

CONVERSATION ANALYSIS ON AN INDONESIAN TELEPHONE CALL

Desri Maria Sumbayak
English Lecturer of FKIP of Riau University

Abstract: This article discusses a conversation analysis on a telephone call between the author and her Indonesian female friend. The conversation was done on telephone and recorded by the author. The talk-in interaction data was transcribed by using CA convention. Then, the data were analyzed by considering the three typical stages of a conversation. It reveals the distinctive features of conversation in Indonesian context. The conversation flows simultaneously with a little numbers of overlaps, repairs and clarification seeks. There is also a tendency that Indonesian speakers produce wordy sentences particularly at opening and closing stages. The excessive sentences for opening and closing could be considered as politeness in Indonesian context.

Key words: *conversation analysis, culture, conversational strategies.*

INTRODUCTION

Conversation Analysis (CA) is highly considered as a distinctive approach in discourse analysis methods. Cameron (2001, p.87) points out that “CA is markedly as ‘data centred’ form of discourse analysis”. Similarly, Schegloff, as cited in Phillips and Riley (2000, p.39) describes CA as “inductive approach to the analysis of recorded samples of naturally occurring conversation, or as is now preferred, talk-in-interaction”. As an inductive approach, CA seems as an analysis which principally investigates the findings on the conversation text as the data. Furthermore, Paltridge (2000, p.84) mentions that “conversation analysts...explore how participants both produce and respond to evolving social context, using conversational data as the source for the claims they make”. This means that by using CA, the data will reveal the characteristics of social or cultural context in which the conversation takes place. By contrast, in pragmatic and critical discourse analysis, cultural and social context is made use to investigate the data.

Reflecting to the concept that the use of CA will reveal about the social and cultural interactions and practices, the writer is interested in identifying the social and cultural features of a telephone call of Indonesian speakers. So, this article attempts to employ CA in critically exploring the distinctive features in an Indonesian telephone conversation. Firstly, the opening and closing stages of the conversation will be analysed. Secondly, turn taking, adjacency pairs and topic development as the dominant features will be explored. Finally, the reflection upon the implication of CA in teaching context will be discussed.

CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

Burns and Joyce as cited in Paltridge (2000, p.85) suggest three typical stages of CA; Opening stages, Middle stages and Closing stages. Opening stages consist of the beginnings (e.g. salutations and greetings such as ‘Hello’, ‘How are you?’) and initiating exchanges that establish social relations (e.g. formulaic expressions such as ‘How’re things?’ ‘What’ve you been up to since I last saw you?’). Middle stages explore the development of a range using conversational strategies for turn taking, turn allocation, and keeping a turn, adjacency pairs, preferred and dispreferred responses, ways of giving feedback, changing a topic, asking for clarification, correcting what was said, etc. The last stage is closing stages in which the preclosing exchanges signalling the ending of the conversation (e.g. discourse markers and formulaic expressions such as ‘Anyway, Well, I’d better be off’. ‘Thanks for calling’, falling intonation). This stage also consists of closings (e.g. formulaic expressions such as

‘Bye’, ‘See you’).

In the area of the opening telephone conversation, Schegloff (1986) describes “routine” telephone openings as unfolding in four adjacency sequences: summons-answer, identification/recognition, greetings, and initial inquires/responses. This model is illustrated using example (1).

(1). #263; Schegloff, 1986, 115

[a]		((RING))
01	R	Hello
[b]	02	C Hello Ida?
03	R	Yeah
[c]	04	C Hi, = This is Carla
05	R	Hi Carla
[d]	06	C How are you.
07	R	Okay .:
08	C	Good.=
09	R	= How about you.
10	C	Fine. Don want to know...

Schegloff describes this as a set of sequential units: [a] a summons answer sequence, consisting of the telephone ring and the first answerer’s turn, [b] identification/ recognition sequences, consisting of each party identifying and displaying recognition of the others, [c] an exchange of greeting tokens, [d] an exchange of initial inquiries and their responses. It seems that the opening part of telephone conversation has a formatted template, in fact according to Schegloff, actual telephone openings display diverse formats and subtle shades of interactive detailing. The diversity of formats might reflect the distinctive culture and social context of the conversation as aforementioned.

