

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS :

Egalitarian and Asymmetrical Data*

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According to Stubbs (1983), discourse analysis refers mainly to the linguistic analysis of naturally occurring connected spoken or written discourse. It refers to the attempt to study the organization of language above the clauses. It is also concerned with language in use in social contexts, in particular with interaction or dialogue between speakers. Tannen (1989) states that "discourse analysis is the study beyond the sentence, in any context or form" (p. 6).

In this paper, several aspects of discourse will be examined. First, I will discuss repetition and the discourse marker "y'know" in relation to cohesion; second, the ways power is expressed in discourse through questions, overlaps / interruptions, minimal response / back-channeling, and topic change. Finally, I will discuss narratives in discourse. My data includes the conversations of nonnative Female-Female (egalitarian data; F-F hereafter) and nonnative Male-Female (asymmetrical data; M-F hereafter) each of which was tape-recorded in 30 minute segments. The four informants were all nonnative speakers of English who spoke different languages. They lived in the U.S. for three to five years studying at undergraduate or graduate levels. Since their mother tongues were different, English was their only means of communication. I was not on the spot when they were having free conversations in the university cafeteria. I had permission to put a portable tape recorder beside them and asked them to try to ignore it so that their conversations would be able to flow as naturally as possible.

I. Cohesion - Repetition

Tannen (1989, p. 47) identifies the purposes of repetition as production, comprehension, connection, interaction and function, which establish coherence and implement interpersonal involvement. In my F-F conversation, I found some examples of what Tannen calls production and comprehension. As shown in the following discourse, repetition enables a speaker to produce fluent speech while he/she formulates what to say next. Also, it can induce good listenership and link one utterance to another.

(appendix p. 48, lines 7-12)

C: We were always eating.

M: Eating. What kind of food?

C: American food.

M: American food. He missed it, right!

C: He missed it. Every kind of hamburgers and pizza.

(appendix p. 48, lines 20-21)

M: Keep on eating?

C: Yeah. Keep on eating. Five or six meals a day.

In my M-F data, I found in the male speech examples of what Tannen refers to as phonological repetition and "patterned rhythm" which is a rephrase with a slight intensification of the idea of the first item. The following data exemplifies this point.

J: "It's nutritious but not delicious." (p. 62, line 13)

J: "The more I get into the subject, the more comfortable I feel with it." (p. 67, lines 10, 12)

II. Cohesion - "Y'know"

According to Schiffrin (1990), "y'know is an information-

statemarker which marks transitions to meta-knowledge about shared knowledge" (p. 267). Also, this expression opens an interactional negotiation that elicits the hearer's agreement, or marks a transition in information states which are relevant for a participatory framework. In addition, it gains attention from the listener to direct an interactive focus on the speaker's utterance.

Schiffrin indicates that the discourse functions of "y'know" are: (1) a marker of meta-knowledge about what speaker and hearer share and (2) a marker of meta-knowledge about what is generally known. In my F-F data, for example, M: (Appendix p. 46, line 22) "you know what I mean?" is using the literal meaning of 'know' and verifies the knowledge of the hearer. On the other hand, J: (p. 58, line 18) "That's why, y'know, if you keep on getting daughters some people try and try ... " applies to function (2). It is interesting to note that the majority of "Y'know's" in my data are examples of the function (2) of Schiffrin's definition. I believe "y'know" contributes to the cohesion of the discourse since it connects and reinforces the flow of the speech.

III. Questions (as one form of directives)

Zimmerman & West (1989, p. 86) state that women and men physicians use very different speech forms to issue their directives. For example, these authors found that women physicians employed directives that minimize the status differences between their patients and themselves, provide more symmetrical arrangements of their relationships and stress the connectedness between doctor and patient. On the other hand, men physicians use explicit commands and forms that aggravate to emphasize hierarchical status. These commands have similarities with those outlined in Goodwin's study of "boys' and girls' directives in Maple Street". Goodwin (1990) concludes that "boys' directives display distinctions between the participants and stress individual rights, while girls' directives stress the connectedness

of girls to each other and their caretaking concerns" (p. 147).

In my data, I found correspondences with the findings of Zimmerman & West and Goodwin. For example, the questions used in my F-F conversation have characteristics that resemble those of the women physicians and the girls in Maple street, in the way that females function to show interest and to enhance the flow of the conversation. In other words, I can see signs of cooperation and connectedness in the way both partners jointly construct a conversation. On the contrary, in the M-F conversation (appendix pp. 59-63, 41), the male speaker uses questions to challenge the partner, check her knowledge, clarify the point, or to teach some professional knowledge as if he were giving a lecture. However, the female speaker uses questions as a means of eliciting a topic for the conversation to flow. This fact may be evidence for what Maltz & Borker (1982, p. 197) describe as a distinguishing characteristic of male and female speech: women are more active in maintaining interaction and facilitating the flow of conversation. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to challenge or dispute their partners' utterances.

IV. Minimal Response and Back Channeling

A minimal response is a word or brief phrase which has its own turn; that is, the response is not uttered simultaneously with speech of another person (cf. Ainsworth-Vaughn's lecture of winter term 1992). Back-channeling is simultaneous speech that employs expressions like "uhhuh," "yeah," "really!" etc. made by a hearer usually to express support, interest, or appreciation and is not intended to take over the conversation, though the expressions sometimes overlap with the speaker's utterances. As we can observe in Table 1, there are significant differences between male and female speakers in the number of minimal responses and amount of back-channeling. For instance, the number of back-channelings the male speaker used is two and the number the

Table 1

Discourse		Minimal Response	Back Channeling
F-F Data	F(C)	10	12
	F(M)	5	7
M-F Data	M(J)	3	2
	F(M)	5	56

female speaker used is 56. This shows how the characteristic nature of women in conversation contrasts with that of men in the male-dominated conversation.

According to Malts and Borker (p. 210), women convey and look for signs of engagement such as nods and minimal responses (which mean "I'm listening to you; please continue") and give more extended signs of interest and attention. As we can observe from my M-F data (appendix pp. 55-69), the conversation is totally dominated by the male speaker (who is speaking most of the time), and there are not many chances for the female speaker to participate in the conversation but instead to use back-channeling or minimal responses to support male speech.

V. Overlap / Interruption, Turn-taking, Topic change

Generally speaking, discourse contains overlaps, interruptions, turn-takings, and topic changes. In this section, I will briefly discuss these topics in connection with Power.

First, let us examine the case of overlap. Since conversation is a turn-taking activity involving more than two persons, the participants have to negotiate their turns to speak. However, unless the current speaker indicates the end of his/her speech, the next speaker has to anticipate the possible ending of the current speaker's talk to get the floor. Zimmerman & West state: "The delicate timing involved in honoring these constraints often

produces a brief stretch of simultaneous speech initiated by a next speaker just as a current speaker arrives at a possible transition place" (p. 104). This simultaneous speech is what is called an overlap. Observe the following discourse (F-F conversation). Note that the equal sign '=' indicates that the next speaker overlaps at this point.

(appendix p. 51, lines 35-36)

C: It was embarrassing, = wasn't it.?

M: = Yeah, very.

