



AN ANALYSIS OF CONVERSATION STRUCTURE IN LITTLE BIG SHOT AMERICA

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Abstract

Conversation analysis is used to analyze conversation among people. It can be done from the point of view of conversational structure and also part of conversation. This mini research focuses on the conversational structure and strategy used in conversation. Two main focuses on the research are global structure and Local structure. Global structure is overall organization of conversation, which is opening, body and closing. Local structure consists of the use of turn-taking strategy, the existence of adjacency pairs and how the speakers give feedback. The object of the study is talent talk show *Little Big Shot America*, in season 1, episode 1. There were many researches about conversation analysis with TV show as the object study. But this study is different because the show involves kids as the guest. It leads to the result that many strategies used in conversation different from the strategy which involves both adults as the speaker and audience. Although there are many strategies used in the show, the host mostly used Turn-claiming strategy to keep the floor and to let the kids “return” to the turn that they are engaged. It happened because kids often move from one turn to another, jumping from one topic to another one.

Keyword: conversation analysis, conversation structure, turn taking strategy

Introduction

The need of entertainment or leisure has become one of the basic needs for human being. That is why many entertainment shows are now in the business. One of them is Television. Along the decades, TV has been a practical yet complete entertainment tools. Because of this, many programs shown on TV to answer the need of audience which develop from time to time. If the talk show has become one of popular “attraction” since long ago, since Oprah on TV, now people need innovation. There are some talk shows which blend it with comedy or music. One of the innovations done in *Little Big Shot America*. This show is basically talk show, with one host and some guests done in studio with many audiences watch they live. But what make this show different is that all the guests are kids and they are not an ordinary kid. They are talented kids who are ready to perform their talent on TV. The details of the show is about the talent performance and interview done by the host, Steve Harvey. It can be said that the show is talent talk show meaning that the show gives the audience the performance of talent shows and also interview to the talented kids in one package.

There are many talk shows which has become an object of conversation analysis research. Because talk show is part of conversation, although most of the adjacency pairs are Question and Answer, but there is a part of entertaining in it, so it still useful yet excited to analyze. What make it different for the previous study is that the object who are involved



in the conversation are kids. Perhaps the result will show is there any difference between conversation done by both adult and those which is done by adult and kids.

This paper attempts to apply conversation analysis (CA) theory to analyze conversation structure features of Little Big Shot America, which will be conducted from two aspects: global structure and local structure. In terms of global structure, the paper studies the features of Little Big Shot from opening, body and closing process. As to local structure, features in turn-taking strategies, adjacency pairs and feedback are analyzed. It will answer the question on what kind of strategy used by the host to keep up the conversation with the kids. How the host used the strategy to keep the conversation running well, in the case facing kids as the guests. And also, how the overall organization done by the host in build-up global structure of the conversation in the talent talk show

Theoretical Framework

Kong Rui and Su Ting, has done a study about talk show about Ellen Show on the global structure and also the local structure of the conversation happened in the show. The results are about what kind of turn-taking strategy used by Ellen to run her show. Another study also done by saraswati and waode, focus on turn taking and other local structure aspect. She took radio broadcast as the data of the research. The results are focus on the turn-taking and the stuffs like overlap, insertion, feedback, backchannels etc. Those studies concern on studying conversation using conversation analysis. What make it different from the previous research is that both research's object are adults, this study's data are adult and kids.

Conversation based on Levinson is kind of talk in which two or more participants freely alternate in speaking, which generally occurs outside specific institutional settings like religious service, law courts, classrooms and the like. Conversation happens without an obligated topic and dependent rules.

Conversation consists both the form and also the meaning, so in analyzing it, there are two ways of analysis can be done:

1. Discourse Analysis (DA) employs both the methodology and the kinds of theoretical principles and primitive concepts typical linguistics
2. Conversation Analysis (CA) is a rigorously empirical approach which avoid premature theory construction

Conversation analysis (CA) studies the conversational structure used by people practice when carrying a conversation. A famous study on conversation opening is Schegloff's "summon-answer" sequence of telephone conversation opening that when someone wants to talk to others, he/she must send summoning signals in a linguistic or non-linguistic way. The main focus for conversation analysis is to capture the structuring that people practice when carrying on a conversation.