METHODOLOGY

The data was taken from a telephone conversation between the author (D) and her Indonesian female friend (M). Both of them are post graduate students at University of Canberra. They have known each other for more than one year. Considering the ethical of data collection as strongly suggests by Cameron (2001, p.25), the author informed the participant that the conversation would be recorded for academic research purpose and enquired for her oral consent. To get the reliable and naturalistic data, the topic and the specific research area weren’t notified to the participant. The conversation was done in Bahasa Indonesia in order to avoid cultural barrier between the speakers. The talk-in-interaction data was transcribed by using CA convention in Atkinson and Heritage (1984). Subsequently, the Indonesian data was translated into English.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on three typical stages of conversation suggested by Burns and Joyce, it seems that the data covering these three stages with some distinctive features in every stage. There is a tendency that the speakers produce wordy greetings before starting a topic. Philips and Riley (2000, p.42) summarizes that the telephone opening consists of four core sequences: a summon/answer sequence, an identification sequence, a greeting sequence and an exchange of ‘howareyous’. In this data, the telephone opening shows a similar design. However, there is a mixed of summon and identification sequence. There is also no exchange of ‘howareyous’. After responding to ‘howareyous’ question, D immediately prolongs with *what are you doing*. The similar question *what’ve you been up to since I last saw you?* is considered as part of opening stages by Paltridge (2000, p. 85). This type of question requires longer answer. It seems that by obtaining the long answer, the person who makes the call may confirm that the responder is in comfortable condition to start a conversation. Molinowski as cited in

So'o and Liddicoat (2002, p.95) emphasizes "the importance of greetings for phatic communion-greeting are on important site for establishing and defining relationships". It seems that for Indonesian speakers, it is very important to consider the establishment of their social interaction before starting a conversation.

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | M: hallo? | <i>Greeting</i> |
| 2 | D: hallo Monik ::: | <i>Greeting</i> |
| 3 | M: yaa[aaa] apa kabar? | <i>Greeting</i> |
| 4 | D: [aaa] ba:::ik lagi ngapain? | <i>Greeting/Feedback</i> |
| 5 | M: enggak, lagi nonton tivi. | <i>Greeting/Feedback</i> |
| 6 | D: ei::: lagi santai nih ya? | <i>Greeting/Comment</i> |
| 7 | M: haah. | <i>Greeting/Feedback</i> |
| | | |
| 1 | M: hello? | <i>Greeting</i> |
| 2 | D: hello Monik::: | <i>Greeting</i> |
| 3 | M: yea[aaa]h how are you? | <i>Greeting</i> |
| 4 | D: [uh::] go:::od what are you doing? | <i>Greeting/Feedback</i> |
| 5 | M: no, watching television. | <i>Greeting/Feedback</i> |
| 6 | D: er::: relaxing? | <i>Greeting/Comment</i> |
| 7 | M: uh huh. | <i>Greeting/Feedback</i> |

It is also interesting to point out that the greeting is firstly done by M as the responder. In line 3, there is also a tendency that M has a role of first pair. But in the line 4, M starts to use her turn as an initiator to start a question.

Paltridge (2000, p.92) mentions that the basic rule of turn taking in English is that one person speaks at a time, after which they may nominate another speaker, or another speaker may take up the turn without being nominated. It can be seen clearly that the telephone conversation is developed by involving two-sided of the speakers. The conversation flows simultaneously with a little numbers of overlaps, repairs and clarification seeks. This feature may also reflect the potential characteristics of a telephone call. Phillip and Riley (2000, p.41) believe that due to the non-involvement of the third party, there is a tendency that the telephone partners construct their talk in turn-by-turn fashion, working in co-operation to keep their conversation on track. In this data, the use of less overlaps may indicate that the speakers give a chance to take the turn to speak. The phone caller gradually produces some questions and the responder continuously replies with extensive answers. There is no tendency to compete to have the turn. The chances to take turn are given by the indication of pause, rising intonation, falling intonation and feedback signals.

Cameron (2001, p.95) highlights that "CA places great emphasis on the idea that conversation is 'one thing after another'". Furthermore he defines 'one thing after another' as adjacent utterances in

which the second utterance is not just related to the first but functionally dependent on it. The dominant adjacency pairs used in this telephone talk is question and answer in which the second is functionally dependent on the first. The basic rule for adjacency pairs is that when a speaker produces a first pair part, they should stop talking and allow the other speaker to produce a second pair part (Paltridge, p.88). Furthermore, Liddicoat (2007, p.106) defines “the forms of talk which initiate actions are called first pair parts (FPP), while those flow from such initiations are called second pair parts (SPP)”. FPP are mostly constructed by D as the initiator of this conversation, whereas SPP are done by M. Most of the answers are given immediately after the questions are raised. Some of the information is relatively brief. Nevertheless, in most of the occasions, M uses the opportunities to expand her answer and develop the conversation, as shown in the extract below:

8 D: hahaha gimana assignment nya? *Information seek/ start a topic*

9 dah pada kelar belum?

