Gossip as an Episode in Everyday Talk: A Descriptive Study

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Abstract

The Communicate Bond Belong (CBB) theory states that much everyday talk occurs in episodes. CBB theory specifies qualifying criteria for an episode. Frequently undertaking communication episodes is seen as realizing relational satisfaction. Gossip is a type of episode; literature specifies absent individual, evaluative content, and dimensions of context whose simultaneous occurrence transforms a social interaction into gossip. This study investigates the extent to which everyday talk occurs in episodes, and the extent to which gossip is an episode of social interaction. The study is conducted using mixed methods. Data collection adopts diary record as the tool. Data analysis is based on frequencies and interpretation. Findings show that evaluative content more than information about absent individuals describes gossip.

Keywords: Face-to-face; evaluative content;

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Person-A gifts Rs. 100 to person-B on his birthday. This is investment of resource on the part of person-A. Person-B uses this amount for setting-up a pop-corn stall. Person-A recommends the pop-corn stall to his friend who is the principal at a school in the neighbourhood. The school holds talks with person-B for setting-up a pop-corn counter on campus. This meeting allows person-B to connect and interact-- bond within the social network of person-A. The school officially appoints person-B to sell pop-corn on campus. Person-B is able to make a living. Person-B proposes partnership in the pop-corn business to person-A. Person-A instead asks for the commitment that Person-B take care of him during old age.

The amount of Rs. 100 given by person-A is an investment. It is a finite resource. Person-B being able to start a pop-corn stall with the amount is a benefit for person-B. Person-B offering an equal share in the business is an act of reciprocity, and if accepted is a benefit for person-A. The amount likely to realize from the reciprocity is many times more than the investment that is the reciprocation is inequitable albeit a positive one. Also, the partnership is reciprocation in kind as against the investment which is in cash. Person-B reciprocating with Rs. 100 would make their relation an exchange relation. After repaying the amount, persons A and B could terminate their relation. Person-B offering a partnership is an instance of seeking to make the relationship stable.

Person-B is aware first, of person-A's network of individuals from whom he can source more business; and second, person-B's recognition of his own strength of converting person-A's social network into a profitable enterprise. Both the social network and the ability to run an enterprise are resources; but, the benefit realizing from the resources is larger than the sum of parts. Also, the resource of person-A makes him valued. Putting-in a word within his social network by person-A is an action that is, it employs physical behaviours e.g. speech and/or mental behaviours e.g. persuasion. An action is a striving behaviour because it can open-up opportunities for person-B which cannot realize without person-A's act of recommendation. The social network and the entrepreneurial ability together are an instance of individuation or mutual recognition. Person-B choosing to commit to care during old age would be an instance of action based on attention to the need of person-A. If person-B does take-on care of person-A, then they would be in a relation that satiates person-A's need to belong. This relation would be a need satiating behaviour. A need satiating behaviour is immediately linked to belonging, as against a striving behaviour that is remotely linked to belonging. A variety of striving behaviours can realize the same relation of care for person-A; but, it is only a relation of care that will satiate the need for belonging. Stability, interdependence, and individuation are characteristics of a relationship. A relationship that has any/all of these characteristics is a communal relation. Investment of resources in a communal relation is founded on addressing the need of the other, and not on expectation of reciprocity. Investments made in communal relations tend to lead one/both relational partners to survive, flourish, procreate, and/or protect—to well-being. This is why a communal relation tends to be a need satiating behaviour. The fundamental human need for belonging is a need for forging communal relations that are a means to well-being. CBB theory holds that social interaction is a striving behaviour—a means for unleashing relationships that satiate the need for belonging.

The Communicate Bond Belong (CBB) theory looks at the relation of human communication and the human need to belong. The current paper focuses on describing communication episode; the paper does not investigate the efficacy of communication episode to the formation of relation, the exchange of resources, and so on. Similarly, explanation and/or analysis of outcomes of communication episode is beyond the scope of the current study. The paper is organized as follows-- Section-1 introduces the principles and propositions of CBB theory. Section-2 reviews literature and defines the concepts of episode, striving behaviour, and self-disclosure. Section-3 straddles the research questions, design, and findings of the study. This blurring of the boundaries between research design and analysis is aimed-at minimizing repetition and thereby easing comprehension of the study's design and findings. Section-4 presents the discussion.

