CHAPTER V

Discussion
And
Conclusion
CHAPTER - V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

THE FINDINGS OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH ARE AS FOLLOWS.

1- Speaker's status has differential effect on conversation memory. More specifically the remarks of the speaker having high status are better remembered than the remarks of the speaker having low status.

2- Listener's status also have differential impact on conversation memory i.e. subjects having low status show better conversation memory than the subjects having high status.

3- Subject's (Listener's) emotional state was found to have differential influence on conversation memory. More specifically it was found that depressed subjects have better conversation memory than elated subjects.

4- Version of conversation remarks also influence conversation memory. Variation in version of conversation was found to have differential impact on conversation memory. i.e. Assertive version of remarks were better remembered than non-assertive version of remarks.

5- There is an interactional effect of speaker's status and listener's (subject's) status on conversation memory.

6- No significant interactional effect was found between speaker's status and subject's emotional state.

7- No significant interactional effect was found between speaker's status and version of conversation remarks.
8- No significant interactional effect was found between listener's status and listener's emotional state.
9- There is an interactional effect of listener's status and version of conversation remarks on conversation memory.
10- There is an interactional effect of subject's emotional state and version of conversation remarks on conversation memory.

The first finding of the present research i.e. speaker's status does affect conversation memory is in consonant with the findings obtained by Holtgraves Socall & Srull (1989). As a matter of fact there are two ways in which status information may affect conversation memory. First, information about speaker's status may affect reconstructive processes. The logic of such an effect is simple. As suggested by Sachs (1974) ordinarily the memory for the exact wording of conversation is poor and therefore subject's tend to reconstruct surface forms on the basis of information relevant to the communication situation. Since speaker's status is an important contextual feature that is related to assertiveness or non-assertiveness of the remarks, speaker's status might have predictable effect on these reconstructions. Specifically higher status speakers are assumed to use more assertive remarks than low status speakers. Subjects who believe a speaker to be high status may tend to remember his or her remarks as being more assertive than they were.

There is substantial body of evidence to the effect that assertive remarks are better remembered than the non-assertive remarks (Gibbs, 1981, Kemper &Thissen, 1981). Moreover there are some researches indicating that sarcastic remarks are better remembered than non-sarcastic remarks (R.W.Gibbs Jr., 1986, Sperber & William 1984), and remarks with high interactional content are better remembered than remarks with low
interactional contents (Keenan & Macwhinney, 1977). Since subjects tend to perceive non-assertive remarks uttered by high status speaker as assertive, therefore they shown better conversation memory for the remarks uttered by high status speakers than the same remarks uttered by low status speakers. The finding of our study provide evidence to reconstructive processes.

The second way in which status information may affect conversation memory is through constructive process. It is also possible that status information may have an impact on the encoding of the remarks. As stated earlier if there is an expectation that high status speaker tends to be assertive, this expectation may affect encoding such that the remarks of high status speakers are encoded as more assertive than the same remarks spoken by low status speakers (Clark 1985, Gibbs 1985, Levinson 1979). Thus encoding processes also provide adequate explanation for the first finding of our research.

The second finding of the present research i.e. subjects having low status show better conversation memory than subjects having high status is consistent with our social set up. One potential explanation for this finding is a differential rehearsal hypothesis. According to this hypothesis subjects having low status resorted to rehearsal of the conversation between two persons whereas subjects having high status might have not rehearsed the content of the conversation. This differential rehearsal may count for the differences in the recall performance of these two types of subjects. This disposition of a person having low status motivate him to implicitly rehearsed whatever information is received by him in order
to retain the information. The person having high status, on the other hand, generally does not attach much importance to a conversation until and unless it is directly related to him. Consequently he is unlikely to rehearse the information and to retain it.

Another possible explanation of the second finding of present research is that a listener who is having low status is likely to pay more attention to a conversation or for that matter any information than the listener who is having high status. This differential attention given by low and high status listeners to conversations may account for present finding. It is well established that an information that receives greater attention is better remembeed (Schmidt, 1991).

