

## TURN TAKING USED IN CONVERSATION CLASS: A CLASSROOM DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Lailatus Sa'adah<sup>1)</sup> & Rani Yulianti<sup>2)</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sebelas Maret University, Surakarta, Indonesia  
Lyladadah15@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Sebelas Maret University, Surakarta, Indonesia  
rani.yulianti177@gmail.com

### Abstract

*This paper aimed to analyze the turn taking used by the teacher and students in conversation class and provide the authentic evidence of the classroom discourse. The script of conversation were chosen as the materials of the study. The analysis of turn taking is adopted from Sinclair and Coulthard's framework (1975, cited in Christie, 2002) of IRF (Initiation, Response, Feedback) and Mehan's work (1979, cited in Rymes, 2008) who proposed IRE (Initiation, Response, Evaluation). The underlying structure of the pattern is: (a) Teacher question or Initiation, (b) Student Response, and (c) Teacher evaluation or feedback (Bloome, et.al 2005).*

**Keywords:** *Turn taking, Classroom Interaction, Classroom Discourse Analysis*

### Background

Every single person who uses language as a tool for communication will possibly take the turn in conversation. The opportunities to participate are distributed through a turn-taking system (Sidnell, 2010). Sometimes, the one who understands the topic discussion better than others will always have most turn of the talking. Meanwhile the fact is obvious, the way people talk in turn are distributed in a specific way among participants which shape a vast range of phenomena in conversation (Sidnell, 2010). Sidnell (2010) points out that one of the most obvious things about conversation is that it involves people taking turns at speaking and turn taking is perhaps the most fundamental feature of conversation. And it is evidently exposed in debates, meetings, press conferences, plays, therapy sessions, interviews, trials, and so forth (Sacks, 2004).

The phenomenon of turn taking in conversation are included in the study of discourse analysis. In this respect, Hayland and Paltridge (2011) states that understanding how turn-taking normally works in conversation is important for analysts both because co-conversationalists use the turn taking system to pass the conversational floor between them in an orderly way and because participants can manipulate this normative system for power or empathy. As a result, turn taking becomes a topic discussion for several researchers (see Cowly, 1998; Kato, 2000; Gorjian and Habibi, 2015; Heritage, 2015). In addition, it serves an operational role which implies that turn taking can be used as the substance of the conversation analysis (Cowley, 1998).

A bunch of researchers discussed turn taking in any different aspect of analysis. Gorjian and Habibi (2015) did an

experimental research in order to examine the effect of signals of conversation strategies in enhancing the quality of speeches and conversations. Kato (2000) also discussed about the tone choice in discourse approach to turn taking. However, view of them concern on turn taking used in classroom context. Therefore, to fill this gap, the researcher would like to investigate the turn taking system between students and teacher used in classroom conversation as well as the power relation between them and its implication in English language classroom.

Turn taking will occur smoothly in natural English discourse, with only little overlap and interruption, and only very brief silences between turns (McCarthy, 2000, p. 127; Placencia, 2014, p. 107). People take turns when they are selected by the current speaker, or if no one is selected, they may speak of their own record (McCarthy, 2000, p. 127). Most of the native speakers of English can and do use language interactionally (Nunan, 1993, p. 30). Therefore, one can easily know when and how to take the floor, when to introduce a topic or change the subject, how to invite someone else to speak, and how to keep a conversation going (Nunan, 1993, p. 30).

However, the situation and condition above would be different if turn taking occurs in EFL context. Based on the observation obtain from the research site, some of the EFL students are still shy or anxious and sometimes reluctant to speak in the class. This situation makes the teachers have to work harder in order to make the learner to be willing to speak in public (Allwright and Bailey, 1994, p. 20). As a result, chaotic data from natural conversation such as back channel, utterance-completions, and overlaps often occur (McCarthy, 2000, p. 127). In line with this, giving a definite evidence of turn taking used in conversation classroom in EFL context is obviously needed.

