Host Control in Turn-Taking: A Conversation Analysis of Jimmy Fallon's Interview with Jesse Eisenberg

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how Jimmy Fallon exercises host control through turn-taking mechanisms in a late-night talk show interview with Jesse Eisenberg. Using Sacks & Schegloff, Emanuel A. Jefferson (1974) turn-taking model as the sole analytical framework, a qualitative Conversation Analysis examines how the host manages speaking rights, regulates turn transitions, and organizes segment structure in an entertainment-oriented context. The analysis shows that host control is accomplished through strategic turn allocation, TRP-sensitive interruption, affiliative/collaborative overlap, and activity management at projected transition relevance places (TRPs). Specifically, at 02:51–02:53 Fallon reformulates the guest's proposal—"Try it on the show?"—which converts an ongoing explanation into an 5on-air demonstration, evidencing conditional floor allocation and activity re-specification while preserving an informal, humorous tone. Additional patterns include confirmation-type interrogatives that constrain response type and enable swift sequence closings, collaborative completions that reframe stance without overt competition for the floor, and repair-initiating moves used to pace the reveal and calibrate audience engagement during the magic trick segment. Taken together, these practices demonstrate that authority in late-night interviews is interactionally achieved through routine turn-taking resources rather than explicitly declared, clarifying how participation remains asymmetrically organized in favor of the host even when the talk appears spontaneous and affiliative. The findings reaffirm the continuing relevance of classical CA turn-taking for broadcast discourse and offer practical guidance for media practitioners on designing questions, timing interventions at TRPs, and leveraging overlap and repair to sustain flow, humor, and control.

Keywords: Turn-Taking; Host Control; Conversation Analysis; Talk Show Interview

INTRODUCTION

Talk show interviews constitute a distinctive form of institutional interaction in which conversational spontaneity coexists with systematic control. Although such interviews are commonly designed to appear casual, humorous, and unscripted,

interaction within talk shows is shaped by institutional goals such as time management, topic progression, and audience engagement. As Tolson (2006) argues, talk shows blur the boundary between ordinary conversation and institutional discourse, creating an interactional environment in which informality is carefully produced rather than naturally occurring.

From the perspective of conversation analysis, turn-taking is a foundational mechanism through which social interaction is organized. Sacks et al. (1974) demonstrate that ordinary conversation relies on locally managed turn exchange, governed by turn construction units (TCUs) and transition relevance places (TRPs). However, in institutional settings such as interviews, turn-taking is no longer symmetrical. Participation rights are distributed according to institutional roles, granting certain participants most notably the interviewer or host greater authority over turn allocation and topic management (Heritage, 1997).

In talk show interviews, this asymmetry is particularly salient. The host occupies a structurally privileged position, responsible for initiating questions, regulating turn length, and guiding topic development. Unlike everyday conversation, where speakers may freely self-select, guests in talk show interviews are largely responsive participants whose contributions are shaped by the host's interactional moves. Control, therefore, is not exercised through explicit commands but is embedded within routine turn-taking practices such as question design, interruption, overlap, and the strategic management of TRPs (Clayman & Heritage, 2002).

Late-night talk shows present a unique interactional context for examining host control. Unlike political interviews or news broadcasts, late-night talk shows emphasize entertainment, humor, and conversational intimacy. Hosts are expected to appear spontaneous and affiliative while simultaneously maintaining strict control over timing and content. Previous studies have shown that this balance is achieved through subtle interactional practices that allow hosts to assert authority without disrupting the informal tone of the interaction (Hutchby, 2006; Tolson, 2001).

Despite the growing body of research on institutional talk, much of the existing literature has focused on formal interview settings such as political interviews, courtroom discourse, or news programs. These studies have provided valuable insights into institutional power and asymmetrical participation rights, yet they often overlook entertainment-oriented talk shows as sites of systematic interactional organization. When entertainment talk shows are discussed, analysis frequently remains at a macro-discursive or ideological level, paying limited attention to the micro-interactional mechanisms through which conversational order is locally produced (Robles, 2015).

