

# Chairing meetings: turn and topic control in development communication in rural Zanzibar

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First published as:

Hanak, Iirmi. 1998. *Chairing meetings: turn and topic control in development communication in rural Zanzibar*. In: *Discourse and Society*, Amsterdam, No 1/1998. (33-56)

## **Abstract:**

This paper presents a linguistic analysis of the roles and verbal contributions of chairwomen in two agricultural co-operatives in rural Zanzibar. Discourse analysis with a focus on realisations of politeness and powerless speech style is used to study two communicative events. In the first co-operative, the chairwoman controls the meeting through the allocation of turns and topics, as well as the use of her position and its privileges to persuade others of her opinion. In this context, the use of passive voice, subjunctive forms, hedges, the choice of pronouns and address forms is of specific interest to us. In the second co-operative, an Agricultural

Extension Officer present in the meeting interferes, practically taking over the task of chairing the meeting. While the chairwoman is forced to defend her position, her irritation and uncertainty are expressed in contributions that contain several characteristics of a powerless speech style. At the same time, her reply to the Extension Officer's intrusion shows commitment and emphasis on a point that is crucial to her. In Meeting Two presequences, false starts, changes in the word order, hedges, direct speech, choice of tense and address forms are particularly relevant.

## **Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

With the strong commitment to institution-building in concepts of human development, organizational communication in the context of development co-operation presently receives increased attention. Focusing on interpersonal communication, the research project "Communication and Development" at the Institute of African Studies of the University of Vienna carried out respective field research within three different development networks in East Africa.<sup>2</sup> Research results on co-operation and negotiation in organizational networks are used to develop a method of supportive evaluation that enables organizations to deal with conflicts and problems before they become pressing and pervasive.

The role of chairpersons in co-operative meetings includes tasks such as leading discussions and facilitating decision-making by controlling turns and topics. Two co-operative meetings were tape-recorded and transliterated to gain insights about interpersonal communication at grass-root level of an organizational network. Both co-operatives were part of the wider network of the Comprehensive Agricultural Extension Service which was at the time of the research a division of the Ministry of Agriculture in Zanzibar.

Interpersonal communication between participants in development networks reflects the state of relations between development workers, co-operative leaders and ordinary members. As in other organizational or institutional contexts, asymmetry and power differences between interactants call for particular consideration. Issues of turn and topic control are present throughout the meetings, but are most transparent in the introductory parts or when major changes in topics occur.

## **Discourse and development**

Asymmetry of relations and power differences are important issues in discourse on development. Modifications in terminology, symbols and images used in development co-operation reflect important changes in attitude. Whatever was termed "development aid" decades ago is now called "development co-operation", and one of its central concepts is

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Walter Schicho and Karl Thomanek for their help and comments on an earlier version of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> The research project "Communication and Development" was funded by the Austrian Science Foundation.

mutual respect and equality. Declarations of principles of public or private development organizations in the last decade refer to participation and partnership as guiding ideals. Special attention is directed to the relations between development workers and beneficiaries of development organizations. Fair co-operation between local and European development organizations is another important concern. After a long history of European colonialism and patronising, European development organizations presently make efforts to cover up their dominant position in North-South relations (which are not South-North relations after all). Development agencies adopt the values of partnership and fair co-operation and carefully present this image through their internal and external communications. Aspects of a mutual "give and take" are emphasised over one-sided impositions of "aid". Concepts of "empowerment", "local control" and "self-management" are propagated alongside participation, and the respective terminology is used by all types of development organizations from the supra-national to the grass-root level. The use of the same or similar key words, however, does not mean that the same meanings are shared by all these different organizations. Often key words and / or meanings attributed to them vary considerably even within one organization: Management might have a very different idea of participation than fieldworkers or beneficiaries have (Nelson and Wright 1995:7). For example, field staff lectured in a top-down manner on how to set up participatory processes are likely to adopt a teacher-student relationship towards beneficiaries at the village level (Nelson and Wright 1995:13).

On closer analysis, communicative events in the context of development work rarely conform to the image of partnership and participation. Interpersonal communication in the context of development is usually of an asymmetric nature. It reflects and enhances dominance in the crucial relations of development work (Macdonalds 1994:17): between development workers and beneficiaries, South and North, women and men, organizational management and development workers, local authorities and marginalised groups, etc.

## Language and Power

Following Fairclough we conceptualise power both "*in terms of asymmetries between participants in discourse events, and in terms of unequal capacity to control how texts are produced, distributed and consumed in particular socio-cultural contexts.* (1995:1)" We find that participants in meetings have different positions and interests to defend and that they also dispose of different means to negotiate their points. Linguistic features relevant to the exercise of power through language are found at various language levels and include the following aspects:

### *Low-power and high-power styles*

O'Barr identified particular linguistic features as low-power realisations through empirical research at an American courtroom (cf. Lind and O'Barr 1979:71). He found that these forms were typically used by speakers of low status, but absent in the speech of persons with relatively high social power. Lakoff had earlier identified some of these low power forms as features of powerless or female speech; however, her claims had not been supported by empirical data (Lakoff 1975:14). The low- power forms identified by O'Barr were:

1. Hedges: I *sort of* liked it.
2. Intensifiers: I *really* liked it.
3. Tag questions of or declaratives with rising intonation: "I liked it, *didn't I*" "I liked it?"
4. Hesitation: "I ... *uh* ... liked it"
5. Deictic phrases: "That man *over there* liked it."
6. Polite forms: "*Yes sir*, I liked it." (quoted from Ng and Bradac 1993:19)

The impression that low-power speech forms make on the listener has been a main concern of studies on power and language. Lakoff had argued that women face a double-bind situation in interaction because of the following reasons: If women use powerless speech style, they are evaluated as weak or incompetent speakers; however, if they make use of a powerful speech style, they are again negatively evaluated as not feminine. Although the problem of assessing precisely which impression speech styles make on hearers is still a matter of debate, recent research suggests that ratings are

accorded independent of the communicators gender (cf. Ng and Bradac 1993:27): High power-style results in higher ratings of communicator competence, status, dynamism and attractiveness, low power-style in respective negative evaluations.

Objective linguistic differences in women's or men's speech have been shown to be valid only in limited domains, despite the widespread stereotypes on how women or men talk (cf. Ng and Bradac 1993:48, Cameron 1993:42 ff.). While the use of low- power style in speech is not limited to women, studies focusing on speakers' success in institutional communication have shown linguistic discrimination along the lines of gender and social class (cf. Wodak 1985:190). The communicative problems socially disadvantaged, female or young speakers face when defending their interests in institutional and organizational contexts need serious consideration in the context of development work, as discrimination affects mostly those who constitute priority target groups in present development theory (e.g. the poor, women, youth).