## **Theoretical Background**

### **1. The nature of turn taking**

Turn-taking is a type of organization in conversation where participants speak one at a time in alternating turns (Drew & Heritage, 2006). In practice, it involves process for constructing contributions, responding to previous comments, and transitioning to a different speaker, using a variety of linguistic and non-linguistic cues. Meanwhile the structure is generally universal, turn-taking conventions vary by culture and community (Sacks, 1974). Most turns at talk consist of three recognizable chunks: the opening connects it to the previous turn, the actual content (the message you're focused on expressing), and the ending signals.

In conversation analysis, turn-taking is a term for the manner in which orderly conversation normally takes place. The underlying principles of turn-taking were first described by sociologists Harvey Sacks, Emanuel A. Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson on 1974. Turn-taking structure within a conversation has three components, there are: 1) The Turn-taking component contains the main content of the utterance and is built from various unit types, 2) The Turn allocation component comprises techniques that select the next speaker, 3) Rules govern turn construction and give options to designate the next turn-taker in such a way as to minimize gaps and overlap.

### **2. Turn taking in classroom context**

Kramsch (1986) pointed out that to achieve students' communicative competence, students must be given opportunities to interact with both the teacher and fellow students through turn-taking, to receive feedback, to ask for clarification, and to initiate communication. Here, turn taking in classroom context is different from natural context (Ellis, 2012, p. 98). Therefore, the system of turn taking in classroom context

obviously different from that in natural conversation. Van Lier (1988, cited in Ellis, 2012, p. 98) identified the basic rule of classroom turn taking:

1. In classroom context, whenever centralized attention is required:
  - a. One speaker speaks at any one time;
  - b. Many can speak at once if they say (roughly) the same thing, or at least if (a proportion of) the simultaneously talk remains intelligible.
2. If not (a) or (b), repair work will be undertaken.

Interest in the turn taking analysis in classroom discourse has continued over the years (Ellis, 2012, p. 98). Here, Rymes (2015, p. 157) asserted that the significant issues in classroom context are how turn-taking is organized, what kinds of questions are asked, and who will do the talking. Moreover, she expressed that turn-taking still unfolds in most classrooms, most of the time, in traditional, teacher centered sequences. This statement almost the same with the phenomenon which is happen in EFL context, where teacher is the centered of turn taking in the class. However, this phenomenon is not coming by themselves, because this was already determined by the nature of the school as a public institution and by the teaching learning process (Ellis, 2012, p. 98).

### 3. The characteristics of turn-taking in classroom talk

After knowing the nature of turn taking and the definition of it in classroom context, the others aspect that necessary to be discussed is the characteristics of turn taking in classroom context. Due to a lot of interest in analyzing of turn taking in classroom discourse over the years, it lead a scholar, such as Markee to take into account of it. In addition, Markee (2000) identified the following general characteristics of turn-taking in classroom talk:

- a. The pre-allocation of different kinds of turns of turns to teachers and learners.
- b. The frequent production by learners of turns in chorus
- c. The frequent production of long turns by the teacher and short-turns by the student,
- d. The requirement that learners produce elaborated sentence-length turns in order to display knowledge,
- e. A predetermined topic

Based on Markee's identification of the characteristics of turn taking in the classroom. One can assume that there is inequality of turn taking exchange in the class, because teacher mostly produce of long turn than students.

### 4. The structure of turn taking

Teacher and students are usually having a classroom conversation during teaching learning activity. Moreover, they are enacting a turn taking pattern or structure which is found frequently in the classroom (Bloome, et al, 2005). And that type of structure was first found by Sinclair and Coulthard (Ellis, 2012). The structure consisted of three types of moves: Initiation, Response, Feedback move, and known as IRF (McCarthy, 2000; Christie, 2002; Blomee, 2005; Rymes, 2008; Ellis, 2012). The pattern may be represented by the following made-up example:

- T: What's the capital of France?  
(Initiation)*  
*S: Paris  
(Response)*  
*T: Correct  
(Feedback)*  
(Adopted from Christie, 2002)

Furthermore, following a similar description, Mehan (1985) also discusses about the pattern of classroom discourse (Rymes, 2008). And it typically consisted of three types of moves: Initiation, Response, and Evaluation which is also called IRE (Christie, 2002; Bloome, 2002;

Rymes, 2008). The pattern is presented as follow.

