

## TURN-TAKING IN MAX AND RUBY FILM: A CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

This research explores turn-taking patterns in the Max and Ruby animated series with a focus on the title Ruby's Piano Practice. Through a descriptive qualitative approach, the research examines how conversational dynamics reflect broader social and communicative phenomena. The analysis highlights Ruby's dominant and verbose conversational style in contrast to Max's minimalist and repetitive verbal contributions, such as consistently responding with “fire truck” regardless of context. Key elements of conversational analysis, such as adjacency pairs, pre-sequencing, preference organization, and repair, were used to identify implicit rules and structures that shape the characters' interactions. The results showed frequent occurrences of adjacency pairs and preference organization, one instance of pre-sequencing, and no observable repair sequences in the analyzed episodes. These findings illustrate turn-taking mechanisms and contrasting character communication styles, providing insight into how social order is maintained through everyday conversational practices in animated narratives.

Keywords: Conversation Analysis, Turn-Taking; Max and Ruby.

### Introduction

Humans are naturally social creatures, and communication is the cornerstone of their interactions. As described by Aristotle et. al (Politics, 1995, p. 8) that humans are essentially social animals. This intrinsic sociality requires effective communication, which is fundamental to building relationships, sharing knowledge, and fostering mutual understanding in both personal and societal contexts. Communication allows individuals to express their thoughts, convey emotions, and collaborate to achieve common goals. Without communication, human interactions would be chaotic and fragmented.

The importance of communication is increasingly emphasized in the field of discourse studies, where scholars explore how meaning is constructed through spoken and written interactions. One such field of study is conversation analysis which investigates the complex dynamics of spoken discourse. According to Paltridge (Discourse Analysis An Introduction ( 2nd edition ), 2012, p. 90), “A technique of oral discourse analysis known as conversation analysis examines how individuals handle their routine conversational exchanges. This technique looks at the structure of spoken discourse and how it changes as speakers engage in these exchanges. Aspects of spoken discourse such as adjacent pairs-sequences of related utterances-preference organization-turn-taking, feedback, repair, opening and closing of conversations, discourse markers, and response tokens have all been examined by conversation analysis. Conversation analysis uses recorded spoken data to conduct a careful and in-depth evaluation of the data. “In addition, according to Sacks (e.g. 1992, 2007) in (Paltridge B. , 2012, p. 90) developed conversation analysis as an approach to the study of social action which sought to investigate social order as it was produced through the practices of everyday talk. (Liddicoat 2011: 4).

By focusing on turn-taking mechanisms and conversational dynamics, conversation analysis reveals how participants create the flow of interaction. In particular, turn-taking is a fundamental

component of conversation that ensures an orderly exchange between speakers. Understanding how speech turns are allocated, managed and transmitted is crucial to uncovering the underlying patterns that govern human discourse.

Turn-taking is one of the essential components in language pragmatics, which plays a role in maintaining the smoothness and sustainability of conversational interactions. According to van Dijk 2015, as cited in (Lavrinenko & Shevchenko, 2019, p. 55), turn-taking is a local operational mechanism that includes a series of processes, ranging from the gradual handing over of turns, the application of certain pressures, to turn-taking in bilateral conversations. This process is not just a random pattern, but a structured system that is essential for organizing the flow of communication.

(Montensen, 2017, p. 227) The most striking aspect of face-to-face communication is the phenomenon when one of the participants of the interaction ends their talk and the other begins it in a smooth and synchronized manner. Ford (Conversation Analysis and Turn Taking, 2012) explains that turn-taking is a technique used by conversation participants to control the transfer of talk. Each turn taken not only signals a response to the previous speaker but also reflects their understanding of the discussion that has taken place and the direction in which events are unfolding. This shows that communication is not just an exchange of words, but a dynamic process that involves careful coordination between participants.

In practice, these turn-taking patterns are often more complex than they appear. While it is generally assumed that speakers will wait for interlocutors to finish their sentences before taking turns, recordings of everyday conversations show that pauses and overlaps are rare. When these two elements do appear, they have regular patterns and specific social meanings. As expressed by Sacks et. all cited in (Paltridge B., 2012, p. 95) the basic rules of conversation allow one speaker to speak at a time, with the option to designate another speaker or take a turn without designation. This arrangement shows how human communication is supported by a system of verbal and nonverbal signals.

Furthermore, the way speakers mark the end of a speaking turn is also a focus of conversational analysis. Signals such as the completion of a syntactic unit, a pause accompanied by a drop in intonation, or the use of certain expressions such as “mmm” or “anyway” are often used to signal that a speaking turn is coming to an end. In addition to verbal signals, nonverbal elements such as eye contact and changes in posture also play an important role in this process.

External factors also influence this turn-taking pattern. Grun 1998, as cited (Abdilah, 2016, p. 6) identified that gender, personality and culture are the three main factors influencing conversation turn-taking behavior. Gender can influence communication style preferences; for example, some studies show that women tend to be more cooperative in turn-taking than men. Personality traits, such as introversion or extroversion, also determine how actively one takes turns. Meanwhile, culture influences unwritten rules about the duration of pauses, overlaps or signals that are considered polite in conversation.