While the powerful speech style referred to by O'Barr is characterised by the absence of low power forms, the author does not consider specific characteristics of high-power forms. Linguistic forms associated with the exercise of power include control of turn and topic, modality and particular speech acts.

*Modality*: denotes a range of devices that concern a speaker's attitude towards their utterances. These attitudes concern the validity, predictability, desirability, obligation or permission expressed in an utterance (Fowler 1985:72). Expressions of obligation and permission are obviously linked to the exercise of power through language usage. Statements about the validity, predictability and desirability frequently imply claims of authority. Modality used to signal deference, lack of confidence and acquiescence includes the forms listed by O'Barr as markers of a powerless style.

*Control of turns and topic*: The task of chairing meetings consists primarily in preparing an agenda and in leading the discussion. This role provides chairpersons with control of topics and turns, which is a major instrument for exercising power in conversation (Fowler 1985:74). We expect that the process of allocating turns and topics can be related to power differences among the participants, and that power relations are reflected in language use. Turn-taking by speakers either follows various turn-taking rules (they

are allocated a turn, or take their turn because of their role in interaction), or by violating these rules, i.e. by interrupting others.

*Casting* is about allocating roles to interaction partners. By asking others directly or indirectly to participate in a particular way in conversation (e.g. to make a contribution or to listen carefully), speakers cast roles on other interactants. One possible response to casting is mirroring, i.e. complying to the assigned role. Alternatively, speakers also refuse certain roles or negotiate them with their partner (Ng and Bradac 1993:65). A specific form of casting is topical casting. Speakers introduce topics that are either accepted, negotiated or rejected by others.

*Presequences* are utterances that precede the intended topic. Speakers use presequences as signals that prepare and facilitate turn-taking. Discourse markers can function as a particular form of presequences (Schiffrin 1987:31).

*Speech acts*: at the level of achieving actions through utterances, speech acts relevant to the exercise of power found in the two meetings include assertions, requests, directives, and questions. For realising these speech acts, considerable variability in phrasing is possible. As Fowler (1995:73) notes, such variations are of utmost importance for the articulation of power relationships.

Speech acts associated with the exercise of power, a prominent example being directives, have also received considerable attention in studies on politeness.

## **Politeness**

Brown and Levinson (1987:65) developed the notion of face-threatening acts (FTAs) to describe verbal and non-verbal communications running counter to the face wants of communicators. This framework enables them to describe and analyse a wide range linguistic features relevant to politeness. To denote the extent to which an utterance is considered polite in comparison to another, Brown and Levinson (1987:74) use the term weightiness of a FTA. They describe numerous strategies speakers employ to carry out FTAs, and group them into four superstrategies. The perception of the degree of politeness of a particular (super)strategy may differ with changing cultural background.

According to Brown and Levinson, the degree of politeness (weightiness of an FTA) depends on the social distance between speaker and hearer, the

relative power of the interactants, and on the ranking of the imposition. We therefore expect that powerful interactants can afford to make use of less "weighty" FTAs, in other words, to be less polite. While this expectation does not contain assumptions about the actual degree of politeness of particular speakers, it assumes that a person's utterances will be evaluated in a particular way.

Fairclough (1995:23) draws further attention to the interrelation of power and politeness by arguing that pragmatic politeness conventions are assumptions about social relationships underlying interactional practises that *"are quite generally naturalised, and people are generally unaware of them and how they are subjected by/to them."* To "denaturalise" and question assumptions that reproduce social relations of domination is the objective of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995:27).

Polite speech forms have at times been equated to powerless realisations of speech (e.g. by O'Barr who lists polite forms as part of powerless speech forms, see quotation above). As polite forms occur both with powerful and powerless speech styles, it is not possible to reduce polite forms to this category.

The linguistic forms we found relevant to the expression of politeness in the context of the two co-operative meetings have been described by Brown and Levinson (1987) for other languages: forms associated with directives and requests, such as imperative and subjunctive (94-101, 173-4), address forms (107-10), choice of pronouns <e.g. first person plural instead of second person singular or plural> (198-204), hedges (145-72), passive voice (194-7).

Speech acts such as requests, directives and questions mentioned above are discussed by Brown and Levinson in their extensive account of speech acts relevant to politeness (1987:65-68). To illustrate the range of possibilities speakers have when realising speech acts, Fowler mentions the example of the *"finely discriminated forms of making an request, graded according to degrees and nuances of politeness of peremptoriness"* (1985:73).

The universality of politeness phenomena as postulated in Brown and Levinson's framework of analysis has been questioned with evidence from other languages. (e.g. in regard to Swahili language see Yahya-Othman 1994:143 ff.)

While there is no need to assume that linguistic forms found relevant to the exercise of power through language or politeness phenomena in other

languages have the same importance in Swahili, they provide a useful base to discuss evidence from examples.

**Assumptions:**

- In contrast to the rhetoric of partnership and participation, communication in the context of development co-operation is characterised by asymmetry and hierarchies. Participants of communicative events in development networks are aware of power relations when interacting in meetings, seminars, etc. Speakers use various strategies to establish, maintain and confirm power relations.
- Undeclared hierarchies and authoritarian behaviour interferes with the objectives of development work.

**Organizational background**

The Comprehensive Agricultural Extension Services in the Ministry of Agriculture in Zanzibar was set up by a common project of the Zanzibar government, UNDP and FAO. Its organizational set-up consists of pre-existing ministerial structures that were reorganized and adjusted to the requirements of the programme.

At the village level, there are 97 Extension Units (comprising 500-800 households in one or several villages). Activities in each unit are coordinated by Block Extension Officers employed by the Extension Service. Block Extension Officers work with individual farmers or co-operatives. Co-operatives are an established and accepted form of farmers' associations in the village. In recent years, activities of co-operatives have changed in line with evolving economic constraints and opportunities. In search of new markets in a liberalized economy, some farmers have turned away from governmental structures and agents. For the Block Extension Officer, co-operatives remain an important forum for passing on information and services to greater numbers of farmers in an efficient way.

The Extension Service can be described as a hierarchical, bureaucratic structure with a potential to reach out to large parts of the rural population. Because of changing economic conditions, farmers no longer depend on the state as a sole partner in agricultural projects. The Block Extension Officer has to increase his efforts to make farmers interested in his



proposals.

Members of rural co-operatives have the choice of working on their own or contributing some of their labour or other resources to a group effort. Most of them have prior experience of co-operative enterprises and group projects. Chairpersons and other board members of co-operatives are elected by the members and have particular responsibility in safeguarding the groups' interests.

The prevailing division of labour between women and men allocates women particular time-consuming and labour-intensive tasks. This forces women to be particularly careful when decisions concerning additional work are taken.

