

DINNER TALK AT A PAKISTANI RESTAURANT: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

INTRODUCTION

The term 'ethnography of communication' was coined by Dell Hymes in his paper published in 1962. The realization that different societies of the world have specific speech patterns that are worthy of comparable ethnographic description led him to conceive the idea of a field that would focus upon both ethnographic and linguistic aspects of communication.

Ethnography is a discipline that deals with the description and analysis of culture. On the other hand, linguistics is a field concerned with the description and analysis of language codes. In his paper, 'ethnography of communication', Hymes concentrated upon the cultural implication of the structuring of communicative behavior and the role of speech in social interaction. This led to the emergence of a field, known by the title of his paper, dealing with the sociological aspects of communication such as interaction analysis and role identity, and thereby combining the studies of anthropology and linguistics.

D. Hymes and Gumperz developed methods of data collection and analysis. This methodological framework was followed by many scholars to describe different "speech communities" of the world. In her book, "**Speech and Sociability at French Urban Market-places**", Lindenfeld (1990:10) strongly advocates the **SPEAKING** model given by Hymes:

" The methodological framework suggested by Hymes, now known as the SPEAKING model, serves as a useful starting point in data collection and preliminary analysis. It enumerates the various components of the communicative situation: Setting, Participants, Ends, Acts, Key, instrumentalities, Norms of interaction and interpretation, genre (Hymes 1972)."

The methodology suggested by Hymes and Gumperz is followed for this ethnographic investigation. The purpose of this project is to study scientifically communication patterns of people of different cultural backgrounds. The investigator's endeavor is to make a comparative study of the communicative behavior and interaction processes of two different speech

communities, i.e. American and Indian. Being a native of India, the researcher has a sound knowledge of the Hindi language and culture. One of the major objectives of this work is to highlight how speakers learn sociolinguistic and cultural rules and knowledge to communicate appropriately in a given situation. Since this is a comparative study, it also focuses upon how communication patterns determined by these rules differ accordingly from one speech community to another.

DATA COLLECTION

This ethnographic investigation was conducted in a restaurant owned by a Pakistani immigrant. One has to admire a fledgling restaurant (it opened in June) that is courageous enough to serve intensely flavored food rather than taming it down for average palates.

Pakistan is an Islamic state, and Bundoo Khan (the name of this restaurant) is Islamic right down to the sign by the door that warns against the drinking of alcoholic beverages. There are pictures showing the Arabic inscriptions on the wall plaques which are passages from the KORAN (the holy book of Muslims).

The menu makes it clear that the food is 'halal', meaning acceptable to Muslims. Meats come from animals that have been slaughtered according to Islamic precepts; pork is excluded. Paintings and a traditional apparel 'ajrakh' serve as physical objects and add beauty and grandiosity to the interior decoration.

In terms of spatial arrangement, three rows of tables and chairs are neatly arranged. There is a wooden piece of Indian handicraft that separates the dining hall from the kitchen. The entrance is decorated with eye-catching flowers.

Prices are very reasonable and most entrees are affordable to an average middle class customer. Indian and Pakistani ghazals (a musical form of poetry) is played at a pleasant volume. These unique features set this typically orthodox restaurant apart from the contemporary ones and attract multicultural food-goers. It is frequented by American as well as Indian and Pakistani customers.

Since the restaurant owner was my friend, I had the privilege of having access to customer's tables by ordering food for myself and positioning at different locations within the restaurant. The owner gave me the permission to tape customer's conversation. I visited the restaurant several times and took ethnographic notes. After observing American and Indian customers and taping their conversation for 5 hours with a portable cassette recorder, I selected 30 minutes of speech samples each from American and Indian conversational discourse on the basis of the following factors:

- (a) Number of participants;
- (b) Age of participants;
- (c) Quality of audio production;

PARTICIPANTS FOR AMERICAN CONVERSATION

- (1) Female, 24 years old, born and raised in Chicago, Jew, fair-complexioned, tall and skinny, looks American, speaks English fluently with a strong mid-west accent, frequently mumbles and giggles, owns a poster company, travels intensively, musician, and prosperous;

