A Case Study of Adjacency Pairs in Conversation of a Group of Arab Students in Informal Setting

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Abstract

Language is usually seen as a social phenomenon; there is a reciprocal relationship between language and society. When people use language, they do more than just try to get another person to understand the speaker's thoughts and feelings. The current study aimed to analyze short conversation by group of Arab postgraduate students in informal setting with more focus on adjacency pairs' sequences. The objectives of the study are to analyze the potential adjacency pairs by Arab speakers and find out the reasons of using such pairs. Data were collected and transcribed first in Arabic then translated to English using qualitative research methodology. The approach that has been chosen for this research is qualitative approach. In this context, the conversation occurred during informal setting that is in conversation and usual chatting setting among the friends. The speakers are from different Arabic countries. However they are very close friends since they are neighbors and meet each other frequently. Results showed that speakers violated the sequence of adjacency pairs; this might be due to the solidarity and affinity among them. The adjacency pairs found in this conversations are Greeting-greeting, turn taking, overlapping, Question-Answer, repetition, closing.

1. INTRODUCTION
1.1.Conversation Analysis (CA)

"A *good conversationalist is not one who remembers what was said, but says what someone wants to remember*" (Brown, G., Brown, G. D., Brown, G. R., Yule, G., & Gillian, B).Conversation in plain context means the use of speech for informal exchange of views, ideas, or information or the spoken exchange of thoughts, opinions and feelings. According to Schiffrin (1994), the conversational analysis focuses on the methods of society for constructing the required social order. CA aims to find out how conversational behaviour is organized and how it relates to the creation social roles, social relationships and a sense of social order.

According to Heritage (1989), there are three principles of CA:

1- Interaction is structurally organized.

2- Contributions to interaction are contextually oriented.

3- These two properties adhere to interaction details so that no order of detail can be dismissed or irrelevant.

Studying casual conversations helps others understand a given society's cultural norms. That is, how people use language to express themselves in certain social settings and to recognize what kind of speech is permissible and what is not on certain occasions. Further, this kind of analysis could help understand the linguistic behaviour of the speakers of a specific speech community. Thus, the objectives of the present study are 1) to find out the adjacency pairs sequence by Arab speakers and 2) to find out the reason for chosen specific linguistic expressions. This study analyzes a conversation among a group of Arab students focusing on the adjacency pairs during normal conversations in an informal setting. To this end, Schegloff and Sacks' (1973) theory is adopted in the process of analysis to figure out whether the adjacency pairs used by the speakers adhere to what Sacks and Shegloff postulated. The conversation language is colloquial Arabic language since the students are from different Arab countries with different accents and dialects (Tannen, Hamilton &Schiffrin (2015).

A conversation is seen as a pattern of sequences, as shown by the simplest adjacency pair (Schegloff& Sacks, 1973). Adjacency pairs are the distinguishing characteristic used to infer connections between the speakers' and listeners' utterances (Sacks, 1978). It includes sequences with the following features: the speakers in the sequence are distinct, appear in pairs, are close to one another, and are developed that the first speaker paves the way for the second speaker to answer correctly. According to Mey and Asher (1998), requests, invitations, offers, suggestions, informative, complaints, or accusations create expectations that are comparable to those of a continuation with a second pair portion that fits in the following turn.

This study also investigated the reason why the subjects used this speech act action during the conversation and if there are any factors influence the adjacency pairs during the conversation. Therefore, the patterns of adjacency pairs that may occur become interesting aspect to be addressed.

1.2.Adjacency Pairs

Schegloff and Sacks (1968), explained that the adjacency pairs consist of sequences that have specific features and these features are:

1- Two utterances length

2- Adjacent positioning of component utterances

3-Different speakers produce each utterance, and these sequences must achieve relatedness beyond that which may otherwise be obtained between adjacent utterances. These adjacency pairs include greeting/greeting, offer/ acceptance/refusal, question/answer, congratulation/thanks, apology/acceptance.

Schegloff and Sacks focused on turn-taking patterns that occur in that particular conversation. They divided this pattern into AB, AB, and AB, in which participants A and B speak continuously in turns. Adjacency pairs can be found in three situations; pair parts, sequences, and turn-taking. The pair parts appear in question/answer and greeting/greeting. As for sequence, it has no sense unless it is understood as the second part of the question/answer. Thus, turn taking part is vital to avoid simultaneous speech.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1. Related Studies

The realm of conversational analysis has plethora of attempts to investigate adjacency pairs. For example, Murata (1995) examined the immediate repetition utilized at topic and subtopic boundaries and found that there are different functions to the repetitions. These functions are: interruption oriented repetition, solidarity repetition, silence avoidance repetition, hesitation repetition and reformulation repetition. Murata argues that the most salient type of repetition among the Japanese speakers is the solidarity repetition which shows and signals that what is said by the first speaker is understood for the others and to establish rapport in the interaction among the interlocutors.

