

**WOMENS' USAGE  
OF SPECIFIC LINGUISTIC FUNCTIONS  
IN THE CONTEXT OF CASUAL CONVERSATION:  
ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

It is quite easy to make the claim that men and women differ in their linguistic behavior. Assumed gender roles are contrastive, with men often thought as dominant speakers, while women are placed in a subordinate role during the conversation process. Important to realize in this issue, however, is the different perspectives the two sexes have in casual speech. 'If women speak and hear a language of connection and intimacy,' a clash of conversation styles can occur, when confronted with a men's language concerned with status and independence. (Tannen 1990). Misinterpretation of the use of linguistic functions, thus, often arises.

This paper will concentrate on the use of key linguistic functions, and their use by women in creating or disturbing solidarity in a casual conversation context. Two approaches are first presented, that attempt to define the sex differences in communicative competence, specifically from females' position. With that theoretical research in mind, a sample of natural, casual speech will be examined and discussed in terms of its use of specific linguistic items.

## **2.0 THE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF WOMEN**

Early attempts to distinguish speech norms of different communities focused on sociological factors such as economical status, ethnic minorities and age. Through this research, the belief that male and female speakers may somehow differ in their communicative behavior, and thus compose different speech communities, became the focus of researchers in the early 1970's. Although lacking in empirical research, and influenced by bias about gender roles (Coates 1989: 65), this initial work on women's language, specifically the usage of several linguistic features, proved influential toward becoming an important issue in the study of linguistics. (see Lakoff and the Dominance Approach, section 2.1). Research since these early works has focused empirically on a variety of features, such as the use of tag questions, interruptions, questions, standard forms and minimal responses.

It is now understood that men and women differ in terms of their communicative behavior (Coates 1989). In explaining these differences, however, Montgomery (1995)

warns that there is a sense of variation in speech differences between men and women. One sociological point to be remembered, he states, is that ‘speech differences are not clear-cut’ and a set of universal differences does not exist. (p.166). Gender, as a ‘dimension of difference’ between people should always be thought of in relation to other dimensions of difference, such as those of age, class, and ethnic group. A second point he stresses is that linguistically one must be clear as to what is being identified as a difference between the sexes. Unless examining identifiable linguistic behavior, such as interruptions or tag questions, it is difficult to validate generalized claims of dominance, politeness or subordination. Even then, ‘the formal construction of utterances is no consistent guide to what function they might be performing in a specific context. (p.167).

Reinterpretations of gender-differentiated language fall into one of two approaches, which reflect contrasting views of women in society. The *dominance* approach considers language differences to be a reflection of traditional social roles, that of men’s dominance and women’s subordination. The *difference* approach, in contrast, focuses on sex speech differences as outcomes of two different subcultures. Women, it is claimed, come from a social world in terms of solidarity and intimacy, while men are more hierarchal and independent minded. Contrasting communicative styles are born out of these two subcultures.

## **2.1 LAKOFF AND THE DOMINANCE APPROACH**

The *dominance* approach to sex differences in speech is concerned with the imbalance of power between the sexes. Powerless speech features used by women help contribute to maintaining a subordinate position in society; while conversely, men’s dominance is preserved through their linguistic behavior.

Early research that regards imbalance of power as a main factor toward gender speech differences can be attributed to Robin Lakoff, and her influential work ‘Language and Woman’s Place’ (1975). Although relying heavily on personal observation, and later criticized for its feminist bias and lack of empirical research, Lakoff’s definition of ‘woman’s language’-both language used to describe women and language typically used by woman (cited in Fasold 1990:103), created an initial theoretical framework which

would be critiqued and expanded by future researchers. Lakoff provides a list of ten linguistic features which characterize women's speech, as follows:

1. Lexical hedges or fillers, e.g. *you know, sort of, well, you see.*
2. Tag questions, e.g. *she's very nice, isn't she?*
3. Rising intonation on declaratives, e.g. *it's really good?*
4. 'Empty' adjectives, e.g. *divine, charming, cute.*
5. Precise color terms, e.g. *magenta, aquamarine.*
6. Intensifiers such as *just* and *so*, e.g. *I like him so much.*
7. 'Hypercorrect' grammar, e.g. consistent use of standard verb forms.
8. 'Superpolite' forms, e.g. indirect requests, euphemisms.
9. Avoidance of strong swear words, e.g. *fudge, my goodness.*
10. Emphatic stress, e.g. *it was a BRILLIANT performance.*

