

Unmasking the gossipy chat: Co-operativeness in all-female conversations

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Abstract

The idea of co-operativeness in conversations where people work together to produce shared meanings has become highly recognized in the literature on women's language. In a conversation, women are seen to collaborate in the production of text, making the talk dialogic and not monologic. This paper looks into the usual features of all-female conversations to find out if women co-operate in the conversational floor. More specifically, the paper identifies aspects of interactional patterns such as topic development, interruptions, overlaps and minimal responses which may confirm co-operativeness in women talk. The paper includes three all-female conversations of college students, teachers, and senior citizens. The setting of the all-female conversations builds on the presumption that women have their own private safe space to talk. Although the way to understanding language from a gender perspective is boundless, the results of this study may be of significance to students and researchers of gender studies, discourse analysis, and language policies.

Keywords: co-operativeness, interactional patterns, women talk

1. Introduction

Many linguists have embarked on looking into gender as a research variable. Ning, Dai, and Zang (2010) define gender as a societal predetermination of parameters constructed based on how men and women are perceived to talk habitually. It can be deduced that gender is the difference between men and women in terms of expectations pressed by culture and society on them. Moreover, where they come from cannot generalize how they differ because how they talk would depend on their respective needs, opportunities, opinions, limitations, and roles.

Lakoff (1975, as cited in Coates, 2004) in the epochal publication of *Language and Woman's Place* took a gender lens in looking at language in the society. This linguistic breakthrough led other scholars to thresh out their notions and assert their findings on language and gender.

According to Trudgill (2000), men and women have their unique way of using language. Wardhaugh (2002) asserts that analyzing language principles can bridge linguistic

and social theories, thus making various forms of talk as contributory to the success of a social group. In addition, Zimmerman and West (1987, as cited in Coates, 2004) state that linguists take various perspectives and engage in different approaches to study language and gender. For instance, the social constructionist approach claims that participants do not consistently manifest previous observations on how men and women generally talk. However, gender roles of participants in a group they are in are spelled out by their conversational behavior.

Some linguists also considered looking into politeness as an emerging language of women. Fasold (1990) asserts that women tend to be polite in their language to sound less local and more respectable, while Brown and Levinson (1987) see women's politeness as a face-saving strategy. On the other hand, Coates (2004) discusses approaches in looking into men's and women's use of language. Firstly, the difference approach claims that women and men belong to different cultural subcultures, and that explains why men and women use language in such different ways. However, critics of this approach point out that most people are likely to interact with members of the opposite sex on a regular basis and that women are not always victims of linguistic oppression. Secondly, the deficit approach was one the first attempts to study language from a gender perspective. The difference approach was and still is, even though fewer linguists confess to this approach, heavily influenced by Lakoff (1975). Lakoff introduced the idea that hedges and tag questions are conversational strategies of women regarded as weak and deficient as it lacks power. Lastly, the dominance approach is also one of the earlier lenses in linguistic research from a gender perspective. It sees women's way of using language and conversational behavior as a natural result of the societal oppression against women. Men's power and women's subordination are reproduced in language according to researchers who support this approach. In addition, Coates (2004) asserts that these approaches, with the exception of the deficit perspective, are still thriving and contributing to the gender-based research on language.

Lakoff's (1975) theories were heavily criticized by other linguists for making sweeping generalizations about women and their way of using language as she had only studied white middle-class women. Although this is a serious criticism, Lakoff's findings have been very influential all the same, mainly because fellow researchers only studied male language as it was considered the norm. This work on women's language was influential, and it was the first time that male language was not the norm. Lakoff's work inspired other linguists to look deeper into male and female language as two different categories.

Edelsky (1993, as cited in Coates, 2004) asserts that in conversations with other women, women are seen as behaving in a more collaborative way than men do. Conversations are media for asserting unity and showing support to female friends. Women use minimal responses to express: 1) that they pay attention to what a speaker is saying; 2) that they accept or change the topic; and 3) that they agree to the closure of a particular topic. Women's use of hedges, according to Lakoff (1975), expresses uncertainty. However, Coates (2004) identifies this as a way for women to embed sensitive topics into the conversation. It is a way to avoid the awkward humiliation in the conversational circle, and women admire fellow women who are able to do this. Contrastingly, men do not have to think much of hedging because they see themselves as better conversationalists if they are straightforward and frank.

