Power in Conversational Context: the Case of Interlocutors in Non-Stratified Social Settings

Flora C. Alima

ABSTRACT

This study is centered on power relations of naturally occurring conversations in non-stratified social settings. Applying Fairclough's CDA framework, the researcher settled the problems of language texts of conversation, conversation as discursive practice, and conversation as an instance of socio-cultural practice. For this qualitative study, the researcher selected the method of participant observation for two sites GOI and CAO. The following are among the findings: 1) The playful frame chiefly characterizes conversations in both sites; 2) There are negative implicits as well as negative explicits; 3) Both sites have demonstrated the power of *kuan* — a term in a class all its own serving as prominencer, minimizer, and convergent filler — and the power of laughter as a negotiating, mediating, censoring and naturalizing mechanism. Some of the hypotheses generated from data findings are

the following: 1) Among the participating interlocutors, interruptions, volubility and topic-raising are not necessarily power strategies for they also serve as solidarity-enhancing strategies; in non-stratified social settings like the two sites, the binary opposition between power and powerlessness or solidarity has been changed into a continuum of power and solidarity. 2) Among them, the power that is exercised is not a repressive domination; instead, power is conducive, expanding, and essential for comradeship.

— —

Introduction

Power as a concept has been a major recurring character in the long drama of thoughts and thinkers, from Schopenhauer's will-to-live to Nietsche's will-to-power, from Althusser and Gramsci's power ideologies to Halliday's context netting, from Weber's power-knowledge relations to Foucault's discursive formations and Habermas' communication paradigm, and from Fairclough's co-determined orders of society and discourse to Wodak's pioneering power researches. It has continued confounding minds in varied settings. Does power flow from man's intellect, or from his will? Is power diffused throughout or concentrated in some nodes? Is power revealed by discourse? Is power reproduced in conversations?

This study is grounded on the key statement — discourse which can be simultaneously perceived as language text, as an instance of discursive practice, and as a piece of socio-cultural practice, shaping and being shaped by one another, is embedded in its immediate situation which in turn lies in a wider institutional context, and finally in a much wider context of the larger society. The conceptual framework (Figure 1) encodes said key as an imperative.

This research is aimed at answering the following questions: (1) What is conversation as language text? How is it described in the two research sites? What are the mechanisms within conversation? What are the features marking it off as naturally occurring and non-scripted? 2) What is conversation as discursive practice? What is the relation
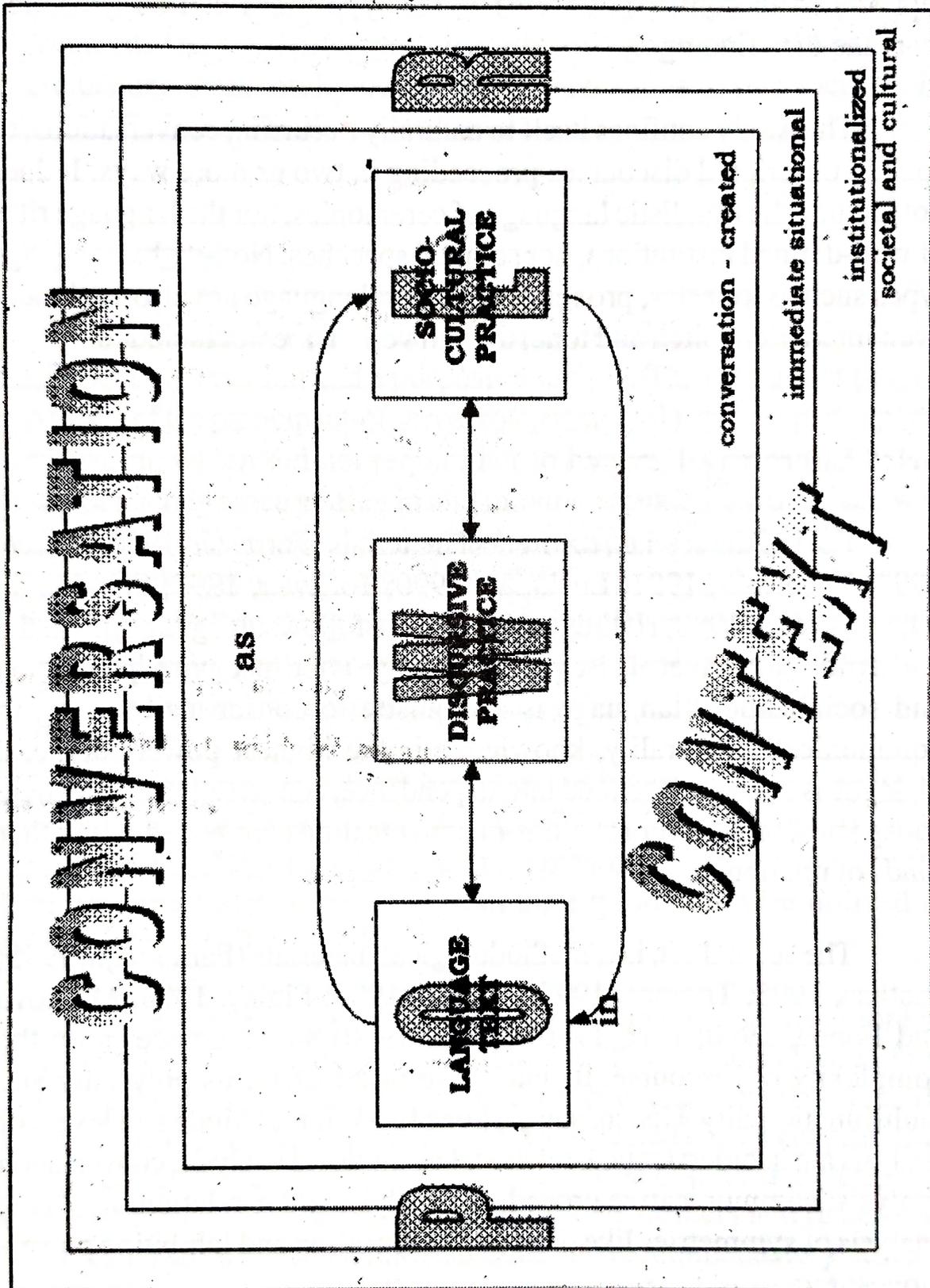
Figure 1

between its text and its discursive practice? 3) What is conversation as a socio-cultural practice? How is power revealed, exercised or reproduced in conversations? 4) What hypotheses can be generated from the data findings?

