Turn Management in Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen*: A Discourse Analysis Study

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ABSTRACT

The study of dramatic dialogue as discourse has caught the attention of researchers in recent times. A defining watershed moment regarding this was the publication in 1974 of Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's framework of turn management for conversation and their notions of turn and turn-taking. Dramatic dialogue is generally considered as a multi-input form and this raises the issue of the distribution of turns and their management. This paper first outlines the theoretical framework of Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's notion of turn management before discussing the contribution that turn-taking patterns make to the understanding of situation and characters in plays. The paper then analyses an extract from Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen* (1991) using the theoretical insights from Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's framework of turn management and shows how turn-taking choices affect the reader's interpretation of the characters' speech.

Keywords: Turn, turn management; turn-taking; turn-grabs; turn allocation; turn order; turn size and texture

The study of dramatic dialogue as discourse, i.e., as an organised system of interaction, is a complex matter as it involves various frameworks of analysis (Herman, *Dramatic Discourse* 3). But, central to the dynamics of interaction is the concept of the turn,which can generally be interpreted as the enactment of a speaker's right to speak by taking an opportunity to speak in a speech event or situation (Herman, "Turn Management" 19). According to Vimala Herman, when a speaker speaks, he or she takes a turn at speech and as speech alternates, turns alternate as well ("Turn Management" 19). However, the distribution of turns has to be managed to mitigate the threat of speech disorder when several participants have rights to speak and wish to take turns. The systematics involved in turn-taking and turn management was explored by Discourse Analysts like Harvey Sacks, Emanuel A. Schegloff and Gail Jefferson, especially in their seminal article titled "A Simplest Systematics for the Organisation of Turn-Taking for Conversation", where they attempted to describe the systematic properties involved in turn-taking and turn management in ordinary conversation. After analysing a large body of data, collected from contexts of naturally occurring speech, the analysts revealed that spontaneous conversation was both ordered and orderly, and responsive to unconscious rules which

were being observed by participants in spontaneous talk (Sacks *etal*. 699). Generalizing over the common features observed, a systematics for turn-taking in conversation was proposed, which is composed of two components: (a) the turn-allocational component (Sacks *etal*. 703) and (b) the turn-constructional component (Sacks *etal*. 702).

The turn-allocational component regulates the changeover of turns (Herman, "Turn Management" 20). Generally, a turn change proceeds smoothly – one participant talks, stops, the next participant talks, stops, and so on. But, there can be conflict at the changeover point which is also termed as the Transition Relevance Place (hereafter TRP) (Sacks *etal*. 703). A 'one-party-speaks-at-a-time' rule states that where there is interruption of the current speaker's turn or the overlapping of speech either at the end or the beginning of turns which means that the current speaker will drop out so that the next speaker can proceed with his or her turn (Herman, "Turn Management" 20). On the other hand, in the opinion of Vimala Herman, where this is not the case and overlaps hold across the current speaker's turn, according to the 'one-party-speaks-at-a-time' rule, it could be assessed as conflict ("Turn Management" 20). Nevertheless, at any cost, turns have to be surrendered, so that the alternating course of the dialogic structure of turns comes into existence for the interactive possibilities of dialogue to be continued.

Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson opine that the changeover of turns can be accomplished in different ways (703). Firstly, the current speaker can select the next speakerby indicating preference, such as by naming, by the use ofpronouns or address forms, by pointing, by eye contact, etc. Secondly, the next speaker can self-select himself or herself by starting to produce a turn (Sacks *etal*. 703). The selected speaker may not respond so that there is aturn-lapseand the current speaker can incorporate the ensuing silence as lapseinto current turn and transform it into a pause, and continue with the turn (Herman, "Turn Management" 20). The current speaker can attempt to relinquish the turn at the next TRP by using either of thetwo methods described above. In the case of a lapsed turn, the silence thatfollows is regarded as an attributablesilence and is attributed to the lapser as hisor her silence. Turn-allocational strategies can construct the orderof turns through the various next speaker selection strategies mentioned above. They can control the turn order adopted. The turn order is significant as who speaks to whom and who is not spoken to within a given speech situation can colour the way in which the situation itself develops (Herman, "Turn Management" 21).

