

Closing Techniques for Face-to-Face Conversation in Saudi Educational Institutes

Khadija Abdullah Al-Amoudi
King Abdulaziz University
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Abstract

This paper addresses the issue of techniques used by English Language Institute teachers at King Abdul-Aziz University to end their face-to-face conversation. In recent years, conversation analysis trends have been the focus of much research. A considerable number of studies have been conducted on conversation closing strategies and techniques (e.g. Stenström, 1992; Dwi-Nugroho, 1993; Schegloff & Sacks 2000; Marlina, 2001; Stockwell, 2002; Saptiana, 2004; Sambo, 2005); yet, due attention is not given to this linguistic phenomenon in Saudi society. In an attempt to fill in this gap in the literature, this research utilizes Saptiana's (2004) method of closing functions and techniques which proposes twenty techniques based on three theories: five techniques from Albert and Kessler (1976), nine techniques from Wardhaugh (1985), and six techniques from Stenström (1992). The data in the current study is taken from a recording of open informal conditioned conversations between two faculty members. The findings demonstrate that ELI teachers utilize eighteen different techniques. This proves the hypothesis that well-educated people use a wide range of closing techniques. Dismissing oneself and giving reasons are found to be the most frequent closing techniques. In addition, the findings reveal that six techniques in Saptiana's (2004) study are found to be irrelevant to our data. Her classification is also found to be insufficient for the purpose of analyzing all the data in this research. Thus, additional expansions were required.

Keywords: Conversation analysis, closing strategies, closing functions, closing techniques, ELI teachers' conversation closing techniques

1. Introduction

As a social activity, conversation involves "two or more participants who talk about something" (Stenström, 1992, p. 189). Hatch (1992) assumes that in every conversation, there must be ways to show that communication is about to begin and then begins, and ways to show that it is about to end and then ends. Thus, good cooperation is required amongst the participants to make the conversation go well. Wardhaugh (1985) argues that cooperation "should also be done in closing a conversation in order to achieve a satisfying ending for all participants" (p. 151).

In fact, ending a conversation is not simply a matter of saying goodbye. Additionally, Labov and Fanshel (1977, cited in Owen, 1990) suggest that ending is a more complicated act than beginning. Thus, speakers should not leave a conversation before negotiating a closing which is a delicate matter both technically and socially. According to Laver (1981, cited in Dwi-Nugroho, 1993), there are routine formulae of parting or farewell, which reflects what Button (1987) calls closing conventions. Those conventions must be carefully placed so that their function to close a conversation does not force any party to exit while they still have something to say (Levinson, 1983).

This paper aims at exploring the closing strategies, the most closing functions used in those strategies, and the techniques that represent the closing functions of face-to-face informal conditioned conversations amongst ELI teachers at King Abdul-Aziz University in Saudi Arabia.

1.1. Selected Literature Review

Closing a conversation has been the focus of a considerable number of studies in the field of discourse analysis. Conversation closing strategies, techniques, and processes are the focus of much of the research such as Albert and Kessler (1976), Wardhaugh (1985), and Stenström (1992). Closing signals also have been taken into consideration by other linguists such as Goffman (1976, cited in Hatch, 1983) and Stockwell (2002). Moreover, many researchers shade some light on closing sectioning. This might include Clark and French (1981), Levinson (1983), and Schegloff and Sacks (2000, cited in Ten-Have, 2000). Also, terminating telephone conversation is discussed thoroughly by Dwi-Nugroho (1993). Furthermore, an important study entitled "Strategies to End a Conversation Used by Betra Christian University Students in An Open Role-Play Situation" is offered by Saptiana (2004) to discuss closing strategies and techniques. Sambo (2005) also presents a study on the closing utterances in conversation used by young people in Rantepao, and Tana Torja in Indonesia.

Albert and Kessler (1976) propose a theory on processes in ending a social encounter. They find that closing a conversation is done in an order. This order in ending a conversation is a strategy that can be applied. Therefore, they divide the closing section into five parts. Wardhaugh's (1985) theory is concerned with face-to-face conversation. He assumes that there are some techniques for closing an ongoing conversation. Stenström's (1992) theory also suggests several strategies to indicate that a conversation is about to reach a closing section. (see table 1 below)

In her significant study on closing strategies, Saptiana (2004) combines the previous three theories. Her findings reveal the type of strategies used in ending a conversation, the most closing functions used in those strategies and the linguistic signals representing the closing function in those conversations.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The research problem of this study is "How do English Language Institute teachers at King Abdul-Aziz University end their face-to-face conversation?"

