# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Research Background

People will always create conversation when they interact to each other. Stenstrom defines conversation as "a social activity involving two or more participants who talk about something" (Stenstrom, 1994:189). Some purposes of making conversation are relating people to a lot of friends, giving information to other people, and trading with other people. Conversation is usually preceded in an organized manner. Commonly, an utterance produced by a certain speaker will be responded by another utterance from another speaker (the addressee). As a result, a proper conversational organization or structure will be created.

The idea that conversational interaction represents an institutional order brought by Harvey Sacks, Gail Jefferson and Emmanuel Schegloff in the early 1960 along with Conversation Analysis approach [which at the time was quite radical since the dominant linguistic view about talk was Chomskyan that said talk is 'too disordered and essentially degenerate realization of linguistic competence' (as cited in Seedhouse, 2004:2)] has been making analysts try to study conversation for decades. Although Jefferson, Sacks, and Schegloff's home discipline is sociology, Seedhouse explained that CA is also a suitable methodology for applied linguist to use, however the words used in talk are not studied as semantic units, but as

products or objects which are designed and used in terms of the activities being negotiated in the talk. (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998:14 as cited in Seedhouse, 2004)

In CA, most of early works focused on ordinary conversation such as casual conversation, chat and ordinary narratives (this is also called pure CA). Then, in the late of 1970s, the attention shifts to the tensions between those local practices and any larger structures, such as institutional rules, instructions, accounting, obligations, etc. The latter is then called applied CA. Its focus is to use basic CA as a resource to understand the work of social institution s such as law, education, and medicine. Some of the example of institutional talks are verbal interaction in doctor-patient (White, 2011), student-supervisor consultations (Bowker, 2012; Vehviläinen, 2009; Etehadieh and Rendle-Short, 2016), news interviews (Clayman, 1990), and interaction in courtroom (Atkinson & Drew, 1979).

This study presents an analysis of student-supervisor consultation as the example of institutional talk. In Jambi University, students are given two supervisors to help them writing their thesis. During the writing progress, there have to be regular meetings between the supervisor and student which is called supervision. In this institutional setting, the aim of the meeting is for the supervisor and student to collaboratively move the research project forward (Etehadieh & Rendle-Short, 2016). Commonly, the student will present their work and the supervisor guides the student through the research process.

However, supervision is often perceived as problematic. Some lecturers would sometimes report conversations with particular students were difficult and mutual understanding was negotiated laboriously. On the other hand, some students

found it difficult to deliver the idea, or did not have clues how to construct a proper explanation toward the supervisors' questions. When this kind of misunderstanding happens at the early meeting of supervision where the topic is still negotiated, the upcoming process will result in uncomfortableness and confusion of both parties.

Regarding to its complexity and the fact that the interaction between supervisor and student in this supervision context remain 'unpredictable,' 'poorly understood,'(Grant, 2003), some researchers have been starting to pay attention more to do empirical research on this subject. One of the studies in the context of thesis supervision is carried out by Bowker (2012) in which he used supervision meetings as a site for talk between international students and academics to look at how supervision meetings are 'talked into being' (Heritage, 1984a: 290, as cited in Bowker, 2012). He focused on students' pauses after an informing or advising action. Another study by Vehviläinen (2009) also used the context of supervision. She analyzes student-initiated advice sequences in Finnish master's thesis supervision, encounters where teachers and students discuss students' ongoing thesis work. The newest study that used supervision meeting is carried out by Etehadieh and Rendle-Short (2016) who focus on the supervision in the context of higher education. They examine how supervisors are often able to appropriately identify the nature of a potentially ambiguous pause through an understanding of epistemic or knowledge of who knows what.

However, in the body of institutional talk literature, especially in supervision context there is no CA study devoting to the issue how supervisors and student negotiated a proposed topic before they reach agreement that this topic is

qualified for 'full thesis'. Therefore, the researcher decided to investigate that interaction, not by interviewing both sides about their perceptions and experiences, but by listening to and analyzing their conversations focusing on the early meeting where supervisors and student still negotiated a proposed topic before both party reached agreement to work on that topic until it is finished.

**1.2 Research Question**

In order to guide the research, the researcher formulates the following question:

How is the talk-in interaction between supervisor and student in the context of thesis supervision?

**1.3 Research Purpose**

Based on the explanation above, the researcher conducts this research to investigate how both student and supervisor try to build mutual understanding in their supervising session.

**1.4 Research Limitation**

In this research, the problem is limited to the analysis of the conversation between the supervisor and his student as supervisee. The participants of this research were limited to Jambi University lecturer and student whose proposal had not been accepted yet, in other words, she had not done the Seminar Proposal yet. The recording were taken in the early meeting of the supervision in which the student and the supervisor were still negotiating the proposed topic.

**1.5 Research Significance**

This study will be useful to understand how to build a good communication between supervisor and student in supervision context. It also makes the student or even the supervisor get better understanding on how miscommunication can arise, thus may be able to avoid it in the future. In addition, this research may be useful for future researcher who is interested in conversation analysis.

**1.6 Key Term of the Study**

1.6.1 Thesis Supervision

Supervision generally consists of regular meetings between the supervisor and student. In this institutional setting, the aim of the meeting is for the supervisor and student to collaboratively move the research project forward (Etehadieh & Rendle-Short, 2016).

1.6.2 Conversation Analysis

The study of sequences of actions and their interactional products, with the starting point being "unique adequacy" of such an instance, what it is that makes some talk just that which it is, and nothing else (Gardner, 2004)

1.6.3 Institutional Talk

The interaction that normally involves the participants in specific goal orientations that are tied to their institution-relevant identities: doctor-patient, teacher-student, bride-groom, etc. (Heritage, 2005)

### 1.6.4 TRP

At the Transition Relevance Places (TRP) point, a simple rule system can be used to determine who would be expected to speak next (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974)

### 1.6.5 TCU

Turns are made up of units which they call Turn Constructional Units (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). A variety of grammatical units may function as TCUs: words, phrases, clauses and sentences.

### 1.6.6 Repair

Treatment of trouble occurring in interactive language use. (Seedhouse: 2004)