

# AN ANALYSIS OF TOPIC SHIFT IN A GIRLS COMMUNITY

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**Abstract:** This study aims to find and classify categories of topic shift in the girls conversations and to find the dominant type of topic shift that is found in the girls conversations. The approach of this study is qualitative method. The object that is researcher used to analyze topic shift is spoken texts. The notion of 'text' as the verbal record of a communicative act becomes a good deal more complex than we consider what is meant by spoken 'text'. The simplest view to assume is that a tape-recording of a communicative act will preserve the 'text'. The researcher recorded the conversations that occurred between the girl's communities in Hazairin University of Bengkulu, then made written transcriptions based on the conversations that occurred. Although the dominant type of topic shift is the whole changing topic, which is the most common type of topic shift on the girls community in Unihaz, but we should relized that there still many topics will appear. Moreover, the context of each utterance is depends on itself, based on the situation that is occurred on that time. The context when the girls said of both topic shift are the opening conversation, the distraction, and the closing conversation. After analyzing the topic shift in the girl conversation, the writer would like to conclude the use of object change are 3 (three) utterances and the whole changing topic are 4 (four) utterances.

**Keywords:** *Topic Shift, Girls, Conversations, Spoken*

Topic shift commonly happend in girls' students community. It is rhetorical deception where one person in a discussion (the shifter) manages to subtly change the discussion's topic to another, related but different topic, Brown and Yule, (1983 : 73), Zhengdong Gan (2010, p.585-602) and Evelina D Galaczi (2013, p.553-574) they conclude language is a tool which is used by all of the creatures in the world, especially humans to communicate and to share the ideas among each other. A more comprehensive understandind of interactional competence has the potential to complement available descriptions of interactional skill in assessment scales of speakingand aid learnes and teachers in communicative classrooms. As the members of society, humans are totally dependent on the use of language to interact in everyday life. According to Lucy, J. A., & Gaskins, S. (2003), every language expresses in how people think, feel, act and in how they related to the context that their statements are occurred. A broaden explanation which spends one hundred or more papers is not enough to reveal the phenomenon of language that humans use while they interact from one to another. That is why the linguists category the specific theories to analyze languages.

Scientific field of study that analyses about language is named linguistics. Linguistics is the study of human language. Linguists usually give the limitation of language as a system of communication by sound, i.e., through the organs of speech and hearing, among human beings of certain group or community, using vocal symbols possessing arbitrary conventional meaning (Pei and Gaynor: 1975). However, there aren't many people question about how the conversations in communities can be analyzed effectively, the listeners often have experience being misunderstood with the connections among the conversations and the contexts. One way to find out about it is through the perspective of discourse analysis.

*Discourse Analysis* is a general term for a number of approaches to analyzing written, vocal, or sign language use or any significant semiotic event (*Mey, Jacob L: 1993, p. 12*). The objects of discourse analysis are discourse-writing, conversation, communicative event are variously defined in terms of coherent sequences of sentences, speech, or turns-at-talk. For example, some individuals expect that participation in a conversation will be very active, that speaking rate will be relatively fast, with almost no pausing between their conversations. There are points where one speaker stops and another starts speaking, even the changing topic of a conversation randomly occurred. This one is called as Topic Shift. It is a rhetorical deception

where one person in a discussion (the shifter) manages to subtly change the discussion's topic to another, related but different topic, without explicitly announcing the change of subject or reaching any kind of mutual agreement that such a change is appropriate, (Gene : 2004)

The object that is researcher used to analyze topic shift is spoken texts. The notion of 'text' as the verbal record of a communicative act becomes a good deal more complex than we consider what is meant by spoken 'text'. The simplest view to assume is that a tape-recording of a communicative act will preserve the 'text'. The researcher recorded the conversations that occurred between the girl's communities in Hazairin University of Bengkulu, then made written transcriptions based on the conversations that occurred.