1.2.1. Research Question

To get the answer for the research problem, a set of research questions are formulated as the following:

1. What are the strategies used by ELI teachers in negotiating a closing?
2. What are the closing functions used in those strategies?
3. What are the closing techniques used in these functions?

1.3. Purpose of the Study

In this study, the researcher aims at revealing how ELI teachers end a face-to-face conversation, and what strategies they use in negotiating an end. The writer also aims at investigating whether there are particular techniques that are commonly used by ELI teachers and the functions that are represented by those techniques.

1.4. Significance and Hypothesis of the Study

Since dew attention is not given to conversation closing in Saudi society, this paper is intended to fill in the gap in the literature by examining the assumption that well-educated people (presented by ELI teachers) use a wide range of closing techniques to end their conversations. By setting an example of well-educated people informal face-to-face conversations in Saudi Arabia, the research may also give a number of ideas for the readers about ways of closing a conversation. The study also can help people recognizing closing signals sent by their addressee in order to give an appropriate respond cooperatively.

2. Theoretical Framework

Strategies used in closing a conversation by Saptiana (2004) are used as basis of analyzing the data in this research. Theories for additional expansion from Albert and Kessler (1976), Wardhaugh (1985), and Stenström (1992) are also required.

In her study, Saptiana (2004) demonstrates that bringing a conversation to an end is not simply a matter of saying goodbye. There has to be at least other closing functions that do not terminate the conversation straightforwardly. The five closing functions identified in her study are the following: showing no desire to continue, asking for an excuse to stop, maintain good relationship, keeping future contact, and terminating the conversation. In order to represent these closing functions, a number of techniques from Albert and Kessler (1976), Wardhaugh (1985), and Stenström (1992) are used. Those techniques include: giving silent pause, ignoring what is said, giving many repetition, summarizing the content, giving pre-closing expressions, diminishing eye contact, shifting position, and using leave-take behaviors. Saptiana (2004) classifies those techniques under the function of showing no desire to continue. Moreover, giving reason, offering other to stop, and dismissing oneself are classified as techniques to ask for an excuse to stop. As for maintaining a good relationship, it can be expressed through some other techniques such as: thanking the addressee, apologizing, giving compliment, and using phatic talk. Furthermore, making arrangement, and re-emphasizing arrangement are techniques to keep future contact. Finally, terminating the conversation can be represented through giving termination markers, giving well wishes, and taking a distance. However, some of the techniques used by the respondents in this study cannot be categorized in to Saptiana's (2004) closing functions. Thus, her methodology requires additional techniques that are found in Albert and Kessler (1976), Wardhaugh (1985), and Stenström (1992).

Albert and Kessler (1976) found that closing a conversation is done in order: summarizing the content, justifying ending contact, expressing pleasure about each other, making reference, and finally wishing each other well. Wardhaugh (1985) assumes that conversation closing techniques may include: giving reason(s) to leave either for the speaker or the addressee, giving compliments, summarizing, giving dismissal formulas, and giving ritual leave takings either verbally or non-verbally (diminishing eye contact, taking distance, etc.). According to Stenström (1992), there are several strategies to indicate that the conversation is about to reach a closing section. Conversationalists can bring their conversation to an end either by: using silent pauses, using winding-up talk, using polite phrases, thanking, apologizing, giving reasons, or by using termination markers.

The closing functions of Saptiana's (2004) method of the three synthesized theory can be summarized in the following table:

Table1: *Functions and Their Techniques According to Saptiana's Method*

Closing Functions	Albert & Kessler	Wardhaugh	Stenström
Showing no desire to continue the conversation	--	Diminishing eye contact	Using silent pause
	--	Shifting position	--
	--	Making leave-taking behavior	--
	--	Giving pre-closing expression	--
	Summarizing	Summarizing	--
Asking for an excuse to stop	Justifying ending contact	Giving reasons	Giving reasons to stop
	--	Giving dismissal formulas	--
Maintaining a good relationship	Expressing pleasure	Giving compliment	Apologizing
	--	--	Thanking
	--	--	Using phatic talk
Keeping for future contact	Making reference	--	--
Terminating the conversation	Wishing each other well	Giving ritual leave-taking	--
	--	Taking a distance	--

3. Research Methodology

To conduct this research, a conversation analysis approach is used. The work is mainly based on the process of analyzing the closing parts of the conversation. In order to get the natural closing, I used a tape recorder to collect the data which consist of three conditioned conversations carried out by myself, who conditioned them, and three of my colleagues, or the respondents/informants who did not know about the conditioning of those conversations till it was over. The situation was that I initiated the conversation and after a while I did not intend to close it. The respondents tried to lead the conversation to its end and desired to leave the conversation using various closing techniques while I tried to pro-long it. I focused on analyzing the utterances made by the

participants rather than those made by me for two main reasons: they contain the closing techniques, and they are more natural since the informants do not know about the recording.