As such, turn-taking is not just a conversational strategy, but also a reflection of the various linguistic, social and cultural aspects that shape the way humans communicate. An in-depth analysis of this process can provide greater insight into how social interactions are structured and take place in various contexts.

In the study of turn-taking analysis, there is what is called the turn-taking mechanism, namely the allocational mechanism and the lexical component. According to (Pour & Yazd, 2015, p. 59) states that Any verbal or nonverbal cue that indicates it is the listener's turn to speak is referred to as an allocation mechanism. The cue can be a word, a cough, a sound, or even a glance. The lexical component undoubtedly relates to each person's perspective on how to start and continue a conversation. Turn construction unit, or TCU, is another word for the turn construction component from which turns are generated.

Four main ideas regarding turn-taking have been defined by Schegloff 2007, as cited in (Pour & Yazd, 2015) and are as follows:

- Adjacency pair

According to Paltridge (2012 p. 98) Adjacency pairs are an important component of conversational structure and an important means of conveying and understanding meaning in conversation. An adjacency pair is an utterance made by two speakers in succession such that the second utterance is recognized as a follow-up to the first utterance and is therefore connected to it. This suggests that an adjacency pair that initiates a conversation requires two people. For example, one of them asks a question, and the other responds (Pour & Yazd, 2015)

- Pre-sequence

According to Cruse (2003) is used to introduce a conversational action. For example, before someone makes a request, they might ask, “Are you busy?” to make sure the situation is conducive. This question is a presequence because it precedes the main request.

- Preference organization

When a speaker makes the first pair component, they should pause their speech and let the other speaker give the second pair part. This is the basic rule for adjacent pairs. However, there is some latitude in how one responds to specific first pair elements. For example, “accept” or “reject” may come after a compliment. As a result, certain components of the second pair may be favored while others may be disfavored (Paltridge B. , 2012, p. 99). This indicates that we favor one type of response or reaction over another.

- Repair

A way for speakers to check their understanding during a conversation and correct their own or others' statements. Almost everyone has experienced it. Imagine when we are talking, you unexpectedly say a word in a funny or awkward way, or we say something without intending to offend, only to find out that our listener is offended. After the conversation is over, we can either apologize to the person we offended or immediately correct our mistake. The speaker must decide how to correct his/her mistake (Pour & Yazd, 2015, p. 60).

This article examines turn-taking patterns in the animated film Max and Ruby. The analysis explores the dynamics of how characters interact, focusing on Ruby's dominant and verbose nature in contrast to Max's minimalist and often one-off verbal contributions. By applying the principles of conversation analysis, the research aims to uncover the implicit rules and structures that shape character interactions and reflect broader social and communicative phenomena.

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method following the theory stated by Creswell (Research Design, 2023, pp. 285, 293). To achieve this, the researcher watched the series max and ruby season 1 episode 1, several times to find and understand the turn-taking patterns used. The data collected during this procedure will be examined and reported in detail in narrative form. In addition, to enhance the theoretical framework and support the research, the researcher conducted a literature review by reading scientific publications and books related to the research topic. This methodology is intended to thoroughly examine the differences between the novel and its movie version.

## Results

Max and Ruby is a children's animated series adapted from the book by Rosemary Wells. The series first aired in 2002 and was produced by Nelvana and Nick Jr. The series depicts the dynamics of a brother-sister relationship, with a focus on mild conflict and cooperation between them. Ruby often wants things to go her way, but Max with his unique ideas comes up with unexpected solutions. The story usually ends with Max and Ruby realizing the importance of understanding each other.

Max is a little rabbit who is about 3 years old. Max is innocent, creative and tends to solve problems in his own way. Although he often only says one word or a short sentence, his actions always make a clear point. Ruby is Max's older sister, who is about 7 years old. Ruby tends to be domineering, responsible and organized. She often tries to direct or organize Max according to her plans.

The following is an analysis of the turn-taking conversation between Max and Ruby in the animated title Ruby's Piano Practice.

| Speaker | What he/she speak                                                                                                                                                                                               | Analysis                            |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Ruby    | "The school <u>concert</u> is tomorrow, ma::x and I get to play <u>twinkle, twinkle, little star</u> "                                                                                                          | Statement                           |
| Max     | "Fire Truck."                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Give another statement              |
| Ruby    | "I don't know where your fire truck is, Max."<br>Ahe:::m<br>♪ twinkle twinkle little star ♪<br>♪ how I wonder what you are ♪♪<br>Practice makes perfect, Ma::x, you go play with your toys, while I:: practice. | (Unexpected answer)                 |
| Max     | "Fire truck!"                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Statement                           |
| Ruby    | "You lo::st your fire truck, Max. You'll have to play, with Something else. Now let's see...<br>♪ twinkle twinkle little star ♪ (Minute 01:05-01-45)                                                            | Statement by providing instructions |

