The Turn-Taking System in American Presidential Debates

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Abstract:

The organization and coordination of any communication is based on the system of turn-taking which refers to the process by which a participant in a conversation takes the role of speaker. The progression of any conversation is achieved by the change of roles between speaker and hearer which, in its turn, represents the heart of the turn-taking system.

The turn-taking system is not a random process but it is a highly organized process governed by a set of rules. Thus, this system has certain features and rules which exist in any English communicative process. These rules, if applied by speakers, help to achieve successful exchange of turns in any conversation.

This paper attempts to present full exposition of the concepts of conversation, conversation analysis and institutional talk. This is the subject-matter of section one. In the second section, a comprehensive theoretical background of turn-taking system has been presented. The paper mainly aims at making detailed analysis of the Turn-taking system in the American Presidential Debates. The analysis is done in the third section by investigating and examining the corpus which consists of three American Presidential Debates chosen randomly. These debates are:

1. Republican presidential candidate debate in Simi Valley, California January 30, 2008.
2. Republican presidential candidate debate in Washington, DC November 22, 2011.
3. Republican presidential candidate debate in Des Moines December 10, 2011.

The three debates have been downloaded from the internet from the website *http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/debates.php*. In each debate, there are a number of presidential candidates who have different political orientations. The analysis is presented through certain points supported by statistics and examples which are in the form of quoted extracts chosen from the three debates analyzed. Section four is devoted for presenting the conclusions arrived at throughout conducting the analysis of the three debates.

تبادل الأدوار الكلامية في المناظرات الرئاسية الأمريكية

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الخلاصة:

تعتمد عملية التنظيم والتنسيق في اي محادثة على نظام تبادل الأدوار. ان هذا النظام هو عبارة عن عملية تمكن المشتركين في محادثة ما من اخذ ادوارهم في الكلام كما يتحقق تطور المحادثة واستمرارها من خلال تبادل الأدوار بين المتحدث والمتلقي .

ان نظام تبادل الأدوار ليس بالعملية الأعتباطية وأنما هو عبارة عن عملية عالية التنظيم تعمل في أطار مجموعة من القوانين التي تنظم سيرها. تعمل هذه القوانين على مساعدة المتحدث على انجاز عملية تبادل الأدوار بنجاح في أي محادثة.

يعمل البحث الحالي في جزئه الأول على تقديم عرض شامل لمبدأ المحادثة وكيفية تحليلها وعلاقتها بالحديث المؤسساتي. كما يقدم البحث عرضاً شاملاً لنظام تبادل الأدوار في المحادثة وذلك في القسم الثاني منه. غير ان البحث يسعى بالدرجة الأساس الى تقديم تحليل مفصل لعملية تبادل الأدوار في المناظرات الرئاسية الأمريكية وذلك عن طريق تقصي وتفحص مادة التحليل المؤلفة من ثلاث مناظرات رئاسية أمريكية اختيرت عشوائياً. قُدمت نتائج البحث في القسم الثالث منه عن طريق مجموعة من النتائج تدعمها الأحصائات و الأمثلة التي هي عبارة عن مقتطفات من المنظرات التي تم تحليلها.

Section One
Conversation, Conversation Analysis and Institutional Interaction

Conversation is a form of connected speech. It has been viewed differently by different linguists. Levinson (1983: 284), for example, shows that it is a verbal and non-verbal stretch of continuous interaction realized by reciprocal behavior between at least two people who have a mutual intention to communicate freely. To Richards (1980:414), conversation is an oral interaction between two or more participants. He argues that it is an activity bound by rules and conventions that are learned as part of the process of acquiring competence in a language.

Conversation analysis is "a study of talk in interaction" (Cameron, 2001:87). Major theoretical studies have examined conversation as an interaction between participants with conversation understood as spoken communication. One primary characteristic of conversation is that it is fully interactive (at least two people must participate in it) and they exchange messages at a real-time basis. Participants take turns in exchanging these messages. Thus, conversation is fundamentally a sequential activity (Nunamaker et al, 1993: 24).

Sacks et al (1974) develop the term *conversation analysis* through studying ordinary conversation to discover if organizational details can formally be described. The idea is that conversations are orderly not for observing analysts, but in the first place for participating members. The field of conversation analysis is primarily concerned with finding the organization of social action located in discursive practices of everyday interaction. Conversation analysis is embedded in the theory of turn-taking and other relevant aspects like adjacency pairs that provide a frame work on which conversation analysts can rely (ibid: 679-735).

Most of the early work in conversation analysis focused on ordinary conversation. Ordinary conversation is often defined negatively; wedding ceremonies are not ordinary conversation, legal proceedings in court are not ordinary conversation, though both adapt practices of talk and action from ordinary conversation and press them into service in these more specialized and restricted speech settings. In contrast, the studies of institutional interaction which began to emerge in the late 1970s focused on more restricted environments in which:
1. The goals of the participants are more limited and institution-specific,
2. Restrictions on the nature of international contributions are often in force,
3. Institution- and activity-specific inferential frameworks are common.
 ((Drew and Heritage 1992) cited in (Heritage, 1998: 2))

The relationship between ordinary conversation and institutional interaction can be understood as that between a master institution and its more restricted local

variants. Institutional interactions can be realized in the law courts, schools, **debates**, news interviews, press conferences, doctor-patient interactions, etc. which are comparatively recent inventions that have undergone a great deal of social change (Heritage, 1998: 2).

