

## A Comparative Analysis of Male and Female Interruption in Jubilee's 'Middle Ground' Discussions

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### Abstract:

This study aims to examine interruptions in mixed-gender conversations within Jubilee's "Middle Ground" discussions on YouTube. Specifically, it explores the frequency, type, and function of interruptions between male and female participants. Using a qualitative method, the researcher collected data by analyzing selected episodes from the series. The data were taken from participant utterances containing interruptions and classified following Beattie's (1982) and Wardhaugh's (1985) frameworks. The findings revealed that women made more interruptions than men, with eighteen interruptions by women and twelve interruptions by men. There are seven simple interruptions by women and six by men. For butting-in interruptions, both genders had the same frequency (three each), while overlap interruptions showed a slight female dominance (three for men and eight for women). Our analysis on the function of interruptions reveal that men use interruption to express their dominance through disagreement, while women are more likely to use cooperative interruption to show agreement and build rapport, suggesting distinct interruption styles between the genders.

**Keywords:** Interruption; YouTube; Discussions

### Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti interupsi dalam percakapan campuran gender dalam diskusi "Middle Ground" oleh Jubilee di YouTube. Secara khusus, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi frekuensi, jenis, dan fungsi interupsi antara partisipan pria dan wanita. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif, peneliti mengumpulkan data dengan menganalisis episode terpilih dari serial tersebut. Data diambil dari ucapan partisipan yang mengandung interupsi dan diklasifikasikan mengikuti kerangka kerja Beattie (1982) dan Wardhaugh (1985). Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa wanita lebih banyak melakukan interupsi daripada pria, dengan delapan belas interupsi oleh wanita dan dua belas interupsi oleh pria. Ada tujuh interupsi sederhana oleh wanita dan enam oleh pria. Untuk interupsi menyela, kedua gender memiliki frekuensi yang sama (masing-masing tiga), sementara interupsi tumpang tindih menunjukkan sedikit dominasi oleh wanita (tiga untuk pria dan delapan untuk wanita). Analisis kami tentang fungsi interupsi mengungkapkan bahwa pria menggunakan interupsi untuk mengekspresikan dominasi mereka melalui ketidaksetujuan, sementara wanita lebih cenderung menggunakan interupsi kooperatif untuk menunjukkan persetujuan dan membangun hubungan, yang menunjukkan gaya interupsi yang berbeda antara kedua gender.

**Kata kunci:** Interupsi; YouTube; Diskusi



## INTRODUCTION

In everyday conversations, interruptions often occur between speakers. Interruption occurs when the second speaker disrupts the first speaker's utterances in a conversation. This phenomenon can take place in various contexts, both formal and informal. Zimmerman and West (1975) categorize interruptions that occur in conversation as disruptive and violations of turn-taking rules. In line with this, Wardhaugh (1985) describe an interruption as "a violation of another's territory or rights." Therefore, a good conversation does not violate the turn-taking system and does not involve interruptions in conversations between individuals. On the other hand, Tannen (1993) notes that interruptions are not always negative or violations of the turn-taking system; they can also show enthusiasm, support, or even solidarity in certain contexts (p.175). In the context of gender studies, interruptions between men and women are interesting to discuss. It is widely acknowledged that there are differences in interruption based on gender.

Zimmerman and West (1975) found that interruptions more commonly occur in mixed-gender than in same-gender conversations i.e. men often interrupt women in a conversation. This can happen because men want to be the dominant party in the conversation (Marche & Peterson, 1993). Both men and women have a different purpose of interruption. Men are likely to interrupt women to convey and assert their opinion to look more powerful than women (Jan & Mohajer, 2012) while women "to show their solidarity and support and ultimately maintain their friendship" (Coates, 1989 as cited in Jan & Mohajer, 2012). In line with this, Tannen (1990) created a theory to describe the different communicative styles of men and women, which is called report talk and rapport talk. According to Tannen, men prefer to speak in front of many people to show independence and dominance of the topic of conversation. While women feel more comfortable in private conversations. Therefore, men are more active in sharing discussions, seminars, and general and open discussions. On the contrary, women are more active in private conversations and frequently use rapport talk to establish a connection and build a relationship, resulting in cooperative interruption.

