

Leaked (Political) Telephone Conversation in Bangladesh: A Conversation Analysis

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Abstract

The paper analyses a selected number of 'leaked' telephone conversations by some political figures of Bangladesh. The analyses are rooted in the ideals of conversation analysis (CA), particularly in the CA of telephone interaction. Leaked conversations are politically sensitive, and thus are rarely discussed in the academia. The data for this study is, however, collected from an open source, i.e., YouTube on which the conversations were circulated. The aim of the study is to examine the organizational structure of the telephone conversations carried out by political figures, i.e., political telephone conversation (PTC). The paper explains how individual political actors conduct formal and informal interactions over telephone as they discuss different sensitive issues in relation to politics and society. The paper investigates how the politicians open and close their talk, maintain adjacency pairs, and construct topics as they legitimize their arguments within a conversation. The findings of this paper are expected to contribute to a better understanding of how we can analyze and comprehend the organization of political conversations through the mechanisms of conversation analysis, and at the same time to provide a helpful documentation for further research on this 'highly neglected' field.

Keywords

Conversation analysis (CA), political telephone conversation (PTC), politics in Bangladesh, topic construction, adjacency pairs, opening & closing.

Introduction

This paper offers a structural analysis of a selected number of leaked telephone conversations conducted by some renowned politicians of Bangladesh. Telephone conversation analysis is one of the largest areas within the field of conversation analysis (CA). Though a large body of studies has been carried out on telephone conversation (i.e., Kiss, 2003; Eggert, 2010; Pallotti & Varcasia, 2008), very limited studies have been done on political telephone conversation (PTC), let alone on a controversial sub-field like 'leaked' conversation.

Politicians spend their time to talk, argue, and persuade. They for instance, take part in meeting, dialogue, conference, interview, talk show, etc., almost every day. Like everyone else politicians also use telephone as a means of communication. Some of these conversations are open to everyone (e.g., when they participate in a live interview on the media) while some are private (which can be either formal or informal but are exclusively meant for a selected audience). However, the privately conducted political conversations can be leaked. In the era of Wikileaks perhaps no political interaction is private anymore.

Conceptual Framework

CA evolved as an approach to the study of social interaction in the 1960s through the writings and lectures of the late sociologist Harvey Sacks. The approach was strengthened further between the late 1960s and early 1970s when Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson joined Sacks, and in consequence, fundamental works had been published in this field. For all practical purposes, CA can be thought of as the study of talk in interaction while not excluding other forms of human conduct in interaction, for example, gaze, gesture, body orientations, and their combinations. The paralinguistic features are accommodated comprehensively within the transcription symbols used by the analysts.

The systematic study of conversation analysis focuses on the underlying organization of talks. This organization is assumed to be based on certain specific features, such as, turn taking and overlapping, repairing and silence, sequences of utterances, and adjacency pairs. The data collected for CA is in the form of video or audio recorded conversations. From the audio or video recording the researchers construct a detailed transcription (ideally with no details left out). After transcription, the researchers perform inductive data-driven analysis aiming to find recurring patterns of interaction. Based on the analysis, the researchers develop a rule or model to explain the occurrence of the patterns. The methods of CA have been detailed in countless publications since the 1970s. Recent publications include, *Conversation Analysis and Discourse Analysis* (Wooffitt, 2005), *Sequence Organization in Interaction* (Schegloff, 2007), *Conversation Analysis: an Introduction* (Sidnell, 2010), *Talk in Action* (Heritage & Clayman, 2010), and *The Handbook of Conversation Analysis* (Sidnell & Stivers, 2013) among others.

Political Conversation

In his *Analyzing Political Discourse* (2004), Paul Chilton claims that “politics varies according to one’s situation and purposes [which is] a political answer in itself” (p. 4). He further describes that on the one hand, politics is a struggle for power, between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it. On the other hand, politics can be viewed as cooperation, as the practices and institutions that a society has for resolving clashes of interest over money, influence, liberty, and the like (Chilton, 2004, p. 3). Consequently, political discourse, like many other discourses is inherently a ‘discursive formation’ (Foucault, 2002; Fairclough, 1992). Differences in articulation can be a manifestation of participants’ ideological commitments towards different political faiths, but such formations can also be mediated by particular vantage points from which ‘social actors’ (van Leeuwen, 1996) engage in political debates. The existence of opposing political articulations can also be explained by the concept of ‘interdiscursivity’ (Fairclough, 2003). Discourses “overlap” and are “interconnected” (Wodak & Weiss, 2005). The domain of politics too is constituted of multiple discourses, such as, social, cultural and economic, appropriated by individuals, within a given context of contestation.

To contextualize, like many other countries, political crises in Bangladesh are plenty. The main political contestation revolves around the two main political parties of Bangladesh, the Awami League (AL) led by Sheikh Hasina, currently in power, and the Bangladesh National Party (BNP), led by former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. A number of issues (e.g., the general election of 2014, liberalizing the Election Commission, and ‘political harassment’) of recent time have influenced the politics or politics influenced those issues and developed crises. This study is an analysis of the conversations done by politicians from different parties of this country which are related to some of those issues. With these aims in view, the current paper answers the following research questions:

- a) How are different CA tools (i.e., openings and closings, adjacency pairs, organization of topics, and overlaps) manifested within the conversations conducted by different political actors?
- b) How construction of discursive opinions and legitimization of arguments are structured as topics within political telephone conversations (PTC)?

