



Incorporating Critical Factors into Discourse Analysis : An Analysis of Interviewing Strategies in a TV Talk Show

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Incorporating Critical Factors into Discourse Analysis: An Analysis of Interviewing Strategies in a TV Talk Show*

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1. Introduction

For more than three decades, discourse-level studies of language have dealt with utterances and the sequences of utterances that exceed the range of a sentence. These studies regard language as being influenced by the situation in which it is used, with the major concern of “describing language use as a social phenomenon” and establishing “causal links between language and society” (Coulmas, 1997, p.2). They include “microlinguistic studies” which deal with individual language use in relation to its social implications and “studies of conversational structure” which observe how spoken discourse proceeds and transmits meaning among the interlocutors. (Wardhaugh, 1986) These studies highlight the analytical processes themselves (Johnstone, 2002): the former study reveals that the meanings of utterances and intentions or the implications of speakers are interpreted based on the assumption of common knowledge among the participants, and the latter study, that customary sequences are created and a certain kind of utterance affects the creation of the next utterance. (Schiffrin, Tannen & Hamilton, 2001; Schiffrin, 1994) The former has been developed as an approach termed interactional sociolinguistics (hereafter, IS), and the latter, conversation analysis (hereafter, CA).

These studies of discourse analysis are commented on by Fairclough, one of the major researchers of critical discourse analysis (hereafter, CDA), who states that “verbal interactions have in fact been studied for the most part in the currently predominant ‘descriptive’ work on discourse” although they are “a mode of social actions” (Fairclough, 1985, pp.746-747). He insists that

the goals of discourse analysis as a descriptive work are “either non-explanatory, or explanatory within ‘local’ limits” (Fairclough, 1985, p.753). This implies that scholars either do not refer to a context or only refer to the immediate context while examining the causes or backgrounds of verbal interactions. On the other hand, CDA, which has “the ‘global’ explanatory goals,” analyzes social situations and social institutions, and seeks the context of the targeted discourse or text. It finally aims to clarify how the writer or a speaker creates realities and represents ideologies in the discourse. (Fairclough, 2001)¹⁾ Social contexts are analyzed because ideologies are “embedded in the forms of language that are used” (Fairclough, 2001, p.2), and such embedded ideologies are naturalized when coherence is established in the text. (Fairclough, 1995, p.123)

Fairclough insists that verbal interactions, which are not only structured on the basis of linguistic knowledge and norms but also on the social context, should be analyzed with regard to social causes. In other words, we should not only “describe language use as a social phenomenon” but also examine it in terms of a “critical” goal, that is, explain the social context of language use where ideologies are embedded and naturalized.

The present study assumes that such a “critical” research leads more strongly toward establishing “causal links between language and society.” Hence, it examines the possibility of incorporating an explanatory perspective of CDA into the factors of the two major “descriptive” approaches to discourse analysis, namely, IS and CA. For this purpose, we will analyze and clarify the interviewing strategies used in a TV talk show.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Theories and methodologies with descriptive goals

Both IS and CA take into account the immediate context while specifying the message that is being dealt with in the interaction. IS examines the process by which an interlocutor infers the meaning conveyed in

conversation and understands the other's intention or feelings. Based on Goffman's concept of social interaction and Gumperz's aims to clarify the process of inference, this approach mainly utilizes the concept of frames and footings.

The concept of frames, which was initially developed and presented by Bateson and later by Goffman, provides us with a way of understanding meanings in conversational interactions. According to Bateson (1972), the definition of a frame is the conveying and understanding of a “metacommunicative level”²⁾ of messages. Goffman (1974) defines it as a situation “built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern social events—at least social ones—and our subjective involvement in them” (Goffman, 1974, pp.10-11). Therefore, the concept of a frame refers to an organized situation with socially categorized orders and it reflects the speaker's intentions and his or her relations with the hearer. Frames are identified through contextualization cues—linguistic, paralinguistic, and non-linguistic factors — which function as signals of contextual presupposition in conversations. (Gumperz, 1982, p.131) Frames are also identified with footings, which Goffman (1981) defines as the “alignment of speakers in conversation” (Goffman, 1981, p.128). It is the temporary and psychological position they adopt toward an utterance during the interaction. It also includes the socio-cultural identities that are assumed by the interlocutors toward each other.

