



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

## Access to Electronic Thesis

Author: Tamara Jones  
Thesis title: Failed Active Listening in The Real World: A Study of Dominance in Casual Conversation  
Qualification: PhD  
Date awarded: 17 January 2011

**This electronic thesis is protected by the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. No reproduction is permitted without consent of the author. It is also protected by the Creative Commons Licence allowing Attributions-Non-commercial-No derivatives.**

If this electronic thesis has been edited by the author it will be indicated as such on the title page and in the text.

**Failed Active Listening in *The Real World*:  
A Study of Dominance in Casual Conversation**

Tamara Jones

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

**School of Education, University of Sheffield**

September, 2010

## Abstract

Native-English speakers generally appreciate a certain amount of supportive feedback from their listeners. However, occasionally, a positive listener response actually causes the speaker to become threatened and revert to floor-saving measures. Speakers whose first language is not English may be at a disadvantage when involved in interactions with native-English speakers because they may not be equipped with the tools to exercise conversational power, if they wish to do so. Consequently, with the goal of creating educational materials that can be easily used in English Language Teaching (ELT), this thesis examines instances of listener support which are not appreciated by the speaker. For my corpus, I pulled 69 conversations from a popular American reality TV show, *The Real World*. These conversations were selected because of the presence of floor-saving strategies in the wake of seemingly benign listener commentary. I adopt a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach with multimodal elements aimed at exploring issues of power in the struggle for conversational dominance inherent in the act of listener talk and speaker rejection of this support. These issues were exposed when I watched the video excerpts repeatedly and responded to questions set out in my framework for analysis. In this thesis, I first examine the terminology used to describe listener talk and control of the conversational floor. I propose more opaque terms, Active Listening Attempt (ALA) and, for instances in which the speaker reacts negatively to the ALA, I propose failed ALA. Moreover, I propose that the non-verbal also be considered as a “turn.” In the second section of this thesis, I find that “statement ALAs” are the most threatening to speakers. Moreover, surprisingly, I determined that the person who speaks the most is not always the holder of the conversational power and the listener’s intention may have no impact the success of his/her ALA whatsoever. In the third section of this thesis, I focus on the impact gender may have on the failure of an ALA. Specifically, I find that female speakers display greater conversational defensiveness, even in conversations with other females, than males. In the final section of my thesis, I propose some implications for ELT pedagogy.

## Acknowledgements

I want to express my gratitude to those who have supported and helped me as I worked on this thesis. First, thanks to my parents for instilling in me a thirst for education. In addition, I need to acknowledge the important contribution many of my students have made to the materials I have created as a result of this research. They were my inspiration, as well as my enthusiastic guinea pigs. I would also like to thank my supervisor, Dr. David Hyatt, for his support and valuable feedback. Finally, thanks to my wonderful husband. Without his encouragement and innovative distractions, I would not have been able to finish this project.

## Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Contents	iv
1. Introduction	1
2. Critical Literature Review	9
2.1 Listener Talk – Important Definitions	13
2.2.1 <i>Overlap and Interruption</i>	13
2.2.2 <i>Turn and Floor</i>	18
2.2 Language and Power	22
2.3 Listener Talk and Gender	30
2.4 Language in Context	39
3. Methodology	48
3.1 The Ontology and Epistemology that Position this Research	48
3.1.1 Ontology	49
3.1.2 Epistemology	51
3.2 Possible Heuristic Methodologies for this Research	54
3.2.1 Conversation Analysis	54
3.2.2 Pragmatics	58
3.2.3 Interactional Sociolinguistics	61
3.3 Critical Discourse Analysis	64
3.4 Procedure	66
3.4.1 The Real World	66
3.4.2 Ethical Issues	73
3.4.3 Transcription and Multimodality	76
3.5 Framework for Analysis	87
3.5.1 Listener Talk	91
3.5.2 Language and Power	96
3.5.3 Listener Talk and Gender	106
3.6 The Analysis	115

4. Findings	117
4.1 Defining Speaker and Listener Talk	118
4.1.1 Overlap and Interruption	118
4.1.2 Turn and Floor	122
4.1.3 Active Listening	131
4.1.4 Failed ALAs	136
4.2 Failed Active Listening Attempts and Power	145
4.2.1 Measuring Power	145
4.2.2 Power and Failed ALAs	159
4.3 Failed Active Listening Attempts and Gender	173
5. Implications and Applications of my Research for Education	192
5.1 Implications and Applications for Pedagogy	193
5.2 Implications and Applications for Educational Policy	211
5.3 Implications and Applications for Research	216
6. Conclusion	223
6.1 My Research Questions Revisited	224
6.2 Limitations of this Study	229
6.3 Areas for Further Study	233
6.4 Final Thoughts	235
 Bibliography	 238
Appendix 1 – The Real World	266
Appendix 2 – My Framework for Analysis	273
Appendix 3 – Spreadsheet Sample	275

## 1. Introduction

Native English speakers learn from a very early age not to interrupt others when they are talking. Furthermore, if asked, most speakers would claim that they do not like to be interrupted. It is, therefore, logical to assume that a discussion among native English speakers in which more than one person talked at one time would collapse into chaos, as it would be difficult to listen and follow any one train of thought. Most speakers would agree with the following opinion held by a cast member of a popular North American reality TV program and the source of data for this research project (see Appendix 1).

Shavonda: I don't like being interrupted when I speak. I can see her, "aa", "the", just waiting. And I'm like ...

MJ: The wheels are turning.

Shavonda: The wheels are turning. And I'm like, "Just listen to me."

*The Real World – Philadelphia*

What is particularly intriguing about the above conversation is that Shavonda is actually interrupted by MJ while she is complaining about how much she hates being interrupted. In fact, as one studies transcriptions of conversations, it becomes increasingly clear that a great deal of speech overlap exists in casual, spontaneous exchanges. People are constantly speaking while others are speaking. This overlap is so pervasive in North American native English speaking culture that if one adhered to the "one-at-a-time" rule (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974) in a conversation, one would run the risk of appearing distant, unfriendly, or uninterested. However, a more focused attention to instances of overlap reveals that not all forms of interruption are customary in casual conversations. Clearly, people can't always be speaking at the same time as others without the conversation resulting in the previously mentioned chaos. One has only to observe a group of friends chatting or a couple in a discussion in order to get the sense that, while people do speak at the same time, there are occasions that this overlap is appreciated and occasions that it is clearly not.

An understanding of the norms that govern overlap in a conversation is valuable to English as a Second Language educators for a number of reasons. First, as language teachers, “the more we understand about what is actually going on in language, the better position we are in to facilitate understanding in learners of how and why language is used to particular ends” (Hyatt, 2000, page 5). Thus, in order to teach our students about English, it is important for us to understand how native speakers use everyday language to accomplish social goals. Furthermore, it is ill-advised to teach the English that we instructors think we speak to students as, so often, we do not say what we think we say. Specifically, our suppositions about spoken English may not always be reflective of the way we actually speak in informal conversation, as “[w]e don’t know our own language” (Widdowson, as quoted by Hyatt, 2001). Finally, ESL students have a vested interest in learning about natural, spontaneous, spoken English and the subtleties and unspoken norms that govern it. In other words, we need to offer our students information about more than just grammar rules, pronunciation and vocabulary. We need to make available the results of research regarding how the target language is used to accomplish things and to create and maintain power structures. “Discursive practices are defined as a set of tacit rules that regulate what can and cannot be said, who can speak with the blessings of authority and who must listen, whose social constructions are valid and whose are erroneous and unimportant” (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005, page 310). An understanding of the ‘rules’ which govern overlap and the fallout that may occur when these rules are violated is certainly part of discursive practice. Moreover, discursive practices are not necessarily cross-cultural. Researchers, such as Ladau-Harjulin (1992), Berry (1994), Iwasaki (1997), Kasper and Rose (2002) and Kogure (2007), have determined that subtle, but significant, cultural differences exist between active listening and interrupting styles. As a result, international students may be ill-equipped to deal with overlap in the target language if they are unaware of the research surrounding the ‘rules’ which govern it in the target culture. Thus,



[s]ocio-linguistic research on the speech behavior of native speakers of English is important not only for establishing a description of how we perform verbally in our day-to-day interactions with other native speakers, but also for the purpose of making use of this baseline information in educational settings.

Boxer and Pickering, 1995, page 44

In other words, English Language Teaching (ELT) educators need to be aware of which linguistic choices native speakers make in order to teach them to our students. Moreover, although on the surface it may appear that “[g]enerally, Americans consider their culture egalitarian and avoid displays of power through language” (LoCastro, 2003, page 238), social power and the struggle to acquire or maintain it, is inherent in every conversational exchange, no matter how banal. Students need to be aware of the implications of their conversational moves, so they can make the individual decision whether or not to call upon their knowledge of North American discursive practice in any given situation. They may choose to revert to their own cultural norms for a variety of reasons, as documented by Davis (2007), or they may choose to adopt the norms of their host culture, but they should have the information necessary to make an educated choice.

This need, in the field of education, to offer our students not only grammatical, but also sociocultural information has prompted me to learn more about turn-taking and the overlap which commonly accompanies spontaneous conversational exchanges. After repeatedly witnessing small breakdowns in conversations which resulted from the clash of backchannel styles used by my students from different countries, I became convinced that students could benefit from thinking consciously about how they conduct conversations in their own cultures, how their host culture conducts conversations, and what the disparity in styles might mean for their own social position. Thus, because my ultimate intention has always been to create ELT classroom materials, and following the research I undertook for my MEd dissertation, *Overlap and the Real World* (Jones, 2002), I created a series of ‘academic interaction’ lessons, one of which contained strategies for backchanneling in a conversation. However, the same research left me

with several questions. One of these focused on the overlap and subsequent minor breakdowns that appeared in several examples of active listening that I analyzed. Clearly, a more detailed study of this phenomenon is necessary before I can confidently share information about this discursive practice with ESL students.

The need to understand overlap leads to several queries. What are the signals that indicate that interruption is acceptable? What signals show that interruption is not appreciated? Questions such as these have caught the focus of Conversation Analysis (CA) since Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) documented the “one-at-a-time” rule. This rule is based on their observation that in conversations, “[o]verwhelmingly, one party talks at a time” (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974, page 706), and periods of time in which there is more than one speaker talking at a time are brief. However, there has been much disagreement among analysts regarding definitions of terminology related to the study of overlap, such as floor and turn. Moreover, many theorists do not agree on what actually constitutes overlap. One type of common overlap occurs when a listener responds to what a speaker is saying. These utterances are often categorized as turns or backchannels. A turn is commonly understood to be something a speaker says and a backchannel is something a listener says. However, this very basic definition reveals a significant question that must be addressed by each researcher. When does a listener become a speaker? The “simple idea that we can identify a speaker and hearer simply by looking at the names that are indicated on the left-hand side of a transcription” (Young, 2008, page 89) is rarely adequate for most scholars. However, a consensus does not yet exist. Rather, the number of words and kinds of words a listener uses appear to have created a sort of continuum upon which conversation analysts place their definitions of these two contentious terms. In order to undertake research concerned with the topic of overlap, I feel I must first reach my own understanding of what exactly constitutes a turn and a backchannel response. Thus, my first research question must be:

*When does listener talk end and speaker talk begin?*

Regardless of what terms analysts use to describe the instances of backchannel they observe in conversation, it is clear, from both the literature and from observation of the spontaneous discussions which surround us, that forms of listener talk are widespread in native English speaker conversations. Under closer scrutiny, however, it also becomes clear that backchannel responses are not always perceived by the speaker as supportive, or even non-threatening, cases of listener talk. Indeed, echoing findings reported by authors such as Tannen (1984), Lerner (1989), and Schegloff (2000), in research I conducted concerning overlap in casual conversations (Jones, 2002), I observed that the use of backchannel occasionally resulted in “hitches and perturbations” (Schegloff, 2000, page 11) in the conversation. In other words, at times, enthusiastic listener responses actually caused speakers to rely on discreet techniques to ensure that they maintained the floor. These “breakdowns” in the conversation are intriguing not because they cause any significant damage in the conversation, but because they happen at all. These active listening attempts seem to have “failed” because they did not accomplish their apparently intended purpose, to support the speaker. Too often, researchers are quick to attribute failed active listening attempts to differences in conversation style, but I believe further exploration is needed in order to determine if the explanation is really so simple. Thus, my second research question initially appeared to be: *What is the cause of failed active listening attempts?* However, upon further reflection, it appeared that this question is too general to be adequately addressed. There could be any number of reasons, both discernable and imperceptible, for listener talk to become threatening to the speaker. Due to the limited scope of this research, it did not seem possible to attempt to answer such a broad question. Rather, it is more practical to isolate several issues related to overlap and two-at-a-time-talk and explore their impact on the success of active listening within a conversation.

One possible root cause of failed active listening attempts may lie in the effect of how the constant, often unconscious struggle for social power asserts itself in our daily interactions. “[T]he very ways in which participants design their interaction can have the effect of placing them in a relationship

where discourse strategies of greater or lesser power are differentially available to each of them” (Hutchby, 2004, page 521). Thus, in order to understand this more clearly, it is necessary to go beyond the descriptions offered by the study of Conversation Analysis, Pragmatics and Sociolinguistics and to delve into the interconnected arenas of power and language as explored by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Although the research concerning overlap has traditionally been dominated by Conversation Analysts, CA has been unable to explore these issues thoroughly because it ignores the ideological causes for the failure of some active listening attempts. For instance, the previous description of overlap would be unable to speculate as to why the speaker Shavonda, quoted at the onset of this paper, would be unperturbed by MJ’s interruption even though she is stating that she hates being interrupted. However, due to the affordance offered when a CDA approach is adopted, it appears that this method may be the best for examining this unexplored territory. Therefore, by adopting a CDA approach and focusing on effects of power on the success of backchannel responses, my research will take over where analysts have previously left off. My examination of these issues will attempt to respond to my second research question:

*What can be generalized about power by the adherence to and understanding of the “rules” that govern listeners and speakers?*

In order to determine why some active listening attempts fail while others succeed, it may be beneficial to look also to the impact of gendered behavior on speaking styles. Interestingly, a number of linguists have described the conversation styles associated with male and female behaviors as contrasting. Theorists, such as Tannen (1994), Coates (1997a), Coates (1997b) and Menz and Al-Roubaie (2008), contend that men and women listen in different ways. Men are often regarded by these researchers as competitive conversationalists. They vie for control of topics and access to the floor. On the other hand, it is argued that women are more collaborative conversationalists; they work together to build conversations and mutually develop topics. As a result, men are often

regarded as less supportive listeners than women. The powerful effect of gender on how conversationalists behave has become somewhat of a cliché in North American culture. Women constantly complain that the males in their lives “just don’t listen,” while men are perplexed by women’s complaint that they “never talk.” Nonetheless, other researchers, such as Schegloff (1997), Cameron (2007) and Weatherall (2007), have begun to problematize this causal relationship. Rather than simply concluding that one’s gender determines one’s conversation style, several theorists have explored the impact of identity upkeep on interaction. Because “[a]n individual identifies him- or herself through his or her relationships with others, such as marital partners, co-workers, and friends, [and s]ocial roles are particularly important in shaping this aspect of identity” (Hecht et al., 2005, page 263), it is logical to look to relationships when examining the impact identity can have on the success of a backchannel. For example, I am a woman and, therefore, possibly used to a certain degree of “failure” when I attempt to actively listen. However, I am also a teacher. This position of power and control may result in my being more successful with my backchannel responses. Then again, I want my students to feel comfortable in conversations with me, so I may censor my listener talk in order to allow my international, English as a Second Language (ESL) students to talk in a way that I would not if I was speaking to my co-workers. Gender is only one aspect of identity, how people perceive themselves and how others perceive them. Nonetheless, it is an interesting “ingredient,” and, due to the fact that many researchers have focused on the impact that gender has on the creation of the conversational floor, it makes sense that research which focuses on backchannel, such as this project does, also considers the influence gender has on the success or failure of backchannel. However, although it is important to consider the impact that gendered behavior might have on the success of active listening attempts, it is also advisable to avoid essentialism. Thus, rather than attempt to conclusively describe the active listening styles of men and women, I would simply prefer to consider gendered behavior as one factor which may influence interaction. “In fact, discourse analysts often look at two contrasting groups not to set up a binary

contrast, but in order to get ideas about what the poles of a continuum may look like” (Gee, 1999, page 120). As a result, my third research question is:

*Are failed active listening attempts more frequent between genders and how do different listening behaviors result in this?*

In order to respond to these three research questions, I have turned to the conversationally rich genre of reality television; specifically, my corpus of misinterpreted backchannel comes from *The Real World*, a popular American program. The corpus consists of 69 conversations from six seasons of the show spanning 15 years. Based on my observations, I will offer my definition of the key terms that I have described as causing discord among those interested in conversational interaction. Specifically, I will delineate the difference between *overlap* and *interruption*, and *turn* and *floor*. As a result of these different classifications, an innovative definition of back-channel will emerge. This paper will also discuss the impact that the struggle for social power and the bearing that gender has on the success or failure of back-channel responses. First, this paper will offer a review of the literature associated with overlap and turn-taking, as well as issues of power and gender. I will also clarify the ontological and epistemological positions that supply the basis for this framework of study and provide a critical comparison of a variety of possible methodological approaches to this research, as well as a detailed explanation of my choice to approach these questions using Critical Discourse Analysis. Following my argument in favor of assuming a CDA perspective, I will explain my methods of data collection and transcription. I will supplement this explanation with a critical review of my own positionality and how it will affect the compilation and documentation of instances of failed back-channel. Finally, in the most significant parts of this paper, I will present the findings of this study and detail the impact these conclusions may have on the field of education.

## 2. Literature Review

The great empiricist philosopher, John Locke, is quoted as saying, “There cannot be greater rudeness than to interrupt another in the current of his discourse” (Locke, 1693, section 145). Three hundred years after his death, most people would still agree that they strongly dislike frequent oral interjections when they are telling a story or making a point. Unfortunately, however, in North American English conversation, “speaker-shift is seldom, if ever, an entirely smooth process” (Orestrom, 1983, page 135). As a result, if people quietly pay attention to the conversations occurring around them, it becomes instantly evident that, in fact, listeners’ talk overlaps that of speakers’ with remarkable frequency in conversation.

In order to examine this phenomenon, it is first necessary to clearly understand what is meant by terms commonly utilized when investigating instances of overlapped utterances. A brief glimpse at the literature associated with this topic is sufficient to notice that analysts do not agree on the definition of terminology such as *floor*, *turn*, or even *interruption* (Edelsky, 1981). Furthermore, many researchers do not perceive two-at-a-time talk in the same light. For example, analysts including Duncan (1972), Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974), and Schegloff (2000) view simultaneous talk as a problem in a conversation that needs resolution. Other studies, such as those conducted by Tannen (1984), Dunne and Ng (1994), Gardner (2001), Shriberg, Stolcke, and Baron (2001) and Leung (2009), consider overlap to be an expected and positive aspect of naturally occurring conversation that signifies enthusiasm for the subject and other speakers. Clearly, an understanding of what others have meant by these terms and concepts is necessary before a comprehensive review of the literature concerned with overlap can be undertaken.

Before beginning research connected with simultaneous speech and listener talk, it is also helpful to survey an overview of the theories associated with turn-taking. Specifically, the groundbreaking work of Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) regarding turn-taking and the innovative notion of backchannel responses written about by Ygnve (1970) form the basis of the literature concerned with overlap and listener talk. However,

although this area of study shares common origins, the subsequent research has moved in a number of diverse directions. One group of analysts, including Berry (1994), Young and Lee (2004) and Kogure (2007) describe the active listening strategies employed by speakers of languages other than English. Furthermore, Fairley (2000) and Wong (2000) approach the subject from a slightly different angle in their studies of how nonnative speakers of English employ active listening, or backchanneling, in their conversations. All of this research is valuable in that most investigators seem to agree that overlap and the tolerance of noise in a conversation varies from culture to culture. Additionally, Obeng (1991), Auer (1996), Cowley (1997), Wennerstrom (2001), Ottesjo (2002), and other researchers focus on describing the prosody associated with two-at-a-time talk and the organization of talk-in-interaction. Other researchers have expressed interest in the sequence and structure associated with turn-taking in conversation. Specifically, Duncan (1972), Orestrom (1983), Psathas (1995), Schegloff (1996), and Lerner (2004) weigh in on what structures a turn and how talk-in-interaction is organized. Finally, some theorists have followed up on the research questions initiated by Ygnve (1970) related to listener talk. For example, Gardner (2001) offers an inventory of listener utterances. Interestingly, however, in spite of the intense scholarly scrutiny of overlap and active listening, little work has yet been done regarding the anomaly I noticed in my MEd research, specifically the minor conversational breakdowns that occur when a backchannel response is seemingly perceived by the speaker as a hostile bid for the conversational floor. It seems, as Coupland, Wiemann and Giles (1991) contend, that much of the research in this area has adopted a 'Pollyanna perspective,' in that theorists have tended to focus on the 'good' conversational behavior, for instance backchannel, and ignore any 'bad' reactions to it. However, by focusing only on how and when backchannel works in a conversation, researchers have neglected to notice that, quite often, the message of support inherent in backchannel is somehow misunderstood. Thus, as this research acknowledges that language is "pervasively and even intrinsically flawed, partial, and problematic" (Coupland, Weimann, and Giles, 1991, page 3), it is



positioned to focus an analytic spotlight on an interesting feature of casual conversation, failed backchannel.

A second area of literature that is significant to the response to the research questions is the relationship between power and talk-in-interaction; to fully examine this connection, it is necessary to turn to the theories of Critical Discourse Analysis. CDA contends that language both affects the identities assumed by speakers and listeners and is impacted by social identities and the distribution of power within a conversation. Moreover, Critical Discourse Analysts, such as Fairclough (1995), Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, and Vetter (2000), Jager (2001), Meyer (2001), and van Dijk (2006) advocate an approach to analysis that allows the researcher to go beyond what is baldly stated in a conversation to consider the social forces that prompt particular utterances. The primary purpose of CDA is the emancipation of those who are dominated by more powerful factions of society. If inequality is perpetuated in every day failed active listening attempts, CDA is an effective approach for delving into these issues. Moreover, as conversationalists become aware of this inequality, they also become aware of how to deconstruct these dominant hegemonic discursive practices and become increasingly more able either to participate in the practice in a more advantageous way or, better yet, to reconstruct a more democratic conversational norm.

The final area of literature that is significant to the response of the research questions is the relationship between gender and talk-in-interaction. Researchers, including Edley and Weatherall (1997), Cameron (1998), Kiesling (1998) and Coates (2003) focus on identifying the competitive characteristics of masculine conversational styles while others, such as Coates (1996 and 1997b) and Leung (2009), focus their analysis on the collaborative conversational styles of women. These inquiries concerned with issues of gender and conversation almost inevitably contain some mention of power. Sociologists, such as Tannen (1994), Lakoff (2002), Schmidt-Mast (2002b), and Weatherall (2002), often introduce concepts of power and identity when describing conversational interaction between women and men. More specifically, these authors frequently

contend that conversational dominance, which is the territory of men, leads to the domination of women by men. In other words, although “[t]here is an element of choice as to how far individuals perform gender in particular circumstances” (Davies, 2003, 118), women are often viewed as being rendered powerless by their collaborative, non-competitive conversational styles. However,

[r]esearching the contingencies that exist in the speech of women and men is a complicated task, and providing evidence of causality is even more difficult. The actual intentions of individuals are not readily accessible, especially when enculturation and conditioning from childhood play a considerable part in the behavior of women and men.

Hannah and Murachver, 2007, page 287

Increasingly, researchers have been rethinking the argument that men and women behave in certain ways in conversations simply because they are male or female. Instead, conversationalists make certain moves for a variety of reasons, including a social power independent of gender and the desire to create or maintain an identity, of which gender is merely a small element. A number of theorists, including Goffman (1974), Gumperz (1982), Antaki and Widdicombe (1998) and Bucholtz (2003), comment on the social creation of identity and stress the joint creation of who people are and how they are perceived.

Who we are lies in the way we live day to day, not just in what we think or say about ourselves, though that is of course part (but only part) of the way we live. Nor does identity consist solely of what others think or say about us, though that too is part of the way we live.

Wenger, 1998, page 151

Rather than search for a convenient, but potentially misleading, causal link between gender and backchannel, a research perspective associated with a Critical Discourse analyst’s interest in conversational and social power, coupled with an interest in observing the gender patterns which emerge from the data, may yield interesting findings.

## 2.1 Listener Talk – Important Definitions

Although the study of the “traffic rules” (Mey, 1993, page 138) which govern conversation and reflect our expectations of overlap and backchannel responses has been very detailed and descriptive, researchers cannot seem to reach a consensus regarding a number of definitions commonly used when reporting about this topic. First, although “[o]verlap is an important inherent characteristic of conversational speech” (Shriberg, Stolcke, and Baron, 2001, page 1). Exactly what may be categorized as an overlap and what is viewed as an interruption is an issue of incongruity in the literature. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, researchers, such as Murray (1987), Murray and Covelli (1988), James and Clark (1993), Ng, Brooke and Dunne (1995), Coates (1996), Schegloff (2007), Hannah and Murachver (2007), Menz and Al-Roubaie (2008) and Ladegaard (2009) have differed regarding the most accurate use of the terms *interruption* and *overlap*. Second, a related discrepancy appears in how theorists, including Duncan (1972), Goffman (1976), Edelsky (1981), Orestrom (1983), Tannen (1984), Gardner (2001) and Stivers (2004), understand the terms *turn* and *floor*. Third, perhaps much of the disagreement regarding whether or not listener talk constitutes a *turn* originates in the lack of a clear definition of *backchannel* among linguists, for example Ygnve (1970), Duncan (1972), Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974), Goffman (1976), Orestom (1983), Graddol, Cheshire and Swann (1994), Coates (1997a and 1997b), Gardner (2001 and 2004), Lerner (2004) and Barbieri (2008). Undoubtedly, the need for a clear, objective definition of both of these terms exists if researchers are to overcome the criticism that the “definitions of these concepts and the criteria for their identification in a corpus have been considerably confused in the research tradition” (O’Connell, Kowal and Kaltenbacher, 1990, page 353).






### 2.1.1 *Overlap and Interruption*

The organization of turn taking practices in talk-in-interaction was first formally documented by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974). Their research suggests that talk is usually structured to allow for one speaker at a

time while providing for “occurrences of more than one speaker at a time, [which] are common but brief” (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974, page 700). Furthermore, they identify transition-relevant points (TRPs) in which it is possible for the speaker to hand over the floor to a new speaker without excessive gap or overlap. Although this research was groundbreaking, several criticisms of the conclusions have come to light. The first problem of particular relevance to this research lies in the treatment of overlap as an undesirable phenomenon. In 2000, Schegloff returned to the notion of turn taking to address overlap. He contends that “stretches of overlapping talk are characterized by hitches and perturbations in the talk” (Schegloff, 2000, page 11). However, although Schegloff provides readers with a comprehensive list of both the various types of overlap and the methods adopted by speakers when they feel their bid for the floor is being challenged, his Conversation Analytical approach does not allow researchers to go further and question the reasons behind the speaker’s defensive reaction.

For example, in the following conversation taken from the corpus for this research project, *The Real World*, Chris, Kyle and Theo have just returned from an art gallery where they saw a series of homoerotic photographs. This clip is enveloped by a two “Confessionals,” or clips in which the roommates speak directly to the camera. In a “Confessional,” the speaker appears to be alone in a small booth and is free to share his/her private opinions. Though the “Confessional” might have been recorded before or after the target conversation, the video is edited so that the audience is exposed to not only the interaction, but also the private views of the speakers. Theo comes from a conservative, religious background, and he has said in one of his “Confessionals” that he believes homosexuality to be wrong. Kyle is noticeably neutral on the subject. Neither roommate knows for certain that Chris is gay at this point. Chris delays coming out to his roommates because, as he says in one of his “Confessionals,” he believes that his sexual preference is only one aspect of his personality. At the time of this conversation, Chris is unpacking groceries at the kitchen island, Kyle is eating pasta directly across the island from Chris, and Theo is playing pool beside the open kitchen area.

## Conversation 1: Chicago – The Bonds (2002)

			Chris	Kyle	Theo
0:47:34			It's, it's cool to see art like that, though.		
0:47:36					It made a bold statement
0:47:39		K chews		I think that was the purpose of it.	
0:47:41				It was like "au natural", you know?	
0:47:42		C looks down and opens his bag	I loved those bonds. The bonds ... Yeah, <b>the ropes</b> around muscle, breaking free from humanity.	Yeah.	The ropes?

In this conversation, Chris is commenting on the art work. The purpose of Theo's backchannel, "The ropes?" appears either to request clarification or to encourage Chris to continue speaking. Regardless of the reason, however, his utterance is said while Chris is speaking. This is in clear violation of the "one speaker at a time" (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974, page 700) rule and it does result in Chris repeating both his own previous utterance and Theo's words in an attempt to maintain the floor (as highlighted in yellow). His "The bonds, yeah, the ropes" is an unambiguous

example of Schegloff's "hitches and perturbations" (Schegloff, 2000, page 11), but is this two-at-a-time talk *overlap* or *interruption*?

Researchers, such as Murray and Covelli (1988), James and Clark (1993), Greenwood (1996) and Schmidt Mast (2002), have used the two terms interchangeably. For instance, overlap is referred to as an "(unintended) error in fine-tuning of turn-taking within conversation" (Murray, 1987, page 102), and interruptions have been described as "instances of simultaneous speech in which the utterance of the first speaker was disrupted by the second speaker" (Ng, Brooke and Dunne, 1995, page 373). These definitions sound similar; however, most speakers would react quite differently to an overlap such as Theo's "The ropes?" than if he had jumped into Chris's speech with a sentence like, "No, for me the whole exhibition was uncomfortable." A disagreement or an attempt to seize the conversational floor gives the impression that the interrupter wants "the floor to himself [or herself], not when the current speaker has finished but now" (Ladd, Scherer and Silverman, 1986, page 159). Thus, there is a striking difference that most speakers would immediately recognize between an *overlap* and an *interruption* which is simply ignored by those who treat the terms as interchangeable.

Other researchers deal with these terms solely in relation to the happenings at a turn-relevance place (TRP). For instance, Zimmerman and West (1975) describe *interruption* as "a violation of a speaker's right to complete a turn" (Zimmerman and West, 1975, page 117) but *overlap* as "errors indigenous to the speaker transition process" (Zimmerman and West, 1975, page 117). This differentiation fails in terms of backchannel on two counts. First, it does not account for the issue of intent regarding the "violation." Who gets to decide if there is a violation: the current speaker, or the listener attempting to backchannel? In the conversation above, Theo's speech is supportive, and there is no evidence to suggest that he is attempting to seize control of the floor; his intent might simply be to encourage Chris to continue. However, Chris reads his utterance as a bid for the floor, and he reacts with a floor-saving measure. Which reading of the situation is correct? Zimmerman and West (1975) do not elaborate. Second, their definitions fail to explain the simultaneous talk commonly

associated with backchannel. This overlapping speech is not necessarily confined to TRPs and may appear in the middle of the speech, as it does in this conversation. Moreover, as a backchannel is not a bid for the floor, the overlap described as a mistaken early start is problematic. Again, the attempt to fit backchannel into preexisting notions of *interruption* and *overlap* proves more difficult than originally apparent.

This limitation stems from the theoretical underpinnings of CA, specifically Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodology. Garfinkel's landmark research explores, among other things, reflexivity, or the connection between conversation and context. "Put simply, the basic point is that it is the *combination* of words and context which gives the utterance sense" (Potter, 1996, page 44). However, by *context*, Garfinkel appears to refer to the immediate environment of the utterance, not the larger social forces which influence the conversational situation. Thus, because Schegloff and other Conversation Analysts are limited to a description of only what explicitly occurred in the conversation, they are constrained to merely describing the hitches and perturbations and they are unable to speculate as to why breakdowns may have occurred. Thus, CA would be unable to comment on the reason for Chris's exaggerated response to Theo's supportive backchannel.

A similar restriction limits scholars who study overlap under the lens of Pragmatics. Pragmatics is, quite simply, "the study of speaker meaning" (Yule, 1996, page 3). In other words, Pragmaticians concern themselves with the intersection of linguistic choices and context in the creation of meaning; however they are not as a rule, interested in the external forces which cause an utterance to be understood in a given way. In addition, Pragmatics scholars tend to view conversation as generally cooperative. Ladegaard (2009) questions this generally accepted tenet when he takes exception to Grice's Cooperation Principle suggesting that we "make [our] conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which [we] are engaged" (Grice, 1975, page 45). Rather, Ladegaard (2009) proposes that issues such as social inequality of the speakers or the desire for intergroup saliency can impinge on what Levinson (1997) argues is a

universal rule of human interaction. The closest a Pragmatician can come to speculating about the hidden agenda of conversationalists is through their notion of conversational implicature, by noting that “it is speakers who communicate meaning via implicatures and it is listeners who recognize those communicated meanings via inference” (Yule, 1996, page 40). However, there is no mention of what is to be made of a conversation in which the implicature communicated by the speaker is misunderstood by the listener, as is the case in the above conversation among Chris, Kyle and Theo. In this exchange, Chris seems to misread the intended message of support inherent in Theo’s backchannel and responds with exaggerated floor saving measures. As a result of its ‘Pollyanna perspective’ (Coupland, Weimann, and Giles, 1991), Pragmatics is unable to comment on this. Thus, as a result of the limitations posed by CA and Pragmatics, this project proposes a fresh approach to notions of *interruption* and *overlap* which allows for the consideration of potentially misunderstood supportive backchannel.

### 2.1.2 *Turn and Floor*




As overlap often occurs as a result of backchannel and may occur at a TRP, it is important to examine exactly what is meant by the term *turn* and how it relates to listener talk. The notion of turn-taking, first introduced by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) implies that speakers do just that; they take turns when engaged in conversation. With this description comes the tidy notion of a turn as speaker talk. However there is no mention of the role that listener talk plays in a conversation other than a brief and vague discussion of *recipient design* which refers to “a multitude of respects in which the talk by a party in a conversation is constructed or designed in ways which display an orientation and sensitivity to the particular other(s) who are the co-participants” (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974, page 727). In other words, they maintain that a turn is a communally constructed entity and that listeners have some control over turn length. There is, nevertheless, no specific description of how the co-participants influence the conversation in terms of backchannel.




Subsequent research has explored adjacency pairs and existence of listener talk; however, many linguists, such as Duncan and Niederehe (1974), McCarthy (1991), Schegloff (1996) and Taboada (2006), do not consider backchannel to be a legitimate turn. “Now, those booster-like encouragements could be counted as a turn at talk, yet obviously he [or she] who provides them does not ‘get the floor’ to do so, does not become the ratified speaker” (Goffman, 1976, page 275). Furthermore, Orestrom (1983) contends that a “speaking-turn is a concept that conveys new information” (Orestrom, 1983, page 23), and, as a backchanneled response does not usually convey new information, it cannot be considered as a turn in itself.

Nonetheless, more recently, researchers, such as Hannah and Murachver (2007), Leung (2009) and Trester (2009), have pointed out that backchannel has “been shown to do important work to help structure and organize everyday conversational interaction” (Trester, 2009, page 150). In other words, without backchannel, interaction as we know it would be impossible. For example, in the following conversation between Andrei and Todd, their band is discussing how they are going to get money to shoot their music video. Andrei is a cast member on *The Real World* as well as a member of the band and Todd is the manager of the band. They have all know each other since they were children, and their relationship is friendly and close.

#### Conversation 2: New York 1 – Kidnapping (1992)

			<b>Andrei</b>	<b>Todd</b>
1:37:24				Okay, that's it. We're going to do this whole thing
1:37:27				and pretend that Dean was kidnapped, and his parents would pay at least
1:37:31			(laughs)	Two million

1:37:33				At least two million in our bank
---------	---	--	--	----------------------------------

Without Andrei's laughter, Todd's joke would fall flat; it would simply not work.

[L]aughter has several roles in playful talk. It signals amusement and appreciation when something humorous is said. It signals the presence in a collaborative floor of co-participants who are not the main speaker but who by laughing can show their involvement in the ongoing talk. It also marks the ongoing talk as solidary in that collaboratively constructed humor relies on in-group knowledge and familiarity. Finally, it plays an important role in structuring playful talk, both in marking speakers' recognition of the establishment of a play frame and in marking its close.

Coates, 2007, page 45

Thus, because backchannel serves such a vital role in conversation, it seems remiss that it not be granted the same status in analysis as a full clause regardless of whether or not they result in the speaker being given the floor. Norrick (2009) apparently agrees, as he notes that the sound *um* forms a complete turn which signals dissent in the following conversation.

Madonna: oh well you can move it in there, put it on the floor.  
I brought some candy.  
Earl: um.

Norrick, 2009, page 869

If a sound like *um* can be categorized as a turn because it conveys a negative meaning, it stands to reason that other sounds (such as Andrei's laughter above), words and phrases should also be considered as turns when they communicate the support of the listener.

A variety of other researchers have elaborated on the description of backchannel offered by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974). Some, including Kendon (1978), Graddol, Cheshire and Swann (1994), and Novick, Hansen and Ward (1996) have commented on the extra-linguistic signals

sent by participants in conversations. Others focus on describing the role of prosody in turn taking. Specifically, analysts, such as Nakajima and Allen (1993), Auer (1996), Local, Kelly and Wells, (1986), Brazil (1997), Wells and Macfarlane (1998), Schegloff (1998), Wichmann (2000), Wennerstrom (2001) and Ottesjo (2002) argue that prosodical features act as “a ‘filter’ between syntax and turn-taking. The filter would be used by participants to decide which possible syntactic completions may be heard as possible turn completions” (Auer, 1996, page 85). Other authors, including Philips (1976), Berry (1994), Iwasaki (1997) and Young and Lee (2004) describe the active listening strategies employed by speakers of languages other than English. Furthermore, Fairley (2000) and Wong (2000) approach the subject from a slightly different angle in their studies of how nonnative speakers of English employ backchannel in their conversations. Clearly, although backchannel is common, it is by no means a simplistic event.


Although a great deal of interesting and influential research has thus far been conducted regarding overlap and backchannel in conversation, there remain some unresolved discrepancies. First, as noted in the previous section, differing definitions of key terms have hindered the applicability of these findings. In order for other analysts to easily compare and comment on the literature associated with overlap and backchannel, it is necessary for authors to reach an agreed-upon set of definitions. Second, researchers are often limited in their conclusions by the restrictions associated with their methodology. Due to the methodological constraints associated with CA and Pragmatics, researchers can merely describe the instances of overlap; they cannot speculate as to why such instances have occurred. However, Critical Discourse Analysts argue that this is a far too limited reading of the conversation. “What is ‘said’ in a text always rests upon ‘unsaid’ assumptions, so part of the analysis of texts is trying to identify what is assumed” (Fairclough, 2003, page 1). For example, what is said in the conversation about the art showing is Chris’s repetition, “The bonds, yeah, the ropes”. This rests upon possible ‘unsaid’ assumptions that Theo is trying to steal the conversational floor or that his real reaction to the exhibition is far more negative than he is willing to admit to Chris on the surface. In fact, the entire conversation from Chris’ perspective may potentially rest on the

'unsaid' assumption that he needs to test the water regarding his roommates' tolerance for homosexuality before he feels safe in coming out. Moreover, when Todd repeats, "at least two million", as he jokes about kidnapping one of the band members, what he says may rest on an 'unsaid assumption' that Andrei is going to attempt to steal the floor. As we can not be sure exactly what Chris' or Todd's 'unsaid' assumptions are, the goal of a Critical Discourse Analysts is an "interpretation of single aspects [which] fit together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle and form a unitary picture" (Jager and Meier, 2009, page 56). In this research project, by employing a CDA approach to exchanges from *The Real World* it is possible to examine the assumptions that motivate speakers to act and react.

## 2.2 Language and Power

People assume a variety of identities throughout their daily lives. We are workers, spouses, friends, siblings, neighbors, as well as a seemingly endless assortment of other, often more specific selves. The selection is seemingly endless because not only does every different situation call for a different, specialized identity, but also, the social self is constantly undergoing re-evaluation by both the individual and the other participants in the situation. For example, in the following conversation, Eric and Taryn have just started to date. Eric is a cast member of *The Real World*, and Taryn is a model. In a "Confessional," Eric has spoken about his nervousness around Taryn, as she has dated primarily musicians in the past, and he does not see himself as belonging to that particular group. They are sitting in Eric's room, and the mood is intimate.

## Conversation 3: New York 1 – Playing the Guitar (1992)

			Eric	Taryn
1:03:08			I, like, I just can't, my fingers, I, I just can't, like, it,	
1:03:12		T leans forward	it's, like, hard to push down the strings.	
1:03:14		E plays air guitar	I don't know. I just can't do it.	You think, you've got to have, like, like, calluses on your fingers. You know?
			I can't do it.	
1:03:30		T plays air guitar		Duh, duh, duh. That's like my guitar playing.

“Identity helps people ‘locate’ themselves in their social worlds. By helping to define where they belong and where they do not belong in relation to others, it helps to anchor them in their social worlds, giving them a sense of place” (Spencer-Oatey, 2007, page 642). In other words, in this conversation, Eric is eager to differentiate himself from the kind of guys Taryn is used to dating. Perhaps openly acknowledging this unique identity gives him a sense of confidence in the relationship. By situating himself as lacking musical ability, Eric “polarize[s] the representation of ‘us’ (in-groups) and ‘them’ (out-groups)” (Baxter and Wallace, 2009, page 413). Moreover, by expressing her agreement and including herself the polarization between Eric and the musical community, Taryn “construct[s] s strong sense of solidarity and cohesive identity as a means of self-validation against those who would ‘do power’ over them” (Baxter and Wallace, 2009, page 413). However, once Eric and Taryn become more comfortable with each other and eventually break up, this co-created, non-musical identity appears to

become less important to them and it is not mentioned again in the remainder of the footage. Clearly, what was a significant element in Eric's image of himself does not maintain that significance forever; one's identity is always in a state of flux.

On the one hand, people form cognitive representations of who they are that are relatively stable and enduring. On the other hand, they also construct and negotiate their identities through social interaction. They not only enact elements of their personal, relational and collective selves through the process of social interaction, but they also negotiate and construct them, with the result that identities develop and emerge through interaction.

Spencer-Oatey, 2009, page 642

Thus, people take on a seemingly infinite number of interrelated roles, each depending on a different situation or context, and consequently, identity is considered as a project or as a rhizomatic becoming by philosophers such as Deleuze and Guattari (1987). In other words, rather than one's identity being like a tree-like monolith, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argue that one is more like grass; one is an interconnected, ever-expanding set of identities. In the case of Eric, his identity is not fixed and monolithic; he is many more identities than just a person lacking musical talent. Instead, Eric's character more closely resembles Deleuze and Guttari's (1987) grass with many roots or identities that cannot always be easily seen. Rather than having only one identity, Eric is many interconnected identities. He is, among many other things, a non-musician, a bad-boy, a friend, a son, a model. These identities emerge and fade as they are significant to him and to those with whom he interacts. Thus, when this interaction between Eric and Taryn is considered with respect to the rest of the corpus, it becomes clear that the concept of identity is complex and variable.

According to West and Zimmerman (1985), individual identities can be distinguished according to three types: *master identities* which are associated with factors such as race and gender; *situated identities* which are connected with the roles one plays and the jobs one does; and, *discourse identities* which reflect the task one has assumed in a conversation. Due to the fact that these identities are not fixed (Eric moves

from the role of speaker to listener and from out-group to in-group in a matter of seconds) there has been a great deal of interest in learning how social identities are created. It appears that people have some control over how they are perceived. “Who you are is partly a matter of how you speak, how you write, as well as a matter of embodiment – how you look, how you hold yourself, how you move and so forth” (Fairclough, 2003, page 159). Therefore, while the clothes we choose to wear and the way we move our bodies are among the many subtle and often subconscious tools available for identity creation, “[o]ne of the most fundamental ways we have of establishing our identity, and shaping other people’s views of who we are is through our use of language” (Thornborrow, 1999, page 158). Thus, scholars interested in understanding why people make the conversational choices they do, such as Gee (1999) and Fairclough (2003), often turn their focus to notions of identity and how the enactment of our social selves is affected by and affects the conversation that is taking place.

In addition to being partially constructed by one’s personal choices, social identity is also socially constructed.

Your social identity is not always something you can determine on your own; it is also bound up with how others perceive you. In fact it would be difficult to conceive of identity as a purely individual matter. Your perception of yourself as an individual can only be in relation to others, and your status within a social group. This status can be constructed through language use in various ways.

Thornborrow, 1999, page 165

Thus, although individuals have some control over how they are perceived, creation of one’s social identity is a joint effort. Furthermore, while social identities are being created through conversation, mini-power struggles are occurring, as “[b]uilding, maintaining, and changing dominance relationships or hierarchy structures involves communication” (Schmid-Mast, 2002a, page 421). In other words, because language is such an important influence on the performance of identity, it can also be an integral factor in issues of dominance and social power. In fact, some Critical Discourse Analysts argue that language actually creates identity and power rather than merely

affecting them. “[R]ather than autonomous subjects using discourse to construct identities, it is discourse that produces power-knowledge relations within which subjects are positioned, identities are constructed and bodies are disciplined” (Ainsworth, 2004, page 338). Thus, it appears that researchers, such as Trudgill (1974), Tannen (1993), Holmes (1997), Gee (1999), Bucholtz (2003), Fairclough (2003), Hutchby (2004) and Young (2008), provide no clear-cut answer to the “chicken or egg” question that has plagued the study of language and identity. Language facilitates the creation of identity and distribution of power, and, in turn, social identity and power play a role in determining what linguistic choices speakers make. Furthermore, “[d]iscourses in the social world are seen as constructive as they do not simply describe the social world, but they are the mode through which the world of ‘reality’ emerges” (Macleod, 2002, page 18).

This realization is expanded upon in Bourdieu’s notion of habitus. “Habitus is a kind of transforming machine that leads us to ‘reproduce’ the social conditions of our own production, but in a relatively unpredictable way” (Bourdieu, 1990, page 87). In other words, habitus describes the formation of self as a composite of socially imposed values. Specifically, in the above conversation between Eric and Taryn, both speakers’ linguistic choices have been shaped in response to the social arena in which they exist and in which they struggle for cultural capital and, in the case of Eric and Taryn, symbolic capital. The speakers are limited in their social moves because they have acquired lasting systems of perceptions and actions. In other words, Eric does not openly state that he is attracted to Taryn at the onset of their relationship because his habitus does not encourage this kind of openness at the beginning of a romantic relationship. Eric’s “speech is determined not by language, but by the social conditions under which agents use language to position themselves” (LiPuma, 1993, page 198). Further,



Bourdieu argued that agents [act] within socially constructed ranges of possibilities durably inscribed within them (even in their bodies) as well as within the social world in which they [move]. Moreover the relation between agent and social world is a relation between two dimensions of the social, not the separate sorts of beings.

Calhoun, 1993, page 74

Thus, although individuals have a seemingly endless set of options for identity enactment, their options are not, in fact, infinite. Rather, they have a large, but limited array of linguistic choices. These choices are restricted, Bourdieu argues, by the social constraints imposed by the world around us. Furthermore, just as identity is not fixed, “habitus are permeable and responsive to what is going on around them” (Reay, 2004, page 434). As conventions for dating change in time, Eric’s wooing may also change. In addition, if Eric were to relocate to a radically different culture where dating is much more complicated and access to members of the opposite sex is restricted, the habitus that prompts his linguistic choices would most likely change. Therefore, people are constantly learning social rules by internalizing socializations through conversations. In other words, we learn from past situations how to act in future situations and our identities are shaped by conversations which are, in turn, shaped by our identities.

Many authors concerned with the connection between identity, power, and language have focused on the linguistic variation and how unexpected linguistic choices have resulted in the creation of individual and group identity. Linguists, such as Edwards (1985), Singh (1999), and Schilling-Estes (2004), have examined the use of vernacular and register in the creation of ethnic or social identities. Other researchers have explored the effects further factors have on the distribution of conversational power and the social impact this unequal distribution has on society. For instance, Mackenzie (2000) reports on the influences of age and education on spoken discourse in her examination of the conversation patterns of the elderly. Although these studies are useful in supplementing our understanding of the connection between language, identity, and power, they largely focus on word choices and neglect other elements of conversation, such as turn-taking. There is “variable accessibility of different turn types and discursive

resources to [conversational] participants” (Walker, 2004, pages 133 – 134); those conversationalists who have more social power in a given situation may also have more interactional tools at their disposal. However, the majority of theorists concerned with issues of identity do not consider the impact that the availability of discursive resources has on turn-taking. Thus, this body of research is lacking studies which demonstrate how overlap and backchannel factor in to the creation of identity and how failed active listening attempts facilitate the unequal distribution of social power within a conversation.

Clearly language, power, and identity are all inextricably interwoven. “To speak is inevitably to situate one’s self in the world, to take up a position, to engage with others in a process of production and exchange, to occupy a social place” (Hanks, 1993, page 139). Furthermore, occupying a social place involves bids for social dominance and subsequent power struggles. “The fact that people have different access to different identities and activities, connected to different sorts of status and social goods, is a root source of inequality in society” (Gee, 1999, page 13). Who we are and what social position we occupy is a direct result of how we converse, which itself is a direct result of who we are and what position we occupy. Moreover, “much of our linguistic energy is tied to our evocation of our past selves and our projection into future conditions” (Bailey, 1985, page 15). Thus, when Eric confesses to Taryn that he is unable to play the guitar, he is not only engaging in a simple conversational act. He is also participating with Taryn in the creation of a temporary social identity. Moreover, when Taryn attempts to support his identity creation with backchannel, he becomes threatened and reverts to the floor-saving measure of repetition. Therefore, he is also involving himself in a struggle, albeit a subconscious, minor one, for conversational dominance and social power.

Perhaps the first step in a discussion of the relationship between power and conversation is to determine who has the power in any given conversation. In their study involving students’ assessment of others and themselves, Ng, Brooke and Dunne (1995) found that “[i]nfluence rankings closely matched the amount a person talked” (Ng, Brooke and Dunne, 1995, page 370). In other words, those who spoke more in an interaction were

perceived as having more power and influence in the interaction. Other researchers, such as Zimmerman and West (1975), Edelsky (1981), Eggins and Slade (1997) and Thornborrow (2002), concur with these findings. Moreover, researchers such as Lakoff (2002) contend that “[s]ilencing’ is a word with some of the most sinister undertones in the language, a word laden with political consequences” (Lakoff, 2002, page 344). Because the act of silencing another speaker contains connotations of power, a speaker who silences or limits the use of backchannel in his/ her conversation may be seen to be holding greater power. Therefore, although the notion of “counting” power is somewhat simplistic and problematic, due to the fact that “the more turns you take (or stop other people taking) and the greater your occupation of the floor, the more power you have as a participant in the talk” (Thornborrow, 2002, page 27), some researchers, namely Eggins and Slade (1997), have relied on tallying the number of clauses in each participant’s utterances. Other linguists, including Wales (1996) and Riberio (2006) contend that by using a great deal of “I” statements, a speaker “places himself [/herself] as author and principal” (Ribeiro, 2006, page 67). In other words, the use of a great deal of “I” statements is a way of acquiring power within a conversation. For example, in the conversation between Eric and Taryn, Eric uses six clauses and seven “I” statements, while Taryn uses only four clauses and zero “I” statements. According to the theories of these linguists, Eric is clearly the dominant conversationalist, and in this instance, a further analysis, the methodology of which is detailed in chapter three, supports this conclusion. However, these calculations appear almost too easy to be reliable. Therefore, even though power is “often seen as a quantifiable thing – some people have more of it than others – [and] we often tend to talk about power as measurable” (Thornborrow, 2002, page 5), can researchers always simply count clauses and words to determine who has the power in a conversation? Is ‘counting’ power really so unproblematic? This research will address these questions by testing the notion that conversation can be measured by counting “I” statements by conducting a Critical Discourse Analysis of several conversations and comparing the results with the conclusions researchers would reach if limited to a tally or sentences.

### 2.3 Listener Talk and Gender

A group of sociolinguists, specifically those concerned with language and gender, have also studied floor management strategies with a focused consideration of the effects that gender might have on conversation. The concept of gender has changed in recent years. Formerly, theorists considered gender to be a biological characteristic; however, “[c]ontemporary research has shown that gender is a fluid, dynamic and constructed notion” (Greenwood, 1996, page 77). Furthermore, according to Butler (1990), Ochs (1992), and Kiesling (2004), gender is more than something that one *is*; it is something that one *does*. In other words, we enact our gender through the behavioral choices, both conscious and unconscious, we make each minute of each day. In fact, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) argue that people learn to be gendered from before we are born, “from the moment someone begins to wonder if the pending child will be a boy or a girl” (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003, page 15). These gendered identities “are maintained and (re-) created through social practices, including language practices” (Kendall and Tannen, 1997, page 82). Thus, one way to understand the connection between backchannel and gender is an analysis of the linguistic choices made by conversationalists which enact their gendered identities.

More recently, however, a number of theorists have begun to problematize the assumption that conversational choices are somehow predetermined by gender.

[A] problem with some of the work on gender and everyday talk has been to assume that when women and men are talking they are ‘doing gender.’ An important critique of that assumption is there is no principled reason to privilege gender over other aspects of a speaker’s identity such as age, sexuality and so on. Furthermore, the idea that there is some kind of stable identity that produces language behaviours slips into the kind of gender essentialism that has been identified as problematic.

Weatherall, 2007, page 282

Therefore, to conclude that something has happened in any given conversation simply because of the gender of either the speaker or listener would be denying the impact that a variety of other factors have on the ever-changing stew that is identity. Moreover, trying to pin the conversational behavior simply on the grounds of gender would smack of positivism. Schegloff (1997) points out that “[i]t is not enough to justify referring to someone as a ‘woman’ just because she is, in fact, a woman – because she is, by the same token, a Californian, Jewish, a mediator, a former weaver, my wife, and many others” (Schegloff, 1997, page 165). Ultimately, Conversational Analysts, such as Schegloff, argue against the mention of gender at all if it is not explicitly raised in the text; however, as will be discussed in Chapter Three of this paper, the approach I have adopted allows for a more generous consideration of the factors not immediately transparent in conversation. Nonetheless, Schegloff is accurate in his description of his wife; she is, we all are, more than just our gender. However, some researchers are quick to point out that one’s gender identity is “not necessarily as much situationally dependent” (Norris, 2006, page 134) as other components of identity, such as occupational identity. In other words, Mrs. Schegloff’s occupational identity as a mediator may not emerge in her talk with her family when she is off the clock; whereas, her gendered identity may emerge independent of the context. In other words, “gender is a chronically accessible category that can become salient with little or no induction” (Palomares, 2008, page 267).

