

**AN ANALYSIS OF PAUSES, BACKCHANNELS, AND OVERLAPS IN CATHY
NEWMAN'S INTERVIEW OF JORDAN B PETERSON IN CHANNEL 4 NEWS.**



*Mencerdaskan dan
Memartabatkan Bangsa*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Analysis Background

Language is one of the main identities of communication, through language, we converse, and through conversation, we can exchange information, it is the natural way of how human interaction works. “Conversation is the spoken exchange of ideas, observations, opinions, or feelings between people.” (Nordquist, 2019). In conversations, whether casual or institutional, there are certain aspects to be paid attention to according to Yule (1996). They are **floor** which is defined as the **right to speak**, **turn** which is a control one can have to the **floor**, an attempt to take control which can be called **turn-taking**, **local management system**, and **transition relevance place** or **TRP**.

A good conversation is achieved when the control is distributed smoothly in a good flow, as conversation is a cooperative activity where both parties involved in the conversation can control the floor one at a time to make sure the utterance of the information is correctly spoken and understood. One party must listen until the other is done speaking to respect the floor, simultaneous speaking of both parties will result in a bad conversation where there is no information that are exchanged correctly. One way to keep a good flow in a conversation is to pay attention to pauses, backchannels, and overlaps. When having a conversation, a speaker occasionally stops, resulting in a silence at the time of speaking, these are called **pauses**, short pauses in a middle of an utterance are simply hesitations, while a longer one becomes silence. Silence at the end of an utterance can be attributable or non-attributable to the second speaker. Nods, sound like “uh-uh”, “yeah”, or “hm” **are** backchannels, which are a sign that someone is listening to the floor owner. Too less signal give impression that you are not listening while too many signal give impressions that you are in a rush. When both speakers try to speak simultaneously, this is called **overlaps**, while it can mean something bad, sometimes overlaps are a sign of agreement and support.

Conversations do not limit itself to daily talks, dialogs in movies, interviews, news channel are also conversations which uses the same concept, all in which the parties must respect the floor in order to receive the information uttered. This research specifically aims to analyse the conversation in an interview between a Canadian clinical psychologist Jordan B. Peterson and a Channel 4 News journalist, Cathy Newman. The 2018 interview was one of the most controversial interviews, with more than 30 million views on

YouTube per June 15th 2021. It was a heated interchange between the Canadian and the Newman, who pressed Peterson on his controversial views. It was the most prominent, striking example of an unfortunate trend in modern communication. Whenever Peterson made a statement or argument or simply answering Newman's questions, the journalist restates what Peterson purportedly said so as to make it seem as if his view is offensive, hostile, or absurd. While this interview does not contain much pauses or an excessive sign of backchannels, it does contain a lot of overlaps, as seen on the example below,

Newman: But you're saying, basically, it doesn't matter if women aren't getting to the top, because that's what is skewing that gender pay gap, isn't it? You're saying (Peterson: No, I'm not saying it doesn't matter) that's just a fact of life, women aren't necessarily going to get to the top.

Peterson: No, I'm not saying it doesn't matter, either... (Newman: You're saying that it's a fact of life...) I'm saying there are multiple reasons for it... (Newman: Yeah, but why should women put up with those reasons?) ... - (rest of Peterson's statement becomes unintelligible).

The example above shows that both Peterson and Newman overlap each other to compete for the floor, Peterson did it to clarify things, while Newman did it to press Peterson with questions. In the chunks of interview above, Newman was asking Peterson about his statement regarding gender pay gap, Newman restated what Peterson said prior and Peterson tries to overlap Newman to clarify things, in the next chunk, Peterson has the floor and tries to answer what Newman had asked him, Newman again with her aggressive method of questioning overlaps Peterson with pressing questions to prove her point. This paper will further analyse the 28 minutes interview and identifies the noticeable pauses, backchannels, and overlaps. These three aspects will later on be used to study the conversation, and be analysed what's the purpose it is done in the interview.

1.2 Problem Statement

In accordance to the purpose of the study, the problem can be stated as:

- a) How does pauses, backchannels, and overlaps occur in the interview?
- b) What is the reason of the constant overlaps in the interview?

