

## CONVERSATION ANALYSIS OF PRIME MINISTER IMRAN KHAN'S INTERVIEW WITH VRT CHANNEL JOURNALIST

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### ABSTRACT

*"Conversation Analysis of Prime Minister Imran Khan's Interview with VRT Channel Journalist" aims to analyze the conversation of the Prime Minister Imran Khan with VRT Channel Journalist Steve Decraene. This is qualitative research which utilizes the Stephen C. Levinson's Theory regarding Preference Structure and Adjacency Pairs. The study focuses on identifying preference structures, the pattern of adjacency pairs and the reasons behind using particular structures in the conversation. The findings of this study reveal that the most occurring conversational structures are question-answer pattern of adjacency pair and the preferred responses in the conversation of the Prime Minister. There are eight pairs of question-answer pattern and seven preferred responses out of which five patterns of assessment-agreement pair and two patterns of question-expected answer pair are observed. This study has documented that the preferred responses such as question-answer pattern and assessment-agreement patterns are mostly found in the conversation and the least found pattern is assessment-disagreement pair. These conversational patterns in the Prime Minister Imran Khan's talk reflect his control, authority and composure in his temperament: clarity and credibility in his views. His utterances have forceful but accommodative tone.*

**Keywords:** Conversation Analysis, Preference Structure, Adjacency Pairs, Levinson Theory.

### INTRODUCTION

Conversation plays a vital role in our life. It helps us to build social relationships with others. Through conversation we share our views and thoughts with others. Interviews are also a kind of conversation in which two or more speakers are engaged in discussions on different matters. Usually, the question answer pattern is followed in the interviews in order to get the information about the topic. In a conversation/interview the speaker sends a message and the hearer receives that message. It not only gives a message but also develops a social relationship. In a conversation/interview two or more people are involved in turn-taking and only one participant speaks at a time. *Turn taking* according to Yule (1996) is taking the floor by a speaker in every type of conversation where the turns are not pre-fixed.

"Conversation is characterized by turn taking" (Levinson, 1983, 296). In a conversation one person "A" talks and then stops and then another person "B" takes his turn and talks then stops. So, in this case we obtain an A-B-A-B-A-B distribution of talk across two participants A and B (Levinson, 1983). In a conversation anyone can take control because it is not decided who must dominate. Turn taking pattern is not fixed but it varies from person to person and society to society. It is not a universal phenomenon.

Paltridge (2006) argues that spoken discourse is a way to manage mutual interactions among people. The speaker and hearer know what to say and how to respond to each other in those utterances. By analyzing conversation, deeper understanding can be attained regarding the views of people engaged in the conversations. Conversation analysis is a major area of study in discourse analysis and it explores the patterns of social life represented in a conversation. It is an area of study which observes everyday communication.

One of the basic units in conversation analysis is *Adjacency Pair*. According to Yule (1996, 77) in the structure of conversation, adjacency pairs are referred to as the automatic patterns. It consists of two parts the first part of the conversation and the second part of the conversation which are produced by different speakers. The second part of the utterance are created after the first part of utterance. While the failure of producing the second part by the speaker will be treated as a significant absence and hence meaningful. Adjacency Pair is the fundamental way to organize conversation that represents social interaction. There are different types of adjacency pairs including question-answer sequence, greetings etc.

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Sometimes questions asked by the speaker is not directly followed by the answer but more questions in a conversation which are turned as insertion sequence.

According to Yule (1996), in adjacency pairs the first part refers to an offer or a request made in the expectation that the second part will consist of acceptance. And acceptance is more likely than a refusal. "This structural likelihood is called a *Preference*" (Yule, 1996, p. 79). The term *preference* refers to indicate a socially determined structural pattern. There are further reacts such as structurally expected act which is called *preferred structure* and structurally unexpected act which is called *dispreferred structure*. In the given example 'request' is considered as first part where in the second part 'acceptance' is referred to a preferred and 'refusal' is referred to dispreferred structure.

