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Conversational Analysis: Taking the Turn in Extraordinary Kids - My Brother Doesn't Share His Girlfriend

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Abstract

This study examines taking the turn strategies within the TV program The Extraordinary Kids: My Brother Doesn't Share His Girlfriend hosted by Steve Harvey, employing Stenström's framework of conversation analysis. The researchers use a qualitative research method, the analysis focuses on three primary strategies: starting up, taking over, and interrupting. The findings indicate that starting up is the most frequent strategy, occurring 5 times, showcasing its role in initiating new conversational directions and maintaining the flow of interaction. Taking over occurs 3 times, reflecting moments of conversational dominance or redirection, while interrupting occurs 2 times, highlighting disruptions and shifts in conversational dynamics. This study emphasizes the importance of turn-taking in managing dialogue and maintaining engagement, providing insights into conversational patterns in media contexts. These findings contribute to the broader understanding of discourse analysis and conversational strategies, particularly in structured yet spontaneous interactions on television.

Keywords: Conversational Analysis; Taking The Turn Strategies; Starting Up; Taking Over; Interrupting

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between humans and communication is fundamental to everyday life. Communication is the sharing of knowledge, opinions, thoughts, feelings, or messages among individuals or groups. It consists of a sender who delivers a message, a medium via which the communication is transmitted, and a receiver who understands it. Smith (2020) stated that effective communication is an essential component of successful interactions, whether personal or professional. It entails not only transmitting information, but also evaluating and interpreting it. True communication occurs when the message is clear, concise, and understood by both the sender and receiver, encouraging collaboration, trust, and mutual respect. Effective communication needs clarity, comprehension, and feedback to guarantee that the message is correctly comprehended by the recipient. Communication, whether verbal (spoken or written) or nonverbal (body language, facial expressions, gestures), is crucial for developing relationships, exchanging knowledge, and attaining common goals. Discourse analysis is an area that studies the way language is utilized in many modes of communication, whether spoken, written, or signed. Discourse analysis considers whether texts and discussions generate significance within specific social, cultural, and political settings. Heraldine & Ambalegin (2023) declared that discourse analysis investigates the way language use changes throughout texts and how language connects with social and cultural contexts. discourse analysis takes a broader view, while conversation analysis focuses on the fine-grained details of how conversations are structured. Liddicoat (2007) defines conversation analysis as the study of talk in interaction, which focuses on how participants in social interaction produce and interpret the conversations that occur when they communicate with each other. Unlike formal or scripted dialogues, conversation analysis investigates spontaneous, real-time interaction to identify

hidden norms and patterns that influence interactions. In the workplace, for example, conversation analysis can be used to examine meetings to understand how turn-taking happens, how decisions are reached, and how power dynamics play out in discourse.

Turn-taking strategy is a fundamental aspect of conversational interaction, ensuring smooth communication and mutual understanding between speakers. According to Munalim & Genuin (2022) turn-taking is a conversational mechanism that helps participants maintain the flow of interaction while observing cultural and pragmatic norms. It involves the dynamic process of taking, holding, and yielding turns during dialogue. Taking the turns is an important feature of communication, particularly during communicates with because it ensures that the contact between participants flows smoothly. Taking the turn refers to the strategies speakers use to gain control of the conversation, often occurring when a new speaker begins talking after another or during overlaps. According to Stenström (1994), there are three main strategies in the "taking the turn" approach: starting up, taking over, and interrupting.

Starting up is a strategy that refers to how speakers initiate their turn in a conversation. It can be categorized into two approaches: hesitant and clean starts. A hesitant start occurs when a speaker begins their turn with signs of uncertainty, such as using filler words or pauses, which may indicate a lack of confidence or preparation (Stenström, 1994:69). In contrast, a clean start is characterized by a confident and direct opening, often incorporating introductory devices designed to capture the listener's attention effectively (Stenström, 1994:70).

Taking over describes the act of assuming the conversational floor by explicitly connecting to the ongoing dialogue. This can be achieved through uptake or links. Uptake involves responding directly to cues or appeals from the previous speaker, facilitating a natural transition (Stenström, 1994:71). Meanwhile, links use conjunctions or conjunctive phrases to maintain or shift the conversation's focus, signaling either agreement or disagreement while keeping the discussion cohesive (Stenström, 1994:72-73).

