




# Dynamic power relations between characters in *A View from the Bridge*: A pragmatylistic approach

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## Abstract

This article investigates power dynamics reflected in the conversations between characters in Arthur Miller's written text, *A View from the Bridge*, from the perspective of pragmatic stylistics. Given that techniques from conversation analysis have proven feasible and effective in the analysis of dramatic dialogue, this article analyses and interprets the development of power relations in the Carbone family by means of turn-taking patterns. In general, this article argues that Eddie's authority is consecutively undermined in front of Catherine, while his control over Beatrice is gradually reinforced. Moreover, Beatrice's manipulation of Catherine is continuously challenged. Based on the above results, this article demonstrates that the changing power relations are a fundamental cause of family conflicts and the final tragedy. Therefore, this article shows that turn-taking analysis is a new way of explaining how we understand dynamic power relations between characters in this dramatic text.

## Keywords

Arthur Miller, *A View from the Bridge*, conversation analysis, power relations, pragmatic stylistics, turn-taking

## 1. Introduction

Pragmatic stylistics (Black, 2006; Chapman and Clark, 2014) is an interdisciplinary which 'combines approaches from pragmatics and stylistics to answer questions about how

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(literary) language is used in context and how it contributes to the characterisation of the protagonists in a literary piece of art or how power structures are created' (Nørgaard et al., 2010: 39). It provides objective evidence for the explanation of literary texts, especially fiction and drama. Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, pragmatic stylistics has drawn on theoretical frameworks from pragmatics and discourse/conversation analysis to analyse and interpret characterisation (e.g. Bennison, 1993; Bousfield, 2007, 2014; Chen, 1996; Culpeper, 1998; Goatly, 2008; Leech, 1992; McIntyre and Bousfield, 2017; Simpson, 1989) and power relations (e.g. Herman, 1991, 1995, 1998) in dramatic texts. However, according to the available references, there is only a small amount of academic work that utilises pragmatist approaches to analyse Arthur Miller's plays, and none that focuses on *A View from the Bridge*.<sup>1</sup>

The play is a social tragedy about Italian American working class men and women. Previous literary studies are primarily concerned with critical commentaries on its characterisation (e.g. Abbotson, 2007; Bigsby, 2005; Marino, 2013; Larner, 2017; Murphy, 1997), themes (e.g. Abbotson, 2000; Costello, 1993; Marino, 2017; Moss, 1980) and literary devices (e.g. Abbotson, 2007; Carson, 1982; Epstein, 1965). No prior literary studies have discussed power dynamics and their influence on the conflicts and tragedy in the play. Additionally, existing literary studies (e.g. Bigsby, 2005; Carson, 1982; Marino, 2013; Moss, 1980) hold that the protagonist's incestuous love for his niece and his betrayal of his wife's illegal immigrant cousins lead to the final tragedy. This article aims to explore the dynamic power relations between characters and their resulting impact on family conflicts and the final tragedy in the play.

As mentioned above, previous literary research has mostly interpreted the contents of the play. The structure of its dialogue has received little attention. Hence this article focuses on this aspect. Since turn-taking analysis is a prominent method to probe into conversational structure, this article analyses turn-taking patterns of characters in the play in a quantitative way. Then, on the basis of the results of turn-taking analysis, it interprets shifting power relations between characters with regard to the immediate contexts and social/cultural contexts of the play. This article argues that objective turn-taking analysis and subjective interpretation contribute to the revelation of power dynamics.

In Section 2, I give a brief summary of the plot of the play. Then, in Section 3, I provide an outline of the theoretical framework used in this article. In Section 4, I take a detailed look at how characters' power relations develop on the basis of the analysis of their turn-taking patterns.

## 2. *A View from the Bridge*: Plot summary

This realistic play is set in the Red Hook section near Brooklyn Bridge in New York. It is a world where the strict code of loyalty and the moral law in society must be observed. Incestuous love and informing on illegal immigrants are also two taboos in this world. In this written text, changing power relations between characters propel the plots in two acts. The play revolves around five figures: three members (Eddie, Beatrice and Catherine) of the Carbone family and two illegal immigrants (Marco and Rodolpho) from Italy. Eddie is an Italian American longshoreman. Beatrice is his wife. Catherine is their niece. Marco and Rodolpho are Beatrice's cousins.

The play begins as Eddie is criticising Catherine, who shows off her new outfit in front of Eddie in a naively flirtatious manner. Eddie is worried that Catherine's dress and actions may be too attractive for the strange men. Then, when learning that Catherine has got a job, Eddie shows disapproval because he wants her to stay close to home and not be exposed to many new men. However, Beatrice agrees with Catherine's decision because she is anxious about the intimate attachment of her husband to Catherine. Eddie's over-protective attitude towards Catherine has developed into a form of possessive and abnormal love for her. This situation is worsened by the arrival of Marco and Rodolpho. When Rodolpho and Catherine fall in love, Eddie is very angry, upset and jealous. He tries his best to destroy their relationship. By contrast, Beatrice supports the marriage of Catherine and Rodolpho. Eddie goes to Alfieri (a lawyer) to check whether there are legal ways to prevent Rodolpho from marrying Catherine. Eddie has been told twice that no legal action is available unless he informs on the brothers. When everything fails, Eddie feels desperate and calls the immigration department. Then Rodolpho and Marco are led away by police officers. Marco accuses Eddie of betraying them in front of his neighbours. The play ends with Marco's returning for vengeance. Eddie refuses to avoid Marco and insists on Marco's apology in order to regain his name. Finally, in the duel between them, Eddie is killed by Marco.

