

Original Analysis: An Eclectic Perspective¹

Linda Wine and Patricia Frenz-Belkin
Teachers College, Columbia University

Analysis of the Conversation

Conversations, especially between people who have a common history such as married couples, inevitably build on or refer back to previous talks. Couples are sensitive to what is said “between the lines”, to what they think the other really means when he or she is talking about certain things. As researchers and outside observers, we do not share the knowledge that the participants have in common and, therefore, we must – at least initially – only consider the data at hand in our analysis. In keeping with the principles of conversation analysis, then, according to which the researcher should avoid making inferences as to the participants’ motives and/or intentions, the following analysis will attempt to establish what is demonstrably relevant to the participants at the moment of the observed interaction and how this is displayed by the participants.

In line 15 (see Appendix A), the wife signals a shift in the focus of the interaction by uttering “alright” (15). She then offers what seems to be a preamble to the discussion that is going to follow in that it frames the interaction in a certain way:

Watch A: [“Nervous”](#)

It appears that what she is saying is of some concern to her since she starts out by addressing her husband by his name in a loud voice, thus drawing his attention to what she is about to say. The husband, in his next two turns (16 and 18), signals that he is listening. The wife then goes on to describe the following discussion as long-range and open-ended (19-21). She ends her preamble with an “OK” uttered with a question intonation. The husband does not respond directly to this, but makes a joke (22), which seems to be aimed at defusing the temporary tension that has built up while she had been talking about the upcoming discussion. In his next turn (24), he asks her to go ahead with the discussion of their vacation plans, thus not only refocusing the discussion on the topic per se, but also indicating that he agrees with her assessment of the discussion as non-binding.

The fact that she feels the need to frame the discussion as somewhat non-binding and the apparent urgency with which she introduces this issue – as well as his attempt to diffuse tension through a joke – seem to indicate that both participants perceive the topic as potentially touchy. This may also explain the husband’s initial reluctance to agree with his wife’s suggestion that they talk about the upcoming vacation. It is likely – given her projection of the conversation as non-binding and his pause before accepting the topic – that the couple has discussed their vacation plans on previous occasions and that this had turned out to be problematic.

¹ This paper is one segment of a larger research paper written by Linda Wine and Patricia Frenz-Belkin in 1997 and presented at the American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL) conference, Vancouver, March 2000, titled: *The impact of gendered social discourse of labor and long-term relationship on conversational interaction: A case study.*

At a later point, it seems that he is trying to move toward closure of the discussion about Minnesota. His wife then mentions the possibility of buying senior tickets, almost as an afterthought. He takes up the topic by providing the longest contribution to the conversation in the whole corpus (lines 126-132):

Watch B: [“Senior Tickets”](#)

Here the husband is discussing at length the air fare to Minnesota, providing exact numbers and calculating the total cost of the trip. As on previous occasions, his talk deals with the specifics of their vacation. The fact that this is the first time in the interaction where a turn of his consists of more than one or two utterances seems to indicate that he is talking about an issue of great concern to him. In view of this, her minimal response to his contribution in general and his direct questions in particular are surprising, especially since she had been the one who introduced this topic. By prefacing her utterance with “anyway” she acknowledges what he has said, but she also signals that she is ready now to move on in their discussion.

In her next utterance, she reasserts that their discussion is about “grand strategy”, perhaps hereby implying that they need not go into the details of their trip at this point, which could also be seen as an explanation of her unresponsiveness with regard to his discussion of cheap air fares (138-141):

Watch C: [“Put Off”](#)

The fact that she laughs may indicate that she is trying to defuse a potentially charged topic. By laughing at himself and, later, agreeing with her, he displays his willingness to move away from the topic of finances.

The wife introduces a new topic, which, at first, appears to be a trip to France and Switzerland in the fall. However, she drops this subject by asking her husband what they should do later in the winter. When she does not receive an answer to her direct question, she appears to be getting annoyed; she asks him if he has any thoughts about their vacation plans. Again she uses his first name, most likely to get his attention and to emphasize what she is saying. When he starts to answer (152), overlapping with her turn, she continues talking (153), making the point – ironically – that she is doing all the talking in this conversation. When he answers in his next turn, he prefaces what he is going to say with the reluctance marker “well”, which is followed by a noticeable pause. She perceives his reluctance here as an indication that he is going to voice something of a disagreement or a criticism regarding what she had said before and, in fact, he again broaches the subject of finances, which had previously been a touchy topic in their discussion.

Here, the wife asks questions in quick succession, without taking notice of her husband’s attempts to provide answers. She asks him twice for his preferences regarding their vacation (159-161) but – because he utters “well” repeatedly, again signaling reluctance – she does not give him a chance to respond.

She finally asks him about a trip to Asia that they had discussed on a prior occasion. We believe that this question is the key to understanding the above sequence in that she directly introduces the topic that she has been hinting at from the beginning of the sequence. It appears that she was reluctant to bring up the trip to Asia herself and her direct question about what they should do in the winter could have been a strategy to have him talk about it first. Thus, her

frustration – which becomes apparent when she asks him if he has any thoughts about their vacation plans – could be a reaction to the fact that he does not mention the trip to Asia. When he instead introduces financial considerations (154-158), she ignores his contribution, asking him repeatedly what he would like to do. It seems that she is trying to keep the focus of the discussion on vacation spots. She finally introduces Asia herself in the form of a question directed at him thus “coaxing” him to say something about the subject.