*T: What time is it?  
(Initiation)*

*S: One Thirty  
(Response)*

*T: Very good, Jackson!  
(Evaluation)*

(Adopted from Rymes, 2008)

Based on some explanation above, this study used both structure of turn taking in order to analyze the system of turn taking used in classroom conversation class. Therefore, it will give some insights which is reflect the equality of turn taking between the participant (teacher and students). As a result it will lead to the conclusion of power relation between participants based on turn taking structure.

#### 5. Power and Identity

The power discussed here is restricted to the kinds of power issues that are directly connected to the teachers' role in the class. In respect to the teachers' role, as we know, the teachers' role in the class especially in speaking skill are being a prompter, participant, and feedback provider (Harmer, 2007). Moreover, the kind of power that impacts on teachers' role are include authority, control, and management. As result, those statements above claim that the teachers' role in the class has an in line relationship with the power of teacher.

Meanwhile, identity refers to the individual identity, here the focus discussion is teachers' identity. According to Sindic, Barreto, and Lopes (2015), identity can be more than the end result of power strategies, and its effect on thoughts and actions can be more than a mere reflection of those strategies. Moreover, Sindic et al. (2015) also argued that actually there is no identity without power. Therefore, it assumes that there is a significant relationship between identity

and power. Then, one can assume that teachers' identity relate with their power in the class which is influenced by their role in the class.

#### Methods

##### 1. Data

The data presented and discussed in this research is a complete classroom conversation between English teacher and students from a private English course in Indonesia. The students are in senior high school level. This type of discourse was chosen for two reasons: firstly, because classroom conversation is an authentic materials of turn taking example. And secondly, it was an easy way to obtain a short interaction of teacher and students as a data from classroom conversation.

##### 2. Methods

Bloome et al (2005) points out that at the simplest level, an analysis of turn-taking involves counting the number of turns at talk each participant has in conversation. In analyzing turn taking in classroom talk, taking turn, asking and answering questions, providing feedback and encouraging more thinking are included into discourse elements that build a classroom's intellectual life (Rymes, 2015, p. 155). In line with this, the researcher chooses qualitative research design. Moreover, in analyzing the data, the researcher used Sinclair and Coulthard's framework (1975, cited in Christie, 2002) of IRF (Initiation, Response, Feedback) and Mehan's work (1979, cited in Rymes, 2008) of IRE (Initiation, Response, Evaluation).

#### Findings

Based on the data gathered, the researcher found that the interaction between teacher and students made a common pattern. They mostly used IRF rather than IRE. This situation can be describe more clearly from the conversational data obtain bellow:

**Data 1**

No.	Identity	Conversation	Type of moves
1	Teacher	<i>Good morning. How are you?</i>	Initiative
2	Students	<i>Good Morning. I am fine (chorus)</i>	Response
3	Teacher	<i>Ok.</i>	Feedback
4	Teacher	<i>Tell me. Have you usually searching in internet? Are you check your mail, your.....website?</i>	Initiative
5	Student 1	<i>everyday</i>	Response
6	Teacher	<i>Everyday? Ok. Do you use it like to study or for work?</i>	Feedback Initiative
7	Student 1	<i>ehhm</i>	Response
8	Teacher	<i>For fun? For entertaining?</i>	Initiative
9	Students	<i>Entertaining (chorus)</i>	Response

From the Data 1, it can be described that teacher is the center of initiation type of move. She always being the first speaker who initiate the whole thing in the class. She also do the feedback for the response that given by the students. Meanwhile, students are the one who always give response. They usually afraid to make a feedback or an initiation. This turn taking sequences appear often in the conversation.

**Data 2**

No.	Identity	Conversation	Types of Moves
1	Teacher	<i>Can you mention what kind of website do you usually visit?</i>	Initiative
2	Student 1	<i>Facebook</i>	Response
3	Teacher	<i>Facebook ... allright</i>	Evaluation
4	Student 2	<i>gmail</i>	Response
5	Teacher	<i>Ok, gmail</i>	Evaluation
6	Student 3	<i>IG</i>	Response

7	Teacher	<i>What is that?</i>	Feedback
8	Student 3	<i>It's ...</i>	Response
9	Teacher	<i>Ok. It is ..... social media?</i>	Feedback

In Data 2, the turn taking sequences in the class have both IRE and IRF. The teacher and the students have the same chance in the term turn taking. However, the role of teacher is still being an initiator of conversation. Students always follow that pattern and become habit. But in this data, we can see that there are a lot of students participate in the conversation, means they are aware enough about their chance in giving response to the teacher's question.

