

Analysis of Preference Structure in Billie Eilish *Hot Ones*

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Abstract

Preference structures are important in the study of conversation since they offer an observable perspective into how human communication is governed by social rules. This study analyses the preference structure in the *Hot Ones* interview featuring Billie Eilish by applying the framework of Conversation Analysis (CA). It aims to find types of preference structure are found in the *Hot Ones* interview featuring Billie Eilish grounded in Yule (1996) concept of preference structure. This research serves as the first investigation to the *Hot Ones* interview featuring Billie Eilish analyse structural changes in a speaker's preferred and dispreferred responses while under the external factor of spicy food consumption in a public media interview. the data were taken from the interview transcript and examined using concepts of preferred and dispreferred response. The findings reveal that Billie Eilish frequently produces preferred responses in the form of direct agreements, minimal responses such as "yeah" or "right," and affiliative laughter to maintain solidarity with the host. Dispreferred responses tend to appear with delays, hedges, doubt or added explanations to soften disagreement. All of these patterns show that in an informal media setting. How politeness and public image maintenance influence interaction between interviewer and the speaker.

Keywords: *Preference structure, Conversation Analysis, Pragmatics*



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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, online interview formats gained popularity, especially on YouTube that has become the main stage where celebrities perform revealing a careful mix of their real self and the polished public image, they want the world to see. One of the popular online interviews on YouTube is *Hot ones* interview that attract viewers not only for their entertainment value but also for the authenticity of interaction they appear to create between interviewer and guest. According to DeVito (2015) interview are able to be seen as a conversation between two strangers, where the primary objective is to obtain the specific information from the other speaker. One of the most viewed episodes features Billie Eilish, whose conversational style, and sense of humor share closeness with the host during the interview.

While interview is useful for collecting facts and specific information, we must dive deeper through the content itself to fully understand the interaction. This leads us to Conversation Analysis. Ramdhani (2024) describes conversation Analysis as a method for studying social life as it happens through conversation. Conversation Analysis ignores the facts gathered and instead focuses on the revealing the hidden structures in all form of spoken communication. A major concept in Conversation Analysis is adjacency pairs, which consist of a first pair part and a second pair part occurring in a sequence. Fatmawati (2020) mentions pair of adjacency pair that include question, assessment and request. Umami et al. (2020) states the interlocutor or the second pair part could respond with two choices in the form of acceptance or rejection. In addition, Pillet-Shore (2017) stated Participants in a conversation perform the exchange by initiating a two part sequence known as an adjacency pair, where one speaker begins by posing a question and the subsequent speaker is socially required to respond with the corresponding answer. Meaning the second pair part is generally expected to align with the first speaker intention, especially in interview settings where maintaining mutual understanding. Through Yule's theory that every conversational turn, even in an interview, is systematically organized toward either a preferred and dispreferred response, such as agreement or disagreement, which named preferred and dispreferred response in conversation is called preference structure.

In preference organization the term preference structure refers to how people naturally respond to each other in social interactions. Hepburn & Potter (2021) also describe preference structure as a way of people show agreement and disagreement towards the conversation topic. It does not mean someone's personal likes or dislikes, but rather a conversational pattern that shows what kind of response is expected in a conversation. For example, when someone makes a request, the expected or preferred response is acceptance such as saying "Sure" or "Okay". While is dispreference considered a dispreferred response because it is less socially expected. Preferred responses usually come quickly and directly, while dispreferred ones often include delays, hesitations, or explanations. Rohmawati (2017) describes that dispreferred as an effect that the speaker is presenting herself as having difficulty and is unwilling or refuse to have to say what is being stated. The use of delay/hesitation, preface, express doubt, token yes, give an account, and hedge the negative as a way to express both dispreferred and preferred that able to be accomplish.

