

# An Analysis of Spoken Discourse of a Movie: *Bend It Like Beckham*

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## Abstract

This paper was written for the fourth year students at Niigata University of International and Information Studies who take the author's seminar about sociolinguistics to show a model for a B.A. dissertation. This study has analyzed spoken discourse of a movie, *Bend It Like Beckham*. Two types of conversation were selected in the movie conducted among an Indian family. The talk has been investigated from the different cultural viewpoints suggested by Holliday (1994) and Hall (1977). The conversation has been analyzed with the use of the SPEAKING Model (Hymes, 1974) and two coding systems: IRF (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) and Speech Acts (Halliday, 1961). The findings demonstrate that one conversation shows communicative breakdown does not allow IRF to flow smoothly and speakers frequently use Expressive speech acts which can be emotional talk. In contrast, the other conversation shows smooth communication has clear patterns of IRF interaction. Additionally, speakers are aware of social norms in the context and use diplomatic communication skills. This shows they employ a mixture of speech acts which gives impression of logical and objective talk. Finally, it concludes that in order to achieve the purpose of conversation, a high level of communicative competence plays an important role.

Keywords : Culture, Spoken Discourse, IRF, Speech Acts, *Bend It Like Beckham*

## 1. Introduction

The introduction consists of three sections. The first section explains the objective of this study and the second section presents the research question of my study. Lastly, the final section will describe the structure of this paper.

### 1.1 The Objective of This Study

In Fujimoto Seminar, we have learned sociolinguistics which is the study about relations between language and society. Specifically, we have focused on spoken discourse that we chose from movies or TV dramas. Then we have analyzed selected conversations from a sociolinguistic perspective.

Regarding my own study, I chose a British movie called *Bend It Like Beckham* whose main

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character is an Indian girl born and brought up in the UK. The reason why I chose the movie is that I used to live in the UK and I have been very interested in Indian culture. The city where I lived is called Leicester which has the largest Indian community in Europe. Therefore, I was surrounded by Indian culture. The purpose of my research is to analyze conversations conducted in the movie. In addition, I would like to investigate the reasons of both communication break-down and smooth communication using sociolinguistic approaches.

## 1.2 Research Question

The research question of my study is as follows:

What cultural and discourse aspects influence Jess' father' s decision to allow her to be a professional soccer player?

## 1.3 Structure of Paper

In terms of the structure of my paper, the next chapter, **2. Literature Review** will review the literature about language, culture and society. Then, **3. Methodology** explains the research methodology of sociolinguistic approaches and describes how the chosen spoken discourse will be analyzed. This is followed by **4. Findings and Discussion** which presents findings and discussion based on the analysis. Finally, **5. Conclusion** will make some conclusions.

## 2. Literature Review

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section reviews studies about culture which is one of the most important aspects in sociolinguistics and the second section discusses spoken discourse that focuses on language itself.

### 2.1 Culture

In this section, three significant studies about culture which are conducted by (1) Geertz (1973), (2) Holliday (1994) and (3) Hall (1977) will be reviewed to clarify how culture, people and society are connected to each other.

#### 2.1.1 Study by Geertz

Firstly, a pioneer researcher in the area, Geertz (1973), proposed the concept of “culture as an ice-berg” from the aspect of nationality. According to Geertz, culture is like an ice-berg which consists of two parts: one is seen above the water and is called “surface culture” ; and the other is called “deep culture” which usually cannot be seen because it is located under the water, as illustrated in **Figure 1** on page 97. Examples of surface culture can be language, body and behavior, whereas, deep culture is how we think, such as psychology, tradition, education and religion. The concept of Geertz is useful when we focus on a particular national culture, so I would like to use it when I analyze spoken discourse among the Indian family in the selected movie.

