Preference Organization Analysis on The NCT Show: Music Space with Johnny and Mark

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Abstract

This research uses conversation analysis to dig deeper into human conversation, especially in the context of talk show. The main purpose of this research is to examine the types and strategies of preference organization used by participants in talk shows. The theory used is Levinson's preference organization theory. The research method applied is a descriptive qualitative method. The result of this research is that there are 61 data found, with a distribution of 5 request data, 4 invite data, 33 assessment data, 18 question data, and 1 blame data. In conclusion, preferred responses are dominant in this talk show. The large number of preferred responses in the talk show indicates a generally positive and cooperative communication environment. This is due to the close relationship between the participants. They share the same knowledge of the topic of discussion.

Keywords: *Conversation, Conversation analysis, Preference organization, Talk show, The NCT Show*

INTRODUCTION

Conversations are a fundamental aspect of human interaction, functioning as essential tools for sharing information, expressing emotions, and fostering social bonds. Schegloff (1972) characterizes conversation as an intimate and interactive process in which participants take turns freely, emphasizing the dynamic nature of spoken exchanges. Supporting this view, Tampubolon (2019) explains that conversations act as a communicative platform enabling individuals with diverse perspectives to mutually exchange and construct knowledge. This aligns with Setiawan et al. (2019), who note that conversations can range from spontaneous, casual exchanges to more structured dialogues, depending on context and intent.

Given their complexity, conversations require systematic approaches to analyze the underlying mechanisms and patterns that govern them. Conversation Analysis (CA) offers such an approach by investigating the sequential organization of talk. According to Hutchby and Wooffitt (2021), CA enables researchers to access participants' understanding of social interaction and examine how meaning is collaboratively constructed in real-time communication.

A core concept within CA is preference organization, which refers to the ways in which responses to utterances are shaped by social expectations. Every utterance typically elicits a response, and those responses may either align with or deviate from what is socially expected. Levinson (2003) asserts that preference organization describes how speakers design their speech acts in anticipation of agreement, particularly in acts like requests. Blythe (2013) further elaborates that preference structures guide speakers not only in crafting their messages but also in interpreting those of others. Referring to Levinson's theory, Amalia, Rachmadhani, and Sinaga (2022) clarify that preferred responses—such as acceptance, granting, and agreement—are positively aligned with social expectations, whereas dispreferred responses, including rejection, disagreement, or refusal, deviate from those expectations and are often mitigated or delayed. Similarly, Cutting (2005) defines preference organization as a structural relationship between the first and second speaker's actions, emphasizing that participants can produce either preferred or dispreferred responses depending on the interactional context.

Levinson's framework identifies five common categories for first-speaker utterances: request, invite, assessment, question, and blame. Each of these initiates a predictable type of response from the second speaker. For instance, requests and invitations typically elicit either acceptance or refusal; assessments are followed by agreement or disagreement; questions receive either expected or unexpected answers; and blame results in denial or admission. These categorizations help structure the analysis of natural dialogue and provide insight into how social relationships and roles are negotiated in interaction.

One especially rich domain for observing preference organization is the talk show format. Talk shows vary in their linguistic formality depending on the platform, topic, and guest profile. On platforms such as YouTube, informal or conversational language is often employed to appeal to broader audiences. Ilenia and Yustisiana (2022) note that the level of formality in talk shows depends heavily on contextual factors such as the subject matter and the relationship between host and guest. This makes talk shows fertile ground

for analyzing how speakers navigate conversational expectations through preferred or dispreferred responses.

Studying preference organization in a media-based talk show format contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how individuals manage interactional norms in public and performative contexts. This research not only deepens theoretical insights into the workings of everyday conversation but also offers practical applications in fields such as media production, education, and intercultural communication, where understanding the subtleties of verbal interaction is increasingly important.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the use of preference organization in naturally occurring spoken interaction. As noted by Denzin and Lincoln (2017), qualitative research is conducted in real-life settings to interpret phenomena as they unfold, utilizing multiple methods to understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social problem. In this context, the research focuses on identifying and interpreting utterances containing preference organization produced by Mark and Johnny in a recorded talk show.

The primary data source is a talk show segment titled *"Music Space: 'Child' Live & Behind Story with Johnny | The NCT Show"*, published on February 11, 2022, and available on the official NCT YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5kQVtdNsMGM). This episode features a conversational exchange between two members of the K-pop group NCT, Mark and Johnny, discussing Mark's song *"Child."* The entire conversation serves as the research population, with particular focus on spoken utterances involving preference organization.