Despite Existing research on Preference structure such as Umami et al. (2020) *An Analysis of Preference Organization as Seen in Calibre Movie*, Khotiyah (2021) *Analyze Preference Organization on English Textbook for Senior High School*, Rohmawati (2017) *analyze the preference organization used by transgender in DANISH GIRL*, Azizah (2015). *The Analysis of Pre-Expansions and Preference Organization of Invitation Dialogues in EFL Textbooks: A Conversation Analysis*, Noval et al. (2022) *Conversation Analysis: Turn-Taking Analysis in Variety's Actors on Actors Conversation Video featuring Zendaya and Andrew Garfield* . a noticeable gap can be seen in casual talk show setting. Specifically, the Billie Eilish *Hot Ones* interview settings where the pain from the spicy wings could override social norms, offers a valuable research opportunity. This analysis would test whether physical discomfort able to simplifies communication by forcing speakers to rely more on structurally preferred actions, or if it uniquely modifies the turn shapes traditionally used for dispreferred actions like disagreements.

This study aims to fill the gap by analyzing the preference structure in Billie Eilish episode of *Hot Ones* interview . The interview shows the dynamic interaction where Billie Eilish expresses agreement, humor, hesitation, and occasional disagreement while still maintaining a positive rapport with the host, Sean Evans. analyzing these responses using Yule's theory of preference structure helps reveal how conversational harmony is maintained through strategies like preface, delay, doubt, give an account, yes token, and hedge the negative.

Additionally, this study contributes to developing an understanding of how media discourse functions in shaping public perception and constructing celebrity identity. Since Billie Eilish communicates while maintaining her public images, her ways of agreeing and aligning reflect both personal authenticity and strategic politeness. The *Hot Ones* interview format provides unique and entertaining feels which make it intriguing research object for pragmatic analysis by observing on how basic conversational structures such as preference naturally emerge even under comedic stress.

Therefore, this study aims to identify the types of preference structure and the strategies used to convey preferred and dispreferred acts in the interview. The analysis emphasizes how Billie Eilish tends to maintain preference for agreement even in situations of discomfort or disagreement. The result of this research is expected to provide further insights into how preference structure works in real, casual media interactions and how speakers able to construct alignment in public communication.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a descriptive qualitative design. This study is qualitative because the data are presented in the form of descriptions and explanations about preference structure found in the *Hot Ones* interview featuring Billie Eilish. Leonard & David (2016) describes qualitative method as an emphasis on understanding the meaning of the phenomenon under consideration to those who are experiencing it. The researchers analyzed the data using the interview transcript and video documentation then identify all the preference structure found in the research object. Each identified preferred and dispreferred responses then categorize according on the ways its delivers. The subject of this research is a recorded interview from the American YouTube talk show *Hot Ones*, specifically Billie Eilish’s episode published on March 28th, 2019. The video was retrieved from the First We Feast official YouTube channel. This interview was chosen because it contains spontaneous adjacency pairs that highlight how both speakers produce preferred and dispreferred responses.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

This section presents the results of a Conversation Analysis examining the use of preferred and dispreferred response types within the *First We Feast: Hot Ones* interview featuring Billie Eilish. The data has been identified and categorize trough preference structure and as it shows down below.

Table 1. The Use of Preference Structure in the *Hot Ones* Interview

Types of Conversation	Types of Respond		Ways to Delivers					
	Preferred	Dispreferred	Preface	Delay	Doubt	Give an Account	Yes Token	Hedge the Negative
QUESTION	21	8	4	3	1	1	-	1
ASSESSMENT	10	3	2	-	-	-	2	1
REQUEST	3	2	-	1	-	1	-	1
OFFER	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
TOTAL	35	13	6	4	1	3	2	3

From the table above, it reveals that out of the 48 instances Billie Eilish shows cooperation to the interaction that can be seen from the 35 instances of preferred responses compared to 13 dispreferred responses. The result also reveals prefaces and delays are frequently used by Billie Eilish to deliver both Preferred and Dispreferred responses

DISCUSSION

Preferred Response

Preferred response is an answer that the other person expects to hear. According to Yule (1996), it represents social actions, and not all social actions are equal when they occur as second parts of some pairs. Basically, a first part that contains a request or an offer is typically made in the expectation that the second part will be an acceptance. These answers are usually quick, and direct. The following data show preferred responses used during the *Hot Ones* interview.

