



The Realization Of Spontaneity And Interactivity Features in The Construction of English Transactional Conversation of Akamigas Students

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Abstract

This research analyzed the way spontaneity and interactivity realized within the students' transactional conversation. The study participants were the students of the Petroleum study program of P.E.M. Akamigas Cepu, Central Java. As a discourse study, this research analyzed five conversations carried out by five groups of students of the Petroleum study program. The data were collected through audio recordings. The recorded files were further transcribed, and the researchers selected, counted, and reported the written data based on the transcription. The transcription of the students' conversation recording was then analyzed to find its spontaneity and interactivity features, referring to the suggestions by Thornburry and Slade (2006). The result of the analysis of students' conversation recording showed that chunks were the most frequent spontaneity feature found within students' conversation, followed by conjunctions and filled pauses. Students use chunks to recall a typical combination of words quickly. As for the interactivity features, the most commonly found part was the discourse marker followed by questions and interaction signal. The students used Discourse markers to keep the information flowing during the conversation. Spontaneity and interactivity features were indeed found and used by the students for specific purposes, and it is suggested to expose learners to the appropriate use of spontaneity and interactivity. This research provides insight for E.S.P. teachers to develop their teaching beyond language content that helps the learners to participate in an actual discourse

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INTRODUCTION

It is a matter of the fact that English for Specific Purposes learners needs to be capable of communicating interactively in a real-time situation. The students of various educational fields need to have communicative skills to cope with the language tasks that must be successfully achieved in the students' respective fields. Petroleum students must master English communicative skills to meet the language demands. The petroleum field will require them to meet and talk to petroleum business stakeholders, i.e., business people, organizations, and government officials, domestic and foreign. The subject matter of the conversation could vary depending on the petroleum business issues they will meet in the future, and the situation requires direct communication.

Regardless of the essential role of communication skills for petroleum students' future, it is the nature of spoken context that has limited or no time available for the speakers during the spontaneous conversation. This limited-time for the speaker to think of what to say may cause disfluencies and hinder the messages' intelligibility.

They are considered to keep up the flow of spontaneous information during the conversation to prevent the communication from breaking down. It is essential to emphasize dealing with the issues of spontaneity and interactivity. A large portion of EFL teaching in Indonesia mainly emphasizes on teaching the language topic or content. It lacks in emphasizing language macrostructure, i.e. the language features that enable the learners to increase and develop their discourse skills to perform excellently in discourse.

Giving more serious attention to these features in EFL learning is essential to fostering students' discourse competence. EFL classrooms need to include these features in the instruction, which is quite tricky since Indonesian EFL learners generally learn English as a foreign language. Another issue is that Indonesian EFL learners are rarely

exposed to actual spoken English usage, such as those spoken by native speakers, and in some cases, such exposure is nonexistent. Learning English in the home country and studying abroad had differences, such as problems in direction due to the language barrier and the cultural context of autonomous learning (Hibatullah, 2019). This condition is the reason to conduct this discourse analysis on spontaneity and interactivity features spoken by students' in their transactional conversation in Petroleum context of English. The study of the spontaneity and interactivity features in students' interaction will give insight into how these features serve as the fundamental skills in conversation to develop the discourse skill that allows the EFL learners to participate.

Since the learners are entirely non-native English speakers, it is interesting to investigate whether or not they involve the spontaneity and interactivity features in their transactional conversation. The students seemingly have problems using spontaneity and interactivity features during their real-time transactional discussions. An explanation for this problem is that students lack exposure to the features' usage. An issue that makes this matter worse is that there is a lack of the use of authentic materials since the spoken text in their English textbooks does not typically reflect the actual use of spoken language features in a real-life situation. This provides information about spontaneity and interactivity features employed by EFL learners of English for petroleum that may contribute to developing teaching conversation skills for the English for petroleum program.