In this conversation between Ruby and Max, Max always answers Ruby's every statement by giving another statement, fire truck. Ruby's first statement wants to give information that there will be a concert at school tomorrow, but Max does not care, he only responds by giving what he wants, which is fire truck. After that Ruby responded that she did not know the existence of Max's fire truck (in conversation analysis studies, especially 'Turn-Taking, Ruby's answer of not knowing Max's statement is called the Preferred-Unexpected answer (Paltridge B. , 2012, p. 99) because it was a response that "connected" with Max's statement, even though Ruby's answer was not expected by Max) then Ruby continued her singing practice. Max didn't care about Ruby's singing practice, all he wanted was his fire truck. Ruby then responded by instructing Max to play with her other toys.

| Speaker | What he/she speak                                                                                                              | Analysis                             |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Max     | "Fire Truck!"                                                                                                                  | Statement                            |
| Ruby    | "What is it, ma::x?"                                                                                                           | Adjacency pair and Unexpected answer |
| Max     | "Fire truck!")                                                                                                                 | Statement                            |
| Ruby    | " <u>I don't know</u> where your Fire truck is, ma::x. you'll have to play with your lobster instead."<br>(Minute 03:09-03-26) | Unexpected answer                    |

While Ruby was practicing playing the piano, Max surprised Ruby by saying "fire truck". Ruby then responded that she did not know what Max meant. Ruby's response to Max's statement can be expressed as Adjacency pair and Unexpected answer, because Max's utterance was responded

to with a response that was “in line” even though it was not what Max expected. Max repeats his statement to make it clear that he wants the fire truck. Ruby finally understood what Max meant and replied that she did not know the whereabouts of Max's fire truck and it can be categorized as Preference Organization-Unexpected answer.

| Speaker | What he/she speak                                                                                          | Analysis     |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Ruby    | “here's your lobster, max. Let's wind him up.<br>(0.8) I have to practice for my concert tomorrow, ma::x.” | Pre-sequence |
| Max     | ..... (Minute 03:35-03-52)                                                                                 | No response  |

In this statement, Ruby says here's your lobster Max. let's wind him up. As a pre-sequence to her desire to continue practicing the piano.

| Speaker | What he/she speak                                                                                              | Analysis                             |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Max     | “Fire Truck!”                                                                                                  | Statement                            |
| Ruby    | “What's the <u>matter</u> Ma::x?”                                                                              | Adjacency pair and Unexpected answer |
| Max     | “Fire truck”                                                                                                   | Statement                            |
| Ruby    | “I know what we should do:: Let's get you some lunch. You can even make it yourself”.<br>(Minute 04:30- 04:45) | Offering another option              |

In this case, instead of looking for what Max wanted, Ruby offered another option to take Max's mind off things.

| Speaker | What he/she speak                                                                                                               | Analysis    |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Ruby    | “Here's the peanut butter, and here's the lettuce, and here's the bread, max. Make your own sandwich, max, I have to practice”. | Instruction |
| Max     | (Minute 04:49- 04:45)                                                                                                           |             |

Ruby told Max to make his own sandwich, so that Max wouldn't disturb her while she was playing the piano. But Max didn't respond to what Ruby said. He just watched Ruby's activities in silence.

| Speaker | What he/she speak                                                               | Analysis                             |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Max     | “ Fire truck”                                                                   | Statement                            |
| Ruby    | “What is it this time, ma::x?”                                                  | Adjacency pair and Unexpected answer |
| Max     | “Fire Truck”                                                                    | Statement                            |
| Ruby    | “you finished your lunch, <u>no::w</u> you can play outside. A::ll by yourself. | Offering another option              |
| Max     | .....                                                                           |                                      |

|      |                                                                                                                              |                                      |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Ruby | “You can e::ven play in the mud with your deep diver <u>submarine</u> . Look at it dive into The mud, max!, where is going?” |                                      |
| Max  | .....                                                                                                                        | Just try to play with his submarine. |
| Ruby | “you know where to find me, max”. (Minute 05:46-06:36 )                                                                      | Closing the conversation             |

Max made another statement to implicitly ask where his fire truck was. Ruby responded with annoyance. Then Max gave the same statement, fire truck. Ruby finally came back and tried to offer another toy option to take Max's mind off his fire truck. Max finally tries to play with his submarine. After that Ruby went back to practicing piano and left Max outside. .

| Speaker | What he/she speak                              | analysis        |
|---------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Ruby    | “What is that?”                                | Adjacency pair  |
| Max     | “Fire Truck”                                   | Expected answer |
| Ruby    | “Max, you're all muddy!” (Minute 07:11-07:49 ) | Statement       |

Ruby was practicing the piano, when suddenly there was an alarm sound when she pressed the keys. She then checked what was inside the piano. then she found something. Max, who appeared suddenly covered in mud, told her it was his fire truck.

## CONCLUSION

After watching the Max and Ruby animation with the title Ruby's Piano Practice, it was found that Max always responds and gives the same answer: fire truck to everything Ruby says. Whereas Ruby always gives a long statement and always takes the initiative and sometimes assumes what Max wants. Adjacency pairs and statements occur frequently in the conversation between Max and Ruby. Pre-sequence was found once. Preference organization was found six times. While repair was not found in the animation. .

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