CONVERSATIONAL ANALYSIS OF MIXED GENDERED INTERACTION IN AN EDITION OF WALE ADENUGA'S *SUPER STORY*

IBE, Chioma Nkechika
Directorate of General Studies, FUTO, Owerri
Chiex2000@gmail.com

And

ODEBUNMI, Akinola Stephen
Department of English Language and Literary Studies, University of Ibadan

Abstract

Mixed gendered interaction is typically characterized by power relations between the two sexes. Recent researches in conversation have demonstrated that a male speaker is more domineering than a female speaker (Kings, 2011; Hall, 2003; Burr, 2003; Tannen, 2003; Kendall, 2003). Nigeria, just as most African societies, is patriarchal. This implies that the Nigerian society is practically male controlled. The trace of male domination could be realized in the participants' use of language. Having set this as a stereotype estranges any woman who attempts to dominate a conversation. Adopting Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson's conversational analysis as its theoretical framework, this research analyzed a mixed gendered conversation of two couples in an edition of the popular Nigerian TV drama series, *Super Story*. The data was obtained by reproducing and recording the audio aspect of the drama. They were then transcribed based on the transcript convention of conversational analysis. Using qualitative analysis, the research identified gesture, high pitch and interruption as indicators of power control. The research concluded by drawing attention to some culturally specified applications in Nigeria that could cause misinterpretations and miscommunications in a mixed gendered conversation.

Key words: Conversation, Gender, Power, Stereotype, Culture-specific, Language

Introduction

The relationship between Language and Power is one of the focus of scholars in recent researches on conversation. According to Itakura (2001: 1860) as quoted in Kings (2011: 207), everyday conversation is rarely symmetrical. This means that one speaker always takes control over the other. In this case, long turns which practically block access to the floor for other potential speakers are used to exercise interactional dominance (King 2011: 205, Herman 1998:21). This is typical in mixed gendered interaction particularly in Africa. Amouzou (2006: 97) posits that most African societies are patriarchal. What this implies is that men generally dominate or as Amouzou defines patriarchy as, "…that form of social organization in which males exercise power..." This is not far-fetched in the use of language. To support Amouzou's claim, Hall (2003: 353) acknowledges that in most researches, findings in mixed talks indicate that men tend to be more domineering than women as women's divergent speech patterns appear to be a byproduct of male dominance.

This research, therefore, tends to analyze conversation between two couples (Osas and Lara; Temisan and Charles) in Wale Adenuga's **Super Story, *"Because you loved me."*** The research identifies the gendered norms on which speakers are portraying, the ground against which individual choices must be interpreted. Hence with the use of Conversational Analysis (CA), an approach that originated from Ethnomethodology, the research gives an analysis of the conversation in mixed gendered Nigerian Discourse with the aim of examining the influence of power and gender in mixed gendered interaction.

Why *Super Story*?

Wale Adenuga's Super *Story* is a popular television drama series shown in most Nigerian screen. *Super story* is serious minded, didactic and African in nature. According to the *Guardian Newspaper*, retrieved on September 18, 2008, 'it is the producer's desires to produce drama programmes that are real and relevant to Nigerians.' The messages of the stories in *Super Story* explore the various social issues in the contemporary Nigeria such as struggle for survival, reproductive health, child trafficking, drug abuse, HIV/AIDS and so on. For instance, 'One bad Apple' (2005) exposes corrupt practices among the Nigerian police; 'Omoeya' (2005) centers on female child and 'A blast from the past' (2008) concentrates on struggle for survival. Therefore, Super story could be seen as a good representation everyday of Nigeria.

In 'Because you loved me', Lara is 14 years old when she becomes pregnant for her young lover.
She drops out of school in order to cater for her child Jimi. Eight years later, Lara meets Osahan. She is confronted with the dilemma of either to leave Jimi with her mother or to introduce him to Osahan. When she eventually tells Osahan, he refuses to accept Jimi as a member of his
    household.
In a move to save her relationship with Osas, Lara leaves Jimi with his grandmother. Meanwhile, Lara's best friend Temisan is confronted with a challenge of choosing between her career and her
fiancé, Charles. Eventually she chooses her career. She is transferred to Abuja. Years later, Charles
resurfaces. She is happy and thinks things will be the same for her and Charles. But to her amazement, Charles abandons her and Temisan becomes heart-broken.

