

ADJACENCY PAIRS IN THE INTERVIEW OF TUCKER CARLSON AND RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN (2024): A CONVERSATIONAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

Adjacency pairs are two-part exchanges in which the first utterance triggers a certain response from the second response from the second utterance. This research aims to 1) identify conversation patterns and 2) describe the types of responses that appear based on adjacency pairs in the interviews. The method used is descriptive qualitative, in which data it was collected from the video interview which is the Tucker Carlson Interviews Vladimir Putin and then analysed it using the adjacency pairs theory. The results of the study revealed that from a total of 34 data analysed, the "Question-Answer/Unanswered" pattern dominates with 29 cases out of a total of 34 data or about (85%), Other patterns such as "Assessment-Agreement/Disagreement" and "Request-Acceptance/Refusal" appear less frequently, each of which is only 3 times out of a total of 34 data or about (8%). about (8%), while the patterns "Offer/Invite-Acceptance/Refusal" and "Blame-Denial/Admission" were not found at all. Meanwhile, the type of response that was obtained showed that the Preferred response was more dominant with 18 cases or (52%) compared to Dispreferred which amounted to 15 cases or (44%).

Keyword: conversation analysis, adjacency pairs, conversation patterns, response type

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INTRODUCTION

Conversation is a fundamental form of verbal interaction in human life, encompassing the exchange of information, thoughts, and feelings between two or more individuals. In linguistic studies, conversation plays a crucial role in understanding how meaning is generated and exchanged within various social contexts (Schegloff, 2007). The primary purpose of conversation is to exchange information, convey ideas, and build mutual understanding between speakers. Additionally, conversation has significant social functions, such as establishing interpersonal relationships, negotiating meaning, and reinforcing group identity and cohesion.

In the context of interviews, conversation is a communicative interaction aimed specifically at obtaining relevant information from a source. Interviews are commonly used in fields such as journalism, research, or job selection. Structured and purpose-driven, interview conversations are designed to elicit deep and informative responses aligned with the interview's objectives. Moreover, good listening skills are essential for interviewers to respond appropriately to interviewees' answers and guide the conversation in the desired direction.

Adjacency pairs are a very conspicuous phenomenon of spoken language, and they have been frequently discussed in the literature. Sari et., al (2023), who carried out turn-taking and adjacency pairs in conversations among students within an English Education Department. It focuses on how students structure their dialogues and the interactional patterns they follow. Fenyi and Nyarkoh (2022) is the modern scholar to discuss how turn-taking is employed as a pedagogical strategy in the classroom through the use of adjacency pairs. It explores how teachers manage turn-taking to structure lessons and facilitate student learning. Nurhayati et., al (2020) discuss the interaction between Ariel Wengroff and Malala Yousafzai through the lens of conversation analysis, particularly focusing on adjacency pairs. It seeks to understand the structure and dynamics of their conversation.

My purpose in the present article is to report on a qualitative study of the patterns and functions of adjacency pairs that emerge in their exchanges. Adjacency pairs are a key element in conversation analysis, highlighting how one speaker's utterance responds to another's, creating a distinctive interaction pattern. By examining these patterns, the study seeks to uncover the dynamics of communication within the interview, providing insights into the broader implications of the discourse on global issues. This research contributes to the field of conversation analysis by offering a detailed examination of a high-stakes political interview, exploring the underlying strategies and power dynamics at play.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conversation, as defined by Jack Richard (in Mustofa, 2010), is a form of direct oral interaction between two or more participants. However, conversation is more than just an exchange of information; it involves assumptions and expectations about the content, flow, and type of interaction. In the field of conversation analysis (CA), as introduced by Levinson (1983), the study focuses on how participants conduct and interpret their interactions within a conversation. Unlike pragmatic analysis, which views conversation as a series of distinct actions, CA delves into the detailed utterances and their social implications, with a particular emphasis on structures such as adjacency pairs.

Adjacency pairs are a central element in conversation analysis. Levinson (1983) describes them as exchanges where the first utterance (First Pair Part - FPP) creates a context for the second (Second Pair Part - SPP), which is essential for maintaining the structure and flow of conversation. Schegloff (2007) further elaborates on the role of adjacency pairs, identifying various types, such as question-answer and offer-acceptance pairs, and emphasizing their importance in organizing social interactions.

Table 1.