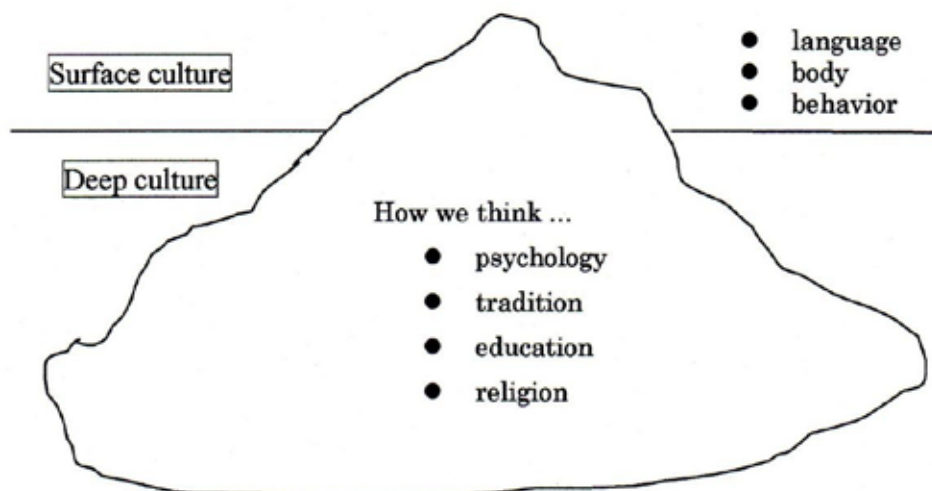


Figure1 : Culture as Ice-berg (Geertz, 1973)

In terms of surface and deep cultures, a Japanese psychiatrist, Doi (1985, pp. 10-13) examined our behavior reflecting the notion of “omote” and “ura”, which imply “public” and “private” personas engaged in daily life. Since the purpose of Doi’s (1985, pp.23-24) research is not only to investigate the nature of Japanese behavior, but also to seek universality, I realized that his notion can be applicable to Indian people’s behavior. Therefore, I will utilize it when I analyze complex spoken discourse among members of an Indian family in the chosen movie.

#### 2.1.2 Study by Holliday

Some researchers criticize Geertz’s concept because it is a mono-cultural perspective, so it is difficult to apply if a person has a multi-cultural background. The idea suggested by Holliday (1994), different “cultures”, can meet such needs since it has a multi-cultural perspective. He said that people have different types of cultural backgrounds. In that case, national culture like Japanese is only one of them. Regional culture can be added because even though people share the same nationality, if they are from different regions, their cultures may be slightly different. Professional job culture can be listed, such as English teachers, who could be international since English teachers exist all over the world. In the same way, student culture is also included. Then people usually have their family life, so family culture is one of them. I believe that his multi-cultural point of view can be also helpful when I analyze conversations from the movie.

#### 2.1.3 Study by Hall

Thirdly, Hall (1977) presents another angle to interpret culture and language. He thinks that the world is divided into two types of culture: “high context” and “low context” cultures. “High context cultures” means that people are sensitive towards hierarchy. Hall suggests that people in Asia are often like that. Nakane (1967, pp. 70-71) expresses a similar view in which Japanese people tend to be concerned with their vertical relationships and she called this a vertical society. Tanaka and Tanaka (1996, p. 37) point out the idea of “caste” which

is a strict hierarchy in Indian society. On the other hand, “low context cultures” mean that people do not change their communication style whoever they speak to since they believe that all of us are equal. Hall implies that people from the United States and Northern Europe such as Finland and Norway are like that and those countries are called a horizontal society.

## 2.2 Spoken Discourse

In this section, I will review two studies of spoken discourse: one conducted by Hymes (1968) and the other by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975).

### 2.2.1 Study by Hymes

The data analysis of this study is broadly based on “ethnography of speaking” suggested by Hymes (1968). In the past, language research tended to focus on linguistic competence such as grammar, but Hymes (1968) criticizes that because the context of language use is more important than linguistic competence. “Ethnography of speaking” is the concept which puts an emphasis on society and culture when we analyze spoken discourse. I will explain the details of his concept investigating the SPEAKING Model (Hymes, 1974) in the next chapter.

### 2.2.2. Study by Sinclair and Coulthard

I have also used the micro-analysis of conversation among the family members adopting the IRF (Initiation, Response, Feedback) speech coding system proposed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). Those two researchers visited some elementary schools in Britain and observed many lessons. Then they realized that there was a specific pattern in the classroom discourse between teachers and their students. The pattern is called IRF and we applied this coding system to analyze conversation. Concerning micro-analysis of conversation, Halliday (1961) proposes an idea called speech acts which are what we say in sentences. The researcher categorizes the types of speech acts into nine such as directive, request, and permission. I think that these are also helpful when we analyze the chosen conversation in detail, so I will combine IRF and speech acts.

