

An Interactional Sociolinguistics Perspective

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In this husband and wife's conversation about future vacation plans, a communication struggle seems to be taking place. The interlocutors are struggling to get their respective points across through conflicting frames, differing stances, and lack of alignment with each other. The numerous pauses in each of the three excerpts, as well as the overlaps, the elongated vowels, the repeated expressions, and the emphatic stresses on words and phrases are among the contextualization cues that signal conflicting conversational frames (Tannen, 1993), and areas of communicative breakdowns. Framing is a key notion in any analysis of human interaction, particularly when analyzing discourse in terms of gender relations (Tannen, 1990). According to Tannen (1993), frames are the "structures of expectations" that speakers have with respect to situations, events, people, and objects. These expectations are either met or defeated when speakers engage in conversation with each other. Common frames, and shared expectations, help to ensure smooth, synchronous conversational exchanges (Gumperz, 1982). When speakers are operating under different frames, lack of conversational synchronization and participant alignment are accompanying factors. From the interplay of all these factors, communication clashes are likely to arise. In the three excerpts, each speaker experiences moments of tension, discomfort, and misunderstanding due to conflicting frames and lack of shared expectations and alignment.

Analysis of Excerpt A, "Nervous"

In Excerpt A, paralinguistic cues such as the wife's pauses in lines 19–21 (see Appendix A) indicate that she is preparing her interlocutor for what she intends as the main point of their discussion. Yet, the numerous pauses, the negative expression ("I don't want you to fee:l"), the hedge "just", and the drawn out vowels in her statements (line 19 in particular), signal that she is uncomfortable with the topic she is broaching, and that it may result in a change of speakers' alignment. She is also aware of the pivotal role her husband plays in the realization of their vacation plans. This evidently adds to her discomfort in discussing their possible upcoming trips. In fact, the husband mentions in the post-conversation interview (PCI, see Appendix B) that he not only handles the household finances, but he also accepts or negates the proposed vacation plans. Hence, the husband has the power to fulfill or deny his wife's expectation. Aware of this factor, the wife even tries to mitigate the negative impact of her statement by repeating the phrase "long range discussion" (uttered in lines 17 and 20-21). This repetition foregrounds the phrase and serves to underscore the point the speaker is trying to make. Furthermore, in line 20, the adverb "just" precedes the repeated phrase. This not only underplays the force of the subsequent statement, but it also blocks any criticism that may result (Tannen, 1993). The speaker's emphatic "O[K]" in line 21, in which she seeks permission from her interlocutor to proceed with the discussion, also reveals her awareness of the delicate nature of the topic, and the fact that it may alter the speaker's alignment. The husband even playfully acknowledges that the discussion might create some non-alignment between them. His teasing is evident in the

elongated vowels, the emphatic stress on the descriptive adjective “nervous”, and the laughter that accompanies his response in line 22.

Given their respective roles in their relationship (i.e., he handles the financial matters, and she the social planning), his seemingly playful remark may hold some underlying truth. His teasing could have a tension reducing function, but it may also be a way of signaling his financial apprehension about the upcoming plans. In the post-conversation interview, the wife even mentions how topics involving the spending of “big bucks” (PCI, 3) are sensitive. Consequently, she must “make him think [she’s] just exploring something [rather] than coming right out” (PCI, 3). Knowing, then, that her husband is uncomfortable with spending money, it may have been wiser for the wife to take the comment at face value. Quite the contrary, she simply laughs along with him (line 24). In doing so, she acknowledges the non-serious nature of the remark, but an awareness of its more serious overtones may promote more synchronous conversation as they proceed to discuss a touchy topic.

Analysis of Excerpt B, “Senior Tickets”

Excerpt B is also punctuated with several pauses, and an emphatic response. The husband’s negative statement, “which isn’t tE:rrible”, with its emphatic drawn out vowel signals that the contrary was expected, but did not result (in this case, that the trip tickets would be too expensive for them). This statement is uttered after some extended calculations on his part regarding the estimated cost of the proposed trip. There is, nonetheless, some hesitation in his utterance, which is cued by the pauses, the filler, “uh”, and by the repetition of “I wonda if those”. He is still not fully aligned with his interlocutor, and realizes the content of his utterance is contradictory to what the wife expects to hear. Although he seems aware of this contradictory expectation, he is not fully comfortable with the situation. This couple is still not aligned with each other, and thereby not effectively communicating their respective positions. The wife’s response in line 44 is further evidence that she did not receive the expected response from her husband regarding their further vacation plans. The emphatic “Anyway” not only draws her husband back to the main topic of discussion, but it is also “a common [cue] that an expectation is violated” (Tannen, 1993, p. 26). This adverb is followed by the modal chunk “would like to” (uttered emphatically), which leads her state her preference in the subsequent phrase. The wife reiterates her preference since the husband’s previous utterance did not meet her expectations. Since she is the one who manages the social calendar, arriving at some conclusion about their travel plans is important to her. Yet, not spending too much money is his main concern. This non-alignment leads to some communication breakdowns.

Analysis of Excerpt C, “Put Off”

In this excerpt the conflicting frames, non-alignments, and clash in expectations continue. The numerous pauses in the wife’s statements (lines 6-12 and again in lines 23, 27, and 29-30), as well as the fillers “ya know” and “uh” show a level of discomfort on her part, either with the responses she is receiving from her husband, or from his total lack of them. Tannen (1993) also reminds us that numerous pauses in an utterance indicate that the interlocutor is uncomfortable with the “violation of [an] expectation” (p. 27). The wife even attempts to draw her husband back to the present topic with her repeated, and emphatic, “Now”. The husband’s responses continue to project non-alignment, particularly in the way he hedges his response in lines 15 (“I

really don't think..."). The negative statement includes an intensifier "really", which further underscores the "defeated expectation" (Tannen, 1993) that will follow. In spite of this conflict, or non-alignment, the husband makes his stance clear with the repetition of "much", preceded with the intensifier "too" in line 17. He reiterates his belief that an additional vacation is too costly and, thus, not possible.