Labov (1991), Wardaugh (1992), Franklin and Rodman (1993), all in Freed and Greenwood (1996), build on the notion that consistent and distinct speech styles are somewhat

related to women and girls and men and boys. However, Freed and Greenwood (1996) argue that it is insufficient to merely count linguistic forms without contextualizing a gendered conversational style by looking into the task, topic, and other discourse variables. Similarly, Coates (1989, as cited in Freed & Greenwood, 1996) presented how co-operative both men and women are based not on the sex or gender of the speaker but on the type of talk. More importantly, Tannen (2013) and Coates (2015) contend that since men and women somewhat live in different worlds which are made of different words, knowing how they talk differently is an effective tool for public awareness.

Coates (2004) cites Pilkington (1998) who studied two-women-only and two-men-only groups. Pilkington found that men do not mind being too argumentative when talking among each other. Moreover, hostility, disagreement, and dominance in the conversation seem acceptable and usual. In another study, Coates (1991) posits that in single-sex groups, women use language as a way to show support and acknowledge each other; their conversational strategy is built on the concept of cooperation.

In the same vein, Eckert (1989) and Richland (2012) opine that gender functions and philosophies shape how men and women build identity and live as members of the society. Moreover, the relation between gender and variation is dynamic, while age scales affects peoples' roles in life. Similarly, Uchida (1992, as cited in Coulmas, 2005) stresses that gender as a concept should be studied using possible all-encompassing and up-to-date approaches.

Compared to previous studies, Dunbar (2016) seems to extend the inquiry on gender and conversations to how group size and sexual segregation may possibly increase how often males or females prefer to engage in single-sex conversations. Although the study does not clearly explain whether or not gender differences affect conversational style, it was found that women, specifically, prefer to join all-female conversations if the social group is large enough to allow this. On the other hand, Guerrina, Chappell, and Wright (2018) take a feminist lens and conclude that women in all-female conversations: 1) ask as many clarificatory questions; 2) encourage responses from their co-speakers; 3) provide enough positive minimal responses; and 4) keep quiet or give way when interrupted.

Thornberg (2011) examined recorded conversations of high school students and found that conversational strategies such as tag questions, interruptions, hedges, and minimal responses were employed in order to manifest either competitiveness or co-operativeness. Moreover, it was found that men and women used these strategies differently. The behavior of the respondents primarily reflected Grice's conversational maxims (Grice, 1975, as cited in Thornberg, 2011), arguing that males are competitive while females are cooperative in conversations. However, in the study, since the group was mixed, although women heavily used cooperative strategies such as hedges and minimal responses, they also employed more overlaps and interruptions than males did. Levitan et al. (2015), refer to previous studies of Coates (2004) and Talbot (1998) among others and affirm that how one uses language depends on the functions that it serves whether in terms of interaction, gender, or identity.

It can be deduced that women develop topics by sharing the conversational floor, which becomes open to interruptions. It happens that several members of the conversation do interrupt and make commentaries. While some may consider such interruptions as discourteous and insensitive, according to Coates (1996), it is almost an unconscious practice for female speakers. To women, "overlap is often a supportive conversational strategy,

enhancing rather than violating a speaker's right to the floor" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013, p. 96). Furthermore, such interruptions also serve as strategies to build up others' contributions to the conversation. Various studies on women's conversation have shown that women automatically employ this strategy especially during intimate situations (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013).

Although there exists a great number of research on language and gender, only a few of them seem to go beyond linguistic patterns of mixed-sex groups. While it is true that a great deal of research analyzes grammatical structure of men's and women's language, not much attention is given to the setting, topic, and function of conversations. Moreover, Coates (2004), as affirmed by Eckert (1997), claims that it is primary for one to know how men and women carry out conversations in single-sex groups before analyzing how they do in mixed-groups.

Coates (1998) tested Jones's (1980, as cited in Coates, 1998) claims on co-operativeness while looking into all women-interaction specifically on setting, participants, topic, form, and function. Jones (1980, as cited in Coates, 1998) states that "gossip is essentially talk between women in our common role as women" (p.129). In this study, Coates looked into women's conversations in relation to setting, participants, form and function. Coates found out that women see themselves as belonging to a group that share similar experiences and woven life stories. Slightly replicating Coates's (1998) study titled *Gossip Revisited: Language in All-female Groups*, this paper will look into possible usual features of all-female conversations and explore the concept of female cooperation.

