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**This thesis entitled:  
A STUDY ON TURN-TAKING STRATEGIES IN AMERICAN TELEVISION  
COMEDY TALK SHOW “*THE ELLEN DEGENERES SHOW*”**

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# **A STUDY ON TURN-TAKING STRATEGIES IN AMERICAN TELEVISION COMEDY TALK SHOW “THE ELLEN DEGENERES SHOW”**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study is aimed to identify, classify and describe the types of Turn taking strategies and its functions from the data found in the conversation between Host and Guest of Ellen Degeneres Talk Show. The study uses the Stenström’s theory to classify which types of turn taking strategies and its functions used by participants in the talk show, it also uses descriptive qualitative method. The source of data in this study is from the utterances between Ellen and her guests in The Ellen DeGeneres Show. The result of the study shows that all participants use three types of turn taking strategies such as, taking the turn, holding the turn, and yielding the turn. The most occurring types of turn taking strategy used by all the participants of three videos was taking the turn with 52% of occurrences then follow by holding the turn with 26% of occurrences and the least occurrences is yielding the turn with 22% of occurrences. The result also shows that taking the turn strategy is functioned as the talk starter device and turn taker by the next speaker. Holding the turn strategy functioned as a mark of hesitation, a time creating devices, an editing term, and a turn holder. Yielding the turn functioned as turn yielders.

**Keywords :** *Conversation Analysis, Turn taking Strategy, Talk show.*

## **Introduction**

Conversation is a natural human behavior that always occurs when there are at least two participants, under the basic rule of conversation: one person speaks at a time, it can be more than two participants as long as they were attending the same conversation) (Schegloff, 1968:1076). It is highly coordinated event that according to Schegloff (1968:1076) conversation is managed on a turn-by-turn basis as in “*ab ab*” distribution (speaker a talks; and stop, then speaker b talks; and stop).

Conversation analysis is an approach that concerns with the way people organize, take and manage their turn in spoken interaction (Sacks et al, 1974). In organizing the turn to speak one person distributes to listens of another person speaks, as the conversation progresses, the listener and the speaker roles are exchanged back and forth. In the role of listener and speaker shift exchange, there is a turn taking.

According to Stenström (1994) there are three types of the turn taking strategies. The first type is taking the turn, the second type is holding the turn, and the third type is yielding the turn. These types concern with how participants start the conversation, carry on in talking and give the chance to other.

One of the conversation form that can represent the used of turn taking strategy is talk show. Erler and Timberg (2002:3) proposes talk show as a show that is quite clearly and self-consciously built around its talk, it consists of speaker and listener who makes conversation in on air or off air. The conversation between the host and the guest in The Ellen DeGeneres Show is used as the object of the research. Additionally, three conversations with some guests from different episodes of Ellen DeGeneres Talk Show for analyzing the research will be selected such as the conversation between Ellen and Michelle Obama, Ellen and Ryan Gosling, the last is between Ellen, Mark and Joe.

Turn-taking strategies in the participant's interaction with a focus on the conversation between host and guest in the talk show is such an interesting issue to be concerned on. It is important to know the turn taking strategies because it is closely connected with how participants take their turn in a conversation. Therefore, it needs to show to the readers about the function of turn taking strategies, and they can apply it in their daily lives in order to get easy of conversation as social beings.

## **Turn Taking**

Turn taking is a fundamental study in a conversation analysis. There are basic facts of the conversation is that the roles of speaker and listener change, which is called turn taking, that is how the interlocutors change and manage their talks whether becoming a speaker or listener in a conversation (Coulthard,1985). Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998) also state that the three basic facts about conversation are turn taking occurs, one speaker tends to talk at time, and turns are taken with as little gap or overlap between them as possible. Stenström (1994) indicates turn is everything the current speaker says before the next speaker takes over.

Sack et.al, (cited in Fasold, 1990:67) composes the rules of turn taking, which are:

1. "If the turn is constructed so as to involve the 'current speaker selects next' technique. Then the person so selected has both the right and obligation to speak and no one else has such a right or obligation.
2. If the turn is *not* so constructed, then another speaker may self-select at the next transition-relevance place, but no one has to self-select. If self-select is instituted, the first person to do so gets the turn and turn exchange occurs there.
3. If the 'current speaker selects next' technique is not being used, and no one else has self-selected, then the current speaker may continue, but not need to."

If the first and the second rules have not applied, and the current

speaker continues to speak as allowed by the third rule, the rules recycle and are in effect at the next transition-relevance place (TRP) and continue to apply recursively until there is an exchange of turn.

