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Review of Conversational Style-Analyzing the Talk among Friends **TANNEN, Deborah**

(Oxford University Press, 2005)

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In the first chapter of the book the author elucidates the reason for writing this book, which is to define the different ways for meeting the balance in involvement with other people in conversation through conversation styles. She comes with the conclusion of two kinds of styles one is which high-involvement used by New Yorkers and high considerateness used by non New Yorkers. It is also stated that there is not objectivity of these styles due the fact that the styles are used only in particular purposes in a particular conversation. To add more to the reasons of author for writing this book, it might be said that different conversational styles are expected to be easily observed in heterogeneous societies where one might be misjudged because of his different conversational style. Therefore the author proposes that one should analyze and know those differences in order to avoid misjudging the other.

In the second chapter, rationale under the analysis of conversational style is given by the author. She justifies her ideas about analysis of conversational style by pulling attention to the interest shown in the analysis of discourse and puts forward the idea that analysis of discourse entails the analysis of conversational styles. Furthermore, the idea that dismissing the possibility of studying conversations since they are diffuse and not quantitative is concluded as ignoring the basic material of the interaction, humanness.

Style in a conversation is emphasized such an important thing because, in a conversation, everything should be said at a certain rate, at a certain pitch and amplitude, at a certain intonation and at a certain place. In addition to this, Sapir (1958:542) included style as the fifth level of speech contributing to judgments of personality.

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Concepts of involvement and considerateness are elaborated in this chapter also. In order to explain these concepts, rules of politeness is mentioned and three principles of the politeness are given which are distance, deference and camaraderie. By looking definitions and examples of these three principles, it might be inferred that there is a parallelism between considerateness and distance and between camaraderie and involvement.

The author is criticized for interpretations that she put on the conversations and the correctness of those interpretations. She, on the other hand, claims that there are lots of possible interpretations about those conversations and hers is just one of them. Besides, she supports her interpretations through giving examples from scripts of the taped conversation. Moreover, she declares that her interpretations are valid by getting the similar reactions from participants of the conversation after having the participants read her own interpretations.

In the third chapter, information about Thanksgiving dinner is supplied such as where the dinner is given, who is going to attend the dinner, who comes the dinner sequentially and how they come, the order of sitting at the table, very detailed demographic information of the participants even their sexual tendencies. Moreover, comments of the participants on taped conversation are given. Besides, topics about which are talked, who participated in these topics most, and how many words are uttered on which subjects are given in a tally. It is also mentioned that, David telling the author that her sister's using the same devices with the author uses while talking to him in a conversation made the author gain a new perspective in the analysis of the conversational styles in the taped conversation on the Thanksgiving dinner.

In the fourth chapter, linguistic devices used by the participants in thanksgiving dinner are explained. One of the devices is usage of *personal versus impersonal topics*. Chad, who is one of the participants, starts not to participate in conversations with the author when the topics include personal things. He contended with only one short answer even when asked by the other participants. Another device is *Enthusiasm constraint*. The author wants Chad to make comment on something; however the author's persistent questions which are her devices interrupt Chad and he gets silent at each interruption. But it is not the same as Steve, who is another participant. While *machine gun questions*, which is another device, has Chad feel on the spot, those questions effect Peter and Steve, who are other participants, positively when they talk about their childhood recollections because the questions paces up the interchanges among speakers which makes the conversation more effective.

Mutual revelation, overlap in speech and pace of speech are the devices which show the enthusiasm and solidarity among speakers. While participants who share the similar background use these devices easily, participants sharing different backgrounds are not able to use them effectively. However, Sally who is one of the participants and a non New Yorker with a different background, expresses that she likes listening to this kind of conversation in which mutual revelation, overlap and high pace are used although she has not participated in such a conversation before.

Usage of *bonding device* in which the main dynamic is among certain people in a conversation is highly expected when participants know each other well such as Peter and the author, Deborah. *Expressive Phonology and Intonation* devices are illustrated by author with marked stress and breathy voice quality in a conversation in which Peter declares his loss of.

Another device is *persistence*. Peter and the author always say what they want even if they are interrupted more than two or three times. An example is given here in which it is told that Peter could tell his joke when every participant tried to sit at the dinner table after fourth try.

The last device mentioned in the book is *Tolerance for Noise* which results from the *persistence* of the three speakers' desire to talk their own topics. Tolerance for silence is stated as a counter argument against *tolerance for noise*. David and Sally are claimed to think that this diffuse and overlapping conversation is weird for them and their intolerance for noise makes it hard for them to participate in such kind of conversation.

In the fifth chapter narrative strategies used by participants are mentioned. Some statistical information is given about who tells the narratives and how many narratives are told by each participant. In addition to this, while some participants start narratives without participating much after starting the story, some both participated and started the narrative. Moreover, some of the narratives are told just for feeling empathy and some are told just to answer a question. Steve is the one who told the narratives without being asked mostly and as a result Peter thinks that Steve dominated the conversation. In *contrasting narrative* strategy, the speaker tells his narrative just for being in the center of the conversation not being part of the flow.

Getting point strategy differs according to the speaker. In the example given in the book, David tells a narrative about adoption and continues it through the questions which are asked to him. However, the end of his narrative is not the same with what Steve expects because Steve thinks that David would give his opinion about adoption. *Impatient and cooperative* prompts are opposite concepts as explained by the author. The speaker may lose his concentration when other participants use the former one; however, the latter one should be used when the speaker pauses while telling narratives.

In the sixth chapter, different types of jokes are mentioned. It is interpreted during the conversations that the author's characteristic style is to build on the humor of another speaker's prior turn. Whereas Steve's irony is *mock annoyed, mock tough, or mock solicitous and dramatized through exaggerated enunciation*, Peter's is *mock serious*.

In the seventh chapter, devices used by participants in conversations are illustrated after the analysis. Moreover, some conclusions are drawn on the basis of the devices utilized by the participants in the Thanksgiving dinner. Steve, Peter and the author are said to use similar devices such as overlapping, pace, personal topics and as a result hold the same style which is high involvement style. However Chad, David and Sally mostly do not tend to use those devices which lead to the conclusion that they hold a high considerateness style. It is added also that, Steve, Peter and Deborah's using the same devices is related with their ethnic and geographic similarities. Lastly it is stated that the study of conversational style is the study of discourse coherence.

In the eighth chapter, future research on coherence in discourse is discussed. While studying discourse coherence, it is claimed that some subjective interpretations may arise. The author, however, suggests that provided that context of the message is analyzed rather than the conversation itself, the objectivity may be attainable. Furthermore, she puts forward three features that should be analyzed when studying discourse which are rhythm, surface structure features and contextualization including ellipsis, figures of speech and imagery.

In the ninth chapter, the author clarifies what she used as cornerstones during her analysis of the conversational styles. She explained that ambiguity and polysemy of the conversational style. In the former one overlap may be intended either as an interruption or as a show of enthusiastic listenership; however, in the latter one it can be intended as both at once. The interplay and power of solidarity which is for understanding how speakers use conversational means to negotiate between power and solidarity and linguistic framing of meaning in interaction which is to account for how speakers signal what they think they are doing when they say a certain thing in a certain way in a certain context.

Taking everything into account, this study is an inspiration source for those who want to analyze different conversational styles. This book gives an outline and frame of such a study which is very hard to conduct. Through such a study, one might reveal how rich a language is in the perspective of consisting different conversational styles.

References

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