1.1 Research Questions

This paper aimed to identify usual features of all-female conversations by addressing the following questions:

- 1.1.1 What among the following aspects of interactional patterns are typical in all-female conversations?
 - 1.1.1.1 topic development
 - 1.1.1.2 interruptions
 - 1.1.1.3 overlaps
 - 1.1.1.4 minimal responses
- 1.1.2 How do these features confirm co-operativeness in women talk?

1.2 Theoretical Framework

Research shows that conversational floor is an organized platform, and speakers undergo a process that follows habits and principles. Included in these conventions of the interactional process are turn-taking and overlapping patterns (Levitan et al., 2015). The following concepts and theories have supported the identification of conversation structures and interpretation of the interruptions and overlaps in the study:

1.2.1 Topic development

Maltz and Broker (1982, as cited in Coates, 1998) posit that women in conversations develop topics gradually. Although Coates (1998) accepts that this notion lacks empirical support, it somewhat presumes that women take time to contribute to discussion, avoid gaps in the conversation, and shift topics progressively. To illustrate the manner by which women friends develop a topic collectively, here is a simple example:

[Three females discuss what they prefer for birthdays.]

F1: I think for birthdays I would rather have simple yet intimate **and** ---

F2: **memorable**.

F3: Plus big parties are **expensive** ---

F1: **and tiring**.

As can be seen in the conversation, although the utterances are said by three speakers, it seems that they are produced by only one speaker. Aside from this, the speakers focus on the topic, blend their voices, and allow each other to contribute to the conversation.

1.2.2 Turn-taking patterns

Coates (2004) posits that norms are necessary to keep conversations orderly. Norms on turn-taking determine how long a person talks in a conversation. This involves not only how prudently speakers are adjusted to each other but also how each of them knows the topic. The conversation below illustrates how females in conversations take turns in speaking:

[Three females talk about giving birth.]

F1: The first weeks are difficult.

F2: Yes, I wanted to believe sleep is not important.

F1: Did you have a normal delivery?

F3: Yes, I did! Thank God!

F2: Me too, but it took a while before the baby came out.

F3: That must have been so hard.

F2: It was! So how do you cope?

F1: I sleep whenever I can and eat a lot!

The example displays how speakers seem to keep their responses short in order to allow each other to contribute to the conversation. The tendency to shift to a short response which seems to ignore a speaker's point is actually a strategy to expound on a point that another speaker tries to assert.

1.2.3 Interruptions

According to Zimmerman and West (1975, as cited in Crawford, 1995) an interruption occurs when a speaker decides to take a turn while someone is still talking. Moreover, in single-sex groups, the interruptions made by women and men are not much different. Here is an example:

- [Two females talking about KDrama.]
F1: I started watching the series **an---**
F2: **You** will never stop!
F1: Yes! I just finished **episode ---**
F2: Oh, you have not reached that part yet.
F1: Really? No **spoi—**
F2: **No**, no! Of course, no spoilers!

In the conversation, F2 appears to be cutting F1 towards the end of F1's sentences. Then again, if one looks closely at the interruptions, F2 does not attempt to veer away from the topic which F1 started but actually seems to keep the pace of the conversation more upbeat.

1.2.4 Overlaps

According to Coates (2004), overlaps happen when a speaker intuitively takes the conversational floor either to agree with or support what is about to be said. This happens when speakers do not wait for their turn. Instead, they take the floor at the end of a speaker's turn. Below is an example of how a conversation may seem chaotic when all speakers want to speak at the same time:

- [Three females talking about buying presents.]
F1: What present should we buy for **[ma'am]**?
F2: **[Oh]** yes, we need to buy today!
F3: I think we should get her a **[blouse]**
F4: **[Bag]** ?
F2: Bag or **[blouse]** ?
F3: **[We]** can get **[both]**.
F1: **[Let's]** see how much we could chip in.

The speakers in the conversation speak simultaneously. It may seem as if the speakers compete and snatch a turn to speak away from each other. However, as shown in the example, the overlaps combine speakers; thus, more voices are allowed to contribute to the collective flow of the conversation.

1.2.5 Co-operativeness

The notion of co-operativeness in the study takes basis from Coate's (1998) assumption that women support each other in a conversation and eventually create shared meaning. The example below demonstrates this:

[Four females talking about booking for a trip.]

F1: How do you book your plane tickets?

F2: Wow, finally! When are you travelling?

F3: You can book online.

F1: This December.

F4: Yes, online is convenient.

F2: F1 has doubts with online booking.

F1: Yes, I'm afraid to get scammed.

