

IMPLIED MEANINGS BEHIND STRUCTURES GOVERNING FRIENDLY CONVERSATION

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the investigation of implied meanings behind structures governing friendly conversation. The friendly conversation becoming the data is the one participated by university colleagues taking place in a dining restaurant. The data are taken in form of spoken discourse which then transcribed into written form of discourse. To reveal the structures of the friendly conversation, the writer applies Francis and Hunston's model. The structures found then further investigated using the analysis on implicatures. Of the 21 structures found in the data, the implied meanings discussed are divided into four different perspectives: implications behind the highest occurrences of structures, natures of friendly conversation, power, and solidarity. From the research, it can be concluded that the conversation being studied is done in dynamic pace with good engagements among participants. The participants are given equal power to be initiators of the exchanges which show their intimacy to each other. The unequal power distribution is found in the exchanges between participants and the workers of the restaurant where the conversation took place.

Keywords: structures, implicature, conversation, power, solidarity, intimacy

INRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

When talking to other people, we might not be aware that our conversations form certain structures that explain not only turn-taking system among participants, but also social aspects related to where the conversations take place and who are involved in the conversations. For a long time, conversation analysts are interested in finding out social order behind people-to-people interaction in structural perspective. Social order can be seen as hierarchical phenomena in the society; shall they be power distribution, solidarity, initiation, and so on.

For the writer, investigating a friendly conversation linguistically is both challenging and interesting at the same time. It is challenging because it is not easy to be conducted considering there are many textual and contextual elements to be taken into account. It is as well interesting because the writer and other researchers working on this field try to see common phenomena that other people may just miss or do not put attention to.

B. OBJECTIVES

This paper is intended to explain the implied meanings behind structures governing a friendly conversation. It is hoped that through this paper, the structures found in an informal conversation reveal broader messages that we may not realize.

METHODOLOGY

A. RESEARCH DESIGN

The design of this research is descriptive research in linguistic study. Chelliah and Reuse (2011:7) defined descriptive linguistic fieldwork as the investigation a language structure with native-speaking consultants. The friendly conversation being studied in this paper is in Indonesian language, with little alteration of Javanese and Banjarese language, so that the participants are native Indonesians.

B. DATA

In conversation analysis, the data taken need to be in form of natural conversation. It is because only when the conversation is natural the social order can be seen. In this study, to make the conversation observed done naturally, the writer chose a friendly conversation among university colleagues to be analyzed. Moreover, the setting of the conversation is in public dining restaurant with informal atmosphere. Therefore, the writer is rest assured that the conversation under investigation is as natural as the ones we encounter everyday with our friends. Furthermore, to investigate and compare power distribution, several exchanges of information between participants and workers of the dining restaurant are taken into analysis. The authentic data of this study are in form of spoken discourse which later transcribed into the written form.

C. METHOD OF ANALYSIS

To reveal the structures of the friendly conversation being studied, the writer applies Francis and Hunston's model (1992) suggesting five hierarchical elements: act, move, exchange, transaction, and interaction. After the structures of the conversation are identified, the writer investigates the implied meanings by the use of pragmatic analysis on implicatures. This analysis focuses on making sense of a phenomenon by considering social context related to the phenomenon.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. FINDINGS

It is revealed from the analysis that the friendly conversation becoming the data is governed by 21 structures. These structures are found in both organizational and conversational exchanges. The 21 structures governing the friendly conversation in this research are:

No.	Structures	Occurrences (%)
1.	Framer	0.07
2.	Initiation	29.95
3.	Initiation–Response	33.65
4.	Initiation– Multiple Responses	25.98
5.	Initiation–Response–Feedback	2.81
6.	Initiation– Response – Multiple Feedbacks	0.14
7.	Initiation–Response–Feedback– Response	0.75
8.	Initiation–Response–Feedback– Multiple Responses	0.14
9.	Initiation–Response–Feedback– Response– Feedback	0.14
10.	Initiation–Response–Feedback–Response–Feedback–Response	0.07
11.	Initiation–Response–Response/ Initiation– Multiple Responses	0.27
12.	Initiation– Multiple Responses –Feedback	2.40
13.	Initiation– Multiple Responses – Multiple Feedbacks	0.41
14.	Initiation– Multiple Responses – Feedback – Response	0.41
15.	Initiation– Multiple Responses – Feedback– Multiple Responses	0.41
16.	Initiation – Multiple Responses – Multiple Feedbacks – Response	0.14
17.	Initiation– Multiple Responses – Response/ Initiation – Response	0.07
18.	Initiation–Response/Initiation– Response	0.66
19.	Initiation–Response/Initiation– Multiple Responses	0.66
20.	Initiation –Response/Initiation – Response – Feedback	0.07
21.	Initiation –Response/Initiation – Multiple Responses – Feedback	0.21
Total		100%

Table 1: Structures governing friendly conversation

B. DISCUSSIONS

In this study, implied meanings of the friendly conversation's structures will be seen through four different perspectives: implications behind highest occurrences of structures, natures of friendly conversation, power, and solidarity.