### **Meeting One: Co-operative 'Mwani'**

"Mwani" (the name of the co-operative has been altered) is a women's co-operative in a village on the East Coast of Zanzibar Island whose members work together to plant seaweed. Group members also engage in the purchase of fabrics such as kanga and kitenge<sup>3</sup> in town and its retail sale in the village.

Situated along the coast in the "coral rag area", the village's main economic activities consist of fishing, small-scale farming, limestone production and tourism. Seaweed farming (for export to countries of the Far East) was introduced on a larger scale from 1989 onwards and has meanwhile turned into an important factor in the local economy. Planting sea-weed is mainly carried out by women who work individually or in groups. A study describing the economic and social changes seaweed production has brought in Paje, another village of the East Coast, suggests that planting sea-weed as part of increased economic activities has improved women's social position in the village (Mwaipopo Ako 1995:164). Seaweed is directly sold to the company exporting it (ZASCOL), and producers can rely on rather stable prices.

Retail trading of textile fabrics is an activity that offers co-operative members the advantage of access to cheap material for themselves and their families. Because of the necessary capital investments, it is an

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<sup>3</sup> A kanga is a rectangular piece of cotton cloth, 150 cm long and 110 cm wide, that is colorfully printed, usually sold in pairs and widely used and worn by Zanzibar women. For a detailed description of kangas and their multiple uses see Beck (1995:75). Kitenge refers to printed cotton cloth which is mostly used to make dresses, shirts etc.

activity that individuals would hardly be able to carry out on their own. The trips for buying fabrics are seen as a welcome distraction. However, financial management of the group enterprise has its own difficulties: At the time of the research reported here, the group had problems in recovering debts from customers who were unwilling or unable to pay.

Participants of the meeting includes the chairwoman of the group and seven other group members. All group members are women from the village. They are between 18 and 50 years old and engage in the usual economic activities of the area. Most of them have attended some years of primary schooling and are literate.

Apart from working together regularly in the "sea-farm", the group meets every other week to discuss and plan group activities. Meetings take place in the village "maskani", a round sitting place with a roof providing shadow, widely used for public meetings in the village. The meeting is opened and adjourned by the chairwoman, who provides the agenda for the meeting. She also leads the discussion.

The meetings are lively and lack ceremonious formalisms. Members participate actively in the discussion. Referring to criteria by Henne and Rehbock (1982:32, 33), we can characterise the communicative event as follows:

- The meeting is pre-arranged and fulfils a formal (official) function
- The number of participants is large enough to require a discussion leader
- The meeting is not open to the public
- The meeting is prepared by some of the participants
- An agenda containing particular topics is prepared for the meeting
- Because of status differences in the group, the relation of the interactants is asymmetric

### Example 1: Chairwoman, Members

**Chairwoman:**

Mkutano wetu wa leo kuhusu safari yetu ya kwenda kuchukua kanga / mpaka hivi hasa pesa zinakuweco si nyingi kwa kuchukua nguo na matenge hazitutoshi / kwa ninavyoona mimi bora mwezi huu tusitish kwenda chukua / sasa nyinyi wenzangu mnasema vipi hapa. XX

Sisi uamuzi wetu yakachukuliwe matenge kwa mwezi huu matupu / tuchukue / tuje tuuze tutengeneze mpango yetu mpaka mfungo wa sita mwezi ishirini twende mjini / tunachopata tunachodai / tunaowadai watu tuwapitie watulipe haki yetu mwezi ishirini twende zetu mjini tukachukue kanga. XX

(Our meeting today is on our trip to get kangas / until now there is not enough money to get cloth <kanga> and fabrics / as I see it / it is better if we cancel our trip / so what do you say my friends.

It was our decision that only fabrics should be taken / that we take them / so that we get to sell them according to our plan that on the 20th of month 6 we go to town / what we get / what they owe us, they who owe us should give us our right so that on the 20th we go our way to town to take kangas.)

**Several group members:**

Sawa.  
(O.K.)

**Chairwoman:**

Sasa pesa hizo hatujazipata / mwezi ishirini tutafanya vipi?  
(Now we haven't got this money yet / what will we do on the 20th of the month?)

**Member:**

Tutakwenda kopa.  
(We will borrow.)

**Group members:**

(Laughter)

**Chairwoman:**

(laughing) Kwa fikiria zangu / ee / nilikuwa naona huko nyuma kama tulikuwa na wasiwasi kuhusu pesa na huku nyuma tuna deni / basi bora sasa naona tu tusimame / tulilipe lile deni kwanza halafu wakati ule mwisho wa mwezi ule ukafika tutakuja kupata pesa kwa urahisi zaidi za kukopa kuliko kwenda kuja kwa madeni ya mara mbili.

(laughing) In my opinion / yes / I thought as we had problems concerning money before / and even from earlier we have debts / well now it would be better if we stopped / we should pay that debt first and then at the end of the month it will be easier to get the borrowed money instead of incurring double debts.

Example 1 is taken from the beginning of the co-operative's meeting. The official opening of the meeting is preceded by greetings and informal discussions as well as the arrival of the Block Extension Officer. After he has left, the chairwoman of the group begins the meeting with a topical casting. By introducing the topic of discussion, she also assumes the role of the discussion leader and starts with an issue which is of particular importance to her. Her switch from the initial *"mkutano wetu"* (our meeting) to *"ninavyoona mimi"* (as I see it) is a hedge: She knows that the following proposal is not yet shared by all members. Her use of *"I"* as opposed to the initial *"we"* signals that after fulfilling the tasks of opening the meeting and providing the agenda on behalf of the group, she takes a first turn to state her opinion as an individual member. She uses subjunctive forms to request others to change their plans. After this short introduction, she again assumes her role as a discussion leader and invites contributions from other participants, warmly addressing them as *"wenzangu"*.

The chairwoman practically confronts the group with a *"fait accompli"*: Lack of money will prevent the group from carrying out the trip as planned. She uses her authority as a discussion leader to put the lack of money on the agenda of the group before stating her personal opinion. As there is no immediate response by other group members, she continues by summing up a previous decision of the group to stimulate the discussion. *"sisi uamuzi wetu ..."* (our decision ...) She uses *"we"* to indicate that she includes herself in the group and its earlier decisions. Apart from using *"we"* and the passive voice to indicate distance from the earlier situation (agents are not mentioned), *"yachukuliwe vitenge"* (fabrics should be taken), she also uses subjunctive forms to describe earlier plans she wants to change *"tuchukue, tuje tuuze, tutengenze, .., tuwapitie watulipe, .., twende, ...; tukachukue"* (we should take, we should come to sell, ... , we should fulfil, ..., we should pass them and they should pay us, we should go and we should take).