F3: That's normal. I was scared at first too,

F4: Make sure you book through the airlines official website.

F2: I haven't done that too.

F4: It's easy.

F3: F1, do you need help?

F1: Yes, please.

The example shows how a conversation may be chaotic when speakers interject immediately after one speaks. In the conversation, F2 reacts to what F1 says instead of answering the question while F3 tries to share a similar experience instead of giving details to the question posed by F1. However, all four speakers, taking turn to speak as they bring their own answers to the question, seem to collaboratively answer F1's question. It is evident in the example that although all other three speakers would like to take the conversational floor, they allow F1 to end the topic F1 started in the first place.

2. Method

Firstly, this study analyzed the topic development of the three-all female conversations through Jones's (1980) notes on gossip in Coate's (1998) paper. Topic development as described by Coates (1998) is how women contribute to the conversation. In the course of a discussion, it is perceived that women prefer stability over disability. According to Coates (1998), a typical topic development is as follows:

1. A introduces the topic;
2. B tells an anecdote on the same theme;
3. C tells another anecdote on the same theme leading into;
4. General discussion;
5. D summarizes;
6. A has the last word.

Secondly, there was a need to quantify the data through frequency count and tallying of all the interruptions and overlaps in the extracts of the three recorded conversations. Moreover, interruptions and overlaps were coded in the extracts. For example, an interruption will be seen as this:

F1: So how's your weekend, F4? How was **your**
(unintelligible) ---

F2: She went to Cebu, man!

On the other hand, an overlap will be marked as:

M3: Ang dadaanan lang ng parents ko Quirino, most likely,
[Quirino]. [My parents way, most likely, would be
Quirino.]

M4:
[Tapos] tapos? [Then – then?]

The more interruptions and overlaps made in the conversations, the less co-operative the females are. Alternatively, less interruptions and overlaps spell out the cooperation of females in a conversation. Lastly, qualitative analysis was employed to discuss the usual structures of the all-female conversations and to explore the concept of co-operativeness.

There were three all-female conversations in the study. The first female group is composed of three college students of a university in Manila, the Philippines whose ages range from 17 to 18. The second group is composed of public school teachers aged 30 to 60 in Nueva Vizcaya, a province in the northeastern section of Luzon. The third group is composed of senior citizens who were co-teachers before and who now belong to a civic organization for retirees. The ages of the females in the last group are above 60.

The setting of the all-female conversations matches Jones's (1980, as cited in Coates's, 1998) presumption that women have their own private safe space to talk. The three recorded conversations in the study took place in each of the female group's favorite meeting place to talk and unwind – the restaurant.

Since the participants knew that their conversations would be recorded, there was a possible risk of participants intentionally or unintentionally changing their behavior or language (Labov, 1972, as cited in Coates, 2014). In the study, the participants in all groups have been friends for at least three years and they see each other every day. This made it comfortable for them to know that their conversation would be recorded and that these would become part of a study.

There were three different recorded all-female conversations: 1) college students; 2) teachers; and 3) senior citizens. Each taped conversation lasted for 15 to 20 minutes. One of the participants in the group was assigned to record the conversation. The same participant later on went over the transcription of the conversation and approved which part could be used in the study.

After listening to the conversations, it was found out that since the participants recorded their conversations in restaurants during their free time, it was inevitable that some

parts were unintelligible and people who walked in interrupted or joined them briefly. At first, it was thought that the data would not fit the objectives of the study, but such circumstances actually established the fact that the participants somehow forgot that the conversations were recorded. Then again, only the conversations among the pre-selected respondents, those three in each of the all-female conversations, were considered for analysis. In addition, although the conversations were generally audible, there were unintelligible parts which made it difficult to transcribe them. Nevertheless, there were enough data gathered for the study. The three conversations were transcribed and are available in MP3 format.

The system of transcription used throughout the paper was that developed by Jefferson (2014) for conversation analysis and Schegloff (1997). The conversation extracts were labeled based on the following aspects of the relative placement /timing of utterances:

1. =	Equals sign	Immediate latching of successive talk;
2. (.)	Period in parentheses	A pause or gap that is discernible but less than a tenth of second;
3. [overlap]	Square brackets	Mark the onset and end of overlapping talk;
4. ---	Broken lines	Indicate the start of an interruption.

3. Results and Discussion

Taking the lens of what Coates (2004) refers to as co-operativeness in all female- talk, this section explains how topic development, turn-taking patterns, interruptions and overlaps dominate or interweave in conversations among women.