English for Specific Purposes (E.S.P.) is considered to be one of the critical branches of English Language Teaching (E.L.T.) (Ahtamjonovna & Behruz, 2017). The English for Specific Purposes facilitate learners to acquire the necessary communicative skills to become active community members. It is required for E.S.P. teachers to consider the situations where the students will have to speak English, the tasks, the communicative activities and the processes related to these situations,

and the genres, language, and communicative strategies used in these situations. The English for Specific Purposes learning can achieve its intended purpose only if the instruction occurs within a meaningful context. To meet the significant context, it needs to have the authenticity of learning materials by exposing the learners to the authentic use of language as well as the cultural condition in their professional area to provide opportunities to the students for them to engage in meaningful tasks in a context that simulate the purposes in which they will use English in real world in the future. Moreover, it will also provide authentic interactions, which give learners an opportunity to practice English as it is used by practitioners or professionals in their respective discipline, in the form of either written or spoken.

Spoken language teaching in EFL classrooms empowers EFL teachers to improve students' overall fluency and face-to-face conversation, increase the authenticity of the speaking lessons, and prevent the students from speaking English like a textbook (Hillard, 2014). Students can take advantage of learning spoken language features (Mumford, 2019). Several studies on spoken language features have been conducted in various speaking activities such as debate (Ikawati, Faridi, & Mujiyanto, 2018) and television talk shows (Mutmainah & Sutopo, 2016), and online game chat (Giovani, Mujiyanto, & Fitriati, 2018).

People commonly consider long silence in conversation unacceptable, and the participants in a discussion are responsible for filling in any gaps that may hinder the smooth flow of the talk (Soerjowardhana, 2015). Speakers used fillers, repeats, or restarts to indicate a consequence of interpersonal coordination to buy time in planning what they would say next (Bortfield et al., 2001). Speakers use *uh* and *um* in spontaneous speaking to express the delay in speaking and monitor the speech plan (Clark & Tree, 2002). Real conversation is naturally spontaneous and unscripted (Brennan, 2010), and spontaneous conversation is notoriously disfluent (Bortfield

et al., 2001). The cause of this disfluency is speakers' inability to decide what to say next (Gosy, 2001).

Sidtis and Rallon (2004) studied chunks and formulaic expressions and found that these were highly used by native English speakers, while Villaneau, Antoine & Ridoux (2014) studied chunk functions. A study dealing with comparison of lexical bundles production between native English speakers and EFL learners found that a lot of variations in producing lexical bundles were used by native speakers (Nekrasova, 2019). It was found that the native speakers have the competence of general knowledge of these expressions. Native speakers can acquire this knowledge since they are exposed to the English language from the very start of their language acquisition period upon childhood. On the other hand, EFL learners do not grow up in such a situation. EFL learners attempt to modify formulaic expressions and employ strategies to make up for their knowledge lack of English context by making up formulas on their own. These modifications made by EFL students often underuse, overuse, or misuse the target language expression resulting in malfunctions and a lack of formulaic expressions. EFL students' unfamiliarity may cause the unnatural use of formulaic expressions, which are insufficiently presented in the EFL classrooms (Khusnita & Rukmini, 2016).

Inappropriateness and disfluency of formulaic language usage is a setback for the listeners' understanding and this situation lead to communication breakdown. Speakers have to maintain the conversation interactivity to keep the information flow. Students can use interactivity features to keep the information flow. Those features are applied in discourse markers, turn-taking, back-channeling, questions, keeping silent while others are speaking, interrupting at times, tails, interruption, overlapping turns as well as signaling their agreement or amusement by grunts, laughs, and chuckles. (Thornburry, 2005). The use of discourse markers provides interactional movement to set up and build the

utterances (Fung & Carter, 2007). Its role is to fulfill an indexical function that connects a statement to the text or context (Buysse, 2012). A study regarding interactivity features such as back-channeling and interrupting found that participants use the elements but have no idea how to use the expressions (Widiyati, 2016) appropriately. Studies on silent and filled pauses were conducted by Rose (2017), examining second language production, and Horvath (2017) reviewed its functions, while repetitions study were carried out by Liliya (2014), in which it was shown that asymmetry of linguistic in L2 interactions is a resource that is taken from situations in which there are not other sufficient resources for action formation and recognition. The study on the function of repetition was carried out by Margulis (2013). Cheng and Warren (2003) examined the students' ability to do indirectness, inexplicitness, and vagueness. They found that these three were the critical component in the repertoire of all competent discourses, and these are commonplace phenomena in written and spoken discourses, especially in conversations. House (2013) conducted a study on discourse markers in which it found that speakers tend to strategically re-interpret some features to help themselves improve their pragmatic competence. Brunetti conducted the studies on tails (2009) and found that speakers' use of seats does not evoke alternatives and that there is no context where it can be contrastive, while a study on the function of tails was conducted by Timmis (2013). A survey of filled pauses was conducted by Fruehwald (2016), examining the filled pause choice as a sociolinguistic variable. Knudsen, Creemers & Meyers (2020) showed the studies on back channels and particles and found that back media and particles facilitate speech planning. Back-channels do not provide much conceptual content and are therefore easy to plan and respond to. Another study on the back-channel was carried out by Cutrone (2013), examining back-channel's role. The survey of conjunction functions was conducted by Sulistyarningsih &