Interrupting comes into play when speakers compete for the conversational floor. This can manifest as an alert, where louder or higher-pitched utterances are used to grab attention and disrupt the current speaker (Stenström, 1994:74). Alternatively, interruptions may take the form of meta-comments, which are polite interjections or redirections, often framed with phrases like "Can I just say...," aiming to navigate the conversation without causing offense (Stenström, 1994:75). According to Schegloff (2007), the purpose of taking the turn in conversation is to assert one's right to speak, contribute to the ongoing interaction, and maintain the sequential flow of dialogue, ensuring mutual understanding and coherence. It refers to how people organize and exchange speaking turns, allowing everyone to contribute to the discourse. Recognizing indicators that indicate when it's time to talk, such as pauses, tone, or body language, is essential for effective turn-taking. For example, if a speaker concludes their thought then pauses, it may imply that it is now time for the other person to react. Similarly, nonverbal signs such as keeping eye contact or nodding indicate preparedness to take or offer a turn. Mastering turn-taking improves clarity, encourages attentive listening, and minimizes overlaps or interruptions, all of which are essential for effective communication. This can be seen in a television interview program with a comedy genre called Ushi & Dushi where an interviewer named Wendy van Dijk who plays the role of Dushi as a Japanese interviewer with limited English interviews a famous singer from England named Adele. (Adele - Ushi the (complete) interview. (youtube.com))

Dushi: "You know I would like to have a little bit like you because you are pretty beautiful and um::me::We in Japan all the ladies are pretty like bowly skinny."(5:32 - 5:40)

Adele: "Maybe it's just in your genes like- "(5:40 - 5:45)

Dushi: "(I'm not wearing jeans, I like wearing little skirts)" (5:40 - 5:47)

In the preceding talk, Dushi interrupted Adele before she finished her turn. This is evident when Dushi instantly reacts with the words "I don't wear jeans," interrupting Adele's attempt to continue her explanation with "Maybe it's just your genes that like..." This interruption demonstrates a comical misunderstanding, as Dushi perceives the word "genes" literally as "jeans" rather than understanding it in terms of heredity. This example emphasizes some critical components of turn-taking methods, including the use of interruptions and the resolution of misunderstandings in discussion. Stenström (1994) stated that interruption is a popular turn-taking approach in which one speaker interrupts another while the latter is still speaking. Dushi adopted a method known as "taking over," in which she took over conversation by responding to a perceived cue, even though Adele's turn was not syntactically complete.

In contrast, one of the specific phenomena found in a TV show called Extraordinary Kids hosted by Steve Harvey can be seen in the conversation between Steve and his child interviewee, Tommy Johnston.

Tommy: “Yeah. Martin Van Buren’s English was his second language.”
Steve: “English was his second language?”
Tommy: “Yes, see?”
Steve: “Tommy, I’m impressed with you.”
Tommy: “Thanks.”

The statement "Steve: Tommy, I’m impressed with you." exemplifies taking over as Steve assumes control of the conversation to conclude Tommy’s turn and redirect the interaction with a supportive and affirming comment. Tommy has been actively contributing by sharing knowledge about historical figures, and Steve uses this moment to shift the focus, taking over the turn to acknowledge Tommy’s performance and steer the conversation toward positive reinforcement.

Meanwhile, other researchers also discussed the turn taking strategy, which were Juliano & Afriana (2024). Their research aimed to analyze turn-taking strategies, focusing on "taking-the-turn" in the talk show Piers Morgan Uncensored, particularly during the interaction between Andrew Tate and Piers Morgan. Using Stenström's framework, the research employed a qualitative approach with data collected through observation and note-taking. The referential identity method was used to analyze the contextual elements, and the findings were presented descriptively. The study identified three key turn-taking strategies: "starting up" (3 instances), "taking over" (6 instances), and "interrupting" (6 instances). "Interrupting" emerged as the most frequent strategy, reflecting the assertive nature of the speakers and their desire for conversational dominance, while "starting up" was the least used, likely due to the speakers’ fluency and confidence.

