
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Discoursal Study of Turn Taking in Political Interviews

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| ABSTRACT

A political interview or any type of conversation is a collaborative effort between all speakers involved. That is, participants, take turns, and the control of a conversation is negotiated by the parties involved. According to Richards (1980: 424), it is governed by turn-taking conventions that determine who talks, when, and for how long. For a successful collaboration to ensue, it is important for speakers to know how and when to take, hold onto, and relinquish their turns in conversation. This study highlights turn-taking as a strategy in Trump's speech. The study tries to show the importance of turn-taking use in political discourse and how it is dominated. The results of the study revealed that there are three strategies of turn-taking: taking the turn, holding the turn and yielding the turn, which Trump used them. Also, the study found that on some occasions, politicians make use of gestures and facial expressions to employ as turn-taking strategies.

| KEYWORDS

Political discourse, turn-taking, yielding the turn

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1. Introduction

Political discourse is nowadays a ground of exceptional attention amongst linguists in several directions, predominantly in pragmatics and discourse analysis fields. One reason for that is that a number of linguists perceive that discursive and rhetoric procedures used by politicians do not significantly differ from the ones used by other types of speakers in other professional circumstances, while the political word is collected and dispersed by the journalist; consequently, it is continuously an arbitrated word.

Therefore, news interviews have turned more and more essential as they carry important topics to the public. A political interview or any type of conversation is a collaborative effort between all speakers involved. That is, participants, take turns, and the control of a conversation is negotiated by the parties involved. According to Richards (1980: 424), it is governed by turn-taking conventions that determine who talks, when, and for how long. For a successful collaboration to ensue, it is important for speakers to know how and when to take, hold onto, and relinquish their turns in conversation.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, turn-taking has not been thoroughly dealt with, especially in political interviews. Thus, the present study attempts to answer the following questions: (1) What are politicians' turn-taking strategies in political interviews? (2) What are the dominant turn-taking strategies used by Donald Trump? In light of the above-mentioned problems, this study aims to specify the turn-taking strategies politicians use in political interviews and identify the dominant turn-taking strategies used by Donald Trump in interviews.

1.1 Theoretical Background

1.1.1 Discourse Analysis

The term 'discourse' has various meanings, which depend on those who do the research and, second, the academic culture. For instance, 'text' and 'discourse' are recognized as different in the Central European context and in Germany, whereas the English speaking communities refers to both written and spoken texts as 'discourse' (Wodak and Meyer, 2009: 5-7).

According to Schiffrin et al. (2001: 1), discourse is 'anything beyond the sentence', a definition with which the structuralists seem to be unsatisfied. They argue that discourse is 'language above the clause', emphasizing the structural properties of texts. As such, they neglect any social relations with discourse. Contradictorily, the functionalists see discourse as inseparable from the social relations that are achieved by means of language, implying that any study of language must entail a study of its functions in real life (Brown and Yule, 1983: 1). However, Fairclough (1992: 3) sees that it is not easy to pinpoint a specific definition for 'discourse' because of the overlapping definitions it has and that it refers to written and spoken examples of language. Moreover, he (ibid.) adds that each social situation has its own type of discourse, like 'newspaper discourse, advertising discourse, medical discourse', etc. Nevertheless, there are three main aspects of discourse: firstly, it is 'anything beyond the sentence'; secondly, it refers to 'language use'; and thirdly, it represents 'a broader range of social practice that includes nonlinguistic and nonspecific instances of language'.

Cognitively, language users return to their 'mental models' in processing discourse to stimulate relevant topics from their 'hierarchical knowledge'. This, in turn, makes discourses, locally and globally, coherent. That is to say, discourses 'enable' and 'delimit' the arenas of information and inquest, as well as control what should be said, thought or done in those arenas. Consequently, the discourse has a primary role in imposing power just like any other form of control, as in laws, commands, prohibitions, etc. It may manage the minds of groups and their members (van Dijk, 2015: 71).

Therefore, discourses are used by the powerful (elite) groups, such as the politicians, the media, and the dominant groups in society, to imply their ideologies and change the thoughts of the less dominant groups (ibid: 30).

1.2 Political Interviews

In interviews, speakers convey information and express opinions. These activities are very largely done as responses to questioning. Questioning handles the main interactional and institutional tasks charged to interviews. First, interviewers are obliged to elicit interviewees' information and opinions for the benefit of overhearers (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991: 121). Second, interviewers must maintain a "neutralistic" position. They are not authorized to argue with or criticize the interviewee's point of view nor, conversely, to agree with, support, or defend it. This stance can be achieved only through questioning (Heritage and Roth, 1995: 1).

