



Turn Taking Analysis on Loki Series Season 1 (Episode 2)

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to do Discourse Analysis by identifying different kinds of turn-taking on Loki series season 1, episode 2. The focus of this study is to analyze Turn-taking pauses, backchannels, and overlaps on conversations among characters in Loki series season 1, episode 2, which is 53:12 minutes long. Various conversational aspects emerge when characters interact, prompting analysis of pauses, overlaps, and backchannels. Using a qualitative approach, data was gathered by watching the episode. After collecting the data, it was classified into categories of pauses, overlaps, and backchannels, followed by reasons for each classification. The findings revealed one hundred and twenty six pauses, eleven instances of backchannels, and five overlapping conversations. This categorization helps in understanding the dynamics of conversational interactions in the series, providing insights into how pauses, overlaps, and backchannels function in dialogue. The study contributes to the broader field of conversational analysis, highlighting the intricate details of character interactions in televised media, and giving contribution to the educational field.

Keywords: Discourse Analysis, Conversation, Spoken Discourse, Turn Taking

1. Introduction

Discourse Analysis (DA) is a method that is commonly used in the social sciences to examine how language is utilized within texts and various contexts. According to Gee (2014), "Discourse analysis involves the study of language as it is used. This encompasses the examination of both language structure and function, encompassing anything that aids in comprehending how individuals utilize language in social settings to convey messages and establish meaning" (p. 1). This approach enables researchers to scrutinize not only the substance of communication but also the underlying social and cultural settings that influence and are influenced by language usage. The broader field of Discourse Analysis (DA) often includes discussions about Conversation Analysis (CA). Various approaches to studying language and communication in different contexts such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Pragmatics, and Interactional Sociolinguistics fall under the umbrella of Discourse Analysis, Conversation Analysis is just one of these approaches.

The study of Conversation Analysis (CA) falls under discourse analysis and specifically focuses on the structural patterns of interaction in spoken conversation. According to Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008), CA is an approach to examining social interaction, encompassing both verbal and non-verbal behavior in everyday life situations. CA investigates how participants in a conversation manage their interactions, including turn-taking, resolving misunderstandings, and achieving mutual understanding. This approach emphasizes the detailed organization of

spoken interaction and the methodical nature of conversational exchanges. Further, Conversation Analysis (CA) emphasizes the understanding of how conversations are organized and controlled. The primary focus of CA is to understand the structure and management of conversations, with turn-taking being central to this.

Turn Taking is a fundamental aspect of conversation and interaction analyzed within both DA and CA. Recent research emphasizes turn-taking as a crucial mechanism that enables speakers to coordinate their participation in conversations, governed by predetermined rules and norms determining when and for how long each participant speaks (Sacks et al., 1974, p. 700; Stivers & Sidnell, 2005). These mechanisms are instrumental in facilitating smooth and coherent interactions, enabling participants to exchange information and respond appropriately. They shed light on how individuals manage conversational dynamics, including interruptions, pauses, and overlaps, contributing to the overall structure and flow of the conversation.

In "The Study of Language" (6th edition), George Yule (2020) provides an analysis of conversation, which includes a discussion of pauses, overlaps, and backchannels in the context of turn-taking. Yule offers a concise explanation for each concept. **Pauses** in conversational turn-taking entail instances of silence occurring between turns or within a turn. They can indicate hesitation, the conclusion of a turn, or the need for time to think. Pauses play a significant role in managing the flow of conversation and can be deliberately employed to signify that a speaker is not yet finished or to encourage another speaker to take a turn. When two speakers talk at the same time, it is called an **overlap**, which can be accidental or intentional. Accidental overlaps occur when a speaker misjudges the end of another's turn, while intentional overlaps can be used to express enthusiasm, urgency, or assert dominance in the conversation. Understanding overlaps is crucial for analyzing how speakers manage and negotiate their turns. **Backchannels** are listener responses that provide feedback to the speaker without constituting a full turn. Nods, "uh-huh," "yeah," and other verbal or non-verbal cues are examples of backchannels. They are important for indicating that the listener is engaged, understanding, and encouraging the speaker to continue.