This study confines itself to naturally occurring conversations, or spoken unscripted discourses proceeding in two or more ways. It does not include the ritualistic language of ceremonies, nor the language rites of well-defined institutions, nor scripted speeches. Non-verbal language types such as kinesics, proxemics and paralanguage are also excluded; even intonation, pitch and tone, though verbal, are not included.

Brief Literature Review

Foci of the set, i.e., theoretical materials (Forrester, 1996; Pearce, 1994; Habermas, 1991; Luckman, 1990; Tofflwer, 1990; Fairclough, 1989; Gordon, 1980; Halliday, 1978) are as follows: language lies at the midst of a complex set of disciplines, language is the medium of production and socialization, language is a requisite to consensus building in communicative morality, knowledge is the highest power-source, a dialogue is a power-inscribed interdependence, conversation is a dialogic subspecies, and power relations in conversations are netted with other kinds of relations.

The second set, i.e., methodological materials (Fairclough, 1995; Psathas, 1995; Thomas, 1995; Tannen, 1993; Finlay, 1993; Markova and Foppa, 1990; Farr, 1990; Linell, 1990) stresses once more the complexity of discourse, its enclosure in a matrix, its polysemy and multifunctionality. Hence, suggestions for different kinds and levels of analysis are in order: textual, relational institutional analysis; conversation analysis; communicative procedures analysis; inter-relations analysis; analysis of symmetries like directing, controlling and inhibiting power-moves; etc.

The third set, which is empirical materials (Wodak, 1996; Edelsky, 1995; Tannen, 1993; Jaworski, 1993; Cherry, 1974; Goffman, 1967)

shows a number of studies involving dialogues, conversations, interviews and other talk forms occurring within specific or defined institutional settings, like those of teachers and learners, principals and parents, psychiatrists and psychotics, pediatricians and mothers of child-patients. There is none on naturally occurring conversations of interlocutors in non-stratified social settings.

Methodology

The research design is that of an exploratory study using participant observation and a purposive sample. The researcher played two forms of the participant-observer role, namely: 1) indirect participant-observation, which did not require her to have a work position in the group or agency since getting in and moving around the workplace was sufficient; and 2) covert participant-observation, where she had a work position in the group, and observed others as a researcher without the knowledge of all in the group; however in this study the group knew about the participant's status as researcher and it was only the actual observation period that was not known by the group.

Pre-analytic procedures included the following: audiotaping of spontaneous casual conversations, transcribing of transcription-friendly tapes, and checking on supplemental notes of participant observers. Data and other details resulting from the exploration were utilized to build concepts and hypotheses.

Since this study was focused on power in context with more or less social equals as interactants, the major criterion in the choice of the two sites was social stratification, its presence or absence, its maximization or minimization. Hence, the selected sites were primarily non-stratified social settings. GOI was a section of a local government office whose clientele was a mix of smallscale farmers and fishermen, and whose staffers without line functions and recommendatory powers, perceived themselves as ordinary persons bereft of extraordinariness that spelled power or domination. CAO is one cell of a church-allied organization that has included among its basic tenets the pronouncement that all its members are considered brothers and sisters, and are treated

accordingly. Rank, status, class and position are insignificant accidentals, or attributes that do not constitute their members' essence.

The analysis of this study is patterned after that of Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis. CDA is socially committed scientific paradigm; it addresses social problems. Its central point is not language itself, not even language use *per se*, but the linguistic character of social and cultural processes and structures. Thus, the total analytic framework here includes Levinson's conversation analysis of conversation mechanisms, Goffman's frame analysis for conversation's narrow context, Fairclough's textural and intertextual analysis for the explicit and the implicit in conversation's broad context, and sociometric strategies to check out relationships among interlocutors and provide a means of showcasing some materials.

Results and Discussion

Texts from the research sites (GOI, CAO) illustrate eight functions of turn-takings. Table 1 provides details.

TABLE 1

Frequency of Turn Functions in Both Sites

Function		GOI		CAO	
		f	%	f	%
#1	Informing, explaining, summarizing, reporting	182	23	150	25
#2	Giving an opinion, criticizing, praising	70	9	63	10.5
#3	Soliciting a response, initiating a topic	128	16.5	93	10.5
#4	Arguing, disagreeing, complaining	50	6.5	35	6
#5	Joking, teasing	103	13	119	20
#6	Agreeing, validating, complying, acknowledging	166	21	113	18.5
#7	Warning, announcing, suggesting, offering, apologizing	69	9	24	4
#8	Analyzing, interpreting	12	2	6	1

Among turn functions, the 1st function and the 8th, as listed, correspond to the most frequently illustrated and the least exemplied function in both sites. Rank-wise, the joking/teasing function is 4th in GOI but 2nd in CAO. Texts also reveal the occurence of the following conversation features: back channel responses or BCR (9%, 10%), interruptions (5%, 2%), overlaps (16%, 4%) adjacency pairs (9%, 13%), insertion sequence (10%, 6%), and dispreferred seconds (2%, 1%).