The turn-constructional component controls the size or length and the linguistic structure of a turn (Herman, "Turn Management" 21). Long speeches require conciliation, and in conversation, when speakers require extra turn time they usually signal the need. They attempt to get confirmation prior to taking a long turn, which is evident in instances when speakers wish to describe some personal experience. Requests for the floor are made and if the requests are accepted, the description proceeds. Long turns generally place the danger of listening on the part of listeners and, hence, should be used judiciously since there might be the threats of boredom, hostility etc. on the part of listeners. Long turns also block access to the floor for other potential speakers and can, therefore, function as a ploy for dominance, exclusion, intimidation etc depending on whether countermeasures are undertaken in response (Herman, "Turn Management" 21).

Short turns are also dependent on the responsive dimension for their value in interaction. Short turns could be used to signify indifference, urgency, the need for extra information if questions are asked in progression on the same topic and so on. Various speech repertoires and styles could be used to vary the linguistic structure of the turn. Different registers, markers of formality or informality, fluency or disfluency, dialects, code-switching, bilingualism, one-word versus multi-clause turns, poetic or rhetorical styles etc. could be used as the situation demands.

In the opinion of Herman, turns have a joint orientation to the topic of talk ("Turn Management" 22). Successive turns and speakers can orientate jointly to develop a topic or negotiate change or closure. Turns in sequence have a projective and a retroactive dimension (Herman, "Turn Management" 22). They can point back to a previous turn for instance, when an answer is given to a question asked in a previous turn; which can be considered as the retroactive dimension of a turn. On the other hand, turns can limit the nature of the next turn for example, when a speaker issues a

greeting to another; this can be considered as the projective dimension of a turn. But turn skips are also possible for example, when one speaker does not orientate to a previous speaker's turn, but orientates to topics raised in his or her own, this involves skipping the other's turn. Thus, although each participant takes a turn alternatively, a double string of talk running more or less independently can also occur. Thus different degrees of co-operativeness are possible.

The turn-taking system described above provides one set of conventions for the conversational 'floor' (Edelsky 189) and the rules which help in managing the turns within it. The floor in turn-taking system is a complex concept and is understood differently by different analysts (Edelsky 205). The most usual usage is to equate turn and floor, so that taking a turn involves taking or having the floor (Edelsky 205). In the opinion of Edelsky, there are two kinds of floor – one is the usually orderly, 'one-at-a-time' type of floor and the other is a collaborative venture where two or more people either took part in an apparent 'free-for-all' type of floor or jointly built an idea operating on the same wavelength (Edelsky 189).

The 'one-at-a-time' type of floor requirement in the turn-taking model described above privileges the single speaker and its turn, which assumes centrality and becomes the focus of attention for others (Herman, "Turn Management" 23). The result is that a focused and homogeneous floor results through turn-taking rules which safeguard the requirement. Where there are dual starts, for instance, one speaker must drop out so that the sequence of taking the turn can be maintained and the turn can proceed untarnished by other speakers. Interruption and overlap are, therefore, considered as competition for the floor in this model. And, in most cases, these conventions seem to operate as envisaged, not for the fact that participants wish to hear what the speaker has to say (Herman, "Turn Management" 23).

The 'Free-for-all' type of floor, on the other hand, as Edelsky mentions, are characterized by much simultaneous speech with partial or full overlapsenacting collaboration of a different kind, with multiple speakers using the same next turn in order to contribute to the development of an idea and thereby displaying that they are on the same wavelength (217). Collaboration in this kind of floor uses simultaneous speech and overlaps positively whereas these aspects are generally negatively assessed in 'one-at-a-time' type of floor. The 'free-for-all' floor is mostly multi-dimensional than linear, with different kinds of speech business proceeding simultaneously with overlaps and simultaneous speech which are not seen as conflict (Herman, "Turn Management" 23). The central speaker role is more limited in this kind of floor. Self-selection, in the 'free-for-all' floor, may show that multiple speakers speaking at a time trying to focus on a turn jointly as a mode of joint collaboration. The erstwhile hearers, as speakers, may develop their own line of thought in speech tandem with others without a sense of conflict. In order to negotiate their goals in speech, the turn-holders may often speak in unison with others either sharing common goals with different utterances or even with the same utterance.

Different floor conventions generate different turn-taking strategies that they authorise as normal (Herman, "Turn Management" 23). The 'one-at-a-time' floor grants a pivotal role to the lonespeaker, with collaboration interpreted as respect of the speaker's rights. Others are shown as non-speaking hearers who change their role to speakers with the same turn rights. A linear path of development follows with interruptions, overlaps etc. are negotiated economically so that the speaker may proceed with his or her turn. Any distraction of the speaker's rights by another speaker is generally seen as a conflict. The focus of this paper is on the single floor and its rules and conventions, and the exploration of these in drama since the 'one-at-a-time' type of floor is more commonly exploited on in drama.