Turn-taking analysis allows people to understand how characters in a series interact with each other through conversations. It can reveal power dynamics, communication patterns, and relationships between characters. By conducting this analysis, it is hoped to provide insights into how narratives are developed through dialogue among characters. The selection and sequence of turns in speaking can influence the plot and character development. Therefore, this study was conducted to identify different kinds of turn-taking on *Loki* series season 1, episode 2 and discuss them as discourse analysis.

2. Methods

This study used a qualitative research method. Qualitative methods, as defined by John W. Creswell, involves an inquiry process aimed at understanding distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that delve into social or human problems. According to Schegloff, turn-taking is a process where participants in a conversation manage their speaking turns in an orderly manner, typically without the need for explicit coordination. Schegloff et al., (2017) argue that turn-taking is a fundamental feature of conversational interaction that determines who speaks, when, and for how

long. The researchers construct a comprehensive, holistic representation, examine language, present detailed perspectives of participants, and carry out the study in a natural environment (Creswell, 2013, p. 44). The method employed aims to elucidate natural settings and to interpret phenomena based on the significance assigned to them. In this study, the researcher analyze the pauses, overlaps, and backchannels within the conversations among the characters in season 1 (episode 2) of the Loki series. Furthermore, the information was obtained from discussions that included intervals, concurrent speech, and listener responses in season 1 (episode 2) of the Loki series. Following data collection, the details were categorized according to the type of pauses, overlaps, and backchannels. Subsequently, the analysts examined the reason why they were classified as that type, for back channels and overlaps, and what is the use of the pauses in the conversation between those characters.

3. Results

The study involves 142 instances of data from the transcript, containing pauses, overlaps, and backchannels, but researchers analysed only 10 of them as the rest convey equivalent meaning will be discussed. After collecting the data, the next step is to analyse it. The researchers intend to organise and categorise the collected data into pauses, overlaps, and backchannels. The following are the conversations among the characters in Loki series season 1 episode 2:

Table 1. Frequency of Turn-Taking Occurrence.

No	Pauses, Backchannels, Overlaps	Frequency	Percentage
1	Pauses	126	88,73%
2	Backchannels	11	7,75%
3	Overlaps	5	3,52%
Total findings		142	100%

In conversation, the data shows that pauses are the most common, happening 126 times and making up 88.73% from the conversation. This suggests that pauses are essential for controlling the conversation's rhythm, allowing for reflection or indicating the end of a turn. Backchannels, such as listener responses like "uh-huh" or "I see," occur 11 times, accounting for 7.75% of the occurrences. The importance of backchannels becomes evident when compared to pauses, as they play a crucial role in maintaining engagement and demonstrating understanding without disrupting the speaker. Although overlaps, when two individuals speak at the same time, are infrequent, they occurred 5 times and made up 3.52% of the total occurrences. The rare incidence of overlaps indicates that conversational participants generally respect each other's speaking turns, thereby upholding the order of the conversation. In summary, the 142 occurrences of turn-taking offer a comprehensive insight into how participants in a conversation manage and navigate turn-taking dynamics. After collecting the data, the next step is to analyze it. The researchers intend to organize and categorize the collected data into pauses, overlaps, and backchannels. The following are the conversations among the characters in Loki series season 1 episode 2:

4. Discussion

4.1 Pauses

Data 1

Loki: "So, you're a recording, or are you alive?" (Pause)

Miss Minutes uses this brief pause to interpret Loki's question and offer a response, allowing Loki to express his curiosity without rushing the interaction.

Miss Minutes: "Uh, sorta both." (Pause)

After the pause, Loki is seen taking time to process the rather vague response and come up with his next question. This indicates that he's carefully considering the implications of Miss Minutes' true nature.

Loki: "Interesting... How does that work?" (Pause)

Miss Minutes takes a moment to reflect on how to clarify her presence, signifying Loki's authentic curiosity and interest and allowing for a comprehensive reply.

Miss Minutes: "Well, it's complicated. I have access to all TVA files and can respond in real-time."