The following are excerpts from the recorded all-female conversations:

3.1 College students' conversation

3.1.1 Extract 1: About a guy

- 1 F4: My - no, my-my senior, fought him. 'Coz he was like, 'I play football' and she's like 'no, you don't'. He goes, 'fine, first bead' and then after that my senior's like 'that's not contact sport'. He's like, 'yeah? You look like an Azkal.' (*laughing*) And then we were like, 'ooohhh, we feel so bad!'
- 2 F3: (*laughs*) Okay, tell them what we saw at (*unintelligible*). Dude, you won't believe it. Go.

- 3 F4: Earlier that night *rin* - we were friends with him – earlier that night, (*laughing*) and then he was like, he’s like, †you know what, girls, football is my first passion’ and then we saw his arms and we’re like, ‘girl, you’re my first passion.’

Laughter

- 4 F4: Come on.
5 F3: (*unintelligible*) – like dude.
6 F4: Come to Mama.
7 F1: And what did you say?
8 F4: **Now** ---
F3: And then the movie – **the movie** ---
9 F2: Are you serious?
10 F1: The movie, bai, the movie – tell us about the movie.
11 F3: Yeah.
12 F4: And so, he was telling us right, he was endorsing his new *baduy* movie. So then, we’re like ‘but we don’t understand, like, straight Filipino’ and he was like, ‘it’s eighty percent sex!’
All: Aaaaaahhhhhh!
13 F4: And then we were like, ‘oh that changes my mind now, yes!’
Laughter

In Extract 1 of the students’ conversation, it can be observed that F4 takes the conversational floor to talk about someone. It can also be noted that F3 and F2 interrupt (lines 8, 9) while F3 makes a minimal response (line 11) as F4 comes to the end of her story. Then again, it seems that the interruptions and the minimal response in the excerpt create a collaborative conversation where F1, F2 and F3 recognize F4 is talking and that all three of them are listening, following and engaging with F4. This reinforces what Edelsky (1993, as cited in Coates, 2004) asserts – women do not compete to take the spotlight in the conversation, but they avoid long pauses to express that they are involved in the conversation.

3.1.2 Extract 2: A friend’s weekend

- 1 F1: So how’s your weekend, F4? How was **your** (*unintelligible*) ---
F2: She went to Cebu, man!
2 F4: I went to Cebu right after, dude. I almost missed my flight! (*laughing*) I woke up at eight, my flight was at nine. I didn’t pack my bag. I went straight to the airport, okay?
3 F1: You had nothing?
4 F4: I didn’t shower, it was so gross!
5 F2: (*laughs*)
6 F3: You have nothing?
7 F4: Nothing!
8 F3: Dude!
9 F1: It’s **okay** ---

- F4: I have [clothes].
 F1: [Its] Saturday I passed out ---
 10 F4: Yeah.
 11 F1: I didn't know what time it [was]
 F4: [Dude], dude!
 12 F1: But I went to church service ---
 F4: (*laughing*) So I go to the airport and we- and I realized I'm holding the wrong ticket!
 13 F2: Oh my God!
 14 F4: And it's already nine! So I went to the ticketing office, right? So I have to reprint my ticket and I run to the airport and the counter is closed so I go to the supervisor's office, I'm like, 'Miss, Miss, the ticketing office took so long!' She's like, 'just run'. I grabbed my boarding pass, I was running.
 15 F2: Oh my God.
 16 F3: I like your outfit today F4.
 17 F4: Thanks, girl.

In Extract 2 of the students' conversation, it can be noticed that although F4 is the focus of the conversation, it is interesting how F1 asks short questions (lines 1, 3) to lead F4 in expounding on her topic, which is a recent humiliating experience. It is also important to mention that F1 interrupts (line 9) F4 somewhere in the conversation not really to steal attention but to express that it is natural for everyone to face embarrassment. Although line 9 appears to be a conversational jam where women somewhat speak at the same time, it can be noticed that F1 consistently assures F4 that her experience is common to women like them. Lastly, F3 pitches (line 16) into the conversation to appreciate F4's outfit which can be figuratively seen as another way to comfort her from a bad experience. This confirms Coates' (2004) argument that women talk in a supportive way to build and sustain harmony in the group. It also supports the view of Guerrina, Chappell, and Wright (2018) which explains how women in all-female conversations clarify their topic, give each other a chance on the conversational floor, interject short responses of affirmation, and give way when interrupted.

