Dude, What Was I Talking About?
A New Sociolinguistic Framework for Marijuana-Intoxicated Speech[1]

Douglas S. Bigham
Southern Illinois University – Carbondale

1. Abstract

The effect of intoxication on speech is an under-researched field. Of the research that has been done, most works are concerned with mechanical errors in speech production, and then only intoxication by beer or liquor is considered. This work will seek to fill that void in two ways: one, by building a taxonomy for topic shifts, and topic management methods; two, by creating a sociolinguistic framework for the effects of marijuana intoxication on the conversational aspects of speech. The first part aims to show how individual speaker roles vary from sober to intoxicated speech and how this alters a group dynamic. The second part will be accomplished by fitting the peculiarities of marijuana-intoxicated speech into a framework for conversation analysis; what this will show is that marijuana-intoxicated speech more readily reflects the communication rules for meetings than for regular conversation. Finally, by combining both methods in future studies, a more complete picture of the variation between sober and intoxicated conversation can be reached.

2. Introduction

This project, concerned with the discourse patterns of marijuana intoxicated speech (hereafter referred to as "stoned speech"), examines the differences that arise between sober and stoned speech, and provides a new framework within which the conversational methods accessed by intoxicated speakers can be discussed. The current literature covering intoxicated speech of any form is relatively sparse, and virtually non-existent for work concerned with speech and marijuana. Of the linguistic analyses that do exist, most are

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centered around mechanical errors of speech production: phonetic changes, morphological errors, slips of the tongue, etc. (Andrews, 1977; Higgens, 1988; Hollien, 1996). I found only one paper on any kind of sociolinguistic analysis of intoxication (Harvey, 1991) and this is primarily concerned with the interplay of diglossia and drinking rituals in a Southern Peruvian Andes community. Although an excellent article, Harvey's only pertinent remarks to this work include:

> When drunk, speakers are less constrained in their linguistic choices by considerations of individual linguistic competence and of differential status between speaker and addressees. (p. 1)

> Drunks are most creative in the construction of new meanings or new world views. They use all the available resources, and they experiment with styles. . . . by breaking though conventions of respect, drunks also reveal the facility with which power relations can be challenged. (p. 23)

Indeed, it is this ability to access power relations that will play a major role in the analysis of stoned speech. As we will discuss later, although no overt "power challenges" are made, if the inherent relationships within a group are not maintained, problems can arise. Specifically, it will be shown that the rules for conversation negotiation seem to be more overtly followed when the speakers are stoned and more flexible when they are sober. By studying how and when a group of speakers breaks, or strictly adheres to, rules for conversation, we can begin to revise and reconsider these rules for all speakers.

3. Hypothesis

The ways in which the differences between the data sets of stoned and sober speech are actualized can be seen as indexical of the differences between the "normal" perception and ordering of one's "world", and how becoming intoxicated with THC (getting stoned) changes one's perception of, and re-orders, this "world".

This work will be centered around the ways in which Topic Management differs between sober speech and stoned speech. This is to include analyses of turn-taking and topic-shift mitigation. I believe that, when stoned, while the rules for turn-taking (Sacks et al., 1974) will be broken more often, these rules will also be more readily accessible to the speakers and more explicitly mentioned. This occurs to the point of "stoned speech" going away from being analyzed as conversation and going towards being analyzed as if it were a meeting in terms of the adherence to, or fronted knowledge of, who has the "right" to speak, how long a turn should last, and who "controls" the topics (Larrue & Trognon, 1992).

4. Frameworks

Any post-1974 discussion of turn-taking owes its primary frame to the work of Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson (1974) which laid out the basic rules for turn-taking in conversation. This work stated the "rules" for turn-taking as follows:

(1) For any turn, at the initial transition-relevance place of an initial turn-constructional unit:
        a. If the turn-so-far is so constructed as to involve the use of a 'current speaker selects next' technique, then the party so selected has the right and is obliged to take next turn to speak;

no others have such rights or obligations, and transfer occurs at that place.

b. If the turn-so-far is so constructed as not to involve the use of a 'current speaker selects next' technique, then self-selection for next speakership may, but need not, be instituted; first started acquires rights to a turn, and transfer occurs at that place.

c. If the turn-so-far is so constructed as not to involve the use of a 'current speaker selects next' technique, then current speaker may, but need not continue, unless another self-selects.