There are many differences that characterize men’s speech and women’s speech. A number of analysts have focused on the topics that recur in male and female discussions. For example, Johnson and Aires (1998) determined that talk, such as gossip and idle chatter, cements women’s friendships, while men’s conversations are more focused on activities. Tannen (1994) summarizes the differences between men’s and women’s conversational styles as *report talk* and *rappor talk*. She contends that males largely prefer to use talk to “take and keep center stage” (Tannen, 1994, page 251), while women usually use talk to make social connections and establish intimacy. However, Tannen cautions that this generalization is not universally applicable because not all members of their respective




genders excel at performing their gendered identity. In other words, not all men are good at competing conversationally and not all women are good at building rapport. Furthermore, Schmidt-Mast (2002b) finds that “all-female groups displayed significantly more interruptive interactions than all-male groups” (Schmidt-Mast, 2002b, page 34). By interrupting each other frequently, these women were not displaying the intimacy that might be expected. This conclusion is somewhat questionable because in this research backchannel responses are not clearly distinguished from interruption, a problem that prompts my first research question, *When does listener talk end and speaker talk begin?* It is clear that even though men and women may have different goals when they converse, this assumption is not accurate in all situations.




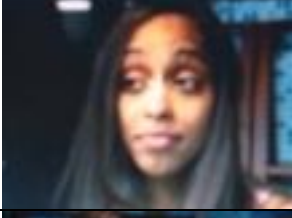
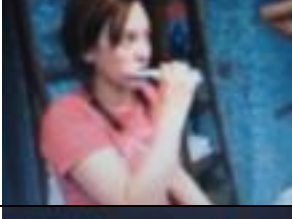


Several researchers have focused on how male and female conversation differs in terms of *what* is said. For example, when Precht (2008) compared the way men and women communicate how they feel about something or someone, she found that “[m]en and women use stance expressions in very similar ways in affect, evidentiality and quantifiers with the sole exception of expletives” (Precht, 2008, page 100). In other words, men and women give their opinions in very similar ways; however, men tend to swear more often. In another example, Cohen (2008) reported that the male participants in his linguistic study appeared more comfortable using “I” statements in close proximity to other “I” statements in their speech, while the women avoided using several “I” statements in one utterance. Both of these studies appear in keeping with the movement away from essentialism as they appear to merely describe their findings without making any grand statements about how males and females have been, by token of their gender, socialized to make certain conversational choices. Linguists appear to want to avoid making any conclusions that smack of positivism. Thus, instead of searching for a causal link between gender and conversational choices, it is more appropriate to explore how “identity emerges in discourse through the temporary roles and orientations assumed by participants” (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005, page 591). In other words, it may be more useful and less-essentialist to view the patterns that emerge from the corpus through the lenses of gender so as to avoid facilitating an “academic

conversation about women, men and language ... couched without apology in the language of biological determinism” (Cameron, 2007, page 16).

Although many theorists have commented on the link between gender and language, few have focused on the role of backchannel. It is generally agreed by researchers, such as Edelsky (1981), Maltz and Borker (1983), Coates (1994, 1996, 1997b, 2003, and 2007), Pilkington (1992), Holmes (1995), and Giesbrecht (1998), that women use conversation to accomplish friendship, while men use conversation to share information. According to the literature, this divergence in purpose results in vastly different active listening styles. Coates found that women tend to turn interactions into a shared text. Their talk seems to assume the form of a “jam session – (of speech)” (Coates, 1997b, page 55). For example, in the following conversation, Arissa and Brynn have met up in a reunion special after several years of not having contact. Arissa is still single, but since *The Real World* aired, Brynn has gotten married and had two children. Brynn admits in a “Confessional” that she is happy with her life, but she misses being young. While they are talking, they are in the bathroom getting ready to go out for the evening.

#### Conversation 4: Las Vegas Reunion – You Should Wait (2007)

			<b>Arissa</b>	<b>Brynn</b>
5/ 6:53			I've been saying, like, looking at your baby makes me, like, want one right now.	
5/ 6:51				You should wait.
5/ 6:48			Yeah, well, I want to wait until I am in my own home.	

5/ 6:44			I know.	Just come baby sit. You're living your life
5/ 6:41		A brushes her hair		Just do it.
5/ 6:38				It's funny, though, when you get married, you'll find yourself start hanging out with married people.
5/ 6:35				And then you have kids, and you start hanging out with people who have kids.
5/ 6:32				People who don't have kids, and all you do is talk about your kids
			Yeah, and they are like, "What?"	And they don't understand.
5/ 6:26				"Oh, let's just talk about our kids."
5/ 6:24			The joys of growing up.	
				Yeah.

In this conversation, Arissa attempts to co-create a conversation with Brynn by responding to her statement, "And then you have kids, and you start hanging out with people who have kids. People who don't have kids, and all you do is talk about your kids" with "Yeah, and they are like, "What?"" The



analogy of a jam session is particularly appropriate for describing this female conversation because it captures the spontaneous nature of all naturally occurring discussion and, at the same time, it encapsulates a notion of overlapped utterances. In a jam session, musicians play at the same time as other musicians, but the music is intended to flow in harmony, not in competition. Similarly, women's conversational floor has been described as mutual, in which "all participants share in the construction of talk in the strong sense that *they don't function as individual speakers*" (Coates, 1996, page 117). This collaboration may be due, in part, to the "facilitative politeness strateg[ies] which encourage[e] others to continue talking and reflec[t] concerns for their positive face needs" (Holmes, 1995, page 57). This kind of cooperative conversing produces joint utterances (where one participant finished another's sentence), non-competitive overlap, and the use of "minimal responses [that] say, 'I am here, this is my floor too, and I am participating in the shared construction of talk'" (Coates, 1997, page 77). In other words, according to this research, women employ backchannel to appear more supportive and facilitative.

Men, on the other hand, are reported to "give barely minimal responses to the talk of others, or they give none at all" (Corson, 1997, page 146). According to this perspective, the conversation between Arissa and Brynn would be unlikely to play out in the same way between two male speakers. However, Cameron (2006) problematizes these assumptions with her study of a conversation among several 'frat boys' (young men who belong to tightly-knit social groups, or fraternities, on US university campuses) about homosexual men. She finds that "more extreme forms of hierarchical behavior and competitive behavior are not rewarded by the group" (Cameron, 2006, page 71). In fact, the conversationalists actually could be seen to be making linguistically cooperative choices and co-constructing the dialogue. However, she also observes that the frat boys may be conversationally competing by "engag[ing] in verbal dueling where points are scored ... by dominating the floor and coming up with more and more extravagant put downs" (Cameron, 2006, page 71). Cameron's reflections pose an interesting concept – that attempting to assign 'competitive' behavior to men and 'cooperative' behavior to women is

inherently problematic. First, “one could argue that talk must by definition involve a certain minimum of cooperation, and also that there will usually be some degree of competition among speakers” (Cameron, 2006, page 71). Second, to ascribe any one conversational behavior to a particular gender may be grossly oversimplifying the matter. For example, the misinterpretation of backchannels would theoretically not exist in the “flat hierarchies” (Schmidt-Mast, 2002b, page 29) associated with collaborative conversations that researchers have often attributed to female conversations. Why would backchannel fail to be appreciated in a collaborative conversation in which there was no struggle for conversational or social power? Clearly this is not the case, as in the conversation between Arissa and Brynn. Brynn actually appears to be threatened by Arissa’s attempt to co-create the conversational floor. Obviously, conversations between women are not always free from competition. Thus, in relation to this research, these essentialist assumptions might have led theorists to conclude that in conversations between men and women, when men are the speakers and women are the listeners, there would be a marked increase of the speakers resorting to floor-saving measures because ‘competitive’ males would be more likely to be threatened by ‘cooperative’ female backchanneling.

The study of the different conversational styles of men and women is significant because of the issues of power and dominance they imply.

Women in most cultural contexts are clearly an oppressed group when compared with men as a group. It follows that almost any sex differences in discourse are interpretable with respect to this clear difference in power between women and men.

Corson, 1997, page 144

In other words, though “language features are gender preferential rather than gender exclusive” (Hannah and Murachver, 2007, page 275), by behaving in a conversationally masculine or feminine manner, a speaker is participating in and perpetuating social power hierarchies. Power is not an external force; according to Foucault (1980), it is located within daily activities. In fact, he argues that in order for power to be understood and

analyzed, “[i]t needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body” (Foucault, 1980, page 119). Furthermore, although Foucault’s (1995) writing largely focuses on instances of institutional power (i.e. the prison system), he encourages readers to study the “mechanisms of normalization” (Foucault, 1995, page 306), or the mundane methods by which power is disseminated. In other words, it may be argued that “[s]etting the boundaries between what counts as institutional and what counts as ordinary is ... problematic if one considers social groupings or communities such as the family institutional” (Thornborrow, 2002, page 135). Therefore, in order to fully understand the inequality inherent in a culture, it is helpful to examine the daily activities of that culture, one of which is discourse. An example of the implications for inequality due to conflicting conversational styles can be found in Tannen’s (1995) study of the discussions that occur in meetings at large, multinational companies. She found that “given the socialization typical of boys and girls, men are more likely to have learned [a more competitive style] and women [a more collaborative] style, making business meetings more congenial for men than for women” (Tannen, 1995, page 148). Consequently, an analysis of turn-taking, and specifically learner talk, can add to the discussion of language and power because “[f]loor holding and topic control are associated with power in the conversational dyad” (Lakoff, 2003, page 162).

However, before making sweeping generalizations regarding these findings, several cautions need to be considered. First, both men and women participate in conversations and both share responsibility for perpetuating any inequality. Women are complicit in creating these circumstances as well as men, and “the use of terms such as ‘dominate’ and ‘control’ should not suggest that men need linguistically to bludgeon women into submission” (Swann, 1998, page 185). In other words, it is inaccurate to portray females as victims and men as the linguistic dictators in this situation. Furthermore, it is difficult to assert that males are using gender language differences to control women as “no criterion approaches being a fully accurate measure of whether an instance of simultaneous talk constitutes a dominance attempt” (James and Clark, 1993, page 232). Therefore, before accusing male conversationalists of bullying tactics,

linguists need to keep in mind that these inequalities are hegemonic in nature and not the conscious linguistic decisions of individuals. In fact, it could be argued that male speakers are simply acting within the confines of their habitus rather than making mindful conversational moves.



Another weakness of this body of research is the inability for the findings to be generalized. As has been argued by Weatherall (2007), the essentialist conclusions that often arise at the intersection of gender and linguistic research are problematic in that the causal relationship between action and gender is dubious. Just as Tannen (1994) reported that some males and females are not skilled in behaviors associated with their gender stereotypes, Cameron also points out that some of the male participants in her study concerning the construction of heterosexual masculinity “fail[ed] to fit their gender stereotype perfectly” (Cameron, 1998, page 276). Perhaps this is why “the most recent studies have shifted their focus from gender differences to the way a ‘gendered dimension to interaction *emerges* rather than being assumed at the outset” (Holmes and Meyerhoff, 2003, page 9, as quoted by Stokoe, 2005, page 124).








Regardless of the limitations associated with this sort of research, this paper’s observations about the influence that power and gender have on the success of backchannel are significant, not only for linguists, but also for educators. “The idea is that, just as people can only play a game together once they have mastered its rules, so people can only communicate, only understand one another once they have mastered the rules of the game of language” (van Leeuwen, 2005, page 47). Students who hope to be able to communicate with native speakers in another language need to study more than the grammar rules and vocabulary of the language; they also need to be informed about the pragmatic norms that prompt conversational choices. As will be discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis, the purpose of this analysis of backchannel under the microscope of power and gender is to inform educational materials so as to provide English as a Second Language (ESL) students with a more accurate picture of how backchannel works in a conversation and how and, potentially why, it is occasionally misunderstood.






## 2.4 Language in Context

In order to fully examine not only *how* certain backchannels result in the speaker feeling threatened, but also *why* such active listening attempts fail and what implications that has in terms of power and the enactment of identity, it is useful to turn to the theories of Critical Discourse Analysis. As mentioned above, CDA contends both that language affects the identities assumed by speakers and listeners and that language is impacted by social identities and the distribution of power within a conversation. Moreover, how one interprets language is also affected by context. “How can we be sure that our own use of language is not marked, even corrupted, by those ideological factors that we seek to identify in the language of others” (Billing, 2008, page 783)? However, as “[b]oth the ideological loading of particular ways of using language and the relations of power which underlie them are often unclear to people[,] CDA aims to make more visible these opaque aspects of discourse” (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, page 258). For example, in the conversation below, Eric is talking to two friends about a roommate, Kevin. Earlier, Eric and Kevin had a disagreement, and Kevin has just written Eric a letter suggesting that Eric does not understand what it is like to be an African American. Eric reads this letter as tantamount to Kevin accusing him of being racist. Eric is discussing the situation with two of his friends, one of whom is black.

### Conversation 5: New York 1 – I Grew Up with Them (1992)

			<b>Eric</b>	<b>Friend 1</b>	<b>Friend 2</b>
1:32:29			I've been around black people since I was this big.		
1:32:31		E slaps hands with F1	Damn. I grew up ...		Best friends.

1:32:34		F1 watch es E	... I grew up with them playing ball at the park ...		
1:32:36			... that's all I did. That's all I did ...		
1:32:37			... every god damned day, since I was in junior high to my junior year in high school when I got home from school, I went to the park, and I played ball.		
1:32:46		F1 looks away from E and chews his fingernails	And, I had a million black friends. You know? I mean what the hell? This black and white bullshit, I can't understand that. I can't see where he is coming from when he says something like that. Because that, that don't even faze me.		
		E's voice get's louder	I don't see ...		That doesn't make sense.
			I don't see, um, a conflict ...		Then he really doesn't know you ...
1:33:02			I don't see		Because he doesn't know who you hang out with
			Right. I don't see a conflict between white and black people on the level that I'm on.		
1:33:08			I see it on the news but with the people that I hang out with, I don't see it.		
1:33:14		F2 nods and looks between E and F1	I see it as one. You know?		

1:33:15			Please.		
1:33:16					And I don't know what he wants from you. What does he want, your pity? He wants you to come over and say, "Oh, man, I'm really sorry. Can I help you out?" You know?
1:33:22				Just make, make some noise.	I mean, what does he want?
			Maybe that's really ...		
1:33:27			... maybe that's really what he's asking for		That's why you've got to confront him, You've got to write, "Alright, you wrote this letter
			That's what he just ...		You wrote this letter
					to get this off your chest. That's cool, now, what do you want? What do you want from me?
1:33:35		E and F1 lean on table E plays with pen	You know, maybe this kid, maybe he's hurting inside.		

A Critical Discourse Analysis of this conversation is able to go beyond merely describing the linguistic choices made by the conversationalists to look at *why* those choices were made.

According to Huckin (1997), CDA differs from other forms of textual analysis in six main ways. First, Critical Discourse Analysts view language as having occurred in real, complex contexts. Perhaps one of the biggest influences on CDA has been Foucault, who states, "[t]here is no statement that does not presuppose others; there is no statement that is not

surrounded by a field of coexistences, effects of series and succession, a distribution of functions and roles” (Foucault, 1972, page 99). Thus, not only do utterances rely on what was said previously in the conversation, but they also rely on all previous utterances that have merged together to create the context.

One important characteristic arises from the assumption of CDA that all discourses are historical and can therefore only be understood with reference to their context. In accordance with this CDA refers to such extralinguistic factors as culture, society, and ideology. In any case, the notion of context is crucial for CDA, since this explicitly includes social-psychological, political and ideological components and thereby postulates an interdisciplinary procedure.

Meyer, 2001, page 15

Based on a critical analysis of entire conversations it becomes possible to make assumptions about what the speaker’s conscious and unconscious impetuses were in that conversation. One could, therefore, conclude that a failed backchannel which causes a minor breakdown in a conversation does not occur in isolation. Rather the attempt and the speaker’s perception of the attempt take place in a context rich with the presuppositions and power struggles associated with and created by the previous utterances in the conversation. For example, in the conversation among Eric and his two friends, a CDA approach is able to consider the entire context of the conversation, not just what is present in the conversation. Thus, the back story of the dispute between Kevin and Eric and the letter Eric has written plays a role in how one understands what lies beneath the surface of the conversation and makes clear what they are talking about. Moreover, there exists the presupposition that both will side with Eric, even though Friend 1 appears much less enthusiastic about Eric’s perspective than Friend 2 does. In addition, a CDA analyst is able to speculate as to the cause of the minor struggle for power that occurs when Eric’s friend backchannels with, “That doesn’t make sense. Then he really doesn’t know you because he doesn’t know who you hang out with.” Eric’s friend is eagerly backing him up, but Eric still responds to the backchannel as though it is a bid for the floor, as



evidenced by the yellow highlighted text. As a result of this interest in context, CDA considers the entire available text when analyzing discourse, not just the example of interesting language. No other approach allows for consideration of the context in the analysis of language to the degree that it is permitted by CDA.

A second, related difference that sets Critical Discourse Analysts apart is that it is “a highly integrated form of discourse analysis in that it tries to unite at least three different levels of analysis: the text; the discursive practices ... that create and interpret the text; and the larger social context that bears upon it” (Huckin, 1997, page 1). CDA researchers agree that language is not only affected by the circumstances that prompt its creation; discourse, in turn, affects the context in which it occurs. In other words, there is a “dialectical relationship between a particular discursive structure and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it” (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, page 258). Thus, a CDA researcher would not only be interested in the interruption present in a conversation, but also in the larger social forces at work and how the habituses of both the speaker and the listener in a conversation affect what transpires within the exchange. Therefore, in the conversation among Eric and his friends, Eric’s linguistic choices are not only shaped by his reality, but he is also able to shape his reality with his speech. Specifically, he is able to use this conversation to strengthen his identity as a person to whom race is a non-issue. In fact, he makes it clear that he has plenty of friends of all color, a statement which is confirmed by the high-five he shares with Friend 1, who is African American. As Halliday (1978) asks, “How else can we look at language *except* in a social context?” (Halliday, 1978, page 10).

A third disparity between CDA and other forms of discourse analysis results from this cyclical relationship between society and discourse. CDA is specifically concerned with issues of social disparity and how language is used to perpetuate current unequal situations. “CDA follows a different and critical approach to problems since it endeavors to make explicit power relations which are frequently hidden, and from that to derive results which are of practical relevance” (Fairclough and Wodak, 2000, page 165 – 166). In fact, researchers, such as Widdowson (1995), often criticize CDA for

being so conscious of its ideological interpretations. Interestingly, this approach is often used to illuminate the linguistic choices made by the media or people in position of power in order to expose hidden messages of racism, consumerism, sexism, or dominance as “[t]he text which results from the interaction is [like] a map of the social occasion in which it was produced” (Kress, 1996, page 189). However, it is not necessary to choose examples of speech for analysis only from such formal corpuses as political speeches and news reports. “There is a tendency in both mundane and social scientific discourse to conceive of power as a ‘big’ phenomenon, operating at the largest scale within social formations. Foucault, on the other hand, suggests that power is pervasive even at the smallest level of interpersonal relationships” (Hutchby, 2004, page 530). Thus, the power-struggle inherent in a casual conversation among friends, like the one among Eric and his friends, is ripe for analysis.

A fourth way in which CDA differs from other forms of discourse analysis is the motivation behind such a focus on power imbalances and social inequality. Ultimately, by “producing enlightenment and empowerment” (Wodak, 2001, page 10), Critical Discourse Analysts hope to urge readers to battle non-democratic processes. Because CDA’s “emancipatory objectives” (Fairclough, 2001, page 125) are not limited to the analysis of political and media language, readers should also be made aware of the subtle inequality that occurs within daily casual conversations. For instance, if one conversationalist (such as Eric in the above conversation) has dominated the discussion, this is a display of inequality as “[i]n western culture, those with power may exercise the right to speak for longer” (Holmes, 1997, page 203). Both parties, but more importantly the subjected person, should be aware of this lack of parity and realize that “equality [only] arises when people grant each other similar amounts of control within the conversation” (Knobloch and Haunani Solomon, 2003, page 491). Nonetheless, CDA does not contend that a utopian conversation would involve equal speaking time for every participant. Clearly consideration needs to be taken of factors such as speaker style and topic. Researchers must “allow speakers in the ‘same’ situation to speak in different ways, that is allow individual variation” (van Dijk, 2006, page 162).

For instance, it would be unnatural for the three speakers above to have equal access to the conversational floor, as Eric is the most personally involved in the situation. However, often, speakers who do not allow listener talk may be, in fact, taking advantage of a position of social domination, and “[q]uestioning standards of speech and norms of language is one way of exposing the dominant social order” (Weatherall, 2002, page 6). By illuminating the methods adopted by socially dominant forces to perpetuate inequality, CDA advocates hope to create a new, increasingly democratic and fair playing-field.

A fifth point of departure for CDA from many other methods of linguistic analysis is the fact that “CDA practitioners assume that people’s notions of reality are constructed through interaction with others, as mediated by the use of language and other semiotic systems” (Huckin, 1997, page 2). This ontological stance will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of this paper; however, in brief, CDA contends that language both shapes reality and is shaped by reality. This theory relies on Bourdieu’s notion of discourse habitus in that “[e]very text or event is unique, but it can also be seen as an instance of some kind or type of text or event that recurs in a community and is recognizable as such” (Lemke, 1995, page 31). Thus, as “[u]tterances are not just static verbal acts but ongoing dynamic accomplishments, that is, forms of action” (van Dijk, 1985, page 3), what people repeatedly hear and say becomes naturalized in discourse and subconsciously perpetuated by subsequent conversationalists. More specifically, backchannel is expected by North American native English speaking conversationalists, such as Eric in the conversation above, because we have been socialized to expect it. This reality does not exist in all cultures because all people everywhere accept overlap as an integral part of an informal, spontaneous discussion, but because it is part of our particular discourse habitus.

A final characteristic that sets CDA apart from other analytical approaches is “in pursuit of these democratic goals, critical discourse analysts try to make their work as clear as possible to a broad, nonspecialist readership” (Huckin, 1997, page 2). Clearly, if researchers hope to instigate social change, they need to be accessible to the repressed, powerless

members of society. If authors revert to the lofty language of academia, the readers who can most benefit from the analysis offered by CDA will not be able to read the research.

However, CDA is not without its critics. Widdowson (1995) has criticized CDA as being an ideological interpretation and, therefore, not an analysis. He further condemns CDA for defining the term “discourse” too vaguely and claims that in Critical Discourse Analysis there is a lack of differentiation between the “discourse” and “text.” Schegloff (1997) also criticizes approaches that rely on information not explicitly stated in the text. Moreover, “he objects to Critical Discourse Analysis because it begins by imposing the analyst’s own concerns on what is happening [in the conversation], rather than attending (at least first of all) to what are the participants’ concerns” (Hammersley, 2003, page 766). Thus, the question that may be applied to all CDA findings is: How much speculation is too much speculation? When exploring conversation in an ideological manner, the researcher cannot help but impose his/her values on the interpretation. Thus, the farther away from what is explicitly stated in the text an analyst goes, the more consciously one must strive to avoid interpretivistic positivism (Fish, 1980). An analyst must be careful not to declare that his/her interpretation of any given text is *the* interpretation because “there is no single way of reading that is correct and natural” (Fish, 1980, page 16). Moreover, researchers must acknowledge their own backgrounds and the biases they possess which will indubitably color their interpretations of a text. However, CDA proponents openly acknowledge both of these criticisms. They concede that an ideological interpretation does challenge the neutrality of the researcher.

A text analysis is a work of interpretation. There are relatively few absolute and clear cut categories in language; there are many tendencies, continuities, and overlaps. Many actual instances can be analyzed in two or more different ways, none of which can be ruled out as impossible; some may be less sensible than others, and so can be discarded, but we may still be left with valid alternatives.

van Dijk, 1985, page 54

Therefore, all researchers, even Conversational Analysts, are subconsciously dominated by values and beliefs that shape their interpretations as “[t]he interpretive researcher ... accepts that the observer makes a difference to the observed and that reality is a human construct” (Wellington, 2000, page 16). Thus, by deciding which piece of text is worthy of analysis, which pauses are worthy of documentation, and which shifts in prosody are worthy of scrutiny, the researcher is affecting the research. At least, proponents contend, in CDA, the ideological position of the researcher is made clear from the start.

In spite of the criticism directed against CDA, the focus that this approach allows appears to best fit the research questions posed earlier in this paper. Specifically, in order to explore issues of gender and identity and the implications they have in terms of social power, no other approach will suffice. Furthermore, although CDA research usually analyzes utterances concerned with political speeches, interviews or advertising, this method is equally applicable when dealing with every-day conversations. In fact, it is these very casual conversations which often result in the gender, identity and power issues that form a person’s habitus. In other words, conversations one has with one’s co-workers, family, and friends, may actually hold more significance in one’s daily life, in how much power one holds and how one is perceived, than the significance held by the soundtrack choices made by advertising executives in Hollywood or the verb tense choices made by the spin doctors in Washington.

### **3. Methodology**

#### 3.1 The Ontology and Epistemology that Position this Research

In many ways, undertaking a large research project is akin to going on a journey to a new location. Just as travelers begin with a ticket and itinerary, so researchers begin with research questions and hypotheses. If all goes well, eventually the travelers end up with photos of a previously unfamiliar area and the researchers conclude with some more or less definitive answers to their original research questions and, perhaps, some new research questions which will lead to yet more journeys. However, while tourists travel by bus or plane, researchers journey by method.

The term 'method' usually denotes the research pathways: from the researcher's own standpoint or from point A (theoretical assumptions), another point B (observation) is reached by choosing a pathway which permits observations and facilitates the collection of experiences.

Titscher, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter, 2003, pages 5-6

Another parallel between the vacationer and the researcher lies in the impetus for both kinds of gathering of experiences. Where the tourists decide to vacation rests on what values and interests they have; their vacations are motivated by the assumptions they hold about the importance of things like family or relaxation. Research, like vacationing, is also positioned by the values, and beliefs of the researchers. More specifically, the assumptions held by the researcher regarding ontology, the nature of reality, and epistemology, the nature of our knowledge, shape the character of the original research questions, the adopted approach and research methods, and, ultimately, the outcome of the research. Thus, before any discussion of methodology can take place, it is imperative for the researcher to critically evaluate his or her theoretical positions related to reality and knowledge.

### 3.1.1 *Ontology*

The word *ontology* comes from the Greek words *ov*, which means being, and *logia*, which means study or theory, and which comes from *logos*, meaning word or speech. It seems logical, then, that discussions of reality often involve reference to discourse. In fact, according to researchers such as Gee (1999), discourse and reality are locked into a reciprocal relationship. Through his description of cultural models, Gee outlines how the definition of words, their identity or reality, can become clouded by the cultural, political and even personal values of the individuals who use them. For instance, in an analysis of the discursive identity of the British reality TV star, Jade, Wetherell (2007) notes that her study, if done in detail, would lead to ontological claims about who Jade is and what she is like. However, Wetherell admits that this interpretation of Jade is “likely to constitute an account which differs substantially from her own version of herself” (Wetherell, 2007, page 671). Whose understanding of what it means to be Jade is more accurate, Jade’s own view of herself or how others see her? There is not one understanding that is *the* true understanding, superseding all others. Thus

meaning is not general and abstract, not something that resides in dictionaries or even in general symbolic representations inside someone’s head. Rather, it is *situated* in specific social and cultural practices, and is continually transformed in those practices.

Gee, 1999, page 63

If ‘reality’ is socially constructed, then it would seem logical that discourse, which “as a whole is a regulating body; it forms consciousness” (Jager, 2001, page 35), would be one of the primary tools available for the creation and perpetuation of meaning and reality. However, Gee notes that, although language is an important factor in the creation of reality, language itself is a social creation. Which words and sentences are selected to be spoken depends on the demands of the situation, or reality, in which they will be uttered.

[W]e face, then, a chicken and egg question: Which comes first? The situation or the language? This question reflects an important *reciprocity* between the language and the 'reality': language simultaneously *reflects* reality and *constructs* it to be a certain way.

Gee, 1999, page 82

Approaches to research with ties to Marxist and Post-Marxist philosophy, such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), embrace the notion of reality as a social construct as contended by sociologists such as Berger and Luckmann (1966). In fact, many proponents of such approaches to discourse analysis take this ontological standpoint one step further and conclude that not only is reality socially created, but those in positions of power possess the means and the tools to generate the kind of reality that best suits their purposes.

Within that paradigm [of Critical Discourse Analysis] reality is understood as *constructed*, shaped by various social forces. These, however, are frequently 'naturalized' – in everyday discourse, as opposed to critical discussions of it, reality is presented not as the outcome of social practices that might be questioned or challenged, but as simply 'the way things are'. Naturalization obscures the fact that 'the way things are' is not inevitable or unchangeable. It both results from particular actions and serves particular interests.

Cameron, 2001, page 123

CDA contends that, because language is an agent of social action, it plays a vital role in how reality is perceived and, ultimately naturalized. Thus, linguists such as Fairclough (1995) are interested in the connection between discourse and hegemony, as "practices [such as discourse] are shaped, with their common-sense assumptions, according to prevailing relations of power between groups of people" (Fairclough, 1995, page 54). CDA proponents would argue that if one is to battle the social and economic domination of the elite, one must be aware of the insidious control those in power wield in such seemingly benign territory as the language used by self-proclaimed neutral sources, such as the TV news.



Although the research that will be undertaken for this project does not contend with issues on the same scale as those covered by many CDA theorists, it could be argued that inequality and domination occur constantly in much smaller and, therefore less noticeable, episodes. In fact, an examination of “the ordinary and observable ways gender [and power are] used in daily mundane interactions” (Weatherall, 2007, page 288) may reveal as much, if not more, about a dominant hegemony as an examination of the speech of politicians. However, regardless of whether the subject of the research is the language used to describe the war on terror (Fairclough, 2003) or the language used to seize control of a conversation, the ontological positioning of the researcher remains the same. I believe that reality is socially created and that language is one of the key tools by which those in control appropriate and maintain social dominance.

### 3.1.2 *Epistemology*

A discussion of language as an instrument of social control leads, inevitably, to a consideration of how language and the hegemony it perpetuates are learned. The term *epistemology* comes, again, from Greek. The word *episteme* means knowledge, and the word *logia*, which derives from *logos*, means word or speech. This line of philosophical inquiry is primarily concerned with the nature of knowledge. If reality and language are joined in a reciprocal relationship, as Gee (1999) has argued, then it is of great significance for linguists to consider how knowledge of discourse is gained and transferred from one person or culture to another, for “[d]iscourses are like icebergs of which some specific forms of (contextually relevant) knowledge are expressed, but of which a vast part of presupposed knowledge is a part of the shared sociocultural common ground” (van Dijk, 2001, page 114).

The metaphor of the iceberg is particularly appropriate as theorists interested in formulating epistemological philosophies reiterate that the knowledge they are referring to are systems “which are in operation below the consciousness of a subject and that define the limits and boundaries of thought in a given domain and period, by setting conceptual possibilities” (Hyatt, 2005a, page 518, referring to Foucault’s 1972 notion of epistemes).

In other words, knowledge is comprised of historical, social, and cultural data that subconsciously governs, among other things, our discourse choices. This embodied knowledge is referred to by Bourdieu (1977) as habitus. Habitus is an internalized system of dispositions. Specifically, as humans grow and experience life, their collection of social knowledge also expands. This knowledge is acquired by “interacting with the social and material (especially the human-made) environment, which consists of other people acting out of [their] dispositions and the material effects of such actions in the world” (Lemke, 1995, page 33). In other words, by interacting with the world, we gain social and cultural knowledge that enables us to continue to interact with the world. For example, in Canada it is common for people to add the tag question *eh?* to their sentences. For many Canadians, their subconscious sociocultural knowledge, or habitus, offers the choice of *eh?* when speakers want to be polite or encourage others to speak. Canadians have grown up hearing their fellow citizens use this word and they have internalized this use so much so that often they are not consciously aware that they have peppered their speech with it, *eh?* Thus, “[h]abitus is a kind of transforming machine that leads us to ‘reproduce’ the social conditions of our own production” (Bourdieu, 1990, page 87).

Interestingly, this very notion of habitus provides the motivation for this research. When learning English, students do not merely study the grammar and vocabulary of another language; they are also often exposed to the social knowledge or habitus of the target language speakers. Thus, “the consciousness of L2 learners is a site of struggle between identities in which the symbolic values of age, gender, status in a hierarchy, nationality, and professional skill differ between L1 and L2 communities” (Young, 2008, page 136). The fact that social knowledge is not universal necessitates the creation of lessons for L2 students, especially those who reside abroad or must interact regularly with native speakers, which expose them to the habitus of their host culture.

However, although this notion of a socially-created subconscious is appealing in terms of my research and ontological position, there are risks associated with a whole-hearted embrace of habitus. First, Reay (2004) cautions researchers that because habitus cannot be empirically tested and

must, therefore, be interpreted “there is a danger of habitus becoming whatever the data reveal” (Reay, 2004, page 438). Furthermore, perhaps the most common criticism leveled at the theory of habitus is that it is structuralist or deterministic. Specifically, the view that our actions are determined by our social knowledge eliminates the element of free choice. This criticism seems misguided, however, as habitus clearly does not dictate one single behavior; there is not only one choice. Not all Canadians add *eh?* to every sentence. By espousing habitus as a tool for analysis, researchers are acknowledging the existence of a limit to the choices available to social actors. Furthermore, Bourdieu argues that habitus was “intended not for theoretical commentary and exegesis, but to be put to use in new research” (Bourdieu, 1993, page 271).

The philosophy of a socially created system of subconscious knowledge offers this research project an appropriate epistemological base. As I have stated, I accept the argument that reality and language are involved in a reciprocal relationship. I would further argue that knowledge, specifically habitus, is also an essential element in this bond. Thus, my research is driven by my belief that reality is socially created and socially learned. This ontological/epistemological positioning has already impacted my study in that it has led me to question how North American native English speakers have learned to use and interpret active listening in their conversations. Furthermore, that this research will also examine the impact of gender, identity and struggles for social dominance in overlapped conversations also draws from my belief that language is a learned tool to be used for the creation of reality. However, at the same time, the reality of the context in which incidences of overlap occur influences how often and which backchannels appear in a conversation and how they are interpreted. The options available to speakers are, in my opinion, limited by the speakers’ habituses and therefore, socially learned reality prompts discourse. Therefore, as “discourse is socially *constitutive* as well as socially shaped” (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, page 258), a critical examination of samples of discourse lends itself to a greater understanding of the socially learned reality which provides the context for the discourse, the habitus of the

speakers which limits the options for discourse, and the impact that discourse has on the situation in which it occurs.

### ***3.2 Possible Heuristic Methodologies for this Research***

There are a number of potential approaches researchers can select from when considering backchannel and the failure of active listening attempts. The most commonly applied when considering samples of spontaneous dialogue has been Conversation Analysis (CA). In fact, almost all research concerning talk-in-interaction and overlap has adopted a CA methodology, which offers a detailed description of what explicitly appears in interactive, naturally-occurring speech. Another possible approach to this study is Pragmatics. Pragmatics is concerned with bridging the gap between utterance and speaker meaning. In other words, Pragmaticians such as Grice (1975) and Brown and Levinson (1987) focus on “how language can be used to do things and mean things in real world situations” (Cameron, 2001, page 68). A third prospective tactic to studying overlap and backchannel is Interactional Sociolinguistics. These analysts seek to connect the differences in the way people use and understand language with “nonlinguistic differences – for instance in speakers’ class, race, ethnicity, or gender” (Cameron, 2001, page 106). In spite of the popularity of these methods, however, I have chosen to adopt a Critical Discourse Analysis approach. In this chapter, I will review the alternative approaches in greater detail and offer a justification for rejecting them in favor of CDA.

#### ***3.2.1 Conversation Analysis***

As stated, perhaps the methodological approach most commonly associated with turn-taking research is Conversation Analysis (CA), which has focused on describing how overlap occurs. “Classic areas of investigation are the organization of speaker change and the sequential organization of conversations which links two successive utterances as an interaction sequence” (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, and Vetter, 2000, page 111). Conversation analysts, such as Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson

(1974), Hutchby and Wooffitt (1999) and Schegloff (2000) are most concerned with describing how conversationalists manage the organization of speaker change. Moreover, in CA, “analysts look not merely for regular sequential patterns in data, but for evidence that participants themselves are *orienting* to the existence of those patterns” (Cameron, 2001, page 93). In other words, conversation analysts are interested in exploring naturally-occurring conversation (they reject the notion that our intuition about what we say can be trusted and rely only on real conversation for data) to discover which conversational rules are evident and how they are followed. CA initially emerged from the research of Sacks in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Sacks, 1992). Three key concepts set this methodology apart as novel and innovative. First, speakers use words to accomplish things as well as to describe the world around them. Second, real-world talk is context specific. In other words, “Sacks takes as his starting point one particular, situated episode of talk and asks: is there a way in which we can see this event as an outcome of the use of methods?” (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998, page 19). Third, talk-in-interaction can be a subject of analysis, not just a tool for viewing the broader social world. These three concepts continue to shape the findings of conversation analysts to this day.

These notions can also be seen to influence the literature surrounding backchannel and overlap. For instance, in the research of Gardner (2001) concerning listener talk, the author catalogues different response tokens. His description of each kind of backchannel details how listeners use the words and sounds to convey meaning, in other words, to accomplish things. For instance, he contends that “[b]y uttering *Mm hmm*, [listeners] are expressing ‘no problem’ with the prior speaker’s turn, and declining the floor and an opportunity for substantial talk” (Gardner, 2001, page 28). Gardner’s catalogue of token responses demonstrates how methodic the use of backchannel is in specific contexts, which complies with the second key concept outlined by Sacks. Finally, Gardner does not use his research to make a commentary about the larger social world; he merely describes in great detail the language samples that he has collected, thus conforming to Sacks’ third key principle.

As stated previously in this paper, although this approach is the most widely embraced by researchers in analyzing turn-taking, there are several serious drawbacks to adopting this method. First, Conversation Analysts have focused excessively on small excerpts of talk. By isolating fragments of conversation for examination to one speaker change, “CA has limited its ability to deal comprehensively with complete, sustained reactions” (Eggins and Slade, 1997, page 32). Few conversation analysts have looked beyond the Turn Completion Unit (TCU) to the larger conversation. Consequently, because CA has trouble seeing the conversation for the turns, there is very little data available on extended casual conversations. Second, purist conversation analysts contend that researchers can only report what is explicitly present in the conversation.

What distinguishes the analytic frame of ethnomethodologists and conversation analysts, of course, is their disinterest in this question of external social or natural causes, and their rejection of the side-step which takes the social analyst immediately from the conversation to something seen as real and determining behind the conversation.

Wetherell, 1998, page 391

For example, CA argues that “gender and gender hierarchy are only relevant to the analysis of a piece of data if the participants *make* it relevant in some way” (Cameron, 2001, page 88). For a conversation analyst, if race or gender was not specifically mentioned in a conversation, these notions must be excluded from the analysis of the exchange. For example, in Gardner’s catalogue of backchannel, neither race nor gender is mentioned at all because, in backchannel, conversationalists rarely mention their race or gender. A simple description of language “make[s] the (critical) study of sexist or racist discursive practices impossible” (van Dijk, 2006, page 360); however, Critical Discourse Analysts argue that it is impossible to view conversation as occurring in a vacuum and “[a]lthough most of us rarely notice this overtly in everyday life, most of our interactions are colored by our performance of our own gender” (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003, page 17) among other characteristics, such as race and social status. Context and the creation of social identity inevitably shape the construction of

meaning in conversation, how turns are taken and what happens when participants do not orient themselves to the expected patterns of conversation. Thus, the micro-analytical approach of CA limits its ability to examine longer samples of casual conversation and speculate about the social and cultural influences that shape a conversation but do not explicitly appear in the conversation. In other words, although CA has been the favored approach in studying the occurrence of overlap in turn-taking, it has not allowed researchers to specify the boundaries of a non-threatening interruption, nor examine what meaning-making is happening in the rest of the conversation. CA has also failed to take into account the “outside” influences (such as power, gender, and race) on the speakers. The limitation is one of description versus explanation.

To describe is to somehow draw a picture of what happened, or of how things are proceeding, or of what a situation or person or event is like. To explain, on the other hand, is to account for what happened, or for how things are proceeding, or of what a situation or person or event is like. It involves finding the reasons for things, events and situations, showing why and how they have come to be what they are.

Punch, 2005, page 15

Thus, in order to hypothesize about possible explanations for failed backchannel attempts, it is necessary to turn to Critical Discourse Analysis. First, CDA encourages linguists to consider the entire conversation, not just the immediate exchange. Rather than being confined to an analysis of the language immediately surrounding a misunderstood backchannel, as a CDA analyst, I can look at conversations in their entirety, or in the case of *The Real World*, as much of the conversation as the editors have allowed. This permits a broader understanding of the undercurrents of power that steer a conversation and, I believe, leads to observations that are more interesting and more significant to ESL instructors and students. In addition, CDA does not limit my analysis to a mere description of what is occurring in the conversation; this approach allows for an interpretation both of what is and what is not explicitly mentioned in the conversation. Because “the act of description is itself interpretive” (Fish, 1980, page 246), it seems

observations gleaned from an approach that incorporates interpretation rather than denies it may be more reliable. Furthermore, a critical approach as opposed to a descriptive approach is beneficial in the field Education as well as Linguistics.

“[I]n order to be able to *deal with the unexpected*, [students] have to *examine* it and this can only be done if [they] have developed *sharp observational skills* and are capable of *constructing useful knowledge* throughout the examination; once [they] have examined and conceptualized the object, [they] can pass *judgment* on it, provided [they] are equipped with *internal values, convictions and reasons*; this judgment will then allow [them] to make an informed choice on [their] response.

Cots, 2006, page 338

In other words, a CA approach simply does not equip students with the tools necessary for interaction in a conversational arena fraught with hidden struggles for dominance and power. In the real world, description is simply not enough; conversationalists must be able to make reasonable interpretations about what they hear and see.

### 3.2.2 Pragmatics

A second possible methodological approach for the study of backchannel and listener talk is Pragmatics. This area of research is concerned with doing things with words. Specifically, analysts focus on instances in which speakers disregard Grice's conversation maxim, “say what you mean and mean what you say” (Cameron, 2001, [summarizing Grice, 1975] page 68). This approach originates from Austin's (1962) notion of speech acts. Austin claims that the words one utters do not simply carry one meaning, rather the line between performative and statement is blurred at times. For instance, if a person walks into a room with an open window and says, “It's chilly,” the speaker may be indirectly asking another person to close the window. Communication, according to pragmatics, occurs because people share the same rules for defining and performing speech acts; these rules help conversationalists to match the form of the utterance to the function. Grice (1975) defined four Conversational Maxims: quantity,



quality, relation, and manner (adapted from Grice, 1975, pages 25-6). Talk that violates these maxims is seen as meaningful and is perhaps something that the speaker cannot say directly. A final defining theory in the field of Pragmatics is that of Brown and Levinson's (1987) notion of politeness and *face*. Many of the utterances that people make are inherently *face threatening acts* (FTAs); they may either cause a person to feel criticized, thereby threatening their *positive face*, or they may ask a person to do something, thereby threatening their *negative face*. Often, therefore, people violate Grice's Maxims in order to avoid committing a FTA, as, "if speakers have to choose between being cooperative (informative, truthful, relevant and perspicuous) and being polite, they will normally choose to be polite" (Cameron, 2001, [summarizing Leech, 1983] pages 78-79).

The notion of speech act, Grice's Conversational Maxims, and Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory can also be applied to analyze instances of listener talk. For instance, Stewart's (1997) study comments on the relationship between conversational laughter, which is "commonly used as a backchanneling device to reinforce or respond to the current speaker" (Stewart, 1997, page 8) and *face*. Specifically, Stewart's research categorizes the functions of laughter and analyzes them under a Pragmatic microscope. In doing so, he notices that laughter has "many face-saving and some face-threatening functions" (Stewart, 1997, page 11). Furthermore, he notes that laughter also serves to lessen the impact of certain FTAs. Therefore, upon consideration of this study, it is possible to envision expanding Stewart's findings regarding laughter and *face* to a broader study of backchannel and why some listener talk is perceived as a FTA, while others is not.

However, many of the same limitations and criticisms that apply to Conversation Analysis may also be leveled at Pragmatics. First, Pragmatics researchers are limited to studying small samples of conversations. Context, both present in the larger, but unreported, conversation and in the social world in which the conversation takes place is not considered in this type of analysis. Therefore, although Pragmatics does allow theorists like Stewart (1997) more freedom to infer about the intentions of the conversationalists than is permitted in a CA approach, they are still largely

tied to detailed descriptions of how the target utterance appears in conversations and they are unable to make larger deductions about what their findings mean in terms of social inequalities. In other words, are certain people able to commit FTAs more frequently and easily in conversations? What implications for the social power of the conversationalists does the use of FTAs have? Pragmaticians are unable to respond to these questions. In addition, as has been previously mentioned, Pragmatics has been accused of taking a 'Pollyanna' approach to interaction. It assumes that cooperation is the ultimate goal of conversationalists and ignores samples of conversation when this cooperation is not apparent. However, for linguists, such as Fairclough (1985) and Mey (1987), in order for Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle to work, "the interactants must be equal" (Ladegaard, 2009, page 652). Clearly, this is rarely the case; even among friends, a certain degree of inequality tends to permeate the most casual of conversations. Another criticism that has been leveled at Pragmatics is that Brown and Levinson's (1987) "general distinction between positive and negative face is not helpful in unpacking the complex face claims that people make in real-life situations" (Spencer-Oatey, 2007, page 646). Specifically, Spencer-Oatey (2007) describes a conversation between herself and a Hungarian student who, when thanking her for her help said, "You are a kind old lady." The researcher notes that although the student "seemed completely unaware of any face-threat in his 'compliment'" (Spencer-Oatey, 2007, page 645), she felt quite put off (her positive face was threatened). Brown and Levinson (1987) give us no indication of how to deal with a situation in which the speaker's intended face-saving act was received as a face-threatening act. Thus, when looking to backchannel and the potential for misunderstanding, Spencer-Oatey's criticism holds; there is simply no mechanism within Pragmatics for analyzing these kinds of misunderstandings.

Clearly, for a project in which the ultimate goal is the creation of materials for ESL students, a Pragmatics approach to the analysis of failed backchannel is not adequate. First, the presumption of equality among speakers is troubling. In fact, according to Wigglesworth and Yates (2007) and Young (2008), English language learners are often at a marked

disadvantage when they function in a native English speaking environment. Because they may not be on equal footing with other conversationalists, “the theory must go beyond a description of *how* to participate to explain *why* participations is or is not possible” (Young, 2008, page 200). A CDA approach is better suited to this explanation than a Pragmatics approach and, therefore, better suited to the analysis associated with this project.

### 3.2.3 *Interactional Sociolinguistics*

On the other hand, Interactional Sociolinguistics is very much concerned with issues of social power. This discipline, influenced by Conversation Analysis and Sociolinguistics, focuses on the same aspects of interaction that CA does, but with an interest in the variations of use between different groups of speakers. In other words, interactional sociolinguists analyze the same kinds of interactions as conversation analysts, but with the intention of displaying the cultural variables that affect how utterances are understood in different social and cultural contexts. Many of the tenets of Interactional Sociolinguistics originate from the work of Gumperz and his associates (1979) who studied the interaction strategies of members of the white, British community and the Asian (East Indian immigrants and their descendants) community. Gumperz noted that tension between the two groups arose from misinterpreted or misspoken *contextualization cues*, such as prosody or paralinguistic cues. A group of Interactional Sociolinguists has recently focused on the different contextualization cues employed by men and women. Again, the research focused on the same kinds of conversations as Conversation Analysis, but with the purpose of exposing the gender variables that lead to miscommunication between men and women and, ultimately, the subjugation of women in society. Thus, much of Interactional Sociolinguistic research is done

... with a view to helping people who regularly engage in intercultural communication ... become aware of the differences that may cause problems, and take account of the variation in their real-life encounters with speakers whose ways of interacting differ from their own.

Again, this approach is one that could easily be applied to research concerning failed backchannel attempts. As mentioned earlier in this paper, this research project will look to gender as one possible variable that may cause certain listener talk to be interpreted as threatening and Interactional Sociolinguistics is well-equipped to deal with issues of gender. For instance, Maltz and Borker (1982) suggest that men and women differ in their use of minimal responses. They indicate that women use backchannel to show support and demonstrate their participation in a conversation, whereas men use listener talk, such as *Mm hmm* to indicate that they agree with what the speaker is saying. The notion that men and women operate under different cultural rules allows Interactional Sociolinguists to analyze conversations from a different perspective than that of CA or Pragmatics.

However, the findings of Interactional Sociolinguistics are not free from weaknesses, either. First, this approach yields conclusions which may be overly simplistic. For instance, as discussed, Maltz and Borker (1982) suggest that men and women view listener talk differently; however, when Reid-Thomas (Cameron, 2001, [summarizing Reid-Thomas 1993]) tested these conclusions by playing sections of dialogue containing samples of backchannel, her panel of male and female judges displayed a high degree of agreement regarding which responses indicated listener support and which indicated agreement. Furthermore, as was discussed earlier in this paper, findings that suggest that women or men behave in a certain manner are notoriously difficult to verify because not all men and women are skilled at, not to mention interested in, enacting their stereotyped gendered identity. A second criticism that may be leveled against this approach is, as with CA and Pragmatics, theorists tend to limit the size of the conversation excerpts they analyze. By not considering the entire conversation, researchers may be inadvertently restricting their analysis. Furthermore, a choice made by the investigator to display only part of an exchange results in the imposition of the biases and values of the researcher on the sample. In other words, even by cutting the conversation into manageable pieces, the theorist influences the outcome of the study. A final weakness in this approach lies in the limited scope of many of the studies. Specifically, this type of

research, “analyzes both women’s representations of experience and the material, social, economic, or gendered conditions that articulate the experience” (Olesen, 2005, page 249); however, it could be argued that studying the experience of women is not enough. Rather researchers also need to consider the historical social conditions that went into creating the experience and how that experience is to be interpreted by the researcher and the subject. In other words, Interactional Sociolinguistics does not express interest in the practices which produce apparent objectivity and normality.

As with Conversation Analysis and Pragmatics, Interactional Sociolinguistics takes an overly narrow view of interaction when it is limited to an excerpt of the entire exchange. Like native English speakers, ESL students do not usually participate in exchanges in which only part of the conversation is made available to them. Why, then, should materials based on authentic, spontaneous language ration the conversation they are exposed to? Furthermore, through an examination of the entire conversation, students may have increasing access to the historical social conditions mentioned above. “[I]t is important to help learners understand the communicative values underlying interaction, because understanding these values can help them understand why speakers, including them, approach particular speech events in the way they do” (Wigglesworth and Yates, 2007, page 800). In other words, students should have access to longer conversations as well as information about the cultural impetus for certain conversational moves so as to hone their critical skills and better prepare them for conversations outside the classroom.

Clearly, the three methods discussed in this section of the paper would be (and, in fact, have been) appropriate to deal with occurrences of failed active listening attempts. However, none allows the level of criticality with which I hope to examine backchannel and overlap. I plan to approach this study as a criticalist,

a researcher or theorist who attempts to use his or her work as a form of social or cultural criticism and who accepts certain basic assumptions: the facts can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from some sort of ideological inscription; that the relationship between concept and object and between signifier and signified is never stable or fixed and is often mediated by the social relations of capitalistic consumption and production; that language is central to the formation of subjectivity (conscious and unconsciousness awareness); that certain groups in any society and particular societies are privileged over others and, although the reasons for this privileging may vary widely, the oppression that characterizes contemporary societies is most forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary, or inevitable; that oppression has many faces and that focusing on only one at the expense of others (e.g. class oppression versus racism) often elides the interconnections among them; and, finally, that mainstream research practices are generally, although unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race, and gender oppression.

Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005, page 304

The approaches described above do not allow me to adopt an approach which “draws attention to the dependence of texts upon society and history in the form of the resources made available within the order of discourse” (Fairclough, 1999, page 184).

### 3.3 Critical Discourse Analysis

As discussed earlier in this paper, Critical Discourse Analysis is appropriate for this research project for a number of reasons. First, and most importantly, CDA encourages the consideration of extra-conversational forces which shape every aspect of interaction, including gender and identity. I believe that reality is socially created and that language is a tool that both perpetuates the inequalities of society and is, in turn, shaped by those inequalities. Because language plays such a significant role in the nature of being and the nature of knowledge, it seems inadequate to view language in a vacuum without considering the social forces that shape it or that are shaped by it, as Conversation Analysts argue. “So, even if gender is not explicitly privileged by participants as relevant to the conversation, it is

an omnipresent feature of all interactions” (Weatherall, 2000, pages 287–288) and should, therefore be considered by researchers. CDA agrees with this notion.

A second advantage to adopting a CDA approach to the analysis of overlap and backchannel responses is the potential for the instigation of social change as a result of this research. Specifically, if issues of social power and their connection to listener talk are exposed, perhaps those in positions of dominance as well as those in positions of weakness can become more aware of this discrepancy and strive to adapt their conversation style to reflect a more just social order. Although this smacks of the “danger of idealism” (Burman and Parker, 1983, page 158), “we can all hope that if enough women adjust their styles, expectations of how a feminine woman speaks may gradually change as a result” (Tannen, 1994, page 239). The potential exposing of the imbalances of social power that play out in daily conversations is also inextricably linked to the implications for education which are described in Chapter Five of this paper.

However, there are several challenges that are associated with adopting this approach to research surrounding overlap and turn-taking. First, the results of this research will not be easily generalizable.

Dealing with human beings and the multifaceted nature of the innumerable variables that make up each one of us does not lend itself easily to the control of a positivistic approach.

Hyatt, 2003, page 107

Nonetheless, although a definitive set of rules or numbers may be impossible to formulate, a qualitative analysis of discourse containing overlap can produce data that may be used as a springboard for posing previously unasked questions. Furthermore, lack of generalizability does not, in itself, denote lack of validity. In fact, “[t]he postmodern turn suggests that no method can deliver on ultimate truth” (Foley and Valenzuela, 2005, page 205). Finally, “part of the claim of any framework worth its salt is that it can sustain “applied” research of various kinds” (Heritage, 1999, page 73).

As described previously, another difficulty facing this research is the perilous nature of assumption. CDA advocates looking beyond the actual

words of the text because “[w]ho you are is partly a matter of how you speak, how you write, as well as a matter of embodiment – how you look, how you hold yourself, how you move, and so forth” (Fairclough, 2003, page 159). However, looking beyond the text involves making a connection between the micro-level text and the macro-level social structure, which is difficult to prove without getting inside the heads of the conversationalists. This kind of guessing is dangerous because there is no way of knowing to any degree of certainty that race, gender or ideas about identity in fact do affect the words chosen by the conversationalists. Thus, researchers can merely make assumptions about what the conversationalists think is occurring in the conversation, as “[a]nalyzing discourse is often about making inferences about inferences” (Jaworski and Coupland, 1999, page 13). Consequently, in spite of the difficulties associated with adopting a Critical Discourse Analysis approach, I feel that it is the methodology best suited to deal with my four research questions.