*First Part: Can you help me? (Request)*

*Second Part: Sure (preferred response) (Yule, 1996, p. 79).*

According to Paltridge (2006), Adjacency pairs are referred as a fundamental unit of conversational organization. It is a basic way in which meanings are communicated and interpreted in communication. In Adjacency pairs the two successive speakers produce the utterances in such a way that the second speaker utterance is related to the first speaker utterance. In each pair of this the first speaker stops and gives a chance to other speaker to produce the utterance in response to the first part. The basic rule for adjacency pairs is considered when a speaker produces the first pair part so he should stop and give chance to the other speaker as well to produce the second pair part. It gives a kind of freedom in responding to the second pair part. The second pair part may be a *preferred response* or a *dispreferred response*. As in the given example below the question may be followed by an expected answer which is referred to the preferred second pair part or an unexpected or non-answer which is referred to the dispreferred second pair part. And in this case the misreferred response to a delay, a preface, or an account which is clearly shown in the following example:

Speaker A: Are you going out with anyone at the moment? (*Question*)

Speaker B: Uhhh ... (*delay response*)

Well, kind of ... (*preface*)

There is someone I met a while back ... (*account*) actually I am getting married at the end of this year (*unexpected answer*).

According to Schegloff (2007), there are some basic features of adjacency pairs. Adjacency pairs are sequence utterances which are composed of two turns, by different speakers. It is adjacently placed one after another and these two turns are relatively differentiated into two pairs' parts such as first part and the second part. The first pair part is a question, request or an offer and the response to the first pair part is the second pair part which can be answer, rejection, or acceptance etc. Furthermore, adjacency pair is pair type related with such pairs e.g. greeting-greeting, question-answer, offer-accept/decline etc. The first pair part and the second pair part come from these same types.

*First Pair Part: "Hello" OR "Do you know what time is it?" Second Pair Part: "Hi" "Four o'clock"*

According to Levinson (1983), the notion of *preference* is referred to as a linguistic concept of markedness rather than the psychological notion that is related to an individual's preferences. The alternative second pair part of adjacency pairs to the first pair parts are not generally of equal standing. But there are some preferred turns and some dispreferred turns to the category. In linguistic concept of markedness the preferred second part is *unmarked*. It occurs clearly without any hesitation and are simpler turns. While the dispreferred second part is *marked* and occurs by various structural complexity. The example of invitations and their responses shows it. In this example of invitation has an acceptance as a second part and the acceptance is of simple design and delivered not without any delay but with partial overlap. While invitation in the next example receives a refusal as a second part.

*Speaker A: Why do not you come and see me some // times. (Invitation) Speaker B: I would like to (acceptance)*

*Speaker C: Uh if you would care to come and visit a little while this morning, I will give you a cup of coffee (invitation)*

*Speaker D: hehh (delay) Well (marker) that is awfully sweet of you, (appreciation) I do not think*

*I can make it this morning. (Refusal) hh Uhm I am running an ad in the paper and-and Uh I have to stay near the phone. (Account)*

The dispreferred second part is produced by various kind of structural complexity such as

- Delay by pauses before delivery.

- With preface such as Oh, Well, hmm, partial agreement/appreciation for offer, invitation, suggestion and advice/apologies for question and invitation etc., the use of qualifier such as I do not know for sure, but....) and hesitation.
- Explanation for not preferred response/information is provided.

A declination component expresses the first pair part. There is a general pattern of preferred and dispreferred structure which is proposed by Levinson. These are given below:

| <u>First Part</u> | <u>Second Part</u>  |                   |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| <i>Preferred</i>  | <i>Dispreferred</i> |                   |
| Request           | Acceptance          | Refusal           |
| Offer/ Invite     | Acceptance          | Refusal           |
| Assessment        | Agreement           | Disagreement      |
| Question          | Expected answer     | Unexpected answer |

*Adjacency pairs* is another local management organization in conversation after turn taking. It is the kind of paired utterances of which Greeting-Greeting, Apology-Minimization, Offer-Acceptance, Question-Answer etc. are prototypical. And as techniques for selecting a next speaker, these pairs are referred to deeply inter-related with turn taking system. In adjacency pairs there is a rule governing the use of adjacency pair is that the first speaker after producing the first pair part must stop so then the next speaker will produce the second pair part to the same pair (Levinson, 1983)