Gender and Power Dynamics

Francis (2000) states that gender can be defined as the social construction of sex differences, expressed in constructions of masculinity and femininity and traditionally, gender differences are integral to the culture of domination, having power asymmetry at their heart. Gender in real sense, is considered in terms of two extreme categories, sometimes even as mutually exclusive opposites - as in "the opposite sex." (King 2011; Bem, 1993). Hence, the role which is usually formed based on the norms of a given society and expectations about verbal behaviour are imposed on people based on their gender. In this case, there is always compelling tendency for gender stereotyping to emerge. Defining stereotyping, Tabolt (2003: 484) on quoting Cameron (1988:8) sees it as that which involves a reductive tendency "to interpret behaviour, personality and so on in terms of a set of common-sense attributions which are applied to whole groups.

Furthermore, the result of gender stereotyping in Nigeria considerably portrayed in the 2016 research report of Voices for Change (V4C) in collaboration with Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) asserts differences in the way Nigerian men and women are

socialized and valued – and disparities in their abilities to access power resources and key roles in society- create an imbalance of power within relationships between the two genders. As a result, men and boys are raised to see themselves as breadwinners, heads of the household, household guards and security providers: viewed as naturally powerful, enjoy violence and as being brought up to fight. On the other hand, women and girls in general are expected to be submissive or supportive, dress modestly, devote themselves to looking after the family and care for their communities. Considering the stereotyped roles, the research finding is that there is greater variation in norms around women's roles than around those of men.

However, Lakoff (2003: 161) sees the need to challenge the ancient platitude (as he calls it) that men are more comfortable with power than women; that it is right and natural for men to seek and hold power and for a woman to do so is strange to a given speech society, marking her as unfeminine and dangerous. This implies a society where women are excluded to some extent. In order to demonstrate the discrepancy in power and language between men and women, Lakoff further cites and compares some empirical findings about the distribution of turns between males and females with the traditional stereotypes about who does more talking than the other. Hence, floor-holding and topic control are associated with power in the gendered conversation. Hence, men are more in control of talk than women. Spender (1980) in his findings also backs up Lakoff's findings to ascertain that typically men hold the floor 80 per cent of the time. Other researches show that men generate most of the successful topics in mixed-group conversation: women's attempts are ignored by both men and other women in the group (Leet-Pellegrini, 1980). Furthermore, according to Lakoff (2003), Zimmerman and West (1975), one way in which men maintain their conversational dominance is by violative interruption of women. This research therefore, is a follow up and a contribution to already existing literature with the aim of studying the conversation between two speakers of different sexes in a Nigerian discourse and the view of observing the power differences in such conversation, determining what could have triggered male constant dominance in conversation.

Theoretical Framework: Conversational Analysis
For qualitative analysis of the data, Conversational Analysis (CA) is used as the framework of this research. CA sprung up from the ethnomethodological tradition of American Sociology which studies procedures and rituals underlying ordinary social activities and interaction which are used by the members of a society themselves in order to produce or make sense of their own social interaction. As an empirical and inductive principle, CA focuses exclusively on the verbal interaction and plays a prominent role in the reproduction of social reality. Specifically, CA offers an approach to discourse that has extensively been expressed by sociologists, beginning with Harold Garfinkel's (1967) *Breaching* experiment. It was then later applied to conversation most notably by Harvey Sacks, Emmanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson's 'A simplest systemics for organization of turn-taking in conversation' (Language, 1974: 50: 4: 696-735).

CA differs from other branches of sociology because, rather than analyzing social order, it seeks to discover the methods by which members of a society use natural language in conversation to provide order and management of the social setting in which the conversations take place. CA also provides description of the way in which conversation achieves this order.

To achieve this, conversational analysts focus on data collected from an audio- or video recordings of episodes of 'naturally occurring,' that is non-experimental, interaction. They also produce transcription and attempt to reproduce what is said in ways that avoid presupposition about what might be important for either participants or analysts. Conversational analysts treat context ethnomethodologically.

Moreover, CA searches for recurrent patterns, distributions and forms of organization in large amounts of talk. In this case, CA approach to discourse considers how participants in talk construct systematic solutions to recurrent organizational problems. These problems include opening and closing talk, turn-taking, repair, topic management, information receipt, and showing agreement and disagreement.