Participants and Context

To comprehend the context of utterance is crucial in interpreting talk-in-interactions because contexts shape interactions profoundly. Contexts are of two types, immediate and larger or traditional types of contexts (e.g., socio-political and institutional contexts). The immediate context of utterance is situated within the larger context. The larger political context in Bangladesh is, the politics here takes place in a framework of a parliamentary representative democratic republic, where the Prime Minister of the country is the head of the government. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and parliament. The Constitution of Bangladesh was written in 1972 and has undergone sixteen amendments. The four major parties in Bangladesh are the Awami League (AL), Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Jamat-e-Islami Bangladesh (JIB) and Jatiya Party (JP).

To reiterate, since the research is an analysis of PTC, the participants of the conversations were members of different political parties. In the first data the participants are the current Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the leader of the main opposition, Begum Khaleda Zia. The situation was that the PM and the leader of the opposition had a telephone conversation (dated 26 October 2013) to initiate a dialogue to resolve the political crisis over the argument of how the next parliamentary election should be held. The leaders' advisers were present at the moment and they could listen to the conversation. The public came to know about this conversation through media.

Unlike the Hasina-Khaleda conversation, the next two conversations are entirely private. In the first conversation the participants are the Awami League MP Shamim Osman and the prime suspect in a murder case (Narayanganj multiple murders), Nur Hossain. Private TV station Channel 24 aired the 103-second conversation that, according to it, took place two days after the seven men were abducted. The station said that Nur Hossain, Narayanganj City Ward-4 Councilor, made the call from his Airtel phone to Osman's mobile phone on April 29.

The next leaked telephone conversation in the data (dated 22 February 2015) was held between Mahmudur Rahman Manna and Sadeque Hossain Khoka. Manna is a former Awami League leader who broke away from the party in order to form a political platform namely *Nagarik Oikya*. On the other hand, Khokais a veteran leader of the then opposition party, BNP. Here the context is to find a solution of the contemporary political impasse and to push government for a dialogue with other major political parties especially BNP. In the conversation they are giving advice to each another and asking for help.

Data Collection Procedure

The data for the current study was obtained from YouTube. It is not allowed to get an audio record of telephone conversation from any telephone company in this country. The length of collected conversations has been shown in the following table.

Table 1: List of Data

Conversations	Duration	Date
Conversation between Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia	37 minutes	26 October 2013
Conversation between Shamim Osman and Nur Hossain	1 minute 40 seconds	April 29 2014
Conversation between Mahmudur Rahman Manna and Sadek Hossain Khoka	51 minutes	22 February 2015

Data Analysis and Discussion

Conversation analysis has been conducted through investigation of social interactions in order to detect how social order is created and produced in our everyday life within conversation (i.e., face to face conversation, telephone conversation, verbal or non-verbal conversation etc.). Each conversation is unique and is different from the other(s). Even a conversation would not be the same again if it is produced by the same speakers on the same topic. In spite of the uniqueness of talks there are some items within the organizational structure of talks which are similar almost in every conversation. For instance, phenomena like opening and closing of a conversation, adjacency pairs, turn-taking, overlapping, topic, and sequence, and framing and footing will be found across conversations. The following sections analyse the structural organization of a selected number of CA items.

Opening and Closing: Opening and closing of a conversation, including telephone conversations, have a precise structure. The first systematic investigation in this area dates back to Schegloff's (1968) analysis of telephone calls openings in the United States of America. In this classical work on CA, Schegloff (1968) identified four core sequences in his corpus of North American telephone call openings:

- a) Summons - answer, i.e. the telephone ring followed by a voice token by the recipient indicating that the communication channel is open;
- b) Identification - recognition, i.e. parties identify themselves and/or recognize each other;
- c) Greetings, which can be produced by one party or both;
- d) Initial inquiries ('how-are-you?'), which may constitute themselves the main object of the conversation or may be preliminaries leading to the reason for call.

These four core sequences have been used as a basic 'template' for describing telephone call openings in a number of studies (e.g., *Service telephone call openings* by Gabriele Pallotti and Cecilia Varcasia, 2008; *Telephone conversation from a Conversation Analysis Perspective* by Eva Kiss, 2003; and *A Conversation Analytical Study of Telephone Conversation Openings between Native and Nonnative Speakers* by Carmen Taleghani-Nikazm, 2002). To explain openings, the current study has used the model of Schegloff (1968) and focused especially on the summons-answer structure, and identification and speaker recognition. Some scholars like Coulthard (1985) believe that a telephone conversation usually starts with greetings. But in most of the cases a telephone conversation starts with a "hello" and for Schegloff this "hello" is an answer of a summons, and not a greeting. Within the three sets of data the openings were like as follows:

Data: 01

Invitation to talk [summons]

1. Khaleda: Hello::o [answer]

Hello::o

Hello::o[answer]

Hello::o

2. Hasina: >Hello<

>Hello<

3. Khaleda: >Hello<

>Hello<

>Kemon achhe[n< [greeting + how are you enquires]

>How are [you< [greeting + how are you enquires]

4. Hasina: [Apni kemon]. Assalamu Alaikum. Bhalo, apni kemon achhen?

[greeting + how are you inquires]

[How are you]. Assalamualikum, Fine. How are you?

