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Interruptions and politeness in David Letterman show “my guest no need introduction” Shah Rukh Khan episode

¹Christiani Tiwi Sumanti, ²Barli Bram

¹Magister Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Sanata Dharma University, Jalan Affandi, Sleman, Yogyakarta 55281, Indonesia

²Sanata Dharma University, Jalan Affandi, Sleman, Yogyakarta 55281, Indonesia

Corresponding author: barli@usd.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzed interruptions and politeness in the David Letterman Show. The data were collected from the show “My Guest No Need Introduction.” The study was qualitative research, and the data were analyzed and then classified into types of interruptions. Results showed 32 interruptions in the conversation uttered by two speakers in the show, more specifically 26 times of overlap interruptions, three times of simple interruptions, twice of silent interruptions, and once of butting-in interruption. It can be concluded that, first, the appropriate interruptions display positive strategies of politeness in the David Letterman Show. Interruptions could be done for a specific purpose to strengthen the bond between two speakers and to avoid misunderstanding. Second, the interruptions show politeness in conversation. Politeness appears to clarify statements to prevent misunderstandings between cultures.

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1. Introduction

The 21st-century era is the new era of teaching, learning, and communication. People live in the global world and work together. Communication is the bridge between people around the world to share their ideas. People gather in the workplace, education field, and community. People work and share their ideas when they enjoy the environment and understand the art of work. People meet one

another on social platforms; they have different backgrounds, religions, and interests. Once again, communication is the way to understand and enhance people in their communal patterns.

Communication has many elements, including the speech act to express their will through language. The understanding speech act is a must for foreign language learners because every culture in the world has its value. Politeness becomes an issue, and it can cause misunderstandings between speakers.

Politeness has two dimensions, positive and negative politeness. Positive politeness explains the value and shares the solidarity oriented. Meanwhile, negative politeness is a tendency when people try to avoid interrupting people (Holmes & Wilson, 2017). In the context of the conversation between two speakers from different regions and cultures, people have to know about the politeness strategy. When people are unconsciously transforming positive politeness into a negative one, it leads to misunderstanding. Holmes & Wilson (2017) also states that people from different cultural backgrounds have different rules of interaction, and it causes other speech acts expression. Recent research on politeness notes that taking into account the emotions of people means exploring ways and taking into account how people frame their actions and utterances (Brown, 2015; Brown & Levinson 1987; Cafaro, Glas, & Pelachaud, 2016; Fukada & Asato, 2004; Maha, 2014; Morand, 2003; Purwanto, 2020).

Interruptions are the indicators to display powers and casual conversation. Previous studies discussed interruptions on various contexts, for example, interruptions which happened in courtroom study (Liao, 2009; Liao & Tessuto, 2013), phone talks (Hutchby, 1992; Lee, Chen, & Tan, 2013), interviews (Aznárez-Mauleón, 2013; Hutchby, 2013; Lundell, 2009; Thornborrow, 2007), and conversations (Hilton, 2018; Noels, Yashima, & Zhang, 2020; Okamoto, Rashotte, & Smith-Lovin, 2002).

This research analyzed the interruption and cross-cultural communication differences between two public figures. The researchers analyzed David Letterman Show 'My Guest no Need Introduction' Shah Rukh Khan Episode for three reasons. First, the two public figures are influential. David Letterman is a well-known host in the USA. He starts his shows in the early 90s. Now, he is in his 70s, but he is still active in the television broadcast. David Letterman's show is one of the greatest late-night shows in the USA. Meanwhile, Shah Rukh Khan (SRK) is a superstar from Bollywood. His work and superstardom influence many people. He has millions of fans, and it is a chance to know the world from the perspective of celebrities. Later, students will learn about how to speak in the public or formal show, and the show will give a new perspective to see the world.

Second, David letterman represents a native English speaker, and Shah Rukh Khan represents a second language speaker. They represent two different cultures and perspectives. Third, this study aims to show the positive interruptions and how to face cross-cultural differences. The analysis on the David Letterman Show will help English learners to act wisely when they speak with a native speaker. It also shows the best manner of conversation in the public context.

The researchers gathered data by exploring the conversation in the show. Kielmann et al. (2012) state that the natures of quantitative research are interpretive and reflexive; therefore, it aims to explore the behavior of the natural setting. The research questions were formulated as follows. Firstly,

how do interruptions display in the cross-cultural communication context? Secondly, how does politeness on speech act appear in the David Letterman Show?

2. Method

The researchers used a qualitative research method. The researchers explored the conversations between speakers in the talk show. The data were collected from a video entitled David Letterman, My guest, no need introduction with Shah Rukh Khan. The researchers analyzed the collected data by watching the video several times and noting the cross-cultural communication. The researchers also noted the essential notions between the two speakers and interpreted the cultural meaning behind it. The researchers noted the interruptions and analyzed them by referring to Tao's (2018) theory about interruption, clarification, and affirmation (Kurtiæ, Brown, & Wells, 2013; Schegloff, 2000; Tannen, 1983). The researchers then classified the interruptions and presented them in tables.