This gap is particularly evident in studies of late-night talk shows, which are often treated as informal entertainment rather than analytically rich interactional events. As a result, the ways in which hosts exercise conversational control while

maintaining the appearance of ordinary conversation remain underexplored. A fine-grained conversation analytic approach is therefore needed to examine how host control is achieved moment by moment through turn-taking practices rather than assumed as a fixed institutional role(Hutchby, 2014).

To address this gap, the present study examines host control in turn-taking during an interview segment from *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* featuring actor Jesse Eisenberg. Jimmy Fallon's hosting style, characterized by humour, rapid turn transitions, and affiliative talk, offers a particularly revealing case for investigating how interactional control operates beneath a conversationally relaxed surface. By focusing on a single interview segment, the study enables a detailed analysis of naturally occurring interaction without reducing control to abstract institutional power. This study is important because it provides empirical evidence of how hosts maintain interactional authority in entertainment talk shows, contributing to both conversation analysis theory and practical understanding of media discourse.

This study adopts Sacks & Schegloff, Emanuel A. Jefferson (1974) turn-taking model as the sole analytical framework. The decision to rely on a single foundational theory is motivated by the need for conceptual clarity and analytical consistency. Sacks et al.'s model provides systematic tools for analyzing TCUs, TRPs, speaker selection, interruption, and overlap, making it especially suitable for examining interactional control in interview settings(Sidnell & Stivers, n.d.). Rather than combining multiple frameworks, this study prioritizes depth of analysis within a clearly defined theoretical perspective.

The objective of this study is to investigate how Jimmy Fallon exercises host control through turn-taking mechanisms during his interview with Jesse Eisenberg. Specifically, the study seeks to identify how turn allocation, interruption, overlap, and TRP management function as interactional resources for organizing the flow of talk while sustaining an entertaining and informal interactional style. Accordingly, the guiding research question is: How does Jimmy Fallon exercise host control through turn-taking mechanisms during his interview with Jesse Eisenberg?

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to conversation analysis and media discourse studies. Theoretically, it demonstrates the continued relevance of classical conversation analytic theory for analyzing contemporary broadcast discourse. Empirically, it contributes to the limited body of research on entertainment-oriented talk shows by providing a detailed account of how interactional control is locally achieved. Practically, the findings offer insight into how media professionals manage conversational flow in televised interviews, highlighting the subtle coordination of authority and entertainment.

This study has several limitations. First, the analysis focuses on a single interview segment involving one host and one guest, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study concentrates exclusively on verbal interaction and does not incorporate multimodal resources such as gesture, gaze, or facial expression.

Finally, by relying solely on turn-taking theory, the study does not address broader ideological or socio-political dimensions of media discourse. These limitations, however, allow for a focused and in-depth examination of turn-taking as a core mechanism of host control and provide clear directions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conversation Analysis (CA) is an analytical approach that examines how social interaction is organized through talk-in-interaction. Rather than focusing on speakers' intentions or external social structures, CA investigates how participants themselves produce, recognize, and orient to conversational order on a turn-by-turn basis. This micro-analytic orientation makes CA particularly suitable for examining institutional interaction, where conversational organization reflects participants' unequal rights and responsibilities.

One of the foundational contributions of CA is the turn-taking model proposed by Sacks et al. (1974). This model explains how conversational turns are constructed and coordinated through turn construction units (TCUs) and transition relevance places (TRPs). TCUs constitute the basic units of talk that can be recognized as potentially complete, while TRPs mark points at which speaker transition may legitimately occur. The orderly exchange of turns is governed by a set of rules that prioritize next-speaker selection by the current speaker, followed by self-selection, or continuation by the current speaker.

