

## INTERPRETATION OF CASUAL CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

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### Abstract

*Casual conversation is a critical site for the social construction of reality. The relaxed nature of casual conversation leads to a very common perception by those who participate in such talk that it is trivial and that nothing happens. Conversation Analysis (CA) is one of the approaches in discourse which has its roots in the field of ethnomethodology, one of the branches in sociology. The purpose of this research is to analyze the casual conversation between two close friends. The duration of the conversation is about 10 minutes long. The setting of the conversation is in the area of campus. In this paper, the casual conversation is analyzed from the form of negotiation, the turn taking, the linguistic competence and the strategic competence.*

**Keywords:** *Casual Conversation, Conversation Analysis, Negotition, Turn Taking, Linguistic Competence, Strategic Competence.*

### INTRODUCTION

Conversation is an interaction. Interaction is a process of mechanical system and taking turns at constructing sounds and words. As stated by Duncan and Fiske (1979), interacting is a semantic activity, a process of making meanings. In interaction, people also deliver a very wide range of tasks which consist of meaningful utterances to express feeling, to negotiate meanings as well as to exchange meaning.

As we take turns in any interaction, we negotiate meanings about what we think is going on in the world, how we feel about it, and how we feel about the people we interact with. As said by Eggins and Slade (1997), casual conversation is concerned with the joint construction of social reality. They (1997:8) also add that “casual conversation is the kind of talk we engage in when we are talking just for the sake of talking. This raises the question of just what we mean by “casualness”. This is line with Thornbury (2005) who notes that most day to day language use is spoken since our social interaction will be mostly occurred by spoken many various situations.

Casual conversation is a critical site for the social construction of reality. The relaxed nature of casual conversation leads

to a very common perception by those who participate in such talk that it is trivial and that nothing happens. However, the evidence of analysis suggests that conversation is anything but trivial. It suggests that casual conversation, in fact, constructs social reality. By this reason, casual conversation is interesting to be analysed in the way of its unique features.

Casual conversation is a basic people's activity which is conducted most of the time (Thornbury & Slade, 2006). The people are not able to avoid themselves from conversing with others. For instance, the teachers are required to establish a successful conversation with their students, the sellers in the market are mandatory to form a clear interactional talk with their customers, or simply friends make a small dialog. These conversations have the same objectives, namely expressing ideas, opinions, goals, and feelings one another (Gabor, 2001). However, conversation is not merely about transferring words and sentences. It essentially consists of the speakers' common senses of acting, relating, feeling, and dwelling together (Carbaugh, 2005). In the other words, casual conversation is a semantic activity that negotiates social identity dimension (Eggins & Slade, 1997).

Conversation Analysis (CA) is one of the approaches in discourse which has its roots in the field of ethnomethodology, one of the branches in sociology developed by Harold Gardinkiel (Bhatia et al, 2008). CA was then explicitly developed to conversation by its pioneers: Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson (Schiffrin, 1994: Sidnell, 2007). According to Arkinson and Heritage (1984), the main objective of conversation analysis is the description and explication of the competences that ordinary speakers use and rely on in participating in intelligible, socially organized interaction. CA avoids positing any categories whose relevance for participants themselves is not displayed in what is actually said (Schiffrin, 1994, p. 239). Hence, CA does not consider any other factors outside the spoken data. Another characteristic of CA is terms of its attention to details in the spoken interaction as well as its concerns to minutes particles, which are pertinent to attempting to comprehend how language works (ten Have, 2007). And CA is based on the interactions that occur naturally and made up based on actual data recorded and transcribed in detail following applicable conversation rules. Conversation analysis rejects an unnatural array of data collection methods conducted by simulating and preparing specific artificial interactive contexts in the conversation (Eggins & Slade, 1997).

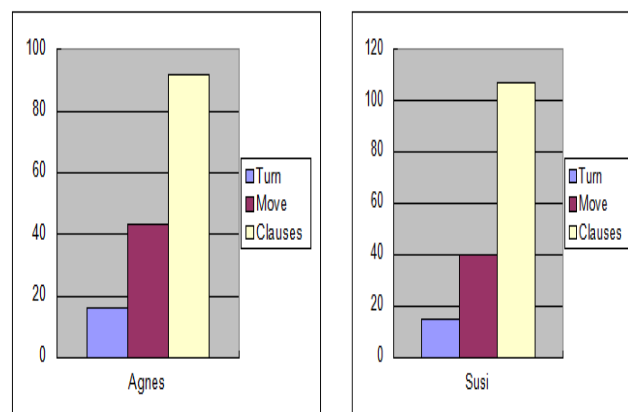
## METHOD

This study used conversation Analysis (CA). CA is one of the approaches in discourse which has its roots in the field of ethnomethodology, one of the branches in sociology developed by Harold Gardinkiel (Bhatia et al, 2008). CA was then explicitly developed to conversation by its pioneers: Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson (Schiffrin, 1994: Sidnell, 2007). The conversation analyzed here is the casual conversation between two close friends. The duration of the conversation is about 10 minutes long. The setting of the conversation is in the area of campus. In this paper, the casual conversation is analyzed from the form of negotiation, the turn taking, the linguistic competence and the strategic competence.