### **Statement of the Problems**

There are some questions that will be raised as the problems of this research. They are formulated as follow:

1. What kinds of topic shift that are found during the girls conversations?
2. What is the dominant type of topic shift that is found in the girls conversations?

### **Research Objectives**

The objectives within this study are:

1. To find and classify categories of topic shift in the girls conversations.
2. To find the dominant type of topic shift that is found in the girls conversations

### **Scope and Limitation of Problem**

To make it easier to analyze the matter, the researcher has limitation problem. The limitation of problem is focused on what kind of topic shift that are found in the girls conversation at Hazairin University of Bengkulu. Supported by the theory of Gillian Brown and George Yule, the scope of the analysis hopefully will be helpful for writer to be more specific and thoroughly in investigating this study in order to get best aim appropriate with the desire of the researcher.

### **Significance of The Research**

The study on Topic Shift is very challenging because it is in the aspects of Discourse Analysis (the part of linguistics study field). Through this mini research, the researcher has a great feeling that it will useful for the readers to add their knowledge about Discourse Analysis. In this case, the researcher finding will be useful for:

1. Teachers and Students of English Department

Teachers and Students will clearly understand about the topic shift especially for students who have interest in studying discourse analysis, it will be very useful for them in enriching their knowledge.

2. The other researchers.

This research can be useful as an additional reference for the next researchers who researching about topic shift.

### **Discourse Analysis**

*Discourse Analysis* is a general term for a number of approaches to analyzing written, vocal, or sign language use or any significant semiotic event (Mey, Jacob L: 1993, p. 12). It is also a general term for a number of approaches to analyzing written, vocal, or sign language use or any significant event. The objects of discourse analysis discourse, writing, conversation, communicative event are variously defined in terms of coherent sequences of sentences, propositions, speech, or turns-at-talk. Contrary to much of traditional linguistics, discourse analysts not only study language use 'beyond the sentence boundary', but also prefer to analyze 'naturally occurring' language use, and not invented examples. Text linguistics is related. For example, some individuals expect that participation in a conversation will be very active, that speaking rate will be relatively fast, with almost no pausing between their conversations. There are points where one speaker stops and another starts speaking, even the changing topic of a

conversation randomly occurred. This one is called as Topic Shift as one of the Discourse Analysis subfield.

## **1. Topic Shift**

As a part of Discourse Analysis study, Topic shift is a rhetorical deception where one person in a discussion (the shifter) manages to subtly change the discussion's topic to another, related but different topic, Brown and Yule, (1983 : 73). To begin an analysis of discourse topic, one must establish the topic framework of the data, which represents the area of overlap (speech encounters are usually co-operative and most overlaps will therefore be resolved quickly, with one participant ceasing to speak) which has been activated and is shared by the participants at a particular point. In formulating the topic framework, the researcher already record the contextual features of the conversations, including participant, time, and location of information.

### **a. The Types of Topic Shift**

In most of the conversations (both of spoken and written English), people have to keep track of who or what they are talking about for more than one sentence at a time. There is often the changing topic in one conversation. Brown and Yule (1983) classified 2 (types) of topic shift in their research. They are patterns of referring Expressions in his research, they are, the object change, and the whole changing topic.

#### **1) The Object Change**

The object change is the changing object by the speaker or listener in the conversation, Brown and Yule (1983). For example, there is a conversation between Speaker A and Speaker B: Speaker A ask a question to speaker B : “*What about the paper?*” and the speaker B answered “*I heard that Miss Granger already submitted the paper to Madam Pomfrey*”. We analyze that the object of this topic is “ the paper”. Then the speaker B gives another statement. “*Miss Granger always becomes the top student in this school.*” There is a changing topic in the object, from “the paper” to the third singular person (Miss Granger). Although there is a changing topic in the object, but there is no significant changing context between first statements to the second statements. Without announced it first by using the words like *by the way*, *anyway*, or *well*, as the signs to change the object of the topic, the speaker B changed the object of the topic into another topic that still in the context. This is what we called as The Object Change.