[greeting + how are you inquires]

5. Khaleda: >Ami achhi, bhalo achhi<

>Yes, I am fine<

6. Hasina: Ami dupore phone korechhila apnake, dukkhito ami pai ni ↓

I called you around noon, but sorry to say that I couldn't reach you↓

In the above excerpt, the conversation starts with a summons-answer sequence and greetings appear later. The first act of the invitation to talk is summons and the utterance 1 (i.e., Khaleda: Hello::o) is the answer of it. Utterances 3 and 4 are part of greetings and at the same time they form a 'how are you' enquiry. Summons-answer is an alternating process in two party conversation developed by Schegloff like A-B-A-B-A-B-A-B..... About summons-answer structure Schegloff says that this describes the sequencing of a two party conversation already underway. It means communication channel is open to continue the talk. In Data 02 the opening was as following:

Data: 02

<<Ring>>= [summons]

1. Shamim Osman: >Hello< [answer]

>Hello< [answer]

2. Nur Hossain: Bhai Assalamu Alaikum. Bhai kemon achhen [greeting]

Brother, Assalamu Alaikum. Brother, how are you doing? [greeting]

3. Osman: > ke<?

[constituting relationship]

>Who is speaking<?

[constituting relationship]

4. Hossain: Bhai↓, amar onek bipod↓. Bhai ami lekha pora kori nai, amar onek bhul achhe... apni amr bap lagen. Ami apnake onek bhalobashi bhai↓.

Brother↓, I'm in great trouble↓. Brother, I'm uneducated. I've made many mistakes...You're like my father. I love you so much brother↓

Conversation in Data 02 has similarities with the first one (Data 01) as it also starts with the summons-answer structure followed by greetings (i.e., an Islamic greeting, *Assalamu Alaikum*, tr., 'Peace be upon you') and next a 'how are you' enquiry. In this conversation another noticeable feature is the process of constituting or reconstituting relationship in between speakers (see L. 3. This act of constituting is another term recognized by Schegloff in the analysis of openings in conversations. Sidnell (2010) explains this act as a key

characteristic within telephone conversations. It involves the mutual recognition by the participants with whom they are speaking to.

The structure of Data 03 follows an organizational structure similar to Data 01 and 02. That is, it starts with a summons-answer sequence, then a greeting sequence and also a reciprocal “how are you” inquiries.

Data: 03

<<Ring>>= [summons]

1. Khoka: Hello:o [answer]

Hello:o [answer]

2. Manna: > Ji, Assalamu Alaikum< [greeting]

>Yes, Assalamu Alaikum< [greeting]

3. Khoka: Ha::e, bhalo achhen? [greeting + how are you enquires]

Yes::s, how are you? [greeting + how are you enquires]

3. Manna: Hae, valo achhi >apni bhalo achhen<? [greeting + how are you enquires]

Yes, I am good >how are you<? [greeting + how are you enquires]

4. Khoka: Ei, cholchhe aar ki.

Yes, life is going on.

5. Manna: ↓Kono Disturb korlam na to? Kon somoy ki ta to bolte pari na ↓.

↓I am not disturbing you, am I? I did not notice the time ↓

6. Khoka: Na, na. Akhon to ekhane baje matro raat sare doshta ↓.

No it is okay. It is only 10.30 pm here now↓

7. Manna: Tahole ghumate jan ni akhono↓?

So you did not go for sleep yet↓?

8. Khoka: Na , na. ami to duitar agey ghumai na↓

No, I don't go to sleep [usually] before 2.00 am↓

9. Manna: Accha, emnite shorir torir ki obostha apnar?

Ok, how is your health?

10. Khoka: Shorir ag::er chaite kharap hoy ni, etai bole bhalo ar ki

Health has not deteriorated than it was before, so you can say, it is kind of okay.

Summon-answer: An analysis of the above data shows that an opening conversation starts mainly with a summons-answer sequence and this establishes a very basic kind of alignment between the participants in a talk in interaction (Sidnell, 2010). Schegloff describes this in terms of “non-terminality” meaning that it is not the final exchange of conversation. They have to be seen as introduction to further talk or an announcement that something else is coming and waited for. Here the data analysis shows that the summons-answers are driving the greeting sequences or how are you enquiries in the beginning of a conversation. So the adjacency pair summons-answer is three-paired. One is summons, the second is an answer and the third is an introduction to further talk.