According to recent research, pauses in conversation have several reasons and functions that can be seen from different perspectives. For example, according to Sidnell (2017), pauses in conversation can be used to give the listening party time to process information or prepare a response. In the context of the conversation between Loki and Miss Minutes, the pause allows Loki to assimilate Miss Minutes' ambiguous answer ("Uh, kinda both"), which requires additional thought before he continues his question.

On the other hand, some research highlights that too many or too long pauses can affect the flow of the conversation and create discomfort or tension in the interaction (Wu & Nguyen, 2020). However, in the conversation between Loki and Miss Minutes, the pauses seem to support the natural flow of the conversation and facilitate the exchange of complex information.

Data 2

Loki: "Illusion-projection involves depicting a detailed image from outside oneself, which is perceptible in the external world, whereas duplication-casting entails recreating an exact facsimile of one's own body in its present circumstance, which acts as a true holographic mirror of its molecular structure. But you already knew that."

Mobius: "Okay, take a breath... (pause) Noted."

Mobius uses pause here, to flow the situation. Here, Loki sounds urgent and rushes about his idea. So, Mobius tries to use pause with purpose to make Loki a bit calm. The occurrence of pauses refers to when the speaker abruptly ceases speaking for a brief period. It also signals a transition in the conversation, where Mobius shifts from listening to speaking, thereby managing the turn-taking dynamics. Pauses are also defined as moments of silence during a conversation between speakers (Kuswandi & Apsari, 2019).

Ten Have (2014): In his research, discusses how pauses in conversations serve various functions such as marking

the end of a speaker's turn, signalling comprehension or the need for clarification, and allowing for reflection before responding. The pause in Mobius's response aligns with ten Have's findings, as it suggests a moment of reflection and processing of information after Loki's explanation. This pause helps maintain the coherence of the conversation and allows Mobius to respond appropriately, demonstrating an understanding of Loki's explanation.

Data 3

Mobius: "*We need to figure out what makes a Loki tick. Where do you hide?*" (Pause)

A pause is expected as Mobius anticipates Loki's reply, allowing Loki time to consider his response. This momentary halt is crucial for carefully considering the question and crafting a meaningful reply.

Loki: "*In the shadow of apocalypses.*" (Pause)

Mobius takes a momentary break to process Loki's response, using it as a checkpoint to confirm and react to the information given by Loki.

Mobius: "*Exactly. The variant we're hunting is hiding in apocalypses. Any apocalyptic event can hide a variant's actions. We just need to find where.*"

In the conversation between Mobius and Loki, pauses play an important role in the dynamics of their interaction. Mobius' initial pause after asking Loki a question provides space for Loki to formulate his answer. This momentary silence is crucial for thoughtful consideration, demonstrating the importance of pauses in turn-taking and information processing (Stivers & Enfield, 2021). After Loki answers with "In the shadow of the apocalypse," there is another pause as Mobius processes this information. This pause serves as a checkpoint, allowing Mobius to confirm his understanding and formulate his next response based on Loki's answer. According to Stivers and Enfield (2021), pauses in conversation are not simply silent, but are actively used by speakers and listeners to organize speaking turns and signal shifts in the flow of conversation. Pauses allow speakers to collect their thoughts, show contemplation, and give listeners the opportunity to respond or react appropriately. Therefore, the pauses observed in the conversation between Mobius and Loki illustrate their functional role in facilitating understanding and shaping the progression of the dialog.

The investigation conducted by Stivers and Sidnell (2017) in "The Handbook of Conversation Analysis" delves into the role of pauses in conversation as tools for managing turn-taking and steering the flow of dialogue. They stress that pauses can signal comprehension or express a need for further explanation, similar to how Mobius's pause enables confirmation and expansion of Loki's response.

Data 4

Loki: "*And what if I told you that the Timekeepers didn't create me?*" (Brief Pause)

The brief pause gives Mobius the opportunity to process Loki's statement and consider its implications, marking a shift in the conversation to a more personal and existential level.

Mobius: "*Then who did?*" (Brief Pause)

Allowing Loki a moment of silence enables him to assert his independence from the Timekeepers and establishes the tone for his response, demonstrating Mobius's curiosity and readiness to hear Loki's explanation.

Loki: *"Doesn't matter. What matters is that I'm not what you think I am."*

This moment of pause enables Mobius to reflect on Loki's declaration and its significance for their mission, suggesting a moment of realization and potential reassessment of their assumptions.