### 3. Turn-taking patterns in pragmatic stylistics

Turn-taking patterns for conversation were originally proposed by [Sacks et al. \(1974\)](#). They refer to the mechanisms that regulate speakers taking turns to speak in conversation. They occupy a central position in the analysis of conversational structure and include four core components: turn construction (units for constructing turns, including words, phrases, clauses and sentences), turn allocation (the action that means one speaker keeps the turn right or allocates the turn right to another speaker), turn grab (the action that means one speaker's turn right is seized by another speaker) and turn sequencing (components from the initiated turns to the final turns in a conversation). Recently, 'stylistics has adopted techniques from conversation analysis and applied them in the analysis of dialogue in both fiction and non-fiction texts' ([Jeffries and McIntyre, 2010: 101](#)). The pragmatic effects of conversational structure arise from turn-taking patterns in specific contexts in pragmatic stylistics.

Turn-taking patterns are closely interrelated with interpersonal relationships, especially power relations, between participants in conversation. As [Gibbons and Whiteley \(2018: 85\)](#) suggest, 'conversational structure is often related in some way to the relative power of the participants involved in an interaction'. Looking at turn-taking patterns is usually a good way to see the overall character relations in a conversation ([Short, 2014: 347](#)). As a result, analysis of turn-taking patterns helps to shed light on power relations between characters in dramatic dialogue ([Herman, 1991, 1995; Short, 1996](#)). This article aims to analyse the interplay between turn-taking and power dynamics, highlighting the value of turn-taking analysis in revealing dynamic power relations in specific contexts in the play.

Given that turn-taking patterns are associated with power relations, [Short \(1996\)](#) originally offered a set of dimensions from turn-taking patterns to identify powerful and

powerless speakers in dramatic dialogue.<sup>2</sup> These dimensions have been supported by other studies, such as Herman (1998), Lambrou (2014) and Gibbons and Whiteley (2018).<sup>3</sup> However, the variable of turn preference, that is, preferred and dispreferred responsive turns in adjacency pairs, has also proven effective in revealing power relations (Short, 2014; Thornborrow and Wareing, 1998). Adjacency pairs are sequences of two utterances that are adjacent, produced by different speakers, ordered as a first part and a second part, and typed (so that a particular first part requires a particular second or range of second parts) (Levinson, 1983: 303). Adjacency pairs include at least a preferred response and a dispreferred response. For example, in this conversation (A: Can you help me? B: Yes/No.), speaker A's question is the first part of the adjacency pair. If speaker B answers 'Yes', it is the preferred responsive turn. Otherwise, it is the dispreferred responsive turn. This article incorporates this variable into the turn-taking patterns in Short (1996) and Gibbons and Whiteley (2018). Moreover, some adjectives used to describe the tendencies of speakers' power (e.g. most turns, longest turns) are too strong or absolute. This article makes a few changes to these words. Specifically, in the variable of turn quantity, 'have the most turns' and 'have the fewest turns' are changed into 'have more turns' and 'have fewer turns' respectively. In the variable of turn length, 'have the longest turns' and 'have the shortest turns' are changed into 'have longer turns' and 'have shorter turns' respectively.

The adjusted turn-taking model for the analysis of characters' power relations in the play is shown in Table 1.

As Short (1996) and Gibbons and Whiteley (2018) state, generally speaking, powerful speakers occupy more turns, hold longer turns, initiate topics and turns, control topics and turns, allocate turns to others, interrupt others, use informal address terms and produce more dispreferred responsive turns. Powerless speakers generally have the opposite tendencies. However, there may be violations of these general rules on account of different contexts, which sometimes lead to discrepancies between turn-taking patterns and characters' power relations. Therefore, the interpretation of characters' turn-taking patterns should be in line with the immediate contexts and social/cultural contexts of the play.

#### **4. Power dynamics in *A View from the Bridge* in terms of turn-taking patterns**

This section shows the dynamic power relations of each combination of two characters from the three (Eddie, Beatrice and Catherine) in the Carbone family on the basis of their individual turn-taking patterns. There are no representative three-way conversations between all of the characters. In each subsection, firstly, I select characters' conversations from the outset to the end of the play. Then, I describe dynamic power relations between characters arising from their changing turn-taking patterns in immediate contexts and social/cultural contexts. Finally, I make connections between power dynamics and turn-taking patterns. Detailed analytical procedures are provided in order to show how the conclusions are reached. However, no statistical analysis of the quantitative data is presented because the paper aims only to suggest a way of analysing texts. Fuller studies might involve fuller statistical analysis but that the aim here is the less ambitious one of

**Table 1.** Tendencies of powerful and powerless speakers in dramatic dialogue (based on Gibbons and Whiteley, 2018: 85).

Variables		Powerful speakers	Powerless speakers
Turn construction	Turn quantity*	Have more turns	Have fewer turns
	Turn length	Have longer turns	Have shorter turns
	Turn feature	Use informal address terms	Use formal address terms
	Topic initiation	Initiate conversational topics	Respond to others' topics
	Topic control	Control conversational topics	Follow others' topics
Turn allocation		Allocate turns to others	Respond to allocated turns
Turn grab	Turn initiation	Initiate conversational turns	Respond to turn initiation
	Turn interruption	Interrupt	Are interrupted
Turn sequencing	Turn preference	Have more dispreferred responsive turns in adjacency pairs	Have more preferred responsive turns in adjacency pairs

\*In interaction between two people it is normal for the amount of turns to be roughly equal, so this indicator usually better applies to multi-party interaction.

showing that consideration of turn-taking patterns helps us to understand power relations between characters.