Following this summary, she pauses again and some group members respond affirmatively to this repetition of earlier plans. In order to

emphasise her argument, she again confronts the group with its lack of money. "Sasa" (now) is a discourse marker introducing a straightforward statement. The question following invites contributions by other members to the topic introduced by the chairwoman. The answer "tutakwenda kopa" (we will borrow) by a group member is ambiguous: It could support a previous practice in the group that included incurring debts while doing business, or as well be an admission that there are no alternatives to cancelling the trip. As the group responds with laughter, the statement turns out to support the chairwoman's view.

The chairwoman then continues to explain her suggestion: She uses hedges such as "kwa fikira zangu" (in my mind) and "nilikuwa naona" (I thought) to differentiate her role as a group member stating her opinion from her role as a chairperson. She further uses subjunctive in the first person plural express her wishes.

## Example 2: Members

### Member B:

Sikiliza wanaoyataka hayo matenge safari hii aina mbali mbali / si watu kama wa - / - maana tukishawaambia watu kwamba siku fulani tutakwenda / sasa ikiwa hatukwenda tutawaharibu au watakwenda wenzetu wachukue / siye tuje tukose.

(Listen, those who want different kinds of fabrics this time / these are not people like - / - because we told the people that we will go on a certain day / now if we do not go we will spoil it or our friends will go / and we will miss it.)

### Member C:

Wataturaribiya wao maana tuna deni kubwa.  
(They will spoil it for us because we have big debts)

### Member D:

Utawaambia mwezi kumi na uhakikishe ....  
(You will them on the 10<sup>th</sup> and make sure ...).

Member B enters the discussion to express her disagreement. "Sikiliza" (Listen) is a discourse marker (taken literally it would also be role-casting, but that is only secondary in this example). She does not complete her first sentence, hesitates, restarts with the discourse particle "maana" and refers to the customers and their interests in a direct statement. The use of the conditional clause mitigates and specifies her warning: If members of the

group don't keep their promises, they will lose customers.

Another member interrupts shortly with a contribution that moves the centre of interest back from the customers to the members of the group. Yet another group member advises Member B on how to deal with the customers without losing them. The future form "utawaambia" (you will tell them) is a direct instruction.

What follows is a long and lively discussion of the problem of incurring debts in the group. Consensus is reached that there will be no trip before former debts have been paid, and that all group members will make an effort that all debts will be paid by the following month. While the chairperson is about to close the debate and some members agree and suggest further topics, others are still in doubt. The chairperson therefore continues the debate by persuading members to a common strategy.

### Example 3: Chairperson, Members

#### Chairperson:

... / tumalize nayo  
(let's finish with this)

#### Member D:

Safari hakuna  
(There is no journey)

#### Member B:

Na mwani <tunaenda lini>  
(And when will we go to the seaweed)

#### Several group members:

<++++>

#### Member F:

Sikiliza kitu kimoja <++++>.  
(Listen one thing)

#### Chairwoman:

<aa sikiliza hao> tuhakikishe kwenda kuwadai / mpelekee kibarua  
(aa listen those we should make sure that we go and ask them to repay the money  
/ bring them a small letter /)

**Member F:**

Taz'eni tukishamwambia mwandikeni kibarua mpelekee / "pesa zangu tarehe nazitaka / nataka safari yangu msivunje / nangoja pesa zangu sijalipwa / basi kwa hiyo na wewe uchangie na pesa zangu unilipie /"

(Look we have already said write letters and deliver them / "I want my money on this date / I don't want you to break my journey / I am waiting for my money I have not yet been paid / well so you, too, do your part and pay me my money /")

As the chairwoman is about to announce the end of the debate on this topic, one member sums up the discussion while another member starts with the next topic: work on the seaweed farm. However, other group members continue to talk all at once about the previous topics. It is again the chairwoman who manages to speak and get others to listen: She starts with the discourse marker "sikiliza" (listen) and uses subjunctive and imperative to give instructions. She ignores the new topic of work on seaweed introduced by Member B and continues on the previous issue of the trip to buy fabrics. She is, however interrupted by another member.

**Example 4: Chairwoman, Members****Chairwoman:**

Sikilizeni / katika miradi ee - miradi mingi ya - ya kuja kununua kitu au kuja kuuza / mingi inafilisika kutokana na deni.

(Listen in projects - many projects that are done lets say that you buy something and get to sell is/ many go wrong because of debts).

**Group members:**

Eeh. (Yes.)

**Chairwoman:**

Kwa hivyo kuanzia leo mtu kunako miezi miwili mtu hajalipa / aandikiwe barua / apelekewe tarehe fulani pesa nazitaka / na safari yangu ishakuwa mfahamu.

(therefore from today onwards if within two months a person hasn't paid / a letter should be written to her / she should be brought that letter that at a certain date I want the money / and you have already come to know about my journey)

**Several group members:**

Eeh. (Yes)

**Chairwoman:**

Tuandikeni vibarua tuwapelekee / maana hivi hivi tu mtu kumwambia tutaona haya / lakini barua haina haya.

(we should write small letters and take them to them / because to tell a person like that we will feel ashamed / but a letter has no shame)

As several group members begin to talk all at once after Member F's contribution, the chairwoman tries to capture the other members' attention with the discourse marker "Sikilizeni" (Listen).

She starts to talk about projects and hesitates. Then she continues and repeats herself in a slightly mitigated, but still assertive version: "miradi mingi..." (many projects ...) to enhance her argument, which is kept abstract and general by not naming particular projects.

In the lively atmosphere of a heated discussion, she overrides other members' attempts to state their opinion, takes control and makes the others listen to her explanations: While it is difficult to buy kangas without cash, incurring debts could cause further problems. She reminds the audience that debts have destroyed other projects.

She suggests a common group policy on unreliable customers. By using the passive voice, she stresses that she wants her idea to become a general rule for the group: "aandikiwe, ... , apelekewe" (<a letter>should be written / taken to her/him).

No agent who should fulfil the rule is mentioned. We therefore find that the use of passive voice avoids impositions on particular hearers by not naming them. But the speaker also chooses to conceal her own role.

The respective active sentence „Write letters and take them to her/him“ is a straightforward command, a directive. It can be paraphrased as „I tell you to write letters and take them to her/him“. Whether „I tell you, I order“ etc. are actually part of the utterance or not: The position and role of the speaker as one who tells others what to do is obvious and part of the speech act. The speech act „issuing a directive“ is realised by an implicitly performative utterance (cf. Levinson 1983:232). In the transformation to the passive voice, this implicit quality of the utterance is lost: the person behind the rule disappears and is no longer necessarily identified with the speaker.