## 3. Methodology

My study employs a triangulation of three analytical frameworks as a research methodology. They are different cultures proposed by Holliday (1994), the SPEAKING Model by Hymes (1974), and IRF coding system by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). This chapter explains how these frameworks can be used in my study.

### 3.1 Different Cultures

Firstly, Holliday (1994) implies different types of cultures within a person and **Figure 2** illustrates those multiple cultures. I believe that investigation of people’s cultural backgrounds is important to understand their relationship when we analyse conversation. Similar figures are created to show different cultural backgrounds among the members of the Indian family in the chosen movie in the next chapter.

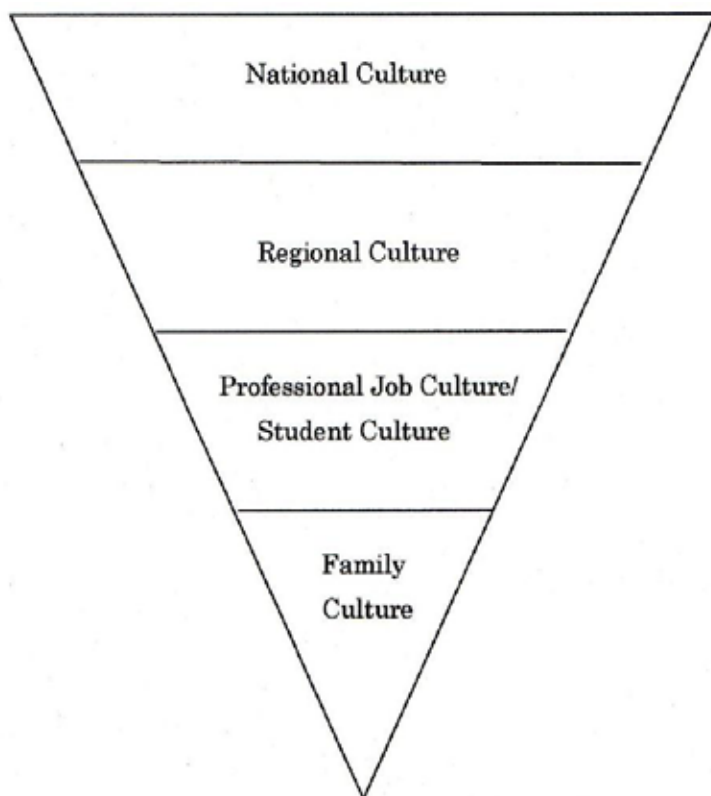


Figure2 : Different Cultures (Holliday, 1994)

### 3.2 SPEAKING Model

Secondly, Hymes (1974) emphasizes the significance of the context when we analyze spoken discourse and he proposes a framework called the SPEAKING Model as can be seen in Table 1 on page 100.

"S" is an initial for "setting" and "scene" which means time and place of a speech act. "P" is "participants" and they include both speakers and audience. "E" is an abbreviation of "ends" which are purposes, goals and outcomes of conversation. "A" is "act sequence" which is form and order of the events. "K" stands for "key" which means tone, manner of spirit of the speech act. "I" is the initial of "instrumentalities" which are forms and styles of speech. "N" is "norm" which is social roles governing the event and participants' action and reaction. Finally, "G" stands for "genre" which means the kind of speech act and event. I will use this SPEAKING Model in order to understand the context of conversation in the selected movie.

### 3.3 IRF Coding System

Thirdly, Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) proposed the IRF coding system when they analyzed classroom discourse between a teacher and student(s). According to this system, most classroom conversation consists of three parts: (1) Initiation <I> by a teacher, (2)

Initial	Word(s)	Explanation
S	Setting and Scene	Time and place of a speech act
P	Participants	Speakers and audience
E	Ends	Purposes, goals and outcomes
A	Act Sequence	Form and order of the events
K	Key	Tone, manner of spirit of the speech act
I	Instrumentalities	Forms and styles of speech
N	Norm	Social roles governing the event and participants' action and reaction
G	Genre	Kind of speech act or event

Table1 : SPEAKING Model (Hymes, 1974)

Extract 1

Line	Speaker	Talk	IRF
1	Teacher	What time is it?	I
2	Student	It's ten o'clock.	R
3	Teacher	That's right. Very good.	F

Type	Example & Explanation
Directive	"Stand up." = giving order
Request	"Could you stand up, please?"
Permission	"May I go to the toilet?"
Referential	"It's Wednesday." "Yes." "No." = giving information
Invitation	"Would you like to have a cup of coffee?"
Expressive	"I'm fine, thank you." = your feeling
Phatic	"I'm SO sorry to hear your bad news." = emphasis
Poetic	"Once upon a time ..." = reading a story, poem
Metalanguage	"Let me explain that again." = talking about your language

Table 2 : Speech Acts (Halliday, 1961)

Response <R> by student(s), (3) Feedback <F> by the teacher. Extract 1 is an example.

