

# DISCOURSE ANALYSIS ON PHILOSOPHY FROM THE POINT O VIEW OF INTERACTIONAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS APPROACH

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## Abstract

Interactional sociolinguistics is an approach to discourse analysis that has its origin in the search for replicable methods of qualitative analysis that account for our ability to interpret what participants intend to convey in everyday communicative practice. Methodologically, interactional sociolinguistics relies on close discourse analysis of audio- or video-recorded interaction. Such methodology is central to uncovering meaning-making processes because many conventions for signaling and interpreting meaning in talk are fleeting, unconscious, and culturally variable. The purpose of this article is to analyze the interactional patterns in casual conversation through which interactants jointly construct social relations. This study, however, limits just the analysis of the grammatical patterns at the clause level which indicate power and subordination within interaction. The underlying theories are Eggins's Analyzing Casual Conversation – the grammar of casual conversation: enacting role relations.

**KEY WORDS:** *interactional sociolinguistics, communicative practice, interpreting meaning, interactants.*

## INTRODUCTION

Interactional sociolinguistics (IS) is an approach to discourse analysis that has its origin in the search for replicable methods of qualitative analysis that account for our ability to interpret what participants intend to convey in everyday communicative practice. This approach stems from three fields of study namely anthropology, sociology, and linguistics, hence it concerns with culture, society, and language. This approach was inspired by Gumperz (1982) and Goffman (1959) which was discussed by Eggins and Slade (1997).

Interactional sociolinguistics attempts to bridge the difference between empirical communicative forms – e.g., words, prosody, register shifts – and what speakers and listeners take themselves to be doing with these forms. Methodologically, it relies on close discourse analysis of audio- or video-recorded interaction. Such methodology is central to uncovering meaning-making processes because many conventions for signaling and interpreting meaning in talk are fleeting, unconscious, and culturally variable (Bailey, 2008)

People, as socialized individuals, spend much of their lives interacting with others. Interacting is not just a mechanical process of taking turns at producing sounds and words, but it is a semantic activity, a process of making meanings. To take turns in interaction means to negotiate meanings about what ones think is going on in the world, how they feel about it and the people they interact with. The process of exchanging meanings is functionally motivated. People interact with each other to accomplish a wide range of tasks, very often quite specific tasks, such as talk to trade, to find out information, to pass on knowledge, to make appointment, to get jobs, and to participate in practical activities. People sometimes talk for the sake of talking itself, such as when they get together with friends over coffee and have a chat. It is to these informal interactions that the label casual conversation is usually applied (Eggins and Slade 1997:6 in Hapsari 2011).

Despite its aimless appearance and seemingly trivial content, casual conversation is really a highly structured, and functionally motivated semantic activity. Eggins and Slade (1997:7) state that people treat conversation as an exchange of meanings, as text, and recognize its privileged role in the construction of social identities and interpersonal relations. They (Eggins and Slade 1997:8) also add that casual conversation is the kind of talk people engage in when they are talking just for the sake of talking.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the interactional patterns in casual conversation through which interactants jointly construct social relations. This study, however, limits just the analysis of the grammatical patterns at the clause level which indicate power and subordination within interaction.

The underlying theories are Eggins's Analyzing Casual Conversation – the grammar of casual conversation: enacting role relations.

## **DISCUSSION**

Casual conversation is motivated by interpersonal goals: people chat not just to 'kill time', but rather to clarify and extend the interpersonal ties that have brought them together. Interpersonal ties are the accumulation of values for four main dimensions: the status relationships enacted by participants, the frequency with which they come into contact, the degree of effective involvement they feel towards each other, and their sense of affiliation with each other.

We can often deduce social or contextual factors about interactions from a brief excerpt of casual conversation such as in "philosophy" which involves three participants,

Fran, Brad and Dave, who are sitting in a parked car, filling a time. We might wonder, what social roles they are playing and how we can reach a conclusion.

### Analysis and Interpretation

Based on the analysis of basic mood choices, it may reveal whether the speaker is as dominant or as incidental participant in that talk, and how the speaker expresses his proposition. The results of the basic mood choices analysis is presented in the following table.