Slamet (2018), while the study on the part of questions was completed by Repp (2020).

This exchange type is a common feature of E.S.P. courses (Thornburry & Slade, 2006). The use of spontaneity and interactivity features in transactional conversation is an essential issue since the learners need to be aware that the purpose of the communication shapes any use of language, and this awareness will assist them in managing the flow of the message to avoid the communication breakdown because of the spontaneous nature. In addition, there are still a few studies conducted in the area of spontaneity and interactivity features used by the learners in a transactional conversation, specifically in the context of E.S.P. learning, especially English for Petroleum. Based on this rationale, this research aims to investigate the use of spoken language features focusing on the spontaneity and interactivity by petroleum students at the Petroleum Program of P.E.M. Akamigas Cepu in transactional conversation.

METHODS

This study falls into the category of discourse study, examining the data from five recordings of spontaneous transactional conversations. These five spontaneous transactional topics are in the petroleum field, spoken by the students of P.E.M. Akamigas Cepu. Ten students were randomly selected and asked to make a group of two. All of the research participants were non-native English speakers, and they were asked to have a conversation on the topic of petroleum. The students are Petroleum study program students of P.E.M. Akamigas Cepu, Central Java, Indonesia, and all have either sista Indonesia or Javanese as their first language. This study utilized two instruments: a spoken language features list written by Thornbury (2005) and Thornbury and Slade (2006) and observation sheets were also used as the instrument.

The researchers recorded the conversations made by the students', and this recordings transcribed for further analysis. The

transcription was used to find the spontaneity and interactivity features. The researchers asked the students to make a spontaneous conversation based on some topics in the field of petroleum. Students were free to choose the topic as they wished, and their conversation performance was audio recorded. The researchers made a transcription based on the students' conversation recordings. Using this transcription, the researchers looked for spontaneity and interactivity features in the transcription, and the results were descriptively presented.

The researchers applied triangulation to the findings to ensure validity, as well as to avoid bias. This study involves an investigator for the triangulation and a native speaker as the evaluator. The researchers gave the audio transcript to the evaluator, and then the spontaneity and interactivity features found in the students' conversation audio transcription were identified and classified by the evaluator. The evaluators and researchers referred to Thornbury (2005) and Slade (2006) to classify the spontaneity and interactivity features. Once the triangulation was completed, researchers' and evaluators' findings were compared. The consistency level of the results was drawn by examining the similarities and the differences between the evaluator's and researcher's conclusions. The evaluator's analysis was helpful for the validity of the research findings and addressed this study's four research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1. Spontaneity Features Forms and Occurrence Frequency in Students' Transactional Conversations

N	The Forms of Spontaneity Features	C	C	C	C	C	Total Occurrences	%
1	Filled pauses	1	2	8	2	1	46	17
2	Repetitions	2	3	5	0	0	10	3.
3	False start and backtracking	2	1	5	0	1	9	3.
4	Incomplete utterances	8	1	2	0	4	15	5.
5	One clause/phrase at a time constructions	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.
6	Conjunctions	4	5	2	3	5	19	7
7	Tail slot fillers	1	0	0	4	0	5	1.
8	Question tags	0	0	1	0	0	1	0.
9	Adverbials	1	0	1	0	0	2	0.
10	Vagueness expressions	0	0	2	0	0	2	0.
11	Chunks	3	3	3	3	2	160	59
Total Spontaneity Features		6	6	6	4	3	270	

Spontaneity features forms and frequency

The findings of data analysis show ten spontaneity features in the students' transactional conversation transcription. The results are presented in Table 1.

