

# Analysis of the Discourse of Power in Etel Adnan's Play *Like A Christmas Tree*

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## Abstract

This paper seeks to investigate the sources of power in the discourse of an Arab-American writer, Etel Adnan's one act play, *Like a Christmas Tree*. The play represents a heated argument between two figures who stand for two different ideologies and who fall within the frame of 'binary opposition', transcultural misunderstanding, and colonial hegemony versus native resistance. Supposedly, an American Journalist, Jim, is expected to dominate the discourse by force of his cultural and professional background, but sarcastically enough, the Iraqi butcher, Badr is the part who represents power and domination throughout the play. The current paper depends on more than one tool of analysis: Norman Fairclough's (2001) and Foucault's (2004) concepts of power and discourse, Grice's theory of 'cooperative principles' (1989), Brown and Gilman's study of 'address forms' (1972), and Georgia Green's contribution in the process of 'turn-taking' (1989). The study celebrates an analysis of data which uncovers the power of discourse in the exchanges of both characters and sheds light on the identity of both of them in an attempt to affirm that 'power' is not necessarily on the side of the stronger.

**Keywords:** discourse, power, address forms, turn-taking, interruption, topic control

## 1. Introduction

In his book, *Power and Language* (2001), Norman Fairclough explores the various dimensions of the relations of power and language. For this purpose, he focuses upon "two major aspects of the power/language relationship, power in discourse, and power behind discourse" (36). He further believes that discourse is a "place where relations of power are actually exercised and enacted" and highlights power "in face-to-face spoken discourse, power in cross-cultural discourse where participants belong to different ethnic groupings, and the hidden power of the discourse of the mass media" (36). In the same vein, Fairclough views text as a "product rather than a process- a product of the process of text production" and texts, accordingly, are regarded as both "written texts and spoken texts". By "spoken texts" Fairclough means "what is said in a piece of spoken discourse" while "written texts" refer to the "written transcription of what is said" (20). Fairclough, moreover, reiterates that the "formal properties of a text can be regarded from the perspective of discourse analysis on the one hand as *traces* of the productive process, and on the other hand as *cues* in the process of interpretation" (20, author's italics). Thus, viewing language as a discourse and a social practice necessitates not only the analysis of texts, processes of production and interpretation, but also the relationship between texts, processes, and their social conditions. This is why, for Foucault, "power is recognized to be a core constituent of all discourses and one of the reasons why one participates in discourse. Discourses produce power but they can also expose it and render it fragile" (qtd in Stahl, 2004:4330). Precisely, in Foucault's view :

Power is relations; power is not a thing, it is a relationship between two individuals, a relationship which is such that one can direct the behavior of another, or determine the behavior of another. (Foucault, 1996:410).

In like manner, power relations are determined by other domains of communication that focus upon the mechanism of conversations in a dramatic text like Adnan's one. In this respect, Michael Toolan, in *Language and Literature* (1998) asks: "What are we actually doing when we talk to each other?. And how many truly different things can we do in the course of talking to each other?" (183). The simple answer to these questions is that we try to establish a discourse through various channels. Those channels fall within the frame of power acquisition through our speech and, for the purpose of the study, will be limited to "cooperative principle", "address forms", and "turn-taking" procedures, topic control, and interruptions.

Paul Grice put forward what he described as the "cooperative principle" and used the term "conversational implicature" to account for what the speaker can imply (Grice, 1975:45). According to this principle, language is interpreted on the assumption that its sender is following four maxims. It is assumed that he/she intends to

- Be true (maxim of quality)
- Be brief (maxim of quantity)
- Be relevant (maxim of relevance)
- Be clear (maxim of manner). (qtd in Cook, 1989:29)

Grice, in addition, defines his "cooperative principle" in terms of conversational exchange: "make your conversational contribution such as required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (44). In contrast, Cook puts the violation of these maxims into meaningful terms: "There are also times when meaning derives from deliberate violations.....provided that the sender intends the receiver to perceive them as such....."(31-32) .

Brown and Gilman in their study, *The Pronouns of power and Solidarity in language and Social Context : Selected Readings* (1972), postulate that power and solidarity are two basic prerequisites for choosing any address form. These address forms may refer to feelings of respect, intimacy, power, distance or despise. Participants reciprocate proper address forms or they may deviate from the proper use depending on the kind of relationship and on the context in which the exchange occurs.

