Turn-Taking Strategies of Secretary Harry Roque as a Presidential Spokesperson: A Conversation Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to analyze the conversation style used by former Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque in political interviews. Specifically, it aims to determine the turn-taking strategies used by former Sec. In political interviews, Roque identifies corresponding pragmatic power relations based on the dominant turn-taking strategies employed by former Sec. In political interviews, Roque ascertains the overall conversational style portrayed by former Sec. Roque, and glean the conversational style used by Sec. Roque. To achieve these, a descriptive research design was utilized. Five political interviews featuring Roque with accumulated airtime of three hours were transcribed to acquire on-hand data from the conversations. The conversation analysis revealed that Spokesperson Roque employed dominant turn-taking strategies such as overlapping, directness, and indirectness to control the conversation and assert his authority. He did not conform to the traditional manner of politicians, as he was straightforward in his utterances and did not use evasion when asked questions. Spokesperson Roque’s conversation style aimed to command attention, assert authority, talk upfront, and talk longer in political interviews. However, this style aligns differently with the mandate of being a spokesperson as promulgated in Executive Order No. 4, 2010, which emphasizes information sharing and trust building. Notably, Spokesperson Roque’s conversation style was like that of former President Duterte, which highlights the critical role that
Presidential Spokespersons play in shaping public perception of the President and their administration. This study underscores the importance of understanding the complex dynamics that govern the relationships between Presidential Spokespersons and the leaders they serve, particularly in modern political communication.

KEYWORDS

Presidential Spokesperson, Overlapping, Directness, Indirectness, Dominance, Report talk, descriptive, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

In the world of political discourse, one of the key personalities is the Presidential Spokesperson. This is because the latter person serves as the speaking representative of a country's President. In the context of the Philippines, the Presidential Spokesperson fronts the national government’s communication arm because the Spokesperson speaks on behalf of the head of the country and is the primary source of information regarding current issues and concerns related to the President.

Duterte became the most internationally known Filipino leader since Ferdinand Marcos because of his charismatic persona and blunt, profane speaking style (Timberman, 2019). He is direct to the point that he does not mince words and takes a no-nonsense approach to governance (Ranada, 2019). He says it as it is to his fellow politicians and avoids the confusing, even contradictory, communication styles of other officials. According to David (2020),

“Duterte enjoys the advantages of both worlds. He gets away with saying the most outrageous things while leaving his spokesmen to offer benign interpretations of his statements, making them less transgressive in retrospect. He gives vent to his unadorned impulses and desires while expecting his minions and enablers to come up with lawful causes of action that mask the primitive instincts undergirding their boss' actions.”

During the Duterte Administration from 2016-2022, six (6) Presidential Spokespersons were appointed for the post in different years and timelines. Each of them had different approaches/styles on being the Spokesperson of the same President, but ultimately had the same goal, which was to provide lawful interpretations and elaborate the intentions of the former President. This was a challenge for Duterte’s Spokespersons as they should do the said while adhering to the mandates of what a Presidential Spokesperson should be as promulgated Executive Order No. 4, 2010, which include (1) developing public understanding of activities and policies; and (2) enhancing public trust and support at the national, regional, and barangay levels.

In an article released by Rappler, Ranada (2019) differentiated the conversation style of the three eminent Presidential Spokespersons of Duterte. Ranada (2016, 2018, 2019) pointed out that Ernesto Abella was meek, keeping his statements brief and
devoid of character. His statements in press briefings are safe; some might even say bland. He keeps his answers short, never giving away too much, perhaps saying too little. He could not tango with reporters questioning the legality of Duterte’s policies and frequently resorted to answers like “No comment” or “I’ll get back to you on that.”

Panelo, on the other hand, exudes amiability and ease, a buoyancy—missing in the two Duterte spokesmen, Abella and Roque. He is a lawyer; thus, he can call forth and spin legal concepts to defend Duterte, which is how Duterte himself likes to be defended. The lightness in Panelo’s manner is compounded by his now well-known sense of style. He’s had to rise up to the challenges every Duterte spokesman has faced, proffering his own interpretations of controversial Duterte pronouncements, explaining away the President’s frequent no-shows, and launching attacks on the latest smoldering government critic.

Out of the two mentioned Duterte Spokespersons, Roque as a Spokesperson had way different conversation style. Roque had an aggressive and confrontational way of speaking, often responding to criticism or questions from the media with sarcastic comments and eye-rolling. He was always prepared to use legal jargon as a weapon against criticisms from the media (Ranada, 2019). Before he assumed the role as a Spokesperson, Roque was a litigator, a human rights champion, and a public servant wherein he clashed with Duterte on a number of key issues, such as the death penalty and the lowering of the criminal age of responsibility (Ranada, 2017). But, in 2017, he shifted and became the most controversial Spokespersons. He received numerous criticisms for the way he talked in the media. He was accused of ‘being manipulative’ (Fonbueno, 2018), ‘trending for the wrong reasons for skipping questions’ (News TV5, 2021), ‘getting slammed for being rude for scolding health workers in briefings’ (Salaverria, Ramos, & Chui, 2021), and ‘deliberately cutting off reporters’ (Mia, n.d.). These are all contrary to the mandate of how a presidential spokesperson should act, as Roque’s conversation style did not develop understanding, let alone promote public trust, as promulgated in Executive Order No. 4, 2010. Due to these, Roque is the most, if not, considered to be one of the most controversial spokespersons among the PH spokespersons he preceded. As Geducos (2021) has put it, “Roque has been at the center of controversy for many remarks that did not sit well with the public.” Whether Roque’s conversational strategies are intentional or otherwise, or even send a different message, will be points of analysis in this study.