Section-1. Introduction

Belonging is a fundamental need of humans (Hall & Davis, 2017). Belonging is realized through the formation and maintenance of close relations. Relations are formed through reciprocity that is the exchange of resources. An individual invests more or invests fewer resources in another based on the value that he/she sees as possible to realize in a given relation. Relations can be either exchange or communal in nature. The need to belong prompts individuals to form close relations. A close relation tends to be communal in nature. In a close that is a communal relation, the basis of investment of resources is the other individual's need as against balance of resources. The focus of CBB theory is on studying the role that human communication plays in the development and/or maintenance of communal relation that gratifies the need to belong.

Facilitating the formation and/or development of a relation into a communal relation is the role an episode plays in realizing belonging. An episode is a definite type of interpersonal communication. For it to facilitate relationship, an episode must be a striving behaviour. (Hall & Davis, 2017)list four propositions (3A-D) for an episode to be a striving behaviour-- An episode must yield physiological and/or psychological benefits for communication actors (3A); The episode must lead to long-term relational bonding between communication actors (3B); A reduction in undertaking striving behaviours that is, fewer instances of undertaking communication episodes purely for psychological and/or physiological benefits is a sign of the need to belong been satiated (3C); and When an episode is seen to function as a striving behaviour that is when an episode is seen as realizing benefits that satiate the need to belong, the communication actor reduces experimenting with alternate episodes (3D). I interpret 3D as incidence of a recurring pattern of a specific episode in interactions. Given the emphasis on the role of episode as a striving behaviour, the next section reviews the concepts of episode, striving behaviour, and of self-disclosure as an episode.

Section-2. Theoretical Framework and Review of Literature

2.1. Episode

The need for belonging prompts everyday talk (Hall & Davis, 2017). But even as everyday talk is directly prompted by the need for belonging, everyday talk does not directly satiate the need for belonging. Instead, everyday talk responds to the prompt from the need for belonging with action that leads to bonding and/or relationship formation or development.

The actions within everyday talk are assortments of physical and/or mental behaviours that communication actors choose to undertake together on incumbent information. The result of this interaction of information and action is the nature of content that realizes. CBB theory categorizes this nature of information into supragenre. The superficial, informal, task or instrumental, deep, and relational are the five broad categories or the supragenre of everyday talk. A supragenre classifies everyday talk by the nature of content. A supragenre may be created within two or more episodes, but a particular episode tends to carry content only of the specific nature. The supragenre specifies the nature of content, and an episode is the type of interaction that realizes this nature of content; that is, an episode sees content of interaction to be of a certain and not some other nature, and the realization of this nature of content tends to be contingent upon application of some and not some other actions. This leads me to operationalizing the episode. An episode is content of a certain nature realized from action/s undertaken on information by communication actors. This nature of information is co-created for a purpose within daily social interaction. Greater the frequency of such episodes, greater the relational satisfaction for communication actors. Bonding is a form that relational satisfaction takes. Developing a social network, and interaction with persons within this network are measures of bonding.

2.2. Striving Behaviour

Everyday talk realizes bonding which episode leads to, as well; episode yields physiological and/or psychological benefit which striving behaviour does, too; but striving behaviour leads to relationship which neither everyday talk nor episode can. And only relationship realizes belonging (Hall & Davis, 2017). Having said this, incidence of a physiological and/or psychological benefit is important because it is antecedent to the formation of a relationship. If the benefit/s realized is formative for exchange relations, then the specific episode may not evolve into a striving behaviour, because communal rather than exchange relations are capable of realizing belonging. And, the focus of CBB theory is on looking at the efficacy of communication for realizing belonging.

A striving behaviour is an action (Hall & Davis, 2017). An action is the application of a mental behaviour, a physical behaviour, or a combination of mental and physical behaviours in a communication situation. Action may realize benefits that go on to forging exchange relations. The feature of action as striving behaviour is that it realizes something that strengthens the relation. This strength of a relation is measured through the very characteristics of a relation--
1. Stability
2. Interdependence and/or
3. Individuation that is mutual recognition.
When any/all of these characteristics come to describe a relation, the relation becomes a communal relation. A measure of communal relation is that here investments in the relational partner are made on the basis of his need and not on the potential of reciprocity. This makes the striving behaviour valued. This strengthening of relation is the role of striving behaviour in indirectly realizing belonging. CBB theory sees social interaction as a striving behaviour that feeds relationships which in turn satiate the need to belong. Not all social interaction is striving behaviour. This brings me to identifying measures of episode that is a striving behaviour. A striving behaviour--
1. Is an action (application of mental and/or physical behaviours)
2. Yields benefit (other than physiological / psychological)
3. Realizes bonding between interaction partners over a long period of time
4. Occurs in a recurring pattern through particular episode/s.

