

LT4239 CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

ASSIGNMENT 3 WRITTEN REPORT

**A GAZE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS:  
FUNCTIONS OF EYE GAZE IN NEGOTIATION**

LAW KA MEI, ELIZABETH

LAW MAN KA CRYSTAL

WONG SZE LAM TIFFANY

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## **Introduction**

The project is an in-depth analysis on the functions of eye gaze based on an **8-minute** long video extract (1:31 - 9:41). The face-to-face conversation<sup>1</sup> was recorded at A's home with the use of a laptop's camera placed on the right-hand side of A.

In the video, two interlocutors, A and B, sitting side by side are conversing about their trip. A sits on the left and B on the right. A is searching information on the Internet with the computer monitor in the front while B is holding a travel guide. To arrange meal and activities in their trip to Osaka, Japan in May, they are negotiating to make some decisions.

## **Aims**

We would like to take this opportunity to explore the functions of eye gaze in conversation based on the authentic data we have collected, particularly in the situation of negotiation.

## **Literature Review**

There were increasing numbers of studies in gaze in 1970s. One early research often cited is done by Kendon (1967). He finds that gaze is usually found at the end of utterances and at the phrase breaks within an utterance.

Therefore, it accounts for the gaze duration of speaker. Taking time to organize ideas in mind, speaker tends to hold the floor by looking away. That prevents an insertion to the lapse from the hearer. The speaker's gaze then comes back with a fluent speech. Kendon also notes that speaker's gaze signals the boundary of utterances and that a hearer's response is required. The hearer accepts the offer and then looks away in order to process what to say next.

The above illustrations show that gaze facilitates turn transitions in a conversation. Kendon concludes two functions of eye gaze for speaker: checking how information is being

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<sup>1</sup> According to Schefflen (1964), two patterns of seating arrangement, side-by-side and face-to-face, pose different kinds of gaze movement. A side-by-side seating arrangement "involves mutual orientation toward some third party or object" (Goodwin, 1977). It is to notice that the examples in this project do not involve investigation of gaze toward the third object, but rather, between the two interlocutors. Moreover, the "face-to-face" conversation in this project refers to a real-time conversation with eye gaze, instead of sitting opposite each other.

received by the hearer and regulating the behaviors of hearer.

Goodwin (1977) believes that the presence of eye gaze is important as well as its absence in social life. “Gaze is not merely a means of obtaining information, but is itself a social act.” He then investigated the association of gaze and restarts which are fragments before a coherent sentence. Restarts act like summon and request eye gaze from the hearer. Therefore, a restart-and-gaze adjacency pair is formed and gaze is found to be a significant means of social interaction.

Kleinke (1986) did a review on other past research. He concludes more functions of gaze: “to express intimacy, to exercise social control, and to facilitate service and task goals”. Precise definitions of “face-gaze”, “eye-gaze” and “mutual gaze” are given<sup>2</sup>. But in this project, gaze, stare and glance mean gaze toward one’s eye as well as face.

Mehrabian and Williams (1969) did three experiments on the correlation between the non-verbal cues and the intended and perceived persuasiveness.

### **Transcript Notations**

Similar to the research of Goodwin (1977, pp. 111-119), transcript notations of gaze developed by Gail Jefferson are adopted. Besides the general notations for conversation analysis, only three specific notations are selected. Other notations like gaze duration are not investigated in the project.

Speaker:	X_
Utterance:	Hi. How are you?
Recipient:	....X_____

A cross “X” indicates the exact point of gaze reaching the recipient. “\_” refers to gaze continuing and dots means the movement of gaze towards the recipient.

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<sup>2</sup>According to Kleinke (1986), Harper et al. (1978) defines a number of terms: “Face-gaze is the direction of one person’s gaze at another’s face, and eye-gaze is the direction of one’s gaze at another’s eyes. Mutual gaze refers to two people gazing at each other’s faces, and eye contact defines two people gazing at each other’s eyes.”