Third finding of the present research i.e. recall performance of depressed subjects are better than elated subjects, is quite interesting, there are numerous researches which have shown mood dependent memory depressed subjects significantly recall more unpleasant events, past failures where as elated subjects recall significantly more pleasant events and past success (Kovacs & Beck, 1978, Clark & Karp, 1978, Bower, 1981, Teasdale & Fogarty 1979). In the light of these studies we can simply suggest that depressed subjects might have interpreted the contents of the conversation as unpleasant or as a threat to their ego and self esteem where as elated subjects might have not interpreted the contents of the conversation as pleasant. This differential interpretation of the contents of conversation may account for our finding. This contention receives strength when we go through the content of the conversation. The content of the conversation given subjects reveals that the conversation deals with a time
bound scheme which is likely to be interpreted by some individuals as unpleasant and as a threat to one's ego and self esteem. Thus it is possible that depressed subjects might have interpreted this conversation as unpleasant and consequently showed better recall of this conversation. The finding consistent with mood dependent memory hypotheses.

The fourth finding of the present investigation i.e. assertive remarks were remembered better than non-assertive remarks is too obvious to need any explanation. The finding is not only consistent with the finding obtained by numerous researchers but also fits well in the speech act theory proposed by (Austin, 1962; Scarle).

Holtgrave, & Srull Socall (1989) have demonstrated that assertive version of speaker's remarks are better remembered than non-assertive version of remarks. Gibbs (1981) and Kemper & Thissen (1981) have observed that wording that violates contextual expectations are better remembered than the wording that do not violate contextual expectations. Green, Smith & Lindsey (1990) found that memory for pragmatic form of a compliance gaining tactic was greater than memory for elements of the tactic specific prepositional content. Our fourth finding is in agreement with these findings.

Speech act theory hypothesized that requests that violate the conversational conventions governing the polite and direct requests by speakers would be accurately remembered. Our finding provides empirical evidence to this theory. Assertive version of remarks may be considered as a violation of conversational convention hence better remembered.
Another potential explanation for the finding under discussion may be provided by differential rehearsal hypothesis and differential retention hypothesis. As a matter of fact when any remark is uttered assertively then the listener interprets it as more important and consequently pays more attention to it and at least implicitly rehearse it so that this important piece of information may be stored in his long term memory repository. If this is the mechanism then listeners are expected to show better memory for assertive version of remarks than for non-assertive versions. The fourth finding of our research provides empirical evidence to this expectation.

There is an interactional effect of speakers status and listeners status on conversation memory. In other words speaker's having high status and listener also having high status show markedly better conversation memory (in terms of recall) than speaker having low status and listener having high status but the difference in conversation memory of speaker having high status and listener, having low status is marginally better than the conversation memory of speaker having low status and listener also having low status. That is the effect of having low status of speaker depresses conversation memory for listener who has high status but facilitates conversation memory for listener who has low status. The difference in recall performance high and low status listener depends on the status of the speaker.

The interaction effect of speaker's status and subject's emotional state on conversation memory is insignificant. This
insignificant interactional effect suggest that the recall performance of elated and depressed subjects is independent of speaker's status. The finding reveals that though speaker's status and subject's emotional state both influence the recall performance significantly when considered separately but when both variables are combined its interaction becomes insignificant.

The next two interactional effects i.e. the interactional effect of speaker's status and version of conversation remarks and interactional effect of listener's status and listener's emotional state on conversation memory are also insignificant. These insignificant interactional effects may also be explained in the same way as we have explained the first insignificant interactional effect.