10 M: a udah tadi::: trus::: ya udah, *Information provide*

11 udah, pokoknya assignment

12 yang paling berat udah semua tadi

13 trus ada test akuntansi itu juga

14 yang berat-beratnya udah selesai. *Information expand*

8 D: hahaha how is your assignment?

9 all have finished? *Information seek/start a topic*

10 M: uh just finished::: then::: yeah finished, *Information provide*

11 done, the most difficult assignment

12 is done this afternoon

13 then, accounting test,

14 the most difficult one has also finished *Information expand*

This extract shows that as the responder, M seems to be actively expanding the information and making the conversation more dynamic. In some parts of the conversation, D regularly uses feedbacks such as: *uh huh, yeah, hmm*. Paltridge (2006, p, 119) points out that the use of response token such as ‘mmm’ and ‘yeah’ is one of the ways to show that the listeners are attending to what being said. At the same time, using this token seems to be very effective to give chances for M to expand her information. This also confirms that response token may give the opportunities for the speakers to take their turn (Paltridge, p.92). The initiative of the responder to expand the conversation shows that as the person has social and cultural barriers to talk in a great extent.

Nevertheless, it is also meaningful to discuss several exceptions. There is one time (line 69- line 81) that the question is not responded immediately by the direct answer, but by an explanation. To answer the question *when is your husband coming*, M seems to defer her answer. Instead of directly

answering that her husband is not coming, she initially explains the reasons why her husband is not able to come. In another occasion (line 136-138), the question is replied by a question. It seems that M needs more information before giving her expected answer. Cameron (2001, p.95) points out that there is also a possibility that questions are not always followed by answers but may be followed by further questions. For these cases, Cameron argues that this strategy is used defer the answer but not to cancel the expected answer of original question.

As a casual telephone conversation, the topics of this conversation are considered as general. The topics are about the assignment, holiday and husband. The personal topic such as husband seems to be not a taboo to be discussed. The topic about her husband is extensively discussed from line 66-127. In line 100 there is a tendency to discuss about a joke of her sexual desire to her husband. Even though this joke is not expanded gradually, but that may indicate that in particular setting, the topic about sex is not taboo to be discussed. There is a tendency that the topics are started by D as the initiator. The expanded information given by M may provide chances for D to seek more information and develop the topics, such as in line 56-61, 109-113 and 103-107.

To sum up the telephone call, the speakers tend to produce the extensive closings with some overlaps in them. The pre-closing signal in line 151-153 is considered as relatively long. The use of long sentence may show that the speaker tries to be polite to end up the conversation. The feedback *okay* and closing *bye* are overlaps and mentioned several times. It seems that both speakers are holding up to bring the conversation to an end. There is uncertainty who is the most appropriate person to end the conversation; the telephone call maker or the receiver. Subsequently, it can be seen that the caller ends the conversation. This process of waiting may vis-a-vis to the concept of politeness in Indonesian culture. It reveals that in Indonesian context, it is more appropriate when the person who initiates the conversation will put the conversation to an end. Cameron (2001, p.99) points out that there is often a difficulty to end the conversation on the phone. This might due to the limit of the involvement of body language or physical movement on the phone call. This means that closure basically needs linguistic features. However, producing linguistic features to end the telephone call may deal with cultural stumbling block.