**Table: Summary of basic mood choices in “Philosophy”**

No.	Mood Choices	Brad	Fran	Dave
<b>1</b>	Number of Turns	<b>53</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>16</b>
	Number of clauses	<b>128</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>DECLARATIVE</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>19</b>
	Declarative : full	1(iii), 3(i), 5(i), 9(i), 15(ii), 17(ii), 25(iv), 29(ii), 35(i), 37(ii, iii), 41(iii, vii, ix, xi), 45(iii), 52(iii, iv), 56(i), 58(iii), 60(iii), 62(i, iii), 64(i, iv, vii), 66(ii), 67(i), 69(i, ii, iii), 71(i, ii, iii), 75(ii), 77(i, ii), 79(i), 81(i), 83(i), 85(i, ii), 94(i), 98(iii), 100(i), 105(i, iv), 107(i, ii)	4(i), 65(i), 68(i), 72(i), 82(v), 95(i), 97(i)	8(i), 24(ii), 32(i), 48(ii), 74(ii)
	Declarative : elliptical	3(iii, iv), 7(ii), 13(ii), 15(i, iii, iv), 19(i), 25(iii), 27(i), 29(i), 31(i, ii), 37(i), 39(i, ii), 41(i, ii, iv, v, vi, viii, x), 45(i, ii), 49(i, ii), 56(ii), 58(i, ii), 60(i, ii), 62(ii), 64(ii, iii, v, vi), 73(i), 75(iii), 79(ii, iii), 83(ii), 85(iii), 87(i), 91(i), 94(ii), 98(ii), 103(i), 105(ii, iii, vi)	12(i), 16(i, ii), 18(i), 28(i), 53(i), 55(i), 72(ii), 80(i, ii), 82(i, ii, iii, iv), 84(i, ii), 90(i), 92(i), 93(i), 99(i), 104(i),	10(i), 24(i), 48(i), 74(i), 76(i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, vii)
	Tagged Declarative	49(iii)	14(i), 55(ii),	6(i, ii), 22(i),
<b>3</b>	<b>IMPERATIVE</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
	Imperative : full	1(ii)		74(iii), 78(i)
	Imperative : elliptical	1(i)		74(iv)
<b>4</b>	<b>WH-INTERROGATIVE</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
	Wh-interrogative : full	13(i), 21(i), 23(i),	63(i), 88(i),	20(i),
	Wh interrogative : elliptical	105(v), 89(i, ii, iii)	86(i), 101(i)	32(ii), 36(i), 102(i)
<b>5</b>	<b>POLAR INTERROGATIVE</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
	Polar interrogative : full		4(ii),	38(i), 40(i),
	Polar interrogative :		2(i), 26(i),	42(i),

	elliptical		70(i),	48(iii),
<b>6</b>	<b>EXCLAMATIVE</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
	Exclamative : full	33(i), 43(i), 62(iv),		
	Exclamative : elliptical			
<b>7</b>	<b>MINOR</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>
	minor	7(i), 11(i), 15(i), 17(i), 25(i, ii), 47(i), 52(i, ii), 54(i), 66(i), 75(i), 77(iii, iv), 96(i), 98(i),	30(i), 34(i), 46(i), 51(i), 57(i), 59(i), 61(i), 106(i)	44(i), 50(i)

### **Dominant and Incidental Participants**

We can see from the table above that there are three participants in “Philosophy,” namely Brad, Fran and Dave. It shows that Brad produces 53 turns, Fran 38 turns, and Dave only 16 turns. This suggests that two of them (Brad and Fran) are the dominant participants, while Dave is the incidental participant.

#### ***Number of Turns***

Brad produces a half ( 53 turns) of the total turns (107 turns), while another half (54 turns) are produced by Fran (38 turns) and Dave (16 turns). The percentage of turns produced in the casual conversation is: Brad = 50% , Fran = 33%, and Dave 17%.

#### ***Number of Non-Verbal Actions***

There are six non-verbal actions: Fran laughs three times; Dave coughs once, laughs once, and yawn loudly once. These show that both Fran and Dave are not so serious in the conversation, while Brad is serious as he does not perform non-verbal actions at all.