3.1.3 Extract 3: Other friends

- 1 F2: You know what, you remind me of my friend, (*friend's name*), and I told her when I saw her, like, 'you remind me of my friend F4, *grabe*. Like the way they talk, it's like, half the thing she says isn't funny, but she could explain it in a different way. So it's not even funny, but it's the way that she, like, delivers the **lines** ---
 F4: Yeah.
 2 F2: *Grabe*. And then the laugh *pa*?
 3 F4: (*laughs*)
 4 F2: F*** you, babe. **So** ---
 5 F4: Thanks, babe. Thanks, babe.

- 6 F2: **To give ---**
 F1: *Dapat ---*
 F2: So then anyways, she got into a fight, *si (friend's name)*-girl.
- 7 F4: Yeah, yeah.
- 8 F2: She got into a fight, and I went out, and I was supposed to do – and it was my – *(another friend's name)* ex before me, who she cheated on for me, but anyways, who cares, long story. She was there at the club, and then *(friend's name)*, like, she **got---**
- F4: *Gusto mo pa ba, babe?*
- 9 F2: She's good. Pop it. And then she's – she went up to my – to my ex, and then she was acting **like---**
- F4: Yeah?
- 10 F2: It's three years *na*.
- 11 F4: Yeah.
- 12 F2: Like, she's not over it yet, and she's like, 'f*** you'.
(laughs)
- 13 F4: *(laughing)* What?!

Extract 3 of the students' conversation shows that this time, F2 leads the conversation (line 1) in order to appreciate F4's good traits. In this part of the conversation, F4 can be marked as consistently giving F2 minimal responses (lines 1,5,7,8) in the course of F2's rundown of thoughts. In addition, although F1 interrupts F2 (line 6) in the middle of her exchange of dialogues with F4, it can be seen that F1 eventually remains quiet after recognizing the fact that F2 and F4 were not done with their points yet. This validates Holmes' (2000) claim that women have this skill to use minimal responses at the right time and in the right place in order to keep on affirming that they pay attention to what one says in the conversation. In the same token, Levitan et al. (2015) see frequent interruptions in female talk as interactional rather than disruptive because, as can be seen in the extract, the minimal responses either attempt to help out the speaker who seemingly finds the right words to continue or just signal that they do follow what the speaker is saying.

3.1.4 Extract 4: Another guy

- 1 F1: We did a speech and at the end of the speech I walked out so I can – 'coz I have to go and give her a *(unintelligible)*, and when I walked out, he starts screaming after me so I'm sure my prof saw.
- 2 F3: Oh my God. Does he follow you around?
- 3 F1: Yeah.
- 4 F3: Why is he here though?
- 5 F1: At school?
- 6 F3: No, why is he in Starbucks and you're in Starbucks?
- 7 F1: He was already here **[when I got here]**.
 F3: **[But he needs to]** understand...

- 8 F1: Yeah, yeah, yeah, he's – he doesn't get it. Like he's **socially** ---
 F2: Oh yeah.
- 9 F1: Like altered. But like, it's hard. The reason why, like, he's so persistent is because people in class instigate it. And then I kinda told them the other day when he wasn't here I kinda, uh, I told my class, I was like, 'you know it's really hard for me to not be mean to him and you guys just make it worse for me to be mean to him' and I'm like 'I hope you guys understand that there's something wr- like I got really mad and **then** ---
 F4: What did they say?
- 10 F1: They're all just really nice. I have to deal with it, yeah. And it's – it's, you know if I didn't know, I probably would've called, like told you and all that a long time ago. I – I hate sitting here 'coz I always wanna stare at – and it's like, I feel like they can't (*laughing*) see me **but** ---
 F4: (*laughs*)
- 11 F1: (*unintelligible*) – I'm like, staring at one person and then looking off, like, what the f***?
 (*unintelligible conversation*)

Extract 4 of the students' conversation elucidates how women use language to create cooperation and team spirit (Nelson, 1998, as cited in Coates, 2004). As can be seen in the extract, the participants make sure that each of them takes the conversational floor, one at a time, to either tell a story or share a problem. Moreover, this backs up the idea that women encourage each other to participate in the conversation so that nobody monopolizes it (Aries, 1976, as cited in Coates, 2004). It is interesting how the overlap (line 7) and interruptions (line 8, 9, 10) become not interruptions to one who is talking but interruptions to the silence. As can be noticed, F1 seems to deliberately pause towards the end of her sentences while the rest of the women keep completing her sentences or laughing at her story to somehow imply that they understand her discomfort in talking about a peculiar guy. The extract seems to reflect the results of Thornberg's (2011) study showing that conversations of students are abundant in tag questions, interruptions, hedges, and minimal responses in order to indicate how engaged and involved they are in the conversation.