The political interview is a genre that does not have a great tradition; however, it has blown out and has been imposed in such a way that nowadays, it "competes in importance with the parliamentary debate" (Chilton, 2004).

It is a genre of political discourse as a type of informative speech (Chilton, 2004), as it is a significant vehicle for the spread of political messages.

From the point of view of the conversational organization, a political interview shows a well-defined structure in which the interviewer and the interviewee follow the format of turn-taking answer-question (Greatbatch, 1988). A number of studies about the political interview (Bull, 1994; Chilton, 2004) show, however, that in this genre are correspondingly interruptions, overlaps, and other occurrences that put forward that there is not an inflexible distribution among the role of the participants. Regardless, it is a functionally specified type of interaction that is steered by a number of established conventions that regulate the structure and development of the interaction.

1.3 Turn taking

Turn-taking is a type of organization in conversation and discourse where participants speak one at a time in alternating turns. In practice, it involves processes for constructing contributions, responding to previous comments, and transitioning to a different speaker, using a variety of linguistic and nonlinguistic cues. While the structure is generally universal, overlapping talk is generally avoided, and silence between turns is minimized, turn-taking conventions vary by culture and community. Conventions vary in many ways, such as how turns are distributed, how transitions are signalled, or how long is the average gap between turns (website Resource).

For Ochs (1979: 63), a turn is "an utterance bounded by a significant pause or by an utterance of other participants." In other words, a turn is the speech of one person continued until another takes the floor.

Cohen (1979: 259) states the characteristics of a turn as follows:

1. It is a socially cooperative act in that it is an occasion for participating in a conversation.
2. It is informationally relevant. "It is an event that occurs with respect to other conversational events, takes them into account, builds on or alters them in methodical ways" (Speier, 1972: 402).
3. It creates the opportunity for further conversation. It contributes sufficient information to the dialogue to enable the other participant to continue.

1.4 Turn-Taking Strategies

Successful management and control of turn-taking in conversation involves a number of abilities. Bygate (1987: 39) suggests five abilities are required for efficient turn-taking: First, it involves knowing how to signal that one wants to speak...Second, it means recognizing the right moment to get a turn....Thirdly, it is important to know how to use appropriate turn structure in order to use one's turn properly and not lose it before finishing what one has to say...Fourthly, one has to be able to recognize other people's signals of their desire to speak. And fifthly, one needs to know how to let someone else have a turn. Of these abilities, the first, third and fifth are more active, involving linguistic (e.g. phrases, words, and noises) and paralinguistic (e.g. eye contact, facial expression, and gestures) techniques.

These techniques are called referred to as turn-taking strategies. Below is an illustration of each one:

1. Taking the turn

To do this, certain strategies for 'taking the floor' of a conversation or taking over the role of the speaker are employed. Richards (1990: 86) suggests four strategies by which a speaker can take a turn in a conversation:

- using interjections to signal a request for a turn, such as "Mm-hmm," "Yeah," and rising intonation.
- using facial or other gestures to indicate a wish to take a turn
- accepting a turn offered by another speaker by responding to a question...
- completing or adding to something said by the speaker

2. Holding the turn

When one would like to indicate that they are not finished speaking and intend to continue with their turn, strategies for holding a turn can be employed. One strategy for holding a turn, as indicated by McDonough and Shaw (1993: 157), is "filling in the silence at [a] particular moment". Brown and Yule (1983: 30) state that, when asked a direct question, the most frequent response by native English speakers is "well, erm, er (in any order) interspersed with pauses".

These kinds of fillers are useful for giving speakers time to think or plan what to say next. In addition to fillers, Richards (1990: 69) describes expressions of continuity such as "first," "and another thing," and "after that," that can be used to indicate that the speaker has something more to contribute and that they are not yet ready to give their turn up

3. Yielding the turn

This means that the speaker 'pass the ball' on to someone else. One way in which speakers let others have turns is by using tag questions. This is confirmed by Sacks et al. (1974: 718). They point out that using a tag question such as "you know?" or "don't you agree?" is a "generally available 'exit technique'". Other available strategies for bringing others into the conversation, as indicated by Richards (1990: 69), are:

- using adjacency pairs, requiring the other person to provide the sequence, such as with the adjacency pair challenge-denial:

A: You look tired.

B: I feel fine.
- using phonological signals, such as slowing down the final syllables of an utterance and increasing the pitch change to signal completion of the turn.
- pausing to provide an opportunity for someone to take up the turn
- using facial or bodily gestures to signal that a turn is finished.