The identification of response types based on adjacency pairs pattern

First Pair Parts (FPP)	Second Pair Parts (SPP)	
	Preferred	Dispreferred
<i>Request</i>	<i>Acceptance</i>	<i>Refusal</i>
<i>Offer/Invite</i>	<i>Acceptance</i>	<i>Refusal</i>
<i>Assessment</i>	<i>Agreement</i>	<i>Disagreement</i>
<i>Question</i>	<i>Answered</i>	<i>Unanswered</i>
<i>Blame</i>	<i>Denial</i>	<i>Admission</i>

Source: Levinson (1983)

The table 1 is a classification of responses based on patterns in adjacency pairs and the types of responses above depend on the second pairs utterances.

Yule (in Latifah, 2024) contributes to this discussion by introducing the concept of "preferred" and "dispreferred" responses within adjacency pairs. Preferred responses align with social expectations and norms, promoting conversational harmony, whereas dispreferred responses often involve delays, hesitations, or explanations, potentially leading to conflict or misunderstanding. This perspective underscores the nuanced nature of conversation and the importance of response types in maintaining social order and cohesiveness.

Despite the significant research conducted on adjacency pairs, particularly in everyday conversation, there remains a gap concerning their role in high-stakes political interviews. This study seeks to address this gap by analysing the use of adjacency pairs in the interview between Tucker Carlson and Vladimir Putin. By focusing on this high-profile political interview, the study aims to contribute new insights into how adjacency pairs function in contexts where power dynamics and strategic communication are prominent.

METHODS

A qualitative descriptive method was used in this study. Furthermore, according to Sugiyono (2013), qualitative descriptive research is a research method used to explain natural phenomena. This qualitative descriptive research aims to present a systematic, factual, and accurate description of the facts, characteristics, and relationships between the investigated phenomena. The method is a qualitative descriptive method used to study a group of humans as research objects and systematically describe the phenomena of research results.

This method is used to analyse the conversation in the interview between Tucker Carlson and Vladimir Putin to provide an in-depth and comprehensive description of the communication phenomena in these conversations. The data used in this research are transcripts of the interviews aired on Tucker Carlson's YouTube channel. This interview sparked widespread discussion in the Western world, and by 10 February 2024, it had been watched by 161 million viewers. The interview covers key issues such as the involvement of Western countries in the ongoing Ukraine war, the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipeline explosion on 26 September 2022, the failure of peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine on 22 July 2022 due to British interference in Ukraine, and the long history of Ukraine's state formation. A notable example of such an interview is conducted by Tucker Carlson, a prominent American political commentator, with Russian President Vladimir Putin. This interview, broadcast on Tucker Carlson's YouTube channel, has garnered significant attention, amassing millions of views and sparking widespread discussion in the Western world. The interview touches on critical topics such as Western involvement in the Ukraine War,

the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipeline, and the failed Russia-Ukraine peace negotiations, among other geopolitical issues.

This data is then categorized based on the adjacency pairs theory introduced by Levinson (1983). Each utterance in the interview will be classified according to the type of adjacency pairs identified, such as question-answer, request-acceptance/refusal, and offer-acceptance/rejection pairs. Data was collected through documentation techniques, namely by downloading and transcribing video interviews that became the object of research. After the data is collected, the first step is data reduction, where data irrelevant to the research focus will be filtered and removed. Furthermore, the data that has been reduced will be analysed using the Conversation Analysis approach. This analysis is carried out by identifying patterns of adjacency pairs in conversation and evaluating the types and functions of responses that appear in the interaction. The results of this analysis are expected to provide deeper insights into the communication strategies used by the two characters and the power dynamics reflected in their conversations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following is the classification of data based on the adjacency pairs pattern that occurred in the interview between Tucker Carlson and Russian President Vladimir Putin. Each classification shows two data each that can represent the other data because the data found is almost similar, and the only difference is the number of frequencies of data occurrence from each number of data findings in each pattern.

Question-Answer Pair

1. Putin explained about Western funding and policy to Ukraine, which is supported by the US, namely President Biden. This funding and Western policies and interventions continue to block Russia's efforts to conduct dialog or ceasefire negotiations with the Ukrainian side.

Tucker Carlson : But you haven't spoken to him (President Biden) since before February of 2022?

Vladimir Putin : No, we haven't spoken. Certain contacts are being maintained though. Speaking of which, do you remember what I told you about my proposal to work together on a missile defence system?

Tucker Carlson : Yes.

(1:05:02 – 1:05:27)

The underlined statement, “*But you haven't spoken to him (President Biden) since before February of 2022?*” is classified as a '**Questions-Answer**' pattern because Tucker Carlson directly asked when Putin last communicated with President Biden. Putin's answer, “No, we haven't spoken.” is classified as an Answer because Putin gave a response to Carlson's question while introducing the related topic of missile defence collaboration.