CHAPTER 2

DISCUSSION

2.1 Identification of Pauses, Backchannels, and Overlaps

No	Sequence	Pauses/Backchannels/Overlaps
1	<p>Newman: So what's gone wrong then? (2 sec)</p> <p>Peterson: Oh god, all sorts of things have gone wrong. I think that... I don't think that young men are here words of encouragement some some of them never in their entire lives as far as I can tell, that's what they tell me, and the fact that the words that I've been speaking, the YouTube lectures that I've done and put online for example, have had such a dramatic impact is indication that young men are starving for this sort of message because, like why in the world would they have to derive it from a lecture on YouTube? Now they're not being taught that it's important to develop yourself.</p>	<p>Pause (attributable silence)</p> <p>Peterson paused for a good 2 second, possibly indicates that he is carefully thinking of a response.</p>
2	<p>Newman: It doesn't bother you that your audience is predominantly male. Isn't that a bit divisive?</p> <p>Peterson: No, I don't think so. I mean, it's no more divisive than the fact that YouTube is primarily male and (Newman: That's pretty divisive, isn't it?) Tumblr is primarily female.</p>	<p>Overlap</p> <p>Newman does an overlap to question Peterson's statement.</p>
3	<p>Peterson: I'm not saying anything. It's just an observation that that's the way it is. There's plenty of women that are watching my lectures and coming to my talks and buy my books it's just that the majority of them happen to be men.</p>	<p>Pause (attributable silence)</p> <p>Peterson probably again tries to be careful in answering a sudden overlap question from Newman, asking about what's in it for the woman while Peterson is contextually speaking about the majority of his audience happen to be men.</p>

	<p>Newman: What's in it for the women, though? (2 sec)</p> <p>Peterson: Well, what sort of partner do you want? Do you want an overgrown child? Or do you want someone to contend with, who is going to help you?</p>	
4	<p>Peterson: It depends on what they want. It's exactly how I laid it out. Women want deeply men who are competent and powerful. And I don't mean power in that they can exert tyrannical control over others. That's not power. That's just corruption. Power is competence. And why in the world would you not want a competent partner? Well, I know why, actually, you can't dominate a competent partner. So if you want domination... (Newman: So you're saying women want to dominate, is that what you're saying?)</p>	<p>Overlap</p> <p>Newman overlapped Peterson to get a clarification on his statement, basically tries to restate Peterson's statement to make it sound absurd.</p>
5	<p>Peterson: No, I'd say women who have had impaired their relationships with men, impaired and who are afraid of such relationships will settle for a weak partner because they can dominate them. But it's a suboptimal solution... (Newman: Do you think that's what a lot of women are doing?)</p>	<p>Overlap</p> <p>In continuation to the prior chunk, Peterson resumed his statement about having partners, again, Newman interrupted with a question to relate to the status quo.</p>
6	<p>Newman: Let me put it quite to you from the book (Peterson: sure) where you say "there are whole disciplines in universities forthrightly hostile towards men. These are the areas of study dominated by the postmodern stroke neo-Marxist claim the Western culture in particular is an oppressive structure created by white men to dominate and exclude women." But then I want to put</p>	<p>a. Backchannel</p> <p>a little sign of backchannel by Peterson by saying "sure" in the middle of Newman's statement.</p> <p>b. Overlap</p> <p>Peterson overlapped Newman to add and clarifies about what he said in his book.</p>

	<p>you... (Peterson: Minorities too, dominate...)</p> <p>Newman: Okay, sure, but I want to put to you...</p>	
7	<p>Newman: Okay, sure, but I want to put to you... here in the UK, for example, let's say that as an example, the gender pay gap stands at just over 9%. You've got women at the BBC recently saying that the broadcaster is illegally paying them less than men to do the same job. (Peterson: Ya) You've got only seven women running the top footsie 100 companies. (Peterson: Hum).</p>	<p>Backchannel</p> <p>Simple display of Backchannel by Peterson.</p>
8	<p>Newman: So it seems to a lot of women that they still being dominated and excluded, to quote your words back to you.</p> <p>Peterson: It does seem that way. But multivariate analysis of the pay gap indicate that it doesn't exist... (Newman: But that's not true, is it?) – (Peterson statement becomes unintelligible) (Newman: That 9 percent pay gap, that's a gap between median hourly earnings between men and women. That exists.)</p>	<p>Overlap</p> <p>This is an example of a bad overlap, Newman interrupted Peterson, not respecting his floor therefore not letting him to utter a complete statement, it even becomes unintelligible until she interrupted again.</p>
9	<p>Newman: But you're saying, basically, it doesn't matter if women aren't getting to the top, because that's what is skewing that gender pay gap, isn't it? You're saying (Peterson: No, I'm not saying it doesn't matter) that's just a fact of life, women aren't necessarily going to get to the top.</p> <p>Peterson: No, I'm not saying it doesn't matter, either... (Newman: You're saying that it's a fact of life...) I'm saying there are multiple reasons for it... (Newman: Yeah, but why should women put up with those reasons?) ...</p>	<p>Overlap</p> <p>Peterson did an overlap, clarifying that what Newman restated about his statement is not true.</p> <p>On the other side, is yet another example of Newman's prominent aggressive method of questioning. Shoving questions while Peterson is trying to answer her question to clarify things. The rest of</p>