### 3.4 Procedure

#### *3.4.1 The Real World*

In order to respond to the research questions posed at the onset of this paper, I have undergone a labor-intensive process. First, I selected a popular American reality television program, *The Real World*, as the source from which to build my corpus. *The Real World* has been running on MTV since 1992, when the producers, Mary-Ellis Bunim and Jonathan Murray, set out to create a show about “real people, undirected, sharing their lives” (Huriash, 1996, page 25). As one of the first American reality TV programs, *The Real World* was groundbreaking because it showed real young people dealing with real issues.



They showed how these folks, some away from their parents and hometowns for the first time, were an unruly combination of naiveté and know-it-all syndrome, grappling with what it means to be an adult, and how sheltered their lives had been in terms of race, sexual orientation and other cultural and social differences.

Graham, 2004

The roommates audition to participate in the program, which places them in a house with six other young adults, creating a “Generation X fishbowl of sorts” (Orbe and Hopson, 2003, page 219). The roommates are filmed around the clock for three to five months; there are cameras mounted all around the house and a small crew of cameramen follows the roommates around as they conduct their daily lives. In addition to being constantly filmed, once a week the roommates are required to sit down in front of a camera in a private room and reflect on the past several days. These sessions are referred to as “Confessionals.” This mass of footage was originally edited into a weekly 22-minute show for the first 19 seasons, but since the 20<sup>th</sup> season, it has been edited into a 44-minute program (Sicha, 2009). The popularity of this program has prompted several spin-offs, including, *Road Rules*, in which the cast members travel in a motor home together, and *The Real World / Road Rules Challenge*, in which former cast members compete in physical and mental challenges for prize money.

Using reality TV from which to pull linguistic data makes sense because it offers the possibility of a wide number of spontaneous conversations without the inconvenience of recording sample conversations on my own and the accompanying concern for getting quality recordings and the expense of renting or buying good video recording equipment. Particularly as I included elements of a multimodal analysis of the conversations, quality recording of both modes, aural and visual, was vitally important to this research. In addition, reality television is a genre that is familiar to many international students, particularly the university-aged students in my ESL class. As Marsh, Brooks, Hughes, Ritchie, Roberts and Wright (2005) point out in their study of the use of popular culture in early education, “[i]f children are encountering texts in a wide range of media outside nurseries and schools, then it makes sense for them to be able to

analyse, understand, respond to and produce texts using these media in nurseries and schools” (Marsh, Brooks, Hughes, Ritchie, Roberts and Wright, 2005, page 13). Although these researchers were referring to a much younger student population than I encounter in my college-level classes, I believe the same sentiment holds true; reality television is ubiquitous, and students may benefit from the opportunity to examine it more closely. Furthermore, given that there seems to be a reality television program airing every time I turn on the television, I knew that I had a wide selection to choose from for this project. However, narrowing the choice down to just one program was not a difficult process.

I opted to use MTV’s *The Real World* as the corpus for this project for a number of reasons. First, it offers a fairly wide view of American culture. It has been filmed in an array of American cities, including New York, San Francisco, Seattle, New Orleans, and Chicago. Furthermore, the cast comes from diverse backgrounds. The roommates are purposefully chosen to be as different as possible and “[f]or many viewers (and scholars), one of the most intriguing aspects of these shows is the cultural diversity of each cast” (Orbe and Hopson, 2003, page 219). For example, in 2000, the New Orleans cast consisted of a number of stereotypes: Danny, “the gay guy,” Melissa, “the African/Asian American drama queen,” Kelley, “the all-American, white girl,” Matt, “the right-wing religious hipster,” David, “the militant, black guy,” Julie, “the Mormon virgin” and Jaime, “the rich, frat boy.” Thus, a broad spectrum of US values and cultures is portrayed in every episode. Furthermore, the cast members hail from different parts of the United States, so *The Real World* roommates offer the research different accents and regional dialects. For example, in 2002, cast members came from Louisiana, Illinois, Washington, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and California. Perhaps the only limit to the diversity offered by this program is age. The cast members are all in their late teens or early twenties, so a clear picture of American life at all ages is not available. As Barbieri (2008) notes, there is an “inordinate amount of research on youth language [which] has no counterpart in other age groups” (Barbieri, 2008, page 59). Nonetheless, in spite of the fact that this corpus does not add much-needed diversity to that body of research, *The Real World* certainly does offer a

more interesting and inclusive view of American culture than if I were to attempt to assemble a group of conversationalists for taping on my own. Moreover, as many of my students are on their early twenties, they are not alienated by the young cast and they are usually interested in the content of the clips. “Popular culture offers a range of material that children and young people find engaging and that has the potential to motivate students who might otherwise think their particular cultural interests are excluded from the curriculum” (Marsh, 2006, page 160).

Another advantage to my choice of *The Real World* as a source for my corpus lies in the democratic nature of reality television. “[R]eality TV promises to revolutionize television – to make it interactive and democratic by giving everyday folks community and access to the means of production, thereby challenging monopolistic corporate media” (LeBesco, 2005, page 1117). Unfortunately, the hope that media giants would be replaced by the common man or woman seems somewhat unfounded; viewers are constantly being bombarded with new reality television programs that bear absolutely no resemblance to our daily reality. However, there is truth in the fact that the cast members on *The Real World* are not actors. Especially in the earlier years of the program, the cast members were ordinary, albeit usually abnormally attractive, young people who agreed to have their lives filmed for a period of time. Most have gone on to lives of obscurity, unlike some of the other reality stars who have made careers out of capitalizing on their fifteen minutes of fame. Thus, due to the fact that there is some truth to the notion of democratization of television that reality TV has brought, it is a perfect fit for a CDA analysis, a methodology which “can bring into democratic control aspects of the social use of language that are currently outside the democratic control of people” (Alvarez, 2005, page 119).

A final benefit to using *The Real World* is the focus of the program. Many reality television shows are structured around some sort of contest or activity. For example, cast members from *The Amazing Race* speed all over the world in order to reach a secret destination before their competitors. Thus, the conversations that take place are largely centered on elements of panicked travel, such as getting the last seats on the bus and urging their partners to hurry up. In contrast, the language on *The Real World* is not

limited by such activities. Rather, the cast members simply live and work together, so the focus of the program is much more concentrated on the relationships and daily activities of the cast members and the producers are much more likely to focus on the conversations that occur than on the actions of the cast. Moreover the dialogues tend to be more social and broader than those found on other action-based reality programs. Issues that are interesting to many people are raised on this program. For example, race is a sensitive issue in the United States, and ESL students are often interested in and eager to talk about their experiences with racial discrimination, as well as their own racial biases. In a number of *The Real World* seasons, race is openly discussed, including *New York 1*, *New Orleans*, and *New York 2*. These discussions, while providing excellent samples for linguistic analysis, also provide fodder for conversation and catch the interest of the students who will be interacting with the materials that result from this research. Clearly, *The Real World* brings rich, naturally occurring conversation to this project about topics that are of immediate interest to many ESL students.

I am, however, aware of a number of challenges I face by using conversations from *The Real World* to create a mini-corpus. First, the editing and selection of the conversations has been taken out of my hands. Because their goal is to make a popular television program and not to shed light on the linguistic choices made by young adults, the producers at MTV only air conversations they think will make an interesting show. Moreover, the producers also edit the conversations, show clips out of context, and use other techniques to create a provocative and flashy product. Although these strategies make great television, they may interfere with a precise analysis of the conversations and force me to violate the fidelity criterion outlined by Wood and Kroger (2000): “[t]he recording of spoken discourse must be of high fidelity; that is, it must correspond as closely as possible to the discourse” (Wood and Kroger, 2000, page 56). In order to make up for this weakness in my research, I have abided by the tenet of CDA which maintains that the conversation in its entirety (or as much as has been made available to viewers) has been included in the analysis. In many of the cases, especially in the earlier years of the program, large portions of

interactions are shown without editing. Thus, although using reality television for a basis of my corpus has resulted in my having a lack of control over the integrity of the data, I have compensated for this by including as much of the exchange as is available in my analysis.

A second challenge with using conversations from *The Real World* that I might anticipate is the issue of divided illocution. According to Fill (1986), locution is what is said, and illocutionary force is what is meant. Divided illocution, however, refers to the possibility of there being two different audiences and two potential meanings of an utterance. Specifically, on *The Real World*, the cast members speak to each other, but they are also followed by cameras and they are aware that millions of people are going to watch them on television. Because “[i]dentity performance ... involves a sense of audience - an audience to whom one is presenting a particular narrative (or narratives) of the self” (Davies and Merchant, 2007, page 178), this pressure may cause them to behave in ways they normally would not and this abnormal behavior may affect their conversational styles and linguistic choices. For instance, in the Chicago season of *The Real World* one of the cast members, Kyle, was rumored to have future political goals. Clearly, if someone plans to become involved in politics, he or she must be careful of his or her every on-camera move and not only guard against possible indiscretions, but also put his or her best conversational foot forward. I wonder, then, if Kyle had any naturally occurring conversations in which he was not aware that he was being taped. Thus, the taping of interactions may adversely affect the data I hope to capture. I do not see any solution to this problem, as it would arise in any recording subject to divided illocution. Moreover, in the program, *The Real World You Never Saw: New Orleans* (2000), when cast members were reunited to reflect on their time on camera, several commented that, after the first few weeks, they tended to forget the cameras were there. This lack of consciousness was evidenced by the “bloopers reel” showing the roommates bumping into the cameras and cameramen. It would seem that, at least occasionally, the cast members’ behavior was not affected by the ever-present cameras.

Once I had chosen my source of data, I watched hours of footage from *The Real World: New York* (1992), *The Real World You Never Saw:*

*New Orleans* (2000), *The Real World Casting Special* (2001), *The Real World: New York* (2001), *The Real World: Chicago* (2002), *The Real World: Las Vegas* (2003), and *The Real World: Las Vegas Reunion* (2007). These seasons were chosen somewhat unsystematically; I had access to them either because they had already been recorded for the work I did on my MEd dissertation or because they were available for purchase or for free through MTV. However, more recent seasons of *The Real World* have come under fire from the media and parents' groups for moving away from its roots of exploring interpersonal relationships and focusing on the more sordid aspects of coming of age.

Perhaps fueled by the salaciousness of other reality TV shows, the program has surrendered to society's most bottom-feeding beliefs about young people as empty-headed morons concerned only with bacchanalian excess, which has become as boring as it is plentiful.

Graham, 2004

Thus, as conversation has been increasingly edited out in favor of drunken liaisons, perhaps it is to the advantage of this project that later seasons have not been included in the corpus.

As I was watching the shows, I paid close attention to the conversations in which supportive listening, specifically backchannel, was occurring. Whenever the backchannel resulted in a "hitch or perturbation" (Schegloff, 2000, page 11) in the speaker's talk, I noted the episode and time of the interaction. From 44.5 hours of television, I amassed a corpus of 69 naturally occurring conversations which contain examples of failed backchannel. These clips are the only ones from the data which met my criteria for selection; they contain both backchannel and, in response, at least one example of Schegloff's (2000) "hitches and perturbations in the talk" (Schegloff, 2000, page 11). The size of the corpus worked with was somewhat limited by the scope of this research and the timeframe for this project. Moreover, the number of conversations was restricted by the amount of raw data I had to work with. However, I feel that 69 conversations gave me enough data to be able to see interesting patterns emerge. Furthermore, the number I propose is reflective of the corpus size of similar

research projects, such as that undertaken by Hyatt (2003). Finally, although the time span between the first and the last seasons of *The Real World* included in my corpus is considerable, I do not feel that issues of potential changes in language usage have affected my observations. For instance, if I were analyzing the slang used by the roommates, perhaps this issue would present an impediment, as “slang changes rapidly” (Green, 2002, page 27). However, it would appear that the language associated with backchannel does not vary from year to year. In fact, the description and examples offered by Ygnve (1970) are still relevant today. Consequently, I have no reason to assume that a time span of 15 years would significantly affect my analysis. After the corpus was assembled, I transcribed the conversations.

### 3.4.2 Ethical Issues

One of the main advantages to selecting *The Real World* as the basis of my corpus is the fact that a great deal of the ethical issues that researchers working with video-taped conversations normally contend with are easily circumvented. Primarily, the consent forms that would allow me to use the recordings have all been taken care of by the MTV producers. The participants are, for the most part, easily identifiable in the clips I have selected. When the viewer has not yet been introduced to an interlocutor, the producers usually provide the name of the person and their relationship to the other speakers on the screen. For example in “Conversation 2: New York 1 – Kidnapping” (as seen on page 19 of this paper), the audience sees Todd for the first time. The subtitles on the screen give his name and reveal the fact that he is the manager of the band.



At times, MTV neglects to name a particular conversationalist. For instance, in “Conversation 5: New York 1 – I Grew Up with Them” depicted on pages 39 to 41 of this paper, it is unclear exactly who the two men are who are speaking with Eric. Nonetheless, it is clear from the context of the conversation that they are friends of Eric’s and, consequently, they are referred to as Friend 1 and Friend 2 in the transcription. However, I can confidently presume that, even though these speakers are not named publically, MTV would not air the clip if consent had not been acquired.

In addition, according to the “fair use” doctrine set out in sections 107 of US copyright law (title 17, US Code), educators are permitted to use published materials if the “reproduction by a teacher or student [is] of a small part of a work to illustrate a lesson” (<http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html>). In other words, my transcription of *The Real World* clips in no way violates copyright laws as they are relatively short and used for educational purposes.

While these ethical issues are easily addressed, the issue of the trustworthiness of my findings, as posited by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is less straightforward. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness involves establishing credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility refers to confidence in the accuracy of my observations. Most researchers, including Flowerdew (1999) and Threadgold (2003), acknowledge that a critical discourse analysis of a conversation is open to multiple readings.

I think there are good reasons why CDA can never really be all of those things [replicable, systematic and verifiable] and they all have to do, as Halliday himself argued, ... with the ineffability of grammatical categories and the differences between a grammatics as metalanguage and the actual textures of language in use.

Threadgold, 2003, page 10

As it is impossible to know exactly what is motivating, both consciously and subconsciously, each speaker at the time of a conversation, there is no “right” interpretation of a conversation. If there were, the possibility of a misinterpreted or failed backchannel would not exist because speakers



would all have the same understanding of any given utterance. One solution to this weakness in my research would have been to locate the cast members and interview them about their participation in the clips I had chosen. However, although some of the roommates live their lives in the public eye and tour the USA giving speeches and making appearances on various college campuses, the vast majority has disappeared from the limelight and would have proven exceptionally difficult to contact. I was further deterred by my conviction that the speakers themselves would not have been able to shed much light on why they reacted defensively to a backchanneled response in a conversation that occurred several years ago when their reaction most likely happened at a subconscious level. Furthermore, “[i]nterviews present opportunities for people to represent themselves in particular ways, forget or misinterpret details, or even deliberately lie about events” (Marsh, 2006, [summarizing Sikes, 2000] page 167). Nonetheless, by openly conceding that a “true” reading of the conversations I am studying is impossible, I hope to avoid the criticism that my findings are of the “anything goes” (Antaki, Billig, Edwards and Potter, 2002) variety.

Among the many techniques Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest for achieving credibility, the authors suggest *thick description*. Particularly, “[t]he description must satisfy everything that a reader may need to know in order to understand the findings” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, page 125). I contend that this call for *thick description* is satisfied by the form of multimodal transcription and the framework for analysis I have adapted for this project (see the following section for more detail). I believe that by providing pictures of the actions of the speakers, comments on their movements, user-friendly, accurate transcriptions and a detailed framework for analysis, I am supplying the reader with adequate information to understand the observations described in Chapter Four.

In addition to *thick description*, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that researchers need to practice *reflexivity*. By this, they mean that I need to acknowledge that the judgments I make about the motivations of the speakers stem from my own positionality and biases. However, Norris (2004) argues that researchers who are members of the same culture that

their data comes from are capable of making judgments based on their “*native interaction intuition*” (Norris, 2004, page 25). In other words, although the confirmability of my results is perhaps questionable and my findings will indisputably be colored by my own background and habitus, as a native English speaking North American, I may be able to record some fairly reliable observations. As there is not one “right” answer when it comes to discourse analysis, I contend that instead, researchers should strive for transparency, reflexivity, Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) *thick description*, and an acknowledgement of the possibility of other interpretations of the text.

### 3.4.3 *Transcription and Multimodality*

Issues surrounding transcription may initially seem simple, as it appears one merely has to write down what the speakers are saying; however, in fact, “transcribing data is at once problematic, intuition-producing, and fraught with often unreported yet important decisions” (Edelsky, 1981, page 384). By the very act of writing what someone says, the transcriber is making choices about what is important and what is not. Moreover, “[i]n order to analyze socially situated speech, it is necessary to recognize that language is only one of multiple modalities of expression, all of which may be operant in communicative practice” (Hanks, Ide and Katagiri, 2009, page 4). Therefore, simply documenting the words in a conversation does not provide the researcher with a sufficiently clear picture of all that is occurring in any given exchange. As my research interests lie in isolating and studying various conversations containing backchannel from a corpus consisting of excerpts from MTV’s *The Real World*, it is necessary for me to clarify and explain the methods of transcription I have employed. I have purposely written the plural of the word *methods* as it was necessary to combine two forms of transcription in order to allow both my reader and myself the most comprehensive view into the interactions I have used.

As mentioned earlier, transcription is far from being the neutral undertaking of writing down what the speakers are saying that many might assume. In fact, there are many dilemmas associated with making a written record of an interaction. One problem is that people often hear the same interaction differently. Ferber (1991) found that when listening to a single

event, different people might listen to, process, and thus transcribe the conversation differently. When responding to a self-posed question regarding why she includes the transcription notations that she does, Jefferson (2004) replies, “Well, as they say, because it’s there. Of course, there’s a whole lot of stuff “there”, i.e. in the tapes, and it doesn’t all show up in my transcripts; so it’s because it’s there, plus I think it’s interesting” (Jefferson, 2004, page 15). Nonetheless, what is interesting to the researcher, me, may not be relevant nor interesting to others. Moreover, it may skew my research if I include some elements of a conversation but not others in my written account without carefully and consciously considering what I am including and why I have chosen to include it.

Furthermore, in most analyses of conversations to date, “language is widely taken to be the dominant mode of communication” (Kress, Jewitt, Ogborn and Tstatsarelis, 2001, page 42); however, in fact “[a]ll interactions are multimodal” (Norris, 2004, page 1). In other words, many transcriptions thus far have contained a thorough account of the words exchanged in a conversation and may contain brief asides about the actions of the participants. For instance, in *Describing Language*, Graddol, Cheshire and Swann (1994) have included two transcriptions of interviews showing nonverbal information. The first is in table format with a column entitled “comments” which contains a description of the nonverbal interaction.

<i>Client</i>	<i>Counselor</i>	<i>Comments</i>
I've got three certificates on the parts that we had to take exams on. One's operations	So, wait a minute, you've got one in operations	<i>Counselor writing as she speaks</i>

Graddol, Cheshire and Swann, 1994, page 185

The second sample transcription shows gaze and hand-raising in a conversation between a teacher and a student.

-----  
 Teacher: How did they know that those men were  
 [K J M E A]

-----  
 alive? (.) Yes  
 -----

Kate: Miss they were knocking

**Key**

Superscript letters indicate order of hand-raising:

K=Kate; J=John; M=Mark; E=Emma; A=Anne

----- = teacher's gaze towards boys

----- = teacher's gaze towards girls

Graddol, Cheshire and Swann, 1994, page 186

A third example comes from Baxter's *Analyzing Spoken Language in the Classroom*.

REBECCA: But, it's pointless trying to stay in one place. You have got to try and survive. You can't just stay in one place.  
 (GENERAL HUBBUB AS REBECCA SPEAKS; SOME HECKLING FROM ONE BOY; DAMIEN ATTEMPTS TO BUTT IN)

Baxter, 2005, page 162

Although it is helpful that the researchers have thought to include some indication of the nonverbal behavior of the conversationalists, these examples fall short in three key ways. First, the second transcription is rather difficult to read. The reader needs to be familiar with the key, which would change with every conversation containing different nonverbal cues. It is my opinion that a transcription should be accessible to not only the researcher, but also anyone who wants to make use of the findings. Thus, a clear, easy-to-read transcription is necessary.

A second problem lies in the layout of the first and third transcription. Specifically, in western culture, there exists a left to right bias. In other words, because of the left to right manner in which English speakers read "that which is placed on the left of the transcription is – probably unconsciously – doubly privileged" (Baldry and Thibault, 2006, page 181). The first sample transcription clearly places the description of the nonverbal pieces of the interaction on the right side of the transcription. That column will be viewed last, after the two columns of spoken words, and will arguably

receive less attention and less prestige than the verbal aspects. Similarly, the third sample transcription places the description of paralinguistic elements of the classroom interaction after the transcription of the spoken elements. However, multimodal analysts have long contended that the verbal needs to be considered along “with a range of other representational and communicational modes, such as gesture, gaze, movement, and posture” (Bourne and Jewitt, 2003, page 64). In fact, due to the indirect nature of North American society, speakers often rely on silent meaning-making resources to communicate “that which cannot be easily spoken” (Bourne and Jewitt, 2003, page 71). Therefore, these nonverbal cues may actually contain highly relevant messages and might be better placed before the transcribed words, not on the left side of the text as an afterthought.

Finally, and most significantly, none of the texts includes sufficient information. The first transcription describes the general movements of the speaker and the second only mentions gaze and hand-raising; however, it seems implausible that no other physical movements occurred as “language, whether as speech or as writing, is only ever a partial means for carrying meaning” (Kress, Jewitt, Ogborn and Tstatsarelis, 2001, page 178). The other movements, which most likely did occur, were, therefore, omitted from the transcription. Were they deemed unimportant or were they simply unnoticed by the transcriber? Furthermore, and more importantly, how might the results of the research have been different if all of the nonverbal communications had been considered? These questions were ultimately avoided in my research by including multimodal elements to my transcription. Thus, when considering the significant impact of transcription on an analysis of conversation, several choices needed to be carefully made in terms of what to transcribe, how to transcribe, and how to organize the transcription.

First, what should be transcribed? Because “[m]ultimodal texts are composite products of the combined effects of all the resources used to create and interpret them” (Baldry and Thibault, 2006, page 18), the answer to this question needed to be addressed by considering both the spoken word and the other meaning-making resources available to the participants in the conversation. First, I shall address the transcription of the words

spoken in the conversations. In order that my research be “user-friendly,” in keeping with the tenets of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), I chose not to use the popular but confusing Jefferson system of symbols (Jefferson, 2004) to describe the paralinguistic events in the conversation. The Jefferson system appears to be the standard form of transcription, and it is used in many of the analyses I have cited. However, it is, in my opinion, a bit difficult to use. “The system can be learned in a few hours of supervised practice” (Wood and Kroger, 2000, page 85). Nonetheless, as my ultimate goal is to share the finding of this research project with fellow ESL teachers and to create materials that can be used by ESL students, any transcribing I do has to be immediately accessible, not something all people can only understand after hours of training. Thus, I have opted to transcribe in plain English what the speakers are saying. Any significant changes in prosody, such as volume increases and decreases, pitch changes, the quickening and slowing of speech, and elongation of vowel sounds, were noted on the transcript as these strategies are also commonly associated with floor-saving devices as documented by Obeng (1991) and Schegloff (2000).

However, in addition to documenting the words and prosody used by the speakers in each conversation, I wanted to set down the visual elements of the interactions. These nonverbal elements are essential to a conversation, as

just like the choice of words, intonation, and so on, these resources can be, and indeed often are modulated variously by speakers to create specific meaning effects just as listeners can attend to the speaker’s use of them, again to varying degrees of conscious awareness, as they interpret the speaker’s meanings in relation to *what* is said and *how*.

Baldry and Thibault, 2006, page 19

While analysts, such as Jewitt (2006) and Baldry and Thibault (2006), have offered general criteria for multimodal analysis, Norris (2004) has compiled the only comprehensive list of the modes present in casual conversation. Therefore, it is logical that I start from, though not necessarily apply completely, her inventory for my own research. Norris (2004) names the following as vital components to interaction: verbal choices, content,

prosody, pitch, body language, environment, facial expression, gaze, posture, clothing, and speech rate. Furthermore, as it may be argued that “the image has more ‘reality’ to it than a written description of the same image would have” (Norris, 2004, page 2), it is important to include photographic documentation of the interactants and the modes they are utilizing. Therefore, in each instance in a conversation when a new mode is introduced or a shift within a mode occurs, I have included a picture of the action. This was accomplished by taking a digital picture of the TV screen and placing the picture alongside the description of the modes and the transcription of the spoken dialogue. For example, in a conversation between Coral and Nicole, Coral breaks the news to Nicole that her ex-boyfriend and their roommate, Malik, went out with some of the other roommates and their guest, Gisela, the previous night. According to Coral, Malik and Gisela “hooked up.” In my transcription, I included the following screen shots:

#### Conversation 6: New York 2 – Slap Me! (2001)



As a result, the reader has access to a great deal of the visual information that I do. Although the reader can not actually see the moving image, I do not view this as a significant weakness to this project as I have photographed every change in movement that is shown in the edited program. While my photographs are not as detailed as Norris’ (2004), I believe my transcript strikes a balance between the spatial constraints of this paper and the materials I have created for ELT professionals and the importance of presenting the interactions in an illuminating manner. Due to this nod to multimodal transcription, the burden of describing what I believe to be the significant movements of the conversationalists is removed. Therefore, as “[t]he analysis and interpretation of language use is contextualized in conjunction with other semiotic resources which are

simultaneously used for the construction of meaning” (O’Halloran, 2004, page 1), it is valuable to include weighty consideration of both the verbal and nonverbal elements of a conversation. Although my analysis does, admittedly, privilege the verbal over the nonverbal, as floor-saving techniques are inherently verbal, by including photographs of the action and putting them on the right side of the page, I feel I am incorporating enough multimodal elements to allow a thorough analysis and to serve as a basis for user-friendly ESL materials.

The second choice I need to make as a transcriber concerns how I will write down what I hear and see. According to Wood and Kroger (2000), there are two popular methods for consideration. First, there is the standard orthographic approach. This approach would allow me to use conventional spelling. Second, there is the phonological approach. This approach shows sound more clearly than the first, but it is much more difficult to read, as it “exceed[s] the capacities of most non-linguists and require[s] specialized symbols, not all of which are readily available” (Wood and Kroger, 2000, page 83). Due to the fact that CDA advocates research that is accessible to those untrained in the field, it makes sense to use the standard orthographic approach. Thus, I will use conventional spellings. I will not transcribe “pronunciation particulars” (Jefferson, 2004, page 20) such as *dat* for *that* because I find them hard to read and I feel that irregular spellings take away from one’s ability to read a transcription fluently. In addition to simply transcribing the words, I have also taken the extra step of highlighting the point(s) in the conversation in which the speaker reverts to floor-saving measures, such as repetition, volume change or rate of speech change. The purpose of this is to make this important moment clear within a mere glance over the conversation, as this is the focus of this research.

More complicated than choosing a transcription system for the verbal elements of the conversation, however, is choosing a method of detailing the nonverbal elements of spoken interaction. As already demonstrated, analysts have attempted to include descriptions of the paralinguistic features of exchanges with little success; thus, although this is not a multimodal analysis per say, it is helpful to look to the multimodal analysts for direction. First, it is important to recognize that “[t]here is no right or wrong way of



multimodal transcribing. The 'right' method is a matter of what questions the transcript is setting out to answer" (Jewitt, 2006, page 38). As the purpose of my research lies in addressing areas of gender and power as they are revealed through failed active listening attempts, nonverbal modes, such as gesture, gaze, proximity, facial expression, and posture, need to be accurately and clearly documented in the chance that they do, indeed, affect the conversations and my analysis. In other words, I am interested in phenomena that may impact interaction in subconscious ways, so it is necessary to consider all of the modes of language, both verbal and nonverbal, as "[m]ultimodality assumes that all these modes, like language, have been shaped through their cultural, historical, and social usage to realize social functions" (Bourne and Jewitt, 2003, page 65). Thus, as stated, in order to record these modes plainly, it is helpful to examine the suggestions of other multimodal analysts.

The most logical beginning point is the template offered by Norris (2004) as her research is the most like the project I am planning. Norris (2004) displays her data in a unique way. She shows a series of photos with the transcribed text superimposed on the picture and the time of each snapshot above it. Although this style of transcription is very difficult to read, Norris (2004) argues that it is necessary to show each mode as it interacts with all of the other modes because "[o]ne action in one mode alone has a meaning potential, but the actual meaning of any one action performed by a social actor in one mode cannot be determined without understanding the environment within which it is located" (Norris, 2004, page 52). In other words, no mode is an island unto itself; modes must be considered in connection with all of the other modes present in the interaction. In order to facilitate this analysis, Norris (2004) divides the action into two manageable units of analysis: lower-level action and higher-level action. Lower-level action categorizes the small, short actions, for example, a nod, a direct gaze or a shift in posture. Higher-level action, made up of many linked lower-level actions chained together, is a longer, bigger action, for example, a meeting of friends or a telephone conversation.

This leads to the third question I must address when describing my method of transcription: How will the transcription be organized? Although

this question has been indirectly answered by this paper already, it is worthy of clarification and a more detailed description. A standard transcript is the most commonly used method for organization. It sets words out like a play script, with one speaker turn following another down the page in a linear fashion.

When two pieces of text overlap, however, the linear nature of the text is disrupted, and representing this disruption ... has created ... a tension between the need to adequately describe where overlaps begins and end and the desire to present this information to the user in a readable and visually revealing manner.

Meyer, Morris, and Blachman, 1994, page 5

Furthermore, as has already been demonstrated, a traditional transcription neglects to adequately account for the nonverbal elements of a conversation, which, ironically, may actually carry the most important meaning.

Thus, in order to present the transcribed conversations, perhaps the most visually informative way to organize the data is in the form of a column transcript. "Column transcripts ... preserve the temporal sequence of turns [and] make it easier to track different speakers' utterances" (Graddol, Cheshire and Swann, 1994, page 183). Furthermore, I used column transcripts when writing my Master's thesis (Jones, 2002) with great success. Moreover, other linguists, such as McKellin, Shahin, Hodgson, Jamieson and Pichora-Fuller (2007), have also used this column form of transcription, and, in my opinion, their data was quite accessible and easy to read. It was easy to see exactly where the overlap was occurring and for how long. However, the column system is not quite sufficient to convey all of the relevant information contained in a conversation. As a result, I expanded the number of columns to include columns for the time, the photos, and the description of the actions and gestures in addition to columns for the speech of the conversationalists. Therefore, rather than make use of the transcription method described by Norris (2004), which I found to be difficult to read, a slightly different approach, offered by Jewitt (2006) was more applicable to this research project. Jewitt (2006) suggests including the

time, an image, a description of the action/gesture that corresponds to the image, and the speech that corresponds to the action/gesture and image into a column format similar to the one I was already familiar with. Because my data comes from a pre-recorded reality television series, I do not have access to the actual times the conversations were occurring; however, I have included the time as shown on the DVD player in order to give readers information about how long certain conversational acts took and to provide a timeline of the events. For simplicity's sake, I have included a notation of the action only where I deemed it significant to the conversation. The reader is able to see all that is occurring in the conversation, and so the notation of every action would become redundant. This suggested transcription method is easy to read and useful to this research project; however, Jewitt's (2006) approach is not as specific, nor as comprehensive, as that described by Norris (2004). Jewitt (2006) does not break down the modes most conspicuous in casual conversation, as her approach is used to analyze classroom interactions. Therefore, I have brought together the elements from each approach that I think are most useful; I adapted the list of modes proposed by Norris (2004) but incorporate the layout of text recommended by Jewitt (2006).

Nonetheless, in spite of the many advantages of this mode of transcription, this method is also accompanied by several challenges. First, this type of recording is very labor-intensive. In addition to writing the dialogue that is present in the conversation, I also had to include a detailed description of the paralinguistic features of the exchange as well as photograph each of the modal shifts in the conversation. "The task of translating the situated, embodied practices used by participants in interaction to organize phenomena relevant to vision poses enormous theoretical and methodological problems" (Goodwin, 2001, page 160). Clearly, this was a huge job; however, the results were much richer and potentially of more interest than a transcription of the spoken words alone could offer. Secondly, there remains the issue of what modes are of significance and ultimately what the analysis of the data will reveal. In other words, how does the researcher know what is important to describe and what the presence or absence of certain modes can be understood to

suggest? Norris (2004) admits that “[w]hen observing an interaction and trying to discern all of the communicative modes that the individuals are utilizing, we soon notice that this is a rather overwhelming task” (Norris, 2004, page 12). However, she also contends that, because communicative behavior is culturally habituated, “[t]his view from within a culture can best be gained through ethnographic research methods linked with *native interaction intuition*, since we all have native interaction intuition about the meaning of behavior within our own cultures and subcultures” (Norris, 2004, page 25). More specifically, Norris (2004) believes that a native English speaking resident of the USA is in a good position to reach conclusions about the meanings of modes within an interaction from a corpus, in my case, a reality TV program filmed in the USA. However, I am not entirely comfortable with this conclusion. In fact, if all members of a given culture were able to accurately perceive the meanings of the modes in a conversation, there would never be any misunderstandings. A position I am more comfortable with comes from Kress, Jewitt, Bourne, Franks, Hardcastle, Jones and Reid (2005). These researchers

recognize that all analysis is interpretation and our interpretation is informed by our social positions as researchers. ... In all signs people as sign-makers realize their own histories and interests. Hence readings always differ, as we all bring our own interests to the making of signs. ... In light of this we present our analysis not as fact but as hypothesis focused on the exploration of the multimodal production of ... English.

Kress, Jewitt, Bourne, Franks, Hardcastle, Jones and Reid, 2005,  
page 42

In other words, my understanding of the significance and meaning of certain modes in any given interaction might be different from another person’s understanding.

Thus, because “[i]t is a mistake to think there is a truly neutral transcription system” (Kendon, 1982, as quoted in Graddol, Cheshire and Swann, 1994, page 180), these decisions concerning transcription all need to be carefully considered and adhered to. Furthermore, although “in practice no record is completely adequate” (Goodwin, 2001, page 160), it

appears that a combination of Norris's (2004) list of modes and Jewitt's (2006) layout has afforded me a clear and comprehensive insight into how the elements of a conversation combine to both demonstrate and affect social norms associated with gender, identity and power.

### 3.5 Framework for Analysis

Once the 69 conversations were transcribed, my attention focused on how I would elicit revealing patterns from the data. Due to the value-laden nature of qualitative research, linguists dealing with spoken data must consider a series of choices, many of which may significantly affect the findings of the research. The "intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, page 10) lead theorists to make decisions regarding data collection and analysis, and, as previously discussed, questions of transcription and issues of multi-modality must be thoroughly considered. However, transcriptions alone are inadequate as researchers also need to be "able to 'unpack' various texts/genres/discourses as a tool to understanding how language is employed to make meanings" (Hyatt, 2005, page 44). Thus, after I finished transcribing the conversations, I applied a unique framework for analysis in order that patterns within the conversations may begin to emerge, and, ultimately, that I may be able to, with increasing confidence, make speculations about failed active listening attempts that will eventually lead to materials suitable for ESL education.

It is imperative that a unique framework be used for this analysis because "actual discourse analyses will rarely, if ever, fully realize [an] ideal model...[and] real analyses use some tools of inquiry more thoroughly than they do others" (Gee, 1999, page 119). In other words, although I will consider a variety of sources of methods for analysis, in the end, I must create my own frame that is conducive to the research I am undertaking. For instance, although Gee's own "tools of inquiry" (Gee, 1999, page 119) facilitate his observations about interviews with two contrasting groups of teenagers, those from working class families and those from upper-middle class families, not all of his categories of inquiry will yield the same richness

of results for my research concerning failed active listening attempts and their connection to issues of gendered identity and power. Clearly, one researcher cannot seamlessly use another researcher's analytic framework in a different study of discourse.

However, this individuality regarding my tools of inquiry does not preclude my looking to other theorists' for a 'starting point.' Specifically, I utilize Hasan's (1985) Contextual Configuration, Fairclough's (1989) Critical Discourse Analysis frame, Gee's (1999) tools of inquiry, and Hyatt's (2005b) Critical Literary Frame. Specifically, Hasan's (1985) Contextual Configuration prompts a discussion of the following topics: field, which includes acts, short term goals and long term goals; tenor, which is comprised of agent roles, dyadic relationships and social distance; and mode, which consists of the role of language, process sharing, channel and medium. The frame that Fairclough (1989) advocates includes the following questions:

- Vocabulary
  - What experiential values do words have?
    - What classification schemes are drawn upon?
    - Are there words which are illogically contested?
    - Is there rewording or overwording?
    - What ideologically significant meaning relations (synonym, hyponym, antonym) are there between words?
  - What relational values do words have?
    - Are there euphemistic expressions?
    - Are there markedly formal or informal words?
  - What expressive values do words have?
  - What metaphors are used?
- Grammar
  - What experiential value do grammatical features have?
    - What types of process and participant predominate?
    - Is agency clear?
    - Are nominalizations used?
    - Are sentences active or passive?
    - Are sentences positive or negative?
  - What relational values do grammatical features have?

- What modes (declarative, grammatical question, imperative) are used?
- Are there important features of relational modality?
- Are the pronouns *we* and *you* used? If so, how?
- What expressive values do grammatical features have?
  - Are there important features of expressive modality?
- How are simple sentences linked together?
  - What logical connectors are used?
  - Are complex sentences characterized by coordination or subordination?
  - What means are used for referring inside and outside of the text?
- Textual structures
  - What interactional conventions are used?
    - Are there ways in which one participant controls the turns of others?
  - What larger scale structures does the text have?

Fairclough, 1989, pages 110 – 111

Gee's (1999) tools of inquiry include a number of considerations: I statements, such as cognitive statements, affective statements, state and action statements, ability and constraint statements, and achievement statements; connection building, or the use of words to "connect clauses and sentences ...stanzas, episodes, and arguments ... [and] larger themes" (Gee, 1999, page 134); and motifs. Furthermore, Gee's list of several 'building' activities to reflect on consists of semiotic building, world building, activity building, socioculturally-situated identity building, political building and connection building. Finally, Hyatt's (2005b) Critical Literary Frame proposes the following list of areas of consequence:

- Pronouns
- Passive/Active Forms
- Time – Tense and Aspect
- Adjectives, Adverbs, Nouns, Verbal Processes – Evaluation and Semantic Prosody
- Metaphor
- Presupposition/Implication

- Medium
- Audience
- Visual Images
- Age, Class, Disability, Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Sexuality Issues
- Reference to other texts, genres, discourses and individuals

Hyatt, 2005b, page 47

In order to narrow the scope of my framework for analysis, I randomly chose 10 conversations from my corpus, and I applied the existing frameworks in their entirety to the samples. However, as the selection of interactions was analyzed, some telling patterns emerged. Specifically, some questions revealed fascinating information about the interactions and the possible impact gender, power, and identity creation was having on the active listening attempts. For example, Hasan's (1985) focus on Field, specifically the short term goals for the conversationalists, guided me to some interesting deductions about the purpose of the conversation, which, in turn, led to observations about the power struggles occurring within the conversations. This frame was much more effective in leading me to certain observations than direct questions about power would have been. On the other hand, some questions repeatedly received the same negative answer and quickly became burdensome to respond to because they did not provide any useful insights at all. For instance, Fairclough's (1989) queries regarding the grammatical features of the text, specifically the active and passive voice did not generate any relevant findings. Although the manipulation voice is clearly of great interest when analyzing, for example, political interviews, it was of less importance when it was applied to the conversations from *The Real World*, as speakers tended not to use the passive voice particularly frequently in their informal speech. Finally, it rapidly became clear that some essential observations were not prompted at all by these frameworks. For instance, although nonverbal elements of communication have been argued as essential to communication, and "[t]he analysis and interpretation of language use is contextualized in conjunction with other semiotic resources which are simultaneously used for the



construction of meaning” (O’Halloran, 2004, page 1), there is no mention of factors such as body language and eye contact within these frames. Furthermore, as my study is specifically concerned with failed active listening attempts, it is vital that I include some consideration of the presence of the floor-saving devices defined by Obeng (1991) and Schegloff (2000) that signal the “hitches and perturbations in the talk” (Schegloff, 2000, page 11) on which my research is focused. Therefore, although the frames used by other theorists provide a basis for my own framework, clearly I cannot rely solely on the scaffolds offered by others.

As the purpose of my analytic framework is to address my research questions, the questions must be considered when creating the framework. Therefore, before I attempt to create a unique framework for analysis, it is wise to return to my own research questions:

1. *When does listener talk end and speaker talk begin?*
2. *What can be generalized about power by the adherence to and understanding of the “rules” that govern listeners and speakers?*
3. *Are failed active listening attempts more frequent between genders and how do different listening behaviors result in this?*

### 3.5.1 *Listener Talk*

In order to address the first question, I need to identify two elements of the exchange: listener talk, or backchannel, and floor-saving devices. First, the analysis must highlight instances of backchannel in the conversation. It should be acknowledged that I cannot be totally sure of the true purpose of the active listening without interviewing the conversationalists themselves, as suggested by Hyatt (2005b).

Although it may be uncontroversial to suggest that social actions have goals, it is of course very controversial to speculate on the degree to which these goals can ever be stated, since this impinges on the intentions of the interactants.

Fenton-Smith, 2005, page 111

Indeed, even upon being asked, the participants themselves may not be consciously aware or may not care to admit what their true goals were when they made the backchanneled responses. However, it can also be argued that

[s]ituations are never completely novel (indeed if they were, we would never understand them). Rather, they are repeated with more or less variation over time (that is, distinctive configurations or patterns of semiotic resources, activities, things and political and sociocultural elements are repeated). Such repetition tends to 'ritualize,' 'habitualize,' or 'freeze' situations to varying degrees, that is, to cause them to be repeated with less variation.

Gee, 1999, page 83

Therefore, although researchers cannot ascertain for certain what the true intentions might have been behind linguistic choices, I can still employ what Norris (2004) refers to as *native interaction intuition*. In other words, I can, to some degree, rely on my own knowledge as a participant in North American culture as I evaluate whether or not the goal of the learner talk is genuine backchannel or a covert attempt to steal the floor. Thus, clearly, Hasan's question about short term goals is indispensable to this framework for analysis.





Second, in light of the importance of the nonverbal in interaction, some consideration must be given to communication in other modes. In fact, without considering the visual cues that accompany many casual, social interactions, a full understanding of what has taken place in a conversation is simply not possible because the nonverbal parts of an exchange provide both the conversationalists and the theorist valuable information.


As time unfolds, participants display their bodily and verbal conduct in a way that projects more to come; this display is oriented to the recipient and to the participant framework, and *reflexively* adjusted, in the course of the action, to their own embodied reception of it. In this sense interpretative resources have to be made publicly available and prospectively relevantly visible, in order for the reaction to be possible.

Mondada, 2006, page 117

For instance, in the conversation below, Heather, Julie and Norman have just returned to the loft from an evening out. They have all had a good time together, and they appear to all feel as though they have bonded. Norman is gay, but he has not come out to his roommates yet. Heather is trying to tell a joke in this clip.

Conversation 7: New York 1 – There were these Two Guys (1992)

			Heather	Julie	Norman
1:00:30		H stands over the bed.	It was these two guys, right? They were ...		Were they cute?
1:00:35		H kneels beside the bed.	Fuck it. I don't know. Okay, they were both cute.	(Laughs.)	Did they have big penises?
1:00:37		H crawls on her knees forward and forward and touches J's arm.	Okay, that part is a joke. Let me tell you, alright. Okay it was these two guys ...	(Laughs.)	
1:00:41			... they were looking to get drunk, but they didn't have any money. Okay ...		Were they Jewish?

1:00:44		H bangs table beside bed and raises the volume of her voice	Listen, Norman!		
---------	---	---	-----------------	--	--

If the nonverbal were not acknowledged, the researcher would have no basis to discuss the fact that Norman does not make eye contact with the speaker, Heather. A lack of eye contact, even when accompanied with backchannel, demonstrates that the listener may not be really interested in what is being said. Specifically, “glances as the partner are an important part of the turn-taking process” (Guaitella, Santi, Lagrue, and Cave, 2009, page 209). Indeed, visual backchannel plays such a vital role in interaction that, even in noisy settings, adults tend to use both “verbal and visual backchannel to maintain a speaker-listener relationship though the speech may not be comprehensible” (McKellin, Shahin, Hodgson, Jamieson, and Pichora-Fuller, 2007, page 2180). Thus, due to the fact that the nonverbal contains as much information as the verbal, photographs have been taken of the movements, gestures, and facial expressions of the participants in each conversation, as demonstrated above. However, just as the documentation of the verbal events in a conversation in itself does not provide sufficient information about communication norms, pictures alone may also not tell the complete story. In order for transcriptions, even those including photos, to offer valuable insights into human interaction, researchers must conduct an analysis of all of the data, not just the verbal. This stance is in keeping with Kress’ and van Leeuwen’s (2001), Norris’ (2004), Hyatt’s (2005) and Jewitt’s (2006) consideration of visual images and lies at the very heart of multimodality.

Third, in addition to highlighting learner talk, I also need to focus on the response of the speaker to the backchannel. In casual conversation, the speaker and listener usually jointly participate in the creation of the text. However, because “[t]urns are valued, sought, or avoided” (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974, page 699) the response of the speaker to the backchanneled response is of great interest. In other words, I must

contemplate the defensiveness or receptiveness expressed by the speaker to the listener talk.

In summary, a backchannel expression, which is defined as non-confrontational verbal attention to the interlocutor's utterance, takes the different formal shapes of non-lexical, phrasal or substantive backchannels. Their interactional state as a continuer or a reactive expression is determined by its recipient's treatment of it. In other words, the status of a backchannel is always mutative and transformable.

Iwasaki, 1997, page 667

In order to study this changeable conversational characteristic, I need to include Obeng's (1999) and Schegloff's (2000) checklists of floor-saving devices into my framework. Thus, in order to address the first of my research questions, I need to include these items into my framework for analysis:

1. What backchannel responses are present?
2. What other multi-modal data is present?
  - a. What visual images accompany the verbal?
  - b. Is there backchannel in other modes? If so, what?
3. Does the intent of active listening attempt appear genuinely supportive or not?
4. Which "hitches and perturbations" are present that indicate a speaker perception of threat
  - a. Increasing volume
  - b. Adjusting pitch
  - c. Quickening or slowing the pace of speech
  - d. Sudden silencing
  - e. Elongating a subsequent sound
  - f. Repeating

Therefore, my analysis of the listener talk in the above conversation reads as follows:

When does speaker talk end and listener talk begin?

1. Backchannel responses
  - a. *Norman*
    - i. *Yes / No Question: "Were they cute?"*

- ii. Yes / No Question: “Did they have big penises?”
      - iii. Yes / No Question: “Were they Jewish?”
    - b. Julie
      - i. Laughs
 

*Norman is responding to Heather’s statements, but Julie is only responding to Norman’s questions*
2. Other multi-modal data
- a. Visual images associated
    - i. They are in (presumably) Norman’s bedroom
    - ii. Norman and Julie are lying on the bed
    - iii. Norman is on his stomach; Julie is on her back on his left side
    - iv. Heather is standing beside the bed facing them
 

*Julie and Norman appear very intimately connected, while Heather is visibly the outsider*
  - b. Active listening in other modes
    - i. Julie makes eye contact with Heather
 

*Norman is not making eye contact nor demonstrating in any other visible way that he is listening to Heather. Interestingly, however, although Julie’s laughter is an active listening attempt in response to Norman’s jokes, she is looking at Heather, for the most part.*
3. Intent of active listening attempt (genuinely supportive or otherwise)
- a. Norman is responding to Heather’s story, but the backchannel is not genuine
 

*He is more concerned with communicating a message of his own than listening to Heather’s joke. However, perhaps Norman would rather not talk about his sexuality, so he uses active listening to send a message that he doesn’t want to directly express. In this way, Norman is not really trying to steal the floor; however, he is not genuinely active listening, either.*
4. Speaker perception of threat (“hitches and perturbations”)
- a. Increasing volume
  - b. Repeating
 

*Heather also directly, but with laughter, tries to gain control of the floor by saying “Let me tell you,” and “Listen” and by banging on the nightstand.*

### 3.5.2 Language and Power

Critical Discourse Analysis, the methodological basis for this research, expresses an interest in the relationship between power and

discourse. As previously described, “CDA may be defined as fundamentally concerned with analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power, and control as manifested in language” (Wodak, 2001, page 2). Likewise, my research focuses on issues of power as expressed through the linguistic choices, both conscious and subconscious, of *The Real World* cast members. By concentrating on occurrences of misunderstood attempts at backchannel, I hope to observe “everyday acts of meaning, [in which] people act out the social structure [and] affirm their own statuses and roles” (Halliday, 1978, page 2). In other words, whether or not a backchanneled response is appreciated may depend, in some part, on the perceived power relations between the participants in the conversation.




First, as has already been mentioned, the goals of the conversationalists are of great importance when analysts hope to speculate as to the power structure of a conversation. Hasan’s (1985) interest in Field prompts researchers to consider the objectives that the participants have in an interaction beyond simply facilitating the conversation. Again, this requires a certain amount of conjecture on my part; however, due to the fact that I have watched hours of *The Real World*, which included many revealing declarations in the “Confessionals,” I feel capable of making some informed deductions. Moreover, understanding the long and short term goals of the conversationalists helps to unpack the power struggles they face in the conversation as well as in their current living situation. For instance, in the conversation above among Heather, Julie and Norman, both Heather and Norman appear to want to entertain. Heather is trying to tell a joke to Norman and Julie, and Norman is interrupting her by making Julie laugh by asking funny questions. However, Norman’s long term goal is much more serious. He seems to be trying to prepare his roommates for a statement on his own sexuality, which the viewers know about due to his “Confessionals.” His indirect hinting about being gay might be a way of testing the waters to see how such a statement would be received. This is closely reflected by Hasan’s (1985) work on Tenor, specifically her notion of the Dyadic Relationship between the conversationalists. She advocates considering how the relative status of the participants and the associated hierarchy is

evident in the conversation. In this interaction, it appears that there are two different power dynamics. At the conversational level, Norman holds the power because his non-genuine backchannel does not allow Heather to finish her joke. Moreover, his use of joking, which Julie appears to understand and Heather ignores, may be a form of 'in-joke,' which "reinforces the sense of belonging and maneuvers the adversary [in the conversational sense, Heather] into the position of a member of the out-group" (Dyner, 2007, page 1873). However, on a more global level, Norman may be worried about how his coming out will affect his relationships with Julie and Heather, so he is at a social disadvantage in this way.

In addition, Hasan (1985) also encourages contemplation on the Agent Roles of the participants. Specifically, she contends that it is beneficial to reflect on the positions the conversationalists are assuming in the conversation and the potential global roles they may hope to take on. Much of the familiarity between roommates in *The Real World* is deceptive, for although the topics are often intimate and the physical space limited, the cast members really do not know each other very well. In fact, many of the conversations which I will analyze are actually conducted by the roommates with the explicit purpose of getting to know each other better. In the conversation among Heather, Julie and Norman, they are engaged in a friendly conversation and sharing an intimate space (Norman is lying in his underwear on his bed with his arm around Julie), but they have just started living together, and they are still getting to know each other. Moreover, occasionally, Hasan's (1985) Agent Roles in the conversation clearly reflect a social power imbalance between the speakers. For example, in this conversation between Lori and Nicky, their Agent Roles powerfully affect who controls the floor. Lori is an aspiring singer, and Nicky is a producer who works at Arista Records. Lori has just given Nicky a demo and they are discussing the possibility of her recording more for him.



## Conversation 8: New York 2 – I am Very Confident (2001)

			Lori	Nicky
2:27:17				The only thing I'm not sure about, I don't know rhythmically what you can do.
			Right.	I don't know how
				Because what you gave me was very smooth. You know, um, what are your thoughts on that?
2:27:21			I am up for doing different stuff. I am	Right.
2:27:23			I am very confident in my general ability to do different things.	Okay.

In this conversation, Nicky holds the power, as Lori's career is in his hands. Clearly, the Agent Roles played by Lori and Nicky are affecting the way this conversation is progressing. For these reasons, it often proved quite fruitful to consider the Agent Roles of the conversationalists.

In addition, Hasan (1985) advocates consideration of the notion of Process Sharing, which is of particular importance for this analysis of turn-taking. She asks if the addressee is able to share in the creation of the text. Linked to this notion, Fairclough (1998) encourages researchers to consider the interactional conventions used and the ways in which one participant controls the turns of others. Of interest to my research is what the speakers and listeners do in each conversation as they attempt to express their opinions and share their narratives. In other words, how do they attempt to dominate the topic? How do they submit? As "casual conversation is concerned with the *joint* construction of reality" (Egins and Slade, 1997, page 6, italics mine) one can suppose that the listener and the speaker both assume some responsibility for its continuation. However, how much control each participant has in the creation of the text depends on how much power

he/she wields. In some situations, a speaker may have less control over the conversation than the listeners; “[t]he humiliation of being a subordinate is often felt most sharply and painfully when one is ignored or interrupted while speaking” (Henley, 2001, page 288). In the conversation among Heather, Julie and Norman, Norman’s persistent questioning, although tangentially related to Heather’s story, does not allow her to finish telling her joke. In this way, Norman wields much more conversational control than is usually enjoyed by a listener. Thus, questions about who controls the topic, what interactional conventions are used to dominate the conversation, and to what extent listeners are able to affect the conversation all have a place in my framework for analysis.

Although the context is certainly of significance in an analysis of this sort, an analysis of what is going on at the sentence and word level is also useful. For example, Gee encourages the examination of “I” statements in his study involving the linguistic choices of teenagers. “One way, among many, to begin to get at how [speakers] build different socially-situated identities in language is to look at when they refer to themselves by speaking in the first-person as ‘I’” (Gee, 1999, page 124). Although Gee separates “I” statements into two categories, (Category A, which is associated with knowledge, argumentation and achievement, is comprised of affective, state and action, and ability and constraint “I” statements, and Category B, which is associated with a “social, affective, dialogic world of interaction” [Gee, 1999, page 125], is comprised of cognitive and achievement statements) I chose not to apply his specific groupings to my research. I believe that, as my research project is different from Gee’s (1999), the patterns that emerge from “I” statements may also be different. Specifically, following in the footsteps of researchers, such as Wales (1996) and Riberio (2006), who contend that the use of “I” statements mirrors the acquisition of power in a conversation, I thought it would be important to observe how “I” statements were shared in a conversation. For example, in the conversation among Heather, Julie and Norman, Heather is the only speaker to use an “I” statement. Interestingly, she uses it in response to one of Norman’s questions, rather than as part of her own story. Thus, a closer examination of the use of “I” statements reveals that although Heather uses the only “I”

statement, she is still not in control of the conversation. Further examination of the theory of a relationship between power and “I” statements follows in Chapter Four of this paper.

