CONVERSATION ANALYSIS: THESIS SUPERVISION AT JAMBI UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This study presents an analysis of student-supervisor consultation as the example of institutional talk. The purposes of this study are to analyze how supervisor assessed student's capability to conduct her topic, how student designed her talk to get the needed information from the supervisor and how both of them managed to deal with potential problem in their talk. The present study uses Conversation Analysis (CA) method, where the data of thesis supervision discussion was recorded and transcribed, the unique phenomena and their patterns were identified, and they were interpreted to see the relation to the broader matrix of interaction. The data of this study is a recording of thesis supervision between Jambi University's student and her supervisor. From the analysis, it is found that both the student and the supervisor actively participated in the discussion according to their own roles in the institutional talk. The supervisor assessed the student's capability in conducting her proposed thesis in many interactive ways that involved asking questions and giving feedbacks. The student's talk was well constructed where her questions and the way she delivered it also show her own good capability in comprehending the issues under discussion. Last, both student and supervisor were found to be well-aware of the problems arose in their conversation and were able to cover it together in their own role in the institutional talk. This suggested mutual effort in bringing the supervision meeting forward to reach their intendedgoal.

Keywords: *Conversation Analysis, Institutional Talk, Thesis Supervision, Jambi University*

INTRODUCTION

The idea that conversational interaction represents an institutional order brought by Harvey Sacks, Gail Jefferson and Emmanuel Schegloff in the early 1960 along with Conversation Analysis approach has been making analysts try to study conversation for decades. Gardner (2004:266) defines conversation analysis as the study of sequences of actions and their interactional products, with the starting point being "unique adequacy" of such an instance, what it is that makes some talk just that which it is, and nothing else. It means that rather analyzing from assumptions of practices based on prior research, CA begins an analysis of an instance of talk with a description of what is going onuniquely.

In CA, most of early works focused on ordinary conversation such as casual conversation, chat and ordinary narratives (this is also called pure CA). Then, in the late of 1970s, the attention shifts to the tensions between those local practices and any larger structures, such as institutional rules, instructions, accounting, obligations, etc. The latter is then called applied CA. Its focus is to use basic CA as a resource to understand the work of social institution s such as law, education, and medicine. Some of the example of institutional talks are verbal interaction in doctor-patient (White, 2011), student-supervisor consultations (Bowker, 2012; Vehviläinen, 2009; Etehadieh and Rendle-Short, 2016), news interviews (Clayman, 1990), and interaction in courtroom (Atkinson & Drew,1979).

The purpose of this research is to analyze the talk-in interaction between supervisor and student in the context of thesis supervision. Therefore, this study presents an analysis of student-supervisor consultation as the example of institutional talk. Commonly, in this situation, the student presented their work and the supervisor guided the student through the research process. However, supervision is often perceived as problematic. Some lecturers would sometimes report conversations with particular students were difficult and mutual understanding was negotiated laboriously. On the other hand, some students found it difficult to deliver the idea, or did not have clues on how to construct a proper explanation toward the supervisors' questions. When this kind of misunderstanding happens at the early meeting of supervision where the topic is still negotiated, the upcoming process will result in uncomfortableness and

confusion of bothparties.

Regarding to its complexity and the fact that the interaction between supervisor and student in this supervision context remain 'unpredictable,' 'poorly understood,' (Grant, 2003), the researcher decided to investigate that interaction, not by interviewing both sides about their perceptions and experiences, but by listening to and analyzing their conversations to investigate how both student and supervisor try to build mutual understanding in their supervising session.

METHODS

This study employed qualitative method by using descriptive approach which is intended to describe, analyze and interpret the factual condition a phenomenon. According to Johnson & Christensen (2014), qualitative method means the research is done based on qualitative data, tends to follow the exploratory mode of the scientific method and will provide a detailed account of one or more cases.

The data of this study is a recording of thesis supervision between Jambi University's student and her supervisor. In CA, the basic data for conversation analysis is naturally occurring talk (Heritage, 1984). To get natural data, the researcher asked for one of her friend's audio recordings. This audio contains the recording of her early supervision meeting with the supervisor. The important point is the supervisor was aware being recorded, and both student and supervisor have agreed to be the participants of this research by signing the consent form. The conversation was recorded with a smartphone as therecorder.

Several steps has been implemented in order to complete the analysis of the data, they are listening to the data over and over again to produce detailed transcription under CA notation. To do the transcription, the researcher transferred the digital audio files to her computer and use *Transcriber*, a free software tool (now superseded by *TranscribeAG*, available from http://transag.sourceforge.net/) which is relatively simple to use and will enable the researcher to easily repeat sections and measure pause lengths. The researcher used the Jeffersonian transcription system that has been

simplified and modified by Bowker(2009).