Sacks et al's (1974: 700) CA is relevant to this investigation since it will provide a model of turn-taking where '… one party talks at a time' which will clearly show power relations in a mixed gendered discourse. It will also create the ability to recognize the indicators of power struggle among participants in the conversation.

Turn-taking and turn management

Osisanwo (2003:11) asserts that Turn Taking is central to discourse analysis as universal feature of conversation which develops in man from childhood. It involves how participants organize themselves to take turns at talk: That is, how the end of one speaker's turn and the beginning of the next speaker, often, doing on to each other with relatively perfect exactitude. Hence, when people communicate in a face-to-face interaction, they take turns speaking (Duncan, 1972). To ensure perfect exactness in any conversation, one of the speakers triggers off a limited opening for certain range of responses which must come from other participating speakers. These responses are fixed on the condition which is given and stimulated by the first speaker.

Turn-taking is an idea formed as a result of Sacks et al' s (1974) investigation on how turns are allocated in conversation. The aim of their research is to structure a method by which speakers manage turn taking conversation. Based on their observation, "one party talks at a time, though speakers change and though the size of turns and ordering of turns vary; the transitions are finely coordinated; that techniques are used for allocating turns" (699). Turn taking is therefore described as a set of rules which smoothens ordered conversation between participants (704). There are two components of turn taking, turn constructional component (TCC) and Turn Allocation Components (TAC).

Turn Constructional Component (TCC)

In TCC, turn is constructed out of Turn Construction Unit (TCU), which can vary in size and linguistic texture. In this case, the speaker is entitled to have turns. The completion of each turn consists of initial Transition Relevant Place (TRP) where one turn is given up by the speaker for another turn to begin by the next speaker. Hence initial turn is transferred to another turn (by the responder). As Sacks et al view the completion of each TCU as syntactically realized, Selting (2000) finds out that completion of TCU goes beyond syntax arguing that the interplay of syntax and prosody in semantic, pragmatic and sequential context of turns creates the possibility of different kinds of projections at the TRP. Hence TRP may be postponed by the speaker. Little wonder Zimmerman (1975:108) states that conversational organization must involve both active speakership and active listenership. The listener has to anticipate the location of the TRP in order to avoid overlapping or interruption.

Turn Allocation Component (TAC)

TAC involves an organizational method to turn-taking, which averts the participants speaking at the same time at the TRP. Since it has been observed that turn transitions which occur syntactically and pragmatically demarcate transition relevant place, a new speaker at such time, may take the turn. However, there is also a possibility that the current speaker will continue. Therefore, Sacks *et al* (1974) propose a model in which allocation of the turn can take place:

a) **Current Selects Next** The speaker clearly passes the turn to someone else. For example, by directing a question or a request to a particular participant, the turn goes to the selected next speaker immediately the current speaker finishes his or her turn.

b) **Listener Selects Self** A listener may choose to begin speaking by being the first to talk. In this case, the listener promptly gains the turn.

c) **Current Selects Self** The current speaker may resume speaking. According to the model, these options arise in a specific order. The current selects next option is available to the current speaker during the current turn; if that does not happen, a current listener can self-select; if no listener self-selects, the current speaker can continue and, finally, if none of these occurs, the process recycles to option (b).

This phenomenon suggests that in any given instant, either the current speaker or the listener has the "right" to speak but not both (Wilson and Zimmerman, 1986). In terms of Sacks et al (1974) model, this indicates that option (c) cannot be collided with option (b) so far as the current speaker does not appear to compete with the listener for the right to speak. Each participant must observe (not necessarily consciously) whose option it is to speak and exercise his or her own option only at the appropriate moment.

Data Collection

The data used for this research are collected from Wole Adenuga's drama series, *Super Story*: 'Because I loved you.' In this drama series, we studied the conversation between the couples Lara and Osas, Temisan and Charles. The conversation is championed mostly by verbal energy. The level of verbal energy determines the level of power possessed by the speakers. Fairclough (2001) explains here that power in discourse has to do with powerful participants controlling and constraining the contributions of non-powerful participants. This includes limiting or preventing another speakers contribution so as to establish oneself as a more powerful speaker. In this case, to have control over language is to have control over the construction and preservation of that reality, whether it be true or illusion (King, 2011: 207). Therefore, the conversation in our research is preoccupied with struggle for power and dominance through participants' control of turn-taking.