We can therefore sum up that an imposition is made, a necessity is stated, but neither the person making it nor its addressee is named. The chairwoman uses the passive voice to exercise her authority without



personally taking the role of giving directions and without clearly naming an actor who should carry out her ideas. The use of this form also leaves doubt as to who will feel responsible for implementing the decision.

The chairwoman's subsequent utterances in first person plural contribute little to resolve this uncertainty „tuandikeni..., tutaona...“ (let's write ..., we will feel...). Without allowing any further discussion on her contribution, the chairperson introduces another topic which concerns the main activity of the group: The planting of seaweed.

### Example 5: Chairwoman, Members

**Chairwoman:**

Sasa habari ya mwani.  
(Now how about the seaweed.)

While member B's attempt to raise the same issue in Example 3 failed, the chairwoman has no problem in changing the group's topic of discussion. Her turn-taking is marked by the particle "sasa" (now) as a presequence. As all the group members are working there, this is an invitation to other members to report on their activities.

**Member C:**

Habari ya mwani ndiyo tuna - / mwezi saba leo - safari yetu mwezi tano,  
kupanda kwanza, tunakwenda kupanda/ , +++++, aje achukue tai tai.  
(Concerning seaweed we have - / today is the 7th of the month - our trip on the  
5th of the month / we go to plant / +++++, she should come to take the strings

**Member A:**

Juuzi hatukupewa ? (Didn't we get them recently?)

**Member C:**

Taitai itabidi twende tukaombee, Jumatatu itabidi twende / hatujapanda hata  
konde moja.  
(We have to go and ask for the plastic strings / we have to go on Monday / we  
have not planted even one row)

Member C starts to explain the "news from the seaweed", interrupts herself to mention the scheduled work days. She then continues with the problems encountered at work.

### Example 6: Members

**Member C:**

Kusema kweli, kusema kweli sasa mwani hatupandi kwa wingi / yale .....  
 hatuna / maana xxx mengi mabovu na mengi yamepotea /  
 (Honestly there at the seaweed we don't plant a lot / because we don't have .....  
 / because many xxx are damaged and many were lost /)

**Member A:**

Sasa hiyo inabidi labda tumwendeni kwa kikundi / maana mtu mmoja au watu  
 wawili hakubali / twendeni watu watano /  
 (Maybe we should go as a group / but if we go one or two people he doesn't  
 give us / let's go five people)

Member C starts with a mitigating discourse particle "kusema kweli" (to say the truth). She gives reasons why not much was done recently: The women were short of plastic strings, lines and sticks which are used in seaweed planting. Contributions from other members follow.

Member A suggests a common effort to solve the problem. Her request is mitigated by the use of the presequence "labda" (maybe): Members should turn up in a larger number to be given enough plastic strings and lines by the company. "maana" (because) is used as discourse particle at the beginning of the explanation. "Twendeni" (let's go) is a directive in first person plural.

In Example 5 and 6, work on the seaweed farm is brought to discussion. As not much work was done recently, the group members are uncomfortable having to justify themselves. This results in several forms of hedging and mitigation e.g. in the initial statements by member C in both examples, which are in sharp contrast to the straightforward topical casting by the chairwoman.

### Summary of Meeting One

The chairwoman as discussion leader uses her role to allocate topics or turns. Topical castings are usually phrased in a direct, straightforward way. The same is true for questions which she asks in her role as a co-ordinator of the groups' activities. A particular form of questions is used as a request for approval from the whole group. Generally, control of turns is not as strict as topical control: The discussion repeatedly gets out of hand with many participants talking at the same

time. The chairwoman hardly interferes at such points. She rather leads the discussion by topical control. She also uses the authority her role gives her to enhance her arguments as a member with individual interests.

Subjunctive forms are used with varying intentions and results. The choice of subjunctive or imperative forms depends on the situation, the syntactic environment and on considerations in regard to politeness. In a context of imminent danger, hurry, or acoustic problems (physical distance, noise) between speakers, imperative rather than subjunctive forms are the obvious choice. In some syntactic environments, imperative forms have to be replaced by subjunctive forms (e.g. the second verb in a directive such as „nenda umwone“ <go and see her/him>). Used as a strategy of politeness, variation between imperative and subjunctive forms may alter the weightiness of the respective face-threatening act. In English and German, using subjunctive instead of imperative when stating a request or imposition is usually perceived as more polite. In his contrastive analysis of politeness realisations in Swahili and German short stories, Schicho (1994:146) found no evidence to support such an assumption for Swahili.

Further differentiation is called for when considering grammatical person and number. Not explicitly naming or being unclear about the addressee obscures the speakers role in making an imposition or request to the addressee. First person plural of imperative or subjunctive, a rather common strategy of persuasion, has this function: in many cases the hearer can only guess whom the speaker actually meant by "we": everyone present, him/herself alone or just one of the hearers, etc. In case the addressee becomes aware that the speaker is consciously misleading (saying we and meaning you), he might try to clarify this by additional questions, therefore disclosing the speakers role in making an imposition on a particular person. Such a question does not occur in our example; the uncertainty about who will follow up borrowers is not resolved. Evidence from other institutional contexts suggests that it is rather speakers of high status who can afford to use 1st person plural when they mean second person singular or plural (the typical example being the doctor telling the hospital patient "we should take our medicine").

Impersonal forms (e.g. passive) have a similar function in obscuring the role of the speaker as well as the addressee of the request. The consequent uncertainty can lead to misunderstandings and inefficiency.

Finally, subjunctives also have the function to express the attitude of the

speaker towards the likeliness, probability or truth of the fact referred to in the utterance. Subjunctive forms occur both in speech acts associated with power (e.g. directives) and in utterances expressing doubt and lack of self-confidence.

All participants use hedges such as "from my point of view", etc. In her initial proposal, the chairwoman uses several hedging forms when talking about cancelling the trip, probably because of the importance she attaches to the issue. In Example 5 and 6, participants explain why not much work was done recently. Uncomfortable about having to justify their shortcomings, speakers use hedges in their contributions.

The group as a whole consists mostly of attentive listeners. Even though there are several incidents where all members talk at once, the usual role of most members is to listen attentively. Providing approval when asked to do so is part of this role.

From the point of view of the chairwoman, the meeting conforms to her own agenda. She introduces topics important to her and influences decisions. Disagreements are discussed and settled at the end of the debate.

### **Meeting Two: Cooperative "Nyuki"**

"Nyuki" (the name of the co-operative has again been altered) is an agricultural Women's Co-operative in the same village at the East Coast. It has 37 members who work together on various agricultural projects. As a group, they receive counselling and training offers by the local Block Extension Officer, the grass-root level extension agent of the Ministry of Agriculture. Agriculture is done on small plots and is labour-intensive in the village which is part of the coral rag area.