The data analysis findings found that the most common form of spontaneity features are chunks. As shown in Table 1, 68 (41,4%) chunks are found in students' conversations. This finding indicates that the students use the spontaneity feature most.

It was found that students could make spontaneous conversation possible by using chunks; they can quickly and easily memorize pieces to mention during their conversations spontaneously. It was also found that students tend to make up or modify chunks independently. The students' ability to make chunks, although not in a large quantity as they are non-native

speakers, is similar to the findings of the study conducted by Nekrasova (2019).

Students' tendency to make up or modify chunks often results in Inappropriateness. Here is an example of students' lack of exposure to spoken English usage in daily conversation, as shown in example 1:

Example 1

AB: **Hey** Oni

O.J.: **Hi**

AB: **Sorry for bothering**, do you --ave uh -- I
want to talk about some
things in my mind do you
have uh

The chunks that occurred in example 1 shows both proper and improper utterances. Some of the adequately used chunks are hey and hello, while the inappropriate or unusual usage of a chunk is sorry for bothering. The "sorry for bothering" is the chunk containing a formulaic expression intended to make way for others' willingness to have a conversation. The native speaker considers this unusual expression unnecessary because one can see whether the interlocutor is keen to have a chat or not. This unusual or improper usage of chunks is related to the speakers' exposure to the language. By providing more exposure to

the language, they are expected to be more familiar with commonly used chunks and, therefore, can utter them in a more proper and usual manner. Conjunctions are the second most commonly used spontaneity feature in the students' conversation. There are a total of 51 conjunctions found in the students' conversations. Conjunctions make up 31% of the total spontaneity features found in the observation. The findings show the student's high usage of conjunctions. It was found that students made increased use of conjunctions.

Another spontaneity feature that makes up a large percentage of occurrences in this research is filled pause, with 20.7% of the total number of spontaneity features. A filled pause occurred 34 times during the students' conversation. The high number of filled pauses shows students' discussion disfluency, which makes the interlocutor. In this case, their classmates struggle to understand the message and respond or keep the conversation going. It is in line with Rose (2017), as these filled pauses result from complex differences between the first and second languages.

There were so many filled pauses, namely uh and um, which hindered the interlocutor's process of understanding, not to mention the ethical issues from the perspective of a native speaker. The frequent selection of uh and um as the filler confirms the study by Fruehwald (2016). The heavy usage of filled pauses makes the speaker seem unconvincing. The topic of the conversation is oil and gas, and the students involved in the discussion are oil and gas practitioners/academicians. Nevertheless, the research participants did make some points on the discussion topic, and the possible reason the students used filled pause is to buy themselves some additional moments for them to think of what they are going to say. This finding is a potential concern for both 12 learners and teachers as there seems to be a trade-off between fluency and idea deliverance. In the case of this research, students/research participants succeeded in delivering their ideas with the cost of fluency.

Four occurrences of repetition make up 2.4% of the total occurrence of spontaneity features found in the students' conversation. During the conversation, the context in which the students/research participants use repetitions is to make a correction or revise the previously stated utterance. Students tried to correct the statement by restating the same but with an additional revision to convey the idea precisely. The repetition took place in the final part of the utterance as the strategy to state a coherent statement. It supports the research result of Liliya (2014), as the presence of second language linguistic asymmetry creates this situation.

As for the vagueness, the expression made up 1.2% of the spontaneity features or was only uttered twice. The students use vagueness expressions to leave the perception of the interlocutor's opinion. Students still found underusing the vagueness expression, although it can prevent them from spending too much time formulating sentences or finding words. Referring to Cheng & Warren (2003), this underuse of vagueness expressions shows students' lack of repertoire competency.

Spontaneity features function

The spontaneity features present within research participants' dialogues serve some functions. The functions of those spontaneity features are explained as follows

Filled pauses. Speakers deliberately make a pause filled by an utterance between a chain of words, and this is not a lengthened sound within a word. This research identifies only three functions: hesitation right, signposting speaker turns, and correction. These functions align with the study Horvath conducted (201).