(cited in Holmes 2001:286)

Consistent in Lakoff's list of linguistic features is their function in expressing lack of confidence. Holmes (2001) divides this list into two groups. Firstly, those 'linguistic devices which may be used for hedging or reducing the force of an utterance,' such as fillers, tag questions, and rising intonation on declaratives, and secondly, 'features which may boost or intensify a proposition's force' (p.287), such as emphatic stress and intensifiers. According to Lakoff, both hedging and boosting modifiers show a women's lack of power in a mixed-sex interaction. While the hedges' lack of assertiveness is apparent, boosters, she claims, intensify the force of a statement with the assumption that a women would not be taken seriously otherwise.

For Lakoff, there is a great concordance between femininity and unassertive speech she defines as 'women's speech.' According to her, in a male-dominated society women are pressured to show the feminine qualities of weakness and subordination toward men. Thus, "it is entirely predictable, and given the pressure towards social conformity, rational, that women should demonstrate these qualities in their speech as well as in other aspects of their behavior." (Cameron, McAlinden and O'Leary 1989:76).

Although Lakoff's claims were revolutionary- there was no substantial work on gender and language before her work- her lack of empirical data left the door open for further research into her substantive claims. More recent work has focused on several of the linguistic features she first introduced, including the use of the hedge, 'you know' (Holmes 1986), hyper-correct grammar (Trudgill 1983, Coates 1986; Cameron and Coates 1989), tag questions (Dubois and Crouch 1975; Holmes 1986; Cameron,

McAlinden and O'Leary 1989), and commands (Goodwin 1980; Tannen 1990, 1994; Holmes 2001).

## 2.2 THE DIFFERENCE APPROACH

Rather than assuming speech differences among men and women are related to power and status, the more recently emerging *difference*, or *dual-culture*, approach views sex differences as attributable to contrasting orientations toward relations (Montgomery 1995:168). For men the focus is on sharing information, while women value the interaction process. Men and women possess different interactive styles, as they typically acquired their communicative competence at an early age in same-sex groups.

According to Maltz and Borker (1982), who introduced this view which values women's interactional styles as different, yet equal to men's, "American men and women come from different sociolinguistic subcultures, having learned to do different things with words in a conversation." (cited in Freeman and McElhinny 1996:239). They cite as an example the different interpretations of *minimal responses* (see section 3.3, The Function of Minimal Responses), such as nods and short comments like *umhm* and *yes*. For men, these comments mean 'I agree with you', while for women they mean 'I'm listening to you- please continue.' Rather than a women's style being deficient, as Lakoff would believe, it is simply different. Inherent in this position is that cross-cultural misunderstanding often occurs in mixed-sex conversation, as 'individuals wrongly interpret cues according to their own rules,' (ibid:240).

Tannen (1986,1990,1994) provides much research on the concept of misunderstanding in the dual-culture approach. According to her, the language of women is primarily 'rapport-talk', where establishing connections and promoting sameness is emphasized. Men, on the other hand, use language described as 'report-talk,' as a way of preserving independence while exhibiting knowledge and skill. (1990:77). The contrasting views of relationships are apparent: negotiating with a desire for solidarity in women, maintaining status and hierarchical order in men. The frustration that occurs between women and men in conversation can be better understood 'by reference to systematic differences in how women and men tend to signal meaning in conversation. (1994:7). When these meaning signals are misunderstood, communication breakdown occurs.

Tannen describes *metamessages*- information about the relations and attitudes of the speakers involved- as common signals which are misinterpreted in mixed-sex conversation. Metamessages depend for their meaning on subtle linguistic signals and devices. These signals and devices and how they work (or fail to), are at the core of the difference approach.

### **3.0 THE ANALYSIS OF A MIXED-SEX CONVERSATION SAMPLE**

In this section I will examine a sample of natural, spoken conversation among three native speakers of English. Of special interest are several relevant linguistic features, many of which were first provided by Lakoff, and their use in controlling or facilitating the interaction of the speakers. The participants, two men and one woman, are co-workers of equal status in a casual conversation over lunch.