Constituting Relationship: This is the process of identification and recognition defined by Schegloff. As Schegloff (1986, p. 118) notes, “nearly everything in conversational interaction is sensitive to the individual or categorical identity of the interlocutor,” while for Sidnell (2010), mutual identification and recognition of the parties to the conversation is thusan issue that must be worked through more or less directly after the summons-answer sequence. In data 01 and 03 the greeting phrases such as “Assalamu Alaikum” and “how are you” embody a claim to have recognized the answer “hello.” The claim is that the answerer is able to recognize the caller. The voice of the caller is the only device in constituting

relationship over phone. This constitution is of two types, one is other-recognition and the second is self-identification. The data 01 and 03 exemplify other-recognition. Data 02 differs from the other two sets of data. To note, an utterance is a relationship constituting process, which demands a self-identification from the opposite party. In that sense sometimes the summons-answer is not adequate to identify or constituting relationship among speaker in a political conversation.

“How are you” Enquire: Sidnell states that after the sequence of summons-answer and identification-recognition, the next sequence involves how-are-you enquiries and it is a process of greeting. Greeting is a social norm. One of the common phrases of greeting in Bangladesh is “Assalamu Alaikum” when it involves participants of Muslim origin. An observation shows that this Bangladeshi greeting is often used by members of other religious groups as well when one of the participants is Muslim. Another greeting phrase is “how are you”. In all the three data we can see the use of both the phrases:

Data: 01

1. Khaleda:>Hello< >Kemon achh[en < [greeting + how are you enquires]
>Hello< >How are [you< [greeting + how are you enquires]
2. Hasina: [Apni kemon?] Assalamu Alaikum.Bhalo, apni kemon achhen?
[How are you?] Assalamualikum, Fine. How are you?
[greeting + how are you inquires]

Data: 02

- <<Ring>>= [summons]
1. Shamim Osman: >Hello< [answer]
>Hello< [answer]
 2. Nur Hossain: Bhai Assalamu Alaikum. Bhai kemon achhen [greeting]
Assalamu Alaikum, brother. How are you? [greeting]

Data: 03

1. Khoka: Hello:o [answer]
Hello:o [answer]
2. Manna: >ji, Assalamu Alaikum< [greeting]
>Yes, Assalamu Alaikum< [greeting]
3. Khoka: Ha::y, bhalo achhen? [greeting + how are you enquires]
Yes::s, how are you? [greeting + how are you enquires]
4. Manna: Hay, bhalo achhi, >apni bhalo achhen<? [greeting + how are you enquires]
Yes, I am good, >how are you<? [greeting + how are you enquires]

Sacks (1975) noted that answers to ‘how are you’ enquiries fall into three subsets:

- [0] neutral, e.g. “fine”, “okay”,
- [+] positive, e.g. “great”, “terrific”, and
- [-] negative, e.g. “awful”, “terrible”.

In the above interactions, it is evident that after every enquiry whether “how are you” or “recognition”, the main part of conversation starts. In the first conversation L. 03 is the starting of main conversation right after the end of greeting. In the second data L. 03 is the starting after enquiries of identity in L. 2. In the third data L. 6 is the starting after enquiries end.

Responses from either the [+] or [-] subsets have quite different sequential relevance from those in [0]. But in these data we see only the neutral answer except the second one as here it is part of an identification procedure. In Data 02, greeting has not been done as a pair where greeting could be considered as one of the parts of an adjacency-pair. Like greeting, summons-answer is also a part of it. It is almost obvious that all the conversations here start with adjacency pairs and continue to “how are you” enquiries. How are you – fine/ good/ ok etc. is a question-answer pair. Schegloff suggests that these initial enquiries constitute the main object of the conversation or may be part of preliminaries leading to the reason for call. The conversational phenomenon of enquiry can be further explored through following examples:

Data: 01

1. Hasina: [Apni kemon]. Assalamu Alaikum. Bhalo, apni kemon achhen?
[greeting + how are you inquires]
[How are you]. Assalamualikum, Fine. How are you?
[greeting + how are you inquires]
2. Khaleda: >Ami achhi, valo achhi<
>Yes, I am fine<
3. Hasina: Ami dupore phone korechhila apnake, dukkhito ami pai ni ↓
I called you around noon, but sorry to say that I couldn't reach you↓

Data: 02

1. Nur Hossain: Bhai Assalamu Alaikum. Bhai kemon achen [greeting]
Assalamu Alaikum, brother. How are you? [greeting]
2. Osman: > Ke<? [constituting relationship]
>Who is speaking<? [constituting relationship]
3. Hossain: Bhai↓, amar onek bipod↓. Bhai ami lekha pora kori nai, amr onek vul ache...
apni amar bap lagen. Ami apnake onek valobashi vai↓
Brother↓, I'm in great trouble↓. I'm uneducated. I've made many mistakes... You're like my father. I love you so much↓

Data: 03

1. Khoka: Hello:o [answer]
Hello:o [answer]
2. Manna: > Ji, Assalamu Alaikum< [greeting]
>Yes, Assalamu Alaikum< [greeting]
3. Khoka: Ha::y, Bhalo achhen? [greeting + how are you enquires]
Yes::s, are you good? [greeting + how are you enquires]
4. Manna: Hay, bhalo achhi, >apni bhalo achhen<? [greeting + how are you enquires]
I am good, >how are you<? [greeting + how are you enquires]
5. Khoka: ei, cholchhe ar ki.
Yes, life is going on.
6. Manna: ↓Kono Disturb korlam na to? Kon shomoy ki ta to bolte pari na ↓.
↓Have I disturbed you? I did not notice the time ↓

Regarding closing Schegloff and Sacks (1973, p.290) in their book “Opening up closing” claimed that conversation “does not simply end, but is brought to a close”. When we are in a conversation on telephone it is not possible to hang up the phone suddenly at the middle of the conversation or even at the end. It will be considered as rude. Rather we have to end the conversation in a specific place or have to take a preparation before simply ending up. Sidnell (2010) claims that people generally end up a conversation suddenly to express annoyance or anger. Participants may also hang up when an emergency situation emerges. Here are the examples of closing sequences from the conversations.