4.1. *Eddie’s decreasing power over Catherine*

In this subsection, three extracts<sup>4</sup> of the conversations between Eddie and Catherine are selected from the beginning of Act One, the middle of Act One and the middle of Act Two respectively. These extracts typify the development of the power relations between Eddie and Catherine.

According to the three extracts, Eddie’s powerful status is gradually challenged by Catherine from the beginning to the end of the play. From extract 1, Eddie is the dominant character, while Catherine belongs to the subordinate one at the outset of Act One. As her uncle, Eddie has raised Catherine since she was a child. He has then established his entire control over Catherine. As a result, Eddie is very powerful in front of Catherine. However, Eddie’s authority is challenged by Catherine in extract 2. Confronted with Eddie’s accusation of Rodolpho, Catherine attempts to vindicate her lover. Even though Catherine still respects Eddie deeply, she dares to argue with him in her own interests. We can infer that Eddie’s manipulative force has been emasculated on account of Catherine’s growth in the middle of Act One. As extract 3 reveals, Eddie’s powerful position is further threatened by Catherine. Since Eddie’s informing causes serious damage to Marco and her fiance Rodolpho, Catherine breaks completely with Eddie. As a consequence, Eddie’s dominance over Catherine continues to be reduced in the middle of Act Two.

The above interpretations can be substantiated by the different turn-taking patterns of Eddie and Catherine in the three extracts. According to the variables in the turn-taking

**Table 2.** Turn-taking patterns in different conversations between Eddie and Catherine.<sup>5</sup>

Number		Extract 1		Extract 2		Extract 3	
Character		Eddie	Catherine	Eddie	Catherine	Eddie	Catherine
Turn construction	Turn quantity	10	10	22	22	5	6
	Turn length (average/largest length)	16.9/39	8.2/15	16.35/81	10.15/37	29/105	11.33/32
	Turn feature (formal/informal address terms)	0/6	0/2	0/10	0/8	0/4	0/2
	Topic initiation	3	2	4	4	3	1
	Topic control	15	0	28	8	7	0
Turn allocation	(to/from others)	10/1	1/9	16/8	11/14	5/1	2/5
Turn grab	Turn initiation/response	6/4	4/6	12/10	10/12	4/1	1/5
	Turn interruption (to/from others)	2/0	0/2	2/2	2/2	0/0	0/0
Turn sequencing	Turn preference (preferred/dispreferred responsive turns)	0/4	1/5	2/8	3/9	1/0	1/4

patterns given in the third section, analytical statistics in relation to the three extracts are shown in [Table 2](#).

Values of the variable of turn quantity in this table are insignificant because it is a two-party interaction between Eddie and Catherine in the selected conversations. Thus this variable is excluded in the analysis and discussion. In the following parts, I show how the other changing turn-taking variables reflect the dynamic power relations between Eddie and Catherine.

Different values in turn construction from extract 1 to extract 3 serve as the first evidence for the power dynamics between Eddie and Catherine.

Specifically, in extract 1, Eddie's average turn length is 16.9 words, which is more than 2 times of Catherine's (8.2 words). Eddie's largest turn length is nearly 3 times of Catherine's (39 words against 15 words). What's more, Eddie uses 6 informal address terms, while Catherine only employs 2 informal ones. Eddie's informal address terms are used to show his superior status and compel Catherine to accept his guidance. By contrast, Catherine's informal ones are exploited to ingratiate Eddie. For example, in turn 5, Catherine attempts to make Eddie be satisfied with her new shirt by calling Eddie's name. However, in turn 14, Eddie takes advantage of his father-figure identity to exert control over Catherine's emotion by calling her 'kid'. As far as topics are concerned in extract 1, although Eddie's topic initiation is more than Catherine's (3 times against 2 times), there is a difference between their topic control (15 times against 0 times). In other words, Eddie initiates 3 topics (the length of Catherine's new shirt in turn 2, Catherine's walking posture in turn 6 and Catherine's waving to other men in turn 16) in order to criticise Catherine and point out her so-called disgraceful behaviour. Correspondingly, 15 turns are under the control of these topics. In contrast, Catherine initiates 2 topics (the price of her new shirt in turn 1 and the popularity of her new shirt in turn 5) to make Eddie admire her new shirt.

Nonetheless, every time Catherine starts her topic, Eddie neglects her initiation and turns to another new topic. Thus, no topic is under the control of Catherine. From the above values in turn construction, we can see Eddie's dominance and Catherine's weakness in the beginning.

In extract 2, Eddie's average words are more than Catherine's (16.35 words against 10.15 words). The largest turn length of Eddie is also more than that of Catherine (81 words against 37 words). However, in this extract, each of the gaps of the two variables in turn length reduces, by comparison with that in extract 1. As for turn feature in extract 2, Eddie's informal address terms are still more than those of Catherine. However, the disparity between the informal address terms used by Eddie and those used by Catherine (10 times against 8 times) also decreases, compared to that in extract 1 (6 times against 2 times). In this extract, the quantities of the initiated topics from Eddie and Catherine are equal (4 times against 4 times). Eddie's topics are distributed in turn 2 (Catherine's ignorance of him), turn 10 (Catherine's love with Rodolpho), turn 18 (Catherine's plan to marry Rodolpho) and turn 26 (Rodolpho's purpose to obtain his American citizenship). Catherine starts her topics in turn 1 (Eddie's ignorance of Rodolpho), turn 9 (Eddie's opinion of Rodolpho), turn 13 (Eddie's prejudice of Rodolpho) and turn 19 (Eddie's opinion of Rodolpho again). However, Eddie aims to rebuke Catherine's frequent contacts with Rodolpho and cast Catherine's doubt on Rodolpho's real intention to marry her. By contrast, Catherine initiates these topics in order to contradict Eddie's arguments. Following their topics, Eddie's topic control amounts to 28 times, while Catherine's amounts to 8 times. Compared with that in extract 1, the quantity of Catherine's topic control increases obviously, even though Eddie's numbers are still more than Catherine's. The above changes in the values of turn construction from extract 1 to extract 2 mirror Catherine's challenge to Eddie's great power.