In institutional interaction, the turn-taking system operates asymmetrically. Institutional speakers are typically granted greater rights to select next speakers, initiate topic shifts, and intervene in ongoing turns. From a CA perspective, these practices are not treated as disruptions but as institutionally sanctioned actions that participants orient to as legitimate. As a result, interruptions, overlaps, and turn extensions in institutional talk must be analyzed in relation to participants' roles and the sequential environment in which they occur.

Within interview settings, adjacency pairs play a crucial role in organizing participation. Question–answer sequences allow interviewers to allocate turns explicitly while constraining the scope of respondents' contributions. In addition, practices such as repair initiation and the management of overlaps function as resources for maintaining interactional coherence. These mechanisms enable institutional speakers to regulate the flow of interaction without resorting to explicit instructions or authoritative commands.

Several studies have applied CA to examine turn-taking practices in televised talk shows. Habibi et al., (2020) demonstrate that hosts maintain interactional dominance through systematic turn allocation and topic control in *Mata Najwa*. Their findings illustrate how the host's ability to select the next speaker and limit turn length is grounded in the turn-taking system rather than overt authority.

Similarly, Sari et al., (2021) show that hosts in the *Indonesia Lawyer Club* exercise control through interruptions and strategic topic shifts. These interruptions are produced at projected TRPs and treated as interactionally legitimate, reflecting the institutional asymmetry between host and guest. The study highlights how conversational control is embedded in the sequential organization of talk.

In addition, Nopriani et al., (2023) find that hosts in the *Brownis* talk show frequently employ overlaps, interruptions, and adjacency pairs to manage conversational flow. Their analysis supports the CA view that speaker change and participation rights are systematically organized. The use of these interactional practices enables hosts to balance entertainment with institutional control. In a different cultural context, Fitriyany (2024) analyze turn-taking behavior in the Japanese talk show *Oshareizumu* and show that hosts maintain control through backchannels, overlap regulation, and pause minimization. These findings suggest that while interactional styles may vary cross-culturally, the organization of turn-taking remains a central mechanism for enacting institutional authority.

Building on this line of research, a number of studies have examined turn-taking practices in Western entertainment talk shows using a conversation analytic approach. Matondang & Manullang (2023) demonstrate that turn-taking in *The Ellen Show* is systematically organized through host-led speaker selection, self-selection, and continuation of turns. Their findings indicate that the host maintains interactional control by managing turn allocation and regulating speaker transitions, showing that conversational dominance is achieved through the turn-taking system rather than explicit institutional authority. Similarly, Hasan (2021) show that hosts in *The Ellen Talk Show* exercise control by applying structured rules of turn-taking, including turn holding, turn yielding, and interruption at appropriate transition relevance places (TRPs). These practices enable the host to manage the flow of interaction while maintaining the informal and entertaining nature of the program. The study highlights how institutional control is embedded in the sequential organization of talk.

In addition, Rahayu et al. (2023) analyze turn-taking mechanisms in the *Insight with Desi Anwar* talk show and reveal that power and status differences between participants are reflected in patterns of turn allocation. Hosts are shown to dominate the interaction through topic initiation and turn management, while guests tend to follow the interactional constraints set by the host. This study reinforces the view that turn-taking operates as a key mechanism for enacting institutional asymmetry. In a more global entertainment context, Purwanti et al. (2025) investigate turn-taking strategies in *The Tonight Show* interview featuring BTS and find that hosts strategically manage turns through question design, turn pre-allocation, and controlled turn length. Their analysis demonstrates that even in celebrity-centered interviews, conversational order is carefully structured to maintain pacing and narrative coherence, supporting CA's claim that media talk is systematically organized.

Finally, Noval et al. (2022) apply Conversation Analysis to the *Actors on Actors* interview format and show that turn-taking is managed through overlap regulation, pauses, and turn recycling. The study illustrates how hosts and participants collaboratively maintain conversational flow while respecting institutional roles. These findings further confirm that turn-taking practices function as micro-interactional resources through which control and participation rights are locally accomplished.

