

Macrostructure, spontaneity, interactivity, and solidarity: An analysis of casual talk

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Abstract

This study explores the dynamics of casual conversation as a part of spoken discourse in everyday interactions. It aims to examine how conversational structure, interactivity, and interpersonal features emerge in spontaneous talk, addressing the research questions of how speakers organize turns, sustain engagement, and negotiate meaning. The data were collected from a naturally occurring, unplanned discussion between two male Indonesian Javanese postgraduate EFL students, close friends in their forties and fifties, who are fluent in English. The 16-minute interaction, recorded in a university lobby, produced 203 turns and 23 conversational story sequences, which were transcribed and analyzed using a qualitative, interpretive method. The findings reveal that the conversation displays clear structural patterns, including adjacency pairs and the IRF (Initiation–Response–Follow-up) sequence. Spontaneity is marked by filled pauses, repetitions, false starts, backtracking, incomplete utterances, and frequent use of conjunctions and fixed expressions. Interactivity is shown in turn-taking, respectful silences, occasional interruptions, and discourse markers, with strategies applied to avoid communication breakdowns. Interpersonal engagement emerges through laughter and chuckles that foster solidarity, while coherence is achieved through cooperative exchanges in which speakers provide relevant responses and comments. Negotiation occurs at both interpersonal and logical-semantic levels, ensuring clarity and mutual understanding. These findings suggest that casual conversation builds engagement through laughter, coherence through cooperation, and clarity through negotiation, enabling structured storytelling within an informal setting. A key limitation of the study lies in its reliance on audio recordings, which prevent analysis of nonverbal elements such as gestures and facial expressions. Future research should incorporate video data and consider varied conversational contexts, participant relationships, and cultural factors to provide a deeper understanding of casual interaction.

Keywords: casual talks; interactivity; macrostructure; solidarity; spontaneity

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INTRODUCTION

This study examines a casual conversation between two Javanese-Indonesian postgraduate students, analyzing its macrostructure, including turn-taking, adjacency pairs, and linguistic markers of spontaneity, like filled pauses, false starts, and repetition (Sacks, et al, 1974; Clark & Wasow, 1998; Schegloff, 2020). It also explores interactivity through turn-taking strategies (Qiao, 2016), discourse markers, and interpersonal aspects such as humor, solidarity, and cohesion (Kairova et al., 2024). Additionally, coherence and negotiation strategies (Hartono & Ihsan, 2017) are evaluated to understand how meaning is maintained. This research contributes to spoken discourse studies by highlighting the complexities of casual conversations.

Effective communication in a second language requires linguistic competence and the ability to navigate meaning through strategies (Long, 1996). Casual conversations among speakers with shared backgrounds provide insight into meaning negotiation (Eggs & Slade, 1997). Prior research has examined communication strategies (CS) in L2 acquisition (Tarone, 1980; Romadlon, 2016; Kalisa, 2019), yet informal postgraduate conversations remain underexplored. This study applies conversation analysis (CA) to investigate spoken discourse structure, interactivity, and coherence in spontaneous exchanges (Sacks et al., 1974; Smith, 2001; Romadlon, 2016; Zhou, 2020).

Casual conversations, though informal, follow identifiable linguistic patterns (Thornbury, 2005). Turn-taking is fundamental, shaped by cultural and gender influences (Qiao, 2016). Shared social knowledge impacts interaction (Fairclough, 1989; Ekiye, 2019), and negotiation of meaning supports mutual understanding (Hartono & Ihsan, 2017). While casual conversations are spontaneous, they incorporate structured narratives and negotiation strategies, adding depth beyond small talk.

Despite extensive research on spoken discourse, gaps remain in studying postgraduate students' casual conversations. Many studies focus on classroom speech (Nizar et al, 2018), leaving informal academic peer interactions unexplored. Additionally, multimodal analysis is limited, often neglecting gestures and facial expressions (Norris, 2004).

Spoken language is interactive and spontaneous. While seemingly unstructured, casual conversations exhibit patterns that contribute to coherence. Macrostructures such as turn-taking, adjacency pairs, and topic shifts support communication (Gerrot & Wignell, 1994; Fasold, 1990; Thornbury, 2006; Almakrob, 2020). Understanding these structures enhances knowledge of everyday spoken discourse and its significance in social interactions.

Casual conversation fosters mutual understanding through active engagement and openness. It is a free speech exchange in informal settings, characterized by reciprocal roles and joint construction. Conversations are categorized as pragmatic (serious, polite) or casual (informal, humorous, spontaneous). Despite appearing unstructured, casual conversations follow patterns like turn-taking, adjacency pairs, and macrostructures, ensuring coherence. They include false starts, hesitations, interruptions, overlaps, and non-standard grammar, making them dynamic. While flexible, casual

conversations retain macrostructures shaped by speaker interactions and context, maintaining meaningful communications. This paper is to describe macrostructure, spontaneity, interactivity, and solidarity in the context of casual talks. The research questions can be stated as follows: (1) How is conversational structure organized in casual talk, particularly in terms of turns, moves, adjacency pairs, and IRF sequences? (2) What features of spontaneity (e.g., pauses, repetitions, false starts, backtracking) are evident in the conversation, and how do they shape interaction? How do the participants demonstrate interactivity and solidarity through turn-taking, interruptions, silences, and discourse markers?

This study is significant as it enhances understanding of how proficient EFL speakers create meaning, maintain interaction, and build social connections in everyday English conversations. By analyzing spontaneous talk between Indonesian Javanese postgraduate students, it reveals how speakers organize, sustain, and negotiate discourse effectively. The findings should contribute to discourse analysis and intercultural communication studies, while offering practical implications for developing communicative competence through authentic conversational practice in EFL contexts..