Data: 01

1. Hasina: Ami apnake 28 tarikhe daoat dicchi, kader kader [niye ashben bolen
Come on October 28, tell me who with [you be bringing along.
2. Khaleda: [Ami 28 tarikh ashte parbo na ami 30 tarikher pore ashte parbo, 28 tarikhe
hortal withdrawn hobe na.
[I won't be able to come on the 28th I will come after 30 (October). The
hartal dated 28 can't be withdrawn
3. Hasina: [Okay, thank you.
[Okay, Thank you].

Data: 02

1. Osman: Thik achhe, tumi ek kaj koro. Ami amar ekta phone number dibo, tumi jogajog
koro, thik achhe? Ei number ta notun?
All right. You do one thing I'll give you another phone number of mine,
and you contact me there. Is this your new number?
2. Hossain: Ji bhai.
Yes, brother.
3. Osman: Acchha >rakho<.
Okay. >You can hang up<.
4. Hossain: Ji bhai, Assalamu Alaikum bhai.
Okay, brother. Assalamu Alaikum.

Data: 03

1. Manna: Apnara onake bolen, tarpor dekha jak ki hoy
You guys talk to her (?). Let's see what happen next.
2. Khoka: Ji, acchha.
Yes, alright.
3. Manna: Ji, Assalamu Alikum
Yes, Assalamu Alaikum.
4. Khoka: Ji.
Yes.

How to end a conversation is known as closing problem. About the closing process Schegloff and Sacks (1973) say about a special kind of adjacency pairs, named “terminal exchange”. In this pair the first part is a proposal to end the conversation like ‘bye’ or ‘good bye’ and in the next part the other speaker can expect the proposal. Here in these utterances we cannot see any “Placement problem” means they have uttered at the right place of the conversation to bring a close. Like in first data line no 2 is a pre-closing context so the placement of closing sentence has done properly. The line no. 2 is the first part of terminal exchange and

the next line is an acceptance of it. In the second data L. 1 is a pre-closing sentence or a warrant for closing that indicates the conversation is almost at the end. So the terminal exchange utterances have no placement problem and the organization of adjacency pair is organized. Now in case of the third data line no. 1 is again a pre-closing utterance and within the terminal exchange turn in adjacency pair is also organized. Here all the closings have been 'brought to a close' properly.

So finally, the opening and closing are the most important parts of a conversation especially in a telephone conversation, as here is no scope to show any facial expression or to use body language. The opening sequence is a structural process. The opening structure of a PTC is similar with the basic process of telephone call opening. It starts with the summons-answer process then gradually comes the step of constructing-relationship and ends with the greeting sequence called how-are-you enquires. This closing of an opening part of a conversation leads the conversation to the opening of topic talk. And the closing process is also smooth. They end their conversation through the process of "terminal exchange" where the "placement problem" of closing is absent in the conversation. They do not seem to use pre-closing system, rather give an announcement or warrant to take an entry into closing section and gradually come to the end of their conversation when it requires.

Topic Construction

Sidnell (2010) says that "people do talk on a topic and sometimes they can be seen as trying to get off a topic, change the topic etc" (p.). In conversations with political consequences construction of topics can be crucial. Here the acts of legitimization and discursive opinion of arguments also influence the process of topic construction. The current study focused on what the "topic" is doing within the stretch of a conversation rather than merely what it is all about. The purpose of the analysis is to explain how the political figures construct topics through telephone conversation. Schegloff (1990) notes some dilemmas while defining the concept of "topic". Firstly, how to determine "what the topic is", next, to map the "gradual transition from one topic to another", thirdly, the unity in the practice of "formulating the topic" and only finally what the participants "talk about" rather than "talk-that-does". The following sections explain the construction of topics in all the three sets of data collected for the current study.

Data: 01

The primary purpose of this phone call was to invite the opposition party's leader Khaleda Zia by Prime Minister to sit for a dialogue. Here the topic is "an invitation for dialogue". But how was that topic constructed? According to Sidnell (2010) a topic in a conversation is generated within a sequence and it flows from one to another in gradual fashion. In telephone conversation the first step of topic construction is the opening then the second part is the main topic within the sub-topic and final step is the closing where the topic-talk ends. Within a conversation these steps are often not obvious as having clear boundaries since conversation is a continuous act of interaction, while for analysts these boundaries are there.