Since frames indicate what happens during the interaction, they shift from one type of frame to another as a conversation unfolds and the behavioral interpretation changes. Tannen & Wallat (1993) examine such frame shifts in a case where they are caused by mismatched schemas³⁾ between a pediatrician and the patient's mother. They demonstrate that the identification of frame shifts is useful for interpreting the metamesages that are being conveyed and how the participants are interacting with each other.

CA, which is theoretically based on ethnomethodology, aims to clarify the

process by which social orderliness in conversation is being created by the participants. It closely examines every detail of the data in order to identify the rules and devices used in the flow of conversation. Unlike IS, it does not take into consideration the participants' social and cultural identities. Moreover, it does not regard context as stable but as renewed and revised continuously by new verbal and nonverbal actions. In this manner, the current act in a conversation is created by the previous one, which determines the current context, and the current act itself creates a new context for the following acts. CA deals with such dynamic sequences and interactions among the participants, thus seeking orderliness in conversation.

Formulating is one of the devices that contribute to such orderliness in interaction. Heritage (1985) mentions that it designs "next questions so as to tacitly presuppose the truth and adequacy of prior reports" (Heritage, 1985, p.99). In his data, he focuses on an interviewer's utterance, "you really were prepared to commit suicide because you were a big fatty" to "the Slimmer of the Year" who had contemplated suicide due to her profound sadness over her obesity. (Heritage, 1985, p.101) He states that such a response by the interviewer serves to both maintain "official neutrality" in an interview and to target the TV audience as the primary recipients of the talk even if it is not directly addressed. Heritage (1985) concludes that such formulating, which elaborates on previous talk, enables the interviewer to maintain a stance of neutrality while agreeing with or objecting to the interviewee's views.

Thus, it has been demonstrated that frame shifts and formulating are effective tools for clarifying what is happening during interactions. However, in this "descriptive work," Fairclough insists that the appropriateness of understanding the context that forms the backgrounds of interactions (e.g. the relations between patients and their doctors and the general opinions about obesity, as mentioned in the above studies) is taken for granted and never questioned. CDA doubts whether the concept of common sense is really

neutral, or free from power differences, and attempts to explain it based on social norms and institutions. The next section examines such “explanatory” discourse studies by using the analytical tools of frames and formulations.

2.2 Literature Review

As Cameron (2001) points out the manner in which asymmetrical power and identity are enacted in institutional talk, studies on interactions in the institutional context demonstrate possible relations with CDA. Here, we conduct an overview of two such studies that use the factors of IS, CA and CDA—Lauerbach (2007) which utilizes the concepts of frames, footings and formulations and Hashby (1996), which is based on the concepts of CA and CDA.

Lauerbach (2007) applies the argumentation theory to discourse analysis, and clarifies how “critical doubt” is evaded in a TV talk show with celebrities. It explains the social constraint on answering questions in media talks. A media institution sets its own goals and purposes for an event, for instance, the goal of talk shows with celebrities is to entertain the viewers by glorifying the guest as a star. On the other hand, an interview with an expert aims to provide the audience with background knowledge and a political interview attempts to severely challenge a politician’s strategies. Lauerbach analyzes two interviews from “Larry King Live” that were broadcast on CNN on November 22, 2000—one with Dr. P.K. Shah, a cardiologist, and the other, with Dick Cheney who was then a candidate for the U.S. vice presidency—about Cheney’s health problem. The analysis demonstrates that in the expert interview with Shah, the host, adopting the footing of either a former patient and or a host, collaborates with the expert in constructing the inference that there is no reason to worry about the condition of Cheney’s health. In the political celebrity interview, the host’s cooperative questions and responses are utilized in constructing the argument about Cheney that he

was recovering and positively coping with the disease. Thus this study reveals how the interviewer contributes to establishing a healthy and reliable image of the vice presidential candidate by accommodating his footings and formulations, and by shifting frames between “the talk show interview” and “the expert and political interview.” This illustrates the asymmetrical power and identity of the politician.