2.3. Gossip

How widespread is gossip in daily interaction? The answer varies with how gossip is defined. But, there is consensus in literature that gossip takes-up more than a trivial share of conversation time. (Dunbar, Marriott, & Duncan, 1997)find that two-thirds of the conversation time includes talk about absent persons; (Emler, 1994)finds that about seventy per cent of conversation time involved gossip; (Slade, 1997)reports that about a seventh or about fourteen per cent of coffee break time in workplace is used-up by negative gossip. A reasoning for prevalence of gossip is that persons who do not show at least a minimum interest in gossip tend to be socially marginalized. (Dunbar, Marriott, & Duncan, 1997) (Bergmann, 1993) (Eggins & Slade, 1997) (Gluckman, 1963) The extent to which gossip is part of everyday talk is contestable, but it appears that gossip is a common type of everyday talk. This leads to the need for describing gossip.

(Foster, 2004)describes gossip as idle talk. (Dunbar R. , 1994)elaborates idle talk as conversation about social and personal topics. The content of such a conversation tends to be information about absent third party/s. (Medini & Rosenberg, 1976)The defining feature of gossip is the blurring of the line between the private and public life. (Goffman, 1959) Gossip is the window through which one sees and another shows "how the third lives life behind the social mask". (Medini & Rosenberg, 1976) It is to be noted that the content of gossip here is merely a passing-on of information or repetition of news about a third party, and this type of gossip is called gossip for informational purposes. (Tannen, 1990) (Bergmann, 1993) (Besnier, 1989) So, the content of gossip is idle talk that exchanges social and personal information about an absent individual.

Gossip among adolescents tends to carry both positive and negative content (Mettetal, 1982)while the gossip content of younger children tends to be largely negative. (Gottman & Mettetal , 1986) The reasoning is that with maturity, individuals' gossip takes-on a more subtle form. So, being value-laden is a characteristic of content of gossip, although it can be either positive or negative. (Noon & Del-Bridge, 1993) The importance of positive gossip is that it is a way for individuals to move popular opinion in the desired direction and thereby to contribute to consolidation of power within the group. (Burt & Knez, 1995) (Foster, 2004)provides reasons that make evaluation positive/negative essential to the characterization of gossip. Gossip is evaluative because of the knowledge histories that gossiping individuals share in common and because of the cultural norms that the information of gossip is seen as compatible or inconsistent with. This is why the evaluative or value-laden information is a key feature of content of gossip.

Evaluative content about an absent individual makes gossip violate norms of privacy.. (Rosnow, 2001) (Bok, 1983)This awareness may underlie actors' taking steps to guard themselves against misinformation. (Harrington & Bielby , 1995) This attempt at safeguarding themselves against misinformation takes the form of gossip participants actively looking-out for confirmatory indicators that is something to establish credibility of the source of information. In face-to-face communication with known persons, the likelihood of misinformation is sought to be minimized through such confirmatory indicators, as the speaker's status, expertise, interpersonal connections, direct access to information etc. When using electronic media platforms, communication actors compensate for these confirmatory indicators by placing emphasis on explicit statement of the identity of sources that allows receivers to independently verify information. (Harrington & Bielby , 1995) This appears to particularly be the case when content of gossip is claimed to have been gathered covertly, anonymously, or vicariously. (Blumberg, 1972)When value-laden content is seen as negative, it prompts safeguards against misinformation. The literature reviewed leads me to interpret that individuals are unsuspecting of positive gossip. Assuming this is the case, I propose the following hypothesis-- H. Positive gossip more efficiently realizes coherence within the group.

In addition to purpose and information value as variables key to description of gossip, (Gilmore, 1978) context or setting or the congeniality of conditions is important for gossip (Yerkovich, 1977) (Hannerz, 1967) (Rosnow, 2001) (Abrahams, 1970)to qualify as a communication episode. (Hall & Davis, 2017)Intimacy, gusto, surprise, and revelation characterize the atmosphere in which gossip occurs. (Spacks, 1982)

(Foster, 2004)draws on this literature to arrive at the definition of gossip--

"In a context of congeniality, gossip is the exchange of personal information (positive or negative) in an evaluative way (positive or negative) about absent third parties".