In like manner, manifestations of discourses of power could also be traced through procedures of turn-taking. In this respect, Georgia M. Green (1989) poses some relevant questions :

How does an addressee A get to take the floor and become a speaker?. Does he just break in at the end of a sentence, hoping that the one speaking X is finished?. If X is not finished , how do they know who gets the floor? Is it a matter of status and deference , or persistence and brute force? .....(151)

## 2. Contextualizing *Like a Christmas Tree*

Etel Adnan's one- act play, *Like a Christmas Tree* is the case in question as it abounds in various contexts that could be designated under strategies of power acquisition in a discourse. Action is partially set on a macrocosmic level on the Iraqi soil during the war and on a microcosmic level being set in a cell that contains two prisoners: an Iraqi butcher and an American journalist. Both occupy an equal space of the cell, receive the same amount of food, and given the same degree of self expression. The major difference between the two characters lies in their cultural and educational background, which undoubtedly formulates and shapes their utterances and exchanges. Although the play does not have any more characters but for a guard whose voice is occasionally heard, it symbolizes the everlasting debatable argument between west and east. What is really paradoxical is the noticeable power the Iraqi butcher Badr shows in his argument inspite of the vast intellectual gap between him and Jim, the American journalist. This is accomplished by force of his abducted legal rights versus American false pretexts. Thus, the way Badr thinks and talks about a subject influences the ways he acts in relation to that subject.

In this respect, theorists like (Cosser, 1976, Lukes, 1986, Pitkin, 1972) distinguished two concepts of power by contrasting two expressions: "power to" and "power over". Our concern in *Like a Christmas Tree* focuses on "power over" model as it incurs the western attitudes as colonizers towards non-western peoples as colonized. Consequently, 'hegemony' and 'domination' emerge as key terms owing to the western concept of 'power' that prevent others from expressing, identifying, or even recognizing their own interests and desires. In addition, 'power' can be exercised over others by cultivating what Marx and Engels referred to as "false consciousness" or by exercising what Gramsci (1971) called "cultural hegemony". ( qtd in karberg, 2)

Moreover, the identities of the two concerned characters have been constructed in conformity with De Fina's "positioning theory" (2006: 4) whereas those identities are constructed through the relationship between speaker and what is being said, the relationship between the self and the other, and through relationships to the dominant ideologies and underlying power structures drawn together as discourse (qtd in Mudhafar Ali, 111). In *Like a Christmas Tree*, ideologies and identities are entirely different and foreign to each other. Badr and Jim are in conflict on the ideological, social, and cultural levels. The exchanges of their discourse are mere "representations of who we are what we stand for" (Oktar, 2001, 314). In their discourses, they perform social conducts that help classify their beings and, accordingly, acquire a sense of identity (Teo, 2000, 41)that distinguishes one from the other in all respects(qtd in Kuhl & Hassanimehr, 2013: 23). Thus, the "binary opposition" of 'we', referring to Iraqis, and 'you' , referring to Americans, remain the outer frame of the discourse of power each one of both characters is behind

The entire play is an extended east-west dialogue that uncovers the impossibility of coming to an accord as long as the greed of the west still exists. Throughout their dialogue, both characters failed to create even a common ground that might contain them, but rather the strain of misunderstanding is strengthened and the gap of dispute is widened. Badr and Jim are made to share one place, one fate, and one chance of freedom, but similarly made to differ entirely in their approaches to war on Iraq. At a time Jim justifies his presence in Iraq as a national mission he fulfills to his country and for the newspaper he works for, Badr views that presence as imperialistic and unjustifiable. Even in their intellectual dwells over concepts like honour, nationalism, belonging, war, pride, and power, each one is backed by his cultural notions that legitimize his own discourse. Each of them is behind gaining power over the other, but the concept of

power is viewed on concrete basis by Jim who believes that: "power is energy and it makes things happen, like....air. It's invisible, but we see it. Air can produce tornadoes and power can generate storms. That's what we do. When America blows its storms, it's awesome"(157) and on abstract grounds by Badr who states that:" We, for thousands of years, are raised on pride, vengeance, and punishment. And you, you're raised on what? Food and money? We should have never talked together, not on *this* earth.(156). On the basis of this intellectual misunderstanding and binary oppositions the discourse of power is given the space dedicated to this paper.

