

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Research

People talk in order to communicate. It cannot be denied that communication is the foundation of all human relationship. It is as old as human. Long ago before human created languages like we use today, communication did exist but just in other forms and systems. People might use signs, symbols or any kinds of signals generated with systems they created by themselves which made them able to deliver what was on their mind and what they meant to deliver to others. Since, the process of sharing knowledge and delivering messages from one to another in certain communication patterns have been developed to the level where communication is not merely a simple send-receive pattern but it becomes to the tool of interaction among people so they can build relationships in their social institutions. Up until now, the significance of communication undoubtedly becomes the basic need of human life—such as breathing, eating, and so on.

Communication involves two or more persons as it is derived from Latin word ‘*communis*’ which means to make common, to transmit or to share between two or more persons or groups. According to Julia Wood (2004), communication is “a systemic process in which individuals interact with and through symbols to create and interpret meanings.” It is obvious that the main point of communication is the common understanding perceived by both sender and receiver. The process of transferring the meanings they bring through the symbols used happens in a form of conversation. Figure 1 reflects the definition and identifies the important elements of the communication process (Shannon, 1948).

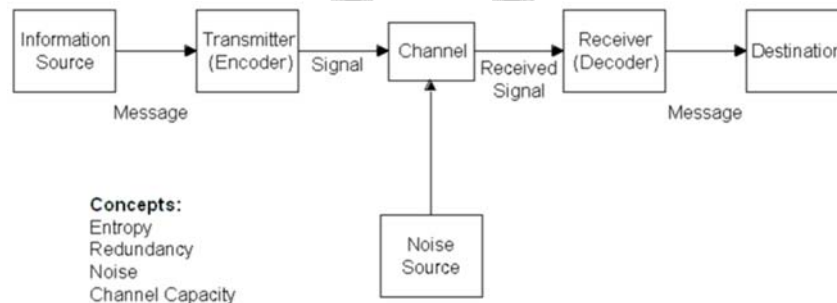


Figure 1. Shannon-Weaver model of communication

A man and a woman who never know each other are engaged in a sudden conversation at a train station. “The weather looks nice today, doesn’t it?” asked him. “Yeah, I think so,” she replied. Although it seems simple to understand what he asks and what she feels about, linguists can imply hundreds of meanings behind such conversation. According to George Yule (1996), the study which concerns with the study of meaning as communicated by speaker and listener is called pragmatics.

Here, syntax is considered to be the study of the formal relations of one sign to another, while semantics studies the relations of signs to objects in the outside world. Finally, pragmatics is thought as the relation of signs to those who interpret the signs, the users of language. Charles Morris in *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (1938: 33) writes that “pragmatics itself would attempt to develop terms appropriate to the study of the relation of signs to their users and to order systematically the results which come from the study of this dimension of semiosis.” Moreover, pragmatics is “the study of linguistic acts and the contexts in which they are performed” (Stalnaker 1972: 383). Pragmatics acts as the basis for all language interactions. It is a key feature to the understanding of language and the responses that follow this. Therefore, without the functions of pragmatics, there would be a very little understanding of intention and meaning.

It is taken into account by the writer to conduct a research using pragmatics approach since this field of study allows humans into its analysis. The process of involving humans is considered to be complicated because understanding what is on someone’s mind and what is the true intention delivered through utterances are difficult to analyze. Hence, the writer is challenged to carry on the research of communication and pragmatics to prove that the states of each person, the time when they are engaged in a situation of conversation, and also the context surrounded have impact to the meaning and the interpretation.

Conversation, as mentioned above, is believed as the best place for analyzing a case with pragmatics approach. It has complete ‘ingredients’ such as speaker and listener, messages transmitted to one and another, signs, language used, contexts, rules, interactions and all material needed to create a communication process. Within this

paper, the writer will soon study a conversation and analyze it using tools which will be described soon in the next chapter.

In his book, Yule (1996: 71) states that ‘interaction’ could actually apply to a very large number of quite different social encounters. For example, a mother talking to her son, a customer puts order to a waitress, a minister delivers speech to his people, or even a host interviewing his/her guest star. These kinds of talks are able to be analyzed differently in various ways according to the context performed within.

In this paper, the writer chooses to conduct a research upon one of the most popular talk shows in the United States of America, The Ellen Show. This television comedy talk show was debuted in 2003 hosted by comedian/actress Ellen DeGeneres. This famous talk show which is broadcasted on NBC (The National Broadcasting Company) has been the writer’s interest since Ellen successfully combines comedy, celebrity life, musical guests, and human-interest stories by having conversation with her guests that come from various occupancies—celebrities, politicians, intelligent children, talented youngers, even small business owners.

Michelle Obama has once been invited as Ellen’s guest star. Michelle Obama who has already ended her service as the First Lady from 2009 to 2017, is engaged into a conversation at the show watched by million people. She is asked by Ellen about the life after she left the White House and her stance towards a particular problem faced by Americans. Due to various factors such as close distance between Ellen and Michelle and more in their conversation, Michelle as the interviewee conveys statements and responses which may threaten Ellen’s faces. So does Ellen as the interviewer with her questions to Michelle.