METHOD

Using a qualitative, interpretive approach, the study analyzes natural conversational data based on Sinclair & Coulthard's (1975) framework. Transcriptions follow Jefferson's (2004) system, and discourse-pragmatic analysis applies Schiffrin's (2001) and Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. The study highlights the role of informal interactions in academic socialization and meaning construction.

The participants are two Indonesian, Javanese, fluent English-speaking male postgraduate students in their forties and fifties, engaging in a spontaneous 16-minute discussion at their university lobby in Semarang on October 31, 2018. Their conversation, recorded with consent, consists of 203 turns and 23 story sequences, analyzed using Mondada's (2019) conversation analysis approach. The first participant, in his forties, served as a class captain and worked as an English lecturer in Semarang, while the second, in his fifties, was the oldest student in the cohort and taught English at a private university in Kudus. They maintained interaction both face-to-face and through online platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook groups.

The study defines turns and moves as the core analytical units. A turn begins when a speaker starts speaking and ends when another speaker provides feedback, while moves are distinct speech acts within a turn, typically realized through clauses. A single turn may contain multiple moves that collectively shape an exchange. Whereas turn-taking structures regulate shifts between speakers, moves indicate potential completion points without necessarily transferring the turn. To collect the data, the conversation was audio-recorded in a natural setting and later transcribed in detail to capture verbal features such as pauses, repetitions, and overlaps. The analysis then focused on identifying turns and moves within the transcript, coding them systematically to reveal patterns of interaction, turn-taking strategies, and negotiation

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processes. This framework enables examination of how participants manage conversational dynamics, balancing spontaneity with structural organization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis highlights key characteristics of casual conversation, notably the use of adjacency pairs and the IRF (Initiate–Respond–Follow-up) pattern. Adjacency pairs, such as greetings or question–answer exchanges, demonstrate how speakers rely on predictable, interdependent turns to sustain dialogue. Meanwhile, the IRF sequence shows how participants manage interaction—by initiating a topic, responding, and providing feedback—to maintain coherence and shared understanding. Together, these features reveal that casual conversation follows recognizable structures that support smooth and cooperative communication.

The Evidence of Macrostructure

There are predictable two-way exchanges, known as adjacency pairs, that naturally occur throughout the conversation. The second utterance is functionally dependent on the first. The predictable sequencing implies that each pair is spoken by a different person. Adjacency pairs include question and answer, complaint and denial, offer and accept, request and grant compliment, and instruct and receipt.

The three-part exchanges called IRF (Initiate – Respond – Follow-up) also happen in the conversation. There are typically three characteristics of adjacency pairs: first, they consist of two utterances; second, the utterances are adjacent. The first immediately follows the second, and the third speakers produce each utterance. Turn-taking typically makes an adjacency pair (Turns 1-2, 2-3) that can be seen in the following pieces of evidence:

- 1 1st Subject: *How is life, Pak (.) ((2nd Subject))?* Fine? Is everything okay?
- 2 2nd Subject: *Yes, I am fine (.) Thank you (.) You Pak?*
- 3 1st Subject: *I am good (.) I am good.*

The adjacency pairs can also be observed in the following:

- 174 2nd Subject: *What service did your company provide?*
- 175 1st Subject: *Yea (.) eee (.) what is it (.) eee (.) helping people from eee (.) you know (.) from overseas countries like eeee (.) French (.) just like Netherland.*

From 203 turns, there are 23 identified topics in the casual conversation which are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Identification of Topics in the Casual Conversation

	Turn(s)	Patterns of Conversational Story Sequences / Topics of Conversation
1	1-4	Opening/Greeting
2	4-12	Kidding
3	12-16	Praying for 1st Subject in the Future
4	17-25	Discussing Traffic from City A to City B
5	26-35	Discussing Steps how to get City B from City A
6	35-50	Discussing BRT Ticket fare
7	51-61	Discussing Stuffs Prices in the Canteen

8	61-69	Discussing a Seemingly Never-ending Road Repair from Kudus to Semarang
9	69-74	Discussing how long to get to University C campus
10	75-78	Discussing the 2nd Subject of where to stay in City B
11	79-85	Discussing Distance and transportation from the first participant's daughter's housing estate to University C
12	86-91	Discussing the benefits of staying in the daughter's house for the 2nd Subject
13	91-111	Arguing whether 1st Subject is commuting or not
14	112-118	Discussing the 2nd Subject, how to get to University A Campus
15	119-123	Discussing the 1st Subject, how to get to the University B campus
16	124-130	Comparing at a glance University A and University B
17	130-152	Discussing New Competition for University A
18	161	Informing that the 1st subject loves to live in City C
19	162-173	Informing the 1st Subject's experience living and working in the Capital City of the country
20	174-181	Informing the service of the 2nd subject's company in the Capital City of the country
21	182-191	Discussing the lessons learned from working with an overseas company
22	192-198	Discussing the use of experience in current jobs
23	199-203	Parting/closing

The conversation opens with greetings and lighthearted jokes before moving to practical topics such as traffic, travel routes, and ticket fares. It then shifts to daily experiences like road repairs, commuting, and accommodation, followed by comparisons of universities and professional experiences. Toward the end, participants reflect on overseas work and conclude with cordial parting remarks, reinforcing mutual respect and sociability.

The macrostructure reveals that adjacency pairs and IRF (Initiation–Response–Follow-up) sequences jointly sustain coherence and interactional flow. Adjacency pairs—such as question–answer, greeting–response, and offer–acceptance—structure reciprocal exchanges and reflect adherence to conversational norms (Schegloff, 2018). The IRF sequence (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) extends talk beyond minimal responses through elaboration or affirmation, maintaining continuity and engagement. These mechanisms operate complementarily: adjacency pairs ensure balance and contextual relevance, while IRF sequences enable topic expansion.