In extract 3, Eddie's average turn length is obviously more than that of Catherine (29 words against 11.33 words). This gap (17.67 words) widens by comparison to that (6.2 words) in extract 2. What's more, Eddie's largest turn length is more than 3 times of Catherine's (105 words against 32 words). The values of these variables imply that Eddie tries to restart his control over Catherine at the end of the play. He intends to persuade Catherine not to marry Rodolpho by making excuses for his own opinions. With reference to turn feature in extract 3, the difference between Eddie's and Catherine's informal address terms is the same as that in extract 2. As for topics in this extract, Eddie's initiated topics are more than Catherine's (3 times against 1 time). Eddie controls his topics 7 times, while there is no topic under Catherine's control. To be specific, after Catherine's topic initiation (the time of her wedding) in turn 1, Eddie immediately starts a new topic in turn 2 (his treatment of her and Rodolpho before). In the following turns, Eddie initiates 1 topic (his agreement to Catherine's freedom outside) in turn 4 and 1 topic (Rodolpho's arrest by the police) in turn 10. All the other turns are under the control of Eddie. However, even though he controls most turns, Eddie's topics are not regarded seriously. For example, in turn 5, turn 7, turn 9 and turn 11, Catherine refuses Eddie's instructions continuously. This is a further challenge to Eddie's powerful status.

The second evidence to show the dynamic power relations between Eddie and Catherine lies in the changing values in turn allocation.

In extract 1, Eddie allocates turns to Catherine 10 times and gets turns from Catherine only 1 time. However, the distribution of Catherine's turn allocation runs counter to that of Eddie. In this extract, Catherine only allocates 1 turn to Eddie, yet she gets Eddie's turns 9 times. Such a contrast at the outset of the play hints at Eddie's superiority and Catherine's inferiority in power.

In extract 2, Eddie's turn allocation to Catherine is still more than Catherine's turn allocation to Eddie (16 times against 11 times). However, the gap between them decreases from 9 times in extract 1 to 5 times in this extract. What's more, the numbers of Eddie's turn allocation from Catherine are still less than those of Catherine's turn allocation from Eddie (8 times against 14 times). Similar to their turn allocation to each other, the disparity between Eddie's turn allocation from Catherine and Catherine's turn allocation from Eddie also narrows, from 8 times in extract 1 to 6 times in extract 2. Such a change in the values of their turn allocation reflects Catherine's challenge to Eddie's dominant position.

In extract 3, Eddie's turn allocation to Catherine is still more than Catherine's to Eddie (5 times against 2 times). However, the gap (3 times) between their values further reduces in this extract by contrasting with that (5 times) in extract 2. In addition, Eddie's turn allocation from Catherine is still less than Catherine's from Eddie (1 time against 5 times). Their difference in this variable also further lessens in this conversation. Clearly, Eddie's authority declines in front of Catherine at the end of the play, Although he remains powerful powerful.

Variations in the distributions of Eddie's and Catherine's turn grab are another evidence to suggest their changing power relations.

In extract 1, Eddie initiates turns 6 times and responds to Catherine's turns 4 times, while Catherine initiates turns 4 times and responds to Eddie's turns 6 times. The reverse values imply that Eddie is more powerful than Catherine. Moreover, Eddie interrupts Catherine 2 times. For example, in turn 5, when she shows her new shirt before Eddie, Catherine is interrupted by him. In turn 14, when hearing Catherine's complaint against him, Eddie interrupts her at once because he does not allow Catherine to have her independent thought. Nevertheless, Catherine exerts no turn interruption on Eddie. Thus, we can see Eddie's powerful position over Catherine.

In extract 2, the numbers of Eddie's turn initiation are still more than Catherine's (12 times against 10 times), although the gap of the initiated turns between Eddie and Catherine is equal to that in extract 1. It is the same case with their turn response. However, both Eddie and Catherine interrupt each other 2 times in this conversation. For instance, in turn 26, Eddie interrupts Catherine's explanation to him about Rodolpho's respect for her. In turn 39, Catherine interrupts Eddie to show her disapproval with Eddie's accusation of Rodolpho's actual intention to marry her. This suggests Catherine's rebellion in front of Eddie. She begins to challenge Eddie's dominance as the plot unfolds.

In extract 3, the numbers of Eddie's turn initiation are larger than Catherine's (4 times against 1 time). However, the difference (3 times) of turn initiation between Eddie and Catherine increases in comparison with that (2 times) in extract 2. What's more, in this extract, the numbers of Catherine's turn response are still larger than Eddie's (5 times against 1 time). The gap between their numbers in turn response widens from extract 2 (2 times) to extract 3 (4 times). Additionally, Eddie has no chance to interrupt Catherine in this conversation because Catherine rejects his advice resolutely and quickly in all her



turns. It is thus clear in extract 3 that, even though Eddie's variables are more favourable than Catherine's on the whole, Catherine only makes some curt replies. In fact, she does not pay any attention to Eddie's suggestions. Thus, Catherine shows her overt challenge to Eddie's dominance.