Dealing with Conversation analysis is also engaging with the conversational structure. It is a method used by speakers to structure conversation efficiently or management of conversational turn. There are two main parts of conversational structure. It is Global Structure and Local structure. The first refers to overall organization which linguists hold that a complete conversation is made up of opening, body and closing. Whether the local



structure usually includes the analysis of turn-taking, adjacency pair, feedback, overlapping and interruption, etc. (Schegloff, 2007)

What is meant by Turn-taking is a term for the manner in which orderly conversation normally takes place or how that speaker has interpreted previous talk and the action so far. The characteristics of Turn-taking are:

1. Two/more speakers speaking simultaneously
2. Overlaps (where two/more speakers are talking at the same time)
3. The transition between one speaker and the next must be as smooth as possible and without a break

Turn-taking is the most obvious feature of conversation. The conversation will run smoothly if the turn-taking done without any obstacles although it happens in the real life. During the process of conversation, participants attempt to practice some strategies to achieve turn-taking. Many research done on the turn-taking strategy used by speakers in case to make the conversation going on effectively. Because as the social human being, people unconsciously need to be understood and to convey message meaningfully. That is why they need strategy to make it done well.

Another part of Local structure is adjacency pairs. It is a sequence of two related utterances by two different speakers. The second utterance is a response to the first. Schegloff and Sacks proposed adjacency pair which is composed of two adjacent turns by different speakers. Particular first part is followed by a particular second part, like questions take answers. If the question is not directly answered by the hearer, instead another turn coming, it is called insertion. If there are embedded parts between adjacency pairs exist, the insertion appears. Another thing about adjacency pair is that when speaker tries to avoid dispreferred of the second part, so the utterance appears in bridging to the next topic, it is called pre-sequence. It is used mostly to link the previous topic to the new one, to make the conversation jump smoothly from one topic to another. It like a warm up to the next topic.

Feedback is the brief response from the listener to the speaker's utterance which intends to encourage the speaker to continue his/her turn. It can be in the form of verbal or nonverbal / gesture. The speakers usually use "nodding" to show that they are engage with the conversation. How the speakers give sign to the one who are still speaking that he is listening or he is there in the turn can also be called as feedback.

Research Method

This study uses a qualitative approach, because this study examines the turn-taking in analyzing discourse and then describes its findings. Creswell (2003: 18) states that a qualitative approach is a study that often uses a statement based on a person's perspective to develop research, for example taking a statement from several experiences of someone in his research. Certainly it can also use perspectives such as in politics, issues, collaboration, or oriented change. He also stated that qualitative research also uses strategies such as using narration, phenomenology, ethnography, ground theory studies, or case studies and the researchers generate data through goals. Another idea is from Lawrence (2001: 3) who says a study that uses qualitative methods on meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things. Therefore, the researcher concludes qualitative research to explain and analyze data based on the data itself.



The data of this mini research is the first episode of *Little Big Shot America*, hosted by Steve Harvey. In this episode, there were six guest stars, all of them are children age 5-10. They were interviewed by the host in four different segments. Their conversation with Steve Harvey as the host become the data of this research. The conversation was recorded, transcribed, analyzed and categorized. Because the main concern of this research is the conversation structure, so the analysis was focused on the conversation structure especially the turn-taking and turn-taking strategy.

Findings and Discussion

Global structure

Three-Step Opening

In the *Little Big Shot*, the host always do the three-steps opening consists of background introduction (including video about the guest), guest's showing and phatic communion between the guest and host.

First step of opening done by the host, Harvey, introducing the shown and doing monologue about the guest. The host talk about general information about the star and describe the special talent that she/ he had. After having monologue, the next step is, Harvey will deliver the guest showing by calling his/her name and where he/she comes from. The last step of the opening is having phatic communing, which is the casual conversation to engage with the guest. This conversation actually is not part of the topic matter that will be talk about. The function of the phatic communion is to open up conversation and link the guest to the topic of the conversation.