Despite the informal setting, the speakers exhibit strong interactional competence, maintaining sequential order through transitions, overlaps, and feedback moves. This supports Eggins's (2004) view that casual talk, though spontaneous, follows an underlying organizational system. Smooth topic shifts achieved through lexical cohesion and shared experience demonstrate that coherence is socially co-constructed rather than mechanically structured.

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Linguistically, adjacency pairs regulate turn-taking and politeness, while IRF sequences subtly express roles and alignment. Greeting–response pairs build rapport, question–answer pairs sustain engagement, and compliment–acknowledgment pairs reinforce solidarity. These cooperative exchanges reflect Grice’s (1975) principles of collaboration and social harmony. From a sociolinguistic perspective, the structured yet flexible macrostructure highlights the pragmatic and discourse competence of proficient EFL speakers. Their management of adjacency and IRF patterns indicates mastery of interactional norms beyond grammar and vocabulary. Thus, conversational macrostructure represents not only linguistic organization but also a social process through which meaning, respect, and solidarity are continuously negotiated.

The Evidence of Spontaneity

A spontaneous conversation occurs without prior planning, unfolding unpredictably based on speaker interaction. Thornbury and Slade (2006) describe spontaneous speech as unplanned, allowing flexibility and organic topic shifts.

The analyzed casual conversation exhibits spontaneity markers, including (1) filled pauses for cognitive processing (Clark & Tree, 2002); (2) repetition for emphasis and clarification (Tannen, 1989); (3) false starts and backtracking reflecting speech adjustments (Levelt, 1989); (4) incomplete utterances due to shifting thought processes (Chafe, 1994); (5) conjunctions for discourse cohesion (Halliday & Hasan, 1976); and (6) lexical chunks enhancing fluency. These features underscore the interactive and adaptive nature of casual spoken discourse.

Filled Pauses

Evidence of spontaneity in casual conversations can be shown by the presence of filled pauses. Some pieces of evidence are given as follows (represented by ‘eee’):

- 17 1st Subject: *By the way (,) how is the traffic this morning? Did you depart from your house eee (,) from Kudus?*
- 18 2nd Subject: *Eee (,) yea (,) yesterday (,) eee (,) although there are some... eee (,) some problem with the ... eee (,) the road ... there is ... eee (,) what do you call it Pak?*
- 19 1st Subject: *Traffic.*
- 20 2nd Subject: *Eee (,) to ... to make it good.. to repair the road ... eee (,) road ... eee (,) road repair (,) road repairs (,) but because I went to Semarang still early in the morning and ... the bus I was in ... could run smoothly.*

Filled pauses are found in the utterances of both speakers in the conversation. These can also be observed from the following pieces of evidence.

- 153 1st Subject: *Yea (,) and by the way (,) talking about another thing (,) yaa (,) how (,) how do you feel staying in Semarang?*
- 154 2nd Subject: *Oooww (,) oww (,) well Pak (1st Subject) (,) living in Semarang is not new for me (,) I was studying here when I was eee (,) getting my S One (S1) and I love it (,) yea (,) Semarang for me is a very nice place and friendly place eee (,) and in Semarang (,) I eee (,) got a kind of enlightenment in my life.*
- 155 1st Subject: *And what do you mean by enlightenment in your life?*

- 156 2nd Subject: *Eee... because you know eee (.) I was not a good (.) a good guy when I was in SMA (.) in my senior high school (.) and then when I was in Semarang taking S One (S1) here (.) I eee (.) I experienced my changes in my life (.) spiritually (.) academically (.) yes.*

Filled pauses such as *uh*, *um*, *eee*, and *you know* serve as cognitive and interactional tools that help speakers organize thoughts and sustain engagement during spontaneous talk (Clark & Tree, 2002; Ekaningsih, 2019). Rather than indicating hesitation, they function as time-gaining strategies that manage speech planning and prevent disruptive silences (Martin & Rose, 2007). These brief vocalizations signal to listeners that the speaker is processing information or searching for words, thereby maintaining conversational rhythm and mutual attentiveness (Clark & Tree, 2002). The placement and frequency of filled pauses also reveal speakers' fluency and pragmatic control. Moderate use supports coherence and transition, while excessive use may signal uncertainty. Proficient bilinguals employ pauses strategically to manage cognitive load and bilingual processing demands (Ekaningsih, 2019). In this study, filled pauses commonly appeared as speakers retrieved information or elaborated on complex ideas, serving to retain conversational control. Thus, filled pauses are best understood not as flaws but as interactional resources that sustain fluency, thought coordination, and social engagement in spontaneous EFL discourse.

Repetitions

Repetitions in this data are seen to serve as other pieces of evidence of spontaneity. They are endemic in everyday conversation. Speakers not only repeat their own words and phrases at the level of the turn, and their turns at the discourse level, but they also echo the wording, rhythms, and turns of their interlocutors. Repetitions can be observed in the following evidence in the conversation.

