5 Evasiveness and Depersonalization

5.1 Introduction

According to Webster’s dictionary, evasiveness means “deliberate vagueness or ambiguity; failing to answer a question while trying to seem as though one is answering”. It has been the focal point of substantial research literature in discourse and communication studies (Bavelas et al., 1985, 1990; Bull, 1994, 1998; Galasinski, 1996a, 1996b; Greatbatch, 1986; Harris, 1991; Heritage, 1985; Obeng, 1997 among others). Speakers may employ evasive communication as a result of the necessity to disclose sensitive topics to remedy critical situation driving from this necessity. This type of communication may emerge as a critical option, a socio-cultural necessity to continue the interaction in socially stigmatized topics smoothly. As a result, people may either move beyond the parameters of the questions by overtly acknowledging that they will deviate from the topic of interaction, or they may covertly signal that they are not going to engage in the conversation.

This chapter provides an overview of the dynamics of evading answers in terms of overt and covert practices, and some possible self-presentational consequences of these strategies in interpersonal relationships. After a comprehensive examination of the practices through which answers are constructed, depersonalization as an evasive strategy will be singled out to reveal how several levels of discourse work together to manage, sustain and create an impression on others.

Discreetness on culturally sanctioned topics is a major part of Turkish culture and social pressure is almost doubled if the speakers are female. Many proverbs and sayings such as Baş yarılır fes içinde, kol kırılır yen içinde (One’s head is injured within one’s cap; one’s arm breaks inside one’s sleeve), Gizli çamaşırlarını açma (Disclose not your secret linen), Kazan üstü kapalı kaynar (The cauldron boils with the lid on) underline that it is undesirable for people to reveal personal information in Turkish culture. Several studies (Bergmann, 1992; BL, 1987; Holtgraves, 1997; among others) show that taboo topics are avoided and handled evasively. Not surprisingly, Turkish women avoid direct, clear-cut statements and communicate evasively, as this mode of interaction is less risky and
socially more secure with respect to cultural and gender concerns. The finding of this dissertation cannot immediately be generalized beyond the cultural roots of the speakers involved, this is, a rural culture with little education. Duyan and Duyan (2005), however, present convincing evidence that Turkish people in general continue to hold traditional ideas about sexuality, and traditional codes and norms still prevail in all classes of the society. Their study of university students’ attitudes towards sexuality reveals that sexuality is talked about only among close friends of the same sex in privacy. Speakers’ privacy-protecting self-presentation behavior as the artifact of culture-specific normative expectations, affecting their discourse composition and style of interaction, can thus be seen in all layers of the society regardless of individuals’ education and socio-economic background.

Prevailing analyses of self-presentation in evasive communication reveal that tactics of self-presentation vary along the dimensions of protective and defensive self-presentation. Defensive self-presentation aims at repairing potentially damaging self images in the form of overt justifications and resistance in undesirable negative situations. Protective self-presentation emerges in covert strategies designed to fit the appropriate circumstances and to leave the field with the least damage.

A micro-analysis of depersonalization—a covert evasive strategy evidenced by the use of pronouns sen (you), biz (we) and impersonal nominal references insan/adam (human/man) instead of ben (I)—will throw light on explicit views on representation of self and negotiation of social roles. Pronominal choices are important indicators of socio-cultural and gender orientation as they enable speakers to accomplish multifunctional interactional goals. The discursive functions of pronoun shifts express self-detachment, involvement or solidarity with topics and participants, diffusing responsibility. These goals can be identified in reference to self-directed goals and other-oriented facework. Self-directed goals are different pronominal forms other than ben employed as a result of protective and defensive self-presentation strategies (see Kansu-Yetkiner forthcoming b). Other-oriented facework, as it is discussed in BL (1987) (see Chapter 2), is performed for others’ face wants through solidarity concerns, conventional indirectness or impersonalization of speaker and hearer by defocusing the agent.

After a review of the literature on evasiveness and the reasons for evasive communication of Turkish women, I will explain the main dimensions in the classification of evasive communication in the following section. I will present an analysis of evasive strategies in section 3. Section 4 will focus on depersonalization through pronominal shift. Section 5 concludes with a discussion of some implications and consequences of these studies.

5.2 Evasive Communication

The vast and growing literature on evasiveness has concentrated into two camps; question-focused studies and answer-focused studies. Question-focused studies can be classified into three groups (see Wilson, 1990). The logico-formal approach attempts to set the limits of formal and structural definition of questions. The focus of the functional approach is on the role of questions within various interaction situations. The third approach is the sequential approach, which argues
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that what is and what is not a question is determined through the sequential placement of that form within the ongoing interaction. All these three perspectives have been applied to political discourse analysis (see Harris, 1991 (logico-formal), Bull and Mayer, 1988 (functional), Greatbatch, 1986 (sequential), Jucker, 1986 (logico formal/functional)).

This chapter concentrates on the answer-focused approach. However, drawing hard and fast lines around what is and what is not an evasive answer to a question is indeed not straightforward. Depending on context, interactants and group dynamics, definitions are broadened and narrowed, and the categorizations are changed in line with how evasion is defined and what it covers as a strategy.

Evasiveness phenomena within the framework of answer evasion are mainly discussed in the political discourse literature. Different perspectives ranging from implicitness and explicitness of the speakers in their evasive behavior, namely overt and covert evasiveness, agenda shifting procedures, to responses resisting the agenda of the questions are suggested. Bull and Mayer (1988:10) developed a typology of answer-focused strategies: ignoring the question asked, acknowledging the question without answering it, questioning the question, attacking the question, attacking the interviewer, apologizing, stating the question being asked has already been answered, declining to answer the question, repeating an answer to a previous question and giving an incomplete answer. Although this typology was later criticized by Wilson (1990) for having an intuitive approach and for providing no argument of any kind to indicate the structural or formal analysis of questions and responses, Bull & Mayer’s typology opens the doors of the tactical strategies of speakers with respect to self-presentational goals. Harris (1991) later creates three broad categories of response attitudes in political discourse: direct answers, indirect answers, and challenges. She considers a response evasive if it includes (a) indirectness or (b) challenges. The studies conducted by Galasinski (1996a, 1996b) and Clayman (2001) distinguish “overt” and “covert” evasive strategies and introduce them as two alternative tactics of evasiveness. In overt evasion, the speakers directly signal that they are not going to give a cooperative answer, whereas in a covert evasion strategy they may pretend to answer the question, while answering a different one. Rather than working on the implicitness or explicitness of the speaker in their communication strategy, Greatbatch (1986) concentrates on interviewees’ attempts to exert some degree of control over what they discuss through agenda shifting maneuvers. For Clayman (2001) evading questions covers practices through which interviewees manage responses that resist the agenda of the questions raised by an interviewer. For that reason, he employs “resistance” as an umbrella term to denote any reaction against the agenda of the question. In this study, the dynamics of evasion is employed to provide a valuable conceptual framework for highlighting “gendered” self-presentation styles in the analysis of talk on taboo topics triggering social anxiety.

Bavelas et al. (1988, 1990) provide a comprehensive frame which is helpful in describing what evasiveness covers as a strategy and how and why Turkish women could prefer to evade questions. According to the theory of equivocation devised by Bavelas and colleagues (1990) people tend to equivocate when they are faced with what Bavelas et al. call an “avoidance-avoidance” conflict, in which all
of the possible replies to a question are risky and have negative consequences, but a reply is still expected.

In a critical situation designed for this study, there are three main choices of interational mode for Turkish women: acceptance of communication, rejection of communication, and disqualification. Considering the conformity to cultural interactional style which requires them to treat the interviewer cordially, Turkish women may agree to interact. If they continue interacting at a high level of involvement, damage to their present multiple identities (as a woman in the community, wife and mother in the family) and/or their past and future image may occur. Concerning the construction of gender in Turkish society, this option for Turkish women is too risky and dangerous. Hence, they do not agree on speaking straightforwardly (see the notion of face in the section on Turkish culture in Chapter 2).

As a second choice, physical withdrawal from the identity threatening circumstances can be a preferred course of interaction for Turkish women, since the speakers are then removed from the risky transaction. In other words, speakers can make explicit to the interviewer that they do not want to cooperate and leave the field. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, an open confrontation appears to be impossible when the respondents consider their status as a host who is culturally responsible for the entertainment of the guest (interviewer) invited to a respondent’s own house to conduct an audio-taped conversation. If there is a rejection, respondents will not keep their promise. In other words, refusal will bring about a culturally improper mode of interaction that threatens the face wants of both sides. Schlenker and Leary (1985:181) put forward that “when people remain on the scene but evidence virtually no involvement, they run the risk of being regarded as aloof, snobbish, disinterested, socially inept and dull”. Hence both reactions to these competing pressures—leaving the field and staying—silent are likely to be negative in terms of losing face, risking social reputation.