In order to assist Filipinos in comprehending the profound meaning of the conversational styles utilized by Philippine spokespersons, it is crucial to examine the way in which one of the most talked-about and controversial spokespersons communicates. Specifically, this study makes a significant contribution to the field of language studies, as it offers a nuanced understanding of how language is used to negotiate power relations in political discourse, provides insights into the complex dynamics of communication between political actors, and overall underscores the role of language in shaping public perception of political leaders and their administration.
With this, the paper addresses the gap in identifying the turn-taking strategies used by Roque and ascertaining his pragmatic power relations and overall conversational style.

Although there are researches on conversation analysis specific to political discourse, prominent to wit are from Santander (2013), Feldman (2016), Furko (2017), etc., most of these authors extensively explored foreign political discourse researches and not much on the Philippine context. In addition, this study explores on political interviews as this study focuses on conversation analysis. An exploration of conversation analysis of turn-taking strategies used by Harry Roque presents new insights into Filipino political discourse research. Thus, this research aims to bridge this gap as it attempts to delve into the pragmatic power style used by the former PH Pres. Spokesperson Harry Roque in political interviews. Specifically, it will try to identify the dominant turn-taking strategies used by former Sec. Roque; determine the corresponding pragmatic power relation he employed; ascertain the conversational style of Sec. Roque; and glean the usage of conversational style of Sec. Roque.

**OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

This study aimed to analyze the conversational style of former Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque.

**FRAMEWORK**

The theories of Harvey Sacks on Conversation Analysis and that of Deborah Tannen's Theory of Conversation are bases of reference for this research.

The founder of Conversation Analysis (CA) is Harvey Sacks, who defined it as a qualitative sociological approach to the study of the organization of social interaction (Levinson, 1983). According to Levinson (1983), “A conversation can be defined as a string of at least two turns produced by different speakers. The mechanism that assures this is the one of turn-taking. At the end of turn-constructional units - these units are syntactic units like sentences the speaker can change.” Regarding CA, Levinson (1983) elaborated that “Conversation analysis is a linguistic discipline that mainly handles coherence and sequential organization in discourse, for example, the opening and closing sequences.” Further, Grundy (2019) explained that CA provides methodical or interactional patterns of talks which are recognizable for the communicators involved in the conversation. Conversation analysis also exposes the speaker’s ways of managing turn-taking captured certain social representations.

In conversation analysis, there are two interaction settings, Institutional and Ordinary. The latter consists of informal, casual interaction without any institutional purpose, while institutional interaction covers an institutional practice with a certain aim. Examples of the latter are news interviews, talk shows, and political interviews.
Political interview is different from a regular conversation due to some identified features. The conversation is in a broadcast setting which involves the interviewer and one or more interviewees. According to Santander, as cited by Yusuf and Prihastuti (2018), it is an institutional setting leading the interaction restricted in the discourse of the participants and also the turns. Greatbatch (1988) mentioned that the interview has a well-defined structure in which turn-taking is evident between the interviewer and interviewees. Political news interviews can be regarded as question-and-answer-sequences. This means it involves a normative turn-taking system that restricts participants from either asking questions or answering them (Clayman, 2010). The cooperativeness of the interviewees influences the interviewer’s conduct. Both can achieve collaboration when the interviewee withholding a response until a question is completed, thereby confirming the neutrality of the turn. Interviewers have the right to keep the floor until a question is produced.

According to Santander (2013), political interviews have the intention to convince and persuade the audience. In that, the Turn-taking System noticeably defines the conflicting functions of the interviewer and interviewee. According to Feldman (2016), both are expected to balance adversarial and objectivity and maintain a neutral stance by not favoring specific politicians or political groups. The interviewees’ task is to reply to these questions to best represent themselves as individuals and their political groups or institutions (Clayman & Heritage, 2002). However, given the advantages that the interview offers politicians to speak to a large audience and promote their own groups’ agenda, they may be able to strive to exert control over the discussion. Thus, they may break the talking procedure, intentionally change the subject before or after giving a response, disregard the questions they are asked by repeating statements (irrespective of whether they have any relation to the interviewer’s questions), and shift the agenda and topic selection, a phenomenon which is termed “agenda shifting procedures” (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1991). In fact, another distinctive feature of political interviews is the interviewees’ vagueness, evasiveness, or equivocal communication style as they hedge from providing direct answers to questions they are asked. (Feldman, 2016).

There are features of conversation analysis; these are turn, silences, usage of interjections, overlaps, and topic raising. Levinson (1983) defined turn as the period when one of the participants speaks with minimal overlap and gap between them. Silences signal the immediate transition of the speaker’s utterance with others. An interjection is an utterance during the conversation indicating attention or understanding from the listeners. Overlaps are the period in which the speakers speak at the same time.

Turn-taking strategies, as defined by Deborah Tannen, are linguistic strategies that speakers use in the process of conversing. There are five: (1) overlapping/ interruption, which is defined as to which speaker speaks at the same time as another; (2) silences, defined as pauses during a conversation; (3) directness, which is a way of conveying
messages in a straightforward and the usage of exclusive deictic pronouns, (4) indirectness, messages that are conveyed through hints, insinuations, tag questions, hedges, and the usage of inclusive deictic pronoun; (5) topic raising, which means a speaker chooses or raises the most topics to be discussed. As Tannen (as cited by Githens, 2015) claims, these strategies can be used for different, even opposite, purposes and have different, even opposite, effects in the contexts.