To select relevant data, the study employed purposive sampling, a technique used to identify and focus on specific characteristics of interest in a dataset (Sugiyono, 2013). Purposive sampling is especially suitable for qualitative studies that aim to explore rich, detailed information rather than generalize findings. In this study, the selected sample includes only those utterances that explicitly exhibit forms of preference organization, as defined by Levinson's (2003) framework.

Data collection was carried out through the following steps:

1. Viewing the full talk show video to gain familiarity with the overall interaction.
2. Reading subtitles and/or transcriptions to understand contextual meanings.
3. Identifying utterances produced by Mark and Johnny that reflect preference organization, including the first speaker's initiating act and the second speaker's response.
4. Classifying and grouping these utterances based on the types of preference organization (e.g., request, assessment, invite, question, blame).

The data were analyzed using a qualitative content analysis method involving the following procedures:

1. Organizing and preparing the dataset for analysis by compiling the transcribed utterances.
2. Reading and reviewing all the selected utterances to identify linguistic features and contextual cues.
3. Coding and categorizing the data based on Levinson's typology of preference organization. This involved labeling the function of the first speaker's utterance (e.g., request, assessment) and the type of response it elicited (e.g., acceptance, disagreement).
4. Interpreting the findings to understand the conversational dynamics between the speakers and how preference organization is realized in this particular media discourse.

By following these systematic steps, the study seeks to reveal how preference structures operate within the framework of a casual talk show setting and how participants manage alignment or disalignment through verbal responses.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result is there is a total of 61 data can be categorized as preference organization using Levinson's theory. From the source video, there are 33 data of assessment, 18 data of question, 5 data of request, 4 data of invitation, and 1 data of blame. For the detail, there are 4 acceptance of request and 1 refusal of request, 4 acceptance of invite, 29 agreement and 4 disagreement, 16 expected answer and 2 unexpected answer, and 1 admission.

Request

According to Safont Jordà (2008), requests are communicative actions executed by the speaker with the intention of involving the listener in an upcoming sequence of actions that align with the speaker's objectives. These acts are anticipatory in nature, preceding the intended or anticipated action, in contrast to actions like apologies that transpire subsequent to an event.

Context: Mark is releasing a new song, and Johnny, as the interviewer, wants to know more about Mark's new song. Therefore, he asks Mark to explain the song to him and to audiences.

Johnny	: **first things first tell us about your song**	(00:45.18)
Mark	: **child is um, a song about like adolescence**	(00:51.22)
Mark	: that was the concept of what something that we can all relate to	(01:03.06)

The type of preference organization in this excerpt is request with acceptance. Johnny's utterance "tell us about your song" is a form of request because Johnny is asking Mark to provide information or details about his new song. The use of the word "tell" in this excerpt indicates a request for narration or explanation, and the specific mention of "your song" makes it clear that Johnny wants Mark to explain his song. In an interview context, this is a polite and direct way of asking the guest to share insights, background, or details about the subject of discussion, which, in this case, is Mark's new song. As a response, Mark accepts Johnny's request. Even though Mark does not explicitly say "yes" or "okay," his response still indicates an acceptance. Mark fulfills Johnny's request by offering information about the song, describing it as being about adolescence and emphasizing a concept that the audience can relate to. While there is no explicit token like "yes" or "okay," Mark's detailed and on-topic response can be interpreted as a form of accepting request.

The domain here is Mark's new song, "Child," and the focus is on providing information and details about the song. Johnny, the interviewer, initiates the discussion by asking Mark to explain the song, and Mark responds by providing insights into the concept and theme of the song. Based on the preference organization type, this excerpt shows a preferred response conversation. Mark's response becomes preferred because he is the source in this show.

Invite

Invite can be characterized as a deliberate effort to encourage the recipient's attendance or involvement in a particular occasion or activity, with the underlying assumption that such participation is advantageous to the recipient (Al-Darraji et al., 2013). The essence of an invitation resides in its role to instigate a reciprocal interaction that aligns with the initiator's intent while appealing to the recipient's potential interests or gains.

Context: Mark and Johnny have not appeared in front of the camera yet. They are still out of frame, only their voice heard. Mark asks Johnny whether they can start to go to the front of the camera. After the dialogue, they step to the front of the camera and appear on screen.