### 3. Objectives

In the light of the previously mentioned theoretical framework, the aim of the study is to analyze the discourse of power through the verbal exchanges between two characters belonging to different cultures and different ideologies and to highlight the source of power in their contexts. The study is also an attempt to prove that man is what he says, and his identity is constructed through a web of his relations with others in the different contexts. Third, the paper tries to contradict the rule which stipulates that power is mostly for the stronger.

### 4. Address Forms as power-indicative process

The use of a specific address form is governed by a specific social context (Shih, 1986)and its formulae is ignited by the specific relationship between the concerned parties whereas each of them tries hard to appropriately situate his forms of address (Nevala,2004). Address forms are viewed to be important formulaic verbal behavior well recognized in the sociolinguistic literature as they signal transactional, interpersonal and deictic ramifications in human relationships (Leech,1999). Similarly, (Afful 2006) believed that address forms "constitute an important part of verbal behavior through which the behavior, norms and practices of a society can be identified"(73). In like manner, Oyetade (1995) states that address forms are "words or expressions used in interactive and face-to-face situations to designate the person being talked to" (517). Likewise, Richardes and Schmidt's definition (2002) involves the previous aspects in addition to the factor of "age, sex, social group, and personal relationship" that frames those verbal activities.

In practice, although Etel Adnan's play *Like a Christmas Tree* celebrates two unequal characters who stand for two different stances socially, intellectually, militarily and even psychologically; they are set physically on an equal footing sharing the same conditions of prison, the same conditions of food, and the same chances of self-expressions. Thus , each of them is made to suffer two kinds of conflicts: external ,with the surrounding conditions, and internal, with the reasons that sent them to jail.

The game of power is set as early as the opening scene in which Jim tries to make acquaintances with Badr in the cell:

**Jim** : What is your name?

**Badr** : Who , me ?

**Jim** : You have a name, don't you?

**Badr** : You speak my language?.....

**Badr** : My name is Badr.

**Jim** : Okay, you're Badr.

**Badr** : (looks carefully at Jim). If you speak my language, here, in the dark, you must be a spy. (146)

Through this exchange, Jim takes the initiative and gives himself the right to take the floor and ask Badr about his name. Badr's answer is not responsive enough as he replied the interrogation with another interrogation in an attempt to turn down Jim's initiative to take power. In the second exchange, Jim repeats his attempt to take the power over Badr, who repeatedly answers interrogatively, rejecting, by so doing, to admit Jim's power over himself. Then, Badr decides to take the power over his partner and sets their relationship on edge when he selects for himself the 'address form' he wants Jim to use, 'Badr'. At the closing sentence of the exchange, Badr takes the lead when he addresses Jim as a 'spy', justifying that by the reason of the latter's illegal presence in Iraq.

In scenes II and III, the sense of 'power over' becomes more and more on Badr's side as his domination started to control Jim and his fate. In other words, Badr rejects Jim's attempt to impose on him a "false consciousness" and denies any sort of "cultural hegemony". In scene II, in reply to Jim's complain of his inability to sleep and his desire to 'forget', Badr sarcastically emphasizes his powerful position over Jim:

**Badr** : .....you want to forget, forget what, me, you? I will enter your dream, tonight, not later than tonight.....two monsters, that what we are, two stinking beasts in one cage. You, because you came to see how we shall die, how a whole nation should disappear, and me because I killed in the dark.....We are killers with no regrets. (159)

In this exchange, 'power' emanates from Badr's use of three address forms that transmit accusatory tones against Jim and himself. One of the sources of Badr's power is his ability to make a clear chest of his personal crime at a time Jim denies any accusation set against himself by Badr. The first of the three forms, "two monsters" signifies the devilish intentions involved in both of them although those of Badr are personal while those of Jim's are national. Likewise, the second form, "stinking beasts" refers to the deterioration that became of them inside the cell and highlights the inhuman

state of being in the jail. The third form of "killers" precisely sets the type of relationship between them inside the cell; a relationship of equality in terms of physical presence and of inequality in terms of human dialogue. Badr excels in exposing and 'positioning' himself in a higher position. Worse, Badr refers to himself and to the Iraqi nation using "we" and to the Americans as "you"; that 'binary opposition' which adds another dimension to the relationship between both men and consolidates Badr's sense of power over his partner: " We ....are raised on pride.....you are raised on food and money...." (156).

