

## Husband/Wife Interpersonal Exchanges in Kalhori Kurdish

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**Abstract.** This research focuses on the Interpersonal Function of language in the sense suggested by Halliday (1985, 1994), and it attempts to analyze the husband/wife interpersonal exchanges employed in Kalhori Kurdish, a dialect spoken in Western Iran. The objective is to answer three research questions as follows: 1) to what extent are husband/wife exchanges of Kalhori Kurdish husband-initiated, and to what extent are they wife-initiated? 2) How different are these exchanges in terms of interpersonal features, 'giving' versus 'demanding'? 3) Why are these exchanges different? The first two questions led to descriptive answers, based on which it was decided that of the total 800 exchanges recorded 440 were husband-initiated and 360 wife-initiated. The husband-initiated exchanges were mostly demanding (358 out of 440) calling for goods and services as well as information. The wife-initiated exchanges, however, were mostly giving (207 out of 360) providing goods, services and information. The last question, which required a critical approach along the lines suggested by Huckin (1997), led to three types of justification for the differences including the reasons related to the larger speech community, those rooted in individual differences as well as the ones stemming from the sequence and content of the exchanges themselves.

**Keywords:** functions of language, the interpersonal function, husband/wife exchanges, Kalhori Kurdish

### 1. Introduction

Approaches to discourse analysis, according to McCarthy et al. (2002), do not have their roots in one particular discipline, and they have come from various sources among which are sociology, sociolinguistics as well as linguistics. The discourse analysis approach that was developed based on sociology was 'conversation analysis' which focused on conversation since, according to this approach, conversation is an accessible and congruent resource for social inquiry, and social inquiry can be maintained best by analyzing different dimensions of conversation such as topic, turn taking, and adjacency pairs. The ethnographic view to discourse analysis evolved based on sociolinguistics. This approach was led by Dell Hymes who, as cited by Widdowson (2003, 2007), suggested that in order to account for the full potentiality of language, a competence for use should be considered. A competence able to answer questions concerning not only the formal possibility of language but also its social appropriateness, its feasibility as well as its actual performance. Linguistics, however, has furnished the foundation for the development of several approaches to the analysis of discourse, a main case among which is Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL).

### 2. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

One of the main approaches to discourse analysis which, according to McCarthy et al. (2002), has developed based on linguistics is SFL. Contrary to the formal approaches of studying language, this type of linguistics is concerned with the way in which language form is determined by its uses. SFL has a long history dating back to work by Prague School in the 1920s and the work of J. R. Firth in the 1940s and 1950s. This type of linguistics has, in recent years, been the focus of consideration for M. K. Halliday (1985, 1994) and his followers. Halliday begins with the question, 'why is language structured the way it is and not in some other ways?' His answer is that because it reflects the functions language is required to serve as a means of social interaction. He distinguishes three main functions: The ideational function, the textual function and the interpersonal function.

#### 2.1. The ideational function

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This function materializes, according to Halliday (1985, 1994), when clause is employed as the representation of a process. A process in this sense consists of three components: the process itself, participants in the process, as well as the circumstances associated with the process. Three principal types of processes have been suggested for the English clause, namely material processes, mental processes and relational processes.

Material processes are processes of doing. They express the notion that some entity does something which may be done to some other entity. Such processes can probe in the following way: The one who does the deed is ‘the actor’, what the actor does is ‘the process’, and the person or thing that undergoes the process is considered as ‘the goal’. Examples: The wolf (actor) attacked (process) the shepherd (goal). The shepherd (goal) was attacked (process) by the wolf (actor). According to Halliday, although it is possible to have texts consisting entirely of material processes, it is not realistic to limit ourselves to these processes since in such sentences as the following, ‘Ahmad favored the present you brought her’, although one clause (you brought her) can be approached within the framework of material processes, another clause (Ahmad favored the present) cannot. That is why the framework is broadened to include mental processes as well.