While examining the linguistic features of this conversation sample, specifically those of the female's, I will comment on what approach they tend to suggest. Does the woman's use of key features stem from *deficiencies* in her language, as the dominance approach suggests, or is her speech usage simply different, caused from a different interactional style?

### **3.1 INDIRECTNESS: WOMEN'S USE OF QUESTIONS**

The function of a command can be described as an utterance designed to get someone else to do something (Montgomery 1995). Several studies (Goodwin 1980; Cameron, McAlinden and O'Leary 1989; Tannen 1990, 1994; Holmes 2001) have commented on the different ways men and women phrase commands. Men tend to use simple, direct statements, whereas women rely on 'couching their commands as inclusive suggestions for action.' (Montgomery 1995:160). Consider the following two examples, taken from my conversation sample:

- 57. Jody: Mmm...home phone.
- 58. Andy: What home?
- 59. Jody: My home. What's my phone number? Are you gonna plug it in?
  
- 91. Jody: Mmm...How many? Do you want it small?
- 92. Andy: Smallish.
- 93. Ian: I like this stuff.

- 94. Jody: Like that?
- 95. Andy: Mmm...even smaller.
- 96. Jody: Smaller? Do you want to put it here? Why don't you just bite it?

Jody has chosen (in lines 59 and 96) to couch her commands in the form of questions. Rather than stating the bald commands, 'Here's my phone number. Plug it in,' and 'Put it here. Bite it,' she opted for a more indirect approach. Lakoff (cited in Tannen 1994) describes two benefits of indirectness: defensiveness and rapport. *Defensiveness* 'refers to the speaker's preference not to go on record with an idea in order to be able to disclaim, rescind, or modify it if it does not meet with a positive response.' (p. 32). *Rapport* refers to getting one's way not by demanding it, but because the listener is working toward the same end, indirectly encouraging the common goal.

It can be argued that defensiveness can be a feature of women's powerless language, and that women's tendency to be indirect is proof of an unauthorization for command usage, as set by society's standards. (Conley, O'Barr, and Lind 1979). However, I believe a different and more valid interpretation is that Jody, however entitled, *chooses* not to make direct commands. Rather, the solidarity she creates with her command/question usage gives the benefit of rapport. This, according to Tannen, can be considered a sign of power rather than the lack of it. However, this ambiguity, often viewed with men's language as the norm, has a tendency to be labeled as powerless. As Tannen states, "Because they are not struggling to be one-up, women often find themselves framed as one-down." (1990:225).

### 3.1.1 TAG QUESTIONS

The tag question, similarly, can be interpreted as a hedging device which weakens women's speech. Of all the linguistic forms originally listed by Lakoff, the tag has come to hold the position of archetypal women's language feature (Coates 1989:67). However, researchers since Lakoff have included *context* as a deciding factor in determining a tag's usage, with an association toward conversational *role* rather than *gender*.

There are three instances in my sample which I consider function as tag questions, two by the woman and one by a man:

- 54. Andy: You don't have a phone right now...do you? (falling intonation)
- 55. Jody: Mmhm.

65. Jody: Looks good...huh? (falling intonation)

66. Andy: Mmm.

79. Jody: You didn't get scissors, eh? (rising intonation)

80. Ian: It's like talking to a machine. She obviously had this spiel...

Holmes (2001) describes four different functions of tag questions, three of which do not follow Lakoff's original proposal of tags expressing tentativeness. They are *expressing uncertainty, facilitative, softening, and confrontational*.

In my first example I have labeled the tag as *softening*. Considering the falling intonation, its function is *affective*, or addressee-oriented. It is not seen as expressing uncertainty, but rather softening an informative out of concern for the addressee. (Holmes 1984).

The second example, 'Looks good...huh?' I have decided to include as a tag form, taking in account the casual context of the recorded conversation. An equivalent tag would be, 'Looks good...doesn't it?' It follows the classic *facilitative* strategy of providing a way into the discourse for the addressee, thus creating solidarity with the speaker. It is an expression of personal opinion, generally by someone in a leadership role (Holmes 2001), in which confirmation is not required, but is elicited. This can, however, be interpreted as a method of 'fishing for approval or verification.' (Tannen 1986:39).