The procedure in analyzing the CA data was divided into some steps. Some of them were adapted from Seedhouse (2004). First is unmotivated looking that means the analyst should be open to discover new phenomena rather than searching the data with preconceptions. After scanning through the transcription to find unique phenomena, the researcher identified the phenomenon individually. Then, the researcher looked through the patterns of unique phenomena in relation to occurrences of the phenomenon and finally produce a more generalized account of how the phenomenon relates to the broader matrix of interaction.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To address the research question investigated in this research, they were some interactional organization in constructing Speech Events as the set of utterances produced in the conversation between student and supervisor under thesis supervision topic. They are:

a. Turn taking

b. Overlaps

c. AdjacencyPairs

d. Repair

However, institutional talk does not end with arriving at findings only, but also implies using them in order to solve the practical problems. In analyzing the entiredata,the researcher also found that there are 3 important factors that affect the content of the thesis supervision as an applied CA.

How supervisor assessed student's capability to conduct her topic

The most noticeable finding from the data is the many occurrences in which the supervisor asks direct questions to the student. According to Darn (2010), asking questions is natural in communication, and he stressed the importance of its usage by the teachers. In the case of this institutional talk, the supervisor as the one who is responsible to guide the student on her thesis has used the chance to ask questions to check hercomprehension.

The questions were asked in varied ways. At first, it was listened as that the supervisor let the student to take control of the flow of their thesis supervision meeting by letting her to bring up new topics that the student saw as needed to be discussed. She only asked some questions to assess the student's understanding of what is discussed in their current topic. These questions often appeared in form of interruption that caused overlap on the conversation. However, towards the end of the conversation, the supervisor took over the direction of the topic by asking questions to have better understanding of the student's capability in conducting the research.

Therefore, there are some patterns that are done by the supervisor in assessing the student's capability to conduct her topic during their conversation, such as directly asking display question. An example of the pattern is in the following extract1:

Extract 1. Supervisor-student consulitation

	L:	kalaudirumahgakselesai-selesaiskripsi mu=
285	S:	=hh (1.3)
286	L:	Apa case study itu? (0.3)
287	S:	a: penelitian yang: memangberdasarkanphe—phenomena yang memang
288		terjadisaatitu ˚gitumeṁ, yang sayatangkepsihitudari—
289	L:	maksudnya phenomena yang terjadisaatitutua↑pa?
290	S:	aaammemang yang <u>realgitumem</u>
291	L:	laluapa yang membuatdia case? (.)
292	S:	karenaadakasuskesulitansiswasiswa>kalau di sinikan
293		pronunciation↓<jadikasusnya↑ ada [kasus—]
294	L:	[kasusnya] pronunciation atau
295		muridnya yang kasus, yang mana yang kasus ˚di sini?˚
296	S:	kesulitanpronunciatioṅnya˚ mem

Then, interrupting the student's turn in talking that caused overlaps,

Extract 2. Supervisor-student consultation

36	S: teruska↑n e: kalo' faktornyaka↑nbanya↓kmem=
37	L:=hm=
38	S:=yang sayadape↓t, ta<u>pi</u>↑kalo' maudimasukinkesini↑kayaknya↑

39		semuanya↑gakbisa	jadikalau[	kayak -]=
40	□L:			[Maksudnya?]
41	S:=[kayakfakto:r]=			
42	□ L: [faktorapa?]			
43	S: =faktor a:ge atau intonation ↑of target language itugakperlu			
44	dimasukingitukanyamem? cuman[yang]			

36	□L:	[Kenapa?]
37	S: karenakalo': age itu ↑kaninisiswanyauda:htaunihkalo'anak	
38	esempe' umurnyasegini↓, sekitartigabelassampai limabelas	
39	tahu↓n. Jadi: kira-kira age kalo: dicantumkan di sinikira-	
40	kira↑:	

The supervisor also asked questions of new topic after long gaps occurred as in extract 3

Extract 3. Supervisor-student consultation

235	L:hati-hatiya↑ ini kayak ginispasi-spasiini=
236	S:=oh iya mam=
237	□ L:=The listener gabung-gabung (1.0) inidapatdarimana↑ teorinyani
238	factors effecting pronunciation ability
239	S:sayangerangkumsihmem [dari: be-]=
240	L: [dariapa?]
241	S:=berapabukusamajurna↓l

and the last, asking questions back after the student asked something as in extract 5

Extract 5. Supervisor-student consultation

288	□ S:jadi↑ yang tadi↑ faktoritu↑ masukinajasemuanyayamem?
289	L:apanya?
290	S:yang factorsnya=
291	□ L:=iya↓ kankeliatanada↑ ka↑n?
292	S:[iya]
293	□ L:[pengaruh]nyaada: kansemuaka↑nkayaknya?

294   S:iya↑ he'e↓h (2.0)

How student designed her talk to get the needed information from the supervisor

This section presents the findings that are obtained through analyzing student's role in designing her talks to pry needed information from the supervisor during their supervision meeting. As stated previously, students constructed themselves as advice- or information-seekers while presenting their reason for the consultation. She tried to gather information from the supervisor to be used on her thesis development. However, another important finding from further analysis showed that, while the student was trying to pry needed information from the supervisors, her designed talks also showed her capability in understanding what she was doing in their supervision meeting. It was shown from the way she presented the questions for the supervisor and on how she showed her attention of what was being explained by the supervisor by giving continuers that caused overlaps in the conversation. Aside by directly asking questions related to her topic, she also pried needed information by stating her concern toward some issue which means she did not directly ask questions to the supervisor. She just admitted that she was confused of something. However, the supervisor caught the indirect question behind her statement and provided her with the information. This phenomenon could be seen in extract 15below.