It seems, then, that the husband is not completely comfortable with what he is communicating. He understands the consequences of his statement and, thus, hedges on several occasions with "well". These minimal responses overlap several times his wife's statements. She, in turn, tries to repair her "defeated expectation" by repeating two *wh*-structures ("what wouldjoo", "how wouldjoo"). Three of the four are uttered in an overlap after her expected response was not received.

There is quite a bit of overlap throughout this entire excerpt, particularly in moments when the wife's expectations about the trip have been defeated (lines 21-26). Nonetheless, this overlap is not cooperative. Tannen (1984) explains that cooperative overlap characterizes the speech of two high involvement speakers (as opposed to a high considerateness speaker whose speech has longer pauses and gaps of silence). In this case the overlaps would help to establish rapport or signal a mutual enthusiasm for, and interest about, the topic of discussion. Instead, the overlaps do not show any pattern of synchronization, as they would if the participants were aligned and involved in a cooperative exchange. If the participants were synchronized, the overlaps would be executed in similar ways (Tannen, 1984). In this case, it would involve the same fast-paced, repetitive questions, which would in turn elicit more than a simple interjection. In short, the overlaps in this excerpt signal speakers' lack of alignment, as well as their lack of ease with the topic.

Interestingly enough, both parties acknowledge their conflicting conversational styles in their post-conversation interview. The husband tells the researcher, "Do you notice the way she doesn't wait for an answer?" (PCI, 5). The wife defends her style by explaining that she "just wanted to make [her] point then have him respond" (PCI, 5). The husband understands this, yet seeks further confirmation from the researcher about his wife's interruptions: "She doesn't let me finish my sentences. Does she?" (PCI, 11). Apparently, the wife's interruptions are now commonplace in the couple's conversations and, consequently, do not promote any ill feeling on the part of the husband. In fact, he states that "It's happened to [him] so many, I don't even notice it..." (PCI, 11).

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APPENDIX A

Transcript Excerpts

Excerpt A: "Nervous"

- 15 Wife: (.hhh) ALRIGHT (.8) this is (.8) Howard, ((looking at H))
16 Husband: ((looking at calendar, looks up)) Mhmm, ((looks back at calendar))
17 Wife: This is a LO:ng-range (.6) discussion.
18 Husband: OK.
19 Wife: Which is O:PENded, (.4) and (.4) I don't want you to fee::l (.6)
20 like I'm, creating pressure. (1.0) °We're just talking about long-
21 range planning O[K]?°
22 Husband: [\$Who's NE:R!vous?\$ ((laughing and waving
23 hands))
24 Wife: ((laughter))
25 Husband: Go ahead

Excerpt B: "Senior Tickets"

- 35 Husband: Yeah, it comes to (1.2) so your senior tickets would come to a
36 hundred and thirty fih dollars (.6) each way (.4) per person (.8) so
37 you've got two seventy >you've got fih< hundred and forty dollahs
38 for the air fare (1.8) which isn't tE:rrible. (.4) It's pretty chea:p I
39 think (1.2) but >I wonda if they, I wonda if those trips< envisage,
40 uh (2.0) wait what do they call it? when you can stop at one place
41 and then continue on a day or two later?
42 Wife: °I dunno.°
43 (1.0)
44 >ANYWAY< SO THAT'S (1.0) THAT (.2) I, (.2) I WOULD
45 Llike to factor that into the, the total scheme of things.

Excerpt C: "Put Off"

- 2 Wife: We're talking about GRAND strategy Howard ((laughter))
3 Husband: Ohh[Kh] ((laughter, looking down at table))
4 Wife: [Grand strategy. (1.0) Alright?
5 Husband: OK
6 Wife: ((playing with napkin)) UH (.6) OK (.6) NOW we've been talking
7 about going ta- (1.) France and Switzerland in the fa:ll (1.4) Now,
8 uh (1.0) I- (1.0) A:lso wanna take into consideration uhm (.2) what
9 we wanna do After that
10 (2.2)
11 Ya know, are we gonna go away in the WI:ntertime? (1.2) What-
12 have you any THOU:ghts about any of this Howard, I'd like to
13 Husband: ((looks up at W))

- 14 Wife: instead of doing all [the
15 Husband: [Well, I (3.2) I REally don't think it's gonna be
16 possible to go away this vacation to go away in the FALL and again
17 in the winter. It's just gonna be (.6) much too much money.
18 Wife: So what wouldjoo like to do. [How wouldjoo- what wouldja like to
19 Husband: [Well I-
20 Wife: do.
21 Husband: We:l[l, since it- it- it- it-]
22 Wife: [The otha, the otha thing I w]anted, I wanted to throw in
23 (1.4) is, uh, (1.0) were you really serious about considering going
24 t-, to Asia?
25 (2.4)
26 Husband: Yeah, but m[aybe after awhile]
27 Wife: [Because maybe may]be, (.2) NO[, but I don't think=
28 Husband: [after a
29 Wife: =we should put those things off. (2.2) I think that uh, I'd rather put
30 off a trip to go to Paris (2.4) if that, if that's a serious
31 consideration.
32 Husband: Well you know what I think we oughta do,
33 (2.0)
34 when we get home, let's take a look at what the Elderhostel-
35 uh (1.2) uh:: (what do you call it)

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

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