PROPS: A big black colored leather wallet, a small note book, and a telephone book;

- (2) Male, 25 years old, born and raised in Minnesota, catholic, fair-complexioned, looks American, speaks English very softly with a mid-west accent, a patient listener, journalist cum photographer, works for a fortnightly magazine, very friendly;

PROP: A brown colored leather portfolio;

TEMPORAL DIMENSION

Dinner time, from approximately 8:00 am to 8:30 pm, soothing music, dim lights, a perfect situation for dinner conversation;

DAY: Tuesday;

DATE: March 27, 1990;

PARTICIPANTS FOR INDIAN CONVERSATION

- (1) Male, 26 years old, born in Patna (the capital of Bihar), Muslim, Wheatish complexion, tall and stockily built, looks Indian, Soft spoken, a patient listener, has a good command of both Hindi & English, full-time student, goes to UCLA for a master's course in Music;
- (2) Male, 26 years old, born and raised in Bombay, Muslim, Hindi, fair-complexioned, short and muscular, looks a native of western India, speaks both English and Hindi, also capable of using a variety of Hindi, Stutters, an MBA, works as a Night Auditor at an International Hotel, has a tendency to interrupt, very stubborn speaker;

PROPS: A cigarette pack and a lighter;

- (3) Male, 25 years old, born and raised in Calcutta (the Capital of W.Bengal), Hindu Brahmin, fair-complexioned, medium height, looks a native of northern India, proficient in speaking English and Hindi, also speaks regional dialect which is a smattering of Bengali and Hindi, an MBA, works with Metropolitan Life Insurance Company as an account representative;

PROPS: A burgundy briefcase and a pair of sunglasses;

TEMPORAL DIMENSION

Dinner time, from approximately 8:00 to 8:30 pm, background music, ideal situation for dinner talk;

DAY: Thursday;

DATE: March 15, 1990;

The American speakers were seated on the left side of the dining hall. The female speaker was facing the entrance and the male speaker was seated on the other side of the table facing the kitchen. It was the third table from the entrance and had two chairs.

The Indian speakers were situated in the middle of the dining hall. Two speakers were sitting against each other and the third speaker was facing the entrance. It was the third table on the right side of the dining hall and had four chairs. One chair was vacant since there were only three customers on that table.

AUDIO EQUIPMENT USED

SONY VOICE OPERATED CASSETTE-CORDER TCM-34V

DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected from the aforementioned communicative situation was transcribed. Both conversational and linguistic structures were analyzed. As discussed earlier, Hymes' SPEAKING model was used for this analysis. I am presenting here a glossary of terms that are repeatedly used in the transcripts and in the discourse analysis:

AM = American male

AF = American female

W = Waiter

IM1= Indian male 1

IM2= Indian male 2

IM3= Indian male 3

Initial period = Opening of the segment, getting situated at the table, ordering food;

The conversational discourse of American and Indian speakers is compared item-vis-item. The headings 'American' and 'Indian' stand for 'American conversation' and 'Indian conversation' respectively.

LINGUISTIC STRUCTURE

The analysis gave the following features of the linguistic structure which were distinct according to the speech community:

INSTRUMENTALITIES

AMERICAN

The channel of transmission of speech was both oral and written. AF drew the graphic design of her business card (lines 288-356) and sought AM's opinion. Since both speakers were monolingual, only one code (English) was used.

INDIAN

The channel of transmission of speech was only oral. Both Hindi and English codes were used. IM2 used a variety of Hindi during the initial period. IM3 used a regional dialect on several occasions.

TYPES OF TALK

AMERICAN

The participants knew each other and were very friendly. In the initial period, their talk was formal with the waiter. It became light after he left. Gossip was also used by the female speaker (lines 440-448). She also complained about the male speaker who was making fun of her (lines 554-569). On the whole, the verbal interaction of the speakers was light and, at times, formal. They were humorous and joked on several occasions. Cross gender jokes were often found. I will discuss more about this under a separate section.