In this first data we see that the conversation opens with the basic pattern of opening sequence like summons-answer, greeting, recognizing and some more. The pattern is used within the structure of adjacency pair, the first pair of the utterance presupposes a second part. In addition, participants are expected to start the topic-talk after the end of an opening sequence:

1. Hasina: Ami dupore phone korechhiam apnake, dukkhito ami pai ni ↓
I called you around noon, but sorry to say that I couldn't reach you↓
2. Khaleda: Ei kothata je bolchhen ta shothik na.
What you've just said is not correct.
3. Hasina: →Ami apnake daoat dite chai [
→ I want to invite you at [
4. Khaleda: [Na, apnake prothome amar kotha shunte hobe. Apni je bolchhen dupore
phone korechhen. Dupore kono phone ashe ni. Ei kothati sompurno sothik
noy. Dupore kono phone ashe ni amar ekahne.
[No, you'll have to listen to me first. You said that you called me this
afternoon, but I didn't get any phone call in the afternoon. This statement
is not right at all. No phone call came this afternoon.
5. Hasina: Ami red phone-e [phone diyechhi
I have called at your red phone [
6. Khaleda: [Red phone to amar dhirgho bochhor dhore dead pore achhe. Apnara
government chalan, ki khobor rakhen? Government chalan r ei khobortuko
rakhen na je birodhi doliyo netar phone thik achhe ki na?
[My red phone has been dead for years. You run the government, what
news do you keep? You run the government, but you don't have the
information whether the leader of the opposition's phone is working or not?

Here they start the main part of their conversation but they begin their conversation with a side topic which according to Goffman is an example of footing (see L. 1). Then at line no. 3 where Hasina says "I want to inform you that," here we see a process to construct the topic as she tries to clarify the reason to call. In next line Khaleda initiates another topic by ignoring the main topic to create an example of "eliciting topic". But it is not a gradual process of formulating a topic. They make a long conversation on this topic which is not related to the main topic. The participants mutually end the topic by producing these two lines:

1. Hasina: Ami agamikal dekhbo keno apnar phone dead chhilo
I will see to it tomorrow why your phone was dead.
2. Khaleda: >Dekhben sheta bhalo kotha<
>It is good news that you will look into it<.

Next, Hasina re-initiates the main topic as follows:

1. Hasina: Ami call korlam je agami 28 tarikk ami apnake gonobhobone daoat dicchhi. Ami
amader rajnoitik doler sathe alap-alochona korchhi. Ami apnake daoat dicchhi
gognobhobone.
I am calling you to invite you to Ganabhaban in the evening of October 28. I have
spoken to the leaders of our political party. I am inviting you at Ganabhaban.
2. Khaleda: Apnar Jodi shotti antorikota theke thake alochona korar jonno, amar jete kono
apotti nei. Ami eka jabo na, amar sathe nischoi keu thakbe.
If you are really sincere about a dialogue, I have no problem to go. I won't come alone
of course. There will be others with me.
3. Hasina: Apni jotojon khushi niye ashte paren
You can bring as many people as you want.

4. Khaleda: Na ami puro dolbol niye ashbo na. Jaderke proyojon tader niye ashbo. Sheta hobe 28 tarikher por.
I don't want to bring my fullparty over. I will bring those who I think will be needed. It will be after 28 (of the instant).
5. Hasina: ami apnake onurodh korbo [jatir Sharthe jonogoner Sharthe, hortal ta prottakhan kore nin]. Manush mara, pathor chhora eishob↓
I am urging you for the sake of the [nation and the people that you withdraw the hartal]. Killing people, throwing stones↓
6. Khaleda: [Na, ↑manush mara, agun deya egulo apnader kaj. Amader na.
[No, Killing people, throwing fire is in your habit. Not ours.

As they were focusing on building the topic, Hasina changes the topic yet one more time that we see in the following lines. This however is a “gradual transition” from one topic to another. After continuing with the new topic for a few turns, Khaleda Zia abruptly introduces another topic:

1. Khaleda: ↑Amra j jonosobha korlam sekhane maiker permission ta keno holo na?
↑When we organized a public rally why didn't you allow microphone speakers there?
2. Hasina: Na, mike to deya hoyechhe [. NO, the use of microphone was allowed [.
3. Khaleda: [Amra jotodur icchha mike boshate pari, lok acche shunbe.
Lok ashbe dekhe rasta ghatar shob transport bondho kore diyechhen 144 jari korechhen, deshe ki joruri obostha hoye gechhe? Juddho obostha hoye gechhe je erokom shuru kore diben apnara, eta ki?
[I will put up speakers as far away as I wish, there are people and they will hear. You stopped transport to prevent the gathering, imposed Section 144. Is there a state of emergency in the country? Is it a time of war? Are we in a state of war that you have started this behavior? What is this?
4. Hasina: ↓Ami e bepare apnar shathe ekhon kotha bolte chacchhi na.
↓I don't want to talk to you now about this.

While they were contributing to the topic of the “speaker” in L. 4, Hasina reveals her lack of interest to contribute any further on the topic explicitly. It is natural that the selection of a topic should be the result of a mutual process; otherwise, it is mostly difficult to construct it. Mutual selection of topic by the participants is called the process of “topic nomination” (Button & Cassey, 1985). Under the process participants also change topics continuously, i.e., one topic leads to another in a gradual process.