I see this definition to be consistent with the variables that make for gossip—

purpose, information value, intensity, context, agent, and status of target. (Gilmore, 1978)

For the same reason, I adopt the definition of gossip provided by Foster (2004). Given the descriptive focus of the current study, I investigate gossip for purpose, information value, and context variables. This leads to the research question--

RQ-A. To what extent is everyday talk characteristically gossip?

What social functions does gossip perform? (Stirling, 1956)identifies four social functions—intimacy, information, influence, and entertainment. CBB theory concerns itself with the human need for belonging, and the role of social interaction in realizing this belonging for an individual. (Hall & Davis, 2017)Therefore, I restrict review of literature to the social function of intimacy. Gossip for intimacy function can operate at either the dyadic or the group level. (Foster, 2004)These interchanges tend to share group norms which create boundaries of what makes (not) one a member of the group. The very act of disclosing is expressing confidence in the receiver. (Hannerz, 1967) (Derlega & Chaikin, 1977)This sharing firms-up the relation. Evaluative gossip tends less often to occur between strangers and/or casual acquaintances precisely because making sense of gossip information entails looking at this information in the context of shared knowledge histories, and cultural norms. (Abrahams, 1970) (Blumberg, 1972) (Noon & Del-Bridge, 1993) A knowledge history is a categorized reservoir of abstractions distilled from evaluations of discrete events. (Yerkovich, 1977)The shared knowledge histories and cultural norms make gossip inaccessible to outsiders precisely because shared knowledge histories and norms make conversations an exchange of jargon particularly in case of professional networks. (Gluckman, 1963) (Hall & Davis, 2017)sees gossip as occurring among individuals who are at the early stage of a relationship. (Hall & Davis, 2017)similarly expects gossip to occur at the level of group rather than at the level of a dyad.

While it is possible to talk about gossip for the various social functions it performs, it may be fair to note that the one critical function underlying all these social functions of gossip is that of ensuring survival. (Foster, 2004) Researchers conjecture that in the course of evolution, gossip must have been selected for the purpose of ensuring survival because it better than any other means provided the news and evaluations of news needed for survival. (Barkow, 1992) Grooming is used in dyads for realizing survival; but, gossip is needed for realizing socialization from one (some) to many within a large group. (Dunbar R. I., 1992)A group implies more than two individuals and this comes with the need for coherence of the group through sharing of organized bodies of knowledge histories of the group. It is through language that humans transmit the pre-existing knowledge histories to new entrants. These knowledge histories are not mere objective facts; rather, these are abstractions distilled from facts of events that have been cast through the norms of the group, and which become points of reference for future action. These norms of groups serve as the formula for deducing abstractions. This is to say that the abstractions from even the same event tends to be different across groups precisely because norms differ and therefore their evaluations of events are different from any others'. It is this need for maintaining consistency of evaluations of newer phenomena for their implications within the group that grooming is needed. Gossip is thought to more efficiently realize transfer of knowledge histories and cultural norms particularly when size of group increases which exponentially increases the amount of social information that needs to be tracked. (Dunbar R. , 1994) (Dunbar R. I., 1992) So, the essential difference between grooming and gossip is whether communication actors exist as a dyad or a mass. The outcome of this socialization for members is bonding (Foster, 2004)and, this links gossip back to CBB theory. (Hall & Davis, 2017)

(Tannen, 1990) says gossip is exchange of information. (Noon & Del-Bridge, 1993)says gossip moves public opinion. (Foster, 2004)says norms and histories underlie evaluation. This leads to the following research questions--

RQ-B. In what context/s does evaluative gossip occur between not close interaction partners?

RQ-C. Independent of context, to what extent is evaluative gossip undertaken between close relations and between not close

relations?

RQ-D. Which of the conditions of congeniality most characterize settings that favour occurrence of evaluative gossip?