In the above lines, one of the patterns of Preference Structure i.e. question-expected answer is found. The Journalist Steve Decraene asks a question which is followed by the second pair preferred response. The Prime Minister Imran Khan assertively responds to the answer regarding solutions in Afghanistan, relations between US and Afghan Taliban and the role of Pakistan in this process by saying that 'Pakistan had tried its best. I since my government has come in, we have left no stone unturned so there would be peace in Afghanistan'. The first part is a question which is responded by a second pair expected answer by saying that Afghans and Americans are trying to bring peace and are settled their disputes. There is cooperation that intent/commitment in the utterances of P.M. to get things done as far as Afghan problem is concerned.

#### Turn 19-20

**Steve Decraene:** *Hmm! And when you are talking about moving economically.... Europe?*

**Imran Khan:** *Well, trade, really Europe has been very good to us we have got the GSP plus which means you know we get Preferential Trade Agreement with Europe ... (Appendix)*

In the above utterances the Prime Minister provides the Journalist with an expected answer by saying 'Well trade really...'. It also shows the Prime Minister's confidence on trade relations with Europe. The first pair part is a question, regarding the message to Europe from Pakistan and the expectation that is responded by the second pair is the expected answer. The Prime Minister answers that Pakistan really wants trade with Europe because it is a trading partner of Pakistan and as well as Europe has provided Pakistan with GSP Plus.

- *Assessment - Agreement*

The first part is asking opinion or comment regarding someone or something which is responded by second pair part in agreement response.

#### Turn 13-14

**Steve Decraene:** *Yeah, because you have spoken about priority lifting 100 ... should be?*

**Imran Khan:** *Near my idea of Pakistan is what was the founding father's idea of Pakistan which was an Islamic Welfare State ... 14<sup>th</sup> centuries ago.*

In the above lines the pattern of preference structure is shown. The Journalist asks for the Prime Minister's view regarding an Ideal Pakistan that lifting people out of poverty that is answered by a second pair preferred response. The Prime Minister agrees by saying that the idea of ideal Pakistan is what was the founding father's idea of Pakistan, an Islamic Welfare State. The Welfare State which looks after the state and weaker section of population.

#### Turn 15-16

**Steve Decraene:** *State of Medina?*

**Imran Khan:** *State of Medina, it was a welfare state and it was a state which had rule of law, it had rights every human being had rights protected by the state..... last 30 years. (Appendix)*

These lines are the further continuation of the above utterances where the Prime Minister provides a preferred response. The journalist asks for Prime Minister's opinion regarding State of Medina to which he categorically explains what kind of state it was. He says that 'State of Medina is a welfare state which had a rule of law, it had rights for every human being protected by the state'. Furthermore, Prime Minister says that in the current time Scandinavian States are highly Welfare States and civilized states according to him. And China has taken out 700 million people out of poverty in the last 30 years. The P.M. has a promising tone and demonstrates his intent to build Pakistan as an Ideal Welfare-State.

#### Turn 17-18

**Steve Decraene:** *But different political systems, welfare state tax collection is needed then.*

**Imran Khan:** *Look! First of all, you need to have direction you know the leadership in a country needs to know where it is headed, what it wants to achieve so if your objective is that my main ..... today in Pakistan. (Appendix)*

In these lines again the pattern of assessment-agreement is found. The Journalist asks for opinion regarding the tax collection policy in a Welfare State. The Prime Minister agrees with the first part by saying that leadership in a country needs to know the direction where it is heading, and the objectives should be cleared. He also gives reference to China by saying that China did the same for lifting people out of poverty they created extra demands, and which means that support and engagement from entire world should be there. Although Pakistan is suffering from economic crunch, but it is the need of the time to follow the policies as for example China did to alleviate poverty. The Prime Minister not only simply responds with agreement but also shows his authority and self-confidence through these responses.

#### Turn 21-22

**Steve Decraene:** *Pakistan is open for business even in Gwadar. There is still room and plays...to invest.*

**Imran Khan:** *Of course, you see CPEC just gives an opportunity to connectivity to China but it is not exclusive. I mean China also all over the world especially in Europe. (Appendix)*

In these lines the Prime Minister provides a preferred response towards assessment asked by the Journalist regarding business that 'Pakistan is open for it even in Gwadar'. Prime Minister agrees by saying 'Of Course'. Furthermore, he also says that CPEC is a great opportunity for China and European countries.