As shown above, the simultaneous speech initiated by M is placed on C's tag question after C arrives at the possible end of her utterance, which does not violate C's sentence structure. In general, overlaps are initiated unintentionally by the speaker. However, some overlaps are initiated intentionally as is evident below.

(appendix p. 45, lines 26-27)

C: Not until = Yesterday

M: = Yesterday.

(appendix p. 50, lines 4-5)

C: That's = exciting.

M: =Exciting.

In these examples, the participants intentionally made their speech overlap their utterances. In this connection Tannen (1989) states: "the characteristic of intentional overlap is that simultaneous utterances are coherent and cohesive to each other and that the coherence and cohesion are supported by the participants' shared knowledge" (p. 103).

Let us now take up the case of interruption. Zimmerman &

Table 2

Discourse		Overlap	Interruption	Topic Change
F-F Data	F(C)	6	3	2
	F(M)	1	1	5
M-F Data	M(J)	1	7	4
	F(M)	2	1	2

West state that "there are definite and patterned ways in which the power and dominance enjoyed by men in other contexts are exercised in their conversational interaction with women" (p. 105). Especially striking asymmetries can be seen in patterns of interruption and topic changes. These authors define interruption as "violations of speakers' turn at talk" (p. 103). More specifically they state: "An interruption involves a deeper intrusion into the internal structure of a speaker's utterance than an overlap and penetrates well within the syntactic boundaries of a current speaker's utterance" (p. 104).

Sacks (1974) suggests that speech exchange systems in general are organized to ensure that one person speaks at a time and change of speakers recurs. However, that is not the case in my M-F data, as I found that the male speaker tends to interrupt when the female speaker's utterance becomes slightly long. In addition, he does not listen to the female speaker but interrupts and continues by completing the point of his speech (appendix pp. 41-44) or interrupts and completes the sentence for the female speaker (appendix pp. 41-45). As indicated in Table 2 above, the male speaker interrupts the female speaker seven times, compared to one interruption by the female speaker.

Now consider the following discourse. Note that the double bar // indicates that the next speaker interrupts at this point.

(appendix p. 61, lines 11-12)

1M: You don't have to cut your hair when you go for //

2J: // I had my hair bald in the island.

(appendix p. 62, lines 22, 24)

3M: Then that's just //

4J: // Unless a ranger course.

As shown above, J's utterance in 4 intrudes into M's speech in 3, before M's speech arrives at the possible turn-taking point. On the contrary, in my F-F data, we can observe more overlaps than interruptions. As we can see in table 2, overlaps occurred seven times compared to the four interruptions that took place. I must note that even though the female speaker interrupts once in a while, it is not an attempt to grab the floor but a sign of interest and support.

Let us now examine topic changes. In my data, topic changes occurred when there was a long pause/silence after a depressing topic or if one person talked for a long time. As shown in appendix (pp. 45-54), in the F-F conversation, most of the time the topic changed gradually and was linked to the previous utterance. With regard to the topic change, Malts and Borker point out that "women have a system in which a topic is developed progressively and shifts gradually" (p. 213). In the M-F conversation as shown in appendix (pp. 58-61, 64-65), however, the topic shifted abruptly. In addition, the male speaker had dominant topic control by talking about his professional field as if he were lecturing to the female speaker. Along this line Troemel-Ploetz (1991) argues that "Men are dominating women; they do it especially in conversations; they declare themselves experts for almost any topic, they expect and get space to present their topics" (p. 491). On the other hand, the female speaker supported the male's topic, withheld her own comment, gave him attention, and supported his conversation.

VI. Narratives

According to Tannen (1989, p. 103), storytelling is a means by which humans organize and understand the world, and feel connected to each other. Labov (1992) and Polanyi (1979) emphasize the correspondence of the temporal order between the events and clauses in the narrative. As for events, Polanyi indicates that "the order of recital of the events is to be presented to have taken place" (p. 208). In regard to clauses, Labov mentions that "the clauses are characteristically ordered in temporal sequence" (p. 360). Analyzing the structure of the narratives of personal experiences in ordinary conversation, Labov defines narratives as "one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of events which actually occurred" (pp. 359-60).

Observe the narrative in my F-F conversation given below.

(appendix p. 46, line 36 - p. 47, line 7)

M: You know what! Back home I sort of got into an accident, too. I was driving my aunt's car, and then it was, you know, the end of the year and a lot of people driving here and there and I was backing up my car and then, um, all the cars were coming from all directions.

C: That's terrible.

M: Yeah. That was really terrible. And I bumped into this huge block, you know, block. And I bumped into the left side of my car, and it was totally you know, indented, you know like inside. The two doors were like inside. And then, I tried to get out of the wall, this wall, and it made it worse. Totally the two doors were damaged.

In M's narrative, as can be seen above, M tells what happened during the end of the year when traffic was heavy and describes her car accident according to the temporal order of events. If she

changes the order of the clauses, the narrative becomes a different one or the hearer misunderstands the event itself. As shown above, M clearly describes the accident in the temporal order of the incident.

A fully developed narrative, as Labov mentions, is made up to the following sections: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result or resolution, and coda. In the light of Labov's formulation, let us now examine M's narrative below.

(appendix p. 49, line 38 – p. 50, line 5)

1 C: Yes. Well, how was your break? (Eliciting a story)

2 M: Oh, my break? Well, it was ...

3 C: You went to Hong Kong?

4 M: Yeah. First I went home, to Korea and I spent maybe three weeks with my parents and after that I flew to see my boy friend and the family. (Abstract)

5 C: That's exciting.

6 M: Exciting. I was really excited.

(appendix p. 50, line 34 – p. 52, line 12)

7 C: (Nod) (External Evaluation)

8 M: But the thing was that ... It was a weird situation for me.

I went to Hong Kong and that was Dec. 30th.

9 C: Aha.

10 M: And then Bill and his father came to pick me up the airport. (Orientation) And then he tell me that his aunt, which was like his mother, like the closest, the aunt took care of him for his mom, she died the day before I came. (Complicating Action)

11 C: No! (Surprised)

12 M: So he didn't tell me over the phone. You know, I knew she was really sick in the hospital but he didn't tell me that she died and then when I got there, straight from

the airport I had to go to the funeral. (Internal Evaluation)

13 C: (Sigh) That's so bad.

14 M: I felt really terrible. I felt really awkward, you know.
(External Evaluation)

15 C: Yeah.

16 M: I didn't know how to express myself or how to react.

17 C: Aha. (Nod)

18 M: Like I was excited inside but now at that time ... really shocked.

19 C: You can not express your excitement. (External Evaluation)

20 M: That's right. I can not smile, I can't ... (Pause) You know what I mean, right?

21 C: I know. (External Evaluation)

22 M: Like, somebody died so ... (Pause) The weird thing was that I had to meet all of his cousins, relatives, his whole family there ... in the ... funeral ...