Unlike ordinary conversation, institutional interaction generally involves a reduction in the range of interactional practices of the participants because there are restrictions in the contexts of this type of interaction. Moreover, institutional interactions frequently involve some specialization and respecification of the interactional relevance of the practices. These reductions and respecifications are often experienced as constraining, troublesome and even threatening (ibid: 3).

In conversation what we say, the actions we perform and the order in which we do things are not determined in advance. In this sense, conversations are unpredictable. However, in some forms of institutional interaction (**debates**, ceremonies, and many kinds of meetings) the topics, contributions and order of speakers are organized in an explicit and predictable way. This kind of organization involves special turn-taking (henceforth TT) procedures that can be described as special TT systems. The most intensively studied institutional TT organizations have been those that are obtained in the courts, news interviews and classrooms. These examples (courts, news interviews, classrooms) suggest special TT organizations that tend to be present in formal environments that normally have two significant features (ibid: 5):

1. There are a large number of participants in the interaction, whose contributions must be organized in a formal way,
2. The talk is designed for an overhearing audience.

The present paper aims at investigating the TT system in American Presidential Debates (henceforth APD) as no such attempt has been done before. It mainly focuses at analyzing the TT system to find out whether there is a special TT system in the APD as a type of institutional interaction.

Section Two
The Turn-Taking System
2.1 Introduction

In a conversation, most of the time one person speaks and the others don't. Participants take turns at the floor. While small gaps and overlaps between participants' speech are frequent, they rarely last more than a few hundred milliseconds. This smooth interaction is one of the essential elements of spoken conversation, one that distinguishes it from other modes of communication such as monologues, formal speeches, and written and electronic mail (Raux, 2008: 13). All interactions involve the use of some kind of TT organization and many kinds of institutional interactions use the same TT organization as ordinary conversation (Heritage, 1998: 5).

The most significant aspect of the TT process is that, in most cases, it proceeds in a very smooth fashion. Speakers signal to each other that they wish to

either give up or take the turn through syntactic, pragmatic, and prosodic means (Taboada, 2006: 329). It's like playing tennis; each player needs to take turns to hit the ball. This system has been investigated in great detail by Sacks et al (1974) who have analyzed spontaneous conversation in natural settings. Sacks et al (Ibid) argue for the existence of a TT mechanism which functions to assign turns to the participants engaged in a conversational interaction. They have handled three problems:

1. How people take turn in conversation,
2. How to open a conversation,
3. How to close a conversation.

Linguists tend to disagree about what precisely constitutes a *turn* or even a turn boundary. For example, a *yeah* produced by a listener to indicate attentiveness, referred to as a *backchannel* is not often considered to implement a turn as it bears no propositional content and does not take the floor from the current speaker. Backchannel signals, such as *uh-huh*, *right*, *yeah*, etc., are signals that the channel is still open, and they indicate at the same time that the listener does not want to take the floor (Taboada, 2006: 332 and Laskowski, 2010: 1000). Victor Yngve first used the phrase "backchannel" in 1970 indicating that both the person who has the turn and his partner are simultaneously engaged in both speaking and listening. This is because of the existence of the backchannel, over which the person who has the turn receives short messages such as *yes* and *uh-huh* without relinquishing the turn (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Backchannel).

Cohen (1979: 259) states the characteristics of a turn as follows:
1. It is a socially cooperative act in that it is an occasion for participating in conversation,
2. It is informationally relevant, i.e. it occurs with respect to other conversational events, takes them into account, builds on them or changes them in a methodical way,
3. It creates the opportunity for further conversation. It contributes significant information to the dialogue to enable the other participants to continue.

For any conversation to continue, there must be a change in the speaker and hearer roles; the participants continually exchange roles. This is what is really meant by TT. Richards et al (1985:300) clarify TT saying that, in a conversation, "the roles of speaker and listener change constantly. The person who speaks first becomes the listener as soon as the person addressed takes his or her turn in the conversation by beginning to speak."

Once people have agreed to have a conversation, there would be a strong pressure against periods of silence. For example, when one person stops talking by giving the floor to another by inviting him to talk, the other more or less has to begin talking. No speaking is considered as addressee's silence and such a pause is likely to be interpreted as a problem in conversation (Coulthard, 1985: 59). Goffman (1972: 65) indicates that intimate collaboration in a conversation must be sustained to ensure that one turn at talking neither overlaps the previous one, nor

wants inoffensive conversation supply, for someone's turn must always and exclusively be in progress.

Relevant to the system of TT is the concept of transition-relevance place (henceforth TRP) which refers to each participant's inclination to move to the next unit of the interaction. At this point, the auditor is ready to shift to the speaker state and the participant who had previously been the speaker has now switched to the auditor state. When this exchange is accomplished without passing through a state of simultaneous turns, a smooth exchange of speaking turns is said to have occurred (Duncan and Fiske, 1977: 179).

2.2 Contents of the TT System

According to Sacks et al (1974: 702-704), the TT system consists of two components as follows:

A. The Turn-Constructional Component (henceforth TCC)

Turns are constructed out of unit-types which consist of sentences, clauses, phrases or single words. These units are syntactic ones and are determined by intonation cues. The basic shape of the TT system allocates (in giving somebody a turn) the right to produce a single turn constructional unit; i.e., a single lexical, phrasal, clausal or sentential construction. There are ways in which the current speaker can produce more than a single one of these units and pile up pretty sizable turns indeed. The turn-constructional component thus describes the units at the ends of which turn allocation and transition becomes relevant (ibid: 702).