In order to get an answer for the research question, I took a number of steps. First, I listened to the conversations from the tape recorder and transcribed the data using Wood and Kroger's (2000) transcript notation. Second, out of one hundred forty three utterances, fifty six were identified as closing utterances. Third, I clarified the techniques used in those utterances using criteria based on Saptiana's (2004) method and some other expansions based on techniques from Albert and Kessler (1976), Wardhaugh (1985), and Stenström (1992). In addition to the previously mentioned classifications in the three theories, a new technique is developed in this study for our data which is the use of smiles. All the techniques were classified into the five closing functions. Fourth, I deduced the three strategies used by ELI teachers to close their conversations. Finally, I interpreted all the findings and drew a conclusion.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. The Strategies Used to End a Conversation

It has been found that there are three strategies used by ELI staff members to end a conversation. Those three types of strategies are determined by the variation of closing functions and their techniques in each strategy. The first one is the strategy that uses five closing functions and fourteen techniques. The next one is the strategy which uses five closing functions but only nine techniques. Then, the last is the strategy that uses only four closing functions with about seven techniques. Details of strategies used in the conversation between the two staff members will be explained later. These findings; however, can be summarized in the following table:

Table2: *The Functions Used in the Three Conversations and Their Techniques*

5 Functions & their Techniques	Conv. 1	Conv. 2	Conv. 3	Total
1) Showing no desire to continue	Total: 7	Total: 3	Total: 4	14
Ignore what is said	--	1	--	1
Give pre-closing expressions	2	--	4	6
Diminish eye contact	1	--	--	1
Shift position	1	1	--	2
Leave-taking behavior	3	1	--	4
2) Asking for an excuse to stop	Total: 6	Total: 6	Total: 7	19
Give reasons	2	3	4	9
Dismiss other party	1	--	--	1
Dismiss oneself	3	3	3	9
3) Maintaining good relationship	Total: 8	Total: 5	Total: 8	21
Thank the addressee	--	--	1	1
Apologize	--	1	2	3
Give compliment	3	3	--	6
Use polite phrases	--	--	3	3
Use phatic talk	1	--	--	1
Smile	4	1	2	7
4) Keeping future contact	Total: 3	Total: 1	Total: 2	6
Make arrangement	2	1	2	5
Make reference	1	--	--	1

5) Terminating the conversation	Total: 4	Total: 1	Total: 0	5
Give termination mark	1	--	--	1
Give ritual leave-taking	2	--	--	2
Take a distance	1	1	--	2
Variations of Functions	5	5	4	--
Variations of Techniques	15	10	7	--
Total Number of Techniques	28	16	21	--

The above table illustrates that all of the respondents used variations of not less than four closing functions in all the three conversations as a strategy to bring their conversation to its end. It means that speakers try to end their conversation politely by making use of almost the whole closing functions that are there along with variations of their techniques. In addition, three closing functions or less seem to be insufficient in making an ending. Those findings reveal that ending is not a mere exchanging pairs of goodbye and they also demonstrate the need for the variation of strategies in ending a conversation.

4.1.1. Five Closing Functions and Fifteen Techniques

The conversation that used this strategy of five closing functions and fifteen techniques has a distinctive feature of having a long closing section. Possibly, the long closing section shows that it was difficult to negotiate a closing. The long closing section also can be a reflection of the design of the researcher to pro-long the conversation. In consequence, it requires a strategy that consists of the whole closing functions. However, the focus is not in keeping future contact and maintaining good relationship. Instead, the stress is more in showing the unwillingness to continue the conversation. This can be explained through the following conversation:

4.1.1.1. Conversation 1

A: (30+, Saudi female, university teacher, MA student, B's colleague, the first speaker)

B: (30+, South-African female, university teacher, MA holder, A's colleague, C's teacher, D's friend, the respondent)

C: (20+, Saudi female, university student, B's student)

D: (40+, south-African female, university teacher, PHD holder, B's friend)

Time: 12:30 pm.