Kalakattawi (2005) investigated the features of the conversation among Sudanese and Makkan Arabic speakers. The study found out that there were a number of linguistic markers used to mark a turn such as overlapping which is considered as very frequent in such these conversations. She explained that the function of this overlap is to increase friendly talk and show interest with the other party. Moreover, the participant did not mind when they are interrupted by the other interlocutors. She argued that this frequent overlap among the participants was as a continuer mark that is to show involvement in the conversation and listenership. The other marker she found in this conversation is the interruption which is a talk of another speaker during the speaker turn not at transition relevance place which causes the current speaker to stop talking (Schegloff, 1987).

Nafi, Rinanda and Sularti (2019) analyzed the adjacency pairs of school students in Indonesia. The study found some pairs employed based on the conversation between the teacher and students. These are greeting / greeting/ summons / answer question / answer accusation / denial. Similarly, Al-Tufaili and Rhaif (2022) analyzed the use of adjacency pairs in Arabic and English political reviews. The analysis showed that there is difference between Arabic and English in the use of AP. Arabs maintains the sense of agreement with each other to show intimacy and appreciation.

Likewise, Rieschild (2007) identified emphatic repetition in ethnographic interviews in Spoken Arabic. In her study, she explained the need to account for emphatic repetition of different formal types (sounds, syllables, words, phrases, and clauses) as well as the more subtle repetition of semantic components in lexical couplets and repetition by code switching. Hence, some emphatic repetition is part of the grammar and lexicon of the language; some is part of bilingual capacity; and in terms of interactional strategies, some emphatic repetition is part of the preferences of that language, which are themselves delimited by the grammatical and lexical possibilities of that language.

Al-Harahsheh (2015) studied the CA of self-initiated repair structures in conversations in Jordanian Spoken Arabic. The findings of this research revealed that Jordanian speakers practice 10 self-initiated repair structures, namely, expansion, hesitation, replacement, repetition, abort and restart, abort and abandon, insertion, deletion, meta-repair and modify order. Mahzari (2019), studied the opening of mobile call by Arab Saudi speakers. Results showed that Islamic religious expressions are heavily used such as God blesses you and may Allah protect you as well as starting the call with Alsalamualikum: peace be upon you.

More recently, and in order to identify the sequence of English and Indonesian welcomes as adjacency pairs in social interaction, Sultan (2020) sought to define the types of verbal and non-verbal greetings typically displayed in every exchange. The English data were taken from "Twelve Years a Slave," while the Indonesian data came from field notes, records, and observation. The descriptive qualitative approach is used for the analysis of both sets of data. The findings of this study suggest that there are four distinct categories of Indonesian sequential greetings that Firth's theory identified. These categories include interjection-question, interjection-question with body language, interjection-invitation, and invitation. For each pair, just one utterance of each is utilized. Second, according to English statistics, the first pair and second's welcome sequences are symmetrical, and body language preceding questions and body language.

Reviewing literature indicates that studying conversation analysis is of paramount significance since it gives the speakers more knowledge about the nature of Arab conversation. Therefore, this indeavour is an attempt to enlighten others about the nature of arab conversations and turn-taking.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The approach that has been chosen for this research is qualitative approach. A case study was conducted on post graduate students at National University of Malaysia. In this context, the conversation occurred during informal setting that is usual chatting among friends. The speakers are from different Arabic countries but they are very close friends, since they are neighbors and meet each other frequently.

3.1. Sample

This study is considered as a case study. The sample of the study are three $N=3$ male postgraduate students, their ages range between 30 and 40. Convenience sampling method is used. Yin (1989) defines case study as an empirical inquiry that investigate a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context. Of the advantages of case study approach are the attention to context and the ability to track and document changes, such as language development over time. Moreover, case study zeros in on a particular case, an individual, group or a situation.