Analysis

For the purpose of this research, two extracts are selected from the drama series. The extracts consist of a Conversational Discourse (CD) between Temisan and Charles (CD1) and another which involves conversation between Lara and Osas (CD2). In CD1, Temisan and Charles are engaged to get married. However, Temisan has an offer to work in one of the country's famous companies at Abuja. She takes the offer against her fiancé's wish and what follows becomes an argument that tests the strength of their relationship.

Following Itakura's description as quoted by Kings (2011:208), conversational dominance is 'a multi-dimensional construct consisting of sequential, participatory and

quantitative dimensions'. In CD1, Charles can be seen to exercise quantitative conversational dominance in the extract. Going by quantitative measures in terms of the number of words spoken by each participant, out of the total 242 words of the extract, Charles spoke 159 words, or 65.75% while Temisan spoke 83 words.   Although there is a huge discrepancy in the number of words spoken by Charles and by Temisan, the numbers of turns they take are roughly equal: Charles (8) and Temisan (7). While an equal number of turns suggests that the power between participants is similarly equal, examination of the turn-allocation strategies and the texture of the turns reveals how quantitative dominance is central to Charles's determination to be in control of the conversation. The difference in turn-size becomes obvious. In turn 107, after Charles authoritatively and explicitly insists that Temisan should reject her job offer. Charles also tries, and succeeds complicating issues for Temisan when he places comparism between their relationship and Temisan's new job thereby increasing the amount and strength of the threats to Temisan's positive face, that is, her positive self-image (Brown and Levinson: 1978:87). The increase in face threatening acts results in an increase in turn length and thus contributes to her quantitative dominance. In addition, he uses face threatening acts (Brown and Levinson 1978) as well as directives. Directive speech acts in this case, 'are attempts…by the speaker to get the hearer to do something' (Searle 1976:11). As such, they tend to 'come from more powerful speakers' (Fairclough 2001:39) and can contribute towards conversational dominance.

In CD2, the couple, Lara and Osas argues over Jimi's fate. Jimi is Lara's biological son and Osas, his step father refuses to accept him in his household insisting that Jimi should be taken to his biological father. This puts Lara in dilemma for she hopes on her husband to accept her son.

In the conversation, Osas assumes dominance in quantitative measures. Out of 194 spoken words, Osas speaks 157 while Lara makes only 64 words. Osas uses high tone to suppress Lara and as such is the dominant speaker. This is to say that there is great power disparity between Osas and Lara. Considering the prior string of exchanges, Osas assumes control of the conversation by asking the speaker questions after questions, that is, the use of interrogation mode (this suggests interview style). His use of prosodic marker (in this case high pitch) determines also where his main area of interest lies. He determines how the interpretive frame is negotiated.

The inequality is enhanced by the established culturally bound rules governing the interactional situation. Hence, Osas's choice of level tone implies his awareness of his stereotyped role which is definitely the cultural norm. Any deviation from this convention attracts negative evaluation and a face threatening act. Notwithstanding the threats to the positive face of Lara, she tries to maintain the face of her husband. Hence Osas's scheme of dominance is not only interlocutory but also by selecting a high pitch fall at the turn end to indicate finality. Meanwhile Lara expresses submissiveness by selecting normal or low pitch fall at the turn initial. This is usually the case in husband/wife interaction, parent/ child interaction and elder/youth interaction in a typical African setting.

Generally, our analysis has shown that turn-taking and turn-management are central to Lara and Osas conversation. Osas's struggles for power dominance is a success as he maintains a great level of turn management and that comprises framework by which their respective levels of conversational dominance can be measured. Osas exploits violate (which include interruption and face threatening) the turn-taking system in his attempts to attain conversational dominance and power. His long turn and, his avoidance of TRPs and treatment of Lara's speech give him complete control (quantitative, sequential and participatory) over what and how much is said; he

limits Lara's verbal contributions and thereby renders her verbally, as well as physically, powerless. The result is that Lara maintains her status quo as the loyal wife of Osas as she understands what the norm demands of a marriageable woman; hence she remains submissive.

