A GLANCE AT FACE- TO- FACE CONVERSATION SYSTEM: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TURN- TAKING STRATEGIES

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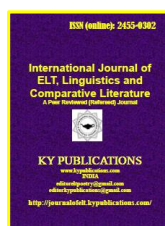
ABSTRACT

Since the spoken discourse systems particularly the turn – taking system is different between cultures and languages, this paper is written to cast light upon English face – to- face conversation with special reference to turn –taking strategies. The paper aims at helping the EFL learners whose languages' turn – taking systems are different from English one. The study includes various titles and subtitles that ease understanding English turn –taking strategies. Titles such as "concepts of discourse and face – to face conversation", shows that the term discourse is a wider umbrella under which many types of communication are seen, but face – to face conversation is a narrower communication between two or more parties. "The role of language in conversation", emphasizes the verbal and non- verbal communication using: hesitation, self -correction, pauses, rephrasing etc. "Turn – taking signals", demonstrate when the turn begins continues and stops. And "turn –taking strategies and systems", embrace so many strategies and systems but in here, we confine ourselves with: Opening and closing sequences; adjacency pairs; getting the floor; repair and overlap.

1.   The Concepts of Discourse and Face- to Face Conversation

In order to discriminate between the discourse studies which do pay attention to language from those which do not pay any attention to language, some researchers of discourse make difference between big *D* and small *d*. the big *D* concerns general ways of viewing the world and general ways of behaving including speaking where spoken discourse being spontaneously produced without any preplanning and it contains abundant redundancy and repetitive hesitations. It also contains pauses and fillers because it is produced in real life. It is authentic. Small *d,* concerns actual and specific language use. It is the discourse as used in situated language.

Falling back on Brown and Yule (1998:1-3), two big categories of language functions are known as transactional and interactional. The transactional function of language is that one in which language serves in the expression of context.

For the interactional view, Brown and Yule (1998:3) remark that "conversational analysts have been particularly concerned with the use of language to negotiate role relationships, peer solidarity, the exchange of turns in a conversation, the saving of face of both speaker and hearer."

Brown and Yule's transactional / interactional stand in general as a correspondence to the following dichotomies: representative/ expressive of Buhler (1934), referential / emotive of Jacobson (1960); ideational / interpersonal of Halliday (1970), and descriptive/ social-expressive of Lyons (1977).

It is noticed by Lyons in Brown and Yule (1998:2) that the notion of communication is readily used of feelings, moods and attitudes, but he has been interested in the intentional transmission of factual or propositional information. Brown and Yule (1998:2) have called the use of language for conveying factual or propositional information as "primarily transactional language". Bennet in Brown and Yule (1998:2), expresses that "it seems likely that communication is primarily a matter of a speaker's seeking either to inform a hearer of something or to enjoin some action upon him."

As reported by Hoa and Hanh (2011:1), conversation as a form of verbal communication between people is an internal part of daily life. Conversations demonstrate the transactional and interactional function of language. In conversations, interlocutors have to engage in communicative language activities in which they change their roles as producers and receivers often and often using several turns

In everyday contexts numerous and various types of spoken discourse that depend on the norms and particular circumstances are noticed. This variety can be categorized in different ways. The concern of this paper is oral production that based on memorizing a text to be an original text treated under demands of immediate response to a situation. This is known as a fresh production which has the following types:

1- Conversation 2- dialogue 3- interview 4- press conference 5-panel 6- talk show 7- public discussion or debate 8- telephone exchange 9- disagreement, row, argument 10- reportage 11-telephone – TV intervention.

As Nonats and Manuel (2017:662) posit conversation is an interactive and spontaneous communication that is used in social context for sharing and accessing information between and among the interlocutors, people as social beings all communicate to interact in order to maintain and establish relationships via constant conversations. Gorjian and Habibi (2015:14), report that everything you do, say and present is a conversation or opportunity for conversation. Things that you say in a networking events, your website, your business card, your misuse or use of a social media, what you say at meetings or events all lead to engage. Further, conversation is a form of interactive, spontaneous communication between two or more people who are following the rules of politeness and ceremonies. A conversation always works for particular purposes because it is of spontaneous nature.

Conversation analysis is a distinct approach of human interaction which deeply affects discourse analysis in recent years. The choosing of appropriate linguistic forms in a given utterance needs to know the sequential context of the utterance. Questions such as where is the utterance positioned in an interaction? Is this utterance opening a dialogue? Or it is a response to some prior talk? Or is it a repair to some prior talk? Or is it a part of a narrative episode? Are raised when analyzing a conversation (He (2001, 7; 14)).