Cameron, McAlinden and O'Leary, in their article 'Lakoff in context: the social and linguistic functions of tag questions' (1989), state that although facilitative tags contain no informational function, their *interactional function* of including others is important. That the woman in my conversation sample provides the only facilitative tag device may support the claim that women are more attentive at keeping a conversation going (see also The Function of Minimal Responses, section 3.3), being 'co-operative conversationalist who express frequent concern for other participants in talk.' (Cameron, et al:83).

The third tag example I have categorized as *confrontational*, although the function of this tag is not as clear-cut as the other two. According to Holmes, the function of a confrontational tag is not to hedge but rather to 'strengthen the negative force' of an utterance. Unlike the other two examples, which are affective, this one is *modal*, in that it is requesting information or confirmation of information. With the rising intonation, the 'ehh?' can be translated into 'did you?', as in 'You didn't get scissors, did you?' (Jody is Canadian, and I interpret the regional variation 'eh?', as having all the features of a tag



question.). If falling intonation had been used, the criticizing force would have been more powerfully signaled. However, with the rising intonation, it is difficult to determine, and she may simply be questioning whether the addressee is in possession of scissors. Holmes acknowledges this ambiguity, stating ‘a primary function is often identifiable, but not always. Different functions often overlap and classification into different types is not always straightforward.’ (2001:310).

It is interesting to note that in tag examples one and two, both of which are addressee-orientated and act as positive politeness devices, the addressee chooses to respond to the question, in these cases with the minimal response ‘mmm.’ In doing so, the interactional process is strengthened. The confrontational tag in example three, however, goes ignored, possibly because the addressee has noticed an accusatory tone in the remark and wants to avoid further criticism. The tag question, however, still lessens the accusation and allows the current speaker to hold his turn. (see section 3.3.2 Overlaps, example 2).

### **3.2 WOMEN AND STANDARD LANGUAGE**

Sociological studies have shown that women are more likely to use linguistic forms thought to be ‘better’ or more ‘correct’ than those used by men. Trudgill (1983) provides two reasons for this. Firstly, women in our society are generally more status-conscious than men, and therefore more sensitive to linguistic norms- an idea known as *hyper-correction*. Secondly, “working-class speech...has connotations of or associations with masculinity, which may lead men to be more favorably disposed to non-standard linguistic forms than women.” (p. 87). This lower-class, non-standard linguistic variety has been defined by sociolinguist W. Labov as *covert prestige*. Linked to social class, the differences in how men and women gain, or attempt to gain status through opposing speech patterns is noticeable.

In my sample, I find two cases in which the woman has self-corrected herself as a show of sensitivity toward standard speech, while the men show no such effort. According to Montgomery, self-correction can be defined as the various ways utterances are reworked in the process of uttering them.

46. Jody: Ummm. I have to do gas...uh...call Mira and get them to do the gas...uhh...electricity...water...What else is there? I don't know.

53. Jody: Telephone. Everything has to be about six. I mean...I get six bills every month...so I guess all the bills have to be...

Studies in hyper-correction and covert prestige are generally concerned with sex in relation to social class. (For example, Trudgill 1972, 1983; Macaulay 1977; Milroy 1980; Nichols 1983). In my recorded sample, however, the three participants are of equal social status, all working at the same university as language teachers. I cannot, therefore, make the claim that Jody's self-corrections are a reflection of being status-conscious. A more likely explanation is that her standard language use stems from the social roles that are expected from men and women, and the behavior patterns that fit those assumptions. As Trudgill states, women's language is not only different, it is 'better,' and is a 'reflection of the fact that, generally speaking, more 'correct' social behavior is expected of women.' (1983:88).

### 3.3 THE FUNCTION OF MINIMAL RESPONSES

*Minimal responses* (also known as back-channel speech, positive feedback and assent terms) can be defined as the brief, supportive comments provided by listeners during the conversation interaction. They are a feature of jointly produced text, and show the listener's active participation in the conversation. (Coates 1989). Common examples include *mmm*, *uh huh*, *yes*, *yea* and *right*. Usage in my data is abundant, with both the men and woman producing examples:

41. Ian: It's laying on my mind //  
42. Jody: // Mmm.  
43. Ian: So I think if I do it now and get it over and done with I can relax.  
44. Jody: Yea...I have to //  
45. Ian: // pay ever after the phone.  
46. Jody: Mmm.
129. Andy: High energy...You probably know him...Australian.  
130. Ian: Mmm.  
131. Andy: Is he a national hero or...does anyone really care?  
132. Ian: Uhhh...He was for awhile but...I dunno. I think he's more popular outside Australia now.  
133. Andy: Mmm...an export.  
134. Ian: Yea.  
135. Jody: How do you think about this now? Do you think it's ready?  
136. Ian: It probably is ready and its beef so...