23 C: So that is your first meeting? (Internal Evaluation)

24 M: Yeah. It's not like ...

25 C: Weird.

26 M: The situation is ...

27 C: I can not imagine.

28 M: Ha, so I didn't know how to react ... I would say ... Bill would introduce me to his family and I would say "nice to meet you" but you know, the situation is so bad that ... I didn't know how to ... whatever ... But they were very nice. They were very thoughtful. You know, like they smiled. It seemed like they forgot about what had happened. They really accepted me. Really nice, warm people. (Social/Cultural Norm)

29 C: Yeah. (Nod)

30 M: (Smile) What a ...

31 C: Situation.

32 M: And what a way to meet his family. (Coda)

33 C: It was embarrassing, isn't it?

34 M: Yeah, very. And the first five days I had to go to the funeral until they have that cremation which they burn the body. So ... the first five day were very tough for me. (Complicating Action)

35 C: Yeah.

36 M: Seeing all these sad things happening and you know, people crying ... I didn't know what to ... I went there for a tour but I started out with a very ... ha ... (Sigh)
(Internal Evaluation)

37 C: How was Bill?

38 M: Oh, well ...

39 C: He must have been sad.

40 M: Yeah. He was sad inside but he didn't show that much. But later on I saw him crying and I felt very bad, too. So ... But ... you know, to look at it from a positive point, it was a big cultural experience for me. I discovered similarities between our culture, in that situation.

(appendix p. 52, lines 38 - p. 53, line 2, after discussion on tourist spots)

41 M: But ... yeah, my impression was ... first it started out with a cultural experience ... and later on I tried all kinds of food, like Chinese food, Japanese food, Indian food ... and then I did some seeing ... (Evaluation)

In the above data, line 4 is an abstract in which M summarizes her winter break story. The orientation which contains the place, time, person and situation are identified in nos. 8 and 10. In no. 8, M starts with an evaluation saying that she experienced a weird situation. This draws the hearer's attention because an unusual

situation is interesting to listen to. It is noteworthy that M gives the exact date (Dec. 30th) in no. 8, about which Tannen remarks "in conversation, speakers often make an observable effort to get the details right ...; in a way such a mental scavenging seems to be more for the speaker's satisfaction ... and this gives a listener a sense that true details about true events are being retrieved" (pp. 140-41). We can observe many evaluation elements in this narrative, which get the point of the story across to the participants. The expressions such as "really terrible" and "awkward" (no. 14), "really shocked" (in 18), "weird" (in 22), "so bad" (in no. 28), all indicate the external evaluation of the speaker. Accordingly, I consider the following as internal evaluations: 1) "straight from the airport, I had to go to the funeral" (in 12), 2) "meet the whole family there ... in the ... funeral ... (in 22), 3) "I went to a tour but I started out with a very ... ha (sigh) ... (in 36). Notice that these indirectly imply the speakers' inner feelings, and I believe the "..." are shown to illustrate the pause and the emotion of the speaker which are very important since the pause also expresses the speaker's feelings of awkwardness at that time. This evaluation indicates the story-worthiness of the narrative, for something awkward, weird, or unusual is story-worthy. In 32, we can see a coda which returns the speakers to the present situation. When the coda appeared, it seemed like the end of the narrative, but in 34 the complicating action starts again by means of narrative clauses. Finally in 40 and 41, M underscores an evaluation of the whole trip by saying "to look at it from a positive point, it was ...". In closing, I must note that this narrative assumes a cultural norm (in 28), hospitality, for even though what happened was very sad, the family treated M kindly as if they had forgotten about the death in the family. Polanyi stresses this point by explaining that "cultural ways of showing interest are constraints on attitudes, beliefs, and crucially important key concepts about the way things are or ought to be, the way people are, what they need, and how

they should behave" (p. 212).

Polanyi (1979) analyzes interactive work in story telling. She demonstrates that "the point of a story should not be taken as a fixed formal aspect of the story as originally told" (p. 207). She discusses how "speaker and audience jointly negotiate for what the story will be agreed upon to have been about." Goodwin (1990) also indicates that "story telling is constituted by the collaborative but different work of multiple participants" (p. 238). She examines the ways boys and girls make use of stories in a particular context that involves disputes. She also examines how stories are jointly constructed by hearers and speakers and how stories emerge from interaction and function to accomplish specific social tasks. In addition, Goodwin cites the study of Fishman (1978) which makes the point that when telling a story, females provide "support work" which differs from the competitive nature of male conversational style (p. 237). This cooperative nature of females, in which they elicit the story by asking questions and replying with interest and support, can be found throughout my F-F narrative as shown. Also, one is able to find in my F-F narrative what Sacks calls the "two-part sequence": (1) in a single unit turn, the party who wishes to act as a teller announces the availability of a story; (2) recipients then ask to hear the story, or provide grounds for rejecting it. This may be seen in no. 1 of the following example when C announces the availability of the story and in 2 when M asks to hear the story.

(appendix p. 45, lines 5-13)

1 C: It was terrible this morning.

2 M: What happened?

3 C: I started the engine. I had to go to school. At that time my car was O.K., but while I was waiting for the engine to get warm, the engine stopped.

4 M: Hah! Really!

5 C: And then it didn't work anymore.

6 M: Woo. Oh, no!

7 C: So I had to take a bus.

VII. Conclusion

In this paper, I analyzed F-F and M-F conversations in terms of repetition, question, minimal response / back-channeling, interruption / overlap, turn-taking, topic change, and narrative all of which are observed in various types of conversations.

Through this study I found that there are characteristic differences between F-F and M-F conversations. As noted previously, all my informants were nonnative speakers of English. However, the results attained in the present study are similar to those found in Zimmerman & West's (1989) and Goodwin's (1990) studies whose informants were native speakers of English. Females, for instance, seem to use questions to show interest and enhance the flow of conversation, while males tend to use it to challenge the partner, check her knowledge, or to clarify the point. As discussed in section IV, minimal responses / back-channeling such as "uhhuh," "yeah," "really!" are often observed in conversations. The female speaker in the M-F conversation used back-channeling 56 times and the male speaker two times. This fact evidently shows that the conversation was male-dominated.

As for overlaps, as taken up in section V, they seem to occur more frequently in the F-F conversation than in the M-F conversation. In females' speech, 'overlaps' tend to be placed so as not to interfere with the content of the message but to get the conversation to flow smoothly. In the M-F conversation, however, the male speaker seems often to interrupt the female speaker. Topic changes in M-F conversation seem to be significantly different from those in F-F conversation. In the case of the male speaker, he tends to change the topic abruptly, while the female speakers tend to develop and shift it gradually. All the results

mentioned above show the asymmetries in M-F conversation and the power of the male speaker.

The features taken up in the present study can often be observed in various types of conversations but most of us do not realize their existence until we objectively observe and analyze our own conversations. As Abe, Carton, Cembalo, and Regent (1985) state, "The objective of language learning is not simply to be able to produce or understand a large number of grammatically correct sentences, but also to acquire the skills necessary if they are to be appropriately used; this means being able to adjust what is to be said and understood to the way it is said in a particular situation." (p. 324). In other words, when learning a foreign language, it is important to study not only phonology, morphology, and syntax of the target language but also to acquire communicative competence in order to master the language. In this respect, the study of discourse is indispensable because it definitely provides us with various authentic materials which may make it possible to put the language learner in contact with real utterances in communicative situations. Although the present study was based only tape-recorded data, in the future I would like to work from video-taped data, as many communication specialists have already anticipated, because non-verbal information such as facial expression and body movement may serve as communication signals.