The 'one-at-a-time' kind of floor and the turn-management strategies that construct it are the prevailing ways of organising speech in drama. However, within this overall structure, the use of turn-lapses, pauses, gaps, interruptions, overlaps etc. also make their appearance (Herman, *Dramatic Discourse* 92). The use of these strategies brings significant elements of meaning which can condition the content and function of what is said or meant by a speaker's speech. For instance, when a dramatic character is consistently interrupted or the opportunity to speak is consistently denied to him or her

and the attempt(s) to speak is unsuccessful, the interrupted speaker can be considered as the less powerful interlocutor. Similarly, when there are dual starts for a turn and it becomes a consistent tactic which does not succeed in gaining the floor, the situation thus developed by the use of this strategy can highlight a character's ineffectuality. Consistent turn-lapses on the part of a targeted other who is addressed by a speaker can indicate indifference, boredom, hostility, the desire to be left in peace, opting out, etc. and bring in negative tones into the interaction (Herman, "Turn Management" 24).

In floors of this kind, the speech event can colour the situation and interpretation of those who are jointly involved in creating the speech event turn by turn. The following are all variables in the system:

(a) who speaks to whom,
(b) who is not spoken to,
(c) who listens or doesn't listen,
(d) whether listeners are responsive in turn or not,
(e) whether those who respond are those targeted by the speaker or not,
(f) length of speeches,
(g) linguistic style and texture of a character's speech,
(h) how changeovers are effected, and
(i) the uses of silences, either intra-turn or inter-turn.

In this way, the situation, event and character are developed with the help of speech event whether speech alternation is blocked or progresses in troubled or untroubled fashion.

In the analysis of the extract (from Mahesh Dattani's play *Bravely Fought the Queen*) given below, the variables in the turn-taking system will be identified and the specific patterns and choices of uses will be interpreted for what they contribute to a reader's understanding of the dramatic situation they construct. The focus is on the use of the turn-taking system and the turn management strategies used, and how they contribute to the understanding of this extract. There are six major dramatic characters in the play – JitenTrivedi, NitinTrivedi, Dolly Trivedi, AlkaTrivedi, Lalitha and Sridhar. The Trivediborthers, Jiten and Nitin, are married to the sisters, Dolly and Alka respectively. Sridhar, who works for the Trivedis, is married to Lalita. "The play", as KuthariChaudhuri points out, "dramatizes the emptiness and sham in the lives of its cloistered women and self-indulgent, unscrupulous men, blurring the lines between fantasy and reality, standing on the brink of terrible secrets, deception and hypocrisies" (32). In Act III (titled 'Free for All!') of the play, from which the extract below has been has been taken, the claustrophobic 'female' world of Act I and the 'male' world of business of Act II clash and collapse, stripping the family of the Trivedis of its veneer and everyone standing "exposed to unpalatable realities of abuse, alchoholism, adultery and homosexuality as a fallout of the war on the home front" (33). The turns are numbered for reference.

THE EXTRACT

1. ALKA. What's going on?
2. JITEN. You should be answering the question.
3. ALKA. There are no goings-on over here.
4. JITEN. You can fool Nitin, but not me. *(Loaded with innuendo.)* So, what's going on?
5. DOLLY. Stop it, Jiten.
6. LALITHA. Please, Dolly. Could you help us go home?
7. ALKA. Jiten, drop them at an auto stand.
8. LALITHA. Yes, please. It's getting late and...
9. JITEN *(to Lalitha)*. Just shut up!
10. SRIDHAR. That's no way to talk to a lady.
11. JITEN *(to Alka)*. You are clever. You understand what's going to happen to you, don't you?
12. ALKA. Yes.
13. JITEN. Good. I want him to tell it to you.
14. ALKA *(trembling, leans on Dolly for support)*. I want a drink.

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15. JITEN *(smiling)*. Sridhar. Fix your boss's wife a drink.
16. SRIDHAR *(moves to the bar)*. What will she have?
17. JITEN. Rum.
18. SRIDHAR. With anything?
19. JITEN. Might as well drink it neat now.
20. ALKA. Yes.