A study on interruption has identified several functions, including cooperative and intrusive interruptions (Murata, 1994). Intrusive interruptions occur when a speaker cuts off the other speaker to change the topic or show disagreement by dominating the conversation. This is commonly associated with men in mixed-gender conversation

(James & Clarke, 1993; Marche & Peterson, 1993). On the other hand, cooperative interruptions are used to express an agreement, which aligns more with women's interruption style (James & Clarke, 1993). These distinctions highlight how interruptions serve different communicative purposes depending on the speaker's intent. Intrusive interruptions are often seen as a display of power, while cooperative interruptions aim to maintain conversational flow between speakers.

Previous studies on interruption between men and women focused on various objects, such as debates and formal discussions. Several previous studies have examined interruption patterns based on gender and concluded that in the context of formal discussions and debates, men tend to interrupt more often than women as a way to keep conversational control and assert dominance (Maitra et al., 2021; Miller & Sutherland, 2023; Smith-Lovin & Brody, 1989). Interruption occurs in formal settings, such as debates or academic discussions, and often reflects hierarchical structures where someone with higher social status, typically men, is more likely to interrupt. This means that men have a higher social status than women. In support of this James and Clarke (1993) state that because men are culturally considered to have a higher social status than women, they are often considered linguistically more legitimate to interrupt females (p.232).

However, this does not mean that men consistently dominate in mixed-gender conversations. Another study found that women more frequently interrupt men in formal and informal contexts, mainly when they master the topic or have strong opinions regarding the topic they have discussed (Rossi, 2022; Tartory, 2019). Tannen (1993) explained that men are likely to interrupt women to show their dominance or competitiveness side of them in a conversation. In contrast, women interrupt in a cooperative manner or to defend an argument on a topic they have mastered (Tartory, 2019). This shows that there are differences in power dynamics in a conversation. However, some studies show that social, cultural, and topic contexts can influence interruption patterns in conversations or discussions, leading to variability in research findings (Li, 2001; Murata, 1994; Tartory, 2019).

Cultural differences can influence the frequency of use of interruptions in conversation, as in research conducted by Murata (1994), which examined cross-cultural interruption between English Native Speakers (ENS), Japanese Native Speakers (JNS), and ENS-JSE (Japanese Speaker of English) in one of the pre-university courses in



London. He explained that intrusive, as in research conducted by Murata (1994), interruption, e.g., in English, could be seen as showing support and participation in other cultures. He found that there are fewer interruptions between JNS-JNS conversations than ENS-ENS conversations. He asserts that this is due to the traditional Japanese attitude towards conversation. When someone is talking, the opponent speaker must listen to the speaker until the utterances are complete, especially when someone talks to older people. Additionally, there are a lot of interruptions occurring in ENS-JSE conversations, which he believes is possible because English unconsciously influences the Japanese conversational style since they have been in Britain for more than two years.

In line with Murata's (1994) findings, another study conducted by Li (2001) further investigates interruptions in cross-cultural contexts. She conducted a study of Chinese and Canadian university students in simulated doctor-patient conversations to examine whether culture plays a vital role in interrupting a conversation. The participants were 80 people, 40 Chinese and 40 Canadian. The research results she conducted were in line with the hypothesis he provided. She found that the participants who were paired with the same culture highly experienced intrusive interruption from Canadian-Canadian peers, and cooperative interruption highly occurred in Chinese-Chinese peers' conversations. She stated according to numerous studies that Canadians are proven to be more individualistic than Hong Kong Chinese, even though the West historically influenced Hong Kong because it was a British colony for a century (Li, 2001) while Chinese is the opposite.

Previous studies on formal and informal interruption show that interruption is not just about cutting someone's sentence off, but some factors influence the occurrence of interruption, such as the topic of conversation and culture. Interruption also has functions such as showing disagreement or enthusiasm in a conversation. However, research on interruptions that focus on conversations in YouTube discussion content is limited. Therefore, more research needs to be done to explore interruptions in the YouTube platform, especially in discussion-based content. This study aims to fill the gap by analyzing interruptions that occur between male and female participants on YouTube, especially within the 'Middle Ground' series on the Jubilee channel. 'Middle Ground' is interesting content to discuss, which brings several individuals, both men and women, who have different opinions to discuss social issues that the Jubilee team has determined openly. The social issues chosen by the Jubilee team are argumentative topics such as

LGBT and ex-LGBT, Democrats vs Republicans, Plastic Surgery vs Natural Beauty, and others.