NOTE

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Appendix

Transcriptions of Egalitarian and Asymmetrical Data

(1) Female and Female Conversation (Egalitarian Data)

*The conversation took place at a cafeteria.

M: No. What about you? Did you walk today?

C: No. No. It was terrible this morning.

M: What happened?

C: I started the engine. I had to go to school. At that time my car was O.K., but while I was waiting for the engine to get warm, the engine stopped.

M: Hah! Really!

C: And then it didn't work anymore.

M: Woo. Oh, no!

C: So I had to take a bus.

M: Ahh. (Sigh) All of a sudden it's really cold. I think it was about 17 degrees.

C: Seventeen? (Overlap)

M: Yeh. Seventeen. When I came back, it was about 35 so ...

C: I know.

M: No snow so I thought it's very nice. "This winter is going to be mild."

C: I was here this winter break and it was so warm every day.

M: It was warm? Really!

C: Not so cold, not at all and no snow.

M: Oh good. Not until ...

C: Not until yesterday. (Overlap)

M: ... Yesterday. (Overlap)

Yesterday, I was supposed to go to Grand Rapids, and seven o'clock in the morning I went to borrow a car. And then I called the Grand Rapids schools. So I didn't have to go.

C: That's good! Aha. (Nod)

M: Yeah! I don't want to drive in such a bad condition.

C: I don't either. It's so terrible. Do you know that Yuko's car is broken now?

M: Yuko's car!

C: Yeah.

M: What happened?

C: During the winter break, I don't know for sure, but on December

24, somewhere around there. It was snowing at that time, that was the only day that ...

C: ... Snowed during winter break, and she was trying to get to Frankinmuth?

M: Oh, yeah.

C: And then she was driving the car and the water's so icy that she slipped.

M: Did she turn around?

C: Yeah. And when she slipped the other car came toward her ...

M: Oh no!

C: ... And slammed each other.

M: She got into a big accident?

C: Yeah.

M: Is she O.K. herself?

C: Yeah, she is O.K.

M: Just the car?

C: Just the car.

M: Is all damaged?

C: Umm. No, just the door.

M: Door. Oh ... Was this in a highway?

C: No. Just ...

M: In a regular road.

C: Yeah.

M: That was better than a highway then.

C: Yeah.

M: So she doesn't have the car anymore, or ...?

C: Oh, she is ... her car is in the garage right now.

M: Does she have to pay, too?

C: Yes, because the accident, she is wrong.

M: Oh!

C: And the company only paid ... she has to pay up to 50.

M: Does she also have to pay for the other person?

C: No.

M: Her insurance will increase because she had an accident.

C: Aha.

M: You know what! Back home I sort of got into an accident, too. I was driving my aunt's car, and then it was, you know, the end of the year and a lot of people driving here and there and I was backing up my car and then, um, all the cars were coming from from all directions.

C: That's terrible.

M: Yeah. That was really terrible. And I bumped into this huge block, you know, block. And I bumped into the left side of my car, and it was totally you know, indented, you know, like inside. The two doors were like inside. And then, I tried to get out of the wall, this wall, and it made it worse. Totally the two doors were damaged. And it's my uncle's car and that happened just before ... that was the day before I left home, so horrible. I asked my Dad if I can buy a car and he was like "no way." you know. "You got into an accident if you drive in America ..." he'll be so worried and everything so he still doesn't feel comfortable about me driving a car.

C: So you cannot buy a car here anymore?

M: That's what he said but I'm going to. I'm going to buy it maybe later on.

C: A brand new car?

M: I might. Right now I'm thinking. I might buy a new car or a used one. Not sure.

C: How about my car! (Laugh)

M: Hahaha. (Laugh)

C: That car is such a problem.

M: ... That wasn't a good timing, you know what I mean? I wanted to buy a car but I got into an accident. I made a bad impression on my family. So it wasn't good. (Laugh)

C: (Laugh)

M: Horrible. Ha. (Sigh) I felt so bad for my uncle too. Because of that car. Anyways how was your winter break.

C: Oh my break? Wonderful!

M: Wonderful. (Smile)

C: You know that.

M: Yeh. Your boyfriend came here, right.

C: He came here, then, two and a half weeks ...

M: Yeah! At first, you were saying that, you know, you weren't excited but actually ...

C: Actually ... He is so nice, you know.

M: When he came, you really enjoyed it.

C: He is so nice and he is cute. (Laugh)

M: (Laugh)

C: And a little fat though. (Laugh)

M: (Smile) He has a real cute face. He doesn't ...

He looks younger than his age.

C: Oh. Really.

M: Yeah. Like his face look younger. You too! So where did you guys go?

C: Oh. We went to N.Y. Five days there and we ate a lot.

M: (Laugh)

C: We're always eating.

M: Eating. What kind of food?

C: American food.

M: American food. He missed it, right!

C: He missed it. Every kind of hamburgers and pizza.

M: And lazania. Raviollie?

C: No. He didn't eat Raviollie.

M: Oh, O.K. Did you cook for him when you came back?

C: Um. Only twice because he just misses American food.

M: Oh. O.K.

C: We bought a lot of junk food....

M: Went to eat.

C: Instant food...

M: Keep on eating.

C: Yeah. Keep on eating. Five or six meals a day.

M: Really!

C: And he add weight. (Laugh) Go back. Ahaha.

M: So his friends will be like "You've gained weight" (Laugh)

C: (Laugh)

M: Oh, gosh. You also ... Where did you say you went to?

N.Y. and ...?

C: Chicago.

M: Chicago.

C: We went to Chicago and we rent a car.

M: How many days?

C: Oh, just one day. Just one night.

M: One night. Has he been to Chicago before?

C: No. It's his first time.

M: What about N.Y.?

C: N.Y.?

M: Is that where he stayed when he was a child?

C: Oh, yeah.

M: Yeah. N.Y.

C: Not N.Y. City but away, one and a half hours from there.

M: Oh. So he is familiar with ...

C: Yeah.

M: But not Chicago. Chicago's a nice place.

C: Yeah. I like Chicago better than N.Y....

M: Yeah.

C: Because N.Y. City is a little bit dirty.

M: Yes. That's what I think.

C: And noisy.

M: Hmm. (Nod) Hectic life. Chicago's really pretty. Sometimes it's a little dangerous but ...

C: I like Michigan Avenue.

M: Yeah. The most exciting place.

C: It's so pretty. After Christmas not so many people so not that exciting. When we went to N.Y., we went there before Christmas so it was so exciting. Lots of people walking through fifth avenue.

M: Shopping?

C: Shopping, and they wear so nice. I wore jeans...

M: Did you go to the department store Macy's?

C: No. We went to Sax Fifth Avenue.

M: Oh, Yeah. Expensive?

C: Expensive store.

M: But that's real good.

C: Yeah.

M: Nice clothing.

C: We went to Rockafeller Center.

M: Rockafeller Center's so pretty.

C: It's so pretty.

M: Yeah. People skating and then the Christmas tree.

M: ... is so huge.

C: Yeah.

M: I like the angles around it.