- 17 1st Subject: *By the way (.) how is the traffic this morning? (.) did you depart from your house eee (.) from Kudus?*
18 2nd Subject: *Eee (.) yea (.) yesterday (.) eee (.) although there are some (.) eee (.) some problem with the (.) eee (.) the road (.) there is (.) eee (.) what do you call it Pak?*
19 1st Subject: *Traffic.*
20 2nd Subject: *Eee (.) to (.) to make it good (.) to repair the road (.) eee (.) road (.) eee (.) road repair (.) road repairs (.) but because I went to Semarang still early in the morning and (.) the bus I was in (.) could run smoothly.*

Repetition, as seen in the repeated use of "road," serves as a time-gaining strategy while the speaker searches for a precise word. It also functions as an implicit request for assistance in retrieving "road repair," though the response, "traffic," was unexpected. The speaker continued repeating until arriving at the intended phrase. Similarly, in another instance, the 2nd Subject used multiple repetitions of "nine" to convince the 1st Subject about the BRT fare during a promotion, successfully ensuring understanding. This highlights repetition as a tool for correction, emphasis, and partner alignment in conversation. The evidence can be seen in the following examples.

- 36 2nd Subject: *It is very cheap (.) Pak.*
37 1st Subject: *Hee hee hee (.) thirty-five thousand Rupiah (.) I guess.*

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- 38 2nd Subject: *Nnnn (.) no (.) no (.) nine (.) nine.*
39 1st Subject: *Nine thousand.*
40 2nd Subject: *BRT nine (.)*
41 1st Subject: *Nnn (.) nine thousand.*
42 2nd Subject: *BRT nine (.) because (.)*
43 1st Subject: *Nine thousand.*
44 2nd Subject: *Hiyees (.) I use my application (.) eee (.) my (.) GoJek (.) GoPay (.) and using GoPay (.) it is only nine rupiahs.*
45 1st Subject: *Ooow (.) nine rupiahs?*
46 2nd Subject: *Yea (.) and that is in the promotion period.*
75 1st Subject: *Okay (.) so (.) and I heard (.) eee (.) from friends that (.) eee (.) you (.) what is it? you no longer commute from house to campus and campus to house (.) I hear that you are now staying in (.) eee (.) your sister's house.*
76 2nd Subject: *Yes (.) my (.) my daughter (.) eee.*
77 1st Subject: *Ooow (.) ooow (.) your daughter's house.*
78 2nd Subject: *Yea (.) right (.) eee (.) I spent (.) eee (.) Wednesday (.) Wednesday (.) evening in my daughter's house. Alhamdulillah.*
88 2nd Subject: *I can have a rest (.) eee (.) if I commute every day it will be tiring.*
89 1st Subject: *Yea (.) yea (.) okay.*
90 2nd Subject: *And I have to spend (.) more money.*

Repetition is a pervasive conversational feature serving linguistic, cognitive, and interpersonal purposes. Far from being redundant, repetition operates as a strategic resource for managing discourse, sustaining coherence, and fostering connection between speakers (Tannen, 1989; Norrick, 1987). Through the reiteration of words, phrases, or entire turns, participants collaboratively construct meaning and maintain conversational rhythm. Cognitively, repetition provides speakers with planning time and supports lexical retrieval during spontaneous speech. Recycling parts of previous utterances reduces processing demands and bridges thought with articulation, ensuring fluency under conditions of cognitive load (Norrick, 1987). It thus functions as a fluency device that helps speakers maintain control over discourse flow and idea formulation.

Interpersonally, repetition serves as a marker of alignment and engagement. Echoing another's lexical or syntactic choices signals attentiveness and empathy, reinforcing mutual understanding and rapport (Tannen, 1989). Such repetition often accompanies laughter or supportive feedback, especially in casual exchanges, reflecting solidarity and shared involvement.

In the present study, repetition appears in two main forms: self-repetition, used for emphasis or clarification (e.g., "I am good, I am good"), and other-repetition, which confirms understanding or maintains engagement. Both types contribute to topic continuity and discourse cohesion by linking current utterances to prior talk. As Tannen (2007) observes, repetition "creates texture" in spoken discourse, binding turns into a coherent whole. Ultimately, repetition should be viewed not as a symptom of limited proficiency but as a sophisticated conversational strategy that sustains fluency, coherence, and interpersonal connection in spontaneous EFL discourse.

False Start and Backtracking

A false start occurs when a speaker begins an utterance but abandons it before completing their thought. Less frequent than repetitions, false starts often arise in intense conversations with interruptions or rapid topic shifts. Backchannel

responses signal active listening without taking the floor. These features provide clear evidence of spontaneity in speech.

- 52 2nd Subject: *I usually had breakfast in (.) eee (.)*
53 1st Subject: *The canteen (,) airport canteen.*
54 2nd Subject: *Heee heee heee (,) why do you say so?*
55 1st Subject: *Because (,) I know that everything is expensive like (,) a crazy (.)*
56 2nd Subject: *Yea (.) yea.*
57 1st Subject: *A bottle of (.) eee (.) water (,) normally we buy (.)*
58 2nd Subject: *The copy shop (,) the copy shop (,) only two thousand and five hundred.*
59 1st Subject: *Yea (,) two thousand and five hundred when we buy to that place (,) and it is gonna be twice (.)*
60 2nd Subject: *Four.*

False starts and backtracking are integral components of spontaneous speech, reflecting speakers' ongoing monitoring, self-repair, and negotiation of meaning during real-time interaction. These features reveal how speakers balance the cognitive demands of language planning with the interpersonal need for communicative clarity and coherence. A false start occurs when a speaker initiates an utterance but halts mid-course to reformulate, redirect, or abandon it, signaling the interplay between thought and articulation (Clark & Wasow, 1998). For instance, a speaker might begin, "Did you—uh, I mean—were you able to finish the task?", displaying both hesitation and self-correction as indicators of active speech planning.