On the other hand, considering the conversation between Temisan and Charles, a close observation suggests that both struggle for power even though they avoid to violate the turn-taking system. Though they have almost equal number of turns which also shows equality in speech dominance, the texture of the turns shows that Charles uses quantitative dominance and prosodic cues (such as high pitch) as his strategy for prowess. However, Temisan's physical reaction (gesture) to Charles' threat which shows positive impoliteness of turn which is her strategy to stay in control of the situation as she refuses to succumb to his authority. The result is that Temisan is unable to maintain her relationship with Charles since she refuses to endorse what has been the stereotyped norm in society.

Conclusion

This research attempted to present relevant contributions to the already existing literature. First, it explores the area of mixed gendered conversational discourse by overtly analyzing power differences in the conversation between people of opposite sex. Embedded in Conversational Analysis, as its theoretical framework, the research demonstrates how the male speakers dominate in the conversation. Having been an existing stereotype, estranges any woman who attempts to hold power in a conversation and this surmounts to consequences in the side of the woman. Hence the research adds to our knowledge, some culturally specified applications in Nigeria that could cause misinterpretations and miscommunications in a mixed gendered conversation.

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FILMIOGRAPHY
Because you loved me.
Super Story.
Producer: Wale Adenuga
Director: Antar Laniyan
Year of production: 2008

EPISODE 1 SCENE 6
101. Charles: Abuja   (2.2)
        Don't   tell me you agreed to it   (1.3)
        What are you thinking Temisan   (1.5)
        What happens when we get married you're gonna be shuttling Abuja to Lagos or what
102. Temisan: it's not a bad ideas
103. Charles: I'm not joking Temisan   (1.5)
104. Temisan: The wedding can wait … can't it   (2.8)
105. Charles: for how long   (1.0)
106. Temisan: I don't know
         Maybe::::   ≠
107. Charles: ≠ NO   Temisan   (1.1)
        I'm not ready to wait Temisan   (1.0)
        There are no certainties in life (men)
        you just have to call it off   (3.5)
108. Temisan: this is r::eally very important to me   (2.6)
        It's an opportunity I cann:ot miss   (0.5)

It's my ca::reer   (4.1)
109. Charles: so it's more im<u>port</u>ant to you than our lives   (1.5)
    ehn   (1.8)
    Why not say it Temisan I need to know   (3.6)
110. Temisan: give'n me a comparisms Charles, it's not fair:::   (1.5)
111. Charles: I want you to choose Temisan   (1.3)
    Do I <u>mean</u> anything to you   (.)
112. Temisan: of course   you do   (2.1)
113. Charles: then you have to cho::ose either the marriage or your career   (0.6)
114. Temisan: my car<u>eer</u> is <u>equal</u>ly important to me   (.)
115. Charles: look Temisan   (.)
    If you <u>leave</u> for Abuja that means the relationship is over   (1.5)
116. Temisan: (Gesture)   as you wish Charles   (.)
117. Charles: wh what are you doing
    Temisan what are you doing
    Temisan

EPISODE 2 SCENE 4
165. Osas: there is <u>absolute</u>ly no way that boy will come to stay in this house   (1.8)
166. Lara: what do you expect me to do::   (2.0)
    eh
    Where do I take him   (.)
167. Osas: <u>take</u> the boy to his <u>fa</u>:ther   (1.6)
168. Lara: you know he has nothing to offer Jimi   (.)
169. Osas: but that is not my business   (1.5)
    I will <u>not</u> labour to cater for other man's son   (.)
    While HE does <u>nothing</u>   (1.3)
    I warned you from the onset to <u>take </u>the <u>boy</u> to his fa:ther   (0.8)
170. Lara: how can I do that Osas   (1.5)
    you know the way he i::s   (1.6)
    •h Osas <u>please</u> don't make this too hard for me now you know I <u>just</u> lost my mother
    please   (6.2)
171. Osas: <u>Look</u> Lara   (1.7)
    I'm very sorry (1.1) about the issue of your mother   (0.7)
    and I <u>pro:</u>mise and I will <u>stand</u> by you   (0.7) all through the burial   (1.5)
    but I am not <u>shift</u>ing grounds for this issue of your son   (3.4)
    the <u>boy</u> cannot <u>stay</u>::: in this house   (0.7) <u>peri</u>od   (1.5)
    after the burial (.) take the boy back to his father.