The third category of address forms used by Badr refers to the increasing tone of rejecting the colonizer, and uncovers Badr's deep detestation of the occupying other. The following is a grouping of Badr's address forms in the third scene that stresses his sense of power over Jim:

- (A)- **Badr** :There's darkness in your brain. You are a bird of bad omen. (158)  
 (B)- **Badr** :You are too crazy. (157)  
 (C)- **Badr** :Cowards! All of you cowards.  
 (D)- **Badr** :You are a woman too? (165).  
 (E)- **Badr** :Don't call me Badr. Call me Sir.  
**Jim** : Alright sir.  
 (F)- **Badr** :I'm your boss and you'll obey. (168)  
 (G)- **Badr** :O my mother, where are you in those flames and this son of a bitch is looking at me. (169).  
 (H)- **Badr** : I am not Badr. I am the judgment of God. (169).

Throughout the aforementioned extracts, discourses have been proved to be the "place where relations of power are actually exercised and enacted". In their heated argument, Badr in extracts A,B,C,G sets himself in a more powerful position whereas he gives himself the right to address Jim with forms that sound so insulting. Forms like: "a bird of bad omen, crazy, coward, a woman, and a son of a bitch" reflect "power in discourse" on the one hand, and "power behind discourse" on the other. In those extracts, 'power in discourse' concept derives from Badr's ability to call Jim names, rather than calling him or addressing him, while 'power behind discourse' lies in the legitimacy and the just cause Badr is representing. The sense of power Badr shows is an outcome of the 'domination' he imposes on Jim, and the deviations in addressing him are results of the feelings of 'distance' and 'despise'. Thus, "power becomes a basic prerequisite for choosing any address form" (Brown and Gilman). This is reflected in extract E in which Badr dominates his partner and imposes how should he address him using the form:"Sir", to which Jim seems very obedient and 'dominated'. Likewise, extract F celebrates a similar case in which Badr "direct[s] the behavior of another, or determine[s] the behavior of another". Badr reaches the zenith of power in extract H as he declares himself "the judgment of God" at the closing line of the play, 'positioning' himself on a higher level at the moment he is attacking his partner physically a few moments before the collapse of the building on them. In this particular extract, 'power' in every sense is personified in Badr who beats his partner verbally through their argument, and physically as he dares to attack him.

Number of Address Forms Used by Both Characters

Category	Scene I	Scene II	Scene III
Address Forms used by Badr	1	5	7
Address Forms used by Jim	1	1	1

## 5. Violations of Maxims as a Source of Power

In Foucault's view, power is neither a structure nor an agency as it is everywhere and comes from everywhere. (Foucault,1998:63). It is not only "recognized to be a core constituent of all discourses, but also it becomes a kind of 'metapower' or 'regime of truth' " (63) that pervades society. For this reason, he uses the term "power/knowledge" to signify that power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge, scientific understanding and truth. In addition, the relationship between discourse and power is obvious; "power and discourse are inseparable, and power is realized through discourse. Discourse is not only a tool to exert power, but the key to hold power"(Stanhl, 2000- qtd in Kuhl & Hassanmehr, 2013:22). Moreover, in the relations of power, "nothing is ever stable" (Foucault, 1996:144) as it involves "every time one side does something, the other one responds by deploying a conduct, a behavior that counter-invests it, tries it, diverts it, turns the attack against itself " (144).

In this vein, Badr's and Jim's relationship is governed by the previous considerations of Foucault in the sense that Badr is the more powerful side who is guided by his society's concept of 'truth' in which he tries to impose on Jim. His real power also emerges from his ability to violate maxims in several occasions in an attempt to fix his superiority. Repeatedly, the opening exchanges set this 'power' very early :

**Jim** : What's your name?

**Badr**: Who, me?

**Jim** : You have a name, don't you?

**Badr** : You speak my language?.....

**Jim** : You have been here for how long?

**Badr** : My name is Badr. (146)

In this opening exchange, Badr 'flouts' maxim of relevance when Jim asks him about his name as he responds with an "echo question" (Leech, 1981:297) : "who, me?". Repeatedly, when Jim asks him the same question in a different manner, he diverts from the supposed answer with another 'echo-question': "you speak my language?" which refers to his dominating position that renders more carelessness than involvement in what his partner says, and sets the floor to that dominating-dominated type of relationship.