Further, according to the book of Tannen (2012) entitled “Turn-taking and Intercultural Discourse and Communication,” when individuals engage in a conversation, they take turns speaking. This seems at first a self-evidently uncomplicated matter: one talks, then the other talks, then another. However, turn-taking is somewhat less obvious to everyone that language and culture may also entail diverse practices and ideologies about exchanging turns. This is because turn-taking habits operate automatically; they tend to be invisible. When they differ, people are likely to interpret the consequences resulting from interlocutors’ intentions, purposes, and abilities, especially people involved in political discourse.

Further, Tannen (2012) said that perceived violations of turn-taking are typically labeled interruptions or overlapping. This designation attributes the disruption, in turn, exchange to one party’s behavior and intentions. But perception and intention are not always the same just because one person feels interrupted does not mean that the other intended to interrupt. Moreover, anything that occurs in the conversation is rarely the doing of one speaker. It almost always results from the interaction of speakers’ behavior: each utterance is not only the cause of another’s response but is itself a response to another’s prior utterance. Thus, understanding turn-taking provides a window into the working of conversational interaction as well as intercultural communication.

This is the manner of power-play that speakers use in their speech; it can be either dominance or solidarity. In a book entitled “The Relativity of Linguistic Strategies: Rethinking Power and Solidarity in Gender and Dominance” by Tannen (1996), she defined dominance as the power or establishment of control over the conversation while solidarity as support in the process of the conversation. This means that overlapping does not necessarily mean establishing dominance. This depends on the content of the turn. In relation, Tannen (1996) said turn-taking these strategies could be used for different, even opposite, purposes and can have different, even opposite, effects in different contexts.

According to Tannen (1996), overlapping/interruption entails power when a speaker overlaps/interrupts to disagree with another speaker’s opinion, while support is when a speaker’s reaction is to agree with the idea of others. In topic raising, it portrays dominance when a speaker raises topics far different from what is discussed, while solidarity is when a speaker raises topics related to the conversation.
METHODOLOGY

Research Design
The research design of this study is purely descriptive. It aims to systematically obtain information to describe a phenomenon, situation, or population. The analysis was centered on conversation analysis which refers to the investigation of the structural organization of talk and how utterances are designed to manage a sequence (Santander, 2013). Specifically, it was an in-depth investigation of the structural organization, specifically turn-taking strategies used by the former Spokesperson of the Philippines Sec. Harry Roque.

Corpus of the Study
This study analyzed political interviews taken from the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) Official Website and Youtube concerning the former Presidential Spokesperson, Sec. Harry Roque. The political interviews that were analyzed include minimum airtime of an hour which the researcher transcribed.

Research Instrument
This study employed the method of conversation analysis to seek out information on the usage of turn-taking strategies, pragmatic power relations, and the conversation style of the former presidential spokesperson. Frequency count was used to measure the dominant turn-taking strategies (overlapping/interruptions, directness and indirectness, silences, and topic raising) that Sec. Roque utilized. A self-made checklist that corresponds to Deborah Tannen’s theory on pragmatic power relations (dominance and solidarity) and conversational styles (report and rapport talk) was used afterward.

Sampling Procedure
This study used a purposive sampling method to select political interviews to be analyzed. The reasons for selecting the said interviews are outlined below:

1. The participants in the videos/interviews only include one interviewer and the former Presidential Spokesperson, Sec. Roque. This is to ensure that there is turn-taking in the conversation; and
2. The year of the interviews is during the time when former Sec. Roque was accused of being rude and manipulative in media.

Data Gathering
The researcher purposively selected five (5) political interviews of the former Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque. The interviews selected were mainly those where Sec. Roque was issued cutting off reporters/interviewers as these are the point of analysis of the researcher.
After obtaining the data for the study, the researcher transcribed the videos and employ conversation analysis for an in-depth assessment of utterances by Sec. Roque. Then used descriptive statistics, specifically frequency count, and came up with the dominant turn-taking strategies used by Sec. Roque. To sum up the results of the frequency counts, percentages were used. Further, a self-made checklist based on Deborah Tannen’s (1996) Theory of Communication was utilized to seek the corresponding pragmatic power relations and conversational styles employed by former Sec. Roque. Further, this study used three (3) inter-raters to validate the results of the research. The three inter-raters/validators were English/Communication Instructors/Teachers and preferably have a Masters degree.

Data Analysis

The analysis section of the study involved several steps. First, the researcher transcribed the five political interviews using the transcription symbols of Jefferson. This ensured that the spoken words and turn-taking strategies of the participants, especially Roque, were accurately documented for further analysis. Next, the researcher identified the turn-taking strategies used by Roque in the transcribed interviews. All turn-taking strategies of Roque were counted, such as overlapping, directness, indirectness, topic raising, silences. The researcher then determined the three most prevalent turn-taking strategies used by Roque. To further analyze these three prevalent turn-taking strategies, the researcher developed a checklist based on Debora Tannen’s theory. For example, the utterances on overlapping were analyzed to determine whether the purpose of its usage was for dominance or solidarity and whether it conveyed report or rapport talk. A similar analysis was conducted for the other two prevalent turn-taking strategies used by Roque. To ensure the reliability of the analysis, the results were cross-checked with the analysis conducted by three credible inter-raters. These inter-raters were English/Communication Instructors/Teachers, who provided their expert input and perspective on the turn-taking strategies used by Roque in the interviews. This helped to enhance the validity and accuracy of the findings obtained from the data analysis process.