Fairclough (1989) contends that speakers communicate information about their social identities through the use of expressive words and grammatical features. An inspection of the manifestation of expressive values in conversation may provoke an observation of “the producer’s evaluation (in the widest sense) of the bit of reality it relates to” (Fairclough, 1989, page 112). Subsequently, by looking at the evaluations conversationalists make about the topic, the other interlocutors and the world, researchers can gather intelligence about the conversationalists’ identities and the social power they associate with them. Therefore, my framework for analysis should contain Fairclough’s questions about the expressive values of words and grammatical features in order to prompt this perspective into the identity creation work of the roommates and the power structure that implies. This includes an examination of the positive and negative evaluations made by the speakers and listeners, as well as expressive modality. For instance, in the conversation among Heather, Julie and Norman, Norman uses three positive evaluations, “cute,” “big penises” and “Jewish.” Although, in another context, the adjective “Jewish” might not be considered a positive evaluation, since Norman, himself, is Jewish and he seems to be implying that the men in the joke might be a good match for him, the evaluation can be regarded as a positive one. Norman appears to be using these positive evaluations of two fictional men in a story to communicate a particular identity, as a gay man. Interestingly, Heather does not appear to pick up on his hinting, but she does respond to his evaluations. In this conversation, there is no sign of any expressive modality; however, in the conversation between Lori and Nicky, Nicky wonders what Lori “can do rhythmically.” Nicky is questioning Lori’s identity as a singer, and because “[t]he work of identity is always going on” (Wenger, 1998, p. 154), this questioning puts Lori in a position of having to clarify this part of her identity. The presence of the modal verb, *can*, seems to highlight the power structure in the conversation because by using it Nicky causes Lori to have to defend

her singing ability and this emphasizes his position as powerful enough to decide whether or not to help Lori's career along.

Fairclough's (1989) framework also contains a question about modes which is of interest to this research. He asks, "What modes (declarative, grammatical question, imperative) are used?" This line of inquiry is of particular interest when one considers the potential for backchannel to be misunderstood as a threatening bid for the conversational floor. For example, in the conversation between Nicky and Lori, Lori is reassuring Nicky that she has range as a singer when Nicky backchannels with "Right." Nicky's backchannel, although seeming supportive, causes Lori to revert to a floor saving measure when she repeats herself. One of the most interesting questions that I hope to shed light on with this research project concerns the failure of backchannel (this concept is discussed at great length in Chapter Four) and what might cause a speaker to feel threatened. In addition, a question about modes brings to light the fact that Nicky asks the only question that appears in the conversation. His questioning, again, demonstrates his challenge to Lori about her ability to sing in a variety of genres, which serves to underline the power he has over her. Thus, by studying the modes of the backchannel, in addition to the modes used throughout the conversation, some interesting patterns related to power are encouraged to emerge.

Finally, in order to expose the obscure issues of power which are inherent to many social interactions, it is also necessary to consider two other issues: context and personality. First, context is of importance to a CDA approach because it "assume[s] a more or less direct relationship between situational, societal, political or cultural aspects of the 'environment' of text and talk" (van Dijk, 2006, page 161). In other words, the circumstances under which the conversation is taking place cannot be ignored if an understanding of the power structures present is to be achieved. In the conversation between Lori and Nicky, the context is of great importance. Without acknowledging that the conversation is influenced by the fact that they are sitting in Nicky's office at Arista records where he is deciding on the fate of Lori's career, the power structure of the conversation might remain obscured. Second, an inquiry into the impact of

personality became important as I viewed and transcribed the conversations in the corpus. For example, I noticed that several of the roommates had a conspicuously dominant identity while being filmed. Specifically, Coral from *The Real World Casting Special* and *The Real World New York 2* consistently came across as bossy and domineering. It must be noted, of course, that personality is a nebulous notion. How I see Coral in the 22 minutes of each episode of *The Real World* may not be a reflection of her true self. This happens in a heightened way in reality television because, not only are the roommates getting to know each other and attempting to make their identity known to the others in the house, but they are also putting forward a face for national television. In other words, the cast members are continuously, both consciously and subconsciously, enacting social identities for the benefit of those in their immediate existence and an unseen television viewing audience. (This phenomenon is summed up in Fill's (1986) notion of divided illocution, which has already been discussed in this paper.). These repeated enactments often "produce modifications in the self" (Blumstein, 2001, page 184); thus, a person may actually become the social identity they have assumed. Furthermore, the roommates are not solely responsible for how they are perceived by others. "When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire about him or to bring into play information about him already possessed" (Goffman, 2001, page 175). The other roommates, the producers and the editors all directly and indirectly attribute certain presupposed or convenient characteristics to the cast members so much so that "it is questionable whether these occurrences, constructed and edited for the purpose of entertainment, constitute real life" (Orbe and Hopson, 2003, page 225). Thus, Coral's reputation for being overbearing may be a construct of a variety of factors. Nonetheless, I felt that I could not ignore the fact that personality might impact the way power is held in a conversation.

There are a number of important factors to consider when an analysis of power inherent in a conversation is to be carried out. As a result, the section concerned with power in my framework for analysis contains the following questions:

1. What is the conversational purpose?
  - a. Conversationalists short term goals
  - b. Conversationalists long term goals
2. What is the didactic status of conversationalists?
3. What are the agent roles of the conversationalists?
4. What modes are used?
5. What “I” statements are used and by whom?
6. What positive and negative evaluations are present?
  - a. Positive
  - b. Negative
7. What expressive modality is used?
8. To what extent is the listener able to share in the creation of the text?
9. What interactional conventions are present?
10. Who controls the topic?
11. Does anyone offer the floor?
12. What contextual factors are significant?
13. Does an obvious personality trait affect the conversation in any way?

My analysis of the conversation of the power dynamic present in the conversation among Heather, Julie and Norman follows.

What can be generalized about power by the adherence to and understanding of the “rules” that govern listeners and speakers?

1. Conversational Purpose
  - a. Conversationalists’ short term goals
    - i. Heather wants to entertain the others.*
    - ii. Norman wants to entertain the others.*
    - iii. Julie is listening.*
  - b. Conversationalists’ long term goals
    - i. Norman wants to communicate an important message indirectly to Heather about his sexuality.*
    - ii. Julie wants to facilitate that communication (as is evidenced in a later “Confessional”).*  
*Norman’s goal is not to be an active listener.*
2. Didactic status of conversationalists
  - a. They are social equals, but because Norman is attempting to communicate a message to Heather that she either consciously or unconsciously avoiding, Norman is at a disadvantage.*



*Although Heather is the one telling the joke, she is clearly not in control of the conversation.*

9. Interactional conventions

- a. *Heather raises her voice, bangs the table, kneels to be closer to Norman and Julie, and uses the imperative to command attention.*
- b. *Julie uses laughter to participate in the conversation.*
- c. *Norman uses active listening to communicate a message.*

10. Control of topic

- a. *Heather controls the surface topic (it is her joke, after all), but not the conversation.*

*Norman is in control of the hidden topic and he controls the direction of the joke by asking all sorts of seemingly irrelevant questions.*

11. Offering of the floor

- a. *Heather opens the floor for backchannel in her first sentence when she says "right?" She clearly does not want to encourage another speaker, but rather, she wants reassurance that they are listening to her.*

12. Contextual factors

- a. *None*

13. Personality

- a. *None*

### 3.5.3 Listener Talk and Gender









My final research question focuses on the different listening strategies of men and women. As discussed earlier, it has been repeatedly documented by linguists, including Maltz and Borker (1983), Pilkington (1992), Tannen (1994), Holmes (1995) and Coates (1994, 1996, 1997a&b, and 2003), that men and women use different active listening strategies. Moreover, "a strategy that seems, or is, intended to create connection can in another context or the mouth of another speaker be intended or used to establish dominance" (Tannen, 1993, page 166). Thus, because variations between backchannel exist, it seems as though miscommunications that result in minor breakdowns in the conversation may arise between male and female conversationalists. The question then becomes: is this assumption accurate? Do these breakdowns recur with any regularity in conversations between men and women or do they occur in conversations between all







kinds of speakers? In order to reach an answer, I need to include a question about the genders of the participants. However, as has previously been discussed in this paper, this line of inquiry is fraught with the dangers associated with attempting to make essentialist claims about gender. “A challenge for gender and language research is to develop analytic approaches that do not mechanically invoke gender identity of the speaker in explanations of the way they talk” (Weatherall, 2007, page 285). Thus, my goal is not to definitively assert that men and women act in certain ways because they are men and women. Rather, it is my goal to examine the data from the corpus and see what interesting patterns may emerge. Thus, in order to uncover potential patterns, I need to include a question which makes clear the gender of the conversationalists in relation to backchannel which causes “hitches and perturbations” (Schegloff, 2000, page 11), in a conversation.

Although Hyatt’s (2005b) Critical Literacy Frame does include mention of gender as an issue for consideration, it seems as though he is referring to the presence of overt comments about gender. He encourages observers to “note any comment regarding individuals who may be projected as less socially valued” (Hyatt, 2005b, page 52). Thus, a question about the overt mention of gender in a conversation is useful. However, often issues of gender are not explicitly addressed in casual conversation. In fact, although “casual conversation is a critical linguistic site for the negotiation of such important dimensions of our social identity as gender” (Eggin and Slade, 1997, page 6), it is rarely overtly mentioned. “Thus men well may be able to hide negative opinions about women, or white people, or black people, but indirectly signal their evaluations, position of face, and hence their identity may be signaled by subtle structural characteristics of talk” (van Dijk, 2001, page 106). For example, in the following conversation between Brynn, Frank, Irulan and Trishelle, the women have just returned from their job as cocktail waitresses at a hotel and they are counting their money. Frank is playing pool in an adjacent room.

## Conversation 9: Las Vegas – Tips (2002-2003)

			Brynn	Frank	Irulan	Trishelle
23/16:38						How much did you make in tips?
23/16:41		I turns away from the computer			Fifty-five dollars.	Really?
					How much did you make?	
23/16:43						So far I have eighty.
					Well, you're doing better than us	
23/16:45					so	Yeah, but you should have seen the lengths that I was going to to get tips.
						I was flirting with the fattest, ugliest
23/16:50					What do you mean?	
						oldest men
23/16:52		I looks away from computer at T and laughs				
23/16:54		I laughs				like they were freaking Matt Damon or something.
23/16:57		B smiles and shakes her head	Whatever works.			

23/16:58		I smiles		That's funny.	Yeah, hey!	
23/17:00		F smiles		because I'm always like, "I think the stripper really liked me."		
23/17:03		T looks up and smiles				Shut up! Quit comparing a cocktail waitress to a stripper. My daddy is probably already not proud that I'm a cocktail waitress.
23/17:10				I'll just keep my mouth shut.		He doesn't know.
		T raises her volume				Honestly, he doesn't know yet.





In this conversation, Frank does not openly express distain for deceitful female waitresses even though Trishelle has referred to her male customers as “the fattest, ugliest, oldest men.” However, he indirectly signals his opinion by making an indirect comparison between cocktail waitresses who flirt with their customers for tips with exotic dancers, who also flirt with their customers for money. The comparison is a fairly insulting one for Trishelle, who comes from a conservative background. She picks up on it quickly and scolds Frank for making the comparison, thereby exposing Frank’s attempt to hide his negative opinion.

Therefore, since “ideology is most effective when its workings are less visible” (Fairclough, 1989, page 85), I also need to focus on subtler, less visible references to gender, such as a reference to other individuals. As “[r]elational values may identify the perceived social relationship between the producer of the text and its recipient” (Atkins, 2002, page 5), it may be valuable to consider how gender might impact the relationship between the

speaker and the listener. For example, in the above conversation, Trishelle refers to several outside individuals: her customers, Matt Damon, and her father. She poses a contrast between her customers, who she claims are old, fat and ugly, and Matt Damon, a Hollywood movie star, who she apparently holds as an ideal male. This contrast appears to highlight what Trishelle feels is important in a male, good looks rather than generosity. More over, she appears to be taking the stance that men who are good-looking might expect to be treated better than those who are not. It is not clear where along this spectrum she places Frank, but he appears to feel somewhat threatened and fires back with an insult of his own. In addition to this reference to others, it is useful to consider the possible relational values of the vocabulary and grammar choices of the speakers as described by Fairclough (1989) when attempting to unpack issues of gender. Specifically, Fairclough (1989) advocates examining the use of euphemism, informal words, relational modality, and the use of pronouns. In the conversation among Brynn, Frank, Irulan and Trishelle, there is plenty of fodder for analysis. First, Frank uses the euphemism “stripper” to refer to the exotic dancers he describes as being nice to him. Through this comparison he is attempting to be funny by playing the dumb customer, but it is interesting that he chooses an even more subservient job, that of exotic dancer, as his example. He insults Trishelle and Irulan, although neither seems to be genuinely bothered, despite their protests, as they continue to laugh and smile. In terms of informal language, it is interesting that Trishelle uses the word “daddy” to refer to her father. This lexical choice serves the purpose of making Trishelle seem younger and more innocent than her original comment about flirting with her male customers in exchange for tips. The use of the pronouns “you” and “we” also bring to light the creation of alliances based on gender. “You” usually serves one of two purposes. “It is used as an indefinite pronoun – in the sense of ‘one’ ... – but also as a definite reference ... to the immediate audience” (Baxter and Wallace, 2009, page 418). On the contrary, “we” usually signifies a united front. For instance, in the following conversation between Coral and Nicole, Coral has to tell Nicole that her ex-boyfriend, Malik, went out with some of the other

roommates the previous night and got together with a guest, Gisela. Coral and Nicole are very good friends.

Conversation 6: The Real World: New York 2 – Slap Me! (2001)

			Coral	Nicole
0:54:06			He comes in today and, and he looks all	
0:54:08		N leans on the sofa and looks at C	weathered and torn.	
0:54:10			And I was like, "You guys hooked up?" and he was like, "Yeah."	
0:54:13			So, they were all at the club ... that's what we missed ...	
				Slap me!
0:54:15		C lightly slaps N and N falls on the sofa	That's what we missed when we were at home sleeping!	

In this conversation, Coral uses "you" to refer to her conversation with Malik. This effectively separates him from the 'in-group' of Coral and Nicole. One might presume that this is for Nicole's benefit, as by isolating Malik, Coral is making him less powerful in their immediate situation. In addition, she

creates a feeling of solidarity with Nicole when she uses “we” three times to refer to herself and Nicole.

The effect of this use of grammar is to give an impression of a separate entity residing outside the established ‘in-group’ and consequently sets up the sense of an ‘us and them’ divide. Thus, pronominal use is seen to be an important means of achieving identity work.

Baxter and Wallace, 2009, page 418

Finally, as has previously been stated, gender is one salient aspect of one’s identity. “[T]he notion of identity is a slippery one” (Litosseliti and Sunderland, 2002, page 6), and identity is often a fluid concept that is difficult for researchers to pin down. However, Gee (1999) would argue that one way to observe the impact of gendered identity on conversation is through an examination of the motif building that is occurring in a conversation. He also points out that when exploring the building of socially-situated identities, people often utilize narration, as storytelling is a very powerful way of indirectly describing one’s identity. “In deep narratives, people do not focus on logical consistency, rather, they focus on the theme they are attempting to instantiate and develop” (Gee, 1999, page 136). In other words, stories are a vehicle through which people can present additional and alternative identity characteristics. As a result of the importance of theme to speakers, it is imperative that my analysis include a question about motif building. Closer attention to the motifs which run through a narrative can offer valuable information about a cast member’s socially situated identity, and my analysis should contain a question that prompts this focus. For example, in the conversation among Brynn, Frank, Irulan and Trishelle, it seems that Trishelle is striving to create a motif of herself as both hardworking and innocent. In the conversation between Coral and Nicole, it appears that Coral is trying to create a motif of both herself and Nicole as good girls who don’t go out and party with the others.

Thus, due to the interesting data all of these questions reveal about the impact gender may have on a conversation, they are included in my framework for analysis.

How do different listening behaviors associated with the enactment of gendered identities contribute to the failures of active listening attempts?

1. What explicit reference to gender occurs?
2. What subtle reference to gender occurs?
  - a. Euphemisms
  - b. Informal Words
  - c. Relational modality
  - d. Pronouns *you* and *we*
  - e. Individuals outside the text
  - f. Other references?
3. What motifs in terms of gendered identity are created?

Thus the conversation among Brynn, Frank, Irulan and Trishelle is analyzed as follows.

How do different listening behaviors associated with the enactment of gendered identities contribute to the failures of active listening attempts?

1. Explicit reference to gender
  - a. *“fattest, ugliest oldest men”*  
*Trishelle describes her customers negatively to prove how hard she works for her tips. This could also be a mechanism for Trishelle to regain power after performing in a relatively powerless position. Waitressing is often seen as an occupation that is inherently powerless in that the sole purpose is to serve customers, so Trishelle may be reclaiming her power by laughing at her customers.*
2. Subtle reference to gender
  - a. Euphemisms
    - i. *“stripper”*  
*Frank attempts to be funny by mocking himself and playing the dumb customer, but it is interesting that he chooses an even more subservient job, that of exotic dancer, as his example. Inadvertently, I think, he insults Trishelle and Irulan, although neither seems to mind too much despite their protests. Perhaps this choice is a commentary on the options open to women in the service industry. Or, it might be that Frank wants to counter Trishelle’s comments about her customers (perhaps he fears servers*

*thinking the same about him) by making cocktailing he equal to stripping.*

b. Informal Words

i. "daddy"

*Trishelle uses a childish term to refer to her father. This makes her seem more innocent than she is, a direct contrast to her comments about preying on men for tips.*

c. Relational modality

i. None

d. Pronouns you and we

i. You

1. *Trishelle to Irulan*

2. *Irulan to Trishelle*

3. *Irulan to Trishelle*

4. *Trishelle to Irulan*

5. *Irulan to Trishelle*

*The conversation is initially primarily between Irulan and Trishelle about money. Trishelle's ability to generate more tips than Irulan might be seen as a power imbalance in their conversation in that Trishelle advises Irulan about her strategies.*

ii. We

1. *None*

*This would have been a great opportunity for Trishelle and Irulan to unite and confront Frank's demeaning joke, but they don't do this.*

e. Individuals outside the text

i. "fattest, ugliest, oldest men"

*Again, Trishelle negatively describes her customers so as to highlight the extreme measures to which she goes to make tips and to possibly regain some of her own power after a powerless day.*

ii. *Matt Damon*

*Apparently, this is Trishelle's idea of the ideal male. His Hollywood good looks are in contrast to the norm. In this way, Trishelle makes the ideal unattainable.*

iii. *Daddy*



*Trishelle comes from a conservative background, and she is clearly concerned about how he will react to her job. Again, this view of Trishelle as an innocent child is in direct contrast to her portrayal of her cocktailing demeanor.*

f. Other references?

i. *None*

3. Motifs (in terms of gendered identity)

a. *Trishelle as hardworking and manipulative*

b. *Trishelle as an innocent*

c. *Cocktailing as a shameful occupation*

### 3.6 The Analysis

Once the framework was created, I applied it to the 69 conversations in my corpus. This was time-consuming, as in order to answer some of the questions, I had to watch the clips repeatedly. I viewed each clip approximately seven to ten times. (The actual number of viewings varied depending on the length and content of the interaction.) I turned the volume down and concentrated only the conversationalists' movements at least once for each clip, and I closed my eyes and focused on the sound of the speakers at least once for each clip. As I watched and re-watched the clips, I was able to flesh out the framework into a comprehensive analysis.

There is a great deal of overlap between the two areas upon which I have chosen to focus, and a discussion of gender will inevitably contain mention of power. For example, silencing, such as the stifling of backchannel, may be viewed by linguists "as a way in which men as individuals reinforce and recreate their power" (Lakoff, 2002, page 344). As a result of this interconnection between these areas of consideration, there predictably will be some overlap in the questions in my framework for analysis. In addition, there is also some repetition in my analysis as different questions in the framework prompted similar answers. This repetition, in my opinion, was necessary in that it served to make the opaque more clear, as I often found that one question was not sufficient in teasing out the patterns I was interested in.

Once the analysis was complete for all of the conversations, I was left with hundreds of pages of paper upon which I could see the conversation transcriptions and the analysis. In order to make sense of the raw data, I created a spreadsheet (see Appendix 3), so as to encourage visual patterns to emerge. On the basis of my transcriptions and the observations prompted by my framework for analysis, I was able to address my original research questions:

1. *When does listener talk end and speaker talk begin?*
2. *What can be generalized about power by the adherence to and understanding of the “rules” that govern listeners and speakers?*
3. *Are failed active listening attempts more frequent between genders and how do different listening behaviors result in this?*

#### 4. Findings

Once the analytical framework had been developed, the 69 conversations containing instances of failed active listening attempts were transcribed and analyzed. My specific form of transcription, based on the groundbreaking work of Norris (2004) and Jewitt (2006), which considers both verbal and nonverbal backchannel, coupled with a Critical Discourse Analysis approach, which is “not interested simply in what goes on in the data extracts [but also in making] wider claims about the way particular discursive strategies function, for example sustain a sexist or racial social order” (Hammersley, 2003, page 764) prompted some interesting findings. In other words, when the transcribed conversations were scrutinized under the close light of the framework for analysis some interesting patterns emerged.

These patterns are useful both when addressing the research questions proposed in this text and when creating materials for English Language Teaching. As will be detailed in Chapter Five, the ultimate purpose of this project is to enhance the way English as a Second or Foreign Language, specifically Conversation, is taught and learned. First, the observations reported in this paper may serve to inform the materials created by text authors and used by classroom teachers so that they offer a more accurate reflection of what authentic casual conversation entails.

Without the ability to participate in casual conversations, people from non-English speaking backgrounds are destined to remain excluded from social intimacy with English speakers, and will therefore be denied both the benefits (as well as the risks) of full participation in the cultural life of English-speaking countries.

Eggs and Slade, 1997, page 351

In addition to prompting materials writers and educators to include more aspects of naturally-occurring conversation into their syllabi, the approach adopted in this research and the materials which result may also serve as an introduction to CDA. When studying a foreign language, students can

benefit immensely from acquiring the skills necessary for the critical analysis of language. “The critical approach to language study is consistent with a view of education which prioritizes the development of the learners’ capacities to examine and judge the world carefully and, if necessary, to change it” (Cots, 2006, page 336). Thus, although this research is important because the findings may be significant in the area of discourse analysis, ultimately, the purpose of this project is practical with the goal of positively impacting the way English Conversation is studied.




#### 4.1 Defining Speaker and Listener Talk

##### *4.1.1 Overlap and Interruption*

The first research question, *Where does speaker talk end and listener talk begin?* arises from the problematic definitions and overriding disagreement which dominate the conversation regarding turn taking and backchannel. Specifically, disparities exist in how linguists differentiate between *overlap* and *interruption*, and how they define a *turn*.

Both *overlap* and *interruption* describe two-at-a-time talk, something spontaneous conversations are replete with. Consider the following conversation between Danny and Kelly in which they appear to be responding to an off camera question regarding their best memory of the time they spent in *The Real World* house in New Orleans. Danny and Kelly became very close friends while filming, and they kept in touch long after the program aired. In fact, their relationship was flirtatious; they often appeared to be a couple, which is ironic as Danny is openly gay. Based on comments made by the roommates in a number of “Confessionals,” Julie is also friendly with both of them, but her relationship is quite a bit more casual. Instead of participating in the friendly flirtation that goes on between Danny and Kelly throughout the entire season of *The Real World* as well as the follow-up *The Real World You Never Saw: New Orleans*, her primary flirtatious relationship is an unrequited love affair with another roommate, Matt.

## Conversation 10: New Orleans - Mardi Gras (2000)

			Danny	Julie	Kelly
25:17		K looks at J D looks at K	The float was  Yeah, definitely, the biggest thrill	  Yeah.	The Mardi Gras float was probably, like, the funnest thing we did.
25:20		J nods and smiles	ever.		Yeah, like being here, it was awesome.
25:22		D looks at J J smiles at D K nods	It was like a roller coaster ride.		It was really awesome.

In this conversation, all of the participants' speech overlapped at one point or another in the kind of "all-together-now" conversations described by Dunne and Ng (1994). Julie's backchannel, "yeah", is said in the middle of Danny's observation about the Mardi Gras float. Even more significantly, Kelly and Danny speak simultaneously twice in the conversation. It is not until the very end of the clip that a speaker, Kelly, resorts to floor saving measures when she repeats, "It was really awesome." Otherwise, none of the speakers seem to be concerned about the fact that their speech is "clearly a violation of the turn-taking norms" (Smith-Lovin and Brody, 1989, page 426). This begs the question: Is this an example of *interruption* or *overlap*?

Some linguists, including Murray and Covelli (1988), James and Clark (1993), Greenwood (1996) and Schmidt Mast (2002), use the two terms interchangeably. Others use the term *interruption* in a more clearly defined way. For example, Menz and Al-Roubaie (2008) refer to overlapped backchannel as "supportive interruptions" (Menz and Al-Roubaie, 2008, page 649) in their study of doctor/patient interactions. Ladegaard (2009) describes the clarification questions asked by a teacher of a sullen student as "interruptions that are not disruptive" (Ladegaard, 2009, page 658). However, there seems to be a more substantial difference between the

concepts of *interruption* and *overlap* in real conversations. As a participant in a conversation, it is my intuition that I would prefer to have my speech overlapped rather than interrupted. To me, *overlap* suggests enthusiastic participation in a conversation, while *interruption* signals that the listener is actually not interested in listening.

It appears that Julie's "Yeah" should not be categorized as an *interruption* because "[i]n general...minimal responses are heard as expressing some level of support rather than as a bid for the floor" (Graddol, Chesire and Swann, 1987, page 158), so backchannel can be easily tagged as an *overlap* due to its supportive, non-floor-threatening nature. However, Danny's and Kelly's exchange is a little more challenging to categorize. Both speakers begin talking at the same time about the same topic. Danny quickly gives way and acknowledges Kelly's utterance with "Yeah," but he continues with his own observation. When he attempts to add to Kelly's evaluation, "... it was awesome," she becomes threatened and repeats in order to maintain control of the floor. Perhaps Kelly's reaction is partly due to the fact that, while he is talking, Danny shifts his gaze from Kelly to Julie, which may appear less than supportive to Kelly. Nonetheless, even though this is a friendly conversation and Danny's speech appears to be, at least in form, supportive, Kelly's speech is disrupted. One might, therefore, categorize Danny's response as an interruption, as it is a "disruptive turn" (Homes, 1995, page 52). Nonetheless, it seems that Danny does not really intend to steal the floor from Kelly (he gave in willingly once before), so the term *interruption* does not seem to fit in this instance either. As black-and-white definitions of the terms *overlap* and *interruption* become increasingly difficult to reach, mitigating factors, such as situation, body language, personality, and social power must be taken into account.

Thus, to understand whether an overlap is an interruption, one must consider the context (for example, cooperative overlapping is more likely to occur in casual conversation between friends than in a job interview), the speakers' habitual styles (for example, overlaps are more likely not to be interruptions among those with a style I call 'high-involvement'), and the interaction of their styles (for example, an interruption is more likely to occur between speakers whose styles differ with regard to pausing and overlap).

Tannen, 2001, page 157

However, Tannen (1993) also points out that *overlap* becomes *interruption* when the turn-taking balance of the conversation is thrown off. "If one speaker repeatedly overlaps and other speaker repeatedly gives way, the resulting communication is asymmetrical, and the effect (though not necessarily the intent) is domination" (Tannen, 1993, page 176). Although this definition of interruption as repeated and successful bids for the floor does bring some clarity to the discussion, a problem remains when one considers the focus of this research. Specifically, does Tannen regard repeated backchannels that cause stress in the conversation to be interruptions? It is unclear whether or not overlaps which are unsuccessful because the speaker resorts to floor-saving measures, such as repetition, as Kelly does in the conversation above, should be categorized as interruptions. In my opinion, Danny is not engaging in "a hostile act designed to deny the current speaker the legitimate right to the floor" (Cameron, 2001, page 92) because he continues along the same topic, and he is, in a sense, responding to what Kelly is saying. Therefore, it seems that the term *overlap* is a more suitable and accurate description of two-at-a-time talk resulting from the use of backchannel. Interruption implies an element of aggression that is simply not usually perceptible in this kind of positive listener response. I believe that explicitly defining and differentiating between the terms *overlap* and *interruption* may help to elucidate future research findings concerning backchannel. For instance, in a study, such as that conducted by Murray and Covelli (1988), which compares the two-at-a-time talk caused by male and female speakers, the terms are often used interchangeably. However, the interactional implications of *overlap* may often be very different from *interruption*, and a study which neglects to

acknowledge this difference may be oblivious to some important observations. Thus, a clear understanding of these two similar terms may lead to more insightful research findings.




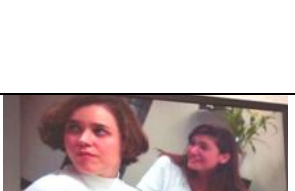





#### 4.1.2 Turn and Floor

In addition to the disagreement about the definitions of *overlap* and *interruption*, there is also a great deal of confusion about what exactly constitutes a turn. More explicitly, many theorists do not believe that backchannel is actually a turn in the conversation. Some theorists, such as Duncan and Niederehe (1974), Goffman (1976), Orestrom (1983), McCarthy (1991), Schegloff (1996) and Taboada (2006), contend that a turn is speaker talk, not listener talk, so backchannel is not, in their minds, a legitimate turn because the backchanneler is not getting control of the conversational floor. However, this approach is somewhat flawed when the following exchange among Andre, Becky, Julie and Eric is considered. The roommates have just moved into the apartment together, and they are in the stages of getting to know each other. Eric and Julie find each other attractive, as is evidenced in earlier “Confessionals.”

#### Conversation 11: New York 1 - First Kiss (1992)

			Eric	Julie	Andre	Becky
0:14:00			Do you remember your first kiss?			
0:14:03		A, J and B turn to face E		[background talking]	Um, my first kiss. I don't ...	[background talking]
0:14:06				Do you remember the girl?		
			Yeah.			



0:14:07		J turns to face E		Do you remember what she looked like and stuff?		
0:14:08		B turns to look at E while drinking J smiles	Yep.			
0:14:09			Like, I can remember the first girl I kissed, when I was like 7 years old. Like that meant more to me than, like, the first girl that I had sex with.			
0:14:16		J leans forward, smiling, and her pitch goes up B turns to face Eric		What?		
0:14:17			Yep. I can't ... I don't remember.			
0:14:19		J, B, and A look at E E's volume increases	I mean ... ... if I really, really thought about it, and	How old were you?		
0:14:22			I can't, I mean I don't remember.			
0:14:25		J thrusts her head forward and smiles and then nods	.	You just been screwing all your life and you don't ...		
0:14:28		E shakes his head	No. No. No. And I don't even ... I don't know. I just don't remember.	... remember.		

Eric initiates the conversation with his question, “Do you remember your first kiss?” However, Julie turns the question back on him, interrupting Andre’s response, by asking Eric, “Do you remember the girl?” Eric’s claim that he remembers the first girl he kissed but not the first girl with whom he had sex surprises Julie and she backchannels with, “What?” Julie probes for more information with the information question “How old were you?” and follows up by rephrasing Eric’s statement with, “You’ve just been screwing all your life and you don’t remember.” In total, Julie backchannels three times. She does not appear to be attempting to take the floor with her questions or the recast. In fact, she is eliciting clarifications from Eric and encouraging him to continue speaking. This backchannel is what Weber (1993) would refer to as a *news receipt*, which is “used to receipt information that is new and interesting, or in some respects, unanticipated” (Weber, 1993, page 187). Garner (1994) is more specific in categorizing listener talk. He would classify the first two backchannels, “What?” and “How old were you?” as *brief questions* and the recast as an *assessment*. O’Keefe, Clancy and Adolphs (2010), as described in Adolphs (2008), would consider Julie’s backchannel to be *engagement tokens*. Finally, Norrick (2009) would refer to them as *interjections*. Although researchers may disagree on the terminology, clearly the study of listener talk is rich, and it presents many interesting observations about the purpose of such talk.






Nonetheless, as stated above, many theorists would consider Julie’s utterances as backchannel and, therefore, not legitimate turns. However, it is difficult to view them as merely belonging to Eric’s turn, partly due to the fact that these backchannels are more grammatically complex than the minimal responses, such as “*uh huh, right, and yeah*, [which] signal that the channel is still open” (Taboada, 2006, page 4). Although Julie’s “What?” is not a full clause, but an “elliptical wh-interrogative” (Eggins and Slade, 1997, page 91), its meaning can be clearly understood as a request for confirmation. The next question, “How old were you?” is a full interrogative, “typically used to elicit additional circumstantial information” (Eggins and Slade, 1997, page 87). Finally, “You’ve just been screwing all your life and you don’t remember.” is a complete compound sentence with two declarative










clauses. It therefore seems that these examples of backchannel should be considered turns of the same rank as any of the speaker, Eric's, clauses. In addition to being grammatically complex, Julie's backchannels, as well as all listener talk, including the marginalized non-lexical minimal responses, such as *uh huh*, *right*, and *yeah*, "play a very important role in interactive discourse." (Eggins and Slade, 1997, page 95) For instance, when Julie summarizes Eric's speech, it is not simply repetition for the sake of repetition. She may also be doing some important relationship building. As Leung (2009) found in her analysis of the conversational behavior of preadolescent girls, "[t]he use of repetition not only helped to seamlessly join the different parts of the narrative, but to bond the girls' relationship" (Leung, 2009, page 1348). Thus, due to the important part Julie's speech is playing in the conversation, it could be argued that Julie is taking a turn when she backchannels, while Eric maintains the conversational floor with his anecdote. However, backchannel need not be long or complex to be a turn. "Each rejoinder, regardless of how brief and abrupt, has a specific quality of completion that expresses a particular position of the speaker" (Bakhtin, 1986, page 72). So, it could be argued that all backchannel is equal; moreover, as all forms of backchannel are considered, it seems that *turn* could more accurately refer to any utterance, be it a full clause or a non-lexical item, and *floor* could refer to control of the topic. For example, in an examination of a short exchange between two men, Jim and Mike, Hutchby (2004) found that by repeating what the speaker, Jim, had said with question intonation, "Mike's turn can be treated as...a maneuver by which the floor is thrown back to Jim with an invitation to go on and develop his position" (Hutchby, 2004, page 523). In this analysis, Hutchby (2004) acknowledges the responsibility held by the listener to maintain the conversation, and the power inherent in the choice at a transition relevance place (TRP), whether to take up the floor or to hand the conversation back to the speaker. Likewise, the conversational actions of Julie probe Eric for more information as she throws the conversational floor back to him even though he first asked the question and no one else answered it. Therefore, this example, as well as many others in the corpus, verifies the original distinction made by Yngve (1970) that "there are at least two levels of turn variables. One might




be called ‘having the turn’ and the other might be called ‘having the floor’” (Yngve, 1970, page 575). In addition, this re-naming of categories clarifies the vital role that backchannel plays in conversations and more clearly depicts the conversational power inherent in listener talk.

Nevertheless, if Julie’s questions and statement are to be considered as turns, and shorter backchanneled responses are also deemed turns, an argument could be made for including even nonverbal responses into this category. In the following conversation, Brynn is returning alone to the hotel suite after a night out with Trishelle. Arissa and Irulan are sitting in the foyer smoking and talking when Brynn arrives, and she joins them to gossip about her troubled friendship with Trishelle. As is evidenced in this exchange, Brynn is very jealous of Trishelle’s looks and her ability to attract men.

Conversation 12: Las Vegas 1 – Help (2002 – 2003)

			Arissa	Brynn	Irulan
7/00:5 2					[unintelligible]
7/00:5 4				Hey!	
7/00:5 7				Hi.	Did you have fun up there?
7/1:01				Trishelle needs help.	
7/01:0 2		I rolls her eyes			Oh god!

7/01:0 4				We were there for like ten	She's up to no good!
7/01:0 5		I looks at B with a serious expression		We were there for like ten minutes, swear to god, and she had like a guy's phone number and then a guy talks to her, and I'm like, are you kidding me, I was there for like, how long was I there?	
7/01:1 3		B and I look at watch		I was there for like,	
7/01:1 4				Three hours.	At least she's not making out.
7/01:1 4		A looks at I and B			I wonder if she feels like she's
7/01:1 7					got to beat you to the punch. If she's got to beat you,
7/01:1 9		I looks at B B crinkles her brow			You know what I mean? You know, I am down for whatever. I'm going to have a good time."
				I am still down for whatever.	
7/01:2 4		I gestures toward B		It is so different.	But it's different.
7/01:2 6		A nods		The sweetest girl. I could describe her	

7/01:2 8				in one word, it would be sweet, but is she really that sweet or ...	
7/01:3 3			There is something there that has you wondering. It's Sybil and Trishelle.		
7/01:3 7		I and B laugh	You know what I'm saying?		

In this conversation, there is a great deal of listener nonverbal reaction that both accompanies verbal backchannel and stands alone. For example, Irulan responds to Brynn's declaration that Trishelle needs help both verbally with "Oh god!" and nonverbally with a roll of the eyes and a smile. Both Irulan's verbal and nonverbal responses communicate significant meaning to the conversation, and both are supportive. Irulan's eye roll plus smile conveys that she has heard before about Trishelle's antics, and she is prepared to agree with Brynn's assessment of the situation. It imparts as much meaning as her next backchannel, "She's up to no good," which is a full clause. Multimodal analysts, as well as discourse analysts such as Kogure (2007), McKellin, Shahin, Hodgson, Jamieson, and Pichora-Fuller (2007) and Guaitella, Santi, Lagrue and Cave (2009), have likewise argued for the significance of the nonverbal because

as linguists we cannot depend on the mode of language to point us to the relevant interactions, presupposing that language always plays the primary role in each interaction. When presupposing...that language is always the primary mode of communication, we in fact run the risk of misanalyzing interactions, conversations, and the doing of talk.

Norris, 2006, page 404

In other words, the nonverbal is a vital part of the meaning-making occurring in a conversation. Without acknowledging the significance behind conversational features, such as gaze, movement, gesture, and proximity

researchers may lose much of the meaning in the text, and “only if we use every cue available in the discourse, can we get closer to a more accurate interpretation of the speaker’s intention behind the utterance, including whether or not s/he is being truly (un)cooperative” (Ladegaard, 2009, page 650). For example, Goldwin-Meadow (1999) found that some gestures, such as head nods, can serve as a substitute for speech. If these nods were to be ignored by analysts, they would clearly miss the agreement and understanding imparted by such gestures. Moreover, researchers such as Kendon (1986) argue that “gesture [should be] viewed as a separate vehicle for the representation of meaning” (Kendon, 1986, page 33). In fact, nonverbal communication is of such importance in conversation that gestures “establish themselves at a very early age—much earlier than the advent of language itself” (Thornbury and Slade, 2006, page 188). These authors offer as evidence an exchange between Ann, a three-month old baby, and her mother in which Ann smiles at her mother and her mother says, “Oh, what a nice little smile” (Thornbury and Slade, 2006, page 189). Obviously without taking Ann’s gesture into account, the response of the mother would be meaningless.

Similarly, “gestural backchannels (like verbal backchannels) are part and parcel of our equipment for organizing and accomplishing talk” (Adolphs, 2008, page 122). In addition to the example of Irulan’s eye roll, there are other examples of this in the conversation. For instance, Arissa nods in reaction to Brynn’s description of Trishelle as “the sweetest girl.” Moreover, at the end of the conversation, Brynn and Irulan both laugh when Arissa makes a joke (which is incomprehensible to the viewer) about Trishelle and someone named Sybil. These two examples of non-lexical backchannel carry meaning-making weight and could replace actual language. Specifically, Arissa’s nod clearly signifies, “I agree” and Brynn’s and Irulan’s laughter means, “I agree, and I think what you are saying is funny.” As has been argued earlier in this paper, an analysis with multimodal elements circumvents the weakness associated with ignoring the nonverbal which is present in a great deal of discourse analysis by “reveal[ing] texts as processes: physical processes of production integral to meanings” (Flewitt, 2004, slide 18).

Nonetheless, it not enough simply to acknowledge the significance of nonverbal acts in conversation; if they carry the weight of a verbal turn in terms of meaning, then they should be considered as turns in their own right. “Perhaps speech acts should be renamed *communicative acts* and understood as multimodal micro events in which all the signs present combine to determine their communicative intent” (van Leeuwen, 2005, page 121). When Arissa nods in reaction to Brynn’s portrayal of Trishelle, this could be viewed as Arissa taking a turn, just as though she had interjected with, “Yeah.” Thus, it seems that although Brynn maintains control of the conversational floor, within this conversation there is room for simultaneous multiple speaker turns.

All too often the nonverbal is dismissed when the topic of *turn* is concerned. In fact, frequently, nonverbal backchannels are completely ignored or minimally described by researchers. In spite of this lack of attention, it is clear that the primary mode of communication available to the listener is through nonverbal reactions, and so they must be fully considered. It is easy to make the nonverbal part of a turn when it accompanies a spoken backchannel response, such as with Irulan’s roll of the eyes and smile when she says, “Oh god.” Clearly, that can tidily be bundled into one turn. However, less tidily for language discourse analysts is assigning a gestural backchannel its own turn, especially when another speaker’s utterance is going on at the same time. This would result in the potential for multiple simultaneous turns at a time, further complicating discourse analysis. Nevertheless, my analysis of the conversations from *The Real World*, including the previous exchange among Arissa, Brynn, and Irulan suggests that by considering the nonverbal as equal to the verbal in issues of turn-taking, richer, and possibly more accurate, results may be reached, for “[t]o ignore gesture is to ignore part of the conversation” (Goldwin-Meadow, 2003, page 3). My findings support the conclusions of Norris (2004). However, I believe that in Discourse Analysis, we need to go further than merely documenting things like gesture and eye-contact. I propose that, in order to present the fullest and most accurate picture of what is actually occurring in a conversation, we treat nonverbal actions as turns in their own right when they express significant meaning in an exchange. I



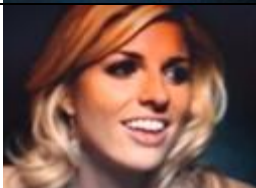

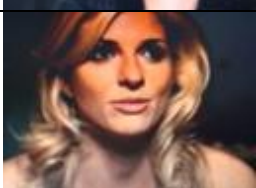
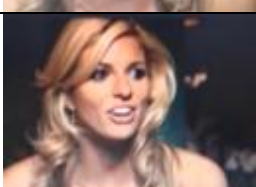

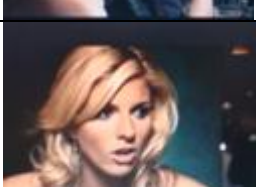


contend that my analysis of conversations from *The Real World*, like the one above demonstrate the potential for uncovering richer data when all input in an exchange is equally considered.

#### 4.1.3 Active Listening

In addition to facilitating clear definitions for the problematic terms of *overlap* and *turn*, the corpus also reveals some interesting evidence related to backchannel. Gardner (2001) refers to backchannel as *response tokens* and claims that “[t]hey provide wonderful examples of the collaborative nature of interactive discourse” (Gardner, 2001, page 4). However, his thorough analysis of a variety of response tokens only explores the purpose of the utterance in the conversation, not how it is received by the speaker. It would appear, since a conversation is created by all the participants, the effect of the backchannel on the exchange must be considered. The following conversation contains several examples of backchannel as well as a variety of responses to it. This clip comes from a reunion show, *The Real World: Las Vegas Reunion*, which reunited the roommates after four years. For this program, the roommates have been invited back to Las Vegas for a limited time, after a year apart, to reconnect and catch up. In the original season, Brynn and Trishelle did not have a particularly close relationship. As is evidenced in the previous clip, Brynn was jealous of Trishelle and openly competed with her for the attention of men, including one of the roommates, Steven. However, at the time of the reunion show, Brynn was a wife and mother. She has become, arguably, the most mature of the roommates, and she is certainly more secure than she was a year prior. During the filming of the reunion show, Brynn and Trishelle have been required by the producers to go out for dinner together, though neither is comfortable at the prospect.

## Conversation 13: Las Vegas 2 – Wedding (2007)

			Brynn	Trishelle
2/- 6:28			I came to get, like, to know everybody again.	Yeah.
2/- 6:27			Like, just be friends with everybody, because last year	
2/- 6:25			I didn't have that opportunity. Or, I did, but I just didn't use it.	
2/- 6:22		B looks at T		I felt the same way about our friendship and everything
2/- 6:19				I feel like, umm
2/- 6:18				out here, like I heard you got married, and like
2/- 6:16				I would have loved to go to your wedding, but obviously we weren't close or tight or whatever.
2/- 6:10		T looks at B	It was like twenty people.	Yeah.
			It was, and we planned it in a week.	

In this conversation, there are two interesting examples of the same backchannel, “Yeah.” Trishelle first uses “Yeah” to respond to Brynn’s discussion of the reasons for her to return to Las Vegas. She uses “Yeah” again when Brynn describes her wedding. Although the backchannels

chosen by Trishelle are exactly the same, Brynn's reactions to them are completely different. In the first instance, Brynn accepts Trishelle's "Yeah"; however, in the second, Brynn responds by repeating "it was" in an effort to maintain the conversational floor. This interesting disparity can be examined only if it is acknowledged that a backchanneled expression is a "non-confrontational verbal attention to the interlocutor's utterance, [and its] interactional state as continuer or a reactive expression is determined by its recipients treatment of it" (Iwasaki, 1997, page 667). In other words, a backchannel is not a backchannel simply because of its form or intention, but also because it is perceived as such by the other conversationalists. However, to further complicate the matter,

[b]ackchannels are [often] produced at a point where an interlocutor could take the turn, but with the backchannel the interlocutor signals that they do not want to do it, in addition to signaling their understanding of or agreement with what is being said.

Taboada, 2006, page 5

Due to the fact that backchannels tend to be inserted at places in the conversation which could also be understood as a TRP, the intent a speaker associates with listener talk is of primary importance if the flow of a conversation is to be maintained. In other words, though a listener may aim for his or her backchannel to be supportive and for it to achieve "mutuality...by overt agreement" (Carter and McCarthy, 2004, page 72) as appears to be the case with both of Trishelle's "Yeahs," because of the placement of the backchannel in a potentially floor-threatening location, the speaker may read the backchannel as a bid for the floor.

This leads to the muddy differentiation between backchannels that succeed and those that don't.

Disfluencies in conversation (whether they are hesitations, interruptions or overlaps) constitute potential problems for both conversation participants and conversation analysts. The former, because they may represent a breakdown in the smooth flow of talk which required remedial action, the latter because they pose problems of explanation and interpretation.

Graddol, Chesire and Swann, 1987, page 157

Returning to the conversation between Trishelle and Brynn, it is clear that the first of Trishelle's attempts to backchannel is received positively by Brynn. When Trishelle says, "Yeah," Brynn simply continues and no remedial action is taken. Therefore, this backchannel could be regarded as successful in that the (supposed) supportive intention of the listener is understood by the speaker. More simply, Trishelle appears to be encouraging Brynn to continue speaking and Brynn understands this and continues speaking. However, the second instance of backchannel is not as problem-free. At the point of the second instance of "Yeah", the conversation topic has shifted from the benign theme of "being friends with everybody" to the exclusion of Trishelle from Brynn's wedding. This subject is fraught with more social danger than the previous one, and both participants might have strong emotions tied to it; Trishelle may be feeling a bit awkward for bringing the issue to light, while Brynn may be feeling a bit remorseful for not inviting Trishelle to the wedding. Due to the treacherous nature of this portion of the conversation, Brynn might be more sensitive to Trishelle's backchannel, even though it appears to be supportive and agreeable. As a result, she resorts to a floor saving measure and repeats herself with, "It was like twenty people. It was ...." Therefore, as a consequence of the presence of Brynn's floor saving measure, Trishelle's second use of "Yeah" could be deemed unsuccessful, or, in other words, as having failed. This then begs the question of how to categorize a backchanneled response that doesn't succeed. Is it still backchannel? Thus far, linguists have not asked this question. In fact, most analyses of backchannel, for instance Gardner (2001), tend to focus on the backchannel itself and not on the reaction to the backchannel. As a result, this is the first study which focuses on what happens when backchannel is not perceived as supportive by the speaker.

Another issue that concerns educators about the term *backchannel* is its inaccessibility. When attempting to broach this subject with international students, or even other educators who are not familiar with linguistic research, use of the word *backchannel* can result in confusion and feelings of intimidation. Because “developing a listener’s skill in using reactive tokens is an important part of learning to be a conversationalist” (Young and Lee, 2004, page 382), the ultimate rationale for this research is to form a theoretical basis for materials intended to arm international students who need, for social, academic or work purposes, to communicate easily with native English speakers. Therefore, if the terminology associated with these materials is daunting or unclear for students and teachers, the materials won’t be of value. Moreover, as one the tenets of CDA (Huckin, 1997) is its encouragement of theorists to “contribute resources which people may be able to draw upon in tackling and overcoming” (Fairclough, 2001, page 125) social, in this case conversational, problems, a clear and accessible term must be used in lieu of the word *backchannel*. Research on the use of metalanguage in English Language Teaching, such as that conducted by Berry (1997 and 2005), suggests that there are “major discrepancies students’ knowledge of terminology and teachers’ estimates of that knowledge, with teacher overestimation of that knowledge being far more common than underestimation” (Cummins and Davidson, 2007, page 953). Although the research to date has largely focused on the use of grammatical metalanguage, it is plausible that the same results would also apply in situations in which opaque terms like *backchannel* might be used.

Introducing unnecessary jargon into the classroom is intimidating and unhelpful, but the careful introduction and regular use of a few well-chosen terms can be helpful and save a lot of time over the length of a course for both teacher and learner.

Lewis, 2000, page129



Due to this contradiction between the value that metalanguage can have in a lesson and the confusion it can cause for students, I propose a new, more easily accessible set of terms. “In an educational landscape that is already

littered with jargon, there is little room for unhelpful or ambiguous new concepts” (Merchant, 2007, page 120); however when the new language clarifies rather than obscures, it can be very valuable. Thus, rather than the unclear word *backchannel*, I will refer to instances of listener talk which serve the purpose of supporting the speaker who holds the floor as *Active Listening Attempts* (ALAs). To clarify between the successful attempts and the unsuccessful attempts, I have referred to the backchanneled responses that result in the speaker resorting to floor-saving measures as *failed ALAs*. The application of these new terms will hopefully make this research more accessible to teachers and international students as well as serve to distinguish between successful and unsuccessful listener talk.

#### 4.1.4 Failed ALAs

However, this distinction between ALAs and failed ALAs begs one final question: are there any factors that predispose an ALA to fail? As described in Chapter Three of this paper, the conversations chosen for corpus used for this particular research project were carefully selected. Examples of listener talk which, in fact, appeared to be either bids for the floor or unsupportive active listening attempts, such as disagreement, were not included. For instance, the following conversation was not included into the corpus because the listener response does not meet the criteria of an ALA in that it does not encourage the speaker to continue. In this conversation, Tonya and Chris are talking about their roommate, Theo, while eating lunch at a restaurant. Specifically, Chris is gay (his boyfriend, Kurt, is present); however, Theo has strong religious convictions which include anti-homosexual beliefs. Regardless of his opinions, Theo does have a friendly relationship with Chris. This conversation takes place after the roommates have been living together for a while, and Chris has invited all of them to a gay-pride event. Theo is the only roommate who does not plan on attending, and Chris is hurt by this. Tonya is the roommate who is closest to Theo in terms of social values, and she is trying to explain Theo’s stance to Chris.

## Conversation 14: Chicago – Support (2002)


			Cara	Chris	Kurt	Tonya
3:18:25		T looks at C				At the same time, he is very
				I just wish that he would say that.		supportive of you
						He is very supportive of you two.
3:18:28				Alright.		
						I mean, he really enjoys you and he really enjoys Aneesa; but, he's been raised in a church, where he honestly, one hundred percent believes a man and a woman should be together.

In this exchange, Chris interjects Tonya's speech with the comment, "I just wish he would say that." This comment cannot be considered as an ALA because, while Chris is not disagreeing with Tonya's assessment, his utterance is neither supportive nor encouraging. In her evaluation of agreeing and disagreeing strategies, Pomerantz (1985) describes an instance of partial disagreement in which the listener "claim[s] to agree with the prior while marking, and accompanying, a shift in assessed parameters which partially contrasts with the prior" (Pomerantz, 1985, page 63). It appears that this is what Theo is doing with "I just wish he would say that". He is not in enthusiastic agreement with Tonya, or he would have most likely said something like, "Yeah" or "Absolutely". Rather, though he doesn't overtly disagree, he laments that Theo is not vocal with his support, perhaps insinuating that it is not genuine support. Due to the fact that this is not a supportive ALA, this conversation was not included in the corpus of failed ALAs.

In addition, the intonation of the ALAs was also strongly considered. Although the ultimate goal of this work is not phonological, the intonation with which an ALA is uttered is closely aligned with its reception, as "intonation contributes information about connections among constituents in discourse, conveying meaning beyond what is provided through lexical and syntactic systems" (Wennerstrom, 2001, page 7). According to researchers, such as Garner (2001) and Wennerstrom (2001), the presence of high rising

boundaries in an ALA often indicates interest. However, in the conversation below between Blair and Jisela, this high rising boundary is not apparent. This conversation takes place between two friends. Both are guests of the roommates, having all met at the *Casting Special*; Jisela was invited to New York by one of the roommates, Malik, and Blair was invited by another roommate, Kevin. Jisela and Blair also know each other because they co-starred on a sister reality program, *Road Rules*, and their relationship is friendly. Jisela is involved in a romantic relationship with Malik, however the night prior to this conversation, several of the roommates and their guests got drunk, and Jisela kissed Blair, Kevin, and Lori in the “Confessional” booth. She is apparently tired of her relationship with Malik, but she also seems to feel guilty about her behavior, so she is looking for reassurance from Blair. Blair, however, may feel a stronger alliance with Malik, as they are also good friends, and his reaction to Jisela is unsupportive.

#### Conversation 15: New York 2 - A Good Time (2001)

		<b>Blair</b>		<b>Jisela</b>	
1:12:47		B 's intonation is flat		It's like he's not as into it as all the other guys are.	
			What do you mean?	Like into having a good time.	
		J speaks more quickly		Like, you know what I'm saying?	

Blair's lack of enthusiasm for Jisela's speech is evidenced in the flat intonation he uses, which does not match Jisela's. In other words, he does not create concord with Jisela in that he fails to create a supportive situation by matching his tone with her tone. “We shall expect concord-breaking to occur at moments when there is a discrepancy between the ways the two parties assess the context of the interaction” (Brazil, 1985, page 86). Moreover, although Blair phrases his ALA as an information question, his intonation communicates the true illocutionary force of the speech. In other words, “when grammar and intonation are at odds, the intonation directly carries the illocutionary force of the speech act” (Wennerstrom, 2001, page 149). As a result of the overt disingenuousness of Blair's question, this conversation was not selected for inclusion in the corpus.






