



NOTION OF TURN-TAKING: A PRAGMATIC PERSPECTIVE TO JAI NIMBKAR'S COME RAIN

*Dr. H. K. Awatade, Dept. of English and Linguistics, Shankarrao Mohite Mahavidyalaya,
Akluj, Dist: Solapur*

Received: 21/02/2018

Edited: 27/02/2018

Accepted: 05/03/2018

Abstract: Pragmatics is labeled as the study of meaning beyond the words within context. Turn-Taking is one of the pragmatic tools to unfold the hidden conversational strategies. This paper tries to unveil the notion of turn-taking with reference to Jai Nimbkar's Come Rain.

Key words: Conversation, turn, speaker etc.

Introduction:

Turn-taking is a well known feature of Conversational Analysis. It is the basic concept of conversation. It is governed by certain principles. Turn-taking means the change of speaker during the conversational activity. According to Levinson (1983: 295-296)

A turn is a time during which a single participant speaks, within a typical, orderly arrangement in which participants speak with minimal overlap and gap between them.

Turn is the time when a speaker is talking and Turn-taking is the skill of knowing when to start and finish a turn in a conversation. Yule compares conversation structures with a market economy. There is a scarce commodity called floor in it. He defines the term 'floor' as the right to speak. Having control on floor at any time is called as turn. If in any situation control is not fixed in advanced, anyone can attempt to get control. This is called Turn-taking. This feature is useful in ordinary and everyday conversations, discussions and question-answer sessions.

Speakers perform action in every turn. While conversing, interlocutors produce the set of utterances in a particular situation; it is called as speech event. Every time a turn is over, the listener is left with the question of what is the speaker's intention in it. There is no particular structure which called as a turn, single interjection might make the

turn such as a word, a sentence, or a sequence of sentences.

The change of speaker during the conversation is called a Turn-taking. Turn-taking means a need to give our listener an opportunity to participate in communication. In every turn speaker performs an action. In conversation someone speaks and someone responds. Everyone uses this term in their routine life.

Turn-taking Defined:

Yule quotes (1996:57),

A speech is an activity in which participants interact via language in which some conventional way to arrive at some outcome.

According to Yule (1996:72),

Having control on this scarce commodity at any time is called a turn in any situation where control is not fixed in advance, anyone can attempt to get control. This is called Turn-taking.

Tsui Amy B.M. (1994:6-7) defines the term as,

A turn is seen as everything one speaker says before another speaker begins to speak.

Two or more participants can take part in conversation. One person may produce single utterance or many utterances while taking his turn. Only one person speaks at a time. Silence should be neglected for successful communication.

It is one of the most important terms in Conversation Analysis. Discourse is a set of

sentences which are related to each other. They are logically relevant and talking about the same subject matter. Written discourse is known as text while oral discourse is known as dialogue. Text is fixed. Dialogue is active so they are dynamic. Turn-taking is a set of dialogues so they are active and dynamic. The speaker can become the listener and the listener can become the speaker, it is the most important aspect of Turn-taking.

As Miller implies, the phenomenon of Turn-taking is universal. It is concerned with conversational activities rather than conversation. In conversation, Interlocutors have to know when and how to take his/her turn, and when and how to stop conversational activities. So there should be pattern like A-B-A-B-A-B. If this kind of organization, turn is not followed; then there are gaps and overlaps, encroachments and manipulations. Thus, turn is a unique and vast concept which includes Verbal and Non-Verbal constituents.

Characteristics of turn:

At least two participants are required in the process of Turn-taking. Not only their identity changes from time but length of turn also changes. Turn may consist of just a word, a continuous Verbal response of a long duration or it can be Non-Verbal like nodding, raising eyebrows, waving hands and so on. A turn is shaped and designed by interlocutors. Turn has its own structure of giving and taking floor for conversation.