#### Turn 25-26

**Steve Decraene:** *We have the impression in...in Europe that Pakistan... accelerates tourism.*

**Imran Khan:** *Yes, we have opened up Pakistan 70 countries can get visa at airport. We have opened up all our areas and now that it's been one of the safest years 2019..... Pakistan. (Appendix)*

In the above lines the Prime Minister provides the Journalist with a preferred response by saying 'Yes' that Pakistan has opened up all the areas for tourism and 70 countries can get visa at airport. Furthermore, Prime Minister says that Pakistan is becoming safest country for tourism. The first pair part is assessment which is responded by Prime Minister with a second pair preferred response.

#### • *Assessment - Disagreement*

Assessment refers to asking opinion or comment regarding something or someone which is responded either in agreement response or a disagreement response.

#### Turn 5-6

**Steve Decraene:** *And do you think apart from Kashmir will ever be..... to soon perhaps?*

**Imran Khan:** *No, I feel that if there was strong and clear-headed leadership in India, this problem would be solved. It is no problem every problem has a solution. ....has a solution. (Appendix)*

In these lines the first pair part is assessment which is responded by a second pair dispreferred response. The Journalist asks for opinion about relationship between Pakistan and India whether it can be normal. But Prime Minister Imran Khan clearly disagrees by saying 'No'. He provides a reason for his disagreement that it is because of the 'extremist ideology in India' and Indians believe in the ethnic cleansing of Muslims from India and that's why they treated Kashmiris very badly by putting them into

jails. Furthermore, Prime Minister says the problem can be solved if there was a strong and clear-headed leadership in India but unfortunately it is not the case.

### 1. Adjacency Pairs

Adjacency Pairs are basically utterances where one speaker produces a first pair part that leads to another speaker to produce the second pair part, for example;

- *Question – Answer*

Question is used for collecting information regarding something or someone or for the sake of clarification. The first pair part is a question which is answered by the second pair part. The examples from the selected interview are as under:

#### Turn 1-2

**Steven Decraene:** *So Prime Minister may I ask first how different ..... needed them both?*

**Imran Khan:** *Uh! Well let me first say the similarity ... similarity in both is that you have to struggle and the dynamics of struggle are such that you only succeed if bigger challenge. (Appendix)*

In the above utterances the Journalist Steve Decraene starts the interview by asking a question regarding the differences between running sports team and running a country which is answered by the second pair part with information. The Prime Minister Imran Khan answers by describing the similarities first between both and then moves towards the differences. Prime Minister says, 'that you have to struggle in both and go through a tough period, learn from mistakes and then pick yourself up'. Furthermore, he describes the differences by saying 'running a country is completely different than running a country... the huge challenge in economy is a much bigger challenge'. The answer of the P.M. shows his understanding of sports and politics and his resolution to face the big challenges of ruling a country and struggle hard as he did as a cricket captain.

#### Turn 3-4

**Steve Decraene:** *Hmm! If we start with the hardest issues Kashmir ... solution possible?*

**Imran Khan:** *Uh! Kashmir is something which Pakistan and India have actually gone to war three times. And Kashmir remains the own, the biggest hurdle in their being normal relationship between ... hundred thousand troops. (Appendix)*

In these lines the first pair part is a question about the situation of Kashmir and its peace. The question is clarified by Prime Minister with a detail response by saying that the situation of Kashmir will remain the same, because Kashmir is the biggest issue between these two countries. And the problem of Kashmir is very difficult to solve because India is a stronger power and they want Kashmir as a part of India not the part of Pakistan. Furthermore, Kashmiris are treated very badly/ruthlessly by Hindus. The Prime Minister clarifies the question by giving the reasons of its situation which is asked by the Journalist.