However, although these conversations are not part of the corpus for this particular research project, they do have some pedagogical value. Specifically, exposing English students to unsupportive ALAs might be beneficial in that they can understand not only what native English speakers might expect from a supportive listener, but also what they might be discouraged by. For instance, rather than merely providing learners with a list of supportive ALAs, teachers can have their classes contrast supportive and unsupportive ALAs so as to raise the consciousness of students about their linguistic choices. In addition, many pronunciation texts neglect to comment on the strong association between intonation and interpretation. Due to the fact that “[s]econd language learners do not hear intonation very well” (Gilbert, 2008, page 36), pronunciation texts, including those by Beisbier (1994), Gilbert (2001), Grant (2001) and Miller (2005), generally include explanation of and practice with this skill. Moreover, most also point out that intonation is the key to speaker attitude. For instance, Noll (2007) warns students about the message they may be inadvertently be sending as “rude, unfriendly, impatient or in a bad mood” (Noll, 2007, page 1-21) if they do not use the expected intonation. However few texts emphasize the importance of intonation when active listening. Giving students a low-interest ALA to contrast with an ALA which contains a high rising boundary will benefit both their pronunciation and their interactions. Nonetheless, despite their potential advantages, for the purpose of this research project, only conversations containing apparently genuinely supportive ALAs were selected.

Among the conversations that were chosen for the corpus, some interesting data emerges in response to the question regarding the characteristics most commonly associated with failed ALAs. In the 69 texts, there are 84 occurrences of failed ALAs; several conversations contain multiple examples. Not surprisingly, none of the failed ALAs was unsuccessful because of nonverbal active listening. However, several other conversational behaviors resulted in the failure of an ALA.

First, six of the failed ALAs contain noises or laughter. For instance, in the excerpt conversation below, several of the roommates have gone out



for dinner, at which they are gossiping about Tonya, another roommates who is not present due to a medical problem.

#### Conversation 16: Chicago – You Need Attention (2002)

			Aneesa	Cara	Kerri	Kyle
1:43:18		A looks at Ke	She comes running in about her kidney and I go, I don't give a fuck			
1:43:20		Ke shakes her head and looks at A	about her kidney. I said			[laughs]
1:43:23		A looks at Ke	I said I need the attention right now and you're not taking it from me. I really got mad.			[laughs]

In this conversation, Kyle is the only participant to verbally react to Aneesa's anecdote; however, Kerri takes a nonverbal turn when she shakes her head. Both ALAs are supportive and encouraging; however, Aneesa still resorts to a floor saving measure when she repeats "I said." In another excerpt, Mike, Segun, and another roommate are unpacking and getting to know each other as they have just arrived on the set of the *Casting Special*. The other roommate is impossible to see clearly in the clip and it does not become apparent later with whom they are sharing a room. They are competing for a spot on *The Real World*, so there is a feeling of tension underlying all of the conversations from this series; however, the guys are fairly friendly in this conversation. Segun has just commented on his desire to become intimate with several of the female cast members and Mike is reacting to him.

## Conversation 17: Casting Special – Chill (2001)






			Mike	Segun	Unknown
7:23				Um, I have a girlfriend, see	
7:24		M's intonation rises and falls as he elongates the sound, "Oh!"  S gestures, speaks more quickly and raises the volume of his voice	Oh!	but, chill. Because, chill. Woah. Because, chill	
					How old are you?
				I'm twenty- two. I'm twenty-two. But, cheating is only cheating if you get caught.	

In this excerpt, Mike's use of "Oh" causes Segun to repeat himself with "Because, chill. Because, chill." According to Wong and Peters (2007), "oh", though packed with meaning, is not a word, but rather a minimal back-channel, and so, for the purpose of this research, I have categorized it as a sound.

Second, in addition to laughter and noises resulting in failed ALAs, nine information questions also prompted the speaker to produce floor-saving measures. For example, in the previous conversation, Segun not only reacts negatively to Mike's elongated, rising-falling, "Oh", he also reverts to several floor-saving measures when the unidentified roommate asks about his age. In the face of this seemingly encouraging information question, Segun repeats, "I'm twenty-two. I'm twenty-two." He also speaks more quickly and raises the volume of his speech. Like his reaction to Mike's seemingly interested, "Oh," Segun assumes a very defensive reaction in the face of the speaker's supportive information question. He seems very intent on maintaining his role as the speaker even though neither listener appears to be interested in taking it away from him at this moment.

Third, of the 84 failed ALAs, 11 were yes/no questions. In the conversation below, Alton is talking to his rock climbing partner about his behavior since arriving in Las Vegas, as he has been accused by some of his female roommates of promiscuity. It is not clear how well he and Amanda know each other, but their relationship appears to be purely platonic.







## Conversation 18: Las Vegas - Sowing Wild Oats (2002 – 2003)


			Alton	Amanda
19/13:49		Al looks at Am and shrugs	It had been the first time, ever in my life, basically, that I didn't have a girlfriend, you know? <b>So</b>	
19/13:55				Are you used to being in relationships?
19/13:56		Al looks at Am and nods	Yeah.	
19/13:58		Am looks at Al and nods	<b>So</b> , I just went	
19/13:59		Al smiles and looks at Am <b>Al speaks more quickly</b>	buck wild, you know what I mean? I sowed my wild oats and did my thing	

Amanda asks Alton a yes/no question, “Are you used to being in relationships?” to which he responds and then reverts to the floor saving measures of repetition and increasing his rate of speech. Clearly, to Alton, this ALA was somewhat threatening, though there is no indication that Amanda actually wanted to seize the floor. In fact, Amanda asked a genuine question to which she does not know the answer, so she can not be accused of conveying “reversed polarity assertions, thereby displaying [any particular] epistemic stance” (Koshik, 2005, page 12). In other words, Amanda’s question is real, asked with the appropriate rising intonation (Wennerstrom, 2001), so it most likely to be meant as supportive. However, Alton reacted negatively, and as “both parties must have a valid claim in authority in determining what the message meant” (Hall, 1979, page 35), I consider the ALA to have failed. In other words, this is a failed ALA because the speaker reacted defensively to it in spite of its supportive tone.

Finally, among the 84 instances of failed ALAs in the corpus, 59 are statements. Thus, statements are by far the most threatening form of ALA available to listeners, perhaps because they most closely resemble a bid for the floor. For example, the following conversation among Alton, Frank and Steven contains examples of both successful and failed ALAs. This conversation takes place after Steven has rejected another roommate, Brynn, who took the rejection rather badly. The guys gossip about that conversation and Brynn until she interrupts them.

Conversation 19: Las Vegas – Cold Power (2002 – 2003)

			Alton	Frank	Steven
2/05:52		S lies in his bed		Because you took away the option	It pissed her off
					Yeah, and ...
2/05:55		A turns over to look at F F stands beside A's bed	Really? What do you mean?	Really, because she just likes to have the option of hooking up with everyone, just to know	
2/05:57		F looks at door twice	She can	that she can	
2/05:58		F looks at A and S		if she wants. It's like a	
			It's cold power	Control issues	
				So that, so that when you, you were flirting with her,	
2/06:04		B stands at door		that's why she likes, you	
2/06:05		F turns to see B		would be like ...	

2/06:06		B enters the room	Come on in!		
---------	---	-------------------	-------------	--	--

Alton's first backchannel, "Really? What do you mean?" interrupts Frank's stream of speech, as it is not made at a TRP. Nevertheless, Frank responds to it seamlessly, and even repeats Alton's "really," which "ties parts of discourse to other parts [and] bonds participants to the discourse and to each other, linking individual speakers in a conversation and in relationships" (Tannen, 1989, page 52). In other words, though Frank is most certainly unaware of it on a conscious level, by repeating Alton's phrasing, he is actually responding very enthusiastically to the ALA. However, seconds later in the same conversation, when Alton makes the statement "It's cold power," the result is a "hitch and perturbation" and Frank repeats himself with "so that, so that."

Therefore, clearly, all ALAs are not equal. In one instance, a statement ALA might indicate to the speaker that the listener is interested, and the floor is secure; however, in another instance, the very same ALA might result in the speaker feeling threatened and turning to floor-saving measures. Why do some ALAs succeed and others fail? What causes these tiny breakdowns in the conversation that subconsciously result in "deflections in the production of talk from the trajectory which it had been projected to follow" (Schegloff, 2000, page 11)? To address these questions, it is beneficial to employ a CDA approach to the text analysis because, if I were to fall back on the methodological approach most commonly associated with turn-taking analysis, Conversation Analysis, I would have to stop my analysis at this point. I could not continue on to make assumptions related to power or gender about why certain ALAs fail because I would be limited to the words on the page. I could not even take into account the greater context of the exchange or the hegemony that prompts the conversational choices speakers in North America make. A CDA analysis of this data allows for broader examination of the hidden motivations that motivate conversational behaviors. "CDA is different from

other discourse analysis methods because it includes not only a description and interpretation of discourse in context, but also offers an explanation of why and how discourses work” (Rogers, 2004, page 2). In order to go beyond a surface analysis of failed ALAs to explore the possible causes behind the failure, the reflexive view adopted by CDA theorists, which “means that, at one and the same time, an utterance influences what we take the context to be, and context influences what we take the utterance to mean” (Gee, 2004, page 29). Though CDA is most often used in analyses of public discourse, such as political speeches, researchers, such as Eggins and Slade (1997), contend that this approach can also yield a more thorough analysis of casual conversations. However, not much of this type of analysis has been conducted thus far. Because I believe the success of international students of English depends on their ability to navigate through complex conversational behaviors, I consider research such as this project to be vital additions to this small, but growing field of linguistic research. An important tenet of CDA is the belief that “power relations are negotiated and performed through discourse” (Paltridge, 2006, page 179). Thus, CDA may be best equipped to deal with the power structures associated with the “why” of failed ALAs due to its “concern with the ‘hidden agenda’ of discourse analysis, its ideological dimensions” (Cameron, 2001, page 123).

## 4.2 Failed Active Listening Attempts and Power

### *4.2.1 Measuring Power*

Interesting observations about the creation of one’s social self and the place a conversationalist occupies on a social hierarchy can be made when interactions are studied. In other words, because “how we speak is inextricable from who we think we are” (Tannen, 1994, page 230), scholars, such as Hamilton (1998), Gee (1999), Thornborrow (2002), Fairclough (2003), Hutchby (2004), Koshik (2005), Cameron (2006) and Walker (2006) are interested in understanding why people make the conversational choices they do and how the creation of our social selves and the power struggle inherent in interactions both are affected by and affect the conversations that take place. Some of the conversations many of these researchers have

focused on have been shaped by the pre-existing power structure of the participants, for example, that of doctor/patient or reporter/politician. However, struggles for social and conversational power also take place in the seemingly democratic arena of casual conversation. In fact, “conversation is *always* a struggle for power – but that struggle goes “underground” being disguised by the apparent equality of the casual context” (Egins and Slade, 1997, page 65). This makes the interactions of *The Real World* potentially rich with competition for dominance.

However, an examination of this struggle for social and conversational power is not without challenges. The most common criticism leveled at CDA is that the theorist can never truly know what the bona fide intention might be for any given conversational move. Of course, “we are all aware that nobody can actually ‘look’ into somebody’s or one’s own brain (‘black box’)” (Wodak, 2006, page 180); further, most of us are simply not sufficiently self-aware to be cognizant of the genuine purpose for our conversational action at any given moment. Even if researchers were always able to question the conversational participants, they themselves might not have any idea why they did what they did because a great deal of this social maneuvering is done subconsciously. In fact, “people in hegemonic positions do not always feel powerful” (Keisling, 2006, page 261). Thus, a “text analysis is a work of interpretation. There are relatively few absolute and clear-cut categories in language; there are many tendencies, continuities, and overlaps” (Halliday, 1985, page 54). Regardless of this reality, it is still possible to notice some interesting patterns within *The Real World* corpus related to the power struggle which occurs under the surface in all conversations by applying the questions from my framework (Appendix 2) to the transcribed exchanges between the roommates.

In *The Real World* corpus, as previously stated, there are 69 conversations. Consider the discussion below between Alton and Frank. Alton has just learned that his ex-girlfriend, Melissa, has been with other men since they broke up. After hearing about this, he found consolation in the arms of a bikini contest winner. This conversation takes place the morning after, as the speakers are getting ready to go to work. Alton is



moving around the room, shifting items either into or out of his closet. Frank is sitting on the bed. Alton and Frank have a friendly, close relationship.

Conversation 20: Las Vegas – Princesses (2002 – 2003)

			Alton	Frank
9/01:02			My mom was raising me to think that all women	
9/01:04			are queens, and you treat them like a princess	
9/01:06		F looks at A and crinkles his brow		Yeah!
9/01:07			And I have , I have my whole life	I agree.
9/01:09			That doesn't mean that I see them as a princess	
9/01:12			I don't want to have emotion involved with anything I do with a girl because	
9/01:16		A bends down to the ground F stands and leaves	it will be overly emotional.	

In this conversation, Alton uses ten clauses. For instance, Alton's statement, "My mom was raising me to think that all women are queens and you treat them like a princess" contains 3 clauses, or subject-verb agreements: (1) my mom was raising me, (2) all women are queens, and (3) you treat them like a princess. For Alton's ten clauses, Frank uses only one,

“I agree.” Therefore, according to the method for determining dominance in a conversation suggested by Eggins and Slade (1997), Alton has the power and Frank does not, as

those who get the most clauses also get to produce the highest proportions of declarative clauses, which means that they are more often giving information than other speakers. At the same time, the least heard speaker is also the one who produces fewest declaratives which implies limited options to initiate exchanges.

Eggins and Slade, 1997, page 122

For this particular conversation, these findings appear unproblematic; however, a second look through the lens of the “I” statement is also warranted.







In the corpus, there were a total of 361 statements containing the pronoun “I.” Of those, 284 were uttered by the “main speaker,” the person who was speaking at the time of the conversational breakdown on which this research is focusing. On the other hand, 77 “I” statements were used by the “listeners” in the conversation, either those who were responsible for the failed ALA or another exchange participant. In the above conversation, Alton is the designated main speaker for the purpose of this study because he is the one who resorts to floor-saving measures when threatened by Frank’s ALA. Alton uses five “I” statements (one is repeated) and Frank only uses one. Again, in view of the fact that “[a] discourse marked by *I-isms* will be understood to be ‘personal’ ... and so indicating the addresser as narrator ... or as author” (Wales, 1996, page 71), and since “making and being successful in evaluating narrative events has been shown to be associated with positions of power” (Georgakopoulou, 2006, page 97), by both measures (clause-counting and “I” statement totals) Alton is to be considered the more powerful participant in the conversation.






Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the nature of this conversation, Alton also reads as the dominant force when the framework for analysis described at length in Chapter Three of this text is applied. Alton’s use of the euphemisms “queens” and “princesses” when he refers to women, ironically, seems to give women power over him through the way that he has been

raised to treat them. He is able to use this narrative to position himself as the victim because, in his view, women are the more powerful. However, an interesting parallel may be drawn between Alton's anecdote and a study of the online postings of cancer patients conducted by Hamilton (1998) in which she noted that such postings "allow the narrator to reflect/create a strong survivor identity by positioning herself as a figure in the storyworld who takes a strong identity vis-à-vis the doctors" (Hamilton, 1998, page 59). In Alton's case, the opposite appears to be taking place. By constructing himself as the victim of the whims of females, Alton is repositioning himself as socially weak. This may serve the purpose of absolving him of the guilt he may feel about having a one night stand, or, more likely, giving him a defense if attacked by the female members of the flat who are quite disgusted with his behavior. Thus, by acting the victim, Alton actually maintains a measure of power. In addition, by invoking an image of isolated women to be worshiped on a pedestal from afar, Alton sets up an "us/them" dynamic. This is an example of "another (unconscious) hegemonic strategy [which] consist[s] in 'marking the Other:' a discursive meta-strategy which situate[s] the speaker as a member of a dominant, or central, social group by creating an "other", marginalized category" (Kiesling, 2006, pages 264–265). In other words, even though queens and princesses are not usually thought of as marginalized in society, they are, to some extent, traditionally seen as isolated and lacking control over their own destinies. Alton may be playing on this imagery in order to create a position of power within his social context. Therefore, Alton appears to be the one with the power both in this conversation and in his social situation. An analysis of this interaction with Frank, which almost reads like a monologue, demonstrates his conversational dominance and by applying the framework developed for this purpose, one can see that Alton does have power within his context, albeit by positioning himself as a bit of a victim. Therefore, my Critical Discourse Analysis of many causal interactions supports other researchers' findings by demonstrating that there is a correlation between speaker talk time and social dominance, as "power is based on privileged access to valued social resources" (van Dijk, 1996, page 85), such as the conversational floor.

However, although this correlation exists, it is not absolute, and once other conversations in the corpus are more closely scrutinized, it becomes clear that the correlation between speaker talk and power is not altogether apparent. For example, in the conversation below, Aneesa and Theo have just met each other and are getting to know each other. Theo has stated in a previous “Confessional” that he finds Aneesa very attractive. Aneesa, on the other hand, is not interested in Theo because she is gay. However, at the beginning of this exchange, Theo is not yet aware of Aneesa’s sexual orientation. Moreover, he comes from a very conservative, religious family, and holds strong opinions about the immorality of homosexuality.

#### Conversation 21: Chicago – Women are Nice (2002)

			<b>Aneesa</b>	<b>Theo</b>
0:07:55			You a Virgo?	
			Yes, baby, me too.	Yes, ma'am.
			Eleventh.	September?
0:08:00			How old are you?	
			Me too.	I'm nineteen.
0:08:03				Can you braid hair?
0:08:05			A little some, but not yours.	
				No, I'm about to let it grow back.
0:08:08		T smokes and looks at A	If you let it grow, like in a month. You braid?	
0:08:11		A looks at T, plays with her hair and nods		Do I braid? Hell, no! Do I look gay?

0:08:12		A plays with her hair and smiles at T	What you trying to say?	
0:08:16				All the dudes I know who braid are gay.
			Do you have a lot of gay friends?	That's what I'm saying.
			What's wrong ...	Hell no! I know one dude ...
0:08:20				Okay, I know one dude that I can say I can be cool with and he's gay, just because he doesn't
			Well,	Try to hit on me
			I'm going to explain my story	
				Okay, go ahead and break it down.
0:08:29			I haven't been with a man for about two years.	
				Reason being? Didn't trust them?
			Women are nice.	
0:08:39		T crinkles his brow and leans forward		






For the purpose of this examination, I consider Theo to be the speaker and Aneesa to be the listener in this conversation as it is Aneesa's failed ALA, "What's wrong," which stresses the conversation. A closer look at the interaction reveals that Theo uses 13 full or partial clauses in his speech; however, Aneesa uses only five. (A partial clause is an ellipsis in which either the subject or the verb is missing, but implied. For example, when Theo asks, "Didn't trust them?" he means, "Didn't you trust them?", but drops the subject, "you." Spontaneous speech is replete with such ellipsis, and researchers, such as Eggins and Slade (1997), usually consider them as clauses.) According to these totals, then, Theo would be seen as dominating the conversation. In addition, he also uses ten "I" statements, while Aneesa uses only two. Clearly, Theo can claim conversational dominance.



However, in this excerpt, the issue of social power is not so straightforward, and in this case, conversational dominance does not

necessarily denote social power. First, because “the social situatedness of discourse data is crucial” (Blommaert, 2001, page 15), this conversation can not be considered without also taking into account the context in which it takes place. One might assume that because Aneesa and Theo have just met moments before, they would be on equal ground; nonetheless, Theo makes clear in a “Confessional” shown just prior to this conversation that he finds Aneesa very attractive. Because Aneesa is not interested in men at this point in her life, she does not share this attraction, although she appears to be aware of it. It is obvious from the pictures of the scene that Aneesa is not only conscious of Theo’s fascination with her, she is also prepared to string him along by adopting very flirtatious body language. She plays with her hair, smiles coyly, and contorts her body so that she is both sitting away from him and facing him at the same time. Aneesa’s quick grasp of Theo’s attraction to her, coupled with a lack of reciprocity, immediately gives her the upper hand in the conversation. Second, the topic of conversation also results in Aneesa gaining more power in the conversation. She possesses information about her sexuality that Theo does not, and, though Theo initially raises the topic by emphatically clarifying that he does not braid because he is not gay, Aneesa proceeds to lure him into stating his opinion about homosexuality before she comes out to him. As she does not appear at all concerned with a negative backlash by Theo because of her sexual preference, she is able to flirt with him and playfully tease out his homophobia. In this way, Aneesa is able to “design the interaction [with the] effect of placing [herself and Theo] in a relationship where discourse strategies of greater or lesser power are differently available to each of them” (Hutchby, 2004, page 521). Although he does not fully recant his stance against homosexuality, Theo also does not appear to be disgusted by Aneesa’s divulgence. Theo, therefore, appears very concerned about “positive self-preservation and impression formation” (van Dijk, 2001, page 106), and Aneesa is able to emerge from the conversation in a position of power. Thus, this example clearly demonstrates that the correlation between conversational power and social power can not be taken for granted. The speaker who dominates the interaction may not necessarily be the person actually possessing the most social control in any given context.

Another example of the lack of an indisputable correlation between talking time and speaker power can be found in this conversation between Mike and Rachel about Rachel's relationship with her over-protective mother. At 18 years old, Rachel is the youngest member of the house on this particular season. Additionally, Rachel comes from a very sheltered background. Her mother tends to baby her, even from a distance, by calling frequently and badgering her roommates into promising to watch over Rachel and take care of her. In a "Confessional," Rachel speaks of her desire to escape her mother's coddling, but she appears to feel as though it would be impossible to change the dynamic of their relationship.

Conversation 22: New York 2 – That's Just How it is (2001)

			Mike	Rachel
0:43:17				No matter how I feel,
0:43:19				It's how it is. And it's not something I just want to stand up and say, you know, stop, because I've tried, and it's not realistic.
0:43:26				It still comes down to that's the way the shoe will fit.
0:43:29				"This is my eighteen year old, my only child, my baby." That's just how it is.
			I'm an only child, too. I know exactly what you are going through.	
0:43:34				I mean,

0:43:36		R speaks slowly		I'm really not that independent. I mean, I am, but independent from my mom.
0:43:40		M uses rising/falling intonation	Do you want to be?	

In this conversation, as with the previous ones, conversational dominance is fairly easy to discern. Rachel has 15 full and partial clauses; Mike has only three. Likewise, Rachel uses seven “I” statements in her speech, while Mike uses only one.

However, issues of social power are not as opaque. To unpack the underlying issues of power, context needs to be considered. This conversation is sandwiched between clips of Rachel’s mother calling the house, pleading with the roommates to look after Rachel and Mike’s “Confessional” in which he discloses his desire for Rachel to stand up to her mother. Due to the fact that Mike is also an only child and can relate to Rachel’s situation and the fact that Mike is older than Rachel and has presumably already cut his apron strings, he is able to give Rachel advice. This position as mentor to Rachel gives Mike influence and a measure of power. This new picture afforded by a greater understanding of the situation surrounding this interaction is further supported by the application of my framework for an analysis. For example, Rachel uses the word “baby” to describe the way her mom perceives her. This negative evaluation is laden with powerlessness, which suggests the way Rachel sees herself at this point in her life. “Global self-presentation can be achieved with particular kinds of formulations, which emphasize either good or bad features” (Potter and Wetherell, 2001, page 199). Therefore, by using the word “baby” in self-reference, Rachel is linguistically situating herself in powerlessness. In addition to Rachel’s telling choice of vocabulary, Mike’s conversational moves also serve to ensure him a position of power. Mike’s final ALA of the conversation is, “Do you want to be?” Grammatically, this is a



straightforward yes/no question. However, Mike voices it with the falling intonation commonly associated with statements, rather than the rising intonation used for yes/no questions in North American speech. In other words, the grammar and the intonation of the utterance do not agree. In this case, according to Wennerstrom (2001) the intonation carries the meaning. Consequently, although Mike is asking a yes/no question, because he is using statement intonation, his meaning is not genuinely questioning. Rather, he is asking a Same Polarity Question, or SPQ. Heinemann (2008) states that






SPQs are asked from a position of knowledge. The epistemic strength of that position may differ from case to case, as do the ways in which the speaker attains the knowledge. What is clear, however, is that the speakers know – or think they know – what the recipient’s stance on some matter is, and convey this through the way in which they format their question – as an SPQ.

Heinemann, 2008, page 60

In other words, by asking Rachel a question that is not a real question at all, Mike is operating from a position of power. Therefore, although Rachel is clearly the main speaker in this conversation as her speech has the greater number of clauses and she uses more “I” statements, Mike is the one who holds the social power.

Interestingly, I found that several of the conversations from *The Real World* corpus actually contained a balance of power. For instance, in this conversation Alton and Irulan are discussing a pregnancy scare that Alton’s ex-girlfriend has called to tell him about. Alton is worried that he may become a father. At the same time, Alton and his ex-girlfriend have already broken up, and he has expressed his interest in Irulan in several “Confessionals.” Irulan is also attracted to Alton.

## Conversation 23: Las Vegas – Pregnant (2002 – 2003)

			<b>Alton</b>	<b>Irulan</b>
3/06:42			She thinks she might be pregnant. She's mad at me for rationalizing it and saying	
3/06:45			no, it's your birth control.	It's on her to, like, make sure, before she calls
			Yeah. Yeah.	You up and starts stressing you out about it
3/06:50		A moves backwards I raises voice and speaks more quickly	She's like ...	And, like, doesn't she want to know?
			Yeah, she doesn't want to know.	
3/06:55		I gestures with her hands A speaks more quickly	Obviously she doesn't. Obviously she doesn't. She's like, she's like, "Oh, and, and I have an appointment in a week." And I am like, dude, an appointment? Go get yourself an EPT.	Like why is she dilly-dallying about it?
			Go figure out what's this thing and hit me up in the morning, you know what I mean?	
3/07:03		I smiles and nods		

Even though Alton is the main speaker in this exchange, as he uses fourteen clauses to Irulan's three, and he uses the greatest number of "I" statements, it is not immediately clear that Alton holds the social power. First, the context comes into play. Alton is panicking because, he has little power in the situation. His ex-girlfriend is ultimately holding all of the cards in the situation, and by refusing to get a pregnancy test and find out the results immediately (because "she doesn't want to know"), she is withholding the information that Alton wants. He can do little else but wait, which places him in an undeniably powerless position. On the other hand, he is sharing this information with Irulan. Both of them have said in "Confessionals" that they are attracted to one another. To demonstrate this, Irulan is almost falling all over herself to appear supportive of Alton's position and indignant on his behalf. Irulan accuses Alton's ex-girlfriend of "stressing [him] out" and "dilly-dallying." Moreover, currently it is rather popular for couples united behind a

pregnancy to use the pronoun “we,” as in “we are pregnant.” In fact, “we” is commonly seen as a “device [used] for displaying coupledness” (Lerner and Kitzinger, 2007, page 428). However, Alton does not use this pronoun. Instead, by using “she” rather than “we” in speaking about his girlfriend’s possible pregnancy, Alton creates a distance between himself and her. In a sense, he seems to be working in tandem with Irulan to depersonalize his ex-girlfriend by their avoidance of using her name in this clip. “There are many motivations for exclusion, such as redundancy or irrelevance, but exclusion may be politically or socially significant” (Fairclough, 2003, page 149). In this case, Alton and Irulan appear to be unified in a position of social power in their agreement about the irrationality of Alton’s ex-girlfriend’s actions and their rejection of her as an individual. Finally, Alton owns the story, which gives him a measure of power. For example, in a much more “macro” context, Lakoff (2004) found that in the election campaigns of George W. Bush and John Kerry, Bush was able to dominate the political battle because he was able to set the topics, or frames, early on in the election. Kerry was reduced to merely responding to them rather than being able to create new frames. Similarly, because Alton is in control of the topic and holds all of the information, he holds some of the power. However, Irulan also has power in the relationship because Alton is fishing for her acceptance and support. This is evidenced by his enthusiastic responses to her ALAs: “Yeah. Yeah.” and “Yeah, she doesn’t want to know.” By repeating Irulan’s question, “And, like, doesn’t she want to know?” Alton is creating a union between himself and Irulan.

Repetition works as a more subtle token of a relationship, not just between utterances or turns but between speakers, the main purpose often being to co-construct interpersonal convergence and to creatively adapt to the other speakers.

Carter and McCarthy, 2004, page 65

Therefore, because of the greater context of this exchange as well as the elements that emerge when the text is more closely scrutinized and because the “text which results from the interaction is a map of the social occasion in which it was produced” (Kress, 1996, page 189), it can be surmised that

Alton and Irulan share power in this conversation. In other words, in this conversation, it is not apparent that one person dominates.

In fact, when the power paradigm is evaluated in each of the 69 conversations, a definite departure from the parallel between speaker talk time and power can be observed. In the following chart, the correlation, or lack there of, between social power and conversational dominance is demonstrated. (Due to the close relationship between clause count and “I” statements, only the “I” statements have been considered.)

Highest Dyadic Status in the Conversation	Greatest Number of “I” Statements		
speaker	speaker	28	41%
listener	speaker	13	19%
speaker	listener	3	4%
listener	speaker	2	3%
speaker	equal	3	4%
listener	equal	2	3%
shared	speaker	6	9%
shared	listener	1	1%
shared	equal	3	4%
--	--	8	10%

The results depicted by this chart are startling, as less than half of all the conversations in the corpus contain a correlation between speaker dominance (dyadic status in the conversation as determined by applying the framework for analysis to the conversations) and talking time (“I” statements). In other words, only 41% of the conversations contain a direct link between social power and conversational control. Moreover, 19% of the conversations demonstrate an opposite relationship in which the listener actually held more social power than the conversationally dominant speaker, as was observed in the conversations between Aneesa and Theo, Rachel and Mike, and Alton and Irulan. Therefore, it would seem that relying on a simple clause or “I” statement count may lead to questionable results, and researchers need to expand their examination to include an analysis of the vocabulary and grammatical features of the text as well. The CDA approach allows linguists to consider the context, or history, of the conversation and encourages researchers to examine the entire conversation rather than

focus on a single point of interest. It is by adopting this approach that interesting contrasts to commonly held beliefs concerning dominance and speaker time are brought to light.

Exchanges, such as the conversations above between Aneesa and Theo, Mike and Rachel, and Alton and Irulan are even more pedagogically useful in an ELT context than the conversations in which there is a clear correlation between social power and talk time. In many situations, nonnative speakers of English speak significantly less in conversation than native speakers. This reticence may be caused by a variety of factors, including personal predilection, cultural differences or lack of fluency in English. For instance, Pritchard (2004) found that native English speakers spoke seven times more than the nonnative participants in an English conversation. In addition, he posits that this silence could hinder nonnative speakers' chances to develop socially and in business. Moreover, as Wigglesworth and Yates (2007) point out, nonnative speakers already often find themselves in positions of lower status than native speakers. Rather than simply encouraging ESL students to speak more if they want to achieve any measure of social power, it might be more useful to create and use materials based on conversations such as these that demonstrate the potential to maintain power in an exchange even when not dominating the conversational floor.

#### *4.2.2 Power and Failed ALAs*







CDA is a useful approach to take as this research turns its focus to my research question concerning power and the 'rules' which dominate speaker and listener behavior. In other words, the question remains, how does power influence the failure of ALAs? One might assume that if a speaker is more socially powerful in a conversation than a listener, he/she would not be threatened by an ALA. After all, if a speaker is in control of a conversation, why would an ALA not be tolerated or even enjoyed? Again, it is impossible to get into the heads of these speakers, and even if I had been able to, it is questionable if they would have been able to verbalize their exact reasoning at the time, as this kind of breakdown is so minute it may not have even registered in their conscious thinking. For example, in the





above conversations, when Rachel slows her rate of speech or Alton repeats “Obviously she doesn’t. Obviously she doesn’t. She’s like, she’s like ...,” it is not likely that either of them are consciously thinking, “Hmm, that was an aggressive bit of talk from my listener. I had better revert to a floor-saving measure to ensure that I get to finish my story.” Instead, it is much more probable, though admittedly no research has been done to date which supports this reasoning, that their responses to the ALAs happened so quickly neither they nor the other conversation participants were at all aware of the hitches. However, although I acknowledge that “in any text there will be both ambiguities and conflicts in the ‘co-text,’ the relevant textual environment at any point” (Halliday, 1978, page 133), it is interesting to search for emerging patterns in the corpus which may help to reveal a connection between failed ALAs and the power structure implicit in a conversation. Specifically, I wanted to explore some possible reasons for ALAs to fail when the speaker has the power in a conversation.

In the 69 conversations that make up the corpus, there are 84 failed ALAs. (Again, several conversations contained more than one failed ALA.) Out of these 84 failed ALAs, there are 43 instances of failed ALAs in which the person holding the most social power in the conversation (as determined by an examination of both the context and the results of the application of my framework for analysis) resorts to floor-saving measures. Of these 43 tiny breakdowns, all but six involve statement ALAs rather than information questions, yes/no questions or noises such as laughter. In other words, 44% of all the failed ALAs in the entire corpus, or 37 out of 84 failed ALAs, involved a speaker with perceived social power responding to a statement ALA. An example of this can be found Conversation 19: Las Vegas – Cold Power on page 131 when Alton both is the dominant speaker and finds social power as the victim, but he is still threatened by Frank’s ALAs. Clearly, statement ALAs are deemed challenging by a large number of powerful speakers. Once the conversations in which this pattern emerged were more closely studied, I made a couple of interesting observations which provide both possible causes for the “hitches and perturbations” (Schegloff, 2000, page 11), as well as anomalies for further study.

First, in several conversations, the speaker in power was also extremely emotional about something. This predictably resulted in an overly aggressive reliance on floor-saving measures. For example, just prior to the conversation below, Julie had had an intense disagreement with Kevin, though the viewer neither sees the dispute nor understands fully what caused it. Kevin became very angry and physically threatened Julie, which upset her considerably. Eric and Julie are quite close friends by this point in the season. Heather had apparently just entered before Eric and appears to feel quite upset by what has happened as well.

#### Conversation 24: New York 1 – Candle Sticks (1992)

			Eric	Heather	Julie
1:10:14		J is crying			I mean I could,
			He was really throwing things?		I knew ...
1:10:17			Like he took one of those candle sticks		
1:10:19		J speaks more loudly	and threw it at you?		No! One of those super
				One of those big ones	heavy ones
1:10:21			What?	Because when I came in I saw it.	
1:10:23				I saw something all out of place and I was like, "What, what is that?"	
1:10:26					He didn't throw it at me, he just, like

1:10:28				Like what? Like if you would have charged him he would have hit you with it	
				Are you kidding me? or something?	
				Regardless or not,	
1:10:32		E walks toward J and H	This, this was in his hand ready to hit you? Like that he, he even thought about that?		
1:10:38		E puts the candle stick on the counter J speaks very loudly and shrilly  J's volume and tone return to normal			Yes! Yes!   I know, it was like, I can handle, you know, a black eye for this
1:10:42		J plays with a stick			You know, I understand that you are going to hit me, but ... I love this show, but I am not going to go to a fucking funeral






Julie is obviously in distress, and the retelling of the incident is disturbing her. Heather is also obviously upset about the incident, even though it does not affect her directly. Perhaps she is intent on aligning herself with a fellow female in the conversation or distance herself from Kevin, who is also African American. Whatever the reason, Heather is clearly emotionally involved in the conversation. For his part, Eric is attempting to listen with interest, most likely supportively. When he asks, "What?" he seems to be encouraging Heather to continue with the story by expressing his shock about the state of affairs rather than asking for clarification because he did not hear her. Heather, however, reacts to Eric's ALA with a floor-saving measure by repeating herself. She says, "I saw it. I saw something." In this case, Heather's emotional state may be affecting her ability to follow the





one-at-a-time rule described by many researchers. Possibly, if this conversation had been about something else and, Heather had not been so upset, she would not have been threatened by Eric's ALA.

In another example of this kind of exaggerated response to an ALA, Brynn, Arissa and Irulan are irritated with Trishelle because the night before, when they had all been working hard promoting a club event in Las Vegas, she had been flirting and having fun. This conversation takes place the morning after the incident, and the girls are having a sort of intervention with the intention of expressing their feelings to Trishelle and curtailing this behavior in the future. As has been demonstrated in previous excerpts in this paper, the girls' relationship with Trishelle is fraught with difficulties and jealousies, particularly for Brynn.

Conversation 25: Las Vegas – I'm Sorry. (2002 – 2003)

			Arissa	Brynn	Irulan	Trishelle
7/18:28						
7/18:29				The whole thing last night was a little bit of disappointment		
7/18:32		T looks at B and nods		You know? Because we are		
7/18:34				Busting our ass Or whatever, and we were just kind of upset		No, I know
7/18:38		A nods		Yeah, and I, and I wanted to have fun		Because we have to be a team, and I wasn't.





7/18:40		T and B sit B gestures		And maybe it was a little bit of jealousy because you were having such a good time and			
			Definitely				
				We weren't. You know what I mean?			
7/18:47		T alternates eye contact with others and looking down	So burned!		I was like, "She had a guy!"	I'm so sorry.	
				Yeah, like chilling.		I'm so sorry.	





In this conversation, Trishelle attempts to diffuse the situation by apologizing and acknowledging her bad behavior immediately and she even tries to establish a sort of camaraderie by interjecting her understanding of the reason that the other women are so angry with her when she says "Because we have to be a team, and I wasn't." By using the pronoun, "we," Trishelle may be striving to include herself into the group, for "we" "is always simultaneously inclusive and exclusive, a pronoun of solidarity and of rejection, of inclusion and exclusion" (Pennycook, 1994, page 175). In other words, rather than remain a "you" in the "you"/"we" dichotomy that Brynn establishes throughout the scolding, Trishelle cautiously attempts to become a "we" also. Nonetheless, Brynn is not willing to let Trishelle off so easily. Even though she performs a "narrator check" (Weber, 1993, page 117) when she asks for an ALA with "you know?" Brynn is clearly not at all ready to let go of the floor and her anger. Thus, there is marked tendency for speakers who are emotionally charged, even those who hold the power in the conversation, to aggressively protect their conversational floor. In all four such occasions that appear in *The Real World* corpus, the speakers all behaved in a manner similar to Julie and Brynn. More research, however, is needed before a definitive correlation can be established between a speaker's emotional state and the likelihood of them resorting to floor-saving measures in the face of an ALA, and, as of yet, no such findings have been reported.

In the vast majority of the other exchanges, however, there appears to be a different motivation that prompts speakers with power to hold on to

the conversational floor. Specifically, speakers tend to resort to floor-saving measures when the conversations are vehicles for the creation or revision of their self image. “Social life requires the negotiation of a shared ideational world. Simultaneously, it requires the continual renegotiation of our places within the world: who we are, how we relate to the other people in it, and how we feel about it” (Eggins and Slade, 1997, page 51). Therefore, a great many of the conversations in the corpus contain examples of the roommates creating or editing their social identities. Although the purpose for these exchanges is communicative, it cannot be denied that there is a level of meaning making within the “interaction [which] is predominantly strategic” (Fairclough, 2003, page 71). For example, in the following conversation, Steven and Trishelle have just met a few minutes before. Their statements in later “Confessionals” that they are immediately attracted to each other provide important contextualization for this conversation. Based on the acknowledgement of his feelings for Trishelle, we can assume that Steven has a vested interest in ensuring that she gets the “right” impression about him from the start.

#### Conversation 26: Las Vegas – Married (2002 – 2003)

			Steven	Trishelle
1/02:43		T makes intermittent eye contact	I'm from everywhere. I've lived in like five states, and I've been to, like, twenty four schools	
				You poor thing ...
1/02:47			Awww.	You probably never had a girlfriend before.
1/02:51			Oh, I've had, I've had	
1/02:52		S speaks quietly	I've had, I've had a few.	I would be scared to have a relationship
1/02:54			Actually, I'm actually married	







1/02:55			right now.	
1/02:57		S and T laugh	I'm serious. I was supposed to be divorced last month, but, uh	
				Are you serious?
			I'm totally serious.	
1/03:05			I got married at the Paris Hotel in Las Vegas, and, uh	
				Were you drunk when you married her?
1/03:09		S gestures, and <b>raises his voice and pitch</b>	No! We planned it! We took thirty of our friends and family. It was like a big wedding.	



Steven appears almost desperate to clear up Trishelle's misunderstanding about his sexual past because he repeats "I've had" four times in rapid succession. As "[m]ultiple sayings function to display that the speaker finds the prior speaker's course of action problematic" (Stivers, 2004, page 288), Steven's reliance on this strategy indicates that he means to amend Trishelle's perception of himself as innocent or sexually inexperienced, as that is not an popular image for a young man to be associated with in North America. Rather, he appears to want to create a motif of himself as a worldly male, capable of both casual and serious relationships. Thus, from the use of these multiple sayings that Steven resorts to in order to maintain the floor, is it clear that "linguistic exchanges [such as this] do not occur at random or aimlessly; much of our linguistic energy is tied to our evocation of our past selves and our projection into future conditions" (Bailey, 1985, page 15). Thus, Steven's eagerness to ensure a positive impression appears to be a major factor in the resulting minute breakdown in the conversation.

Another example of the potential impact that the upkeep of identity can have on a conversation is found within the interaction below. In this discussion, Kevin and Jenn are lying side by side, and he is telling her about the change in perspective he experienced as a result of being diagnosed with cancer and then going into remission. He reveals that in the early days

of his recovery, he had a very positive outlook on life. However, as time passed, his attitude changed. Kevin and Jenn don't know each other very well; they have just met in the past few days. They are laying side by side, Kevin on his stomach and Jenn on her back. This clip was filmed during the *Casting Special*, in which the cast members compete for spots on *The Real World*.

Conversation 27: Casting Special – Cancer (2001)

			Kevin	Jenn
1:03:38			After the cancer, you go through a deal	
1:03:39			right afterwards. It's the biggest high in the world. It's a natural high	
1:03:42			after you beat it. Because you beat	
			life	Mmmhmm.
1:03:45			You think everything's great. You wake up, you have a flat tire. It doesn't matter. "I'm living, I'm breathing.	
			I don't care."	Exactly!
1:03:49			But then, after about four or five months, you end up to	
1:03:52			where little things start to bother you again. Like, you wake up and you don't have any hot water. And, instead of like a couple of months before, you're like, "I don't care. I don't need a shower, I'm just	
			alive	Mmmhmm.
			you wind up saying, "Damn, it sucks	
			You know. So that, so that ... Yeah	You mentioned that. Like a relapse, kind of ...

			Yeah, you forget about how, you forget about your perspective.	
1:04:07			I've gotten back, I've really tried to get into Christ and go to bible study	Mmmhmm.
1:04:13			I used to try to play girls, but I'm out of that too. Like I really feel like I'm growing up and when you can see you're growing up that's a cool thing.	

Foucault (1995) describes power as productive in that it creates. Because “[p]ower is not about saying ‘no’; it is about producing things, identities and ideas” (Baldwin, Longhurst, McCracken, Ogborn and Smith., 1999, page 94), Kevin can surely be viewed as holding the power in this conversation; he is working very hard to create an image of himself as experienced and wise. He appears to want Jenn, *The Real World* producers who are deciding which people to cast in the next season of the program, and the wider viewing audience to see him in a certain light. He is so anxious to create this identity that he cuts off Jenn’s supportive ALA and repeats himself several times with “so that, so that” and “you forget about how, you forget about.” Thus, even though Kevin appears to dominate this conversation both in terms of conversational and social power, because identity is “a relational and sociocultural phenomenon that emerges and circulates in local discourse contexts of interaction rather than as stable structure located primarily in the individual psyche or in fixed social categories” (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005, pages 585-586), he must constantly work on identity upkeep, and his concern with his self image has an undeniable impact on how successfully Jenn is able to use ALAs.




Interestingly, therefore, the success of an ALA may have much less to do with the intention of the listener and much more to do with the image the speaker wishes to construct at that time. Of course, this is not meant to imply that failed ALAs only occur in conversations where the speaker is focused on identity maintenance work. However, as this corpus contains only samples of failed ALA’s, I am unable to make generalizations about the

connection between successful ALAs and the creation of identity. Nonetheless, in spite of this limitation, my research suggests that the relationship between the intention of the ALA and its perception is necessarily not a democratically determined reality as researchers such as Goffman (1975), Gardner (2001) and Young and Lee (2004) contend. In fact, it seems as though the speaker him/herself is solely responsible for the success of an ALA. In other words, if a speaker is intent on conveying a certain message, even supportive ALAs can cause him/her to feel threatened and react in a hostile manner toward the ALA. The actual intention of the ALA does not appear to be a factor at all.

In addition to the overwhelming number of conversations which sustain this finding, there is also an interesting anomaly. In three of the transcriptions, one speaker emerges as a dominant force even when she appears neither to be upset nor to be intent on the upkeep of her identity. In the conversation below, Danny, Kelly and Julie are reminiscing about their time living in *The Real World* house in New Orleans for a DVD special, *The Real World you Never Saw*. Specifically, they are discussing one of their roommates, David, and the casual way he treated the women he brought back to the house.



## Conversation 28: New Orleans – You’re Gonna Get Played (2000)

			Danny	Julie	Kelly
36:15					There was that sign on the door that, and this is my favorite thing,
36:18					it's like, if you walk in, you're going to get played. It's like the warning,
36:21		J gestures K speaks more loudly and slowly		It's like, duh.	Like, "yield" to the passengers.

When Julie attempts to co-create the conversation with “It’s like, duh”, Kelly becomes threatened and resorts to increasing the volume and slowing the rate of her speech, two common floor-saving measures. Tannen (2001) points out that “... a strategy that seems, or is, intended to create connection can, in another context or in the mouth of another speaker, be intended or used to establish dominance” (Tannen, 2001, page 150). In other words, while Julie is striving to demonstrate support for Kelly’s opinion about David, her ALA is heard by Kelly as competition. Ironically, in this situation, Kelly appears to have nothing to lose by allowing Julie a turn, as she is not overtly involved in the maintenance of her own identity (the choices made by the women with whom David was involved are not a direct reflection of Kelly’s identity), nor is she in an emotionally charged state of mind; thus it is unclear why she reacts so vigorously. Moreover, Julie’s participation in the conversation reflects what would be normally expected by researchers as a response to Kelly’s evaluation of David’s girlfriends. “[A]ll appraisal involves the negotiation of solidarity – you can hardly say how you feel without inviting empathy, [and w]here interlocutors are prepared to share your feeling, a kind of bonding occurs” (Martin, 2000, pages 171 - 172). However, in two other conversations which contain failed ALAs, Kelly displays a tendency to fight for the floor in the face of seemingly benign



ALAs. One might argue that her personality is such that she is a naturally competitive conversationalist. As a result, one might suspect that this kind of linguistic behavior would cause her to become unpopular among her roommates; however, there is no evidence at all to suggest that she has any problems getting along with her fellow cast mates. Certainly,

the ideal of 'social style' foregrounds the *social* determination of style, the idea that style expresses, not our individual personality and attitudes, but our social position, 'who we are' in terms of stable categories such as class, gender, and age, social relations, and 'what we do' in terms of the socially regulated activities we engage in and the roles we play within them.

van Leeuwen, 2005, page 143

Thus, although it seems logical that conversationalists with a somewhat overbearing social style would turn off their listeners, this is not the case with speakers such as Kelly. She is not alone in the creation of this public identity, as all identities are co-created, and it would be interesting to understand why Kelly is able to get away with behavior that might not be accepted from another participant. Therefore, the impact that personal conversational style has on an interaction is clearly an area ripe for further study. In fact, personality is listed as a factor on my framework for analysis (see Appendix 2). However, my comments tend to be somewhat more subjective in this area (a trait not in keeping with the rest of my analysis) than other categories. For instance, I note in my framework for the conversations featuring Kelly that "Kelly is a dominant conversationalist and she appears to enjoy being center stage." This observation is based on hours of viewing her interactions and my analysis of her behavior within the highlighted exchanges; however, it is only one aspect of her identity as I see it. This is not *who she is*. Nonetheless, I feel confident in my ability to make some careful generalizations about a number of the conversationalists because "[o]ne meaning of generalizability includes the ability to accurately predict outcomes across different groups of people, in different settings, at new times, and using different messages" (Shapiro, 2002, page 493). In other words, I believe that if I were to watch other recordings of Kelly

interacting with her peers, I would most likely see a similar aggressive defense of the floor because in the five conversations containing failed ALAs I pulled from *The Real World you Never Saw – New Orleans*, three contained examples of Kelly dominating the conversation. This is a higher statistic than any of the other conversationalists. Therefore, though the sample is small, I suspect that she would also exhibit the same tendencies in other conversations. However, due to the focus and consequent limitations of this research project, the impact of Kelly's and the other roommates' personalities on their conversational maneuvering cannot be fully explored. Regardless, even an informal examination of the impact of personality on conversational style is something that may benefit ESL students. Seeing how one dominant speaker can control a conversation without causing obvious frustration to the other speakers may provide a model for students who wish to assume power within their own conversations. In addition, discussing a variety of conversational behaviors of the speakers may help students to view their pragmatic choices as more of a continuum rather than a "right / wrong" scenario. This continuum exists because the way we judge personality is inherently a subjective interpretative act, in keeping with Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) notion of rhizomatic becoming. Identity is not fixed and permanent, and there is not one right reading of Kelly's personality as it influences her conversational style. Rather than impose "the verb 'to be,' while the rhizome continues infinitely with the "conjunction, 'and ... and ... and'" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, page 522). In other words, Kelly is, as we all are, multiplicities, or many identities that are ever-changing, which, in turn, reflects in our varied conversational choices.

Although *The Real World* corpus did yield a conversational anomaly that can be attributed to the personal style of the speaker, the vast majority of the results reflected that competition for both conversational power and social status are inherent in casual conversation. Several aspects emerge as contributing factors to the failure of an ALA. First, the use of a statement ALA was, more than any other ALA, seen by the speaker as a possible bid for the floor and often resulted in the speaker adopting a defensive stance. In addition, an emotionally charged situation may be seen as prompting a speaker to be more sensitive to an ALA than usual. Finally, when a speaker

is involved in identity upkeep, he or she may have more motivation to keep the conversational floor and may respond negatively to a supportive ALA. Although “the meaning of any linguistic strategy can vary, depending at least on context, the conversational styles of participants, and the interaction of participants’ styles and strategies” (Tannen, 2001, page 155), the findings of this examination suggest a struggle for power intrinsic to the failure of an ALA. These findings are remarkable because, although casual conversation is “the most familiar of all varieties of human talk” (Hasan, 2004, page 15), few CDA studies, with the exception of Eggins and Slade (1997), have focused on the role casual conversation plays in “reinforcing conventional mores, solidarity ties and structural inequalities” (MacCallum, 2009, page 16). However, there is clearly a great deal of competition in casual interactions, which can be viewed as an “economy in which the turn is distributed in much the same fashion as a commodity” (Zimmerman and West, 1975, page 124). This study provides some insight into several possible motivations for this quest for conversational dominance which have not been explored as of yet. The trait of a failed ALA is especially interesting when one considers the bearing one particular aspect of individual style, gender, as “women and men are now in competition for the same kinds of power and status, as opposed to taking up complementary roles” (Cameron, 2006, page 86).

#### 4.3 Failed Active Listening Attempts and Gender

For several years, a great deal of linguistic research has suggested a strong relationship between gender and language. “We as actors actively engaged in the construction of our social world inevitably perform gender in our daily interactions as either ‘being a woman’ or ‘being a man’” (Coates, 1997a, page 127). Researchers concerned with the influence of gender on conversation have contended that there are significant differences between men and women in interaction, including their conversational purpose, their behavior, their talking time, their active listening techniques, and their power within the exchange. The findings of a great many of these studies convincingly describe the “gendered status quo” (Weatherall, 2000, page

286), that men and women in conversation tend to be different and unequal. However, recently, theorists have begun to question the causality previously associated with studies regarding gender and conversational behavior. Difference in conversational behavior and lack of social equality is not directly attributable to gender. Rather,

[i]t is that while both sexes must make the same calculations about the same variables (e.g. social distance, relative status, degree of face-threaten inherent in a communicative act), the different social positioning of men and women makes them assign different values to those variables, and therefore behave differently.






Cameron, 2006, page 82


According to my analysis of *The Real World* corpus, ALAs fail in conversations between all kinds of participants. Thus, these “[i]nterpretations of behavior that rest on essentialist assumptions have been found to reproduce rather than challenge dominant cultural beliefs about gender” (Weatherall, 2007, page 285). In other words, I had originally presupposed that significantly larger number of failed ALAs would occur in conversations in which the speaker was male and the listener was female, even though men have been having conversations with women all of their lives, and therefore, they would be practiced with this sort of conversation style because “men are connected to certain alignment roles, and that they connect their identities to their language thought these alignment roles” (Kiesling, 1998, page 71). Interestingly, however, in support of the conclusions of Schmidt-Mast (2002 a&b) and Cameron (2006), the data reveals a different picture entirely.

The transcriptions contained 84 instances of failed ALAs. Every time a speaker resorted to floor-saving measures, I determined which type of ALA caused the speaker to feel threatened, and I noted the gender of the listener. In addition, I noted the genuine intent of the ALA, as some listeners may have had hidden agendas as they participated in the conversation. Obviously, the lack of genuine intent in the ALA could also cause the speaker to become increasingly defensive, even though the ALA’s purpose was to encourage the speaker to talk. For example, in the following

conversation, Coral, Katie and Sophia have just met and they are getting to know each other. Coral has created an identity for herself as sharp-tongued, and it becomes clear in this conversation that she does not like Katie. Sophia is gay, though she has not come out at all.

Conversation 29: Casting Special – Can't Stand Katie (2001)

			Coral	Katie	Sophia
33:43		S looks at K		With my personality, the way I am, either people really like me or they can not stand me. There's no	
33:48			It's like it on this?	It's like Yeah. <b>It's like, there's no</b> like, "Katie's okay." It's either, "I can't stand Katie," or "Katie's really cool; I like her a lot."	
33:57		C looks at K and smiles mockingly	You don't seem like you have, I'm not trying to be mean, but you don't seem to have a strong personality.	I am very opinionated.  Oh, see, yeah.	
			You must be doing that on purpose.	Well, see, when I got	
				<b>when I got in</b> the van, and I was talking to them, I went up to Blair, I don't know if you guys remember who he is, but and I was like,	
34:12				"You're gay, aren't you?" And he's like, "What?" And I'm like, "You're gay." And he's like, "No." And I'm like, "Well, I thought you were gay when I first met you."	
					Why do you think he's gay?
				Just because he's kind of got, you know, a superficial look,	
34:25				and even though, that's you know, bad, whatever, he has that look to me, that's like he	
					Everybody somehow employs that stereotype that usually isn't correct.

34:34				I don't know, I just, I'm very spontaneous with the words that come out of my mouth. I just say	
			You don't regret some of the things you say?		
				Oh, yeah, of course I do. I do regret a lot of the things I say, but I don't think before I talk, so I am like, blah,	
			Do you consider that a flaw?		
				Of course. That is, I mean	
			Are you actively trying to change that?		
				Not currently. No.	