(2) If, at the initial transition-relevance place of an initial turn-constructional unit, neither 1a nor 1b has operated, and, following the provision of 1c, current speaker has continued, then the rule-set a-c re-applies at the next transition-relevance place, and recursively at each next transition-relevance place, until transfer is effected. (Sacks et al., 1974, p. 704)

The only other conversational frameworks used in this paper are those of Geluykens (1992) and Larrue & Trognon (1992). Geluykens (1992) provides the more specific and accessible work on topic introduction and topic management, which will be the main concern of this work; Larrue & Trognon (1992) provide an augmentative work to Sacks et al. (1974) on turn-taking in meetings, providing a frame for the re-interpretation of the stoned speech data. The unusual transcription form was an independent idea I developed for the particularly troublesome data where more than two speakers often overlap or co-construct talk. Later, I was delighted to find it used by Talbot (1992) who took it from some unpublished data by Norman Fairclough.

5. Methodology

5.1 Participants

The participants of this study, in three groups, are all in college and are semi-regular marijuana smokers (semi-regular defined as 3-12 times a month, but not more than 3 times per week). Two of the participants in Group 0 (*D* and *N*) are also participants in Group 1. Group 0, consisting of five participants, was considered more of a pilot study and has no matching data for sober speech, therefore, Group 0 was not formally analyzed. All participants are white non-Hispanic and from a middle class background.

Group 1 consists of three participants:
D: 21, male, homosexual, from rural Southern Illinois
A: 21, female, bisexual, from rural Southern Illinois
N: 22, male, heterosexual, from Chicago suburbs

Group 2 consists of two participants who are romantically involved with one another:
B: 23, male, bisexual, from Chicago
G: 20, female, heterosexual, from Northern Illinois

5.2 Data Collection

Data from Group 0 were collected in February 2000 by means of a tape recorder which all participants were aware of and occasionally used performatively, and which was turned on and off for various lengths of time while the participants were getting/remaining stoned. As stated above, there is no full set of comparative sober data for the participants in Group 0.

Data from Groups 1 and 2 were collected in October-November 2000 by giving the participants a tape recorder and asking them to record thirty minutes of continuous sober speech. They were in a home and no outside interference was allowed (phones were disconnected, doors locked, etc.). They had not smoked marijuana for at least 36 hours preceding the taping of the sober speech. After the sober speech tape was made, they then smoked one "bowl" of marijuana (roughly equivalent to two joints or marijuana cigarettes), waited 10 minutes, and recorded another thirty minutes of stoned speech. They were instructed to leave the tape recorder running at all times.   The formally analyzed section for both groups was the interior 20 minutes of talk (i.e., minutes 5 -25).

5.3 *Methods and Classifications*

In order to discuss the consideration of what is and is not an actual topic, the definitions that were outlined for topics and topic introduction by Geluykens (1992) must be considered:

> Topics are defined as information which has a low degree of Recoverability (i.e. the extent to which an element is derivable from the previous discourse record) and which has Persistence (i.e. the recurrence of the element, directly or indirectly, in the subsequent discourse context). (p. 181)

> . . .discourse topics are not straightforwardly introduced in a unilateral way, but are rather negotiated through an interactional process which is reflected in the turn-taking system [of Sacks, et al., 1974] . (p. 182)

These are the sources from which this work draws its primary resources for discussion of topic shift and topic management. However, while these definitions are clear, they seem to be lacking in several pragmatic elements. In fact, one of the main ways in which the model that will be presented here differs from Geluykens (1992) is in Geluykens's description of those conversational elements that are excluded from his definition of "topic":

> Once a referent has been mentioned for the first time, it is not self-evident that it will also be developed in the subsequent discourse. It is only those referents which do get developed which I will regard as proper discourse topics (Geluykens, 1992, p. 185)

The exclusion of such undeveloped topics from the discussion of "topics proper" disallows interesting analyses of, among other things, speaker dominance, participants' roles in the conversation, and speaker identity within the conversation.   Therefore, to account for these previously excluded topics, I differ from Geluykens's (1992) definitions of topic, and expand "topic" to the following three-part distinction, each of which can be either a success or failure:

(1) Unmitigated Changes (UC): those topic shifts with a low or absent degree of Recoverability from the immediately preceding discourse, and which are obviously (usually non-overlapping) moves (or attempted moves) toward a new topic.

