ABSTRACT

ARMINA. *Conversational Skills used in the Conversation of Paired Students of Different English Mastery.* **Thesis. The Graduate Department of English Applied Linguistics. State University of Medan (SUT – UNIMED). Medan. 2013**

This descriptive qualitative study deals with the application of four conversational skills as performed by twelve students of the 12th grade of SMA Negeri 19, Medan in six conversations. Each conversation was performed by three different groups of speakers namely the high, medium and low mastery levels. The instrument for collecting data was a taperecorder. The recorded conversations were transcribed for the analysis. It was found out that all the four conversational skills were applied. The existence of the skills was confirmed. The students developed their skills in the conversation interaction. The turn-taking was initiated by patterns of question and answer, interruption and elicitation. The topic shifting was initiated by the need to switch to another topic based on the key words provided in the sentence that triggered a comment. The topic clarification was initiated by questions and statements. The topic maintenance was initiated by personal opinions. The reasons why they applied such skills in maintaining the conversations was that they needed the social recognition and experimented with the language. The clever students wanted to show off their knowledge and so they tried to talk at length. Even the slow students wanted to keep up with the bright students so that they could be regarded as clever students. It is suggested that students should be encouraged to apply the four skills and teachers should know more about the nature of conversation so that they can speak more fluently as they know the interaction process as a means of developing their conversational skills.