In this conversation, Coral asks a number of questions that are, for all intents and purposes, ALAs. However, when “the relationship between the verbal and the visual” (Adolphs, 2008, page 118) is explored, it is easy for the viewer to notice that Coral has an agenda as she encourages Katie to talk in that she appears to want to make Katie make herself look foolish. For instance, in response to Katie’s confession people either love her or hate her, Coral asks, “It’s like it on this?” On the surface, Coral could be sympathizing with Katie because she is disliked by a few of the other cast members; however, upon viewing Coral’s body language, it becomes increasingly apparent that Coral’s true intent is not kind. Her head is down, though she maintains eye contact, and her smile is somewhat mocking. Moreover, further on in the conversation, Coral asks a series of Speaker Polarity Questions (SPQs). Specifically, she asks if Katie regrets what she says, if she considers her lack of thought before she speaks as a flaw, and if she is working to change that. Again, although these questions may look initially appear genuine, “it is the trajectory of action within a sequence that helps participants determine what action and SPQ implements. For an SPQ to be interpreted as a challenge, it has to be produced in a sequence in which disagreement is already present” (Heinemann, 2008, page 65). Due to Coral’s body language and earlier hostile observations about Katie’s personality, the SPQ does take on a threatening connotation. Thus, although Coral’s questions and observations seem designed to keep Katie

talking, they lack the enthusiasm of a genuine ALA and this example is not included in the “Genuine’ ALA” category in the table below.

Speaker/Listener	Number of Failed ALAs	Number of “Genuine” ALAs	Percent of “Genuine” Failed ALAs
Male/Male	19	8	42%
Male/Female	22	14	64%
Female/Female	18	13	72%
Female/Male	16	12	75%

These figures demonstrate a number of startling contrasts with assumptions one might reach based on much of the existing literature. Primarily, a contrast between the number of failed ALAs in male/female conversations as opposed to those in all-female exchanges did not really materialize. The largest number of unsuccessful ALAs did occur when men were speaking and women were listening; however, the disparity is not as striking as I had anticipated. Clearly, my findings contrast with those of Coates (1996), who argues that “no one in the conversations I’ve recorded ever protests at the overlapping talk” (Coates, 1996, page 137). In fact, the women who participated in *The Real World* conversations did protest in the form of floor-saving measures. For example, in this conversation among Arissa, Brynn and Irulan, the three women are discussing Mark, their employer. Mark is their boss; however, he also seems to want to socialize with them off the clock. He has a particularly flirtatious relationship with Irulan until he propositions her and she turns him down. Once rejected, Mark becomes increasingly difficult to work for.

## Conversation 30: Las Vegas – Mark (2002 – 2003)

			Arissa	Brynn	Irulan
5/10:20				I can't believe Mark.	
5/10:21			He does this, "I am		
5/10:22			the boss" at 2:00 in the afternoon but at 2:00 in the morning, when he's had a few drinks, it's not I am the boss anymore. It's like I am down for whatever.		
5/10:31		B nods			It did start out as a situation where
5/10:35		A looks at I and nods			like okay, maybe we are going to be friends outside of,
5/10:38					you know, the work thing
5/10:40		I raises voice		Friends	But if you're going to be drawing a line
		I lowers voice to regular volume			And being all disgruntled in meetings, then ...



All three women appear to be in agreement about Mark's behavior. In fact, Brynn attempts to voice her support for Irulan by repeating the word "friends" from Irulan's prior utterance. As has previously been demonstrated, repetition often serves a collaborative function (Carter and McCarthy, 2004) and indicates "participatory listenership" (Tannen, 1989, page 59); however,





in this case, Irulan becomes threatened and reverts to the floor-saving measure of increasing her volume. In this way, by raising her voice, Irulan protests the overlap caused by Brynn's ALA. In this conversation, the all-female participants "may compete with each other and at the same time be pursuing a ... common agenda." (Cameron, 1998, page 280) Clearly, women's conversations are not "free of competition" (Troemel-Ploetz, 2002, page 582) as so many linguists have contended.

In contrast, because male talk has been described as competitive and because "while activities and behaviors labeled as *male* are treated as appropriate for females as well as for males, those labeled as *female* are treated as only appropriate for females" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003, page 21), it is often argued that male listeners persistently avoid this utterance co-creation form of ALA. However, *The Real World* corpus yields several instances of men rejecting the concept of the "solo narrative [in favor of] co-constructed stories" (Coates, 2003, page 185) in conversations both with women and other men. For instance, in the following conversation, Steven is telling Alton about a conversation he has just had with Brynn in which he made clear to her that he had no romantic feelings for her. Alton attempts to add to what Steven is saying by supplying the reasoning for Steven's willingness to become intimate with all of the female roommates even though he is not genuinely attracted to any of them.

#### Conversation 31: Because they are Hot (2002 – 2003)

			<b>Alton</b>	<b>Steven</b>
2/05:20		A and S lie on their beds	Are you serious? Where was I?	Like, she hates me now.
2/05:22		A looks at the door	Shut up!	No, seriously, dude.






2/05:23		A moves closer to S A smiles	What happened?	Well, I said, like, if they were naked on an individual basis, if I were single, yeah, I would sleep with all of them,
			Mmhmm.	but I was like, there's no sexual chemistry.
2/05:31		S looks at A		I'm not really into any of them. I'd sleep with all of them, don't get me wrong, because they are hot
			Yeah, yeah, yeah, because you are a man, you know	
		S speaks quietly		Yeah, because they are, because they are hot.

Alton's motivation appears to be supportive, and, in fact, there are several factors that create the feeling of heterosexual intimacy that is present in this conversation. Primarily, however, the gossipy topic serves to unite the men, as "in most gossip sequences, unless there is agreement, the speaker is likely to back down" (Thornbury and Slade, 2006, page 122). In other words, because Alton and Steven are gossiping about their female roommates, and Steven is the dominant speaker, Alton's role in the conversation is to demonstrate his agreement with Steven or Steven may be forced to stop telling his anecdote. Alton does this by stating, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, because you are a man, you know." However, he selects a historically "feminine" form of ALA, according to Coates (2003), by completing Steven's utterance. It may be argued that, after all, "[p]eople *do* perform gender differently in different contexts, and do sometimes behave in ways we would normally associate with the 'other' gender" (Cameron, 1998, page 272). However, this example, as well as others in the corpus, further demonstrates that the foregrounding of gender and cataloging an action as *masculine* or *feminine* is distinctly problematic, and suggests that women do not hold a monopoly on "the strategy of seeking agreement" (Holmes, 2004, page 325).

Perhaps more striking than the lack of a sizeable difference between male and female failed use of ALAs, is the high percentage of genuinely intended ALAs which failed in conversations in which the speaker was female. Although this paper has already explored several examples of this, another illustration of the misinterpretation of an ALA by a female speaker can be found in the next conversation. Aneesa has just received a gift

basket from her mother with whom she has an extremely strained relationship. Cara enters the room and watches Aneesa open the gift. Cara and Aneesa have a friendly relationship.

Conversation 32: Chicago – The Gift (2002)

			Aneesa	Cara
3:33:26			It's from my mom.	
3:34:27				She totally spoiled you!
3:34:30			My mom might be the sweetest, most loving	Let me see.
3:34:34			person	Generous, thoughtful
3:34:36		A slows down her speech and says the word "met" more loudly	I've ever, ever met. I want go downstairs and shower, like, that's how special I feel.	

In this conversation, when Cara attempts to jointly construct the conversation (Coates, 1996) by contributing positive adjectives to Aneesa's list, Aneesa appears to become threatened. She slows down her rate of speech, increases her volume and repeats herself. This reaction is in spite of Cara's adherence to the maxims of collaboration described by Coates (1996) including mirroring Aneesa's intonation, the grammatical structure, and rhythmic quality of the utterance. As depicted in the table, 72% of conversations in which the speaker was female and the listener was female resulted in failed genuine ALAs, and 75% of conversations in which the

speaker was female and the listener was male also contained failed ALAs. Why might these numbers be so much higher than those of the male speakers? Are women more sensitive to ALAs? Possibly, however, rather than paint Aneesa as conversationally thin-skinned because she is female, perhaps it is more appropriate to point to Cameron's (2006) notion of conflict.

The question is not whether women and men produce different surface patterns of language use (they do, but that does not entail they will misunderstand one another), nor whether they have differing general principles for interpreting discourse (I believe there is no good argument and no convincing evidence that they do), but *whether in interpreting utterances they make use of conflicting assumptions about the position a particular speaker in a given situation either is, ought to be, speaking from; and thus hold conflicting beliefs about the rights and obligations that are normative in the speaker-hearer relationship.*







Cameron, 2006, page 82



In other words, rather than assuming that women are just touchy about listener talk, perhaps we simply are making use of different conversational interpretations and tools than men. This does not belie an element of power, which may be seen as the essence of any conflict, however, and perhaps the time has come to stop viewing women as the more cooperative sex and to embrace the conversational contest.

In addition to describing a "competitive/cooperative" (Cameron, 1998, page 272) dichotomy, researchers have also described female talk as inclusive. "Women value solidarity and their linguistic behavior reflects this" (Holmes, 1998, page 465). It is, therefore, implied that men tend toward exclusivity in their conversations, as their talk tends to be "competitive and individualistic" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003, page 127). One measure for inclusivity and exclusivity within a conversation is the occurrence of the pronouns "you" and "we". As previously discussed in this paper, these pronouns have the potential to carry a great deal of meaning within an utterance. "Because persons can be described in a variety of different ways, the selection of any one particular personal reference

descriptor over other possible descriptors makes available in the talk much more than is conveyed” (Land and Kitzinger, 2007, page 499). Within this corpus, there are examples of both the pronoun “you” and the pronoun “we.” In the following conversation, Rachel and Mike are speaking to a guest, Ellen, about their problems getting along with Nicole and Coral. Ellen was a cast member on *The Real World Casting Special*, where she had a series of arguments with Coral; however, they eventually patched things up. As a result of her being able to “manage” Coral, Mike and Rachel have turned to Ellen for advice.

### Conversation 33: New York 2 – It Gets Vicious (2001)




			Ellen	Mike	Rachel
13:27		R nods	I definitely felt like that for a while, too. All the teasing and everything ...		
13:29					When you're alone with Nicole, she's totally cool and she doesn't do that, but when
				She does it to fit in with Coral.	
13:33					But, when, when the two of them are together, it gets to the point where, like,
13:37					for me, it gets vicious.
13:41				[unintelligible] like every time I'm with Coral	
13:43				she acts like my mother. I swear, like, I'll sit there and be like ...I'll say something,	

13:47				And she'll just be like, "dada."	
13:51			But, it's weird. Like, for all those times we fought, it only made us closer. That's how I feel anyway.		

In this excerpt, Rachel uses “you” when she speaks about her relationship with Nicole when she is not with Coral in, “When you’re alone with Nicole, she’s totally cool.” This appears to be inclusive in that Rachel seems to be referring to herself and Mike. In this conversation, moreover, by using an inclusive pronoun, Rachel is procuring a measure of power, as “[a]ny show of solidarity necessarily entails power” (Tannen, 2001, page 151). In other words, by gaining the support of Ellen and co-opting Mike into her utterance with the use of “you”, Rachel is achieving strength in numbers.

This inclusive “you” can be seen most often in the phrase “you know.” In the following exchange, Alton and Irulan are considering the commitment each is willing to make to the other. They have both mentioned in prior “Confessionals” that, not only are they attracted to each other, but they also have genuine respect for each other. The relationship later becomes quite serious, and they stay together long after their time in Las Vegas is over. This conversation is taking place as they begin to explore their feelings for each other.

## Conversation 34: Las Vegas – Mistaking Sex for Love (2002 – 2003)








16/01:41			Alton Because a lot of people make the mistake of sex for love, right? You know?	Irulan
16/01:45				To have sex with somebody, to make love with somebody, like, I just feel, like, it can't be something casual. Because it isn't, and for me, like
16/01:52			I totally got this.	there's nothing there's nothing that can come out of that.

Alton uses “you know” to elicit support for his position. This structure is often used to mark a “boundary of a ‘private thought’ component” (Barnes and Moss, 2007, page 131). This structure acts as a kind of monitoring move in the face of such personal communications. “Monitoring involves deploying moves in which the speaker focuses on the state of the interactive situation, for example, by checking that the audience is following” (Eggins and Slade, 1997, page 195). As stated, Alton and Irulan are attracted to each other; however, Irulan is hesitant to become involved with Alton because he has a reputation for promiscuity. Alton is eager to reassure Irulan and make her understand his behavior, so he seems to be using “you” in a very inclusive manner. Moreover, he is asking for a conversational gesture from Irulan that she is following his opinion and that she is willing to participate in the inclusivity. Interestingly, Freed and Greenwood (1996) found that one member of a conversational pair consistently uses more “you knows” than the other. Although this does not fall within the mandate of this research paper, it is interesting to speculate about the power structure inherent in an obviously unbalanced use of “you knows.” Would the elicitor emerge as the less powerful because of his or her repeated need to use an inclusion strategy? Does this imbalance suggest a conversational insecurity on the part of one of the members? This interesting finding deserves further study under the scope of CDA in order to explore these questions.








However, “you” is more often an exclusive pronoun (Oktar, 2001, and Sotillo and Wang-Gemp, 2004), as is evidenced in the following conversation. Chris and Kyle are discussing the awkward situation Kyle finds himself in, as he has a girlfriend at home, but he is also attracted to Kerri, one of his roommates. He claims that his girlfriend, Nicole, is his soul mate; however, he is seen on film cuddling with Kerri.

#### Conversation 35: Chicago – Physical Needs (2002)

			Chris	Kyle
2:03:29				This is what it is. I think Kerri is the coolest person here, like in my opinion. I think she is so chill.
2:03:35				I think she's funny. I'm attracted to her physically
2:03:36				you know, but
2:03:38			She's beautiful.	I have not
2:03:42				I don't think I've expressed what my relationship with Nicole is like.
2:03:44				You know, like, we have, like, storybook love,
2:03:48				you know what I mean? I would never hurt Nicole. She's the most special thing in my life, but, I'm having issues. You know, it's hard. I did not expect this to happen because I have very very strong will power.






2:03:58					I really do.
2:04:01				Of course you are going to have physical needs and stuff and wants.	
2:04:03					I would never cheat on someone that I'm with,
2:04:06					particularly someone that I love.
				Right.	
2:04:09				What if it does happen?	
					I'm not going to let it happen, man.
2:04:14				Right.	

Chris's use of "you" in "Of course you are going to have physical needs and stuff and wants" is exclusive in that he is focusing solely on Kyle's situation; he does not appear to include himself in Kyle's predicament. "[Y]ou" often seems to imply an assumed Other who is being addressed rather than described" (Pennycook, 1994, page 176). It is never clear how much Chris sympathizes with Kyle. Over the course of filming, Chris has only one boyfriend, and may disapprove of Kyle's behavior; he does challenge Kyle's assertion that he would never cheat on Nicole with "What if it does happen?" Conversely, however, Chris may just see this as Kyle's issue and that, as a gay man, he has little to bring to the conversational table. Regardless of the rationale, this "you" does not appear to be as inclusive as the previous two discussed. Rather, it seems to serve as to create a "distan[c]e" between

speaker and those supposedly being addressed” (Pennycook, 1994, page 177).

The presence of the pronoun “we” is similarly loaded. “As in many other languages, we can refer ‘inclusively’ to speaker and addressee ... or it can refer exclusively to speaker and third party or parties, who may or may not be present in the immediate situation” (Wales, 1996, page 58). Occasionally, this dual meaning can occur in the same conversation. For example, Lori and Nicky are meeting at Arista Records, where Nicky is a producer. Lori is an aspiring singer, and one of her goals is to get a record deal. She has wrangled a meeting with Nicky, and Nicky has chosen a song for her to record as a demo.

Conversation 36: New York 2 – Get Excited. (2001)

			Lori	Nicky
2:21:45				If the song turns out not to be a song that we both love, either way we're going to put your voice on it
			Yeah! It would be fun to do and to have.	just
				just to get your voice on something.
2:21:52				You know, and we will, regardless of this song, we'll be writing stuff specifically for you.
			Okay.	
				So meanwhile, we'll feel comfortable with each other.
			Oh yeah.	
2:21:02			I am. Oh, I am so excited. I can't wait.	So, so get excited.

In his first clauses “If the song turns out not to be a song that we both love” Nicky appears to be using the inclusive “we.” It acts as a unifier (Ribeiro, 2006) in that he appears to be referring to himself and Lori. However, Nicky rapidly switches to the exclusive “we” when he begins to talk about the production side of the recording. With “and we will, regardless of this song, we'll be writing stuff especially for you.” Clearly he does not still mean himself and Lori; rather, he is referring to himself and a songwriter with

whom he works. Finally, Nicky reverts back to the “covert assumptions about shared communality” (Pennycook, 1994, page 176) when he hopes that “we’ll feel comfortable with each other.” Again, he is clearly referring to himself and Lori. In this way, Nicky “claims [both] authority and communality” (Pennycook, 1994, page 176) in one short exchange.

If the majority of the literature is correct in its argument that women’s conversations are collaborative and egalitarian, while men prefer to avoid this conversational style, then one would expect there to be far more uses of inclusive pronouns when females are the speakers than when men are.

<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Inclusive “you”</b>	<b>Inclusive “we”</b>	<b>Exclusive “you”</b>	<b>Exclusive “we”</b>
female	47	6	62	10
male	65	7	30	11

The evidence from the corpus clearly indicates that men are no less inclusive than women when it comes to the use of pronouns. In fact, it might be argued that female speakers are far more likely to use pronouns to distance themselves from others. Moreover, some might argue that exclusion is a method of domination. By segregating themselves from other members of the conversation, female speakers can be seen as attempting to gain power in the conversation. In order to craft a powerful identity for ourselves, women “have to draw upon and deploy discursive means which [we] have at our disposal” (Blommaert, 2005, pages 4–5). The strategic use of exclusive pronouns is clearly one such discursive mean. Although exclusivity certainly is not the only measure of how a speaker, either male or female, can dominate a conversation, these findings to serve to cast doubt on the perception of female talk as a welcoming collaboration and male talk as a cut-throat competition.

However, there is one main criticism that may be leveled at the existing literature, as well as at my own findings. First, as many theorists have acknowledged, we do not perform our gender perfectly at all times, and “sociolinguistic research has documented considerable variation within gender categories” (Weatherall, 2002, page 134). For example, a male speaker might behave in a manner in keeping with his gendered identity in

one context, but he might act in a completely different way, one which defies “the constraining hand of hegemonic masculinity” (Coates, 2003, page 196) in a different situation. This also holds true for female conversationalists. For example, in the previously examined conversation among Katie, Coral and Sophia, Coral is asking Katie seemingly innocent active listening questions; one might assume that because she is a woman, she would adhere to certain gendered behavior. However, Coral has a hidden agenda. She does not like Katie, and she wants to attract the attention of the producers of *The Real World* because this conversation is occurring during the *Casting Special* in which all everyone is competing to be chosen to become a roommate. This special set of circumstances affects Coral’s behavior so that she does not choose to follow the conversational norms associated with female talk. Although “gender is a highly-salient social category” (Cameron, 2006, page 84), it is not the only influencing aspect on a speaker’s repertoire of communicative tools. Moreover, “interactions, contexts and events are likely to make certain aspects of identity more or less salient at any given time and in any particular social interaction” (Merchant, Dickinson, Burnett and Myers, 2006, page 25). Thus, it is ill-advised to chalk any particular conversational act up to the sway of gender alone. This is significant because in the past 20 years, researchers have been overwhelmingly focused on the variation between men’s and women’s conversational behavior, and gender has been “represented as difference with gender categories frequently being treated as bipolar, fixed and static. ... This is bad” (Talbot, 2010, page 109). The findings of this research suggest that gender does not have a monopoly on the motivation of specific conversational behavior; other factors, such as individual personality and hidden agendas need to also be considered in any study of gender. Moreover, these findings call into question a great deal of the existing research in this field. It appears that when a wider view of the exchange is taken, including consideration of the extralinguistic features and the context, different results emerge. Thus, perhaps a closer look at the more positivistic conclusions reached by researchers such as Coates (1994, 1996, 1997a, 1997b, and 2003) and Tannen (2001) is merited, but it is out of the scope of this particular project.

In conclusion, although there is always room for further study, this research does yield some interesting results. Issues surrounding the terms associated with listener talk, I believe, have been clarified, and a new pair of terms, *ALA* and *failed ALA*, has been offered as a useful replacement for the ambiguous term *backchannel*. These new terms may be beneficial in ELT settings, because, as Vellenga (2004) argues, metalanguage is necessary, but often absent from existing ESL texts. However, terms like *backchannel* can be intimidating to the non-expert; consequently, *ALA* and *failed ALA* might better meet the needs of language learners and teachers. In addition, the analysis of the transcriptions reveals interesting patterns concerning the influence of power and gender on the way active listening attempts are received in a conversation. These results can be used to inform materials for international students who wish to level the conversational playing field when interacting with native English speaking North Americans. Under these circumstances, students may need practice to develop their “abilities to ‘read’ [ALAs] in terms of their situated functions, when and where they occur in context and co-text” (Adolphs, 2008, page 122). In other words, in addition to fluency with other conversational “tools,” students need to be aware of how to use ALAs, how to interpret them, and what might cause an ALA to fail in a North American context if they plan on living, studying and/or working in the USA or Canada for an extended period of time. Therefore, in the next chapter I will demonstrate materials based on the observations described here that serve to help students as they “move from purely utilitarian motivations [when studying English] towards goals associated with expressing their social and cultural selves” (Carter and McCarthy, 2004, page 81).

## **5. Implications and Applications of my Research for Education: Pedagogy, Policy and Research**

Research does not exist in a bubble, separate from the outside world. Now that the findings of my research project have been closely examined, I am prompted to ask, “What can I ... do both to understand and change the world? How do I ‘apply’ my research” (Collins, 2004, page xxii). To answer these questions, this paper must explore the impact my research could have on English Language Teaching (ELT). A failure to consider the potential applications would leave my study incomplete, as the dissemination of this information could benefit English as a Second Language (ESL) students and teachers. As previously argued, although “[t]here is a tendency in both mundane and social scientific discourse to conceive power as a ‘big’ phenomenon, operating at the largest scale within social formations, [CDA proponents] suggest that power is pervasive even at the smallest level of interpersonal relationships” (Hutchby, 2004, page 530). Thus, a critical analysis of discourse is particularly well suited to exploring the power struggles inherent in everyday conversation. This kind of close examination is beneficial for students struggling to learn another language, particularly in an environment dominated by native speakers of that language, because there exists a “political and economic context in which ... immigrants learn English, a context that is clearly in the economic interest of those who speak the dominant language and results in immigrants ... blaming themselves for their lack of ability in English” (Young, 2008, page 204). In other words, giving ESL students the tools to participate equally in a conversation with a native speaker affords more power to the learner than they may have previously held. Thus, because “CDA scholars play an advocacy role for groups who suffer from social discrimination” (Meyer, 2001, page 15), this approach is appropriate to assist typically disadvantaged ESL students participate more fully in the target culture. My research project, which focuses on the failure of active listening attempts, has the potential to impact the lives of students by influencing three distinct but related groups: teachers, educational policy makers and educational researchers. Thus, it is

important, at this point, to examine the prospective implications and applications of my research for the field of education.

### 5.1 Implications and Applications for Pedagogy

Overlap and the failure of active listening attempts are of great interest to me as an ESL educator because I witness the cultural clash of different listening styles on a daily basis. For example, in a Conversation class I taught several years ago, I grouped three students together: a Peruvian woman, a Korean man, and a Chinese woman, and instructed them to have a conversation about a topic of their choosing. Their conversational styles clashed immediately. Specifically, the few times the Korean man was given an opportunity to talk, he would release the floor as soon as either of the women made any kind of listening noise. I can only guess that this might have been frustrating for the Korean student, as he may have thought the women were constantly interrupting him. The situation may have been equally frustrating for the women who possibly wondered why the man would never finish a thought. I concede that this observation and my subsequent interpretation is just that, my interpretation. Other interpretations of what occurred in that classroom are entirely possible; however, as I did not interview the conversationalists, these other interpretations are not at my disposal. Nonetheless, I felt that something interesting was occurring in the conversation. More specifically, I noticed that my students' conversation neither conformed to the norms that dominate the North American native speaking context in which the students lived, nor occurred smoothly without any breakdowns.

This lack of compliance is hardly surprisingly, as the rules and expectations that govern conversational behavior are not cross-cultural. "Members of different cultures have different expectations about how participants in conversations will act in given contexts and assign meaning to deviations from expectations" (Salzmann, 1989, page 157). In other words, when we participate in conversations, our behavior is informed by the subconscious 'rules' that govern conversational choices in our culture. When we speak with someone who is not following the same rules that we

are, we make assumptions about their motivation, and, in multi-cultural contexts, linguistic clashes may occur. These clashes are the result of *negative pragmatic transfer*, which arises “[w]hen interacting in the target language, [and] the L2 learners transfer and apply pragmatic resources from their native language” (Huth and Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006, page 60). Therefore, in the conversation described above, the Korean man was applying the “rules” of his conversational culture when he stopped talking every time a listener made any noise at all; whereas, the Peruvian woman and Chinese woman were being prompted by their conversational cultures to vocally show support for the speaker. Although these clashes might appear minor, research conducted by Beal (1992) suggests

it does not take massive breakdowns to create tensions between people of different cultural backgrounds. Rather, it is a cumulative process made up of uncomfortable moments and small frustrations.

Beal, 1992, pages 49 - 50

In other words, while pragmatic differences may not cause a breakdown in communication, they may cause irritation in the other participants, which may result in a disadvantageous outcome for the nonnative speaker. Consequently, speakers from different backgrounds are in danger of violating their conversation partners’ linguistic cultures every time they follow one of their own rules. For example, Ladau-Harjulin (1992) noticed that “[b]ecause of their cultural patterns, Finnish businesspersons sometimes appear silent in situations in which Anglo-Saxons expect some kind of ‘polite noises’” (Ladau-Harjulin, 1992, page 71). This observation was further supported by Carbaugh (2008) when he described quiet as a “natural way of being” (Carbaugh, 2008, page 209) for Finnish people. Thus, by following Finnish linguistic culture, listeners are actually in danger of causing discomfort for the native English speakers involved with the conversation.

Many other studies, some of which have been described earlier in this paper, have also demonstrated that “unlike grammatical errors, pragmatic errors can easily lead to misconstruals of speaker intention, which in turn can lead to negative judgments about a speaker’s personality or moral



character” (Vasquez and Sharpless, 2009, page 6). Therefore, it is imperative that “[t]hose who approach a new language ... do not do so [merely] by learning a system of new ways in which to express and interpret their native ways of acting and feeling, but also by learning the preferences and theories of a new community” (Young, 2008, page 137). Furthermore, most speakers do not consciously know the conventions of their linguistic culture. Therefore, they are often not necessarily aware that nonnative speakers are making socio-linguistic or pragmatic miscalculations. Native speakers may instead regard a violation of their linguistic culture as impoliteness. In fact, “[s]peakers who do not use pragmatically appropriate language run the risk of appearing uncooperative at the least, or, more seriously, rude or insulting” (Bardovi-Harlig, Hartford, Mahan-Taylor, Morgan and Reynolds, 1991, page 4). This misinterpretation could alienate and cause undue frustration for language learners. Moreover, although it is true that

[p]art of the onus for successful communication must, of course, rest with native English speakers (NESs), ... the often lower status newcomers to a situation cannot always depend on interacting with sympathetic interlocutors but should and can be empowered to understand the intricacies of the communicative contexts in which they are now being called on to operate.

Wigglesworth and Yates, 2007, page 791

In other words, in an ideal world, all conversationalists would share the responsibility for understanding the cultural meaning implicit in certain behaviors; however, in reality, this task seems to fall to the least powerful participants, usually nonnative speakers in a native speaker context.

Interestingly, educational researchers have typically found that simply hearing the target structure, even repeatedly, does not suffice. “Exposure alone to discursive practice in an L2 community is not an efficient instructional strategy, no matter how long or how intense that exposure is” (Young, 2008, page 196). Conversationalists who have lived in a native English speaking context for many years, therefore, may not be aware of the conversational signals they are sending. Moreover, “[t]he research to date

suggests that when learners transfer pragmatic resources from one language to the next, communication can be impeded or even break down, but rarely do second language learners get overtly corrected” (Golato, 2002, page 567). Without any form of instruction and correction, L2 users could unwittingly send a negative conversational message in the majority of their English interactions. Although researchers such as Schauer (2006) have argued that “environment plays an important role in priming the learners’ L2-related awareness” (Schauer, 2006, page 309), the students need the cultural knowledge first in order for it to then manifest in a native speaking situation. This might explain why the Korean speaker described at the beginning of this chapter continued to follow his own communicative culture even though he had immigrated to the USA many years prior.

Thus, since these types of errors tend to have much more serious consequences than grammatical errors, and since they call for explicit instruction and correction, “[l]earning how to converse, as opposed to simply speaking, should be a top priority in second language teaching methods” (Acton and Cope, 1999, page 4). Clearly, many educators agree. In 2000, a coalition of four American language-teaching organizations (the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages, the American Association of Teachers of French, the American Association of Teachers of German, and the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese) published their Standards for Foreign Language Education. In this document, they stress the significance of language learners “[k]nowing how, when, and why to say what to whom. All the linguistic and social knowledge required for effective human-to-human interaction is encompassed in those ten words” (NSFLE, 2000, page 2). This definition of communicative competence is equally applicable to ELT. It is no longer considered adequate for educators to solely concentrate on grammar rules and neglect the communicative nature inherent in language use.

However, this enthusiasm for communicative competence has been a bit slow to transfer to English classrooms. In a survey of Masters TESOL programs conducted by Vasquez and Sharpless (2009), 50% of the respondents indicated that in their teacher preparation curriculum, either pragmatics was not required or it was covered in one week or less. These

results suggest an alarming number of ELT professionals who possess little familiarity with the norms of linguistic politeness and how to best cover the topic in class. Moreover, in his study of the curricula of EFL classes in Taiwan, Yu (2008) reports that “no matter whether a given class was considered more communicatively oriented or less, sociolinguistic instruction was mostly neglected in classroom practice” (Yu, 2008, page 31). Although studies of this happening in other countries have yet to be carried out, Yu’s results potentially reflect a larger problem; not all learners are being provided with information that will help them make strategic conversational choices in a native English speaking context. Omaggio (2001) suggests that perhaps language teachers neglect teaching culture for a number of reasons: they may not feel expert on the subject, they may not feel that they have time in the curriculum to address it, they may believe that students will pick up the cultural aspects of conversation organically, or they may simply feel as though culture is too fuzzy or unquantifiable to teach. Whatever the rationale, it appears as though there is a danger that ELT educators may not be preparing students to move past communicating their survival needs and on to “seek[ing] that kind of liberation of expression which they enjoy in their first language” (Carter and McCarthy, 2004, page 81). Thus, in order to prepare my students to participate more actively, if they choose to, in the American style of conversation, I became interested in studying listener talk and how native English speaking Americans used ALAs.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that my goal as an ESL teacher is not to ‘cram’ imperialistic conversation norms down the throats of my pliable students. Rather, I view these behaviors as conversational tools that students can add to their cultural ‘tool boxes’ and pull out as it suits their purposes. Once students gain proficiency with these tools as well as an understanding of the consequences if they do not use them, they can choose whether or not to draw on them in their daily conversations. Mugford (2008) argues that “L2 users have the right to be impolite if they want to: they should be able to express themselves in the way they want to while understanding the consequences of their actions” (Mugford, 2008, page 382). Moreover, some research suggests that students may resist following the conversational rules of their host culture. Kasper and Schmidt (1996)

report that learners may choose to be pragmatically distinctive rather than converge with the L2 norm. This is further supported by the research conducted by Davis (2007) regarding Korean students' reactions to Australian pragmatics. Davis suggests that

how a learner negotiates the complex political and ideological dimensions of ESL learning is simultaneously affected by the specific political and cultural context of a given learning locality, the prior EFL learning environment, and a more global conception of English as an international language.

Davis, 2007, page 632

In other words, at times, the students in his study chose to reject Australian-English politeness rules in order to establish a unique conversational identity or in favor of American-English pragmatics. This is their prerogative, but as an ELT professional, it is my job to "help learners understand some of the cultural values underlying the choices that native English speakers make and the devices that they use to achieve their intentions" (Wigglesworth and Yates, 2006, page 799). Once students are aware of their linguistic choices and the implications of these decisions, they are able to make an informed decision about whether and how they want to demonstrate that they are listening politely.

By and large, however, my personal experience has not been like that of Davis'. On the contrary, my students have expressed great interest in the rules associated with polite and active conversation, and they have tended to enjoy practicing them, although they may initially find it odd or uncomfortable. I was a teacher of Conversation in the USA for nine years and, when I began each semester, I asked students why they are taking the class. Inevitably, students complained of their inability to participate actively in conversations with Americans. Many of my students wanted to develop a level of social fluency that would allow them to enjoy involved conversations with their children's friends' parents and teachers, their neighbors, and other native English speakers in their communities. In these kinds of "casual conversations [which] are aimed at sustaining and maintaining social relationships ... the need [exists] for linguistic strategies that open out, rather than foreclose" (Thornbury and Slade, 2006, page 119). In other words,

students who want to develop relationships need to master active listening behaviors that encourage the speakers and open up the conversation. It follows, then, that they should also be aware of the behaviors that may be interpreted as closing the conversation, such as the ALAs that are more likely to be misinterpreted.

This need was also shared by another portion of my students, though their ultimate goal was very different from those students pursuing social relationships. Some of my students were more concerned with the contact they would have with native English speaking university or college professors and the other students with whom they would be studying once they left the relative security of their ESL classes and entered mainstream college or university classes. Research, as well as a great deal of anecdotal evidence, suggests that ESL students struggle with a variety of aspects of academic life post-L2 study. Moreover, according to theorists, such as Mason (1994) and Lucas and Murray (2002), since the 1980s, there has been a trend in academia away from a lecture format and toward an interactive discussion format in many college classrooms. Often students are expected to participate in class discussions, a charge L2 students may not be prepared for. In fact, Kim (2006) found that 78% of students involved in his study of East-Asian graduate students “reported that they were always or frequently expected to participate in whole-class discussions. Participating in small-group discussions and raising questions during class were also reported as commonly-required classroom activities in graduate courses” (Kim, 2006, page 483). Particularly in the whole-class and small-group discussions, a strong understanding of active listening norms and strategies would be advantageous, and students could be sure of sending supportive messages to their colleagues and professors, if that was their intention. Their adherence to pragmatic norms expected by native English speakers might even help to compensate for non-standard English pronunciation or grammar. Therefore, almost all of my students expressed an interest in learning about active listening so that they could use it as a tool to ease their social and academic interactions outside of the ESL class. Initially, I became interested in this topic with the naïve intention of offering my students a tidy list of different active listening strategies they could

memorize, practice, and use with the hope that they could become more empowered and participate in conversations with native speaking Americans as equals. Although this is clearly more complicated than I had originally thought, I nevertheless feel that a clearer understanding of the, albeit somewhat messy, active listening choices available to speakers in the English speaking North American context in which my classes occur can only serve to increase the social power of my students.

Therefore, as a result of this research project, I have created a set of materials that will accomplish this. These materials are based on my study of successful verbal and nonverbal ALAs, as well as failed ALAs. As discussed in Chapter Four of this paper, ALAs can be used as tools to maintain conversational dominance; if English students wish to access this kind of social power, these materials might serve as a model. Moreover, these materials prompt students to speculate about the causes of the failure of certain ALAs, as described in Chapter Four. Not all ALAs will always be successful, and it seems that students who wish to experiment with ALAs need to know why their ALAs might fail, and how they can reject the ALAs of others if they want to do so. Thus, the goal of these materials is to “increase consciousness of how language contributes to the domination of some people by others, because consciousness is the first step towards emancipation” (Fairclough, 1989, page 1). As “[c]lassroom research focusing on pragmatic development in L2 learners strongly suggests that pragmatics are taught more successfully with an explicit approach” (Huth and Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006, page 65), these materials offer unambiguous information about the active listening strategies that are available to students. Moreover, they adhere to the views associated with CDA in that when using these materials, “the EFL teacher’s task can go beyond linguistic training and become a really educational undertaking, with the aim of helping the pupils develop their internal values and capacity to criticize the world” (Cots, 2006, page 337). To this end, a comprehensive framework for teaching pragmatics is offered by Martinez-Flor and Uso-Juan (2006). Although the term *pragmatics* is often used to refer to functional language and is not commonly associated with active listening, it is also true that “various aspects of pragmatic organization can be shown to be centrally

organized around usage in conversation” (Levinson, 2000, page 284). In other words, even though *pragmatics* tends to focus on speech acts, such as apologizing or making a request, for the purpose of the ELT professional, the same pedagogical framework for teaching active listening is also useful. Martinez-Flor and Uso-Juan suggest that educators follow the 6Rs approach:

- Step 1: **Researching**
- Step 2: **Reflecting**
- Step 3: **Receiving**
- Step 4: **Reasoning**
- Step 5: **Rehearsing**
- Step 6: **Revising**

Martinez-Flor and Uso-Juan, 2006, page 45

My materials follow these steps; however, I have found that a strict adherence to this approach is somewhat time consuming. I know from experience that teachers are, at times, pressured to keep to a tight schedule in their conversation and oral communications classes. As a result of my own experience and classroom experimentation with these materials, I have found that similar results can be accomplished by merging some of the steps together. The lesson plan that I have created is adaptable to accommodate a variety of conversational strategies; however, the one of greatest interest to this paper is, of course, active listening.

With my materials, students begin with an activity that merges Step 1 (Researching) and Step 2 (Reflecting) of this pedagogical framework. Eslami-Rasekh (2005) also refers to this as the “Motivation Phase”. Although Martinez-Flor and Uso-Juan suggest that students “collect naturally occurring [examples of the target language] in their mother tongue” (Martinez-Flor and Uso-Juan, 2006, page 46), this data collection was not possible for many of my students, who did not always have ready access to their L1 community in the USA. Therefore, the introduction to my lesson prompts a discussion between students regarding their own communicative culture if members of the L1 community were not readily available for interviewing prior to the lesson. In the case of active listening, the materials begin with an activity in which two student volunteers who speak the same

L1 stand in front of the class; one tells a story and the other listens politely according to his or her own conversational culture. Then, after 30 seconds, the listener is directed to listen impolitely, demonstrating that they not focused on what the speaker is saying. After they are finished, the teacher guides the class in brainstorming about the behavior they observed. This should continue until all of the languages represented in the class have demonstrated the appropriate listening behavior of this communicative culture. If there is only one student who speaks a particular language present in the class, he or she could listen politely and then impolitely to the teacher tell a story in English, although this is admittedly somewhat less effective as the student may not be as comfortable using English as his/her L1. Of course, as established by my findings in Chapter Four of this paper, people of the same L1, or even the same culture, may exhibit very different listening behavior than the other members of his or her L1. However, the goal of the activity is not to exhaustively catalogue the active listening behavior of the cultures, but rather the aim is to prompt students to begin to think consciously about what is so often a subconscious behavior and to become aware of differences in listening styles. Another alternative that I have used in my class is a set of video taped conversations I have recorded of students participating in conversations with their same-language friends and colleagues. I ask the students to watch the clips and comment on the listening behavior demonstrated by the conversationalists. At this point in the lesson it is also useful to discuss elements that might also affect someone's listening behavior, such as the relationship between the participants and individual personality. Again, as documented in Chapter Four of this paper, ALAs can be important tools in the struggle for conversational dominance, and encouraging students to adopt a more critical view of the conversations may stimulate a clearer understanding of any deviance from 'expected' conversational behavior and move students toward an awareness of "the reciprocal influences of language and social structure" (Stubbe, Lane, Hilder, Vine, Vine, Marra, Holmes and Weatherall, 2003, page 367).

As previously stated, speakers are often not consciously aware of the 'rules' they follow each time they participate in a conversation. For example,



Golato (2003) demonstrated that, regarding complimenting behavior, in German “the perception of native speakers *about* their own conversational conduct differed from their *actual* conduct” (Huth and Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006, page 62). However, once students are asked to reflect on their own linguistic choices, especially when they are required to do it repeatedly over the course of a semester, they seem to become more adept and critical. “Through guided discussion, students become aware of the pragmatic rules governing their native language and the ramifications of enacting such rules appropriately and inappropriately” (Bardovi-Harlig, Hartford, Mahan-Taylor, Morgan and Reynolds, 1991, page 10). Thus, in a primarily English-speaking context, many students may not have the luxury of L1 data collection, so merging the Researching and Reflecting steps of the 6Rs Approach not only saves time, it also makes the activity more adaptable to a variety of learning situations.


Next, the materials raise the consciousness of the students about the active listening norms of the target culture.

In [this] phase of the student-discovery procedure, students become ethnographers and observe ... naturally occurring speech acts. The aim is to help learners have a good sense of what to look for in conducting a pragmatic analysis, make them adept at formulating and testing hypotheses about language use, and help them become keen and reflective observers of language use in both L1 and L2.

Eslami-Rasekh, 2005, page 201

In other words, in this portion of the lesson, students observe video clips and become sensitized to the linguistic choices made by native speakers. This step is not included at all in Martinez-Flor and Uso-Juan’s (2006) pedagogical framework; however, some research, including that conducted by Schmidt (1993) and Rose (1999), Trosborg (2003), and Carter and McCarthy (2004), suggests that consciousness raising is beneficial when teaching pragmatics in ESL and EFL contexts. Rose (1994) contends that video “represents an ideal medium for introducing pragmatics in the classroom” (Rose, 1994, pages 57–58); however, he also cautions against relying solely on scripted materials. Because “[t]he teaching of speech acts

should first and foremost be based on spontaneous speech in order to capture the underlying social strategies of the speech behavior being studied” (Boxer and Pickering, 1995, page 52), clips from *The Real World* are a perfect fit for a lesson focusing on active listening strategies. For students encountering ALAs for the first time or for classes with limited experience with critical analysis, an activity in which they watch a video and complete a gap fill with the active listening strategies might provide a sufficient challenge. For example, students could watch the video clip in which Cara and Tonya are talking about the fact that Cara has never been single. They should try to fill in the blank boxes with what Tonya says. (The answers are in blue below.)

	Cara	Tonya
	I've never been without a boyfriend since I was thirteen.	
	I	Never?
	I mean, literally, I will ... you know, one relationship will end and I'll be in another immediately.	
		Are you worried about ...
	I'm terrified.	that pattern at all?
	I'm terrified. What the \$%^ does that say about me?	

Then, the teacher would lead a discussion of the purpose of each of Tonya's utterances and offer some more examples of ALAs. Some question prompts could include:

- Which of the different kinds of ALAs is Tonya using when she says, "Never"?
  - Comment (i.e. "That's interesting.")
  - Listening Noise (i.e. "Mmmm.")
  - Repetition (i.e. A: "I like apples. / B: "Apples?")
  - Information Question (i.e. "What kind of ice cream?")
- Which of the different kinds of ALAs is Tonya using when she says, "Are you worried about that pattern at all?"
  - Comment (i.e. "That's interesting.")
  - Listening Noise (i.e. "Mmmm.")
  - Repetition (i.e. A: "I like apples. / B: "Apples?")
  - Information Question (i.e. "What kind office cream?")
- Does Tonya wait until Cara is finished talking before using an ALA?
  - Yes
  - No

4. What does Tonya do with her body while she is listening?
  - a. Keep eye contact
  - b. Smile
  - c. Look at her hands
  - d. Use her face to show that she is surprised
  - e. Nod her head
5. In your opinion, is Tonya a polite listener or a rude listener according to American conversational culture? Why?
  - a. Polite  Because she uses ALAs and she shows she is interested through eye contact and facial expressions.
  - b. Rude
6. How do you think Cara feels about Tonya's listening style? Why?
  - a. Generally comfortable
  - b. Uncomfortable
7. Why do you think Cara repeats herself with "I'm terrified?"
  - a. Cara spoke too quietly for Tonya to hear her the first time.
  - b. Cara wants to control the conversation.
  - c. Tonya was confused about what she was saying.

These questions are designed to raise awareness about the active listening options available to students and to help them understand that jumping in with an ALA is not necessarily considered rude in an American context. "The overall aim [for ELT educators] is to raise consciousness and to assess learners' awareness of how meanings and relationships can be creatively co-constructed" (Carter and McCarthy, 2004, page 82). When the class checks the answers of these questions, the materials comply with the Receiving phase of Martinez-Flor's and Uso-Juan's (2006) framework.

As a follow up activity, or for students more well-versed in the art of critical analysis, the materials may adopt a CDA approach and demonstrate the implications of an unequal power distribution in a conversation. These materials may encourage students to "move back and forth from analysis of text to analysis of social formation and institution, from micro to macro levels" (Luke, 2002, page 100). In this case, the conversation analyzed needs to be longer, and more formalized questions posed to the students. This analysis corresponds with Step 4 of the framework: Reasoning. For example, the conversation between Aneesa and Theo could be presented.

	Aneesa	Theo
	You a Virgo?	
	Yes, baby, me too.	Yes, ma'am.
	Eleventh.	September ?
	How old are you?	
	Me too.	I'm nineteen.
		Can you braid hair?
	A little some, but not yours.	
		No, I'm about to let it grow back.
	If you let it grow, like in a month. You braid?	
		Do I braid? Hell, no! Do I look gay?
	What you trying to say?	
		All the dudes I know who braid are gay.
	Do you have a lot of gay friends?	That's what I'm saying.
		Hell no!
	What's wrong ...	I know one dude ...
		Okay, I know one dude that I can say I can be cool with and he's gay, just because he doesn't
	Well, I'm going to explain my story	Try to hit on me
		Okay, go ahead and break it down.
	I haven't been with a man for about two years.	
	Women are nice.	Reason being? Didn't trust them?
		

Following the outline proposed by Cots (2006) based on Fairclough's (1989) analytic framework, after watching the video and reading the transcript, the students reflect on

(a) how the text contributes to a particular representation of the world and whether this representation comes into conflict with their own representations; and (b) how the textual representation is shaped by the ideological positions of its producer(s)

Cots, 2006, pages 339-340

Although Cots (2006) proposes that the students should first contemplate how the text fits into their own world views before moving on to a closer study of the language, I would argue that with a topic as potentially sensitive as homosexuality, there is grounds for a switch. Having students talk about something less controversial before moving on to this particular discussion may serve to break the ice a little. Thus, the following questions about the communicative situation could be assigned first. (Answers are in blue.)

1. Is this conversation formal or informal? **Informal.**
2. In your opinion, do Aneesa and Theo know each other very well? **They have just met.**
3. Do you think Theo is attracted to Aneesa? **Yes.**
4. Do you think they will have a friendship after this conversation? **Yes.**

Questions about how the conversation meshes with the students' context might follow.

1. How would you feel if you found out your friend was gay?
2. In your opinion, is a person's sexual preference something that should be discussed?
3. How does Theo seem to feel about homosexuality?
4. Do you think Aneesa is secretive about her sexual preferences?

Finally, the focus shifts to "reflecting upon salient formal and semantic features of text construction" (Cots, 2006, page 340). The questions which could be posed originate from my framework for analysis, but I have simplified them to make them more user-friendly in an ELT context. They are designed to help students "to figure out ... the possible configurations between texts, ways of representing, and ways of being, and to look for and

discover the relationships between texts and ways of being and why certain people take up certain positions vis-a-vis situated uses of language” (Rogers, 2004, page 38).

1. Do the speakers wait until the other is finished before starting to talk? Why might they do this? They sometimes interrupt each other because Aneesa wants to ask Theo some questions and Theo wants to give his opinion.
2. Look at Aneesa’s body language. What message is she sending with her body? She is flirting with Theo. Her body is turned away, but she is smiling at him and playing with her hair.
3. How many questions does Aneesa ask before she tells Theo she is gay? Why does she do this? She asks 5 questions to find out what Theo thinks about homosexuality. She may like having information that Theo doesn’t for a while because that is a way to hold power in the conversation.
4. Why does Theo repeat himself when he says, “I know one dude. Okay. I know one dude ...”? He wants to make sure he can continue speaking to explain that he can be friends with a gay man.
5. Who do you think has the most power in this conversation? Why? Aneesa has the most power because she has information that Theo doesn’t and because Theo seems to want to please her.

Therefore, the first lesson presents students with functional language for active listening as well practice ‘noticing’ language use that could be transferable to other communicative situations, the second lesson requires that students critically analyze the conversation to determine what is going on below the surface. For practical reasons, the students are not required to go through all the steps that I did in the analysis of the conversation that I describe in this paper; nonetheless, according to Gee (2004) doing a simpler analysis that “combine[s] aspects of sociopolitical and critical theory with rather general (usually thematic) analyses of language not rooted in any particular background or theory” (Gee, 2004, page 20) is still doing Critical Discourse Analysis. Just as my study of the above conversation prompted interesting observations about the veiled struggle for social power, so students may also notice the way Aneesa uses her body language and ALAs to dominate the conversation. Or, they may reach a different conclusion about the exchange, as such descriptions “are necessarily read by other researchers who will project their own values regarding what is better and what worse onto their descriptions of difference” (Lemke, 1998). In other

words, there may be more than one way to read this text. Thus far, “ESL has been language based and not dealing with critical issues” (Ramirez, 2005); however, although the concentration of this particular research project and the subsequent lesson plans is extremely focused, the skills associated critical evaluation that the materials will practice are useful with regards to an infinite number of conversational acts.

Finally, my materials offer practice opportunities, a combination of the Rehearsing and Revising phases, so that students can use ALAs successfully and with increased ease in their daily lives. First, students write and perform role plays, for controlled practice. In addition, I created a game, which I have used in my ESL classes with great success, that pushes students jump into a speaker’s stream of speech to use an ALA, something which my largely Korean class population is extremely uncomfortable doing. After watching the video and calling attention to the variety of ALAs available and the amount of overlap that is characteristic to a friendly English conversation, I divide the class into groups of three or four and give each student a set of ALA cards. Each set contains four of four different colored cards. Each color is associated with a different ALA: comment, repetition, emphasis question, and information question. The students choose one ‘speaker’ in the group, and I set a timer for one minute. The speaker tells a story about a pre-selected topic while the others listen. Every time a listener uses an ALA, he or she puts the corresponding card into the center. After one minute, the timer goes off and a new ‘speaker’ is chosen. The first student in each group to give up all of his or her cards is the winner. This is a lively, fun way to encourage students to make use of a variety of ALAs and to help them become accustomed to interjecting into a stream of speech. Moreover, this race helps students acquire the speed that Taguchi (2008) contends is akin to unconscious accuracy.

However, these materials raise a question when used outside of a native English speaking environment. All over the world, English is so frequently being used as a medium of communication between nonnative speakers that “[i]t has become more or less a cliché these days to refer to English as a world language” (Rajagopalan, 2004, page 111). In fact, according to Seidlhofer (2005), the majority of English speakers are, in fact,

nonnative speakers. Moreover, the bulk of conversations that are being conducted in English at any given moment around the world involve speakers for whom English is their L2 or L3 or more. Theorists are increasingly coming to agree that native speakers do not *own* English. Rather, though “[i]t is of considerable pride and satisfaction for native speakers of English that their language is an international means of communication[;] ... the point is that it is only international to the extent that it is not their language” (Widdowson, 1994, page 385). Consequently, if native speakers are not the sole custodians of English and do not even comprise the largest number of English users around the world, nonnative speakers clearly have an impact on how English is evolving. For the most part, exploration of the influence nonnative speakers have had on English has been focused on the grammatical. However, Seidlhofer (2004) notes that research has found “[i]nference from L1 interactional norms is very rare – a kind of suspension of expectations regarding norms seems to be in operation” (Seidlhofer, 2004, page 218). Nonetheless, when considering the conversation between the Korean man, Peruvian woman and Chinese woman which I described at the onset of this chapter, the exchange did not appear to have occurred in a conversational culture vacuum. Quite the opposite, the exchange was peppered with small breakdowns and potential frustrations as each speaker followed the rules of his or her own conversational culture. In fact, House (2002) points out that there is a danger in taking the surface cooperation that exists in many nonnative speaker conversations at face value because it may hide a deeper level of trouble. Clearly, although “[m]isunderstandings are not frequent in ELF interactions” (Seidlhofer, 2004, page 218), misperceptions about the character or intent of the other conversationalists might well be. Certainly, more research is needed into the impact that violations of conversational culture have on the signals that are sent in an EFL exchange. For ELT educators, this issue is also somewhat ambiguous. Should we teach students L2 cultural norms even if they will most likely never use the language with a native speaker? It is my belief that the best we can do is to provide the information regarding English conversational norms; English users can, therefore, decide for themselves if and how they would like to



apply these 'rules' to their own conversations. We are, thereby, "[h]elping learners develop interaction strategies that will promote comity (friendly relations)" (Seidlhofer, 2004, page 226).

It is my belief that teachers who use materials similar to those I have created to introduce active listening to their students are doing them a great service. "There is a danger, if we ignore the extended context of language, that learning a new language becomes simply knowing how to express, in a new language, familiar ideas from an old cultural context" (Young, 2008, page 4). ELT educators can help students become more familiar with a new cultural context through the teaching of the subconscious rules that govern native speaker's linguistic choices.

## 5.2 Implications and Applications for Educational Policy

Previously in this chapter it has been argued that

[c]ulture helps govern and define the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted. Your entire repertoire of communicative behaviors depends largely on the culture in which you have been raised.

Samovar and Porter, 2003, page 7

Clearly, then, it would behoove international people who choose to live, work, and/or study in the USA to learn about the communicative behaviors common to the host country. Again, this is not because the conversation culture of the USA is inherently better than that of the individual's native culture or because there is one 'right' way to communicate, but because having knowledge about the way messages are sent, received, and interpreted in any given culture is essential for successfully socially interacting with native speakers. Again, whether or not foreign students choose to make use of this knowledge is entirely up to the individual; however, it is impossible to make a choice if one is not informed about one's options. For this reason, those responsible for setting educational policy in the USA should be made aware of the need for the instruction of conversational culture in ESL classes.

However, the educational policy that may be impacted by this research is somewhat limited. Specifically, the application of my findings in an elementary, middle or high school setting would be restricted. Roberge (2004) points out that children who arrive in the US at pre-school or elementary school age have more in common with native speakers than students who arrive later in life. Students who arrive in the US during their high school or college years tend to be more like ESL students. However, adolescents who arrive after grade five, but before high school tend to fall into a particular group that has become known as *Generation 1.5* (Rumbaut and Ima, 1998). They do not completely identify themselves as immigrants, nor do they identify as native speakers; they are somewhere in between. Research concerning this group of international students who entered the country and the US public school system as adolescents reveals that “[t]hese students are English *users*, not English *learners*” (Roberge, 2004). Generation 1.5 students seem to have relatively little trouble learning and using the tools associated with cultural communicative competence. Thus, it appears that this sort of curriculum would be unnecessary in an elementary, middle school, or high school setting, and it seems logical that I look at the government policy that is concerned with Adult and Higher Education.