Repetitions. Research participants uttered repetitions to take some time to think of what they will say next, make corrections, and make a restatement or put some emphasis on the words they have previously stated, following the result of a study by Margulis (2013). During the student's conversation, repetitions were used as verbal nodding.

False start and backtracking. Students make false starts and backtracking during their conversation as they attempt to make corrections to their previously said utterances. a false start and backtracking functions as speakers review their reports quickly and correct their errors. These are in line with Cutrone's (2013)

Incomplete utterance. Students who uttered incomplete utterances during their conversations are mostly in the form of response utterances. These incomplete utterances serve as responses to participate in the conversation.

Conjunction. Students uttered conjunctions to connect the negation relationship of the clauses (i.e., but). Besides negations, students use conjunctions to join related statements to give the addition relationship of the utterance (i.e., and or). These connecting functions are in line with Sulistyaningsih & Slamet (2018).

Table 2. Interactivity Features Forms and Occurrence Frequency in Students' Transactional Conversations

N	The Forms of Spontaneity Features	C	C	C	C	C	Total Occurrences	%
1	Filled pauses	1	2	8	2	1	46	17
2	Repetitions	2	3	5	0	0	10	3.
3	False start and backtracking	2	1	5	0	1	9	3.
4	Incomplete utterances	8	1	2	0	4	15	5.
5	One clause/phrase at a time constructions	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.
6	Conjunctions	4	5	2	3	5	19	7
7	Tail slot fillers	1	0	0	4	0	5	1.
8	Question tags	0	0	1	0	0	1	0.
9	Adverbials	1	0	1	0	0	2	0.
10	Vagueness expressions	0	0	2	0	0	2	0.
11	Chunks	3	3	3	3	2	160	59
Total Spontaneity Features		6	6	6	4	3	270	

Chunks. Chunks in this study enabled students to have creative language use in addition to the quick and efficient recall of commonly used combinations of words. Students were found to use a large frequency of chunks, in which it is indicated that chunks could be quickly and easily memorized and uttered by the students, helping their language-related process. It is similar to Villaneau, Antoine, & Ridoux (2014) explanation.

The occurrence of interactivity features

Based on the findings of the students' transactional conversation transcription

analysis, it is found that discourse markers are the most common form of interactivity features.

As shown in Table 2, 52 (28.6%) discourse markers are found in students' conversations. These discourse markers function as the unifier and clues of the discourse creator to predict what the people are going to say to make the conversations unfold. Discourse markers usage in students' conversations is presented in Example 2.

Example 2

D.R.: Uh, **and** I think not the only danger for the buildings

Z.P.: ahem

D.R.: **But** also, it is a danger for us workers– Do you know uh -- oil and gas workers are at risk from hazards.

Example 2 shows an example of discourse markers uttered by students in their conversation, and in terms of usage, the students use the discourse markers appropriately. The first discourse marker 'and' is used to mark a continuance of the following utterance with the previous message the speaker D.R. has said. As for the discourse marker 'but,' the speaker signals an additional yet unexpected message to be uttered. This example of the finding on discourse marker shows that the students use the feature properly to maintain conversation flow and smoothness, resulting in better information comprehensibility. It is in line with House (2013), as speakers strategically re-interpret discourse markers to help themselves improve their pragmatic competence and function smoothly in the talk flow.

Students asked many questions in their conversations. The second most frequently occurred feature of the interactional signal is questions with 26 utterances, thus making up 24.7% of the total interactivity features in the students' conversation. The questions uttered by the students have the function of requesting information as well as sustaining the conversation by making it interactive and purposeful.

Another interactivity feature with high occurrence in the students' conversation is the

interaction signal. 13% of the total interactivity features or as many as 14 utterances are made up of interaction signals. The interaction signal has the purpose of eliciting response and feedback. In the students' conversation, an interaction signal was used to start, continue, and end a conversation.

Tails also made up a significant percentage of the interactivity features by 12.4% or occurring as much as 13 times. The tail slot is more retrospective, serving to extend, reinforce, mitigate, clarify or otherwise comment on what the speaker is saying or has just said. According to Brunetti (2009), students use tails as the tail does not evoke alternative or contrast to the speech context.

