

## STUDY ON INTERPERSONAL MEANING REPRESENTATION IN AN ENGLISH INTERACTION

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**Abstract:** *This spoken discourse analysis adopted the model of casual conversation analysis as suggested by Eggins and Slade (1997). The corpus of data of this study was a taped English casual conversation between a non-native speaker (NNS) and a native speaker (NS). The transcribed conversation was analyzed to know the mood patterns and the speech function patterns of the interactants. The mood patterns were studied from the types of clause structures chosen by the interactants, while the speech function patterns were studied through the choice of speech functions when the interactants acted on each other. The interpersonal relationships between the interactants were interpreted from the synoptic quantification of the mood and speech function patterns.*

*The study revealed that NNS was the dominant interactant and played his role as initiator, while NS is the marginal interactant and played her role as supporter; the conversation was the one of information negotiation rather than goods and services negotiation signed by the dominant production of declaratives by both NNS and NS; and NNS favoured on negotiating opinion information, while NS preferred factual information negotiation..*

*It is suggested that casual conversation needs to be considered in designing syllabus to complement the current practices of conversation which focus on pragmatic conversation; authentic text, such as casual conversation, needs to be used in language classroom to avoid genre shock in students' daily activities; and speech functions and their lexicogrammatical realizations need to be introduced to students to enrich them with possible moves in sustaining a conversation.*

*Key words: English interaction , interpersonal meaning, representation*

We need communication in our social activities. To make an understandable communication the individuals involved in the communication need efforts to create, negotiate, and interpret personal meanings. Communication happens when a move made by a participant is responded by the other participant.

Dealing with language, Halliday (in Eggins, 1994: 78) says that of all the uses we make of language, which are limitless and changing, language is designed to fulfill three main functions: a function for relating experience, a function for creating

interpersonal relationships, and a function for organizing information. Language is viewed as a resource for making not just one meaning at a time, but several strands of meaning simultaneously. Those three functions successively refer to the three types of meaning or metafunctions: experiential meaning, interpersonal meaning, and textual meaning.

According to Eggins (1994: 149) dialogue is the means language gives us for expressing interpersonal meanings about roles and attitudes. Being able to take part in dialogue, then, means being able to negotiate the exchange of interpersonal meanings, being able to realize social relations with other language users. Whenever we use language to interact, one of the things we are doing with it is establishing a relationship between us: between the speaker speaking now and the person who will probably speak next.

Halliday (1984: 11) interprets dialogue as a process of exchange involving two variables: (1) the nature of the commodity that is being exchanged: either information or goods-&-services, and (2) the roles that are defined by the exchange process: either giving or demanding. The combination of the two variables constitutes a speech function. For example, speech function statement is the activity of giving information, while question is demanding for information.

The speech functions are in turn coded in the lexicogrammatical system as categories of mood. The mood structure of a clause refers to the organization of a set of functional constituents including the constituent Subject. For example, a clause has declarative mood if the structural element of Subject occurs before the Finite element of the clause.

Eggins (1994: 152) points out that in a dialogue there is a correlation between the semantic choice of speech function and the grammatical structure which is typically chosen to encode it. For example, if we wish to make a statement, we will typically use a clause of a particular structure: a declarative clause (e.g. *The Bostonians was Henry James' last novel*). On the other hand, if we wish to ask a question, we will of course use the kind of clause we call interrogative (e.g. *Is The Bostonians by Henry James?*).

Sometimes, however, we encounter non-typical realization of speech function. For example, while question is usually expressed by interrogative (e.g. *Is The Bostonians by Henry James?*), it can also be expressed by modulated declarative (e.g. *I was wondering whether The Bostonians might be by Henry James*). This non-typical realization is influenced by the social context of the dialogue, especially the interpersonal relationships between the interactants.

This study analyzes the realization of interpersonal relationships between native speaker and non-native speaker in an English casual conversation. Particularly, this study focuses on the way the native speaker and non-native speaker negotiate meanings through their choices of speech function which are influenced by the interpersonal relationships and the realization of those meanings through the grammatical choices of mood to arrive at a successful interaction.

## **METHOD OF THE STUDY**

This study is a discourse analysis by using systemic functional approach to casual conversation as suggested by Eggins and Slade (1997). The study was conducted by analyzing the casual conversation under study from two linguistic patterns: the mood patterns and the speech function patterns. The mood patterns were revealed by studying the types of mood and modality chosen by the interactants, while the speech function patterns were explored from synoptic quantification of overall speech function choices per interactant

The corpus of data of this study was a stretch of approximately fifty-five-minute taped-English-conversation between a native speaker (an American female) and a non-native speaker (an Indonesian male). The data was a natural and casual conversation. It was natural because the conversation took place without any particular conditions to control the process of the conversation. Meanwhile, it was also casual because the speakers had the conversation just for the sake of conversing, without any certain pragmatic purpose.