Transition-relevance place/TRP is a place where the role of speaker and listener are traded. The current speaker knows when the trade comes by analyzing turn-constructive unit (TCU) occurrences of prior speaker. The Turn-constructive unit/TCU turns out to be syntactic units as: words, phrases, clauses and sentences. (Sacks et al., 1974)

As explained above, turn taking is the changing role of the speaker and the listener. It begins by the first speaker speaking. In this case, the speaker takes a chance to speak or he/she tries to keep his/her turn or gives a chance to the next speaker to take the turn until the turn taking stops when there is nothing to say.

### **Turn Taking Strategies**

Stenström (1994) distinguishes three basic strategies in the turn taking system. The strategies consist of taking the turn, holding the turn and yielding the turn.

#### **a. Taking the Turn**

If the participant uses taking the turn strategies, which means that someone has an initiative to talk and it is function as a start of the talk and the participant is marked as the first speaker, later the use of taking the turn strategies is continued when the first speaker begins to talk with someone who is invited (the second speaker/ the listener) to talk then after finishing the talking, the listener takes the turn and gives a comment or answer to him/her (the first speaker). Taking the turn consists of starting up, taking over and interrupting.

#### **b. Holding the Turn**

If the participant uses holding the turn strategy, which means carry on talking and it is function as a mark of hesitation, a time creating device, an editing term, and a turn holder. It is happened when the speaker still has something to say but not prepared because it is difficult to say and speak at the same time hence the speaker needs a time to edit some term in his/her talk and maintain the turn. Holding the turn consists of four devices such as filled pause and/or verbal filler, silent pause, lexical repetition and new start.

#### **c. Yielding the Turn**

If the participant uses yielding the turn, which means that the speaker gives the chance to the next speaker without much protesting because the speaker wants to hear response. It is function as the turn yielders. Yielding the turn consists of prompting, appealing and giving up.

### **Methodology**

This study used conversation analysis approach in order to get an understanding of how turn taking strategies are formed in the talk show. There are several reasons in the preference of employing this approach. First, turn taking is one of the aspects of conversational interactions. Second, the research aims to discover the function of turn taking strategies in talk show. This research also uses

qualitative method to make interpretations of the data based on theory because the data are in the form of words descriptively. This research focuses on the conversation used by the hosts and the guest in a talk show, which simultaneously created in interaction and the turn taking applied in the conversation. (Bogdan and Biklen cited in Hidayati 2014) state that qualitative method is research bringing about the descriptive data in the form of written or oral data from the subjects of the research being investigated.

The source of the data is the utterances between Ellen and her guests in The Ellen DeGeneres Show taken from Youtube. The participants include host and guest who participate in talk show such as, Ellen as the host and the guests are Michelle Obama, Ryan Gosling, Mark Kimsey and Joe Chambers. In analyzing the data, the data is analyzed and classified into what strategies are used and determined the frequency of the strategy occurrences the last step is described the type along with the function of turn taking strategies that listed in the research object is determined.

## Findings

This research shows that the participants in the conversation of The Ellen DeGeneres Show uses 3 types of turn taking strategies, which are taking the turn, holding the turn, and yielding the turn.

**Table 1: Turn Taking Strategies**

No.	Strategies	Video 1		Video 2		Video 3		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1.	Taking the turn	52	61%	51	45%	32	52%	<b>135</b>	<b>52%</b>
2.	Holding the turn	19	22%	28	25%	22	35%	<b>69</b>	<b>26%</b>
3.	Yielding the turn	15	17%	34	30%	8	13%	<b>57</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Total</b>		86		113		62		<b>261</b>	

The table above shows of the three turn taking strategies (taking the turn, holding the turn and, yielding the turn), participants in the first video applied taking the turn as much as 61%, holding the turn with 22% and, yielding the turn with 17%. Participants in the second video used taking the turn as much as 45%, holding the turn with 25% and, yielding the turn with 30%. Participants in the third video adopt taking the turn as much as 52%, holding the turn with 35% and, yielding the turn with 13%. When observed as a whole, all participants from the first video to the third video used taking the turn as much as 52%, holding the turn with 26%, yielding the turn with 22%.