Back-channeling, overtures, and agreement/amusement signals are the least used interactivity features. It is in line with Knudsen, Creemers & Meyer (2020) as back-channels and particles facilitate speech conversation. From the conversation interactivity features analysis, seven back-channels or 6.5% of the total interactivity features, six overtures or 5.7% of the total interactivity features, and one agreement/amusement signal or 0.09% of the total interactivity features.

Functions of Interactivity Features

The data analysis found that the spontaneity features used in dialogues serve some functions. The functions of those interactivity features are explained as follows

Interaction signal. Aside from eliciting feedback and responses, interaction signals initiate, sustain, or end a conversation. It also allows the conversation to hold together and flow easily.

Back-channel. Students make an effort to show agreement. Back-channel also roles as an expression to direct their continuous attention toward the speaker.

Discourse marker. Students maintain information flow during their conversation by uttering discourse markers. Some discourse markers were used to frame the discourse to end or start the discourse by Buysse (2012).

Question. Questions maintain the conversation interactive, and some of the questions found in this research serve as questions to seek information as well as indirect requests. Questions request for information means the speaker wants to know something and assumes that the hearer knows it. These functions are in line with the explanation by Repp (2020), as the principal use of questions is to elicit information.

Overtures. Overture is used to introduce a topic that does not contrast with the ongoing conversation but indicates an expression of perspective. Preludes found in the discussion have the function of launching the talk.

Tails. Tails serve as an expression to qualify the utterance, solicit the listener's involvement, and clarify certain information. Many seats in this study were found to be used as tags, triggering responses from the listener, and this is according to Timmis (2013).

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Concerning the spontaneity features functions, filled pauses has the role of responding, restating, monitoring, correcting, gaining time, signposting the turn, as well as hesitating sign to the previously stated utterance. As the findings showed, the students' conversations spontaneity features in English for Petroleum can be categorized in seven forms. Those forms are filled pauses, repetitions, false start and backtracking, incomplete utterances, conjunctions, tail slot fillers, and chunks. Spontaneity feature with the most utterance frequency is chunks (68 times), this indicates that chunks is quick and easy to be memorized by the students, which helps students' language-related production. The second most frequent form of the spontaneity features is filled pause which found uttered as much as 34 times in students' conversations, indicating disfluency in the students' discussion.

The findings revealed that students tried various ways in maintaining conversation interactivity. These various ways can be

classified into six forms of interactivity features. This six forms of interactivity features are interactional signals, back channels, discourse markers, questions, overtures, and tails. Discourse marker is the most frequently uttered interactivity feature (38 times), serving as the unifier and clues of the discourse creator to predict what people are going to say in order to make the text unfold. In addition, interactivity features function in the students' conversations are namely response elicitors, indicators of agreement and listener's attention, maintenance of the flow of the conversation, utterance launcher, clarification of certain information and also feedback.

In addition to maintaining the communication's intelligibility, the students also attempting to manage the information flow as realized in the spontaneity and interactivity features in the their conversations. However, a native speaker consider some of the features as inappropriate. Students' lack of exposure to the actual use of English causes them to have few exposure that are important to them to understand how English conversations are actually spoken in the real world, resulting in this inappropriateness. Therefore, teaching spoken language features especially spontaneity and interactivity features will help students' fluency and direct conversation, preventing them from having conversation in English inappropriately.

As an addition, EFL teachers should use authentic spoken texts to increase the students' exposure to actual, real-world spoken language features. It is important for teachers to introduce spontaneity features to develop students' fluency and interactivity features to develop students' ability to maintain the conversation flow. Students can communicate fluently and effectively once they are familiar with spontaneity and interactivity features.

However, this study has some limitations. This study focused only on the analysis of spontaneity and interactivity features found within students' transactional conversation in English for Petroleum. This does not consider spontaneity and interactivity

features usage in other E.S.P. programs. Hence, future research should also extend to cover other E.S.P. programs.

In addition, this study aimed to investigate spontaneity and interactivity features forms and functions found in students' conversation only; it is expected that future research can examine the appropriateness and accuracy of spontaneity and interactivity features usages by investigating whether they are used appropriately and accurately in the conversation. Studies on similar topic are necessary for EFL learners to enhance their communication and assist them in managing the flow of the message to avoid communication breakdown because of the spontaneous nature.

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