The conversation happened when the non-native speaker came to the native speaker's house by prior appointment. Under the permission from the native speaker and with her notice that the conversation would be studied from the linguistic matters, this conversation was then tape-recorded by the non-native speaker.

The subjects of the conversation under study were a native speaker and a non-native speaker. The names of the subjects remained confidential and for referring to them in this study the initials were used respectively as NS and NNS. The NS was an adult American female who has been living in some cities in Indonesia for about ten years teaching and being a counselor at a theological college in Semarang when this conversation was carried out, while the NNS was a twenty-two-year-old Indonesian male student who has been studying English for seven semesters at an English department of a university in Semarang.

Because this study explores two linguistic patterns: mood patterns and speech function patterns, there are two units of analysis used in this study. The unit of analysis for mood pattern is clause because this pattern operates within turn and has to do with the mood of the clause a speaker uses. Clause can be identified as a sequence of Subject and Finite, plus a Predicator, and combination of Complement and Adjunct, with some elements possibly ellipsed but recoverable from prior clause.

On the other hand, the unit of analysis for speech function pattern is move because this pattern operates across turns and is overtly interactional and sequential. Move is a unit after which speaker change could occur without turn transfer being seen as an interruption. A move can be identified from the grammatical dependence or independence of a clause: i.e. it makes independent mood selection, and from the prosodic factors: i.e. the end of the clause corresponds to the end of a rhythmic/intonational unit.

The transcribed casual conversation was analyzed by applying mood and speech function analyses. The mood and modality labels in this study refer to the

ones introduced by Halliday (1994), while the speech function classes refer to the ones developed by Egging and Slade (1997).

## FINDINGS

The mood patterns and speech function patterns of NNS and NS in the casual conversation can be presented in the following tables.

Table 1. Summary of Mood Patterns Produced the Speakers

<b>Grammatical Patterns</b>	<b>NNS</b>	<b>NS</b>
Number of clauses	<b>745</b>	<b>552</b>
Incomplete clauses	7	10
<b>Declarative</b>	621	461
<b>Polar Interrogative</b>	32	26
<b>Wh-interrogative</b>	29	16
<b>Imperative</b>	1	1
<b>Minor</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>47</b>
Subject: I	294	75
Subject: We:inclusive	11	13
Subject: We:exclusive	8	58
Subject: You	57	50
Subject: 3-rd Person	307	309
Modalization: Probability	47	14
Modalization: Usuality	31	21
Modulation: Obligation	2	6
Modulation: Capability	41	14

Table 2 The Summary of Speech Function Used by the Speakers

<b>Speech Function</b>	<b>NNS</b>	<b>NS</b>
Number of turns	228	227
Number of moves	514	443
<b>Open</b>		
question:fact	17	14
question:opinion	11	6
statement:fact	13	23
statement:opinion	14	3

	<b>total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Continue</b>			
monitor		3	12
prolong		256	165
append		15	48
	<b>total</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>265</b>
<b>React:responding</b>			
support:develop		28	25
support:register		49	24
support:reply		84	61
<b>React:rejoinder</b>			
support:tracking		15	15
support:response		8	6
confront:challenging		0	1

## DISCUSSION

### Mood Patterns

The interpretation on the linguistic construction of status and identities of both NNS and NS are as follows:

#### *Number of Clauses*

Table 1 shows a difference in the amount of clauses produced by NNS and NS. NNS speaks more by producing 745 clauses or 57.4 % of the whole clause production in the entire conversation, while NS speaks less by producing only 552 clauses or 42.6 % of the whole clause production in the entire conversation. This is an evidence that NNS gets more floor in the conversation and NS takes less floor in the interaction. This finding also shows that in a naturally occurring spoken interaction in English, non-native speaker can dominate the talk over native speaker and position himself as the dominant interactant. It is unlike what happens when a non-native speaker interacts with a native speaker. In this interaction, a high level of dominance is usually demonstrated by the native English speaking participant (Martine, 2004).