"What time is it?" in line 1 is <I> from a teacher, "It's ten o'clock." in line 2 is <R> by a student and "That's right. Very good." in line 3 is <F> by the teacher. Additionally, Sinclair and Coulthard said that <F> is evaluation, so it shows the teacher's power in the conversation. I think that I can apply this coding system to ordinary conversation within a family in the chosen movie in order to see the power relationship.

Also, in order to investigate the details of the chosen conversation, speech acts proposed by Halliday (1961) are combined with the IRF coding system. Halliday divided speech acts into nine types as can be seen in **Table 2** above. I will add this coding system into IRF to understand the relationship among the speakers of the chosen conversation.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

This chapter contains six sections. The first section describes the context of the selected movie and the second section introduces the participants of the chosen conversation. Then the third section demonstrates the cultural backgrounds of participants and the fourth section explains the SPEAKING Model of the chosen conversation. Furthermore, the fifth section analyzes both communication breakdown and smooth communication using the IRF and speech acts coding systems. Finally, the sixth section discusses the analysis.

### 4.1 Context

*Bend It Like Beckham* is a British movie released in 2002. The movie is set in London, which is a multicultural city. Many immigrants came from former British colonies, such as India and Pakistan, after the Second World War. Their children were born in Britain and are familiar with two languages and cultures. Specifically, this movie shows many scenes in an Anglo-Indian home in London and a training ground for a women's soccer team.

### 4.2 Participants

This study focuses on three participants: the main character, Jess, and her parents. I chose these people because they play essential roles in the movie. The main character of the movie is a teenage Indian girl called Jess who was born and brought up in London. Her hero is the famous professional soccer player, David Beckham, and her dream is to be a soccer player like him. Also, she is not a traditional Indian girl who is usually submissive because she is good at soccer and likes to play it with her male friends. Her parents do not approve that their daughter wants to be a professional soccer player, but towards the end of the movie, they change their minds and start to support her dream. The following sections will analyze cultural backgrounds of the three participants and their spoken discourse.

### 4.3 Cultural Backgrounds of Participants

**Figure 3** on page 102 illustrates the cultural backgrounds of the three participants from the perspective of Holliday's different cultures (1994). Basically, Jess and her parents share Indian culture and the same family culture. However, since Jess is a secondary school student, she has teenage culture but her parents are in their 40s, so they have a middle-aged culture. Both Jess and her father have their sports culture because she likes to play soccer and her father used to be a cricket player in India when he was young. Cricket is a ball game like baseball originated in the UK and played mainly in Britain and ex-British colonies such as India and Pakistan. In contrast, Jess' mother does not have sports culture. Instead she has a

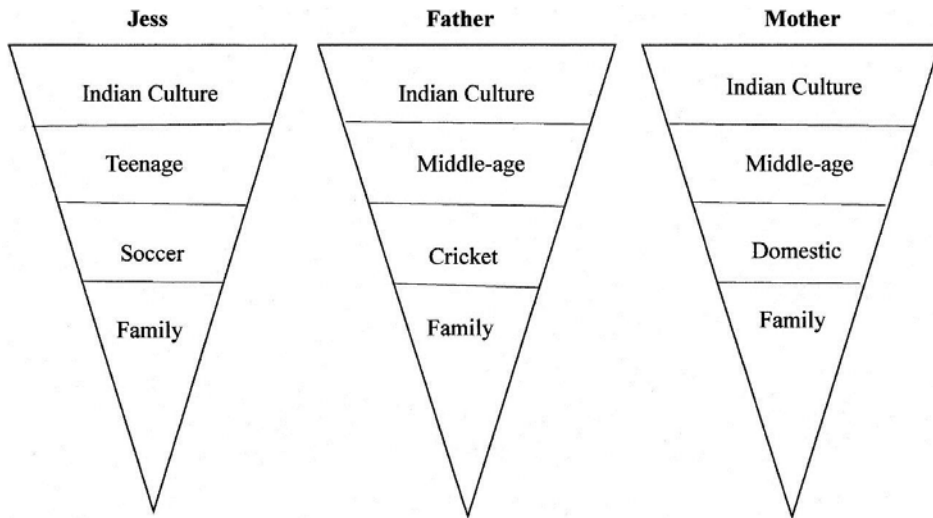


Figure3 : Cultural Backgrounds of Jess and her Parents

domestic culture since she believes that it is more important for her daughters to learn how to cook Indian dishes than playing soccer.