## RESULT

### 1. Turn/Move

| Speaker | Turn | Move | Clauses |
|---------|------|------|---------|
| Agnes   | 16   | 43   | 92      |
| Susi    | 15   | 40   | 107     |
|         | 30   | 83   | 199     |



That table is quantification of the discourse structure choices in all conversation by the two speakers: Agnes and Susi. They have almost the same total of turn, those are 16 and 15. There are 31 turns. Both of them are dominant participants in the conversation. They result equal participation during the conversation. As the conversation is done by the two speakers only, there is no marginalized speaker who does not have shared background and plays passive role of the talk. Each of the speakers shared the same information about discussion topic. Both of them are not competing for turns since they have the right to equal turns to talk. Moreover, both of the speakers are classmates, so they have known each other. There is no need of being superior to other during the conversation. The discussion topics are various, but those are about their activities related to the lecturing on campus.

The number of move which is produced by the participants has a slight difference. Agnes gives more moves but does not dominate the conversation since the difference of total move is marginal only. Although Susi gets less moves, both of them realize the equality of friends so there is no beating of others. This also indicates that Agnes emerges as speech functionally

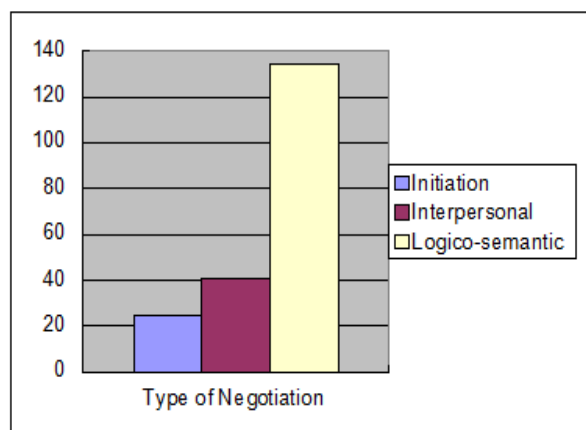
| Type of Negotiation | Agnes | Susi | Total |
|---------------------|-------|------|-------|
| Interpersonal       | 22    | 19   | 41    |
| Logico-semantic     | 61    | 73   | 134   |

dominant as she gets more moves into her turns and gets more value out of her turns since she produces more moves though she has the same turn as Susi. In other hand Susi gives less contribution and interpersonal attention to the conversation compared to Agnes.

The number of clauses is also almost the same with the number of move. There is a gradual difference between the two speakers. Agnes produces more clauses than Susi for her number of turns/moves. Despite this confirms that Agnes get more airspace to talk, more value as speaker and also more substantial congruence between moves and clauses in casual conversation context, Susi is not categorized as incidental participant because their relationship as friend and he speaks purposively.

## 1. Negotiation

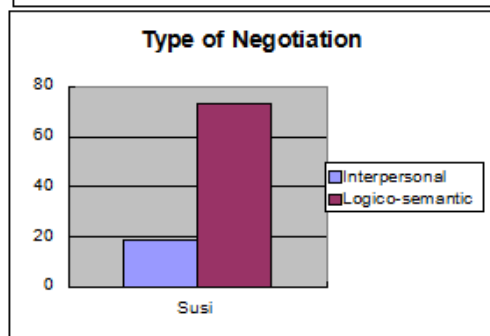
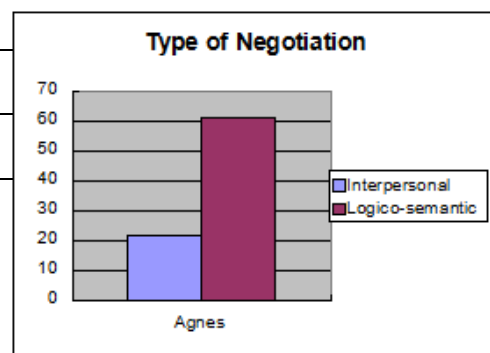
| Type of Negotiation | Total |
|---------------------|-------|
| Initiation          | 25    |
| Interpersonal       | 41    |
| Logico-semantic     | 134   |