Data: 02

In comparison to other data, 02 is a shorter conversation. Usually in a long conversation people gradually change topics or sometimes use sub-topics to establish the main topic. But in short conversations participants generally stay on the main topic without much topic transition. In Data 02 the participants after the opening sequence, which is a process of coming to the main conversation, start their main conversation.

1. Hossain: Bhai, ↓amar onek bipod. ↓Bhai ami lekha pora kori nai, amar onek bhul achhe... apni amr bap lagen. Ami apnake onek valobashi vai ↓.
Brother↓, I'm in great trouble↓. I'm uneducated. I've made many mistakes...You're like my father. I love you so much↓

Here the caller Nur Hossain makes this call to ask for a help in order to get out of the trouble and in this line he constructs the topic with some sub-topics to establish his 'vulnerabilities' (see L. 1: "I am uneducated", "I have made many mistakes", "you are like my father" and "I love you so much"). These sub-topics help him to construct the main topic. There are other sub-topics which have been shown in the following interaction:

2. Osman: Khoborta powchiechhilam, paichhila ↓?
I sent a message, did you get it↓?
3. Hossain: Bhai, apnare onek bhalobashi bhai. Amar polada chhoto, moira jabe vai ↓
Brother, I admire you so much. My son is young. He will die↓
4. Osman: Shomoy dao ektu.
Give me some time.

Hossain: Bhai, apni amar baap lagen ↑bhai. Jibon apnare diya dimu bhai
You're like my father. ↑I will give you my life, brother

5. Osman: >Arey, tumi eto chinta koirona<, shomoy dao
>Don't worry so much<. Give me some time.

Here they are in the process of constructing topic.

6. Hossain: Bhai, >amare jaoar bebostha kore den<.
Brother, please >arrange for my departure<.
7. Osman: Kono jaygar seal nai? >There'll be no problem<
>There'll be no problem< Is there any seal (visa) for any country↑
8. Hossain: Na, na. achhe achhe, seal achhe. kintu jamu kemne, shob jaygae bole alert.
No, no, that is there. There is seal (visa). But how can I go? I heard that an alert is issued everywhere.
The sub-topics diverge further from the main topic but only to support the construction of the main topic:
9. Osman: > Tumi shudhu oi jaygatate jao<.
>You just go to that place<
10. Hossain: Bhai, ami micro bus e.
Brother, I'm in a microbus

Osman: Kicchhu hobe na, chinta koro na. >tumi kono oporadh koro nai<.
Nothing will happen. Don't worry. >You haven't committed any crime<.

Interestingly, the flowing back to main topic and expanding on sub-topics is a stable feature in this talk. In LL. 9-11 the participants develop a sub-topic while immediately in L. 11 they return to the main topic.

Data: 03

The following conversation is similar to the first two data as it also introduces the topic-talk after the opening sequence of personal enquiries. This is how the topic begins:

1. Manna: Ediker khobor tobor hoyto peyechhen. Maj::he tuku vaier sathe ekin kothao bolechi ↓
Maybe you have got the news from this side. I ha::ve talked with brother Tuku recently↓

2. Khoka: Ha, amake phone korlo ektu age, apnar sathe kotha hoyeche seta bollo.
Yes, he has called me just a while ago and informed me about your conversation.
3. Manna: Ekhn (0.3) kotha holo shesh porjonto ki hobe ta to bola jay na. but dekha jacche
kutnitikra bivinno vabe initiati[ves niche.
Now (0.3) the fact is, what is going to happen at the end is unpredictable. It
seems like that diplomats are taking initiat[ives
4. Khoka: [Ha, initiatives <kicuta niche dekha jay>.
[Yes, initiatives, <that they have taken some>
5. Manna: j::i. Protibeshider o dristivonggi poriborton hocche ↓.
Ye::s, neighbor countries perspectives are also changing ↓
6. Khoka: <Hmm> ↓
<Hmm> ↓
7. Manna: Ami khobor tobor pacchi. Ai muhurte dorkarta holo mathe jawoa. Ami apnader
osubidhata bujhte parci. Dekhte parchi chesta korchen apnara. dekha jak ki kora jay ↓.
I am getting news. Right now it is important to stay in the field. I understand
your problems. I can see that you are trying your level best. Let's see what can be
done ↓
8. Khoka: Amader jela porjaye nicher diker lokra bimorsho hoye jacche.[] Ora exhausted
hoye jacche. Ekhn eta bola mushkil kotodin continue kore jabe.
Our people from the district level are getting frustrated. [] they are getting
exhausted. Now it is difficult to say how long we can continue.
- Manna: [Hmm]
[Hmm]

The above conversation takes place between two political figures from two different parties who speak to arrange a dialogue to find a solution for the contemporary political impasse. Here the participants develop the main topic by linking the topic coherently with a number of sub-topics. They formulate the topic-talk gradually in a mutual process of “topic nomination” whereby all the topics are inter-related. Another name for this attempt is topic generating move. Their contribution let them stay focused on the topic and not out of the topic.