INDIAN

The speakers knew each other for a couple of years. Their relationship was mutually friendly. Their talk was light in the initial period. They were humorous with the waiter (lines 28-30). As the discourse developed, their talk became serious. Issues ranging from socio-political, socio-economic to individual problems in diverse perspectives were found.

The speakers joked with the waiter before and after the initial period. In response, the waiter also joked with two of the participants who were uncle and nephew (lines 180-195). In a nutshell, the conversation of Indian speakers was basically serious.

CODE SWITCHING

AMERICAN

It didn't occur in the discourse of American speakers because they were monolingual.

INDIAN

All subjects were bilingual and frequently code switched. Different types of code switching were found in their conversation:

Word level - lines 29, 426, 433 etc.

Intrasentential - lines 35, 41, 370, 501, 508 etc.

Intersentential - lines 423, 436, 440, 496 etc.

REPETITIONS

AMERICAN

The researcher found a great deal of repetition in the discourse of American speakers. In the initial period where they negotiate with the waiter, certain linguistic forms representing various dishes names were repeated e.g. 'chicken tikka', 'chicken tikka masala', 'chicken curry', 'chicken biryani' etc. The repeated use of these food items was a common feature in the discourse of both participants, i.e. American and Indian.

INDIAN

Repetition in the verbal interaction of the Indian speakers occurred in Hindi as well as in English. Their speech provides a quintessence of the use of repetition to facilitate comprehension, production, and interaction in the discourse of bilingual speakers. Certain figures of speech, words, and sentences were repeatedly produced to keep conversation going. As said earlier, repetition was frequently used in both codes (Hindi and English) to create interpersonal involvement.

SYNTAX

AMERICAN

English grammar was used by the speakers. Both subjects used non standard expressions in reduced forms such as 'wanna' for 'want- to', 'gonna' for 'going to', and 'whaddya' for 'what do-you'.

Simple and complex sentences were used. Complex sentences were mostly produced by AF. She also produced broken and sometimes unusual utterances like taco-paco, fusha, ond, yummy-scummy etc. Intersentential lexical repetition was usually produced by her.

Imperatives were seldom used in their conversation. I found only two imperatives in their speech:

1. When AM asked AF to 'pass the rice'(line 509).

2. When AF asked W for `cream and sugar'(line 119).

INDIAN

Both Hindi and English grammars were used by the participants. Simple as well as complex sentences were produced. Code switching occurred at different levels, e.g. word, intrasentential, and intersentential.

Unfinished sentences were followed by subordinate clauses that didn't correspond to the main clause. Intrasentential lexical and phonemic repetitions were found in IM2's speech.

Imperatives were frequently used by IM2 to express command(line 63):

IM2: That..that..(I) will give him Aleem then you give me Haleem.

And again in line 72:

IM2: yes yes that is Haleem..now (you) do this to Haleem some..tarka.

N.B. The researcher was unable to find an English equivalent of `tarka'.

IM3 also used imperatives in the initial period while talking to the waiter (line283):

IM3: come on brother, serve us some parathas.

CONVERSATIONAL STRUCTURE

GREETINGS

AMERICAN

The waiter opened the segment by greeting the customers as they walked into the restaurant (line 1). The male speaker responded verbally (line 2). The female speaker didn't give a verbal response but made an eye contact with the waiter.

After greeting, the waiter directed them to the table and asked `will this be alright?'(line 3).

INDIAN

The waiter initiated the greeting by saying `aaiye' which means either `come' or `please come' depending upon the intonation. There was no response to his greeting though the subjects made an eye contact with him.

Instead of greeting him, IM1 walked towards the table and asked IM2 and IM3 to get situated (line 3):

IM1: You (please) come here.

TOPICS

AMERICAN

28 topics were found in the discourse of American speakers. Out of these, 18 topics were initiated by the female participant, 6 by the waiter, and 4 by the male speaker.