Backtracking, by contrast, allows speakers to revisit earlier points or reformulate prior statements to ensure alignment between intended meaning and shared understanding. These mechanisms, while less frequent than simple repetition, serve more cognitively demanding functions—monitoring, adjusting, and refining discourse structure in real time. They frequently arise in moments of overlapping talk, interruptions, or heightened emotional involvement, when speakers momentarily lose fluency but strive to preserve coherence and intersubjectivity. As Schegloff (1982) notes, such repair sequences are fundamental to the collaborative organization of conversation, maintaining both social order and semantic precision. Moreover, false starts and backtracking often elicit backchannel responses such as "yeah," "uh-huh," or "right," which signal active listening and encourage conversational continuity (Clark & Wasow, 1998). These subtle cues enrich the interactional texture of talk, transforming potential disfluency into opportunities for engagement. Ultimately, false starts and backtracking reveal conversation not as a linear or polished performance but as a co-constructed, self-regulating process—a dynamic interplay of cognition, emotion, and collaboration that sustains coherence and mutual understanding in everyday discourse.

Incomplete Utterances

Incomplete utterances are common in spontaneous conversations, reflecting quick thinking, trust, and conversational intimacy. Close interlocutors - friends, family, and colleagues - often leave thoughts unfinished, relying on mutual understanding to complete ideas mentally. Such omissions indicate fluency and cooperative interaction, reinforcing the natural flow of discourse. They may

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indicate a highly anxious or emotional state that needs calming or incoherent thinking that needs to be quiet for a while.

- 26 2nd Subject: *You know Pak (.) I have to take several (.) several (.) transportation modes yaa (.) first I have to take my own car (.) eee to (.) City A Bus Station (.) and then after that I took (.) eee PATAS (.) PATAS going to City D or going to City E and then I (.....)*

It can be seen that one clause or one phrase at a time produces small 'runs' (like in *service* and *competitor*) which are not embedded in larger units.

- 139 1st Subject: *Okay okay okay (.) really competitor (.) really competitor yea*
140 2nd Subject: *But maybe by having a competitor (.) it is good for us..*
141 1st Subject: *Yea yea yea*
142 2nd Subject: *Motivate (.) motivates us to*
143 1st Subject: *Be more professional*
144 2nd Subject: *To be more professional*
145 1st Subject: *In service*
146 2nd Subject: *In giving better service*

Incomplete utterances are a defining feature of spontaneous conversation, reflecting the real-time, interactive nature of spoken discourse. Unlike written language, speech often includes truncated or unfinished constructions that reveal incremental planning and on-the-spot formulation (Tree, 2014). Such incompleteness emerges as speakers monitor listeners' reactions, self-correct, or prioritize communication efficiency over grammatical accuracy. Interactionally, unfinished utterances invite listeners to infer meaning, demonstrating shared understanding and trust (Clancy, 2021). This reliance on contextual inference underscores the cooperative dimension of conversation, where comprehension is jointly constructed. Pragmatically, incomplete utterances sustain conversational rhythm, signal hesitation or emotion, and encourage co-construction of meaning. Far from being flaws, they function as discourse strategies that enhance authenticity, immediacy, and interpersonal alignment. Ultimately, they illustrate how cognition and interaction intertwine, making conversation fluid, adaptive, and inherently collaborative.

Frequent Use of Conjunctions

Conjunctions play a crucial role in casual conversation, enhancing discourse cohesion and spontaneity. Words like *and*, *but*, and *so* help speakers connect ideas, manage turn-taking, and maintain conversational flow. Their frequent use reduces cognitive effort in real-time speech, reinforcing coherence in spoken discourse (Biber et al., 1999). Frequent use of conjunctions is one of the characteristics of casual conversations.

- 30 2nd Subject: *Yea (.) in Campus B (.) and then I take (.) eee (.) BRT,*
31 1st Subject: *Okay*
32 2nd Subject: *And BRT (.) and*
33 1st Subject: *Dropped by around (.) City C General Hospital*
34 2nd Subject: *Yes (.) eee (.) and I stop at City C General Hospital and take my (.) Go Ride*

Also tail slots, observed in casual conversations, further demonstrate spontaneous speech patterns. Turns 179 and 180 provide evidence of this

feature, showing how speakers extend utterances naturally. Tail slots are also observed in casual conversation. Turns 179 and 180 are some examples.

- 174 2nd Subject: *What service did your company provide?*
175 1st Subject: *Yea (.) eee (.) what is it (.) eee (.) helping people from (.)
eee you know (.) from overseas countries like (.) eeee French (.) just
like Netherland*
176 2nd Subject: *I see*
177 1st Subject: *Just like United State (.) the United States (.) and they
would like to have like (.) a (.) an internship program in Indonesia*
178 2nd Subject: *I see*
179 1st Subject: *And what we need to do at the time is that (.) to find
like (.) eee*
180 2nd Subject: *To provide a visa (.) like that*

Common tail slot fillers can be in the form of questions. The following are the examples:

- 1 1st Subject: *How is life (.) Pak (2nd Subject)? (.) Fine? (.) Is everything
okay?*
2 2nd Subject: *Yes (.) I am fine (.) Thank you (.) You (.) Pak?*
3 1st Subject: *I am good (.) I am good.*

The use of chunks is common in casual conversation. They are multi-word units that behave as if they were single words and typically consist of formulaic routines that are stored and retrieved in their entirety (*How is life? I am fine. Thank you. By the way*). The use of chunks can be observed in the following evidence.