Disqualification as the third option of Turkish women refers to avoiding a clear style of any kind considering the negative consequences of a direct reply as they act in two roles as a host who should ponder the face wants of the guest and as a person who cannot risk her face wants and the honor associated with the notion of face. Hence, the conflict between the immediate context and larger social context represents an “avoidance-avoidance conflict” and causes women to find a midway, which is an evasive interactional style. Concerning this interactional framework, the main focus in this chapter will be upon responsive evasive strategies as a reaction to the necessity of disclosing on face-threatening questions in a situation designed to introduce an “avoidance-avoidance conflict”.

5.3 Evasive Strategies in TWIST

In this section I will discuss my categorization of evasive strategies based on the literature and on what I encountered in TWIST. First, the process in which I went back and forth between the previous classifications in the literature and my data will be explained. In this process, after establishing the main categorization by following the dichotomy between overt and covert practices proposed in the literature, they were further divided into sub-categories considering the features of
TWIST. Second, the construction of a new broader categorization resulting from the difference between political interviews and the TWIST corpus in terms of different styles of self-presentation and facework strategies will be discussed.

To construct my categorization, the whole corpus was read again and again to identify the patterns of impression management and facework strategies performed in employment of these interactional styles. First of all questions posed to the respondents were highlighted to observe responsive strategies of the speakers. Then the nature of the responses was evaluated to see whether they formed direct answers or manipulation of the questions. I consider that evasiveness in Turkish women’s interactional style signals deceptiveness and validity as two main themes which go along the continuum of covert and overt evasiveness (see also Miller and Stiff, 1993). Deceptiveness in my analysis was associated with covert practices where answers were veiled through the manipulation of discourse focus, indirectness and ostensible compliance. Validity, where the intention of the interaction was stated in a relatively clearer way, was emphasized in overt practices through which uncooperativeness and resistance. Hence, I went back to Clayman’s (2001) and Galasinski’s (1996a and 1996b) studies to compare the strategies I found in my corpus with those in the literature. Some answer types in TWIST failed to fit into any of the suggested categories in Clayman (2001) and Galasinski (1996a and 1996b). Thus, concerning the different genres (i.e. political discourse vs. daily discourse), the evasive styles in political interviews were either excluded, or some additional categories were added to fit some examples into the classification, such as ostensible compliance and the tactic of telling long narratives and different types of resistance.

Construction of a broader categorization in my corpus results from several differences between political and non-political interviews. Bull (1998) points out that politicians’ replies are intended not for the interviewer, but for the listening audiences. In other words, politicians appear on television as the representative of their party and their voters in order to manage and save and/or defend their collective face. The participants of the interviews on delicate topics, on the other hand, take into account the reaction of both other participants in the course of interaction and their wider social contacts which do not exist in the interaction. While politicians avoid direct replies, which could put them in a difficult situation or would offend a substantial number of voters, Turkish women take into consideration their family, husband and the society they live in.

Some scholars point out uniqueness and special form of political interviews as compared to any other social interactions. According to Heritage (1985:112) “news interviews is a functionally specialized form of social interaction produced for an overhearing audience and restricted by institutionalized conventions”. Political interviews are usually restricted to one single agenda. Within the frame of this specific agenda, potential questions raised by the interviewer can be more or less anticipated, and the answers can be preplanned. In this sense, it is possible to talk about a tendency toward agenda shifting procedures for politicians in order to foreground accomplishments, and to conceal failures on the topic on the agenda. In our case, however, since the respondents are non-politicians without a specific agenda, they try to manage questions on critical and delicate topics with minimum
risk, through spontaneous reactions and the main motivation of the speakers should be the avoidance of putting themselves in socially risky positions.

Since desire to be approved and establishing a positive image are the main incentives for the politicians, the notion of positive face and assertive self-presentation are the central aspects of political interviews. Politicians’ political success depends on the approval of the majority of the people, whilst participants of interviews on delicate topics try to preserve their established image on others by taking minimum risk and gaining the approval of others depending on their performances on critical topics. In this sense, management of delicate topics

*Figure 1. Distribution of covert and overt practices in TWIST*

- Evasive Practices
  - Covert Practices
    - Manipulation of discourse focus
      - Full shift in focus
      - Shift in the focal subject of question
      - Narratives about focal elements
      - Selecting the risk-free part of the question
    - Indirectness
      - Indirect expressions
      - Indirectness in Long Narratives
    - Ostensible Compliance
  - Overt Practices
    - Justifying uncooperativeness
      - Resistance
      - In the form of coming to the main point
      - In the form of questioning the question
      - In the form of mentioning the unpleasantness of situation
      - In the form of silence

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combined with face saving strategies covers a passive version of positive face, namely protective self-presentation strategy for Turkish women and an attempt to reestablish the damaged images, that is, defensive self-presentation. In political news interviews, the politicians' desire to have autonomy of action causes negative politeness, if the speakers/participants exert some control on the agenda of the question. In the interviews on sexual and health issues, rather than direct refusals, overt and covert practices of topic manipulation signal mitigation of some sort of confrontations, and the consideration of the face wants of the both parties.

Hence, agreeing on macro-analytical components of the previous studies (i.e. covert practices vs. overt practices), evasiveness in Turkish women’s interactional style were categorized into two ways with reference to their attitude on avoidance of the topic of interaction: covert practices and overt practices (see Figure 1 on the previous page).

5.3.1 Covert Practices

In the case of covert evasion, the evader moves beyond the parameters of the question by answering on the topics that are not specifically called for without explicitly acknowledging the fact that s/he will deviate from the topic of interaction. In other words, the speaker does not signal that s/he does not reply the questions cooperatively. According to Clayman (2001:424) what makes an answer covert evasion “is that the interviewees avoid any explicit acknowledgment of the fact that a shift is in progress, and they may also take steps to conceal that fact”. Through covert practices people settle for protective self-presentation style that prevents audiences from evaluating them in a negative fashion. The main focus is on avoiding blatant failures rather than achieving major successes.

Covert evasion can be displayed differently with respect to magnitude and kind. Shifts in our data can be categorized into three groups: manipulation in discourse focus, indirect responses to the questions which require inference mechanism of the listener to come to a conclusion, and ostensible compliance.

5.3.1.1 Manipulation of Discourse Focus

Full shift in focus

Speakers may sometimes keep on talking and pretend to continue the interaction, but they avoid the focal point and talk about on another topic whether it is relevant or irrelevant with the discourse focus.

Context :Nuptial night
(S= Saniye)

(1) Int: Onunla yatacaksın, onunla kalkıcaksın, aynı evin yatağı paylaşacağım, başka özel şeyleri, bi zorluk çekmediniz mi o zaman?
S: Ben bah, iki yıl nişanlı galmama rağmen, ben coh zorluk cehtim. Benim çünkü annem burda olmadı için, ben babamin yanında


Int: Him.

Int: Güüşmeler>
S: Yani öyle ben çok sımartıldım ben.

S: Kesssinlikle! Bizim sağırdızı vardı ama, sağırdızı içmişti bizde. Sağolsun gafayı bulmuşlarım, bi sey bilmiyorlar. Ondan sonra, bizi yukarı çıkarttular işte, herkes aşağıda oturuyó yalnız. Bizim kendi evimiz vardı, kendi evimize indik, yani kayınbabam, kayınvaldemin evine inmedik.

Int: So, you will sleep with him, get up with him, uh m you will share your bed with him and many special things. Didn’t you have any difficulties at that time?
S: I, look, although I had been engaged to him for two years, I had great difficulties. As my mum was not with me, I was raised by my dad. I was the youngest child in the family. So my father and my family spoiled me a lot, they bought whatever I wanted. Once, I remember very well, when I had just gotten married, I felt like eating some sweets. In those days I used to eat a lot of sweets, chocolates etc. My husband didn’t buy whatever I wanted and I sat and cried loudly. Can you imagine that? It is for only a bar of chocolate. I was affected by the fact that he didn’t buy me a bar of chocolate.

Int: Uhuuhm.
S: I went to my dad and said “dad your son-in-law does not buy me some chocolate”. “What chocolate are you talking about my girl?” asked my dad. “Haven’t you eaten any chocolate? Shame on you!” he said. So, my father was on his side. At that time, I thought that they did not love me anymore (laughing) they loved their son in law more.

<Laughter>
S: I mean I was spoiled in such a way.

Int: But, what I am asking is something different. I mean I am talking about the first night of your marriage, your first experience. You said you were raised by your father.
S: Defffinitely! We had a matron, but she had drunk heavily. For God’s sake, they were all drunk and weren’t aware of anything. Then they let us go upstairs, but everybody was sitting downstairs. We had our
house there. I mean we went to our house after the wedding, not to
the house of my father-in-law.