However, upon further inquiry it becomes obvious that there exists no official educational policy that governs Higher Education institutions. More specifically, academic ESL programs at Community Colleges and Universities across the USA are not required to comply with any national curriculum standards. Interestingly, though, ESL classes that are housed under Continuing Education departments, particularly those that receive money from state governments, are increasingly finding themselves under scrutiny, as government agencies attempt to ensure the money these programs are receiving is used to benefit students. An example of this dichotomy can be found by examining the two contrasting departments at my previous institution. The academic ESL program is housed in the English and World Languages department. There are no guidelines or constraints on the academic ESL curriculum, other than that the students who pass through the ESL program largely have the goal moving on as mainstream students, so they must be prepared to enter the freshman

composition course. Moreover, once they pass their ESL classes, students do not even need to take an entrance exam. They simply need to pass the advanced level of ESL classes and they are able to matriculate. In addition to the academic ESL program, the college at which I taught also has ESL classes which are housed in the Continuing Education department. These classes are divided into two groups: *intensive* and *grant*. Students who take *intensive* classes pay for books and instruction; no government money can be used to subsidize these classes. These classes are also not subjected to legislative oversight. However, *grant* classes are funded by the Maryland state government. In recent years, the government has become less willing to hand over money to ESL programs and, since 1998, the Workforce Investment Act (H.R. 1385, Pub. L. No. 105-220) “not only [has required] states to continue to develop measures of program quality, but also [has required] the presentation of evidence of effective performance” (TESOL Task Force on Adult Education Program Standards, 2003, page 4). In order to help ESL programs comply with this mandate, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) published a manual containing program narratives and self-review instruments.

As a result of pressure at the national level, in July 2003, the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) issued the *Maryland Content Standards for Adult ESL / ESOL*. Due to the fact that these standards are the only existing document in Maryland that dictates the curriculum of adult ESL education, it therefore is pragmatic to focus on this area of government policy. Thus, the implications of this research for policy makers are limited to suggestions for amending state level standards. The time may be ripe for such suggestions. In the *2009 Maryland State Plan for Postsecondary Education*, policymakers noted the need to “[a]ccount for the particular educational needs of first-generation, first-time college students, non-traditional adult learners, and students with disabilities” (Maryland State Plan for Postsecondary Education, 2009, page 22). In other words, the state government recognizes that first-generation, or ESL students, may have special needs that must be met before they are able to successfully graduate from college or university. However, it appears to be left to the Maryland State Department of Education specifically the MHEC committee

which is responsible for the description of the needs in the *Maryland Content Standards for Adult ESL/ESOL*, to determine what those needs are. For the committee to be persuaded of the need to change, advocacy, perhaps through the vocal local TESOL affiliate, Maryland TESOL, in the form of presentations and published articles would be needed. Specifically, this advocacy would draw to policy makers' attention to the fact that active listening behavior is an essential aspect of communication with native speakers, more so than even grammar or pronunciation errors, because pragmatic mistakes are the most dangerous, as "L2 users may perceive utterances to impolite when there is no such intention on the part of the target-language user" (Mugford, 2008, page 376) and vice versa. Moreover, local program heads could be approached on an individual basis in order to disseminate my findings and materials, if there is interest. The ESL Workgroup Contributors list in the *Maryland Content Standards for Adult ESL/ESOL* is entirely composed of ESL educators and administrators, so affecting a change in the content of the *Standards* may be most simply accomplished on a program by program basis. Thus, as a number of the members of the committee are both Maryland TESOL members and ELT professionals, and as they are sympathetic to the desire for integration held by so many ESL students, they may be receptive to suggestions of integrating pragmatics into the *Maryland Content Standards for Adult ESL/ESOL* at a time in which they are revisited and revised.

An increasing number of states have published such content standards. States, including Arizona, California, Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, and New York have all issued content standards (Cunningham-Florez, 2002). Furthermore, in my former program, we require grant teachers to adhere to the standards and conduct assessments throughout the school year to ensure that our ESL classes are helping students to meet the standards as determined by a panel of educators and policy makers. Therefore, if the reception at my community college is any indication of state-wide enthusiasm, it would appear that the standards are being used and applied.

The program standards issued by MHEC as well as those distributed by other states are usually divided both by learner level and by content area.

Although a great deal of detail is generally used to describe the skills necessary for proficiency in speaking, not one of the six state content standards currently mentions active listening. The MHEC standards vaguely point to conversational skills; however, currently, there is little concrete direction for teachers and administrators who may not be aware of the danger of pragmatic mistakes. Nothing specific to cultural conversational competence appears in the skills associated with a Beginning ESL/ESOL Literacy student. A beginning ESL/ESOL student is expected to be able to “produce simple statements in routine and familiar situations” (Maryland State Department of Education, 2003, page 46). Intermediate, High Intermediate, and Advanced ESL/ESOL students are supposed to learn how to “participate in routine social conversations in familiar contexts” (Maryland State Department of Education, 2003, page 46) and “use appropriate language in both informal and simple formal situations” (Maryland State Department of Education, 2003, page 46). Finally, High Advanced ESL/ESOL students should be able to “participate in a discussion” (Maryland State Department of Education, 2003, page 47). Clearly these ambiguous descriptors are inadequate when considering the necessity of providing the conversational culture tools to our international students. Thus, perhaps the findings of this research project may be useful in influencing state educational policy makers to revisit the MHEC content standards and add some mention of cultural communicative competence. Again, this would be most easily accomplished by a grassroots campaign through Maryland TESOL’s established channels of communication, specifically articles in the newsletter and presentations at the local conference. In addition, I could approach programs individually to gauge how receptive their teachers and administrators might be to incorporating active listening into their ESL curricula. As the committee which originally designed the *Maryland Content Standards for Adult ESL / ESOL* was composed of people who were both Maryland TESOL members and local program teachers and administrators, I am convinced this would be the most practical approach to affecting change in educational policy in Maryland.

### 5.3 Implications and Applications for Research

In addition to implications for ELT educators and educational policy makers, this research project also bears potential benefits for educational researchers. Specifically, researchers may be interested in not only the findings of this project, but also the methods. First, I believe that my use of reality TV as a corpus offers an exciting new source of data for linguists. Second, my combination of a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach with elements of a multimodal analysis may also appeal to researchers who are active in the field of linguistic research, especially those interested in the possible role gender may play in influencing conversational behavior.

For years, researchers have struggled to compile high-quality, ethically-gathered corpora that contain authentic conversations. As previously mentioned in this thesis, using excerpts from reality TV is a relatively easy way to get hours of rich conversational data. It would seem that reality television has taken over the airwaves; from “The Bachelor” to “Cops,” from “The Amazing Race,” to “Blind Date,” from “Survivor,” to “Big Brother,” there is a reality television program for every audience available at almost any time of the day or night. Often, entire seasons of a program are available for purchase, so linguists can get their hands on the raw data they desire without the hassle of dragging around video camera equipment and organizing “spontaneous” conversations between friends and associates. By using reality television, the dirty work is already done. The footage is captured by professionals and “suitably edited ... into an attractively packaged television program” (Kilborn, 1994, page 243). Furthermore, reality television provides the researcher with unscripted, spontaneous language. Scripted television programs often do not contain the real speech, which “is often messy and untidy” (Carter, 1998, page 48) and peppered with discourse markers and ellipses. Thus, even though the content is edited for entertainment value, many of the drawbacks which hinder researchers from making use of the convenience associated with samples of traditional television programs do not apply to reality television.

However, it should be noted that reality television is not an exact mirror of reality. “Rather, reality shows are becoming the latest and most

self-conscious in a string of transparently staged spectacles, complete with their own formulas” (Andrejevic, 2003, page 3). In other words, reality TV isn’t necessarily real. Baudrillard (2003) refers to the blurring of the line between reality and the reproduction of reality (by the media, television and art) as *hyper-reality*. He states that “[u]nreality no longer resides in the dream or fantasy, or in the beyond, but in the real’s hallucinatory resemblance to itself. To escape the crisis of representation, reality loops around itself in pure repetition” (Baudrillard, 2003, page 1018). In other words, reality has been mediated by reality television to such an extent that we may equate reality with reality television. Nonetheless, the fact that “most viewers expect ordinary people to *act* for the cameras” (Hill, 2005, page 9, italics mine) does in no way detract from its usefulness to discourse analysts. Assuming an on-camera personality, for example that of social conservative, frat boy, or militant black man, does not make the ALAs any less pertinent to observers. The conversationalists are still demonstrating their interest in what another speaker is saying. In fact, as has been demonstrated by this research, even the gender of the speaker does not greatly influence the use or success rate of an ALA. Therefore, although the roommates in *The Real World* might be acting and “the story that is told ... lies in the hands of the producers” (Huff, 2006, page 32), the roommates’ speech is not scripted, and the conversational behavior that the stars of reality TV demonstrate is still an excellent resource for researchers.

Finally, using video recordings rather than tape recordings provides researchers with “the unique opportunity to observe the extralinguistic elements which are necessary for successful communication” (Armstrong and Yetter-Vassot, 1993, page 9). In other words, video is useful for researchers because it demonstrates the paralinguistic features of communication that are so vital to meaning and that are not generally cross-cultural. For example, because video “captures complexity, situatedness, dynamism and multimodality of interactions” (Flewitt, 2004), in the conversation between Aneesa and Theo, analysts are able to observe how Aneesa uses her body to communicate a message of flirtatiousness and coyness. She plays with her hair, smiles engagingly, and contorts her body to partially face Theo and partially turn away, a position which sends a

purposefully mixed message. If linguists did not have access to these rich nonverbal signals as they analyzed the transcription, an important part of Aneesa's message would be lost. In addition to the prominence that nonverbal communication, such as gesture, eye contact, and proximity, has in the message that is ultimately received by other conversationalists, researchers might also be interested in the role that body language plays in identity creation.

Individuals choose many of their actions on a moment by moment basis, yet, we can argue that their choice is often limited by their internalized perceptions, social and cultural norms, and social histories, which are all intertwined in an individual's identity construction.

Norris, 2005, page 195

An analysis that has been influenced by the multi-modal work of theorists, such as Kress and van Leeuwen (2001), Bourne and Jewitt (2003), Flewitt (2004), van Leeuwen (2004 and 2005), and Norris (2005 and 2006), may shed light on the constant identity maintenance that individuals do as they attend to their identity throughout every interaction. If theorists neglect to consider nonverbal communication, they run the risk of "analys[ing] identity in quite obscured ways" (Norris, 2006, page 133). Therefore, one of the possible unintended benefits of this research project may be to encourage researchers to turn to reality television for data. Conversation does not occur in one mode only; thus, "[p]erhaps speech acts should be renamed *communicative acts* and understood as multimodal micro events in which all the signs present combine to determine their communicative intent" (van Leeuwen, 2005, page 121). Although my approach is more cautious than van Leeuwen would advocate (my analysis of the multimodal is somewhat limited and subordinate to my analysis of the linguistic content), the source of my data does not cause this limitation. Therefore, there are some enticing benefits associated with using reality television as a linguistic source, in spite of its "air of nondeliberate parody" (Baudrillard, 2003, page 1020).

Another innovative approach to this research has been in the unorthodox choices of methods for the analysis of casual conversation. First, multimodal transcription has, for the most part, been used in the



analysis of advertisements and classroom interactions. For instance, Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) include a discussion of magazine covers in their multimodal investigation, and Jewitt (2006) describes using a multimodal analysis of classroom interactions. However, Norris (2004) pioneered the application of this method of transcription in a detailed study of casual conversation. As “[a]ll interactions are multimodal” (Norris, 2004, page 1), the transmission of messages in all exchanges, including casual conversations, relies on both verbal and nonverbal communication. Therefore, a transcription with multimodal elements, although labor intensive, is very helpful in this sort of analysis. Furthermore, although paralinguistic cues are of great importance to meaning-making in a conversation, participants in an exchange are almost never consciously aware of them. Thus, the inclusion of multimodal elements in a study can help researchers better notice the impact nonverbal modes, such as eye contact and body language, have on conversational exchanges. As previously argued, an analysis of the conversation between Aneesa and Theo would be left lacking if the nonverbal communication was not considered. I believe that my contribution to this methodology has been to refine previously existing methods of multimodal transcription to make them easier to read and, therefore, more accessible to educators and students. As I described in Chapter Three, I carefully considered a number of options before settling on my transcription method. I felt that by including a series of screen shots beside the transcription of the exchange, I was presenting richer data for analysis and encouraging the reader to “choose between a focus on words, actions or gaze or [a] combination” (Flewitt, 2004). Furthermore, as I have, in turn, used my research to create materials for my ESL students, I believe that I am also offering them a much more detailed image of what a successful and unsuccessful ALA looks like as well as sounds like. My specific multimodal transcription method, combining pictures and text, may be useful to future researchers as “transcription conventions held so dear by so many Conversation Analysts are gradually being superseded by plainer versions” (Wichmann, 2007, pages 261–262). Clearly, the analysis of discourse is not complete when only a written version of the exchange is presented to researchers. Moreover, the use of a

multimodal analysis of communication “is an exciting new area for linguistic research, an area in which many projects are waiting to be done, and many treasures waiting to be discovered” (van Leeuwen, 2005, page 18).

Second, traditionally, CDA’s interest in “the hidden agenda’ of discourse, its *ideological* dimension” (Cameron, 2001, page 123) has often lead it to be used as a vehicle for the analysis of political interviews and articles. For instance, Fairclough (2003) scrutinized several texts in *Analysing Discourse*, including articles from newspapers, extracts from business meetings, an excerpt from a political speech, and a report from a radio news broadcast. Similarly, most other examples of CDA in action also gather data from these types of sources. However, in spite of these conventional applications of CDA, some researchers, such as Eggins and Slade (1997) and Weatherall (2007), have used this approach to study the “embod[ied] ideological assumptions” (Wooffitt, 2005, page 140) of casual conversations. “CDA may be interested in macro notions such as power and domination, but their actual study takes place at the micro level of discourse and social practices” (van Dijk, 2001, page 115). Thus, although most CDA studies have not chosen casual conversations as an area of research, spontaneous, casual conversation is, nevertheless, satiated with power-struggles. Furthermore, according to Eggins and Slade, “[t]he apparent triviality of casual conversation disguises the significant interpersonal work it achieves as interactants enact and confirm social identities and relations” (Eggins and Slade, 1997, page 16). In other words, notions of power need not be confined to political or economic realms. Moreover, the use of a reality television program like *The Real World* as a corpus is a good fit for a CDA analysis in that it not only presents a great deal of spontaneous natural conversation, it also originates from a genre of television programming that “promises to revolutionize television – to make it interactive and democratic by giving everyday folks community and access to the means of production, thereby challenging monopolistic corporate media” (LeBesco, 2005, page 1117). As one of the main goals of CDA is to equalize social inequalities, the seemingly egalitarian nature of reality television makes *The Real World* as suitable a corpus for a CDA analysis as a more formal body or speech. Ultimately, however, the question is not which discourse better displays this

struggle for power, “[t]he question is whether there are any discourses which do *not* have consequences for power or dominance relations in society” (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, page 75). Although, the application of a CDA approach to the analysis of causal conversation is nothing new, my choice of it as a method to analyze the failure of active listening attempts is. Thus far, no one has explored these minute breakdowns in conversation using such an approach. In fact, I would argue that a CDA approach might be an interesting vehicle to study more of the tiny, subconscious moves conversationalists make in casual conversations as they may have a much greater affect on how people interact than is initially apparent. Moreover, one of the weaknesses CDA is accused of is “the systematic failure of the key male figures in CDA ... to cite of use feminist work in the field” (Threadgold, 2003, page 21). As I suggested in Chapter Four of this paper, a CDA approach may lead to findings that contradict those reached by feminist theorists about the causal links between gender and language. Many of these theorists would agree that the struggle for power is at the center of the conversation about gendered communication. I contend that CDA is a well-suited approach for the examination of this struggle because

[i]t allows one to incorporate elements of ‘context’ into the analysis of texts, to show the relationship between concrete occasional events and more durable social practices, to show innovation and change in texts, and it has a mediating role in allowing one to connect detailed linguistic and semiotic features of texts with processes of social change on a broader scale.

Fairclough, 2005, page 4

Educational research does not occur in a vacuum. Teachers, administrators, text publishers, policy makers, and other educational researchers can be impacted by the dissemination of the findings of linguistic inquiry. Because of this, it is the ultimate goal of this study to positively influence three groups: researchers, so that they may gain new insights into how power is negotiated in casual conversation; policy makers, so that state standards may be adapted to include mention of conversational culture; and, most importantly, teachers, so that ESL students can augment

their conversational tool kits and participate in conversations with native English speaking Americans with increased ease and comfort.

## 6. Conclusion

This project was originally prompted by my desire to learn more about active listening attempts, specifically what might cause their failure, in order to arm my ESL students with knowledge that they could call upon when participating in conversations with native English speakers. As pointed out by McNulty, Bliesener, Hoelker, Kamhi-Stein and Kubota (2006), a power hierarchy is not static, and if students studying a foreign language want to gain and maintain power in a society, it is in their best interest to understand how to use language to their advantage. My aspiration was not only to create materials that would inform my ESL students about the way I thought speakers should behave in a conversation. Rather, I wanted the materials to be based on a rigorous study of authentic interactions, as “native speaker notions about language are typically inaccurate if taken literally as descriptive claims” (Hanks, Ide and Katagiri, 2009, page 3). As stated earlier in this paper, my initial observations about overlap in conversation emerged from an examination of excerpts of *The Real World* I undertook for my MEd dissertation. Based on this research, I was later able to create materials for my ESL students with the goal of raising their consciousness about turn-taking norms in their own culture and in English. The examination of these differences was intended to prompt students to consider the implications of speaking English while following their own conversational culture, a practice which, according to McNulty, Bliesener, Hoelker, Kamhi-Stein and Kubota (2006), is common among language learners. However, although the work I undertook for my MEd dissertation was enlightening, it also left me with some nagging questions. The one of greatest interest to me materialized after watching a conversation from *The Real World* corpus in which a speaker resorted to floor saving measures even though the intention of the active listening attempt appeared to be positive and genuine. This anomaly was of even greater interest to me because, if my materials presented the norms associated with active listening, I also needed to be clear about the exceptions to the rule. Thus, the impetus for this thesis was born.

## 6.1 My Research Questions Revisited

Before I could fully examine the causes of the “hitches and perturbations” (Schegloff, 2000, page 11) that occasionally crop up in response to backchannel, I felt it necessary to untangle the array of terms associated with backchannel. This prompted my first research question, *Where does speaker talk end and listener talk begin?* First, I considered the definitions of *overlap* and *interruption*. As previously mentioned, scholars such as Murray (1987), Murray and Covelli (1988), Ng, Brooke and Dunn (1995), Coates (1996), James and Clark (1993), Schegloff (2007), Hannah and Murachver (2007), Menz and Al-Roubaie (2008) and Ladegaard (2009) differ in how they label two-at-a-time talk. Ultimately, after my analysis of *The Real World* corpus, I concluded that the term *overlap* was most appropriate when describing the two-at-a-time talk that occurs when a listener attempts to actively listen to a speaker. In a perfect world,

overlapping speech [could be seen as] the inevitable outcome of joint ownership of the conversational floor. But, far from leading to conversational breakdown, overlapping speech in a collaborative floor [would entail] a richer multi-layered texture to talk, where speakers demonstrate their shared perspective on whatever is being talked about.

Coates, 2007, page 39

However, as has been repeatedly proven by my corpus, supportive overlapped speech does, at times, lead to conversational breakdowns, albeit a minute one. It appeared that the problematic assumptions surrounding the concepts of *turn* and *floor* also begged clarification.

Linguists, such as Duncan (1972), Goffman (1976), Edelsky (1981), Orestrom (1983), Tannen (1984), Gardner (2001) and Stivers (2004), have long disagreed on how to define these problematic terms. Of greater interest to this research, however, is the dispute regarding whether or not listener talk actually constitutes a *turn*. Through my analysis, it became clear that listener talk is far too rich to be dismissed as belonging to the previous turn. In fact, as McCarthy and Carter (2007) point out, “[a]ll turns are responses, apart from the first turn” (McCarthy and Carter, 2007).

Therefore, it is counterproductive to simply write off listener talk. In fact, in this paper, I argue that listener talk is often grammatically complete and, more importantly, replete with meaning and integral to interactive discourse. Thus, listener talk clearly should be considered as a *turn*. Moreover, I concur with Yngve's (1970) differentiation between talking as taking a *turn* and the control of the topic as the *floor*. Finally, I contend that linguists should not only take verbal backchannel into account when studying turn-taking, but nonverbal active listening should also be deemed taking a turn. Because "the written representation cannot be stripped from its context" (Merchant, 2007, page 120), and in order to perceive the nonverbal elements of communication, I adopted a multimodal-inspired analysis. Although my transcription gives more weight to the linguistic aspects of each interaction, by including photos and a description of the relevant sounds and movements which cannot easily be seen, I have been able to examine pertinent communication in other modes beyond the verbal. In my analysis, I demonstrated that a knowing smile, a roll of the eye, or a look down the nose can impart as much information as a full clause. When accompanying a spoken utterance, the nonverbal is part of that turn, but I argue that components such as gaze, movement, gesture, and proximity may constitute a turn worthy of equal consideration when they stand alone. After all, what is the real communicative difference between a listener nodding and her/she saying "yeah"? If one agrees that "yeah" is a turn, why would the nod not also be considered as one? I believe there is no difference and both should be treated equally in discourse analysis.

The final definition that lacked clarity in regard to this research is the concept of backchannel. To date, most researchers have assumed that backchannel is a necessary component of English conversation that listeners use "to signal understanding and interest in the conversation" (Stocksmeier, Kopp and Gibbon, 2007, page 1). I do not dispute this stance; however, in my research I noted many cases in which the (apparently) supportive intention of the listener was misunderstood by the speaker, and, as a result, the speaker became threatened by the backchannel and resorted to floor saving measures. Although the conversations continues unabated after the minor "hitches and perturbations" (Schegloff, 2000, page

11), it intrigued me that there would be any sort of breakdown at all response to positive backchannel. In order to explore this further, I broke the term *backchannel* down into two categories: failed and successful. Furthermore, I proposed that, for this research to be more user-friendly for ESL educators and students alike, the new term *active listening attempt* (ALA) should be used, as it is immediately clear to those who have not studied discourse analysis. I determined that a failed active listening attempt was one by which the speaker was threatened. If one is to assume that the listener's intention is genuinely supportive, then his/her active listening attempt fails when it is not perceived as such; the message communicated is not the message received, therein lies the failure.

Once these definitions were clarified, it became possible to move on to a more detailed look into the causes of these failed ALAs. Due to the limited nature of this project, I was unable to consider all of the factors which may contribute to this phenomenon, so I applied a CDA approach and narrowed my focus to the impact of power on a conversation. This prompted my second research question, *What can be generalized about power by the adherence to and understanding of the "rules" that govern listeners and speakers?* In a conversation, not all participants get equal access to turns. In fact, this paper is explicitly concerned with "how power operates in and through language – by viewing power in terms of the relationships between turns (as actions) in sequences" (Hutchby, 2004, page 29). Originally, I had subscribed to Eggins' and Slade's (1997) theory that the conversationalist who uttered the greatest number of clauses was the most powerful. I also took into account the number of "I" statements used by the speakers as an indication of their relative power within the exchange. It seemed logical that if the speaker was in control of the narrative by the use of "I" statements, it could be assumed that he/she was dominant in the conversation. However, when these theories were put to test by *The Real World* corpus, I made some interesting observations. Specifically, in a number of the conversations, neither a higher clause count, nor a higher use of "I" statements necessarily correlated to greater power in the discussion. Rather, if the context of the conversation, including the personalities and social histories of the speakers, is not taken into consideration when



determining the power of a speaker, false conclusions can easily be reached. Thus, when considering issues of power, linguists must consider a more qualitative approach that contemplates

three important analytical foci: the discursive identities set up during the talk event (for example, questioner, formulator or opinion-giver), the institutional identities of participants inscribed in that event (for example, phone-in host, interviewee or school pupil) and the variable accessibility of different types and discursive resources to those participants

Walker, 2004, pages 133-134

By taking into account the context of the conversations, it was possible to observe conversationalists who spoke less holding more sway in the interaction as well as discussions in which both speakers appeared to share equal power. Clearly, “every text involves a particular context of use” (Aijmer and Stenstrom, 2004, page 3) which must be examined. In addition to the relationship between speaker talk and power, this research also scrutinized the role power played in the failure of an ALA. I had initially surmised that if a speaker held more power in the conversation, he/she would be less likely to be threatened by an ALA from a less powerful speaker. However, this was not the case. In fact, slightly more than half of all the failed ALAs in the corpus occurred in conversations in which the threatened speaker held the power. In several of the conversations, it appeared that the emotional state of the speaker may have been the cause of this heightened sense of threat. However, in most interactions, the speakers appeared to feel compelled to fight for the conversational floor in the face of even supportive reactions because they were in the midst of work on their identity which they deemed vital. As “social actors are seen as unfinished, agentic and as continually in the process of construction and reconstruction” (Wetherell, 2007, page 672), we are constantly engaged in this process and appear to judge this work as far too crucial to allow interruptions. Perhaps unsurprisingly, I was also able to note that the type of ALA that was most likely to fail was a statement as opposed to a question or a listening “noise”. A statement is more like a bid for the floor than the other forms of ALA, so it stands to reason that they would prompt the most

defensive reaction. Thus, it would appear, from these findings, that the intention of the ALA is not as relevant as the perception of it. In other words, whether or not an ALA succeeds is largely in the hands of the speaker; the listener's message of support does not appear to ensure that an ALA will be appreciated by a speaker, especially one intent on doing any kind of identity management work.

In addition to the broad impact of power on a conversation, I was also interested in narrowing down at least one of the potential factors that may influence who holds conversational power: gender. There is a rich tradition in linguistic and feminist literature to conclude that men exhibit certain conversational behaviors and women exhibit others. Many researchers, such as Tannen (1994) Johnson and Aires (1998), Coates (1996 and 2007), Cohen (2008) and Precht (2008), associate conversational choices with gender. At the onset of my research, I had also assumed that gender would impact how speakers perceived the ALAs and whether or not they would fail. I had predicted that, because women were described as preferring a collaboratively created floor (Coates, 1997b), they would react more positively to ALAs than men, whose conversational style is thought of as more competitive. However, my findings uncovered some interesting statistics. First, the contrast between threatened male speakers with female listeners and threatened female speakers with male listeners was not as great as had been anticipated. Moreover, the corpus revealed male and female conversationalists comfortably adopting behavior that has long been associated with the opposite gender. In addition, the research also contained a sizeable number of conversations in which a female speaker was threatened by a female listener. This surprising observation flies in the face of the collaborative female floor espoused by linguists, including Tannen (1994) and Coates (1997b). Finally, based on my analysis of the use of the pronouns *you* and *we*, I was able to conclude that men are no less inclusive than women in their conversations. Clearly, past assumptions about the way men and women use conversation to gain social power and do identity work beg reconsideration.

Thus, I believe that this research project can contribute to this field in a number of ways. First, by coining a new set of terms to describe

backchannel, *active listening attempt (ALA)* and *failed active listening attempt*, I have brought some clarification to a confusing assortment of terminology. These expressions are more accessible not only to researchers, but also to ELT professionals and students. Furthermore, this research proves the existence of listener talk which is intended to be supportive but, in fact, threatens the speaker. Second, through this research, I have deduced that, in a casual conversation, talk time does not necessarily equal power. Moreover, when an ALA fails, I observed that it fails because the speaker rejects it, not because the listener's intentions may be threatening. Even when a speaker does not dominate the conversation, he/she is still able to determine whether or not he/she will accept an ALA without reverting to floor-saving measures. Third, my observations of the conversational choices made by males and females have led me to conclude that, in fact, men's and women's responses to active listening don't differ as much as popular theory would hold. Thus, in terms of a contribution to this field of feminist literature, I believe that my findings point in a new direction, away from the notion of female conversations as collaborative and male conversations as competitive.

## 6.2 Limitations of this Study

As with all research, this study was limited in a number of ways. First, I did not use a machine or tool for measuring the impact prosody might have on the conversations I examined. Researchers interested in teasing out the influence that prosody has on turn-taking and backchannel do not tend to rely on their own ear for a detailed description of the suprasegmental aspects of the utterances. Many utilize expensive pitch detection software. For instance, a research project undertaken by Kim, Hahn, Yoo and Bae (2008) used an "IBM-PC/586 microphone input interfacing ... [a] 16 bit A/D converter .. and stored this quantizing 16 bit by 11kHz's the sampling rate" (Kim, Hanh, Yoo and Bae, 2008, page 549). However, in neither my work nor my academic setting did I have access to these types of instruments for measuring intonation. Other researchers look online for free voice analysis tools. For example, Benus, Gravano and Hirschberg (2007) used the free

internet-based program PRAAT to accurately map out the prosodic features of backchannel in American English. However, I chose to rely on my own hearing to pick out significant changes in intonation. Although “[e]vidence shows that even trained native speakers find it very difficult ... to identify tonics in speech” (McCarthy, 1991, page 101), it was not the immediate aim of this project to identify the specific prosody associated with failed and successful ALAs. Thus, by neglecting to make use of this software, it is possible that I have overlooked some important features that might predict the way an ALA is perceived by the speaker. This is certainly an area that would benefit from future study.

A second limitation of this study lies with the methodology I applied. As has already been described, Critical Discourse Analysis has long been criticized by theorists such as Widdowson (1995) and Schegloff (1997) for looking outside the immediate text to the context surrounding it. I believe that my findings demonstrate why this approach is necessary, as one can't simply count the number of clauses used in the interaction to determine speaker dominance; nonetheless, it is a fair criticism that my findings are largely impacted by my own positionality as a researcher. This danger is especially real when, as with many CDA studies, informed speculation occurs. Thus, I have to acknowledge that my findings are undoubtedly influenced by what I noticed in my multiple viewings of the corpus clips. Another researcher might well have noticed additional or different features. Perhaps this limitation could have been overcome if I had amassed a panel of people to watch the clips; then again, there is always the possibility that those not on the panel might have also seen something that my panel didn't. While this possibility of differing interpretations exists, as previously stated, most researchers, including Flowerdew (1999) and Threadgold (2003), acknowledge that an analysis such as mine is open to multiple readings because the analyst is “still quite different from [the speakers], and this difference is the margin which can empower [the] analysis — not to be ‘correct’, but, as a goal, to be non-trivial, insightful, and socially relevant” (Beaugrande, 2006, page 43). In fact, even within the conversation, there is not one “true” reading of an ALA. For instance, when considering a failed ALA, whose interpretation of the utterance is “correct” - the listener who

wants to be supportive or the speaker who feels threatened? Thus, because multiple interpretations are possible, credibility cannot be established through the “truth” of the findings, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) would argue, but through the systematic approach I have taken to the analysis. My framework for analysis and my familiarity with the context of the conversations (through multiple viewings as well as thoughts and feelings shared by the roommates in their weekly “Confessionals”) ensures that my findings avoid Widdowson’s (1995) criticism of CDA as a partial interpretation.

Perhaps the most significant limitation of this project, however, stems from the source of my corpus. More specifically, by using the reality television program, *The Real World*, I have exposed this research to three particular criticisms. First, the roommates on this particular program are somewhat homogeneous. Although they come from different parts of the United States, as well as diverse ethnic, economic and religious backgrounds, the cast members tend to be in the same age range, from eighteen to twenty-five years old. Clearly this presents a skewed perspective on language use and turn-taking. On the one hand, a great deal of both CDA studies and research done on active listening have focused on what Slade and Eggins (1997) refer to as *pragmatic conversations*, such as classroom interactions (Bourne and Jewitt, 2003), court interactions (Ehrlich, 1998), and televised political interviews (Hyatt, 2003); consequently, my analysis of the casual conversations from *The Real World* serve to bring more diversity to CDA’s repertoire. However, the fact that all of the conversationalists are from the same generation may limit the findings somewhat. It is possible, though I feel it is perhaps unlikely, that different results might have been reached if a more diverse group of speakers had been recorded. Perhaps older female speakers are less likely than their younger counterparts to become threatened by an ALA. This study cannot speculate. A second criticism that could be leveled at my choice of source is that I had no access to the raw footage and no control over the editing process. Although, by relying on *The Real World* for data, I had easy access to hours and hours of spontaneous, naturally-occurring conversations with none of the ethical or quality issues that often plague researchers who

record interactions on their own, I also had no input over how scenes were recorded or edited. For instance, the camera frequently focuses on the speaker's face rather than the listener's. While this makes for more compelling TV, for a researcher interested in the nonverbal reactions of a listener, it can be limiting. In addition, several conversations appeared to have been prematurely cut off or edited in such a way so as to leave me unsure if something had been said but not broadcast. For example, in an exchange between New York's Lori and Nicky, the conversation was interrupted by a clip of Lori's "Confessional." It was obvious to me that the two conversations were actually one, but I had no idea whether or not something had been cut from the middle where the "Confessional" had been inserted. Clearly, the goal of *The Real World's* cameramen/women, editors and producers is to sell a provocative show, not to explore the discourse choices of the roommates. Therefore, I was not always able to watch entire conversations without interruption. This may have influenced the outcome of my research. The final challenge faced by this project due to my choice of *The Real World* is the fact that I was unable to interview the roommates to get their perspective on what was actually happening in the clips that made up my corpus. This was impossible for logistical and practical reasons. The seasons I recorded had more than thirty-three different cast members. To further compound the issue, these seasons are not the most recent. In fact, they range from 1992 to 2007. The roommates have long since gone their separate ways and they are scattered all over the United States. It would have been unfeasible for me to locate them (many have disappeared from the public eye completely) and administer a questionnaire in any kind of systematic manner. However, more daunting than the logistical problems associated with this kind of research, I was skeptical that the roommates would be able to provide much insight into why they reacted the way that they did to the ALAs. These conversations took place years and, in some cases, decades ago. It would be ridiculous to assume that they would have any memory at all of the exchange. Moreover, the kind of conversational breakdown I have described in this project is minute. When it happens, speakers are, most often times, not even aware at a conscious level that they are threatened. It is doubtful that even a speaker who was questioned

immediately after the incident would have anything valuable to contribute about, for example, the identity work or the impact gender might have had on that conversation. We are generally just not that self-aware, in my opinion. However, it is possible that had I been able to question the speakers and listeners, some interesting observations about their states of mind might have been made. These potential observations would be more likely with a source in which the speakers are in closer spatial and temporal proximity to the researcher and the recordings.

### 6.3 Areas for Further Study

Although several interesting and valuable observations have resulted from this study, a number of areas for further study have also arisen. First, a number of studies have been conducted regarding the nonverbal aspects of turn-taking, including Stewart (1997), Wells and Macfarlane (1998), Goldwin-Meadow (2003), Walker (2004), Kogure (2007), McKellen, Shahin, Hodgson, Jamieson and Pichora-Fuller (2007), and Rockwell (2007); nonetheless, very few to date have adopted a multimodal approach to transcription. Clearly, if the visual is significant in the conversation, those researching it should “represent the world and by doing so, actually make the world available to others to encounter” (Kress, 2009). Therefore, I believe that there is certainly room for more multimodal elements in the analysis of not only backchannel, but also turn-taking as a whole.

Second, due to the limited scope of this project, I was unable to pursue a few of the avenues that the research brought to light. For instance, a follow-up study that compares my findings regarding the characteristics of failed ALAs with the characteristics of successful ALAs would be beneficial, particularly if the end result was the creation of materials that specified for ESL students what they can do to make their ALAs more appealing, if they wish to do so. Additionally, it would be interesting to determine if there were roommates who consistently had more failed ALAs than successful ones, and if certain cast members were more sensitive to ALAs than others. More significantly, it would be valuable to compare the number of successful ALAs used by male and female speakers in *The Real World*. This study calls into

question the long-held belief that women are more cooperative conversationalists than men; thus, a further study of successful ALAs would prove beneficial. I was also unable to explore the various different factors that might impact the success or failure of an ALA. As previously stated, the limited nature of this paper did not allow me to consider other aspects of identity maintenance, such as ethnic background or economic background. Gender is only one part of who we are; it stands to reason that our conversational choices could just as easily be influenced by any number of the other parts. Finally, due to the limitations of the cast members' ages, it would be constructive to conduct similar research using a different source, perhaps an alternate reality television show. As I have described in the previous section, different results could potentially be reached if a different source were to be analysed.

Third, an interesting pattern of failed ALAs was observed in highly emotional situations. This is an interesting area for further study, as to date very limited research has been conducted on the impact emotion has on backchannel. Most studies, such as those described by Anderson and Leaper (1998) Clark, MacGeorge and Robinson (2008) and Palomares (2008), tend to focus on the words that speakers use rather than their conversational behaviour. However, because "emotion *experience* is not necessarily captured in words" (Anderson and Leaper, 1998, page 420), in order to fully explore the impact of emotion on interaction, all participants' conversational choices need to be considered, not just the words.

Fourth, the main purpose of this study is to create materials to help ESL students accomplish their personal and professional goals in English. As about 80 percent of English speakers are nonnative speakers (Jenkins, 2008), it is highly possible that many learners will not actually use English with native speakers, but rather will use English to communicate with other nonnative speakers. Thus far, the research regarding English conversations between nonnative speakers seems to be focused on the grammar errors of the conversationalists, not the pragmatic errors (Seidlhofer, 2004), but I would argue that the "danger of a mismatch between rules of speaking of two societies" (Boxer, 2003, page 48), or pragmatic errors, is far greater in these kinds of conversations than using an incorrect verb tenses might be.



Although another speaker may identify a grammar error as a mistake, he/she may not immediately recognize a pragmatic disparity as such. “While grammatical error may reveal a speaker to be a less than proficient language-user, pragmatic failure reflects badly on him/her as a person” (Thomas, 2006, page 29). Specifically, just as a native English speaker will most likely have certain expectations about what behaviour they can anticipate from their listener, nonnative speakers also have certain ideas about listener behaviour they are comfortable with, and a contravention of these expectations may have dire consequences for the listener. This begs the question: what is the impact that violations of conversational culture, specifically those associated with listener behaviour, have in interactions between nonnative English speakers. A study conducted by Schauer (2006) indicates that “[i]n an EFL context ... participants tend to focus more on grammar rather than pragmatics” (Schauer, 2006, page 309); however, she also argues that this lack of attention to English conversational norms puts EFL students at a disadvantage. Therefore, I believe that this area, specifically the implications of adhering to one’s own conversational cultural rules associated with active listening in a nonnative speaker conversation, would benefit from further study.

#### 6.4 Final Thoughts

Nonnative speakers may often find themselves in positions of decreased social power. From students (Cho, 2004) to instructors (Li, 2007), from guests socializing at a party (Coulthard, 2007) to employees wanting the day off (Wigglesworth and Yates, 2007), many L2 speakers are at a disadvantage due to the power differentials that exist in native English speaking cultures. As ELT professionals, in addition to teaching English, we can also provide our students with the linguistic tools necessary for increasing their social status by “be[ing] concerned with hidden meaning” (Chase, 2008, page 43). Moreover, when students follow the rules of their own conversational culture, they may be inadvertently violating the expectations of the other participants in the exchange. These violations,

while often not immediately obvious, can have catastrophic results for the English learner.

These differences [between conversational cultures] lead potentially to situations of communication breakdown, misunderstanding, frustration, or simply feelings of inadequacy that may prevent people from even attempting to communicate with others.

Li, 2000, page 59

Because “power and dominance are produced and reproduced in social practice through the discourse structure of generally unremarkable interactions” (Stubbe, Lane, Hilder, Vine, Vine, Marra, Holmes and Weatherall, 2003, page 367) such as everyday communication, and because students are often required to participate in casual social interactions, a careful study of active listening, an important component of casual conversation, is necessary. First, in this paper, issues surrounding the terms associated with listener talk, I believe, have been clarified, and a new pair of terms, *ALA* and *failed ALA*, has been offered as a useful replacement for the ambiguous term *backchannel*. These new terms may be less intimidating to both ESL teachers and students and increase the likelihood that this important skill is embraced in the L2 classroom.

Moreover, I believe that my choice of *The Real World* as a corpus serves two important purposes. First, it offers easy access to rich, unscripted conversations that have proven to contain many examples of the failed ALAs I was interested in studying. Second, the fact that it is popular culture is extremely appealing to many of my students and it “can provide a means of locating new understandings within a familiar discourse” (Marsh, 2000, page 130).

My analysis of *The Real World* transcriptions reveals interesting patterns concerning the influence of power, and gender on the way active listening attempts are received in a conversation. Specifically, my findings demonstrate that notions of power in a casual conversation are not as straightforward as might be assumed. First, I found that talk time does not necessarily translate to power. In fact, in many instances in the corpus, I observed powerful conversationalists speaking far less than their

counterparts. This may come as a relief to English learners who are not confident enough in their own ability to speak a great deal in a conversation. Their reticence alone may not necessarily lead them to a position of decreased power. Second, I discovered that affirmative listener talk is not always recognized as such, despite the supportive intentions of the listener. For L2 students, this is useful information for two reasons: they learn to recognize a failed ALA and understand its implications, and they acquire the tools to reject an ALA, if they so choose. Finally, my research reveals that both men and women are threatened by ALAs in similar ways, in spite of long-held theories on this matter (Tannen, 1994 and Coates, 1997b). Although this is admittedly of less importance to language learners, I believe that these findings may prompt gender research in a new direction, one in which context is more heavily weighted, and in which CDA can play a more active role.

## References

- Acton, W. and Cope, C. (1999) Cooperative attending skills training for ESL students. In D. Kluge, S. McGuire, D. Johnson and R. Johnson (Eds.), *JALT Applied Materials: Cooperative Learning*, Tokyo: Association for Language Teaching.
- Adolphs, S. (2008) *Corpus and Context*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Aijmer, K. and Stenstrom, A. (2004) Discourse patterns in spoken and written corpora. In K. Aijmer and A. Stenstrom (Eds.), *Discourse Patterns in Spoken and Written Corpora*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.
- Ainsworth, S. (2004) Critical discourse analysis and identity; Why bother? *Critical Discourse Studies*, 1(2).
- Alvarez, R. (2005) Taking a critical linguistic turn: Using critical discourse analysis for the study of information systems. In D. Howcroft and E. Moore Trauth (Eds.), *Handbook of Critical Information Systems Research: Theory and Application*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Anderson, K. and Leaper, C. (1998) Emotion talk between same- and mixed-gender friends: Form and function. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 17.
- Andrejevic, M. (2003) *Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Antaki, C. Billig, M., Edwards, D. and Potter, J. (2002) *Discourse Analysis Means Doing Analysis: A Critique Of Six Analytic Shortcomings*. Retrieved March 31, 2004 from <http://extra.shu.ac.uk/daol/articles/v1/n1/a1/antaki2002002-paper.html>.
- Antaki, C. and Widdicombe, S. (1998) Identity as an achievement and as a tool. In C. Antaki and S. Widdicombe (Eds.), *Identities in Talk*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Armstrong, K. and Yetter-Vassot, C. (1993) Action, interaction, and reaction: the video camera and the FL classroom. Paper presented at the 27<sup>th</sup> annual Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) convention, Atlanta, GA, USA.
- Atkins, A. (2002) *Critical Discourse Analysis: A Letter to Expatriates from the Rt. Hon. Sir Norman Fowler, MP*. Retrieved April 15, 2004 from [www.cels.bham.ac.uk/resources/essays/Andrew%20Atkins%20Assignment%205.pdf](http://www.cels.bham.ac.uk/resources/essays/Andrew%20Atkins%20Assignment%205.pdf).

- Auer, P. (1996) On the prosody and syntax of turn-taking continuations. In E. Couper-Kuhlen and M. Selting (Eds.), *Prosody in Conversation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Austin, J.L. (1962) *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bailey, R. (1985) Negotiation and meaning: Revisiting the context of situation. In J. Benson and W. Greaves (Eds.), *Systemic Perspectives on Discourse, Volume 2*, Norwood: Ablex Publishing Company.
- Bakhtin, M. (1986) *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Baldry, A. and Thibault, P.J. (2006) *Multimodal Transcription and Text Analysis*, Oakville and London: Equinox.
- Baldwin, E., Longhurst, B, McCracken, S., Ogborn, M. and Smith, G. (1999) *Introducing Cultural Studies*, Hertfordshire: Prentice Hall Europe.
- Barbieri, F. (2008) Patterns of age-based linguistic variation in American English. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 12(1).
- Bardovi-Harlig, K., Hartford, B.A., Mahan-Taylor, R., Morgan, M.J., and Reynolds, D.W. (1991) Developing pragmatic awareness: closing the conversation. *ELT Journal* (45/1).
- Barnes, R. and Moss, D. (2007) Communicating a feeling: The social organization of private thoughts. *Discourse Studies*, 9.
- Baudrillard, J. P. (2003) The hyper-realism of simulation. In, C. Harrison and P. Wood (Eds.), *Art in Theory: 1900-2000*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd.
- Baxter, J. (2005) Analyzing spoken language in the classroom. In A. Goodwyn and A. Stables (Eds.), *Learning to Read Critically in Language and Literacy*, London, Thousand Oaks.
- Baxter, J. and Wallace, K. (2009) Outside in-group and out-group identities? Constructing male solidarity and female exclusion in UK builders' talk. *Discourse and Society*, 20.
- Beal, C. (1992) Did you have a good weekend? Or why there is no such thing as a simple question in cross-cultural encounters. *Aral*, 15(1).
- Beisbier, B. (1994) *Sounds Great*, Florence, KY: Heinle Cengage.

- Benus, S., Gravano, A. and Hirschberg, J. (2007) The Prosody of Backchannel in American English. Retrieved on January 15, 2010 from [http://www.cs.columbia.edu/nlp/papers/2007/benus\\_al\\_07b.pdf](http://www.cs.columbia.edu/nlp/papers/2007/benus_al_07b.pdf).
- Berger, P.L. and Luckmann, T. (1966) *The Social Construction of Reality*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Berry, A. (1994) Spanish and American turn-taking styles: A comparative study. *Pragmatics and Language Learning*, 5.
- Berry, R. (1997) Teachers' awareness of learners' knowledge: The case of metalinguistic terminology. *Language Awareness*, 6.
- Berry, R. (2005) Talking terms: Choosing and using terminology for EFL classrooms, *English Language Teaching*, 1(1). Retrieved June 16, 2010 from [www.ccsenet.org/journal.htm](http://www.ccsenet.org/journal.htm).
- Billing, M. (2008) The language of critical discourse analysis: The case of nominalization. *Discourse and Society*, 19.
- Blommaert, J. (2001) Context is/as critique. *Critique of Anthropology*, 21(1).
- Blommaert, J. (2005) *Discourse: A Critical Introduction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Blumstein, P. (2001) The production of selves in personal relationships. In A. Branaman (Ed.), *Self and Society*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990) *Sociology in Question*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993) Concluding remarks: for a sociogenetic understanding of intellectual works. In C. Calhoun, E. LiPuma, and M. Postone (Eds.), *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bourne, J. and Jewitt, C. (2003) Orchestrating debate: A multimodal analysis of classroom interaction. *Reading: Literacy and Language*, (July 2003).
- Boxer, D. (2003) Critical issues in developmental pragmatics. In A. Martinez-Flor, E. Uso-Juan and A. Fernandez-Guerra (Eds.), *Pragmatic Competence and Foreign Language Teaching*, Valencia: Universitat Jaume.

- Boxer, D. and Pickering, L. (1995) Problems in the presentation of speech acts in ELT materials: the case of complaints. *ELT Journal*, (49/1).
- Brazil, D. (1997) *The Communicative Value of Intonation in English*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, P. and Levinson, S. (1987) *Politeness: Some Universals in Language USAGE*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bucholtz, M. (2003) Sociolinguistic nostalgia and the authentication of identity. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 7(3).
- Bucholtz, M. and Hall, K. (2005) Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach, *Discourse Studies*, 7.
- Burman, E. and Parker, I. (1983) Against discursive imperialism, empiricism, and constructionism: Thirty-two problems with discourse analysis. In E. Burman and I. Parker (Eds.), *Discourse Analytic Research: Repertoires and Readings of Texts in Action*, London and New York, NY: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York, NY: Routledge.
- Calhoun, C. (1993) Habitus, field, and capital: The question of historic specificity. In C. Calhoun, E. LiPuma, and M. Postone (Eds.), *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cameron, D. (1998) Performing gender identity: Young men's talk and the construction of heterosexual masculinity. In J. Coates (Ed.), *Language and Gender: A Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Cameron, D. (2001) *Working with Spoken Discourse*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Cameron, D. (2007) Unanswered questions and unquestioned answers in the study of language and gender: Female verbal superiority. *Gender and Language*, 1(1).
- Carbaugh, D. (2008) Coding personhood through cultural terms and practices: silence and quietude as a Finnish "Natural Way of Being". *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, (25/3).
- Carter, R. (1998) Orders of reality: CANCODE, communication, and culture. *ELT Journal*, (52/1).
- Carter, R. and McCarthy, M. (2004) Talking, creating: Interactional language, creativity and context. *Applied Linguistics*, (25/1).

- Chase, D. (2008) Finding hidden meaning in mass media through Critical Discourse Analysis and implications for language teaching. *Hawai'i Pacific University Teaching English as a Second Language Working Paper Series*, 6(1).
- Cho, S. (2004) Challenges of entering discourse communities through publishing in English: Perspectives of nonnative-speaking doctoral students in the United States of America. *Journal of Language, Identity and Education*, 3(1).
- Clark, R., MacGeorge, E, and Robinson, L. (2008) Evaluation of peer comforting strategies by children and adolescents. *Human Communication Research*, 34.
- Coates, J. (1994) No gap, lots of overlap: Turn taking patterns in the talk of women friends. In D. Graddol, J. Maybin and B. Stierer (Eds.), *Researching Language and Literacy in a Social Context*, Clevedon, Philadelphia and Adelaide: Multilingual Matters Limited.
- Coates, J. (1996) *Women Talk: Conversation between Women Friends*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Coates, J. (1997a) One at a time talk: The organization of men's talk. In S. Johnson and U.H. Meinhof (Eds.), *Language and Masculinity*, Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers.
- Coates, J. (1997b) The construction of a collaborative floor in women's friendly talk. In T. Givon (Ed.), *Conversation: Cognitive, Communicative and Social Perspectives*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Coates, J. (2003) *Men Talk*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Coates, J. (2007) Talk in a play frame: More on laughter and intimacy. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 39.
- Cohen, S. (2008) Gender differences in speech temporal patterns detected using lagged co-occurrence text-analysis of personal narratives. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 38.
- Collins, J. (2004) Foreword. In R. Rogers (Ed), *An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education*, Mahwah, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Copyright and Fair Use* (2009) Retrieved June 14, 2010 from <http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html>.
- Corson, D. (1997) Gender, discourse and senior education: Ligatures for girls, options for boys? In R. Wodak (Ed.), *Gender and Discourse*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.



- Cots, J. (2006) Teaching 'with an attitude': Critical Discourse Analysis in EFL teaching. *ELT Journal*, 60/4.
- Coulthard, M. (2007) By their words shall ye know them: On linguistic identity. In C. Caldas-Coulthard and R. Iedema (Eds.), *Identity Trouble*, London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Coupland, N., Wiemann, J. and Giles, H. (1991) Talk as "problem" and communication as "miscommunication": An integrative analysis. In N. Coupland, H. Giles and J. Wiemann (Eds.), *"Miscommunication" and Problematic Talk*, Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Cowley, S. (1997) Conversation, coordination, and vertebrate communication. *Semiotica*, 115(1/2).
- Cummins, J. and Davison, C. (2007) *International Handbook of English Language Teaching*, New York, NY: Springer.
- Cunningham-Florez, M. (2002) *Content Standards in Adult ESL*, Retrieved October 3, 2008 from [http://www.cal.org/caela/esl\\_resources/bibliographies/constanbib.html](http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/bibliographies/constanbib.html)
- Davies, J. (2003) Expressions of gender: an analysis of pupils' gendered discourse styles in small group classroom discussions. *Discourse and Society*, 14(2).
- Davies, J. and Merchant, G. (2007) Looking from the inside out: Academic blogging as new literacy. In M. Knobel and C. Lankshear (Eds.), *A New Literacies Sampler*, New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Davis, J. (2007) Resistance to L2 pragmatics in the Australian ESL context. *Language Learning*, 57(4).
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1987) *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, (B. Massumi, Trans.), Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (2005) Introduction. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London and New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Duncan, S. (1972) Some signals and rules for talking speaking turns in conversations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 23(2).
- Duncan, S. and Niederehe G. (1974) On signalling that it's your turn to speak. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 10.

- Dunne, M. and Ng, S.H. (1994) Simultaneous speech in small group conversation: All-together-now and one-at-a-time? *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 13(1).
- Dynel, M. (2007) Book review: The linguistics of laughter, a corpus-assisted study of laughter-talk. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 39.
- Eckert, P. and McConnell-Ginet, S. (2003) *Language and Gender*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Edelsky, C. (1981) Who's got the floor? *Language in Society*, 10.
- Edley, N. and Wetherell, M. (1997) Jockeying for position: The construction of masculine identities. *Discourse & Society*, 8(2).
- Edwards, J. (1985) *Language, Society and Identity*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Eggins, D. and D. Slade (1997) *Analysing Casual Conversation*, London: Cassel.
- Ehrlich, S. (1998) The discursive reconstruction of sexual consent. *Discourse and Society*, 9/2.
- Eslami-Rasekh, Z. (2005) Raising the pragmatic awareness of language learners. *ELT Journal*, (59/3).
- Fairclough, N. (1985) Critical and descriptive goals in discourse analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 9.
- Fairclough, N. (1989) *Language and Power*, London: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1995) *Media Discourse*, London: Edward Arnold.
- Fairclough, N. (1999) Linguistic and intertextual analysis within discourse analysis. In A. Jaworski and N. Coupland (Eds.), *The Discourse Reader*, London: Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (2001) Critical discourse analysis as a method in social scientific research. In M. Meyer and R. Wodak (Eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Fairclough, N. (2003) *Analysing Discourse*, London: Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (2005) Critical Discourse Analysis. *Marges Linguistiques*, 9.
- Fairclough, N. and Wodak, R. (1997) Critical discourse analysis. In T. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse as Social Interaction, Volume 2*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

- Fairclough, N and Wodak, R. (2000) Critical discourse analysis. In S. Titscher, M. Meyer, R. Wodak, and E. Vetter (Eds.), *Methods of Text and Discourse Analysis*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Fairley, M. S. (2000) *Troublesome Discourse: Analysis of Native Speaker / Non-Native Speaker Conversation*. ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED439448.
- Fenton-Smith, B. (2005) Theorizing "context" for text analysis. *Nagoya University of Commerce and Business, Journal of Language, Culture, and Communication*, 7.
- Ferber, R. (1991) Slip of the tongue or slip of the ear? On the perception and transcription of naturalistic slips of the tongue. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 20.
- Fill, A.F. (1986) "Divided Illocution" in Conversational and Other Situations - And Some of Its Implications. *IRAL*, 24(1).
- Fish, S. (1980) *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*, Boston: Harvard University Press.
- Flewitt, R. (2004) *Multimodal Analysis Workshop: Visual Data*. Retrieved January 25, 2010 from [http://eprints.stotn.ac.uk/17416/01/Multimodal\\_Analysis\\_Workshop.ppt](http://eprints.stotn.ac.uk/17416/01/Multimodal_Analysis_Workshop.ppt).
- Flowerdew, J. (1999) Description and interpretation in critical discourse analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 38(8).
- Freed, A. and Greenwood, A. (1996) Women, men, and types of talk: What makes the difference? *Language in Society*, 25.
- Foley, D. and Valenzuela, A. (2005) Critical ethnography: The politics of collaboration. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London and New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Foucault, M. (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, (A.M. Sheridan Smith, Trans.), New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1980) Truth and power. In C. Gordon, C. (Ed) *Power / Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972 - 1977*, New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1995) *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York, NY: Vintage.