C: Me, too. It's pretty. I like N.Y. city. Big cities are always exciting.

M: Exciting. Like East Lansing is a college town so not that much ...

C: He likes it here.

M: Oh. His impression of the city is good then.

C: Yes. Well, how was your break?

M: Oh my break? Well, it was ...

C: You went to Hong Kong?

M: Yeah. First I went home, to Korea and I spent maybe two weeks with my parents and after that I flew to, to see my boyfriend. And the family.

C: That's exciting.

M: Exciting. I was really excited.

C: Have you ever been to Hong Kong before?

M: No.

C: It's your first time?

M: Yeah.

C: How was it?

M: It's a very nice place.

C: Yeah. I heard about that.

M: So many places to shop.

C: It's endless, right?

M: Yeah. Very pretty night lights, too.

C: I heard they have one of the most beautiful night view in the world.

M: It sure was beautiful. But you know what. Those shopping places used to have cheap stuff but now that the price of the land is increasing tremendously, so are the things they are selling out there.

C: That's disappointing.

M: I know.

C: Did you try their famous brunch called timsun?

M: Of course, I did. Those dishes are excellent. So many variety. I just couldn't stop eating.

C: Did you gain weight?

M: I hope not. What do you think?

C: I think you're still safe.

M: Thanks. If you have a chance you should visit that place. I recommend it. By the way, I didn't tell you about the bad part of the trip.

C: (Nod)

M: But the thing was that ... It was a weird situation for me. I went to Hong Kong and that was Dec. 30th.

C: Uha.

M: And then Bill and his father came to pick me up at the airport.

And then he tells me that his aunt, which was like his mother, like the closest, the aunt took care of him for his mom, she died the day before I came.

C: No! (Surprised)

M: So he didn't tell me over the phone. You know, I knew she was really sick in the hospital but he didn't tell me that she died and then when I got there, straight from the airport I had to go to the funeral.

C: (Sigh) That's so bad.

M: I felt really terrible. I felt really awkward, you know.

C: Yeah

M: I didn't know how to express myself or how to react.

C: Uha. (Nod)

M: Like I was excited inside but now at that time ... really shocked.

C: You cannot express your excitement.

M: That's right. I cannot smile, I can't ... You know what I mean, right.

C: I know.

M: Like, somebody died so ...

M: The weird thing was that I had to meet all of his cousins, relatives, his whole family there ... in the ... funeral ...

C: So that is your first meeting.

M: Yeah. It's not like ...

C: Weird.

M: The situation is ...

C: I cannot imagine.

M: Ha, so I didn't know how to react ... I would say ... Bill would introduce me to his family and I would say, "Nice to meet you" but you know, the situation is so bad that ... I didn't know how to ... whatever ... But they were very nice. They were very thoughtful. You know, like they smiled. It seemed like they forgot about what had happened. They really accepted me. Really nice, warm people.

C: Yeah. (Nod)

M: (Smile) What a ...

C: Situation.

M: And what a way to meet his family.

C: It was embarrassing, wasn't it?

M: Yeah, very. And the first five days I had to go to the funeral until they have that cremation which they burn the body. So ... The first five days were very tough for me.

C: Yeah.

M: Seeing all these sad things happening and you know, people

crying ... I didn't know how to ... I went there for a tour but I started out with a very ... ha ...

C: I know.

M: Very bad.

C: How was Bill?

M: Oh, well.

C: He must have been sad.

M: Yeah. He was sad inside but he didn't show that much. But later on I saw him crying and I felt very bad too. So ... but ... you know, to look at it from a positive point, it was a big cultural experience for me. I discovered similarities between our culture, in that situation. (Laugh)

C: (Laugh) They are Buddhist?

M: Yeah! Yeah, that's why lot of same ... But after that five days when everything was finished, we went for a tour around. His cousins brought me to many places.

C: Did you eat Chinese food?

M: A lot of Chinese food. Bill and his brother and I went to this island three minutes by ferry. The main island is here and you can take a ferry and also you can go by cable car.

C: Cool. Cable car.

M: Cable car (Laugh) . You can take a train around the island or you can cycle. And they had all kinds of ... I think they had museums and aquariums. The fish were like swimming on top of your head.

C: Ah?

M: See, the, um ...

C: How come?

M: Because it's a tunnel.

C: Glass?

M: Yeah, it's a tunnel and when you go through, glass is above your head. So when you look up, you can see all kinds of fish floating on top of you.

C: That's interesting.

M: Yeah, we really ...

C: Interesting (Nod)

M: Feel like you're inside the ocean.

But ... yeah, my impression was ... first it started out with a cultural experience (Laugh) ...

C: (Laugh)

M: And later on I tried all kinds of food, like Chinese food, Malay food, Indian food ... and then did some sight seeing ... Yeah, (Pause) We went to Tokyo on our way back. Bill, it was his first time there so he was excited (Laugh)

C: (Laugh)

M: We took the bus tour.

C: That's good.

M: He likes the night lights a lot.

C: Did you go to Roppongi?

M: No. (Laugh)

C: I like Roppongi.

M: Yeah. Roppongi is really exciting. Night life ...

C: Yeah!

M: We only had one day so that's why we took a real quick bus tour and walked around on our own. But, he likes going around *sushi*. You know the *sushi* bar that ... the *sushi* goes around and around. You know that place? We went to eat three times because he liked it a lot.

C: Ah, ha, ha, ha. (Laugh)

M: He can eat ... He can eat ...

C: He likes it? Ha! (Surprised look)

M: Yeah. He likes *sashimi* a lot.

C: I don't like that kind of *sushi*. Because ... cold ...

M: Cold. (Overlap) Not good?

C: Not good.

M: Because he likes it a lot ... The first time, I thought he should experience it and I took him there and then he liked it so much that he wanted to go two more times. Ha, ha, ha. (Laugh)

C: (Laugh) Ha, ha, ha.

M: Too bad, he wanted to try the game Pachinko.

C: (Laugh)

M: But I was scared to try it. I've never tried it before.

C: You didn't?

M: No.

C: Don't be scared.

M: Really! It looks scary.

C: I usually use the restroom there. When I want to go to the restroom and there's no restroom around me, I'll find a Pachinko store ... That's good.

M: Oh. But I don't know why, but I'm so scared.

C: Don't be ...

M: Scary people inside ... No?

C: No, no.

M: So I said, "Don't go in" but he really wanted to try.

C: And he did?

M: No. (Laugh)

C: No!

M: Yeah, see, he regret it, though. He wanted to try it.

C: I can take him to go there.

M: Yeh, good, good.

C: Because, Ken, my boyfriend, he likes ...

M: Oh, he does! He goes very often?

C: When he was an undergraduate he said he went there often.

M: Did you win any?

C: Yes. Sometimes I did. Sometimes I didn't.

M: Some people make their living out of it, right!

M: I know! I heard that ...

M: They're so good ...

C: I heard that ... there is a way to win every time.
there is a way. (Overlap)

M: Really?

C: Yeah.

M: Even though the machine are like ...

C: The machines are ...

M: They're all programed.

C: Computer programed. If they find out what kind of program
they have they can win.

M: Oh! So they know the thing behind it.