2.   **The Role of Language in Conversation**

It is generally acknowledged that language – verbal or nonverbal -, plays the most important role in understanding turns. The phatic function of language as one component in combination with others e.g., ("listen…", "Let me …", "Look",etc,), hesitation, self -correction, pauses, rephrasing etc. The use of other

nonverbal cues of communication beside body language- smiling, facial expressions, nodding/head shaking from side to side and gestures along with interruptions , overlapping by both interlocutors, while still listening to what the other is saying and embedding anecdotes or quotations within their discourse have various functions and special understandable messages. Wild (2014:9) points out that the linguistic resources such as discourse markers: "Well" or "right" indicate a shift in topic could result in a speaker being prematurely interrupted and losing their turn. Further she adds that stress and intonation are tools for topic management that a falling tone on words like OK or SO often shows that the speaker is about to change the topic.

3   Turn Taking signals

Turn-taking in conversation strategies have signals too. These are nominated by Gorjian and Habibi (2015: 14; 18) as the following list demonstrates: informing; asserting; summarizing; building; including; self – promotion; supporting; disagreeing; avoiding; challenging; attacking; defending and blocking.

Behavioral analysis categories for turn - taking mechanisms are classified in Wiemann and Knapp (1975:83) as verbal cues and non-verbal cues. The verbal cues include: interrogative request; completion; buffers; interruption; simultaneous talking; stutter starts and re-enforcers. And the non-verbal cues embrace: other – directed gazes; smiles; reclining angle; forward- leaning angle; gesticulations and head nods.

Finegan (1994) confirms that various cultures have different degrees of tolerance for silence between turns, overlaps in speaking, and competition among speakers. For instance, in some cultures of Native American Nations and the Eskimos, it is observed that people sit comfortably together in silence, whereas in French and Argentinean cultures many conversationalists often talk simultaneously. The same case is seen when Sudanese women chat with each other. They always interrupt each other more frequently too. Two basic rules are used to solve such a problem, are to use verbal and nonverbal clues as turn taking signals:

(A) Verbal Signal clues:

Speakers signal many ways when they wish to terminate their turns. These ways include:

(i) Verbal clues to show:

- The completion of a sequence shows end of the turn.

- A sequence ending in tag question isn't it? Are you? For example:

    It is boiling today, isn't it?

    You're very happy to day. Aren't you?

- An explicit invitation of the interlocutor to take the floor, for example,

Ali, it's your turn. Or, yes Ali.

(ii) Raising and lowering the pitch of speaker's voice, or drawling the lost syllable of the final word of the turn. In the very informal conversation, one common cue is the phrase, "Or something" e.g.

    A: He behaves as if he wanted to say he was a king or something.

    B: Really?

(iii) Other signals: Other expressions also can signal the completion of a turn, are: Y' know, kind, I don't know (or I dun no), and trailing uhm. These can be used within a turn for the speaker to keep the floor while thinking about what to say next.

A pause can be used for turn termination, when the pause is maintained for a long duration:

A: you have to do it this way. Right?

B: Right. Pause.

A speaker often has to pause in the middle of a turn for various purposes:

- To think about what to say next.

- To emphasize a point.

- To catch a breath.

- To signal that he/she has finished what he/she wanted to say. Pause duration varies from culture to culture.

(B) Nonverbal Signal Clues:

In nonverbal communication, people use gestures to support and stress what they say. Finegan (1994:347) refers that continuing hand gestures let interlocutor know that the speaker has more to say. When the speaker puts his hand at rest, his fellow conversationalist may infer the speaker is yielding the floor. Eye gaze is used variously across cultures that in some countries like mainstream American society, the speakers do not gaze at their interlocutors, instead, "their gaze goes back and forth between their listeners another point in space, altering quickly and almost imperceptible." In cultures in which listeners do not stare at the speaker, while the speaker stares at them when speaking, he/she turns to his/her interlocutor when he /she finishes his/her turn, because, eye gaze is not important in the disturbing of other turns.