3.2.2 Teachers' Conversation

3.2.2.1 Extract 1: After-school getaway

- 1 F1: Dadating kami dun ng **mga**--- [We get there at about---]
 F2: Five?
- 2 F1: Hinde. [No.] Four thirty or four o'clock- We arrive at 4:30 or five.
 3 F2: Yes.
- 4 F1: Four thirty or five. Duduwa nga oras! Talagang gusto pa naming sumayaw. [Just two hours! We still wanted to dance.]

3.2.3.3 Extract 3: Being sensitive

- 1 F1: Ay isu nga nakitak tatay idiyay pag prakpraktisan tayo. Wen. Ay apu, nakabasulak sapay tatay awan ka pay. [Oh, that's why I saw him there. You know, I thought I hurt someone's feelings a while ago].
- 2 F2: O..
- 3 F1: Ta gamin in-offer ku jay tupig. Kaabay ku ni Patring. Ni madam Vangie, jay ada idiyay sanguk ti nangyawatak. [So I wanted to offer the "tupig". Patring was seated next to me. But offered the "tupig" to Vangie who was seated in front of me.]
- 4 F3: Sinu ti kaabay mu? [Who were you sitting with?]
- 5 F1: Ni Patring. Idi ikak ti piyaya ni Patring ket, "Ay haan, ited mu kanyada" kunana ket di inted ku kanyada ta isu met kunana. [Patring. Now when I offered Patring some "piyaya", she said, "No thanks. Offer that to them." So I did what she told me to do.
- 6 F3: Retirees garud. Managsui da dagi diyay! [Well, retirees---. They easily feel bad.]
- 7 F1: Idi kwan napan sa met ni Manang Tuning. [And then Manang Tuning approached her too.]
- 8 F3: M-m .
- 9 F1: Napan na ikkan ti piyaya.Tapus. [She went to give her "piyaya".]
- 10 F3: Haan nan sa **kayat**--- [I think she does not want that.]
F2: Tupig met! [It's "tupig"!]
- 11 F1: Haan. Idi ukukisan ni Manang Tuning kay tupig ket kwa kayat na met. "Data man ti kayat ku", kunana. [No. When Manang Tuning was peeling the "tupig", she said "I actually want that.]
- 12 F2: Ay, very **good**! [Oh, very good!]
F1: **[Ay]** salamat! Kunak man nu ada man nasaktak nga baketen. Nagse-sensitive dagituy nga babaket. [Thanks God! I thought I hurt someone's feelings again. Old women are so sensitive.]

Laughter

In Extract 3 of the senior citizens' conversation, F3 and F2 interrupt (line 10) and overlap (line 12) with F1, respectively. As can be seen, F1 is worried about probably hurting a colleague during their rehearsals. Consistently though, the interruption and overlap made by F3 and F2 in different points during F1's sharing are attempts to support her. The two coded interactional patterns seem to have helped her to forget about her worries and feel eventually better. This extract somewhat supports Nelson (1998, as cited in Coates, 2004) in his claim that women do not only give each other a chance to participate in a conversation, but they also consider conversations as opportunities for them to tell a story or share a problem.