Mark   : shall we?   (00:06.22)
Johnny: yeah   (00:07.21)

The type of preference organization in this excerpt is an invite with acceptance. Mark's utterance "shall we?" is an example of an invite. In this case, Mark is offering or inviting Johnny to join him in moving to the front of the camera. Mark's utterance is a form of invitation because he is proposing or suggesting an action. The use of invitation in this context serves as an invitation for Johnny to join the proposed action, to start the show. Thus, suggesting someone to do something can be considered as an invitation. Moreover, Johnny's response, "yeah," is an acceptance to Mark's invitation. It is a token 'yes'. By saying "yeah," Johnny is indicating his willingness and readiness to move to the front of the camera, accepting Mark's invitation. The rising intonation, represented by the arrow up, showing that Johnny has an excitement towards Mark's statement. Therefore, his affirmative response can be categorized as acceptance of invitation.

This excerpt is related to invitation and acceptance. Mark's invitation is likely a polite way for him to signal his readiness to move to the front of the camera, allowing Johnny to lead the way as the host. Mark as the guest is essentially deferring to Johnny's direction. Johnny, as the interviewer, accepts the invitation so they can move forward to start the interview. Based on the preference organization type, this excerpt shows a preferred response conversation. Johnny's response becomes preferred because they have to start the interview as soon as they come to the set.

Assessment

Sorjonen & Hakulinen (2009) introduce the term assessment to denote an evaluative action, often conveyed through an utterance that offers either a positive or negative prediction regarding a referent or a state of affairs indicated by the subject or object of the sentence. Through the utilization of assessments, individuals not only engage in the act of conveying value judgments but also contribute to the subtle layers of meaning embedded within their linguistic expressions.

Context: Mark suddenly provides information that there was a song before "Child" that he considered releasing on NCT Lab Station. NCT Lab is a station where NCT members can release their own songs individually, in duos, or in trios. Marks states that the song has different vibes compared to "Child."

Mark   : but the song that I had in mind, last year, for this station,   (02:13.11)
          was a different song, with a totally different vibe, but it was
          you know- **it- like- good feel, you know like- a vibing song**
Johnny : **I mean, I don't know, what your first song sounded like**   (02:24.14)

The type of preference organization in this excerpt is assessment with disagreement. Mark suddenly mentions that he actually had another song prepared for release. This song had a different vibe compared to Child. He says, "it's like good feel, you know? like a vibing song." Through his utterance, Mark is expressing a positive assessment of the overall feel or mood of the song. He also characterizes the song as "vibing," which implies a positive, enjoyable, or lively quality. Mark's statement serves as an assessment because it involves providing an opinion about the musical qualities of the song he mentions. In response to Mark's statement, Johnny gives a disagreement by saying, "I mean, I don't know what your first song sounded like." This indicates that Johnny has no idea about the song Mark is referring to. This can be seen as a disagreement, as Johnny's response does not align with Mark's expectation that Johnny might have some knowledge or understanding of the song.

Based on the preference organization type, this excerpt shows a dispreferred response conversation. Johnny's response becomes dispreferred because the topic of the talk show is Mark's new song, and Johnny did not participate in composing the song. Since Johnny did not participate in the composing process of the song, he may not have the same level of knowledge about it as Mark does.

Question

An alternate application of the term question pertains to the communicative act typically executed through the utterance of interrogative sentences (Groenendijk & Stokhof, 1997). This usage signifies the act of soliciting the addressee to furnish the speaker with specific information, essentially entailing a plea for a response or answer to the inquiry posed. The fundamental aim of question centers on asking for responses that, in turn, leads to the conversational trajectory forward.

Context: Previously, Johnny said that when he listened to the song, he was reminded of when he was a child. Johnny's feelings seemed to be in line with the content of Mark's song. So Mark tries to seek clarification whether Johnny's feelings are in line with his song.

Mark   : are you resonating with this song?   (09:44.22)
Johnny : yes   (09:46.13)

The type of preference organization in this excerpt is question with expected answer. Mark's utterance, "are you resonating with this song?" is a form of question because he is seeking confirmation from Johnny regarding his emotional response to the song. Mark wants to know if Johnny is connecting with or relating to the song, especially considering that Johnny mentioned being reminded of his own childhood when listening to the song. The phrase "are you" is a form of yes-no question type. It serves to ask about Johnny's emotional resonance with the song, and the context suggests that Mark is interested in understanding how Johnny feels about the song. As a response, Johnny gives an expected answer by saying "yes." Johnny's utterance is considered a form of expected answer because it aligns with the context and the positive sentiment of the conversation. Mark, after expressing that the song is about adolescence, asks Johnny if he resonates with the song. Johnny's "yes" response falls in line with the positive and supportive atmosphere established in the conversation, making it categorized as expected answer.