**Table 2: Taking the Turn**

No.	Taking the Turn	Video 1		Video 2		Video 3		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1.	Starting up	1	2%	6	12%	3	9%	<b>10</b>	<b>8%</b>
2.	Taking over	39	75%	25	49%	20	63%	<b>84</b>	<b>62%</b>
3.	Interrupting	12	23%	20	39%	9	28%	<b>41</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Total</b>		52		51		32		<b>135</b>	

The table above indicates of the three taking the turn subclasses (starting up, taking over and, interrupting), participants in the first video applied starting up as much as 2%, taking over with 75% and, interrupting with 23%. Participants in the second video used starting up as much as 12%, taking over with 49% and, interrupting with 39%. Participants in the third video adopt starting up as much as 9%, taking over with 63% and, interrupting with 28%. When observed as a whole, all participants from the first video to the third video used starting up as much as 8%, taking over with 62%, interrupting with 30%.

**Table 3: Holding the Turn**

No.	Holding the Turn	Video 1		Video 2		Video 3		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Filled pause and/or verbal filler	5	26%	7	25%	10	46%	<b>22</b>	<b>33%</b>
2.	Silent pause	5	26%	7	25%	2	9%	<b>14</b>	<b>20%</b>
3.	Lexical repetition	8	42%	13	46%	8	36%	<b>29</b>	<b>42%</b>
4.	New start	1	6%	1	4%	2	9%	<b>4</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Total</b>		19		28		22		<b>69</b>	

Table above reveals of the four holding the turn devices (filled pause and/or verbal filler, silent pause, lexical repetition and, new start), participants in the first video applied filled pause and/or verbal filler as much as 26%, silent pause with 26%, lexical repetition with 42% and, new start with 6%. Participants in the second video used filled pause and/or verbal filler as much as 25%, silent pause with 25%, lexical repetition with 46% and, new start with 4%. Participants in the third video adopt filled pause and/or verbal filler as much as 46%, silent pause with 9%, lexical repetition with 36% and, new start with 9%. When

observed as a whole, all participants from the first video to the third video used filled pause and/or verbal filler as much as 33%, silent pause with 20%, lexical repetition with 42% and, new start with 5%.

**Table 4: Yielding the Turn**

No.	Yielding the Turn	Video 1		Video 2		Video 3		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Prompting	15	100%	27	79%	4	50%	<b>46</b>	<b>81%</b>
2.	Appealing	0	0%	4	12%	3	37%	<b>7</b>	<b>12%</b>
3.	Giving Up	0	0%	3	9%	1	13%	<b>4</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total</b>		15		34		8		<b>57</b>	

Table 4 above indicates of the three yielding the turn subclasses (prompting, appealing and, giving up), participants in the first video only used prompting, not appealing and giving up. Participants in the second video used prompting as much as 79%, appealing with 12% and, giving up with 9%. Participants in the third video adopt prompting as much as 50%, appealing with 37% and, giving up with 13%. When observed as a whole, all participants from the first video to the third video used prompting as much as 81%, appealing with 12%, giving up with 7%.

This study elaborates 11 data samples to support the hypothesis:

**Data 1**

[T75] Ellen : No. **Hey↑, I have a question**, and I, I, I, I think a lot of people have the same question, so when the transfer was happening, when uhh Donald Trump and, and his wife were, were moving into The White House

**Data 2**

[T85] Ellen : First of all, he just walks up the steps without his wife, just leaves his wife behind, he just walks up there.↓

[T86] Michelle : **Well**, there's all this protocol, I mean, this is like a state visit, so they tell you, you're going to do this, they're going to stand here, never before do you get this gift, so I'm sort of like, OK, what, where am I supposed to do with this gift? And everyone cleared out, and no one would come and take the box, and I'm thinking, do we take the picture with it? And then my husband saved the day, See, he grabbed the box and took it back inside, but everybody cleared out, no staff, no one, I was like, what do you do with a box?

**Data 3**

[T91] Ryan: Put them in a room and see what happens.

[T92] Ellen: **But** wouldn't they bump into each other and then go completely away from each other?

**Data 4**

[T4] Mark: I was responding to a person with a weapon call my lights and sirens going. Uhh.. Came into an intersection was involved in an auto accident. Next thing I know is, my vehicles close to a sidewalk, my air bag's blown, and there's a fire right in front of me. Uhh.. I had a--

[T5] Ellen: //so you don't remember impact? You just.--

[T6] Mark: //I don't. I don't remember impact. I--I just kind of woke up, basically.

**Data 5**

[T20] Michelle: Came out of the basement. It's just like, what? Come out of the house? But we're, we're, we're doing great. **Uhh**, The girls are good. Barack is working. We've got projects going. So we're staying busy. And traveling, we've had some fun.