In this example S tries to sidestep the question as she takes into account the
negative inferences generated in case she shares her privacy with others. Rather
than answering the question about her experience in her nuptial night, she speaks
instead about her immature manners and the way she was nurtured. However this
shift is obscured by initial reference to the question “Although I had been engaged
for two years, I had great difficulties”. Hence the interviewer, recognizing her
maneuver, explicitly says that she is not satisfied with her answer and she is
actually asking about something else. However, S is for the second time deviating
from the focal point and telling about their drunken matron.

Shift in the focal subject of the question
Speakers sometimes apply pronominal shift by depersonalizing their answers
to detach themselves from an unpleasant situation. Let’s consider example (2) as an
example of shift in the focal subject of the answer. Detailed qualitative and
quantitative analysis of shifted references in TWIST will be discussed in section 5.4
below.

Context: Sex life
(Ş=Şengül)

(2) Int: Peki cinselliğe nasıl bakıyor musun? Yani doğal bi şey mi? Yani
yasamınızın olması gereken bi bi bölümü mü yoksa, hani olmaza da
olur cinsinden bi şey mi?
Ş: Genelde genelde erkekler daha çok düşkün oluyo. Ben hiç böyle
çevremde çok düşkün bi gadın gördüm ki bu gece bu iş olaçak, oh
hafta sonu diye hiç duymadım. Ya, ailemde, tanıdık arkadaşlarmda hiç ...

mean is it vitally important in our life or is it an unimportant thing?
Ş: Generally, generally men are keen on sex. In my environment I have
never seen a woman who is keen on sex, saying “Oh! we’ll do it
tonight or weekend” etc. I have never heard of it. I mean, in my
family, among my friends, never…

In the example above, the interviewer actually asks four questions thereby
providing Ş some options as to which question to answer. In all her questions the
interviewer seeks to know about the respondent’s own opinion about sex life by
using the siz pronoun (polite form of you) determining the focal proposition of the
question. Ş, however, not only transfers the topic of the question from a general
perspective of sex life to the desire of sex, but also avoids sharing her own opinion
overtly. Therefore, she presents first men in general and then her friends and
women around her, ignoring the sen (you) form in the question.
Narratives about the focal elements

The speakers may start to talk about an event on the focal subject of the question which shifts the focus of the question into other directions and initiates a new subject of talk. In this way, those speakers implicitly change the flow of the conversation into other risk-free dimensions.

Context: Birth control methods
(I=İmdat, G=Güler)

(3) Int: Peki, başka doğum kontrol yöntemleri neler var? Neler biliyosunuz?
İ: Spirayl tahyolar işte. Bizim köy, bizim Yozgat tarafında da işte böyle spirayl -ne demişler işte şey, spirayl tahilıp da ölenin cenazesı kılınmaz, günahımız diye
Int: Aa?
İ: Ondan sonra spiraylı cihartan hamile galiyo yaşlı gadınlar böyle.
Int: Aa?
İ: Bunu kim niye dediyse... Mesela ben de şeyden hocadan duyдум; mesela diyo kalp naklı olayı diyo, mesela diyo protez dehliyo bi yerine diyo yani onun hiç hic bi günahı yoh bi tel diyo
G: Olur mu canım oyle?
İ: Günahı yok spiraylin diyo hoca da.

Int: What are the other birth control methods? What do you know about them?
İ: People use the spiral. In our village, I mean in Yozgat region, people say that uhmm if a woman died with a spiral in her body, her funeral procession can’t be conducted, as using the spiral is a sin.
Int: Oh!
İ: Then those who had the spiral taken out got pregnant, even the old women!
Int: Oh!
İ: I don’t know who said so with what purpose. For instance, I also heard from the Hodja; for instance he says there are heart transplantation operations or there are prostheses applied to different parts of your body. So, he says it does not cause any sin, it is only a piece of wire.
G: How could it be honey?
İ: Hodja says the spiral does not cause any sin either.

Speaker İmdat launches her answer with a key word: spiral, which appears to be relevant with the interviewer’s question. Spiral is commonly used in Turkish as a loan word. İmdat’s use of spirayl is a quasi-Turkish adaptation of the loan word “spiral” with Turkish pronunciation. İmdat initiates a story about using a spiral and this brings the topic into different directions such as whether using a spiral is a sin or not. Hence, although using a spiral is a birth control method, the story about the spiral does not constitute an answer to the question.
Selecting the Risk-free part(s) of the question

Alternatively, a speaker may choose to answer the least risky question from a group of questions listed one after the other. Then, seemingly, an answer may lie within the question’s topical territory, but supplies information other than requested by the questioner. Hence, in example (4), when G is asked whether she was informed about sexuality before the nuptial night and what she experienced with a man she hardly knew, she offers a short answer of her lack of knowledge about sexuality and then immediately shifts to the topic of her eagerness to read and to learn about sex by herself. She thus skirts the question about her nuptial night experience.

Context: Nuptial night/sex education
(G=Gülay).

(4) Int.: [...] Size birileri bi şey anlattı mı? Nerden öğrendiniz? Neler yaşadınız?
G: Hiç kimse bi şey anlatmadı. Ben okuyodum gerçi. İlkokuldan beri böyle yani hani köy yerinde oturuyoruz. Benim bi öğretmenim vardı onun gasteleri, o zaman Hafıza Sonu gastesi falan vardı böyle
Int: Magazin gasteleri
Int: Did anyone ever tell you anything about sexuality? How did you experience it?
G: No one told me anything, but I had been reading since my primary school years. We used to live in a village—I had a teacher—I was reading her newspapers. At that time, there was a Weekend newspaper etc.
Int: Tabloid newspapers.
G: I was very interested in tabloid newspapers. Where can you learn about it? I borrowed some books. God bless my auntie, she used to lend me some. She used to bring them in sacks. As my mum didn’t let me open and read them, I used to go and read—forgive me to say it—but in the place where the sheep slept. I was curious, I wanted to learn everything.

5.3.1.2 Indirectness

Indirect Expressions

The respondents may give a cooperative answer, which can be relevant to the agenda of the question. However, while formulating their answers, they may rely on figures of speech, euphemistic expressions, certain indexical expressions, namely those having meanings that are inextricably linked to the common ground
between speakers and hearers. In other words, they manipulate the language by employing ambiguous, abstract references, which trigger inference mechanisms in the hearers as the speakers avoid clear-cut statements on these delicate issues. A detailed analysis of interactional indirectness will be presented in the next chapter.

Context: Sexual Life
(A=Aydan)

(5) Int:  Hıhım. Peki cinsel hayatta eşit misiniz? [...]  
A:  Ya hayır, hayır demez. Ama bi de şu var zaten; eğer bu gemi birlikte gidicekse beraber gidicek, batıcaksa bu hani bera yani götürcükse adam gibi beraber gidicek. Yok dağlıcaksak bundan herkes yaralanır, zedelenir.  
Int:  Evet.  
A:  Yani senin dediğin olur, benim dediğim olmaz, şu olur bu olur bundan iki taraf da zedelenir  
Int:  Hıhım.  
[...]  
A:  Yani zaten bi mutlu aileyse bana göre, o aile bi ülkedir. Kürenin içindeki aile mutluysa, anlaşıyorsa, ortak bi noktada bulunuyorsa, o aile bana göre bi ülkedir. Nası bi ülkenin cumhurbaşkanı çok çalışdır, başkanı çok çalışdır, milletvekilleri çok verimlidir, ne olur, o ülke gide gide bir refah seviyesine gelir, ilerler.  
Int:  Hıhım.  
A:  Ama, başkan hırsızdır, cumhurbaşkanı arızsızdır, milletvekilleri başı boştur. Noolur? O millet batar, birbirini karar, o gemi batar. İşte aile de öyledir. Yani eğer evde bir birlik, dirlık ortak nokta bulunuyorsa  
Int:  Hıhım.  
A:  Bulunuyorsa bi zaten her alan için geçerli. Mutfak için de geçerli, yatak odası için de geçerli, her şey için geçerli.  
Int:  Uhuhhm. So, are you equal in sex life?  
A:  No, he does not say “no” to me. But there is one more thing; if this ship goes forward, we will manage it together, if it sinks, I mean, but if we manage it together, we will do it properly. If everything will collapse, this affects everybody.  
Int:  Yes.  
A:  I mean, what you say is wrong, what I say is correct, this will happen, that will happen etc., such arguments affect both sides.  
Int:  Uhuhhm.  
[...]  
A:  I mean, a happy family is like a country for me. If the family is happy, members of the family come together to a common point, this family is like a country for me. As in the case of a country, where the president is very hardworking, the prime minister is very hardworking, the members of parliament are very productive. What
would happen at the end? This country gradually reaches welfare and makes progress.

Int: Uhuhm.
A: But if the prime minister is a crook, the president is immoral and the members of parliament are out of control, that nation is corrupted, destroys itself and that ship sinks. Just like a family. I mean if there is a common point, peace and unity at home...