2. Data Analysis

The present study's data is Donald Trump's interview being a representative of the famous political figures today. Contextual details of the data might be of use. The interview happened at the University of Wisconsin Green Bay. The interviewer is Chris Matthew, a journalist and a political commenter. Both of them know each other very well. They have the same political background. Trump was invited for an interview because he became the front runner for the Republican presidential nomination in the 2016 election.

Excerpt (1)

This excerpt talks about apologizing to the young woman reporter about the incident in his campaign. It can be seen below:

TE: = Let me explain. Normally, you talk about running and you DON'T have seventeen [people =
MR: [Yeah.
TE: = We had 17 people, we actually had eighteen people, AGAIN, including Gilmore, OK?
MR: Right.
TE: We have eighteen people. And during a long period of time, we would (Erased see appendix)
MR: [Yeah.
TE: You probably saw the poll that just came out in New York, Emerson Collage which is you know, I am up by [ə:: =
MR: [Yeah, but it is all about you are not getting the 1777. They will deny it to you.

It is clear from the excerpt above that Trump's hesitant start "em" is a turn-taking strategy. It means that he has not a good preparation at the beginning of the conversation after getting a question from the interviewer. This is a strategy to avoid silence. Another turn-taking strategy used by Trump is his utterance "yeah" to answer Matthew's question. Again, his response "No" is another strategy he used to take the turn. Finally, Trump, interrupting Matthew, used a turn-taking strategy. He said, "Hey, look", with an iconic gesture because he wanted to clarify that he does not touch the reporter.

Excerpt (2)

This excerpt of the conversation discusses the result that is got by Trump as the Republican nomination for the president of the United States in the 2016 election.

TE: I think, (·,ʌ) you know, (certainly) be helpful. We are doing very well↑, >and< we are leading by a lot, we are leading everybody by a lot. And ə:m in votes, in terms of votes, we are millions of votes up on <Cruz> and millions of (.) votes up on Kasich. əmm, but..(erased see appendix).
MR: Let's talk about ə::mm (·,ʌ) before you go to the general election, >you have got to win< the republican nomination. What is---what is your leverage there? (Erased see appendix)
TE: One thing (.) the voters.
ə:m I have millions more.. (Erased see appendix).
MR: [right
TE: =And that is my leverage. And, and these are people that are REALLY-- they really like Donald

Trump held the turn more than once in the above excerpt. He used a silent pause for (0.2). He needed a little time to think of what he would say. Again, he kept his turn when he used a pause after saying "and millions of (.) votes".

In the same turn, he used a filled pause "em" to hold his turn. He uses this strategy four times to hold his turn. This indicates that Trump was facing a problem with what he was about to say next. However, he needed time to continue his utterance.

The same thing holds true with his repetition of the conjunction "and" and the repetition of the utterance "that are really, they really". Repeated words or utterances are one of the most common disfluencies in spontaneous speech. This strategy was of use for Trump to hold his turn more than once.

Excerpt (3)

MR: Was <Teddy Roosevelt> right to walk?
 TE: ə::m <studied well>, I think possibly he was, but boy, did that cause a problem.
 MR: (Erased see appendix) .Do you think you could have handle it differently from our-- from the start with maybe an apology to the young woman reporter, something like that? Maybe give her an interview?
 TE: Yeah, [Personally
 MR: [Something to DE-ESCALATE the issue and show respect for her. Could you have done that more?
 TE: No, I <don't think so>. (Erased see appendix)
 MR: >But there< was contact↑.
 TE: ə:: what contact↑? I mean, there is contact every time.
 MR: But that's what this low says. It's unwanted TOUCHING, [unwanted
 TE: [HEY LOOK, I am walking with reporters. I am walking and she contacted me.

The above excerpt shows that Trump yielded his turn more than once by using different strategies. First, he used the question tag, "ok?" because he wanted Matthew to give feedback. This is an explicit signal to invite the addressee to talk.

Second, Trump yielded his turn by giving up in the utterance "you know, I am up by ...". In this way, he delayed his time because he had some difficulties continuing his utterance.

3. Conclusions

On the basis of the analysis conducted in the practical part or chapter three of the present study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. There are three strategies of turn-taking: taking the turn, holding the turn and yielding the turn
2. Politicians in general and Trump in particular use all the above-mentioned strategies of turn-taking.
3. The dominant turn-taking strategies used by Donald Trump as the interviewee are:
 - a. Lexical repetition in taking the turn strategy.
 - b. The repeated words and utterances and the utterance "em" in holding the turn strategy.
 - c. Silent pause and question tag in yielding the turn strategy.
4. On some occasions, politicians make use of gestures and facial expressions to employ as turn-taking strategies.

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