B. The Turn-Allocational Component

There are two groups of turn-allocational techniques (henceforth TAT):
1. Those techniques by which the second speaker selects the next speaker,
2. Techniques by which the next turn is allocated by self selection.

(ibid: 704)

In addition to the two components above, there is a set of rules for coordinating talk in a conversation. These rules have been proposed by Sacks et al (ibid: 703) as turn-allocation rules:

Rule (1) The next turn goes to the person addressed by the current speaker,

Rule (2) The next turn goes to the person who speaks first; i.e., by self-selection,

Rule (3) The next turn goes to the current speaker, if he resumes before anyone else speaks.

These rules ensure that there is one speaker at a time and that overlaps, interruptions and gaps are avoided (ibid: 705). They are sequential rules; rule (1) comes before rules (2) and (3). If the current speaker A asks B a question, B is obliged to take the turn and C is not allowed to speak even if he speaks first. Moreover, rule (2) takes priority over rule (3). The selection of the next speaker in rule (1) can be done in different techniques. Selection can be done by naming the next speaker or calling him by a descriptive phrase. Selection can also be done by

gaze, body orientation, topic selection or by giving a first pair part of an adjacency pair, these pairs unambiguously require a response. Examples of adjacency pairs are question- answer sequences or summons-answer sequences, but there is a difference between these two; a question requires a response but without allocating it to someone while summons requires a response for a particular person. Thus, selecting the next speaker is related to the job of the TATs (Clark and Clark, 1977: 228 and Taboada, 2006: 331).

Concerning rule (2), a non-speaker who is not selected but wants to self-select himself has different options. He may be able to predict the point of possible completion in a speaker's turn and, thus, overlaps the beginning of his utterance with the end of the current speaker's turn. By this way, the current speaker is obliged to stop. A non-speaker has also the option of breaking in, but this is frequently considered as rudeness. Another option is repetition which occurs where there is competition for the floor and where the current speaker has been previously denied the floor or where there is overlap between different speakers' utterances. The repletion counts as a recycling of the original attempt to give the floor and provide the talk (Och, 1979: 69).

When rule (1) and (2) do not operate, the current speaker has the option of continuing speaking until another participant who wants the floor occurs. He can imply what Sacks (1974) calls an utterance incomplete or which includes items like: *but*, *and*, *however* and other clause connectors which have the importance of turning a potentially complete sentence into incomplete one.

In moving to the role of the speaker, the listener has a variety of options: he can give different responses to a question, carry out a request in different ways, or even refuse to answer. According to Duncan and Fiske (1977: 251), there are only three courses of action the auditor can take:
1. Respond in the backchannel,
2. Attempt to take the speaking turn,
3. Neither respond in the backchannel nor attempt to take the speaking turn.

According to Coulthard (1985: 65), the non-speaker who is offered the turn but does not want it may simply remain silent until the speaker continues or he can produce a minimum response to confirm, agree or express interest or use the whole of his turn to produce a possible pre-closing such as *alright, okay, so, well*, etc. indicating that he has nothing further to add and is willing to close the topic.

Sacks et al (1974: 715) make a distinction between three types of silence in the TT system which are accessed according to their placement in the turn and the exchange:
1. Lapse: It is an extended point of silence at a TRP,
2. Pause: It is an intra-turn silence (not at a TRP),
3. Gap: It is a point of silence after a possible completion point.

Section Three

The Turn-Taking in American Presidential Debates: Analysis

The main aim of the present paper is to analyze the TT system in the APDs, as a type of institutional talk, to find out the way the system used in the APDs and to see whether there is a special strategy for the use of the TT system in this type of text. To achieve this aim, three APDs have be downloaded randomly from the internet and analyzed carefully. The analysis has been organized into points as follows:

1. The participants who take turns in APDs are divided into two groups:

a) **The Presidential Candidates (henceforth PCs):** this group consists of minimally two presidential candidates.

b) **The Moderators (henceforth Ms):** this group consists of one or more reporters working for the TV channel or the radio broadcasting corporation which is supposed to be airing the APD, and/or they may be press reporters working for the news paper which is supposed to publish at least a summary about the APD. Of the three APDs that have been chosen for the analysis, there is one M in the first APD, two in the second and three in the third.

2. In the debates led by one M, that M is the one who allocates the turns for the participants by asking them questions and assigning them by name (or any other device) to answer the question. At the beginning of the debate, the M starts talking to announce the beginning of the debate and the place from which it is launched. Then, the M starts producing the PCs one by one to the audience and viewers. After producing each PC, the M gives that PC the floor to greet the audience and thank them very briefly for their applause. However, when there is a considerable number of PCs (especially more than three), he gives the floor to the first three maximally to thank the audience for the applause and announces the others' names without giving up the floor for them for greeting or thanking. In this case, those PCs restore to the nonverbal procedures nodding their heads one by one to show appreciation for the audience applause. Consider the following extract from the first debate:

> **BLITZER (M):** *It's time now to meet the 2012 Republican presidential contenders. Joining us onstage, the former U.S. ambassador to China, Jon Huntsman.*
> **HUNTSMAN(PC):** *Thank you.*
> *Thank you very much.*
> *Thank you.*
> *Thank you. [applause]*
> **HUNTSMAN (PC):** *Thank you.*
> **BLITZER (M):** *Minnesota Congresswoman Michele Bachmann.*
> **BACHMANN (M):** *Good to see you, Wolf. [applause]*
> **BLITZER (M):** *The former speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich. [applause]*