Statistical Treatment

This study used descriptive statistics to answer the problems of the study. In that, the researcher used frequency counts and percentages to come up with the dominant turn-taking strategies.

Ethical Considerations

To prioritize ethical considerations, maintain the integrity of the study, and protect the rights of participants, the researcher assures that any analysis of Sec. Roque’s turn-taking strategies, pragmatic power style, and conversational style in political interviews are conducted in a respectful and professional manner that does not infringe upon his
rights or dignity. This can be achieved by ensuring that any information collected is used only for the purposes of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of this study, the results show that the three prevalent turn-taking strategies used by Spokesperson Roque in political interviews were overlapping, comprising the highest number of frequencies with 81 (39%), followed by directness with 68 (33%), indirectness with 56 (27%), and topic raising and silences with both 1 (0%).

The prevalent turn-taking strategy used by Spokesperson Roque in political interviews was Overlapping. This means that Spokesperson Roque mostly interrupted or grabbed, or even held the floor of the interviewer. This could also indicate that Spokesperson Roque talked at the same time while another speaker, in this case, the interviewer, was still speaking, breaking the organization of the conversation. This explains that although political interviews are regarded as question-answer-sequences (Clayman, 2010), where an interviewee should withhold a response until a question is completed, thereby confirming the neutrality of the turn, still, they often break the talking procedure (Heritage & Greenbatch, 1991). Below are example utterances of Spokesperson Roque using overlapping.

Rappler:
I: Sir some experts are talking about a way for us to galvanize support among the international community using the grueling to kind of get support so that we could pressure China maybe not through force of arms, but you know, through their sensitivity to their reputation and people think that this could be one-way when=
H: =rhetorics. I go back to diplomacy since ancient times so I don’t know what galvanizing support ahm ahm would look like but what has happened in ASEAN is I think I see and neighbors have recognized that the ways of president Duterte appears to be effective and they have designated (.) designated him as the person in charge of dealing with China which they would not have done if they did not approve of the initiatives of President Duterte you know history did not just happen overnight …

CNN-The Source:
I: Secretary Roque, okay. Just to be very clear about this, it was a tweet that I read, and I asked for your reaction if you would denounce it and then after that=
H: =Yes. But it’s implying that I should follow what Danny Arao says. And where’s the basis? Tell your viewers now! Where is the basis that I should follow what Danny Arao says? It’s not just you asking for a reaction you were pursuing
– will you denounce? See? So, it’s not just a reaction; you wanted me to answer Danny Arao. Why should I? And it’s not fair on your end to do that.

I: Okay. Then if you say, why should you answer it, and you answer it that way, sir, then I would have to take it as is. It was just a challenge=

H: =Yes, but you’re pushing the point.

ANC-Headstart:

I: Okay. The World Health Organization ah recently said that the Philippines in terms of contact tracing and management, wasn’t doing too well=

H: =Well let’s complete the statement of the WHO. They did attribute success in our testing program the fact that we have actually expanded the targeted testing. We have reached the one million mark of PCR testing, and we were aiming to do 10 million more…=

I: =Okay, but Secretary=

H: =It’s imperative that those who are positive if they don’t have their own isolation capacity in their homes…

I: But can you expound and clarify how it will be implemented?=

H: =[Laughs] We don’t have a provision for house to house…

The examples presented are utterances of Spokesperson Roque wherein he overlapped in the conversation in the programs Rappler, CNN-The Source, and ANC-Headstart. In an extract taken from the Rappler interview as presented above, Spokesperson Roque interrupted the interviewer while the interviewer was giving Roque the situation and asking him a question. Although the interviewer was still talking or taking the turn on the conversation floor, Roque already interrupted that turn by immediately expressing his thoughts which meant cutting off the interviewer and violating the organization of turns.

In the second and third extracts presented above, taken from CNN-The Source program and ANC-Headstart, Spokesperson Roque consistently grabbed the floor from the interviewer resulting in an unfinished turn from the interviewer. In the initial part of both conversations, Roque already interrupted the interviewers with contradictory statements to the interviewers, which means Roque disagreed with the statements of both interviewers. The interviewers tried to regain the floor, but Roque already overlapped by continually sustaining the floor.

The second prevalent turn-taking strategy used by Spokesperson Roque in political interviews was Directness. In fact, his usage of Directness had only 6% difference from his usage of Overlapping. This means that Spokesperson Roque often relays his messages and answers the interviewer in a straightforward manner. This result contradicts the statement of Feldman (2016) that one of the distinctive features of political interviews is the interviewees’ vagueness, evasiveness, or equivocal communication style as they hedge from providing direct answers to questions they are asked, as Spokesperson Roque
preferred to answer more so directly rather than evading. Below are example utterances of Spokesperson Roque using directness.