#### **2) The Whole Changing Topic**

In contrast with The Object Change, the whole changing topic in topic shift means that the significant changing of object and context in a conversation, Brown and Yule (1983). This type of changing topic creates assumptions to the listeners. For example : “*Miss Granger always become the top student in this school*”, said Speaker A to speaker B. And then the speaker B said “*Emm.. I am not sure if I can't visit my cousin Lily anymore.*” The whole changing topic here creates some assumptions to the listener, such as, the speaker B does not want to talk about Miss Granger anymore, or it is a sign to the Speaker A to stop talking about people behind their back. There is a pause before the speaker B change the topic. The word of “*Emm..*” is the prove that he wants to change the topic by thinking first what topic that is good to change the first topic.

### **b. The Girls' Community in Hazairin University of Bengkulu**

The writer chooses girls' community in Hazairin University of Bengkulu because it is the closest community with the writer. To analyze the topic shift, the writer also needs to record the conversation by tape recorder and to write the conversation into the transcriptions, so the writer can analyze the topic shift that occurred in the conversations of the girls' community in Hazairin University of Bengkulu.

### **c. Previous Study**

Using topic shift as the topic of the research often occurs. But the object of the previous research might be different, because of the broaden explanation of linguistic and literary works. The previous study was conducted by Angela D. James from the University of Western Ontario (2011) with the title “*Topic Shift in Casual Conversation*”. The study is investigated about the discourse topic changing in the casual conversation. It is different with

the writer tried to carried out in this mini research. The writer focus on the topic shift that occurs in the girls community of Hazairin University of Bengkulu.

## Method

The approach of this study is qualitative method that deals with the non-numerical linguistics units in the forms of words, phrase, clauses, or sentences (Creswell : 2003), by means of which this research paper attempts to identify and analyze the topic shift as found in group in Hazairin University of Bengkulu..

The methodologies that are used to analyze the topic shift in the girls conversation is; (1) recording the conversation in the girls community by tape recorder is the absolute choice in order to understand the topic shift, (2) writing the dialogues that consist in the conversation as the written transcript, (3) selecting dialogues that have topic shift, (4) analyzing the changing topic in the written transcript, and (5) classifying the types of topic shift that occurred in the conversation of the girls community. Reading the related articles about topic shift from many books is another way that is taken besides reading journals and articles from internet.

## Result and Discussion

### 1. Result

Based on the recording conversation and the written transcripts (the data is attached), the writer found 2 (two) topic shift's types occurred in the conversation, they are The Object Change, and The Whole Changing Topic. There are 4 (four) girls who involved in the recording conversation. Based on the recording, there is an information that tells the listener that these conversations were occurred in the classroom (at the beginning of the conversation, one of the speaker discussed about AC (Air Conditioner) that was out of normal, and then at the last conversation, another speaker said :

(...) *"Ma'am datang"*.

(...) *"Ma'am comes"*

It means the lecturer has come to their classroom in Hazairin University of Bengkulu). There are Speaker A, Speaker B, Speaker C, and Speaker D.

### 2. Analysis and Discussion

#### a. The Object Change

The object change is the changing object by the speaker or listener in the conversation, Brown and Yule (1983). The following explanations will show the object change in the girls conversation.

#### 1. Speaker A said

*"Besok. Besok kan senin.. pagi-paginyo. Tapi kan kito ndak ngerjokan laporan PKL"*.

*"Tomorrow is Monday. Early morning. But we want to do our PKL report"*

There is a changing object in the last statement. At first the object is *"senin"*. The next sentences showed the the object has changed into *"laporan PKL"*.

#### 2. Speaker C said

*"Ndak, ambo satu. Ya Allah Epan baik nian. Eh, Fenti minta satu lagi"*.

*"I want one. Epan is very nice. Uh, Fenti asked for one more "*.