> **BLITZER (M):** *The former president and CEO of Godfather's Pizza, Herman Cain. [applause]   The former Massachusetts governor, Mitt Romney...[applause]   Texas governor, Rick Perry...[applause]   Texas congressman, Ron Paul...[applause] [inaudible] from Pennsylvania, Rick Santorum. [applause]. Ladies and gentlemen, the Republican candidates for President of the United States. [applause]*

Republican Candidates Debate in Washington, DC (November 22, 2011)

The M then asks every body to rise for the national anthem and, in the same turn, he announces the name of the band that is going to produce the anthem and where they have come from. After the national anthem, the M takes the turn back to thank the band and ask the PCs to take their podiums. He tells them that he is going to be the M and he informs them of the names of his partners (if any) that represent certain foundations and/or institutes. Those partners are going to take their turns to ask the PCs questions and, again, the M is the one who allocates them the turns. The M goes on talking maintaining time limits for responses and the time the PCs are allowed to have for follow-ups and rebuttals. After that the M prepares the PCs to take the floor one by one to introduce themselves to the audience asking them to be brief and giving them example of how brief they should be by introducing himself to the audience. Consider the following extract:

> **BLITZER (M):** *Now, let's have the candidates introduce themselves to our audience, but we'll keep it very brief. Here's an example of what I'm looking for.*
> *I'm Wolf Blitzer and yes, that's my real name. I'll be your moderator this evening and I'm happy to welcome each one of you to our debate.*
> *Rick Santorum, let's begin with you.*   (Ibid)

As it is clear in the example above, the M allocates the next turn by naming the PC who can have the floor next. When the first PC finishes introducing him/herself, the other PCs start taking their turns to speak by self-selecting themselves according to the order which they sit in. Each PC tells the audience his/her name and a very brief account about his/her priorities for the future. When the audience get excited by what a PC says, they reward him with applause before the next PC takes his/her turn.

When the PCs finish introducing themselves, the turn goes back to the M who starts to speak immediately by thanking the PCs and direct the debate to its vital part (the questions). Then, there is applause after which the introductory part of the debate has ended and the M starts directing the debate by allocating turns for the PCs to answer his questions.

In other debates the number of the Ms who guide the debate is two or more. The introductory part of such debates is similar to the debate with one M. In the debate with two Ms, the Ms cooperate by exchanging turns to direct the introductory part in a smooth and organized way which seems to be agreed upon

before the debate starts. There is no interruption or fight for the floor from the part of Ms. Each M has a set of question for the PCs and each of them takes enough floor to cover his/her questions. The topic has a considerable role in allocating the Ms their turns. When the speech is about a particular topic, the first M to speak is the one who suggests the topic. That M goes on asking the PCs and allocating them the turns by name. If the other M(s) has questions for the PCs about the same topic, he/she will take the floor and ask the question or even make a comment. In the examples below, one of the Ms tries to benefit from the topic to ask a PC a question.

> **STEPHANOPOULOS (M):** *I wanna grab that-- this conversation, but-- but very quickly, I believe Speaker Gingrich is also for extending the payroll taxes and so is Congressman Paul, Governor Perry, I believe you're against it-- some are so tur--*
> (Republican Candidates Debate in Des Moines, Iowa December 10, 2011)
> **SAWYER(PC):** And I want to turn to Governor Romney, if I can. Because you've given a number and you've given a time frame, 11.5 million jobs in four years, aiming for six percent-- unemployment rate at the end of the first time. What is the distinguishing idea to do that?   (Ibid)

In the debates with three Ms, however, the introductory part is led by one M who, in the present paper, is referred to by the dominant M (henceforth DM). The DM keeps the floor from the very first beginning to run the debate. After the end of the introductory part, he allocates himself the turn again to state the topic that the debate is supposed to start with and goes on to allocate turns for the PCs. Then, he starts allocating the turns for the other Ms and then for himself successively. It is worth mentioning here that the DM gives the other Ms the floor to ask as much questions as they want, but he/she can allocate the floor back to him/herself whenever he/she wants. It is also the responsibility of the DM to make the shift of one topic to another. The DM distributes the time of the debate as fairly as possible on the topics intended to be discussed.

In the middle of the APD, the M (DM in the debates with three or more Ms) allocates himself the turn and announces that the debate is going to stop for a short time to have what the Ms call "commercial break" through which the floor is given to few short commercial advertisements. After the break, the same M takes the floor back to welcome everybody back and, in the same turn, he directs a question to one of the PCs allocating him/her (the PC) the floor.

3. It is clear now that it is the job of the M to allocate the turns to the PCs to answer the M's question or to produce a certain clarification. The M is supposed to allocate one turn to each PC successively; one turn at a time. However, this is not always the case. It may happen that a PC doesn't give clear or sufficient answer or the PC's

answer itself suggests another question. In this case, when the PC finishes his answer, the M allocate the turn back to the same previous PC to get more information about the topic in question. This case has repeated **32** times throughout the three debates analyzed.