Hutchby (1996) observes the play of power in the interactions of a British radio talk show through the approach of CA, which traditionally does not take into consideration the pre-existence of power in discourse. Hutchby (1996) analyzes how asymmetric participation is realized in terms of verbal patterns and sequences. By examining data comprising more than 100 interviews, he found that it is not the caller who takes the initiative in choosing the agenda and setting the course of discussion but the host, who has a goal of eventually “putting the caller on the defensive” (Hutchby, 1996, p.486). The following are the two factors that Hutchby (1996) proposes: the “action-opposition” sequence which inherently makes the first statement arguable and leads to it being opposed by the second speaker, and the organization of talk on radio which forces the caller to assume the position of the first speaker. While the caller must build his or her argument as a defense, the host can choose whether merely attacks the caller’s argument or set up his or her own arguments. In addition, the host can challenge the relevance or validity of the caller’s argument by using interrogative expressions or formulations. Thus Hutchby (1996) demonstrates that such asymmetric burdens among the participants of the radio talk show are “‘built-into’ the overall structure of the calls” (Hutchby, 1996, p.488). Hutchby (1996) is a study of CA dealing with the question of power in discourse: it extends the notion of context by incorporating the view of power into the turn allocation and the formulation functions. Therefore, this is not a “‘pure’ version” of CA (Cameron, 2001, p.88) but a study on the topic of social context which has mainly been tackled in the field of CDA.

The present study utilizes the analytical tools of frames, footings, formulations and the critical perspective of power in discourse as we have seen in the two studies discussed above. The differences are as follows: first, the present research analyzes power in discourse with respect to ordinary TV audiences and not only that of celebrity guests: second, we examine the interviewer's strategy for contrasting the naturalized ideologies of the general population with those of the guests.

3. Data

The present study analyzes two types of interviews from "Larry King Live." The host, Larry King, is a very prominent figure and is said to "meet with his interviewee on a fairly equal basis" (Lauerbach, 2007, p.1399).

One of the sources of data is an interview with Paris Hilton, who is a singer, actress and fashion model, and a member of a very wealthy family in the U.S. She is notorious for her selfish and uninhibited talk and behavior in the media. Charged with drinking and driving and driving on a suspended license, she was sentenced to 45 days in jail in May 2007. This interview was held on June 28 (broadcast on July 1), two days after her release from jail. The second source of data is an interview with a city manager from Largo, Florida, who has a gender identity disorder. His employment was terminated because he began living as a woman. Accounts of his experiences and hardships are elicited by the host.

The host's utterances have been analyzed in terms of frames, footings, and formulations, and an explanation has been sought in relation to the social context of the two types of data.

4. Data Analysis and Examination

4.1 Interpretation of naturalized ideologies through framing

4.1.1 Analysis of frame shifts

In the interview with Hilton, King asks her whether she socializes with

people who use drugs or ever had her picture taken together with such people.⁴⁾ He asks questions in a manner that prompts her to present the facts, and she responds by providing information. We consider the interview frame in a strict sense is proceeding here since the interviewer takes the initiative in deciding the topic of discussion and in controlling the sequential flow.

< Data 1 > : Larry King Live (7/1/07 CNN) guest: Paris Hilton

01 K: Did you hang around with people who did those things?

02 H: Yes. I know people who have.

03 K: Were you, did people photograph you with people who did those things?

04 H: I'm not sure, but I think a lot of people have that problem.

05 K: Why didn't you put a stop to this earlier? (1.0) In other words, if you would

06 read stuff, why didn't you take an outlet to go on and say I don't, I never use

07 drugs? I don't drink?

08 H: I don't, I just feel like when you do that, you put more attention to

09 something. And when something is not true, I just don't pay attention

10 to it because I know my friends and family know the true me. And that's all that

11 really matters to me and I feel like by defending yourself for things that aren't

12 true, all you are doing is making people talk about it more.

13 K: But in today's world, Paris, no comment is yes. (0.8) Don't you think so?(1.0) I

14 mean, the media is the message.

15 H: Yeah. I just, (0.7) I don't know. (2.0) People just make up stories and there's

16 nothing I can really do about it. I just don't like to dignify it with a response.

17 K: But then you realize, of course, that one of the problems is then you let it

18 continue.

19 H: Yeah. But I know how I am so that's fine.

20 K: But the way to put a stop to it is to proclaim it. I mean, [if you know.

21 H:

[I'm telling you right

22 now [I've put a stop to it.