The researcher found 18 subtopics which were embedded in the matrix of the main topics. 11 subtopics were initiated by the female speaker and 7 by the male. Sometimes the topics were not interlinked.

The female participant was the dominant speaker and most of the times initiated a topic and continued it. Backchannel was usually provided by the male speaker indicating her to either change or continue the topic.

INDIAN

26 topics and 21 subtopics were used by the participants. IM1 initiated 4 topics. Both IM2 and IM3 initiated 7 topics. The waiter changed the topic 8 times by interrupting. Following is the number of subtopic initiation by Indian speakers and the waiter:

IM1 - 2

IM2 - 4

IM3 - 11

W - 4

IM3 always continued the topic. If there was an interruption and the topic changed, other speakers provided him with backchannels or questions asking him to continue the earlier topic. Once a topic was changed by the waiter (line 58). The same topic relapsed when IM1 reminded IM3 to continue it (line 345). Topic linkage was more explicit in their discourse.

OVERLAPS AND INTERRUPTIONS

AMERICAN

There were 99 occurrences of overlaps and interruptions. Only 8 successful interruptions occurred during their conversation. The waiter succeeded 3 times in silencing the speakers in the mid of their utterance. AF succeeded 3 times and AM succeeded twice.

The female speaker interrupted to dominate the conversation. The male speaker didn't actually interrupt, he rather said something to keep the conversation going.

The waiter contradicted AM by interrupting. He explained the menu and wound up the sequence with a question (lines 53-60).

INDIAN

Overlaps and interruptions occurred 249 times. There were 21 occurrences of successful interruptions. I am presenting here the number of successful interruptions made by the participants:

IM1 - 2

IM2 - 10

IM3 - 6

W - 3

IM2 had a tendency to interrupt IM3. IM1 was a patient listener and seldom interrupted. Though both IM2 and IM3 interrupted each other in Hindi as well as in English, the frequency of occurrence of interruptions in English was considerably less.

SPEAKING TURNS

AMERICAN

The female speaker did most of the turn takings. Her speaking turns were longer and led the topic to a somewhat different or new direction. The prolongation of her speaking turn depended on the formality of the situation. The male's speaking turns were very brief.

INDIAN

IM1 was the most patient listener and occasionally did the turn taking. IM3's speaking turns were longer than IM2. IM2 tended to interrupt IM3 very often. Since IM1 barely talked, both speakers (IM2 and IM3) were instrumental in constructing the communication pattern.

ADJACENCY PAIRS

AMERICAN

The following types of adjacency pairs were observed in the participants:

Cardinal type (Question/Answer)

(Question/Question)-lines 43-5

(Offer/Acceptance) -lines 5-7

(Offer/ Refusal) -lines 98-120

(Request/Compliance)-lines 101-4

The customers requested information about a traditional Indian drink (lines 101-2). The waiter complied by explaining it to them (lines 2-4).

The initial period was replete with request/compliance adjacency pairs. The customers consistently requested information about items and the waiter complied. The request was necessarily verbal and compliance for explanation was also necessarily verbal. However, at one point, the waiter started explaining the recipe without any request for information. He kept speaking till he got proper verbal responses from both customers (lines 274 - 286). More questions were asked by the female speaker.

INDIAN

There was an abundance of the cardinal type (Question/Answer) adjacency pair. The code used in utterances that were adjacency pairs was usually the same. Only sometimes it was different. For example, when IM1 asked IM3 a question in English, he answered in Hindi (lines 364-366):

IM1: (?) you were going straight to India ?

IM3: yes (Hindi).

Other adjacency pairs such as offer/ acceptance and offer/refusal were not found. The customers used mostly imperatives to request goods. Their request was necessarily verbal and compliance by waiter was also necessarily verbal.

I found an interesting example of extended adjacency pair (Question/ Question / Question /Answer) :

Lines 84-7

Q W: Then what do you call your mother ?

Q IM2: What ?

Q W: What do you call your mother ?

A IM2: Mother.