C: (Laugh) Ha, ha.

(2) Male and Female Conversation (Asymmetrical Data)1

*The recording took place at a restaurant.

M: What was it again?

J: For me, it's the other way around. People tell me that...

Even my Dad told me that "You can't make it"!

M: You cannot make it?

J: Yeah. Nobody supported me. When I retook my O Level, my English improved.

M: Aha. (Nod)

J: I think behind me people were saying I'm real stupid. I pass everything and I retake my English. It's a waste of time. People think that it's a waste of time. And I believe they were laughing at me. But ... Then I said, "I want to go for a university so I went for it. I just feel like, you know ... afraid.

M: You made your decision.

J: ... I want to go for the best and compete with other people. Even the last out of the best school is better. Because I have been in the lousy elementary school, and a pretty good secondary school, and one of the best junior college.

M: Humm.

J: That's why I said this school makes me feel not so stable. On the other hand, you're the one that's telling me that, "here, you don't have work." What do you think?

M: It's not that I'm not challenging enough. I've been challenging my life for so long. Like getting into senior high. That was one of the best and university, too.

J: Yeah! But what about now?

M: Now, people consider it good, too.

J: This university?

M: I mean, it's like going for Master itself is like "Wow." And doing MA, as long as MA, it's great! As long as I accomplish that stage that's great wherever it is.

J: Yeah. But I keep asking you, will there be a difference if ... O.K., for instance, you're saying people are saying great ... Consider all those people including your family.

M: What!

J: If one of them has a son or a daughter that goes to, you know, Columbia University. When they talk about you they say great! What about when they talk about him?

M: It's the same thing. It's great.

J: It just basically cannot be the same.

M: For you it's not the same. But for us it's the same.

J: What's the difference between MIT and your university, then.

 If you were to be doing a Ph. D. in MIT ...and doing ...

(Interrupt)

M: Yeah, yeah, yeah. What I'm saying is ...

 the domestic universities, people know the rank.

J: In time to come ...

M: ... But ...

J: People will know.

M: But in the United States people do not know ...

(Interrupt)

J: It's not a matter of people do not know. What if one of them had a son that has been to the United States before, and he told his mother, you're basing your fact on, ... people do not know ... people do not know ... that makes it really ... You see, the reason why people do not know, eventually people are going to have a list, when people have a list and this school is not on the top twenty universities you'll be in deep (Pause), you know, trouble. That's what happened to me. See, in my country people know American universities. They know the top twenty.

M: Oh.

J: They know the top twenty. And if my university is not in the top twenty, they know that university is not good. They believe that the university out of the twenty, people buy the certificate. People buy their degree. That happens to a lot of people. Because when they graduate from the United States and go back to the country they cannot do anything. You know, they basically start from fresh.

M: Oh.

J: And the companies were like so shocked. And they said, "I thought you're a degree holder." And the guy said, "Well, I can't remember anymore, well I don't know, I've never seen this before I learned something else." All kind of reasons they give.

M: Oh.

J: But some students seems to know everything. But if I graduate from the top twenty university, then the training I go through is totally different. First of all, exposure.

M: Yeah.

J: Look in this University I can be exposed to Nelson and Elina. Both of them are very smart. When they study something, they can tell me about what they learned and I can tell them about what I learned. But put it this way, the rest of the people cannot do so. Or if they're good, I don't know them ... But put me in MIT. Jeff and Andrew, all those people know about a lot of things. They have a brain. They're brainers.

J: Now, if I were to study with them they are going to give me a lot of clues. Every general knowledge how a machine works, if I don't study that thing, Andrew's going to tell me.

M: Humm.

J: That's what makes a difference. I've been to the lousy elementary school, where in my whole class, less than five people graduated for a degree. Whereas in my college, all of them are great people. (Pause)

M: Humm.

J: You can see the percentage. People from my elementary school, they're all now my age, right?

M: Yeah.

J: I trace back, less than 10% of them got a degree, including myself.

M: Yeah.

J: I'm in the 10%.

M: Aha.

J: Considering my high school, St. Joeseph, it's not a great one, but then I look at Peter, Jennifer ... all those people, less than one-third of the class, I would say only one quarter of the people eventually make it to the university. But then, I look at my junior college, nearly everybody that I know goes to university. And a lot of them appears tops.

M: Yeah.

J: Like in Peter's case, it's not a very good junior college. What happened is, if you get like 70%, you're like "Wow!" "Great guy!"

M: Aha.

J: 70% in a course is like so great.

M: It makes a lot of difference.

J: Yeah. Like they have 70% passing mathematics but my college has 70% getting A's in mathematics. You see the difference, between them?

M: Yeah.

J: They have less than 70 % pass math. We have 70% A's, 100% pass.

(Pause) I missed that feeling. When I was wearing my junior college uniform, walking along the street, taking bus, everywhere people look at me.

M: Oh! (Pause) It's a prestige.

J: Yeah!

M: Same thing with me, too.

J: Now, but now you're not. No longer.

M: That senior high girl's uniform

J: I know, yeah. Now you're not.

Dinner comes----- Eating.

J: You know the reason why ... My sis is paying for the utility in the family. That's why.

M: Your elder sis?

J: Yeah. That's why we don't want to use the air con. Because my brother cannot use the air con, my Dad cannot use the air con, and if we use the air con, she'll have to pay more and she'll make a lot of noise.

M: Oh.

J: Well, you have to understand the fact that my sis is not earning a lot of money. She herself is not using the air con because she can't afford that.

M: Oh, I didn't know that.

J: On the other hand, my brother and I talked to Dad and said, "why don't you pay, and don't ask sis to pay so that we can on the air con?"

M: Aha.

J: My father was telling me, "What do you want to do when my sis offers to any utility. I can't just ask her not to. Moreover, my money is dead. It's really nice for my sis to offer. You're not earning money. I'm not earning money, my brother's not earning money so we cannot make any noise, keep our mouth shut. But my father said something. He said, "My responsibility is not finished yet. That's why I worry about the money. You are spending a lot on school fees, my brother's going for studies ..."

M: Yeah.

J: Eventually, none of us can earn, yet.

M: Oh.

J: So that effects my thinking.

M: I know. I know that it's very important for your future and you to go for the higher level in order to get a good job and support your family ... I know that. So I don't want to be (pause) ... a barrier.

(Interrupt)

J: You say that you know that you're already forming a barrier.

You're already giving me problems by saying you don't want to go. You want to stay in this school ... Do this ... and do that.

(Long pause) If it doesn't matter to you which university, why don't you just, you know, go where I go. It matters to me.

(Topic change)

J: In Chinese society, the son is the one that is more important.

M: In our society, too.

J: So you should understand that the son is the one that brings the next generation under the surname of ...

M: Yeah.

J: That family.

M: Yeah. That's right.

That's why, you know, if you keep on getting daughters some people try and try until they, like, 11 kids and last one is the son.

J: 'Cause daughters will not give them the surnames of ...

(Interruption)

M: Yeah, they'll go ...

J: Of the family.

M: Eventually they'll get married and go to another family.

(Pause)

J: Nowadays a lot of girls are fighting for surnames.

M: Oh, for keeping ...