(2) Mitigated Changes (MC): those topic shifts with a medium to high degree of Recoverability from the immediately preceding discourse, and which are obviously (usually non-overlapping) moves (or attempted moves) toward a new topic.

(3) Topic Regains (TR): those topic shifts which are directly Recoverable
     from the discourse preceding the immediately preceding discourse (the
     penultimate topic).

This method of classification is similar, but not identical, to the model for Attempted Speaker-Switches in Figure 1 (from Beattie, 1983; cited in Talbot, 1992, p. 455). Revamping Beattie's model to accommodate this new model of Topic Shift and autonomous Interruptions yields Figure 2. This gives four possible main categories for ordinary conversation and at least six sub-categories for discussing turns and topics in a more complete way. Since the branches from the subsets to the main categories re-converge, when one examines only the final type it is impossible to be certain of any mitigating force. Therefore, it is important to note that the final outcome stage is useful for discussing topic shift types in the conversation as a whole, while the intermediate stage is useful for discussing topic shift types in individual speakers.
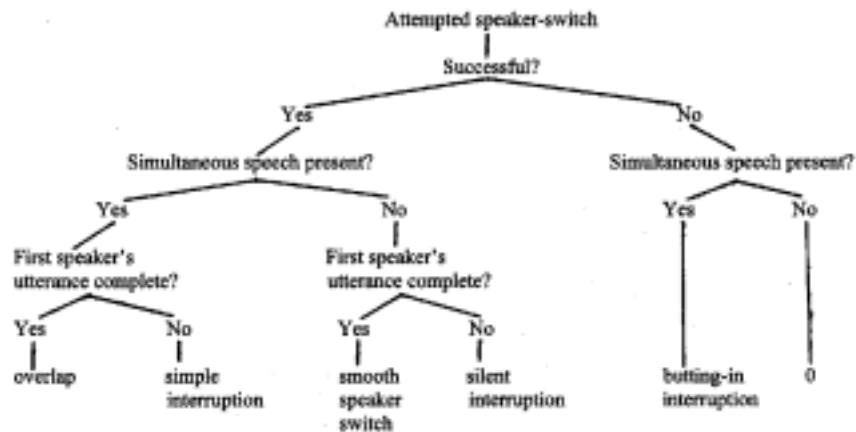

Fig. 1. Attempted speaker-switches (from Talbot, 1992, p. 455)

Attempted Topic Shift

Successful?

Yes   No

Mitigated?   Mitigated?

Yes   No   Yes   No

Related to discourse   Related to discourse
one topic back?   one topic back?

Yes   No   Yes   No

TRS   MCS   UCS   TRF   MCF   UCF

Previous speaker's utterance complete?   Previous speaker's utterance complete?

Yes   No   Yes   No

Smooth topic shift   Topic Shift with Interruption   Ignored statement   Ignored Interruption
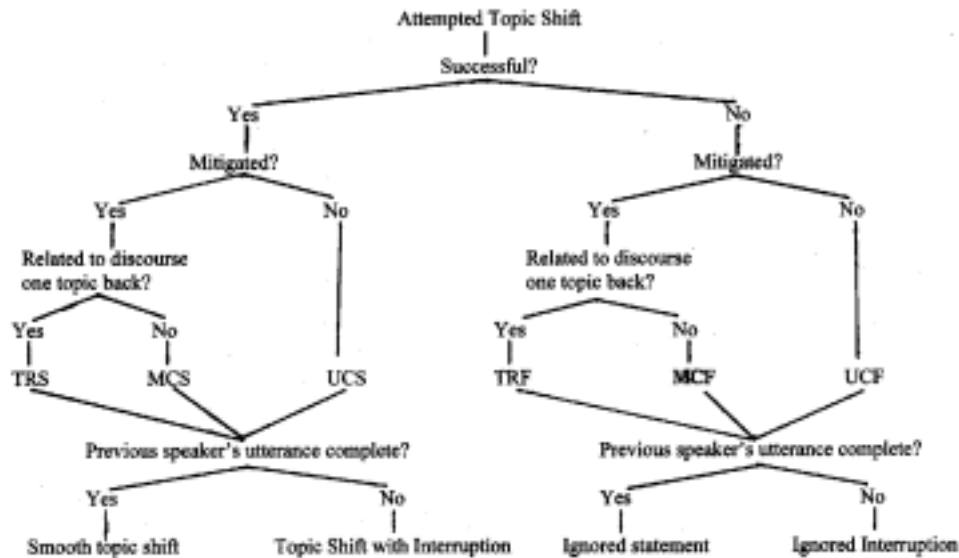
Fig. 2. Topic Shift and Interruption as Autonomous, Interconnected Units