CODE SWITCHING

INDIAN

IM3 and IM2 did most of the code switching. IM2 while asking IM3 about his immigration status used English and IM3 responded in English (lines 382-392). Their conversation where they are talking about the strict attitude of INS towards Immigrants, represents a quintessence of the communicative competence of Indian speakers (lines 398-435). IM3, the focal person, resorted to Hindi while discussing his marriage prospects in India. He also depended heavily on Hindi to describe his mother's opinion about her would be daughter-in-law (lines 462-479). However, it is interesting that he referred to his mother in English (mummy) during this discussion even though there is a Hindi equivalent for "mummy". Apart from this a lot of English loan-words were used by the Indian participants.

IM2 showed his willingness for interpersonal involvement in a different code by referring to a friend who lived in Delhi (the Capital of India). IM3 referred to Delhi in lines 465-7. IM2 responded to the word Delhi in English (lines 480-7).

REPETITIONS

AMERICAN

The repetition strategy in their discourse was pervasive and functional. The researcher noticed a lot of lexical repetition.

The female speaker, in a segment of the conversation, repeats words like `black', `logo', `pink', `card', `white', `letters', and `circles', (lines 153-90). She also repeated her company name

'silent Music', to emphasize that she was discussing an important issue and demanded proper attention from the listener (lines- 193, 201, 326, 336, 351). The male speaker realizing this also used this two-word name to show his willingness for interpersonal involvement (lines 218, 304). The transcript showed one interesting pattern which is closely linked to the grammar of the English language (lines 194-5):

AM : I like this I like this paper texture.

AF : I love that paper.

Here the female's response 'I love that paper' is an initiation of the preceding sentence. Her utterance is a response to what AM said, the form of her response - repetition is a ratification of the preceding utterance. Further, in one segment she repeats the word 'boobs' to talk about her friend Sherry and her father (lines-680,694).

INDIAN

Like American conversation, lexical repetition was also found in the discourse of Indian speakers. In the initial period, one instance is worth mentioning to notice how participants in a conversation repeat the same lexical item consistently to emphasize the message content. From the interaction point of view, the relative frequency of the following lexical repetition should be correlated with the value system of their culture (lines 98-129):

W : what happened to you? Did you get hurt?

IM2 : No, there was a blood-test at my work today.

W : I see.

IM2 : I took that insurance policy, you know.

W : What is your (blood) group?

IM2 : Don't know, they said (they) would find the group, no I mean.. they said (they) would send them.. if you want the report you could get it from them, however mine is A Positive.

W : oh! (it) is O positive ?

IM2 : O negative;

W : O negative, mine is B positive.

IM2 : B positive

IM1 : B positive

IM2 : A positive

W : But B positive is abundant.

IM2 : A positive is the most common blood.

W : B

IM2 : A and (it) is said .. which is the most rare?

IM1 : O

IM2 : O

IM1 : O is most..most rare.

W : (it) is rare... in O... there is no difference between O
negative, positive?

IM2 : No O negative O negative has more value because may be O negative eh.. eh.. can
be administered to anybody.

W : Really?

IM2 : Any group you know, any group can accept O negative .

W : very good.

The cohesive function of repetition is clearly explicit in this topic. Apart from the repetition of technical terms (positive, negative), a number of other words are also repeated. The word 'rare' is uttered by all speakers except IM3.

JOKES

AMERICAN

Their talk was generally humorous. Once the female speaker used a simile to describe the color of her business card and the male speaker playfully teased her (lines 340-8).

The waiter was not competent in speaking English. His utterances were broken. The male speaker realizing this often joked with him (lines 406-9).

The observer found two jokes that were unusual. The male speaker joked about his mother by declaring 'she is dead' (lines-466-7). This was followed by the female participant playfully insulting him (line 471-2).

Further, she used a few negative words at different instances (lines 645-54). These negative expressions were directed towards the listener with an intended meaning (line 472).