**Data 3**

No.	Identity	Conversation	Types of Moves
1	Teacher	<i>Now, when I want you to do is discuss aha... a little bit, what is aaa, aha... most common, man using internet or woman using internet?</i>	Initiative
2	Teacher	<i>Ok. Talk a little bit please. You two please, you two please, and you two.</i>	Initiative
3	Students	<i>Oke. (chorus)</i>	Response
4	Teacher	<i>Just who do you think uses aaa more internet. Man or woman?</i>	Evaluation
5	Student 1	<i>Is it write or ...?</i>	Initiative
6	Teacher	<i>no no no. Just discuss a little bit about it ..... I think, I consider, I imagine, I don't know. Give your opinion about it. Who do you think uses</i>	Response



		<i>more the internet. man or woman?</i>	
7	Students	Yeeea ... (chorus)	Feedback

The pattern of Data 3 is mostly the same with the Data 2. In Data 3, the turn taking sequences have both IRF and IRE. However, in this data, the initiator is not merely focus on the teacher, but the students have already started initiating in conversation. But still, the center of initiator is the teacher.

**Data 4**

No.	Identity	Conversation	Types of Moves
1	Teacher	<i>Ok fine. Who do you think use more the internet? Man or woman? What is your opinion?</i>	Initiative
2	Student 1	<i>Because, aaa woman are more talented??</i>	Response
3	Teacher	<i>Ok. Talented to what?</i>	Feedback
4	Student 1	<i>Tal-a-tive</i>	Response
5	Teacher	<i>Talkative?</i>	Feedback
6	Student 1	<i>Yes</i>	
7	Teacher	<i>Ow okey ... please give another description. Talented no and talkative? I don't think so, man is speak to?</i>	Response
8	Student 1	<i>No?</i>	Feedback
9	Teacher	<i>No.</i>	Response
10	Teacher	<i>They said woman. Ok. Do you agree with him?</i>	Initiative
11	Student 2	<i>Yes.</i>	Response
12	Teacher	<i>You have to give me a conclusion. We think, I think, I don't know.</i>	Evaluation
13	Student 2	<i>Okey</i>	Response

14	Teacher	<i>So, what is your conclusion about it? Man or woman?</i>	Initiative
15	Student 2	<i>Woman</i>	Response
16	Teacher	<i>Allright, woman. Oke the cause here ....</i>	Evaluation/ Initiative
17	Student 3	<i>Emmm, she likes, e..... the woman likes thinking many of course.</i>	Response
18	Teacher	<i>Aha., oke .. I don't think so, let's go. It's your opinion, it's your opinion.</i>	Feedback

Based on the Data 4, the initiator of conversation is still the teacher. Both IRF and IRE found in this data. However, the IRF is mostly used which can be shown from the teacher and students interaction in conversation. Related to the chance in turn taking, from the data we can assume that the chance of turn taking is equal for both teacher and students.

**Discussion**

Based on the findings above, it derived that the structure of turn taking which is often used in the classroom conversation is IRF and IRE. Furthermore, IRF has higher percentage of use rather than IRE. Moreover, the initiator of conversation is still led by the teacher. The teacher often used questions to initiate the conversation and sometimes repeated it for several times, while students responded only to the question given to them. This is in line with Blommaert's description that turn taking is organized by the teacher, who will do most of the talking and ask most of the questions (Rymes, 2009).

The association of turn taking approach with power relation also can be seen from the conversation obtain. Based on the data obtain, we can see that teacher always

initiates turns and asks the students to respond the questions. She also does not provide opportunity for students to initiate turns. By this description, regarding to the power relations, the teacher does her role in the class professionally. She knows her authority and power to manage the students and the activity in the class. Therefore, it can be also assumed that the teacher has a strong power and identity. As Sindic et al. (2015) said that identity can be more than the end result of power strategies, and its effect on thoughts and actions can be more than a mere reflection of those strategies.