**Rappler:**
I: Yes sir, the last time we spoke, we were in Malacañang; you were the spokesman, and you were defending the president’s ban on Rappler, and now here we are talking, and you’re running for Senator oh so sir, what is your outlook now for 2019 how are you feeling with the elections fast approaching.
H: The last time we talked was two days ago in the ah in the signing of the Hugpong na Pagbabago and and PRP affiliation but I’m I’m great ‘no. I’ve always wanted to go get a mandate again directly from the people. It’s not my first time to get the people’s mandate…

**CNN-The Source:**
I: Attorney Te was saying that this actually violates the principle of mutuality of contracts; termination cannot be left solely on one side. Would you agree to that?
H: Certainly not ‘no although it is not my field of specialty. I think for three semesters, obligations and contracts cannot be unilaterally terminated. Everything else, if it’s bilateral, it’s for cause, then it can be terminated…

The above are extracts that present the usage of Spokesperson Roque’s Directness in political interviews. The usage of Directness in the conversation was apparent in the extract above. Roque was straightforward in answering questions, openly responding ‘no’, ‘absolutely not’, ‘I don’t know’, and ‘certainly not’ to the questions of the interviewers. He does not mince his words and just answers the questions upfront. He also corrects, if need be, as seen in the first extract, where he corrected the interviewer on the time they had seen each other, and he did so without hesitations.

The third and last dominant turn-taking strategy employed by Spokesperson Roque in political interviews was Indirectness. This means that Roque occasionally conveyed his messages and answers using hints, questions, gestures, and circumlocutions. Below are example utterances of Spokesperson Roque employing indirectness.

**Indirectness:**
I: May areas, sir, na MGCQ babalik niyo pa sa GCQ?
H: Yes, yes, yes—
I: Sir, I mean… I know the announcement is later but ang Metro Manila, will it be back to ECQ or we most likely expect that it will retain on GCQ?
H: [Laughs] Ikaw talaga, Karen. [Laughs]

The utterances presented above are examples of Indirect utterances used by Spokesperson Roque from the political interview videos analyzed for the purpose of this
study. Spokesperson Roque’s usage of the turn-taking strategy-indirectness was very evident because he used hints, insinuations, and hedges for a total of 27% in political interviews. Spokesperson Roque mostly used the word ‘well’ at the beginning of his utterances as a signal or a hint that he was starting the conversation. Also, the usage of ‘laughter’ by Roque in the ANC-Headstart extract was clear evidence of the usage of indirectness. In context, he was trying to evade to answer the question of the interviewer by laughing. In fact, the Spokesperson’s response ‘ikaw talaga, Karen’, as presented in the third extract, indicated that he does not want to preempt the announcement of the President, which is why he wants to avoid the question.

The results imply that Spokesperson Roque’s manner of communication is overall forthright. In other words, he does not care about the pattern of turns in the conversation, as he mostly used overlapping in political interviews. He voices his inputs immediately without minding the pattern and organization of turns. In fact, he did so in a straightforward manner, as he uses directness quite often as well. He answers without mincing words and often does so when correcting the interviewer about statements regarding political issues. However, he can also be indirect on some occasions, as he uses ‘well’ to begin his turn, providing background information first before giving in answers, and sometimes ‘laughs’ to try to evade the question and to lighten the mood of the conversation. Aside from this, it is extremely evident in the results that Spokesperson Roque did not use two turn-taking strategies, which are topic-raising and silences in political interviews. From the analysis of data, an implication can be drawn that Spokesperson’s non-usage of topic raising indicate that Spokesperson sticks with the topic at hand and did not try to avoid all topics, questions, and even statement by the interviewer. He wants to address all concerns of the media. Also, he did not use silence in his statements and answers. This implies that he is used to answering questions with background knowledge of the topics.

Below is Table 1, which presents the overall frequency counts of the turn-taking strategies used by former Philippine Spokesperson Harry Roque in political interviews. It is the overall count of the five political interviews that this study analyzed.

Table 1. Turn-taking Strategies Used by Former Spokesperson Roque

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn-taking Strategies</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overlapping</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>39.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directness</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>32.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirectness</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>27.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Raising</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silences</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>207</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As observed and counted, the former Spokesperson Harry Roque used 81 counts of overlapping, 68 directness, 56 indirectness, 1 topic raising, and 1 silence. Overall, the dominant turn-taking used by Roque were Overlapping, Directness, and Indirectness.

The implication of his usage of such strategies is that Roque disregards the organization of talk as he speaks his mind immediately and answers the questions in an upfront manner.

In a study by Kim and Lee (2019), where the researchers investigated the effectiveness of overlapping and directness as conversation strategies used by spokespersons in political interviews. They found that overlapping and directness, which involves interrupting the interviewer and responding to questions directly, were perceived as negative behavior by the audience. The latter results corroborate to the results of this study, Roque’s constant overlapping and being direct in responding to questions and statements send a negative connotation to audiences.