Despite these studies, there is still limited attention to how host control is achieved moment by moment through the turn-taking system using a single, consistent analytical framework. Many studies emphasize the identification of strategies without fully tracing their sequential organization. Addressing this gap, the present study applies Sacks et al. (1974) turn-taking model as the sole framework to examine how host control is interactionally accomplished in a late-night talk show interview. In summary, while previous studies have documented the use of turn-taking strategies in various talk shows, this study adds to the literature by providing a fine-grained, sequential analysis of host control within a single consistent analytical framework. By focusing on moment-by-moment turn allocation, interruptions, overlaps, and TRP management, the study demonstrates how conversational authority is interactionally constructed rather than assumed, offering new insights into the micro-mechanisms of institutional talk in entertainment-oriented media.

METHOD

Design and Samples

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in Conversation Analysis (CA), an approach that examines how social interaction is systematically organized through talk-in-interaction. CA emphasizes naturally occurring data and focuses on participants' orientations as displayed in the sequential organization of talk (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008; Sacks & Schegloff, Emanuel A. Jefferson, 1974). This design is appropriate for the present study because it allows for a fine-grained analysis of turn-taking practices through which interactional control is accomplished in institutional settings. The data consist of a publicly available interview segment from *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* featuring actor Jesse Eisenberg. The interview was accessed via YouTube and selected using purposive sampling. In conversation analytic research, purposive sampling is commonly employed to select interactional data that exhibit relevant phenomena for analysis rather than to achieve statistical representativeness (Sidnell, 2010; ten Have, 2007). This particular segment was chosen because it provides clear instances of host guest interaction and displays recurring turn-taking practices characteristic of late-night talk show interviews.

Instruments and Procedures

The primary instrument of this study is a video recording of a selected interview segment obtained from *YouTube*, specifically from the official channel of *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* (Fallon, 2025). The selected video has an exact duration of 8 minutes and 02 seconds, covering the full interview segment prior to the introduction of the next guest. Video data are particularly valuable in Conversation Analysis (CA) because they allow for repeated observation of interactional details and enable close attention to timing, speaker transitions, pauses, and overlap (Heath et al., 2010). The use of publicly accessible broadcast material also ensures that the interaction represents naturally occurring institutional talk rather than elicited or experimental data.

The video was transcribed manually by the researcher to ensure close analytic engagement with the data. The transcription was conducted through a multi-stage process, beginning with the production of an initial verbatim transcript based on repeated viewing of the video. The transcript was then checked line by line against the recording to verify lexical accuracy, turn transitions, pauses, overlaps, and instances of audience response (e.g., laughter and applause). This verification process was repeated to ensure transcription accuracy and internal consistency, while temporal markers (timestamps) were retained throughout the transcript to allow precise reference to interactional moments. Although the transcription does not employ full Jeffersonian notation, it follows simplified transcription conventions that are widely accepted in CA research when the analytical focus does not require detailed phonetic representation (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008; Sidnell & Stivers, 2013).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using the turn-taking model proposed by Sacks & Schegloff, Emanuel A. Jefferson (1974) as the sole analytical framework. This model provides systematic tools for examining how speakers construct turns, project possible completion points, and coordinate speaker change through turn construction units (TCUs) and transition relevance places (TRPs). In CA, analysis proceeds inductively, beginning with close examination of the data rather than hypothesis testing (Heritage, 1984; ten Have, 2007). For analytical purposes, the transcript comprises approximately 35 interactional turns organized into 13 interactional segments, each reflecting a distinct interactional activity within the interview. From these segments, 11 analytically relevant excerpts were selected for close sequential analysis. These excerpts represent moments in which the host actively manages conversational flow, including turn allocation, interruptions, cooperative overlaps (e.g., laughter), and topic transitions. Excerpt selection was guided by interactional relevance to the research focus rather than by proportional or mechanical sampling, in accordance with established principles of Conversation Analysis