Putin's response pattern is **Dispreferred**. Although he answers the question, his response is indirect and he quickly shifts the focus to another topic about missile defence in the words “*Speaking of which, do you remember what I told you about my proposal to work together on a missile defence system?*” which indicates a deviation from the direct answer expected in a direct Question-Answer interaction. The Dispreferred nature is evident when Putin avoids further explanation of his lack of communication with Biden and instead brings up the topic of missile defence, which diverts the conversation from the original question.

2. Putin explained that negotiations had made significant progress, but were abandoned by the Ukrainian side after Russian troops withdrew from Kiev. He

stated that Ukraine, under Western intervention, chose to go to war and President Zelensky signed a decree banning negotiations with Russia, making dialog impossible.

Tucker Carlson : *...When was the last time you spoke to Joe Biden?*
Vladimir Putin : *I cannot remember when I talked to him. I do not remember, we can look it up.*
Tucker Carlson : *You do not remember?! (laughing).*
Vladimir Putin : *No, why? Do I have to remember everything? I have my own things to do. We have domestic political affairs.*

(1:03:55 – 1:04:13)

Tucker's statement at, "When was the last time you spoke to Joe Biden?" is classified as a 'Question' pattern because he asks about the last communication between Putin and Biden. Putin's answer, "I cannot remember when I talked to him" is classified as an 'Answer' because Putin gives a direct response to Tucker's question followed by Tucker's statement at, "You do not remember?! (laughing)," introducing a sarcastic tone where this exchange involves a direct question and answer, hence the conversation pattern is classified as **Questions - Answer**.

Although Putin responds to Tucker, he deflects the conversation with a sarcastic humour answer in "Do I have to remember everything? I have my own things to do." plus the words "I cannot remember" instead of something indicated that he's forgotten like "I don't remember it" shows a deviation from direct response. He avoids giving an answer and shifts the focus to his own tasks and the context of domestic affairs, so Putin's response pattern here is 'Preferred'.

Assessment – Agreement /Disagreement

1. Tucker argues that Gershkovich, unlike a typical spy, is a young journalist. He argues that holding Gershkovich as a hostage in the exchange may be unfair and could demean Russia, as it is widely known that Gershkovich is not a spy.

Tucker Carlson : *...but what makes it different is that this guy (Evan Gershkovich) is obviously not a spy, he is a kid... So maybe he is in a different category, maybe it's not fair to ask for somebody else in exchange for letting him out. Maybe it degrades Russia to do that.*
Vladimir Putin : *You know, you can give different interpretations to what constitutes a "spy," but there are certain things provided by law. If a person gets secret information, and does that in a conspiratorial manner, then this is qualified as espionage....*

(1:53:01 – 1:53:46)

Tucker Carlson gave a statement by stating his perspective on Evan Gershkovich's situation, expressing his doubts regarding the allegations that he is a spy as he said "this guy (Evan Gershkovich) is obviously not a spy, he is a kid," and stated that it might be unfair for Russia to demand an exchange for his release. Putin responded by expressing his point of view, He acknowledged that there are different interpretations of espionage as Tucker said, but he emphasized more on the legal definition, indicating his disagreement with Tucker's statement in the words "You know, you can give different interpretations to what constitutes a 'spy,' but there are certain things provided by law." However, there is also a slight disagreement regarding Tucker's opinion that Gershkovich may not fit the profile of a spy. This dialogue exchange can be categorized as **Assessment-Disagreement**.

The response pattern in this interaction is '**Dispreferred**'. Tucker's question sought to challenge Gershkovich's classification as a spy and questioned the fairness and potential degradation of Russia's image. However, Putin's response does not directly address Tucker's concerns about fairness or reputation, instead focusing on legal definitions and the justification for continuing to label Gershkovich as a spy with the evidence at hand. This deviation from the direct statement of Tucker's point shows the Dispreferred pattern.

2. Putin cited a very long history and documentary evidence from 1654 showing that Ukraine sought Moscow's protection and outlined Ukraine's integration into Russia. Carlson then asked why Russia did not claim Eastern Ukraine earlier. Putin replied that his explanation was very important for context.