> *Sridhar pours out rum for her.*

21. DOLLY. Shouldn't... shouldn't we inform Praful?
22. JITEN. In good time. It's not as if somebody has died or anything.
23. DOLLY. Yes. That's true.
24. ALKA. I-I'm feeling cold.
25. DOLLY. You're shivering. (Dattani 302-03)

The turn-taking system proposed by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson is one of the options for turn allocation and to initiate turn change. The current speaker can select the next speaker to whom the turn right passes or the next speaker can self-select or the turn may lapse and the original speaker may incorporate the lapse into his or her own turn as pause and continue with the turn, and try to relinquish it at the next TRP by selecting any one of the options mentioned above. In the above extract, all the three options are used but with different frequencies of occurrence. The two most frequent options used are the current speaker selecting the next speaker and self-selection. But, they often clash since the speaker selected by the current speaker is not the one who speaks next and the next speaker self-selects against the rights to speak of the previously selected speaker. Jiten is the dominant character. Nine of the twenty five turns are Jiten's and Jiten does most of the selection. In Turn 4, Jiten chooses Alka, but Dolly takes Turn 5. Lalitha self-selects in Turn 6, changing the focus and direction of the talk away from Dolly to herself. Lalitha, who self-selects herself in Turn 6, selects Dolly but the latter's turn is taken up by Alka. Again, in Turn 9, Jiten chooses Alka, but Sridhar self-selects himself and takes Turn 10. The self-selections are, therefore, turn-grabs by unauthorised speakers who interject themselves between Jiten and his targets.

Turn-grabs

Turn-grabs can have various functions. Getting oneself involved in an interaction uninvited and against the rights of invited speakers can be either self-orientated, to promote one's own interests, or other-orientated. It appears to be the latter one here. Jiten selects Alka in order to taunt her in one way or another. Thus, the sarcasm directed at Alka in Turn 4 and the potential conflict it can initiate is deflected from developing by Dolly who interjects her own contribution and makes herself Jiten's interlocutor rather than Alka for the next turn, and thereby saves Alka from Jiten's fury. Alka, however, installs herself into the interaction and takes her delayed turn by self-selection, and tells Jiten to drop Sridhar and Lalitha at an auto stand. In turn 10, Sridhar self-selects himself and comes to the rescue of his wife, Lalitha, when she is threatened by Jiten in the previous turn to "shut up". Jiten's Turn 15, addressed to Alka, gets a collective lapse and the silence becomes a gap. This gap is filled in by Sridhar who takes up Turn 16. The gap is demonstrated through the stage direction, i.e., the time taken by Sridhar to move from his initial position to the bar. He interjects himself into the conversation powerfully sideliningAlka in his use of the third person pronoun 'she'in the presence of Alka while taking his turn.

The development of hostility is frustrated by the others self-selecting to speak. Turn-changes in the responsive dimension are actually effected in such a way as to curtail the dominance awarded to Jiten in the frequency of turns. Alka is the most protected in this way, usually by Dolly. Sridhar also acts on Alka's behalf although Alka has her say even in delayed mode.

Turn allocation

In defiance of canonical expectations built into turn-taking rules, Jiten's turn allocation strategies via participant selection are notdesigned only to pass his turn to another. His choice of

addressee is usually politic as he targets, often mid-turn, the addressee most likely to be undermined by his taunts – Alka, in particular. The turn allocational strategy used first targets those he names as the butts of his speech and then the passing of turn to them is challenging and confrontational. Thus, in Turn 4, Jiten answers Alka and addresses the last part of his turn to her, with the sting in the tail specifically directed at her: "...(*Loaded with innuendo*) So, what's going on?" Similarly, in Turn 13, having declared to Alka to whom his turn is addressed that he would prefer Nitin telling her about the 'on goings', he selects Sridhar in Turn 15. In Turns 19 and 22, there are swift changes of addressees from Sridhar to Alka and Alka to Dolly respectively. Dolly is mostly omitted from the scope of the address, as the untargeted addressee, and the conflict and antagonism is directed specifically at Alka.

Turn order

Turn order too reveals unequal distribution of turns among those present. The twenty five turns that constitute the extract can be subdivided into basically two-party interactions in succession, within the six-party floor. Jiten is central to all the interactions and the participant structures in force. All the participants present address Jiten. He is thus the focal point of their speech. They do not address each other and so, quite ironically, no 'free-for-all' floor, in the real sense of the term, ensues. Turn order takes up and drops participants, one at a time, in succession. Thus, Turns 1-4 have Alka–Jiten–Alka–Jiten in interaction. The pattern then changes with Dolly, Lalitha and Sridhar also getting their pieces of turns. The initial sequence again returns in Turn 11 and continues till Turn 15. Dolly takes Alka's Turn 5 and so there is a shift in the turn order, Dolly–Lalitha–Alka–Lalitha –Jiten–Sridhar, but the order reverts to Jiten–Alka again from Turn 11 onwards. Apart from Jiten, Alka is awarded the most number of turns and interactive prominence in the turn distribution pattern used.