An example is presented in the following extract:

BLITZER (M): *Congressman Paul, I suspect you disagree.*
PAUL (PC): *I do.*
BLITZER (M): *Tell us why.*
PAUL (PC): *I think the Patriot Act is unpatriotic because it undermines our liberty. I'm conce.*

(Republican Candidates Debate in Washington, DC November 22, 2011*)*

4. In the three APDs analyzed, the Ms have allocated the turns for the PCs 250 times. The following table shows the TATs used in this process:

By the Name of the PC	By Eyesight	By a certain characteristic
226	22	2

Table (1): The TATs that the Ms use in allocating the turns for the PCs

It is clear from the table that the Ms rely heavily on the names of the PCs rather than any other way. **The indicator of the eyesight is the absence of any mention of a name or a characteristic of the PC. This clearly shows that the M is using a certain paralinguistic clue (eyesight) to identify the PC.** Mentioning the name of the PC is a very good guide that the Ms use to identify the PC who has got the turn in order to help the electors to identify the speaker. See the following example:

STEPHANOPOULOS (M): *Let me bring* **Congresswoman Bachmann** *in on this, because you make similar accusations against Speaker Gingrich. You called him a "poster boy of crony capitalism." Did he answer your concerns?*
BACHMANN (PC): *Well, when you're talking about taking over $100 million, and when your office is on the Rodeo Drive of Washington D.C.,....*

(Republican Candidates Debate in Des Moines, Iowa December 10, 2011)

However, it doesn't mean that the other techniques are misleading even when used in a careful way. The eyesight has been used in a very restricted condition; only when allocating the turn for the same PC in a successive way, the eyesight is used. Consider the following example:

1. COOPER(M): *That said, let's begin. The first question is actually a question that will go to all of you, but I'll start with* **Governor Romney** *.... Are you better off than you were four years ago?*

So tonight, in terms of the economy, are Americans better off than they were eight years ago?
ROMNEY (PC): *Well, if you're voting for George Bush, you'd be very interested in knowing the answer to that. If you're voting for Mitt Romney, you'd like to know are you better off in Massachusetts after four years of my term in office, and the answer would be decidedly yes….*
2. COOPER (M): *Let me just interrupt, though. The question was, are Americans better off than they were eight years ago? And as you know, there are a lot of Americans out right now who are very interested in the answer….*
How do you feel America is doing?
ROMNEY (PC): *Well, again, I'm pleased with what I did while I was -- as governor. I'm happy to talk that record. With regard to -- with --*
3. COOPER (M): *Are you running for governor, or are you running for president, though?*
ROMNEY (PC): *Well, I'm not -- but I'm not running on President Bush's record. President Bush can talk about his record….*
(Republican Presidential Candidates Debate in Simi Valley, California January 30, 2008)

In the extract above, Cooper (the M) has asked Romney (the PC) a question mentioning his name in the first exchange only. In the other two exchanges, Cooper has directed a question to the same PC without mentioning the name and depending on the eyesight in assigning the PC indicating that the turn is still allocated to same PC.

As far as the third technique is concerned, allocating the turn by mentioning a characteristic of a PC is very narrowly used. **It has been found in one debate only** in which it is used by one of the Ms to identify of the PCs. The following extract clarifies the point:

STEPHANOPOULOS (M): *So there you have it,* ***Mr. Speaker****. He says this is gonna make life….*
GINGRICH(PC): *The Israelis are getting rocketed every day. The-- we're not making life more difficult. The Obama administration's making life more difficult….*
STEPHANOPOULOS (M): Mister speaker.
GINGRICH (PC): *Well, I-- I wanna say two people, one on the stage and one not. Governor Terry Branstad is my role model….*
(Republican Candidates Debate in Des Moines, Iowa December 10, 2011)

It is important to mention here that the above exchange does not occur successively. The M has given this characteristic to the PC because he is the one who is more eager to be assigned the turn than the others and has a lot to say to the nation.

5. While analyzing the TT system in the APDs, it has been found that pauses have a noticeable surprising high frequency of occurrence. After **counting the number** of pauses in the three debates, it has been found that they have occurred 932 times. The following are examples of pauses taken from two APDs:

> *BLITZER (M): Now, just to be precise, Mr. Cain. I just want to – **(pause) -** I'll give you a chance. Is it OK for Muslim Americans to get more intensive pat downs or security when they go through airports than Christian Americans or Jewish Americans?*
> *CAIN (PC): No, Blitz. That's oversimplifying it. I happen to believe that if – **(pause) -** if you allow our intelligence agencies to do their job they can come up with an approach -- I'm sorry, Blitz, I meant Wolf, OK?*
> *This was – **(pause) -** since we on a – **(pause) -** since we on a blitz debate, I apologize. Wolf, what I'm saying is let's ask the professionals to give us an approach of how we can increase the identification of people that might be a danger to civilians as well as a danger to this nation.*

(Republican Candidates Debate in Washington, DC November 22, 2011*)*

> *COOPER (M): Let me skip a question now, just to -**(pause)** - I said I would ask everyone.*
> *So, Governor Huckabee, if you can briefly, are we better off than we were eight years ago?*
> *HUCKABEE (PC): I don't think we are.*
> *And the real issue though --**(pause)** let's not blame President Bush for all of this. We've got a Congress who's sat around on their hands and done nothing but spend a lot of money, and their spending, leaving us $9 trillion…. Right now home sales are -**(pause)** - new home starts anywhere are down 40 percent. That's going to have a cascading ….*

(Republican Presidential Candidates Debate in Simi Valley, California January 30, 2008)

Lapses (as extended points of silence at a TRP) have also occurred five times only in the speech of the PC immediately after assigning the turn for them. The following extract represents an example of lapses instances:

> *SAWYER (M): Governor Perry, close this, please.*

> *PERRY (PC): - (lapse) -just say that I think this is a minor issue-*
> *- that the media is blowing-- way out of proportion….*

(Republican Candidates Debate in Des Moines, Iowa December 10, 2011)

Gaps (as points of silence after a possible completion point) have not been found in the APDs.