3.2. Research tools

This research was created based on a single case analysis, where the researcher concentrated on the interaction in a single episode with respect to some interesting or relevant aspects. This was done in light of the fact that conversation analytic methodology is strongly data driven. The researcher looked at the description of the environment within which turn design may be recognized as in turn construction practices and the description of the sort of social activity carried out by turn construction practices as a sequential level. The study used recoding, Jefferson's (2004) transcription notation and data analysis. This is because these studies use raw data from the taped recorded conversation; hence all the dialogues that might occur are spontaneous and natural. The raw data were then recorded and coded. Recording is very important so that all the data and information are real, authentic and valid. The recording process lasted about 10 minutes.

3.3. Research procedures

Conversation was recorded between the students during chatting in informal setting among friends. The recording session in this conversation lasted about 10 minutes. After the researcher completed the recording process, all the data were transcribed and categorized. Then, data were analyzed to find out the patterns of this natural conversation, such as turn taking and adjacency pairs. Adjacency pairs tokens are analyzed in the next section.

1. Greeting-greeting

Goffman (2009), characterizes greeting exchange as an access rituals consist of two types; passing greeting and engaging greeting. Ritual is defined by Goffman as conventionalized act in which an individual shows his respect to others. He added that greeting consists of several interlinking behaviors as follows:

1- Salutation or the verbal linguistic form.
2- Term of address.
3- Body language.
4- Social context.

(Excerpt 1)

1.Speaker A: Alsalamalikum guys↑ (peace be upon you)

2.Speaker B: WalikumAlsalam

3.Speaker C:WalikumAlsalam

The nature of greeting by Arab speakers generally starts by saying Alsalamalikum (*peace be upon you*).This greeting is Islamic greeting, and since all of the participants here are Arab Muslim students, the used and most common greeting is AlsalamAlikum, However, there are other colloquial greetings used among Arab speakers such as (marhaba, hi) but it depends on context and the respondents but generally the standard greeting by Arab speakers is AlsalamAlikum.

2. Turn taking sequence

Turn taking is considered as the most important feature of the conversation. It is when the speaker and the listener change their turn in order to keep the conversation in progress and to show comprehensibility between them. According to Schegloff (1992), there are three rules that govern the turn taking system; (a) when the current speaker selects the next speaker, the

next speaker has the right and, at the same time, is obliged to take the next turn; (b) if the current speaker does not select the next speaker, any one of the participants has the right to become the next speaker. This could be regarded as self-selection; and (c) if neither the current speaker selects the next speaker nor any of the participants become the next speaker, the current speaker may resume his/her turn.

(Excerpt 2)

Question-answer

4.Speaker A: How are you <u>all</u>?

5.Speaker B: Fine (.) Alhamdullellah

The excerpt above shows the nature of the responses of the interlocutors when they ask each other about the situation and the health, the answer is generally Alhamdulellah, (*Thanks goes to Allah*) and this is clear from the answers of the two other speakers when they are asked about their situations. Since all the speakers in this conversation are Arab and Muslim speakers, we can infer that the general and predominant answer about the situation and health is Alhamdulellah.

3. Repetition

According to Tannen (1989), repetition is at the heart not only how particular discourse is created, but how discourse itself is created. She suggests that the syntactic repetition in conversation serves many functions such as production, comprehension, connection, interaction, and conversational coherence. Tannen defines repetition as the same words uttered in the same rhythmic patterns

(Excerpt 3)

8.SpeakereA: HEY do you have any experience about computers ?

9.SpeakerB: computers? ↑

10.SpeakerC: (.)Why?

11.SpeakerA: I bought a new laptop (.) but the problem is its very slow.

This part shows the repetition by the second interlocutor; the second interlocutor repeated the word computer although he heard the word computer very clearly but he still says computer!. Among the functions of the repetition is to show the interest with the other part and to show

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that the first party is following the speaker with his utterances. According to Murata (1995), repetition indicates positive attitudes towards conversational partners. In the above excerpt, the repetition of word computer might show interest with the partner.

(Excerpt 4)

14. Speaker A: from kl low yat lowyat plaza(.) <u>dell</u>

In this excerpt it is quite clear that the repetition by the first speaker comes to explain more to the others by repeating the word low yat plaza twice. The repetition came from the first speaker to focus on the utterance and to ensure correctness and make it clear for other listeners. According to Tannen (2005), the varied purposes served by repetition can be subsumed under the categories of production, comprehension, connection and interaction. The first three categories refer to the creation of meaning in a conversation. The latter category, an interactional function, goes beyond the level of meaning creation. It accomplishes social goals in a conversation.