Dolly takes Turn 5. She comes in as a protector of Alka who is targeted by Jiten. Dolly comes in uninvited and takes up Alka's turn. Thus it constitutes the first turn-grab of the extract. The turn order is once again disturbed with Lalitha's utterance in Turn 6. She provides a topic-change. The focus now shifts from the household chores to the duties of a host. In Turn 10, Sridhar comes in for the rescue of his wife, Lalitha, who is threatened by Jiten in Turn 9. The Alka-Jiten turn sequence is again seen in Turns 11-15. Although Jiten's Turn 15 is not directly addressed to Alka, she is definitely the referent of the utterance. There is a turn-lapse in Turn 16. This lapse is shown through the stage direction in the form of the time taken by Sridhar to move from his earlier position to the bar. During that time span no one speaks, although the turn was meant for Alka.

Turn change, on the whole, is smoothly achieved. One speaker speaks, stops, and the next speaker speaks, stops, and so on. There is a variation, however, in one interruption, in Lalitha's turn by Jiten in Turn 9. The interruption by the speaker also indicates the dominant position that he enjoys. The two dominant participants, Jiten and Alka, conduct their interactions via a smooth turn change. They give each other a full hearing without any of the two cutting the other short. Smooth turn change, paradoxically, does not produce comity, but facilitates equality between them in the control of the conflict that is enacted between them.

Turn size and texture

Turn size and texture also vary, but not drastically. Jiten's turns are occasionally longer, multi-clause turns which he uses to develop or to intensify some personal point to be delivered to his interlocutor – to Alka in Turn 4 to mock her and in Turn 11, to Alka again, but this time to threaten her. His turns also include many questions, rather than one, or question and comment and so on, although short, one-clause turns are also evident – to express surprise and disbelief, as in "...So, what's going on?"to Alka about the household chores. Jiten is usually the one who dictates turns to others. His dominance is seen in Turn 15, when he orders Sridhar to prepare a drink for Alka. Sridhar revolts against his boss, Jiten, in Turn 10, when the latter treats his wife with disdain in Turn 9, but Sridhar is soon shown his position in Turn 15. Jiten also speaks for Alka on her behalf even in her presence. He answers Sridhar's query when the latter wants to know what drink Alka would like to

have.

Alka's turn-lengths are very short, one clause and even a sentence. She is bullied by Jiten, a wretched patriarchal bully that he is, and she finds shelter in Dolly. She generally answers Jiten in a 'yes' or 'no' manner. The stage directions before Turn 14, shows Alka crossing over to Dolly and leaning on her. This possibly is a reflection of the weakness of her character. The leaning on Dolly is not to be understood only as a much-needed physical help that she seeks but also as a psychological need for an external help. Dolly, in Turn 5, comes to her rescue. Lalitha's turns revolve around her own concern of reaching home safely. She does not seem to be interested in the on-goings in the Trivedi household. In Turn 8, she tries to justify herself as to why she wishes to go home, but is soon interrupted by Jiten: "Yes please. It's getting late and…"

The linguistic style is uniform for all of them – naturalistic, standard language, in informal conversational idiom. Words from everyday language are used. Jiten uses indirect statements mainly to attack Alka. Most of the turn sequence is in the form of question and answer. Topic control is generally in Jiten's hands, and others' turn orientate to his. He is the one who gives turns to others. He is the one who dictates the terms of the conversation.

The variables of the system have thus been used in complex fashion throughout the extract to give cues to interpret both situation and character. The situation is a conflictual one with Jiten central to the conflict. The situation develops in sequential fashion, with Jiten interacting with each of the participants in turn. He is the constant participant with all of them, and all the others' turns are addressed to him, making him the focus of their attention. The majority of turns are also Jiten's, and he also initiates the majority of topics. His speech style is varied and complex, and adapted to his goals in speech, and he often takes marginally longer turns than the others. The others give their limited speech presence and their turns are relatively short in comparison to Jiten.

A detailed examination of this extract from Dattani's *Bravely fought the queen* shows that what is important in interpreting dramatic dialogue is not just the meaning of what is said, but the management of the saying itself, in the judicious use of the variables of the turn-taking system which the dialogue projects.

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