The next researcher is Tango & Afriana (2024) who identified and analyzed the turn-taking strategies used by Will Smith and Ellen during their interview on The Ellen Show YouTube channel, focusing on three primary strategies: taking the turn, holding the turn, and yielding the turn, as outlined in Stenström’s framework. Employing a qualitative approach, the researchers used document and content analysis, with data collected from the YouTube video through observational and note-taking techniques. The findings revealed several turn-taking strategies, including starting up (clean start with 1 instance), taking over (1 link and 1 uptake), and interrupting (3 alerts and 5 metacomments). Strategies for holding the turn included 2 silent pauses, 1 filled pause, and 1 repetition. Interestingly, no instances of yielding the turn, such as prompting, appealing, or giving up, were observed. The frequent use of interrupting, particularly through metacomments and alerts, highlighted the dynamic and competitive nature of the conversation.

Lastly, Sari & Ambalegin (2023) analyzed turn-taking strategies, focusing on "holding the turn" as observed in the YouTube debate "A Trans 'Mother' Debates Matt Walsh on Womanhood," specifically examining filled pauses, repetition, and silent pauses to understand how speakers

maintain their conversational turns. Using a qualitative approach based on Creswell's and Sudaryanto's frameworks and Stenström's model, the researchers collected data by transcribing the video and categorizing instances of turn-holding strategies. The findings show that filled pauses (e.g., "uh," "umm") and repetition were the most frequently used strategies, each appearing four times, while silent pauses were used twice, reflecting their importance in informal settings for controlling the flow of conversation. The study highlights that these strategies, particularly filled pauses and repetition, are crucial in managing conversational dynamics and effectively holding the floor during discussions.

However, this research analyzes taking the turn strategies in The Extraordinary Kids: My Brother Doesn't Share His Girlfriend hosted by Steve Harvey using Stenström's conversation analysis framework. The study focuses on strategies such as starting up, taking over, and interrupting. Findings show that starting up is the most frequent strategy, occurring 5 times, highlighting its role in initiating conversation shifts. Taking over appears 3 times, reflecting a shift in dominance during interactions, while interrupting is noted 2 times, showing the disruption of taking the turn.

METHOD

In this study the reserachers used the qualitative research method. According to Litosseliti (2018), the qualitative approach employs words and utterances rather than numerical data. The researchers analyzed the interview script from the TV program The Extraordinary Kids: My Brother Doesn't Share His Girlfriend to investigate taking the turn strategy that occur in conversational interactions. For the data collection, the researchers used the observational approach. Sudaryanto (2015) stated that the process of data collection involved transcribing the interviews from the TV program, closely examining the utterances, and identifying instances of starting up, interrupting, and taking over. Furthermore, researchers applied a non-participant approach, it means the researchers did not interact with the speakers but focused on analyzing the transcripts. For the qualitative analysis methods the researchers utilized identification and categorization method, involving the systematic classification of conversational patterns within the interview data to determine turn-taking strategies.

Table 1. Jefferson's Glossary of Transcript Symbols

Symbols	Description
//	Double obliques indicate the point at which a current speaker's talk is overlapped by the talk of another.
[	A left bracket indicates the point of overlap onset.
]	A right bracket indicates the point at which two overlapping utterances end.
=	Equal signs indicate no break or gap.
(0.0)	Numbers in parentheses indicate elapsed time by tenths of seconds.
--	Double dashes indicate a short, untimed interval without talk, e.g., a 'beat'.
(.)	A dot in parentheses indicates a brief interval.
_	Underscoring indicates some form of stress, via pitch and/or amplitude.
::	Colons indicate prolongation of the immediately prior sound.
↑↓	Arrows indicate shifts into especially high or low pitch.
-	A dash indicates a cut-off.
><	Right/left carats bracketing an utterance or utterance-part indicate that the bracketed material is speeded up, compared to the surrounding talk.
(h)	Parenthesized 'h' indicates plosiveness. This can be associated with laughter, crying, breathlessness, etc.

(( ))	Doubled parentheses contain transcriber's descriptions.
()	Empty parentheses indicate that the transcriber was unable to get what was said.
£	The pound-sterling sign indicates a certain quality of voice which conveys 'suppressed laughter'
:_	Combinations of underscore and colons indicate intonation contours.
WORD	Upper case indicates especially loud sounds relative to the surrounding talk.
°word°	Degree signs bracketing an utterance or utterance-part indicates that the sounds are softer than the surrounding talk.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

In the following study, researchers used 10 data sources from a TV show called Extraordinary Kids hosted by Steve Harvey.

Table 2. Finding of the research

3 Main Strategies of Taking the Turn	Frequency
Starting Up	5
Interrupting	2
Taking Over	3

Discussion

Data 1
Steve: “Do you know a lot of stuff? Yeah, do you have a girlfriend?”
Tommy: “Well Jack had run and her name is Devon.”