So far as significant interactional effect of listener's status and version of conversation is concerned, it shows that listener having low status show markedly superior conversation memory when assertive version of conversation is used as compare to listener having high status with assertive version of conversation but listeners having low status show poorer conversation memory when non assertive version of conversation is used than those listeners who have high status under non-assertive of conversation. This finding of the present research leads us to conclude that the recall scores of listeners having high and low status are not independent of version of conversation remarks rather recall scores of the subjects are the product of listener's status and version of conversation remarks. In other words neither listener's status nor version of conversation alone influences conversation memory i.e. both listener's status and version of conversation remarks play equally important role as determinants of conversation memory.
This finding not only provides empirical support to the previous findings (Holtigrave, Srull & Socall, 1989; Gibbs 1981; Thissen and Kemper 1981; Green Smith & Lindsay 1990) but also makes it clear that subjects who have low status may perceive assertive version of conversation as more assertive and hence they retain it, whereas subjects having high status are likely to perceive assertive version of conversation as less assertive and they are not likely to make any effort to retain the information. On the other hand, subjects having low status are likely to perceive non-assertive version of conversation as a request. Since in our social environment individual having low status get rare chance to be requested and when they get such a chance they start perceiving themselves equivalent to individuals having high status and hence they are likely to neglect or ignore such type of request. Thus subjects having low status show poorer recall performance with non-assertive version of conversation. Whereas subjects having high status are likely to perceive non-assertive version of conversation as a humble request. Since individuals having high status frequently receive requests from masses of the society they are likely to impress upon the masses that they are very concerned with them in order to command their social support. Thus, by remembering their requests they win over their social support. The finding that high status listeners show better recall of non-assertive version of conversation than low status listener prove this point.

The last significant interactional effect of subjects emotional state and version of conversation remarks reveal that subjects with depressed mood show markedly better recall than subjects with elated mood when assertive version of conversation is used. Whereas
subjects with depressed mood show a strong tendency to perform poorer than subjects with elated mood when non-assertive version of conversation is used. This tendency is not visible in our data but would have shown certainly had we have used larger number of subjects. A glance of the graph (Figure 2.5) makes this tendency very clear. There are numerous researches which have shown mood dependent memory. Depressed subjects significantly recall more unpleasant events and past failures [Kovacks & Beck, 1979; Bower, 1981; Teasdale & Fogarty 1979; an Isen, Shalker, Clark & Karp, 1978). In the light of these studies we can simply suggest that depressed subjects might have interpreted the content of the conversation as unpleasant or as a threat to their ego and self esteem whereas elated subjects might have not interpreted content of the conversation may account for our finding. This contention receives strength when we go through the content of the conversation. The contents of the conversation given to subjects reveal that the conversation deals with a time bound scheme which is likely to be interpreted by some individuals as a threat to once ego and self esteem. Thus it is possible that depressed subjects might have interpreted this conversation as unpleasant and consequently showed better recall of this conversation; the finding consistent with mood dependent memory hypothesis.

The overall findings of the present research not only open a new area of research in memory but also provide significant information about the development of interpersonal relation and highlight the process of impression formation. It is an open secret that our interpersonal relations and our impression about the other individuals are determined to a great extent by the social status of the
individuals as well as the way other individuals communicate with us. Thus we have a tendency to value more of those informations communicated by our leaders than when the same information is uttered by ordinary individuals. This process helps in continuation of leaders and followers relationships. As soon as this process ceases to work the entire relationship between followers and leaders collapses. Thus the finding of our research makes it crystal clear that we remember those informations which are uttered by a speaker having high status, for we have tendency to form positive impression about such speaker's.

Our research also demonstrates the importance of emotional mood in the development of interpersonal relations as well as in the information of impression about other individuals.

As mentioned earlier the findings of the present study may be applied for understanding interpersonal relationship and process of impression formation, it would be however much interesting if a study is designed in which officers and their subordinates are used as subjects. The conversation memory of these officers and subordinates would certainly help in understanding the interpersonal relationships between officers and subordinates in more meaning full way.

In our study we have used two types of emotional mood i.e. depressed and elated mood, it would be however more informative a study is designed using three types of emotional states i.e. depressed, elated and normal mood state.

Furthermore, the findings of present research highlights the fact that finding of our research would have been more clear had we used a larger number of subjects.

Finally it may be concluded that memory for various
aspects of conversation is an important component of social interaction. Impressions are often formed and social judgment made on the basis of what is remembered from verbal interactions. However, conversation memory is far from veridical. What is remembered and how it is remembered no doubt depend on many factors, such as the topic, the participants goals, the setting and so on. Despite its importance, however, conversation memory has been a neglected topic in the social cognition literature. We believe that uncovering the complexities of conversation memory will add significantly to our understanding of many social psychological phenomena.