Her reluctance to broach the subject of Asia directly may be linked to his concern with finances, which he displays throughout the interaction. She may feel that if she broaches the subject, he may again raise the question of money as he had done with regard to the trip to Minnesota. This may be the reason for her subtle attempts to manipulate the interaction in a way so that he would be the one who brings up the subject of Asia. That he is, in fact, hesitant to discuss this subject, is displayed by his delayed response (165) “Yea:h” (note the lengthening of the vowel). The fact that she does not wait for him to finish his turn, overlapping his utterance with what seems to be the beginning of an explanation (166), may indicate that she interprets his reluctance as a yet-unstated negative response which she is trying to forestall. He then makes another attempt to say something (167), which is again overlapped by her. Here, again, it appears that she feels that a negative response is coming and she utters “NO” in a raised voice with a question intonation, signaling that she interprets his unfinished utterance as a rejection of the trip to Asia. She then goes on to refute his presumed rejection. When there is no response on his part, she states her preference for a trip to Asia over a trip to Paris. Interestingly, she ends her turn with an indirect question (173) “if that’s if that’s a se:rious considerA:tion”, which refers back to her question in line 163 about his seriousness about the trip to Asia, and to which she had not gotten a conclusive answer.

His response (175-178) is a somewhat indirect answer to her question; he is trying to postpone further discussion about this subject to a later time, at the same time he agrees to look at a prospectus for Elderhostel, thus displaying his willingness to consider this trip. It also appears that he is trying to move the current discussion toward closure by saying that they can continue this conversation on a more informed level once they have looked at the travel prospectus.

Analysis of the Follow-Up Interview

Tannen (1996) and other researchers suggest that – while participants may or may not be fully aware of how and why they interact as they do – it is, nonetheless, useful to consult with them before making definitive statements about their interaction. Therefore, three months after the initial conversation was videotaped, the couple was asked to return to the home of one of the researchers to answer questions on their lives, watch the video, and comment on the interaction (see Appendix B for the post-conversation interview [PCI]).

Given that the couple has been married for some fifty years, it is not very surprising that the protocol data reveals that they divide responsibilities in a fairly stereotypical way for members of their socioeconomic group and generation: she is responsible for the home and social contacts and he, for the finances and heavy work around the house. As the husband puts it:

[The wife] is generally in charge of the appointment calendar... I think she plans most of our activities ((laughter))... and then I have to put in between the things that I want to

do...my own chores, whether they're at my desk or, this morning, getting all the corrugated cardboard together for recycling...(PCI, 1).

It is noteworthy that he mentions that he must fit his chores into her schedule because she levies a similar complaint against him, namely, that he is caught up in his own life and many of his "personal" activities end up involving her and detracting her from her own interests:

[Y]ou spend most of your time either at your desk working on personal things, our finances or whatever you do – I'm not quite sure...and he's working a lot...at the Mediation Center...going to training sessions...his magic shows...but he has scheduled a lot of things [that] have involved me...(PCI, 1).

Along with this division of responsibilities comes the continual balancing act between getting the individual's and the couple's needs met. This division of labor (she social, he financial) extends to how vacations are arranged, as well. When asked who is responsible for vacation planning, the husband explains that his wife does it because "she is much better at it than I am" (PCI, 3) and, when asked about his own role in the process, answers: "Either accepting or negating the plans" (PCI, 2).

Given that he considers her the vacation expert, we were not very surprised that he remembers nothing about the original conversation, whereas she – the responsible party – remembers quite a bit. What did surprise us somewhat was how quickly she sums up what her conversational goals had been. Rather than mentioning Minnesota or Europe (the bulk of the conversation in terms of amount of talk), she immediately answers: "I was making a proposal to you that we should go to Thailand. That's what the discussion was about" (PCI, 2). The fact that she mentions Asia, the last topic she introduced in the interaction, confirms what Pomerantz (1984) and others have claimed: when there is a preference for agreement, important or potentially problematical topics are often left for last.

Throughout the initial interaction, as we have mentioned, the wife's use of indirectness (hedging, labeling the conversation as non-binding, etc.) is noticeable; however, without the follow-up interview, it would have been impossible to know exactly why she felt it necessary to proceed in such a tentative way. The interview reveals two important issues she feels she is up against: one related to his personality (traveling makes him nervous [PCI, 8]), and the other to his role as financial expert (spending money makes him nervous). As a result, the way she handles money topics with him has evolved over the years, changing somewhat – but not entirely – after she joined the workforce:

Before I worked, I was extremely intimidated by him [when it came to money]...but I've developed a certain independence and it's carried on to this day. I'm never going to back to where I was, but I know when it comes to big bucks...it's better to do it the way I did on the video and make him think I'm just exploring something ((laughter)) than coming right out ((laughter)) (PCI, 3).

We have a situation, then, where she may be the planner, but he is the gatekeeper:

[W]hen it comes right down to it, he has a lot to say and I know just how far to go with him...I'm very astute about knowing how far I can go on anything. I mean, like that

conversation was absolutely the perfect example. I know what I had to do to get him on my wave length, bring him in on it or else...forget it (PCI, 10).

His gatekeeping role explains his frequent use of silence to withhold agreement, his requests for more facts throughout the conversation, and why he shifts from what he calls a “low profile” role – and she calls “passive” (PCI, 6-7) – to a more dynamic role, firing questions at her about logistics after her suggestion that they drive out to Minnesota. When he is questioned about this shift in his interactive style, he responds:

Well, she...asked me a question that really wasn't 'yes' or 'no.' I mean, it had to be qualified. You can drive if it's driveable. You can't drive it if it's so many miles that it doesn't make sense to do it...and, since she had been there and visited many times, I thought she had some idea of how far away it was! (PCI, 7).

