



**CONVERSATIONAL STYLE OF MALE AND FEMALE TEACHERS IN SENIOR  
HIGH SCHOOL**

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***ABSTRACT***

This research dealt with conversational style of male and female teachers in senior high school. The objectives of this study were: to investigate features of conversational style used by male and female teachers in senior high school; and to elaborate the conversational style. It was conducted using qualitative research design. The data were obtained from 4 male and 4 female teachers. 20 conversations were recorded. The instruments of collecting data were observation, recording, and interviewing adopted by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). The data were classified to the criteria of conversational style determined by Swann (2000). The findings showed there were five features of conversational style used by male and female teachers. All features of conversational style were found in realization of male and female teachers.

Keywords: Conversational style, Gender and Language, Teachers' language.

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## **1. Introduction**

Communication among persons is known as conversation. Conversation is necessary for social interaction among people of everyday life. It is necessary because the language used by conversational participant is a kind of embodiment people's thoughts and it is used by persons to participate and to have some interaction one another. The interaction among persons in conversation indicates them actively talking in a particular topic. During the conversation, actually the speakers use their own style. The style means the way they talk in the conversation; in other words it is called as conversational style.

Conversational style refers to the basic tools with which people communicate; anything that is said must be said in some way, and that way is style (Tannen, 2005). Further, Tannen explains that the style refers to a special way of speaking as if one could choose between speaking plainly or speaking with style. Thus, the role of style in conversation is really important in order to make the interaction communicative.

Tannen(1990) maintains that men and women have very different communicative conventions and conversational styles and that these styles are rooted in their early socialization in same-sex play groups. Girls grow up in groups in which the emphasis is on equality, cooperation, and friendships, and so they develop conversational styles that are cooperative and highly interactional, with each girl encouraging the speech of others and building on others' communications. On the other hand, boys grow up in groups based on competition and hierarchy, and so they develop styles that are competitive rather than cooperative, often dominating conversations through long turns, interruptions, and abrupt introduction of new topics.

Further, Swann (2003) stated that there is a substantial body of evidence that women and men, and girls and boys interact, to some extent, in different ways. Such differences as occur have often been thought to disadvantage female speakers in mixed-sex interaction. This area of language and gender is one that has a number of practical as well as theoretical implications: within education.

Thus, this research concerns on conversational style of male and female teachers in senior high school since there is some situation where the conversation of male and female teachers takes place within this context. In senior high school, there are some setting where the conversation can occur naturally; such as in the classroom, teachers' office, canteen and library. In this research, it focuses on break time where the conversation

among male and female teachers occurs in *SMA Swasta Sisingamangaraja Tanjungbalai*. One of previous study which had been conduct the study about conversational style is Sylvia and Dewi (2012). It compares the conversational styles and preference structure of the host with different guest. This previous study and this research are discussed the same topic about conversational style. However, the previous study relates the conversational style with the preference structure in talk show; while this research relates the conversational style to gender differences in senior high school. The aim of the previous research is to find out the features of conversational style used by the host toward different guests which is in a group and a single guest, in other words it compares the two different guests with the same host in order to see whether the conversational style of the host are different or not. On the other hand, this research intends to find out the style in conversation among male and female teachers in senior high school. The difference also can be seen in the theory which is used to analyze the conversational style. The previous study uses Tannen's theory, while in this research the researcher uses Swann's theory.

According to Swann (2000) there are five features of conversational style. Such as amount of talk, interruption, conversational support, tentativeness, and compliment. Further, Swann states that in amount of talk male speakers have been found to talk more than females, particularly in formal or public contexts. The second feature is interruption; it is stated that male speakers interrupt female speakers more than vice versa. The third feature is conversational support, female speakers more frequently use features that provide support and encouragement for other speakers, for example „minimal responses“ such as *asmh* and *yeah*. The fourth feature is tentativeness, it is stated that there are claims that female speakers use features that make their speech appear tentative and uncertain, such as „hedges“ that weaken the force of an utterance („I think maybe...“ „,sort of“ „,you know“) and certain types of „tag questions“ (questions tagged on to statements, such as („It's shot, isn't it?"). The last feature which proposed by Swann is compliment, it is stated that a wider range of compliments may be addressed to women than to men, and women also tend to pay more compliments.