Knowing that kind of pattern which is found in the class conversation, teacher should realize that most of the students are afraid, shy and sometimes reluctant to make a voice in the class, especially in term of turn-taking. Since the students aware that their competency still far enough to initiate them having willingness to speak in the class. Therefore, students only respond to the question which is given to them. In this respect, Kasuya (1998) proposed that the power distance between teacher and students sometimes gives negative effects on the students' participation during the teaching learning process.

Concerning about the implication of this study, it is more useful if this study can be applied in teaching learning process in the class. Through this analysis, teachers can identify the pattern of turn taking from the teacher and students interaction in the class. As a teacher, it is a must to motivate students to be more active in the class. Teacher's role in initiating turn should be equal with that in giving students' opportunity to initiate turn also. Therefore, the power distance between teacher and students are not the problem anymore for the students.

The application of turn taking analysis can be as simple as it seems in conversation

class. The teacher can engage the students by giving some materials in order to be discussed together. The teacher can ask the students related to their opinion with the material given and also give them opportunity to ask about the material. Moreover, the teacher also can discuss a student's response with the other students. As a result, the equality of turn taking between teacher and students will be occurred.

Theoretically, this study gives advantages both for the students and teacher in teaching and learning in conversation class. In addition, this study also useful as reference for other researchers in conducting the same topic. Practically, this study concern more on students' center rather than teachers' center. Therefore, it will gives some insights about turn taking both for teacher and students' understanding that affect their role in the class.

### **Bibliography**

- Allwright, D., Bailey, K. M. (1994). *Focus on the Language Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bloome, D., Carter, S.P., Christian, B.M., Otto, S., Faris, N.S. (2005). *Discourse Analysis and The Study of Classroom Language and Literacy Events: A Micro ethnographic Perspective*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publisher.
- Christie, F. (2002). *Classroom Discourse Analysis: A Functional Perspective*. New York: Continuum.
- Cowley, S. J. (1998). *Of Timing, Turn-Taking, and Conversations*. *Journal of Psycholinguistics Research* 27 (5).
- Drew, Paul; Heritage, John (2006). Drew, Paul; Heritage, John, eds. *Conversation Analysis*. I. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. pp. xxxiv. ISBN 978-1-4129-1848-0.
- Ellis, R. (2012). *Language Teaching Research and Language Pedagogy*.

- West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Gorjian, B., Habibi, P. (2015). *The Effect of Conversation Strategies on the Classroom Interaction: The Case of Turn taking*. Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Learning, 1 (1): 14-23.
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4<sup>th</sup> ed)*. Essex, UK: Pearson Education.
- Hyland, K., Paltridge, B. (2011). *The Continuum Companion to Discourse Analysis*. New York: Continuum.
- Heritage, J. (2015). *Well-prefaced turns in English conversation: A conversation analytic perspective*. Journal of Pragmatics 88 – 104.
- Kasuya, M. (1998). *Classroom interaction affected by power distance: Language teaching methodology, classroom research and research methods*. Retrieved from <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-artslaw/cels/essays/languageteaching/LanguageTeachingMethodologyMichikoKasuya.pdf>
- Kramsch, C. (1986). *From language proficiency to interactional competence*. The Modern Language Journal. Vol. 70, No. 4 (Winter, 1986), pp. 366-372. DOI: 10.2307/326815
- Markee, N. (2000). *Conversation Analysis*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- McCarthy, M. (2000). *Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nunan, D. (1993). *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Placencia, M. E. Language in Interaction. [Ed] Wei, L. (2014). *Applied Linguistics*. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Kato, F. (2000). *Discourse Approach to Turn taking from the Perspective of Tone Choice between Speakers*. University of Birmingham: Unpublished Thesis.
- Rymes, B. (2008). *Classroom Discourse Analysis: A Tool for Critical Reflection*. Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press.
- Sacks, H. An Initial characterization of the organization of speaker turn-taking in conversation. In Lerner, G. H. 2004. *Conversation Analysis Studies from the First Generation*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co.
- Sidnell, J. (2010). *Conversation Analysis: An Introduction*. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons.
- Sindic, D., Barreto, M., & Lopes, R.C. (2015). *Power and Identity*. East Sussex: Psychology Press.