The question "Do you know a lot of stuff? Yeah, do you have a girlfriend?" represents an example of starting up in the context of conversational analysis because Steve initiates a new conversational path by posing a question that introduces a fresh topic. According to Stenström (1994), theory of turn-taking and conversational analysis, starting up refers to the initial act of introducing a new conversational direction or topic into an interaction. Here, Steve begins by asking "Do you know a lot of stuff?", which serves as an opening to engage Tommy and establish a conversational connection. He then quickly follows this with "Yeah, do you have a girlfriend?", transitioning into a personal inquiry that shifts the focus toward Tommy’s personal life. This demonstrates starting up because Steve sets the stage for interaction by taking the conversational lead and inviting Tommy to respond, thereby initiating a new sequence of dialogue.

Data 2
Steve: “You like Devon, don’t you?”
Tommy: “Yeah. But Jack doesn’t share with me, but Devon does.”

"You like Devon, don’t you?" represents an example of starting up because Steve introduces a new conversational query, effectively opening a fresh topic of discussion by shifting the focus toward Tommy’s feelings about Devon. Based on Stenström (1994), starting up refers to the act of introducing a new conversational topic or inquiry to initiate a sequence of interaction and maintain engagement. In this instance, Steve uses a tag question "don’t you?" as a conversational strategy to prompt Tommy's response while simultaneously establishing control

of the dialogue's direction. The use of a tag question is particularly strategic because it both engages Tommy and guides him toward a specific area of discussion, allowing Steve to take the conversational lead.

Data 3
Steve: “What about this one? Look.”
Tommy: “Thomas Jefferson.”

In this instance, Steve’s phrase "What about this one? Look" signals a clear transition, inviting Tommy to focus on a new subject matter and encouraging his participation. This demonstrates starting up because Steve takes the lead by setting the conversational stage, guiding Tommy’s attention, and framing the next question. By using a directive phrase like "Look", Steve effectively directs Tommy’s attention toward the flashcard activity, maintaining the interaction's structure and focus.

Data 4
Steve: All right, let me see. Who is that? Look at that. Let me show you this. Look.
Tommy: “John Quincy Adams.”
Steve: “Who?”
Tommy: “John Quincy Adams.”

" Let me see. Who is that? Look at that" is a clear instance of starting up because Steve introduces a new question, redirecting the conversation toward a specific focus to the next flashcard and attempting to engage Tommy. By using phrases like "Let me see" and "Look at that", Steve not only transitions the conversation but also signals the introduction of a new activity, framing it with curiosity and directive language to capture Tommy's attention. In addition, Schegloff (2007) in his work on conversational organization emphasized that starting a new sequence often involves an “entry device” to shift the focus and re-establish turn-taking. Steve's use of the question "Who is that?" serves as such a device, explicitly inviting Tommy to respond while simultaneously steering the interaction. This tactic demonstrates Steve's role as the dominant speaker, maintaining control of the conversational flow while ensuring Tommy’s engagement.

Data 5
Steve: “I got a surprise for you. You’re gonna be the president one day, right?”
Tommy: “I want to.”

The exchange "Steve: I got a surprise for you. You’re gonna be the president one day, right?" exemplifies starting up as Steve introduces a new and playful topic to sustain engagement and reinforce positivity. Here, Steve shifts from the ongoing discussion about historical presidents to a light-hearted and aspirational statement aimed at Tommy, effectively changing the conversational focus. Adding to Stenström’s perspective, Brown & Levinson (1987) in politeness theory provides insight into how conversational strategies can serve social functions. By using a playful and affirming statement like "You’re gonna be the president one day, right?", Steve employs positive politeness to create rapport and encourage Tommy’s participation. This dual move of introducing a new topic and reinforcing Tommy’s value in the conversation illustrates how starting up can function not just to shift the topic but also to enhance relational dynamics.

Data 6
Steve: “Who is Jack?”
Tommy: “One of my brothers.”
Steve: “One of your brothers?=”

"One of your brothers?=" is an example of interrupting because Steve interjects with a question before Tommy has completed his response. Stenström (1994), interrupting occurs when a speaker takes the turn prematurely, often breaking into another speaker's ongoing utterance. Here, the overlapping turn "One of your brothers?=" demonstrates an interruption, as Steve cuts into Tommy's speech to seek clarification or confirmation. The equal sign (=) indicates latching, signifying that Steve's turn immediately follows without allowing for a natural pause.