When discussing the stoned speech, however, it is also necessary to note the rules for talk and turn-taking at meetings outlined in Larrue & Trognon (1993):

Current speaker ((n-1)th requester on the list): . . . formulates an ending
Chairman: designates next speaker according to order specified on list
Next Speaker (nth requester on the list): takes turn. (p. 181)

This differs from the rules laid out by Sacks, et al. (1974) in that:

next speaker: (1) does not define the transition-relevance place—it is the current speaker who indicates that he has finished his turn—and (2) does not grant himself the right to speak. (Larrue & Trognon, 1993, p. 183)

This difference between turn-taking (and topic-shift) in conversation and meetings is likewise what I expect to be descriptive of the main difference between sober and stoned speech. Unfortunately, however, Larrue & Trognon (1993) do not give rules governing meetings where no pre-designated chair is present, and if stoned speech is similar to meetings speech, it would be a meeting without a chair since no one speaker is announced (explicitly) as the "head" of the group.

6. Results

Geluykens (1992) states that the basic model for topic introduction is:

Stage 1 (A): topic introduction (bare NP = referent)
Stage 2 (B): acknowledgment signal
Stage 3 (A): topic establishment (second mention of referent)
(Geluykens, 1992, p. 189)

In fact, the sober speech is replete with such examples, such as in stave (1s44) with extended acknowledgment/establishment. Speaker *A* has the topic introduction ("An' y'know how/ timid. . ."); *D* acknowledges ("Didn't really look timid"); *N* then further acknowledges, which is perhaps a kind of establishment, ("No he doesn't look. . ."); and finally *A* establishes ("He comes across. . ."); this talk of a guy's supposed "timid" nature continues for the next 4 staves (not included here), showing a firm establishment in this opening sequence for the topic.

 Speech Example 1:[2]
(1s44)
D1:
A1:   An' y'know how/ timid he looks n' stuff?
N1: a couple more will pop in.

D2: Didn't really look timid.
A2:   He comes across that
        way
N2:   No he doesn't look timid **at all**

    How does this topic-introduction model play out in the stoned speech data? Not as well, it would appear. For example, in stave (1x27) we see that, far from a two-party, three-stage development of topic, only speaker *D* is needed for the introduction ("eat this") and acknowledgment ("eat this, lick it off my finger"); only after the completion of stages 1 and 2 does *N* then establish topic ("Sick! I don't want that fudge. . ."); the acceptance of this topic can be seen in further references to it in later staves.

Speech Example 2:
(1x27)
D1:   ~~eat this. Eat this.   Eat this, lick it off my finger.
A1:
N1: You saw me jack off?   Where was I?   Sick!

D2:
A2:   Ohh. Damn Mike!
N2: I don't want that fudge! Why don'chu go pack it?

