On Wednesday, November 9th during required class study tables for the Evan's Scholar House Grace Foley, Clara Baumgartner, Ali Dobbins, Jess Purcha, and Nick Van Fossen broke off from the group and found a small secluded room in order to record their conversation. It was late in the evening around 9:00, but the participants were inside so the weather was not a factor in the conversation. Most intriguing in the recording is to listen to the code switching and interruptions that occur by the present females when the topics changed to gossip. Women use code switching to signal a change of conversation from previous topics to gossip, while they also use interruptions to add information about the topic that they possess.

The three-minute-long audio recording covers largely one topic, gossip about a fellow housemate named Lexi. The conversation is mostly dominated by Ai and Clara, one being her roommate and the other being a close friend in respective order. Jess and myself spoke the least in the conversation, with myself being the odd gender out, and Jess not being a roommate or a close friend. The audio recorder, my IPhone was in the center of the table and all participants were seated equal distances from the recorder. It is important to note that the conversation occurred in a Kelley break out room, therefore no one outside of the group and room could hear the conversation on going. Also interruptions or unforeseen visitors in the conversation were very unlikely due to being in a locked room. The conversation did not start as gossip, instead as plans for travel and politics, eventually a house relationship is brought up, code switching occurs as the gossip begins, which leads directly into the rich point.

The rich point occurs about 2/3 of the way through the recording, and reveals how women use code switching and interruptions to speak about gossip, add information, and
The gossip begins when Lexi is brought up and I ask a direct question about her based off of rumors and what the girls in the room had previously said. The gossip from the girls about Lexi begins with discussing her and her relationships both in and out of the house and her sexual promiscuity. Eventually the conversation flows into her mishandling of multiple situations with Clara giving a very direct example that involves another girl in the room, Grace. Most interesting in the recording is line 17 when Grace code switches in order to deliberately attempt to clarify her understanding of Lexi and a fellow housemate Jake. Code switching also occurs in lines 45-47 when Clara explains what Lexi really does instead of what she in perceived to do. Finally, Lines 57-59 are examples of interruptions to add information, as Clara interrupts Ali to note that Lexi, 21 years old, will pretend to be more drunk than she is in order to excuse her behavior. All three of these lines reveal how women will code switch in order to gossip, and use interruptions in order to add information while gossiping.

The first example of using code switching in order to gossip is from Grace when she states, “So correct me if I’m wrong, but this is what I know” (Line 17). It would appear to be strange that for the first time in the entire recording Grace would phrase a statement in such a peculiar way, looking for confirmation of the information she currently possesses when she had never done that prior. Although it makes sense in the context of the conversation, prior to the conversation being about gossip and Lexi, Grace’s information on politics and travel plans was definitive and not based off of rumors, such as most gossip is. With her new information being here say and not fact, she attempts to clarify the knowledge she has. It is unknown but interesting to wonder if Grace truly wanted her information confirmed, or if she simply was
attempting to give information in a sneaky way. If this is true and she was truly looking for a way to add her information to the conversation, she may have phrased it in such a polite manner in-order to save face. This example would align perfectly with the reading in Chapter 31, “Sporting Formulae in New Zealand English: Two Models of male solidarity” in which Kuiper states, “...politeness is a way of saving face: either the speakers face or the hearer’s face.” (Kuiper). Grace’s attempt to save face for herself and those in the room with her is a direct result of her code switching in order to gossip and add information to the conversation.

The most complete example of a participant using interruptions as a method of injecting information is Clara when she states, “She just pretends she’s drunk, and then she’ll be like, what I was drunk, my drunk text their just crazy.” (Lines 57-59). Clara’s interruption of Ali does not occur because she attempting to be rude or disrespectful of Ali, instead because Clara has information that is prevalent to the situation that is being discussed. She uses the linguistic device of interruption in order to inject her gossip, which relates to the book in chapter 20, written by Deborah Tannen, and titled “Conversational Signals and Devices”. In the chapter Tannen states, “These signals are used in linguistic devices that do the work of conversation, complex work that includes, always and simultaneously: creating conversation by taking turns talking; showing how ideas are related to each other; showing what we think we are doing when we talk; and revealing at the time how we feel at the time of talking.” (Tannen). We are able to take Clara’s lack of taking turns while talking to reveal that her information was considered urgent and that her ideas related to previously spoken about ideas. This shows her power in the conversation is strong enough to feel comfortable with interrupting another
speaker, and that her identity is good enough that she will remain face and not be looked on poorly.

Around the mid-way point of the conversation while Lexi’s sexual promiscuity is in question, Clara uses code-switching in-order to clarify the truth about Lexi. In a playful and polite manner Clara states, “Really the equivalent to going all the way for her, is like sending a really stupid message to someone and then all of us being like you just did that? And her being like yeah. And then her bawling her eyes out the next morning because she regrets it.” (Line 45-48). Clara more than likely makes this clarification for Lexi because she felt that the truth was necessary and in the situation and in order to prevent any misinformation from occurring. Clara’s desire for the truth reveals her identity in the conversation as being one of a kind person who looks out for their friends even if they are gossiping about them. Also her values in the conversation are unveiled through her defense of Lexi because she clearly values saving face over trash talking a housemate.

The rich point of the audio perfectly captures how females use code switching to gossip about friends, and interruptions to inject their knowledge into the conversation. This reveals that women are willing to gossip about their friends, but largely do it in a manner that will save face and not upset fellow gossipers. Typically, in a conversation is it considered rude to interrupt when someone is speaking, although it appears that interruptions that occur during gossip are viewed in a non-negative light because interruption means that urgent information is being added to the conversation. Code switching and interruptions are common and almost necessary for females to gossip about friends and save face while doing it.