The analysis focused on interactional segments in which the host actively manages the conversational flow. These include instances of host-initiated turn allocation, interruptions of extended turns, cooperative overlaps such as laughter, and topic transitions. Each segment was analysed sequentially to identify how the host exploits projected TRPs to intervene, redirect talk, or reallocate speaking turns. Following CA principles, analytic claims are grounded in observable features of the interaction and supported by detailed excerpts from the data (Drew, 2005; Sidnell, 2010). Through this process, conversational control is treated as an interactional accomplishment rather than an explicit exercise of institutional authority.

RESULT AND DISUSSION

Within the framework of Conversation Analysis, host-initiated turn allocation constitutes a central mechanism through which conversational order is maintained in institutional interaction. In interview settings, hosts routinely select the next speaker, most commonly through interrogatives, thereby exercising control over turn distribution while preserving the appearance of ordinary conversation. According to Sacks & Schegloff, Emanuel A. Jefferson (1974) ,when the current speaker selects the next speaker, that selection takes precedence over self-selection.

Excerpt 1 (00:23–00:27)
Fallon : *"Can you clear that up and just admit…?"*
Eisenberg : *"It was."*
Fallon : *"Okay. It was. Alright."*

This opening exchange shows Fallon exercising host control by designing a confirmation-type interrogative that both selects Eisenberg and narrows the response to a minimal second-pair part. By immediately closing the sequence with evaluative receipts, Fallon demonstrates control over who speaks, what counts as a sufficient response, and when the move ends. In direct terms of the research question, host control is accomplished here through turn allocation and adjacency-pair design that compress elaboration and keep pacing tight.

Excerpt 2 (00:33–00:37)
Eisenberg : *"People will come back to theaters after—"*
Fallon : *"There's only so many kind of cute TikTok videos I can make…"*

Fallon times his entry at a projectable completion (a TRP), turning *Eisenberg*'s earnest projection into a host-led quip that recenters stance and tempo. No repair is initiated, which indicates that such TRP-sensitive interruption is treated as legitimate in this institutional context. Regarding the research question, Fallon's control appears in the regulation of turn length and prevention of topic drift by exploiting TRPs for precisely timed interruptions.

Excerpt 3 (00:39–00:43)
Fallon: *"What did you—what did you think of this after hearing about this heist?"*
Eisenberg: *"When I read about that, I remember feeling like…"*

Through a stance-inviting interrogative, Fallon not only selects the next speaker but also pre-figures the topical domain ("after hearing about this heist"), thereby steering the shape of Eisenberg's response. Minimal continuers that follow operate as graduated ratification, allowing an extended TCU while keeping it contingent on host uptake. For the research question, this exemplifies host control as agenda setting via question design that guides content without overtly restricting the guest.

Excerpt 4 (01:10–01:17)
Eisenberg : *"…they probably are not doing that."*
Fallon : *"This isn't Robin Hood thieves."*
Eisenberg : *"I know."*

Fallon's overlapping formulation works as a collaborative completion that subtly reframes the moral stance while maintaining affiliation. Eisenberg's immediate "I know" displays alignment and uptake of the host's reframing. In relation to the research question, Fallon's control is exercised by using affiliative overlap to adjust stance and interpretation without openly seizing the floor.

Excerpt 5 (01:58–02:06)
Fallon : *"Uh, in the movie, you play a magician and an illusionist, / And backstage you were telling me that you actually performed at your kid's class at school."*

Instead of asking a direct question, Fallon projects the next activity with a declarative prompt that positions Eisenberg to tell the school-trick story. This is selection through topical projection: the host pre-specifies what action the guest should do next (narrate), re-anchoring the interview to the film's magic theme. This directly addresses the research question by showing host control as activity pre-specification rather than explicit instruction.