Int: Uhuhm.
A: But if there isn’t any, this is valid in all arenas; valid for the kitchen, valid for the bedroom, it is valid for everything.

In the example above, speaker A sidesteps the question on equality in sex life by answering it with a long explanation of her understanding of a family and family unity. Indeed, she does not talk about her family, but an idealization of family life in general terms by connecting it with bedroom life. She uses a number of metaphors where a family and family members are associated with a country and the administrators of the country respectively. Although her explanations appear to be irrelevant to the topic of the question, she later constructs coherence by concluding, “this is valid in all arenas; valid for the kitchen, valid for the bedroom...” In this sense, indirectness through metaphors provides evasion and obscurity in the formulation of thoughts.

**Indirectness in Long Narratives**

Sometimes, rather than giving a direct answer, respondents may prefer to narrate the whole story related to a specific question and expect listeners to come to a conclusion. In other words, they avoid stating explicit results from certain events and entitle listeners to draw their own inferences from these events.

**Context: Miscarriage**

(B=Belma)

(6) B: İstemeden değil, istiyerek düşürdüm.
Int: Nasıl yaptınız?
B: <Gülər>
Int: Bir şeyler mi yaptınız siz?
B: Evet. İki ay mıydı ne? Yok, bir ay yeni bitirdim İşte, iki ikinci aya girmiştim. N. dedim gel bu çocuğu aldrak dedim. Ya, dedi günah dedi, şu hayırlı mübarek gündü çocuk aldırlar mı? dedi.
Int: Beş, beş çocuktan sonra mı olsaydı bu?
Int: Hüm.

Int: Ağır taşdırın yani.
B: Him.

B: I had a miscarriage not as a result of natural causes, but on purpose.
Int: How did you do that?
B: <Laughter>
Int: Did you do something?
B: Yes, was I in my second month of pregnancy? No, I had just finished my first month and my second month had just started. I said N, let’s go and get an abortion. No he said, it is a sin to do that. How can you get an abortion on this holy day (Ramadan) he said.
Int: Did this happen after five children?
B: Uhuhm. I said to him what kind of a sin are you talking about? Let’s solve this problem before you leave for God’s sake I said. He left me there and came here to work. I thought that he perhaps wanted to have this child. We boil cracked wheat in the village
Int: Uhuhm.
B: We went to the mill to grind this cracked wheat. We always go there all together with our neighbours, through the division of labor we help each other. We sift, prepare it and bring it back home. Guess what I said to them? Don’t do anything I said. No one knew about my situation. I was hiding it. While you are dealing with the other things, I will put them one above the other I said. I carried all the sacks one by one by myself. Yeah, I took care of it all.
Int: So, you carried heavy things.
B: Uhuhm.

Rather than explaining the method she applied to cause a miscarriage, speaker B chooses to tell the whole story about her miscarriage. While this tactic allows her to converse in a talkative, cooperative manner, the interviewer tries to bridge the gaps and to come to a conclusion from the clues given in to the story. Although the story seems to be elaborately narrated, she does not explicitly declare what she did for a miscarriage. That is why the interviewer tries to ratify what she grasped from the story.

5.3.1.3 Ostensible Compliance

In the case of ostensible compliance, a speaker pretends to engage in the interview process. S/he can be seen as trying to make the interviewer believe that his/her response is cooperative and s/he answers the question raised. Here, the respondent implicitly asks the recognition of his/her pretense by addressee. According to Isaacs and Clark (1990) in ostensible speech acts, collaboration is
required to confirm mutual belief in the pretense and if possible to make the off-
record purpose mutually understood. When the speaker pretends to answer the
questions by “saying something without really saying it” or “saying nothing while
saying something” (Bavelas et al., 1990:21), here the matter is not to change the
topic of question or to display resistance to questions, but to behave as if one was
cooperating with the interviewer. Ostensible compliances, as my data present,
constitute a coherent class of speech acts that are identifiable by a small number of
properties. Here is an example from the corpus:

Context: Sex education
(D=Demet, İ=İpek)

(7) Int: Peki evlenmeden önce, hani ilk geceden önce birisi anlattı mı size?
D: Onu da aynı amcamın kızından aldım, o bilgiyi de ben.
Int: Ha, ne anlattı mesela?
D: E, Ne olacak ki? Anlattiiste (Güler)
Int: Yani?
İ: Böyle böyle!
D: Böyle böyle!
<Gülüşmeler>

Int: Before your marriage, I mean before the first night, had someone ever
talked with you about it (sex)?
D: I learned about it, that information, from my uncle’s daughter as well.
Int: Uhuhm. What did she say for instance?
D: What could it be? She said about it (Laughing)
Int: So?
İ: This is this!
D: This is this!
<GLaugh>

1. Pretense: Speaker D pretends to give a relevant, clear-cut answer.
3. Involvement: Interviewer is not convinced by the answer.
4. Challenge/Resistance: As the interviewer asks the content of the talk, the
speaker N insists on her answer.

While the speakers are pretending to answer, they expect their pretense to be
recognized by the interviewer as well. The interviewer may take the responses as
sincere attempts to answer the questions or she may take them as ostensibly sincere.
If the interviewer does not collude with the interviewees on the mutual pretense by
responding accordingly, challenges occur from both sides.
5.3.2 Overt Practices

For Galasinski (1996b:7), overt evasions are those utterances “in which the speaker more or less directly signals that s/he is not going to give a co-operative answer”. Overt evasiveness appears to arise from people’s concerns about repairing potentially damaging self-images, warding off negative effects that may come through interacting on stigmatized topics. We identify two main ways by which the speakers mention that they will not give relevant answers; justifying uncooperativeness and resistance.

5.3.2.1 Justifying Uncooperativeness

In this case, the speaker signals that there are some factors hindering her responses and it is not her/his intention to give an uncooperative answer. Hence, a number of excuses are put forward to explain uncooperativeness, such as forgetfulness, or not having much to say on the topic, lacking knowledge and so on.

Context: Sex life
(I= İmdat, H= Hesna, G= Güler)

(8) Int: E, peki hayır deme hakkınız var mı?
İ: Hayır diyön ama dediğini duymuy ki. Hayır deduk...
<Güşüşmeler>
H: Hayır, hayır, açak...tekmeylen mekmeylen son etabın da zorunan da olsa alyolar iste.
G: Zorunan da olsa alyolar iste.
<Güşüşmeler>
H: Sözün ksiası tekmeylen mekmeylen...
Int: Siz ne diyosunuz peki?
G: Ne diyim bitti işte yoh!

Int: So, do you have the right to say no (in your sex life)?
İ: You say “no”, but it does not work out. We said “no”...
<Laughter>
H: No, no, by kicking etc., they finally get whatever they want by force.
G: They get it though it is by force.
<Laughter>
H: In short, by kicking etc…
Int: What do you think about it?
G: What can I say? There is nothing to say, it is over!

In the following example, the speaker pretends to be forgetful about the details of her nuptial night.

Context: Nuptial night
(I= İmdat)
Evasiveness and Depersonalization

(9) **Int:** Heh, yani bekleyen var mıydı? Hadi bakalım görelim diye
**Ir:** Bizim orda beklerlerdi, ondan sonra annesi vurur. Ordan ne, damat der ki gurt musun, goyun musun der annesi. Damat da der ki hani
**Int:** Hım
**Ir:** Koyun olursa hani kızğı oluyomus,
**Int:** Hım
**Ir:** Kurt olursa hani oluyomus.
**Int:** Heee!
**Ir:** Gurdum anne gurdum diye gapiya yumruğu vurursa, ondan sonra annesi gider uyur. Yoksa annesi bekler orda.
**Int:** Sızde sizde öyle mi?
**Ir:** Bizde de öyle hı.
**Int:** E, peki sizde kurt mu dedi yani kurt muyum mu dedi?
**Ir:** Bilmiyom ki unuttım, getti.

<Kahkalar>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ir</th>
<th>In our region, they used to wait for it. The mother knocks on the door and asks the groom: “are you a sheep or are you a wolf” she asks.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Uuhhm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ir</td>
<td>If it is sheep, then the bride is not a virgin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Uuhhm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ir</td>
<td>If it is wolf, then she is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Aha!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ir</td>
<td>If he knocks on the door saying I am a wolf mum, I am a wolf, then she goes and sleeps peacefully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int</td>
<td>In your case, in your case was it the same?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ir</td>
<td>Yes, it was uuhhm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int</td>
<td>So did he say wolf, I mean I am a wolf?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ir</td>
<td>I don’t know. I have already forgotten about it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<Laughter>

Context: Birth Control methods
(N= Neval)

(10) **Int:** Uuhhm. Ee, siz niçin tercih etmiyorsunuz spirali?
**N:** Bilmiyom. Baştan öyle...gördük, öyle bilmiyorum.