The second occasion in which Badr violates the maxim of quantity and puts him in a more powerful and a higher position than Jim is when he responds to Jim's remark that it is "not a toilet over there, that's an open sewer". Badr's violation here starts with a question : "what do you mean?" which implicitly sounds sarcastic and could have been an adequate reply, but his flouting of the maxim quantity follows:

A toilet is not a perfume shop, isn't it?. It stinks. It's done for that. Unless you Americans find a way to prevent humanity from shitting.....you can do anything you want, don't you?. (151)

Badr's violation of the maxim of quantity here uncovers his capability to represent a fixed concept of 'truth' prevailing his society; namely, an overwhelming hatred of every American behaviour. Through this violation, the relationship between both men is determined to be not that of equality, but of superiority-inferiority formula. Violating the maxim of quantity has thus become a major characteristic of the play, and Badr has accordingly not only gained power over his partner but also taken the right to reply, comment, criticize, and ridicule. In other words, Badr's exchanges in terms of violating maxim of quantity represent more than triple of Jim's (17 vs 7 violations); a fact that stresses the superiority of the former and the inferiority of the latter.

Another example which throws light on the superiority and power of Badr over Jim comes up when Jim asks Badr about his government, an enquiry which is handled by Badr with a clear violation of the maxim of quantity that asserts his power:

**Badr** : I will tell you what I think of my government and also what you think of your government.....When my government manifests itself in Nassiriyah I would rather be in Mossul; when it is in Kirkuk I find myself in Basrah; when it flies in the air I swim in the Tigris or the Euphrates. With you, it's the opposite: everything scares you and you have no love but for your government. It's upside down. (155)

Hence, Badr emerges as the more powerful side who has the authority and who has the information Jim needs. Badr realizes that he belongs to the 'regime of truth' in his society and fulfills the maxim of quality being truthful in his exposition, but violates that of quantity through his "prolixity" (Cook,1989:31), trying hard to "mark a sense of occasion" and to avoid being "rude or blunt" (31). Badr highlights his power over his partner once more when Jim wonders: "Aren't we suffering enough? Isn't this torture?" (158), referring to their state in the cell that he cannot bear anymore, but Badr, very rhetorically, replies with an aim of underlying the meaning of true suffering Jim is not aware of:

I have a radio in my butcher's shop and I used to have it on all day long and between the music there was Panama, Guatemala, Vietnam, death. It doesn't haunt you at all?. Did you write on all that?. I wish I could have traveled in all these places, like you did, but with no death in my baggage. (158)

In this exchange, Badr rejects the 'false consciousness' and the 'cultural hegemony' Jim is trying to impose on him. Rather, Badr resorts to the prevalent tradition inherent in him, which detests American behaviours on earth. Violating the maxim of quantity and abiding by the maxim of quality, he uncovers the true essence of each identity . In addition, the discourse in this extract affirms the paradox which results from the reversal of the rule in the sense that all information and interpretations come out from the less educated partner who is deeply seated in the 'regime of truth' and deploys his discourse as "the key to hold power".

Furthermore, the closing exchanges celebrate power in its full sense as Badr's violation of quantity maxim exceeds levels of mere "act type" (Toolan, 1998: 184) into an "implicature" in the sense Leech put it as the "extra meaning that we infer, and which account for the gap between overt sense and pragmatic force" (294); all that is "aided by the kinesic signal[s]" (296). In their heated argument while Iraq is being bombarded, Jim expresses his wish to live and go back to his wife and children, but Badr, in his violation states:

I have a mother. Lord, is she well? Is she dead? Is she gone with the city? (*getting violent*) : If my mother is dead why should you be alive? That's not going to be. You're a killer, a demon who escaped from hell.....(*Badr was almost breathing in Jim's face, that close*). (168-69).