## Data Analysis

According to the position where eye gaze takes place, we have classified our data into two broad categories: eye gaze as independent responses and intense eye gaze accompanying utterances. Analysis on its functions is presented below:

### Case 1: Eye Gaze as Independent Responses

In the following excerpt from the data, speakers A and B are deciding whether to have congee or not during their trip. A suggests having congee while B disagrees due to the hot weather. Though A persuades B that having congee is good for appetite, B insists in not having it. A asks if there is congee that served cold and B stares at speaker A without making any verbal cues.

A's turn and the corresponding response by B in line 283 & 284 will now be investigated:

#### (Extract 1: 8:03 – 8:07)

283 A: °有 冇 啲 凍 嘅 粥°  
jau5 mou5 di1 dung3 ge3 zuk1  
have no CL cold ATTR congee

'Is there any congee that served cold?'

X\_\_\_

→ 284 B: ((瞪))  
((staring))

285 A: <咁↑ 點 呀:> (.) 冇野 h 食 呀:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
gam2 dim2 aa1 mou5\_je5 sik6 aa1  
so what SFP nothing eat SFP

'So what to eat then? (We've got) nothing to eat!'

Feeling ridiculous, B stares at A soon after she hears A's question since congee, to the best of our knowledge, is normally served hot. Staring, by definition, is a gaze or look that persists

for a while regardless of the behavior of the other person (Kleinke, 1986; Ellsworth, Carlsmith, & Henson, 1972). B does not give any verbal responses; instead, she resorts to the non-verbal cues --- eye gaze. She originally gazes at the monitor, where A is looking for information (see Fig. 1), and subsequently directs her gaze to A as a response (see Fig. 2 & 3) and finally withdraws her gaze after A starts another question FPP.

From A's perspective, she may realize her question is a bit improper and she probably does not expect an answer from B. Possibility has it that A is just joking as the question is realized as a stretch of quieter talk in contrast to its surrounding utterances. A does not notice the gaze when B's eyes reach her, she has not even begun to turn her eyes toward B. A follows by initiating another FPP in line 285, asking B what to eat then.



Figure 1 Speaker B gazes at the monitor



Figure 2 Speaker B directing her gaze towards A



Figure 3 Speaker B stares at A

Apart from the gaze unnoticed by the recipient in the above example, extract 2 demonstrates that one might deliberately avoid making an eye contact with the gaze sender.

(Extract 2: 2:26 – 8:32)

66 B: =你 未 拉 上 去: 呀::=

nei5 mei6 laai1 soeng5 heoi3 aa1  
you not.yet scroll up go SFP

‘You have not yet dragged (the routes).’

67 A: =做乜 要 拉 上 去 啱  
zou6\_mat1 jiu3 laai1 soeng5 heoi3 zek1  
why need scroll up go SFP  
行 過 黎 呢度 有 咩  
haang4 gwo3 lai4 nei1\_dou6 jau5 me1  
walk.here here have what  
分別 呀  
fan1\_bit6 aa1  
difference SFP

‘Why (I) have to drag it? There’s no difference walking from this side to the other.’

68 (1.3)

69 B: 係 喎 (1.1) sor  
hai6 wo3 sor  
yes SFP sorry

‘Oh, yes! Sorry.’

..X\_\_

→ 70 A: ((瞪))  
((stare))

71 B: (kit)  
(brittle smile)

B asks A about the distance going from the JR station to the park as shown in the Google Map. B thinks she has spotted something wrong on A’s placement of the cursor. A tries to defend herself and B apologizes soon after she realizes that she has made the wrong claim. In

response to B's apology, A stares at B, showing her unpleasantness by giving B an 'i-have-already-told-you' look, which is a sequence closing. Indeed, from the seating arrangement, B should have noticed the gaze. Yet, she deliberately avoid making an eye contact with A (see Fig. 5), such act reveals that B is ashamed of herself. Knowing that B is avoiding the gaze, A withdraws and B cracks a brittle smile.