#### Turn 9-10

**Steve Decraene:** *Hmm! and what about Pakistan if we moved to Pakistan ..... stamped out?*

**Imran Khan:** *You see, let me explain what happened in Pakistan so you need to know the history. In the 1980's Pakistan was backing the Mujahedeen who were backed by the Americans safest year in Pakistan since 9/11. (Appendix)*

The above question-answer pattern is one of the types of Adjacency Pairs. A question about the bad times specially related to terrorism in Pakistan that whether terrorism is stamped out or not. The first part is a form of question which is answered by a second pair part. The Prime Minister gives a detailed answer to the question and also provides clarification by giving the reason behind terrorism and by giving a brief history about the bad situation in Pakistan. Pakistan had been suffering from dark times but that all started with Afghan Jihad and by different Mujahedeen who were trained by America in Pakistan. Around 70,000 people were killed due to terrorism in Pakistan. But now the situation has been controlled and now there is peace in Pakistan and its credit goes to security forces and intelligence agencies. The answer of the Prime Minister is imbued with truthfulness. He never feels shy to hide the realities regarding any political/state matters. His tone is clear, emphatic and confident.

Turn 11-12

**Steve Decraene:** *Okay. If we move to another hard issue you... you spoke about economy,... make it work?*

**Imran Khan:** *Well, it's like if your houses, if you inherit a house which is bankrupt and their creditors coming to ask for their money back and their loans and there someone is coming for the rent of the house..... show signs of recovery. (Appendix)*

In these lines the first pair part is question which is answered by a second pair part. The Journalist asks question from the Prime Minister Imran Khan that how his strategies about betterment in Pakistan could be different from his predecessors. This question is answered by providing a detailed information with example. The Prime Minister answers by comparing the bankrupted house to the country to make the situation clear. Furthermore, Prime Minister states that he assumed power when country was going through very tough times due to huge deficit, loans and tattered economy. But he finally got through tough 2019, and expects prosperity and improvement in all sectors in coming years. He expresses hope that things are moving in a right direction, exports signs are increasing, electricity sector is improving and economy has been set on right track. These replies demonstrate the resolute nature of the Prime Minister.

Turn 23-24

**Steve Decraene:** *Hmm! talking about climate change Europe there is a lot of political debate about it.....a lot for solutions?*

**Imran Khan:** *Well, first of all I am I was always an environmentalist because I loved hunting I loved shooting then as I grew up I saw that in Pakistan two things were happening .....and that is a big worry for us. (Appendix)*

In these lines Prime Minister Imran Khan not only provides a detail information about climate zone, hilly areas and rivers but also gives clarification regarding the question about climate change challenge in Pakistan. The Journalist Steve Decraene asks Prime Minister that Pakistan is not a big contributor of climate problem, then why he is doing a lot for solution. The Prime Minister clarifies the question by saying that he has been 'always an environmentalist because he loves shooting and hunting' but with the passage of time he observed that wilderness and forests are disappearing from Pakistan which turned him into a conservationist. And that's why in his government, he decides to plant ten billion trees which really will work to improve the environment. The Prime Minister's answer is an expression of his concerns about his country and his determination to bring positive change.

Turn 27-28

**Steve Decraene:** *Finally, may I ask you some two perhaps more personal questions which triggered me.....to politics?*

**Imran Khan:** *Uh! First of all you know I never really lived away from Pakistan I only went for studying in England for four years and then I used to play professional cricket in England so that ..... long to succeed. (Appendix)*

In the above utterances the question is followed by a detailed answer. The Prime Minister gives a long account of his life. The Journalist asks a question regarding the Prime Minister's plan of coming back to Pakistan and to become a part of politics. The Prime Minister answers the question by giving detail explanation. Furthermore, he says that he always wanted to represent Pakistan and he came into politics to remove corruption from country which was a big reason of poverty. These lines also show the assertive and forceful tone and resolute personality of the Prime Minister. He is confident that whatever he has resolved (corruption free Pakistan), he would finally achieve.