The 'extra meaning' inferred here is framed within the power of Badr who has reached the zenith of rejection and opposition of the American other as it comes out of his frequent resort to 'binary opposition' tools. His power is mingled with an 'overt sense and a pragmatic force' and is verbalized through the means of interrogation and communion to God which sends him so 'violent'. Then, Badr directs his interrogation to Jim: "If my mother is dead why should you be alive?" and waits for no reply by force of his extreme domination over his partner and rather he promises him a denial of his presence. The pitch of power, consequently, increases and Badr accuses Jim of being a 'killer' and a 'demon' who came to devastate his country, Iraq. Badr's authority and power are incurred in the manner he addresses his partner with a significant "kinesic signal": "breathing in Jim's face, that close" that hints to an 'overt sense' of hatred and revenge, and a 'pragmatic force' that gives him the lead. Submissive as he seems, Jim does not have the power to halt Badr's overflowing nor has the power even to try. On the other hand, spurred by his potential social and psychological power, Badr, a bit later in his violation declares: "I will kill you demon who came straight out of hell to burn me and my mother, I'm killing you.[...*throws himself on the American, aiming at his throat...The American is stronger than Badr thought...*]. Even, when Jim takes back the power physically over Badr, he could not continue as such: "Badr, don't make me kill you", while Badr "with a hoarse, dying, but audible voice" cries: "I'm the judgment of God", regaining, by so doing, the power again in his last breath a few moments before the building collapses over both of them.

Number of Maxim Violations By Badr and Jim

Category	Scene I	Scene II	Scene III
Badr's Violations	10	1	6
Jim's Violations	-	2	4

## 6. Turn-Taking and Power

It has been a starting point for "ethnomethodologists that a conversation involves turn-taking and that the end of speaker's turn and the beginning of the next's frequently latch on each other with almost perfect precision and split-second timing" (Cook,1989:52). In addition, turn-taking mechanism is of a "choreographic" nature (Green,150) in the sense that there is a regular "switch roles from addressee to speaker and vice versa"(150). In the same vein, Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) suggest some principles that govern turn-takings:

- a- If the current speaker selects the next speaker....., the current speaker is expected to stop speaking, and the next speaker is expected to speak next.
- b- If the current speaker's utterance of behaviour doesn't select the next speaker, then any other participant may self-select.
- c- If no speaker self-selects, the current speaker may continue. (qtd in Green 151)

Moreover, the process of selection could be through "naming him or just alluding to him with a descriptive phrase" (Coulthard,1977:60), or this could occur through the use of "adjacency pairs" in case "the utterance of one speaker makes a particular kind of response very likely" (Cook 53). In addition, "interruption" is one characteristic that marks power in conversations as Lakoff (1975) views it as a strategy which is used to show dominance, displays rudeness, lack of respect, and permits speakers to control topics.

Being of a cyclical nature, turn-taking involves a speaker who takes the conversational floor, then finishes and gives the floor to the next speaker. This cyclical motion comes to an end when nothing is left to be uttered.(Woodburn, Arnott, Newell, and Procter,2011:5). In the same vein, "frequency" and "control of contribution" have become basic characteristics of the process of turn-taking. A conversation between two persons is a type of high "frequency" while a lecture is of low "frequency". A "control of contribution" reflects the degree of control a speaker has over his speech that varies from "a free for all" control as in cases of personal letters or as "rule-dependent" as could be the religious, political or scientific rituals.

In *Like A Christmas Tree*, the two speakers exchange turns. Their exchanges follow the 'cyclical' patterns in the sense that each speaker 'selects' the next through 'alluding' to him by means of the second pronoun 'you' throughout the play:

(I)- **Badr** : You tell me first if, at least for one day, you loved this country.

**Jim** : I don't care ....

(J)- **Jim** : Do you think that after this defeat Iraqis will still buy American cars? (155)

Up to the end of the play, this 'cyclical' movement is kept in use as we have only two characters who share the same number of turns, but they differ in the degree of control over their topics. The American journalist, Jim is thrown into jail "for his safety" while the Iraqi butcher, Badr is there pending trial for killing his wife in an honor crime. Thus, each of them realizes the stimuli that empower his stance. Repeatedly, and paradoxically enough, Badr, the Iraqi butcher and the less-educated person establishes himself as a domineering character and the power relation between them is not balanced accordingly. In other words, Badr, stands in a higher and a more powerful position than the well-educated Journalist, Jim. The strategies adopted to dominate the equally-distributed turns are "topic-control" and "interruption", which are equally distributed as well.