4   Turn – taking Systems and Strategies

Elaborating turn – taking construction and turn - taking techniques, Sacks and his colleagues (1987:7-12), believe that "turn – taking is used for ordering moves in games, for allocating political office, for regulating traffic at intersections, for the servicing of customers at business establishments, for talking in interviews, for meetings, for debates, for ceremonies, for conversations etc." Moreover, they confirm that there are various ways for turn –taking systems construction, because the turn construction depends on the sorts of activities in which they operate and on the interest of the investigator in a particular activity. Furthermore, turn constructional unit type for English includes lexical, phrasal, sentential, and clausal construction. And turn allocation techniques are distributed into two categories as (1) those in which the next turn is allocated by current speaker selecting a next speaker; and (2) those in which a next turn is allocated by self- selection.

Any successful conversation is an efficient turn – taking that has to be well organized by particular strategies like, facial expressions; breathing; eye contact; gestures; intonation and semantic cues.

As Kato (2000: 1) reports that turn –taking is the basic mechanisms in conversation that its nature is to promote and maintain talk, and a smooth turn – taking requires the knowledge of both the conversational rules besides the linguistic rules. The concept of turn – taking according to Gorjian and Habibi (2015: 14) covers both a theoretical construction in the linguistic field of discourse analysis and important patterns in communicative events that govern speech and define social roles as it establishes and maintains social relationships. The rich turn – taking is an available human being feature of spoken dialogue. It has to deal with allocation and acquisition of turns. The turn taking system is not only restricted to conversation. All speech genres according to Traugott and Pratt (1980:244), have floor rules which govern prolocutors get to converse and at what topics. Many participants take the floor in some speech genres like press conference or questioning

of witnesses or debates and in other genres only one participant gets the floor as in presidential address or a lecture sometimes.

The rules which govern conversation work can be explained in various ways as follows:

Addressing that participants must know naturally and clearly agree on who should speak and when, Finegan (1994: 333 – 56) says people normally take turns at holding the floor and they do so without overt negotiation. A beneficial way to explain the conventions of turn taking is to observe what happens and when they break down. Other speakers usually pause when they feel that it is somebody's turn then somebody else begins speaking. For example:

A: Why are you looking sad today?

[pause]

A: Why are you looking so sad today?

B: I feel lonely when you travel next hour.

Ibraheem (2017: 293) suggests that the phenomena to be used in a mode of the exchange of the speaker role in conversation are: 1- the precise timing and the little overlapping of the transition between one speaker to another, 2- … this mechanism is independent of particular circumstances such as a number of participants and the varying turn length, 3- … the same system operates in face –to – face as well as in telephone conversations without visual monitoring. As Duncan in Wiemann and Knapp (1975:75), proposes three rules for operating successful turn taking by the interlocutors such as: a) turn – yielding cues; b) suppression of speaking; c) backchannel cues and d) turn –taking requesting, Thorn bury in Ibraheem (2017: 292) sees only two main rules for turn – taking:1-long silences are to be avoided 2- listen when the other speakers are speaking. Speaking on teaching and learning speaking model, Elkommos (2018:1130) says "teaching turn – taking rules should include pragmatic principles and speech acts will enhance students' sociolinguistic competence; strategic competence; together with discourse competence."

4-1. Opening and Closing Sequences:

Conversations are usually opened and closed by using techniques like, adjacency pairs; the first topic is held back until the conversation developing, from opening to a point where it can be introduced. This is on one hand, on the other hand, conversations according to Paltridge (2008:12) are closed by several techniques such as: archetype closing which includes two techniques namely pre-closing using expressions like "OK" or "alright". And closing forms: using "bye- bye" or using similar expressions. Sometimes pre-closing sequences such as: referring back to something previously mentioned e.g. have you got your bag last night?; Expressing good wishes e.g. "Enjoy your time dear."; or restatement of the reason for calling e.g., "I Just called to congratulate." Sometimes conversational closing may be what is called foreshortened expressions when archetype closing is skipped as in " It's a high time to go. See you." Or by using extended expressions by continual repetition of pre-closing or closing items as in:

A: Bye

B: bye

A: Bye – bye

B: Bye- Bye

A: Good night

B: The same to you

Finegan (1994:353) remarks that "in many cultures the opening sequences appropriate to a situation in which people meet after not having met for a while is an enquiry about the person's health…"

For example, in American formal greeting formula is the formula "How are you?", and English greeting formula is "How do you do?" The meaning of these two formulas is not literal but conventional that the answer for both formulas is (I'm fine, or fine. Thanks), even when feeling terrible. It is noticed in other countries, the conventional greeting may be of different forms as in Fur language: Afela konga (= good morning), Afela kamungo (good after noon), Afela kang(greeting), Saa sa kongo (= Hi, used for meeting after a short departure)/ sabbas sa kongo has the same meaning of "Saa sa kongo'. In Arabic the formal forms of greeting 'Asalamu Aleikum' and 'Us?tum Sabaahan/ masaa .an' besides informal greeting forms like, Sabbah alkher /anur and Massaa Alkher/anur and others are used

It is said that "greetings exemplify opening sequences, utterances that ease people into- a conversation, they convey the message 'I want to talk to you.", (Finegan (1994:352)).