4. Overlapping

Overlapping is the talk of another speaker during current speaker's turn at a transition relevance place, and both the speaker and hearer continue talking at the same time (Schegloff, 1987).

(Excerpt 5)

11.Speaker A: I bought new laptop(.) [but the problem it's very slow….

12.Speaker B: [<u>congratulations</u>

13.Speaker C: [from where?

We notice that the utterances of the two other speakers B and C overlapped with the utterance of the first speaker at the same time; the other speakers interrupted the first speaker before he finished his sentence. The first speaker congratulated him while the other asked a question. This excerpt clearly shows that there is no respect for the turn taking. However, this does not mean that the other two interlocutors do not respect the first speaker, instead, this overlap may indicates that the other two speakers are interested in the topic show enthusiasm by interacting more and congratulate the first speaker.

According to Kalakattawi (2005), overlapping is natural in conversations and it increases in friendly talk. People overlap usually to let the speaker feel that the hearer is positively interacting with him/her and the hearer welcomes the overlap as he continues his/her speech instead of stopping. The continuation of speech shows that both participants accept the overlap as both speaker and hearer do not change the topic but elaborate it.

5. Openings and Closings

Conversations must be opened and closed and nterlocutors are obviously aware of this and varied question forms were used to open the discourse. These acts as closings are vital to bring the exchange to a close and to reflect a group consensus. Speech acts of agreement and seeking consensus were vital components of the discourse.

According to Schegloff and Sacks (1973), there are different strategies for closing the conversation; the first strategy is called positive face saving strategy such as positive comments e.g., (*it was nice talking to you*), this strategy is considered as the most frequent strategy for ending the conversation .The other one is the excuse e.g., (*I will better go back to work*). This strategy removes the implication that one wishes to end the conversation by providing an alternative motivation, an alternative explanation for one's potentially face-threatening behavior. The third strategy is called imperative to end which implies that the conversation must end e.g., (*it looks like our time is up).*

(Excerpt 6)

14.Speaker A: ok (..) do you need anything(.)   because I need to go now

15.Speaker B: thank you(.) may Allah save you, but it's early sit a little more↑

16.Speaker C: may Allah save you

17.SpeakerA: AlsalamAlikum

18.SpeakerB :WalikumAlsalam

19.Speaker C :WalikumAlsalam

Closing strategy in this conversation seems very polite; the speaker who wants to end the conversation did not say directly to his interlocutors I need to end the conversation now or I want to go home now, instead he offered his services and his help to the other speakers to make the closing comfortable to the hearers and to have a logical series of ending of the conversation. Moreover, the second interlocutor offered to the first speaker to sit a little more,

and he did not just say thank you I do not need anything. This might show the interlocutors' caring to each other and shows a very polite strategy which is a positive politeness strategy to save the listeners' positive faces for ending the conversation. The closing greeting in Arab speakers' conversation is same as the opening greeting which is AlsalamAlikum (*peace be upon you*) which shows the importance of Islamic religion to the speakers.

4. CONCLUSION

This study tried to find out some features and characteristics of the conversation between Arab speakers in informal setting. Although this conversation is considered a limited-scale analysis, we still can find the predominant features of the conversation for Arab speakers. The speaking patterns discussed in this conversation are the adjacency pairs and turn-taking, in addition to investigating the overlap process during the conversation and, finally, the opening and closing. The analysis shows that AlsalamAlikum (peace be upon you) is the dominant greeting by Arabs and Muslims, which is considered one of the adjacency pairs according to Scegloff and Scaks (1990). That is, the first pair of greetings needs the second pair, which is the response for this greeting: Waalikumalsalam (peace be upon you as well).

The other issue which is clear in this conversation is that the type of turns selections is considered self select, in which the speaker did not choose his next speaker but he finishes his sentence and wait the answer from any other speaker, and the other speaker starts his turn of speaking when the first speaker stops talking. It is considered impoliteness if the interlocutor allocates his next speaker in such these conversation, because the others will feel that they are neglected from the conversation. Thus, this could indicate that the speaker did not prefer to choose his next speaker, especially when the negotiation is open for all speakers, because it is considered as an impolite behavior.

The analysis of this brief conversation shows that although there is overlapping and no totally respect to the turn taking but this did not affect the conversation main stream because the speakers are very close friends and the conversation took place in informal setting. Hence, we could conclude that whenever there is affinity and solidarity among the speakers, there is no totally respect to the conversational patterns that were presupposed by Schegloff and Sacks (1973) and Pöhacker (1998).

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