She, however, views the same exchange, quite differently:

I feel that was his way of putting me on the defensive...getting back at me. You know, here he was...I'm bringing up a subject that was not really something he's really hot on, so he can turn the tables on me and make me feel like a fool, 'cause I don't know any answers to those questions (PCI, 7-8)...he probably feels like I'm going to push him into something he doesn't want to get into (PCI, 9).

The fact that she finds his gatekeeping face-threatening may explain why she – on the one hand – requests his participation and – on the other – when faced with his reluctance marker “well” – attempts to override any objections he might make to their discussion. Later, she admits to this behavior, explaining: “I was getting at a point...It wasn't that I didn't want to listen to him. I just wanted to make my point and then have him respond” (PCI, 5), and adding:

I had already gotten his answer... 'cause he told me we couldn't do both [Minnesota, Europe and a winter trip]...but...I still wanted to keep it on the long-range view...I wanted to get to the point of asking him if he wanted to go to Thailand (PCI, 12-13).

Finally, when asked if there is a boss in the family, the husband answers that he is convinced that she is, whereas she denies it, making a clear distinction between dealing with all the “practical details [that make it seem] like you're... running the show” and having absolute control (PCI, 10). In effect, there appears to be no clear pattern of dominance in the couple, with each exerting power in a homeostatic effect of checks and balances. This does not mean, however, that each side does not do its utmost to carry the day.

REFERENCES

- Pomerantz, A. (1984). Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: Some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes. In J. M. Atkinson & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of social interaction* (pp. 57-101). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Tannen, D. (1996). *Gender and discourse*. New York: Oxford University Press.

APPENDIX A

Full Transcript

1 Husband: Rosilyn, ((cough)) what are we gonna have discussion about?
2 Wife: Alright, ya wanna talk about our upcoming vacations –
3 for next year?
4 (.4)
5 Husband: OK, ((cough))
6 Wife: Let's see, – do we have a calendar?
7 (.3)
8 Husband: Ah=
9 Wife: =I'm not sure, - I don't=
10 Husband: =Can we borrow your calendar? There you go,
11 (.3)
12 Wife: Just in case we need it, we're not=
13 Linda: =I'm NO:t=
14 Wife: =OK-just in case we need it now. I'm not sure,
15 (.hhh) ALRIGHT (.1) HOWARD?,
16 Husband: Yeah=
17 Wife: =This is a long-range – discussion, =
18 Husband: =OK=
19 Wife: Which is OPEN-ended (.1) and (.1) I don't want you to feel
20 (.1) pressure. We're just talking about long-range planning,
21 O[K]?
22 Husband: [Who's] NE:R!vous? ((laughter))=
23 Wife: =((laughter))
24 Husband: Go ahead
25 Wife: Alright, (.1) uhm. One of the things that I – I just wanna talk
26 about (.1) uhm (.2) mention (.4) that should be in the
27 consideration is that – uhm (.1) the Green's – Marsha
28 Schwartz=
29 Linda: =The coffee's ready,
30 (.05)
31 Wife: Uh, Marsha Schwartz's son is going to be bahmi:tvahed in
32 MinnesO:ta –
33 Husband: Yeah
34 Wife: And that's gonna be – I think that date is August eighth
35 (.1)
36 Husband: ((cough))
37 Wife: And I would like to go to the bahmi:tvah (.2) and at the same
38 time – I would like to travel around MinnesO:ta – and show
39 you the High spots.
40 (.2)
41 To visit some people that we – you, know that I know in
42 Rochester and Deluth – and go up to the – northern (.1) shore

- 43 of the no:rtth shore of Lake Superiah – and – uh – cuz I think
44 that would be in:teresting,
45 Husband: Besides the – visiting peo:ple there, is it an interesting place to
46 visit? Asi:de from the people? I mean – beau:tiful or
47 interesting things=
48 Wife: [I]
49 Husband: =to do?
50 Wife: I think the uhm – north shore of Lake Superiah – is – is ve:ry
51 beautiful, it's – uhm – What is it? What's it called – the – uhm
52 – boundary wah:tahs between – uh – Ca:nada and – uhm – the
53 United Sta:tes – it's a big pla:ce for CA:mping and HI:king
54 and it's VERY Wild – and ve:ry nice – now – that might even
55 ha:ve Elder HOS:telS that take place up there – one of the
56 couples that was on our Tur[
57 Husband: [Yeah?]
58 Wife: [key trip? What was their name –
59 the couple – the guy worked for uh – he's retired from working
60 for one of the – flou:r co:mpanies?, the uhm –
61 Husband: Oh=
62 Wife: =THEY THEY [
63 Husband: [Ralst]on or one of those
64 Wife: [hava]
65 Husband: [Rals]ton or one of those=
66 Wife: =Huh? Yeah,
67 Anyway, they have a a vaca:tion house up there – and it's –
68 it's a ve:ry in:teresting area.
69 Husband: ((blows nose))
70 (.1)
71 Wife: HO:WARD, I MEAN – I mean it would be interesting from a –
72 just from a (.1) very E:very point of to view to visit – De –
73 Deluth is an interesting ci:ty – it's very – it's (0.5) I don't say
74 it's BEAU:tiful but it's very I:nteresting, (.05) A:nd – uhm
75 (0.5) if you've never bi:n there – I I think it would be fU:n to
76 do something like that?=
77 Husband: =How long udju – uh – (.1) propose – that we[
78 Wife: [OH! Eight or ten
79 da:ys or something
80 (.3)
81 Husband: Ok,=
82 Wife: It depends what we're gonna do.
83 Husband: Yeah,
84 (.3)
85 So?, but the
86 Wife: I MEAN I thi:nk it would be a SHA:me to GO[
87 Husband: [I know, the one
88 problem there is if we're going to go THE:re (.5) and – we're