The final evidence of the power dynamics between Eddie and Catherine can be seen from the changes in the values in turn preference.

In extract 1, there are no preferred responses in Eddie's turns. On the contrary, he uses 4 dispreferred responsive turns to contradict Catherine's ideas. For example, in turn 18, Eddie warns Catherine not to wave to his friend Louis, in spite of Catherine's reasonable defence. By contrast, Catherine produces 1 preferred responsive turn and 5 dispreferred responsive turns. Although her dispreferred ones are more than Eddie's, Catherine just uses them to tell Eddie her own opinions. She does not intend to challenge Eddie's power.

In extract 2, Eddie has 2 preferred responsive turns and 8 dispreferred ones. Catherine's preferred responsive turns are more than Eddie's (3 times against 2 times). Yet her dispreferred ones are also more than Eddie's (9 times against 8 times). In her dispreferred responsive turns, Catherine disagrees with Eddie's viewpoints in general. For instance, in turn 15, Catherine tells Eddie explicitly that Rodolpho has great respect for him in order to alleviate his misunderstanding with Rodolpho. Therefore, Eddie's power is emasculated by Catherine.

In extract 3, both Eddie and Catherine have 1 preferred responsive turn. However, Catherine's dispreferred ones are more than those of Eddie (4 times against 0 times). Catherine exploits them to refuse directly Eddie's last persuasion. For example, in turn 5, Catherine disregards Eddie's permission for her freedom to play, work and meet other guys. This is Catherine's further challenge to Eddie's authority.

#### *4.2. Eddie's increasing power over Beatrice*

In this subsection, two extracts<sup>6</sup> of the conversations between Eddie and Beatrice are chosen from the middle of Act One and the middle of Act Two separately. From the two different conversations, we can arrive at the interpretations in relation to the changing power relations between them.

According to the two extracts, Eddie's control over Beatrice is progressively reinforced from Act One to Act Two. From extract 4, Eddie's power is higher than Beatrice's in Act One. After Rodolpho's arrival and his close contact with Catherine, Eddie is very furious with this interloper. Therefore, he accuses Rodolpho's abnormal behaviour in a debate with Beatrice on the love relationship between Catherine and Rodolpho. Eddie contradicts everything Beatrice mentions. Yet Eddie does not argue strongly with Beatrice, because he intends to persuade her to stop the close association between Rodolpho and Catherine. However, as extract 5 shows, Eddie tries to exercise absolute control over Beatrice in Act Two. As the situation develops beyond his expectation, Eddie is still not reconciled to his defeat. He then quarrels with Beatrice because she agrees with the marriage of Catherine and Rodolpho. In this conflict, Eddie vents his anger on Beatrice in a violent outburst. As a matter of fact, Eddie attempts to compel Beatrice to support his own decision by virtue of his male dominance in the Carbone family.

**Table 3.** Turn-taking patterns in different conversations between Eddie and Beatrice.

Number		Extract 4		Extract 5	
Character		Eddie	Beatrice	Eddie	Beatrice
Turn construction	Turn quantity	15	15	24	24
	Turn length (average/largest length)	17.27/ 53	9.47/23	16.5/ 75	10.67/ 34
	Turn feature (formal/informal address terms)	0/3	0/1	0/7	0/3
	Topic initiation	7	1	8	3
	Topic control	18	4	28	9
Turn allocation (to/from others)		8/8	10/5	18/9	12/13
Turn grab	Turn initiation/response	9/6	8/7	16/8	12/12
	Turn interruption (to/from others)	1/0	0/1	0/2	2/0
Turn sequencing	Turn preference (preferred/dispreferred responsive turns)	0/6	1/6	3/5	4/8

Turn-taking patterns in the two typical extracts function as the objective evidence to mirror the shift of the power relations between Eddie and Beatrice. The statistical data related to each variable in their turn-taking patterns is shown in [Table 3](#).

In this table, turn quantities of Eddie and Beatrice are not analysed and discussed since it is a two-party interaction in the selected extracts. Their turn numbers are the same and insignificant in turn-taking analysis. Next, I present how the dynamic power relations between Eddie and Beatrice can be supported by other turn-taking variables.

The first evidence that shows the change of the power relations between Eddie and Beatrice refers to the differences existing in the variables in turn construction.

In extract 4, Eddie's average turn length is 17.27 words, almost 2 times of that (9.47 words) of Beatrice. In addition, Eddie's largest turn length is more than Beatrice's (53 words against 23 words). As for turn feature, Eddie's informal address terms are more than Beatrice's (3 times against 1 time). They both use them to shorten their psychological distance and persuade the other party to accept their personal explanations. With regard to topics in this extract, Eddie initiates in total 7 topics, while Beatrice starts only 1 topic. Accordingly, 18 turns are under the control of Eddie's topics. Yet only 4 turns are under the control of Beatrice's. For example, in turn 19, Eddie begins to censure Rodolpho for his weird hairstyle when Beatrice defends Rodolpho's singing on the deck. The above values show Eddie's high power over Beatrice in extract 4.