Mental processes are different from material processes on the basis of five criteria among which are the following. In a clause of mental process, there is always one participant who is human. This is the one that senses, feels, thinks or perceives. Example: Mary in ‘Mary liked the gift’. Another difference associated with mental processes is that of tense. In a mental process, the unmarked present tense is the simple present: ‘Do you know Ahmad’ (unmarked), not ‘are you...’ But in material processes, the unmarked present tense is the progressive: ‘They are building a house’ (unmarked), not ‘they build a house’. If material processes are processes of doing and mental processes those of sensing, the other main category ‘relational processes’, are those of being. For example: Ali is wise. Hassan is the leader. The central meaning of relational processes is that something *is*. Being can be expressed differently in different languages. In English, being is expressed in three ways: intensive (**X is A**), circumstantial (**X is at A**) and possessive (**X has A**). Each of these comes in two modes: attributive (**A is an attribute of X**) and identifying (**A is the identity of X**).

## 2.2. The textual function

According to Halliday (1985, 1994), when clause is employed as a message, we are dealing with textual meaning and textual meta-function. Clause in this sense involves two main components, namely ‘theme’ and ‘rheme’. Theme is the element which serves as the point of departure of the message. The remainder of the message, the part in which the theme is developed is called the rheme. Examples: The bearded man (theme) has provided Ali with a book (rheme). The book (theme) has been provided by the bearded man (rheme). Some grammarians have used the terms ‘topic’ and ‘comment’ instead of theme and rheme, but in functional grammar topic refers to one kind of theme. Another point is that although theme is the element which comes in the first position, it is not the way it is defined in functional grammar where it is as ‘the point of departure of the message’. It should be noted that theme is not necessarily a nominal group like the ones exemplified, and it can be an adverbial group or propositional phrase as in the following two sentences: Once (theme) I was a teacher (rheme). On Sunday night (theme), I paid Ali a visit (rheme).

## 2.3. The interpersonal function

When clause is employed as an exchange, we are dealing with the interpersonal meaning and interpersonal meta-function (Halliday 1985, 1994). The idea here is that simultaneously with its organization as a process as well as a message, clause can also be organized as an interactive event involving speakers (writers) and audiences (readers). In this framework, the speaker adopts a particular speech role in the act of speaking, namely ‘giving’ or ‘demanding’. The commodity exchanged would be ‘goods and services’ or ‘information’. (Table 1)

Table 1

	a. goods and services	b. information
1. giving	Offer Would you like this?	Statement He gave him the book.
2. demanding	Command Give me that book	Question What did he give him?

As represented in the table, when language is used to exchange information, clause takes on the form of a ‘proposition’ which involves statements and questions, and when language is used to exchange goods and

services, it takes on the form of a ‘proposal’ which involves offers and commands. Whether clause takes on the form of a proposition or a proposal, it will involve two main elements: ‘the Mood’ element as well as ‘the residue’. The Mood element itself consists of two parts. The first part is ‘the subject’ which is a nominal group and the second part involves ‘the finite’ which is part of a verbal group (Table 2).

Table 2

Finite	Subject Mood	Residue
1. The professor	Has	provided them with a book
2. What I had	did not	interest him
3. They	Might	turn up any time

In order to recognize the subject and the finite within the framework of functional grammar, the element which is picked up by the pronoun in the tag is considered ‘the subject’. The element which is picked up by the auxiliary in the tag is considered ‘the finite’. The finite has the function of making the proposition finite. This is done in two ways: One is by reference to the time of speaking (examples 1 and 2), and the other is by reference to the judgment of the speaker (example 3). The first is primarily tense, the second modality. As presented in Table 2, the Mood involves the subject and the finite while the remainder of the clause is called the residue. The residue consists of functional element of three kinds: ‘predicator’, ‘complement’, and ‘adjunct’. Predicator is realized by a verbal group minus the temporal or modal operator which functions as the finite, complement is an element within the residue that has the potential of being subject but *is not*. And adjunct is an element that has not got the potential of being subject and it is typically realized by an adverbial group or propositional phrase.