Situation: **B** is sitting at her office at KAU and has to leave in few minutes. While **B** is collecting her belongings preparing to leave, **A** starts the conversation with **B**. **C** enters the room and has a short talk with **B**. Then, **D** enters the room to tell **B** about the money **D** received the same morning. It is a long conversation with many initiations from different parties.

1 A: Opening up until 3 times

(2) Give reasons → 4 B: Ok, bu::t I have to go to the H. R.
before my class(0.5) in let's sa:y ↑half a

(1) Leave-take behavior → minute. (Sitting and collecting her papers)

5 A: So, you are leaving.

(2) Dismiss oneself → 6 B: ↓Yes, (0.8)>I'm leaving right no::w<
(Looking at "A")

7 A: May I ask you just few questions before you
leave?

(1) Diminish eye contact → 8 B: >Sure, sure, sure< (no eye contact with "A")

9 A: Opening up 1 time



10 B: ↑First, (0.5) you have to know that I'm

(2) Dismiss other party → speaking ONLY English. (1.4) Do you

(3) Smile → ↑want it in English? (Smiling),

(glancing at "B")

11 A: Sure, I prefer it to be in English.

Opening up 3 times



15 C: Teacher. (Holding a paper)

16 B: Yes, where were you this morning?(To "D")

(2) Dismiss oneself → <It's one o'clock> (0.8) and I have to go.

(To "A")

(1) Leave-take behavior → (Standing up and collecting her belongings)

17 D: Hi. (To "B")

18 B: Hi.

Opening up 11 times



(4) Make arrangement → 30 B: We will have a MEETING (0.4) and

↑another talk tomorrow.

(1) Shift position → 31 D: ↑Ok. (Moving toward the door)

(3) Give compliment → 32 B: I'm happy for ↑you. (0.6) You take them and enjoy.

(5) Take a distance → 33 D: Ha ha ha (Leaving)

34 B: Ha ha ha

35 C: Teacher, excuse me can I do it now? (Still holding the paper)

36 B: Why don't you say it in ↑front of the class?

(1) Leave-take behavior → (Still standing, collecting her belongings)

Opening up 3 times



(5) Give ritual leave-taking → 40 B: ↓Ok, let's go to class (1.2) and you will talk in FRONT of the class? (To "C")

(2) Give reason → <I ↑have a class now ↓Khadija>

(3) Give compliment → I'm lucky to meet you. (To "A")

41 A: Me to, but I also have some other questions.

(Still sitting)

(4) Make arrangement → ~~42 B:~~ ↑Ok, you can bring them tomorrow; (0.8) I

(3) Smile → don't have a::ny class on Tuesday. (smiling)

Opening up 3 times



(1) Pre-closing expression → 46 B: ↑Alright?

47 A: Ok, how about your phone number, may I

have it?

48 B: Yes, sure 050.....

(1) Pre-closing expression → 49 A: ↑O::K (1.2)

(5) Give ritual leave-taking → 50 B: Let's go right no:w. (To "C")

51 B: OH, (0.8)>I need a tape recorder<. (Opening here drawer and taking it)

- 52 A: So. (Still sitting)
 (3) Smile → 53 A: Khadija, (smiling)
 (2) Dismiss oneself → 54 B: I'll leave, (0.2)↑OK?
 55 A: Ok.
 (4) Make reference → 56 B: See ↑you soon.
 57 A: If Allah is welling
 (3) Give compliment → 58 B: ↑Nice meeting you.
 59 A: Same here dear.
 (3) Future phatic + (3) Smile → 60 B: ↑Enjoy your day. (smiling)
 61 A: You too.
 (5) Termination → 62 B: ↓Bye.
 63 A: Bye.

The above conversation shows that the respondent attempted to bring the conversation to an end by asking for an excuse to stop (Giving reason in turn 4, 40). Then, she showed her readiness to leave (Leave-taking behavior in turn 4, 16, 36). This can reflect her negotiation in closing though her co-participant did not agree to end. Thus, she tried not to pay much attention to her co-participant (Diminish eye contact in turn 8). She also tried many times to dismiss both herself and the other party (In turn 6, 10, 16, 53). However, she still maintained good relationship between them by giving compliment (In turn 32, 40) and using phatic talk (In turn 59). The ending mostly contains maintaining good relationship by giving compliment (In turn 40, 57) and phatic talk (In turn 59). Moreover, by knowing that her partner was not interested in bringing the conversation to an end, she was being cooperative in giving pre-closing expressions towards the end of the conversation (In turn 46, 49). However, she was still having difficulties to close the whole conversation. Thus, she chose to dismiss herself (In turn 53) and to make reference (In turn 55). Finally, she gave a termination marker (In turn 61) at the very end of the conversation before leaving the room.