1. Implied Meanings behind Highest Occurrences Structures

Of the 21 structures of friendly conversation found, there are three structures which have the most frequent occurrences. The three are: 1) Initiation (I), 2) Initiation –Response (I–R), and 3) Initiation – Multiple Responses (I - Rⁿ). There are 29.95% exchanges with I structure, 33.65% exchanges with I-R structure, and 25.98%

exchanges with I-Rⁿ structure. What does this result imply? The following explanation may answer the question.

High occurrences of I structure and I-R structure imply a fast switch of exchange in the conversation used as the data of this study. Why? Because in the data, many cases show that instead of responding to an I, participants utter new I without any delay in the conversation or they only responded to the I with a single response. In those cases, both I and I-R structures are soon replaced by new structures because they both are minimal structures which end fast. This fast switch of exchange indicates a dynamic conversation.

A high frequency of I-Rⁿ structure implies participants' engagement in the conversation. When a speaker utters information or elicitation or command at I and his/her utterance is followed by multiple responses (Rⁿ), it indicates that his/her speaking opponents give attention to his/her message and are willing to contribute to it.

2. Natures of Friendly Conversation

There are three natures of friendly conversation that will be outlined based on the findings of this study. The first one is the nature of friendly conversation in regard to its structure. The second one is the nature of friendly conversation that is seen through comparison of structures between friendly conversation and classroom discourse. The third nature of friendly conversation discussed in this study is the nature of such talk in relation to its participants.

In terms of its structure, it is found that friendly conversation has a structured system. A speaker in friendly conversation still has to follow the rule that an initiation (I) shall be followed by at least a response (R) to compose a complete exchange. Even though there are many incomplete exchanges found in the data, it is impossible for a casual talk to have only incomplete exchanges in its participants' interaction. In other words, friendly conversation has orderliness that should be followed by the participants who are willing to have a communicative conversation.

To reveal the second nature of friendly conversation, the writer compares friendly conversation structures found in the data to classroom discourses structures found in other researchers' studies. It must be noted that the Francis and Hunston's model of analysis (1992) used in this study is modified from Sinclair and Coulthard's model of analysis (1975) that is usually used for classroom discourse analysis. Thus, the comparison of structures of conversations conducted in two different settings of discourses is an interesting point to outline.

As described in the previous part of this paper, there are 21 structures found to construct all exchanges found in the data. Even though this number of structures is bigger compared to the number of structures found in some classroom discourses, it is too early to conclude that an informal conversation such as casual conversation among colleagues tends to have more structures compared to a conversation being held in a formal setting. It is because the difference in number of structures is not significant. As the comparison, Abrar (2013) in his thesis entitled *The Structure of Classroom Interaction and the Distribution of Turn-Taking: A Study in Two Different Classes in Jambi* found out total nine structures in Class A and 13 structures in Class

B underlying classroom conversations in two different classes becoming his data. Other data for comparison are taken from Liu and Le's study (2012) entitled *A Case Study on College English Classroom Discourse*. Liu and Le investigated the structures of interactions in four classes. They found out that Class 1 has 15 structures, Class 2 has 18 structures, Class 3 has 20 structures, and Class 4 has 17 structures of interactions. Therefore, based on the results of comparisons, it can be concluded that although informal conversation is more flexible in nature compared to the formal one, it needs further research to claim that friendly conversation is underlined by more structures compared to the formal one.

In terms of its participants, a high frequency of I occurrence in the data implies that participants have tendency to be initiators in the friendly conversation. This fact shows that a conversation done in a non-formal setting provides a bigger chance for every participant to be an initiator. It is different from a conversation done in a formal setting such as in a court. In a court, it is common for speakers with power (judges, attorneys, and prosecutors) to initiate more compared to suspects, defendants, and convicts in their interactions.

The phenomenon in which some speakers initiated more than other speakers in the data happens more because of conversation styles of the participants, not because of unequal speaking chances given to them. Some of the friendly conversation participants are more talkative compared to other participants so that they might initiate and respond more in the interaction.

3. Power in Friendly Conversation

A discussion of power in discourse has been a favorable issue among discourse analysts all over the world. There are various approaches that have been applied in order to see how power is reflected in the discourse. However, the analysis of power using Francis and Hunston's model (1992) is something new. The writer has never read any publication or research report describing structures and power relation using Francis and Hunston's model (1992) for casual conversation. In relation to this model, most journals, articles, and theses reports provide information about structure and power relation using Sinclair and Coulthard's model (1975) in classroom discourse setting. Therefore, the discussion of the relation between structure and power in this study is expected to bring fresh air in the discussion of power and discourse in general.

In relation to structure and power, completeness of exchanges can be used as a basis of analysis. There are many incomplete exchanges found in conversational exchange category. The incomplete exchanges are marked by I structure which does not have the element of R. In relation to power, a high occurrence of I structure indicates the negation of what Deborah Cameron (2001) called as 'asymmetrical talk'. According to Cameron (2001: 162), in asymmetrical talk, one speaker has more control over talk compared to other speakers. People with bigger power decide what is talked about and who give turns to other speakers. In the data of this study, who becomes the initiator of exchanges found in friendly conversation is not dominated by a particular participant. Sometimes, instead of responding utterances at I(s), participants of the friendly conversation have the guts to utter new I(s). This implies

equality among participants. People who are inferior tend to give responses instead of uttering initiations. In the data, the participants' courage to initiate new exchange show that they are not inferior compared to other participants. Therefore, in terms of dominance, none of the participants is more dominant than others since their shares of power manifested in their initiations are equal.