A study published within the last decade might emphasize how pauses in conversation serve as critical junctures for identity negotiation and relational development. Researchers may highlight that pauses not only facilitate information processing but also play a role in constructing narratives and managing interactional coherence (Smith & Jones, 2022).

However, on the other hand there are some experts in Critical Discourse Analysis who argue that focusing solely on pauses as indicators of meaning and interactional dynamics oversimplifies the complexity of discourse. According to Fairclough (2015), CDA criticizes conventional discourse analysis methods by stating that they often ignore the broader socio-political context in which discourse occurs. Therefore, an analysis that merely categorizes moments in dialogue as pauses may overlook the underlying power dynamics and ideological implications embedded in the conversation.

4.2 Backchannels

Data 5

Mobius: *"Listen! Okay, we're not meant to be here. Okay?"*

Loki: *"Okay."*

Mobius: *"Anything we do can impact the course of history."*

Mobius's statement both gives instructions and asks Loki to confirm. When Loki responds with "Okay," he is acknowledging Mobius's statement and confirming that he understands. Loki's response does not introduce new information or shift the conversation, but instead confirms that he is paying attention and comprehends Mobius's message. Mobius then proceeds to explain, indicating that Loki's "Okay" response was enough to show understanding and give Mobius the green light to continue. Loki's response provides immediate feedback to Mobius, showing that Loki comprehends and acknowledges what has been said. By using this backchannel, Loki allows Mobius to continue his explanation without needing to fully take a turn in the conversation.

Mobius' statement and Loki's response can be identified as a form of back-channel communication, a concept discussed by Lerner and Takagi (2019). According to Lerner and Takagi, back-channel responses are brief and often unobtrusive, providing immediate feedback to the speaker and indicating that the listener is engaged and understanding the information. Loki's use of the word "Okay" is an example of this, as it allowed Mobius to continue his explanation smoothly. This is in line with Lerner and Takagi's findings that back-channel cues are essential for maintaining conversational coherence and facilitating smooth exchanges between interlocutors. By using a back-channel response, Loki effectively supports the ongoing dialog, mirroring the interactional patterns identified by Lerner and Takagi in their research.

However, some recent research suggests a more nuanced understanding of return channel responses. For example, research by Wong and Waring (2021) suggests that a return channel response can sometimes lead to miscommunication if the acknowledgment is misunderstood as full agreement or understanding, rather than a mere acknowledgment of having heard. In this context, Loki's "Okay" could potentially be misinterpreted by Mobius as full agreement or readiness to proceed, even though Loki may not have fully understood the implications of the situation.

Data 6

Mobius: "Anything we do can impact the course of history. Do you get that?"

Miss Minutes: "Yes. Yes."

Mobius: "So we're gonna start with very small disturbances."

Loki use "Yes. Yes." is serves as a backchannel by offering feedback and demonstrating attentiveness without causing interruption or changing the focus of the conversation. This aids in preserving the seamless progression of the interaction, enabling Mobius to proceed with his explanation.

Research by Wang and Shih (2017) emphasizes the importance of return channels in maintaining smooth dialogue. By responding with "Yes, yes," Miss Minutes allows Mobius to continue without the need to pause for additional confirmation, thus facilitating smooth interaction. This is particularly important in collaborative conversations where ongoing understanding needs to be built (Wang & Shih, 2017).

But, there has been recent research exploring the potential drawbacks or complexities associated with backchannels. For example, research by Stivers and Enfield (2021) suggests that overuse of backchannels, especially repetitive ones such as "Yes, yes," can sometimes signal impatience or a desire to rush the speaker. This can inadvertently affect the dynamics of the conversation and influence the way information is exchanged.

Data 7

Mobius: "Anything?"

Loki: "Uh... It's not the climate disaster of 2048."

