

# Responding to an authentic transcript



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In this transcript, Oprah Winfrey is talking with so called "wiggers". There are two guests, as well as Oprah Winfrey are discussing the social and cultural changes in society, causing some white people to dress 'black'. Oprah is discussing the fashion choices among white kids. Oprah has no obvious previous relationship with the guests and the audience. It would seem pre-prepared or semi-spontaneous questions and answers. The discourse conventions for this situation are that the manner is polite. It is also expected that there be fillers, hesitation etc, as this conversation is semi-spontaneous.

The turn taking is lead by Oprah. She conducts the direction of the conversation. Both the guests and Oprah are engaged, and Oprah also interacts with the audience. The propose of this interview is to inform the audience and to entertain on some occasions. The language which is used contains a lot of idiolect, sociolect and is casual. Since the conversation is casual, there are many fillers, non-fluency features, slang, contraction etc. There are a few prosodic features in this transcript. For example, instead of pronouncing 'Pumas', the audience pronounces it "Poomers".

These features highlight the cultural difference of the "wiggers" The use of sociolect such as "wigger" further highlight this difference. Elision within the transcript lends the image that the conversation took place in a casual environment. Elisions as well as false starts typical of everyday talk emphasize the fact that the conversation was informal. Fillers such as "um" are numerous in this transcript. If the conversation was pre-planned these wouldn't happen. Repairs are used frequently such as " can you turn your sh

foot". This punctuates the utterances and makes the conversation seem more natural and un-planned.

The conversation between Oprah and her guests follow Grice's Maxims. Firstly, the maxim of quantity. Neither Oprah nor her guests talk for too long a period. The turn taking is fairly smooth and this defines a successful conversation. Another Maxim which the conversation follows is the Maxim of relevance. The conversation does not stray from the main subject - "wiggers". The conversation stays on the topic of the black culture and fashion, and does not change. The third maxim of manner is followed, as the conversation is clear, and each person understands what is going on. The maxim of quality is the final maxim and this too is followed.

The maxim of quality is that the conversation remains truthful, or assumed to be not a deliberate lie. The transcript does not contain (or is assumed) to not contain any false information, thus this conversation is deemed a successful conversation. Oprah allows slight diversion of the conversation only to strengthen the points she is making, for example, talking about shoes to show the audience of the fashion choices of the guests. Oprah also keeps the conversation light hearted and paced when she diverts attention to a lady who is coughing. It is off topic but Oprah steers the conversation back to the topic on hand quickly.

This is an example of phatic talk, where the bit of conversation is off issue, but establishes a relationship with other people. It is similar to small talk.

Oprah Winfrey is the speaker whom asks the questions. The audience often exclaims and makes statements. Apart from the direct channel of speech

there are certain areas of back channeling, such as the interaction near the end of the transcript " so do you think of it as a black thing; no; you just see it as; I just see it as it is" Since the show is largely opinion based, hesitation and false starts are expected.

Hedging of statements is also expected. For example, the guest says " an I think it's marvelous" to soften the force of his statement. The guests sometimes avoid seeming too strong minded about things. To sum up, the type of language used, non fluency features and turn taking are typical of a casual conversation. The conversation is at least semi-spontaneous and this is highlighted by the false starts and repairs within the dialogue. The utterances punctuated by frequent pauses and hesitations keep the conversation at a leisurely pace. Grice's maxims are followed and this makes a successful conversation.