INDIAN

In the verbal interaction of Indian speakers, jokes were used by the customers and the waiter. The waiter, while joking with IM2, provides an interesting example of linguistic and cultural interference in the discourse of bilingual speakers (lines 181-93):

W : Oh there is no 'mama' so you say 'mumma'?

IM2 : Hunh.

IM3 : laughs

W : then what do you call your Ammi?

IM2 : What?

W : What do you call your Ammi ?

IM2 : Ammi.

W : So Ammi is mumma.

IM3 : (laughs)

IM2 : Actually, this 'mumma' is not the English 'mama', this is Urdu 'mumma'...(it) became 'mumma' from 'mama'

W : Right right.

IM2 : That is English mumma, you know mumma from mama.

It should be noted that IM2 tried to defend himself and explained the difference between the English 'mama' and the Urdu 'mumma'. Here the role of speech in both social and cultural interaction is clearly displayed by the participants.

Indian speakers also used negative words on many occasions. For example, while explaining to IM1 about his strategy to re-enter America, IM3 used an abusive word (line 370). However, this derogatory remark was not directed towards the listener.

Lines 523-39 give a fascinating example of how a speaker may get frustrated about listener's inability to comprehend the message content. IM3 goes to an extreme by jokingly threatening the chastity of IM2's sister. IM2 realized his mistake and shared the humor generously.

DATA INTERPRETATION

AMERICAN

- (1) Greeting was always initiated by the waiter for functional purpose. Customer's response to his greeting was, most of the times, verbal. Eye contact was an essential factor to open the conversation. Waiter's greeting was approached based and he paid extra amount of attention to the American customer. The setting was very conventional and religious. It was a new experience for the Americans and they were uncomfortable about the restriction on drinking alcohol. This indicates that it is very normal in American society to have alcohol during dinner. The waiter tried to be very hospitable and made them comfortable in an unusual atmosphere. Also because of the gender factor, he was a little taciturn with the female speaker. He was more professional and polite with them.
- (2) During the initial period, only two imperatives were used. However, it is interesting to note that both times they were very polite and used 'please' to mitigate the illocutionary force.
- (3) The topics were not closely linked. The female speaker abruptly changed the topic several times. She was the dominant speaker and changed the tone and manner of the conversation.

- (4) Most of the American customers including the participants for this study ordered appetizer before having the main course . This reflects their culture where it is customary to have appetizer in dinner.
- (5) Repetition in the discourse of American speakers was used for production, comprehension, and interaction and to create coherence and interpersonal involvement. Sometimes repetitive utterances overlapped but they were not interruptive rather it was used for co-operation and rapport development (lines 1945).
- (6) Repetition was often used as a device for cross-gender jokes. It is interesting to note that while the female speaker uttered 'yummy scummy', to express that the food was delicious, the male speaker used the same compound words in broken parts for humorous talk (lines 680,694).
- (6) The adjacency pair request/compliance was frequently used by the American speakers during the initial period. Most of the times, they were requesting information of goods. They were not acquainted with the Indian food and needed explanation for that.
- (7) Certain abusive words such as bastard, creep were used by both speakers in a teasing manner. The use of these derogatory remarks was functional, i.e. playful insult.

Cultural assumption

- In American speech community, negative expressions are often used without really meaning it. These abusive forms have become hackneyed and have lost their semantic substance.
- (8) The frequency of occurrence of interruption was considerably less in American conversation. This reflects the cultural assumption that politeness requires listenership in American culture.
- (9) Two extremes in jokes relating to AM's mother were found. Something which is highly inappropriate and unacceptable in Indian speech community.

INDIAN

(1) The waiter always greeted first to open the segment of conversation. Greeting was not necessarily verbal but eye contact was essential to welcome the customers. The waiter was not very voluble with the customers in the beginning of initial period (especially families with females and children).

There was usually no response to his greeting. Customers helped themselves. Unlike American customers, they were not directed to the table.

The familiar setting made them very comfortable and relaxed and they didn't have to observe any formality.

(2) A lot of imperatives were used during the initial period. The customers were very demanding.