- 1 1st Subject: *How is life (.) Pak (2nd Subject)? (.) Fine? (.) Is everything
okay?*
2 2nd Subject: *Yes (.) I am fine (.) Thank you (.) You (.) Pak?*
3 1st Subject: *I am good (.) I am good.*
11 1st Subject: *Come on (.) come on*
12 2nd Subject: *Yea (.) okay (.) I am not kidding (.) Pak (.) It's my prayer
for you.*

Tail slots are a defining feature of casual conversation, consisting of short post-clausal elements such as *you know*, *right*, or *I mean* that serve pragmatic and interactional purposes. These discourse markers reinforce meaning, check understanding, and sustain interpersonal involvement. As Schiffrin (2001) notes, they help manage turn-taking, mitigate assertions, and signal shared stance, thereby contributing to social negotiation and coherence. Pragmatically, tail slots function as affiliative cues—inviting confirmation or empathy rather than information (Clancy, 2021). By transforming declarative statements into dialogic exchanges, they enhance emotional synchrony and conversational flow.

Furthermore, tail slots aid cohesion and adaptability by softening opinions, marking transitions, and maintaining a natural tone. Expressions like *I mean* or *you know* enable speakers to adjust meaning fluidly without disrupting interaction. Despite their brevity, these markers play a crucial role in maintaining rhythm, rapport, and engagement, illustrating how minimal linguistic forms achieve significant interpersonal and discourse-level effects in spontaneous talk.

Spontaneity in Casual Conversation

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Spontaneity is a defining characteristic of casual conversation, reflected through linguistic markers such as filled pauses, repetitions, false starts, backtracking, incomplete utterances, and frequent conjunctions (Jefferson, 1989). These features reveal the real-time cognitive processing speakers employ to formulate and adjust utterances during interaction. Filled pauses like uh and um serve as planning devices for managing timing and retaining the conversational floor, while repetition reinforces meaning and provides cognitive space for speech organization (Clark & Wasow, 1998).

False starts and backtracking indicate active self-monitoring, allowing speakers to refine meaning or coherence as talk unfolds (Clark & Tree, 2002). Similarly, incomplete utterances emerge from evolving thought processes or interruptions, reflecting the fluid, negotiated nature of dialogue. Conjunctions and formulaic chunks, such as you know and I mean sustain continuity and cohesion across turns (Sari & Sari, 2020). Collectively, these features highlight the adaptive, co-constructed nature of speech, demonstrating that spontaneity embodies authenticity and engagement rather than disfluency.

Evidence of Interactivity

The conversation demonstrates interactivity through various features: (1) turn-taking, (2) pausing while others speak, (3) occasional interruptions (turns 96, 105, 109), (4) signaling amusement via grunts, laughs, and chuckles (turns 95, 99, 160, 163), (5) backchanneling to show engagement (turns 89, 9, 107, 117), and (6) using discourse markers. These interactive elements highlight how speakers actively contribute to dialogue, maintaining engagement and coherence. The pieces of evidence of interactivity can be observed in the following:

- 88 2nd Subject: *I can have a rest (.) eee (.) if I commute every day it will be tiring*
- 89 1st Subject: *Yea (.) yea (.) okay*
- 90 2nd Subject: *And I have to spend (.) more money*
- 91 1st Subject: *Yea (.) yea (.) yea (.) I think so (.) I think so (.) and I am happy (.) happy (.) to (.) to (.) to (.) to (.) what is it? (.) to hear that (.) that you don't need to commute (.) yaa (.) you are not a commuter any longer (.) you are commuting (.) commuter*
- 96 2nd Subject: *By the way (.) you (.) you (.) never eee become eee commuter (.) Pak (.) because*
- 97 1st Subject: *Commuter (.) everyday I am a commuter*
- 98 2nd Subject: *I don't think so (.) your place to City B is not commuting*
- 99 1st Subject: *Ha ha ha*
- 100 2nd Subject: *He he he*
- 101 1st Subject: *But crossing town (.) yaa (.) crossing town*
- 102 2nd Subject: *He he he (.) I don't think so (.) I don't think so*
- 103 1st Subject: *You don't think so (.) ha ha (.) okay (.) yes*
- 104 2nd Subject: *By the way (.) how do you come here in the campus?*
- 105 1st Subject: *By bicycle (.) motorcycle (.) bicycle (.) motorcycle*
- 106 2nd Subject: *You own a car?*
- 107 1st Subject: *Ya (.) ya (.) I have (.) I have one (.) I have one*
- 108 2nd Subject: *But you prefer...*
- 109 1st Subject: *Yea (.) yea (.) yea*
- 110 2nd Subject: *Riding a motorcycle*
- 111 1st Subject: *It is eee cheaper (.) yaa*
- 112 2nd Subject: *Yes (.) when I was in City A (.) I also... used a motorcycle to campus (.) Pak*
- 113 1st Subject: *Okay*

- 114 2nd Subject: *It only takes two minutes (.) to me*
115 1st Subject: *Yea (.) yea*
116 2nd Subject: *To that place*
117 1st Subject: *Yea (.) yea (.) very close*
118 2nd Subject: *It is only one kilometer (.) and there is no traffic jam there*
119 1st Subject: *Okay (.) I am also lucky (.) when I go to campus (.) you know (.) eee (.) the distance is actually close (.) here (.) it is around (.) With the toll road (.) it is around (.) twenty-seven kilometer (.) one (.) one (.) one way (.) and so*
120 2nd Subject: *But you cannot (.) you cannot ride a motorcycle in a toll way*
121 1st Subject: *Cannot (.) cannot (.) yaa (.) cannot (.) if I use eee (.) if I ride motorcycle in a normal way (.) it will take an hour*
122 2nd Subject: *An hour*
123 1st Subject: *And eee (.) An hour and half (.) But I am happy that eee (.) we have eee (.) like toll road now (.) because it (.) you know (.) it has been saving my time a lot (.) I just eee (.) you know (.) it just takes around eee (.) forty-five minutes to campus (.) forty-five minutes by car (.) yea (.) it is nice (.) Campus (.) campus (.) campus*

The use of Discourse Markers is also frequently observed in the conversation.