23 K: [Yeah, but. But do we think maybe we should have done this long

24 ago? Not here, [somewhere

25 H; [Yeah, You know everything happens for a reason. I went

26 and found out a lot about myself and I'm going to continue going down that path,

27 so. (1.0)

28 K: Have you ever had psychiatric care?

King asks Hilton the reason she did not stop the rumor about her using drugs from spreading and why she did not publicly deny the allegation that she was using drugs (05,06,07). Here, King's utterances are not a rhetorical question but a pure question about the reason she did not counter the malicious rumor: this interpretation is based on his inquiring intonation and facial expression. In fact Hilton does not provide a counterargument but the reason in detail. Therefore, it is obvious that she herself interprets King's question as an inquiry and not as a blame.

In the utterance 13, we notice King's frame shift: that is, from the interview frame to the admonishing frame. By using the conjunction "but", King clearly demonstrates that he opposes Hilton's opinion. With the phrase "in today's world"(13), he insinuates that she does not understand common senses as it is understood by her contemporaries. The question "Don't you think so?" is not asking but emphatically telling her to understand the ordinary rule, that is, a case for common sense or a naturalized ideology. Moreover, the phrase, "Media is the message" (14) is not only a fact but also an admonition. We can also understand that paralinguistically this turn constitutes an admonishing frame due to his persuasive accent.

Hilton is not convinced by King, stating that she does not wish to challenge the suspicion because people—the media—publish fictitious articles (15, 16). Following this, King again negates her counterargument by saying "but" and completely contradicts her opinion (17, 18). By beginning his reply with "you realize," he instructs her to understand that her

own carelessness is also responsible for the spread of such a malicious rumor.⁵⁾ Once again, King adopts the footing of an admonishing teacher who advises a naïve person to notice the problem, and lets her reconsider why such a rumor spread.

In her utterance (19), Hilton insists that her knowledge of having done nothing wrong with respect to drug use is sufficient, thereby insinuating that she does not have to publicly announce her innocence. However, King again flatly rejects her assertion (20), insisting that she should deny the accusations through the media if she wishes to put an end to their wrongly broadcasting her behavior. Here, King uses the word “but” again, and suggests the manner in which she should conduct herself in order to quell the rumor.

Hilton then illogically states that since she is speaking publicly during the interview, the false accusation should be dismissed (21, 22). King, once more using the word “but” and flatly rejecting her idea, states that she should have announced this publicly much earlier, and not at the interview (23, 24). His usage of the inclusive “we” makes his and Hilton’s footings equivalent to those of friendly acquaintances, such as those of an elementary school teacher and his or her student. In other words, King is dealing with Hilton not as a grown-up adult but as an immature child who is ignorant of the ways of the world.

The admonishing frame clarifies her naturalized ideology or conception of common sense, wherein she does not mind other people’s accusations of her because her family and friends as well as she herself know the truth. The more King advances his admonishing frame, the more Hilton linguistically reveals her own conception of common sense. At the same time, King’s admonishing frame reveals the general population’s naturalized ideology that Hilton should responsibly apologize and atone for her crime (use of drugs) if she has in fact committed one and that she should clarify the situation even if she has not committed any crime.

Moreover, this admonishing frame is still contained in the superior TV interview frame, therefore, it is possible for King to convince the guest that he is not actually or personally condemning her but only playing the role of a person who is admonishing her on the program. This contributes to save Hilton's positive face. (Brown and Levinson, 1989) Thus these frames can be very useful for revealing the guests' ideological common sense (what they think is right.) and their true profiles without forcing them to do so: King contrasts Hilton's naturalized ideology with that of the general population and allows the latter to criticize the former, which exposes Hilton's personality clearly and impressively.

4.1.2 Analysis of a reference to framing

Data 2 is an excerpt from an interview with Mr. Stanton, a former city manager from Largo, Florida State. He has publicly acknowledged a gender identity disorder.

<Data 2> : Larry K Live (8/10/07 CNN) guest : Suzan Ashley Stanton

01 K: So basically you're a cross-dresser?

02 S: No. I think what's important is who you are, what's in your heart and

03 what's in your head and not between your legs. And that (0.8) the genitalia does not

04 define you as an individual. So no, I am who I am. Unfortunately, in our society we

05 do tend to define people in very binary terms. That's silly.