Interruptions in align with Zimmerman & West (1975) in the concept of conversational dominance, where a speaker asserts control over the interaction by seizing the floor. In this case, Steve interrupts not to dismiss Tommy’s point but to probe further into the conversation, steering it toward additional details. While such interruptions can be disruptive, they also serve as conversational strategies to maintain engagement, clarify points, or redirect the dialogue.

Data 7
Steve: “Did y’all know that? Ain’t no way in the world you knew that!”
Tommy: “So it goes Grover Cleveland—”
Steve: “[Okay] now let me ask you this right here.”

Another example of interruption is " [Okay] now let me ask you this right here." Steve interjects before Tommy has finished his statement. Tommy begins to elaborate with "So it goes Grover Cleveland—", indicating he intends to provide more information about Grover Cleveland’s presidency. However, Steve cuts in with "[Okay] now let me ask you this right here", which redirects the conversation before Tommy can complete his thought.

Interruptions occur when one speaker preempts another's turn by taking over the conversational floor, often preventing the completion of the original speaker's contribution. This instance also aligns with Zimmerman & West (1975) findings on turn-taking, where interruptions can reflect conversational control. By interjecting, Steve demonstrates a strategy to steer the interaction toward a new topic or maintain the program's pacing.

Data 8
Tommy: “He got stuck in the bathtub.”
Steve: “Because he was too big.”
Tommy: “So, they replaced the bathtub.”
Steve: “He got stuck in the bathtub.”

The statement "He got stuck in the bathtub." represents an example of taking over because Steve seizes the conversational floor from Tommy to confirm and emphasize a humorous point, shifting the interaction toward his framing of the topic. Tommy begins narrating the anecdote about President Taft getting stuck in the bathtub, and Steve repeats the core detail "He got stuck in the bathtub", asserting control of the conversation and steering it toward humor for the audience.

Data 9
Steve: “What do you know about Thomas Jefferson?”

Tommy: “He was not a very good public speaker, but he was an excellent writer.”
Steve: “He wasn’t a good public speaker.”

The statement "He wasn’t a good public speaker." is an example of taking over because Steve seizes the conversational floor from Tommy and rephrases Tommy's earlier point to make a concluding statement about Thomas Jefferson. Tommy begins explaining Jefferson's qualities, but Steve interrupts and simplifies the narrative with his own interpretation, asserting control over the conversation.

Data 10
Tommy: “Yeah. Martin Van Buren’s English was his second language.”
Steve: “English was his second language?”
Tommy: “Yes, see?”
Steve: “Tommy, I’m impressed with you.”
Tommy: “Thanks.”

The statement "Steve: Tommy, I’m impressed with you." exemplifies taking over as Steve assumes control of the conversation to conclude Tommy’s turn and redirect the interaction with a supportive and affirming comment. Tommy has been actively contributing by sharing knowledge about historical figures, and Steve uses this moment to shift the focus, taking over the turn to acknowledge Tommy’s performance and steer the conversation toward positive reinforcement.

Stenström (1994) explained that taking over often involves a speaker stepping in to shift the conversational trajectory, whether by completing another speaker’s point or redirecting the dialogue. In this case, Steve’s intervention transitions the topic from Tommy’s detailed historical knowledge to a moment of recognition and praise.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study analyzed the turn-taking strategies employed in The Extraordinary Kids: My Brother Doesn’t Share His Girlfriend hosted by Steve Harvey, using Stenström’s framework as the theoretical foundation. The analysis focused on three primary taking the turn strategy: starting up, taking over, and interrupting. The findings revealed that starting up was the most frequently used strategy, occurring five times, demonstrating its role in initiating new conversational paths and maintaining the flow of communication. The taking over strategy appeared three times, highlighting moments where speakers shifted the conversational focus to assert control or provide affirmation. In the final, interrupting was used two times, reflecting disruptions or shifts in the dynamic flow of interaction. These strategies underline the importance of managing conversational transitions effectively, such as initiating topics, guiding the focus of discussion, and maintaining or asserting control during communication. The analysis also provides insights into how strategic communication tactics like starting up and taking over help ensure smooth interactions, maintain attention, and strengthen social connections.

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