- 89 contemplating a trip to [Europe
90 Wife: [I KNOW – HOWARD – I – I
91 Understand that and I'm thinking that if we wanna DO
92 SOMETHing like that – uh you want to be able to get the – uhm
93 – cheapest fare (.1) and uhm – (.1) I dunno – we have to – we
94 ought to try to think about how we can DO it, so it's-uhm – not
95 too expensive.
96 (.2)
97 Then there's ALSO the possibility of DRI:ving?,
98 (.5)
99 Husband: Driving ou:t there?
100 Wife: Uhm.
101 Husband: How longzit take?=
102 Wife: =Oh, it's a lo:ng ri:de,=
103 Howard: =How lo:ng?
104 Wife: I, I dunno – Howard.
105 Husband: How many MI:les is it?
106 (.4)
107 Wife: I – can't s- I don't have any A:Nswer for you on tha:t – I never
108 drO:ve.
109 (.6)
110 Husband: Well - what would be the advantage of dri:ving?=
111 Wife: =Well=
112 Husband: =The only thing is saves is the – uh=
113 Wife: =car rental,
114 Husband: Cah rental.
115 (.5)
116 Well! I suppose if ya make it a tri:p and pla:n things goin out
117 and coming ba:ck – as path of the trip – maybe – uh – (.2) it's a
118 possibility.
119 Wife: OK. THAT'S=
120 Husband: =Yeah=
121 Wife: =Ya know like for exa:mple – you know those senior uh –
122 tickets?=
123 Husband: =Mmm,
124 Wife: That you get – that might be a good time for us to buy those
125 senior ti:ckets.=
126 Husband: Yeah, - it comes to (.2) so your senior tickets would come to a
127 hundred and thirty fih dollars – each way – per person –
128 you've got two seventy – you've got fih hundred and forty
129 dollahs air fare (.2) which isn't tE:rrible. It's pretty chea:p (.2)
130 – but I wonda if those – I wonda if those trips envisage – uh
131 wait – what do they call it? Where you stop at one place and
132 continue on a day or two later?
133 Wife: I dunno.
134 (.2)

135 ANYWAY, - SO THAT'S - THAT'S I WOULD LIKE TO
136 factor that into the - total scheme of things=
137 Husband: =Ok=
138 Wife: =We're talking about GRA:ND STRA:tegy - Howard
139 ((laughter))
140 Husband: =((laughter))=
141 Wife: =Gra:nd strategy. Alright?=
142 Husband: =Ok
143 Wife: UH - OK - NOW - we've been talking about going ta -
144 Fra:nce and Switzerland in the fall (.1) Now, I - I a:lso wanna
145 ta:ke into consideration - uhm - what we wa:nna do A:fter
146 that
147 (.4)
148 Ya know, - are we gonna go away in the WI:nter ti:me?,
149 (.3)
150 What? Have you got any THOU:ghts about - thoughts about
151 any of this? Howard - I'd like to=
152 Husband: [Well]
153 Wife: =instead of doing all the (talking)
154 Husband: [Well - I]
155 (.5)
156 I really don think it's gonna be po:ssible to go away this
157 vacation, go away in the all and this vacation - it's much -
158 much too much money.
159 Wife: So - what wouldjoo like to do?
160 Husband: Well [
161 Wife: [How wouldjoo - how wouldja - what wouldja like to do?
162 Husband: [Well
163 Wife: Were you serious about considering going to - to A:sia?
164 (.2)
165 Husband: Yea:h, I think [
166 Wife: [Because maybe - maybe
167 Husband: [Maybe after a while
168 Wife: [NO? I don't think we
169 should put those THINGS OFF
170 (.2)
171 I think that - uh - uh - I'd ra:ther put off a trip to go to Pa:ris
172 (.2)
173 if that's if that's a se:rious considerA:tion
174 (.1)
175 Husband: Well, you know what I think we ought to do
176 (.2)
177 When we get home, let's take a look at what the Elderhostel -
178 uh - uh (what do you call it) =
179 Wife: =I think there must be a NE:w issue coming out=
180 Husband: =We just got one before we - uh - [we=