Five members of the group, including the chairwoman of the group. They are all women of the village with a few years of primary schooling, working in fishing, agriculture and seaweed production.

The Block Extension Officer lives as a farmer in the village. His education includes a few months of agricultural training after his seven years of primary schooling. It is his job to advise farmers and in particular to attend to farming co-operatives in the village. His superiors in the Extension Service expect occasional (success) reports on projects facilitated by him.

Members of the co-operative are well aware that in any extension service project they will have to rely mainly on their own effort. While

training and basic inputs might be provided by the service, labour has to come from group members. As the extension service has been present in the village for decades and most people have worked with it in one way or another, group members all have some idea of how it works and what they can expect from it in terms of bureaucracy, inflexibility, hierarchical decision-making, small scale of projects, labour-intensive working techniques and low profit.

The meeting takes place in the CCM-office of the village. Some participants remark in the beginning that this is not a proper meeting place after the introduction of a multi-party system in Zanzibar. As no other convenient location is available nearby, the meeting eventually takes place at the agreed place.

However, out of 37 members, only 5 have turned up. The chairwoman suspects that because of the low tide most members would rather work in seaweed planting. As the extension officer insists that he wants to discuss some issues with the members present, the meeting eventually begins.

According to criteria of Henne and Rehbock (1982:32, 33), we can characterise the type of communicative event in the following way:

- The meeting is pre-arranged and official
- The number of participants is large enough to require a discussion leader
- The meeting is not open to the public
- Some participants prepare the meeting and its agenda
- The meeting has fixed topics
- Status, class, gender and role differences exist between participants.
- Relations between the interactants are asymmetric

### Example 7: Chairwoman, Members

#### Chairwoman:

Hata kabla ya hawajaanza nilizungumza neno moja nilisema / hawa pengine wanakuja na mapendekezo au jambo gani mnataka mfanye hivi au waje kama hivi tulivyokwishazungumza, waje na neno, "tunataka hivi na hivi, mnasemaje", sasa kwa watu 37 kweli kuwachukulia dhamana / hata kwa sheria ya mkutano pia hatuzitimu / kwa hiyo hatuwezi tukawachukulia dhamana / au

mnasemaje watu wanne? <pause>

Kwa sababu siye tunaweza kusema kuhusu hiyo miradi niliyoitaja / kwa mfano miye naweza niseme / "Ah, miye naona a - a" / wengine wanasema / "Sasa kakataa yeye ya nini / maana tungefanya hivyo / hivyo au hivi / kama hivyo" / sasa itakuja kuwa vipi hapo?

(Even before they started I talked about one thing I said / maybe they come with suggestions or whatever issue you (pl.) want to do this way or that they come as we have said already / they come up with something / "we want this or that / what do you think" / now for 37 people really to take over responsibility for them / moreover this is not according to the rules of the group / so we cannot take over responsibility for them / or what do you say 4 people.

Because we can say concerning this project which I mentioned / for example I can say / "Ah - me I think a -a" / others say / "now why has she refused / because we would have done it / this or that / like this" / so how is this going to be?)

**Member A :**

Au kuna za kukubali  
(Or if there is something to agree)

**Chairwoman:**

Au naweza nikakubali mimi / baadaye ...  
(Or I can agree / and later ... )

Instead of officially opening the meeting, the chairwoman explains that out of 37 members only 5 are present. Therefore there is no quorum and the group cannot take any decisions. The chairwoman explains that to proceed with the meeting without the others present would be against the rule of the co-operative, and that it would create confusion and dissatisfaction in the group. Her contribution continues a debate that had been going on even on the way to the meeting place.

She marks the beginning of her contribution with the presequence "hata" (even). Change in persons "nilizungumza, nilisema" (I talked, I said) to the later "hatuwezi" (we cannot) are part of an evasive strategy, just as the reference to others as the decisive authority in the third person "hawa" (these) and, referring to the same people the second person "mnataka mfanye" (you would like to do). Inconsistency in persons and numbers

here is a sign of irritation and at the same time a defensive measure to refuse the role the Extension Officer has allocated her: To take a decision for the group on the spot. "Pengine" (maybe) is a mitigating element. The discourse markers "sasa" (now) and "hata" (even) direct attention to the main problem: taking over responsibility. "kwa mfano" (for example) is again mitigating. The change from "siye tunaweza" (we can) to "miye naweza niseme" (I can say) is a hedging self-correction that again shows that she is not sure of herself. She again refers to the absent members by refusing the request "wengine wanasema" (others say). She ends her contribution with a rhetorical question that anticipates affirmative responses from other group members: "itakuja vipi hapo ?" (how will that be ?)

Member A joins in to illustrate the chairwoman's statement with further elaboration. This support is readily taken up by the chairwoman.

### Example 8: Block Extension Officer, Chairwoman and Members

#### Block Extension Officer:

Sasa mimi / nitaeleza ile hali ilivyo / sasa namna ya kukubali tuseme kama mfano / ilikuwa mwisho tarehe 8

(Now me, I will explain to you how the situation is / now the way to agree lets say for example / the end would have been the 8th)

#### Chairwoman:

Leo tarehe ngapi?  
(What is the date today?)

#### Block Extension Officer:

leo tarehe 5 / kwa hivyo ilikuwa ampe majina yote ayapeleke kabla ya kufikia tarehe 8 / kwa sababu hiyo semina yenyewe itakuwa ni tarehe 8 / unaona / hiyo semina yenyewe hasa itakuwa tarehe 8 / sasa ilikuwa mimi niwapeni maelekezo kama itakuwa mmeyakubali hayo kabla ya kufikia tarehe 8 / ...  
..... / mmeifahamu barabara.

(today is the fifth / so it would have been to give him all the names before the 8th so that he could take them there / you see / that seminar itself would have been on the 8th / so I would have given you information before the 8th if you had agreed to this / ...  
... / you understood clearly.)

**Chairwoman, members:**

Ee (Yes)

**Block Extension Officer:**

Ee / sasa ilikuwa swala la kulizungumza / ikiwa mtalikubali / nimpe jina la nani atakwenda atakayeshiriki kwenye semina hiyo / vile vile ijulikane kama hakuna mtu /

(Yes / now the question to be discussed / if you agree/ that I should give the name of whoever will go to participate in that seminar / it should also be known if there is no one /)

The Block Extension Officer joins the discussion in order to explain his request to the meeting. He begins with "sasa mimi" (now me), a common discourse marker. The subsequent announcement leaves no doubt about his assertiveness: "nitaeleza ile hali ilivyo" (I will explain to you how it is) "tuseme kwa mfano" (let's say for example) is mitigating the initial statement that was a strong claim and suggested that his account is not negotiable. "Kwa hiyo" (therefore) and "kwa sababu" (because) introduce his explanations why he is under pressure to receive information. He then continues with the impersonal "ilikuwa" (it was) and subjunctive to instruct group members about their duties.