Number of Total Turns of Badr and Jim

Category	Scene I	Scene II	Scene III
Badr's Total Turns	25	66	33
Jim's Total Turns	24	59	32

## 7. Topic Control

In his capacity as a journalist, Jim takes the initiative in the reciprocated conversations trying, as possible as he can, to dominate and control the topic of their argument. His attempts to do so start with making acquaintances with Badr:

- What's your name? (146)
- Did you guess where I came from? (147)
- What's there to be said?....., my wife , my children? (148)

Then, he sets himself in a position to be the first speaker: "I'm going to have an interview with you. I will ask you questions and you will answer" (152). This takes place through a number of questions raised by Jim that cover topics like Iraqi domestic affairs traditions, culture, and even religion.

(K)- **Jim** : [*very serious*] Is Saddam Hussein the friend or the enemy of the people?. (155)

(L) - **Jim** : Do you have any strong convictions besides....religion? (160).

(M)-**Jim** : ....What form of government would you have liked to have? (160).

Jim might have some power for initiating the conversations and 'controlling' the topics, but it is Badr, by force of his 'prolixity' and his just cause, who has more justifiable levels of power over his partner. In other words, Jim's profession as a journalist imposes its prerequisites on the relationship between both characters in the sense that Jim has the power of initiating the conversation while Badr responds in more powerful exchanges, a battle between Jim's personal, pragmatic tendencies and Badr's national and patriotic inclinations.

Thus, although Jim commences and selects the topics, Badr's replies represent the more insightful, powerful and dominating part of the exchanges. In his replies, he asserts the power of identity and the falsehood of his partner's pretexts. In his reply to extract (K) concerning Saddam Hussein, he refers to him as a "bad man" only in his case because one of his men seduced Badr's wife, but at the same time, he rejects Jim's attempt of overgeneralization and legitimization of American invasion. He responds to Jim's question: "So he's a bad man?" (155), saying:

In my case, yes. But you're trying to gouge something out from me , don't you fool me....We ....are raised on pride, vengeance, and punishment. And you . You're raised on what? Food and money?. We should have never talked together, not on this earth. (156)

In spite of Jim's relative ability to control the direction of the conversation, Badr's reply sounds more powerful and he seems in a more dominating position. His response does not only involve an answer to Jim's enquiry but also adds a comparative hint that differentiates him from his enemy. His viewpoint of Jim and his forces represent a faithful stance of most Arabs and puts Jim in a relatively lower position than Badr.

In response to extract (L), Badr, sarcastically enough, sends a cry of protest against Jim's enquiry about "justice":

That's the biggest nonsense I ever heard. Good. You make me laugh, we need it. We're in the earth's belly, a cracking world, we're probably close to its end and you speak of justice?. Your justice makes me want to be fierce, ferocious, to tear the skies apart. Airplanes understand it, yes? Ours , yours, they are all on screens in the movies.....I slaughter a lamb and the blood is gone.....where do you think God is when I kill a lamb?...The morning of their execution they know they arrive with another lamb's blood on their buttock. (160)

Lengthy as they are, Badr's turns do not resist the continuous topic changes by Jim, but he responds in detail and adds his own vision which surpasses Jim's in most cases. Jim here is confronted with a person who knows much, says much,

and elaborates his ideas in a counter verbal debate that wins him the power and robs his partner the right to impose any unjustifiable pretext for his presence on the Iraqi soil. Through this turn, Badr's suffering is double: personal and national, and although he suffers on the personal level and feels oppressed, he is courageous on the national level.