150	D: [oke]	
151	iya deh:::	
152	besok kita cerita-cerita panjang lagi	
153	ya Monik ya:::	<i>Closing</i>
154	M: oke	<i>Closing/Feedback</i>
155	[sampai jumpa]	<i>Closing</i>
156	D: [o:::ke]	<i>Closing/Feedback</i>
157	M: [bye bye]	<i>Closing</i>
158	D: [em]	<i>Closing/Feedback</i>
159	thank you banget ya:::	<i>Closing</i>
160	M: bye.	<i>Closing</i>
161	D: malam baik ya::: da:::	<i>Closing</i>

150	D: [okay::]	<i>Acceptance</i>
151	yes::	
152	so tomorrow we'll talk more	
153	yeah Monik yeah::	<i>Closing</i>
154	M: okay	<i>Closing/Feedback</i>
155	[see you]	<i>Closing</i>
156	D: [okay]	<i>Closing/Feedback</i>
157	M: [bye bye].	<i>Closing</i>
158	D: [ehm]	<i>Closing/Feedback</i>
159	thank you so much yeah::	<i>Closing</i>
160	M: bye.	<i>Closing</i>
161	D: good night yeah:: bye::	<i>Closing</i>

So'o, A and Liddicoat (2002, p.95) believe that the ritual of telephone openings may differ from one culture to another. Similarly, Paltridge (2000, p.86) argues that opening and closing rituals "vary across seemingly linguistic and cultural settings". He brings up the example of cultural barriers between the New Zealand English speaker and Australian English speaker. New Zealand English speakers tend to have less pre-closings at telephone conversation whereas Australians be likely to produce longwinded closings. It is interesting to identify that there is slightly cultural gap between similar countries like New Zealand and Australian. But, it is more interesting to find out that there is a similarity in terms of wordy closings in telephone call between Indonesia and Australia; two countries which are regarded as dissimilar in culture and social context.

Reflecting upon the process of doing CA, the author was inspired by meaningful insights to be applied in teaching context. Exploring the turn taking of natural data has enriched my knowledge on how to teach speaking effectively. In my speaking class, the students are often caught in the situation where they can't make the conversations developed. McCarthy (1991, p.128) points out that in traditional classroom, students are reluctant to break rigid turn-taking. There would be cultural barriers in producing linguistic features. English turn taking is not as easy as in Bahasa Indonesia. Celce-Murcia & Olshtain (2000, p. 173) argue that the turn taking styles are different in one country to another country. They highly suggest the teachers in ESL and EFL classes to develop their students' strategies in the new language. Similarly, Cook (1989, p. 53) points out that "there are particular signals which enable speakers to get into – and to get out of conversations, to pass the turn to somebody else, varying according to whom on is talking to and in what circumstances". By considering the differences between the turn taking in Bahasa Indonesia and in English, ideally I could apply the strategies in English to encourage my students to be more confident to develop conversation in English.

The exploration of adjacency pairs gives the author an idea on how to teach her students in constructing the adjacency pairs and how to respond in different context and situation. McCarthy (1991, p.121) points out that "different roles and settings will generate different structures for such adjacency pairs". Natural authentic conversation might also be given to enrich the material of the

course book. The use of natural conversation may give an opportunity for the students to see the real model of turn taking and adjacency pairs.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, CA is very useful to analyse data in different context. CA framework could be used to explore the specific features in different social and cultural context. The use of CA in analysing a telephone conversation in Bahasa Indonesia shows that there is a tendency that Indonesian speakers produce extensive openings and closings. This may reflect that the social and cultural interaction in Indonesia highly consider politeness in their interaction. There is also a tendency to avoid overlaps in turn taking in telephone call conversation. In terms of adjacency pairs, questions are immediately followed by expected answers. The understanding of CA is also very beneficial to enrich teachers' perspective in teaching speaking in EFL context.

REFERENCES

- Atkinson, J.M.& Heritage, J.C. 1984. Eds. *Structures of Social Actions: Studies in Conversation Analysis*, Cambridge: CUP.
- Cameron, D. 2001. *Working with Spoken Discourse*. London: Sage.
- Celce-Murcia, M. & Olshtain, E. 2000. *Discourse and Context in Language Teaching*, Cambridge: CUP.
- Cook, Guy. 1989. *Discourse*. Oxford: OUP.
- Liddicoat, A. 2007. *An Introduction to Conversation Analysis*. London: Continuum.
- McCarthy, M. 1991. *Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Paltridge, B. 2000. *Making Sense of Discourse Analysis*. Gold Coast: Antipodean Education Enterprises.
- Paltridge, B. 2006. *Discourse Analysis: an Introduction*. London: Continuum.
- Phillips, D & Riley, P.C. 2000. Managing Telephone Talk: The Sequential Organisation of Telephone Openings. *JOLIB*. 11/2. pp 39-59.
- So'o, A. & Liddicot, A. J. 2002. Telephone Openings in Samoa. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*. 23/1, pp 95-107.**