Furthermore, conversationalists use opening sequences to declare that they are going to invade the personal space of their interlocutors. For instance, a stranger may say: "Excuse me, I don't mean to eavesdrop, but I couldn't help hearing that you are talking about Nyala . Iam from Nyala " He / she joins the conversation as a third party.

4-2-Adjacency Pairs

Adjacency pairs which are believed to be the basic structural unit in a conversation, are discussed by Paltridge (2008:116 -118) as exist across cultures and as stage of the conversation.

Specific turns have certain follow up turn associated with them. For example:

- Questions have answers.

- Greetings are returned by greetings.

- Invitations are accepted or refused.

    Etc.

 Certain sequences of turns go together in the following exchanges are composed of two parts each:

(i) Question/answer.

    A: Have you enough time to read?

    B: yes, I have.

(ii) Invitations/acceptance/refusal

    A: I would like you and me to dine together today.

    B: yes, of course. (Acceptance).

C: I have exams. (Refusal).

(iii) Assessment/ disagreement

    A: I don't believe she would desert you.

B: you don't know her intentions.

Below are more instances of adjacency pair system:

A: May I use your pen please?

B: Sure.

(v) Apology and acceptance

A: Sorry I'm late.

B: That's alright.

(vi) Summons and acknowledgement:

A: John!

B: Yes?

There are three well known characteristics of adjacency pairs:

(a) The two parts are touched and uttered by different speakers.

E.g. answer does not precede a question at all.

(b) The two parts are ordered: one cannot accept an invitation before it

has been uttered.

(c) The first part and the second part must appropriately matched, e.g.

A: Do you need more money?

B: Yes, that's good.

An interaction may consist of one adjacency pair embedded in another one as in:

	A: Can I speak to Mr. John?	
Main	B: May I ask who's calling?	
	A: Mr. Bill Brown.	Secondary adjacency pairs
Adjacency	B: Please hold.	

Adjacency pairs are marked by preference for particular type of second part e.g. questions, invitations and requests have preferred and these preferred answers are shown in the examples below:

A: I really enjoyed the last party. Did you?

B: Yeah, I thought it was pretty good. (Preferred)

A: I really enjoyed the last film. Did you?

B: No, I thought it was pretty bad… (Dis-preferred)

Hesitation particles like (well) or (uh) may precede dispreferred second part as in:

A: Would you like to meet tomorrow for breakfast?

B: Well, hmm let's see… (hesitation particles)

4-3.Getting the Floor

In multi-party conversations, the floor can be got by various ways:

(a)   The floor holder can select who will speak next.

(b)   The next speaker can select himself.

(c)   If the floor holder does not select the next speaker, any one may take the floor (competition can arise).

In the situation of friendly participants, competitions are quickly and smoothly solved. In conversational situations such as social or situational inequality as between boss and employee, parent and son, doctor and patient etc., it is expected the superior to get the floor and then let the inferior to explain.

4- 4. Repair

During their interactions, interlocutors do not always find it possible to obtain what they have expected due the occasional communication breakdowns. To prevent potential incidents that may occur in conversations, the interlocutors tend to make use of an interaction strategy called repair.

Self- repair and other- repair are very essential when managing turn – taking because they are distinct strategies of everyday conversational strategies that are used by interactants to support mutual cooperatively understanding of the message in focus in the talk. Further, Earnshaw and Oregon (2017:318), report that when certain issues or errors such as the parties cannot hear or understand one another, or a party has difficulty in speaking are identified and revolved, the process is known as repair in conversation analysis.

Referring to Schegloff et.al.(1977:361 - 382), "repair is a mechanism that operates in conversation to deal with problems in speaking, hearing, and understanding the talk in conversation." Schegloff and his colleagues further, classify repair into two types as self- initiated repair and other – initiated repair. Each repair of which has three components namely, trouble source, repair initiator and repair completion.