(3) The adjacency pair request/compliance was used in a different context. Here the request was not for information about goods rather it was a request for goods because they had a sound knowledge of the Indian food.

(4) There was a clear link between the topics. Both IM2 and IM3 actively participated in the conversation. There was a definite relation between the topic and the code used. IM3 referred to his mother in English (mummy) during the conversation. This tendency suggests that second-language learners in India living in a metropolitan city tend to use specific kinship terms in English instead of Hindi.

(5) The Indian customers generally ordered the main course. They didn't eat appetizers before dinner.

Cultural assumption

In Indian society, appetizers are not included in the dinner course. They are served as evening snacks.

(6) The researcher observed less intense talk while the speakers were eating. Unlike American subjects, they were concentrating on food and were less articulate during that period.

Cultural assumption

Talking is not allowed during eating in Indian culture.

- (7) Repetition was used for both functional and semantic purposes to express certain feelings, ideas, and emotions. Repetitive utterances intertwined and exhibited speech harmony. IM2 was the most stubborn speaker and used repetition as a tool to achieve multifarious purposes. The instances where he repeated certain utterances had different purposes such as mocking, emphasis, etc. On the whole, the function of repetition was much more interruptive in the discourse of Indian speakers.
- (8) At one instance, where the waiter asked IM2 about his finger (line 98), he changed the tone and manner of talk from formal to intimate. He also bypassed the rule for social conduct in this particular speech situation.

From the Indian perspective, this intrusive behavior is appropriate and respectful. IM2 respected that the waiter was concerned and politely answered. We can see that the speech transaction at this point of the discourse is based on shared cultural assumptions. The waiter's endeavor to personalize his relationship with the customers, at this instance, is considered polite. Contrary to it, the same behavior with American customers would undoubtedly reinforce the American stereotype of Indians being 'impolite', 'aggressive', and 'impudent'.

- (9) The frequency of occurrence of overlaps and interruptions was much higher in Indian conversation.

Cultural assumption

Interruption in Indian speech community is an acceptable rule for social conduct.

- (10) Their conversation was diverse and touched serious issues.

Cultural assumption

Dinner is more than an eating event in Indian speech community. It is a means of social gathering to discuss problems and share views and ideas.

- (11) Though Indian speakers also violated the rule to behave appropriately in a given speech situation by using abusive words, they were impersonal and were not used against the

listeners. They violated the social constraint to express their feelings of resentment and indignation for INS.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research confirm that different speech communities have different communication patterns. People's communicative behavior in a given speech situation is determined by the sociolinguistic and cultural rules and knowledge. However, the basic structure of conversational discourse suggested by ethnomethodologists was the same in both speech communities, e.g. speaking turns, changing roles between speaker and hearer, adjacency pairs, etc. The difference between the American and Indian speech communities must be attributed to the deeply embedded norms and beliefs peculiar to each of the two speech community.

The shared interpretive conventions, interaction, and relationship among all the speech components are major factors that constitute successful communication in a given speech situation. My findings and discussion of social and cultural norms are based upon the analysis of my own speech community, with which I am more familiar. I present myself as a person who is a member of Indian speech community and a keen observer of American speech community.

I am fully aware that this study is extremely limited. Being a native of India and having lived in the United States for the last 5 years, I was always fascinated by the cultural contrasts of these two speech communities. This study is an effort to promote intercultural understanding in order to have a much more global view of these communities.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

Since the investigator is a native of India, his knowledge of the cultural background of the native English speakers is comparatively less sound than that of Indian participants. The same research and analysis with the assistance of a native English speaker might give the ethnographic picture of these two speech communities with greater clarity.

The researcher was unable to control certain variables such as gender, and the number of participants. Since Indians are more family oriented, it was hard to find a female and a male speaker for Indian conversation. They usually came with the members of their family. Observing and analyzing an Indian female and a male speaker under the same circumstances may provide deeper insight into their distinct rhetoric stylistic patterns. Bearing in mind these limitations, another investigator--probably a native English speaker-- may come up with a more interesting and authentic comparative study.