	- (rest of Peterson's statement becomes unintelligible).	Peterson's statement again became unintelligible.
10	<p>Peterson: I'm not saying that they should put up with it! I'm saying that the claim that the wage gap between men and women is only due to sex is wrong. And it is wrong. There's no doubt about that. The multivariate analysis have been done. So I can give you an example... (Newman: You keep on telling me about the multivariate analysis) wait a second let me give you an example... (Newman: No no no, I'm saying that nine percent pay gap exists. That's a gap between men and women. I'm not saying why it exists but it exists. Now you're a woman that seems pretty unfair.)</p>	<p>Overlap</p> <p>Another overlap by Newman, this time she interrupted Peterson possibly to debunk what Peterson believes to be true. Both Peterson and Newman immediately compete for the floor in which Peterson gives up and let Newman interrupts him.</p>
11	<p>Peterson: Oh, definitely. But also, I didn't deny it existed. I denied that it existed because of gender. (Newman: ok) See, because I'm very, very, very careful with my words.</p>	<p>Backchannel</p>
12	<p>Newman: So, the pay gap exists. You accept that. But you're saying... (1 sec) I mean the pay gap between men and women exists—you're saying it's not because of gender, it's because women are too agreeable to ask for pay raises.</p>	<p>Pause</p> <p>A very short pause by Newman indicating hesitation.</p>
13	<p>Newman: So do you.. do you agree that you would be happy if that pay gap was eliminated completely? Because that's all the radical feminists are saying.</p> <p>Peterson: It would depend on how it was eradicated and how the disappearance of it was measured.... (Newman: And you're saying if that's at a cost of men, that's a problem.) Oh, there's all sorts of things that it could</p>	<p>Overlap</p> <p>Some of Peterson's utterance become unintelligible but he managed to continue after the interruption</p>

	be at the cost of it. It could even be at the cost of women's own interests.	
14	<p>Newman: I think I take issue with the idea of the typical woman because, you know, all women are different. I want to just put another quote to you from the book... (Peterson: No, they are different in some ways and the same in others...)</p> <p>Newman: Okay, you say "women become more vulnerable when they have children" ... (Peterson: Oh yes.)</p>	<p>a. Overlap</p> <p>Most of the times, Peterson would only interrupt to clarify, which is the case in this one.</p> <p>b. Backchannel</p>
15	<p>Newman: So, you think women are just more sensible. They don't want that because it's not a nice level.</p> <p>Peterson: I'm saying that's part of it, definitely. And so, I worked... (Newman: So, you don't think there are barriers in their way that prevent them getting to the top of those companies.)</p> <p>Peterson: There are some barriers, yeah, like... men for example, I mean, to get to the top of any organisation is an incredibly competitive enterprise and the men that you're competing with are simply not going to roll over and say "please take the position". It's absolutely all-out warfare.</p>	<p>Overlap</p> <p>Newman's overlap does not allow Peterson to complete what he about to say, resulting in a completely different topics in his next turn.</p>
16	<p>Peterson: If it means equality of outcome then it is almost certainly undesirable. That's already been demonstrated in Scandinavia. Because in Scandinavia... (Newman: What do you mean by that? "Equality of outcome is undesirable.")</p>	<p>Overlap</p> <p>Newman's once again pressed Peterson with question in the middle of an utterance.</p>
17	<p>Newman: Let me put something else to you from the book you say "the introduction of the equal pay for equal work argument immediately complicates even salary comparison beyond practicality (Peterson: hm) for one simple reason: who decides what</p>	<p>a. Backchannel</p> <p>Peterson shows that he is listening by saying "hm" in the middle of Newman's turn.</p>