Figure 4 Speakers A & B gaze at the monitor



Figure 5 Speaker A stares at speaker B

### Case 2: Intense Eye Gaze Accompanying Utterances

This type of eye gaze comes along with the utterance. In addition to persuasion, its major function is to seek responses from the recipient. After finishing the TRP, speaker will continue to hold his gaze until a response is given. This can be illustrated by the following excerpt from line 268 to 271.

(Extract 3: 7:29 –7:34)

			X						
268	A:	=<聽說>	五月	嘅	日本	係	好	熱	嘅 (1.2)
		teng1_syut3	ng5jyut6	ge3	jat6bun2	hai6	hou2	jit6	ge3
		hear_say	may	ATTR	Japan	BE	very	hot	SFP
									'I heard that the weather in May in Japan is very hot'
7:34	269	B:	huhhh	啱=					
			dou1						
			INTJ						
			'shxt'						

In this extract, A offers a reason to persuade B not to a hot spring in Japan. In line 268, A produces the first assessment FPP (see Fig.6). She provides a third party's assessment on the weather in Japan and expects the reply from B. However, B does not produce a verbal response immediately. A next speaker's pause can be found after A's FPP. From the start of A's

utterance, A continues to gaze at B until B produces a second assessment SPP. A then withdraws her gaze nearly at the end of B's TRP (see Fig.7).

This gaze serves as a turn-taking signal, which can be used to complement the verbal cues. In the aforementioned extract, A does not ask for a feedback verbally, instead her gaze provides a signal of seeking responses from B. In other words, the eye gaze signifies the speaker gives up her floor and selects the audience as the next speaker (Kendon, 1967). Kendon states that the speaker's eye gaze at the end of an utterance also indicates the speaker checks on how the audience is responding to what she is saying, apart from looking for a response.



Figure 6 Speaker A gazes at B



Figure 7 Speaker A holds her gaze at B

The example from line 270 to 271 also shows the functions performed by an intense gaze.

The corresponding extract is as follows:

**(Extract 4: 7:34 – 7:39)**

		X							
270	A:	=我地	可以	慳返	錢	唔洗	浸	溫泉.	(3.0)
		ngo5_dei6	ho2ji5	haan1_1faan1	cin2	m4_sai2	zam3	wan1_cyun4	
		I_PL	can	save_ASP	money	NEG_need	soak	hot spring	
		'We can save our money by not taking the hot spring.'							
7:39	271	B:	((hand gesture meaning okay))						

As shown in line 270, A suggests not taking a hot spring. A looks away from B at the beginning of her turn (see Fig. 8), this can not only be interpreted as a way showing she focuses on organizing her speech, but also her intention to hold her floor and unwillingness to be interrupted by her interlocutor. A directs her gaze to B in the middle of her speech (see Fig. 9). Without blinking her eyes, her gaze seems to be forceful, which makes her suggestion like a firm decision. After her TRP, A continues to gaze towards B (see Fig.10). This possibly shows

she expects a response from B and she holds her gaze at B during the next speaker's pause. She withdraws her gaze until B's nonverbal response indicating her acceptance of the suggestion is given (See Fig. 11).



Figure 8 Speaker A looks away at first



Figure 9 Speaker A gazes at B in the middle of her speech



Figure 10 Speaker A continues to gaze at B



Figure 11 Speaker A withdraws her gaze from B

The following extract also provides an insight on how intense gaze is regarded as a means of exerting dominance.

**(Extract 5: 4:04 – 4:08)**

4:04	124	A:	可唔可以食埋野呀。跟住(.)[ 因為行哩度:: ho2 m4 ho2ji5 sik6maai4 je5 aa1 gan1jyu6 jan1wai4 haang4 le1dok6 can not can eat ASP thing SFP follow ASP because walk there 'Can we have something to eat after that? Because we walk there '
	125	B:	.....X [食早餐...呀(0.7) Sik6 zou2caan1 aa4 Eat breakfast SFP 'Eating breakfast?'
4:08	126	A:	係嗰甜品黎㗎 hai6 wo3 tim4 ban2 lai4 gaa2 wo3 yes_SFP dessert come SFP SFP 'Yes, it's a dessert.'