- 181 Wife: [Ya, but that's
182 Husband: =We went on vaca:tion. What will be in there'll give us an idea.
183 They don't change [too much.]
184 Wife: [Alright. Marion Hidercorn has our –
185 [our uh international=
186 Husband: [Oh, really?
187 Wife: =our international thi[ng,
188 Husband: [Oh, really.
189 Wife: I can get it back from her.
190 Husband: Yeah. Oh, Ok. Did you ask her to kee:p it for u:s?=
191 Wife: =I tO:ld her that at thA:t time I didn't have any U:se for it
192 but- uh [
193 Husband: [If she ha:s it
194 Wife: Yeah, if she sti [ll]
195 Husband: [If she still ha:s [it]
196 Wife: [Yeah – if she doesn't=
197 Husband: If not, we can get another one (.1) I'm sure=
198 Wife: =Cuz, I mean – if you're – if you're interested in – in going –
199 uh – to southeast A:sier or A:sia (.1) I think that's something
200 we should consider for next – wI:nter.
201 Husband: Yeah
202 Wife: And I think we oughtta consider thA:t now.
203 (.1)
204 Husband: And
205 Wife: I mea:n I DON'T WANT TO GO ta FRA:NCE – AND THEN
206 SAY WE'RE NOT GONNA – GO –
207 Husband: Yeah. I know whatcha mean. You'd rather – if =
208 Wife: [I wanna pla:n
209 the whO:le thing
210 Husband: =if it's O:ne or the O:ther – you'd rather go –
211 Wife: YEAH – I'd rather go ta –
212 Husband: Yeah – the A:sia trip – well I think that's a – that ma:kes sense
213 (.1)
214 ((laughter))
215 We never dO seem to get in tha:t a – European trip in
216 (.2)
217 BUT – if we didn't have ta – ya know if we don't have –
218 another thing like this (.1) ta Minnesota
219 Wife: HM?

APPENDIX B

Post-Conversation Interview (PCI)

(1)

I. Comments Before First Video Viewing

- Linda: If you were to look at how you divide responsibilities around decision-making at home, do you have a sense of how you divide that? Who's in charge of certain decisions? Who's in charge of others?
- Husband: I make all the computer decisions. ((laughter))
[several turns skipped]
- Linda: If you look at your lives, how do you divide up those kinds of decisions?
- Wife: Why don't we let Howard talk first.
- Husband: Well, Rosilyn is generally in charge of the appointment calendar. She makes most of the social calendar events. She takes care of, she plans the parties, birthday parties and things like that and, in general, going to plays and...I think she plans most of our activities ((laughter)). That's what it boils down to. And then I have to put in between the things that I want to do...
- Linda: Like what?
- Husband: I most want to take care of my own chores, whether they're at the desk or, this morning, getting all the corrugated cardboard together for recycling. I want to clean out the lower level, things like that...
- Wife: Howard, you spend most of your time either at your desk working on personal things, our finances, or whatever you do – I'm not quite sure – at the desk...and he's working a lot, doing a lot at the Mediation Center – whether it's working there or mediating – and going to training sessions. He is doing his magic shows, preparing for them. He is spending a lot of time on his personal – which I think is fine – he has a lot of personal...
- Husband: When you said planning a time, I didn't think you meant working hours. What did you mean?
- Linda: I didn't mean anything in particular. I think that both of your answers are very useful. I was more on that track that you [Howard] were on though...What you basically said Rosilyn, is that Howard – at this stage in your life – has certain outside commitments that would be an extension of

- (2) his old professional commitments. [To Rosilyn] You also have your thing going at the Family Abuse Court.
- Wife: Well, I haven't done that for the past month and a half...which I am going to get back into, but he has scheduled a lot of things and a lot of the things...have involved me...[driving and helping with magic shows].
- [several turns skipped]
- Husband: I thought your question was directed toward, in a sense, when you speak of disposable income...only this would be disposable time.
- Linda: Yeah, in a way it was...but all of this is very helpful. I want to get back to the original question and see if I can reformulate it.
[several turns skipped]
This is a conversation you had about a vacation. How do you make those kinds of decisions? Where you go? When you go?
- Husband: Was that what the video was about? I don't remember. I'd have to see it.
- Wife: I was making a proposal to you that we should go to Thailand. That's what the discussion was.
- Linda: It's interesting that you remember it that way because you didn't say that 'til much, much, much later.
- Wife: ((laughter))
- Husband: I don't remember the conversation at all, really...
- Linda: Generally, when you have these conversations about vacation, who does the planning?
- Husband: Rosilyn.
- Linda: OK, and [To Howard] what do you see as your role?
- Husband: Either accepting or negating the plans.
- Linda: OK. It's perfect. It's just what I said in the last paper. ((laughter))
- Wife: Howard only cares about what he's doing himself. I don't think he'd take any initiative...(several lines skipped)
- Linda: Do you agree with that? That you'd never go away on vacation if she didn't plan it?

(3)

Husband: No, I don't agree. I think, since she is really much better at it than I am, and she does it all the time, I have never to worry about...but, when I have to do it – for example, when Rosilyn used to be on the road sometimes [for business], I would call the kids, I would do the things, I would do them when I had to. But it's not something that I enjoy doing so, not that I don't enjoy it...Rosilyn does it.

Linda: What would you call all those kinds of tasks?

Husband: Social contacts...familial contacts.

Linda: Let me ask you this before we see the video tape, [To Rosilyn] can you think back to before you worked...when we talk about money, for example, on the one hand – you spend more – and you kind of stand up to him – but, on the other hand, you don't really spend on big things without his permission, right? When do you consult him and when not?

Wife: Oh, if we're going to buy some appliance or something. I definitely consult him. I mean, I know how far I can go! ((laughter))

Linda: What does that mean, though?

Husband: Over a hundred dollars! ((laughter))

Wife: Well, you know what Linda, it's funny. Before I worked, I was extremely intimidated by him and I would even bring my clothes home and show him and everything and then, when I started to work, I said to myself, "screw him" ((laughter)) and not only wouldn't I show it to him, but I never, never, he didn't even know how much the things cost until he finally caught on...

[several lines skipped]

But, you know, I developed a certain independence and it's carried on to this day. I'm never going to go back to where I was, but I know when it comes to big bucks, there's no point in, it's better to do it the way I did it on the video and make him think I'm just exploring something ((laughter)) than coming right out...you've got to use a little *sechel* [brains, in Yiddish] ((laughter))...