The 'Middle Ground' discussion can entertain the audience with exciting debates and encourage people to reflect on the issue from their perspective. The discussion encourages debate and frequently occurs interruption since participants try to assert their opinions or perspectives. This allows the researcher to analyze interruption patterns in various social issues topics among participants in the videos. Thus, comparing interruptions between men and women in the discussion videos on Middle Ground by Jubilee is an intriguing topic to discuss. This study examines the frequency, type, and function of interruption between male and female participants in discussions on Middle Ground by Jubilee. The research questions guiding this study are: 1. How do male and female participants differ in their use of interruption during Jubilee's "Middle Ground" discussions? 2. What are the functions of interruptions used by the participants?

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses descriptive qualitative methods to analyze data obtained from the 'Middle Ground' series by Jubilee. According to Hancock et al., (2007), qualitative research is a method that focuses on the interpretation and explanations of social phenomena. This is in line with the aim of this research, namely, to find and describe the frequency, type, and function of interruption between male and female participants in discussions on Middle Ground by Jubilee. By using qualitative methods, researchers can gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon of interruption, especially in the context of discussions on social issues.

The data of this study is in the form of sentences uttered by male and female participants that indicate interruptions in the 'Middle Ground' by Jubilee's videos. The source data of this study is the 'Middle Ground' series on the Jubilee channel, which is available on the YouTube platform. Several episodes of the series were chosen as samples. The key instrument used in this study is a human instrument, the researcher, to observe the interruption that occurred between participants.

The researcher took several steps to collect data. First, the researcher watched the selected episodes of 'Middle Ground' by Jubilee, which had a similar topic about gender equality. Those episodes are *Can Feminists and Non-Feminists Agree On Gender Equality?*, *Men*

*and Women Seek to Understand Each Other*, and *Men's Rights vs Feminism: Is Toxic Masculinity Real?* Second, the researcher copied the video transcription that was available on the video. Then, the researcher checked the accuracy of the dialogue between participants and the video transcription. Finally, the researcher annotated the participant's utterances, which contained interruptions. In analyzing the data, the researcher used the theory of Beattie (1982) and Wardhaugh (1985) to identify the type and function of interruption. The researcher took several steps to analyze the data. First, the researcher identified and classified the utterances containing interruption between male and female participants based on the type of interruption category for each gender. Then, the researcher analyzed and classified the interruption function based on the group of interruption functions for each gender. Afterwards, the researcher compared the frequency of interruption types used by males and females and their functions. Finally, the researcher described the findings by comparing the following sample and providing examples of interruptions with the context and made a conclusion.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

The researcher found 30 utterances that contained interruptions between participants in the three selected episodes of *Middle Ground* by Jubilee, which discussed gender equality. Among the 29 data occurred in the videos, 18 were done by female participants, and 12 were done by male participants. The type of interruption most frequently used by female participants was Overlap Interruption, occurring eight times, while for male participants, the most used was Simple Interruption, which occurred six times. Additionally, the most used function by female participants in the use of Interruptions was to show agreement, while for male participants, the most used interruptions were to show disagreement. The data are presented in the tables below.

**Table 1. Type of Interruption Occurred between Male and Female Participants in Middle Ground by Jubilee.**

No.	Type of Interruption	Male Participants	Female Participants
1	Simple Interruption	6	7
2	Overlap Interruption	3	8
3	Butting-in Interruption	3	3
4	Silent Interruption	0	0
TOTAL		12	18

**Table 2. Table of Function of Interruption Occurred between Male and Female Participants in Middle Ground by Jubilee.**

No.	Function of Interruption	Male Participants	Female Participants
1	Agreement	2	9
2	Disagreement	6	3
3	Clarification	3	3
4	Correcting	1	3
TOTAL		12	18

### *Simple Interruption*

Simple interruption is the most used among the participants, and it appears 13 times. It occurs when the interrupter cuts off the speaker's sentence before the speaker finishes talking, making his/her sentence uncompleted, and the interrupter successfully takes the floor. Here are the examples of simple interruptions that occurred between male and female participants in Middle Ground by Jubilee.

