

How people are assigned with different roles english language essay

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



In the social context, all people are assigned with different roles, which differentiate them in terms of status and power. Although sometimes the hierarchy between two parties is already known in advance, we are interested in looking into spoken discourse of dynamic exchange, to figure out how power is exercised through language use in reality. Therefore, in this paper, I will explore the power relationship between the speakers through analyzing the linguistics choices made, the exchange structure and the speech functions. The chosen spoken discourse is from the episode 3 of the American reality show 'The Apprentice' (Season 6). Participants are divided in two opposing teams and are assigned business tasks and Donald Trump, the judge, chooses one or more members from the losing team and fires them in the boardroom. I will first generally describe the register of the text, followed by analyzing the mood choices and speech functions, choice of lexical words and modal verbs, positive appreciations by Michelle, directness by Donald, exchange structure(turn-taking and interruption pattern) and form of address. The unequal power relationship between the judge, Donald Trump and the participant, Michelle will then be unveiled. RegisterRegister, which describes 'the relationship between language and context of the situation', includes three aspects: field, mode and tenor (Martin, 2001, p. 152). The field is the boardroom confrontation in a reality show. We can derive it by looking at the verbs used like 'quit', 'work', 'have learnt' from which the material processes are illustrated and the participants like 'organization', 'boardroom', 'business'. The mode is face-to-face talk in which the participants are allowed to express their views in immediate responses. The tenor is the judges, Ivanka Trump, Donald Trump Jr. and

Donald Trump, and the candidates, Michelle Sorro from the losing team. Power and solidarity are the two aspects of tenor (Martin, 2001, p. 160). Michelle is definitely in an inferior position compared with Ivanka, Donald Jr. and Donald. One obvious clue showing the hierarchical relationship is that the trio has heckled Michelle. Their social distance is large as shown by the topic they were discussing (the quitting of the candidate) and the use of personal pronouns, ' I ' and ' you ' to distance themselves from each other. Gardner(1994, p. 99) suggested that ' ...certain roles with greater power in terms of the control of turn-taking, and the people occupying these roles... take on that greater power as long as they are in that role, and for as long as that interaction continues.' Thus, in the following parts, I will focus on the power relations in tenor by explaining the different salient linguistic and exchange features throughout the whole meeting. Mood choice and speech functions Although the whole discourse contains mostly declarative and several interrogative sentences, without any imperative structure, we can still understand the power relation through the speech functions performed by the mood choices. At the beginning of the discussion in the boardroom, Michelle started off by putting a yes/no-interrogative asking for permission to express her feelings. Michelle used it instead of a declarative sentence to show her intention, as it gave Donald the choices of allowing or refusing. This practice is usually seen when people in a subordinate position want to initiate the conversation at the same time to show respect. Moreover, there are more questions used by Donald than Michelle. He raised questions at the beginning of the confrontation in turn 4, 6 and 9 to ask for information. This is interpreted as one way of Donald's exertion of authority, since Fairclough

(2001, p. 105) indicated that questioning can be a sign of power in a sense that the superiors ask for information and demand their subordinates to provide it. It is especially prominent that the less powerful person, i. e. Michelle, gave responses immediately without hesitation. She was not given an option of refusing to answer it. In turn 4, Donald used a WH-interrogative to ask Michelle about the stuff she was dealing with. In turn 6, Donald used a short reduced question form ' Too tough?' instead of ' Was it too tough?' with rising intonation to perform the speech role of question, demanding the information from Michelle. According to Fairclough (2001, p. 38), this type of questions is ' abrupt and curt' and can show the hierarchical relationship. In turn 9, Donald asked Michelle whether she was quitting. It shows Donald's higher power status since as Fairclough (2001, p. 113) pointed out, when the meanings by interlocutors of lower power status are ambiguous, the more powerful interlocutors will ' enforce explicitness' by questioning them with an aim to oblige them to make themselves clear. The same function was exercised here to force Michelle to admit she was quitting. In addition, several instances of interpersonal metaphor, in which ' Mood choices and speech roles do not always coincide' (Thompson, 2004, p. 231), are shown. In turn 9, he uttered a declarative sentence started with ' so' , and ' you' as the Subject followed by the Finite ' are'. The sentence was realized as a question, not a statement, in response to turn 7 of Michelle in which her negative feelings towards the process were expressed. The mood structure in turn 11 is three consecutive yes/no-interrogative structures. The second and third ones are yes/no interrogatives, which take the function of not asking for information, but of a statement to show his judgment towards