The strategy in Conversation 1 is more likely to use verbal acts to show the lack of enthusiasm in continuing the conversation in most of the turns. The closing functions used in this first strategy are: showing no desire to continue, asking or giving an excuse to stop, maintaining good relationship, keeping future contact, and terminating the conversation.

4.1.2. Five Closing Functions and Ten Techniques

The conversation that used this kind of strategy has a relatively long closing section; however, it is much shorter than the first one. This strategy shows that in ending a conversation, the focus is not only in asking for an excuse but also in maintaining good relationship. It stresses more in showing the reasons for the unwillingness to continue the conversation. The following conversation is an example of this strategy:

4.1.2.1. Conversation 2

A: (30+, Saudi female, university teacher, MA student, B's colleague, first speaker)

B: (40+, Pakistani female, university teacher, MA holder, A's colleague, respondent)

Time: 1:30 pm.

Situation: while **B** is sitting at her office waiting for her husband to take her home, **A** enters the room and starts the conversation with many initiations.

1 A: Opening up until 17 times

- (3) Give compliments → 18 B: <Ok Khadija>. (0.5)It's really nice
 ↑meeting you,
- (2) Give reason → bu::t my husband is waiting ↓outside,
 (2) Dismiss oneself → so:: I have to go ↑home.
- (3) Give compliment → It was (0.2) a really ↑lovely talk,
 (4) Make arrangement → but, I am ↑sorry >we can talk for a longer
 period sometimes<(1.4)
- (3) Apology → but this ↑time please excuses me,
 (2) Dismiss oneself → I need to take ↓leave (0.8)
- (3) Give compliment → it's really ↑informative, when discussing
 (1) Leave-taking behavior → ↑learn a lot.(Gathering her belongings)

19 A: Opening up until 5 times



THE PHONE RINGS

- (2) Give reason → 25 B: My husband is ↑calling, (0.2) OK.
 26 A: Ok
- (2) Dismiss oneself → 27 B: “Ok, I’m coming now” ((to her husband on
 the phone))
- 28 A: How about the third assessment?
- (1) Ignore what is said → 29 B: ↓Hu::m (looking at her mobile)
- 30 A: Is he in a hurry?
- (2) Give reason → 39 B: ↑Yes, (0.2) he has to take me and go ↑back.
 (1) Shift position → (Standing up, moving towards the door)
- 40 A: You didn’t tell me about the third
 assessment, are you going to give it to them?
- (3) Smile → 41 B: ↓Yes. (Smiling)
 (5) Take a distance → (leaving after closing the door)

In this conversation, the respondent started by giving a complement to negotiate the closing and to maintain good relationship (Three times in turn 18). She asked then for an excuse to stop by giving reasons to terminate the conversation, and by trying to dismiss herself (Twice in turn 18). Making an arrangement in the conversation above shows the cooperation of the second speaker or the respondent. She did not want to continue the conversation at that time, but she offered the compensation to continue the conversation some other time (In turn 18). In order to maintain good relationship, she used the technique of apology (In turn 18) followed by showing no desire in continue the conversation by gathering her belongings. She also used some other techniques to show her desire to stop the conversation such as: ignoring what is said (In turn 29) and shifting position (In turn 39). Recognizing that the first speaker was not interested in bringing the conversation to a close, she used the strongest technique, which is taking a distance (In turn 41) until she finally succeeded in ending the conversation.

4.1.3. Four Closing Functions and Seven Techniques

This strategy shows that the focus is not in terminating the conversation but to bring it to a close. It stresses more in maintaining a good relationship and asking for excuses to stop the conversation. As a result, the respondent was signaling her readiness to end the conversation and also giving reasons as excuses to stop. Conversation three is an example of this strategy.

4.1.3.1. Conversation 3

A: (30+, Saudi female, university teacher, MA holder, B's colleague, first speaker)

B: (30+, Indian female, university teacher, MA holder, A's colleague, respondent)

Time: 2:00 pm.

Situation: while **B** is sitting at her office helping one of her friends, **A** enters the room and starts the conversation of many initiations.