**Int:** Uuhhm. Why don’t you want the spiral?
**N:** I don’t know. We started at the very beginning like that, I don’t know.

In the examples (8), (9) and (10), the speaker indicates that there is nothing to tell (8), and she has already forgotten about it (9), and she does not know why she behaves in this way (10) are aimed at a pretense where speakers imply that the reason for their uncooperativeness is outside their intention, it is due to external reasons.
5.3.2.2 Resistance

Resistance is a kind of reaction observed when the speaker has a problem in answering the questions. I consider resistance as the creation of other strategies rather than attempts of topic shifts. Resistance strategies can be categorized as questioning the question, questioning the questioner and the presupposed common ground, signaling the unpleasantness of the situation, and so on.

Resistance in the Form of not Coming to the Main Point

Sometimes speakers deliberately do not come to the main point of the question or they pretend to understand an indirect question literally as in the following answer. Consider how D flatly resists a question about her personal experience on her nuptial night:

Context: Nuptial night
(D = Demet)

(11) **Int:** Evlendiniz, sizi bir odaya koydular. Siz bu adamla beraber olcaksınız. Yani çok az tanıdığınız bir insana artık ömür boyu hayat geçireceksiniz. Eh, neler hissettiniz yani İlk gece? Ya da hiç tanımadığınız bir insana noldu?

**D:** Oturduk çay içtik.

**Int:** Benim bildiğim öyle şeyler olmuyor!  

**D:** Vallahi diyorum. Oturduk, o bana bir şey söyleyemiyorum, ben ona bir şey söyleyemiyorum. Tamam o iş yapılcak farkındayız falan.

**Int:** You got married and they put you into a room and you were going to be together with this man. I mean you will spend the rest of your life with a man you hardly know. Uhm, how did you feel about that, I mean on your nuptial night? Or what happened with a man that you didn’t know at all?

**D:** We just sat and drank tea.

**Int:** As far as I know, you don’t do such things.

**D:** I swear it! We just sat, he was not saying anything to me, I couldn’t say anything to him. Yes, we were aware that we had to do that business, but…

In the example above, although speaker D knows quite well what the interviewer means, she insists on talking about the preliminary details of that night and resists coming to the main point. She does, however, keep on talking without refusing to interact.
Resistance in the Form of Questioning the Question

Speakers can also attack the propositional content of the question or question the question in term of its appropriateness and suitability in the situation.

Context: Sex education
(G= Güler)

G: Valla, ne soracah? Çocuh ne bilsin onlari?
Int: Ama televizyondan falan izleyip soruyodur. Ben nasi doğdum, beni kim getirdi?
G: Hastaneden aldık diyoh (Gülerek)
Int: Öyle mi diyosunuz?
G: Mesela biz beni hamileydim, yatıp dinliyoları çocuğu. Gibik diyo mu, depih atyo anne deyin.
Int: Hım. Sormuyolar mı nasi geldi karnına falan anne diye?
G: Valla ne bilsin!

Int: Yes, but do you tell your children? Or do you plan to tell them everything? For example they may be curious about what happens in a mother’s tummy. Have they ever asked you how they were born for example?
G: What can he ask? How could a child know these?
Int: But, watching television, they may ask how they were born, who brought them.
G: We say we got you from the hospital (laughing).
Int: Do you say so?
G: For example when I was pregnant, lying (on my tummy), they used to listen to the baby asking is he kicking you mum.
Int: Uhuhm. Don’t they ask how the baby came into your tummy etc?
G: How could they know that?

In her responses G either states openly or implies that the question asked is in some way nonsense, as young children could not ask such questions. She reacts to the interviewer’s follow-up questions by raising other questions such as “What can he ask?” or “How could a child know these?” etc.

Resistance in the Form of Questioning the Questioner

Some speakers may directly attack the interviewer by questioning a personal trait, the manner of asking questions, level of information on the subject, and so on.

Context: Nuptial night
(L= Lerzan)
Chapter 5

(13)  
L: Gerçekten, o yani o öyle ilginç düşünceleri var ki... Beni üzmemek için elinden geleni yaptı. Annesi babası kapıyı çaliyo falan, herkesi kovdu.
Int: Him, a kapıyı mapıyı mı çaldilar?
L: E, tabi onlarda adettir.
S: Adettir.
L: Siz adetleri biliyo musunuz? Kapıya gelirler işte!

L: He had really interesting ideas...He did his best not to make me sorry. His parents were knocking on the door etc. He threw everybody out.
Int: Uuhhm. Oh, did they knock on the door?
L: Sure, it is a tradition there.
S: It’s a tradition.
L: Don’t you know the traditions? They come to the door!

In this example, while the questioner’s lack of knowledge is criticized or questioned on the surface, the speaker, in fact, tries to manage a question that she does not want to be exposed to and her uneasiness is indirectly reflected in this way.

Resistance in the Form of Mentioning Unpleasantness of the Situation
Some speakers may reflect unpleasantness of the situation and their reluctance to talk further on specific topics. These reactions are not in the form of an explicit refusal, but in the form of implicit objections basically on the subject of the discussion.

Context: Nuptial night
(H= Hale, K= Kıymet, P= Perinaz)

(14)  
Int: Evet, sizin?
H: Benimki çok maceralı oldu.
<Gülüşmeler>
K: O bi hayalarsa...
<Gülüşmeler>
P: Ya çok derinlere daldınız ya!

Int: And, yours? [Your nuptial night—NKY]
H: Mine was really adventurous.
<Laughter>
K: If she starts...
<Laughter>
P: Hey! You went too far!

In the example above, speaker P is not pleased with the topic of discussion and probably with participating in such an interview. She does not, however, bluntly refuse to talk. She is contented with saying that what is being spoken goes too far with the private issues by avoiding an open confrontation. “Hey” at the
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beginning of her utterance indicates a protest and an implicit resistance rather than an active and direct confrontation. She implicitly warns others for going too far on such a critical topic.

Resistance in the Form of Silence

I also analyze how silence actually plays a communicative role in Turkish women’s response to questions. Some speakers try to manage very critical questions by silence through pretending they have not heard the question or simply implying that they do not want to talk about on this matter.

The Turkish proverb *Söz gümüşse suküt altındır* (if speaking is silver, silence is gold) underlines that a man of few words is appreciated more than a man of many words. Cultural attitude, thus, plays a marked role in interpreting and evaluating what has been said and left unsaid. Jaworski (1993) argues that silence is perceived as significant and meaningful, when the speaker is expected to talk, but s/he intentionally withholds it. Silence in response to a critical question carries rather negative connotations. It mainly signals avoidance to talk about sensitive topics and/or disagreement with the interviewer’s initiating these issues. Moreover, there are many visual nonverbal cues that help silence to be understood properly. As my corpus is based on audio-recordings, but not video recording, it is not possible to catch body movements, eye contact, changes of facial expressions for an elaborate interpretation. For that reason, it is possible to talk about resistance in the form of silence. Here is an example from the corpus:

Context: Birth control methods
(F= Fadime, N= Neval)

       F: Valla, korunuyoruz, hiç bir tane başka bir şey kullanmıyorum.
       Int: Ama nasıl korunuyoruz? Korunuyoruz ne demek yani?
       F: .... (Sessizlik)
       Int: Yani eşiniz mi korunuyo?
       N: Eşi olarak tabi. Bizimki de öyle eşin korunuyo.

       Int: Okay, what kind of birth control methods do you know? I asked what kind of birth control methods you know.
       F: Well, we are protecting ourselves, I am not using anything else.
       Int: But how do you protect yourselves? What do you mean by “we protect ourselves”?
       F: .... (Silence)
       Int: Do you mean that your husband is protecting?
       N: Sure, as her husband...In our case, my husband applies protection too.
In this example Fadime does not want to give the details about their birth control method with her husband, thus she is not talking. She signals her disagreement with speaking on this private issue through silence.

The following section presents a closer examination of a covert evasive strategy, namely depersonalization evidenced by the use of pronouns sen (you), biz (we) and impersonal nominal references insan/adam (human/man) instead of ben (I).

5.4 Depersonalization through Pronominal Shift

A great amount of theoretical and practical focus has been placed on the role of pronouns in the construction of agency. Person deixis has been studied widely within the framework of general linguistic theory (Jakobson, 1957; Lyons, 1977; Levinson, 1983 among others). Jakobson (1957) called pronominals “shifters” due to their ability to shift into different directions within the pronominal system. G.H. Mead’s (1934) famous distinction between “I” and “me” as the aspects of self provided some insights in relation to an understanding of human interaction and society, and created some inspiration for sociolinguists to work on pronominals. Goffman’s notion of “participation framework” became another effective tool for the analysis of linguistic aspects of social events as an embedded social activity. The seminal work of Brown and Gilman (1960) revealed that perceived roles of the speaker/hearer determine pronominal choices in certain societies, and pronominal usage is systematically related to variables such as formality/informality, power, solidarity, class and sex.