BCRs are mainly brief completions or brief points of clarification. Interruptions are breaks in the continuity of a course, so ordinarily the term has a negative connotation. Overlaps are interruptions that are pleasant and affiliative, or neutral ones, like those involving minor points of clarification. Adjacency pair is a structure of two parts produced by different speakers and is ordered as the first part - the second part, with each monitoring the other for conditional relevance; examples are question-answer, greeting-greeting, etc. However, verbal exchanges may include insertions of several question-answer, direction-confirmation, and other pairs that result in stretching further the interaction.

Texts contain features marking casual conversations as distinct from formal conversations; these features are: contractions (66 in GOI, 44 in CAO), *kuan* (16% in GOI, 18% in CAO), and ellipses (44, 36). Tables 2 - 4 and charts 1 - 2 show details.

TABLE 2

GOI Contractions

Types	Shortened forms	Uncontracted originals	f
Ug-Linked	*abtig*	*abutan ug*	1
	bahalag	*bahala ug*	1
	basig	*basin ug*	5
	bisag	*bisan ug*	4
	dayog	*dayon ug*	2
	guyorag	*guyura ug*	1
	humag	*human ug*	1
	kaayog	*kaayo ug*	1

Types	Shortened forms	Uncontracted originals	f
	kag	*ka ug*	1
	kog	*ko ug*	3
	konog	*kono ug*	1
	manag	*man kana ug*	2
	manig	*man kini ug*	1
	mayg	*maayo ug*	1
	maypag	*maayo pa ug*	1
	maytag	*maayo ta ug*	1
	mig	*kami ug*	2
	moagig	*moagi ug*	1
	moderetsog	*moderetso ug*	1
	mog	*kamo ug*	3
	moingog	*moingon ug*	1
	morag	*mora ug*	5
	nag	*kana ug*	2
	nakog	*kanako ug*	1
	ninyog	*kaninyo ug*	1
	pangita	*pangita ug*	2
	panukarag	*panukaran ug*	1
	pog	*pod ug*	1
	sigig	*sigi ug*	1
	silag	*sila ug*	1
	siyag	*siya ug*	3
	tag	*kita ug*	1
	tingalig	*tingali ug*	1
Ang-Followed	*adunay*	*aduna ang*	1
	goy	*gud ang*	1
	gyuy	*gayud ang*	4
	hamay	*hain man ang*	1
	kinsay	*kinsa ang*	4
	konoy	*kono ang*	1
	naay	*naa ang*	2
	pilay	*pila ang*	1
	poy	*pod ang*	6
	silay	*sila ang*	1

Types	Shortened forms	Uncontracted originals	f
Nga-Followed	*unsay*	*unsa ang*	3
	bitawng	*bitaw nga*	1
	dayong	*dayon nga*	1
	diayng	*diay nga*	6
	gyong	*gayud nga*	1
	iyahang	*iyaha nga*	3
	katong	*kadto nga*	19
	konong	*kono nga*	3
	maning	*man kini nga*	6
	maynang	*maayo kana nga*	2
	panang	*pa kana nga*	1
One word w/ sound(s) deleted	*gyud*	*gayud*	21
	kato	*kadto*	8
	kadyot	*kadiyut*	1
	may	*maayo*	3
	nya	*unya*	1
Two or more words combined	*ayha*	*ayaw una ha*	1
	dyapon	*diha gihapon*	1
	hali	*hala diri*	3
	haman	*hain man*	1
	ing-ani	*ingon niani*	1
	mana	*man kana*	3
	taymsa, tisa	*taym pa usa*	1

TABLE 3

CAO CONTRACTIONS

Types	Shortened forms	Uncontracted originals	f
Ug-Linked	*bag*	*ba ug*	1
	dakog	*dako ug*	1
	dayog	*dayon ug*	2
	ganahig	*ganahi ug*	1
	ganig	*gani ug*	1
	gibutangag	*gibutangan ug*	1
	kog	*ko ug*	3
	konog	*kono ug*	2
	mamaligyaayg	*mamaligyaa ug*	1
	manig	*man kini ug*	1
	manguhag	*manguha ug*	1
	mig	*kami ug*	1
	moadtog	*moadto ug*	2
	morag	*mora ug*	20
	nakog	*nako ug*	1
	padalag	*padala ug*	1
	perog	*pero ug*	2
	sigig	*sige ug*	3
	silag	*sila ug*	1
	tuanag	*tuana ug*	1
Ang-Followed	*bitay*	*bitaw ang*	1
	gyoy	*gayod ang*	2
	koy	*ako ang*	1
	lay	*lang ang*	1
	manay	*man kana ang*	1
	mautoy	*mao kadto ang*	1
	maoy	*mao ang*	3
	naay	*naa ang*	1
	napoy	*naa pod ang*	1
	nay	*kana ang*	1
Nga-Followed	*bitawng*	*bitaw nga*	7
	diayng	*diay nga*	1
	gyong	*gayud nga*	2
	katong	*kadto nga*	35
	konong	*kono nga*	1

TABLE 4

Top Five Contratced Forms in Two Sites

f	GOI	Rank	CAO	f
21	gyud	1	katong	35
19	katong	2	mana	32
8	kato	3	gyud	29
6	diayng	4	morag	22
6	poy	4		
5	basig	5	kato	11
5	morag	5		

CHART 1 GOI Ellipses

A. Nominal Ellipses

1. basi day kuha to day
2. maypa tulo okey ra maning tulo
3. kulangon nato tulo day
4. ana-ana bitaw maynang nagka-ana-ana
5. agoy gi-on hala ka gi-on gyud gi-on
6. dapat dinhi pag-abot diri
7. o dili ko dili ko dad-a lang
8. mora pag kanang sigi ba
9. oy daghan na oy
10. lagi ilisi maulaw
11. ayha mosulat
12. na tinuod baya
13. adunay sa Friday
14. di ba kasagaran daghan kaayo
15. giganahan kag
16. sapawi ninyo ug shirtjack