Trouble source repair used for any element in a conversation which causes communication breakdown. Repair initiator: This occurs when a trouble source repair is identified by the speaker in his own talk or by the recipient in someone else's talk (other - initiated) and then either the speaker or the listener initiates the use of repair strategies to repair it or to ask for repairing. Repair completion, this happens after a trouble source is identified, it can be repaired by the self – initiator or by other initiators.

4-4-1-1Types of repairs

Repairs are described by Nonats and Manuel (2017:66) as "strategies that speakers use in spoken discourse either in an ordinary conversation or institutional talk." Basing on SSJ (1974) theory of self- correction (self- repair), repair strategies are classified into two main categories as: a) Self – repair strategies and b) other repair strategies.

Self- repair strategies consist of two types, self- initiated and other- initiated repairs. They involve a particular set of repair strategies such as: error correction, searching for a word, immediate lexical change, hesitation pauses, instantaneous repetitions, and false starts. Error correction or trouble source correction, corrects accidental trouble sources including, phonological, lexical, and morphological errors. Searching for a word helps the speaker to lengthen the duration of time to find out the appropriate word for context. Immediate lexical change this happens when exact words or idioms are not used by speakers in a particular context of speaking, which makes understanding difficult for the listeners, then the speakers must immediately change the lexis with the suitable ones. Hesitation pauses are conversational silences that occur within a turn. They happen

when the speakers fail to express themselves properly, or find it is difficult to express their thoughts at the moment of speaking or when they want mention other things. Instantaneous repetitions include a lot of subcategories like, repletion of personal pronouns; conjunctions; indefinite articles; and prepositions. False starts always show that speakers wrongly begin or start their conversations compared to their thoughts so they need to repair them. This strategy affords speakers much time to find the words or phrases for repair.

The other category concerns other repair strategies. SSJ (1974), believe that there are four strategies for other initiators as follows: 1) Question words – wh- words- these used to open conversations. 2) A partial repeat of the trouble source turn, plus a question word. 3) Judging ideas from the speakers utterance. 4) A partial repeat of the prior talk with upward intonation. Moreover, researchers like Nonat and Manuel (2017: 663); and Earnshaw and Oregon (2017:315-336) classify repair strategies as self- initiated – self repair, this is both initiated and carried out by the speaker of the trouble source. Self – initiated – other repair, the speaker of trouble source may try and get the recipient to repair the trouble. The speaker may not know the trouble – of the thing that is the subject of speaking and it is expecting the recipient to provide the correct name. Instead the recipient asks for clarification and the speaker makes the repair. Other- initiated self- repair, carried out only by speaker of the trouble source, but is initiated by the recipient. The speaker is not clearly heard by the recipient as is indicated by the question word. To repair the trouble source, the speaker repeats the same question as before. Other – initiated other repair, the recipient of other trouble source both initiates and carried out the repair. This is nearest to what is conventionally called correction. The recipient himself makes the repair by correcting the error the speaker committed.

4-5-Overlap

Basing on the model of turn- taking of Sacks and et.al (1974), conversational participants always try to minimize overlaps during their turn – taking .Overlaps occur at places of possible turn ends either as terminal overlaps or simultaneous overlaps. Overlap is considered by Elkommos (2018:1133) as a natural feature of conversation analysis that occurs in both two part and group events, yet it should be corrected as per the turn taking rules. The strategy of overcoming overlap should be taught in English language speaking classes so as to help the learners of other tongues because turn – taking is a culture specific phenomenon.

Stolt (2008:24), explains utterance types that may occur in overlap under many names such as: short listeners responses (like, mm, hm, uhhuh, mm,oh,yea and okay.) Tradditionally, or in earlier studies these were called e.g., backchannels, minimal responses, hearer signals, or response tokens.

Overlaps which happen frequently in conversations are known as (1) competitive overlaps or problematic and (2) non- competitive overlaps these are called unproblematic. The non-competitive overlaps were elaborated by Stolt (2008:56 -104) as acknowledgement tokens; continuers; news markers; change of activity tokens; assessments; laughter; conditional – access- to- the- turn overlap; transitional overlaps and accidental overlaps. The alternative terms for overlaps or duration of overlaps include at least, double talking, and negative response times , double talk and interruptions, simultaneous speech, (negative) switch time or switch overlaps, and (negative) floor transfer aspects (Heldner and Edlund (2010:556)).

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