Example 1

(3.15 – 3.34)

Sean : *do you remember when you discovered youtube and the things that you were drawn to early on?*

Billie : *it was like the classics because you know how it used to be like things were viral now it's not no nothing is like viral it's just like everything is you know I don't know it was like chocolate rain.*

When Sean asks Billie Eilish if she remembers her early YouTube days, there is no long pause between the utterances. Billie Eilish answers the question in details as soon as Sean finishes his question. This quick and direct answer to the topic is an example of preferred response used by Billie Eilish.

Example 2

(22.33 – 22.42)

Sean : *i'm in awe billy i thought your back was against the ropes.*

Billie : *it was, i thought that's all i could be.*

In this part of the interview Sean Gives an assesment for sharing his evaluation of how Billie is doing. He is amazed on how Billie handle all of the spicy wing from the start untill the end of the interview. Billie response in a direct agreement. as it seen on the word "*It was*",. Meaning Billie performs preferred response which she agrees with Sean's assesment that she was struggling.

1. Give an account

Khotiyah (2021) describes give an account as an explanation of why something is being done. As a way to perform preferred act, Billie Eilish uses give an account to provide a reason and explanation for the conversation responses. The use of give an account are able to be seen through the following data:

Example 3

(21.29 - 21.42)

Sean : I was gonna say do you feel a freedom when you're walking the aisles at tj's or not so much

Billie : Not anymore anymore not even AT Costco, and I went to Costco on my birthday.

Sean offers a challenge on putting extra hot sauce on the last vegan nugget since it is treated as the interview tradition. Billie response the first pair offer by not using direct agreement, instead she gives an account by mentioning that "*I don't have a show tonight*" as a form of preferred act to accept the first pair offer.

2. Express doubt

Doubt is the way when people I unsure about something. Yule (1996) describes that express doubt contains some words such as "*I'm not sure*" and "*I don't know*". During the interview, it reveals that Billie Eilish utilizes phrases of Doubt not as a signal of disagreement. But, as a way to deliver an immediate answer to the question. The following data provide the use of expressing doubt:

Example 4

(8.25 - 8.38)

Sean : what would a Billie Eilish horror movie look like?

Billie : probably the Bury a friend video. I don't know if any of you seen it came a couple days ago it would be in the realm of that.

Sean delivers a question about what would Bille Eilish prefer her horror movie look like, which Billie immediately response and offers the example of her "Bury a friend" music video that might be her representation of her horror movie. The use of the word "probably" expresses a doubt. Meaning that she used to manage precision and remain preferred because it directly answers the first pair question.

Dispreferred Response

During the *Hot Ones* interview dispreferred response used throughout the interview. Both uses four different type to deliver dispreferred response such as preface, delay/hesitation, express doubt, give an account, yes token, and hedge the negative. The following data show the types of dispreferred response used in the *Hot Ones* interview.

1. Preface

Preface is words use before the response to signal disagreement. According to Umami et al. (2020) the preface is located at the beginning of the response followed by additional statements. Our findings revealed the host and the guest often utilize preface dispreferred responses. Preface. The preface respond appear in the assessment and question which can be seen from the use of hedging particles like "well" and "oh" or even laugh followed by another sentence. Preface often utilize as a dispreferred marker to alerts the listener that the upcoming turn will be a refusal or disagreement.

Example 5

(12.25 – 12.27)

Billie : I'm not gonna drink water anymore I've decided

Sean :well, let's see if you stick with that

Billie's initial utterance shows the Intent she had to not going to drink water anymore to ease out the spiciness of the vegan wings that she had. In conversational analysis this first pair assessment prefers a supportive or affirmative response, however Sean response with dispreferred response that act as a challenge to Billie statement. The word "well" in the second pair act as a clear marker for preface. It functions as indicate to

Billie that the response will be a dispreferred response followed "*let's see if you stick with that.*" that avoid direct disagreement with questioning the sincerity of Billie assessment.

Example 6

(4.32 – 4.36)

Billie : you taking big bites over there sir how the fuck are you doing it

Sean: hahahahaha.

Billie utilizes the question as the first pair to address Sean on the way Sean ate the spicy vegan wings. In preferred structure the first pair expected an answer on how are Sean able to take big bites of the spicy vegan wings, instead the second pair response with only laugh and not answer the question deliver by Billie Eilish. By responding with only laughing Sean perform a dispreferred response for not answering and decline the Billie question, which expected to response with direct answer.