**Data 6**

[T107] Ellen : Oh, you know what?(1.2) I'm gonna(1.0), you know(1.3), your birthday was a few weeks ago, and I'm going to-

[T108] Michelle : //You're going to re-gift

**Data 7**

[T75] Ellen: No. Hey, I have a question, and **I, I, I, I** think a lot of people have the same question, so when the transfer was happening, when uhh Donald Trump and, and his wife were, were moving into the White House

**Data 8**

[T42] Joe: Just like in that video. Mean, **that, that** video was (0.2) **uhh**, i'd say two minutes after when the fire department got there.

**Data 9**

[T13] Ellen: What are you doing? What's happening since you left the White House? Are you bored?

**Data 10**

[T39] Ellen: -because, I think, after you got him out, it, it, it kind of--the whole car caught fire, **right?**

[T40] Joe : within a minute, yeah.

**Data 11**

[T38] Ellen: Like, before you even reach here, I'm just gonna run towards you, and you won't know which way I'm gonna jump. (2.0)

## **Discussion**

### **Types Turn Taking Strategy**

Based on the findings all participants in three videos of Ellen DeGeneres Talk Show uses three types of turn taking strategies namely, taking the turn, holding the turn, and yielding the turn. The types of turn taking strategy that are used the most are taking the turn with 52% followed by holding the turn strategy with 26% of occurrences and the least occurrences is yielding the turn strategy which 22% of occurrences (see table 1).

#### **a. Taking the Turn**

Through analyzing the data, it is found that all participants in three videos of Ellen DeGeneres Talk Show gravitate to use taking the turn strategy, which contains subclass strategy such as starting up, taking over, and interrupting because of some reasons. The first reason is because the desire of the next speaker to give response to the previous speaker talk. The findings show that the participant in Ellen DeGeneres talk Show has a strong desire to give response after showing his/her agreement or disagreement sometimes by using connecting words, which is supported by 62% occurrences of taking over (see table 2). For example in data 2, Michelle uses an uptake utterance “well” to give a response toward Ellen’s talk about the scene where Donald Trump leaves his wife behind when they enter The White House. Another example in data 3 where Ellen uses connecting word “but” due to her desire to give response to Ryan statement about two Roombas are put in the same room. Another reason is based on construction of topic in the conversation that is when the participant tries to change topic in the conversation. The participants in the conversation have some moments of topic change in the conversation, which led to the use of taking the turn in the part of starting up. As in the conversation between Ellen and Michelle that has a mix topic. Wardhaugh (cited in Khasannah, 2015:11) elaborates “A conversation usually covers a number of topics and involves shifts from one topic to another, and sometimes a mix of topic”. For example in data 1, Ellen applies taking the turn strategy, which contains a clean start. It is shown when Ellen uses “Hey, I have a question” to attract Michelle attention and tell her that it is time for new topic.

Thus, taking the turn strategy is the most frequent strategy used by participants because of a strong desire of participants to give response toward the previous speaker’s utterance and the tendency of the participants in constructing the topic in the conversation

#### **b. Holding the Turn**

The second most applied strategy is holding the turn with 26% of occurrences (see table 1). Holding the turn ultimate aim is to maintain the speaker turn and prevent other speaker to steal the turn and there are four devices as the aid to make it happened. They are filled pause and/or verbal filler, silent pause, lexical repetition and new start. According to the findings lexical repetition is the highest occurrences with 42%, followed by filled pause and/or verbal filler with 33%, then silent pause with 20% and the least is new start with 5% (see table 3).

Participant applies this strategy considering the duration of the talk show is quite short that make the conversation seems rushed. The participants who are

involved in the conversation often do not have enough time to compose the idea of what they want to say because it is hard to think and speak at the same time. For example in data 7 where Ellen rushes to change the topic from Michelle's new house to the scene when Obama and Michelle welcome Donald Trump and Melaine Trump into The White House, right after she directs the conversation into a new topic Ellen seems struggling to say what she intends to say thus she uses holding the turn strategy in the part of lexical repetition by repeating the word "I"

#### c. Yielding the Turn

And the least strategy employed by the participants is yielding the turn, with 22% occurrences (see table 1) yet it is found in the data that most of yielding the turn strategy is used by the host (Ellen) because occasionally the guest only talk when they are prompted by the host considering her proportion as the host where the guest obligates to give some statement about a certain topic usually proposed by the guest. For example in data 9-11 Ellen provokes her guest by throwing out some questions, one is ended with an applier, and one using a long pause in the end of her talk to encourage her guest to give statement and respond to her talk.