In line with the explanation about the features of conversational style above, in reality during the break time (08.50 AM - 09.05 AM) in teachers' office among male and female teachers there was different phenomenon such as in the following.

FT : *Pak Toha, nanti saya masuk sebentar di jam bapakya*  
(Mr. Toha, I will enter to your class for a while)

- MT : *Kelas manabu?*  
(Which class ma'am?)
- FT : ***Memangnya hari ini bapak ada berapa kelas? Kan Cuma satu?***  
(How many classes do you have today? Just one, right?)
- MT : *Oh, ini selasaya*  
(Oh, today is Tuesday)
- FT : *Jangan banyak kali yang dipikirkan pak... nanti saya masuk ya pakya*  
(Don't think a lot sir... I will come in later sir)
- MT : *Oke bu.*  
(Okay ma'am)

Based on example above, female teacher interrupted more than male teacher. The bold sentence "***Memangnya hari ini bapak ada berapa kelas? Kan Cuma satu?***" (How many classes do you have today? Just one, right?) was the interruption that used by female teacher to the male teacher. In addition, female teacher tends to directive during the conversation. Thus, based on the phenomena which have been mentioned above, this research tries to find out: the features of conversational style used by male and female teachers in senior high school; and how are the features of conversational style realized by male and female teachers in senior high school.

## 2. Method

This research was conducted by using descriptive qualitative design. Descriptive was the data collected are in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. Moreover, qualitative research is direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument. Therefore descriptive qualitative means to find out how a theory works in different phenomenon where the data collected are in the form of words rather than number (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). Thus, this research uses descriptive qualitative research because the data are in the form of words, in the natural setting and the researcher is the key instrument in this research.

This research applied case study design. This research analyzed the features, the realization and the reasons of conversational style used by male and female teachers in senior high school of *SMA Swasta Sisingamangaraja Tanjungbalai*. The conversation utterances of senior high school teachers when did the conversation had been recorded and

transcribed.

The data of this research were conversational style of male and female teachers in senior high school in form words, phrases, and sentences during breaktime in teachers' office. The sources of data in this study are *SMA Swasta Sisingamangaraja Tanjungbalai*. There were 20 teachers in this school which consist of 8 male teachers and 12 female teachers. The sample of this research taken through random sampling technique because there were a lot of teachers. 4 male teachers and 4 female teachers were chosen randomly for this research. The technique of data collection taken through observation. The researcher applied observation in order to obtain the data during the conversation of male and female teachers in senior high school. In doing the observation this study conducted by applying a set of procedures in collecting the data. The researcher transcribed the recording data. Then the transcription analyzed and classified based on the features of conversational style.

### 3. Result

The data were analysed based on the theory of Swann (2000); which stated that there are five features of conversational style of male and female speakers in a conversation. Such as: amount of talk, interruption, conversational support, tentativeness and compliment. The researcher found all of the features of conversational style of male and female teachers in senior high school. Below were the further explanations of each feature.

**Table 1 Conversational Style of Male and Female Teachers**

No	The Features of Conversational Style	Male Teachers (MT)		Female Teachers (FT)	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Amount of Talk	17	29.82%	24	35.82%
2.	Interruption	10	17.54%	17	25.37%
3.	Conversational Support	10	17.54%	12	17.91%
4.	Tentativeness	18	31.57%	13	19.40%
5.	Compliment	2	3.50%	1	1.49%
<b>Total</b>		<b>57</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 4.1 Conversational Style of Male Teachers

##### a. Amount of Talk

Swann (2000) stated that male speakers have been found to talk more than females, particularly in formal or public contexts. Amount of talk focusing on face-to-face interaction; it examines talk within the context of a variety of different kinds of activities.

These activities can be held to form a continuum. At one end are "formal tasks"; at the other are informal non-task-oriented activities. In between the two are "informal tasks" and activities such as interaction in a college or university classroom which occur within formal structures but are not task-oriented (Tannen, 1993). Further, it is stated that the measure are vary; such as it can be through the total number of words, the total number of seconds spent talking, the number of turns at talk taken, and the average length of aturn.