The object on the first sentence is *"satu"*. Based on the context, the word of *"satu"* refers to the drinks that someone brought to the class. The next sentences, the object has changed into *"Epan"*. There is a significant changing context here. The Speaker C gave a compliment to someone named Epan who has brought drinks for them. But then, the object at the last sentence *"Fenti, minta satu lagi"* was back again to the first sentence that has an object *"satu"* that refers to the drinks.

#### 3. When Speaker D said

*"ambo bae la kurusan" (I was thin).*

*"Mano nampak tulang kau". (Moreover, the visible of your bones)*

The object is "kurusan", it means the speaker D is getting skinny. Then Speaker D answered "Mano nampak tulang kau". There is a changing object here, from "kurusan" to "tulang", but still in the same context.

#### **b. The Whole Changing Topic**

In contrast with The Object Change, the whole changing topic in topic shift means that the significant changing of object and context in a conversation, Brown and Yule (1983). The following explanations will show the whole changing topic in the girls conversation.

1. The Speaker A said

*"AC kito ko yo, dak pernah elok yo. Mati terus."*

*"Our AC is never good. always dead."*

At the beginning of conversation. The topic in the first sentence is "AC" that is the abbreviation from the Air Conditioner in the classroom that was out of normal. And then The Speaker B said different topic,

*"Ai, maju belipstik."*

*"emm, keep using lipstick"*

That refers to the Speaker A when they saw the speaker A wearing lipstick for more than two times. The first context refers to the Air Conditioner that was out of normal, and in the whole changing topic occurred in the second statement that has different context with the first sentence that refers to the Speaker A who was wearing a lipstick at the moment.

2. When the Speaker B answered

*"ntah" (I don't know)*

that still refers to the Speaker A who was wearing lipstick for more than two times, there is a whole changing topic again when Speaker C said

*"Ai dah.. perasaan ambo hari apolah dak ambo lari pagi tuh?"*

*"emm... what day did I feel I was jogging that morning?"*

The Speaker C here changed the whole topic to "lari pagi" or jogging. The assumptions are, the Speaker C wanted to lead the conversation into new topic, and The Speaker C wanted to invite their friends to jogging with her.

3. When the Speaker C said *"ndak ambo satu."* (I want one too)

It means that the speaker asked the drinks that someone brought to the classroom. But then, Speaker D changed the topic to

*"Ai, ngapo ambo idak balik ajo dak, masih nunggu ma'am masuk".*

*"emm, why don't I just go home, still waiting for the lecturer to come".*

The Speaker D lead the conversation into new topic. She still waited the lecturer to come to the class.

4. When the Speaker D said

*"Kalau kau ya iyolah... Nah... masuk Ma'am nyo".*

*"If you are sure, yes ... Well ... Ma'am comes, Let's go".*

The first statement of "kalau kau ya iyolah" refers to the previous sentence from the Speaker C

*"Ambo idak ado perubahan, tambah besak."*

*"I have no change in change, the bigger."*

Their context is still tied each other, that is talking about the size of their body. When it comes to the statement “*Nah... masuk Ma'am nyo.*” There is whole changing topic in this utterance. The context is to inform the others that they lecturer has come to their classroom. The assumptions are the Speaker D wanted to end the conversation and focus with the lecturer in front of their classroom.

### Conclusion

After analyzing the topic shift in the girl conversation, the writer would like to conclude that the use the object change are 3 (three) utterances and the whole changing topic are 4 (four) utterances. So the dominant type of topic shift is the whole changing topic, which is the most common type of topic shift on the girls community in Hazairin University of Bengkulu. The context of each utterance is depend on itself, based on the situation that is occurred on that time. The context when the girls said of both topic shift are the opening conversation, the distraction, and the closing conversation.

Topic Shift is an interesting object to be analyzed. It is because of the participation in the girls community are very active, that has speaking rate relatively fast, with almost no pausing between their conversations. There are points where one speaker stops and another starts speaking, even the changing topic of a conversation randomly occurred. From this research, it is suggested to the student of English literature to analyze topic shift that happen in the offices. So, by making analysis in other objects, hopefully the vocabularies of the readers can be increased.

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