The findings in this research are similar to the study of Huda (2017) that analyzes the application of turn taking mechanism in the presidential debate between Barack Obama and Mitt Romey. She finds out that the most used turn taking mechanism is taking the turn with 103, holding the turn with 44 and yielding with 29 occurrences.

### **Functions of Turn Taking Strategy**

This part elaborates the function of turn taking strategy used by the participants in Ellen DeGeneres Show. The function of this study is seen in the perspective of the action's objective as Schegloff (1990:51-53) describes it is better to examine the conversation for what it is *doing* than what it is *about*. "An utterance like "Would somebody like some more ice tea" is better understood as "doing an offer" than as "about ice tea," (Schegloff, 1996:1).

Based on the findings, the turn taking strategy that participant used is managed by some devices such as uptakes, links, filled pause and/or verbal filler, silent pause, and applier. These devices are called help resources. As Stenström (1994:81) establishes "Three main strategies in the turn taking system, taking, holding and yielding the turn, would undoubtedly be much less manageable without certain 'help resources'. Pause and <fillers> help the speaker to play for time, <appliers> and <uptakes> help to achieve smooth turn taking; links help to connect speaker turn; [backchannels], finally, help the current speaker along while manifesting the listener's attention"

#### a. Taking the Turn

In data 1 Ellen proposes a clean start utterance with high pitch intonation "Hey↑, I have a question" as the function to direct a conversation into a new topic. In data 2 Michelle produces an uptake utterance "well" as the function to take the turn, which is encouraged by Ellen's low pitch intonation at the end of her turn. In data 3 Ellen uses link utterance "But" as the function to take over Ryan's turn because Ellen wants to give a response to Ryan's talk. In data 4 Ellen and Mark are interrupting each other's turn that functions to summarize and to

show agreement. In general, taking the turn strategy used by participants functions as a talk starter equipment, and a turn taker by the next participant.

b. Holding the Turn

In data 5 Michelle applies filled pause and/or verbal filler utterance “uhh” that functions as a mark of hesitation. In data 6 Ellen uses silent pauses that functions as time creating devices, in data 7 Ellen uses lexical repetition “I, I, I, I” that functions as an editing term. In data 8 Joe uses lexical repetition “that, that”, silent pause (0.2), filled pause and/or verbal filler “uhh” but then realizes the only way to maintain her turn is to start a new utterance, the notion functions as a turn maintainer. Overall, holding the turn strategy applied by participants functions as a mark of hesitation, a time creating devices, and editing term, and a turn holder.

c. Yielding the Turn

In data 9 Ellen produces some questions that functions to prompt Michelle to respond to her talk. In data 10 Ellen applies an appealer utterance “Right?” this utterance is marked as an appealer signal that functions to encourage Joe to give feedback about his statement. In data 11 Ellen uses giving up strategy indicated by a long pause (for two second) in the end of her turn, which functions as the turn yielder.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the research, the conclusion can be drawn as follows:

First, there are three types of turn taking strategies found in the conversation between Ellen and her guests of Ellen DeGeneres Talk Show. They are taking the turn, holding the turn and yielding the turn. Second, the most applied strategy by all participants in Ellen DeGeneres Talk show is taking the turn strategy and the least is yielding the turn strategy. Third, the application of the strategies is affected by some factors such as a desire to give a response, a topic construction, the duration of the talk show, and the proportion of the host and the guest in the talk show. Fourth, the research also shows that taking the turn strategy functions as the talk starter equipment and a turn taker by the next participant. Holding the turn functions as a mark of hesitation, a time creating devices, an editing term, and a turn holder. Yielding the turn strategy functions as a turn yielders.

## **Suggestion**

This study focuses on turn taking strategies used by participant in Ellen DeGeneres. So, it will enrich the knowledge for the next researcher by giving benefits and more information about the study of discourse analysis especially in turn taking strategies. This research is also expected to be a reference and comparison that might be relevant to the subject of the researchers who are interested in conducting the same field.

Moreover, further researcher is expected to investigate more specific category of turn taking because the branch of turn taking strategies is quite tricky ergo it needs a thoughtful comprehension from the researcher itself.

In addition, it is noticed that this research has a lot of weaknesses on its theories provided, methodology, procedures of analyzing, and data interpretation.

Otherwise this research is hopefully being useful as the additional reference for those who want to conduct studies in the same field.

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