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[2] Transcription conventions:
Each stave represents five seconds of speech. The spacing and overlap of lines represents the speech occurances in real-time.
(n) - Numbers in brackets indicate length of pause in seconds
. - period (.) indicates a pause of around one second or a beat
, - comma (,) indicates a pause of less than one second
\ -   frontslash (\) indicates a falling intonation
/ -   backslash (/) indicates a rising intonation, not necessarily that of a question
? -   question mark (?) indicates a question
! -   exclamation point (!) indicates an indignant response
~ -   tilde (~) indicates unrecognizable/uncharacterizeable speech or sounds
- -   hyphen (-) indicates abrupt cut-off of sound/word
X- underline (underline) indicates rapid speech
X -   italics (italics) indicate an imitation voice, usually a dialect performance
X -   bold (bold) indicates increase in volume
XX -   all caps (ALL CAPS) indicates increase in volume beyond the bold level
x: -   colon (:) indicates lengthening of sound, double colon (::) is even longer
(X) -   parenthesis (parenthesis) indicate asides not directed toward other participants
((x)) -   double parenthesis ((double)) indicate researcher's paralinguistic notes

But this deviation in stoned speech is not a constant; several instances were found that followed Geluykens's model. Staves (1x6), although somewhat muddled, shows how *N* introduces ("We'll put'chu in the box"); *A* acknowledges ("Put kitty in the box!"); *N* establishes ("Gonna ship. . ." "Where should we send. . ."); and *D* further establishes ("Abu-Dabi").

Speech Example 3:
(1x6)
D1: Kitty's eatin' the dope. Kitty's eating the research.   fuck.
A1:   Heh hum.
N1:   Kitty-   Kitty get out of the dope!

D2:   What-
A2:   Put kitty in the box! Put 'em in th- put 'em in the box.
N2: We'll put'chu in the box.   Gonna ship you off.

D3:   Abu-Dabi
A3:   How 'bout   Aktar Wat/.
N3: Where sh'we send kitty?   Abu-Dabi?   Aktar Wat?

Geluykens (1992) goes on to mention a case of abrupt topic change where, instead of an acknowledgment, the first speaker is met with a new topic introduction by the second speaker. Geluykens states that "the fact that such hearer-short-circuiting is quite rare is to be expected, given the normal principles of cooperation in conversation" (Geluykens, 1992, p. 195)

Indeed, this case is rare in the sober data; however, it is quite common in the stoned data. Stave (1x11) is an excellent example. Speaker *A* introduces a topic ("The Buddhists use it. . .") and, rather than acknowledgment, is met with a new topic introduction by *D* ("Okay but what was my original. . ."). Speaker *N* is not part of the conversation at hand—he is talking to the cat.

Speech Example 4:
(1x11)
D1:   Okay but
A1: go to the bud- Now Buddhists- run it. The Buddhists use it as the temple.
N1:   (Kitty, what do you have to say?   Say something for me kitty.

D2: what was my original statement? Before I got onto the Regis thing. Shit man.
A2:   I don't know.
N2: kitty. Kitty. Kitty Kitty say something.)

Geluykens goes on to re-assess this problem as support for claiming that conversation is not purely linear:

> One can look upon such (rare) speaker-short-circuit as special cases of conversational repair. . . provide[ing] support to the claim that topic flow should not be approached on a purely quantitative basis. . .too restricted to handle problems like these. (Geluykens, 1992, p. 196)

However, I would suggest, especially in the case of stoned speech, that these "rare" anomalies are simply indicative of a different system in operation all together. If one re-

analyzes stave (1x11) in Larrue & Trognon's (1993) meeting model, one sees that *D* is acting as "chairman" and ending *A*'s comment by self-selecting for next topic. In fact, *D* is, to quote Larrue & Trognon, 1993, p. 188: "forced to remind the others of what initiated his request to speak" (1x11, *D*: "Okay but what. . ."). It is exactly as if *D* were operating inside the conventions for meetings and not inside the conventions for conversation.

Another interesting mention in Geluykens (1992) is that "explicit topic marking is probably employed more often in other discourse types." (p. 210). The data here bear out this idea in that, in the sober data, only four possible times does any kind of overt topic marking appear. In the stoned data, on the other hand, this feature is used often. Stave (1x42) (*N:* "I'm gonna reveal what you just did") is exemplary:

Speech Example 5:
 (1x42)
D1: Oh sh- <u>Don't say that on tape.</u>   I fed kitty,
A1:
N1:   Oh, I'm gonna reveal what you just did.