Excerpt 6 (02:47–02:53)
Eisenberg : *"I want to— I want to try it to you."*
Fallon : *"Try it on the show?"*
Eisenberg : *"I want to try the same trick."*

Fallon's reformulation ratifies and institutionalizes the proposal ("on the show"), granting an extended guest turn while bounding it within show constraints. Audience alignment follows his uptake. With respect to the research question, control is achieved through conditional authorization and format framing, where the guest's extended floor time is host-granted and host-bounded.

Excerpt 7 (03:20–03:27)
Fallon : *"So, um, okay, we're going to play a little game called 'throw it away.'"*

At a clear TRP after setup talk, Fallon names and launches the next activity, defining the sequence template (prompt → choice → elimination) and the turn-types that are now relevant. This directly illustrates the research question: the host controls the interaction by initiating activity sequences at TRPs, formatting expectations and permissible next moves.

Excerpt 8 (03:27–04:07)
Eisenberg : *"Red or black?" —*
Fallon : *"Red." —*
Eisenberg : *"Throw away red…" → "face or numbers?" → "king or jack?" → "Black king?"*
[Laughter / Drumroll / Cheers]

Although the guest appears to lead, the procedural rails were set by the host in Excerpt 7, and Fallon's contributions are slot-constrained responses within that template. Production cues synchronize with progress markers in a host-framed structure. As the research question asks how control is exercised, this moment shows control working structurally: the guest executes a designed sequence, while the host retains ownership of the format and can pace or terminate it.

Excerpt 9 (04:20–04:28 & 04:32–04:52)
Fallon : *"Now I kind of almost understand how the trick is done."*
Eisenberg : *"Do you?"*
Fallon : *"I think so."*
(step-by-step clarification; "Wait, you're right… What?!" / "No, I was doing a real good trick.")

Fallon initiates repair not to correct error but to shape the epistemic contour of the reveal controlling how much explanation is provided and at what pace. Incremental probes and astonishment tokens keep the audience engaged and the method only partially exposed. In terms of the research question, host control here is tempo and engagement management via repair sequences.

Excerpt 10 (04:55–05:09)
Fallon : *"Do you have multiple cards? … In your other shoe?"*
Eisenberg : *"No… I could have one other card… That's a fantastic trick."*
Fallon : *"I love it!"*

Focused, brief probes bound the explanatory space, allowing Fallon to test hypotheses and then seal the sequence with evaluative uptake. This is a clear

instance of the research question in action: the host manages expansion and closure opportunities through incremental probing and well-timed sequence closing.

Excerpt 11 (06:32–07:11)
Fallon : *"What do we tell everyone, and how do we set everyone up for 'Now You See Me, Now You Don't'?"*
Eisenberg : *(brief promotional summary)*
Fallon : *"Here's Jesse Eisenberg in 'Now You See Me, Now You Don't.' Take a look."*

Fallon designs a pre-closing that allocates a final promotional turn and projects segment termination; he then reclaims terminal rights by launching the clip. This addresses the research question by showing how the host uses pre-closing and terminal control to manage how and when the interaction ends, integrating turn allocation and TRP exploitation with phase management.

Taken together, these moments show Fallon exercising host control through turn allocation, TRP-sensitive interruption, affiliative overlap, selection via topical projection, activity launch and procedural framing, repair used to manage tempo and engagement, incremental probing for bounded expansion, and pre-closing that centralizes termination rights. The talk appears spontaneous and affiliative, yet participation and trajectory are asymmetrically organized in favor of the host at the micro-sequential level precisely the interactional logic your research question targets.