The dominant type of negotiation is logico-semantic. It shows that the conversation is done logically connected. Both of them speak and discuss the 'moods' which flow during the conversation happens. They discuss some topics which deliberately come to their conversation. Then it is followed by interpersonal function which means that beside connect the utterances logically, it also has strong interpersonal function in order to establish and maintain solidarity between the

two speakers. The interpersonal functions are shown by laughter or fillers from speaker A (Agnes) when speaker B (Susi) speaks and vice versa. Those do not mean that the speaker A wants to disturb or treat the speaker B, but they are used to show interpersonal intention of the speaker A to speaker B.

There are also some initiations happen during the conversation, those happen 25 times. These reflect that there some topic discussed during the conversation. Each topic is marked by an initiation of the speaker who produces the new topic without any treat to other speaker. The topic change runs smoothly as they have the same background of each discussion topic. Agnes and Susi produce almost the same total of the initiation. This shows that both of the speakers are not dependent on the other. Both of them talk the same topics, not only react to the contribution of others.



In one hand, both of them reflect less different number of interpersonal functions. Each of them responds to other utterances by laughing or chuckling. It happens because of their relationship as friend. They try to give chance each other to finish each utterance. These strategies used by both of the speakers to avoid overlap and to express their affective responses or appreciations to each other. On the other hand, Agnes gives more logico-

semantic utterances than Susi. This describes that she is more willing to express fact and her personal opinion than Susi, though there is only a gradual difference between them. Susi also expresses many personal opinions during the conversation; it is several moves that function as logico-semantic.

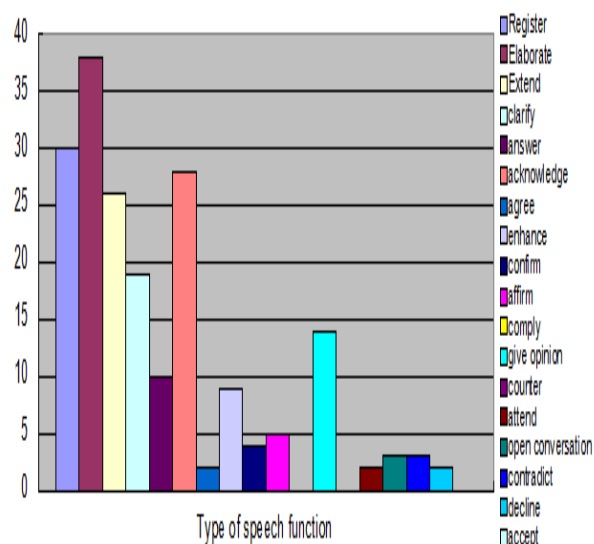
There is no domination of the opening of the conversation, both of them play equal role on different types of speech function. Agnes dominates on the types of question – opinion. This reflects that she starts the conversation by asking opinion question to Susi. She demands opinion information from other speaker (Susi). She uses WH-interrogative and modality/appraisal. Besides that, Agnes also produces statement – opinion to give the new topic. She tends to give attitudinal or evaluative information by using full declarative, modality and/or appraising lexis. While Susi dominates on stating opinion to start conversation, in addition she also produces fact statement. In uttering fact statement, Susi does not risk presenting her own opinion for debate. She gives factual information of the situation or condition by full declarative without any modality or appraisal.

Agnes and Susi favor statements of their opinions, suggest a role of stirrer to each other, but without any indication to be certain egocentricity because they give the same role as opener. There is no domination on topics they talk about. Both of them do not force to discuss a new topic before the previous discussion topic finishes, so that the topic movement changes smoothly. There is no objection from first speaker when second speaker produces utterances to initiate talk around proposition indicating a claim to a degree of control over the interaction.

## 2. Speech Function

| Type of speech function | Total |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Register                | 30    |
| Elaborate               | 38    |
| Extend                  | 26    |
| clarify                 | 19    |
| Answer                  | 10    |
| Acknowledge             | 28    |
| Agree                   | 2     |

|                   |    |
|-------------------|----|
| Enhance           | 9  |
| Confirm           | 4  |
| Affirm            | 5  |
| Comply            | -  |
| give opinion      | 14 |
| Counter           | -  |
| Attend            | 2  |
| open conversation | 3  |
| Contradict        | 3  |
| Decline           | 2  |
| Accept            | -  |



Those show that the conversation plenty of expression. The most used utterances which belong to continue function are elaborate that shows clarification, exemplification, or restatement from previous move.. The second most used utterances are of most used utterances are register that indicates speaker's attention to other speaker during the conversation. The third is acknowledgement. Those offer additional or contrasting information on previous move either it is after intervention by another speaker or not. Those three speech functions have slightly different on the number.