D2: look she's eating.   Shut up.   Shut up!
A2:   I want-
N2:   You just completely manhandled that cat by   grabbing its throat

Geluykens (1992) develops an "explicitness scale" (p. 211) for such instances where explicit mention of topic is involved. Declarative clauses are marked as least explicit while topic phrases are marked as most explicit. It appears that all instances in the stoned data fall on the "most explicit" side of the scale. This is another example of how stoned speech is representative more of an "other discourse style" than of classical conversation.

Finally, aside from Geluykens (1992), we can find one last piece of evidence that stoned speech is indicative more of meetings than of casual conversation in the Larrue & Trognon (1992) article on the turn-taking system and rules of meetings.   Larrue & Trognon (1992) deal explicitly with how an interminable monologue should be dealt with in a meeting situation:

> If the current speaker embarks on an 'interminable' monologue, as if there were no potential speakers officially waiting to speak. . . only the chairman himself can breach the system: if he wishes to (and he must) call upon a new speaker, he is forced to withdraw the turn from the person who is unduly retaining it. (Larrue & Trognon, 1992, p. 189)

Since sober speech is not a meeting, but a conversation, this rule does not apply. In fact, this kind of "interminable" monologue happens often. In the sober speech, seven total staves of monologue have *D* as speaker, and 15 staves of monologue have *A* as the speaker. None of the overly long monologues are sanctioned/commented upon in the sober data—longer narrative stories are common in the regular conversation one has while sober.

However, in the stoned data, the ONLY monologue, given by *D*, staves (1x109)-(1x116), which is not presented in full here, is sanctioned twice during the story, as at stave (1x112) (*A:* "That's too much"). Furthermore, it is explicitly ignored upon it's completion at stave (1x116) (*N:* "It's kitty World War III over here"). Why, if this is a conversation, would one be sanctioned for telling a long story? Because in stoned speech

one is not operating under the conventions of a conversation, but under the conventions of a meeting—without the aide of a Chairperson—where such turn-hogging is not allowed.

Speech Examples 6:
(1x112)
D: for my English class. English 402 with Dr. Riedinger.
A: That's too much.
N:

(1x116)
D: I didn't get my homework done. I think I just told that.
A:
N: Shit. It's kitty World War III over here.

7. Conclusions

   Dude. Given what is known about the frequency of drug use in society (alcohol and marijuana being the most commonly used recreational drugs) it is obvious that the time has come for an in-depth analysis by sociolinguists about what exactly is happening to our methods of communicating during intoxication. This study seeks to help fill that gap. Perhaps the lack of study is due to the reasoning that the models currently available can account for intoxication simply in how the rules of sober conversation are broken. However, what I have presented in this work has shown quite the opposite.   Using the sub-study of Topic Management, it was shown that, while sober speech can be analyzed using the pre-existing models, marijuana intoxicated (stoned) speech needs a new framework for any conclusive discussion, much as "meetings talk" has had its own set of rules developed. With this need in mind, I created a preliminary framework combining traditional models of conversation, topic, and turn-taking together with a newer model of meetings-talk to arrive at a working model for stoned speech. This model allows for both recoverable (mitigated) and non-recoverable (unmitigated) topics, topics that succeed and topics that fail, and the special category of topic regain, all of which are necessary for a discussion of stoned speech that otherwise would appear to exist without any recognizable adherents, only describable as "breaking the rules" of conversation.

   Obviously, much more research is needed concerning the manifestations of intoxicated speech. Certainly, further research should be done in groups with less variation among speaker backgrounds (sexuality and gender) to attempt to reasonably control for any factors other than intoxication that may be manifesting themselves. Also, turn overlap differences between sober and stoned speech could make up a vital part of this new model for intoxicated conversational analysis and need to be addressed in more detail. And, like the alcohol-intoxicated studies most currently available, work on actual mechanical changes in speech production for stoned speech is necessary. Perhaps then we could move towards a true illumination of any mind-universals at work for non-sober speech and talk. So, while the actual work thus far on intoxicated speech may be scant, the possibilities for research in this area are unlimited.

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Department of Linguistics
University of Texas at Austin
Austin, TX 78712
Capn002@aol.com