3. Results and discussion

Table 1 below shows the frequency of interruptions in the David Letterman Show. The interruption categories are based on Ferguson's (1977) classifications, namely 1) Simple Interruption; 2) Overlap Interruptions; 3) Butting-In interruption; 4) Silent Interruptions.

Table 1. Types of Interruptions

No	Interruptions	David Letterman	Shah Rukh Khan
1	Simple Interruptions	1	2
2	Overlap Interruptions	20	6
3	Butting-In Interruptions	1	-
4	Silent Interruptions	1	1

Table 1 showed that there were 32 interruptions in the conversation uttered by two speakers in the show. Four types of interruptions appeared in the show; Simple Interruption, Overlap Interruptions, Butting-In Interruption, and Silent Interruption. The highest interruption that appeared in the show was Overlap Interruption. This interruption occurred 26 times in the show. Then, the second-highest interruption was the Simple Interruption which occurred three times. The third-highest interruption was Silent Interruption which occurred twice in the show. The lowest frequency was butting-In Interruption uttered by David Letterman. Anindya (2014) and Veronica (2016) showed similar results, distributed in four categories of interruptions.

3.1 Simple Interruptions

Simple interruption happens when the second speaker succeeds in interrupts the first speaker's sentence, and the first speaker does not have a chance to continue his or her sentences (Tao, 2018). The following is an example of the Simple Interruption in the show:

David: You live in your grandmother

SRK:

(20.32- 20.37)

Ya, ya in Banglore..

The first interruption was done by Shah Rukh Khan when David wanted to know about Shah Rukh Khan's adoption story. It is discussed in the dialogue that when Shah Rukh Khan was a baby, his mother gave him to his grandmother. Shah Rukh Khan explained that he lived with his grandmother in Bangalore, and he told David about the story. Shah Rukh Khan began to interrupt while David hesitated and said the words 'grandmother'; Shah Rukh Khan agreed with the word "yes" and could take David to turn to explain the phenomena. David Letterman performed the second simple interruption; examples of the Simple Interruption in the show included the following.

SRK: keep moving, we just you know

David:

(58-05-58.30)

but that know, inappropriate for me to pause, but

The dialogue above discussed the reasons why do Indians always dancing in Bollywood Movies. Shah Rukh Khan explained that everybody in India naturally loved to dance. The interruption happened when David interrupted Shah Rukh Khan while explaining the dance. David noted that it was inappropriate for him to interrupt, but he had to do that. The reason is about the limitless of time, they almost came to the end of the show, and David wanted Shah Rukh Khan to teach him how to dance. That's the reason David does the interruption. Meanwhile, Shah Rukh Khan did not have a chance to continue his explanation.

3.2 Overlap Interruptions

Ferguson states that Overlap interruptions happen when the second speaker interrupts the conversation, but the first speaker can continue his or her sentences. (Tao, 2018). Overlap interruptions were the highest interruptions that occurred in the show. It appeared 26 times. David has done 20 times interruptions in the show. Meanwhile, Shah Rukh Khan interrupted David's conversation only six times in the show. The following were the examples of the Overlap interruptions done by David during the one-hour show.

SRK: I don't want to be in that position

David:

SRK:

(11.19-11.27)

well, you set the bar kind of high

No, I don't..

In this conversation, David asked whether Shah Rukh Khan’s son wanted to be an actor like his father. Then, Shah Rukh Khan explained that his son did not want to be the one because he did not want to be compared with Shah Rukh Khan. When Shah Rukh Khan still explained the interruption that happened when David told his opinion by saying ‘well,’ he intended to add some jokes in the conversation, not means to disagree with that. Then, Shah Rukh Khan continued modestly to oppose when he said: “No, I don’t.”

SRK: They adopted me for 5 years

David:	No, no, I mean what is that	
SRK:		It wasn’t any legal or religious process.
(19.35-19.45)		

The conversation above discussed Shah Rukh Khan’s adoption when he was a baby. Shah Rukh Khan explained that her mother gave him to her grandmother and was adopted for five years. David interrupted the conversation while Shah Rukh still explained about the year. David said ‘No, no...’ it expressed his surprise because such an event did not happen in America. Shah Rukh Khan said the event was illegal and was not a part of the religious process.

SRK: He wasn’t very successful

David:	Freedom fighter against the	
SRK:		Against the British
(21.22-21.30)		

This conversation discussed Shah Rukh Khan’s father that was a freedom fighter. David was quite surprised and reassured about the explanation of **Shah Rukh Khan** that **Shah Rukh Khan’s father was** a freedom fighter against the British. David interrupted Shah Rukh Khan and reassured and said, “Freedom fighter,” and then Shah Rukh Khan continued David’s sentence, “Against the British.”

3.3 Butting-in Interruptions

Butting in Interruption happens when the second speaker intends to interrupt the conversation but fails (Tao, 2018). There was only one Butting-In interruption during the show. The following was the Butting-In Interruption.

SRK: That kind of

David:	is it real	
SRK:		encourage me to become an actor
(4.99.5.03)		

David failed to interrupt when he wanted to interrupt, and then Shah Rukh Khan continued his explanation about the play he was doing.