#### ***Number of Clauses***

Brad produces more clauses for his number of turns, he has 53 turns with 128 clauses. The clauses he produces are approximately 2.5 times of his turns. This shows that he dominates the conversation. Fran has 38 turns and she produces 46 clauses, about 1. 2 times of her turns. Dave has 16 turns and he produces 32 clauses, twice as much as his turns.

#### ***Declarative***

Declarative clauses can be defined as clauses in which the structural element of Subject occurs before the Finite element of the clause. One hundred clauses that Brad produces are in declarative forms, a half is in full declarative clauses and another half is in elliptical declarative clauses with one tagged declarative clause. As declarative clauses

usually consist of facts and opinions, this shows that Brad's knowledge on the topic of the conversation is sufficient.

Fran produces 30 declarative clauses consist of 7 full declarative forms, 21 elliptical declaratives, and 2 tagged declarative clauses. This portion of full declarative clauses compared with the elliptical ones, 1: 3, shows that she shares less knowledge about the topic of the conversation.

Dave produces 19 declarative clauses consist of 5 full declarative clauses, 11 elliptical declaratives, and 3 tagged declaratives.

### ***Imperative***

Imperative typically does not contain the element of Subject or Finite but only consists of a Predicator, plus any of the non-core participants of Complement and Adjunct.

Although the number of imperatives is very small, it is significant that Fran does not produce any imperatives, while Brad and Dave do. Brad's imperative is addressed to Fran and Dave. This, however, does not really show his authority.

- |     |      |   |
|-----|------|---|
| 1   | Brad | (i)Look. (ii)See that guy. (iii)He plays the double bass  |
| 2   | Fran | (i)Does he?   |
| 3   | Brad | (i)In the orchestra. (ii) He's a funny bastard (iii)and his wife's German (iv)and she's insane. |
| NV1 | Dave | [coughs]  |

Dave's imperative is more powerful, and this shows his authority (turn 74) and he blames Brad for not to think about it before he decided what department to take three years ago (turn 78):

- |    |      |  |
|----|------|--|
| 74 | Dave | ==(i) Yes there's a. (ii) there's a go. (iii) Get yourself a a degree (iv) and go and work for the Soil Con  |
| 75 | Brad | (i)Yeah but... (ii)yeah, well, that's what I'd like to do (iii) but I don't ==   |
| 76 | Dave | ==(i) And they'd say (ii) "Whaddy know about soil" (iii) and you'd say (iv) "Well I can, (v) I know how, (vi) I know (vii) what it's called in Russian== |
| 77 | Brad | (i) A degree in a degree in Linguistics isn't much use y' know (ii) if you wanna work for Landcare or something , (iii)so== (iv) But anyway              |

78 Dave == (i) Well you should have thought of that thought of that three year ago Brad.

### ***Interrogative***

There are two types of interrogatives, namely polar interrogative and Wh-interrogative. The former is also known as yes-no interrogative, and it can be identified as a clause where the Finite element occurs before the Subject, while the latter consists of a wh-question word such as who, what, which, when, where, why, and how. The purpose of the wh-word is to probe for a missing element of clause structure.

If we count all the interrogatives, Brad produces 7 interrogative clauses, Fran produces 4, and Dave also has 4 interrogative clauses:

#### **(Brad)**

13 Brad (i) Whaddya mean? (ii) Coming, oh  
21 Brad (i) Whaddya mean “odds ‘n’ sods subjects”?  
23 Brad (i) Whaddya talking about?  
89 Brad (i) Who says (ii) they know anything about FISH (iii) just because they were administrating == Fisheries?  
105 Brad (i) He studied fish. (ii) he studied...(iii) he was a ... (iv) he was a ... Dip ... (v) Oh what is it called?... (vi)P-H-D in Science.