#### *Number of Incomplete Clauses*

Egins and Slade (1997: 111) suggest that the amount of incomplete clauses produced in a casual conversation can reinforce the impression that an interactant is careful and planned in his/her speech. Table 1 shows that from the whole clauses

produced by each interactant, NNS produces 7 incomplete clauses (0.9 %) and NS produces more with 10 incomplete clauses (1.8 %). This difference reinforces the impression that NNS is more careful and planned in his speech.

From the analysis on the production of incomplete clauses in this interaction, it can also be found that those incomplete clauses are caused by hesitation, stumbling, and interruption.

### ***Declaratives***

Table 1 shows that both NNS and NS produce similarly high percentage of declaratives from the entire clauses that they produce, with 83.4 % and 83.5 % respectively, but the number of declaratives produced by NNS is significantly more than NS's with 621 clauses by NNS and 461 clauses by NS. This finding shows that both NNS and NS prefer giving information each other in their conversation. In other words, this is an indication that this conversation is an interaction of negotiating information (proposition) rather than goods-and-services (proposal). Such a proposition negotiation is understandable because this conversation is the one between two interactants who meet for the first time. In this first time interaction, they attempt to explore their personal experience and opinion by demanding and providing information.

The high number of declaratives produced by NNS (621 clauses) is an indication that he dominates in negotiating information compared to NS who produces less number of declaratives (461 clauses). NNS and NS collaboratively negotiate information to make the conversation flow by initiating, continuing or responding the exchanges in the grammatical realization of declaratives. The grammatical realization of declaratives in exchanging information are encoded both in full declaratives and elliptical ones. Full declaratives are used in initiating or continuing the exchanges, while elliptical declaratives are usually used in responding other's contributions.

### ***Tagged Declarative***

Table 1 notes that NNS does not use the mood of tagged declarative at all, while NS uses only one clause. According to Eggins and Slade (1997: 86), the grammatical realization of tagged declarative encodes its ambiguous function in dialogue. It both claims the status role of the giver of information, and at the same time recognizes the role of other interactants to confirm or refute the information. The fact that NNS does not produce tagged declarative at all during the conversation confirms his status as information giver and that all of the information he gives are the accurate and certain ones that do not require the confirmation and judgement of NS. On the other hand, NS's use of tagged declarative indicates that in giving information to NNS she also invites NS to confirm the information exchanged.

### ***Polar Interrogatives***

The production of polar interrogatives in the conversation suggests that in negotiating information both NNS and NS play the status roles of information demander either in initiating or reacting the exchanges. NNS and NS produce 32 polar interrogatives and 26 polar interrogatives respectively. Those polar interrogatives are encoded in both full polar interrogatives and elliptical polar interrogatives. Eggins and Slade (1997: 85 and 91) explain that full polar interrogatives are typically used to initiate an exchange by requesting information from others. Thus, they construct the speaker as dependent on the response of other interactants. Meanwhile, elliptical polar interrogatives are typically used to react prior talk and simply to confirm of something that has been said.

### ***Wh-Interrogatives***

According to Eggins and Slade (1997: 194), there are two types of questions: open questions which seek to elicit completion of a proposition from the addressee, and closed questions which present a complete proposition for the support or confrontation of the addressee. Open questions are congruently realized by wh-interrogatives, while closed questions are realized by polar interrogatives.

Table 1 shows that beside using polar interrogatives for demanding information from the addressee, both NNS and NS also employ the grammatical construction of wh-interrogatives. NNS produces more wh-interrogatives with 20 clauses compared to NS who produces less with 16 clauses. Most of the wh-interrogatives produced by NNS and NS are used to initiate new exchanges. This is an indication that NNS plays his status role as initiator by seeking information elicitation from NS. NS's low amount of elliptical wh-interrogative with only 1 clause also indicates that she rarely seeks to elicit information for confirmation. She often seeks for information completion in initiating exchanges.

### ***Imperatives***

In the conversation under study, each of NNS and NS produces only one imperative clause. Both of the imperatives are stated in positive jussive clauses consisting of only Residue, and used to encode advice or opinion of the speakers. Because the imperatives state advice or opinion, they are not used to show the authoritarian of the speaker over the addressee. This indicates that both NNS and NS are in equal status and shows that in a casual conversation between new friends, the speakers always try to maintain the equality of status by not producing commands that demand goods and services from the addressee.

### ***Exclamatives***

The number of exclamatives used in the conversation is small. There are only two clauses of exclamative, and both are produced by NNS. NS does not use exclamative at all during the conversation. The exclamatives produced by NNS are

used to encode judgement or evaluation of events. This is an indication that in maintaining the interpersonal relationship with NS, NNS expresses his positive judgement or praise to NS. In this way, he wants to show that he is engaged in what NNS shares to him.