### Conversation 3

FT : *Makanlause*

(Let's eat sir)

MT : *Silahkan. Kok beda-beda*

*lauknya?*(Yes please. How come it'sdifferent?)

FT : *Samalause*

(It's same si)

MT : *Ayam?*

(Chicken?)

FT : *Ayamgoreng*

(Fried chicken)

MT : *Ayamgoreng?*

(Fried chicken?)

FT : *Iya...*

(Yes...)

In conversation 3, the underline utterances were called as amount of talk. It is called amount of talk because in this case male teacher talk much in the interaction with the female teacher. In this case, *Silahkan. Kok beda-beda lauknya?*(Yes please. How come it's different?) was categorized as amount of talk because male teacher talk much. After answering the offering from the female teacher by saying "*Silahkan*", the male teacher talk again by asking "*Kok beda-beda lauknya?*"to the female teacher (FT).

#### b. Interruption

According to Swann (2000) in interruptions male speakers interrupt female speakers more than vice versa. In line with the interruption, Gibson (2005) defined interruption on the basis of Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's theory of turn-taking organizations in

conversation. However, he brought into his definition a new element which allows social and contextual variations. Interruption occurred when somebody started speaking before the prior speaker has completed his TCU and the prior speaker was actually prevented from completing that TCU.

#### Conversation 7

FT : *Udah berkeringat pagi-pagi pak*

(You look sweating early in the morning sir)

MT : *Angkat kursi tadi*

(Lift the chair just now)

FT : *Yang kemaren itumana?*

(Which one was yesterday?)

MT : *Ha?*

(Huh?)

FT : *Tak wangi?*

(Doesn't smell good?)

MT : *Ah, pahit*

(Eww, bitter)

In conversation 7, the underline utterances were called as interruption. It is called interruption because in this case male teacher (MT) interrupt the female teacher (FT) in the interaction within this context. In this case, "***Ah, pahit***" (Eww, bitter)" is categorized as interruption because this sentence showed that male teacher (MT) didn't agree about the smell of the perfume.

#### c. Conversational Support

According to Swann (2000) female speakers more frequently use features that provide support and encouragement for other speakers, for example „minimal responses“ such as *mmh* and *yeah*. The use of minimal responses (sometimes also called „backchannel“ signals): words such as (in English) *mmh*, *yeah* and *right*, that are generally analyzed, not as speaking turns in their own right, but as conversational support provided by listeners, indicating their involvement in the conversation.

#### Conversation 11

FT : *Surat izin orang tua udah?*

(Letter of acceptance finish?)

MT : *Udah siap, yang penting ini nya tinggal nyetak*

*(Finish, the important is this one which only need printed)*

FT : *Satu lagi, air?*

*(one more, water?)*

MT : *Air? ke PAM nanti*

*(water? To PAM later)*

FT : *Motor pas tak ada bang*

*(Motor exactly nothing brother)*

MT : **Itulah**

*(It is)*

FT : *Jadi minta air kemana?*

*(So, where is the water from?)*

MT : *Dinas kebersihan aja, kan ada dinas kebersihan yang...*

*(Cleaning instention, there is cleaning instention which...)*

FT : *PAM?*

*(PAM?)*

MT : *Tak air baru sihitu*

*(No, that is not new water)*

In conversation 11, the underline utterances were called as conversational support. It is called conversational support because in this case the male teacher (MT) used a minimal response to the Female Teacher (FT). The utterance "**Itulah**" (It is) was the conversational support that used by male teacher (MT). These minimal response used by male teacher in order to provide support to the utterance of female teacher (FT).

#### d. Tentativeness

According to Swann (2000) there are claims that female speakers use features that make their speech appear tentative and uncertain, such as „hedges“ that weaken the force of an utterance ( „I think maybe . . .“, „sort of“, „you know“) and certain types of „tag questions“ (questions tagged on to statements, such as („It’s so hot, isn’t it?“).

#### Conversation 3

FT : *Makan lause*

*(Let’s eat sir)*

MT : *Silahkan. Kok beda-beda lauknya?*

*(Yes please. How come it’s different?)*

FT : *Sama lause*



(It's same si)

MT : Ayam?