6. The standard form of the TT system in the APDs is that the M allocates the turns for the PCs successively; one turn for a particular PC at a time and the same PC may have the turn again later for a different question. However, there have been instances of deviation from that standard norm. It may happen that a PC does not give a satisfying answer or that his answer suggests an urgent question that cannot be delayed. In this case, the M keeps allocating the turn for the same PC till he/she (the M) gets enough information from the PC about the topic under discussion. The frequency of occurrence of this case is 46 times. An example is found in the following extract:

> *BLITZER (M): Senator Santorum, under certain circumstances in the past, you've supported profiling. Is that correct?*
> *SANTORUM (PC): I have.*
> *BLITZER (M): What do you have in mind?*
> *SANTORUM (PC): Well, I mean, I think TSA is a good example of that. We should be trying to find the bomber, not the bomb. Other countries have done it. Israel is probably the best example of that…*
> *BLITZER (M): So just to be precise, is it ethnic profiling, religious profiling? Who would be profiled?*
> *SANTORUM (PC): Well, the folks who are most likely to be committing these crimes. If you look at -- I mean, obviously….*

(Republican Candidates Debate in Washington, DC November 22, 2011*)*

7. Another thing found in the debates is the backchannel with a frequency of occurrence of 11 times; one by a PC and the others (10) by the Ms. The only backchannel of the PC doesn't have any significance and it merely shows agreement with the M. Consider the following extracts which shows that only instance:

> *MR. VANDEHEI (PC): Governor Romney immigration….You said at the time that you felt that there's…. How could that happen? How could we do it that quickly?*
> *ROMNEY (PC): I think you may be confusing me with somebody else, but perhaps not. Let me tell you what my plan is.*
> *MR. VANDEHEI (M): I'll even give you the quote if you'd like.*
> *ROMNEY (PC): Okay.*

> **MR. VANDEHEI (M):** *You said that many of those could be deported immediately….*

(Republican Presidential Candidates Debate in Simi Valley, California January 30, 2008)

According to the Ms, the backchannel is an indirect massage for the PC speaking that he/she (PC) has give a satisfying response and should stop and give the floor back to the M. The backchannel here plays the role of an alternative for the interruption which, though has rudeness indication, is sometimes the only solution available for the M to allocate the turn back from the PC. See the following example:

> **COOPER (M):** *And you're saying point blank you did not want to get out. What did you mean by that statement?*
> **ROMNEY (PC):** *That we have a series of timetables and milestones for working on the progress that they're making, the progress we're making, the rule of law, what their soldiers are doing, what our soldiers are doing --*
> **COOPER (M): Okay.**
> **ROMNEY (PC):** *-- how many troops they're able to recruit, how well-trained are they. And as a matter of fact, the individual asked in the following question, do you have a specific time? Would you support Congress if they gave you a specific time?*
> **COOPER (M):** *Let me --*
> **ROMNEY (PC):** *I said absolutely not.*
> **COOPER(M): Okay.**
> **ROMNEY (PC):** *And by the way, this has been around. If this was a question, it could have been raised in April or May –* (Ibid)

In many cases, as in the extract above, backchannel does not serve its purpose and the PC goes on talking keeping the floor and ignoring the M's massages that it is for the PC to give up the floor. Thus, the M is obliged to restore to the only alternative solution he/she has; interruption.

8. Another surprising concept of the TT system in APDs is the frequency of occurrence of interruption which is **84** times throughout the three debates analyzed. The table below shows the sources and receivers of interruption with their numbers:

	Source and Receiver of Interruption	Frequency of Occurrence (out of 84)
1-	M interrupts PC	37
2-	PC interrupts M	28
3-	PC interrupts PC	15
4-	Off-mike audience interrupts PC	1
5-	Cross-talk interrupts PC	3

Table (2): The sources and receivers of interruption with their frequency of occurrence

As it is clear in the table, the highest frequency of occurrence is of the interruption directed from M to PC. The interruption here occurs when the PC has exceeded the limit of time assigned by the M. See the following example extract:

> **COOPER (M):** *And you're saying point blank you did not want to get out. What did you mean by that statement?*
> **ROMNEY (PC):** *That we have a series of timetables and milestones for working on the progress that they're making, the progress we're making, the rule of law, what their soldiers are doing, what our soldiers are doing --*
> **COOPER (M):** *Okay--(interruption) -*
> **ROMNEY (PC):** *-- how many troops they're able to recruit, how well-trained are they. And as a matter of fact, the individual asked in the following question, do you have a specific time? Would you support Congress if they gave you a specific time?*
> **COOPER (M):** *Let me --(interruption)*
> **ROMNEY (PC):** *I said absolutely not.*
> **COOPER (M):** *Okay. --(interruption)*
> **ROMNEY (PC):** *And by the way, this has been around. If this was a question, it could have been raised in April or May --*
> **COOPER (M):** *On the second issue ----(interruption)*
> **ROMNEY (PC):** *-- but it was raised --*
> **COOPER (M):** *I want to give you an opportunity -- --(interruption)*   (Ibid)

In the extract above, Cooper (the M) keeps interrupting Romney (the PC) till he (the M) wins the floor. In all the cases, the PC eventually surrenders and gives up the floor even if he/she hasn't said what he/she intended to say.