1 A: Opening up until 17 times

- (1) Pre- closing →
- (2) Dismiss oneself →
- (2) Give reason →
- (1) Pre- closing →
- (3) Polite Phrase →

18 B: ↓Ok,
I'll get↑ going
> after helping another friend of↓mine<,
so::: (0.8)
I ↑hope this much was ↑helpful.

19 A: Opening up until 7 times

- 27 A: Fine.
- (3) Polite Phrase →
- 29 A: Sure it was.
- (1) Pre- closing →
- (2) Give reason →
- (1) Pre- closing →

28 B: I wish that wa::s ↓helpful.
30 B: Now, (0.2)
>I really need to go ↑back >to my friend.<
↑ Ok?

- 31 A: Sorry, but I have one more question, please.
- (3) Apology →
- (4) Make arrangement →

32 B: I'm ↑really rea::lly >very sorry<. (1.2)
I ↑really need to get back to you some other time.

- 33 A: Why not now?
- (3) Apology →

34 B: I'm ↑really ve::ry sorry.

- 35 A: A very small question.
- (2) Give reason →
- (4) Make arrangement →

36 B: ↑She's really getting la::te,(0.8) and I really don't want to take a >lot of her time<.
↑You can email me if you want. (0.4) Email lo::ng ↓answer. (smile)

- (3) Smile
- 37 A: M::mm
- (2) Give reason →

38 B: ↑That will be ↑more helpful, (0.8) >I have ↑time at home<.

- 39 A: Ok
- (2) Dismiss oneself →

40 B: But I ↑really need to get back to her ↑right now.

41 A: No problem.

(3) Polite Phrase →

(2) Dismiss oneself →

(3) Smile →

43 A: I'm sure you are not.

(3) Thank the addressee →

45 A: Thank you so much.

42 B: I hope I'm [↑]not rude,

but I [↑]really need to go [↑]back to
her right now. (smiling)

44 B: [↑]Thank you, (0.2) thank you

In this conversation, the respondent did not terminate the conversation. Instead, she gave many pre-closing expressions (Twice in turn 18, and once in 30). When she used a pre-closing expression, she did not just expose her reluctance to keep the conversation going on, but also asking the other party whether it was the right time to stop the conversation or the other speaker still had something else to talk about. She also asked for an excuse to stop by giving reasons (In turn 18, 30, 38) and by dismissing herself three times (In turn 18, 40, 42). The respondent also tried to maintain good relationship with the speaker by using many techniques such as: thanking the addressee (In turn 44), apologizing (In turn 32, 34), and using polite phrases (In turn 18, 28, 42). Keeping future contact in the above data (In turn 32, 36) can also be regarded as maintaining good relationship because the function of the utterance is not only to keep a future contact but also to compensate the conversation at that moment with another conversation in the future.

5. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the strategy used in each conversation consisting of at least four closing functions. This may illustrates that the speakers did not tend to end their conversation by direct termination using any of the termination markers or taking a distance.

It has been confirmed that bringing a conversation to an end is not simply a matter of saying goodbye. There has to be other closing function that helps bringing the conversation smoothly to its end. Therefore, speakers usually give some of the closing techniques that may show cooperative attitude or maintain relationship between both speakers before terminating a conversation. It has been also proved that speakers tend to use strategies of five or four closing functions despite the fact that using strategies with less than four functions is acceptable. This strengthens the concept of conversation as a cooperative activity and of participants as polite parties.

5.1. Most Frequent Closing Functions and Techniques

It can be inferred from (Figure 1) that asking for or giving an excuse is the most frequent function utilized in ending a conversation in the data under consideration. In most of the cases, as illustrated by (Figure 2), respondents tend to give reasons (In 9 turns) in order to justify the negotiation of the closing. Hence, when the speaker stops or leaves the conversation, the other speaker does not get confused and misunderstood. In some other cases, participants show a great tendency to dismiss themselves (In also 9 turns) over than dismissing the other party (In 1 turn only).