137. Jody: Yea.

Several researchers have found that, in casual conversation, it is women who take on the role as facilitator. (Zimmerman and West 1975; Fishman 1980; Holmes 2001; Tannen 1990). Men, it has been demonstrated, are less sensitive to the interactional process. One study which Holmes recounts found that women gave over four times as much of this kind of positive feedback as men (Holmes 2001:297). For women, then, ‘talk is for interaction.’ (Tannen 1990:81).

In examining my data, however, contrasting results were discovered. Jody, in 59 utterances, provided 11 instances of minimal responses, for an 18.6% rate. Andy, in 39 utterances, gave 3 minimal responses, for a 7.7% rate. Ian, the second male, however, in 47 utterances provided 15 instances, thus giving some form of minimal response 31.9% of the time.

What conclusions can be drawn from this data? One interpretation is that Ian goes against the norms of male speech strategies by being more supportive and less competitive in the discourse process.

A deeper analysis of this view, however, should consider the influence of context. Being a small group conversation in a casual context, the goals of this conversation sample are most likely focused on group solidarity (rather than control), which follows women’s strategy of being cooperative conversationalists.

According to Holmes, ‘the norms for women’s talk may be the norms for small group interaction in private contexts, where the goals of the interaction are solidarity stressing-maintaining good social relations. Agreement is sought and disagreement avoided.’ (2001:297-298). However, more research into Ian’s high percentage of supportive minimal responses would have to be done for any conclusive results to be reached.

### **3.3 SIMULTANEOUS SPEECH**

The turn-taking procedure enables conversation to continue without everyone talking at once, as studies by Sacks *et al* (1974) have shown. It is sometimes claimed, though, that women break the rules of the turn-taking procedure less frequently than men do, and conversely, are interrupted more than men are. Of importance, however, is to examine this

claim in relation to the context of the conversation. Not all simultaneous speech is a fight for power, and overlaps can indeed create connections and solidarity between two speakers.

### 3.3.1 INTERRUPTIONS

West and Zimmerman (1983) provide a widely accepted definition of *interruption* as ‘a device for exercising power and control in conversation’ and ‘violations of speakers’ turns at talk.’ (cited in Tannen 1994: 56). (Other researchers provide more detailed definitions based on location and function, such as Schegloff (1972), Bennet (1981), and Murray (1985). Rather than mistaking the first speaker’s intention to relinquish a turn, for example, or enthusiastically overlapping in agreement with the first speaker, an interruption is an intended infringement on a person’s right to speak. In mixed-sex pairs, West and Zimmerman found that interruptions were much more likely to come from men. In one study, 96 percent of interruptions were made by the man; in another, 75 percent. (Tannen, p.55-56).

In my own conversation data, similar results were found. The woman was interrupted a total of eleven times, while a man was interrupted only once. Interestingly, it is the other man who does the interrupting;

110. Andy: The Australian guy...ahh, man...that guy’s a riot...that guy’s //  
111. Ian: // crazy...  
that’s for sure.

In this example, many researchers would not consider this an interruption at all, but rather a sign of active listenership, and not threatening to the current speaker’s turn. (Coates 1998:110).

In the lengthy excerpt below, several examples are shown in which the woman is interrupted. Double slash marks indicating the interruption, while brackets indicate overlaps:

38. Jody: Umm...cancel your phone?  
39. Ian: Yea.  
40. Jody: I have to give //  
41. Ian: // It’s laying on my mind  
42. Jody: [umm]  
43. Ian: [so] I just think if I do it now and get it over and done with I can relax.  
44. Jody: Yea...I have to //  
45. Ian: // pay ever after the phone.  
46. Jody: Mmm. I have to do gas...electricity...water. What else is there? I don’t know.  
47. Ian: Cable TV. Do you [have cable TV?]

48. Jody: [cable.] I've gotta get cable transferred //  
49. Ian: // cause  
they've to come and pick up the box.  
50. Jody: Mmm.