In this conversation, Mark is seeking clarification about whether Johnny resonates with his song "Child," and Johnny confirming that he does resonate with the song. Based on the preference organization type, this excerpt shows a preferred response conversation. Johnny's response becomes preferred because before coming to the show, Johnny already listened to the song.

Blame

Blame constitutes a reaction to the significance underlying an individual's actions, focusing on the interpretation of those actions rather than assessing their ethical permissibility (Scanlon, 2008). Blame, in its essence, embodies a communicative act laden with nuanced implications. It serves as an outlet for expressing disapproval or disappointment stemming from a perceived misalignment between the action and its inferred implications.

Context: Johnny concludes the conversation by delivering a closing statement. Initially, he almost said "Mark's Child," referring to Mark's song titled "Child." However, Johnny modified it to "Mark's new song, Child" because he thinks "Mark's Child" seemed ambiguous. Mark, who noticed this, accuses Johnny of intending to say "Mark's Child".

Johnny	: okay, so there you have it, everything about uuh, Mark's.. new song Child (laughter)	(12:20.13)
Mark	: **you were going to say Mark's Child, weren't you?** (laughter)	(12:27.14)
Johnny	: **I was, I was. I was thinking about it**	(12:30.30)

The type of preference organization in this excerpt is blame with admission. Mark's utterance is categorized as blame because he is accusing Johnny of having the intention to say "Mark's child" and suggesting that Johnny might have been trying to create misunderstanding. Mark is attributing the intention to Johnny by stating, "you were going to say Mark's Child, weren't you?" This suggests that Mark believes Johnny had the intention to use the phrase "Mark's Child" in his closing statement. Moreover, the use of tag "weren't you?" in this excerpt implies a confrontational tone, suggesting that Mark is holding Johnny accountable for his perceived intention. It indicates a level of discomfort with what Mark assumes Johnny was thinking. As the response, Johnny gives an admission. Johnny's response, "I was. I was thinking about it," is an admission that supports Mark's claim. Johnny acknowledges that Mark's observation is correct, confirming that he indeed considered saying "Mark's Child. Johnny's repetition of "I was" emphasizes his recognizement of the intention. The repetition conveys sincerity, emphasizing that Johnny is openly admitting to the thought.

Based on the preference organization type, this excerpt shows a dispreferred response conversation. Johnny's response becomes dispreferred because the response comes from Johnny's realization that the original phrase might have been unclear or could have led to misconceptions. The dispreferred response in this context serves to acknowledge Mark's accusation and admit to the potential misstep in wording. Johnny's admission of considering "Mark's Child" indicates transparency and an attempt to address any ambiguity, contributing to a more open and conflict-avoidant communication style. This dispreferred response helps maintain clarity and understanding between Mark and Johnny, preventing potential misunderstandings.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, a total of 61 data were obtained. For first speaker types, there are 5 data of request, 4 data of invite, 33 data of assessment, 18 data of question, and 1 data of blame. For second speaker types, there are 53 preferred responses and 8 dispreferred responses. The large number of preferred responses in the talk show indicates a generally positive and cooperative communication environment. In this talk

show, all first speaker's preference organization types occurred, while second speaker's preference organization types were absent in the refusal of invite and denial of blame part.

The future researchers are encouraged to explore alternative sources beyond talk shows. The rationale behind this recommendation lies in the potential for increased diversity of data, particularly in terms of conversation duration, the number of speakers involved, and the variety of topics discussed. By shifting focus to daily conversations, future researchers may obtain more realistic and varied results, allowing for a broader understanding of preference organization and conversational strategies in natural, everyday communication contexts.

For talk show hosts, it is highly recommended to immerse themselves not only in scripted dialogues, but also in the spontaneous and dynamic nature of real-life conversations. Actively participating in various discussions, interviews, or informal chats can enhance their grasp of conversation structures. Moreover, building a collection of references related to conversational analysis can serve as a valuable resource, providing insights and strategies for conducting engaging and effective interviews on their shows.

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