(Chicken?)

FT : *Ayam goreng*

(Fried chicken)

MT : Ayam goreng?

(Fried chicken?)

FT : *Iya...*

(Yes...)

In conversation 3, the underline utterances were called as tentativeness. It is called tentativeness because in this case male teacher (MT) showing the uncertainty in the interaction with the female teacher (FT). In this case, "Ayam?(Chicken?)" and "Ayam?(Fried Chicken?)" were categorized as tentative because male teacher used uncertainty utterances by asking again the female teacher (FT) to confirm the answers.

#### e. Compliment

According to Swann (2000) a wider range of compliments may be addressed to women than to men, and women also tend to pay more compliments. Compliments which are considered as kinds of speech acts have been defined as expressions of positive evaluation by the speaker to the addressee. As well as, according to Dirgeyasa (2015) the word compliment actually provides a number of similar, related and relevant words such as praise, respects, admiration, courtesy, flattery, courteous greetings, speech act, and act of politeness. This shows that the compliment is very powerful word and complex by its meaning, usage, and function as well. This also means that compliment is a matter good will of the speaker to the hearer. The primarily function of compliment is aimed to strengthening the solidarity between the speakers although it serves various functions.

#### Conversation 9

MT : *Dia ni suka-sukanya kesekolah kak. Bawa handuk diakesini*

(He went to school as he wanted, sister. He brings his towel here)

FT : *Sekalian ajalah bawasampo.*

(You may bring shampoo at once)

MT : *Dia kemaren hari minggu tu jalan-jalan sama istri*

*tercinta*(Last Sunday he traveled with his belovedwife)

FT : *Naik ini... perahunaga?*  
(Ride this... dragon boat?)

MT : *Enggak, kami jumpa dikisaran*  
(No, we met in Kisaran)

FT : *Kalau si kakang naik perahu naga sama istrinya siangbolong*  
(Mr. Kakang get on the dragon boat with his wife in the afternoon)

MT : *Akugakmaungomongsamakaukang.SamaajakaukayaksiTohabeduakalian.*  
*Diajak makan baru kelen jago.*  
(I don't want to talk to you, kang. You just look as same as with Toha. Both of you like to eat only)

FT : *Haha sakitnya hatiini.*  
(Haha this heart is broke)

In conversation 9, the underline utterances were the compliment used by male teacher (MT). "*Dia kemaren hari minggu tu jalan-jalan sama istri tercinta*" (Last Sunday he traveled with his beloved wife). It is called compliment because in this case male teacher (MT) used "*Istri tercinta* (beloved wife) in the interaction to the female teacher. These utterances show the praise by adding "*tercinta*".

## 4.2 Conversational Style of Female Teachers

### a. Amount of Talk

Swann (2000) stated that male speakers have been found to talk more than females, particularly in formal or public contexts. Amount of talk focusing on face-to-face interaction; it examines talk within the context of a variety of different kinds of activities. These activities can be held to form a continuum. At one end are "formal tasks"; at the other are informal non-task-oriented activities. In between the two are "informal tasks" and activities such as interaction in a college or university classroom which occur within formal structures but are not task-oriented (Tannen, 1993). Further, it is stated that the measure are vary; such as it can be through the total number of words, the total number of seconds spent talking, the number of turns at talk taken, and the average length of turn.

### Conversation 6

FT : *Ini adatisu*  
(Here is a tissue)

MT : *Bilang apanyabu?*

(What did you say?)

FT : *Ini ada tisu ku, bilang. Biasanyakan ngambil tisu yang ini* (Here is the tissue, I said. Usually you take this tissue)

MT : *Minta parfum yang semalam itu. Mantap wangi bah. Dimana dibeliit...*  
(Give me the perfume last night. Great fragrance. Where was you boughti...)

