

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter has examined display of power by a seven year old Indian bilingual child in her conversations with interlocutors from three different tiers: higher, equal and lower authority. The interlocutors comprised her parents and aunts who represented the higher authority level, her peers who represented equal authority and lastly the maid and the younger brother who represented the lower authority level. On the whole the research was designed to answer the three research questions as quoted below:

- 1) To what extent does power exist in the interactions of a child with other interlocutors?
- 2) What are the strategies used by the child to demonstrate power?
- 3) Which strategy of demonstrating power is most frequently used in this study?

This chapter will begin by giving a brief overview on the findings of the study in respect of the three research questions designed. This will be followed with some suggestions for future researches in this area. The chapter will end with a conclusion on the study.

5.1 Overview of findings

The data collected which was collected over 10 weeks comprises total minutes of 154.54 from the seven year old child clearly indicated that the child does display power in her

conversation with her interlocutors. The common strategies that she used to display power during the time period recorded were overlapping and latching. Through these strategies, the child was able to take the floor from the interlocutor in an abrupt manner which is not consistent with the normal flow of turn-taking in conversations (Sacks 1974). An in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the data collected and analyzed indicated clearly that the strategies of overlapping and latching were the two main strategies constantly used by the child in her conversations with her interlocutors. Although these strategies were randomly used in her conversations with the interlocutors from the three levels of authority, what distinguished the use is seen in the impact or the effect of the strategy on the interlocutors. In the case of the parents, the strategies overlapping and latching, despite enabling the child to take the floor from the parents, did not however have the effect of enabling the child to take control of the conversation. The power exhibited through these strategies was not successful as the parents' will could not be controlled by the child. Hence the parents had the final say in the outcome of the conversations. In the case of the aunts however, the child did succeed in some instances to bend the will of the interlocutors to achieve her goals by taking the floor from them. The reason for the success of the power displayed on these occasions is due to the affectionate nature of the relationship that she shares with her aunts. There is a difference here if a comparison was to be done with the parents. The parents, though having an affectionate relationship with the child like her aunts, still had to play the role of "authority" where they had to ensure that discipline and proper moral behaviour is instilled in the child. As such the parents did not yield to the power displayed by the child.

In the case of the interlocutors from equal authority which are the child's peers, the findings brought forth an interesting point. There is no doubt that the strategy of latching

was more frequently used by the child in her conversation with these interlocutors. What made the finding interesting is that the power display was not one sided but rather there was an ongoing shift back and forth between the child and the interlocutors. The peers (classmates) were able to display power just as successfully as the child does by taking the floor from each other. It is obviously seen that all the children tended to display power subconsciously and this is predominantly seen in conversations comprising children themselves. There was a constant struggle to dominate the conversation and its outcome between the children. The interesting fact is that it is all done in a very natural and spontaneous manner, thus the tussle for power is less aggressive.

The findings of the study with reference to the conversations of the child with interlocutors of lower level authority comprising the maid and the younger brother, indicate that it is at this level where power is displayed blatantly. This is very obvious and consistent in the case of the maid unlike in the case of the younger brother. The power displayed by the child through the strategies of overlapping and latching in her conversations with the maid is overt and successful. In all the instances where the strategies were seen to have occurred; the maid tended to submit to the will of the child (Weber 1949) and this is obvious because of her status. In the case of the younger brother, the power displayed though blatant at times, was not as successful because the younger brother tended to display his own power using solidarity as a means to get the child to bend to his will in order to achieve his own goals. The researcher who is also of Indian origin is of the view that the younger brother's success in displaying power is consistent with the culture of the Indian community which tends to give a lot of importance to the male child compared to the female child. It may also be due to the general tendency in society to normally give in to the demands of the youngest child in the family.

The total duration of data collected in this study is 154.54 minutes. Out of this, the strategies of overlapping and latching total up to 88 instances, 52 instances of overlapping and 36 instances of latching. In terms of percentage this total to 57% of total time recorded. Percentages of occurrences of the strategies used by the child were calculated using the following formula.

$$\frac{\text{No.of Occurrences}}{\text{Total Time Recorded (Minutes)}} \times 100\%$$

The reason for the above method of calculation is to ensure that the percentages reflect the actual picture of occurrence as contrasted with the duration of the recorded conversations. The differences in terms of the number of times overlapping (52) and latching (36) occurs is 16. Thus the strategy of overlapping is more frequently used compared to the strategy of latching. It has also been noted that both the strategies have been used by the child in her conversations with her interlocutors immaterial of the level of authority. The percentages of occurrences of the strategy of overlapping ranges from 7% to 45% with the lowest in the child's conversation with her younger brother and the highest in her conversations with her aunts. In the case of latching, it ranges from 14% to 41% with the lowest seen in the child's conversation with her peers and the highest with her younger brother.

5.2 Recommendations for further studies

The finding from the study has brought to surface a number of challenges for future research in the area of power display in the studies related to the children's conversations. Existing studies related to this area are limited to the concept of identifying strategies adopted to display power in children's conversations and there is

insufficient analysis on other areas related to power and children's communication.

Based on the findings of this study, further research can be done in the following areas.

Among this would be:

- 1) Research can be done on all other methods which children use to display power such as directives , tone , silence, interjections and so forth.
- 2) Studies can also be carried out to investigate whether culture, religion, background and upbringing has any effect on power display in children's conversations.
- 3) Comparative studies between gender can also be done to determine whether there are any differences in terms of strategies adopted to display power by children in conversations.

The areas of research suggested above are those which emerged directly from the present study. Researches on the areas identified above will enhance existing knowledge on the subject of power in children's communication.

5.3 Conclusion

This study represents an attempt to evaluate power in children's communication. Using a seven year old bilingual child as the sample for the study, the researcher identified the existence of power display in her conversations. Using interlocutors from three different levels: higher, equal and lower authority, the research findings clearly indicates that the strategies of overlapping and latching have been used consistently by the child in her conversations with them. Although the strategies were adopted in her conversation with all the interlocutors, what distinguishes the use was seen in the impact of the power display on the interlocutors. An analysis of the impact suggests strongly that children like adults are able to blatantly display power effectively in communications with people from lower authority than those from higher and equal authority.