(Interruption)

J: They say why must they follow the male one. Actually it's creating a lot of trouble. They should just let it be male's. I certainly think so. You create a lot of problems, you don't even know what's going on. One of the things people can do is put the father's surname after the name and ...

M: Hyphen.

J: Mother's surname.

M: Yeah.

J: That'll be good. I believe that that'll make it more fair. One thing is it also tells, a person, like a girl, what her surname was.

M: Yeah.

J: I like it that way. You call somebody Mrs. whatever and you don't know what that person used to, you know, belong to.

M: Yeah. It's good, though. It's a good idea. It must be hard to get used to the new name after getting married.

J: But at least you can do something.

M: Yeah.

(Long pause)

M: This, um, taperecorder working? Is there one chip in it like you said ... or what is it?

J: There're couple of them.

M: Couple of chips in it?

J: It has a lot of things in it. Something to make it work. It doesn't have so much control. It doesn't have, oh, you know, so much electronics in it. This one. This is an old one. But new ones have a lot of controls in it. They have digital clocks, you know, they have a lot of electronics in it.

M: Yeah. This is an old one. Long time ago. But it's a pretty good recorder.

J: Because when you talk about electronics, every parts control something. Like the volume.

M: Aha.

J: How come when it turns it becomes louder and when you go down, it becomes softer? And things like that. You know they have capacitors, conductors, and registers to do all the job for the volume to adjust, and for the tuning part for the radio is basically also capacitors and all that kind of thing to do in order to match with a frequency.

So you will adjust it.

M: Oh.

J: And for the power supply, you put in power and then how this particular machine takes power, powers go though all the integrated circuits and, you know, get to work but this one is not that hard, If you talk about computers and robots ... it's really hard to do. It has a lot of things implemented inside ...

Anyway, this grape is like old.

(Topic Change)

M: Yeah. It's like not washed.

J: Yeh. It's dirty.

J: It is not washed.

M: Ha, ha, ha. (Laugh) It won't come off.

J: I'm gonna get some more.

(Pause)

M: Remember that you pointed out to me when we went to the golf club? That island that you said you did your training and stuff?

J: Aha.

M: Is that where you had your hair bald?

J: No.

M: You don't have to cut your hair when you go for ...

J: I had my hair bald on the island, Yeah, but not that one that I pointed out to you.

M: Oh.

J: You can't see it from there. The place I went for military training is far away.

M: When you go to that training, you're in that camp for couple of months?

J: I was there for three months.

M: So you're in there, in that island for 3 months?

J: For weekend we can come out.

M: Oh.

J: Weekend we come home, and Sunday night or Monday morning we went back in again.

M: Hoom. (Nod) For 3 months you experienced those ...

J: (Interrupt)

J: Army life.

M: Not Army life but those ancient ...

J: Ancient?

M: Those far from civil life.

J: Aha.

M: Not like modern life. You're in tents and stuff.

J: No.

M: And then cook outside.

(Interrupt)

J: No, we don't.

M: And survive in the jungle.

J: Survive in a jungle is under a course called survival course.

M: Oh, I see.

J: Normally we have a place called cafeteria, oh, no, not cafeteria

J: but a cook house.

M: So ...

J: We eat.

M: During this 3 months period, you eat ...

J: (Interrupt)

J: Properly.

M: Like a normal life.

J: Actually we're given good meals, like meals that includes fruits, everything, drinks, pretty good meal but the way they cook it is not nice.

M: Oh.

(Rhyme)

J: It's nutritious but not delicious.

M: Oh.

J: Very simple way of cooking and they have everything. I don't like it. I hated it. That's why my weight went down.

M: I thought it was like that 3 months you have to survive in the jungle and ...

J: (Laugh) No.

M: You have to cook your own meal.

J: No. Nobody can do that.

M: Then that's just ...

(Interrupt)

J: Unless a ranger course.

M: Hah?

J: That's a ranger course. (Smile)

M: Just couple of days?

J: Nobody do that. It's only in the training. What every they want to do in the training. It's not quite possible to do that for 3 months.

M: I can't imagine. I will never survive in that kind of situation. Like not bathing for many days and ...

J: Yeah. You get used to it. It doesn't really matter. You put a lot of power. It makes you dry that's good enough. That's what you want. That's what I want. You know.

M: All kinds of insects?

J: A lot of things . Mosquitoes are the worst things. I used to think our place is fine. You know, a tropical region. But I forgot about the training. The training is hell. But if I were to have the training here, for instance in a nice place like the United

States, it will be great. You know like there will not be mosquitoes or bugs or anything that trouble me. It's not so humid.

M: Yeah.

J: If it's not so humid, it's fine.

M: I can't imagine all those ants crawling over me.

J: The worst thing is American soldiers fighting in Vietnam War.

They have to go there to ... in a tropical ...

M: Going to the tropical, humid ...

J: Yeah. Vietnam, which is like my country. (Pause)

What else do you want to know about the Army?

M: What is this! (Laugh)

J: What else do you want to know?

M: Army?

J: It was a good place, though. It was a good place to train you.

M: Train you physically and mentally?

J: Everything. It makes you a more independent guy.

M: Hum. (Nod)

J: I think all of us come here and it's easier.

M: Because of that training that you go through, become more stronger.

J: More mature.

M: You can survive here better.

J: (Pause) More mature than those that have never been to the Army.

M: Yeah.

J: Look look at Denny. He didn't go to the Army. He came here first so he ...

M: So compared to the others ...

J: I think he's naive. He thinks differently and he do things differently so ... he's really ...

M: So that hardship is worthwhile.

J: I hope so.

M: I think that's true because we don't go through that ... (Laugh)
So probably we are ...

(Interrupt)

J: Well, if you don't have to go through it, that's good. I don't want to go through it. If I were to be given a choice. You know, fighting a war and being a soldier has to do with personality. I believe, because if you're those kind of guy that do not like to

fight, it's really hard to be a soldier, (Rhyme) join the Army. If you don't want, go ahead and study, go ahead and work. (Pause) That makes people better. In our place, military police are military service, right?

M: (Nod)

J: But a lot of people are not suited for the Army.

M: Yeah.

J: When they're sent to the Army, a lot of them get into trouble. Some have, you know, mental defect.

M: Oh, they get upset and ...

J: I had a few friends that go crazy.

M: Really!

J: I mean that's not good. And a couple of my friends got hurt. They were supposed to go to the university. I mean, me, too. All of us can go to the university but then we have to serve the Army. So my friends serve the Army and one get killed. A couple of them did, actually. During the training,

M: What happened?

J: Oh. One of the ... what do you call ... Crossfire.

M: Crossfire?

J: I mean accident. During training, where the bullet just ... one of the bullet just crossfire and shot him from behind. You know, it was just an accident. But you can't do anything. He's dead.

M: Poor thing.

J: Yeah.

M: His whole life.

J: He's the only son. And then a friend of mine went to a very, um, tedious, um, what do you call, company, went for the armor trouper, very tough stuff.

M: Aha.

J: And then he couldn't take the pressure and he went crazy.

M: Oh, gosh! ... So some people can't take it then.