Section-3. Research Design

As stated earlier, this work is part of a larger study of communication episodes in everyday talk. For comparing findings from each of these episodes, it is important that there be methodological consistency. The design decisions presented below are similar to the ones taken for studying self-disclosure as a communication episode. (Surana, Self-disclosure as an Episode in Everyday Talk-- A Descriptive Study (Unpublished), 2020A; Surana, Social Curiosity as an Episode in Everyday Talk-- A Descriptive Study (Unpublished), 2020B)

Social anthropology studies evolution of social groups in the broadest sense; ethnography studies smaller groups and/or communities; gossip is the sharing of cultural norms and knowledge. Given the similarities, it is logical to choose from methods for data collection that have been successfully used by social anthropology and ethnography. (Foster, 2004) Participant observation was used by the early researchers. These researchers used field notes as the tool for collecting data. Field notes is where the researcher is in close proximity to the time and place of where the events occur; he immerses himself in the culture of the study group for observing and recording events. This combination of method and tool yields rich primary data but is time consuming. An alternative is video and audio recordings of subjects. While it eases the task of recording events, (Eder & Enke, 1991; Planalp, 1993) (Mettetal, 1982)the challenge of time remains. Additionally, it has been found to even if marginally make subjects less natural in their conversations. The researcher must invest the time needed for becoming accepted within the group to be studied. (Nicolopoulou, 1997)Eavesdropping is an alternate method used by researchers to preserve the spontaneity of conversations and of interpersonal relationships. (Levin & Arluke, 1987) (Dunbar, Marriott, & Duncan, 1997) (McCormick & McCormick, 1992)eavesdropped on Emails for studying incidence of gossip. While eavesdropping does preserve authenticity of data, it clearly poses ethical questions.

Participant observation as method for data collection is efficacious, but eavesdropping and video-audio recording of conversations is not. Diary records is thought to be a suitable alternative for gathering qualitative data of social interactions. (Duke, 2012) It makes the participant a co-researcher in that the participant himself creates the diary record of his social interactions. An advantage of the diary record is that it addresses the challenge of time commitment that the researcher needs to make for gathering data. The diary record maintained by the diarist is the simultaneous gathering of rich data as events unfold, which is to say that there is minimization of loss of richness of data because the subject is the observer and knows what aspect of data must not be missed for this data to be meaningful. (Duke, 2012)has proved useful in confirming the issues I have anticipated and/or encountered in enrolling participants for the study. In adopting participant observation and diary record, I acknowledge the challenge of the study's need for records of social interactions that are not restricted to the work context.

The need to note incidence of content of a certain nature and of frequency lead me to adopting the quantitative technique to data collection and analysis. The survey questionnaire as a data collection tool assumes the respondent to be adequately aware of his use of information as driven by interest in the phenomenon as such, or by something about the person/s within the phenomenon. Interview as tool for collection of data assumes recall. It has to be one-on-one and conducted by the researcher. The costs of time and effort out-weigh the quality of data that is expected to be generated because these interviews would require the respondent to share details of their conversations; a face-to-face situation like interview can cause respondents to withhold details. Diary record has its weaknesses but has been an established tool for collecting conversation data, particularly over an extended period of time. Tracking frequency of interactions implies data collected over an extended period of time. For these reasons, I adopt diary record as the tool for data collection.

I established contact with persons within my professional network to see if they would consent to being respondents for the study. I provided prospective respondents with a brief of the study, assured confidentiality, shared a specimen diary entry, and

even solicited suggestions on preferred alternatives to a physical diary entry. But, enrolling respondents was a failed attempt. In the meantime, I started maintaining a diary record of my own conversations. At this stage, there are no empirical works known to the researcher that provide a ready research design to adopt. The series of current papers will show the efficacy of the design decisions made for future work to carry forward and/or to modify. Data in the form of diary records has a low success rate, and to collect such data at this stage could lead to the data getting wasted if data analysis shows-up flaw/s at any stage of the study's design. The current paper is based on the twelve conversations that formed the diary entries over a seven days' period. A key weakness of the study because of the small data-set is that findings from the study will not be robust enough for arriving at conclusions. So, I will end this study with discussion of findings and scope for future research.