- 96 2nd Subject: *By the way (.) you (.) you (.) never eee become eee commuter (.) Pak (.) because..*
97 1st Subject: *Commuter (.) everyday I am a commuter*
98 2nd Subject: *I don't think so (.) Ungaran to Semarang is not commuting*
99 1st Subject: *Ha ha ha*
100 2nd Subject: *He he he*
101 1st Subject: *But crossing town (.) yaa (.) crossing town*
102 2nd Subject: *He he he (.) I don't think so (.) I don't think so*
103 1st Subject: *You don't think so (.) ha ha (.) okay (.) yes*
128 2nd Subject: *I think mine is the biggest one (.) in (.) in (.) in (.) eastern part of Central Java (.) is the biggest*
152 2nd Subject: *But for me (.) it is no problem (.) eee (.) I think we have our own target market*

Interactivity in conversation arises from the coordinated use of verbal and nonverbal behaviors that sustain engagement and mutual understanding. Turn-taking remains a central organizing mechanism, enabling speakers to alternate smoothly and maintain conversational balance (Sacks et al., 1974). Strategic silences serve as reflective or transitional pauses, while contextually appropriate interruptions can signal enthusiasm and active involvement. Nonverbal cues—such as laughter, grunts, and chuckles—enhance emotional expression and rapport, reinforcing conversational rhythm.

Backchannel responses like mm-hm, yeah, or right provide real-time feedback that signals attentiveness and alignment without disrupting the speaker. Additionally, discourse markers such as well, you know, I mean, and actually regulate the flow of dialogue, marking transitions, attitudes, and softening responses (Schiffrin, 2001). Collectively, these linguistic and paralinguistic strategies highlight conversation as an interactive and co-constructed process, where meaning and social connection emerge dynamically through reciprocal participation.

Evidence of Interpersonality

In natural settings, conversation goes beyond information exchange, serving to build and maintain peer solidarity. Laughter and chuckles often punctuate

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dialogue, even during disagreements, preventing face-threatening acts. Casual talk employs hedges and vague language to soften disagreements and avoid sounding overly assertive. The conversation's moves, turns, and exchanges reflect a strong interpersonal bond between the speakers, reinforcing their relationship dynamics.

- 4 2nd Subject: *Okay (.) hmmm (.) pak rektor (.) pak rektor..*
5 1st Subject: *Don't call me that name (.) eee*
6 2nd Subject: *Ooo (.) That's true (.) That's true...*
7 1st Subject: *Don't call me that name (.) eee..*
8 2nd Subject: *I predict that you become a rector someday..*
9 1st Subject: *Hahahaha [laughing]*
10 2nd Subject: *Hahahaha [laughing]*
11 1st Subject: *Come on (.) come on*

Casual conversation serves not only as a means of exchanging information but also as a tool for fostering social bonds and maintaining group solidarity. Speakers use humor, such as laughter or chuckles, even in moments of disagreement, to soften the impact of opposing views and preserve each other's social standing. To avoid appearing too assertive, they often rely on hedging expressions which help mitigate the force of their statements. Similarly, vague language allows them to express opinions without sounding overly rigid or confrontational, reinforcing the interpersonal nature of dialogue.

Evidence of Coherence

Coherence in conversation is achieved through speaker cooperation, ensuring relevance to preceding discourse. Topic consistency is maintained using (a) lexical repetition (e.g., biggest, competitor, professional), (b) lexical chains (e.g., University D, University E, University A), (c) referring expressions (e.g., Mine is the biggest one. It is the oldest.), (d) substitution (e.g., several programs → those, happy and sad → both sides), and (e) linkers (but, and). Despite the absence of some cohesion markers, the conversation remains coherent as speakers ensure relevance by providing appropriate responses and maintaining logical flow.

- 128 2nd Subject: *I think mine is the biggest one in (.) in (.) in (.) eastern part of Central Java (.) is the biggest*
129 1st Subject: *Yours?*
130 2nd Subject: *Yea (.) it is the oldest (.) but (.) now (.) new (.) competitor is coming there*
131 1st Subject: *University E (.) No?*
132 2nd Subject: *Yes (.) University E*
133 1st Subject: *Oowwkey*
134 2nd Subject: *It used to be an academy (.) but now it becomes (.) eee (.) a university*
135 1st Subject: *Okay*
136 2nd Subject: *University E*
137 1st Subject: *Ya ya ya ya*
138 2nd Subject: *Yes (.) there are several programs that are the same as those in (.) in (.) University A*
139 1st Subject: *Okay (.) okay (.) okay (.) really competitor (.) really competitor (.) yea*
140 2nd Subject: *But maybe (.) having a competitor is good for us*
141 1st Subject: *Yea (.) yea (.) yea*
142 2nd Subject: *Motivate (.) Motivates us to*
143 1st Subject: *Be more professional*

- 144 2nd Subject: *To be more professional*
145 1st Subject: *In service*
146 2nd Subject: *In giving better service*
147 1st Subject: *Yea (.) yea (.) right (.) right*
148 2nd Subject: *It is (.) it is (.) unavoidable to have (.) to have*
149 1st Subject: *Yea (.) yea (.) right (.) right*
150 2nd Subject: *Competitor*
151 1st Subject: *Yea (.) yea (.) right (.) right (.) yea (.) you should be happy and you should be sad (.) ha ha ha (.) both sides*
152 2nd Subject: *But for me (.) it is no problem (.) eee (.) I think we have our own target market*

Coherence in conversation arises from the collaborative efforts of speakers to maintain relevance and continuity within a shared situational context. Halliday and Hasan (1976) define coherence as supported by cohesive devices such as repetition, lexical chains, reference, and discourse linkers, which ensure logical and grammatical connections between utterances. These linguistic resources facilitate thematic unity and guide listeners through topic development and reasoning.