The second case of interruption is directed from PC to M when that PC (after being assigned the turn and answering the M's question) remembers something which (according to him/her) is important and cannot be delayed. The PC interrupts for fear of not being assigned the turn again to talk about the same topic under discussion. Consider the following example:

> **SANTORUM (PC):** *Well, I've spent a lot of time and concern -- and Rick mentioned this earlier -- about what's going on in Central and South America. I'm very*
> **BLITZER (M):** *Thank you. --(interruption)*
> **SANTORUM (PC):** *You know, maybe the first trip I would take to Israel, but my second trip, and third and fourth, would be into Central and South America. We need to*
> **BLITZER (M):** *All right. --(interruption)*
> **SANTORUM (PC):** *... solidarity with them and build strong alliances.*
> **BLITZER (M):** *Thank you, Senator.*

(Republican Candidates Debate in Washington, DC November 22, 2011*)*

More over, the interruption may come from a PC who hasn't been asked a question about the topic under discussion. Thus, he/she tries to seize any chance and interrupts to state his/her opinion before the M shifts to another topic, as it is clear in the following extract:

> **BACHMANN (PC):** *So if you want a difference, Michele Bachmann is the proven conservative. It's not Newt/Romney.*
> **STEPHANOPOULOS (M):** *You threw-- you threw a lot out there. [applause] So let's get both-- both of them a chance to respond, Speaker Gingrich, you go first, because you were in there twice-- also on r-- on-- Romney, and then---(interruption)*
> **GINGRICH (PC):** *Okay-- those four points….*

(Republican Candidates Debate in Des Moines, Iowa December 10, 2011)

The interruption which has a less frequency of occurrence (15) is that which is done by one PC interrupting another PC. The fight for the floor happens here not because of the scarcity of the turns or the floor itself, but because of a controversy which emerges when a PC (while having the turn and speaking) say something which contrasts what another PC (the interrupter) believes to be true. In many cases (19 times), at the end of a PC turn, another PC allocates him/herself the turn to object to what the former PC has said. The two PC, then, start a short conversation interrupting each other in many instances till the M interferes to stop that conversation which is usually accompanied by cross-talk. See the following example:

> **ROMNEY:** *Why don't you use the whole quote, Senator?*
> **MCCAIN:** *I'm using your whole quote, where you said ---(interruption)*
> **ROMNEY (PC):** *Why do you insist on not using the actual quote?*
> *That's not what I said ---(interruption)*
> **MCCAIN (PC):** *The actual quote is, we don't want them to lay in the weeds…. That is the actual quote, and I'm sure fact-checkers ---(interruption)*
> **ROMNEY (PC):** *What does that mean? What does that mean, we don't want them ---(interruption)*
> **MCCAIN (PC):** *It means a timetable for until we leave---(interruption)*
> *(Cross talk)*
> **ROMNEY (PC):** *Is it not fair to have the person, who's being accused of having a position he doesn't have, be the…. (cross talk.)*

MCCAIN (PC): I'm the expert on this -- when you said, I won't weigh in; I'm a governor.
ROMNEY (PC): That's a separate point.
MCCAIN (PC): You couldn't weigh in because you were a governor back when we were having the fight over it.
ROMNEY (PC): That's a separate point. That's a separate point.
MCCAIN (PC): The fact is that I have fought for this surge… *then al Qaeda would have won, and we would be facing a disastrous situation**---(interruption)***
COOPER (M): There are two separate issues being discussed, and I just want to clarify both of them….

(Republican Presidential Candidates Debate in Simi Valley, California January 30, 2008)

The other cases of interruption presented by the table (off-mike audience interrupts PC and cross-talk interrupts PC) have a very low frequency of occurrence and do not represent a significant phenomenon in the use of the TT system in the APDs.

9. The structure of the APDs is based mainly on exchanging turns among Ms and PCs. According to the details of the roles of Ms and the PCs mentioned above, the M is the member responsible at distributing the turns. He/she is the one who allocate the turns for the PCs and for the other Ms, if any. In their turns, the Ms have initiated the following adjacency pairs and speech acts, each with its frequency of occurrence:

Direct question	78
Indirect question	38
Approval for a request from a PC	2
Request	2
Asking for permission	1
Approval for permission	1
Statement	1

Table (3): The adjacency pairs and speech acts issued by the Ms

According to the calculation above, the majority of the Ms' turns are devoted to the questions (whether direct or indirect) directed to the PCs. As any other type of interaction, the TT system of the APDs contains other adjacency pair and speech acts such as the ones mentioned in the table above. However, they don't have a considerable frequency of occurrence. The following two extracts represent two examples of direct and indirect questions respectively:

BLITZER (M): Governor Huntsman, where do you stand on the *Patriot Act? Do you believe it's un-American, as Congressman* *Paul has suggested?*

> *HUNTSMAN (PC): I think we have to be very careful in protecting our individual liberties. We forget sometimes that ....*

(Republican Candidates Debate in Washington, DC November 22, 2011*)*

> *SAWYER (M): I wanna come back to those of you with another direct question of whether there is a number of jobs that can be created and a time frame you can tell the American people you can do it in. But I want to turn to Governor Perry for your distinguishing idea.*
>
> *PERRY (PC): Yeah, the distinguishing mark is-- a tax policy that puts a flat tax in place of-- 20%. And you-- as they've said, you get rid of the regulatory burden ....*

(Republican Candidates Debate in Des Moines, Iowa December 10, 2011)

10. Concerning the TCC of the turns in the APDs (unit-types which consist of sentences, clauses, phrases or single words that construct turns), both the Ms and PCs produce more than a single one of these units above and, in many times, pile up pretty sizable turns which consists of a mixture of these syntactic units. However, the majority of the turns consist of full sentences rather than any other syntactic units.