Here are some examples of three steps opening done by Steve Harvey in *Little Big Shot America*:

First Step:

H: "welcome to the first little big shot, we've found some of the world's most talented and funniest young stars....."

Second step:

H: first from the Derby, Kansas, here's Titus – (music on, guest appear from the backstage through door with his silhouette on it)

Third step:

Phatic Communion

(a) *H: Hi, Mr. Titus, how are you, come grab a seat, man!*

H: how are you doing, man?

G: good

H: you're four years old?

G: yea

(b) *H: what do you bring?*

G: It is a dictionary.

H: the dictionary is bigger than you.

G: [laughter]



In the example (a) the host asking about guest's age which is actually not main information he wants to share, and also in example (b), the host tries to ask what kind of book brought by guest which is not part of the topic. Those two are only used to bridging to the topic matter.

Interactive body

The body of conversation is the main part of all conversation done. Because it is a talent talk show. The conversation mainly in the form of Q-A or question and answer. It was interactive in the way the host trying to cope with getting information from the guest because all guests are kids and they have their own way of explaining things. In this interactive exchanging information, there are so many insertions. The guests keep talking about one thing and then jump into another thing.

The closing

This show is mainly talk show with the appearance of talented kids, so in every segment there will be a performance of talent owned by every guest. This is related to the closing done by Steve Harvey as the host. First he will let the guest to perform their talent, after that after the talent show is finished or almost finished, he will join to the stage and do the little chat like "you're doing great, man" or "that's awesome" or "you have it" or "you are my dude" then followed by the closing like "give some noise for Akash, ladies and gentlemen."

Local structure

Turn-taking strategy

Turn-holding

Turn-Holding strategy is when the current speaker has something more to say, he/she needs to make use of some strategies to maintain the turn. The most common turn-holding strategies are the use of tone or closing remarks at the end of discourse, such as "but" "and" "however" "then", etc. And because this is a talent show with some interviews, so the Turn-Holding strategy is mostly done by the host. Concerning that the guests are kids, most of them have short answer, so it is not so hard for the host to keep up with his turn. In this episode of the show, Harvey uses this strategy but not as much as another turn-strategy because of the reasons that he always can continue his matter without interrupted by the guest.

Here are some examples of turn-holding strategy from the show.

(From the segment of talented singer-Celine & Jerry)

- H : What is the story that brings you together?*
G1 : We went to a place...like..
H : That's a talent show in China
G1 : Yea
H : And you too met there for the first time?
G2 : Yea
H : How do you rehears? When you stay far apart?
G1 : We never rehears
H : So, you don't rehear in the internet?
G1 : No



We can see that Harvey use the word “and”, “so” to keep his floor and get the turn to still speak to the guest about the topic that he brought

Turn-claiming

Turn-claiming is that one participant attempts to get the floor and become the current speaker. It can be found in the use of conjunction or interjection. Sometimes the speaker also used facial expressions or body language. In the talent show of little big shot America the turn claiming strategy mostly used. Here are some examples of the findings

- (a) *G: I want my Daddy sit at the front so he can see me better*
H: but we have daddy spot, over there
G: but I want my daddy..
H: right, ok, he can see you better...Ok...I'll tell you what
- (b) *H: are there any word U can't spell?*
G: I don't have any word that i can't spell..(laughing)
H: OK, SPAGHETTI
G: hmmm
S: I can spell spaghetti
G: really?hmm...I...
S: yes I can.....don't you laugh at me,...don't you close your mouth

In the example (a) the guest wants to talk about why his daddy do not sit in front of him, so he can see him clearly. The host try to keep in his conversation of talking about the topic. He used the word ‘right’ then ‘ok’ to make the conversation still in his floor. Whether in example (b) the guest tries to speak about something else but because the host still manage to talk about the guest ability of spelling, he keeps himself on the turn by using “ok” and repeat some words.