However, Brown and Yule (1983) argue that coherence extends beyond linguistic cohesion, depending also on participants' shared knowledge, contextual inference, and interpretive cooperation. Even without explicit markers, meaning can be co-constructed through pragmatic alignment and mutual understanding. In casual conversation, coherence thus emerges dynamically as speakers refer back to prior topics, elaborate on ideas, and negotiate understanding. It reflects both linguistic organization and social collaboration—demonstrating that conversational flow relies as much on interpersonal engagement as on formal textual structure.

Evidence of Negotiation

Eggins and Slade (1997) argue that casual conversation unfolds as speakers respond and negotiate meaning. A response is meaningful only when it relates to the previous utterance, either interpersonally (negotiating feelings) or logico-semantically (negotiating content). The evidence of coherence in the conversation under analysis can be seen in the following:

- 153 1st Subject *Yea and by the way, talking about another thing yaa. How how do you feel staying in City B?*
154 2nd Subject *Oooww oww well Pak 1st Subject. Living in City B is not new for me, I was studying here when I was eee getting my S One (S1) and I love it yea, City B for me is a very nice place and friendly place eee and in Semarang I eee got a kind of enlightenment in my life*
155 1st Subject *And what do you mean by enlightenment in your life?*
156 2nd Subject *Eee...because you know eee I was not a good, a good guy when I was in SMA in my senior high school and then when I was in Semarang taking S one (S1) here, I eee, I experience my changes in my life spiritually, academically yes Logico Semantic Negotiation*
157 1st Subject *Okay, Okay ... what do you mean by spiritually? Logico-Semantic negotiation*
158 2nd Subject *Eee when I was here I started to have my prayer more regularly.*
159 1st Subject *Okay then, okay*

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The results reveal that interpersonal negotiation in casual conversation effectively balances social rapport and communicative clarity through the use of politeness, humor, and alignment strategies (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). These features demonstrate how speakers maintain positive relationships while ensuring mutual understanding. At the same time, logico-semantic negotiation operates to achieve precision in meaning through clarification, elaboration, and reformulation (Martin & Rose, 2007). Despite the spontaneous nature of informal exchanges, the postgraduate students' talk exhibits recognizable structural organization, particularly through adjacency pairs and IRF (Initiation–Response–Follow-up) sequences, which facilitate turn management and discourse progression (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975).

Markers of spontaneity—such as filled pauses, repetitions, false starts, and backtracking—serve important self-repair functions, allowing speakers to monitor their speech in real time and sustain conversational flow (Kalisa, 2019). Moreover, features like turn-taking signals and discourse markers (e.g., well, you know, actually) enhance interactivity, enabling speakers to manage transitions smoothly and indicate engagement (Khurniawan et al., 2022). Coherence, in turn, is maintained through the use of lexical repetition, cohesive linkers, and contextual relevance (Halliday & Hasan, 1976), while negotiation strategies—such as clarification requests and confirmation checks—ensure shared understanding and prevent communication breakdowns (Ostovar-Namaghi et al., 2022).

These findings suggest that casual conversation functions not merely as social talk but also as a site of informal learning, where speakers refine their linguistic, pragmatic, and intercultural competencies (Sukirlan et al., 2023). The conversational exchanges analyzed here exemplify how spontaneous discourse contributes to the development of communicative strategies—an insight that reinforces the pedagogical value of teaching discourse analysis in enhancing learners' interactional awareness and communicative effectiveness (Nurliana, 2020). Nonetheless, the current study is limited by its reliance on audio data, which restricts analysis of nonverbal behaviors—such as gestures, gaze, and body orientation—that also play a crucial role in meaning negotiation (Norris, 2004).

CONCLUSION

This study qualitatively highlights key aspects of casual conversation. Structurally, the dialogue follows adjacency pairs and the IRF (Initiate-Respond-Follow-up) pattern, ensuring coherence. Spontaneity is evident through filled pauses, repetitions, false starts, backtracking, and fixed expressions, reflecting natural speech patterns. Interactivity is demonstrated through turn-taking, respectful silence, interruptions, and discourse markers, alongside strategies to prevent communication breakdowns. The conversation also fosters interpersonal engagement, with laughter and chuckles strengthening peer solidarity. Coherence emerges through cooperative exchanges, where speakers contribute relevant responses and comments, while negotiation occurs in both interpersonal exchanges and logical-semantic adjustments, ensuring clarity. Despite its casual nature, the conversation maintains structured storytelling.

A limitation of this study is its reliance on audio recordings, restricting the analysis of nonverbal communication such as gestures and facial expressions. Since multimodal analysis is increasingly relevant in conversation studies (Norris, 2004), future research should incorporate video recordings to capture body language and facial expressions, offering deeper insight into conversational dynamics. Additionally, exploring different contexts, participant relationships, and cultural influences could further enrich the understanding of casual interactions.

AUTHOR STATEMENTS

Muh Syafei was responsible for research conceptualization and methodology, while **Kurniawan Yudhi Nugroho**, **Abdulrahman Milad**, and **Nur Ekaningsih** handled data collection, analysis, and supervision. **Achmad Hilal Madjdi** and **Titis Sulistyowati** contributed to report drafting, and **Nuraeningsih**, together with **Agung Dwi Nurcahyo** and **Abdulrahman Milad**, undertook reviewing and editing.

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