Despite being interrupted three times in this excerpt (following the 'interruption as violation' definition provided by West and Zimmerman), Jody provides three minimal responses to support Ian's speech turns. Thus, rather than fight to maintain her speaking turn, she relinquishes it when Ian cuts in and, in turn, supports his topic.

This, according to Tannen, should not be considered an issue of power control. For an interruption to occur, two speakers must act. One must start speaking, and the other must stop. If the first speaker does not stop, no interruption occurs.

For Jody, therefore, the goal of group cohesiveness takes precedence over the desire to share her individual information and opinions, and her choice of relinquishing the floor shows sensitivity for this. For men, conversely, conversation can be likened to a contest, 'in which everyone competes for the floor...expecting women to compete for the floor like everyone else.' (Tannen 1990:212). The misunderstanding of these two different conversational styles has often been misinterpreted as supporting men's speech dominance over women.

### 3.3.2 OVERLAPS

As shown in the above section, not all violations of a speaker's turn are disruptive. *Overlapping speech*- where two speakers speak at the same time- can be a sign of supportive interaction, much like the function of minimal responses (Schegloff argues that minimal responses are not interruptions, but rather 'demonstrations of continued coordinated hearership,' cited in Woods 1989: 143).

Conversational styles and cultural variations, for example, can affect turn-taking strategies, ranging from highly regulated turns on one hand, featuring long pauses and an avoidance of overlaps, to what Tannen calls a 'high-involvement' style (1994:63), in which a faster, overlapping pace is preferred. A mismatch of these styles can create misunderstanding among participants, even though good intentions are sought.

In my data, many overlaps occur, as is natural in casual conversation. Coates (1989), in her article 'Gossip revisited,' classify seven types of simultaneous speech, most of which

do not represent an attempt to infringe the current speaker's right to a turn. (p.107). One common overlap form is when the second speaker self-selects at a TRP, or transition relevance place, i.e. the end of a clause or phrase. The first speaker continues, the second stops;

61. Jody: That's my hand phone. It doesn't work. [I don't have]  
62. Andy: [But you don't have]  
63. Jody: I don't have a hand phone.  
64. Andy: Okay.

In this example, Andy's interruption fails, and Jody continues with her statement. Andy realizes his mistake and takes his turn when Jody is finished. This, according to Tannen, would be an example of the 'overlap-as-enthusiasm' strategy. Rather than wanting to cut her off, Andy is merely showing his active participation. Jody, in this example, prefers a more defined turn-taking system where one person speaks at a time.

However, the following example shows that Jody at times prefers a more interactive style, consistent of overlap strategy;

119. Andy: Trying to uhh...you know...It's like one of those nature programs...and he'll just wrestle crocodiles...he'll rescue crocodiles from [mud pits]  
120. Jody: [So what was he doing on the show?]  
121. Andy: and he was on Oprah bringing on animals.

Here we can see another common type of simultaneous speech. Even though Jody interjects a question during Andy's turn, its purpose is not disruptive, but rather a feature of 'active listenership,' giving him the right to acknowledge the question while continuing to hold the floor. (Coates 1989:109-110).

To say that women are less likely than men to break the rules of turn-taking is misguided, often coming from examinations of public speech in which turn-taking rules are closely followed. In this public domain, strategies consist of trying to gain and keep the floor for the purpose of information exchange. In a casual context, however, linguistic features such as interruptions and overlaps can be choices used to create the preferred payoff of supportive, interactive conversation.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Through supporting evidence found in my recorded data, I have shown how women use key linguistic features in a casual conversation context. In addition, I have argued that in many of these instances, the usage has been a conscious choice, supporting the *difference approach* in sex speech styles. Rather than acknowledging an imbalance of power between the sexes, I have supported the claim that speech styles are different due to contrasting interaction purposes. For women this includes the payoff of connection and solidarity. Often evaluated with men's language as the norm, misunderstanding of women's speech intentions is common.

There are problems, however, with any research that attempts to define characteristics of men's or women's speech. First is the interpretation of differences. Associations that are found between specific feature use and women's language should not be assumed to take place in all situations or contexts. As seen in Ian's excessive minimal response use, for example, gender differences are not absolute. Secondly, many conversational features, such as tag questions and interruptions, do not have set functions (not to mention researcher's varied definitions). An interpretation of a particular feature, in addition to a speaker's intention, can only be done within the setting of the interaction.