In extract 5, Eddie's average turn length is still more than Beatrice's (16.5 words against 10.67 words). Moreover, Eddie's largest turn length is still more than Beatrice's (75 words against 34 words). Yet the gap (41 words) of the largest turn length between Eddie and Beatrice widens by comparison with that (30 words) in extract 4. The same is the case with their informal address terms in turn feature. In this extract Eddie uses informal address terms to admonish Beatrice for her mistakes. For instance, in turn 17, Eddie tells Beatrice flatly that he dislikes her way of speaking to him by calling Beatrice's name. Furthermore, the gap (5 times) of the initiated topics between Eddie and Beatrice is

nearly the same with that (6 times) in extract 4. However, in extract 5, the numbers of Eddie's topic control are increasingly larger than Beatrice's (28 times against 9 times), compared with those in extract 4 (18 times against 4 times). Hence Eddie's power increases in front of Beatrice in this extract.

The second evidence of the power dynamics between Eddie and Beatrice is connected with the different distributions of their turn allocation.

In extract 4, Eddie's turn allocation to Beatrice is less than Beatrice's to Eddie (8 times against 10 times). The reverse is their turn allocation from each other. Such an opposite distinction is a symptom of their seemingly equivalent power relation. However, Eddie does not exert his influence over Beatrice because he tries to persuade her to impede the contact between Catherine and Rodolpho.

However, in extract 5, the allocated turns from Eddie to Beatrice increase, which are 1.5 times of those from Beatrice to Eddie (18 times against 12 times). Additionally, Eddie's turns allocated from Beatrice are less than Beatrice's turns allocated from Eddie (9 times against 13 times). These manifest changes in turn allocation from extract 4 to extract 5 suggest that Eddie tries to exert his iron control over Beatrice because she is unwilling to cooperate in the second part of the play.

The third evidence to suggest the changing power relations between Eddie and Beatrice is related to the variations of their turn grab.

In extract 4, Eddie initiates 9 turns, which are more than Beatrice's 8 turns. Eddie responds to Beatrice's turns 6 times, which are less than Beatrice's 7 times. Nevertheless, the gap between Eddie's turn initiation and Beatrice's widens in extract 5. Eddie's turn initiation numbers increase to 16 times, while Beatrice's increase to 12 times. The same is the case with the two characters' turn response in extract 5. Eddie's turn response numbers increase to 8 times, whereas Beatrice's increase to 12 times.

Besides, Eddie interrupts Beatrice 1 time in turn 21. In this turn, he interrupts Beatrice's explanation for Rodolpho's blond hair. In contrast, Beatrice has no interruption to Eddie in this extract. Nonetheless, in extract 5, it is just the opposite case. Eddie is interrupted by Beatrice 2 times altogether. In fact, in the two interruptions, Beatrice poses no threat to Eddie's dominant position. For instance, in turn 30, Beatrice interrupts Eddie's reproach for her previous complaint about his unwillingness to sleep with her. At this moment, in the subsequent turn, Eddie insists that Beatrice really complained to him before. Then, Beatrice yields to Eddie's persistence in her fault in turn 32. Thus, Beatrice fails to challenge Eddie's powerful position. From the changes of the values in turn grab, we can find that Eddie exerts increasing authority over Beatrice in specific contexts from extract 4 to extract 5.

Power dynamics between Eddie and Beatrice can also be supported by the changes of the values in their turn preference.

There is almost no difference between Eddie and Beatrice in extract 4. Eddie has no preferred responsive turns, while Beatrice only produces 1 preferred responsive turn in turn 2. They both have 6 dispreferred responsive turns. In extract 5, Eddie's preferred responsive turns are still less than Beatrice's (3 times against 4 times). However, Beatrice's dispreferred responsive turns are more than Eddie's (8 times against 5 times). Despite such a disparity, Beatrice's power does not exceed Eddie's in her family. She just uses dispreferred responsive turns to show her disagreement with Eddie's thoughts. Yet

Beatrice's contradiction receives Eddie's lengthy counterattack as their confrontation becomes more and more heated. For example, in turn 34, Beatrice responds to Eddie that nothing ever changes for her. Yet, in the next turn, Eddie refutes her opinion with three long sentences. Finally, Beatrice makes a concession in turn 36.

#### 4.3. *Beatrice's decreasing power over Catherine*

In this subsection, two extracts<sup>7</sup> of the conversations between Beatrice and Catherine are selected from the middle of Act One and the end of Act Two respectively. Dynamic power relations between them are mainly embodied in the two extracts from different parts of the play.

From the two conversations, Beatrice's manipulation of Catherine is continuously undermined from Act One to Act Two. As extract 6 suggests, Beatrice's power is higher than that of Catherine. As Beatrice's niece, Catherine has developed a dependence on the elders in the Carbone family since her childhood. She is very obedient when Beatrice guides her. Thus she usually obeys the ideas of her aunt and has no individual choices in most cases. Under this circumstance, Catherine is under the total control of Beatrice in the beginning. However, as extract 7 exhibits, Beatrice's control over Catherine is weakened. As she is on the verge of womanhood, Catherine becomes more and more rebellious, especially when her desire is not satisfied. At the end of the play, Catherine abuses Eddie violently because he does not allow Beatrice to attend her wedding. Even though Beatrice commands her to stop, Catherine defies Beatrice directly and insists on her insults to Eddie. Here we can see Catherine has the courage to challenge Beatrice's power in the end.

The change of the relative power relations between Beatrice and Catherine is objectively manifested in their turn-taking patterns from the two extracts. Statistics of the variables of their turn-taking patterns are shown in [Table 4](#).