Based on the analysis of the above three data sets, it is apparent that the political actors' strategy for topic construction within any telephone conversation is not a neutral process. The sub-topics chosen by each participant contribute to the construction of the main topic. The choices of sub-topics can be systematic or abrupt (e.g., contrast and compare Data 01 and 02 with Data 03); they however are constructed around the key focus of the main topic or topic-talk. In other words, the change of topic is not entirely irrelevant rather; they somehow are related to one another. Amidst the process of topic change or move what we encounter is a gradual process of constructing the main topic. Hence, what the ‘play of topics’ (i.e., main topic vs. sub-topics) is doing in the stretch of the conversation is more important than what their topics are about. A crucial observation here is that they did not get off a topic, that is, they did not end a topic abruptly as found in the conversation between Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia discussed above.

The overall process of topic construction was also influenced by the discursivity of their arguments i.e., the way they gave different opinions while constructing a topic. In a conversation, discursivity occurs due to ideological differences between interlocutors. The speakers suggest or construct different opinions based on their specific subject positions which are also a reflection of their specific ‘member’s methods’ (Garfinkel, 1964). The

speakers within a given context of interaction are members of a specific social, cultural or political group. Consequently, they tend to legitimise their utterances by following specific linguistic choices (i.e., the process of establishing one's opinion by using particular vocabularies, sentence structures, and also specific means of exemplification or explanation).

Data: 01

For example, if we focus on the opening topic of this conversation once more, that is, "red phone," we see how these two participants make opposing truth claims about the use of the phone. When Khaleda asserts that "My red phone has been dead for years," Hasina responds by saying that "The red phones always work". Next, on the issue of troubling common people when Hasina accuses Khaleda of "Killing people, throwing fires..." and asks her to "stop these" Khaleda rebuts by saying "Killing people, throwing fires, it is in your habit to kill people". Then on the topic "microphone/speaker" Khaleda says "Why didn't you allow speakers in our rally?" and on this Hasina's reply was "We did allow speakers". This is how the two speakers construct counter claims on certain factual incidents.

Within this 'play of topics' the participants change topics abruptly or use an issue to discuss other issues. For instance, Khaleda Zia pushes the topic of 'problems with red phone' to the issue of 'an oppressive government' that thwarts opposition to speak out. Khaleda says,

Red phone to amar dirgho din dhore, bochor dhore dead pore ache, ↑tahole j apnara government chalan ki khobor rakhen, government chalan r ei khobortuko rakhen na j birodhi doliyo netar phone thik acche kina na?

↑My red phone has been dead for years. ↑You run the government, what news do you keep? You run the government, but you don't have the information whether the leader of the opposition's phone is working or not?

The above data evidences that the narration of conflicting opinion and the use of interdiscursivity discourse is present in PTC. In every conversation such discursivity may not be obvious as the conversational structure depends on the context of the conversation in relation to the macro components including ideological commitments and power relations.

Conclusion

This paper explains the organizational structure of political telephone conversation (PTC) from a conversation analytical perspective. The specific examples are taken from a selected number of leaked phone calls made by political actors in Bangladesh. The analysis shows that in order to comprehend the structure of such talk-in-interaction one of the most important variables is the context of those utterances. Without adequate background knowledge, various socio-cultural norms of greetings and contextually sensitive sub-topics they would sound 'strange' to outsiders since members of each society deploy specific 'members' method' to explain utterances. The concept of context is crucial not only for telephone conversations but for all types of conversations. Both the wider socio-political context and the individual stretches of the conversation are crucial to interpret any conversational data. The immediate context of utterance has certain structural effects on conversations which would be manifested through sharing turns and nominating topics and this was evident too in the analysis of data.

We see that opening and closing part of a PTC is almost similar with a general telephone conversation as they begin with greetings and end with “terminal exchange” processes. Topics have been constructed by the political actors with the help of sub-topics and while they changed topics, they did so without going very far from the main topic. One of the crucial aspects of talk-in-interaction which has not been discussed adequately in this paper, due to space limitation, is turn-taking. By using the same data it is possible to show how turn-taking was very much influenced by the nature of the conversation and also by the power relation between the speakers. Future studies can also explore face-to-face political conversation because similar structural issues like opening and closing, turn-taking and topic construction are part of almost all types of talk-in-interaction.

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Appendix

3.2 Transcription Notation

- (.) A full stop inside brackets denotes a micro pause, a notable pause but of no significant length.
- (0.2) A number inside brackets denotes a timed pause. This is a pause long enough to time and subsequently show in transcription.
- [Square brackets denote a point where overlapping speech occurs.
- >< Arrows surrounding talk like these show that the pace of the speech has quickened
- <> Arrows in this direction show that the pace of the speech has slowed down
- () Where there is space between brackets denotes that the words spoken here were too unclear to transcribe

(()) Where double brackets appear with a description inserted denotes some contextual information where no symbol of representation was available.

Under When a word or part of a word is underlines it denotes a raise in volume or emphasis

↑ When an upward arrow appears it means there is a rise in intonation

↓ When a downward arrow appears it means there is a drop in intonation

→ An arrow like this denotes a particular sentence of interest to the analyst

CAPITALS where capital letters appear it denotes that something was said loudly or even shouted

Hum(h)our When a bracketed 'h' appears it means that there was laughter within the talk

= The equal sign represents latched speech, a continuation of talk

:: Colons appear to represent elongated speech, a stretched sound