### 3. Research Method

#### 3.1. Objective, instrumentation and procedure

This research focuses on the Interpersonal Function of language and attempts to study husband/wife exchanges used by people speaking Kalhori Kurdish, a Southern Kurdish dialect, spoken in and around Eslamabad-E- Gharb city which is located in Kermanshah Province in Western Iran. The objective is to analyze husband/wife interpersonal exchanges employed in this dialect. Three research questions are asked in this regard: 1) to what extent are husband/ wife exchanges in Kalhori Kurdish husband-initiated, and to what extent are they wife-initiated? 2) How different are these exchanges in terms of interpersonal features, viz giving and demanding? 3) Why are the exchanges different? To address these questions, the data was collected using diary keeping over a period of two months, and it was recorded in the form of dialogs along with context notes in order to hinder possible ambiguities restricting analysis. Over the given period, attempts were made to directly document as many exchanges as feasible. Nevertheless, there were times when no exchanges were recorded as well as other occasions in which a general understanding of the content of the exchanges was considered.

#### 3.2. Results and discussions

A total of 800 exchanges were recorded among which 440 were husband-initiated and 360 wife-initiated. The husband-initiated exchanges were mostly ‘demanding’ (358 out of 440) in the form of commands (demanding goods and services) as well as question (demanding information). The wife-initiated exchanges, however, were mostly ‘giving’ exchanges (207 out of 360), in the form of offers (providing goods and services) as well as statements (furnishing information). There were other differences as well. The majority of the husband-initiated exchanges were followed up either verbally or practically by the wife (example 4 below); otherwise, there was the possibility and even probability of irritation on the part of the husband. Nevertheless, there were quite a few wife-initiated exchanges that remained unanswered (example 2 below), and there was no sign of apparent irritation on part of the wife.

1. Wife: Chowa deress bekam? (What should I cook?)
2. Husband: .....
3. Husband: Wella bera khass beyo. (It was really good.)
4. Wife: Rass vavid. (You are telling the truth.)

Another difference was that husband-initiated exchanges were mainly explicit while wife initiated cases were either implicit or accompanied by particular mitigating expressions. The following utterances are parallel cases extracted from the data:

***Husband-initiated utterances***

1. Husband: Chakoshaga bapim. (Give me the hammer.)
2. Wife: Ha ko? (Where is it?)
1. Husband: Laptapa bena bane mizaga. (Put this laptop on the desk)
2. Wife: Namei. (I will.)
1. Husband: Chida ko? (Where did you go?)
2. Wife: Male khoman. (I went to my father's house.)

***Parallel wife-initiated utterances***

1. Wife: Gian azizi khod kifaga bapim. (Would you please give me the bag?)
2. Husband: Basha bera. (It's all right – in an unwilling manner.)
1. Wife: Ya nida ora? Fara shakat bioma. (Can you put this over there? I am really tired.)
2. Husband: Nio kam feshar barida khod? (Can't you take it easy a bit?)
1. Wife: Neioshid chidasa ko? (Don't you say where you have gone?)
2. Husband: Maga nawatema pid. (I told you.)

Up to here the results were handled on pure descriptive basis. Mere description, however, does not seem to provide enough in the way of analysis. One justification is that presented by Johnstone (2008) who considers the assumptions underlying a pure descriptive discourse analysis approach to be subject to questions coming from Philosophical Relativism as well as critical social theories. Another point is that particular discourse questions do not lend themselves fully to mere descriptive answers, and they require the analyst to develop deeper understanding of what is being studied. To address the issue in the framework of the present study, the first two questions could be appropriately answered as the result of a pure descriptive approach but not the last. That was because there was the need to figure out the significance of the differences associated with the husband/wife exchanges studied, and this required going beyond mere description to employ a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach along the lines suggested by Fairclough (2003). A CDA approach to discourse, according to Thompson (2002), seeks to link the text (micro-level) with the underlying power structure in society (macro-level) through discursive practices upon which it is drawn (meso-level). What is implied here is that, as also pointed out by Foucault (2000), discourse is shaped by social structure (class, status, age, gender, etc) as well as culture. Said another way, the analysis of the text itself (micro-level) cannot provide a complete picture of the significance of differences between interactions unless the social structure in which discourse is shaped as well as the forces exerting effects in shaping discourse are also taken into account.