List of Variables and Associated Measures

Variables	Measures
Context	
	Intimacy [Frequency {closeness (Surana, 2020A)]
	Gusto [enthusiasm]
	Revelation [disclosure of new information]
	Surprise
Purpose	
	Coherence [persuasion for a change of position on an issue]
Information value	
	Personal
	Knowledge history [inferences]
	Cultural norms
Information [topic]	
	Absent individual

3.1. Operational Definition

Intimacy has to be operationalized, and this takes me to literature on self-disclosure. I borrow the operationalization of intimacy from (Surana, Self-disclosure as an Episode in Everyday Talk-- A Descriptive Study (Unpublished), 2020A). Closeness is the emotional component of the hearer's response towards the disclosing individual that is, liking for the discloser. This emotional response is influenced by the hearer's perception of appropriateness of content of self-disclosure. When content of self-disclosure is seen as appropriate, increases in amount of self-disclosure leads to increases in closeness that is liking for the discloser. Perceived appropriateness of content is related to setting. Face-to-face that is private setting makes for appropriateness of intimate self-information. So, sharing of intimate information with the interaction partner in a face-to-face setting makes for appropriateness of content of communication. increases in sharing of intimate content in private setting is expected to lead to increase in liking which is a latent measure of closeness. Increases in frequency of self-disclosure is positively related to familiarity; so, increase in frequency of intimate content in private setting should increase closeness. This leads me to using face-to-face setting as a measure of intimacy dimension of context.

3.2. Data

I define episode as content of a certain nature realized from action/s undertaken on information by communication actors. This nature of information is co-created for a purpose within daily social interaction. Greater the frequency of such episodes, greater the relational satisfaction for communication actors. (Surana, Self-disclosure as an Episode in Everyday Talk-- A Descriptive Study (Unpublished), 2020A) The first task is to find-out the extent to which conversations fulfill the conditions of a communication episode including occurring in daily social interaction, being purposeful, and been co-created by communication actors. (Hall & Davis, 2017)

Code	Daily Social Interaction	Purposeful	Co-created
1A	1	1	1
1B	0	1	0
2A	1	0	1
3A	1	1	1
3B	1	1	1
5A	1	0	0
5B	1	1	1
5C	1	1	1
5D	1	1	1
6A	1	1	0
7A	1	0	1
7B	1	0	0

Each of the twelve conversations fulfills at least one of the three conditions to qualify as episode. Daily social interaction has a frequency of 91.66 per cent, while both purposefulness and co-construction of conversation have a frequency of 66.66 per cent. I now look at data for answering the research questions raised by the study.

RQ-A. To what extent is content of everyday talk characteristically gossip?

Five (5) 41.66 per cent of the twelve conversations talk about an absent individual;
four (4) 80.00 per cent of these five conversations possess the knowledge histories' dimension;
four (4) 80.00 per cent of these five conversations possess the cultural norms' dimension; and,
three (3) 60.00 per cent of these five conversations possess both the knowledge histories and cultural norms dimensions.
The finding: 25.00 per cent of all everyday talk is about absent individuals seen through the lens of knowledge histories and cultural norms.

RQ-B.. In what context/s does evaluative gossip occur between not close interaction partners?

Closeness has been operationalized as frequent sharing of intimate content in face-to-face setting with the same interaction partner. (Surana, 2020A)Data shows that five (5) 41.66 per cent of the conversations fulfill the closeness criterion. So, the focus of analysis for answering RQ- B are the remaining seven (7) 58.33 per cent of the conversations.

Each of these seven conversations is undertaken with a different interaction partner.

All these seven (7) 100.00 per cent conversations occur in face-to-face setting.

So, all these seven (7) conversations are identical in terms of frequency and setting. Given this, data shows the following—

Two (2) 28.57 per cent of the seven conversations talk about an absent individual.

One (1) 50.00 per cent of these two conversations possesses the dimensions both of knowledge histories and cultural norms when talking about the absent individual.

Knowledge histories dimension characterizes two (2) 100.00 per cent of the conversations where talk concerns an absent individual.

Two (2) 100.00 per cent of these conversations that talk about an absent individual and possess either/both dimension of evaluation of information, possess the face-to-face setting and revelation dimensions of context.

The finding: 28.57 per cent of everyday talk with not close interaction partners is revelation of information about absent individuals in face-to-face settings.

RQ-C. Independent of context, to what extent is evaluative gossip undertaken between close relations and between not close relations?

C1. Three (3) 60.00 per cent of the five conversations between close interaction partners talk about an absent individual.

All the three (3) 100.00 per cent of these conversations possess either/both dimensions of information value (knowledge histories; cultural norms).

Two (2) 66.66 per cent of the three conversations possess both the knowledge histories and cultural norms dimensions.

When the condition of target of conversation (absent individual) is relaxed, all the five (5) 100.00 per cent of the conversations possess either/both dimensions of information value.