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## APPENDIX 1: TRANSCRIPT OF CONVERSATION

Double slash marks indicate points of interruptions. Brackets show overlapping speech.

1. **Jody:** Do you want ice cream?
2. **Andy:** Before lunch?
3. **Ian:** Not me, no. I'll have some after.
4. **Jody:** I always feel like //
5. **Ian:** // You go ahead.
6. **Jody:** No?
7. **Ian:** (...?...?) totally opposite
8. **Jody:** Yes, [no]?
9. **Andy:** [Is] it self-serve?
10. **Jody:** Yes.
11. **Andy:** Get me a small dish. Thanks.
12. **Ian:** So on Monday I have to go and pick up my airline ticket in the morning
13. **Jody:** [Uh huh]
14. **Ian:** and then I'll come over after I pick that up. Will that be okay?
15. **Jody:** Yea...What time is it? I mean...what time is the //
16. **Ian:** // anytime in the morning. They're there from eight o'clock. What time are the movers gonna come?
17. **Jody:** Ten o'clock
18. **Ian:** Okay...well...
19. **Jody:** I think //
20. **Ian:** // I'll just pick up my things at about...at about...uh eight thirty or nine. That should be alright.
21. **Jody:** Do you have a private class on Monday?
22. **Ian:** No...Wednesday and Friday.
23. **Jody:** Okay. I like the purple.
24. **Ian:** Yea.
25. **Jody:** Ice cream. Yea.
26. **Andy:** Grape?
27. **Jody:** Is it grape?
28. **Andy:** What else is purple?
29. **Ian:** Baskins and Robbins licorice ice cream is purple...yeah.
30. **Jody:** [Mmm]
31. **Ian:** It's yummy, too.
32. **Jody:** This is really nice. I brought some Korean teachers...some middle school teachers here and some people were eating this. It looked really good.
33. **Ian:** That's right...yea.
34. **Jody:** We didn't order it at the time but I'm thinking we should've.
35. **Ian:** Yea...we're wishing we'd ordered it.
36. **Jody:** Who is it you're calling?
37. **Ian:** The phone company to cancel my phone.
38. **Jody:** I should really (...?...?) Ummm...cancel your phone?
39. **Ian:** Yea.

40. **Jody:** I have to give //
41. **Ian:** // It's laying on my mind
42. **Jody:** [Umm]
43. **Ian:** [So] I just think if I do it now and  
get it over and done with I can relax.
44. **Jody:** Yea...I have to //
45. **Ian:** // pay ever after the phone.
46. **Jody:** Mmm. I have to do gas...uhh...call Mira and get them to do the gas...uhh...  
electricity...water...What else is there? I don't know.
47. **Ian:** Cable t.v. Do you [have cable t.v?]
48. **Jody:** [Cable.] I've gotta get cable transferred //
49. **Ian:** // cause  
they've to come and pick up the box
50. **Jody:** [Ummm.]
51. **Ian:** [with] the transformer and give you your  
money, your //
52. **Andy:** // Telephone?
53. **Jody:** Telephone. Everything has to be about six. I mean...I get six bills every  
month...so I guess all the bills have to be //
54. **Andy:** // You don't have a phone right now... do  
you?
55. **Jody:** Umhmm
56. **Andy:** Hand phone?
57. **Jody:** Mmm... home phone.
58. **Andy:** What home?
59. **Jody:** My home. What's my number? Are you gonna plug it in? [Nine three eight]
60. **Andy:** [That number's]  
not working anymore?...at the bottom.
61. **Jody:** That's my hand phone. It doesn't work. [I don't have]
62. **Andy:** [But you don't have] //
63. **Jody:** // I don't have  
a hand phone.
64. **Andy:** Okay
65. **Jody:** Looks good...huh?
66. **Andy:** Mmm.
67. **Jody:** I think there should be no problem...just transferring over my home phone  
number that I got now with my new home...cause its right across the street...  
Right? So //
68. **Andy:** // Okay. Zero two...
69. **Jody:** Zero two nine three eight two two seven two. It's my birthday.
70. **Andy:** Really?
71. **Jody:** Tomorrow's the twenty third of August. I like this stuff
72. **Andy:** So what are you doing?
73. **Jody:** Mmm...I'm gonna actually give Emily a call. I'm gonna give Emily a call  
and go and...I need to do some womanly things today...waxing mainly...and uhh...  
she wants //