Turn-Construction Units (TCUs):

Lexical or syntactical items make turns. Linguistic units and non-linguistic units make turns. Linguistic units contain words, phrases, clauses and utterances whereas non-linguistic units involve gaze, facial expressions, body movements etc. All these elements make turn and are called as turn-construction units. In this way turns are taken smoothly and systematically.

Turn- Organization Mechanism:

Turn-taking is the set of practices by which a conversation is done in and through turns. Turn-taking is one of the fundamental organizations of conversational analysis (CA). According to CA, the

Turn-taking system consists of two components such as the turn constructional component and the turn allocation component. While Conversation Analysis does not explicitly claim that Turn-taking is universal, as research is conducted on more languages, it is possible that if there were any basis for a claim to universality in language. Turn organization mechanisms are concerned with socio-cultural conventions. They differ from society to society. Turns are organized on the basis of situation. Interlocutor's purpose, role and status, number of interlocutors involved in conversational activities also play vital role. In conversation, participants talk one at a time and try to minimize gaps between turns and overlapping turns.

Turn-Taking Rules

Burton has expressed his view (1980:78) as *The Turn-taking rules say that somebody should be talking all the time, not more than one person, but somebody. So a currently completing speaker finding no one's started may make it his business to keep off silence by going on.*

Turns occur at certain well-defined junctures in conversation; such points are called transition relevant places (TRPs).

Rule 1: This rule applies initially at the first TRP of any turn.

If current speaker selects next speaker in current turn, then current speaker must stop speaking, and next speaker must speak next, transition occurring at the first TRP after next speaker selection.

If current speaker does not select next speaker then afterwards any other party may self-select first speaker gaining rights to the next turn. If current speaker has not selected next speaker, and no other party self selects under option (b) the current speaker may continue.

Rule 2: A next speaker selects himself.

It applies all subsequent TRPs.

When rule 1 has been applied by current speaker, then at the next TRP rule 1 apply and recursively at the next TRP, until speaker change is affected.

These rules are concerned with two components such as Turn Construction Units (TCUs) and Turn Allocation Techniques (TATs).

In a casual conversation there seems to be two possibilities in selecting next speaker. Firstly, the current speaker indicates the next speaker to obtain the floor. Secondly, the current speaker may directly ask question or use 'you' or call by specific nomination for selecting next speaker. So linguistically or non-linguistically rules can be followed. Therefore, we can say that Turn-taking rules are cyclical in nature.

Exploitation of Turns:

Conversation is a goal directed activity. While interacting with one another people exploit turns. It means interlocutors perform various activities through it such as asking questions, giving answers, welcoming, asking and providing information, taking permission, forgiving, excusing, quarrelling, and loving etc. Turn-taking is significant in all sorts of activities. Turn-taking is useful in various institutions like market, factories, and workshops.

Manipulation of Turns:

In manipulating turn, interlocutors frame some Turn-taking strategies. Interlocutors are continuously busy in analyzing each other's principal turn. They produce and receive turns on the understanding, analyzing and interpretation of what another speaker meant in his prior turn.

In manipulating turns, hearer uses logical reasoning and inferring faculties to interpret what is said. Inference is drawn on certain standards, backgrounds and relationships between/ among interlocutors. In addition, a few clues are utilized by a hearer to manipulate turns. For example- for recognizing conversational activities, hearer grasps turn taker's linguistic and non-linguistic behaviours. Apart from Non-Verbal gesticulation, attention is paid towards vocabulary, grammar and spacio-temporal relationship between turns and turn takers.