17. *na mayg wala kay kinahanglanon*
18. *adto pong kuan asa man*
19. *dauy malata*
20. *morag nagdako na ning atua*
21. *naay mga ana*
22. *lain maluod na*
23. *kulang pag duha*
24. *dili ato-a*
25. *ato-a lagi*
26. *aron kuno dili*
27. *kay mokanaug, saka kanaog*
28. *gikuan baya na sa iyaha*

B. Verbal Ellipses

29. *pressure cooker, rice cooker, duha ka*
30. *di maskin kinsa*
31. *tana man gyud na*
32. *apil ang duha ka tawo*

C. Clausal Ellipses

33. *haman to bi*
34. *o dili ko dili ko dad-a lang*
35. *unsay unsay one nine lang*
36. *may karon naay*
37. *basta greener pasture sigi*
38. *biya-biyahe intawon si Cesar sa atoa*
39. *kinsa may atong casual atong daan na*
40. *ay sus wa ra ka abtig tulo ka oras*
41. *cooperatives na pod ilaha*
42. *okey ba kaha gihapon na*
43. *duha ra man gyud ang ila*
44. *okey balik ta ani no*

CHART 2 CAO Ellpises

A. Nominal Ellipses

1. *giduol gyud giduol-it*
2. *mayo tong diri kay duol ra*
3. *dali ra lagi na*
4. *dili lang palabi-an*
5. *ganina bibo ganina*
6. *atbang lagi ilang Yap*
7. *naa lagi tag singko*
8. *bida man oy*
9. *dinagko unya gamayg sulod*
10. *naa pay wala na*
11. *chapter chapter ra chapter nga snacks*
12. *kon magproblema karong gabii*
13. *tua pa ilang manang*
14. *luyo ilang manang*
15. *sakit kaayo na oy mokaon ka*
16. *na kaduha na ni*
17. *morag tan-awon nimo morag-hayop*
18. *mao nay wala kang masabi*
19. *lapwa-an ibutang sa freezer*

B. Verbal Ellipses

20. *ang anak niya tua na*
21. *gikuan niya tong laki*

C. Clausal Ellipses

22. *a dako diay kuan Marquez gyud dako na*
23. *kapoy saka ug balik didto oy*
24. *asa ato katong bag-o, ay katong usa*
25. *unsa pa wala na no*
26. *sigi kog tawag di gyud*
27. *naa ba diayng ingon ing-ana*
28. *unsa mana trabahante sa NSC*
29. *diha sa ibabaw kanang namaligyaayg softdrinks*
30. *unsa gani ang ing-ana gani*
31. *sigi kag lingkod sigig paminaw gutmon ka*
32. *unsa pa wala na no*
33. *bata lang walay problema ang bata*
34. *anak niya tua na*
35. *sigi kog tawag di gyud*
36. *sakit kaayo kay bug-at*

The chief characteristic of conversation as a discursive practice in both sites is the 'playful frame', i.e., a high degree (85% in GOI, 100% in CAO) of permitted rudeness or tolerable roughness, with laughter as the strongest cue suggesting that everyone is determined to become an active associate in the making of fun.

Majority of interlocutors in the sites are in their forties and fifties; aside from a common mother tongue which is Sebuano, their shared experiences and encounters have created a bonding which belongs to the familiarity-breeds-tolerance-and-fun variety, not the familiarity-breeds-contempt type. The interlocutors of the GOI site have conversed for more than ten years every working day, except when assigned to a whole day or longer fieldwork. The interlocutors of the CAO site converse informally after a structured praise-and-worship session, a practice integral in a group where members believe they need one another for greater spiritual growth and development. Although the CAO interaction is only once a week, the interactants have lived in the same village for more than fifteen years. Some particulars about the sites' people-components are in Table 5 (the complete report has an ethnographic account of the sites).

TABLE 5
Summary of the People - Place Components in Two Sites

Basis	GOI	CAO
1. age range	40 - 65 (with 72% in their forties)	33 - 56 with 60% in their fifties)
2. language based ethnic origin	Sebuano (84%)	Sebuano (100%)
3. sex	72% females, 27% males	53% females, 46 males
4. education	baccalaureate degree holders (100%) 60% baccalaureate)	1st yr. College to graduate school (with
5. monthly income	P6,585 to P20,279 (with 55%, P8,605)	P6,000 to P26,000 (with 83, an average of P6,200)
6. years of togetherness	10-19 years of employment in the same office	3 -10 years of group membership, 5 -22 years of residence in same village

There are episodes (Table 6 and 7) illustrating negative explicits (4 in GOI, 9 in CAO), i.e. direct, unsweetened, non-euphemistic declarations of something or someone as unpleasant or detestable, which have not resulted in consequences of a similar nature due to the playful frames.

TABLE 6

Negative Explicits in GOI

Utterances in Original Language	Possible English Translations
Ambut gadanghag sad ning gisugo	I can't understand how you can be so careless. / I'd no idea you could be that irresponsible.
Oo makarma ra na siya	I bet it has a karmic effect. / She'll have to pay dearly for this.
O para dili na siya sigig pamakak nato	Yes, so that she'll not always lie to us/... in order to put an end to her lying spree.
Ibulgar nato para ma-awake siya nga aware ta sa iyang kabakakon	The expose' will tell her she hasn't fooled us. / Let it be known to all so she can learn the lesson well.

TABLE 7

Negative Explicits in CAO

Utterances in Original Language	Possible English Translations
Sa man god mibalik ka pagkabata	What can we do when you're rerogressing./ You're lacking in maturity
Kabuang god nimo	You've been stupid
Bayad na binuang na	Pay your dues, be responsible; don't look for reasons not to.
Wala man niy lasa	This is tasteless or awful.
Loud kaayo	This makes me vomit./ I can't take it.
Wad-a nang bisyo kay wa nay nada	Drop that vice, it's a blind alley. /It will never make you fighting fit.
Makapugong nako sa sigig yawyaw	It keeps me from being a loudmouth. /I've learned to shut up./ I used to be impossible to live with.
Adik-adik na	You're an addict, a hopeless case.
Gilibak ka namo	We're backbiting you. / Backbiting you is easy and fun.