3.2.3.4 Extract 4: Newborn babies

- 1 F2: Ti nakakatkatawa di rabii anya, di uppat kami. Maysa nga lolo ti agigigem jay apu na ta talu kami met nga kuwa – taga Bayombong jay maysa nga teacher met lang. [You know what’s funny last night? There were four of us. One grandfather was carrying his grandchild while there were three of us – the other one was from Bayombong, a teacher like us.]
- 2 F3: Sinu kadwa yo? [Who were you with?]
 F2: Tata ket, ni agsangit jay maysa. Tumakder ta ihelhele na. Ni sumublat met jay maysa. [Now, one baby cried. The grandparent, who was carrying the baby, stood while singing a him a lullaby. Then baby was next.]
- 3 F1: Nga? [To?]
 4 F2: Nga agsangit, jay baby. [To cry...I mean, the baby..]
 5 F1: O..
 6 F2: Hala, hala, hala! Ay ag-compose ka meten apu. Mag compose ka na rin ha. Tingnan mo duet sila, mamaya **trio na** --- [Oh, oh, oh! I think you should also cry along baby boy. Look how the other babies sing in duet. Pitch into the crying and we’ll have a trio--”]
 F3: Ang ibig mong sabihin, talu kayu jay room? [You mean there were three of you in the room?]
 7 F1: Maysa nga room? [One room?]
 8 F2: Kasi PhilHealth lahat yun! [It was a Philhealth room, you know.]
 9 F3: Ay PhilHealth room. [Oh, Philhealth room.]
 10 F1: PhilHealth room nga para **[babies]**. [PhilHealth room for babies.
 F2: **[Kasla]** met lang aya nga dingdinggen dagidiyay babies aya diyay pagtungtungungan mi. Idi nagsangit jay maysa, simarunu met diyay **[maysa]**. [It seemed like the babies understood what we were saying. When one of them cried, the other one chimed in.]
 F3: **[Umapal]** met a isu agsangit met. [Maybe he was envious that’s why he cried too.]
 11 F2: Ay very good balong a, very obedient. [Oh very good boy, very obedient.]
 Laughter

In Extract 4 of the senior citizen’s conversation, F2 shares her experience in the hospital when she took care of her newborn grandchild. It is interesting how the interruptions unfold and scaffold the conversation into a coherent one. First to note is how F3 interrupts (line 6) F2 to clarify the setting of her story. Second to notice is how F1 overlaps (line 10) with F2 in illustrating her story. Finally, it can be observed that F3 chimes in overlapping with F2 to signal that she is able to blend into the discussion. The extract illustrates Aries’s (1976, as cited in Coates, 2004) argument that when women talk, they do not monopolize nor compete but collaborate and cooperate.

4. Conclusion

This paper sought to examine interactional patterns in all-female conversations and how they influence female co-operativeness.

Coates's (2004) theory on female cooperation was significant since it was found in the study that women use language to build friendship since their strategies, for instance, minimal responses manifest supportive attention. Surprisingly, even interruptions and overlaps in the conversation seem to contribute to the participants' goal of building solidarity among them through women talk. Although female college students employed a considerable amount of swear words, there were observable expressions of belonging and support in their conversations.

Although Lakoff's (1975) assertion on how women use language is highly criticized, it was relevant in explaining how women in the study use language. Their use of minimal responses to sustain the conversation showed how accustomed they are in using language to maintain relationships. In addition, the slight occurrence of interruptions and overlaps in the conversations is similar to the contention of Zimmerman and West (1975, as cited in Crawford, 1995) that although men and women interrupt similarly, they intuitively differ in reasons for interrupting. Men want to be heard immediately, which is why they take the spotlight at the conversational floor while someone is speaking. On the other hand, women cut in on to show affirmation for what is being said and interest in what other speakers think and feel.

Therefore, all-female conversations can be described as co-operative. Although some unceasingly argue about how women's stereotyped conversational strategies like minimal responses, hedging device, and tag questions when in mixed groups, it pays to underscore the fact that in the study, women see other women in the conversation as their equal. Moreover, there is more to identifying or counting conversational strategies in all-female conversations. As Freed and Greenwood (1996) argue, contextualizing all-female conversations goes beyond existing gender stereotypes on women's passivity and weakness in conversations. Women, when talking together, as illustrated in this paper, shape a unique framework that is spelled out by a common goal. As seen in the study, female college students take a conversation as a safe space to share their adventures and experiences; thus, building identity and self-esteem. On the other hand, teachers, even when outside the portals of the school could not help but discuss their students' welfare; thus, enunciating their roles as second parents. Lastly, the senior citizens consider talking to each other as a chance to affirm their extended parental roles to their grandchildren; thus, indirectly coming to terms with old age. As Coates (1998) stresses, when analyzing all-female conversations, considering where women are coming from will provide a broader lens of women's conversational roles and goals.

Then again, it should be highlighted that the way to understanding language from a gender perspective is still boundless for researchers to discover multifarious details on language and gender, which is highly relevant when one takes a socio-cultural lens in the teaching and learning of language.

Since this research is limited in scope, it is recommended that future research include other conversational strategies like tag questions and hedging devices in all-male, all-female, and mixed groups. Moreover, it will also be interesting to know if these interactional patterns have correlation with the age of men and women in single-sex groups and their socio-economic status.

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