Turn-yielding

Turn –Yielding strategy happened when the current speaker finishes his/her talking, he/she will give up the turn and give it to the next speaker. In the show, this strategy appeared in what have been done by the host. He tries to attract guest attention to take turn, although some of them do not get it. It is happened because they are kids and they have their own way to deal with conversation

Here are some examples of turn-yielding strategy in the show.

- (a) *H: So, Jeffry you learn a valuable lesson here,*
H: Every talk over a woman, you can try it (rising action)-silence-
G: yea
- (b) *H: U know what I think,..I think it's time – silence-*
G: time for what?

In example (a) the host rising his tone to give sign to the guest that he finishes with his turn, then because the guest does not catch it, he then silent to give the turn, in example (b) the host wants to give the turn by silence, although the guest needs to confirm to take turn.



Adjacency pairs

The main form of adjacency pair is Question and Answer, but there are some other forms of Adjacency Pair like requirement-grant, statement-confirmation, offer-acceptance etc.

In this talent talk show, the most adjacency pair happen is Question and answer, although there is insertion happen and also overlapping sometimes. The pre-sequence also appears in some parts of conversation.

Insertion

- (a) H: *Do you know that you have over 50 million viewers on YouTube?*
G: *I have more viewer than that. They are way over a hundred*
H: *Over a hundred? Did somebody tell you that?*
G: *I know I have a lot viewer.*
- (b) H: *Are you just ready to backhand me?*
G: *What is backhand? I don't know what backhand, you don't know, good*
H: *OK don't learn about that*
G: *Ok, I'm doing nothing on you*

In the example (a) the host (H) tries to ask about the viewers on guest's YouTube because the guest video about how he does shoot on basketball became viral. But instead of answering whether he knows that he has a lot of viewers on YouTube, he makes a correction to the number of his viewers first and answer the question at last. Whether in example (b) the guest is making a gesture looks like he wants to hit the host with his backhand, when the host confirm about it, instead of answering, he asked for explanation what backhand means.

Insertion happens a lot in this show. It perhaps because all the guest are kids. The way they take turn is providing their own fact which sometimes different to adult understanding. Another thing appear in the adjacency pair is the existence of pre-sequence and overlapping.

Feedback

Feedback refers to those brief reactive signals from the listener to the current speaker's content. Including verbal and non-verbal forms, feedback is usually short and simple aiming to encourage the current speaker rather than interrupt and claim the turn. In this show, the host mostly use gesture to show that he is attending the turn, and to let the guest now that he is tuning in. He uses funny faces, nodding, surprise face and words. The words he usually uses is "yea". When the guest gives some explanation, the host often say "yea" followed by nodding or faces. The word "yea" is also used by the guests to give feedback to the host. On the other hand, the host also use repetition to give signal to the guests that he understands what they meant. It is used perhaps because the guests are kids, they try to attract attention. By repeating what they say, it gives them signal that the host pay attention to them.

Here are some findings of feedback done by the host, Harvey

- (a) G: *that was on the first try*
H: *-repeat-[high five]-[nodding]*
- (b) H: *Can I see the video*



G: Yea

H: Do you know what it means to go viral?

G: Does it mean your video got too many viewers?

H: Yea

In the example (a) the guest tries to explain that what he can do in the video is successfully done in the first try, the host repeat what he said then asks for high-five and then nodding for some times to let the guest know that he knows what he is trying to explain. Whether in example (b), both host and guest try to give feedback by saying “yea” when others are saying something.

Conclusion and Recommendation

From this mini research, we can see that conversation analysis can help people to understand what is going on behind the conversation. It can be done through analyzing the conversation structure and turn-taking strategy. In this research, it is shown how people try to convey the message through conversation in many ways. Some turn-taking strategy used to make conversation going on. And because the object is a talent talk show, so it is not a regular conversation, but how the strategy used also to gather people attention, to make it interesting to watch. In another side of view, because the conversation in this show involves children as the guests, we can see come conclusion about how kids deliver themselves in the conversation, what kind of strategy they used and how they use it. It is also shown how the host who is an adult use also the strategy to keep up the conversation with kids. Hopefully it will be useful on how to be effective in conversation, especially how to build up with kids.

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