The results exhibit that Spokesperson Roque’s main purpose in overlapping his interviewers and being direct with his utterances in political interviews was to dominate the conversation. Below are example utterances taken from the political interviews analyzed by this study:

**Overlapping:**
I: You’re watching The Source on CNN Philippines. Our guest today, Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque. Sec., I still need to do a follow up on this because now the Duterte Youth Partylist is seeking or asking that kung ano po iyong ginawa sa UP ay iyong din ang gawin sa PUP. Just want to get your thoughts on that, sir.
H: Well, you know, it’s a free country. If that is the thought of the Duterte Youth, so be it. And that’s ah something that the Presidential Spokesperson does not have to be involved with ‘no. But you know, Pinky, I have to highlight the fact that I think the question of Arao was unfair. In the first place, why am I duty-bound to follow anything that Professor Arao says? He made appear as if it’s compulsory for me to follow him. I spent more time in UP than him. And I think, as I said, I even have ah ah ah I’m even more senior academic than him ‘no. So it was not a fair question. I’m not duty-bound to follow anything that Danny Arao says. It should not [garbled]
I: Spokesperson, don’t get me wrong. I wasn’t saying you’re duty-bound—
H: =Yes, but you were wrong. You were implying as if I had to follow what Danny Arao has said. What is the basis for that? There’s no place for that.
I: It was a tweet, sir. It was a tweet, Spokesperson, and then it just said—
H: =Yes, but you said, I had to follow him and if I did not do as he did, then I have no honor or excellence. Is that a fair question? That’s not.
I: No, I did not say that, Secretary Roque
H: That’s what he said though. That’s what he said, and that’s why I’m calling you out for that. It’s [off mic]
I: Secretary Roque, okay. Just to be very clear about this, it was a tweet that I read and I asked for your reaction if you would denounce it and then after that—
H: =Yes. But, it’s implying that I should follow what Danny Arao says. And where’s the basis? Tell your viewers now! Where is the basis that I should follow what Danny Arao says. It’s not just you asking for a reaction, you were pursuing—will you denounce? See? So, it’s not just a reaction, you wanted me to answer Danny Arao. Why should I? And it’s not fair on your end to do that.
I: Okay. Then if you say, why should you answer it, and you answer it that way, sir, then I would have to take it as is. It was just a challenge—
H: =Yes, but you’re pushing the point.
I: =Well, be—
H: =You’re going beyond asking for my reaction.
I: =Sir—Okay. It’s a challenge—
H: =Will you denounce it? You said it on record. The TV recorded it.
I: =Yes, that’s right.
H: =You have to be fair, ‘no.

The example extract above is a vivid portrayal of the dominance of Spokesperson Roque in his usage of overlapping in political interviews. This means that Roque was trying to control the conversation. In fact, in the extract above, Roque violated turn-taking when he thought he needed to correct the notion of the interviewer. The interviewer tried to regain the floor by acknowledging the point of Spokesperson Roque; however, Roque circled back to what he thought was a wrong idea of the interviewer and kept on reiterating the same idea throughout the conversation, making the conversation under his control and authority. Spokesperson Roque only stopped dominating when the interviewer agreed to his point by saying, “Yes, that’s right.” This is backed by Heritage and Greenbatch (1991), when they stated that politicians strive to exert control over the discussion for the expense of promoting their own or groups’ agenda.

This is also the same with the portrayal of dominance Roque in his direct utterances, as reflected below:

**Directness:**

**First Extract**

I: Okay. Hmm. Sir, how about Senate independence.? We know that very important to have an independent Senate. We have two senators who have been attacked by the president. Ahm How do you think the president can preserve its independence in this environment?
H: It’s not senators who should fight for independence, and you can’t invoke independence where you’re accused of a criminal crime. Commission of a criminal crime because being a senator does not give you any form of immunity from the commission of criminal acts...
Second Extract

I: Is there any issue sir apart from the death penalty, we know that you disagree with the President on that but are there other issues where you disagree with the President on?
H: Lowering the age of criminality. I supported the house-compromised version that there could be responsibilities as far as minors are concerned, but we should do away with imprisonment because the best way to ensure that juvenile offenders become criminals is to send them to jail...

As presented above, Spokesperson Roque directly answered the questions of the interview without hesitation, pause, hedges, etc., which could indicate awkwardness, evasion, or subterfuge. Roque, on the other hand, did not flinch in educating or even contradicting the statement of the interviewer, as seen in the First Extract, as Roque relayed about senators committing criminal acts directly. In the Second Extract, Spokesperson Roque is upfront about his answer, which is ‘lowering the age of criminality as one of the issues that he disagrees with from President Duterte. Also, his usage of the exclusive deictic pronoun ‘I’ indicates that he really wanted to establish control in the conversation.

Although dominance was the highest count for Spokesperson Roque’s power style, he also portrayed solidarity in his usage of Indirectness, as seen below:

Indirectness:

I: Ang hiling po ng UP President na si Danilo Concepcion is bawiin ho ito and that there should be some sort of a conversation or talk with Secretary Delfin Lorenzana. Is this something you think that is possible na, number one, mag-usap po sila; number two na bawiin po itong termination ng accord?
H: Well, I think ab it is the proper course of action and, of course, the UP President is a lawyer itself so it is a contract so it should be discussed by the party. And being a UP graduate and UP professor myself, I even offer my good office if they need assistance in discussing this matter.

Spokesperson Roque’s usage of the words ‘well,’ ‘I think,’ and ‘so’ is an indication of indirectness having a power play of solidarity in the conversation. In fact, Spokesperson even ‘offered his good office’ to help or assist personalities involved in the issue. Moreover, the usage of Roque’s inclusive pronoun ‘we’ shows that he does not exclude himself but rather includes everybody in his suggestion or idea. This means that the purpose of the utterance is to come up with a common goal among the speakers of the conversation. Indirectness then is used as solidarity because the main goal of the Spokesperson is to establish a connection and support to the common agenda of the conversation.