In this extract, A first produces a question FPP requesting having something to eat after the traveling. This is followed by an overlapping: A provides a supporting reason while B produces an answer SPP. Since the food mentioned is a dessert, to the best of our knowledge,

it is probably not suitable to eat as breakfast. With this rationale, B's reply seems to be a rhetorical question, implying a rejection on A's question. At the beginning of her utterance, B starts to direct her gaze towards A (see Fig. 12). Her gaze is intense (see Fig. 13), which makes her answer become more assertive. The possible reason is that B thinks A forgets the food is a dessert, leading A to come up with this suggestion. Through her response on line 125, it can be interpreted that B has a strong reason to reject and tries to point out A's source of misunderstanding. In line 126, A's agreement on the rhetorical question of B apparently implies that A has discovered the trouble source of her suggestion. Furthermore, a lengthening and a stress on the morpheme, '餐', can be found in line 125. Meanwhile, B's intense gaze is possibly functioned as a visual cue complementing this verbal cue to show B is the dominant one who makes reasonable decisions.



Figure 12 Speaker B starts to direct her gaze towards A



Figure 13 Speaker B gazes at A

## Discussion

### Case 1: Eye Gaze as Independent Responses

In the first two extracts, both speakers A (in extract 1) and B (in extract 2) are the non-gazing recipient for they do not gaze back at their interlocutors. Though there is no mutual gaze between the two parties, the examples perfectly illustrate that eye gaze can be a simple, yet meaningful way, to convey one's emotions or feelings, which are sometimes hard to convey verbally.

Some features of eye gaze as an independent response can be noted. To begin with, eye gaze stands alone as an independent action, without any verbal utterances accompanying it.

Second, response after the gaze turn is not necessary as the conversation can end at this point of time. One pattern that can be observed is that the 'inferior' party tends to self-select after the gaze turn. One may argue that A does not notice the gaze turn of B in the first example. Yet, whether eye gaze has been realized by the interlocutor does not constitute a problem as this does not in any way affect the flow of communication. A initiates another question FPP and the conversation continues. Besides, eye gaze is a natural response, which conveys the underlying emotions of the speaker. Thus, gaze conveys communicative information. As Darwin (1872) puts it, people can use their eyes to convey their emotions and feelings. Through the gaze, one can express their feelings, be it appreciation dominance or shame.

### **Case 2: Intense Eye Gaze Accompanying Utterances**

The above examples illustrate that this type of gazing behavior serves as an effective tool in persuasion. Firstly, it can be used to pursue feedback from the recipient. As shown in the extract from line 267 to 271, the speaker continues to hold her gaze until a response is given by the audience. The gaze functions as visual cue to seek responses and select the recipient as the next speaker forcefully. Accompanying with the verbal utterances, intense gaze can perform as a signal of requiring a reply where no explicit verbal question is produced. Although no mutual gaze between the two parties is involved in the above-mentioned examples, it seems that the interlocutor can sense or notice the intense gaze and answer back. The intense gaze can generate an impression that the speaker engages in this conversation deeply, which can hence improve the quality of persuasion.

Secondly, intense gaze can indicate the power relation between speakers and audiences. As stated by Romano and Bellack (1980), gaze can be used as an element indicating assertiveness. Speaker uses the gaze to demonstrate her dominance over others. This can improve the degree of persuasion via using intense gaze to exert her social control (Kleinke, 1986). From all the discussed examples, the speaker tends to have a stronger reason or argument on her side, which apparently makes her view impossible to be refused. Along with

the verbal utterance, the gaze makes the speech become command-like, implying the speaker has the role of group leader (Howells & Becker, 1962). As shown in extract in line 125, intense eye can accompany with other verbal cues, like stress, in order to reflect the “superior” position of the speaker.