### ***Minor Clauses***

Table 1 shows the production of minor clauses by NNS and NS. From the table, it is recognized that NNS produces minor clauses significantly more than NS does. Of the whole minor clauses used in the conversation, 68 clauses or 59 % are produced by NNS and 47 clauses or 41 % are made by NS. NNS's strikingly high proportion of minor clauses indicates his supportive role during the conversation. In playing his supportive role in the conversation, NNS mostly uses the minor clauses for feedbacks and back channel cues, as well as evaluative reactions. This is to show that he really understands or is engaged in what NS says. The minor clauses used in the conversation are expressed in lexical items, formulaic expressions, or non-lexical items.

### ***Subject Choices***

From the total subject choices made by NNS (677), the subject "*third person*" with the total of 307 or 45.3 % becomes the most frequently used subject. The occurrence of subject "*I*" with the total of 294 or 43.4 % is the next frequent subject after the subject "*third person*". The occurrences of the other subjects – *you*, *inclusive we*, and *exclusive we* – are very far smaller than the subjects "*third person*" and "*I*". This is an indication that during the interaction NNS is more concerned in discussing the persons or things that do not directly refer to himself as the speaker or NS as the addressee. The third persons or others that become the subjects of NNS's clauses include the persons or things that are referred in his propositions or proposals.

Similarly, the total subject choices made by NS show that the subject "*third person*" becomes the most frequently used subject in the conversation with the total of 309 or 61.2 %. The other subjects occur less frequently than the subject "*third person*". This is an evidence that NS is more concerned in discussing the persons or things that do not refer to herself as the speaker or NNS as the addressee. From the analysis on the most frequent subjects made by both NNS and NS in the conversation under study, it is clear that the casual conversation is the one about others rather than the interactants (the speaker and the addressee).

### ***Modalization***

Modalization is modality which is used to argue about a proposition. It is an argumentation of a proposition in between two poles of polarity: positive (yes) and negative (no). A proposition is not always positive (something is) or negative (something is not). Between these two polarities there are a number of choices of degree of certainty, or of usuality.



In qualifying their propositions, NNS and NS refer to the probability or usuality of the propositions. Each type of modalizations can be classified according to the degree into high, median, and low. Table 1 shows that NNS produces 78 modalizations much more than NS with only 35 modalizations. Because modalization expresses speaker's judgement of certainty and usuality, the striking difference in the amount of modalizations produced by NNS and NS indicates that NS is more sure of something she exchanges, compared to NNS who is concerned with uncertainty. This idea is relevant to the one stated by Eggins (1994: 182) that the more we say something is certain, the less certain it is. If we are sure of something, we do not use any modality.

The fact that NS is more sure with her propositions rather than NNS is supported by the number of probability modalizations produced by NNS and NS in the conversation. NNS makes 47 probabilities from his total clauses which consist of 17 low probabilities and 30 median probabilities. On the other hand, NS makes 14 probabilities from her total clauses which consist of 8 low probabilities and 6 median probabilities.

The different number of usuality modalizations produced by NNS and NS also supports that NS is more certain rather than NNS in qualifying the events in her propositions. This is indicated by her low uses of usuality modalizations in 21 clauses which consist of 9 low usualities, 7 median usualities and 5 high usualities. On the other hand, NNS makes more usualities in 31 clauses which express 16 low usualities, 2 median usualities and 13 high usualities.

### ***Modulation***

Modulation is modality which is used to argue about proposal (negotiation of goods and services). It is a way for speakers to express their judgements or attitudes about actions and events. When we are acting on or for other people, we do not only have the choices of do or don't. But between these two poles of compliance and refusal we can express degrees of obligation and inclination.

In the casual conversation under study, NNS and NS seek to act upon each other through the degrees of obligation and capability. There is no realization of inclination during the conversation. Unlike the amount of modalizations, fewer amount of modulations are used both by NNS and NS in the conversation. The total There are only 8 obligations which all belong to the high degrees. From those high obligations, 2 are made by NNS and the other 6 are made by NS. The low use of modulation in this conversation shows that NNS and NS seldom negotiate goods and services each other. In other words, this conversation is not the one about arguing proposals. The lack of modulation in such a conversation is understandable, since it is in this conversation the interactants meet and have face-to-face interaction for the time. This kind of interaction between new friends are usually dominated by the exchange of personal information of the interactants.