Table II shows the frequency count and the percentage of the corresponding pragmatic power relations according to the dominant turn-taking strategies used by
Table 2 displays the result that Spokesperson Roque's corresponding pragmatic power relations are the following: Overlapping was used to portray dominance which had a frequency count of 65 or 80% of the total overlapped utterances; Directness was used to portray dominance which had 68 or 74%; and Indirectness was used to portray solidarity which had 29 counts or 52% in political interviews. Also, upon the analysis of the data gathered, it was found that Roque had 3 counts of overlapped utterances in which he neither intended to portray dominance nor solidarity. These 3 overlaps were intended to inform the interviewer of the technical dilemma experienced by both the Spokesperson and the interviewer during the interview.

Overall, the results exposed that Roque's usage of Overlapping and Directness was to establish dominance, meaning he asserts control in political interviews, as he did not shy away from contradicting and correcting interviewers and he did not stop unless interviewers agreed with his notions. This may be Roque's approach to appearing and projecting confident, authoritative, knowledgeable, and decisive in the media. This analysis is backed by the study of Schnurr and Zayts (2014), where they found that both overlapping and directness are used to assert control over the conversation and to demonstrate confidence and authority. Overlapping is used to interrupt the other speaker and to establish dominance, while directness is used to show decisiveness and to avoid appearing evasive.

Results show that Spokesperson Roque's conversational style is Report Talk, with a total of 142 counts or 69%. This means that Spokesperson Roque answers and responds to questions and statements to get the upper hand in the conversation, specifically in the context of political interviews. Moreover, Spokesperson Roque wants to preserve independence, negotiate, and maintain his status. Tannen (1994) also explained that conversationalists using Report Talk as a conversation style seek to command attention, convey information, and win arguments.

In a study by Mahartika and Hanafiah (2019), wherein they studied the conversation style of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in political speech, results
showed that Donald Trump tended to use report talk in delivering his idea, wherein he used and displayed all of the features of report talk. The features used include, among others, commanding attention or showing authority, being direct, and talking longer in the public context. This conforms to the results of this study; although Roque is not a President, but rather a Spokesperson, he displayed features like commanding attention or showing authority, being straightforward or direct with his responses, and even talking longer in political interviews. As the Spokesperson for the President, Roque needs to convey the messages of the President clearly and effectively, and for Roque to achieve this, he might opt to exhibit traits like authority and directness to ensure that his message is heard and understood. Moreover, Roque might also feel the need to talk longer in political interviews to address complex issues or provide in-depth context about the country’s problems, even if it means he should correct the interviewer. The longest utterance of Spokesperson Roque took about 5 minutes and 18 seconds, where he only answered and discussed his plans as he moved forward and applied for the senatorial bid.

Shonk (2021) stated that an authoritarian tends to cut off communication, information sharing, and trust building, and this can backfire on the powerful and prevent win-win agreements for the conversationalists involved. This implies that Spokesperson Roque's usage of Report Talk as his overall conversation style in political interviews may not be in conformance with his mandate, which is developing public understanding and trust, as Shonk (2021) pointed out, being authoritative disregards information sharing and trust building.

Table 3 displays the overall frequency counts of the conversational style used by Spokesperson Roque based on their turn-taking strategies and pragmatic power relations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dominant Turn-taking Strategies</th>
<th>Conversation Style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Report Talk (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overlapping</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directness</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirectness</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the analysis of this study, results display that the overall conversational style used by Spokesperson Roque is Report Talk with 142 counts or 69%, while his usage of Rapport Talk had 69 counts or 29%. Roque also had overlapping utterances that neither can be categorized as report or rapport talk as these utterances relate on just clarificatory utterances pertaining the internet connection of the interviewer.
The analysis and investigation of this study unraveled that the former Philippine Spokesperson Harry Roque often used overlapping, directness, and indirectness as his turn-taking strategies and that his usage of these strategies was generally for the purpose of dominating or exerting control over the conversation. These results then led to unfold that Spokesperson Roque’s overall conversation style in political interviews is Report Talk, which according to Tannen (1994), means that he converses in political interviews to command attention, convey information, and win arguments in the context of political interviews.

Conveying information, as one of Spokesperson Roque’s conversation styles, is aligned with his mandate as a Presidential Spokesperson as promulgated in Executive Order No. 4, 2010, specifically on developing public understanding of activities and policies and enhancing public trust and support at the national, regional, and barangay levels. By conveying or relaying information to the media, the masses then are being updated with recent information about the president and the administration in general, hence, developing public understanding and trust. However, overlapping and using directness to dominate and control the conversation, command attention, and win arguments are some of Spokesperson Roque’s conversation styles that are not aligned with his mandates, as public trust is achieved through positive experiences of service delivery (Kampen et al., 2006). To elaborate, winning arguments and commanding attention in front of the media, may come across as lacking empathy or concern for the public’s needs and concerns. This can erode public trust, as people may feel that the spokesperson is not advocating for their interests, hence, contrary to his mandates.

However, in an article published by Rappler (2017), Duterte personally chose Roque to become the Spokesperson, where he announced Roque’s appointment during his birthday in Davao city. The former President relayed, at that time, that Roque will soon be “Secretary,” “To get the message clear, Harry will fit the – kasi medyo malikot ang bunganga namin (because we speak in playful language).” The statement of Duterte then indirectly states that among Roque’s many tasks include holding regular Malacañang press conferences, answering media queries about a host of public interest issues, and, most of all, clarifying Duterte’s often shocking and vague statements. The latter task had to be the main reason why Roque was the Spokesperson. Apparently, his job was to explain and make interpretations of the statements of the President. He was chosen to become the spokesperson, one who served the longest compared to the other spokespersons who served former President Duterte because Duterte said that they have a similar conversation style which is why he thought that Roque is fit for the role.