Verbal and Non-Verbal Turns:

Turn-taking can be distributed into Verbal and Non-Verbal Turn-taking. For effective and successful communication, interlocutors actively

manage and adjust Verbal and Non-Verbal turns. When one takes turn by using words, it is called Verbal Turn-taking. Verbal Turn-taking has particular structures such as question-answer. For example, a question is expected to be followed by an assertive sentence. When one does not use any word in communication, instead of it he uses gestures, it is considered as a Non-Verbal Turn-taking. Gestures like smile, raising eyebrows, hand movements, head shaking, gaze, silence, dots, dash, bracket etc. can be included in Non-Verbal turns. Through Non-Verbal turns, a participant gives instructions to the next participants. According to Elija Ventola (1979:268),

As generally in any face to face interaction so also in casual encounters both Verbal and Non-Verbal means of communication are used. We don't only communicate through language; we also 'talk' with our whole body.

Non-Verbal devices are simple and habitual. They are systematic and complementary to Verbal turns.

Analysis of Turn-Taking in Jai Nimbar's Come Rain:

Ann is a heroine of the novel. She plays a significant role in the novel. She comes from America after marriage with Ravi who is an Indian. Novel deals with the misunderstanding and miscommunication between Ann and Ravi. Their ways of thinking are different so there are conflicts between their views.

Example 1

Ravi said, 'Well I'd much rather marry a girl I happen to love, even if she can't fit in with my family, than a mindless nonentity who spends her life making compromises so that she can fit in.'

'Why do you take it that making compromises mindless?'

Amol said. 'It's the essence of life.'

'Amol, our views on this subject are so different that we had better just leave it alone, all right.'

There was an uncomfortable silence. Amol had married a girl who had very little education, and who was several years younger than him, and Ravi's remark had touched a raw nerve. Ravi on his part thought he understood what Amol and Vijoo were trying to do. It was the old tribal instinct at work. You have married an outsider, you have

transgressed and you will be condemned they seemed to say. (Come Rain: 15)

In the above mentioned conversational passage, Ravi and Amol take turns. They talk about marriage. There is a conflict between Ravi and Amol's views about marriage. Ravi feels proud to have a foreigner to be his life partner and makes compromises for him. Amol feels defeated by Ravi's way of thinking. Amol is more orthodox in his way of thinking. On the contrary, Ravi belongs to upper middle class and his views are different from Amol. According to Amol, compromises play very significant role in a day-to-day life. Amol tells Ravi that there is a contrast between their views so it's better to leave the topic. In this way, Ravi closes the conversation by taking turn. Amol feels very irritated as his condition is totally different from Ravi. There seems to be uncomfortable silence. Amol is hurt by Ravi's view.

Amol and Shri seem to say through their gestures that Ravi has married an outsider for whom he'll be criticized, so better to marry the way Amol did. At least, they will be saved from criticism. This turn taking clearly states the clash of cultures which is one of the central themes of the novel. It also throws light on marriage as an institution in both countries- India and America.

Example 2

'Knowledge is never wasted.'

'That's fine theoretically. In practice if you spend years acquiring a certain kind of knowledge and never use it, it's wasted.'

'All right,' Mr. Gogte said. 'Then wait until what you think is just the right job comes along. I was only giving you suggestions because I thought you would be bored just sitting at home doing nothing. I know I am only happy when I am busy doing something, whatever it is. But if you are happy being idle, I have nothing against it. I can afford to support ten generations of you in idleness.' (Come Rain:21)

In this conversational passage, Ravi and Mr. Gogte interact with each other by taking turns. They discuss about Ravi's job hunting. There is a conflict between their views. Mr. Gogte opens conversation by giving suggestion to Ravi to learn something

more. He suggests Ravi to increase his knowledge of general subject and accept any job and don't be so choosy. Ravi's view is that these jobs are not suitable for him; they are out of focus for him because he has specialized in a particular subject. If he joins these jobs, it will be wastage of his talent. So he is not ready to waste his talent. He wants to join the company which has research programme. So Ravi's father tries to convince him but Ravi is not ready to listen to him. He is ready to wait until right job comes to his ways. Actually, Ravi is not updated with his knowledge as Pathak. He needs to get a job. If Ravi doesn't update his knowledge and doesn't work, it is also wastage of his knowledge. But still Ravi is not convinced. Ravi never becomes satisfied with his job or business. It conveys that Ravi is not satisfied and comfortable with his decision. So he repents for his decisions. So lastly he decides to settle in America again.