J: Some were not lucky enough. They got hurt. Like my friend got hurt and he cannot walk properly permanently.

M: Oh, gosh!

J: Had an operation on the leg because he jumped down from height. I think he jumped down from a ramp or something like that.

M: Oh.

J: During the training and they hurt themselves.

M: That's really bad. If he didn't have to serve then, he would've been a student by now.

J: If everything goes fine it's O.K. to serve the Army but not everything goes fine, so ... (Pause)

(Topic change) I'm full.

M: (Laugh)

J: I can't move anymore. (Pause)

M: So how come you choose your Major?

J: You pay for the dinner.

M: I already did!

J: (Laugh) Ha, ha, ha ... Why I chose engineering?

M: Yeah.

J: Because I don't like English. Ha, ha, ha. (Laugh)

M: (Laugh) What is this?

J: I'm just kidding.

M: How come?

J: It's the best course in our place. In my country not everybody can go for medicine.

M: (Nod)

J: And law. In order to go for medicine and law you need to go ... You need to be ... you need to prepare from high school. You need to get very good grade in English.

M: Oh.

J: You have to do very well in English, you have to do very well in your own class, and you have to take humanity classes ... and I don't have a chance to take any humanity classes in high school. Because I never know what I want to do. I never know what I want to be. So I just studied science.

M: Mmmm.

J: For medicine, you need to, you know, be very bright and have outstanding grades all the way since you're elementary school.

M: Mmmm.

J: Or I would say end of elementary school. That means senior year in elementary school.

M: Yeah.

J: And you need to go through an interview. So the next best alternative for me is engineering. Because you can get a job easier and it's pretty interesting stuff, hard, so the 3 best is Law, Medicine and Engineering. So I cannot go for Law, cannot go for Medicine, so I ended up only with a choice of Engineering.

M: Oh.

J: Um. One of the thing about the interview in medical school and law school is they usually look at the background.

M: Oh.

J: They look who your Dad is. They see what kind of family you belong to. Of course, if you're from a poor family you can still be doctor or a lawyer. Then, they want to see your personality. They ask, why do you want to be a doctor. And usually, people who had Dads or uncles as lawyers they usually say they're inspired by their Dad or uncle. And usually people who have uncles or fathers that are doctors or lawyers usually are from more or less wealthy families. So when they answer those questions, they seem to answer better than those who are poor.

M: Oh.

J: And people who are rich has more exposure. Lawyers and doctors, you need to be a very unique kind of person ... You have to have a very special kind of personality compared to other people.

M: Hummm.

J: Like people who are good in studies and at the same time have something else.

J: For instance, a friend of mine can play music very well. He can play music well and his studies well.

M: So extra.

J: Yeah. Something that makes him different from other people. So he will not be looking at someone and realize that he is the same as that person.

M: Yeah.

J: You know, you're talking about saving a man's life.

M: Mmmm.

J: As doctors, they believe that it's better to be different from all your patients. Then you will treat everybody the same, and consider them patients.

M: Yeah.

J: And for lawyers, the same thing. You're fighting for cases and everything. You want to be somebody different from your clients. Or if you're a prosecutor you want to know you're different and you investigate on somebody else rather than someone whose about the same kind of situation as you are.

M: (Nod)

J: Engineers, well, I choose electrical engineering, but, actually, talking about interest, my interest lies more in mechanical engineering. But because the time when I chose for university, it is like, during that time electrical engineering is the best.

M: Yeah.

J: The time when the demand for electrical engineer is at the top. And they have the highest pay. So I tell myself, "Maybe I should choose electrical engineering." Now it's not anymore. Now it seems like mechanical engineering is better. But anyway, the more I get into the subject.

M: Yeah.

J: The more comfortable I feel with it. So it's O.K.

M: It's more interesting.

J: Yeah. But it's tough. The reason why nobody wants to study electrical engineering is because it's very tough. It seems like it's tougher than mechanical engineering but, um, I would say the basic electrical engineering and basic mechanical engineering, electrical is tougher but when you go to professional level, higher level, they are both as complex. What I'm saying is the concept. To understand mechanical engineering is easier. Because you're dealing with, um, for mechanical stuff, you're dealing with laws, and definitions that were established since 14, 15, 16 century, during Newton's time, long long ago. They already, you know, found all the laws, and the rules, and definitions for mechanical engineering, or something to do with mechanics.

M: (Nod)

J: So, it's easier to understand. For an electrical engineer, most of the things, like electronics, and all those kinds of things are modern. They're under the category of modern physics and they are pretty much, ah, 18, 19, 20th century. So there's no rules, laws, or definitions.

M: Hmmm.

J: There are only theories, postulates, assumptions, things like that, so even a theory like Einstein relativity, um, Energy equals MC square, or whatever, they're all theories. They derive all this formulas, a lot of assumptions. Assuming that light cannot travel faster than this ... Assuming that this, this, this, and they postulate, maybe this is the case, let's think about it. Maybe that is not true. So a lot of things are theoretical so it's really

hard to understand. For instance, in order to understand something the professor will tell you "O.K., now you guys have to accept the idea that this is true. And you have to accept postulate 1, 2, 3, and they say no, we don't know it right now. Nobody is smart enough to tell you what it is. But it is a theory. We assume it is right. And then you do rest of the thing. Why do they assume? The reason is after assuming it, then you use whatever you have and you do experiment and it turned out right, so we can assume.

M: Humm.

J: But actually what's behind, is still not very clear yet. You know, who knows if someday somebody could find to disprove like $E=MC^2$ or to disprove a lot of the theories that are established right now.

M: Yeah.

J: As a matter of fact, that's why initially when I study I find that it's so hard to study. So what I'm trying to say is at the basic bachelor's level, when someone studying electrical engineer and someone studying mechanical engineer, the electrical engineer student go through a lot of studies where they have a lot of doubt. They ask themselves questions like "How come?" "How somebody knows this?" It is not proven yet. But for a mechanical engineer, everything is proven. It's easier to accept. But for me, as an electrical engineer, it's not easy to accept.

M: Aha.

J: But of course when you reach Ph.D. level you're talking about implementing stuff, proving this society, you're talking about technological improvement, everything so mechanical engineer, civil engineer, electrical engineer, they're all equal. At that level. When you reach high level, it's all the same. As mechanical engineer, you try to make machines, motors, everything try to improve. Try to make humanlife easier. You want to make the best transportation, you invent this, that, and for electrical engineer, you do the same thing.

M: Yeah, all that electrical appliances.

J: You want to make the best computers, robots, everything. Civil engineers, you want to build the best house, you want to set up the best bridge, you want to set up the city, arrange it ...

M: Without engineers this whole world would be still ...

J: No, basically this whole world started out with surviving, and eventually ...

M: To make it more comfortable.

J: ... Tools, you need a lot of things so engineers evolved. I would say everything is important. Education itself is important. So it's not a matter of which field is better but it's a matter of what your interest is. Where you think you can go. It doesn't matter if you are a teacher, or a lawyer, or a bus driver, everybody plays a part.

M: Yeah.

J: And everybody be good at that part.

M: Yeah.

J: You know. When you play a part, you're good at something. Everybody's an expert in their field.

M: Need all kinds of people.