74. **Andy:** // Hey...that's not only for women.
75. **Jody:** Yea...actually...and uhh //
76. **Ian:** // It sounds like she's not gonna cut the phone off  
for me on the day I want it cut off.
77. **Jody:** Maybe you have to wait out the whole month...Is that..and then...but...  
I don't understand.
78. **Ian:** I don't know...We'll work it out [somehow I guess]
79. **Jody:** [You didn't get scissors, eh?]
80. **Ian:** It's like talking to a machine. She obviously had this spiel [that she had to]
81. **Andy:** [Its probably what  
her] job's all about.
82. **Ian:** Somebody outside the...outside the square comes along and asks her to do  
things differently
83. **Jody:** [Mmm]
84. **Ian:** she can't function.
85. **Jody:** At least...In Toronto now, that's all there is...are machines.
86. **Ian:** Mmm
87. **Jody:** You can't talk with real people.
88. **Ian:** Mmm
89. **Jody:** Government cutbacks and all that business. Do you want a //
90. **Andy:** // Yea...cut that.
91. **Jody:** Mmm. How many? Do you want it small?
92. **Andy:** Smallish.
93. **Ian:** I like this stuff.
94. **Jody:** Like that?
95. **Andy:** Mmm...even smaller.
96. **Jody:** Smaller? Do you want to put it here? Why don't you just bite it?
97. **Andy:** I was watching Oprah this morning.
98. **Ian:** Mmm.
99. **Andy:** One of my favorite shows, you know.
100. **Ian:** Mmm.
101. **Andy:** Steve Irwin.
102. **Jody:** Really?
103. **Andy:** Crocodile Hunter.
104. **Jody:** You actually like Oprah?
105. **Andy:** No.
106. **Ian:** Mmm.
107. **Jody:** Oh...I didn't think so.
108. **Andy:** The only reason I watched it was that it was something that was actually  
interesting. Crocodile Hunter.
109. **Ian:** Yea.
110. **Andy:** The Australian guy...ahh, man...that guy's a riot...that guy's //
111. **Ian:** // crazy...  
that's for sure.
112. **Jody:** I don't know who he is.
113. **Andy:** Oh...he's this...adventurer...like a biologist...a zoologist.

- 114. Jody:** Mmm.
- 115. Andy:** And he...and he he ...I think now he works at Animal Planet. He has a TV show on the Discovery Channel.
- 116. Ian:** Mmm.
- 117. Andy:** About reptiles, mammals.
- 118. Jody:** Right.
- 119. Andy:** Trying to uhh...you know...It's like one of those nature programs...  
And he'll just wrestle crocodiles, he'll rescue crocodiles from [mud pits]
- 120. Jody:** [So what was he  
doing on the show?]
- 121. Andy:** and he was on Oprah bringing on animals.
- 122. Jody:** Yea?
- 123. Andy:** He brought on some crocodiles and then his wife brought on...some baby,  
baby tigers.
- 124. Ian:** Mmm.
- 125. Andy:** But he's just...He just puts his life on the line.
- 126. Ian:** Mmm.
- 127. Andy:** In a humorous way...He's just...
- 128. Ian:** I know.
- 129. Andy:** High energy...You probably know him...Australian.
- 130. Ian:** Mmm.
- 131. Andy:** Is he a national hero or ...does anyone really care?
- 132. Ian:** Umm...He was for awhile but...I dunno. I think he's more popular outside  
Australia now.
- 133. Andy:** Mmm...an export.
- 134. Ian:** Yea.
- 135. Jody:** How do you think about this now? Do you think it's ready?
- 136. Ian:** It probably is ready and its beef so
- 137. Jody:** [Yea]
- 138. Ian:** it doesn't have to be well-cooked [as pork  
does.]
- 139. Jody:** [It would  
have been] nicer if it's like right here though...here within reach.
- 140. Ian:** Mmm.
- 141. Jody:** Can we move it?
- 142. Ian:** Its gonna be really heavy. I think you probably shouldn't try.
- 143. Jody:** No? Well...she had an idea to put it there maybe because of the balance?
- 144. Ian:** Yea...might've been...might've been.