As we can see from this table, Beatrice and Catherine have the same turn quantities in their two-party interaction. This insignificant variable is not included in the analysis and discussion of this part. How their power relations change are shown in the following analysis of their different turn-taking variables.

Differences in the distributions of turn construction function as the first evidence to show the shifting power relations between Beatrice and Catherine.

In extract 6, Beatrice's average turn length amounts to 24.65 words, nearly 4 times of Catherine's 6.9 words. So it is with their largest turn length. The two wide gaps in turn length reflect Beatrice's high power over Catherine in the middle of Act One. In addition, Beatrice uses 12 informal address terms, while Catherine uses only 2 informal ones. Beatrice's informal address terms are applied to get closer to Catherine and request her to accept the guidance on how to deal with Eddie. In contrast, Catherine's informal ones are just employed to confide to Beatrice what she really thinks. For example, in turn 39, by calling her 'honey', Beatrice asks Catherine to tell Eddie personally that she wants to live with Rodolpho. Beatrice's intimacy will not lead to Catherine's rejection. In fact, she compels Catherine to accomplish this task by means of her mother-figure identity. Moreover, in extract 6, Beatrice initiates 4 topics (Catherine's plan to deal with Eddie in turn 1, Catherine's anxiety in turn 7, criticism

**Table 4.** Turn-taking patterns in different conversations between Beatrice and Catherine.

Number		Extract 6		Extract 7	
Character		Beatrice	Catherine	Beatrice	Catherine
Turn construction	Turn quantity	20	20	6	6
	Turn length (average/largest length)	24.65/ 84	6.9/22	10.17/ 45	11.5/20
	Turn feature (formal/informal address terms)	0/12	0/2	0/4	0/0
	Topic initiation	4	1	1	2
	Topic control	35	0	0	9
Turn allocation	(to/from others)	19/5	8/13	3/4	6/0
Turn grab	Turn initiation/response	14/6	6/14	0/6	6/0
	Turn interruption (to/from others)	2/1	1/2	0/1	1/0
Turn sequencing	Turn preference (preferred/dispreferred responsive turns)	4/2	8/6	0/6	0/0

of Catherine's uncomfortable actions in turn 17 and Catherine's involvement in persuading Eddie in turn 33) and 35 turns are under the control of these topics. Nevertheless, Catherine starts only 1 topic (how to talk with Eddie about the serious matter in turn 16) and no turns are under the control of this topic. Such a striking contrast implies Beatrice's absolute control of Catherine in this conversation.

However, in extract 7, Beatrice's average turn length is even less than Catherine's (10.17 words against 11.5 words). The gap of the largest turn length between Beatrice and Catherine reduces from nearly 4 times in extract 6 to more than 2 times in this extract. What's more, the numbers of Beatrice's informal address terms are still more than Catherine's (4 times against 0 times). Yet their discrepancy (4 times) narrows by comparison with that (10 times) in extract 6. Thus, Catherine greatly challenges Beatrice's power. For example, in turn 4, even though she is filled with anger at Catherine's insult to Eddie, Beatrice still tries to stop and conciliate Catherine by calling her name. However, in turn 9, Catherine refuses Beatrice's request directly without affectionate address terms. Besides, the numbers of Beatrice's initiated topics are even less than Catherine's (1 time against 2 times). Beatrice initiates only 1 topic (Catherine and her responsibility in the tragedy) in turn 12, while Catherine initiates 1 topic (her insult to Eddie) in turn 1 and 1 topic (her compulsion on Beatrice to attend her wedding) in turn 5. Such a distinction is just opposite to that in extract 6. Additionally, no turns are under the control of Beatrice's topics. In contrast, the numbers of Catherine's topic control increase to 9 times. Compared with that in extract 6, the contrasting distribution of topic control in extract 7 has the reverse effect. As she grows up, Catherine is inclined to follow her own opinions. Her increasing independence leads to an evident challenge to Beatrice's power at the end of the play.

The second evidence for the power dynamics between Beatrice and Catherine is bound up with their disparities in turn allocation.

In extract 6, Beatrice allocates turns to Catherine 19 times, while Catherine only allocates 8 turns to Beatrice. By contrast, Beatrice's allocated turns from Catherine add up to 5 times, while Catherine's from Beatrice amount to 13 times. Such a contrasting difference is indicative of Beatrice's authority over Catherine.

In extract 7, however, on the one hand, Beatrice's turns allocated to Catherine are half of Catherine's allocated to Beatrice (3 times against 6 times). On the other hand, Beatrice's turns from Catherine are more than Catherine's from Beatrice (4 times against 0 times). Changes in this variable from extract 6 to extract 7 indicate that Catherine's power increases in comparison with Beatrice's. Beatrice is challenged by Catherine to a large extent at the end of the play.

Changes of the values in turn grab are also the reflections of the dynamic power relations between Beatrice and Catherine.

In extract 6, Beatrice initiates turns 14 times and responds to Catherine's turns 6 times. However, Catherine initiates turns 6 times and responds to Beatrice's turns 14 times. This sharp contrast signifies Beatrice's dominant position in her family. In addition, Beatrice interrupts Catherine 2 times, whereas Catherine interrupts Beatrice 1 time. Even though she initiates 1 interruption in turn 26, Catherine is just eager to listen to Beatrice's advice about how to behave normally in front of Eddie. She has no intention to contradict Beatrice's views.