#### 4.4 SPEAKING Model of Chosen Conversation

Table 2 on page 100 shows the SPEAKING Model (Hymes, 1974) of my chosen conversation in Bend It Like Beckham.

First of all, the setting and scene is after the wedding of Jess' sister, Pinky. Her family, relatives and friends are gathered in the living room in her parents' house. Regarding the participants, the speakers are Jess and her parents and the audience is her family, relatives and friends. The ends, or the purpose of the talk is that Jess wants to convince her parents that she should go to the USA to be a professional soccer player. The act sequence is that Jess played in a soccer game on her sister' s wedding day. Then she received an offer of sport scholarship from a university in the USA. However, her family wants her to study law at a British university. The key is the tone of talk Jess and her parents use, in this case, Jess is determined to go to the USA and her father is also determined to support her. In contrast, her mother is emotional and blames her husband for supporting Jess to go to the USA. Instrumentalities are the casual conversation among family members. The norm surrounding the spoken discourse is that in Indian culture, children are expected to follow parents' advice. However, Jess wants to seek her dream to be a soccer player. Finally, the genre is conversation.

#### 4.5 Coding of Chosen Conversation

This section analyzes the chosen conversation in the movie coded by IRF (Sinclair &



<b>Initial</b>	<b>Word(s)</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
S	Setting & Scene	After the wedding of Jess' sister, family, relatives, friends are gathered in the living room in her parents' house.
P	Participants	Speakers: Jess and her parents Audience: family, relatives, friends
E	Ends	Jess wants to convince her parents that she should go to USA to be a professional soccer player.
A	Act Sequence	Jess played in a soccer game on her sister's wedding day. Then she received an offer of sport scholarship from a university in USA. However, her family wants her to study law at a British university.
K	Key	Jess is determined to convince her parents. Her father is determined to support Jess. Her mother is emotional and blaming her husband.
I	Instrumentalities	Casual conversation among family members
N	Norm	In Indian culture, children are expected to follow parents' advice. However, Jess wants to seek her dream to be a soccer player.
G	Genre	Conversation

Table3 : SPEAKING Model (Hymes, 1974) of *Bend It Like Beckham*

Coulthard, 1975) and speech acts (Halliday, 1961). Two types of conversation were selected from the last part of the movie because the interaction illustrates the family relations very clearly. One shows communication breakdown and the other demonstrates relatively smooth communication.

#### 4.5.1 Conversation Shows Communication Breakdown

Just before **Extract 2** on page 104 starts, Jess said that she played in a soccer game and received an offer of a sport scholarship from an American university. Communication breakdown is shown in the interaction between Jess and her parents in **Extract 2**. For example, on lines 4 and 5, her mother's Reaction to Jess was directed to her father in an Expressive Initiation. This is a sign of communicative breakdown because the Reaction was not given to the initiator. Then Jess' father tried to repair the communication breakdown taking an Expressive Reaction on lines 6 and 7. That led to his wife's Phatic and Referential Feedback on lines 8 and 9.

#### 4.5.2 Conversation Shows Smooth Communication

After the interaction of **Extract 2**, Jess' father mentioned his own difficult experience as a cricket player when he was young. He used to be a star player in India, however, after immigrating to the UK and joining a British team, he experienced racial discrimination from his teammates, so he decided to quit the sport. He regrets the decision now because he actually did not want to stop the career as an athlete. Then **Extract 3** starts as illustrated on page 104.

## Extract 2

Line	Speaker	Talk	IRF	Speech Acts
1	Jess	I really want to go. And I can't tell you what	I	Expressive
2		I want now, then I will never be happy		
3		wherever I go.		
4	Mother	(to Father) You let her leave her sister's	R/I	Expressive
5		wedding to go to a football match?		
6	Father	Maybe you could handle her long face, I	R	Expressive
7		could not. I didn't have the heart to stop her.		
8	Mother	That's why she is ready to go all the way to	F	Phatic Referential
9		America now.		