## **Conclusion**

Eye gaze is a universal and natural phenomenon in conversation. In this project, we have examined the gaze turns in our authentic data from a naturally occurring talk. As negotiation is ubiquitous and inevitable in all forms of interactions, be it private or open, our emphasis has therefore been placed on the gaze turns in such situations, so as to improve skills as a negotiator.

Through the analysis of our authentic data, eye gaze can be classified into two broad categories, namely, eye gaze as independent responses & eye gaze accompanying utterances. Both forms have their own functions in conversation. Briefly, the gaze as independent responses discloses the speakers’ attitudes and emotions, which are sometimes hard to express verbally. Interestingly, responses after the gaze turn are not a must and the ‘inferior’ party tends to self-select as the next speaker. By ‘inferior’ I mean the interlocutor who had made a wrong claim or had said something ridiculously.

Apart from expressing emotions, eye gaze serves as an effective device in persuasion. To be more specific, speakers can use their gaze to seek responses without saying it out verbally. Besides, gaze can be used to exert social control or demonstrate one’s dominance over the others, ranging from assigning the next speaker’s turn in a forceful manner, to showing how assertive one is and what he/she says cannot be withdrawn.

In sum, eye gaze conveys a great deal of information that we sometimes may not be aware of and a gaze really speaks a thousand words. Indeed, this study is a small-scale piece of work and it is our hope that further explorations can be done in the future on the regulatory functions of the gaze behavior in interactions.

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## Appendix I: Transcript

### 1. Description of the Conversation

Below is a brief description of the content of the conversation:

Time	Topic
1:31 – 2:06	B raises questions about getting to Nara by Kintetsu or Japan Railway (JR). They also discuss whether to buy a railway pass.
2:07 – 3:35	They plan the route from the station to the park by Google Map. B thinks A place the wrong starting point and they start to negotiate. Finally, A successfully convinces B that B has misunderstood.
3:36 – 3:57	They continue planning the route as well as the itinerary.
3:58 – 4:18	B suggests a route including lunch but A has question about that. B quickly realizes her concern and reminds her rhetorically that it is not for breakfast.
4:19 – 4:46	They change the topic to buying a souvenir of chimpanzee. A refuses to do so.
4:47 – 6:25	After checking the route to a tofu shop, they turn to other choices, congee, Indian cuisine and pot rice. A asks about the pronunciation of “釜” (the name of the rice) and B answers her.
6:26 – 7:28	The topic switches between congee and sushi.
7:29 – 7:49	A suddenly talks about the hot weather and suggests not taking the hot spring. B agrees.
7:50 – 9:30	A suggests eating congee but B disagrees. They then talk about pudding and the route. They decide to buy breakfast in the railway.
9:31 – End	They negotiate about whether to go Uji or not.

## Appendix II: CA Abbreviations

<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
FPP	First Pair Part
SPP	Second Pair Part
TCU	Turn Constructional Unit
TRP	Transition Relevance Place
SCT	Sequence-closing Thirds

### Appendix III: Abbreviations in the Interlinear Glosses

<b>Symbol</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
ASP	Aspect Marker
ATTR	Attribute
CL	Classifier
INTJ	Interjection
NEG	Negation
PL	Plural Marker
SFP	Sentence Final Particle

### **Work Distribution Table**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Tasks</b>
Law Ka Mei, Elizabeth (53462459)	Introduction, Aims, Literature Review, Transcript
Law Man Ka Crystal (53463026)	Data Analysis & Discussion - Case 2
Wong Sze Lam Tiffany (52616117)	Data Analysis & Discussion - Case 1, Conclusion

### **Acknowledgement**

We would like to take this opportunity to offer our heartfelt thanks to Dr. Zhang and Ms. Peng Xin for their generosity in guiding us to work on this simple, yet profound topic, eye gaze, which is out of the course syllabus.