2. Delay/Hesitation

Delay or hesitation are a way that speaker response to buy time for processing answer. Yule (1996) describes the first pair often marked with the word "*um*" followed by declination or disagreement. Delay or hesitation is utilized by Sean and Billie Eilish only in dispreferred context.

Example 7

(12.02 - 12.10)

Sean : Do you have a favorite memory from the second annual Brockhampton prom night?

Billie :um, I forgot the whole bridge and copykat, the whole thing, and the audience hated it that's all

Sean's question Billie about the memory she had during the second annual Brockhampton prom night that require a simple answer. However, Billie avoids providing the expected positive memory to the first pair and instead delivers detailed account of failure by forgetting the memory and only remember that the audience hated it. Billie begins with the delay or hesitation marker "um," that signals to the listener that the

upcoming response will be a dispreferred act. Billie also utilizes a delay or hesitation phrase to make a dispreferred act as it shows on the data below

Example 8

(17.20 - 17.38)

Sean : can we get some director's commentary from some of our favorite Billie Eilish fits pics up first, what can you tell us about this picture of soulja boy?

Billie: hold on...

When Sean request of a commentary on her Instagram picture of the oversize fashion outfits that she used during a show, which inspired by American rapper and record producer known as Soulja Boy. Billie's response with "*hold on*," functions as dispreferred act by using delay or hesitation phrase to avoid answering Sean question while she battling with the taste of spicy wings. Sean, shows his experience by reading this dispreferred act immediately, which Instead of waiting Billie to answer the question. Sean skips the original question about Soulja Boy to accommodate her difficulty.

3. Yes Token

Another way to perform dispreferred act is to use yes token. In the interview yes token is utilized to honor the first pair before mentioning and perform disagreement that led to dispreferred act. Umami et al. (2020) stated that the use of token yes is marked with the word 'yeah' before giving a complete utterance. The use of yes token is able to be seen through the following data:

Example 9

12.36 - 12.41

Sean : don't you feel that way sometimes too though. When you're like, oh it's a full press day, and then I've got this tour and then this.

Billie : yeah, but I hate it though.

Sean first pair perform an assessment by mentioning Billie Eilish busy career schedule that full of promotion and touring. Billie Eilish perform disagreement by using yes token from the word "*yeah*" the followed by a statement that decline the first pair.

Therefore, dispreferred act is used in the following conversation through the use of yes token.

4. Hedge the Negative

Another way to perform dispreferred act is through the use of hedge the negative to make the respond seen as more polite. Umami et al. (2020) describes hedge the negative is often utilize to soften the disagreement to the topic. The following data shows the use of hedge the negative in the interview:

Example 10

(15.31 – 15.39)

Sean : I was gonna say do you feel a freedom when you're walking the aisles at tj's or not so much.

Billie : Not anymore not even AT Costco, and I went to Costco on my birthday

The first pair started with an assessment from Sean by asking if she feels freedom while walking around in public supermarket without fan intrusion especially in Trader Joe`s supermarket. Billie's response with the word "Not anymore" that delivered immediately is a form of Hedge the Negative implying that she no longer feels the freedom to shop at the supermarket. It also declines the premise of Sean assessment, which make Billie Eilish response a dispreferred act.

CONCLUSIONS

This study reveals the types of preference structure response in *Hot Ones* interview featuring Billie Eilish and aimed to classify, and analyze the composition of Preferred and Dispreferred conversational responses within the *Hot Ones* interview featuring Billie Eilish. The findings demonstrated that out of 48 conversational sequences. Preferred Responses are dominant with 35 instances, while dispreferred Response is 13 instances. The responses utilize Delay, Preface, Token Yes, Account, Doubt, and Hedge the Negative as ways to Response.

The use of preface *Hot Ones* interview featuring Billie Eilish not only act as dispreferred response but also as a preferred response in Notably, the study's novel contribution lies in demonstrating how the unique context of celebrity endures a spicy while maintaining conversation. This study offers valuable, spicy insights into how people

talk when they are enduring a pain from spicy wings. Future research should compare these hot exchanges to regular interviews, perhaps focusing on how other celebrities handle this strange dynamic, further informing how we understand the intersection of media, celebrity, and physical discomfort.

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