## Extract 3

Line	Speaker	Talk	IRF	Speech Acts
1	Father	I don't want Jess to suffer.	I	Expressive
2	Jess	(Tears in her eyes)	R	Expressive
3	Father	I don't want her to make the same mistakes	I	Expressive  Referential Phatic Referential Expressive
4		her father made.		
5		Accepting life, accepting situation.		
6		I want her to fight. And I want her to win.		
7		Because I've seen her playing.		
8		She's brilliant.		
9	Everybody	(Silent)	R	Expressive
10	Father	I don't think that anybody has the right to	F	Referential
11		stop her.		
12	Jess & Father	(Hug)	R	Expressive
13	Father	Two daughters made happy on one day.	F	Referential Expressive
14		That's all a father can ask for.		
15	Mother	(to relatives) At least I taught her full Indian	R	Referential Phatic
16		dinner. The rest is up to her.		

Unlike Extract 2, smooth interaction can be frequently seen between her father and Jess using non-verbal communication such as on lines 1 and 2. Also, his Initiation received a positive Reaction from the audience (family, relatives, friends) as illustrated from lines 3 to 9. Then her father's Referential Feedback on lines 10 and 11 led to Jess' and his own Expressive Reaction on line 12. Finally, her father's Referential and Expressive Feedback on lines 13 and 14 drew his wife's Referential and Phatic Reaction on lines 15 and 16.

#### 4.6 Discussion

This section compares and contrasts **Extract 2** showing communicative breakdown and **Extract 3** which seems relatively smooth communication. A significant difference between the two extracts can be the use of different types of speech acts. Specifically, in **Extract 2**, Jess and her father used only Expressive speech acts which show their subjective emotion. By contrast, in **Extract 3**, Jess' father used a mixture of Expressive, Referential and Phatic speech acts. In my opinion, Referential speech acts gave a logical and objective impression in his talk and that led his wife to compromise her stance on lines 15 and 16. An interesting point here is that Jess' mother did not speak to her husband directly; instead, she spoke to her elder female relatives sitting on a sofa next to her. This illustrates that Jess' mother was careful dealing with her relatives which can be a sign of giving importance to "omote" (Doi, 1985) or her "public" persona. I believe that her reaction in lines 15 and 16 was the result of Jess' father' s logical and objective talk, specifically in lines 10 and 11; his Referential Feedback was not only to his wife but also towards the wider audience. This means that Jess' father was aware of the notion of "omote" and "ura" (Doi, 1985) or "public" and "private" personas. In this case, his public persona is to show respect to the relatives who attended the wedding of his elder daughter and his private persona was to support his younger daughter, illustrated in lines 13 and 14 in his Feedback, "Two daughters made happy on one day. That' s all a father can ask for." Finally, he successfully convinced his wife and relatives to assist Jess' dream to be a professional soccer player.

#### 5. Conclusion

This chapter concludes the study from the following two perspectives: (1) culture and (2) coding of chosen conversation.

Firstly, regarding the cultural point of view, I realized that "omote" (Doi, 1985) or "public" persona played an important role in the chosen conversation among Jess and her parents. Especially, her parents are fully aware of their "high context culture" (Hall, 1977) in Indian society which can be similar to Japan' s "vertical society" (Nakane, 1967, p. 70). On the other hand, from Holliday' s (1994) cultural perspective, Jess and her father shared sports culture, which was not shared with her mother. Therefore, her father understood Jess' decision to go to the USA to seek her dream, whereas it was difficult for her mother to accept her decision.

Secondly, concerning the coding of the chosen conversation employing IRF (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975), since Jess' mother showed her Feedback in **Extract 2**, her mother took initiative in the interaction. By contrast, in **Extract 3** there is no Feedback from her mother; instead, Feedback from her father appeared. This means that he took initiative in the conversation. In terms of speech acts (Halliday, 1961), speakers in **Extract 2** mainly used Expressives which led to communicative breakdown. However, the use of a mixture of speech acts by Jess' father in **Extract 3** gave the impression of logical and objective talk. That tactic

of communicative competence eventually helped to achieve the “End” or “purpose” of the conversation in the SPEAKING Model (Hymes, 1974), which was to convince her parents that Jess should go to the USA to be a professional soccer player.

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