There are also negative implicits (16 in GOI and 21 in CAO, Tables 8 and 9), in fact many more than the explicits. Negative implicits result from an intertextual analysis that delves into the present and absent, the explicit and implicit, the said, unsaid, or the elsewhere - said. With the playful frame framing the implicits, the negativities are without the fist-of-fury results.

TABLE 8

Negative Implicits in GOI

Utterances in Original Language	Literal & Imaginative Translations
Sweet sixteen he he ha ha	Sweet sixteen? Trying to be funny!
Dako pa kog bukton	My arms are bigger than his. Who's he trying to impress or threaten?
Nag-dextrose pod to sa ubos	There's also a dextrose pin needled below. She has a certain appetite.
Tingalig gamay tong iyang dextrose	It's not big enough for her, thus not quite satisfying.
Pag-abot niya didto sa ila pa-fill up-an na sa iyang anak	She needs her daughter to fill it up properly. She's not functionally literate.
Mora man sab ning nahubog sa Coke oy	Shame on him, behaving as though Coke is a hard drink.
Sagdi lang kong magtabi, pagtabi lang mo diha	I talk, you talk, to each his own.
Ikaw gyud wa gyoy kay klaro gyud	You're not being clear. Do you know what you want?
Kon atong, ihilum, it means sa tinuod nahadlok ta niya	If we refuse to divulge it, perhaps we're really afraid of her.
Bakak nga di makaayo na	That's a lie without redeeming value.
Mora ra ba mog kwartahan	It's as though yo have money./You don't have money to throw away, do you?

Inday, may pagkaterang ba	Inday, you're sort of neurotic.
Ambut kinsay magbuot	I want to know exactly who calls the shots here.
Wise yud	He's smart, he can make you look like a fool
Kabalo gud	He knows something, what else?
Ato ato ra na	It's just between you and me. I shouldn't have shared something as delicate and dangerous...

TABLE 9

Negative Implicits in CAO

Utterances in Original Language	Translations Making Explicit the Implicit
Grabe sad nimo oy, Inday	Inday, you're terrible; you're brutally frank
Maabot hinoon kog laag didto	I could roam that far, don't think we're the same.
Hadlok mana siya dayban nako iyang negosyo	He's afraid I'd dive like into his line of business. You think I'm a threat?
Walay klaro	What's this all about? A maze?
Usahay ra ba mangita dayon ug lusot	Instead of coming forward with the truth, he invents one alibi after the other.
Nalimot ko naa koy tapad	I didn't remember being seated beside him; nothing comes from nothing.
Inom ta	Let's drink, stop the hypocrisy; you're still the same alcoholic

Maka-high blood na sa bulsa	It causes pocket hypertension. My economic ladder is too short for that luxury.
At last mitingog na gyud siya	Finally, he's speaking up. Where did he get the courage?
Laluma adto brod oy	Too profound? Did you pick it up from somewhere?
Ayaw pod ing-anaa ang tanan	Don't include all; beware of the fallacy of generalization.
Wala koy kalibutan ana	Ask me not and tell me not; I don't want to know.
Unsaon mani kato na lang gud	What do I do with this? Why not that instead. Let's improve our taste.
Aha naniid pod diay ka	So, you've been observing too, suspicious of someone?
Pasobraan madaut gihapon, bisan unsa gyud	Anything excessive harms, and that includes all.
Presyo lang daan, niwang na ka	It's extremely expensive; paying for it is enough to spread you thin.
Nindot to sa inyo, leksyon	That's for you... an important lesson.
Ambut na siya, atong tudloan ug pangaway	I don't know what to do with her. She's helpless. We'll teach her how to fight.
Aa katong dakog tiyan	That big bellied fellow? Nothing else about him strikes me.
Kanta man tingali to	It sounded like a song... some familiar lyrics. Nothing original about it.
Nangluod lagi na siya	He's behaving like a resentful brat.

That language is a material form of ideology and that ideologies both as system of representations and as practices of lived relations are residing more in implicit propositions than anywhere else, have been illustrated by several episodes of the texts. Some ideologies in implicit propositions of texts are the following: a) Age of the female is a liability; the older she is, the lesser are her competencies and chances; b) The basic question raised before membership in an organization is "What do I get from joining it, or what is in store for me there?"; c) Lying is mainly circumstantial; when caught, liars can and do unsay their prior assertions; d) Government trainings are generally unproductive and futile; in many cases, the results are only increased food expenditures; e) A new administration stops a practice of predecessors not because of its effects, but because continuing it is giving glory to the previous administration; f) The value of a uniquely Filipino identity has not been inculcated; the concept of superiority-in-sameness has prompted countrymen to present themselves as no different from superior non-Filipinos; g) There are two popular biases: 1] all traffic officers are mercenaries, and all attempts at enforcing traffic rules are mercenary missions; 2] it is difficult to make changes in the well-entrenched Mindanao-based binary opposition between Muslims and Christians.

Transcripts have not shown the power or domination as indicated by interruptions, volubility and topic-raising, which are considered as common linguistic power strategies in stratified settings. Instead, both research sites (GOI, CAO) have demonstrated the power of *kuan* (Table 10) and the power of laughter (Table 11).