At the end of each of the three debates analyzed, the M is the one who takes the last turn to give an ending statement that closes off the debate. In the debate with one M, that M is the one who does that job; in the debate with two Ms, any of them can do the job and in the debates with three Ms the DM closes off the debate.

Section Four
Conclusions

After careful analysis, the following conclusions have been arrived to:

1. According to the analysis, the main participators who exchange turns in the APDs fall into the following categories:

   A. The presidential candidates (PCs)
   B. The moderators (Ms) who are usually reporters working for a particular medium outlet. A debate M's functions include keeping the debate process orderly and on topic, enforcing debate rules, asking questions and maintaining time limits for responses.

However, in addition to the above two participants, the audience can rarely participate in the APD. This happens during the debate when a member of the audience allocates himself the turn by interrupting the speaker (whether an M or a PC) to say what he/she want to say off-mike. The Ms and the PC listen to what that member of audience says and then they proceed with their discussion.

2. The participant who has the upper hand in the turn management of the debate is the M. The M is the one who allocates the turns to whoever he/she wants, whether to a particular PC or to another M to complete the task. In the debates with more

than one M, those Ms seem to manage the turn allocation process according to a pre-agreed upon way. They neither interrupt each other nor fight for the floor. Each M has a number of questions for the PCs and each of them takes enough floor to cover his/her questions. In allocating themselves the turns, the Ms rely heavily on the topic which determines whether they have something to ask or not.

3. According to table (1), the Ms rely heavily on mentioning the name of the PC in allocating the turns for the PCs. The other two alternatives, eyesight and mentioning a characteristic for the PC, are less frequent. The reason behind that is obviously related to the type of the interaction represented in the APDs. Such debates occur in a formal atmosphere and dedicated to the whole nation of the United States of America. The majority of people who watch or listen to the APDs are electors who are eager to decide on the best PC to vote for. Thus, they are very careful with what a PC says about the future plans. Accordingly, mentioning the name of the PC is a very good guide for the electors to identify the speaker.

The heavy reliance on mentioning the PCs name doesn't mean that the other techniques are misleading. The eyesight has been used in a very restricted condition; only when allocating the turn for the same PC in a successive way, the eyesight is used. Thus, when used in a careful way, the eyesight can also work in allocating turns for the PCs.

4. The pauses (as intra-turn silence instances) neither represent a negative feature for the debate nor indicate any negative attitude for the speaker. They represent a verbal planning for psychological processing either for the preparation for the fluent phase that follows the pause itself or for the production of some sort of complex syntax. Pauses have occurred in the speech of both Ms and PCs having the same previous interpretation.

Like pauses, lapses do not indicate any negative attitude from the PC. They have a psychological significance in preparing and organizing the thoughts for producing well organized sequence of speech and a convincing answer that really satisfies the electors' expectations. This is related to the fact that the PCs are careful with their answers and try to do their best to convince as much people as possible of their precedence to be elected rather than the others.

The three APDs analyzed are completely free from gaps. The reason is obviously related to the time of the debate which seems very precious. The Ms have many questions in their minds to ask and the PCs try to take as much advantage as possible of the time assigned to them through the turns allocated to them. Accordingly, gaps have no space in such conversational interactions.

5. Though the standard form of the TT system has been applied very often, many instances of deviation from that norm have been noticed. The M is supposed to allocate the turns for the PCs successively; one turn for a particular PC at a time. However, it happens that the PC's answer does not suffice the M's expectations. Thus, the M keeps allocating the turn for the same PC till getting a satisfying answer. This leads to the conclusion that the Ms are not restricted to assigning one

turn at a time to each PC. The turn can still be allocated to the same PC twice, thrice or more within certain temporal limits.

6. Though the interruption is a very useful short cut for the M to get the floor back from the PC, there appears to be an alternative that the Ms have often resorted to. The backchannel is that alternative that the M have found more formal, polite and useful to win the floor back after getting a satisfying answer. However, the backchannel does not work sometimes with some of the PCs. Therefore, the Ms have no other way, other than the interruption, to get the floor back. The M interrupts the PC for the following reasons:

1. In order for the M to be fair in distributing the time among the PCs,
2. In case there is more than one M, the DM is the one who usually does the interruption in order to give both the other Ms enough time to ask their questions and the other PCs to state their points of view.

7. As for the adjacency pairs issued in the debates, the TT system in the APDs is based mainly on the question-answer adjacency pair and that the Ms are the ones who initiate that pair directing it to a particular PC and requiring an answer from that PC. This shows the real purpose of the debates; to ask the PCs questions which elicit certain answers that satisfy the electors' questionable expectations about the intentions of the PCs. The PCs themselves want to be asked about their post-election plans and intentions since their answers represent an essential part of their election propaganda campaigns.

8. As for the TCC of the turns in the APDs (unit-types which consist of sentences, clauses, phrases or single words that construct turns), the majority of the turns consist of full sentences rather than any other syntactic units. This is related to the nature of the exchange taking place. An APD is considered to be an institutional formal talk directed to the whole nation of the United States. The form of that talk has to be fully produced in the whole sense of the word and the complete well-formed sentences do really help in achieving that purpose.

According to the conclusions above it is clear that, although the general structure of the TT system is applied in the APDs, there still be some specifics that underlie the TT system in the APDs. All of these specifics have been tackled in the conclusions above.

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