FT : *Janganlah mengejek. Kau bilang sepuluhribunya.*  
(Don't mock. You say only ten thousand)

MT : *Belikan satu kayak gitu.*  
(Buy one like that)

FT : *Harga sepuluhribunya*  
(Only ten thousand)

MT : *Udah turun itu sekarang lima ribu.*  
(It's already turned five thousand now)

FT : *Diamlah, haha gaksopan*  
(Shut up, hahait's impolite)

In conversation 6, the underline utterances were called as amount of talk. It is called amount of talk because in this case female teacher talk much in the interaction with the male teacher. In this case, *Ini ada tisu ku, bilang. Biasanyakan ngambil tisu yang ini* (Here is the tissue, I said. Usually you take this tissue) was categorized as amount of talk because female teacher talk much. After answering the offering from the male teacher by saying "*Ini ada tisu ku, bilang*", the female teacher talk again by saying "*Biasanyakan ngambil tisu yang ini*" to the male teacher (FT).

#### b. Interruption

According to Swann (2000) in interruptions male speakers interrupt female speakers more than vice versa. In line with the interruption, Gibson (2005) defined interruption on the basis of Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's theory of turn-taking organizations in conversation. However, he brought into his definition a new element which allows social and contextual variations. Interruption occurred when somebody started speaking before the prior speaker has completed his TCU and the prior speaker was actually prevented from completing that TCU.

#### Conversation 8

MT : *Ih kok jelek kali*  
(Ih look so bad)

FT : *Pulak jelek kali... ini nah.*

(*Not so bad.. here is*)

MT : *Hmm?*

(*Hmm?*)

FT : *Sinila dekat sikit, harus dekat.*

(*Here, close a little bit, mustclose*)

MT : *Haha*

(*Haha*)

In conversation 8, the underline utterances were called as interruption. It is called interruption because in this case female teacher (FT) interrupt the male teacher (MT) in the interaction within this context. In this case, ***Pulak jelek kali... ini nah.*** (*Not so bad.. here is*)” is categorized as interruption because this sentence showed that female teacher (FT) didn’t agree about the painting.

### c. Conversational Support

According to Swann (2000) female speakers more frequently use features that provide support and encouragement for other speakers, for example „minimal responses” such as *mmh* and *yeah*. The use of minimal responses (sometimes also called „backchannel” signals): words such as (in English) *mmh*, *yeah* and *right*, that are generally analyzed, not as speaking turns in their own right, but as conversational support provided by listeners, indicating their involvement in the conversation.

#### Conversation 2

MT : *Ada nyimpan remotben-q?*

(*does anyone keep remote infocus?*)

FT : *Disitu nyabiasanya*

(*there usually is*)

MT : *Tak adadisitu*

(*there isn’t*)

FT : ***Oh gak taulah***

(*oh... I don’tknow*)

In conversation 2, the underline utterances were called as conversational support. It is called conversational support because in this case the female teacher (FT) used a minimal response to the Female Teacher (FT). The utterances “Oh gak tau lah (oh... I don't know)” were the conversational support that used by female teacher (FT). The minimal response “Oh” used by male teacher in order to provide support to the utterance of male teacher (MT).

d. Tentativeness

According to Swann (2000) there are claims that female speakers use features that make their speech appear tentative and uncertain, such as „hedges“ that weaken the force of an utterance ( „I think maybe . . .“, „sort of“, „you know“) and certain types of „tag questions“ (questions tagged on to statements, such as („It's so hot, isn't it?“).

Data 5

FT : *Ih lapar aku. makanlahiyakan?*

(Oh, I'm hungry, let's eat)

MT : *Makanlah, nanti pulang jam dua makan lagi.*

(Just eat, two hours later you can eat again)

FT : *Iya.*

(Yes)

MT : *Ini aja bontoku baru dimakan*

(I just ate my food)

FT : *Ih... yang kebanyakan tak kenyang-kenyang pabakni.*

(Eww, you eat a lot of food and don't look full)

MT : *Udah lapar pulak, apa lagi yang ditunggu*

(Already hungry, what else is waiting for)

FT : *Tidak, soalnya mau melayat lagi nanti ini*

(No, because I want to attend the funeral ceremony later)

MT : *Melayat makanlag*

(Eat again after the funeral)

FT : *Gak ada kuahnya ya. Ini piring siapa ini yang tak becuci ni? (U42)*

(No sauce, huh. Whose plate is this that doesn't wash yet?)