Both sites have revealed the presence of the term *kuan* (16% in GOI and 18% in CAO); although the figures are not impressive on their own, the fact that *kuan* is the only one of its kind, being in a class all its own, i.e., multifunctional term that can serve well in naturally occurring conversations as a maximizer, minimizer and convergent filler, or a mix, makes the figures indicative of something. *Kuan* as prominencer forces an idea or meaning to jut out in a conspicuous manner, or dramatizes the impact of whatever the utterer is presenting. In its minima-role, *kuan* may initially indicate a lack of power. *Kuan* as minimizer reduces the impact, allows delays in order to show reluctance to say or perform

something; *kuan* as power of this kind is limited to prejorative pronouncements or deprecating ideas. Using *kuan* as filler is to engage in convergence, an accommodation process engaged in by persons who change their way of speaking to make it sound more like the speech of the persons they are talking to. When an interlocutor desires group acceptance, he modifies almost unconsciously his own speaking style to be more like theirs. He talks like them; there's no reason why they cannot talk to him about anything. Unless they open up and grant him entry into their realm, he cannot exercise power over them. *Kuan* as convergent filler is potentially power-welding.

TABLE 10

"Kuan" in Two Sites

"Kuan" Roles	GOI		CAO	
	f	%	f	%
"Kuan" as prominencer	47	45	34	38
"Kuan" as minimizer	20	19	11	12
"Kuan" as filler	37	36	44	50

Conversation circles from both sites have demonstrated the power of laughter in dealing with sensitive, ticklish, delicate, ego-threatening and face-losing issues. Laughter is more of a how-negotiator than a what-negotiator, more of a form-repair than a content-repair. The interlocutor's laughter serves like an arm around the other's shoulder, offering the comfort of friendship. As mediator, laughter softens jabs of insolence and verbal abuse, or cushions the impact of failures and deficiencies which have been made public. As censor, laughter blocks the way of aversion and repulsion by enveloping the addressee or the recipient of criticisms with the spirit of camaraderie and fun. And in the sites covered by this study, laughter as naturalizer, means it is natural to laugh at our mistakes, it is natural to laugh at identical experiences of struggles and failures because the laughter clears the air of hurts and hostilities.

TABLE 11

Laughter in Two Sites

Laughter Roles	GOI		CAO	
	f	%	f	%
Laughter as negotiator	3	15	7	28
Laughter as mediator	4	20	5	20
Laughter as censor	6	30	4	16
Laughter as naturalizer	7	35	9	36
Total Laughter sets	20	100	25	100

Figure 2 is a sociogram, which attempts to display in a graphic way the 50-turn conversation (SC#65 in the unabridged report) of 9 CAO interlocutors at a given time. The lines of communication from one interlocutor (represented by a circle) to another, or from one to the group (represented by a rectangle), and their arrangement are made comprehensible at a glance. N, O, Q and P are the top interlocutors. N, strategically positioned, has the highest number of turns (19/50); N is also the highest scorer in the use of the term *kuan* (6) and in the production of laughter-turns (5).

The following hypotheses have been generated from data findings: a) In a small-group setting of friends as interlocutors, interruptions, volubility and topic raising are not necessarily power strategies; they can, however, serve as solidarity strategies; b) Among them, the playful frame is an interactive negotiating frame; c) Among them, the power that is exercised is the less oppressive, less selfish variety, using *kuan* and laughter as strategic means; d) Power relations among interlocutors in groups similar to the CAO site are established by the "other world" hegemony.

Conclusion

The first hypothesis indicates a movement away from the clear-cut boundaries of power and powerlessness or solidarity, as binary opposites. In non-stratified settings represented by the two sites, the binary opposition has been changed into a continuum of power and solidarity, intersecting in a field of dynamic relations with other continua. Any power-show entails solidarity by involving participants in relating to one another, and any show of solidarity entails power, inasmuch as the requirement of similarity and closeness limits freedom. The conversation mechanism itself suggests that the interlocutor in taking his turn, whether to inform or criticize, to tease or interpret, etc., and in allowing others to take their turns cannot be completely devoid of either one or the other, power or solidarity.

The second and third hypotheses deal with the nature of the social interaction that allows exchanges and negotiations of meaning among interlocutors. The interactive negotiating framework of conversation-turns in the sites is powered by *kuan* and laughter. The power-variety of conversation among friends in non-stratified setting does not have the ugly face of repressive domination or irrational control. But it still is power, i.e., that which influences or persuades others to do one's bidding. The playful frame bordering conversations powered by *kuan* and laughter distinctively marks speech exchanges of the studied groups. A hearty laugh displays closeness that makes teasing and intriguing games rather safe. Even near verbal assaults within this non-serious frame are treated as nurturing arguments.

The fourth hypothesis about power relations among CAO interlocutors as operated or influenced by the "other-world" hegemony, with religion as the ideological state apparatus (ISA), has sprung from the following data: 1) CAO conversations illustrating interruptions and overlaps are severely minimal, only 6% compared with GOI's 21%; 2) CAO conversation has only 1% (one-half of GOI's) of dispreferred seconds, some of which are short-lived.