However, in extract 7, Beatrice produces responses to Catherine's turns 6 times. She initiates no turns actively and is entirely passive before Catherine. In contrast, Catherine initiates 6 turns and does not respond to Beatrice. We can infer Catherine provokes Beatrice and challenges her power in this conversation. What's more, Beatrice does not interrupt Catherine, while Catherine interrupts Beatrice 1 time in extract 7. As a result, Beatrice's dominance over Catherine is weakened in the end.

Shifts of the values in turn preference are the last evidence to suggest the changing power relations between Beatrice and Catherine.

In extract 6, Beatrice produces 4 preferred responsive turns, while Catherine produces 8 preferred ones. Such a distinction displays Beatrice's high familial status in comparison with Catherine's. Although the numbers of Beatrice's dispreferred responsive turns are less than Catherine's (2 times against 6 times), Catherine just uses them to tell Beatrice that she does not know how to make a choice between Eddie and Rodolpho. She does not intend to control Beatrice. For example, in turn 4, even though she interrupts Beatrice suddenly, Catherine is just very indecisive about how to deal with Eddie.

However, in extract 7, Beatrice and Catherine produce no preferred responsive turns. The numbers of Beatrice's dispreferred responsive turns are more than Catherine's (6 times against 0 times). Despite this fact, Beatrice fails to assert her dominance over Catherine. For instance, in turn 8, faced with Catherine's abuse directed at Eddie, Beatrice orders her to stop immediately. But Catherine continues to swear at Eddie in turn 9. Here Catherine's disobedience is a conspicuous challenge to Beatrice's authority.

## 5. Conclusion

In this article I have explored how turn-taking patterns correlate with power relations in dramatic dialogue. The exploration of turn-taking patterns in pragmatic stylistics constitutes a new approach to looking at shifting power relations. Taking Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge* as an example, this article has demonstrated that changes in turn-taking patterns reflect dynamic power relations between characters in different conversations. It has also shown that dynamic power relations between characters are a fundamental cause of family conflicts and the final tragedy in the play.

According to the analysis of turn-taking patterns in Section 4, firstly, Eddie's authority over Catherine is consecutively challenged by her. As Catherine falls in love with Rodolpho and then consecutively challenges Eddie's authority, Eddie feels strongly the threat of Rodolpho's theft of Catherine from him. It is even an intolerable insult to Eddie that Catherine is seduced by Rodolpho and decides to marry him. Even though he knows clearly that informing is a taboo in his social community, Eddie still chooses to inform on the two illegal immigrants so that he can keep the integrity of his family. As Catherine abuses Eddie violently, their confrontation becomes more and more serious and eventually out of control. Secondly, Eddie's control over Beatrice is continuously reinforced. Eddie tries his best to persuade Beatrice to support his thoughts and stop the marriage of Catherine and Rodolpho. However, Eddie's increasing control over Beatrice makes her fully aware of his actual intention. What Eddie really wants is his incestuous love for Catherine, which is a taboo in the Italian American community, and lifelong company from her. Ultimately, Beatrice's actions run counter to Eddie's purposes. Thirdly, Beatrice's manipulation of Catherine is gradually undermined. Beatrice makes use of every chance to enlighten Catherine in order to save the normal uncle-niece relationship and her own marriage. At first, Catherine adopts her suggestions. However, as she becomes more and more independent and disobedient, Catherine overtly challenges Beatrice's power and refuses to listen to her commands at the end of the play. On the whole, when their shifting power relations are inextricably interwoven, conflicts frequently emerge in the Carbone family. Eddie's tragic fate ensues in the end. Therefore, we can infer that dynamic power relations between characters have a marked influence on family conflicts and the final tragedy in the play.

The above results provide a new perspective that contributes to the interpretations of the play. Apart from characterisation, power relations serve as a new aspect to understand and appreciate characters. Moreover, the development of power relations is closely linked with conflicts between characters. Dynamic power relations between characters are a fundamental cause of family conflicts and the final tragedy in the Carbone family. Therefore, a pragmastylistic analysis of power relations sheds new light on the way the characters in the play are interpreted. Furthermore, the pragmastylistic study of power dynamics combines objective turn-taking analysis with subjective interpretation in the immediate contexts and social/cultural contexts of the play. This lends weight to the interpretation of dynamic power relations between characters. Finally, this article contributes to future research in relation to both power relations and turn-taking patterns. On the one hand, we can explore power relations in

other realistic plays by way of turn-taking analysis. On the other hand, we can develop understanding of turn-taking patterns in pragmatic stylistics by looking at power relations in large numbers of realistic plays.

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### Notes

1. The initial version of *A View from the Bridge* is a one-act play. For a description of the differences between the one-act version and the two-act version, see Chapter 12 in Bigsby (2005).
2. The full description of turn-taking patterns of powerful and powerless speakers is provided on page 206 in Short (1996).
3. The table about the relationship between turn-taking patterns and power tendencies is shown on page 85 in Gibbons and Whiteley (2018).
4. The three extracts are selected from pages 30–32 (extract 1), pages 61–63 (extract 2) and pages 97–98 (extract 3) in Miller (1960) respectively.
5. Apart from those in turn quantity, turn length, turn interruption, turn preference and address terms, the values of other variables may not be absolutely accurate due to partial overlaps within them. This table is not meant to show the significance of figures themselves, but to reveal the tendencies of dramatic characters' relative power relations in different conversations. The same is the case with Tables 3 and 4.
6. The two extracts in 4.2 are chosen from pages 55–56 (extract 4) and pages 93–96 (extract 5) in Miller (1960) respectively.
7. The two extracts in 4.3 are selected from pages 64–67 (extract 6) and pages 107–108 (extract 7) in Miller (1960) respectively.

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