In reply to extract (m), Badr's response is repeatedly so sarcastic, and his comments gain him the power. In a lengthy, well-worded turn, he states:

You're either too naïve or too shrewd, I haven't figured it out. A government is a jail keeper, a prison guard. Have I chosen this guard sitting behind this door? No! And you, have you chosen your boss at the newspaper? No. So?. (160)

Badr's response confirms his power as it appears that he is far acquainted with his country, his place, and with the surrounding conditions. He rejects Jim's so-called idealism and claims, and mocks the way he thinks. Badr appears to be more experienced and more aware than Jim. His vision of the government is so negative as he believes, and people do not have the impacting power whatsoever. He sounds so passive in this respect as a citizen, but when it comes to Iraq being exposed to danger and invasion, he is so ferocious a resistant.

Number of Topics Suggested by Jim and Badr

Category	Scene I	Scene II	Scene III
Badr's selected Topics	6	13	10
Jim's Selected Topics	5	17	7

## 8. Interruption

The strategy of 'interruption' is used by the speaker to refer to power or dominance on the one hand or to impose some sort of authority or determination on the other. (Lakoff, 1975). It is also employed to assert identity, beliefs, or viewpoints. Thus, in *Like a Christmas Tree*, power is established through the means of interruption between Badr and Jim. Badr interrupts Jim eight times very powerfully as his interruptions result not only in stopping Jim's enquiries, but also in directing and uncovering the ambiguous part of them. Jim has interrupted Badr only twice as an expression of wonder and surprise, not as an insignia of power. Badr's interruptions are scattered throughout the play, a fact which signifies his continuous powerful topic control:

(N)-**Jim** : Now all I want to get out as soon as this is over, and it will be, pretty soon.....

**Badr** : Who told you that.... (152)

(O)-**Jim** : ...There's something worst than the body's or the soul's death and that's anarchy, Chaos, disobedience.....

**Badr** : ....then, good. You must obey me because.....you're on my territory. (156).

(P)-**Jim** : If only my threat didn't choke me.....[*bombardment*.....]

**Badr**: Good Lord.

(Q)-**Badr** : ...Every child in Iraq knows that God used our mud to create the world....

**Jim** : ....you went to school.....

**Badr** : To create you, too.....

(R)-**Badr** : ...you wish ill to my people so how could we be friends, unless.....

**Jim** : Unless?. (152-53).

In extract (O), when Jim tries to justify what his country is doing in Iraq, he refers to "chaos" and "disobedience" as major sins, but Badr interrupts and rejects his claim and justification, asking him very aggressively to obey him as long as he is on the Iraqi soil. Thus constructed, he wins more power over his partner out of the just approach he has. In extract (P) Badr tries to overgeneralize his viewpoint, seeking a long-awaited sense of justice and equality when he claims that the whole world is created out of the 'mud' of Iraq, but Jim tries to interrupt him in an attempt which is neglected by Badr who continues his argument affirming that even Americans are 'created' out of the same 'mud'. Repeatedly, Badr imposes his authority over Jim in extract (R) when he concisely sums it up: "you wish ill....", a statement which wraps all the black desires and the hidden plans 'they' have towards Iraqis. Jim's interruptions did not measure up to the level of Badr's; they are mere expressions of wonder as in "you went to school..." or surprise as in "unless?", leaving the floor to Badr's sweeping statements that consolidated his power and asserted his authority.



## Number of Interruptions by Badr and Jim

Category	Scene I	Scene II	Scene III
Badr interrupting Jim	4	3	1
Jim interrupting Badr	-	2	-

## 9. Conclusion

Etel Adnan's war experiences played an important role in the formation of her identity and in her border-crossing movement. *Like a Christmas Tree* is a cry against the attempts of hegemony and domination by the colonial forces, and a hailing of the powers of resistance on the side of the natives. Her border-crossing moves enabled her to maintain her original national perceptions in use and could, accordingly, select the expressions and discourses that consolidate her stance. Adnan, and consequently her character Badr, could be viewed in the light of resistance to powers of assimilation, hegemony and domination. Although she is of a Lebanese origin, Adnan's sense of urgency and nationalism led her into highlighting a trauma on the near borders of Iraq. The analysis of the data selected proved that Adnan's technique is meant to be a counter cry in the face of the oppressor and an urgent stimuli to the resistant native. She could instill and stress a fact that power could be gained even if you are the weaker side by force of legitimacy, nationalism and just cause. In addition, the capacity of defending and resisting is an instinct that does not necessitate a military force, but needs a power of intellect, a stability of ideology, and a deep belief in one's creed.

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