Along these lines, as discussed above, a micro-level analysis of interpersonal exchanges in this study furnished information on the first two questions and revealed that 1) husband/wife interpersonal exchanges are more husband-initiated. 2) husband-initiated exchanges are more 'demanding' than 'giving', and 3) they are explicit while wife-initiated exchanges are implicit and associated with mitigating expressions. However, that type of analysis did not provide information on why such differences exist. Therefore, to develop an understanding into the reasons behind these differences, the data were subjected to critical analysis along the lines suggested by Huckin (1997) who believed that after an uncritical review of the text like an ordinary reader, the critical analyst comes at it again in a critical manner revisiting it at different levels, raising questions about the taken-for-granted issues within it, and imagining how it could have been constructed differently. The issues coming next include the prominent points surfaced as the outcome of this sort of critical analysis:

The mitigating expressions employed by the wife involved such Kurdish expressions as 'Jan-e Khodat', 'Jan-e Jewani-e Khodat', and 'Jan-e Azizi-e Duataman' which could roughly be translated into 'for your own life's sake', 'for your own youth's sake', and 'for the sake our dear daughter's life'. These expressions are ordinarily used in Kurdish when the speaker has an important demand, desires the demand to be fulfilled, has no power to enforce the fulfillment, and resorts to soft talking to reach the objective.

Regarding exchange-initiation and why most husband/wife exchanges recorded in this study were husband-initiated, the recorded exchanges were revisited, husband-initiated cases were compared with wife initiated examples, and comparison was also made between the time when one particular exchange was immediately followed by another and other times in which one single exchange took place. There appeared to be different reasons behind why the wife ventured far less exchange initiations: One reason turned out to be related to the larger speech community and ladies' preferences to evade violation of politeness maxims. Another reason was rooted in individual differences and this particular lady's shyness in some situations.

There were, however, reasons stemming from the exchanges and their sequence of occurrence. In other words, when there were more than one exchanges following each other the content of the previous cases paved the grounds for the next exchanges to be either husband-initiated or wife-initiated as in the following case in which the termination of one exchange on 'dased dard naked' (thank you) has paved the way for the coming exchange to be wife-initiated.

1. Husband: Laptapa bena bane mizaga. (Put this laptop on the desk.)
  2. Wife: Namei. (I will.)
  3. Husband: Dased dard naked. (Thank you)
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1. Wife: Bila bafshah wa pi kar bekeid. (Let Banafsheh use it.)
  2. Husband: Ya na, kamputera. (Not this, the computer).

#### 4. Conclusion

Critical social theories as well as Philosophical Relativism consider a pure descriptive approach to the analysis of discourse inadequate due to the underlying assumptions (Johnstone, 2008). This research also considers pure description inadequate since the micro-level analysis of interpersonal exchanges recorded in this study furnished information on only two research questions and revealed that husband/wife interpersonal exchanges are more husband-initiated, husband-initiated exchanges are more 'demanding' than 'giving', and that they are explicit while wife-initiated exchanges are implicit and associated with mitigating expressions. However, this sort of analysis did not provide information on why such differences occurred. To understand the reasons behind these differences, the data were subjected to a critical analysis according to which there were several justifications for the differences ranging from the reasons related to the larger speech community and the ones rooted in individual differences to those stemming from the sequence and content of the exchanges themselves. Thus, mere description turns out to be inadequate, not because of underlying assumptions, but rather due to the issue that particular research questions do not lend themselves fully to descriptive approaches and require other discourse analysis paradigms such as CDA to get appropriately answered.

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