Figure 1: *The Functions Found in the Conversations*

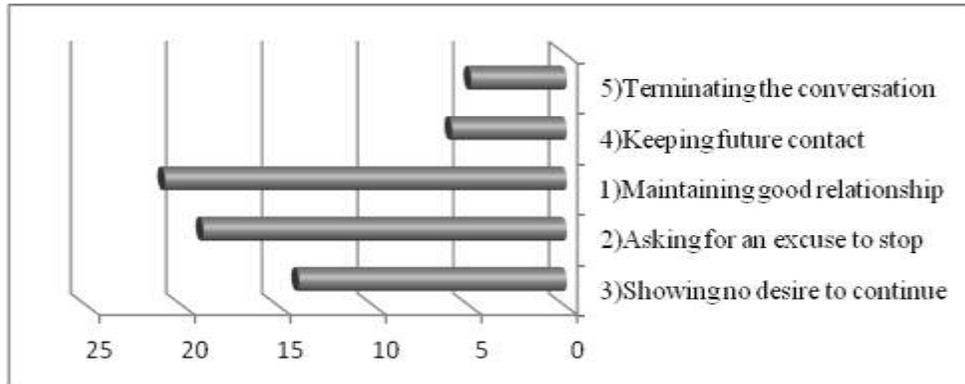
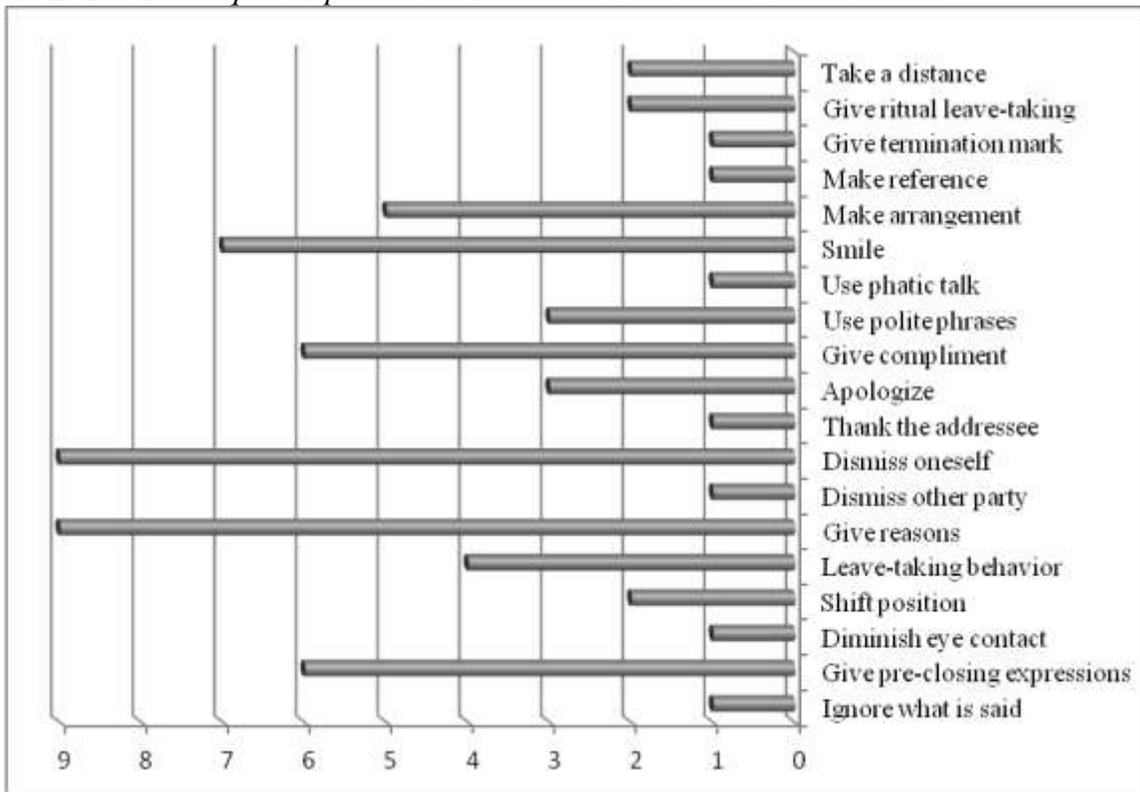


Figure 2: *The Techniques Represent the Functions Used in the Conversations*



Dismissing the other speaker is probably considered not a cooperative way to end a conversation. All the conversations were initiated by the first speaker, and the respondents are those who are supposed to end them. For this reason, the respondents felt that they might offend their addressee if they forced a closing by dismissing her. Furthermore, dismissing the other speaker cannot be categorized into Saptiana's (2004) closing functions. Thus, her methodology requires additional techniques from Wardhaugh's (1985) closing techniques in order to identify the type of technique used in this particular turn.

The second frequent function is showing no desire to continue a conversation (In 14 turns). By showing no desire or less desire to continue the conversation, the speakers tried to make their

addressee understand they did not want to talk anymore and want to inform that it was time to close the conversation. The most used techniques are: pre-closing expressions (In 6 turns), leave-taking behaviors (In 4 turns), shift position (In 2 turns), diminish eye contact (In 1 turn), and ignore what is said (In 1 turn).