06 K: Don't you feel funny with the (1.3) wrong genitalia?

07 S: Yes, it feels out of whack now. So maybe I'll have to have it corrected. But

08 yes, and some people do and some people don't. I do. [I ()

09 K: [Not as a joke, you stand up

10 in the women's bathroom?

11S: No, I don't. No, I sit down in the woman's [bathroom.

12 K: [You do sit down?

13 S: Sure. But I don't go in the men's bathroom because that would be inappropriate.

Here, King is listening to Stanton's opinion or discontent with a society that defines a person according to his or her biological sex. (02, 03, 04, 05) Further, Stanton responds very naturally when King asks about his feelings (06), hinting that he is going to have an operation for that since he does not feel comfortable (07, 08). Next, King probes Stanton's use of bathrooms. King assures him that his question is not a joke but rather serious, and appeals for a sincere response (09, 10), which Stanton provides (11).

By emphasizing that his question should not be construed as humor and that he is conducting a sincere interview, King avoids a frame shift from the interview frame to a joking frame. The fact that King refers to a joke when he asks Stanton whether he stands in a women's bathroom reveals the people typically believe that being a person who is biologically male implies standing in the bathroom and that they can not imagine a case to the contrary. Therefore, the question itself can be interpreted as a joke under ordinary circumstances. In other words, the general population considers it natural that a man who is biologically male should be a man in terms of gender. Further, he should be viewed as abnormal if he does not behave like a man. Thus, the naturalized ideology about sexual orientation becomes evident from King's referring to a frame shift. If King had shifted to a joking frame and adopted a teasing footing, Stanton would have assumed the footing of an abnormal person who sits in a women's bathroom, which would have eventually threatened the positive face of Stanton and other transgender people.

King's next question "You do sit down?" is asked without laughter or excitement, which also emphasizes that he is not framing his utterances as jokes (12).

In this data King contrasts Stanton's naturalized ideology with that of the general population; thus, he deals fairly with the former by denying the latter's naturalized ideology in advance. Here, we can observe the host's consideration for the guest and transgender people.

4.2 Interpretation of naturalized ideologies through formulating

Data 3 is also an excerpt from the interview with Mr. Stanton.

<Data 3> : Larry K Live (8/10/07 CNN) guest : Suzan Ashley Stanton

01 K: You're in your late 40s, right, Susan?

02 S: Uh-huh.

03 K: Why did you wait so long?

04 S: Yes, because like a lot of people, I tried to outrun it. I tried to deny. I

05 didn't want to face the potential reality that could ultimately happen if, in fact, the

06 world found out that I was something other than what I was portraying to those

07 who knew me the best.

08 K: So you're glad you waited or do you say to yourself "I should have done it

09 sooner" ?

10 S: That is probably the only regret I have. I wish I would have done it 20

11 years ago 'cause you do create a lot of victims from people that thought they knew

12 you one way and find out later on that they didn't.

13 K: What was the surgery like?

14 S: I've not had surgery yet. I scheduled it. I'm excited about it but I've not

15 had it yet.

16 K: Well, now I understand. You're a transgender but you haven't had surgery.

17 S: Yeah.

18 K: So basically you're a cross-dresser?

19 S: No. I think what's important is who you are, what's in your heart and

20 what's in your head and not between your legs. And that (0.8) the genitalia does not

21 define you as an individual. So no, I am who I am. Unfortunately, in our society we

22 do tend to define people in very binary terms. That's silly.

23 K: Don't you feel funny with the (1.3) wrong genitalia?

24 S: Yes, it feels out of whack now. So maybe I'll have to have it corrected. But

25 yes, and some people do and some people don't. I do. [I ()

26 K: [Not as a joke, you stand up

27 in the women's 28 bathroom?