SCENE TWO
451. Charles: so this is my living room as you can see   (0.7)
452. Temisan: I see (0.5)   I <u>like</u> it
453. Charles: now let me show you the rest of the house   (1.0)
454. Temisan: okay
455. Charles: there's my kitchen   (0.5)
456. Temisan; kitchen   (gesture)

457. Charles: well I <u>must</u> warn you sweetheart that e::m   (.)
     not too much is happening there this days you know bachelor's tide you know(0.5)
458. Temisan: wa::ow
459. Charles: do you like it   (.)
460. Temisan: mhmm   (.)
461. Charles: now come, ∘find out∘   (gesture)
     so how're you finding the house   (.)
462. Temisan: <u>beau</u>tiful   you have a lovely place here
463. Charles: two can put together you know
464. Temisan: I know
465. Charles: yeah now this guest bathroom   (.)
466. Temisan: okay
467. Charles: and this here is the ironing room and some other room but →   (.)
     I haven't decorated it yet I   (.)
     I hardly have people come from   ≠
468. Temisan: ≠ it's alright   (.)
469. Charles: okay so finally   (.)
     so (2.4)   voilá   so this my lady::, is the master's bedroom   (.)
470. Temisan: ∘waow∘
     Char::les   (.)
     This is, <u>beau</u>tiful   (1.7)
     and you have good taste   (1.0)
471. Charles: thank you (2.0)
     but you know I always had em   (1.0)
     good taste in everything   (11.3)
     Temisa::n   (6.5)
     when I saw you again from the elevator I   (0.5)
     I almost went <u>crazy</u> with excitement   (3.0)
     I was, <u>thin</u>king of so:: many things at the same time   (1.4)
     at first I wasn't sure it was you   (1.5)
     h then I didn't want to lose site of you   (1.1)
     my heart was (.) <u>pound</u>ing fast   (2.5)
472. Temisan: oh Charles:::
473. Charles: and was wishing to heaven that you were still single   (1.0)
474. Temisan: uhn
475. Charles: I mean (.) one of the chances (XXXX) once'n a while (XXXX)but   (.)
     I knew I had to take it   (3.1)
     I didn't know what I'd have done, if it was   (1.1)
     if you have turned out otherwise   (2.1)
476. Temisan: charles (2.1)
     I know we're both trying hard to avoid the topic of our breakup ↘   (1.1)
     but I (.) I just don't   ≠
477. Charles: ≠ shh::: (2.5) Temisa::n   (1.2)
     <u>that</u> is not important anymore   (.)
     h (0.5) nothing matters   (6.0)
     <u>we</u>'re together again Temisan   (.)

that means we're meant for each other   (0.7)
478. Temisan: oh Cha:rles::   (1.2)
        I <u>love</u> you::   (3.6)
479. Charles: you know Temisan   (1.1) I've never heard those words before   (4.3)
        It makes me s::o happy babe,   <u>come</u> here
480. Temisan: uhnmm, Cha::rles::

IBE, C.N. & ODEBUNMI, A. S.: Conversational Analysis of Mixed Gendered Interaction in an Edition of Wale Adenuga's Super Story

EPISODE 4 SCENE FIVE
531. Esa: <u>wel</u>come dad   (0.5)
532. Osas: <u>where</u>'s your mum   (2.5)
533. Lara: welcome dear   (1.8)
534. Osas: what did that vagabond son of yours come to do in this house again   (0.9)
        ANSWER   ME WOMAN
540.   Osas: <u>o</u>::ver my dead body will that boy come back to this house again   (.)
        do you <u>hear</u> me   (.)
541. Lara: Osas please don't talk like that   (.)
542. Osas: and <u>that</u> is final   (.)
        Lemota   (.)
        <u>go</u> into his room   (.)
        <u>pack</u> all his things, and put them behind the house   (.)
        for him to pick up when he comes back   (1.5)
        DO YOU HEAR WHAT I <u>SAID</u>   (.)
543. Lemota: <u>yes</u> dad   (3.6)
544. Osas: non sense   (3.5)
545. Lara: Osas please   (1.2)
        please I beg you Osas please   (1.0)
546. Osas: I don't <u>ev</u>er, want to see that boy in this house again