With "mmefahamu barabara" (you understood exactly) he orders positive feedback from chairwoman and members and indicates again that the content of his contribution is not negotiable. After the affirmative response by the group members, the extension officer continues with a strong reinforcement of his topical casting:

"swali la kuzungumza ni ..." (the question to be discussed is ...) He continues by using a hedge with an otherwise straightforward request: "ikiwa mtakubali" (if you agree). The use of an impersonal form "ijulikane" (it should be known), is another typical claim for authority. The agricultural officer therefore puts a straightforward "yes/no"-question; despite the earlier objections of the chairwoman, alternatives are refused.

**Example 9: Chairwoman****Chairwoman:**

Maan'ake / pia kuna jambo moja / hapa sie mara nyingi / imekuwa sie roho zetu



kama ... hawatujali ndiyo mwenye ... hivyo hivyo / tunapata lawama wakati mwingine wanapokuja wale viongozi wa sehemu hizi za karibu karibu lakini wakaja hapa sie tunaona ndiyo wageni / pamoja na wakaja wageni wanaotoka mbali wao pia wanakuwa wenyeji / wanakuwa sawa sawa na sie / lakini wakati mwingine tunapata malawama na kutushambulia / sasa sie roho zetu zinakuwa / kusema kweli / tunazidi kule kuvurugika tokea hapo / kwa mfano wanasema "niye mtakuja mradi kabla hamjajua mradi ule utakuwa na hasara gani au faida gani mnajitokeza / ++++ / matokeo yake sasa inakuwa hasara" tukaletwa mfano wa mashine hiyo / ...

... wao wanadhani wanatufahamisha / lakini tunavyoelewa sie wanatulaumu /

... lakini tutaona kukubali mradi wakati hatujajua utaratibu wake nadhani ni kosa / au vipi jamani?

(Because / also there is one thing / here we many times / for our minds it is ... as if they don't care about us ... just like that / we are insulted sometimes when these leaders come from places nearby but if they come here we treat them as visitors / together with other visitors (strangers) from far who are also turn out to be citizens / who are equal to us / but sometimes we are insulted and attacked / now we - our minds are increasingly disturbed by this / for example they say "you will come to a project before you get to know its disadvantages or advantages you volunteer ... the outcome is a loss" we had the example of this machine /...

... they think that they explain to us / but as we understand it they insult us ...

... but we will see that agreeing to a project at a time we don't know its arrangement I think its a mistake / or what do you think?)

**Group members:**

Kweli (True)

The chairwoman takes the next turn to object and protest against the Block Extension Officer's request. How can they decide without having enough information? Instead of directly reacting to the Extension Officers request, she introduces the more general topic of the Extension Staff's behaviour in the village. She complains about officials and guests who add insult to injury by abusing group members for starting projects without being informed about possible problems and risks. By playing with the multiple meanings of „mgeni“ (guest, stranger) in Swahili, by using the term leaders while at the same time reminding listeners that all persons

involved are equals - she ridicules the conceited behaviour of some visitors and members of the Extension Service in the village.

The presequence "maanake" (because) is a first start. „pia jambo moja" (also one thing), another presequence, prepares a change in topic and consists of mitigating elements. The chairwoman needs a third start to come to the point "hapa sie mara nyingi" (here we many times). She reports unpleasant experiences of the past, summarising them in a general way. In two of the following sentences, the verb precedes the subject: „wanapokuja viongozi" (when leaders come) and „wakaja wageni" (visitors come). The transposition of the usual word order is part of the chairwoman's effort to draw attention to this point which, for her, is the crucial issue of the meeting. It is also a sign of her emotional involvement and irritation at the Extension Officer's request. The use of discourse markers such as "mara nyingi" (many times), "kusema kweli" (to say the truth) or repeatedly "wakati mwingine" (many times) mitigates her generalisation and again indicates that she is unsure of herself. "Kwa mfano" (for example) starts the narrative in which she illustrates her argument with an example. Her use of present tense and direct speech marks her seriousness and her immediate concern.

She concludes her contribution by an open question asking for support which the group readily gives her, underlining her request for attention with „jamani" (an emotional address form standing for „you" <plural>).

Regarding contents, this contribution of the chairwoman is highly remarkable for both its subtle ridicule as well as its outspoken criticism of the arrogance and predominance of outside experts and high-rank bureaucrats. On a formal level, it contains several elements that indicate that the chairwoman is irritated, unsure of herself as well as emotionally involved. False starts, several presequences, change in word order, hedges, direct speech, choice of tense and address forms. While the contradictions between content and style do not work to the advantage of the speaker, the chairwoman does not fail to impress her audience, including the extension officer.

### **Example 10: Block Extension Officer**

#### **Block Extension Officer:**

Sasa mie / kwa upande wangu kama nikiwa mtu wa kilimo

/ ni juu yangu mie kutoa ushauri si kumlazimisha mtu/ ...

Now me / from my side as a person from agriculture / it is my duty to counsel and not to force a person / ...

After the chairwoman's complaint, the Block Extension Officer needs to defend his position. He uses two hedges (almost identical in content) to safeguard his utterance: "Sasa mie kwa upande wangu..." (Now I from my point of view ...) Then he rephrases his position: He cannot force anyone, he just offers information.

The result of the initial argument is a long and informative discussion on bee farming.

### **Example 11: Block Extension Officer**

#### **Block Extension Officer:**

Sawa, halafu la pili kuhusu swala la mradi wa kuku / mnaonaje wenzetu au wenzenu pale Marumbi tayari washaa- / washakuwa wanauza pale.

(OK, now second concerning the question of the chicken project / what do you think / our friends or your friends in Marumbi have already - / they are already selling.)

The extension officer begins with a new topic. He starts with several discourse markers: "sawa, halafu la pili..." (ok, then second...) and uses a polite and familiar address form "wenzetu" (our companions), which he then reconsiders and replaces by the more distant "wenzenu" (your friends). This might be an effort to emphasise the social and gender difference between himself and the group members. As a reviewer of a previous version of this article remarked "*the self-correction from wenzetu to wenzenu is very interesting and might be explained not only in terms of him being the advisor and outside of the group, but also of raising chickens as a women's work*". He introduces a competitive aspect by mentioning other groups who have successfully started chicken projects. Like in the previous question of participation in the bee-farming seminar, the extension officer asks for a decision before giving information. This time, however, the question is phrased openly and rather inviting general statements than immediate commitments. Group members comment and ask questions

about this project. A critical and lively discussion follows.