#### **(Fran)**

2 Fran (i)Does he?  
4 Fran (i)He’s funny (ii) == and she’s insane?  
26 Fran == (i) This year?  
63 Fran (i) Why are they == idiots?  
70 Fran (i) But even if it meant that you could understand people and therefore HELP them?  
86 Fran (i)But whadda they know about education?  
88 Fran ==(i) What have fish gotta do with education?  
101 Fran == (i) A WHAT? ==

#### **(Dave)**

20 Dave (i) When are you gonna do ... all your odds ‘n sods subjects?  
32 Dave == (i) That’s what I mean. (ii) And when are you gonna do your General Studies?  
36 Dave == (i) And what are your General Studies?

- 38 Dave (i) Yeah but what IS it?  
 40 Dave (i)History of Scotch bagpipe == playing?  
 42 Dave (i) So you gonna pick all those up this year?  
 48 Dave (i) But I thought (ii) you dropped a lot of them last year (iii) which you were s'posed to do?  
 102 Dave == (i) Who?

### ***Exclamative***

Within the class of exclamatives we include sentences like *What a nice guy he is!*, which associate a variety of syntactic features with a specific conversational use. In this conversation only Brad produces exclamative clauses, namely:

- 33 Brad (i) I'm doin it NOW! ==  
 43 Brad (i) I'm doin' em ... at the moment! ==  
 62 Brad == (i) It's just a ... technicality. (ii) But this one on Philosophy is alright. (iii) We talk about bloody ... Descartes and all these idiots. (iv) It's riDICulous!

### ***Minor Clause***

One very important category of clauses in casual conversation is that of minor clauses. These are clauses which have no mood structure at all e.g. right, thanks, yeah. Minor clauses tend to be very brief, and are often formulaic. However, their brevity is not due to ellipsis. Minor clauses do not have any mood structure, i.e. they do not consist of elements of Subject, Finite, etc.

The minor clauses produced in this conversation are as follows:

#### **(Brad)**

- 7 Brad (i)Yeah,  
 11 Brad (i) Yeah  
 15 Brad (i) No, this ...  
 17 Brad (i) Yeah I,  
 25 Brad (i) No [falling-rising tone]. (ii) I,  
 47 Brad (i) And um  
 52 Brad (i) Right, (ii) so G ...  
 54 Brad == (i) Yea  
 66 Brad (i) Yeah but ....  
 75 Brad (i)Yeah but...  
 77 Brad (iii)so== (iv) But anyway

96 Brad (i) Yeah well exactly.

98 Brad (i) Exactly,

**(Fran)**

30 Fran (i) Mmm

34 Fran (i) Mmm

46 Fran (i) Mmm

51 Fran ==(i) Mmm

57 Fran (i) Mmm

59 Fran (i) Mmm

61 Fran (i) Mmm

106 Fran (i) Yea

**(Dave)**

44 Dave (i) Right.

50 Dave ==(i) Yeah

## CONCLUSION

The categories and procedures are involved in analyzing the grammatical resources interactants can draw on information to make interpersonal meanings in casual conversations. Choices in mood enable us to explore, confirm, and extend our intuitive opinions of the different roles enacted by the interactants. The analysis of mood choices in casual conversation can reveal tensions between equality and difference, as the interactants enact and construct relations of power via conversation.

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## APPENDIX

### Philosophy

Three participants, Fran, Brad and Dave, are sitting in a parked car, filling in time.

1, 2, 3 refer to speaker turns. NV indicates a non-verbal action. (i), (ii), (iii) indicate clauses.