It is relevant to note that the political discourse during the Duterte Administration was dubbed as “Dutertism’ or “Dutertesmo”. This is the former President’s way of conversation, where he was utterly straightforward, blunt, and even used profanities in his speeches and engagements. According to David (2016), Bello (2017), and Capozzola (2018), Dutertismo is a populist appeal to the masses and a willingness to use controversial and unconventional means to achieve policy objectives. Curato (2017)
pointed out that Duterte’s gutter language establishes the urgency of saving the republic. The words “kill” and “death” is essential to the President’s vocabulary, for the country is at war, and his politics of “I will” demands quick, albeit painful, solutions. In other words, Duterte did not shy away from being direct and vulgar in his language just to transcend to the masses his sincere sympathy to the people.

As a Spokesperson of Duterte, Spokesperson Roque reflected and emanated that Dutertismo as his political discourse, which could explain the similarities between the conversation style of both Spokesperson Roque and former President Duterte. In fact, in a press briefing, Roque said, “As a person who became [the] presidential spokesperson for President Rodrigo Duterte, the role requires to set aside one’s personal stances and to relay the positions of the president.” In this regard, Roque’s conversation style was only to speak in the Presidents’ stead, providing people with straightforward statements about issues and concerns. This is contrary to the result of the study of Autor (2021), where the study revealed two problems contained in Harry Roque’s statements: (1) his abuse of power and his manipulation of data and (2) he tried to change the image of the Duterte administration by spreading false information for their own personal interest.

The results of this study imply that as a Spokesperson, Spokesperson Roque can only suppressed his own opinions and ideas, regardless of him not agreeing with the notion of the President. His only job is to relay the positions and statements of the President, even if it meant mirroring the conversation style of Duterte which is Dutertismo.

**CONCLUSIONS**

This study concluded that:

First, the former Presidential Spokesperson, Harry Roque does not conform to the organization of turn in the conversation, specifically in the context of political interviews, as he just blurts out his thoughts even though the interviewee is still taking the conversation floor. Spokesperson Roque was also straightforward in his utterances, not using hedges. He does not use evasion when asked during political interviews, unlike the usual manner of politicians. He just answers questions in a forthright manner.

Second, Spokesperson Roque’s use of his turn-taking strategies was to control the conversation. He corrects the statement of the interview and does not stop controlling the conversation unless the interviewer agrees with Spokesperson Roque’s notion. This is his way of establishing authority in the conversation.

Third, Spokesperson Roque’s conversation style was meant to command attention, assert authority, talk upfront, and talk longer in political interviews. These styles do not conform to the mandate of being a Spokesperson in the Philippines as promulgated in Executive Order No. 4, 2010 because, as Shonk (2021) pointed out, being authoritative disregards information sharing and trust building.
Fourth, Spokesperson Roque’s conversation style is the same with former President Duterte. The latter used Dutertismo as his political discourse, where his conversation style was blunt, using words and statements that included profanities and even using gutter and vulgar language. Spokesperson Roque had the same conversation style as Duterte as being direct, as he spoke on behalf of the President; however, he provided legal explanations and wholesome interpretations of the gutter language of the former President.

Overall, it can be concluded that a Presidential Spokesperson’s role extends beyond simply carrying out their official duties and responsibilities. In fact, the spokesperson’s actions and manner of discourse are closely aligned with those of the President whom they represent. This suggests that a Presidential Spokesperson not only serves as a conduit for the President’s messages and policies but also plays an important role in shaping public perception of the President and their administration. By adopting a similar tone, style, and manner to conversation as the President, the spokesperson can help reinforce the President’s messaging and cultivate a coherent and consistent image of the administration. Lastly, this study highlights the critical role that Presidential Spokespersons play in modern political communication and underscores the importance of understanding the complex dynamics that govern their relationships with the leaders they serve.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the findings and the conclusions that have been established by this study, the following recommendations are drawn, specifically for:

**Future Researchers:**

First, extend the length of the observation of the interviews/conversation. The length/air-time of the conversation may be extended to five hours of conversation to ascertain the turn-taking strategies used by other Presidential Spokespersons. With that, the study may have a significant amount of frequency which probably makes a better result.

Second, determine the turn-taking strategies and overall conversation style of other PH spokespersons during the Duterte Administration and determine whether the same violated Executive Order No. 4, 2010 and/or employed the Dutertismo discourse as well.

Lastly, analyze political interviews wherein the number of conversationalists involved in the interview is at least three (3), including the Spokesperson. Having three communicators would be interesting as it brings different dynamics in the conversation, especially in the organization of the turn. It would also provide data on the turn-taking strategies a Ph Spokesperson use during a group interview, whether or not he/she is motivated to control the conversation or otherwise.
Language Teachers and Students:

Study the turn-taking strategies and overall conversational styles of presidential spokespersons. It can provide language students and teachers valuable insights into the ways in which language is used to convey authority, establish dominance, and influence public opinion. Incorporate the study of presidential spokesperson' conversational styles in language education through analysis of interviews and critical reflection. By incorporating such into language education, students and teachers can develop a better understanding of the dynamics of public discourse and the role of language in shaping political communication.

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