More recently, a vast body of literature has been devoted to pragmatically oriented studies of pronouns to show pronominal usage on specific context of utterance and the interactional goals of the speakers. Benveniste (1971:220) for the first time pointed out the importance of pronouns on pragmatic account and considered pronouns not only as referential signs, but also “the instruments of a conversion of a language into discourse”. A pronoun, thus, indexes the referent of an utterance with the speaker’s immediate context and its illocutionary force with wider socio-cultural context. Similarly, Mühlhäusler and Harre (1990) suggested the thesis of “double location” where pronominal choices reflect not only a person’s location in a spatio-temporal structure of things and events, but also in a structure of rights, obligations, so having a sense of moral responsibility. Further studies on more contextually dependent use of pronouns and/or pronominal shift with respect to thematic structure denote different aspects of the communicative goals of speakers and how pronominal forms can be manipulated to attain these goals.

Various studies of political discourse present the pragmatic role pronouns express in the speeches of politicians who manipulate pronouns for political strategy and personal reasons (Maitland and Wilson, 1987; Wilson, 1990; De Fina, 1995; Zupnik, 1994; Kuo, 2002). Furthermore, some linguists within the framework of critical discourse analysis consider pronominal usage in political discourse analysis in order to show the manipulation of power by powerful groups in capitalist societies (see Fairclough, 1989).

Given the potential complexity of interactional reference, a body of literature has taken the notion of “social meaning” into consideration on the basis of
spontaneous daily conversations (Duranti, 1984; Biq, 1991; Obeng, 1994; Malone, 1997). In a recent study, for instance, De Fina (2003) analyzed how pronoun switches can throw light on the construction of collective or “depersonalized” roles in the interactional negotiation of stories. Stewart (2003, 2001) examined pronominial choices of speakers in relation to mutual face wants of the speakers and the hearers within the broad framework of politeness theory. O’Connor (1994) examined the variation in indexicality and subsequent shifts in agency shown by pronouns “you” and “I” in prisoners’ narratives of stabbing.

Another group of study focused on the organization of perceptions of the social world in the male/female opposition through self-reference and pronoun alternation in gendered discourse (Rojo, 1997; Ostermann, 2003; Kuo, 2003). Kuo, for instance, stated that male sports reporters tend to employ more second person singular pronouns as compared to females, which denotes their strong self-involvement and interpersonal involvement with athletes and the TV audience. Rojo (1997) in another study studied the ways in which pronominal shifts and self-referencing strategies entail a modification of women’s social image among Spanish women.

This corpus-based study aims to examine, both qualitatively and quantitatively, shifts in agency evidenced by the use of pronouns sen, biz and impersonal nominal references insan/adam instead of ben. In-depth analysis of shifts in agency provides invaluable perspective and insight not only into linguistic functions of pronoun choices but also into their subtle social meanings. This analysis highlights the ways in which speakers exploit the multi-functionality of pronominal choices to express stances with respect to topics, and to shift alignments and positions.

In the following part of the chapter, the pronominal system of Turkish and some features of it will be briefly described. Then, shifted references will be discussed in detail in terms of their deictic and pragmatic functions. This analysis will be shown in a scale of shifted references. Distribution of pronominal shifts will be analyzed in two groups of women with respect to frequency and distance in shifts comparing sensitive and innocuous topics.

5.4.1 Pronominal System in Turkish

In order to analyze self-referencing strategies, it would be appropriate to state the overall pronominal system in Turkish. There are six personal pronouns in Turkish. The third person singular pronoun (He, She, It) is expressed by the same pronoun O denoting no gender difference as it is shown in the table below.
Table 1
Pronominal system in Turkish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turkish</th>
<th>English Equivalents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ben</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sen (2nd p.sg./indef)</td>
<td>you (2nd p.sg./indef)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>he, she, it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biz, biz+ler (pl. morpheme)</td>
<td>we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>siz (2nd p.pl./polite form of sen)</td>
<td>you (2nd p.pl./-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>onlar (3rd p.pl.def./ indef.)</td>
<td>they (def./ indef.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It would be appropriate to explain the variation in pronoun usage. *Sen* stands for impersonal or indefinite *sen* form which brings about a sense of shared agency or experience, while the speakers still index themselves. *Biz* denotes regular *biz* which means *ben*+others. It is both used to encode solidarity and to strengthen shared authority thus deemphasizing individual responsibility. *Biz+ler* (pl. morpheme) is the semantic extension of regular *biz* form where the content of “others” in regular *biz* form is enlarged. While it is basically employed for an overemphasis of solidarity in group identity, it may include *biz*—inclusive and *biz*-exclusive cases. *Biz* (sing.) which is a nonstandard use of *biz* refers to a shift to a singular reference different from its conventional plural form. It is especially evidenced in sensitive topics where speakers’ invisibility is required. Turkish is one of the languages with *tu-vous* (T/V) distinction. In *sen/siz* distinction of Turkish *siz* is considered to be more respectful to use. It is both the polite form and plural form of *sen*, which is used in intimate situations or by superiors to inferiors. Two types of *onlar* refer to regular they and indefinite they respectively.

Another significant point about Turkish is that personal pronouns are not necessarily denoted in sentences explicitly. Speakers tend to make utterances with zero subjects in daily interaction. In other words, Turkish allows the omission of grammatical subject as in the following example:

Context: Abortion
(Ş=Şeyma, Int=Interviewer)

(16) **Int:** Çocuk aldırmaya falan düşünmez misiniz? (in polite form of “you”)
**Ş:** Yok düşümem. Saten bi tane aldırdım. Kürtaj oldu bi tane.

**Int:** Don’t *(you)* ever think of having an abortion?
**Ş:** No *(I)* don’t. *(I)* have already had one. Once *(I)* had an abortion.

Here, the grammatical subject *ben* can be deduced from first person singular –*m* suffix attached to verb phrase.

In order to denote multiple uses of personal pronouns in conversational Turkish, the following schema was formed for Turkish pronoun system concerning the cases we faced with in the TWIST corpus.
Table 2
Self-referencing shifted references in conversational Turkish.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular forms</th>
<th>Plural forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ben</td>
<td>biz (sg.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sen (indef.)</td>
<td>biz (pl.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insan/adam</td>
<td>biz+ler (pl.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it is illustrated in Table 2, different versions of biz, sen and third person singular nominal references insan/adam are used to denote first person singular ben form. A detailed description on the use of biz (pl.), biz (sing.), biz+pl, sen2 and insan/adam will be given with respect to their deictic and pragmatic functions in the qualitative analysis process. Diverging action of these shifting references from ben will be further discussed.

Rather than culling all the pronominals other than ben form in discourse and treating them in isolation, for the analysis of pronominal shifts, I selected passages where questions were raised specifically to the participants in sen/siz form and where the respondents answered questions about their personal experience. A pronoun shift was noted whenever the disclosure elicited by the question was presented in a form other than the first person singular.

5.4.2 Shifted References

5.4.2.1 Biz (we)

Employment of biz signals potential ambiguity in the sentences as biz covers “speakers and some indefinite number of others”. Thus, the biz form is a common way of sharing the responsibility of an action with others. In other words, by using the biz form, the speaker clearly admits that she has also played a part in a given situation, but the degree of the responsibility becomes vague as less light will be put on her through the plural meaning of biz form.

Biz (pl.) (Regular biz)

In most conversational speech as well as political speech, speakers use biz instead of first person singular ben. The biz form both provides a distancing device from the negative events and a solidarity device in the form of group identity. In this respect, employment of biz has a socio-psychological and communicative significance. It connects people with the strong feeling of sense of community as in Stone and Pennebaker’s (2002) study on shared upheaval after the sudden death of Princess Diana or Maitland and Wilson’s analysis (1987) of Thatcher’s speech as a
political leader embracing all the members of her party, her party’s political aims. Similarly, Pennebaker and Lay (2003) analyzed and compared 35 press conferences of the Major of New York city, Rudolph Giuliani, on his personal crisis and the terrorist attacks on World Trade Center (WTC) on September 11, 2001. They pointed out the Major’s intention to use “I” form during his personal crisis and tremendous increase in the use of “we” form during the first years of his administration and the WTC crisis. Whereas, “we” underlines distinctiveness or exclusion from a certain group of people as “we” form may include (we inclusive) or exclude (we exclusive) the hearer too. In a similar vein, Goffman (1981) mentions that making use of the forms such as “we” helps to distance the speaker from the immediate undesirable situation. Hence, “we” contains an evaluative component which is important for designating, reflecting and understanding identity boundaries. Consider the following example;

Context: Birth control methods
(S= Sinem)

(17) Int: Bildiğin ne tür doğum kontrol yöntemleri var? Neler var?
S: Ya, ben ehm her doğum kontrolünden haberiniz var, her çeşidinden.
Kendimize en uygun, en rahat hangisiyse biz onu kullanıyoruz.