Third, maintaining good relationship is also used as many as the previous function (In 14 turns). In fact, maintaining good relationship while ending a conversation is one strategy in maintaining the speakers' relationship. The findings illustrate that all the respondents pay attention to maintain a good relationship while they were ending their conversation. Giving compliments is the most used technique in this respect (In 6 turns), followed by apologizing (In 3 turns) and using polite phrases (In 3 turns). It seems that thanking the addressee and using phatic talk are the least frequent techniques (In 1 turn for each). It is worth mentioning that Saptiana's (2004) closing functions do not account for using polite phrases which is accounted for by Stenström's (1994) theory of conversational strategies.

Fourth, keeping future contact is also significant in its function as to end a conversation though not much utilized by the respondents (In 6 turns only). Making an arrangement is the most frequently used technique in the data under consideration (In 5 turns). As a result of being not able to pro-long the conversation, the participants offered compensation in the future to keep the contact with the first speaker. Another technique used to keep future contact is making reference (In 1 turn). This technique is not specified in Saptiana's (2004) methodology; thus, additional expansion from Albert and Kessler's (1976) processes in ending a social encounter is required to improve her methodology.

Fifth, terminating the conversation is the least frequent closing function used in the discussed closing strategies (In 5 turns only). In fact, a conversation is rarely ended with termination markers (In 1 turn only). However, this does not affect the plan of ending a conversation since most speakers must have agreed to close their conversations before the termination is given. Giving ritual leave-taking (In 2 turns) can be said as an effective strategy because the other speakers usually could only make few opening up after the initiation of this strategy. Taking a distance (In 2 turns) is found to be the strongest technique in forcing a closing and the speaker could not open another new topic and finally agreed to end the conversation. In Saptiana's (2004) closing methodology, ritual leave-taking is not taken into account as in Wardhaugh's (1985) closing techniques.

In ending a conversation, terminating is used almost in all final stage of the conversation. However, the most important and preferable closing function that can be used as a strategy in ending a conversation is asking or giving for an excuse to stop.

6. Conclusion

This paper has examined the strategies used by ELI teachers in ending their conversations, the most closing functions used in those strategies, and the techniques that reflect these functions. It has been shown that ending a conversation requires closing techniques that bring the conversation gradually to its end. Although ending can be easier to be done in some conversations than in others, strategies are always needed. Moreover, it is not precise to assume that a short conversation is more likely to need a strategy with less closing functions.

With regards to the closing functions, the five functions suggested by Saptiana (2004) to reach a conversation end are used in the current study. It is found that asking for an excuse to stop seems to be the most important closing function amongst the five functions. Saptiana's (2004) findings demonstrate that the respondents mainly used a range of two to four functions. However, the

findings in this research reveal that the participants used a range of four to five functions. This difference between the two findings is due to the different type of informants in both studies in view of the fact that teachers (the participants in this study) are known to be more polite and skillful than students (the respondents in Saptiana's, 2004 study) in ending their conversation. This confirms the hypothesis that well-educated people who are presented by ELI teachers use more closing techniques to end their conversations.

Concerning the closing techniques, giving reasons and dismissing oneself are found to be the most frequent techniques used to close the conversations. Despite the fact that the twenty techniques suggested by Saptiana (2004) are used in this research, her classification is found to be insufficient for the purpose of analyzing all the data in this research. Four other techniques from Albert and Kessler's (1976), Wardhaugh (1985), and Stenström (1994) have been added to the method used in this work. They are: ignoring what is said, using polite phrases, making arrangement, and giving termination markers. On the other hand, six of her techniques were found to be irrelevant to the data namely: using silent pauses, justifying ending contact, summarizing, giving compliment, expressing pleasure, and wishing each other well.

Suggestions for Further Research

Since this study is based on conversation analysis of closing utterances in informal face-to-face conversations used by ELI teachers at KAU, the analysis and findings are mostly not the same as using different informants. Changing the respondents will be appropriate to make further research including techniques and strategies.

Also, the conversation will be more natural if both speakers are talking spontaneously without bearing prolonging the conversation in mind. Therefore, the chance to conduct a research using more natural conversation will be a good offer to those who want to make a further research in the field of conversation analysis.

Finally, some further research can be carried out to investigate the factors that influence the chosen strategies through gender differences, status differences, and social distance differences.

About the Author:

Mrs Khadija Abdullah Al-Amoudi is a lecturer at the English Language Institute in King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. She obtained her Master degree in English Linguistics. Currently, Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages is the main area of her research interest.

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