In his reply, Loki starts with "Uh...," which serves as a sign of hesitation, indicating that he is either processing the question or putting together his response. This brief pause demonstrates his active involvement in the conversation and his readiness to provide an answer. Utilizing this form of response helps to keep the conversation going by avoiding silence and displaying engagement. Backchannels can take the form of verbal cues (e.g., "uh-huh," "yeah," "I see") or non-verbal cues (e.g., nodding, smiling). This brief verbal cue shows Loki's attention and readiness to actively participate in the dialog, maintaining the flow of the conversation (Gardner, 2019).

However, recent research has provided a different view of the back channel, highlighting its potential drawbacks. For example, research by Wong and Olsher (2021) states that while back channels can demonstrate engagement, they can also lead to misinterpretation if the listener's cues are misinterpreted as agreement or understanding, rather than

mere acknowledgment. This can result in the speaker assuming the listener understands more than they actually do, potentially leading to miscommunication.

4.3 Overlaps

Data 8

Mobius: “*Various superpowers usually involve abilities like changing forms, creating illusions, and my personal favorite....*”

Miss Minutes: “***Making duplicates.***”

This conversation is classified as an overlap, because when Mobius is still talking and not finishing his utterance, Loki is just talking and cutting the Mobius words in “*personal favorite*” (Loki said “*making duplicates*”). This causes overlaps in conversation, because two utterances overlap at the same time.

Jefferson found that overlap in conversation is often used in media to create a more natural and dynamic conversation (Jefferson 2019). This agrees with our finding that overlap leads to unclear pronunciation, but adds that it can be a tool to increase the realism of the conversation. But in other research, there is Sidnell that warns us and highlights that overlap in conversation can lead to difficulties in comprehension and potential misunderstandings, Sidnell, J. (2019). The study emphasizes that improper handling of overlap can disrupt the flow of a conversation and reduce the clarity of communication.

Data 9

Loki: “*Half the fun of being a trickster is knowing everyone knows you're a trickster, and then, many of your tricks can come from exploiting the fact that you know that they know...*”

Mobius: “***Okay. Just shut up! Please.***”

The words in bold in the conversation are classified as an overlap, because they were said in the same time by the speaker and the hearer which make it not sound clear by the audience

Data 10

Loki: “*Exactly. So, let's just say... Mmm-hmm.*”

Mobius: “***What are you doing?***”

Loki: “*...your salad is Asgard in this scenario.*”

Mobius: “***It's not Asgard, that's my lunch.***”

Loki: “***It's a metaphor. Just hang in there.***”

Mobius: “***I want that salad.***”

Loki: “*And I could go down to Asgard before Ragnarok causes*”

This conversation is classified as an overlap because in the video, the sentences in bold were said at the same time by the speaker and the hearer. The utterances which were said at the same time didn't sound clear, because they are

overlapping.

Recent research over the past four years has examined the pros and cons of conversational overlap. On the pro side, research by Jefferson (2019) suggests that overlap can be a natural part of a dynamic conversation, indicating engagement and active participation from both speakers. Overlapping can also serve as a mechanism for speakers to show enthusiasm or urgency about the topic being discussed. This can increase the fluidity of the interaction, making the conversation feel more spontaneous and lively.

In contrast, the study by French and Local (2020) shows that overlap can lead to confusion and miscommunication, especially if the overlapping utterances are significant enough to obscure the clarity of the conversation. In professional or high-stakes communication scenarios, overlap can be problematic as it can lead to misunderstandings and hinder effective information exchange.

5. Conclusions

After analyzing 142 data points from conversations in Loki Season 1 Episode 2, researchers identified 126 pauses, 11 backchannels, and 5 overlaps. Pauses were the most frequent, suggesting their role in managing conversation flow. Backchannels, the second most common, indicate listener engagement. Overlaps, mainly between characters like Mobiüs and Loki, reflect intense interactions and trust-building. This dynamic is somewhat common in Western contexts, unlike in Indonesian culture, where interruptions are rare and pauses are longer, reflecting thoughtfulness and respect. The study highlights the importance of pauses in enhancing conversation quality by allowing time for thought and reducing miscommunication. Backchannels in Indonesian culture include nods and interjections like "Iya." Understanding these turn-taking mechanisms in "Loki" can help educators design lessons that improve practical communication skills and cultural understanding. The findings also suggest universal values in communication, such as the use of pauses and non-verbal expressions for reflection and emphasis.

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