### **Speech Function Patterns**

### ***Number of Turns***

By referring to Table 2, particularly on the number of turns, there is a remarkably close similarity in the number of turns for NNS and NS, with NNS gets 228 turns and NS 227. This suggests that the interactants are competing for turns, and shows that they have right to equal turns at talk.

### ***Number of Moves and Clauses***

There is a striking difference in the amount of moves produced by NNS and NS. NNS produces more with 514 moves or 53.7 % of the whole moves of the conversation, while NS produces slightly less with 443 moves or 46.3 %. Although both interactants get similar turns at talk, NNS makes more moves in his turns. This is an indication that in this interaction NNS plays the dominant interactant. NNS's dominance of the interaction can also be seen from his higher production of clauses with 745 or 57.6 % compared to NS who makes 552 clauses or 42.6 %.

### ***Opening Speech Function***

Comparing the number of opening moves made by NNS and NS shows that NNS dominates the openings. He makes more openings with 56, while NS makes slightly less with 46. NNS initiates the exchanges more often rather than NS. This is an indication that NNS plays the role of initiator, while NS as supporter.

In initiating exchanges, both NNS and NS use statement and question of both fact and opinion. NNS initiates the exchanges more frequently by question rather than statement. On the other hand, NS's initiations are encoded in statement. This fact also indicates different roles played by NNS and NS. NNS plays his role as the demander, while NS plays as the giver.

There is also significantly different type of information exchanged by NNS and NS in their initiations of question and statement. NNS favours giving and demanding of opinion information that risk himself for a further debate. In contrast, NS prefers giving and demanding of fact information suggesting that she does not risk presenting her own opinion for debate.

### ***Continuing Speech Function***

Table 2 shows that continuing speech functions dominate the speech function production in the conversation either by NNS or NS. NNS produces 276 continuing speech functions or 54 % of his own speech functions, while NS makes 265 or 50 % of her own speech functions. This indicates that both NNS and NS favour sustain the negotiations by keeping continuing the same propositions in his or her previous moves. In sustaining the exchanges, NNS continues more often by making 275 continuing moves compared to NS who does the same moves with 265. Both NNS and NS continuing their negotiations by monitoring, prolonging, and appending.

From these continuing moves, prolonging moves are most frequently used by either NNS or NS. NNS and NS prolong 255 and 205 times respectively. This means that they are not straightforward in their negotiations: i.e. they do not say all they want to say in one single move. In prolonging moves, they use elaboration by clarifying an immediately prior move, extension by adding to the information in an immediately prior move, and enhancement by modifying the information in an immediately prior move. Both NNS and NS favour prolonging their moves by elaboration. This means that they say the same thing in a different way: i.e. they do less to broaden subsequent discussion.

### ***Reacting-Responding Speech Function***

In responding reactions NNS is more dominant than NS. He produces 160 moves and she makes less with 110 moves. Most of the responses are supporting moves. From NNS's 160 responding moves, 158 are supporting moves and only 2 are confronting moves. Similarly, of NS's 110 responding moves, 101 are supporting moves and 9 are confronting moves. The high number of supporting moves made by both NNS and NS indicates that they accept each other to negotiate the other's proposition by giving predicted response: a response which is preferred by the proposition giver.

In supporting the other's propositions NNS and NS use developing, registering, and replying moves. The developing-supporting moves are expressed by using elaboration, extension, or enhancement. The developing-supporting moves made by NNS and NS are dominated by elaboration. This pattern of elaboration continues the similar elaboration in continuing moves. This means that they tend to re-say what someone else has already said.

### ***Reacting-Rejoinder Speech Function***

Rejoinder speech functions set underway sequences of talk that interrupt, postpone, abort or suspend the initial speech function sequence. Thus with respect to what is already negotiated on the table, rejoinders query it (demanding further details) or reject it (offering alternative explanations). In this conversation, NNS and NS make nearly equal number of rejoinders. They make 23 and 22 rejoinders respectively. This indicates that all of the interactants contribute to the maintenance and open-endedness of the conversation. The rejoinder speech functions of NNS and NS are dominated by tracking moves of confirmation which indicate that try to promote sustained talk by seeking verification of what he or she has heard.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study concludes that

1. NNS is the dominant interactant and plays his role as initiator, while NS is the marginal interactant and plays her role as supporter;
2. The conversation is the one of information negotiation rather than goods and services negotiation which is signed by the dominant production of declaratives by both NNS and NS;
3. NNS favours on negotiating opinion information, while NS prefers factual information negotiation;

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