28 S: No, I don't. No, I sit down in the woman's [bathroom.

29 K: [You do sit down?

This part of the interview takes place just before the one examined in 4.1.2. Here, King asks why Stanton waited until he reached his 40s to live openly as a woman (01, 03). In utterances 08 and 09, King formulates Stanton's feeling about this in two ways, since Stanton's response does not clarify whether he is happy about or regrets having waited for a long time (04, 05, 06, 07). Stanton clarifies that he believes he should have announced his feelings 20 years ago and that he regrets shocking his acquaintances (10, 11, 12). Next, King inquires about the surgery he believes Stanton underwent to become a woman (13), which in fact Stanton did not. Here, King believes that living as a woman presupposes becoming a woman through sex change surgery. In other words, we can observe a naturalization to the effect that a womanly outlook and the act of living as a woman entail being a woman biologically. Stanton rejects King's presupposition and states that he did not undergo surgery (14, 15). Then, King creates two formulations to clarify Stanton's condition.

The first formulation is "You're a transgender but you haven't had surgery." (16) This question indicates the naturalization that King himself may have: that is, having a woman's outlook implies that the person is a woman biologically. By clarifying that changing one's gender does not imply changing one's sex, King demonstrates the irrelevance of his inquiry about the surgery. Based on the positive response from Stanton (17), King develops his second formulation, "So basically you're a cross-dresser?" (18) This utterance redefines Stanton's condition as being a woman only in terms of appearance. Using the word, "basically," King attempts to define Stanton's identity as simply as possible. However, his definition is flatly rejected by Stanton, who states that it is our feelings and self-perceptions that are

important, and not our biological sex. King's process of formulation, that is, from transgender to cross-dresser makes the definition simpler to understand, and it clearly represents the opinion generally shared among the viewers. In other words, these two formulations reveal how simply we think about the distinction between women and men, and how lightly we think of our consciousness of being female or male. King's formulations reveal the viewers' naturalized ideology about sex and gender, and contrasts it with that of Stanton's, thereby emphasizing how an ideology that is considered to be "common" is not at all common but biased.

5. Conclusion

The present study has demonstrated that the host of an interview reveals the naturalized ideologies held by the guests and contrasts it with those held by the TV viewers, that is, the general population. In the analysis of framing and frame shifts, we have first observed how King succeeds in clarifying Hilton's ideological way of thinking, that is, she should be understood without painstakingly explaining her activities and then admonishing her for it. Next we have observed King demonstrating how transgender people are judged in terms of sex and gender by avoiding a frame shift from an interview frame to a joking frame. In the analysis of formulations, we have observed King's formulations as following the process of the general population's understanding about transgender people. The general population is apt to make the issue simpler and only focus on the biological sex without paying attention to the emotional conflict.

This study has demonstrated how two factors, frames and formulations, function through the examination of ideological naturalization, which is the basic way of thinking in CDA. In addition, it has revealed the possibility of incorporating such critical factors into these approaches of discourse analysis. The study clarified the host's skillful strategy of contrasting different naturalization of ideology by gently criticizing the arrogance of a celebrity

and fairly recognizing a transgender person. This is not only an excellent strategy by Larry King but also a humane and considerate way of interacting with other human beings.

Notes

*This study is a revised version of the paper presented at the JACES (Japan Association for Current English Studies) Annual Meeting held at International Christian University on October 6, 2007.

- 1) The concept of ideology in the present paper is based on the following definition by Fairclough, "Ideologies are representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation" (Fairclough, 2003, p.9).
- 2) Understanding a "metacommunicative level" of messages is to interpret what is going on, not only literally and by following grammatical rules but also on the basis of the speaker's intention and of his or her relationship to the hearer. (Bateson, 1972)
- 3) "Schemas" here is used to mean "participants' expectations about people, objects, events and setting in the world, as distinguished from alignments being negotiated in a particular interaction" (Tannen & Wallat, 1993, p.60). Knowledge schemas are composed of information obtained in previous experience in society, and discourse is understood thanks in large part to such schemas filling in unstated messages.
- 4) In the interview Hilton replies that she takes a medication for ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) and not drugs because she has been suffering from it since childhood.
- 5) King's expression "of course" also clarifies the directive function. It emphasizes that it is only natural that Hilton should understand her responsibility in the spreading of the rumor.

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Appendix:

Transcript symbols (excerpt) based on Heritage (1985)

- (1.0) Numbers in parentheses denote elapsed silence in tenths of a second.
- [gay community. Separate left square brackets, one above the other on two successive lines with utterances by different speakers, indicate a point of overlap onset, whether at the start of an utterance or later.
- [Unfair?
- I () Open parentheses indicate the transcriber's uncertainty.