Michelle's resignation. The purpose is to embarrass her and also make it an obligation for her to give responses. If it was a declarative sentence, the obligation would not be as prominent because she could choose to start a new turn unit. In turn 22, there was also a declarative sentence performing as question. However, he did not expect an answer actually, but raised the attention. It did not serve as providing options for Michelle but only a signal that he was going to give information, assuming that Michelle wanted to know it. In turn 37, Donald raised a WH-interrogative with his own reply, functioning as giving his own judgment, but not asking for opinions. This is also a technique in exercising his power since he pre-assumed the situation and the reaction of Michelle. Politeness by Michelle

As Holtgraves (2002, p. 47) pointed out, "we are more likely to be polite ... to a higher-power person than to one who is in lower power than us." Politeness is manifested through choice of words and positive appreciation by Michelle. Choice of lexical words and modal verbs

It is noticed that in Michelle's speech, she used modal verbs like 'would' and 'cannot'. Examples can be found in turn 3, 7&10 ('would love/like' instead of 'want'), and turn 25 ('can't appreciate' instead of 'don't agree with') to make her tone less strong and show her disagreement indirectly. In turn 7, 'a little' was adopted as a 'downtoner' (Martin and Rose, 2007) to reduce the intensity of the judgment so that it did not sound offensive to Donald. Overall, she showed politeness and deference to the listener because she indicated her preferences and disagreement indirectly and courteously. Positive appreciations and judgment

Michelle included quite a lot of positive appreciations to mitigate her negative appreciation on the competition process. Mitigation happened in turn 7, 16, she mentioned that

she appreciated the opportunity and in turn 18, she used some positive appreciation like 'insightful', 'great' to describe the process. These reduce the effect of complaining. In turn 28, she expressed a positive judgment on Donald's candid. This acts as concession to make it sound more pleasant and polite for the hearer. In turn 18, Michelle used 'so much/many', 'incredibly' to add force to her positive appreciation to the process. It is like a flattering speech to the superior to save the face of Donald. The fact that Michelle gave positive judgments and appreciations before or after negative appreciation towards the process reflects that she wanted to alleviate the overall negative atmosphere and make it less aggressive. Directness by Donald Tannen (2000, p. 195) points out that "Many in the United States find it self-evident that directness is logical and aligned with power...". Directness can be shown in choice of words and use of intensifiers. Choice of negative lexical words Donald has adopted many negative evaluative expressions to judge directly on Michelle's performance and behaviors. This 'evaluative feedback' or 'evaluative comment' is common for dominant persons towards subordinate persons (Fairclough, 2001: 113). For example, Donald explicitly used words like 'hate', realized as negative affect (used repeatedly in turn 24, 26, 27, 29), 'trouble' (turn 17), 'loser' & 'quitter' (turn 11), 'mistake' (turn 27), all realized as negative judgment. These are adopted to construct Michelle's decision as a wrong and unacceptable act explicitly. In turn 20 & 37, he used the word 'never', which shows definite and determined evaluation, to judge on Michelle's failure. This inclusion of 'never' makes him appear unchallengeable. He did not attempt to mitigate the accusation of quitting against Michelle. Rather, he used these subjective,

personal affects and judgments to highlight his negative attitude towards Michelle and her behavior of quitting, setting up a negative and assaulting ‘prosody’ (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 59). Intensifiers

In turn 17, ‘serious’ was uttered to add force to ‘trouble’. It is a highly offensive judgment which made Michelle lose face. In turn 19, a lot of words indicate the attitudes and graduation. For example, ‘major’ was repeatedly used as an explicit ‘intensifier’ (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 43); ‘only one person’ was repeated as a quantity intensifier to stress the amount while ‘all the years’ was to emphasize the quantity in time. These intensifiers were used to strengthen the force in constructing Michelle’s resignation as a rare case and alienate her from the rest of contestants who stayed. Only the higher power status person can take the risk to amplify and magnify the other’s wrong behavior (his own judgment).