Turn	Speaker	Text
1	Brad	(i)Look. (ii)See that guy. (iii)He plays the double bass
2	Fran	(i)Does he?
3	Brad	(i)In the orchestra. (ii) He's a funny bastard (iii)and his wife's German (iv)and she's insane.
NV1	Dave	[coughs]
4	Fran	(i)He's funny (ii) == and she's insane?
5	Brad	(i) == ALL German are in== sane.
6	Dave	(i) == You know ... (ii) a lot of funny people, don't you Brad?
7	Brad	(i)Yeah, (ii)everyone at Uni is. ==
8	Dave	== (i) They're ALL mad==
9	Brad	== (i) They are all FREAKS
10	Dave	(i) Except you.
11	Brad	(i) Yeah
12	Fran	(i) And they're all coming home now.
13	Brad	(i) Whaddya mean? (ii) Coming, oh
14	Fran	(i) Like, they're coming up the hill are they?
15	Brad	(i) No, this ... (ii) For General Studies we've got this ... tutor (iii) and he's German (iv) and he's insane.
16	Fran	(i) I didn't know (ii) you had to do General Studies.
17	Brad	(i) Yeah I, (ii) I got exemption from == [noise of passing bus] (iii) Bastards!
18	Fran	== Last year
19	Brad	(i) From half of it.
20	Dave	(i) When are you gonna do ... all your odds 'n sods subjects?
21	Brad	(i) Whaddya mean "odds 'n' sods subjects"?
22	Dave	(i) Well, y'know, you can't just do languages can you?
23	Brad	(i) Whaddya talking about?
24	Dave	(i) If you're doing an Arts degree (ii) you got a lot of other garbage to do.
25	Brad	(i) No [falling-rising tone]. (ii) I, (iii) if I wanted to (iv) I could do French, German and Russian ...
26	Fran	== (i) This year?
27	Brad	== (i) In First Year.
28	Fran	== (i) Oh this year.
29	Brad	== (i) I could do ... (ii) In FIRST year you can do whatever you WANT ==
30	Fran	(i) Mmm
31	Brad	== (i) in an Arts Degree ... (ii) as long as you do ... a few General Studies subjects ==
32	Dave	== (i) That's what I mean. (ii) And when are you gonna do your General Studies?
33	Brad	(i) I'm doin it NOW! ==
34	Fran	(i) Mmm
35	Brad	== (i) That's what I'm talking == about.
36	Dave	== (i) And what are your General Studies?
37	Brad	(i) Oh it's ... RUBBISH ... (ii) One of them is alright. (iii) one of them is actually good.
38	Dave	(i) Yeah but what IS it?
39	Brad	(i) Well I'm thinking (ii) what it is.

NV2 Fran [laughs]  
40 Dave (i)History of Scotch bagpipe == playing?  
41 Brad == (i) It's [laughing] ... (ii) It's bloody ... (iii)it's ...introductory philosophy ... sort of stuff. (iv) It's it's called ... (v) I dunno (vi) what it's called. (vii) Th' they've got weird names like "The Pursuit of Human Rationality" or "Self and society" (viii) and I, the one, (ix) I think the one that's that's alright is called Human Rationality (x) and it's just introductory philosophy. (xi) They talk about ... Rationalism an. [belches] aah [laughs]

42 Dave (i) So you gonna pick all those up this year?  
43 Brad (i) I'm doin' em ... at the moment! ==  
44 Dave Right.  
45 Brad == (i) It's look, (ii) it's just a, (iii) it's only a two hours a week subject.

46 Fran (i) Mmm  
47 Brad (i) And um  
48 Dave (i) But I thought (ii) you dropped a lot of them last year (iii) which you were s'posed to do?  
49 Brad (i) You only have to do, (ii) I onl'...oh [3 sec pause]  
(iii) I've told you about what POINTS are haven't I?  
50 Dave ==(i) Yeah  
51 Fran ==(i) Mmm  
52 Brad (i) Right, (ii) so G ... (iii) First Year German is twelve points. (iv) You only have to do eight points of General Studies in your whole in your whole == career.

53 Fran == (i) Three years.  
54 Brad == (i) Yea  
55 Fran (i) Or whatever, == (ii) don't you?  
56 Brad == (i) In Second Year, you do ... four points, (ii) and in Third Year you do four points.

57 Fran (i) Mmm  
58 Brad (i) If you wanted to (ii) you could do ... (iii) you could do ALL your points in the one year.

59 Fran (i) Mmm  
60 Brad (i) But anyway you th', (ii)it's it's just, (iii)it's just this rubbish subjects that you have to do ==

61 Fran (i) Mmm  
62 Brad == (i) It's just a ... technicality. (ii) But this one on Philosophy is alright. (iii) We talk about bloody ... Descartes and all these idiots. (iv) It's riDICulous!