Sociologist Erving Goffman defined impression someone would like to have as a person’s face. According to Goffman (1955) *face is the positive public image you seek to establish in social interactions.*

This research employs theory of conversational analysis and preference structure to discover the possibilities of face-work generated from conversations including the questions and answers conveyed. Finally, this term paper will examine impacts from the conversational style and preference structure performed on the talk show.

## 1.2 Identification of the Problem

Face considerations are embedded in every action in the organization of conversation, Goffman (1967) states as well that face-work dedicated to possible or actual threats to face can also become a matter of direct or exposed concern in the conduct of interaction.

As both speakers are iconic celebrity, when they speak in front of public, it cannot be denied that they have to be very careful to speak. After watching the whole talk show, the writer examines that it is interesting to find out what makes them interact in a very comfortable way and why they do not feel shy to each other to talk about privacy and even politics. During the talk show, Michelle and Ellen seem to threaten each other's faces so easily. Therefore, the writer is triggered to analyze whether conversational style and preference structure affect the face-threatening act.

It is obvious that what someone conveys in public will be broadcasted widely and valued socially by many people. In daily life, it is known that Michelle and Ellen are close friends. Despite the close distance between them, still, when one fails to maintain faces (either his face or other's), reputation (especially for celebrities or famous icons) will also be threatened. As it is observed that some media record and report the contents of Michelle and Ellen's conversation on several online sites, especially when they discuss sensitive issues, the netizens show their response seriously.

Via the talk show that will be analyzed, the writer aims to show how particular face-threatening acts are realized linguistically and how such realizations are associated to variables in conversation. Thus, this research identifies the way face-threatening acts occur as the result of the analysis of conversational styles and structure of preferences. Eventually, this research will suggest what action should probably be avoided to prevent wrong face acts.

### **1.3 Limitation of the Problem**

Due to the time limitations of the writer, qualitative research will be used for this study. As an initial step, the research is based on a set of The Ellen Show Season 15 Episode 93 'Michelle Obama on Ellen's 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday Two-Part Event' transcript and videos which are available in Ellentube.com (the official website of The Ellen Show) and also in YouTube. Additional data is gathered through printed sources such as textbooks and digital sources such as e-journals, e-books, and website articles. The interview will be analyzed according to the theory of conversational styles, preference structure and politeness strategies.

It is important to note that the transcript does not include all linguistic details such as rhythm, pronunciation or even other related linguistics study such as sociolinguistic and so on. In this research, the writer may face the issue of deciding how to accurately capture the prosody. However, the prosody helps the writer to recognize the interpretation of both speakers. To deal with that, it requires several times to forward and backward the video.

### **1.4 Formulation of the Problem**

The main interest of this term paper is to analyze conversational styles and preferred structure employment in a talk show which may result to face-threatening acts. Therefore, the term paper intends to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What is the relevance of conversational style and preference structure to face want?
2. What is the impact of conversational style employed by the interviewer and the interviewee to the face want?
3. What is the impact of preference structure employed by the interviewer and the interviewee to the face want?

### **1.5 Objective of the Research**

It can be inferred that the objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To find out the relevance of conversational style and preferences structure to face want.



2. To find out the impact of conversational style employed by the interviewer and the interviewee to the face want.
3. To find out the impact of preferences structure employed by the interviewer and the interviewee to the face want.

### **1.6 Method of the Research**

This research is conducted through qualitative approach. According to Ross (1999), qualitative approach is based on a "world view" which is holistic and has the following beliefs; 1) there is not a single reality; 2) reality based upon perceptions that are different for each person and change over time; 3) what we know has meaning only within a given situation of context. Myers (1997) says qualitative research methods are developed in the social sciences to enable researchers to study social and cultural phenomena. This means that the goal of qualitative method is to get deeper analysis or understanding about something. The first thing that the researcher has to do when he or she uses qualitative method is collecting data. After collecting it, this research uses descriptive analysis which involves the interpretation and description of the data.

### **1.7 Benefit of the Research**

This research benefits readers to understand more about differences in conversational styles and preference structure application conducted in an interview. Furthermore, this research is also to prove that particular face-threatening acts are realized linguistically and associated to variables in conversation. Additionally, the writer expects the results of the research will be beneficial for current and further research as well as for academic and non-academic audience. As observed previously, similar research conducted with this typical case are infrequently found and not significant. Thus, this research may encourage the audience to conduct more research on the relevance of conversation analysis to face acts pragmatically.

### **1.8 Systematic Organization of the Research**

Paper organization is used for this research. The paper organization is explained as follows:

## CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

Chapter one explains about the background of the research, identification of the problem, limitation of the problem, formulation of the problem, objective of the research, method of the research, benefit of the research and systematic organization of the research.

## CHAPTER 2 : FRAMEWORK OF THE THEORIES

Chapter two explains some theories of conversational analysis, preference structure, politeness and interactions. Those mentioned theories will support this research.

## CHAPTER 3 : FACE THREATENING ACTS GENERATED FROM CONVERSATIONAL STYLE AND PREFERENCE STRUCTURE EMPLOYED BY MICHELLE OBAMA & ELLEN DEGENERES IN THE ELLEN SHOW SEASON 15 EPISODE 93: A PRAGMATIC STUDY

Chapter three explains the analysis of the case problem which is elaborated with the theories.

## CHAPTER 4 : CONCLUSION

Chapter four concludes the analysis of this research and also gives suggestion.