Int: What kind of birth control methods do you know? What are these?
S: Well, I uhm we are aware of all kinds of birth control, every type. We are using the most suitable one for us.

Sinem does not want to talk about how much she knows about contraceptives personally as knowing too much on sexual issues could also be a potential danger among Turkish women (Gifford et al., 1998). Employment of this plural “we” form stresses the fact that she is not taking responsibility for listing different types of contraceptives, but rather she is speaking in the name of a group of women.

Biz (sing.)

Biz does not always involve “speaker and the others” in Turkish and it functions as one of the basic interactive means through which speakers create new alignments with others. The singular use of first person plural form biz refers to a shift denoting a singular referent ben that differs from its conventional plural form. In the TWIST corpus this usage is specifically evidenced in sensitive topics where facework is the primary concern. In this sense, the main motivation behind the use of singular biz form is to pluralize the case and create invisibility for the speaker by making him/her not the subject of this specific action, but just one of the persons within the “crowded” content of biz form. Supporting this view, our examples generally appeared in difficult contexts where a confession, deny situation and/or a discussion point is the matter as in the following example:
Context: Sex life
(K=Kıyomet, Z=Zarife)

(18) Int: Sizin hayır deme hakkınız oluyor mu yani (cinsel yaşamda)?
K: Benim mi? Ya benim kendi açımdan oluyor tabi. O zaman da bi demi
yani biraz gizyo ama, ondan sonra da bi şey demiyo artı (Güler)
Z: Valla hastayım ben rahatsızım diyom, arkamı dönüyom yatıyom.
K: (Gülerek) ben arham dönüyom da..
Z: Dönerim.
K: Ama sonucu anlayışla karşılıyo yani.
Int: Ama reddetmek, sürekli reddetmek ilişkiiyi zedelemiyo mu?
K: Yo, sürekli reddetmiyoz.

Int: I mean do you have the right to say “no” (in sex life)?
K: On my account? On my account, I mean, of course I have. Then, he
gets angry a little bit, but he does not say much.
Z: Honestly speaking, I say I am sick, I am ill, then I turn my back and
sleep.
K: (Laughing) I don’t turn my back, but…
Z: Well, I do.
K: But he tolerates it at the end.
Int: But, does not rejecting, continuously rejecting affect the relationship?
K: No, we don’t continuously reject.

As we proceed through the extract, there is a shift from the personal voice
ended in ben to the pluralized encoded by biz. It is quite clear that K, giving away
her secrets about her sexual life, does not want to take the full responsibility of
being active in her sex life among the women who have already claimed that they
are not. Thus, biz form that she employs in her last sentence denotes only herself
rather than other women who declared that they do not behave the way she does
towards their husbands. Probably this is the reason forcing her to switch to biz form
to shadow her uniqueness in this situation. This situation can be considered both as
a possibility of the diffusion of responsibility through the plural content of biz and
creation of a false consensus where a group of people is mentioned by biz form but
in reality may be it is used to reflect only the view of the speaker.

Biz+ler

It can be considered as an extended version of regular biz form, which points
out ben and others. With a plural suffix attached at the end of regular biz, speakers
enlarge the content of “others” embedded in the meaning of “we” form. It may also
indicate “we inclusive” and “we exclusive” cases in the form of a generalization
and/or a speech on behalf of others in the group sessions and basically an
overemphasis of solidarity in the form of group identity. In the TWIST corpus we
have both cases where the speakers set a boundary between themselves and other
speakers/interviewer and where they consider the hearer/interviewer as a member of
their group where being a woman, or a mother is considered to be the common
ground. The following examples highlight different attempts in the employment of plural *biz*.

**Context: Sexual education**

(F= Fadime, S= Suzan)

(19) *Int:* Having been curious, didn’t they ever ask about it? I mean questions such as how I was born, how a baby grew up in your tummy etc.?

*F:* No, they never asked.

*S:* Children coming from poor families never dared to ask such questions. Though Lerzan said she is asking this and that, their situation is different. Children of poor families, like *we+pl*, can not make sexuality an issue.

In this example, Suzan underlines the distinction between one of her group members, Lerzan, and the rest of the group. By the attachment of a plural suffix-*ler* on “biz” she emphasizes her involvement with the rest of the group, but not with Lerzan. As being poor is a negative trait, she may want to state this situation by pluralizing the case rather than denoting only herself as “poor”.

Consider the following example:

**Context: Equality of men and women**

(T= Tijen)

(20) *Int:* Do you think that man and woman are equal in marriage life or in daily life?

(silence).....

*Int:* Or aren’t they?

*T:* To be honest, although you said they are equal, a man is a man. [...] Men are of course a bit superior than *we all are*.
In contrast to the previous example, here an ultimate generalization is the matter as Tijen uses biz+ler to indicate all women in this example. It is a common attempt to formulate morals and a cliché in relation to a group of people.

5.4.2.2 Sen (You)

In the most straightforward sense, a speaker refers to a hearer through the employment of the sen form, as sen puts the hearer in an addressed recipient position. In the form of a shifted reference, “you” creates greater ambiguity as it does not include any embedded “I” form.

“You” has been considered in a wide range of both deictic and pragmatic functions. Biq (1991) distinguished four types of second person singular pronoun “ni” usage in conversational Mandarin: a) the propositional ni (which is employed to denote the intended recipient of the utterance) b) impersonal ni (where no specific person is referred to) c) the dramatic ni (which occurs in direct quotations to dramatize the described situation) d) metalinguistic ni (which functions as an address to elicit the attention of the intended recipients of the speech).

Our analysis of the sen form was limited with the “impersonal sen” as we consider only the passages where respondents gave answers to the questions asking their personal opinion. Malone (1997:70) stated three ranges of references in the indefinite “you” form: “it can refer to a single addressee; or it can refer to a set of more than one addressee; or it can refer to an abstract category of people that do something or have something done to them”. Accordingly, self-detachment and other involvement in the form of “shared agency” are the main functions in using sen as a shifted reference form in the pragmatic account. Here are some instances of sen from our corpus:

**Context: Gynecological exam**
(I= İndat)

(21) **Int:** Yani ne nasıl rahatsız oluyosun bi anlat bakalım.

**Int:** So, tell me why are you irritated?
İ: But now it is not the same as it was in the past. Uhm, there is a special curtain. He (the doctor) says go into the cabinet and take off your clothes. You take your place behind the curtain and take off your clothes. There is nobody else in the room. By the way the doctor puts on her/his gloves. You just go and lay down over there and cover your body.

There should be motivation for a person to detach herself from a situation. This is the delicacy of the topic of discussion in our case. As the respondents do not want to put themselves under the spotlight, they employ shifted references in order
to veil their involvement. Considering the visual imagery given in the example above, İmdat does not want to take a part in the picture of “a woman under gynecological surgery”. Thus she puts the hearer into her position. As in the example below, however, speakers may talk with the sen form by bringing about a sense of shared agency or experience, while still indexing themselves.

Context: Effects of blind marriages on nuptial night.
(H=Hale)

(22) H: Beklemedigin şeyler yasynosun, sonra üzülüsün diyosun ki yani keşke bir sene iki sene bi nişanlık dönemimiz olsaydı. İşte çıkma diydik, görüşeydik, ailelerimiz birbirini tansaydı.

İ: You experience totally unexpected things, you get worried and say If only we had been engaged for one or two years, we had dated, our families had known each other or what so ever…

For Wilson (1990), the indefinite “you” form can also give rise to a style of “formulation of morals ad truisms”. In other words, the “you” form reflects a common sense, in Wilson (1990:57) term, “a kind of conventional wisdom as opposed to actual experience”. In the following example, Neval uses the second person singular pronoun to express the customs related with the nuptial night. Although the interviewer asks about her private story related to that night with plural you, siz, a polite version of the second person singular form, she deviates from the personal and private perspective and carries the answer to a more generalized focus by neglecting the proper “I” form. She also tries to keep herself away from this situation and impersonalizes the case as she transfers her narration to the “you” form.