63 Fran (i) Why are they == idiots?  
64 Brad == (i)He sits, (ii)he sits in a room and, and – and the' (iii) and decides (iv) "I think (v) therefore I am" ... (vi) all this stuff. (vii)An', I mean he hasn't got anything better to DO. ...um

65 Fran (i) He's an abstract thinker.  
66 Brad (i) Yeah but ... (ii) at least he could think abstractly about something that was worth thinking about, like soil erosion or something.

NV3 Fran [laughs]  
67 Brad (i) That's what I'm == thinking ( )

68 Fran == (i) How to solve the == problem

69 Brad == (i) I'm wondering these days. (ii) I'm thinking (iii) what the hell ... use in anything that I'm doing at University

70 Fran (i) But even if it meant that you could understand people and therefore HELP them?

71 Brad (i) Yeah but don't LIKE people ... um...(ii) I don't want to be INVOLVED with people. (iii) I'd rather be involved with == soil erosion

72 Fran == (i) Everybody has to be though. (ii) But I mean

73 Brad (i) or desalin==ation

74 Dave ==(i) Yes there's a. (ii) there's a go. (iii) Get yourself a a degree (iv) and go and work for the Soil Con

75 Brad (i)Yeah but... (ii)yeah, well, that's what I'd like to do (iii) but I don't ==

76 Dave ==(i) And they'd say (ii) "Whaddya know about soil" (iii) and you'd say (iv) "Well I can, (v) I know how, (vi) I know (vii) what it's called in Russian==

77 Brad (i) A degree in a degree in Linguistics isn't much use y' know (ii) if you wanna work for Landcare or something , (iii)so== (iv) But anyway

78 Dave == (i) Well you should have thought of that thought of that three year ago Brad.

79 Brad (i) I'll get a job, (ii) and I'll make some money, (iii) and then I'll maybe be able to do something meaningful == (with my life)

80 Fran ==(i) However, I mean what you said is, is maybe all very true David (ii) but, I mean, in the Public Service people are transferring from ...areas

81 Brad (i) Ah I don't wanna be a bloody public Servant ==

82 Fran ==(i) no no but I'm just saying like. (ii) Like you're saying you know (iii) you don't know anything about soil... (iv) But people are transferring from Fisheries to Education ... (v) Now I can see no == no bearing

83 Brad == (i)Yeah but you can't teach (ii) if you haven't got a Diploma in Education ==

84 Fran == (i) They're not teaching though. (ii) But they're adMINISTERING==teachers

85 Brad ==(i) Yeah well that's different. (ii) That's different . (iii) That's that's that's just a

86 Fran (i)But whadda they know about education?

87 Brad (i) Well they know ==

88 Fran ==(i) What have fish gotta do with education?

89 Brad (i) Who says (ii) they know anything about FISH (iii) just because they were administrating == Fisheries?

90 Fran == (i) Well they were high up in Fisheries ==

91 Brad == (i) Yeah but that doesn't mean they have

92 Fran == (i) Like SAFCOL

NV4 Dave == (i) [yawns loudly]

93 Fran == (i) the South Australian Fisheries

94 Brad (i) They mightn't have had a degree in biology or anything.(ii) They might have just

95 Fran (i) They didn't have that either.

96 Brad (i) Yeah well exactly.

97 Fran (i) They were just clerk.

98 Brad (i) Exactly, (ii)so ... if they can administer fish (iii) they can administer bloody schoolkids.

NV5 Fran [laughs]

99 Fran (i) Well I, I think ==that's

100 Brad == (i) That guy that that Bangladeshi that used to live with us he was a a a Limnologist or whatever it's called.==

101 Fran == (i) A WHAT? ==

102 Dave == (i) Who?

103 Brad (i) Oh not ==Limnologist.

104 Fran == (i) Ichthyologist.

105 Brad (i) He studied fish. (ii) he studied...(iii) he was a ... (iv) he was a ... Dip ... (v) Oh what is it called?... (vi)P-H-D in Science.

106 Fran (i) Yea

107 Brad (i) An 'e was learnin, studyin Fisheries. (ii) His, his thesis was on the breeding of mullet [laughs] or something

NV60 Fran [laughs]