Husband: I'd be interested in listening to that conversation.

Linda: What we're going to do now is I'm going to show you...

Wife: I don't know whether I want him to know what all my tricks are! ((laughter))

Husband: I've known them for years.

(4)

Linda: Listen, we're going to watch it once through and if you want to comment while you're watching it, it's fine. It's eight minutes. OK. And then, we're going to watch it again and I'm going to stop it in certain places and ask you a couple of questions.

[several turns skipped]

Let me tell you something before we begin. What's not on the video tape but is on the audio tape is that Howard says to you, "So, what are we going to talk about, Rosilyn" and you say, "You wanna talk about vacation?" And then there's a pause of about four seconds...

Husband: That's all?

Linda: And then Howard says, "OK."

[several lines skipped]

I picked this to work on because you guys have a common interest here. You're not going to go on vacation without each other. You have a certain amount of resources and it's different than what Howard should do about his medical appointment, what you should do with the kids in the afternoon...this is something you are going to do together so you have a common goal and that was something I was interested in looking at.

II Comments During First Video Viewing

Husband: ((laughs))

Husband: We've got to get some tickets.

Linda: Are you going?

Husband: Yeah.

Husband: Stay with friends ((laughter))

Wife: I don't know whether it's half way across the...Kansas is half way across the country.

Husband: We're going to find out pretty quick.

Husband: Is she about to drop the bomb?

(5)

Husband: Do you notice the way she doesn't wait for an answer?
((laughter))

III. Comments Before Second Video Viewing

Linda: OK. Do you have any thoughts before I ask a few questions?

Husband: She doesn't listen to answers! ((laughter))

Wife: I was getting at a point.
[several turns skipped]
I was trying...It wasn't that I didn't want to listen to him. I just wanted to make my point and then have him respond.

Linda: ((unintelligible))

Husband: Yeah, we're going to Thailand. No, Europe is out.

Wife: We signed up for a trip to Thailand.

Linda: That's great. That's really great!

Husband: All as a result of that interview ((laughter)).

Linda: Let me ask you a couple of questions here. You picked up on the fact that she asks you questions, but then she doesn't give you a chance to answer. Sometimes you ask something [turning to Rosilyn], and then totally obliterate his response...

[several lines skipped]

There's a place where you ask him about those people on the Turkey trip and he starts to answer you..."Ralston or something"...and you acknowledge him and just move on. That's just kind of like sharing information. But there's another point where...Howards' really trying to answer you...but you don't really give him a chance to answer you. This isn't a criticism of you...

Wife: I know.

Husband: Oh, I don't know! I think it's a pretty fair criticism. It's all right ((laughter)).

Linda: People like Deborah Tannen talk about high involvement style...New York Jews...I teased you [Rosilyn] about that the other day...And when she talks about her own family, she says that her father can't get a word in edgewise. He's always

- (6) waiting for some special moment when people are going to stop talking, so that the women in the family will stop talking and give him a chance to talk. And they're constantly talking over each other. They find these other places... Would you [Rosilyn] say Howard is high considerateness, like Deborah Tannen's father? That Howard doesn't really ever push himself into a conversation... a home conversation we're talking about?

[several turns skipped]

- Husband: I will intrude in a conversation if I can, but I find it very difficult very often. And, usually when I do, the response is: "Wait till I'm finished." Other people seem to be able to go back and forth and intrude all the time without it being an intrusion, but when I try it, it's: "Give me a chance to finish what I'm saying" ((laughter)).

[several turns skipped]

- Linda: [To Howard] You don't have problems with public speaking, but do you think you were shyer or quieter because we were video taping? Or do you think that's pretty normal for you?

- Husband: It's a possibility, but I doubt it... I don't know. Rosilyn, was that normal for me?

- Wife: Can I say something?

- Husband: Sure.

- Wife: I think it was the kind of conversation. He feels kind of on the defensive...

- Husband: ...Threatened ((laughter)).

- Wife: He said it! I didn't! You said it!

- Husband: Well, I see big bucks going out...

- Wife: He feels threatened and on the defensive, so he was taking a very behind-the-scenes or whatever... he's retreating...

- Husband: Low profile... ((laughter)).

- Linda: Yeah, the only time you involved is when it has to do with logistics. You move from high considerateness – all of a sudden – to high involvement when she mentions driving out... or getting the discount tickets and – all of a sudden – you've been very quiet through the whole conversation. If you listen to it again you're going to hear that she's basically begging you to say something and you're not saying anything. And then she says, "Well, I guess we could fly out or get

- (7) discount tickets” and, all of a sudden, your mind is like a human calculator...Brr, brr, brr, and you [Rosilyn] say, “We could drive out” and you [Howard] keep asking her these questions to which she has no answers. Right? How long are you on the tape doing that?
- Husband: Of course, I remember...
- Linda: DO you have any idea why you did that? Why you changed from being...
- Wife: Passive, passive...
- Husband: Well she answered me, she asked me a question that wasn't really “yes” or “no.” I mean, it had to be qualified. You can drive out if it's driveable. You can't drive out if it's so many miles that it doesn't make any sense to do it.
- Wife: I have a different take...
- Husband: And, since she had been there and visited many times, I thought she had some idea of how far away it was!
- Wife: I never drove to Minnesota! I always flew out there, Howard...
- Husband: You still might have the mileage...
- Wife: I would guess...
- Husband: I mean, if you go to California, it's three thousand miles...
- Wife: I would guess, now that I was thinking about it, Kansas is in the center of the country and Minnesota is probably north of Kansas, so it's probably fifteen hundred miles...probably half way across the country.
- Husband: I would not be interested in that...driving.
- Wife: Alright...But I...You know what my take...Do you want me to respond to that?
- Linda: Yeah, yeah. Before you respond, I just want to mention to Howard that you were saying that it was the only time she asked you something that wasn't a “yes” or “no” question you said?
- Husband: Sort of...
- Linda: We should go back and look at that. Go ahead.
- Wife: I feel that was his way of putting me on the defensive...getting back at me. You know, here he was...I'm bringing up a subject that was not really something he's