Tucker Carlson : *It's not boring.*

Vladimir Putin : *Good. Good. I am so gratified that you appreciate that. Thank you.*

(14:14 – 14:23)

The sentence, "*It's not boring,*" from Tucker can be classified as '**Assessment - Agreement**' because Tucker gave his evaluation or assessment of Putin's explanation of the long history of Ukraine. Putin's response, "*Good. Good. I am so gratified that you appreciate that. Thank you,*" is classified as 'Agreement' because Putin acknowledged and appreciated Tucker's positive assessment and expressed his gratitude for the appreciation.

Tucker's assessment also shows positive acceptance of Putin's detailed explanation, and Putin's response, which aligns with this positive assessment by expressing gratitude, makes the interaction smooth and 'friendly', hence the response pattern in this conversation is '**Preferred**'.

Request – Acceptance/Refusal

1. Putin noted the ongoing dialogue between Russian and US special services and expressed willingness to negotiate Gershkovich's return to the US, emphasizing the need for a professional and cooperative approach to resolving this issue.

Tucker Carlson : *I hope you'll let him out. Mr. President, thank you!*

Vladimir Putin : *I also want him to return to his homeland at last. I am absolutely sincere. But let me say once again, the dialogue continues.*

(1:57:45 – 1:58:00)

Tucker Carlson made a request, expressing his hope that Vladimir Putin would release Gershkovich from prison in "*I hope you'll let him out.*". Putin responded to Tucker with the answer that he also hoped Gershkovich had a chance to be released in "*I also want him to return to his homeland at last.*" What proves this pattern is **Request - Refused** which implies that the decision to release depends on how the West responds.

Putin's response pattern is **Preferred** where he gives a response that matches Tucker's request and does not go off topic. However, he again emphasized the importance of negotiations between the US and Russian special services in the statement "*But let me say once again, the dialogue continues.*", which can be inferred that he rejected it but still considered his willingness to release Gershkovich and also expressed his desire for him to return to his homeland.

2. Tucker Carlson asked President Putin if he would be willing to release Evan Gershkovich, the Wall Street Journal reporter imprisoned for nearly a year, as a courtesy, and allow Carlson to bring him back to the United States.

Tucker Carlson : I just want to ask you directly without getting into details of your version of what happened, if as a sign of your decency you'll be willing to release him to us and we'll bring him back to the United States?

Vladimir Putin : We have done so many gestures of goodwill out of decency that I think we have run out of them. We have never seen anyone reciprocate to us in a similar manner. However, in theory, we can say that we do not rule out that we can do that if our partners take reciprocal steps.

(1:51:25 – 1:52:14)

Tucker Carlson's question was an implied request for Vladimir Putin to consider releasing Evan Gershkovich from prison in the words “if as a sign of your decency you'll be willing to release him to us and we'll bring him back to the United States?” Putin responded directly and answered this request but he's response was diplomatic, Putin replied that he hoped for reciprocity with the same goodwill and basic decency from them (the US) in the words “We have done so many gestures of goodwill out of decency that I think we have run out of them. We have never seen anyone reciprocate to us in a similar manner.”, this implies that Vladimir Putin will not release him (**Request - Refused**).

While he did not outright reject the request, he emphasized the lack of reciprocity in the gesture of goodwill and indicated that any decision to release Gershkovich would be contingent on the United States taking reciprocal steps on the basis of the same courtesy in the words “that we can do that if our partners take reciprocal steps.”. This indicates a reluctance or hesitation to fulfil the request without certain conditions which means this response from Vladimir Putin can be considered as **Dispreferred**.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the interview between Tucker Carlson and Vladimir Putin reveals that the "Question-Answer/Unanswered" adjacency pair overwhelmingly dominates the conversation, consisting of 29 out of a total of 34 (85%) of the interactions. This pattern highlights the critical role of questions in directing the conversation, extracting information, and maintaining the flow of communication.

In contrast, other patterns such as "Assessment-Agreement/Disagreement" and "Request-Acceptance/Refusal" are less frequent, with only 3 times each (8%). This suggests an intentional effort by Carlson to avoid confrontational situations that could disrupt communication or escalate tensions. Notably, patterns like "Offer/Invite-Acceptance/Refusal" and "Blame-Denial/Admission" were not found at all in the interview.

The greater frequency of Preferred responses compared to Dispreferred indicates a tendency to maintain harmony in the conversation. The response pattern of Preferred and Dispreferred shows that the total Preferred responses (18 cases) or about 52% are found more than the total number of Dispreferred responses (15 cases) or 44% of the total 34 cases. More Preferred responses than Dispreferred responses reflect an attempt to avoid potential tension and conflict, in accordance with the definition of Preferred which means that it contains short, easy answers, and is not considered a confrontational response.

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