The finding: 40.00 per cent of everyday talk with close interaction partners is evaluative gossip.

C2. Two (2) of the seven (7) 28.57 per cent conversations with not close interaction partners talk about an absent individual.

Two (2) 100.00 per cent of these conversations possess either/both dimensions of information value.

One (1) 14.28 per cent of the seven conversations possesses both the knowledge histories and cultural norms' dimensions.

When the condition of target of conversation (absent individual) is relaxed, six (6) 85.71 per cent of the seven conversations possess either/both dimensions of information value.

The finding: 14.28 per cent of conversations with not close individuals is evaluative gossip.

 RQ-D. Which of the conditions of congeniality most characterize settings that favour occurrence of evaluative gossip?

D1. Twelve (12) 100.00 per cent of the conversations occur in face-to-face settings.

Six (6) 50.00 of these conversations disclose information to the interaction partner.

Three (3) 25.00 per cent of the conversations possess the dimension of enthusiasm (gusto).

Two (2) 16.66 per cent of the conversations possess the dimension of surprise.

Two (2) 16.66 per cent of the conversations possess all the four dimensions of context (2A 5D).

Five (5) 41.66 per cent of the conversations possess only the intimacy dimension of context (3A5A 5C 6A 7A).

D2. Eight (8) 66.66 per cent of the conversations possess the knowledge dimension of evaluative content.

Nine (9) 75.00 per cent of the conversations possess the dimension of cultural norms.

Six (6) 50.00 per cent of the conversations possess both the knowledge histories and cultural norms dimensions of evaluative content (2A 5D 1B 3B 5B 7A).

Two (2) 33.33 per cent of these six (6) conversations possess all the four dimensions of context.

D3. Three (3) 25.00 per cent of the twelve conversations exchange personal information and focus conversation on an absent individual.

Six (6) 50.00 per cent conversations exchange personal information.

Five (5) 41.66 per cent conversations talk about an absent individual.

Three (3) 25.00 per cent of the twelve conversations talk about an absent individual, and use knowledge histories and cultural norms (2A 5B 5D).

Two (2) 66.66 per cent of these three conversations possess all the four (4) dimensions of context (5D 2A).

Realizing group coherence is the purpose in two (2) 16.66 per cent of the twelve conversations.

Realizing group coherence is the purpose of zero (0) 00.00 per cent of the conversations that fulfill the criteria of context, information, and information value.

The findings: 41.33 per cent of all everyday talk is evaluative gossip.

100.00 per cent of evaluative gossip occurs in face-to-face settings.

40.00 per cent of evaluative gossip possesses all the four dimensions of context.

60.00 per cent of evaluative gossip possesses only the face-to-face dimension of context.

Section-4. Discussion

Going by the definition of gossip, (Foster, 2004)   this study finds that 25.00 per cent of all everyday talk is evaluative gossip. This finding is inconsistent with (Dunbar, Marriott, & Duncan, 1997) (Emler, 1994). Specifically, 40.00 per cent of everyday talk with close interaction partners is evaluative gossip; and 14.28 per cent of conversations with not close individuals is evaluative gossip. These numbers suggest that the estimate of incidence of gossip is exaggerated in literature; but these findings must be treated with caution because the data size of the current study is small and the findings must be validated by future research. The findings are inconsistent with CBB theory which sees gossip first, as occurring at the early stage of relationship; and second, as more often undertaken with a mass than within a dyad. (Hall & Davis, 2017)

In 28.57 per cent of everyday talk, the not close interaction partners reveal information about absent individuals in face-to-face settings. In 40.00 per cent of everyday talk, the close interaction partners reveal information about absent individuals in face-to-face settings. Both close and not close communication actors evaluate information in 100.00 per cent of these cases. There is a relation among face-to-face setting, absent individual as target of conversation, and evaluative content; and, this relation is unaffected by the relationship between individuals as communication actors. Further investigation is required to describe the nature and direction of relation among these variables.

41.33 per cent of all everyday talk is evaluative gossip. 100.00 per cent of evaluative gossip occurs in face-to-face settings. 40.00 per cent of evaluative gossip possesses all the four dimensions of context. 60.00 per cent of evaluative gossip possesses only the face-to-face dimension of context. So, being face-to-face is the essential condition of context for evaluative gossip. Future research must investigate the nature and direction of relation between evaluative gossip and face-to-face setting.

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