	<p>work is equal? It's not possible" (Peterson: hm). So, the simple question is: do you believe in equal pay? (2 sec)</p> <p>Peterson: Well, I made the argument there. It's like it depends on who defines them...</p>	<p>b. Pause (attributable silence)</p> <p>Peterson said in the interview that he is very careful with his word, perhaps this is one example.</p>
18	<p>Newman: ...so you don't believe in equal pay...</p> <p>Peterson: Ahahah! No, I'm not saying that at all!</p> <p>Newman: Because a lot of people listening to you will just say, are we going back to the dark ages?... (Peterson: That's because you're actually not listening, you're just projecting (Newman: I'm listening very carefully) what they think.</p>	<p>Overlap</p> <p>Both Newman and Peterson compete for the floor, this is the first time in the interview Peterson overlapped to snap at Newman for absurdly restating his statement.</p>
19	<p>Peterson: No! I really think that's silly! I do, I think that's silly. I really do. I mean, look at your situation. You're hardly unsuccessful.</p> <p>Newman: Yeah, and I had to work hard to get where I got to. (Peterson: Exactly! Good for you!)</p> <p>Newman: That's ok, battling is good. This is all about the fight. (Peterson: It's inevitable.)</p>	<p>Overlap</p> <p>Peterson overlapped to show Newman that she accidentally proved his point.</p>
20	<p>Newman: Okay. You cited freedom of speech in that. Why should your right to freedom of speech trump a trans person's right not to be offended? (2 sec)</p> <p>Peterson: Because in order to be able to think, you have to risk being offensive. I mean, look at the conversation we're having right now. You're certainly willing to risk offending me in the</p>	<p>Pause (attributable silence)</p> <p>Peterson paused for 2 seconds; this is one of the highlights of the interview where Peterson uttered a brilliant response.</p>

	pursuit of truth. Why should you have the right to do that? It's been rather uncomfortable.	
21	<p>Peterson: You get my point. You're doing what you should do, which is digging a bit to see what the hell is going on. And that is what you should do. But you're exercising your freedom of speech to certainly risk offending me, and that's fine. More power to you, as far as I'm concerned.</p> <p>Newman: So, you haven't sat there and... (3 sec) I'm just... I'm just trying to work that out... I mean... (5 sec)</p> <p>Peterson: Ha! Gotcha!</p>	<p>Pause</p> <p>Newman paused resulting in an awkward silence when she tries to respond to Peterson's statement. This interview feels like a debate and this can be considered as Peterson's "winning moment".</p>

2.2 General Analysis

The interview turns into a fiery encounter at some part, it can clearly be seen that throughout the whole interview Newman tried to debunk Peterson's controversial statement with her aggressive pressing interview method. There are a noticeable pattern in Newman's questions; "So you're saying that", this phrase later on becomes a viral part of the whole interview in the internet, because Newman used that so many times in the interview, Newman repeatedly tries to oversimplify Peterson's view, as if he believes one factor he discusses is all-important, and then she seems to assume that because Peterson believes that given factor helps to explain a pay gap between men and women, he doesn't support any actions that would bring about a more equal outcome.

While on the other side, Peterson is very calmed and relaxed while at the same time being very careful with his words. Although at some point he subtly shows his frustration with being interviewed by someone who refuses to relay his actual beliefs. Peterson once said in the interview that he is very very careful with his words, in which he did, thus resulting in the interview going crazy viral with Peterson's popularity bomb in the youth community. One of the most important things this interview illustrates is that how Newman constantly poses as if she is the controversially accountable reporter when in reality, it's the complete opposite.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSION

3.1 General Conclusion

Pauses, backchannels, and overlaps are one of the elements in conversational analysis, in the findings and discussion provided, there are a lot of examples regarding these 3 things, most of them being overlaps as it is an interview that in a style of a debate.

Overall, the conversation studied in this research paper does not serve the concepts of a good conversation that is respecting the floor, and maintain a good flow in turn-taking, it is a fiery encounter where both the interviewer and interviewee exchange their views on several controversial topics that includes relationship, gender pronouns, gender pay-gap, transgender, etc. This interview deserves of its viral status where it is now viewed 30 million times on YouTube, it mostly favours Jordan B Peterson for being the “good guy” resulting in his popularity boom. Despite of it being the most controversial interview of all time, it is an interesting object of study linguistically, this time specifically about pauses, backchannels, and overlaps.

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