Extract 15. Supervisor-student consultation

209   □ S: sayamasihagakbi↑ngungsihmem di chapter two itu:(.)kada↑ng

210   ngeliatini↑inikeknya↑: b—bisadimasuki↓nliat yanglai↑n

211   □gitu↑□me↓m

212   L: teoriini<banyak>kalaukamumaumasukansemuateori

213   pronunciatio↓nnantikamupusingsendiri↓ artinyakamumasukan

214   yang: rasanyaini<butu↑h>gitulo↓h, yang bakalankamupaka↑i

215   a↑ja↓ itu—itudia<review of related literature>Kalaugak   p—

216   perlu↑ gakusah>dimasukansi↑ni↓(.)<

She also designed her talk by confirming something she already knew,

Extract 14. Supervisor-student consultation

383   ☐ S:nah nam—di situ↑ bintangprivatenyaitu↑ sayamasukin di

384   backgroundjuga yah mem? (0.3)

385   L:mungkinbukanbintangnyatapi: apakamutu yang menjadi: research

386   kamutu, yang kamumasukan, misalnya: <murid>nyatumuridapa

387   aja↑ gitu, anaksiap—apaanak: esempe: atauapa di kursusnya:

388   gitu=

389   ☐ S:=oh iyaudah[kokmem   ]

390   L:[Jadibukan] spesifikbintangnyagak, bintangnya

391   ini—

The last student's designed talk to be analyzed here was the way the student provided some basic information before asking certain questions. It was slightly similar with the previous discussion, but there was one obvious difference here. While in previous design the student stating her concern of some issues and the supervisor directly providing the needed information, in this design the student had built up her question by providing some information to the supervisor.

Extract 16. Supervisor-student consultation

7   ☐ S:=sayajugadapatme↑mini: ada: prio:r instruct-pronunciation

8   instruction↓=

9   L:=hmm

10   ☐ S:jadi: merekatu↑ e: pertamanyamereka tau: pronunciationnyagini,

11   teruskeikuatansalahitu di: prior pronunciation instruction

12   itu: kira-[kira—]

13   L: [iya][karena-]

14   ☐ S: [bisa] jadifaktornyagituya

15   mem?=

16   L:=iya↑ karenagurunyasalahngajari↓n=

17   S:=he'em

How both of them managed to deal with potential problem in their talk

The term "problem" in this study is specified misunderstanding on certain topics that hampered the communication. The researcher looked at this problem to understand how breakdowns in communication and misunderstanding are repaired. Thereunto, using conversation analysis terminology, problem solving in this study was referred to repair.

It was found from the data that there were four repairs that happened on the conversations. The first two repairs were minor problems in which the student and the supervisor did not hear or get what the other was saying, therefore they initiated a repair. The other two repairs, however, were much more complex where the problem sources were some misunderstandings of some issues that they were discussing at the moment. Misunderstandings that happened between the two speakers were mostly caused by the confusion from the supervisor's part. Further analysis showed that the student was the one who noticed the misunderstandings that appeared on their conversation and made an effort to deal with them. There was one occurrence in which the student misunderstood the supervisor's question and the supervisor quickly clarified them. In this section, the researcher would present these four repairs that happened in the supervision meeting between the supervisor and the student. The way they deal with the problem would be looked aswell.

Looking at the way both student and supervisor dealt with their problems in the conversation, it could be seen that the student did most of the repairs and the supervisor often initiated them. Both participants were well-aware of the problems arose in their conversation and were able to cover it together in their own role in the institutional talk. Further analysis found that this finding indicated mutual effort in bringing the supervision meeting forward to reach intended goal. It also indicated a good understanding from the student's part towards the issue they were discussing. The student was aware of misunderstanding that happened in their conversation and made an effort to clarify it instead of let it unattended.

CONCLUSION

Three main points are highlighted to draw the focus of this research. They are to

analyze how supervisor assessed student's capability to conduct her topic, how student designed her talks to get the needed information from the supervisor and how both of them managed to deal with potential problem in their talks. The findings of this research show that in assessing student's capability in conducting her proposed thesis, the supervisor did many interactive ways that involved asking display questions regarding the topic, interrupting student's turn in talking, bringing up new questions about the thesis draft after long gaps, and throwing questions back to answer the student's questions. Next, how the student designed her talk to pry needed information from the supervisor was well constructed where her questions and the way she delivered it also show her own good capability in comprehending the issues under discussion. Last, both student and supervisor were found to be well-aware of the problems arose in their conversation and were able to cover it together in their own role in the institutional talk. Further analysis found that these findings indicated mutual effort in bringing the supervision meeting forward to reach their intendedgoal.

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