(8) really hot on, so he can turn the tables on me and make me feel like a fool, 'cause I don't know any answers to those questions.

Husband: ((laughter))

Linda: Well, you certainly reacted as if that was the way...you were, you were so frustrated with him, I thought you were going to kill him.

Wife: Really?

Husband: I wasn't aware...

Linda: ((laughter)) [taking Rosilyn's voice] I'm doing all this work! What do you want from me, blood? ((laughter)). OK> Let me ask you a couple of things. Way back in the beginning, you [Howard] make a joke about being nervous. Why do you think you made that joke?

Husband: 'Cause I was nervous.

Linda: 'Cause you were nervous?

Husband: I was nervous because of the unexpected that was coming up...

Linda: What kind of unexpected?

Husband: I don't know. Traveling always makes me nervous...just the thought of it.

Linda: [To Wife] Is that true?

Wife: Well, I don't know...

[several turns skipped]

Linda: We'll go back and look at that. Tell me Howard why you keep looking at the calendar.

Wife: Because we were making plans, Linda.

IV. Comments During Second Video Viewing

((unintelligible))

Wife: Stop talking, Howard.

Linda: Stop talking Howard!!?? ((laughter))

(9)

Linda: Why do you think you made the joke?

[several turns skipped]

Husband: I was nervous, I guess. I was afraid.

Linda: Afraid of what, though?

Husband: What she was going to say. The unknown...I don't know.

Linda: [To Wife] Do you think that's...

Wife: Oh, he probably feels like I'm going to push him into something he doesn't want to get into.

Linda: Do you agree with her on that?

Husband: Yeah.

Linda: Did you notice that you didn't look at Rosilyn very much?

Husband: Yeah.

Linda: Why do you think that was?

Husband: That happens to me very often in conversation. I find that I have to make an effort to look someone in the eye and I really never look them in the eye; I look them in the nose or the mouth...maybe even their chin...

Linda: You know something...that's gender. Women look at each other in a very involved way [faces Rosilyn]. Men don't. Men actually sit parallel to each other...except in maybe a business meeting where you really have to...men don't look at each other.

[several turns skipped]

Let me ask you this. My son is convinced that I'm the boss in the family, which totally shocks me.

Husband: Doesn't shock me.

Linda: I wouldn't make a big decision without Alejandro...

Husband: But you make all the little decisions.

(10)

Linda: Who's the boss in your family. You guys have a boss?

Husband: Uh...that's very interesting. Yeah, I think it's Rosilyn.

Linda: Do you agree you're the boss?

Wife: Uhm...no, I don't really. I mean...

Husband: In fact, I don't think...I'm convinced.

Wife: I mean, I make, I'm involved in all the practical details so that's why you son thinks...so are you. So, it makes it seem as if...like you're just kind of running the show. But Howard has, when it comes right down to it, he has a lot to say and I know just how far to go with him...and I know damn well if I go beyond that, I will have a revolution...((laughter))...I'm very astute about knowing how far I can go on anything. I mean, like that conversation was absolutely the perfect example. I knew what I had to do to get him on my wave length, bring him in on it or else...forget it.

Linda: And the upshot is that you're going to Minnesota and you're going to Thailand and you're not going to Europe.

Husband: Right.

Linda: And from the conversation, [to Howard] one would think you really didn't want to go to Minnesota and preferred to go to Europe.

H & W: No, no that's not true.

[turns skipped]

Husband: No, when we were talking about going to Europe, Thailand hadn't come up and I don't remember the time sequence – it might have been before this, but I guess most likely it was after this –

[conversation focuses on news images on mute TV screen; turns skipped]

Linda: The last thing you say Howard in the conversation is, "You know, we never really got in that trip to Europe."

Husband: Oh, yeah. But, because we've done this so many...that was almost sort of a joke because it has happened time after time we say we're going and then something else comes up with a higher priority, comes to the fore...I've lost my train of thought...

(11)

Linda: I was asking you whether you really wanted to go to Minnesota...

Husband: Oh, yeah. 'Cause I think at one point I thought about the Thailand trip – and I think it was after this, not before – and I said, “You know, I had such a good time when we went to South Africa and Turkey...”

Wife: No, I think I [stops herself]

Husband: See, it's helped. She recognized that she's stepping on my voice... ((laughter)). I think I'd really have a good time. I'm concerned about the food, and I am a little worried about my digestive system...but, I think it's worth a shot.

Wife: Well, what happened...I can't remember...we were talking on some previous occasion and Howard made some reference to Thailand and I picked up on that and I wasn't sure whether I heard him correctly and that's why I was so gingerly making this presentation...I thought he had come to the feeling that he had done so well physically in South Africa that he should really give it a try...