Example 3

'I explained to you that Indians are not as outgoing as Americans. They don't make friends as quickly. They take time to get used to strangers.'

'And while they are taking their time getting used to me, weeks have passed by without my knowing enough to carry on the simplest conversation in the language that is spoken all around me. I might as well be a deaf-mute for all the communication I have with people. I want to learn the language systematically, to be able to read and write as well as speak it.' (Come Rain:22)

In this conversational passage, Ann and Ravi interact with each other by taking turns. Ann needs a tutor to teach her Marathi, as she is from America; she faces the problem of speaking local language, Marathi. Ravi's views are different from her that she can learn Marathi by talking to everyone around her. Ann takes her turns and tells him that very few people know English around them and those who don't know English they refuse to talk to her. Ann tells Ravi that nobody wants to talk to her as she is a foreigner. Even Ravi's family members don't want to talk to her. Ravi takes his turn by saying that Indians are not frank enough compared to Americans. They can not mix easily with strangers. Ann wants to learn

Marathi systematically and thoroughly with its all skills. Her view is that she can not participate in conversation with the family members as she cannot understand the local language. She needs to translate the local language. So Ravi helps her to translate it. It is unbearable to her that no one talks to her. Psychologically she feels lonely.

Ravi realizes her need of learning local language and calls the tutor for her.

Example 4

She began to experience the sweet languor one feels when very tired body begins relax. Then a fresh burst of laughter from downstairs assailed her ears and fuelled her anger. Her eyes felt strained and gritty but she refused them the comfort of sleep.

Finally- she didn't know how long after she had come up- there were footsteps, voices, coming closer, then the door opened and Ravi came in.

He said casually, 'You still awake?'

The casualness of his tone was the final insult.

She said, 'How could you expect anyone to sleep through all the racket?'

He said mildly, 'We weren't that noisy, were we?'

She said nothing.

'Well, I am sorry if we kept you awake. You can sleep now.' (Come Rain:1)

This conversational passage is taken from the very first chapter of the novel. In the above conversational passage, turns are taken by Ann and Ravi. There is an argument between them. Ann is tired of journey, so she needs some rest. But in Ravi's home, she can't take rest properly. Ravi opens the conversation and surprisingly asks her a question. Ann becomes furious to give him an answer. Instead of giving answer to his question, Ann asks him a question. In his turn, Ravi is so mild and tries to tell her that they were not so noisy. Ravi uses a question tag. Ann doesn't say anything. This Non-Verbal device implies that she doesn't want to argue with him anymore. She wants to break the conversation through her turn using this device. Ravi realizes his mistake. He takes the turn himself as she remains silent and says sorry to her. So it is the first argument

between them in India. Ann is clever enough to convince people by her behaviour.

Example 5

Across the table he looked at her long windblown hair, the pink in her cheeks and the sparkle of excitement in her eyes. He felt like a sour-faced grouch .he loved her capacity to enjoy every experience to the fullest, without reservations. This was to his mind the essence of what was admirable in the American character.

Ravi covered her hand on the table with his, briefly.

'What was that for?' she said.

I love you. You are wonderful. I thought after one day here you would run to catch the first flight home. But here you are, actually enjoying yourself.'

'Aren't you?'

'I guess so.' (Come Rain:8-9)

In the above conversational passage, Ann and Ravi have taken turns. They go to the restaurant and there Ravi expresses his love for her through his turns. For that purpose, he takes the help of Non-Verbal and Verbal devices of turns. He uses particular gestures. He holds her hand and expresses his deeper feeling for her. Instead of saying in words, he communicates her that he loves her so much. It indicates the bond between each other. He likes the way; Ann enjoys every moment of her life in a foreign country and tries to adjust here without giving excuses. In this way, he gives her compliment. Ann doesn't give him any reply and takes a pause. This pause indicates her shyness. Ravi takes his turn himself by asking her a question. Ann feels happy but very stylishly gives a casual reply. Thus, this conversation helps them to form healthy relationship between them.