- Gardner, R. (1994) Conversation analysis: Some thoughts on its applicability to applied linguistics. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, Series S, 11.
- Gardner, R. (2001) *When Listeners Talk*, Amsterdam / Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Gardner, R. (2004). Conversation Analysis. In A. Davies and C. Elder (Eds.), *The Handbook of Applied Linguistics*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Garfinkel, H. (1967) *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Gee, J.P. (1999) *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis*, London: Routledge.
- Gee, J.P. (2004) Discourse analysis: What makes it critical? In R. Rogers (Ed), *An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education*, Mahwah, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Georgakopoulou, A. (2006) Small and large identities in narrative (inter)action. In A. de Fina, D. Schiffrin and M. Bamberg (Eds), *Discourse and Identity*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Giesbrecht, N. (1998) Gender patterns of psychosocial development. *Sex Roles*, 5(6).
- Gilbert, J. (2001) *Clear Speech*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Gilbert, J. (2008) *Teaching Pronunciation: Using the Prosody Pyramid*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Goffman, E. (1974) *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, New York, NY: Harper and Row.
- Goffman, E. (1975) Replies and responses. *Language in Society*, 5.
- Goffman, E. (2001) The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. In A. Branaman (Ed.), *Self and Society*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Golato, A. (2002) German compliment responses. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 34.
- Golato, A. (2003) Studying compliment responses: A comparison of DCTs and recordings of naturally occurring talk. *Applied Linguistics*, 24(1).
- Goldwin-Meadow, S. (1999) The role of gesture in communication and thinking. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 3(11).
- Goldwin-Meadow, S. (2003) *Hearing Gesture*, Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

- Goodwin, C. (2001) Practices of seeing visual analysis: An ethnomethodological approach. In T. van Leeuwen and C. Jewitt (Eds.), *Handbook of Visual Analysis*, London, Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Graddol, D., Cheshire, J. and Swann, J. (1994) *Describing Language*, Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Graham, R. (2004, September 26) MTV's 'Real World' turns into 'The Carnal Camera Show'. *The Boston Globe*. Retrieved June 11, 2010 from [http://legacy.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20040926/news\\_1a26real.html](http://legacy.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20040926/news_1a26real.html).
- Grant, L. (2001) *Well Said*, Florence, KY: Heinle Cengage.
- Green, L. (2002) *African American English: A Linguistic Introduction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Greenwood, A. (1996) Floor management and power strategies in adolescent conversation. In V.L. Bergvall, J.M. Bing and A.F. Freed (Eds.), *Rethinking Language and Gender Research: Theory and Practice*, Essex: Longman.
- Grice, H.P. (1975) Logic and Conversation. In P. Cole and J. Morgan (Eds.) *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*, New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Guaitella, I., Santi, S., Lagrue, B., and Cave, C. (2009) Are eyebrow movements linked to voice variation and turn-taking in dialogue? An experimental investigation. *Language and Speech*, 52.
- Gumperz, J. (1982) *Discourse Strategies*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Gumperz, J., Jupp, T. and Roberts, C. (1979) *Crosstalk*, Southall: National Centre for Industrial Language Training.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1978) *Language as Social Semiotic*, London: University Park Press.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1985) Dimensions of discourse analysis: Grammar. In T. van Dijk (Ed.), *Handbook for Discourse Analysis, Volume 2: Dimensions of Discourse*, London: Academic Press.
- Hamilton, H. (1998) Reported speech and survivor identity in on-line bone marrow transplantation narratives. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 2(1).
- Hammersley, M. (2003) Conversation analysis and discourse analysis: methods or paradigms? *Discourse and Society*, 14(6).

- Hanks, W. F. (1993) Notes on semantics in linguistic practice. In C. Calhoun, E. LiPuma, and M. Postone (Eds.), *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hanks, W.F., Ide, S. and Katagiri, Y. (2009) Towards an emancipatory pragmatics. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 41.
- Hannah, A. and Murachver, T. (2007) Gender preferential responses to speech. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 26.
- Hasan, R. (1985) The structure of a text. In M.A.K Halliday and R. Hasan (Eds.), *Language, Context, and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social-Semiotic Perspective*, Geelong: Deakin University.
- Hasan, R. (2004) Analysing discursive variation. In L. Young and C. Harrison (Eds.), *Systemic Functional Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis: Studies in Social Change*, London and New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing.
- Hecht, M., Warren, J., Jung, E. and Krieger, J. (2005) A communication theory of identity: Development, theoretical perspective, and future direction. In W. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Theorizing about Intercultural Communication*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Heinemann, T. (2008) Questions of accountability: Yes/no interrogatives that are unanswerable. *Discourse Studies*, 10.
- Henley, N. M. (2001) Body Politics. In A. Branaman (Ed.), *Self and Society*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Heritage, J. (1999) Conversation analysis at century's end: Practices of talk-in-interaction, their distributions, and their outcomes. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 32(1&2).
- Holmes, J. (1995) *Women, Men and Politeness*, London and New York, NY: Longman.
- Holmes, J. (1997) Women, language, and identity. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 1(2).
- Holmes, J. (1998) Women's talk: The question of sociolinguistic universals. In J. Coates (Ed.), *Language and Gender: A Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Holmes, J. (2004) Women, men and politeness: Agreeable and disagreeable responses. In A. Jaworski and N. Coupland (Eds), *The Discourse Reader*, London and New York, NY: Routledge.

- Holmes, J. and M. Meyerhoff (2003) *The Handbook of Language and Gender*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- House, J. (2002) Pragmatic competence in lingua franca English. In K. Knapp and C. Meierkord, C. (Eds.), *Lingua Franca Communication*, Frankfurt: Lang.
- Huckin, T.N. (1997) Critical discourse analysis. In T. Miller (Ed.), *Functional Approaches to Written Text*, Retrieved January 26, 2004 from [http://exchanges.state.gov/education/engteaching/pubs/BR/functional\\_sec3\\_6.htm](http://exchanges.state.gov/education/engteaching/pubs/BR/functional_sec3_6.htm)
- Huff, R. (2006) *Reality Television*, Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Huriash, L. (1996, July 10) Surreal World. *Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel*.
- Hutchby, I. (2004) Power in discourse: The case of arguments on a British talk radio show. In A. Jaworski and N. Coupland (Eds.), *The Discourse Reader*, London and New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hutchby, I and Wooffitt, R (1999) *Conversation Analysis: Principles, Practices, and Applications*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Huth, T. and Taleghani-Nikazm, C. (2006) How can insights from conversation analysis be directly applied to teaching L2 pragmatics? *Language Teaching Research*, (10/1).
- Hyatt, D. (2000) *Statement on Research for Transfer from M.Phil. to Ph.D.* Unpublished Upgrade Paper, University of Sheffield.
- Hyatt, D. (2001) *Language: why we study language and why now?* Lecture presented at the MEd (ELT) March Residential Weekend, Sheffield, UK.
- Hyatt, D. (2003) *Towards a Critical Literacy Frame: A Textual Analysis of the Adversarial Political Interview*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Sheffield.
- Hyatt, D. (2005a) Time for a change: A critical discursal analysis of synchronic context with diachronic relevance. *Discourse and Society*, 16(4).
- Hyatt, D. (2005b) A critical literacy frame for UK secondary education contexts. *English in Education*, 39(1).
- Iwasaki, S. (1997) The Northridge earthquake conversation: The floor structure and the 'loop' sequence in Japanese conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 28.

- Jager, S. (2001) Discourse and Knowledge: Theoretical and methodological aspects of a critical discourse and dispositive analysis. In M. Meyer and R. Wodak (Eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Jager, S. and Maier, F. (2009) Theoretical and methodological aspects of Foucauldian critical discourse analysis and dispositive analysis, In M. Meyer and R. Wodak (Eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- James, D. and Clark, S. (1993) Women, men and interruptions: A critical review. In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Gender and Conversational Interaction*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Jaworski, A. and Coupland, N. (1999) Introduction: Perspectives on discourse and analysis. In A. Jaworski and N. Coupland (Eds.), *The Discourse Reader*, London: Routledge.
- Jefferson, G. (2004) Glossary of transcript symbols with an introduction. In G.H. Lerner (Ed.), *Conversation Analysis: Studies from the First Generation*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Jenkins, J. (2008) *English as a Lingua Franca*, paper presented at the 47<sup>th</sup> annual Japanese Association of College Teachers conference, Tokyo, Retrieved August 11, 2010 from [http://www.jacet.org/2008convention/JACET2008\\_keynote\\_jenkins.pdf](http://www.jacet.org/2008convention/JACET2008_keynote_jenkins.pdf).
- Jewitt, C. (2006) *Technology, Literacy and Learning*, London and New York, NY: Routledge.
- Johnson, F.L. and Aries, E. J. (1998) The talk of women friends. In J. Coates (Ed.), *Language and Gender: A Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Jones, T. (2002) *Overlap and "The Real World"*, Unpublished Med Thesis, The University of Sheffield.
- Jorgensen, M. and Phillips, L. (2002) *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Kasper, G. and Rose, K. (2002) Pragmatic development in a second language. *Language Learning, Monograph Series*.
- Kasper, G. and Schmidt, R. (1996) Developmental issues in interlanguage pragmatics. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, (18).



- Kendall, S. and Tannen, D. (1997) Gender and language in the workplace. In R. Wodak (Ed.), *Gender and Discourse*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Kendon, A. (1978) Looking in conversation and the regulation of turns at talk. *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 17.
- Kendon, A. (1986) Current issues in the study of gesture. In J. Nespoulous, P. Perron and A. Lecours (Eds.), *The Biological Foundations of Gesture*, New Jersey, NJ and London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Kiesling, S. (1998) Men's identities and sociolinguistic variation: The case of fraternity men. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 2(1).
- Kiesling, S. (2004) What does a focus on "men's language" tell us about language and a woman's place? In M. Bucholtz (Ed.), *Language and a Woman's Place: Text and Commentaries*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Kiesling, S. (2006) Hegemonic identity-making in narrative. In A. de Fina, D. Schiffrin and M. Bamberg (Eds.), *Discourse and Identity*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Kilborn, R. (1994) 'How real can you get?': Recent developments in 'reality' television. *European Journal of Communication*, 9(4).
- Kim, S. (2006) Academic oral communication needs of East Asian international graduate students in non-science and non-engineering fields. *English for Specific Purposes*, 25.
- Kim, J., Hahn, H., Yoo, U. and Bae, M. (2008) On a pitch duration technique for prosody control. *World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology*, 45.
- Kincheloe, J.L. and McLaren, P. (2005) Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Knobloch, L. K. and Haunai Solomon, D. (2003) Manifestations of relationship conceptualisations in conversation. *Human Communication Research*, 29(4).
- Kogure, M. (2007) Nodding and smiling in silence during the loop sequence of backchannels in Japanese conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 39.
- Koshik, I. (2005) *Beyond Rhetorical Questions*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

- Kress, G. (1996) Internationalisation and globalisation: Rethinking a curriculum of communication. *Comparative Education*, 32(2).
- Kress, G. (2009) *Modes as Technologies of Transcription: Some Comments on Contemporary Forms of Composition*. Paper presented at the Symposium on Multimodal Approaches to Communication, Verona.
- Kress, G., Jewitt, C., Bourne, J., Franks, A., Hardcastle, J., Jones, K. and Reid, E. (2005) *English in Urban Classrooms*, London and New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kress, G., Jewitt, C., Ogborn, J. and Tstatsarelis, C. (2001) *Multimodal Teaching and Learning*, London and New York, NY: Continuum.
- Kress, G. and van Leeuwen, T. (2001) *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*, London: Arnold.
- Ladau-Harjulin, U. (1992) Using video to teach communicative English to students of international business, In S. Stemplenski and P. Arcario (Eds.), *Video in Second Language Teaching*, Alexandria: TESOL Inc.
- Ladd, D.R., Scherer, K.R. and Silverman, K (1986) An integrated approach to studying intonation and attitude. In C. Johns-Lewis (Ed.), *Intonation in Discourse*, San Diego, CA: College Hill Press, Inc.
- Ladegaard, H. (2009) Pragmatic cooperation revisited: Resistance and non-cooperation as a discursive strategy in asymmetrical discourses. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 41.
- Lakoff, G. (2004) *Don't think of an Elephant*, Berkeley: Chelsea Green.
- Lakoff, R. (2002) The silencing of women. In K. Hall, M. Bucholtz and B. Moonwoman (Eds.), *Locating Power: Proceedings of the Second Berkeley Women and Language Conference, April 4 and 5, 2002*, Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Women and Language Group.
- Lakoff, R. (2003) Language, gender, and politics: Putting "women" and "power" in the same sentence. In J. Holmes and M. Meyerhoff (Eds.), *The Handbook of Language and Gender*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Land, V. and Kitzinger, C. (2007) Some uses of third-person reference forms in speaker-self reference. *Discourse Studies*, 9.
- LeBesco, K. (2005) Book Review: Reality TV: The work of being watched. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 38(6).
- Lemke, J. L. (1995) *Textual Politics: Discourse and Social Dynamics*, London: Taylor and Francis.

- Lemke, J. L. (1998) Analysing verbal data: principles, methods and problems, in K. Tobin and B. Fraser (Eds.), *International Handbook of Science Education*, Retrieved July 28, 2010 from <http://www.personal.umich.edu/~jaylemke/papers/handbook.htm>.
- Lerner, G.H. (1989) Notes on overlap management in conversation: The case of delayed completion. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 53.
- Lerner, G.H. (2004) On the place of linguistic resources in the organization of talk-in-interaction: Grammar as action in prompting a speaker to elaborate. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 37(2).
- Lerner, G.H. and Kitzinger, C. (2007) Introduction: person-reference in conversation analytic research. *Discourse Studies*, 9(4).
- Leung, C. (2009) Collaborative narration in preadolescent girl talk: A Saturday luncheon conversation among three friends. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 41.
- Levinson, S. (1997) *Pragmatics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lewis, M. (2000) Language in the lexical approach. In M. Lewis (Ed.), *Teaching Collocation: Further Developments in the Lexical Approach*, Hove: Language Teaching Publications.
- Li, D. (2000) The pragmatics of making requests in the L2 workplace: A case study of language socialization. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 57(1).
- Li, X. (2007) Am I a course instructor or a nonnative speaker? In M. Mantero (Ed.), *Identity and Second Language Learning*, Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc.
- Lincoln, Y. and Guba, E. (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- LiPuma, E. (1993) Culture and the concept of culture in a theory of practice. In C. Calhoun, E. LiPuma, and M. Postone (Eds.), *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Litosseliti, L. and Sunderland, J. (2002) Gender identity and discourse analysis: Theoretical and empirical considerations, in L. Litosseliti and J. Sunderland (Eds.), *Gender Identity and Discourse Analysis: Discourse Approaches to Politics, Society and Culture Vol. 2*, Amsterdam: Benjamins Publishing Company.
- LoCastro, V. (2003) *An Introduction to Pragmatics: Social Action for Language Teachers*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

- Local, J.K., Kelly, J. and Wells, H.G. (1986) Towards a phonology of conversation: Turn-taking in Tyneside English, *Journal of Linguistics*, 22.
- Locke, John (1693) *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, Vol. XXXVII, Part 1, Section 145, Retrieved November 11, 2004 from [www.bartleby.com/37/1/](http://www.bartleby.com/37/1/).
- Lucas, C.J., and Murray, J.M. (2002) *New Faculty: A Practical Guide for Academic Beginners*, New York, NY: MacMillan.
- Luke, A. (2002) Beyond science and ideology critique: Developments in critical discourse analysis. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 22.
- MacCallum, D. (2009) *Discourse Dynamics in Participatory Planning*, Padstow, Cornwall: TJ International Ltd.
- Mackenzie, C. (2000) Adult spoken discourse: the influences of age and education. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 35(2).
- Macleod, C. (2002) Deconstructive discourse analysis: Extending the methodological conversation. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 32(1).
- Maltz, D. and Borker, R. (1982) A cultural approach to male - female miscommunication. In J. Gumperz (Ed.), *Language and Social Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Marsh, J. (2000) Teletubby tales: Popular culture in the early years language and literacy curriculum. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 1(2).
- Marsh, J. (2006) Popular culture in the literacy curriculum: A Bourdieuan analysis. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 41(2).
- Marsh, J., Brooks, G., Hughes, J., Ritchie, L., Roberts, S. and Wright, K. (2005) Digital Beginnings: Young Children's Use of Popular Culture, Media and New Technologies. Retrieved on July 12, 2010 from <http://www.digitalbeginnings.shef.ac.uk/DigitalBeginningsReportColor.pdf>.
- Martin, J. (2000) Beyond exchange: Appraisal Systems in English. In S. Hunston and G. Thompson (Eds.), *Evaluation in Text*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Martinez Flor, A. and Uso Juan, E. (2006) A comprehensive pedagogical framework to develop pragmatics in the foreign language classroom: The 6Rs approach. *Applied Language Learning*, 16(2).

- Maryland State Department of Education (2003) *Maryland Content Standards for Adult ESL / ESOL*, Baltimore, MD: MSDE.
- Mason, A. (1994) By dint of: student and lecturer perceptions of lecture comprehension strategies in first-term graduate study. In J. Flowerdew (Ed.), *Academic Listening: Research Perspectives*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McCarthy, M. (1991) *Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McCarthy, M. and Carter, R. (2007) *Current Trends in the Use of Corpora*, Paper presented at the 41<sup>st</sup> annual TESOL Convention, Seattle, Washington.
- McKellin, W., Shahin, K., Hodgson, M., Jamieson, J. and Pichora-Fuller, K. (2007) Pragmatics of conversation and communication in noisy settings. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 39.
- McNulty, P., Bliesener, U., Hoelker, J., Kamhi-Stein, L. and Kubota, R. (2006) *Multicultural Communication: Whose Culture, Whose Pragmatics?* Paper presented at the 40<sup>th</sup> annual TESOL Convention, Tampa Bay, Florida.
- Menz, F. and Al-Roubaie, A. (2008) Interruptions, status and gender in medical interviews: The harder you brake the longer it takes. *Discourse and Society*, 19.
- Merchant, G. (2007) Writing the future in the digital age. *Literacy*, 41(3).
- Mey, J.L. (1987) Poet and peasant. A pragmatic comedy in five acts. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 11.
- Mey, J.L. (1993) *Pragmatics: An Introduction*, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers.
- Meyer, C.F., Morris, R.A. and Blachman, E. (1994) Can you see whose speech is overlapping? *Visible Language*, 28(2).
- Meyer, M. (2001) Between theory, method, and politics: Positioning of approaches to CDA. In M. Meyer and R. Wodak (Eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Miller, S. (2005) *Targeting Pronunciation*, Florence, KY: Cenage.
- Mondada, L. (2006) Participants' online analysis and multimodal practices: Projecting the end of the turn and the closing of the sequence. *Discourse Studies*, 8.

- Mugford, G. (2008) How rude! Teaching impoliteness in the second-language classroom. *ELT Journal*, 62(4).
- Murray, S.O. (1987) Power and solidarity in 'interruption': A critique of the Santa Barbara school conception and its application by Orcutt and Harvey (1985). *Symbolic Interaction*, 10(1).
- Murray, S.O. and Covelli, L.H. (1988) Women and men speaking at the same time. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 12.
- Nakajima, S. and Allen, J.F. (1993) A study on prosody and discourse structure in cooperative dialogues. *Phonetica*, 50.
- National Standards for Foreign Language Education*, (1996), Retrieved October 16, 2006 from <http://www.yearoflanguages.com/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3392>.
- Ng, S.H., Brooke, M. and Dunne, M. (1995) Interruption and influence in discussion groups. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, December.
- Noll, M. (2007) *American Accent Skills: Intonation, Reductions, Word Connections*, Oakland, CA: The Ameritalk Press.
- Norrick, N. (2009) Interjections as pragmatic markers. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 41.
- Norris, S. (2004) *Analyzing Multimodal Interaction*, New York and London: Routledge.
- Norris, S. (2005) Habitus, social identity, the perception of male domination – and agency? In S. Norris and R. Jones (Eds.), *Discourse in Action*, London and New York, NY: Routledge.
- Norris, S. (2006) Some thoughts on personal identity construction: A multimodal perspective. In V. Bhatia, J. Flowerdew and R. Jones (Eds.), *Advances in Discourse Studies*, London and New York, NY: Routledge.
- Novick, D., Hansen, B., & Ward, K. (1996) *Coordinating Turn-taking with Gaze*. Paper presented at the 1<sup>st</sup> annual *International Conference on Spoken Language Processing*, Philadelphia, PA.
- Obeng, S.G. (1991) Pitch, loudness and turn regulation in Akan conversation. *York Papers in Linguistics*, 15.
- Ochs, E. (1992) Indexing gender, In A. Duranti and C. Goodwin (Eds.), *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- O'Connell, D.C., Kowal, S. and Kaltenbacher, E. (1990) Turn-taking: A critical analysis of the research tradition. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 19(6).
- O'Halloran, K. L. (2004) *Multimodal Discourse Analysis*, New York and London: Continuum.
- O'Keefe, A., Clancy, B. and Adolphs, S. (2010) *Pragmatics in Use*, London: Routledge.
- Oktar, L. (2001) The ideological organization of representational processes in the presentation of us and them. *Discourse & Society*, 12(3).
- Olesen, V. (2005) Early millennial feminist qualitative research: Challenges and contours. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA / London / New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Omaggio, A. (2001) *Teaching Languages in Context: Proficiency-oriented Instruction*, Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- Orbe, M. and Hopson, M. (2003) Looking at the front door: Exploring images of the black male on MTV's *The Real World*. In J. Martin, T. Nakayama and L. Flores (Eds.), *Reading in Intercultural Communication*, New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- Orestrom, B. (1983) *Turn Taking in English Conversation*, Lund, Sweden: Gleerup.
- Ottesjo, C. (2002) *Coherent but Discontinuous- On How a Discontinuous Turn is Made Coherent with the Help of Syntax and Prosody*. Paper presented at the *International Conference on Conversation Analysis*, Copenhagen, Denmark.
- Palomares, N. (2008) Explaining gender-based language use: Effects of gender identity salience on reference to emotion and tentative language in intra- and intergroup contexts. *Human Communication Research*, 34.
- Paltridge, B. (2006) *Discourse Analysis*, London and New York, NY: Continuum.
- Pennycook, A. (1994) The Politics of Pronouns. *ELT Journal*, 48(2).
- Philips S.U. (1976) Some sources of cultural variability in the regulation of talk. *Language in Society*, 50.

- Pilkington, J. (1992) Don't try to make out that I'm nice: The different strategies women and men use when gossiping. *Wellington Working Papers in Linguistics*, 5.
- Pomerantz, A. (1985) Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments. In J.M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of Social Action*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Potter, J. and Wetherell, M. (2001) Unfolding discourse analysis. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor and S. Yates (Eds.), *Discourse Theory and Practice*, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Precht, K. (2008) Sex similarities and differences in stance in informal American conversation. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 12(1).
- Pritchard, C. (2004) *Training Students to be Active in Discussions*. Paper presented at the 38<sup>th</sup> annual Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) convention, Long Beach, CA.
- Psathas, G. (1995) *Conversation Analysis: The Study of Talk-in-Interaction*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Punch, K. (2005) *Introduction to Social Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Rajagopalan, K. (2004) The concept of 'World English' and its implications for ELT. *ELT Journal*, 58(2).
- Ramirez, J. A. (2005) *Critical Discourse Analysis*. Paper presented at the 39<sup>th</sup> annual Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) convention, San Antonio, TX.
- Reay, D. (2004) 'It's all becoming a habitus': Beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research. *British Journal of Sociology in Education*, 25(4).
- Ribeiro, B. (2006) Footing, positioning, voice: Are we talking about the same thing? In A. de Fina, D. Schiffrin and M. Bamberg (Eds.), *Discourse and Identity*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Roberge, M. (2004) *Serving Generation 1.5 in College Writing Classes*. Paper presented at the 38<sup>th</sup> annual Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) convention, Long Beach, CA.
- Rockwell, P. Vocal features of conversational sarcasm: A comparison of methods. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 36.
- Rogers, R. (2004) An introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in education. In R. Rogers (Ed.), *An Introduction to Critical Discourse*



*Analysis in Education*, Mahwah, New Jersey: Laurence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

- Rose, K. (1994) Pragmatic Consciousness-Raising in and EFL Context. *Pragmatics and Language Learning*, 5.
- Rose, K. (1999) Teachers and students learning about requests in Hong Kong. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Culture in Second Language Teaching and Learning*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rumbaut, R. and Ima, K., (1998) *The Adaptation of Southeast Asian Refugee Youth: A Comparative Study*. Washington, DC: U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement.
- Sacks, H. (1992) Lectures on Conversation, Volumes I and II. In G. Jefferson and E. Schegloff (Eds.), *Lectures on Conversation*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. and Jefferson, G. (1974) A simplest system for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language*, 50.
- Salzmann, A. (1989) Oh darn! I'd live to come, but I already have plans: television invitations as conversation models. *Ideal*, 4.
- Samovar, L.A. and Porter, R.E. (2003) Understanding intercultural communication: An introduction and overview. In L.A Samovar and R.E. Porter (Eds.), *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*, Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth.
- Schauer, G. (2006) Pragmatic awareness in ESL and EFL contexts: Contrast and Development. *Language Learning*, 56(2).
- Schegloff, E. (1996) Turn organization: One intersection of grammar and interaction. In E. Ochs, E. Schegloff and S. Thompson (Eds.), *Interaction and Grammar*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schegloff, E. (1997) Whose text? Whose context? *Discourse and Society*, 8.
- Schegloff, E. (1998) Reflections on studying prosody in talk-in-interaction. *Language and Speech*, 41(3-4).
- Schegloff, E. (2000) Overlapping talk and the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language in Society*, 29.
- Schegloff, E. (2007) Categories in action: person-reference and membership categorization. *Discourse Studies*, 9(4).
- Schilling-Estes, N. (2004) Constructing ethnicity in interaction. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 8(2).

- Schmidt, R. (1993) Consciousness, learning and interlanguage pragmatics. In G. Kasper and S. Blum-Kulka (Eds.), *Interlanguage Pragmatics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schmidt-Mast, M (2002a) Dominance as expressed and inferred through speaking time. *Human Communication Research*, 28(3).
- Schmidt-Mast, M. (2002b) Female dominance hierarchies: Are they any different from males? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28(1).
- Scollon, R. (2001) *Mediated Discourse: The Nexus of Practice*, London and New York, NY: Routledge.
- Seidlhofer, B. (2004) Research perspectives on teaching English as a lingua franca. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 24.
- Seidlhofer, B. (2005) English as a lingua franca. *ELT Journal*, 59(4).
- Shapiro, M. (2002) Generalizability in communication research. *Human Communication Research*, 28(4).
- Shriberg, E., A. Stolcke, and D. Baron (2001) Observations on overlap: Findings and implications for automatic processing of multi-party conversation. *Proceedings of Eurospeech*, 2.
- Sicha, C. (2009, May 18) The Real World: Brooklyn. For real. *The New York Observer*, Retrieved June 7, 2010 from <http://www.observer.com/2008/real-world-brooklyn-real>.
- Singh, I. (1999) Language and ethnicity. In I. Singh and J. Stilwell Peccei (Eds.), *Language, Society and Power: An Introduction*, London: Routledge.
- Smith-Lovin, L. and Brody, C (1989) Interruptions in group discussion: The effects of gender and group composition. *American Sociological Review*, 54.
- Sotillo, S. and Wang-Gempp, J. (2004) Using corpus linguistics to investigate class, ideology and discursive practices in online political discussions. *Language and Computers*, 32.
- Spencer-Oatey, H. (2007) Theories of identity and the analysis of face. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 39.
- Stewart, S. (1997) *The Many Faces of Conversational Laughter*. Paper presented at the 9<sup>th</sup> annual Conference on Linguistics and Literature, Denton, TX.

- Stivers, T. (2004) "No no no" and other types of multiple sayings in social interaction. *Human Communication Research*, 30(2).
- Stocksmeier, T., Kopp, S. and Gibbon, D. (2007) *Synthesis of Prosodic Attitudinal Variants in German Backchannel Ja*. Paper presented at the 8<sup>th</sup> annual Interspeech Convention, Antwerp, Belgium.
- Stokoe, E.H. (2005) Analysing gender and language. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 9(1).
- Stubbe, M., Lane, C., Hilder, J., Vine, E., Vine, B., Marra, M., Holmes, J. and Weatherall, A. (2003) Multiple discourse analyses of a workplace interaction. *Discourse Studies*, 5.
- Sunderland, J. and Litosseliti, L. (2002) Gender identity and discourse analysis: Theoretical and empirical considerations. In L. Litosseliti and J. Sunderland (Eds.), *Gender Identity and Discourse Analysis*, Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Swann, J. (1998) Talk control: An illustration from the classroom of problems in analysing male dominance of conversation. In J. Coates (Ed.), *Language and Gender: A Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Taboada, M. (2006) Spontaneous and non-spontaneous turn-taking. *Pragmatics*, 16(2-3).
- Taguchi, N. (2008) Cognition, language contact, and pragmatic comprehension. *Language Learning*, 58(1).
- Talbot, M. (2010) *Language and Gender*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Tannen, D. (1984) *Conversational Style: Analyzing Talk among Friends*, Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Tannen, D. (1989) *Talking Voices*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tannen, D. (1993) The relativity of linguistic strategies: Rethinking power and solidarity in gender and dominance. In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Gender and Conversational Interaction*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Tannen, D. (1994) *Talking from 9 to 5*, New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, Inc.
- Tannen, D. (1995) The power of talk, *Harvard Business Review*, September-October.
- Tannen, D. (2001) The relativity of linguistic strategies: Rethinking power and solidarity in gender and dominance. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor

and S. Yates (Eds.), *Discourse Theory and Practice*, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

- TESOL Task Force on Adult Education (2003) *Standards for Adult ESL Programs*, Alexandria, VA: TESOL, Inc.
- Thomas, J. (2006) Cross-cultural pragmatic failure. In K. Bolton and B. Kachru (Eds.), *World Englishes: Critical Concepts in Linguistics*, New York, NY: Routledge.
- Thornborrow, J. (1999) Language and identity. In I. Singh and J. Stilwell Peccei (Eds.), *Language, Society, and Power: An Introduction*, London: Routledge.
- Thornborrow, J. (2002) *Power Talk: Language and Interaction in Institutional Discourse*, London: Pearson Education.
- Thornbury, S. and Slade, D. (2006) *Conversation: From Description to Pedagogy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Threadgold, T. (2003) Cultural studies, critical theory and Critical Discourse Analysis: Histories, remembering and futures. *Linguistik Online*, 14(2).
- Titscher, S., Meyer, M., Wodak, R. and Vetter, E (2000) *Methods of Text and Discourse Analysis*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Trester, A. (2009) Discourse marker 'oh' as a means for realizing the identity potential of constructed dialogue in interaction. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 13(2).
- Troemel-Ploetz, S. (2002) The construction of conversational equality by women. In K. Hall, M. Bucholtz and B. Moonwoman (Eds.), *Locating Power: Proceedings of the Second Berkeley Women and Language Conference, April 4 and 5, 2002*, Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Women and Language Group.
- Trosborg, A. (2003) The teaching of business pragmatics. In A. Martínez-Flor, E. Uso-Juan and A. Fernández-Guerra (Eds.), *Pragmatic Competence and Foreign Language Teaching*, Valencia: Universitat Jaume.**
- Trudgill, P. (1974) *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society*, Middlesex: Penguin.
- van Dijk, T. (1985) Introduction: Levels and dimensions of discourse analysis. In T. van Dijk (Ed.), *Handbook of Discourse Analysis, Volume 2: Dimensions of Discourse*, London: Academic Press.

- van Dijk, T. (1996) Discourse, power and access. In C. Caldas-Coulthard and M. Coulthard (Eds.), *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis*, London: Routledge.
- van Dijk, T. (2001) Multidisciplinary CDA: A plea for diversity. In M. Meyer and R. Wodak (Eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- van Dijk, T. (2006) Discourse, context and cognition. *Discourse Studies*, 8.
- van Leeuwen, T. (2004) 10 reasons why linguists should pay attention to visual communication. In P. LeVine and R. Scollon (Eds.), *Discourse and Technology*, Washington: Georgetown University Press.
- van Leeuwen, T. (2005) *Introducing Social Semiotics*, London: Routledge.
- Vasquez, C. and Sharpless, D. (2009) The role of pragmatics in the Master's TESOL curriculum: Findings from a nationwide survey. *TESOL Quarterly*, 43(1).
- Vellenga, H. (2004) Learning pragmatics from ESL and EFL textbooks: How likely? *TESL-EJ*, 8(2).
- Wales, K. (1996) *Personal Pronouns in Present Day English*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Walker, G. (2004) Increments to turns in talk in interaction. In E. Couper-Kuhlen and C. Ford (Eds.), *Sound Patterns in Interaction*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Weatherall, A. (2000) Gender relevance in talk-in-interaction and discourse. *Discourse and Society*, 11(2).
- Weatherall, A. (2002) *Gender, Language and Discourse*, London: Routledge.
- Weatherall, A. (2007) Feminist psychology, conversation analysis and empirical research: An illustration using identity categories. *Gender and Language*, 1(2).
- Weber, E. (1993) *Varieties of Questions in English Conversation*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Wellington, J. (2000) *Educational Research: Contemporary Issues and Practical Approaches*, London: Continuum.
- Wells, B. and Macfarlane, S. (1998) Prosody as an interactional resource: Turn-projection and overlap. *Language and Speech*, 41(3-4).

- Wenger, E. (1998) *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wennerstrom, A. (2001) *The Music of Everyday Speech: Prosody and Discourse Analysis*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- West, C. and Zimmerman, D.H. (1985) Gender, language, and discourse. In T. van Dijk (Ed.), *Handbook of Discourse Analysis, Volume 4*, London: Academic Press.
- Wetherell, M. (1998) Positioning and interpretative repertoires: Conversation analysis and post-structuralism in dialogue. *Discourse and Society*, 9(3).
- Wetherell, M. (2007) A step too far: Discursive psychology, linguistic ethnography and questions of identity. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 11(5).
- Wichmann, A. (2007) Reviews. *Language in Society*, 36.
- Wichmann, A. (2000) *Intonation in Text and Discourse*, New York, NY: Longman.
- Widdowson, H. (1994) The ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(2)
- Widdowson H. (1995) Discourse analysis: A critical review, *Language and Literature* 4(3).
- Wigglesworth, G. and Yates, L. (2007) Mitigating difficult requests in the workplace: What learners and teachers need to know. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41(4).
- Wodak, R. (2001) What CDA is about – A summary of its history, important concepts, and its developments. In M. Meyer and R. Wodak (Eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Wodak, R. (2006) Mediation between discourse and society: Assessing cognitive approaches in CDA. *Discourse Studies*, 8.
- Wong, D. and Peters, P. (2007) A study of backchannels in regional varieties of English, using corpus mark-up as the means of identification. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 12(4).
- Wong, J. (2000) The token “yeah” in nonnative speaker English conversation. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 33(1).
- Wood, L.A. and Kroger, R.O. (2000) *Doing Discourse Analysis*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

- Wooffitt, R. (2005) *Conversation Analysis and Discourse Analysis: A Comparative and Critical Introduction*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Ygnve, V.E. (1970) On getting a work in edgewise. *Papers from the 6<sup>th</sup> Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society*, Chicago: CLS.
- Young, R.F. and J. Lee (2004) Identifying units in interaction: Reactive tokens in Korean and English conversations. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 8(3).
- Young, R. (2008) Discursive practice in language learning and teaching, *Language Learning*, 58.
- Yu, M. (2008) Teaching and learning sociolinguist skills in university EFL classes in Taiwan. *TESOL Quarterly*, 42(1).
- Yule, G. (1996) *Pragmatics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zimmerman, D, and West, C. (1975) Sex roles, interruptions and silences in conversation. In B. Thorne and N. Henley (Eds.), *Language and Sex: Difference and Domination*, Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers, Inc.

## **Appendix 1 – *The Real World***

*The Real World* is a reality television program produced by Music Television (MTV) in the USA. *The Real World* has aired annually since its inception in 1992 and has prompted off-shoots, product lines, film careers and presidential commentary. *The Real World* has been both lauded and criticized for forcing social issues, such as AIDS, race, and religion, into the US living room and consciousness. As the grandfather of American reality television, *The Real World* has undoubtedly not only impacted entertainment but also the social landscape in the USA.

The premise of *The Real World* can be best summarized by the opening lines of each episode: “This is the true story of seven strangers, picked to live in a house and have their lives taped, and find out what happens when people stop being polite and start getting real.” In fact, seven young people who have never met each other before are selected by MTV producers to live together for several months in one house. The roommates are deliberately chosen from diverse backgrounds; the cast members are gay, lesbian, and straight; Latino, African American, Asian American, and white; virginal and promiscuous; teetotalers and substance abusers; and naive and worldly. The roommates live and work together and, as the program introduction implies, the close proximity of their situation coupled with their varied backgrounds spark controversy and debate.

Contrary to the ‘plots’ of most reality television programs, *The Real World* roommates do not compete against each other in any way; there is no “game”. The only people to have left the house midway through filming



either chose to leave because they did not deal well with the pressure of constant scrutiny, or they were forced to leave because they violated their contract by, for instance, striking another cast member. Thus, the conversation captured by *The Real World* is entirely centered around young people living their lives, not around a competition or rivalry.



For my corpus, I pulled conversations from four full seasons and three special programs: *The Real World: New York* (1992), *The Real World You Never Saw: New Orleans* (2000), *The Real World Casting Special* (2001), *The Real World: New York* (2001), *The Real World: Chicago* (2002), *The Real World: Las Vegas* (2003), and *The Real World: Las Vegas Reunion* (2007). For reference, I have compiled a cast list for each program. I have listed the roommates' hometowns, occupations (when known) and ages at the time of filming. I have also added notes about my general impressions of their relationships during their time in *The Real World* houses, as well as any significant events that occurred in the person's life prior to their participation in the program and during filming, such as fights.

I did not include the cast member in this list, if he/she did not appear in any of the clips I used. For instance, in the full season of *The Real World: New Orleans* (2000), there were seven roommates; however, I have omitted Melissa Howard and Jamie Murray from the list below as my corpus does not include any conversations featuring them. In addition, I did not include a cast list from *The Real World Casting Special* (2001), as I was unable to find sufficient information on all of the cast members.








## The Real World: New York 1 (1992)

 <p>Becky Blasband</p>	<p>Hometown: New Hope, Pennsylvania  Age: 24  Occupation: Folk Musician  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>not sure which direction to take in life</li> <li>doesn't form a particularly strong alliance with any one member of the cast</li> </ul>
 <p>Andre Comeau</p>	<p>Hometown: Royal Oak, Michigan  Age: 21  Occupation: Singer in the Rock Band, Reigndance  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>becomes friendly with Julie</li> <li>seems to be a dominant member in his band</li> </ul>
 <p>Heather Gardner</p>	<p>Hometown: Jersey City, New Jersey  Age: 21  Occupation: Hip Hop Artist in the group Boogie Down Productions  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>seems to get on well with all of the cast members</li> <li>gets into a fight with a guest at a party in the loft and is arrested, but no charges are pressed</li> </ul>
 <p>Julie Gentry</p>	<p>Hometown: Birmingham, Alabama  Age: 18  Occupation: Aspiring Dancer  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is naïve but also curious and interested in different life experiences</li> <li>has a flirtatious relationship with Eric at the beginning</li> <li>has an early friendly relationship with Kevin, but gets into a fight with him near the end of the season</li> </ul>
 <p>Norman Korpi</p>	<p>Hometown: Williamstown, Michigan  Age: 25  Occupation: Artist  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>comes out to other cast members</li> <li>has a serious relationship</li> <li>appears to get on well with other roommates</li> </ul>
 <p>Eric Nies</p>	<p>Hometown: Ocean Township, New Jersey  Age: 21  Occupation: Model  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>had a troubled childhood (got into trouble with the law)</li> <li>has a flirtatious relationship with Julie at the start</li> <li>has a fight with Kevin mid-way through the season</li> <li>lives in New York and has a support system of friends there</li> </ul>
 <p>Kevin Powell</p>	<p>Hometown: Jersey City, New Jersey  Age: 25  Occupation: Writer  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has a difficult relationship with all of the other cast members</li> <li>appears intolerant, angry and conservative</li> </ul>

## The Real World You Never Saw: New Orleans (2000)

 <p>David Broom</p>	<p>Hometown: Chicago, Illinois  Age: 22  Occupation: Singer  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is conservative and religious, but also promiscuous</li> <li>• has ambition (aspired to be the first black president)</li> <li>• tends to avoid conflict with roommates by not being around often</li> </ul>
 <p>Kelley Limp</p>	<p>Hometown: Fayetteville, Arkansas  Age: 21  Occupation: Student  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• belonged to a sorority</li> <li>• develops an especially close relationship with Danny</li> </ul>
 <p>Danny Roberts</p>	<p>Hometown: Rockmart, Georgia  Age: 22  Occupation: Unknown  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is gay, but does not feel a part of the homosexual community in Atlanta</li> <li>• develops a close relationship with Kelley</li> <li>• is dating a service member in the US military while filming</li> </ul>
 <p>Matt Smith</p>	<p>Hometown: Hiawasee, Georgia  Age: 21  Occupation: Student / Web Designer  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• comes from a very conservative Catholic background</li> <li>• doesn't drink, smoke or believe in premarital sex</li> <li>• does not return Julie's feelings for him</li> <li>• is a fan of hip hop</li> </ul>
 <p>Julie Stoffer</p>	<p>Hometown: Delafield, Wisconsin  Age: 21  Occupation: Student  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is a Mormon who violates her conservative College's honor code by appearing on the show</li> <li>• has a crush on Matt</li> <li>• has a strained relationship with her father</li> </ul>

## The Real World: New York 2 (2001)








 <p>Rachel Braband</p>	<p>Hometown: Orland Park, Illinois  Age: 19  Occupation: Student  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has been sheltered by her overprotective mother and is rather immature</li> <li>• is bullied by Coral and Nicole</li> </ul>
 <p>Malik Cooper</p>	<p>Hometown: Berkeley, California  Age: Unknown  Occupation: Student  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has a romantic relationship with Nicole which goes sour during filming</li> <li>• has a relationship with Jisela of Road Rules (another MTV reality show)</li> <li>• develops a close relationship with Kevin and Mike</li> </ul>
 <p>Kevin Dunn</p>	<p>Hometown: Austin Texas  Age: Unknown  Occupation: Student  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is a survivor of testicular cancer</li> <li>• has a flirtatious relationship with Lori, but doesn't really share her feelings</li> <li>• develops a close relationship with Malik and Mike</li> </ul>
 <p>Nicole Jackson</p>	<p>Hometown: Wilmette, Illinois  Age: 22  Occupation: Web Entrepreneur  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gets along well with all the roommates</li> <li>• has a romantic relationship with Malik which goes sour during filming</li> </ul>
 <p>Mike Mizanin</p>	<p>Hometown: Parma, Ohio  Age: 20  Occupation: Aspiring Wrestler ("the Miz")  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• battles with Coral at the beginning of the season; near the end, they become close</li> <li>• develops a close relationship with Malik and Kevin</li> </ul>
 <p>Coral Smith</p>	<p>Hometown: San Francisco, California  Age: 21  Occupation: Part Time Student / Nanny  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has a very strong personality</li> <li>• is close to Nicole</li> <li>• fights with Mike and bullies Rachel at the beginning of the season</li> </ul>
 <p>Lori Trespicio</p>	<p>Hometown: Roseland, New Jersey  Age: 21  Occupation: Vocal Student  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is an aspiring singer</li> <li>• has a crush on Kevin</li> </ul>

## The Real World: Chicago (2002)

 <p>Chris Beckman</p>	<p>Hometown: Brockton, Massachusetts  Age: 24  Occupation: Artist  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is gay and has a relationship while filming</li> <li>• is an alcoholic</li> <li>• works as a model and bartender during the season</li> </ul>
 <p>Kyle Brandt</p>	<p>Hometown: Lincolnshire, Illinois  Age: 23  Occupation: Student and Aspiring Actor  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develops a flirtatious relationship with Keri despite having a serious girlfriend back home</li> <li>• has a friendly relationship with Chris and Theo</li> </ul>
 <p>Tonya Cooley</p>	<p>Hometown: Walla Walla, Washington  Age: 21  Occupation: Nursing Student  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• suffers from kidney problems</li> <li>• grew up in the foster care system</li> <li>• has a serious boyfriend at home</li> <li>• has a reputation as being whiney, needy and overly dramatic</li> </ul>
 <p>Keri Evans</p>	<p>Hometown: New Orleans, Louisiana  Age: 22  Occupation: Student  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has a flirtatious relationship with Kyle</li> <li>• gets homesick when her relationship doesn't work out</li> <li>• appears to get along well with the others in the house</li> </ul>
 <p>Aneesa Ferreira</p>	<p>Hometown: Narberth, Pennsylvania  Age: 20  Occupation: Unknown  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dates women and has two relationships while filming</li> <li>• has no patience with Tonya and talks behind her back</li> <li>• fights with her mother frequently because her mother won't accept her sexuality</li> </ul>
 <p>Theo Gantt III</p>	<p>Hometown: Riverside, California  Age: 19  Occupation: Student  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• comes from a conservative, religious background</li> <li>• disapproves of homosexuality, but has a friendly relationship with Aneesa and Chris</li> <li>• clashes with several of the roommates, but is quick to apologize</li> </ul>
 <p>Cara Kahn</p>	<p>Hometown: Boston, Massachusetts  Age: 22  Occupation: Student  Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has spent most of her adult life in relationships</li> <li>• gets along well with the other roommates</li> </ul>



## The Real World: Las Vegas (2002 - 2003) &amp; Las Vegas Reunion (2007)

 <p>Trishelle Cannatella</p>	<p>Hometown: Cut Off, Louisiana Age: 22 Occupation: Actress Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• comes from a conservative, religious family</li> <li>• has an on / off relationship with Steven</li> <li>• gets her first acting gig during the season</li> </ul>
 <p>Arisa Hill</p>	<p>Hometown: Malden, Massachusetts Age: 22 Occupation: Model Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• very close to Irulan until they fall out while living together (with Alton) after filming the first season</li> <li>• has a short temper and gets angry when people are inconsiderate</li> </ul>
 <p>Steven Hill</p>	<p>Hometown: San Marcos, Texas Age: 23 Occupation: Student and bartender at a gay bar Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is divorced</li> <li>• has an on / off relationship with Trishelle</li> <li>• is close to Alton and Frank</li> </ul>
 <p>Frank Roessler</p>	<p>Hometown: Louisburg, Pennsylvania Age: 22 Occupation: Student Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• seems a bit naive and is self confessed mama's boy</li> <li>• had a crush on Trishelle at the beginning of the season</li> <li>• close to Steven and Alton</li> </ul>
 <p>Brynn Smith</p>	<p>Hometown: Portland, Oregon Age: 21 Occupation: Unknown Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fights with Trishelle</li> <li>• has a crush on Steven at the beginning of the episode</li> <li>• gets married and has a baby before the reunion special</li> </ul>
 <p>Alton Williams</p>	<p>Hometown: San Diego, California Age: 22 Occupation: Unknown Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is close to Frank and Steve</li> <li>• has several one night stands</li> <li>• becomes romantically involved with Irulan but that falls apart by the reunion special</li> </ul>
 <p>Irulan Wilson</p>	<p>Hometown: The Bronx, New York Age: 21 Occupation: Design Student Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• very close to Arissa until they fall out while living together (with Alton) after filming the first season</li> <li>• has a romantic relationship with Alton until after the first season</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2 – My Framework for Analysis

### When does speaker talk end and listener talk begin?

5. Backchannel responses
  - a.
6. Other multi-modal data
  - a. Visual images associated
    - i.
  - b. Active listening in other modes
    - i.
7. Intent of active listening attempt (genuinely supportive or otherwise)
  - a.
8. Speaker perception of threat (“hitches and perturbations”)
  - a. Increasing volume
  - b. Adjusting pitch
  - c. Quickening or slowing the pace of speech
  - d. Sudden silencing
  - e. Elongating a subsequent sound
  - f. Repeating

### Are failed active listening attempts more common in conversations between different genders?

1. Floor saving strategies and gender of the participants
  - a.

### How do different listening behaviors associated with the enactment of gendered identities contribute to the failures of active listening attempts?

4. Explicit reference to gender
  - a.
5. Subtle reference to gender
  - a. Euphemisms
    - i.
  - b. Informal Words
    - i.
  - c. Relational modality
    - i.
  - d. Pronouns *you* and *we*
    - i.
  - e. Individuals outside the text
    - i.
  - f. Other references?
    - i.
6. Motifs (in terms of gendered identity)

What can be generalized about power by the adherence to and understanding of the “rules” that govern listeners and speakers?

14. Conversational Purpose
  - a. Conversationalists short term goals
    - i.
  - b. Conversationalists long term goals
    - i.
15. Didactic status of conversationalists
  - a.
16. Agent roles of the conversationalists
  - a.
17. Modes
  - a.
18. “I” statements
  - a.
19. Positive and negative evaluations
  - a.
20. Expressive modality
  - a.
21. Ability of listener to share in creation of text
  - a.
22. Interactional conventions
  - a.
23. Control of topic
  - a.
24. Offering of the floor
  - a.
25. Contextual factors
  - a.
26. Personality
  - a.



## Appendix 3 - Spreadsheet Sample

	Short Term Goals: Speaker	Short Term Goals: Listeners	Long Term Goals: Speaker	Long Term Goals: Listeners	D/S Speaker = Power	D/S Listener = Power	Agent Roles
1	Eric: to give information	Others: to listen / Julie: to respond	Eric: to create a persona as sexually experienced, but emotional at the same time	All: to create an image / Julie and Eric: to flirt /	Eric is initially in control	Andrei is a peripheral player / Julie gains power through her supportive role	Conversationalists / Possible romantic interests
2	Heather: to entertain	Norman: to entertain / Julie: to listen	Heather: possibly to avoid hearing Norman	Norman: to communicate about his sexuality / Julie: to facilitate that communication	Heather has social power by ignoring Norman's message	Norman undermines Heather and is in control of the conversation	Conversationalists / friends
3	Eric: to warn Taryn that he is different from the other guys she has dated	Taryn: to communicate acceptance to Eric	Eric: to appear attractive to Taryn	Taryn: to appear attractive to Eric	Eric is communicating a message about his image, but it appears that he wants Taryn's approval. He has conversational control.	Taryn has the social power because she gets to decide if she will accept Eric	Conversationalists / Romantic interests
4	Artist: to keep the attention of the listener and to sound funny and whimsical	Becky: to appear to fit in / Julie: to distance herself from the scene	Artist: to sell art	Becky: to fit into the art scene of New York / Julie: to try a new experience	The artist is in his element, and he is the "expert" so he has the power (Becky accepts this, but Julie rejects it)	Julie might gain some power through her rejection of the artist	Conversationalists / potential customers (?)
5	Eric: to win the support of his two friends, to explain his position, and to plan his next move	Friend 2: to support Eric and give him advice / Friend 1: to give some advice	Eric: to come across as a person who doesn't consider race	Friend 2: possibly to cement his relationship with Eric / Friend 1: Perhaps he wants to support his friend without being disloyal to his own race	Eric is in control of the conversation	Friend 2 is an active listener / Friend 1 is really the "expert" at the able, but he is unwilling to participate actively	Conversationalists / Friends
6	Darleen: to show what her life is like / The Man: to defend himself / Both: to impress Julie(?)	Julie: to listen and learn about life on the street	Darleen: possibly to make someone understand how her drug addiction is affecting her life / The Man: to come out of the conversation in a positive light		Darleen and the Man might be equal, or Darleen might be of a lower status because she has been in the powerless position of trading sex for drugs	Julie might be seen as having higher social status because she is not homeless and she is a guest	Conversationalists / Darleen and Julie have a new friendship / Darleen and the man may be acquaintances or friends
7	Andrei: to listen and offer support / to find out information about Julie's family	Julie: to explain about her family		Julie: to figure out / explain why she doesn't get along with her mother / to escape the "good southern girl image" / to get support from Andrei	Andrei appears to have the power because he has a closer relationship with his mother	Julie is making Andrei pull it out of her when clearly she is willing to talk about it	Conversationalists / Friends / Advice Giver & Seeker
8	Julie: to tell her story / Heather: to tell what she knows	Eric & Heather: to support Julie	Julie: to create allies	Heather and Eric: to ally with Julie	Julie may temporarily have higher status as the victim and center of attention	Heather also has power as she has information to share as well	Conversationalists / Allies
9	Andrei: to play music and to entertain each other	All: to play music and to entertain each other	ALL: To sell records and to remain friends			Andrei may have slightly more power (it is his band and his show) but Todd allows him that	Conversationalists / band members / friends
10	Becky and Kevin: to give information and advice about growing up Steven: to create a favorable impression / to make sure Trishelle does not view him as inexperienced	Eric: to get advice	Kevin and Eric: to cement their friendship / Becky and Kevin: to appear like experts in this context	Eric: to reach the level of adulthood described	Becky and Kevin hold the power as they are the "experts"		Roommates / Friends with a difficult past / Mentors & mentee
11	Steven: to bond with Alton / to clarify his message / to explain Brynn's anger	Trishelle: to create a favorable impression	Steven: to create an image / to give information about himself / to flirt	Trishelle: to create an image / to flirt	Steven controls & Trishelle is mostly complicit		New acquaintances
12	Steven: to bond with Alton / to clarify his message / to explain Brynn's anger	Alton: to bond / to listen	Steven: to avoid looking like the bad guy	Alton: to get more information / to support Steven as a man	Steven has the power		New roommates / Potential friends and allies
13	Frank: to give information	Alton & Steven: to listen	Frank: to create an image / to bond / to appear savvy	Steven & Alton: to create an image / to bond	Frank holds court		Roommates / Allies
14	Steven: to entertain and to send a message to Brynn / Alton: to entertain		Steven and Alton: to create an image associated with "manly" desire / to bond	Brynn: to distance herself from the other women / to participate in the joke	Steven has power / Alton is an ally		New roommates / Potential friends and allies (Steven and Alton)