CAO interlocutors apparently prefer to wait for their respective
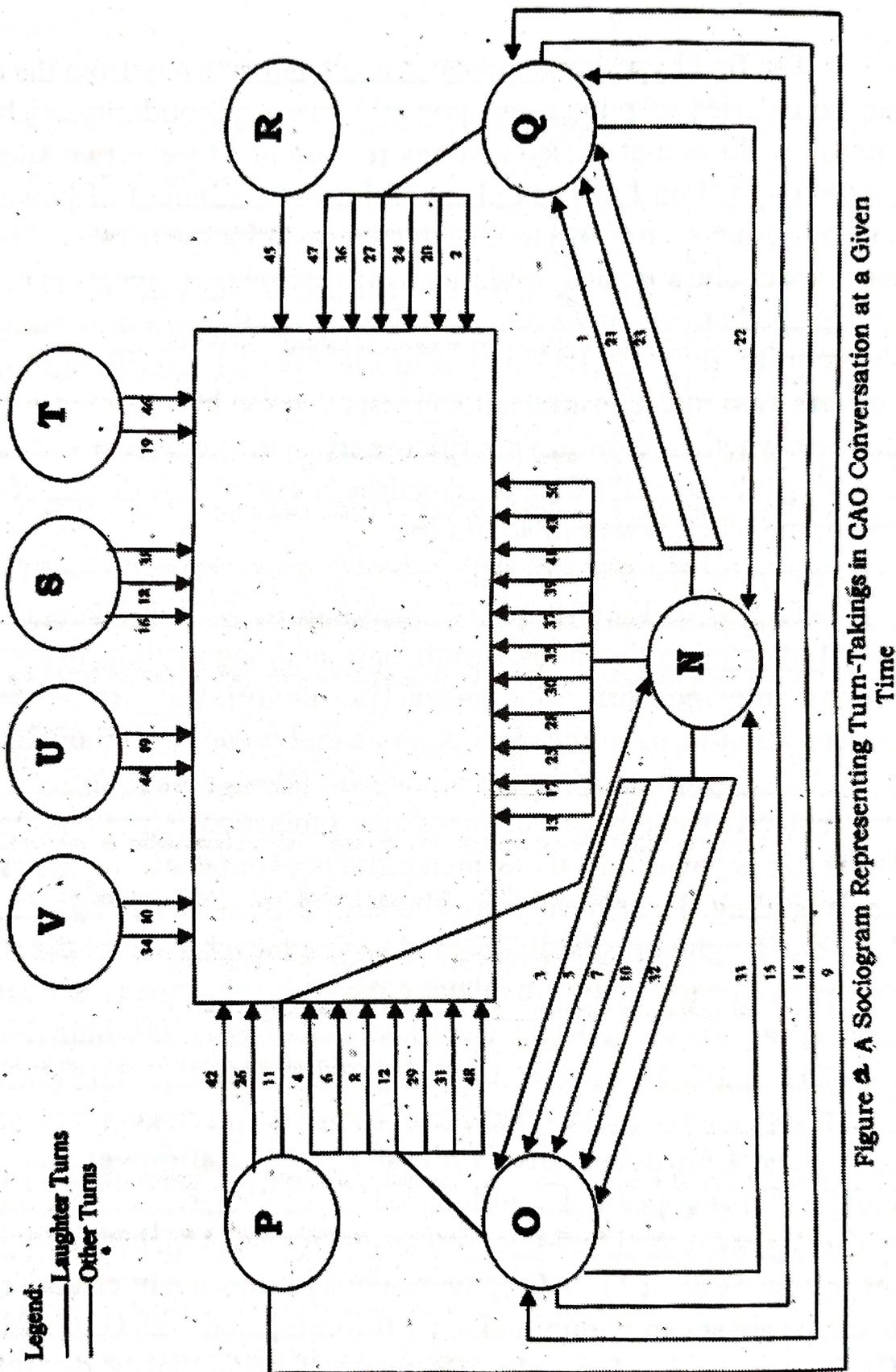
Figure 2. A Sociogram Representing Turn-Takings in CAO Conversation at a Given Time

Figure 2

turns; they are not keen in interrupting. It is also likely that speech events my have been influenced by a popular tenet of the group — there is no need for compulsion because no assignment gets a rejection.

"Although hegemony implies a high degree of consensus, it doesn't mean a society or a situation without conflict. What hegemony does suggest is that conflict is contained and channeled into ideologically safe harbours." (Storey, 1993). In short, hegemonic power is exercised as authority, not as force.

The hegemonic interpretation is also supported by the conversation structure of the CAO site. Conversations flow only after a highly structured session of praise-and-worship. The same research site illustrates organized religion as ISA, where the language of conversations suggests that conflicts have been kept within bounds and where the ideology of an invited Divine presence is an active practice. Since ideology is not just a system of ideas or concepts and images, but also a practice, the religious ideological practice effects a transformation of relations between an individual and his social formation. What a participant perceives as an exercise of power by a fellow participant is legitimized as right or just. Said legitimization emanates from the conviction that every human being, created in God's image, has been ordered to demonstrate a loving concern for one another, and its demonstration may take the form of power-exercise.

This is in addition to the concept of Divine Presence. Conversations are conducted with the powerful idea that the Supreme Being is around, and interlocutors naturally try to behave. What CAO interlocutors aspire for is not liberation from all forms of power; what matters to them is that they have made a choice as to Whose power to totally submit themselves.

This study concludes with a set of recommendations. The first is a research-replication with the added dimension of nonverbal forms accompanying authentic conversations in non-stratified social settings. Data have characterized casual conversations as full of contractions and ellipses, among others. Yet these varied forms of omissions have

not stopped or shortened the flow of speech exchanges, nor have they triggered questions to dispel ambiguities. Such absence may either indicate that essential meanings have been adequately conveyed to fellow interlocutors, or suggest the likelihood that nonverbal language has been a vital transmitter. Hence, what is recommended is a similar study with the inclusion of the following question: What is the conversation-role played by the nonverbal language types, such as kinesics, paralanguage, proxemics, facial expression and touching behavior?

The second recommendation is stage 2, with this recently concluded study as stage 1. From this first research that is grounded, discovery-oriented and exploratory in nature, the second, which is a follow-up, will be an expansionist, hypothesis-refining or hypothesis-testing type of research.

The third recommendation is still culled from the findings of this study, particularly from ideologies residing in implicit propositions. What is recommended is a further search of ideologies that have been transformed into commonsensical and natural codes. What can be other so-called commonsensical and natural codes that might be unearthed when one tries to look deeper into implicits? It is likely for such a study to contribute much to the making or unmaking of the Filipino psyche.

Another one is a Foucauldian-inspired study — power in academic discourse: a case of 'specific intellectuals' in a university setting. For Foucault, knowledge is intertwined with power, knowledge bestows power, power-exercise necessitates knowledge, and power is integral to discourse. For him, one of the few great ideological apparatuses is the university that even when in a state of crisis, its power, instead of being dissipated is continually heightened as more individuals and groups relate themselves to the academic system. His concept of 'specific intellectuals' points to them who by individually making theoretical, moral and political choices become bearers of universality or become the conscience of all.