Exchange Structure

Turn-taking system

The turn-taking system is that current speaker can select the next speaker or the next speaker can select himself (1978, Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, p. 701). The flow of turns between Michelle and Donald is generally self-selecting despite some are through Donald’s selection by adjacency pairs. According to Coulthard (1985, p. 60), when the current speaker does the selection, he can also choose to say the first part of an adjacency pair to restrict the next speaker’s types of response. It can be shown that Donald exercised the power through saying the first part of the adjacency pair, i. e., a question in the cases

Examples can be found in turn 4 and 5, 6 and 7, 9 and 10, 11 and 12. There are two instances when Michelle tried to say something and wanted to compete for the turn between turn 19 & 20 and within turn 22, but failed to do so since she chose to give up the chance of speaking but let

Donald continue. This reviewed her own limitation on her contribution since she knew that Donald would continue. It is significant that her perception of herself being inferior was reflected. Interruption Tannen (1989, p. 267) summarised that ' West and Zimmerman (1983, p. 103) are typical in calling interruption " a device for exercising power and control in conversation" and " violations of speakers' turns at talk." Therefore, a higher power status of Donald is demonstrated through the interruptions as the basic rules of taking turns are broken. More interruptions were made by Donald than Michelle.

Donald Michelle Interruptions Overlaps Interruptions Overlaps Turn 6 [Too tough? Turn 25 [I can't Turn 5 [I Turn 11 [Are you a quitter? Turn 34 [I get that. Turn 12 [It does not. Turn 11 [But doesn't Turn 36 [Mr. Trump Turn 23 [I won't Turn 17 [Plus you know Turn 42 [Thank you. Turn 36 [Yes Turn 22 [I don't know Turn 29 [You know Turn 39 [You've done Turn 41 [Okay In turn 5-6 and turn 10-12, Donald interrupted Michelle's account by interrogating her, and then Michelle could not continue her own turn but responded to it. In turn 16&17, he ignored and refused to respond to Michelle's positive comment in the last sentence, but he interrupted and referred back to Michelle's previous sentences of explanation. It was to give authoritative accounts of the motive for her resignation. It shows that he was in control of choosing what to respond or ignore. In turn 38&39, Donald interrupted Michelle because she denied her easy-quitting. He wanted to show his disagreement immediately. Thus, he started his turn by ignoring Michelle's attempt in further explanation. Interruptions also occurred when Donald wanted to change the topic. Like turn 29, by ignoring what Michelle has said and not giving any responses to the previous turn, Donald continued and

stated his own analogy comments. Michelle was compelled to stop her turn because she was not allowed to continue. At the end (turn 41), Donald suddenly stopped the focus of the discussion of whether Michelle gave up easily and uttered that he accepted her resignation. He did not wait until Michelle finished her promise but he stated his own acceptance at the time he preferred. In short, the turns were dominated by Donald because he could always take the turn from Michelle while Michelle only obeyed and gave in. Despite that there are some instances that Michelle tried to interrupt Donald (turn 25, 34, 36, 42), Donald managed to seize the turn, stop Michelle from interrupting and continue his own turn. For instance, in turn 35, when Donald describing how tough it would be in real business, Michelle tried to take her turn by addressing Mr. Trump as signification, but Donald ignored her signs. This made Michelle stop her speech but say 'yes' as feedback token. Her failure in taking the ground reflects her subordinate position. Forms of addressIt is noticed in some instances that Michelle and Donald addressed each other differently. When Michelle referred to Donald Trump's speech in turn 32 and addressed him in turn 36, she used the form of title plus his last name, Mr. Trump, rather than his first name, Donald. On the contrary, Donald Trump addressed Michelle by her first name in turn 33. This 'non-reciprocal form of address' is a clear manifestation of the hierarchical relationship between them (Tannen, 1992, p. 135) because the subordinate should not call her boss in first name to show deference. It is the privilege of the boss to call his subordinates by first names. ConclusionThe power relationship between Donald and Michelle is illustrated through the politeness by Michelle, direct and negative judgments and affects by Donald

and the exchange structure. All of them positioned Michelle in a lower power status while Donald in a higher one. The hierarchy is observed through the verbal resources. Further investigation could be made based on the non-verbal resources such as gestures, facial expressions or even intonation in order to give a comprehensive analysis on the realization of power in discourse.