### **Summary of Meeting Two**

The chairwoman initially takes a turn to explain why the meeting cannot take place and practically opens the discussion. Then she explains why she is unable to speak for other members of the group. Although she does just that, she refuses to take a decision for others. While the steps she takes are exceptional for the beginning of a meeting, they are all part of a chairwoman's usual scope of action.

It is the Extension Officer who interferes with this pattern by allocating turns and topics to her. Talking to him, the chairwoman repeatedly hesitates, uses discourse markers, hedges and mitigating forms which are not found in her interaction with other group members. Because of the small size of the group, turns are not formally allocated; however, there is informal control by both the extension officer and the chairwoman who initially do most of the talking and only occasionally invite feedback from others. The extension officer is dominant in the control of topics. He uses declarative statements that demonstrate his authority. A few polite or mitigated forms occur together with a number of straightforward requests. After the chairwoman's protest, he is willing to give information before asking for a response. However, he does not give up control of turn and topic while introducing the second issue.

The chairwoman is disturbed from the beginning onwards by the Extension Officers' claim for topical control. Despite her irritation, she quite ably defends her own and the groups interests against the intrusion. Other group members again form an attentive audience. They occasionally voice their opinion if requested by others. Initially, only a few turns are taken by group members. Later on in the discussion, other members actively participate.

### **Conclusion**

Examples taken from two meetings in development work illustrate different situations discussion leaders find themselves in. The Chairwoman of Meeting One presides over a meeting without experiencing a major challenge of her role. She is even in a position to convince the whole group of her opinion, doing that in a self-confident and non-imposing way. In particular, we find the chairwoman using the

following strategies while chairing the meeting: Politeness strategies to mitigate impositions; casting roles and topics on other participants; control of turns. All these strategies support her aim of persuading the other group members of her opinion.

In the second meeting, the chairwoman of another co-operative experiences a severe interference by the Block Extension Officer. Using his authority as an advisor and as a man, he insists on a request after it had been refused several times. Moreover, from the beginning onwards he takes over tasks of turn and topic control that should be the prerogative of the chairwoman, who in turn is busy with rejecting the role the Block Extension Officer casts on her. She refuses to take decisions for other group members who are not present. The chairwoman's speech at this point contains mitigating elements and hesitations. She retains this restrained style while explaining her refusal of the Extension Officers request with a narration of earlier incidents. Her contribution turns out to be a sharp criticism of the whole Extension Service. She confronts the extension officer with her own ideas about his role: she tells him that instead of hastening people into hurried decisions, his duty is to give information and to advise. This move puts the Extension Officer in a defensive position. He changes his strategy in regard to this request but does not give up his self-taken role in the meeting: the next major change in topic is again introduced by him. The power struggle between chairwoman and extension officer interferes with their common aim of solving technical problems. But at least, both „antagonists“ manage to put messages across which are important to them: While the Extension Officer needs information about the number of people who would participate in a seminar to report it to the District Extension Officer, the chairwoman makes clear why she cannot give this information without consulting other members of the group. In addition, she articulates criticism of the Extension Service's communicative patterns in the village. The Extension Officer has to accept that his authoritarian behaviour does not accelerate but rather slow down the process. We can only speculate whether this experience will change his attitude in the long term. Evidence from other projects suggest that dominant behaviour (in this case, passing pressure from superiors on to subordinate members of the hierarchy) hinders less competent speakers from participating in development projects; poor, female, young or uneducated members of target group often prefer to silently opt out. While the Chairwoman in our case successfully

challenges the Extension Officer, and the conflict is resolved, not all members of the Extension Services' target group can be expected to do the same .

Analysis of the examples confirms our first assumption that communication in development work is asymmetric and marked by power differences. Linguistic elements expressing power and politeness are used in what seem to be typical conflicts of development co-operation. They reflect power differences between beneficiaries and development workers, between grass-root group leadership and members as well as between women and men.

Our second assumption, which stated that undeclared hierarchies and authoritarian behaviour interferes with the objectives of development work, is confirmed by the evidence of the power struggle between the Chairwoman and the Extension Officer.

His authoritarian behaviour creates a serious conflict with the Chairwoman and possibly group members: A productive discussion in which a group considers whether it will participate in a project or not cannot take place under such circumstances.

Moreover, the Chairwoman's complaint about members of the Extension Service rushing groups into decisions with disastrous consequences deserves our attention and probably further research.

The outcome of this research as well as the questions it raises are relevant on a more general level, too. As mentioned at the outset of this paper, asymmetric power relations are not limited to development communication, but found in all institutional settings. Insights on how language is used to create relations of domination in this particular context should contribute to our general understanding of communication in institutions and organizations.

In practical development work, this research is useful in two respects (Brünner 1987:344,345). First, it enables us to collect data and information on institutions and to critically analyse and study particular development networks and organizations. In our case, we found evidence that women's co-operatives are a viable and functioning form of grass-root organization. Women use co-operatives to realise economic projects and to get organised in a group that represents their interest. In regard to the agricultural extension service we find that the hierarchical patterns of communication interfere with efficient implementation of programmes, a fact that has been

confirmed by research on other elements of the Extension Service. Instead of partnership and participative communication frequently referred to in documents and policy papers of development co-operation, asymmetric patterns of interaction prevail.

Secondly, analysis of communicative behaviour can serve as a basis of individual communication training for participants. Confrontation with an analysis of their own communicative behaviour can help interactants to improve their communicative patterns. In our example, we find a need for the Extension Officer to reduce strategies of dominance and patronising and to find ways of dialogue in partnership. Communication training would have to include the upper levels of the extension service because at present, the approach of the Block Extension Officers in the village reflects the treatment they experience from their immediate superiors in the Extension Service.

In both cases of practical application, the primary aim is to support and advise development organizations in their work. The reasons for failures of projects and programs are frequently communication problems. Governments and NGOs as well as their respective employees need to improve their capacity to assist intended beneficiaries.

#### **Appendix: Notation Symbols**

<.> Speech overlap by following speaker(s).

<<.>> From << to >> Speech overlap with previous speaker.

<<<.>>> From <<< to >>> Overlap with both previous speakers.

Example:

A: Will you come to the park <tomorrow?> B: <<At what>> time? I am quite busy.

In this example, the last part of A's question (tomorrow) overlaps with the first part of B's answer (At what). This way of transliteration does not provide an exact indication of which sounds are uttered simultaneously, but it is sufficient for our purpose here.

xx Interval of 2 seconds.

xxx Interval of 3 or more seconds.

- Interruption of word or sentence.

++ Inaudible or incomprehensible utterance.

(...) Situational comments, e.g. on non-verbal interaction.

/ Beginning or end of an utterance.

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