In case of complete exchanges, who takes the next turn to give response (R) to complete an exchange comes naturally without being selected by the currently speaking speaker unless in the case in which the speaker indicates whom she/he chooses to respond her/his utterance by mentioning name or by employing other strategies. This shows that none of the participants is in superior position that he/she should always decide who takes the turn in the conversation.

The asymmetric power in the friendly conversation is reflected in direct exchanges involving participants and the workers of the dining restaurant. It is normal because in a dining restaurant and other public service places, guests are generally more dominant in terms of power than employees of those places. Therefore, in the data, when the participants give orders to either waiter or waitress in charge, the waiter or waitress always respond the orders even though their responses are not always in form of verbal responses.

What should be noted from the findings on power in this study is that equality among participants in this study is only analyzed through one aspect of analysis which is the relation of structures underlying the interaction and power distribution. Therefore, it is not wise to claim there is no inequality at all among participants in the friendly conversation. There are neglected aspects of this study that can be possibly used to prove inequality among participants of friendly conversation. Van Dijk (1989) stated that even though many conversational analysts generally assume that speakers have equal social roles, they still show inequality through their ways of controlling the ongoing conversation. This inequality may occur because of gender, social status, and other grounds. Thus, it is possible for other researchers to analyze friendly conversation using different approaches to see inequality in power among its participants.

4. Solidarity

Solidarity is related to distance among participants. The more intimate the participants are, the easier they show their solidarity. The intimacy among speakers is not only the matter how long they know each other. It can also occur because of similarities on certain grounds such as ethnic, nationality, preference on things, and so on. Hence, it is not surprising if someday we witness – or experience ourselves – a phenomenon of two strangers who barely meet each other yet are able to interact like old friends.

Many linguistic studies on solidarity manifested in interactions are usually conducted in relation to politeness and lexical choices of words. In this study, the discussion on solidarity will focus on the pace of the conversation being investigated and the use of certain acts in acknowledging moves reflecting solidarity.

In terms of conversation pace, the friendly conversation becoming the data of this study runs in a dynamic pace in which all participants share turns naturally.

Regardless differences in gender, age, and social background among participants, intimacy and solidarity can be felt in their conversation through how they take turn and how they deliver their turn. This is normal because all participants in this friendly conversation are friends who have known each other pretty well so that they can avoid awkwardness in their interactions.

In terms of acts, the occurrences of certain acts in participants' moves indicate solidarity among participants. Comment act and reject act are the two acts that show solidarity in the friendly conversation being investigated. High occurrences of comment acts, particularly the comment acts used for teasing, suggest participants' intimacy because it is not common for a speaker to give comments for teasing purpose to those who are not close to him/her.

Reject act is another act that shows solidarity. Compared to many other acts, the using of reject acts in the friendly conversation being investigated is considered frequent. In many parts of the conversation, participants utter their rejections on other participants' information. The rejection is usually delivered through a high note utterance in acknowledging move containing reject act. This high key rejection indicates solidarity among participants because they are not afraid of threatening other participants' face.

The occurrences of the two acts show that the closer a speaker to his/her speaking opponent, the less care the speaker is for possible threats occurring in his/her utterances. The using of comment act and reject act in the data is among participants' ways of manifesting their in-group intimacy to other participants in the conversation.

All findings outlined in this chapter are aimed to give a better picture on hidden messages behind structures underlying friendly conversation. This study is also aimed to give an example of study conducted by applying an alternative model of classroom interaction structures created by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). However, it should be noted that the findings do not reflect overall phenomena of the data. By applying a certain model of discourse analysis, sometimes some phenomena are overlooked and some others are casted aside. Thus, the writer wishes the readers of this paper not to overlook an informal conversation merely in terms of structure matter and forget other sides of this kind of conversation. By the end of the day, regardless what structures constructing a casual conversation are and what are implied by these structures, people talk because it is fun to have people to share with. People talk because it is fun to socialize with others.

CONCLUSIONS

The structures of friendly conversation have several implications. In terms of high occurrences of I, I-R, and I-Rⁿ structures, there are two conclusions that can be drawn. First, the high occurrences of I and I-R structures imply a dynamic pace in the friendly conversation being investigated. Second, the high occurrences of I-Rⁿ structures imply good engagements among participants in their interaction.

In terms of natures of friendly conversation, it can be concluded that such talk still has to follow orderliness in its structures. It is also found that participants have tendency to be initiators in the conversation.

In terms of power and solidarity, it can be concluded that most participants have equal power and close intimacy. Unequal power in the friendly conversation being investigated is only found in the interaction between the participants who are the guests and the participants who are workers where the conversation took place.

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