The analysis demonstrates that Fallon's authority is not declaratively imposed but sequentially produced through ordinary conversation-analytic resources. Across the opening adjacency pairs and early stance-setting, he repeatedly allocates the next speaker and pre-figures the relevant response (e.g., confirmation, stance, promo), then closes sequences swiftly to maintain tempo. These moves answer the research question by showing host control realized in the micro-timing of turns who talks next, what counts as a sufficient second pair part, and when a sequence is brought to an end while the surface remains informal and humorous. A second thread concerns TRP-sensitive intervention as the engine of pacing. Fallon's interruptions occur at projectable completions, so they are treated as normatively acceptable rather than troublesome. Entering exactly at a TRP allows him to re-specify the ongoing action (e.g., pivoting earnest rationale to a quip, or moving from explanation to demonstration) and to trim turn length without triggering repair. In practical terms, this shows how the host governs rhythm and trajectory by exploiting the architecture of TCUs/TRPs precisely how control can coexist with a relaxed, spontaneous feel.

Overlap in this interview operates as control-through-affiliation. Fallon's collaborative completions and affiliative overlaps do not compete for the floor; instead, they reframe stance and steer interpretation while preserving rapport. Because the guest accepts such reframings immediately, the overlap achieves two

things at once: social smoothness and directional influence. In relation to the research question, this clarifies that host control need not appear adversarial; it can be exercised covertly through aligning actions that still move the talk where the host needs it to go.

Host control is also visible in activity management: Fallon launches and names new sequences at TRPs (e.g., turning the segment into a "game"), which formats turn-types (prompt/choice/elimination) and sets procedural rails the guest then follows. Even when the guest appears to lead during the demonstration, the execution remains structurally host-owned: progress markers, audience cues, and the possibility of timely closure are all aligned to a format the host has framed. Thus, segment-level structure is accomplished through micro-moves of naming, timing, and framing.

Following the trick, Fallon uses repair and incremental probes to manage epistemic exposure and audience engagement. By projecting partial understanding and asking short, targeted questions, he paces the reveal, tests plausible inferences, and then seals the sequence with evaluation. Here, repair is not merely for correcting trouble; it becomes a tool for tempo control and reveal choreography, keeping curiosity high while protecting the trick's mystique. This directly addresses the research question by showing control over how much and how fast knowledge is made available.

Finally, the interview's endgame consolidates pre-closing and terminal rights. Fallon allocates a final promotional turn, projects closure, and then launches the clip, exercising the institutional right to decide when and how the segment ends. Taken together, the findings portray a model of managed informality: question design allocates and constrains, TRP-timed entries regulate length and action, affiliative overlap reframes stance, activity launches format participation, repair/probes calibrate disclosure, and pre-closing centralizes termination. The talk looks casual, but participation and sequence trajectories are asymmetrically organized in favor of the host precisely how Fallon exercises host control through turn-taking in this late-night interview.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that host control in a late-night talk show interview is produced sequentially, not declared. Working within Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson's (1974) model, the analysis demonstrates how Fallon allocates next speakers, constrains response types through question design, enters at projected TRPs to regulate turn length and re-specify ongoing action, uses affiliative overlap to reframe stance without friction, launches and names activities to format participation, and employs repair and incremental probes to manage tempo and epistemic exposure. Together, these micro-practices sustain flow and humor while keeping participation asymmetrically organized in favor of the host—directly addressing the research question of how host control is exercised through turn-taking.

Theoretically, the findings reaffirm the continued relevance of classical CA turn-taking for contemporary broadcast discourse: institutional authority can be traced to ordinary interactional machinery rather than to overt directives. Practically, the study offers a blueprint for media professionals: deploy stance-inviting interrogatives for agenda setting, exploit TRPs for clean interventions and activity shifts, use affiliative overlap for subtle reframing, and treat repair as a tool for pacing and reveal management. While the single-segment focus and emphasis on verbal conduct limit generalizability and exclude multimodal detail, this narrow lens allows for a fine-grained account of how control is organized moment-by-moment. Future research can extend these insights through multimodal analysis, cross-genre comparisons (e.g., news or political interviews), and cross-host/ cross-culture studies to examine how similar mechanisms are adapted to different participation frameworks and audience expectations.

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