Turn 29-30

**Steve Decraene:** *And then it's related to the previous question the image which I read also from ..... West didn't see?*

**Imran Khan:** *Look! If a human being is lucky if they are lucky sometimes during the life, they will ask themselves two questions one that what is the purpose of my existence and two what happens to me after I die ..... asking these two questions. (Appendix)*

In these lines the Prime Minister gives clarification to the Journalist regarding the question about his personality that how he changes his life by becoming a religious person from a famous cricket star. The Prime Minister says that if he had fame, riches and everything in the country, but that is not enough for spending a life but rather there is need to know the purpose of life. And spirituality answers these questions

because in the Spiritual World he is more responsible towards other people and more responsibility is entrusted by the Almighty. Therefore, he chose to help his people to better their lives. There is a great sense of responsibility, composure and reassurance in the voice of the P.M. His conversation demonstrates that he is a truly responsible leader.

#### Turn 31-32

**Steve Decraene:** *Hmm! and finally given the challenges of Pakistan, giving the history ... Prime Minister means a lot?*

**Imran Khan:** *Well, first {a slighter laugh} you must understand that when you ...when you move towards spirituality so one thing that happens and my faith tells me that .... will of God.(Appendix)*

In the above lines, the Journalist asks a question to the Prime Minister if he is not afraid of the big challenges, to which the answer is, 'life and death is in Almighty's hand and all in your hands is effort'. Furthermore, Prime Minister says by providing more clarification that humans should struggle whether they succeed or not: all is in Almighty's hand so that's why he does not fear death and failure. And he will try his best and accept the decision of God as his will. There can be observed truly bold tone of the P.M. and faith on the Supreme Lord for life or death and these are those great drivers which made him the Leader of the Pakistani Nation.

### **MAIN FINDINGS**

This research study has attempted to identify the patterns of adjacency pairs: Question – Answer pair and patterns of preference structure: Assessment- Agreement pattern, Assessment--Disagreement pattern, Question – Expected pattern in the interview/conversation between the Prime Minister and the VR Journalist. It has been found out through the analysis that there are 34 turns in the interview between Imran Khan and Steve Decraene out of which 32 turns of conversation are classified in preference structure and adjacency pairs such as question-answer pattern, assessment-agreement/disagreement pattern and question-expected answer pattern. Using Levinson's Theory, the analysis has revealed different patterns of conversation. There are eight pairs of question-answer pattern. Preference structure has also been examined. There are seven preferred responses produced by the Prime Minister Imran Khan during the conversation of interview. The preferred responses are five Assessment-Agreement patterns and two Question-Expected answer patterns. One dispreferred response is also found in the utterances of Prime Minister Imran Khan that show Assessment-Disagreement pattern. The conversation flows smoothly because most of the responses are found in agreement response. Mostly in this interview agreement is shown in the views of Prime Minister Imran Khan because of preferred responses that contribute towards clarity as well as authority of the Prime Minister. And that's why the few dispreferred responses do not affect the flow of the conversation. The most occurring patterns are question-answer pairs of adjacency pairs and assessment-agreement structure. The question-answer pair is mostly used in interviews to gather relevant information. And the less found pattern is assessment-disagreement pair. The use of the above conversational patterns by Prime Minister demonstrates how interviewers can be convinced; points of views can be clarified; and credibility can be established. The Prime Minister has categorically stated his aims and goals in an assertive and bold tone. He is crystal clear in his arguments, provides satisfactory accounts of his life –struggle as a cricketer and as a politician. He has faith in the Almighty Lord and therefore without being afraid of death, he has firm resolution to continue his struggles for the betterment of his beloved country and people.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

This research study aimed to analyze the conversation of the Prime Minister Imran Khan with the journalist of the VRT Channel. The conversational patterns have been explored to see what are the most occurring structures and what these signify. The analysis has revealed the use of these patterns: question-answer pairs of adjacency pairs and pattern of assessment- agreement/disagreement pair and question-expected answer pair of preference structure in the conversation of Imran Khan and Steve Decraene. There were more preferred responses produced by Imran Khan which show that he can clearly convey his views to his listeners and can convince his interviewers by his clear arguments and accounts. His conversational choices present him as a bold, composed and responsible leader.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended for future researchers to study further the conversations and conversational patterns in order to fully understand how these help build relations, gather information, share views and extend support. Hidden human personalities can be revealed and judged through the conversation/interviews, therefore, it is a best kind of human study. Hence, its scope must be expanded through future research studies on other personalities with other perspectives and approaches.

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