Still another recommendation is based on the communicative ethics of Habermas — a study on the concretization of the 'ideal speech situation' where the prevailing power is the force of the better argument,

not physical or pecuniary force, nor the threats of electronic weaponry. Success in a real practical discourse requires interlocutors' complete reversibility with other participants in argumentation, meaning that in the balancing of interests, all attempt to adopt the perspectives of all others, one after the other. This process entails a series of questions and answers eliciting information, clarification, possible applications and exceptions. To actively partake in the process, Habermas adopts Alexy's rules which provide that 1] every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse, 2] everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatever. This grant of freedom however may require, depending on the issue, inputs of experts from academe or communications technology. But how do these experts write? Is it done in obscure lexicon and styles accessible only to fellow experts? Is there indeed an erosion of public language? Is there a decline of public discourse? What kind of study will dramatize the need for a revival of the public voice? How is the revival of academic text as critical social practice done? Or, starting from the basic, how is literacy itself revived as a social practice? How is it practiced as empowerment?

A final recommendation is a cross-cultural study of conversation mechanisms and power relations among interlocutors. This shall provide the opportunity to use cross-cultural methods in order to compare findings of the present study, for example, the power of *kuan*, the power of laughter, and the nuances of volubility, with perspectives from other cultures and other language-groups.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alsuutari, Pwertti. *Researching Culture: Qualitative Method and Cultural Studies.* London: SAGE Publications. 1995.

Cameron, Deborah; E. Frazer; P. Harvey; M.B.H. Rampton; and K. Richardson. *Researching Language: Issues of Power and Method.* London: Routledge, 1992

Carter, Ronald; A. Goddard; D. Reah; K. Sanger; and M. Bowring. *Working with Texts: A Core Book for Language Analysis.* London and New York: Routledge, 1997.

Cherry, Colin, ed. *Pragmatic Aspects of Human Communication:* Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1974.

Cresswell, John. *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches.* London: SAGE Publications, 1994.

Dicks, Dennis, "Experiments with Everyday Conversation." *In Pragmatic Aspects of Human Communication,* pp. 27-50. Edited by Colin Cherry. Boston D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1974.

Dillon, George; A. Doyle; C. Eastman; S. Silberstein and M. Toolan. Review of "Language and Power in Critical Linguistics," by Norman Fairclough. *International Journal of the Society of Language,* 103 (1993), pp. 185-196.

Durant, Will. *The Story of Philosophy.* New York: Washington Square Press' Publication of Pocket Books, 1953.

Dy, Manuel. "The Ethics of Communicative Action: Habermas' Discourse Ethics: *In Contemporary Social Philosophy,* pp. 63-74. Edited by Manuel Dy, Quezon City, Phil.: JMC Press, 1994.

Fairclough, Norman. *Language and Power.* London and New York: Longman, 1989.

Fairclough, Norman. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study*

of Language. London and New York: Longman, 1995.

Fiske, John. *Introduction to Communication Studies.* New York: Methuen and Co., 1982.

Finley, Marike. *Powermatics.* London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1995.

Forrester, Michael. *Psychology of Language; A Critical Introduction.* London: SAGE Publications, 1996.

Giles, Howard; and Peter Robinson. ed. *Handbook of Language and Social Psychology.* New York: John Wiley and Sons. Ltd., 1990.

Goffman, Erving. *Interaction Ritual.* Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1967.

Gordon, Colin, ed. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977 by M. Foucault.* U.S.: Harvester Press, 1980.

Habermas, Jurgen. *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991.

Jaworski, Adam. *The Power of Silence.* London: SAGE Publications, 1993.

Hammersley, Martin and Alkinson, Paul. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice.* N.Y.: Routhledge, 1995.

Levinson, Stephen C. *Pragmatics.* Camdridge: Cambridge University Press. 1983.

Linell, Per. "The Power of Dialogue Dynamics." In *The Dynamics of Dialogue*, pp. 147-174. Edited by Ivana Markova and Klaus Foppa. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990. Ivana Markova, and Klaus Foppa. ed. *The Dynamics of Dialogue.* New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990.

Maxwell, Joseph. Qualitative Research Design: *An Interactive Approach.* London: SAGE Publications, 1996.

O'Sullivan, Tim; J. Hartley; D. Saunders; M. Montgomery; J. Fiske. *Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

Pearce, Lynne. *Reading Dialogics*. New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., 1994.

Schiffrin, Deborah. "Speaking for Another in Sociolinguistic Interviews: Alignments, Identities and Frames." In *Framing in Discourse*, pp. 231-263. Edited by Deborah Tannen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Storey, John. *An Introductory Guide to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993.

Straehle, Carolyn. "Samuel?" 'Yes, dear?' Teasing and Conversational Rapport" In *Framing in Discourse*, pp. 210-230. Edited by Deborah Tannen. Oxford: Oxford University Press., 1993.

Tannen, Deborah. "What's In A Frame? Surface Evidence for Underlying Expectations." In *Framing in Discourse*, pp. 14-16. Edited by Deborah Tannen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Tannen, Deborah, ed. *Gender and Conversational Interaction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Toffler, Alvin. *Powershift*. New York: Bantambooks, 1990.

Varenne, Herve. "Talk and Real Talk: The Voices of Silence and The Voices of Power in American Family Life." *Cultural Anthropology* vol. 2. Nos. 3 (August 1987): 369-394.

Verderber, Rodolf and Kathleen Verderber. *Inter-Act: Using Interpersonal Communication Skills*. New York: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1995.

Wodak, Ruth. *Disorders of Discourse*. London and New York: Longman, 1996.

Wood, Julia. *Communicative Theories in Action*. New York: Wadsworth Publishing co., 1997.