

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

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1.1 The Background of the Study

Conversation is often taken for granted because people never ask much about its nature. The speakers in a conversation assume that conversation is just a common activity. They think that there is no problem with it until they have a misunderstanding. In other words, the speakers begin to ask about the nature and function of conversation when they have confusion about the information presented in the conversation. For instance, when the two speakers ask questions about a certain topic, they then know that conversation is not easy.

In everyday communication, conversation is obviously a necessity. Through conversation, information or knowledge is transmitted as language has the function of transaction (Yule, 1985:5). People need information for their daily life. It is true that without conversation, people may lose their self-identity. As the speakers exchange information, they learn more about their own life.

There are many linguistic elements that should be considered in understanding a conversation. When two people speak to each other, there are noticeable events such as *turn-taking*, *elicitation* (giving a cue for another to speak), *topic development* and *facial expression* (Hudson, 1980:58). A speaker should know when to interrupt another. He must wait for the right moment to continue the conversation. Also, there must be a way of signaling

the other speaker to talk. The speakers' body language is an important aspect of the conversation because there is meaning in the body movement.

It is believed that for a conversation to function successfully, each speaker's turn should not go on too long, and should be accomplished without interruption, and at the end of one speaker's turn another speaker should take over without too long an intervening pause (Sabat, 1991:161).

When a speaker cannot respond to the other's stimulus, the conversation is going to fail. There must be a balance of exchange and turn-taking during a conversation. Elicitation functions well when the two speakers know when to interrupt or close the conversation. These elements should be familiar to those who want to know well about conversation.

At the initial stage of conversation, a topic is the most important segment of the talk. It should be developed to make the conversation interesting. If there is no continuation of the talk between the two speakers, this activity will produce a breakdown of communication. Silence is the result of being unable to develop and sustain the conversation. It is said that a conversation comes to a deadlock. Thus, a problem arises in the process of communicating to one another.

There are various ways of topic development. First, a topic can be shifted or changed. When a certain idea cannot make the speakers express anything, then, they may choose another topic. This occurs during a conversation. Of course, it depends on the background knowledge of the speakers to continue the talk or not. Second, the two speakers contribute more information to the given topic. Again the general knowledge of the

speakers is required for the development of the topic. If the speakers have extremely different knowledge background about a topic, it is almost impossible to sustain the conversation.

Facial expression can show whether the speakers really understand the topic. When a speaker grimaces, this indicates that the topic is unfamiliar. In this case, the other speaker must see the facial expression of the speaking partner. A confused speaker can be identified by his facial expression.

In reality, many speakers do not have skills in sustaining a conversation. Through the daily observation on how people actually speak to each other, there is clear evidence that speakers should know the strategy of speaking. This is quite acceptable. People have different ways of expressing themselves. Some may be straightforward and honest. Others try to keep a secret and in the end they have to evade questions from each speaker. If that is the case, again conversation is not an easy matter.

Evasive answers are also intended to sustain a conversation. The reason is that people do not want to expose themselves to the truth. Honesty is not always the best policy in conversation. Sometimes the truth must be explained indirectly. This event can be observed or proved when speakers use a different style such as the choice of words. When two professionals talk about their business, they may use certain terms to protect themselves from other people's bad intention.

Conversation can be analyzed from several aspects. It can be discussed from the view of the topic. The topic can be general or specific. No matter how and what the topic is, the speakers should be ready for the

continuation of the topic. This spoken discourse can also be discussed from the viewpoint of strategy. People have different responses to the same stimulus. Many want to make conversation more than a common talk. A secret can be told indirectly so that other hearers may not know it. An indirect way of saying something is called "implicature" (indirectness). This is also called a conversational implicature which can be distinguished from conventional implicature.

Having considered the nature and function of conversation, it is of interest to know how people usually sustain a conversation. All the factors mentioned above must be incorporated in understanding pragmatic aspects of language. It is believed that many students who have studied English cannot sustain a conversation because they have little information about conversation itself. It is this matter that becomes the topic to be discussed in this study.

By conducting a research on the performance of speakers in conversation, it is believed that the problems of communication are solved. The main problem is concerned with the functions of implicature in sustaining a conversation. This topic is treated as a scientific view of how speakers sustain conversations.

1.2 The Problem of the Study

The problems of the study are formulated in the following questions.

- 1) What are the functions of implicature in sustaining a conversation as found in the recorded conversations by selected speakers ?

- 2) What is the context where the implicature is performed or realized by the speakers in a conversation ?

1.3 The Scope of the Study

Strategies in sustaining a conversation vary from one speaker to another. It is almost impossible to predict the way a speaker wants to sustain a conversation. In the theory of conversation as part of pragmatics, an implicature is used as a starting point to sustain a conversation. The focus of this study is in the analysis of conversational implicatures both the generalized and particularized implicatures. The two types are incorporated as the conversational implicature for the analysis of the data.

1.4 The Objective of the Study

This study is aimed at finding out the functions of conversational implicature in sustaining a conversation and also attempting to find out the context in which the implicature is performed or realized in a conversation.

1.5 The Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to be useful for those who want to improve their speaking skill because conversation is the ultimate goal for the teaching of a foreign language like English. Enthusiasts especially teachers of English can also benefit from the findings because they can design a model of conversation for the purpose of teaching the speaking skill. Readers in general will be much more informed about the nature of talking.