MT : *Entah gak tau (U43)*

(I don't know)

In conversation 5, the underline utterances were called as tentativeness. It is called tentativeness because in this case the female teacher (FT) used uncertainty utterances to the Male Teacher (MT). In this case, the utterances “*Ih lapar aku. makanlah iyakan?* (Oh, I’mhungry, let’s eat)” were the conversational support that used by male teacher (MT). These tentativeness used by male teacher in order to showed the uncertain feeling of the female teaher (FT).

a. Compliment

According to Swann (2000) a wider range of compliments may be addressed to women than to men, and women also tend to pay more compliments. Compliments which are considered as kinds of speech acts have been defined as expressions of positive evaluation by the speaker to the addressee. As well as, according to Dirgeyasa (2015) the word compliment actually provides a number of similar, related and relevant words such as praise, respects, admiration, courtesy, flattery, courteous greetings, speech act, and act of politeness. This shows that the compliment is very powerful word and complex by its meaning, usage, and function as well. This also means that compliment is a matter good will of the speaker to the hearer. The primarily function of compliment is aimed to strengthening the solidarity between the speakers although it serves various functions.

Conversation 3

FT : *Makan lause*

(Let’s eat sir)

MT : *Silahkan. Kok beda-beda lauknya?*

(Yes please. How come it’sdifferent?)

FT : *Sama lause*

(It’s same si)

MT : *Ayam?*

(Chicken?)

FT : *Ayam goreng*

(Fried chicken)

MT : *Ayamgoreng?*

(Fried chicken?)

FT : *Iya...*

(Yes...)

MT : *Aku tadi ikan*

(I got fish just now)

FT : *Hmm... maaf ya*

(Hmm... I'm sorry)

In conversation 3, the underline utterances were the compliment used by female teacher (FT). "*Hmm... maaf ya* (Hmm... I'm sorry)". It is called compliment because in this case female teacher (FT) used "*Maaf ya* (I'm sorry) in the interaction to the male teacher. These utterances show the respect by adding "*Maaf*".

After analyzing the features of conversational style, the next was answering the realization of conversational style by male and female teachers based on the theory proposed by by Lakoff (1978) such as addition, substitution, deletion, and permutation. Based on data analysis, it was found that all the features of conversational style were realized by male and female teachers. The findings can be seen as follows:

Table 2 **The Realization of Conversational Style by Male and female teachers**

No	The Realization of Conversational Style	Male teachers	Percentage	Female teachers	Percentage
1	Addition	25	42.37%	25	38.46%
2	Substitution	5	8.47%	6	9.23%
3	Deletion	28	47.45%	25	38.46%
4	Permutation	1	1.69%	9	13.84%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100%</b>

Based on the table above, it showed that the frequency of deletion was the highest both by male and female teachers conversation. The second was addition. The third was substitution, and the last was permutation.

#### 4. Discussion

All of features of conversational style were uttered by male and female teachers in senior high school. Based on elaboration in findings that the features of conversational style such as: amount of talk, interruption, conversational support, tentativeness and compliment. According to Swann (2003) in interruptions male speakers interrupt female speakers more than vice versa. Further in using tentativeness, there are claims that female speakers use features that make their speech appear tentative and uncertain, such as „hedges“ that weaken the force of an utterance and certain types of „tag questions“.

But in this study, it can be seen that the used of interruption and tentativeness by male and female teachers were different from the theory of Swann (2003). In fact, the use of interruption by female teachers were larger than the male teacher. Further, in using tentativeness male teachers used tentative language much more than the female teachers

during the interaction.

There were different way of communication during conversation between male and female teachers in senior high school. Looking at the realization of conversational style of male and female teachers, the female teachers realized more than male teachers during the conversation with the male teachers.

## 5. Conclusion

All the features of conversational style were used by male and female teachers. Namely: amount of talk, interruption, conversational support, tentativeness and compliment. The result showed that the most dominant feature of conversational style realized by male and female teachers was amount of talk. The different ways of communication between male and female teachers in senior high school were expanded that female teachers are able to communicate by male-like strategies since they tend to directive while having conversation with male teachers during break time. Male and female teachers used different style in conversation because male and female teachers have different opinion about their status during the conversation. In addition, male and female teachers have different characteristics which also lead them having different style in conversation..

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