[several turns skipped]

Linda: She interrupted you, but she recognized your contribution.

Husband: Yeah.

Husband: Hmm, she doesn't let me finish my sentences. Does she?

Linda: ((unintelligible)) Does that surprise you?

Husband: It's happened to me so many times, I don't even notice it. I will from now on! ((laughter))

[several turns skipped]

Wife: Is he looking at me now? Am I looking at him?

[several turns skipped]

Linda: Not as much as you usually do. You're spending a lot of time looking at the napkin, the cup...

[turns skipped]

(12)

Linda: How did you feel when he said that?

[turns skipped]

Husband: Three things...

Linda: Three things. And you kind of visibly pull back from him...and say, "Well, what do you want to do?" And he starts to answer you. Watch this...

Wife: I'm looking at him now!

Husband: ((laughter)) May I answer that question now, Rosilyn? ((laughter))

Linda: What were you trying to answer, to say?

Husband: That we could probably go two of the three, but not to all three. That's my guess...

Linda: And if she had asked you at the point which two of the three you prefer, what do you think your answers would have been?

Husband: At that point I don't know because I really wanted a winter vacation that's warm and Thailand fits that bill. I don't like these long, cold winters.

[lines skipped]

Linda: Let's look at it again. I want to hear what you [Rosilyn] have to say.

[turns skipped]

So, you've complained, basically, "Do you have any thoughts on this, Howard? What would you like to do? What would you like to do?" And he starts to answer you. What did you think he was going to say? Why didn't you let him finish what he was going to say?

Wife: Well, I can only respond in this way. I had already gotten his answer. It was going to be one or the other.

Linda: How did you know you'd gotten his answer?

Wife: 'Cause he told me we couldn't do both!

Linda: But then you said, "What do you want to do? What do you want to do?"

(13)

Husband: I think she means she knows now.

Wife: No, no...I knew then. No, but also...I still wanted to keep it on the long-range view...I wanted to get to the point of asking him if he wanted to go to Thailand.

Linda: Why were you asking him, "Howard, what do you want to do? Do you have any thoughts on this? What do you want to do?"

Wife: I don't know. I was stalling. ((laughter)) I don't know.

Linda: I'll tell you probably what happened.

[plays segment again]

Well is a word that usually comes before what is called a *dispreferred response*. You hear *well*, and you knew that what he was going to say was not what you wanted to hear...

Husband: Oh, really. That's very interesting. *A dispreferred response?* "Well..."

Linda: Howard is giving you all these signals that he's going to give you dispreferred responses...long pauses, then he goes through these rapid, machine gun questions...it's call *face-threatening*. He keeps pushing you...he hasn't said anything and all of a sudden..."How long's it gonna take, blah, blah, blah ((laughter)). There are questions that are called rapport-building. When you're high involvement and you ask those kinds of questions one after the other, it can be very threatening to someone like Howard, but when you [Rosilyn] do it to me if you and I are talking about something and you ask, "And where do you think you're going to go?" and before I get it out, "Who do you think you're going to see?" you're showing interesting in what I'm talking about. But, when Howard did it, he was putting you on the carpet in the only way he really knew how, which was that he was interested in the logistics, the planning, the this, the that, and the other, and he was going to make you accountable for what you were saying.

Wife: ((laughter))

Linda: So, when he says "Well" – while in a perfect world you should let him get out what he has to say – but what happened was you heard the *well* and you knew what was coming. And you said, "I'm not gonna let him get away with that..."

(14)

Husband: This is fascinating...((laughter)).

Linda: "I've got to move on here fast before he says it's all over..."

Wife: ((laughter))

Husband: This is really, really fascinating...

Wife: It's psychological...

[several minutes of turns skipped]

Husband: [About conversation in general] This is exposing our skeletons...((laughter)).

Wife: I'll have to use different strategies...

Husband: Me too.

Linda: At the beginning of the tape [several lines skipped], why did you ask Rosilyn what you were going to talk about?

Husband: Because she's the planner in the family.

[conversation continues; transcript truncated.]

APPENDIX C

Transcription Conventions

Overlaps

[] (brackets) simultaneous or overlapping speech.
[]

= no interval between two speakers' utterances (latching). Also links different parts of one speaker's continuous utterance when the speech goes onto another line due to an intervening line by a different speaker

Intervals

(0.0) timed pause

(.) untimed pause, less than .5 seconds

Delivery

- self-interruption, halting, or stammering
- ... a section or sentences has been left out of the transcript
- : sound extension (the more, the longer the extension)
- .hhh audible inhale (the more h's, the longer the inhale)
- hhh audible exhale (the more h's, the longer the exhale)
- . stopping fall in tone
- ? rising inflection
- ! animated tone
- ↑ marked rise in intonation on the word that follows
- ↓ marked fall in intonation on the word that follows
- ABC increased volume
- °abc° encloses speech at a decreased volume
- abc emphasis
- \$abc\$ encloses "smiley" voice
- >abc< encloses speech at a faster rate
- ((abc)) encloses a noise or description

Linda Wine is a doctoral student in Applied Linguistics at Teachers College, Columbia University. Her research focus is conversation. She is currently finishing her dissertation on framing and alignment in parent-teacher meeting talk.

Patricia Frenz-Belkin holds an EdD from Teachers College, Columbia University. She currently works as a full-time assistant professor at Hostos Community College of the City University of New York, where she teaches ESL as a faculty member of the Department of Language and Cognition. Her research focus is the development of instructional technology for content-based ESL teaching.