There are 5 speech functions which are only produced less of each by the

speakers. Those are agreement, attend, open conversation, contradict, and decline. Those mean that the speakers do not focus on expression of attention seeking, demand opinion information, negate prior information, contradict import of a challenge, and accept proffered goods and services. The speakers do not seek attention of others since they believe that their equality of friends make them confident to talk and be sure of getting attention. Each of them does not need to demand opinion information since they always give information needed during the conversation. Due to the same knowledge background, they also do not have to negate prior information. Contradiction happens only three times because there is no topic which is arguable. It is only about their activities on campus. From the data above also clearly shows that both of the speakers do not use any kinds of utterances of comply, counter and accept.

### 3. Situation

The situation of the conversation is in the area of campus. The second speaker (Susi) sat down on the stairs while waiting for the next class. Then, the first speaker, (Agnes) came toward the second speaker. Actually, they are in the same previous class and will be in the next same class. It makes the discussion topics vary and there are some initiations during the conversation. Because of their friendship's equality, it flows smoothly. There is no speaker who controls the conversation or be the superior.

There is a little grammatical error during the conversation. Such kinds of minor clauses happen (without any mood) though it is logico-semantic. At least, it is still understandable to both of the speakers.

#### A. Linguistic competence analysis

##### 1. Linguistic Competence: Syntax

There are several linguistic evidences which show the speakers competence in linguistics in side of its syntax.

- Constituent/phrase structure

There are 7 phrase structures.

Those are on c.8 iv, c.20 v, c.23 v, c.29 i, c.30 vi, c.30 x, c.30 xvi – in light blue.

Example: -no problem sis

- Sentence types used in this casual conversation are:

- present continuous tense (example: what are you doing?)
- simple past (example: I got it sis)
- simple present (example: it seems that....)
- past continuous (example: I was fixing my work)
- present perfect (example: I have submitted to Prof)
- simple future (example: it will be better)

- Sentence types:

- statements: 91 clauses (in purple)
- questions: 21 clauses (in yellow)
- imperatives: 1 clause (in orange)
- exclamations: 13 clauses (in green)

- Special constructions

- existentials (-)
- question tags

There is no question tag in this casual conversation. The speaker used "right?" instead of question tag.

- Modifiers/intensifiers

quantifiers, comparing and equating

e.g. Maybe my childhood wasn't as beautiful as you were mbak and manage it better.

- Coordination (and, or, etc) and correlation

- Subordination (e.g., adverbial clauses, conditionals (1))

- Embedding (-)

noun clauses , relative clauses (11), reported speech (-)

##### 2. Strategic Competence

- STALLING or TIME-GAINING STRATEGIES

-Fillers: example: ha...?, hmm

-Hesitation devices, e.g. Eeeee

-Gambits, e.g. The decision is still up in the air.. ; It's hard for me to digest this life lesson..

-Self and other-repetition.

Example: Even now, my mother... she is not with me.

- SELF-MONITORING STRATEGIES

-Self-initiated repair, (e.g., I mean)

-Self-rephrasing (over elaboration) , e.g.

(T13) Bu Helena teaches us in sophisticated way, that it forces us to read a lot. She's great I think. I think so..

(T30) I guess..., may be,... I don't know for sure...I never ask my father about his feeling.. He must be so sad..

-Self-rephrasing (over-elaboration)  
e.g. Bu Wuli is very nice lecturer, right? U know, the way she guide us in class...wow...so nice.. She is very wise. Hmmm...

#### ● INTERACTIONAL STRATEGIES

-Appeals for help

- direct (all in direct)
- indirect (e.g., -)

-Meaning negotiation strategies  
Indicators of non/mis understanding

-Requests

- repetition requests (e.g.,-)
- clarification requests (e.g., (iii) which will take for about 9 days?

(iv) Was that this one?

- confirmation requests (e.g.,)

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## CONCLUSION

In short, the casual conversation between two speakers, although it shared balance turns, it is mostly dominated by the first speaker, as she produced more clauses in her turns. Most of the negotiations in the conversation are logico-semantic. There are only several grammatical errors in whole conversation. The turns are not many, because one turn consists of many clauses and each speaker seemed to wait each other.