Context: Nuptial night
(N=Neval)

(23) İnt: Sizde ne oldu peki?
N: O gece olup, vermen lazım.
İnt: Bekliyolar yani.
N: Tabi canım bekluyolar canım.
İnt: Ayyy, çok kötü!
N: Mecbursun. Sen zar zor o vakit o iş olacak

İnt: And what happened in your case?
N: You have to do it and give it.
İnt: So, they are waiting for it?
N: Yes, of course. They are waiting for the sheet.
İnt: Ohh! It is very bad!
N: You have to do so. With difficulty or not, you should manage it.
5.4.2.3 Impersonal Nominal References (insan/adam)

In the shift from first person singular *ben* to indefinite nominal references *insan/adam*, the speaker creates an object of talk through which s/he seeks to describe his/her opinions in a particular fashion. In other words, these references point to who we are not on the surface level. They, however, function as camouflage for *ben* especially in critical situations. Only the context and the common ground shared by speaker and hearer can provide clues for the domain of identity of the referents. In contrast to other pronouns *sen* and *biz* which denote presence and engagement in an interaction, impersonal nominal references remove the subject from the event and provide a disconnection between the action and the subject. Ashby (1992) discussed the various referential meanings of the third person pronoun for the first person in French. He notes that semantic role encoded by “on” could be an indefinite or what he calls nonidentifiable or “people in general” experience and thus the referent is an indefinite one conveying generalizations. Consider the example below:

Context: Sex life.
(Ş=Şeyma)

(24) [...]  
Int:  Her koşulda kadın erkeği mutlu etmeli mi? Yani kadının red etme hakkı var mı?  
Ş:  Yok, canım, cinsel hayatda bazen hani çok direniyoz.  
Int:  Hum.  
Ş:  Yani hani insanın bi hoş göynü olur, bi hoş olmadığı göynü olur.  
Int:  Should women satisfy men under all conditions? I mean, can women refuse them or not?  
Ş:  No, we sometimes resist a bit in sexual life.  
Int:  Uuhhm.  
Ş:  I mean a **person** is sometimes in the mood and sometimes not.

In our example, Şeyma uses firstly *biz* and then *insan* (Human being/man) to depersonalize the topic of sex life which turned into the details of her sex life. As she does not want to explicitly indicate that she accepts or refuses her husband depending on her mood, she uses this remote nominal reference which allows her both to generalize the case and detach herself form this difficult topic.

5.4.3 A Scale of Shifted References

Strategies of shifted references allow the speaker to declare his/her relative distance to the topics of discussion and highlight her particular approach and attitude towards a subject. Qualitative analysis and a short survey conducted among Turkish native speaker linguists have revealed the following hypothetical extent of shift to describe the way in which pronominal references are organized:
On this scale *ben* is considered to be the most fundamental and subjective form of personal pronoun and all other forms display divergency from this deictic center. Our analysis divulged the fact that Turkish women quite frequently switch from the orthodox “I” form to primarily, different versions of the *biz* form, *sen* form and employment of an indefinite personal pronoun *insan/adam* respectively.

*Biz* (sg.) is considered as the closest pronoun to *ben* form as *biz* form includes “I and others” in its content. The use of *biz* in its traditional plural meaning is the second step to diverge from *ben* since this usage pluralizes the case and indicates the speaker as one of the persons involved in that interaction. Employment of plural we, *bizler*, however enlarges the content of “others” embedded in the meaning of *biz* form. Hence, the speaker further diverges from the *ben* form. *Sen* in this scale indicated indefinite or impersonal *sen* bringing about a sense of shared agency or experience. Indefinite nominal references are ultimate step in shifted references as they denote indefinite singular references which do not cover *ben* form in content meaning.

The table below illustrates the number of pronominal references used by the two groups. When we look at the overall use of pronouns main concentration is observed to be around *biz* (pl.) and *sen* usage. The Groningen group produced 56733 words. The speakers in the Ankara group used 37373 words. In general there is a high frequency of pronominal shifts in the Ankara group which reflects both avoidance-based interactional style and more strictly defined female gender role in Turkey. There is a considerable variation in how groups employ *biz* (pl.) and *sen* form. The Ankara group displayed a sharp increase in plural *biz* form and *sen* as compared to the amount used by the Groningen group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronouns</th>
<th>The Groningen Group</th>
<th>The Ankara Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>1654</td>
<td>1161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biz (sg.)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biz (pl.)</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biz (pl.)+pl.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sen</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insan</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2406</td>
<td>1908</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4.4 Distributional Analysis

In this section, I will present distributional evidence supporting my claim that the self-referencing pronominal shifts as a form of covert evasive strategies investigated in this study often serve the function of protecting the speaker’s face. The presence of a distancing scale and the number of usage of each pronoun with respect to two groups provide us with two testing grounds for our interpretation for the use of shifted pronominals in self-protective purposes. Thus, the first hypothesis to be tested in this study is that if what we have regarded pronoun shifts as self-protective functions, they should occur more frequently in the sensitive topics than in innocuous topics. The second hypothesis is that larger shifts through the scale are expected to occur in sensitive topics than in innocuous topics.

Figure 2 shows that all shifted references occurred more often in sensitive topics than with innocuous topics in both the Groningen and the Ankara group.

![Figure 3. Percent shifted references with respect to sensitive and innocuous topics.]

When I compared the use of pronouns within the groups with respect to the sensitive and innocuous topics, the Ankara group showed a statistically significant correlation between topic sensitivity and the use of ben, biz (sg.) and biz (pl.) ($Z=-3.9$ and $p=.00$, $Z=-2.6$ and $p=.009$, $Z=-3.4$ and $p=.001$) respectively. For the Groningen group, the Wilcoxon test indicated a statistically significant correlation between topic sensitivity and the use of ben, biz (sg.) and biz (pl.) ($Z=-2.8$ and $p=.005$, $Z=-3.2$ and $p=.001$, $Z=-2.7$ and $p=.006$ respectively). Hence, topic sensitivity triggers speakers to employ pronominal shifts for various interactional purposes such as detachment, diffusion of responsibility, generalization, involvement for protection.
Yet, the overall distributional analysis reflected a striking difference between the Ankara and Groningen groups at a strategic level. The Ankara group performed more frequent shifts than the Groningen group with respect to *ben* and *biz* (pl) in sensitive topics. I take this as (tentative) evidence for the influence of the more liberal Dutch cultural context on the women living in Groningen, while conservatism and religion may have conditioned the Ankara group’s preference for the avoidance of agent role.

Turning now to the hypothesis that sensitive topics can trigger larger shifts than in innocuous topics, I want to observe whether the increased use of shifted references in the context of sensitive topics is larger than those in the context of innocuous topics as I go through the range of the shifted scale. Accordingly, I expect to see the largest differences in the last two items of the scale (*sen* and *insan*) in sensitive topics than in innocuous topics. Although the overall view reveals the fact that topic sensitivity triggers pronominal shifts in general, statistically significant differences in shifted reference employment tend to occur in *biz* (sg.) and *biz* (pl.). Hence, the pattern was broken in sen and insan usage and falsified my hypothesis. Small numbers of *biz*+pl cases (19 instances) in all sessions refers to inclusion of this form as regular *we* (pl.) to explain the trends in scale of shifted pronouns, which is reflected in Figure 4.

![Figure 4. Shifted references with respect to sensitive and innocuous topics.](image)

### 5.5 Discussion

Evasive communication strategies reflect a discursive presentation of Turkish women and the legitimization of women’s discourse. They not only underline women’s tendencies to behave in line with the mainstreams; but also, they produce, sustain, and reinforce ongoing facts and a “proper” way of linguistic interaction in terms of gender and cultural norms. In this sense, evasiveness projects...
the gendered identity and the negotiation of social roles as the important indicators about the self and its perception in social world. When I consider the socio-cultural frame and social context, evasive communication appears to be a culturally conditioned interactional style. In other words, the speakers’ evasive self-presentational behavior was the result of culture-specific normative expectations and demands of gender role. Not surprisingly, most of our evasive strategies took place in questions on sensitive topics and the number of covert strategies is higher than that of overt strategies.

Moreover, a deeper insight is given into the ways in which the speakers use shifted references *sen, biz*, nominal reference *insan* to present themselves as an agent in critical discourse situations. Our qualitative analysis revealed that by manipulating pronouns respondents can convey subtle social meanings that relate to their social identities or to their positions with respect to interlocutors especially in sensitive topics. Turkish women pursue interactional goals both at self-oriented and other-oriented dimensions. Self-oriented facework, which is the primary concern of this study, is managed either to protect the social image against the possible dangers and risks or to minimize the damage that has been done after the desired image has been threatened due to disclosure on sensitive topics. Other-oriented references such as *biz* project identification with others, solidarity, strengthening a shared authority and reemphasizing common ground.

In conclusion this chapter attempts to put forward a modal for evasiveness across genres and cultures in a wider variety of social settings. In particular, the pragmatic domain is defined by the key parameters of avoidance and protective-defensive self-presentation. These strategies can also be refined by describing and analyzing variation of evasiveness across culture, across genres, and its registers within and between cultures. Evasive strategies identified in this study suggest that the cultural construct of “womanhood” affects the organization and content of discourse and that choices in interactional style are the results of the intersubjective influences of cultural meanings, normative practices and personal interpretations. It is not clear, however, whether educated women or male speakers show the same usage patterns for pronominal alternation as the less-educated women in this study. Furthermore, the overall frequencies of pronominal shift in my data may have been higher than in ordinary everyday conversation, as the setting used was particularly conducive to the elicitation of strategic language use.