**SS:** I think you considered it a privilege that women.. there are more women in the teaching profession, but you should also consider that other options weren't necessarily or historically available to women because they were considered to be more nurturing and-

**JT:** Still, women are choosing these majors and choosing their region of study whereas men are tending to choose higher paying majors. They're choosing more to go into STEM fields and such like that and reaping the financial benefits while women are also reaping their own happiness benefits of going into a field that they enjoy.

From the dialogue above, when SS is talking, JT suddenly interrupts SS before she finishes her sentence and successfully takes the floor. JT interrupts SS to show that he disagrees with what SS has said.

### *Overlap Interruption*

The female participants in the three selected videos of Middle Ground by Jubilee use overlap interruption the most. This occurs when the speaker and the interrupter speak at the same time, but the interrupter unsuccessfully takes the floor, so the speaker continues to finish his/her sentence. The example of overlap interruption that occurred in the videos is shown below.

**FH:** I think there's so many men who people will say, "Oh yeah, men are always strong or always this or always that." Well, tell that to a female UFC fighter. She'll kick their ass. You know what I'm saying? | *And they're also-*

**GB:** *Yeah, that's why I said, there's exceptions.*

**KR:** *Very much so.*

**FH:** But there are a lot of people who will say, "Oh, women are always hyper emotional." And then tell that to a bleeding heart guy who's just like the biggest, most passionate person. I mean, so I just think generalization is always problematic.

The male participant in the dialogue above is FH, and the female participants are GB and KR. The dialogue above shows that when FH is talking, GB and KR interrupt FH to show that they agree with FH's opinion, and they talk at the same time. But FH successfully continues his talk and finishes his utterances.

### ***Butting-in Interruption***

Butting-in interruption occurs when the speaker delivers his/her sentence, and the interrupter interrupts him/her. The interrupter fails to take the floor because the speaker ignores the interrupter and succeeds in keeping the floor. The following dialogue is an example of a butting-in interruption that occurred in the *Middle Ground* by Jubilee.

**BE:** I feel like you're conflating two different situations because you started off with saying random person or even women. So it feels like, okay, this is a woman that you don't have a bond with or any type of relationship with. And then you mentioned or in front of your best friend, you know, that's okay to cry. Well that woman could be your best friend. You know, like, so again-

**DR:** I don't think you can be friends with a woman, so-

**AL:** Because you don't see us as equal, as you said before.

The dialogue above shows that when BE talks, suddenly DR interrupts her to take the floor, showing his disagreement, but he fails because AL takes back the floor and continues her talks.

### **Discussions**

The identification of the type of interruption and the functions is based on Beattie's (1982) and Wardhaugh's (1985) theory. Beattie (1982) classifies interruption into four types: simple interruption, overlap interruption, butting-in interruption, and silent interruption. Based on the data of this research, 30 interruptions occurred between male and female participants in the three selected episodes of *Middle Ground* by Jubilee. There are 13 simple interruptions, 11 overlap interruptions, 6 butting-in interruptions, and there is no silent interruption that occurred between the participants.

Based on the analysis data above, female participants interrupted more often than male participants with eighteen interruptions compared to male participants who interrupted twelve. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research by

Tartory (2019) and Rossi (2022), which also found that women interrupt more often than men. Furthermore, female participants used interruptions to show agreement with the opinions of other participants or to respond to other participants' conversations, while male participants interrupted to show their disagreement with the opinions of other participants.

## CONCLUSION(S)

Based on the results of the study above, it can be concluded that the analysis of interruptions in three selected episodes with the same topic on *Middle Ground* by Jubilee found three types of interruptions used by male and female participants, namely simple interruption, overlap interruption, and butting-in interruption. There is no silent interruption was found among male and female participants. The data shows that women interrupt more than men. And the researcher's analysis of the function of interruptions shows that women use interruptions to show agreement with the opinions of other participants. In contrast, men use interruptions to show their disagreement.

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