Example 6

Geetabai said, 'How far away is your country?'

'Very far. Thousands of miles.'

'I would never my daughter so far way.'

Ann smiled. 'In our country parents don't arrange children's marriages.'

'Then who does.'

'The children themselves.'

Geetabai shook her head wonderingly. 'And what happens if the parents don't approve of the match?'

They have to accept it, because the children won't listen to them if they say no.'

Geetabai kept shaking her head. She obviously didn't approve of such blatant disregard for the proprieties. She said, 'What if the parents threaten to throw a boy out and not support him?'

'Most young boys are on their own and earning their own living by the time they marry.'
Now that's not such a bad thing.'

She had finished with the room and she went out, leaving door open. (Come Rain: 27)

In this conversational passage, Ann and her maid servant, Geetabai take turns. There is a conflict between their views. Geetabai opens the conversation by asking Ann a question. It is a common question asked by everyone. Ann gives her short answer. While taking her turn Geetabai surprisingly says that she would never do this with her daughter. Ann uses Non-Verbal device here and smiles. It implies that Ann knows that it is the thinking and care of mother for her daughter. She also realizes Geetabai's way of thinking. In her turn, Ann tries to tell her American way of living. Geetabai is so surprised to listen about to the American way of life. In her turn, she takes Non-Verbal means of Turn-taking such as shaking her head. It implies her wonder and dislike. While taking her turn, Ann tries to tell her that American children are matured enough to take their decisions as they are independent. Ann tries to convince her through her turns.

Example 7

'Is the caste-system still rigid?'

'I suppose so. In some ways at least.'

'Is that why your mother didn't like Ravi marrying me? Because I don't belong to your caste?'

'It's got nothing to do with caste. There was girl from our caste whom Ravi had wanted to marry but my mother still didn't approve of her.'

'Why not?'

Mahesh hesitated. He looked as though he had said too much and would like to end this conversation.

(Come Rain: 40)

In the above conversational passage, turns are taken by Ann and Mahesh. Ann opens the conversation by asking Mahesh a question about caste system in India. While taking his turn, Mahesh uses the falling tone and gives his answer. Ann again asks him the question about herself as Mrs. Gogte doesn't want to approve her as her daughter-in-law as she belongs to different caste. While taking his turn, Mahesh adds more information that Mrs. Gogte even rejected the girl who belongs to the same caste. Ann, while taking her turn asks Mahesh a question. Instead of giving answer, Mahesh remains silent. It implies that he hesitates to take his turn. He just wants to cut the flow of conversation because he seems to be guilty as he feels that he has given her information more than required.

In this paper, an attempt has been made to analyze the Verbal and Non-Verbal means of turns. In the conversation they play very significant role. In this novel, Non-Verbal devices of Turn-taking come with Verbal means of Turn-taking. There are various Non-verbal devices such as gazes, smiles, laugh, nodding, dash and pauses etc. which play vital roles in conversation. These devices fulfill functions such as asking questions, surprise, offer, willingness, refusal, acceptance, agreement, disagreement greeting, advising, threatening, warning, hesitation etc. The analysis reveals that a speaker can use these Non-Verbal devices to fulfill the same functions.

References:

- Levinson, Stephen.C. (1983), *Pragmatics*, Cambridge: CUP.
Nimbakar Jai (1993) *Come Rain* Mumbai: Orient Longman.
Tsui, Amy B.M. (1994), *English Conversation*, Oxford: OUP
Ventola, Eija (1979) *The Structure of Casual Conversation in English*, North Holland: Journal of Pragmatics,
Yule, George. (1996) *Pragmatics*, Oxford University Press: Oxford and New York.