3.4 Silent Interruptions

Silent interruption happens when the first speaker seeks help from the second speaker and allows the second speaker to interrupt (Tao, 2018). Both David and Shah Rukh Khan said one silent interruption during the show. The following were the interruptions:

SRK: What do you say when people are not too well mannered
David: | they frank...
(19.06-19.13)

The conversation discussed ⁷Shah Rukh Khan's youngest son. Shah Rukh Khan asked help from David to find the correct term for the behavior. David successfully interrupted when he said, "They frank."

David: DDJL... this is
SRK: | DDLJ

The conversation above discussed one of Shah Rukh Khan's greatest hit movies Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge (DDLJ). David forgot about the abbreviation and asked for help for Shah Rukh Khan; Shah Rukh Khan interrupted and said 'DDLJ.'

Interruptions happen in everyday life. People do interrupt friends and colleagues. It can happen in formal and informal meetings. People need to differentiate and decide the best time to interrupt. The interruption has significant functions. There are two types of interruptions strategies; disruptive and cooperative interruption. Those two kinds of interruptions affect the engagement between two speakers. It represents interaction and cooperation (Kollock, Blumstein, & Schwartz, 1985). ¹⁰On the other hand, interruptions represent a battle of dominance and turn-taking control (Kollock, Blumstein, and Schwartz 1985; Octigan and Niederman 1979; Stets and Burke, 1996; West 1979; West and Zimmerman 1983).

Cooperative interruptions appeared in the David Letterman Shows. The interruptions strategies that appeared were agreement, assistance, and ²clarification. These notions are supported by other experts that categorized cooperative interruption into three sub-categories; agreement, assistance, and clarification (Kennedy & Camden, 1983; Li, 2001)

Table 2. Cooperative Interruptions

Cooperative Interruptions	David	Shah Rukh Khan
Agreement	10	2
Assistance	1	1
Clarification	12	6

The table above was modified from the dissertation about INI NET Show (Veronica, 2016.) The table showed that David and Shah Rukh Khan were doing positive interruptions strategies during the TV Shows. There were three types of interruption that happened in the Show: Agreement, Assistance, and Clarification.

3.5 Clarification

The highest frequency of interruption has appeared for clarification. David did 12 interruptions, and Shah Rukh Khan did six times. Clarification occurred in the Show because of cross-cultural communication. The clarification is mostly uttered in the overlapping interruption in the show.

The overlapping speech and interruptions involve collaborative action, which requires clarification and affirmation (Kurtiæ et al., 2013; Schegloff, 2000; Tannen, 1983). The examples of interruption for asking clarification were 1) Shah Rukh Khan mentioned adoption and to clarify that David interrupted the conversation. Then, Shah Rukh Khan explained that the process is neither a traditional nor religious process. His mother gave him to his grandmother just because his grandmother wanted a son. Shah Rukh Khan mentioned that in India, the people were so close to each other; therefore, the adoption happened. 2) Shah Rukh Khan mentioned the C gang. David interrupted to clarify the term gang that Shah Rukh Khan has mentioned. Shah Rukh Khan explained that the gang was just got together for fun, nothing criminal. 3) Shah Rukh Khan also interrupted to ask for clarity from David. David was sharing his experience of losing his mother. Shah Rukh Khan clarified whether David had experienced it when he was young, and David said so.

3.6 Agreement

The second-highest strategies that appeared in the show were interruption for asking agreement. David did ask for agreement ten times, and Shah Rukh Khan did two times. The agreement happened in the conversation after Shah Rukh Khan and David stated their opinion or clarified something. For example, When Shah Rukh Khan said that he had gang behavior, he and his friend had an illuminated batch and started to walk and imitate the gang member, and David said it was gang behavior. Shah Rukh Khan agreed about that and interrupted the conversation. Shah Rukh Khan also told a story about behavior that he did when he was a kid, and David agrees about that.

3.7 Assistance

In the show, interruption also happened to assist other speakers. This interruption has the lowest frequency in the show. Shah Rukh Khan did one interruption to assist David. It was when David forgot about the term DDLJ, one of Shah Rukh Khan's hit movies. Shah Rukh Khan interrupted to assist David about the real meaning behind the DDLJ acronym. David also showed one assistance when SRK forgot the term of the specific behavior shown by his kid, Abram. David interrupted and defined the term. All of the David Letterman TV Show interruptions had a significant purpose, and the interruptions are done politely to avoid misunderstanding.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

The analysis of the David Letterman Show ³reveals that the understanding of interruptions could be done for a specific purpose to strengthen the bond between two speakers and avoid misunderstanding. Interruptions show positives strategies, such as agreement, clarification, and assistance. During the TV shows and within the interaction, politeness appears when placing the required interruption techniques in position. More frequently, since he is the host, David interrupts the discussion, and it is done to explain the conversation and state his opinions. No propensity occurs to overwhelm other speakers.

To obtain solid generalizations of interruption strategies, future researchers are encouraged to cover a larger size of data. Future researchers can analyze other aspects of the cultural diversity between speakers or other politeness strategies in different talk shows that will enrich our understanding of various cultures to assist us in communicating better.

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