



**ETHNOGRAPHY OF COMMUNICATION IN THE FIRST OF THE 2012
PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE BETWEEN PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA AND
GOVERNOR MITT ROMNEY**

JOURNAL ARTICLE

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Ethnography of Communication in the First of the 2012 Presidential Debate between President Barack Obama and Governor Mitt Romney

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is aimed to find the elements of ethnography of communication in the debate among Jim Lehrer (the moderator), President Barack Obama (a president candidate from Democratic Party) and Governor Mitt Romney (a president candidate from Republican Party) by using descriptive qualitative method. The elements of ethnography of communication are setting and scene, participant, end, act sequence, key, instrument, norm and genre. Setting of time is at night and setting place is Magness Arena at the University of Denver in Denver, Colorado. Scene of the situation in the debate is serious and quiet. Participants of the debate are Jim Lehrer (the moderator), President Barack Obama (a president candidate from Democratic Party) and Governor Mitt Romney (a president candidate from Republican Party). The end of this debate is discussing on differences about domestic issues. The act sequence of the debate is divided into opening stage, middle stage and closing stage. The key of the debate is serious. The instrumentalities are spoken text, that consists of turn taking, standard grammar, filler, reparation, repetition, colloquialisms, incomplete clause, and closing statement. The norm of the debate uses positive politeness, because there is social status difference between the speakers and the relationship is not intimate. The genre of the text is debate. The genre consists of definition motion, idea development, and rebuttal, and the linguistic features are the use of question and answer, present tense, future tense, past tense, modal verbs, hedging utterances.

Key words: *Ethnography of Communication, Communication, Debate*

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan unsur-unsur etnografi komunikasi dalam debat antara Jim Lehrer (moderator), Presiden Barack Obama (calon presiden dari Partai Demokrat) dan Gubernur Mitt Romney (calon presiden dari Partai Republik) dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Unsur-unsur etnografi komunikasi adalah setting and scene, participant, end, act sequence, key, instrument, norm and genre. Debat ini terjadi pada malam hari di Magness Arena di University of Denver di Denver, Colorado. Situasi debat ini serius dan tenang. Peserta debat adalah Jim Lehrer (moderator), Presiden Barack Obama (calon presiden dari Partai Demokrat) dan Gubernur Mitt Romney (calon presiden dari Partai Republik). Tujuan debat ini adalah membahas perbedaan tentang isu-isu domestik. Urutan debat dibagi menjadi pembukaan, isi dan penutup. Kunci dari perdebatan serius. Media yang digunakan adalah text lisan, yang terdiri dari taking turn, standard grammar, filler, reparation,

repetition, colloquialisms, incomplete clause, and closing statement. *Norma debat menggunakan kesantunan positif , karena adanya perbedaan Status sosial antara pembicara dan hubungan ini tidak intim . Genre teks ini adalah debat. Genre terdiri dari gerak definisi, pengembangan ide, dan sanggahan, dan fitur linguistik adalah penggunaan tanya jawab, present tense, future tense, past tense, modal verb, dan hedging.*

Kata Kunci: *Debat, Etnografi komunikasi, Komunikasi*

INTRODUCTION

People need a language to communicate each other. Language is believed as a tool to communicate. It plays an important role in life, because all people use language to communicate with each other. As a function of language, communication is defined as a process of transferring and exchanging ideas, information from one person to others in order to get feedback as the result of the communication itself. It is always used in social interaction to make relation with other people, because it is the way to the social life works.

Communication is influenced by many aspects of life, such as culture and society. Every particular group of speakers living around the world has its own culture and sociality. They both can be seen from the way the group of speakers communicates with others. Culture has important role in development and variation of language used in particular group of speaker, while society is group of people that use language to communicate. It correlated with (Schiffrin, 1994:138) "To begin with, the main function of human language is **communication**, and since linguistics is the scientific study of language, it goes without saying that the study of communication is one of the major goals of linguistics. On the other hand, the "understanding of communication is ... important for anthropologists: the way we communicate is part of our cultural repertoire for making sense of -and interacting with -the world."

To know language influenced by the culture inside, people need to regard ethnography of communication. Ethnography of communication is a study of language influenced by the culture and society inside. The ethnography of communication aims at describing the form and functions of verbal and non- verbal communicative behavior in particular cultural or social setting. Ethnography of communication is based on the premise, that the meaning of an utterance can be understood only in relation to the 'speech event' or 'communicative event' in which it embedded. Formal descriptions in the ethnography of communication focus on linguistic units above the sentences and the character of such communicative events, i.e., speech situation (e.g. ceremonies), speech event (e.g. greetings, compliments) is culturally determined. Romaine (1994:22) states "A speech community is a group of

people who do not necessarily share the same language, but share a set of norms and rules for the use of language. The boundaries between speech communities are essentially social rather than linguistic. A speech community is not necessarily co-extensive with a language community". In line with that, Labov also states that speech community is a group that used language with rules and norm to interact. Labov (1972:120-1) states that 'the speech community is defined by participation in a set of shared norms which may be observe in overt type of evaluative behavior, and in the uniformity of abstract patterns of variation in respect in particular level of usage.

Studying ethnography can give more knowledge of other aspects of culture, communicative situations and event of the organization. In the ethnographic research, there are several kinds of speech event: talk show, debate, ceremony, news, gossip, interview, etc. It correlated with Hymes (1972a, b:55-57) in uses the word SPEAKING as an acronym for the various factors that he deems to be relevant.

Debate is defined as a formal argument or discussion of a question, e.g. at a public meeting or in parliament or congress, with two or more opposing speakers, and often ending with a vote (Hornby, 1995:299). Based on the explanation above, this research analyzed the element of Ethnography of Communication in the First of the Presidential Debate between Governor Mitt Romney and President Barack Obama 2012 and seeks to describe the meanings of central themes in the life word of the subjects. The main task in presidential debate is to understand the meaning of what the participants say.

METHOD

Research Design

In this study, the researchers used qualitative descriptive method. Isaac and Michael (1987:42) state that: "The purpose of descriptive method is to describe systematically situation or area of interest factually and accurately". The researchers used descriptive qualitative method because this research cannot be counted by the numbers but it is only based on the quality of the presidential debate. Then, this research is not to compare and identify relations between two variables or more.

This research used qualitative descriptive method which is aimed at finding out the elements of ethnography of communication and also describing all aspects that found in the Presidential Debate between President Barack Obama and Governor Mitt Romney.

Unit of Analysis

Unit of analysis in this research is every utterance produced by the participants in the presidential debate particularly President Barack Obama, Governor

Mitt Romney, and Jim Lehrer (as a moderator). The utterances can also differentiate meaning of language that is used in society.

Source of Data

The data of this research are utterances. The data were transcript and video of Jim Lehrer (as a moderator), President Barack Obama, and Governor Mitt Romney in first presidential debate 2012. The researchers used not only transcript but also video as the data in this research in order to get the real information and situation in the presidential debate. It is hoped that the video and transcript support this study well.

Techniques of Data Collection

The data were collected through two steps : the searching for the transcript and video from the internet and downloading the data from the websites: <http://debates.org/index.php?page=october-3-2012-debate-transcript>, and <http://edition.cnn.com/election/2012/debates/first-presidential-debate>, on Wednesday, March 20, 2013.

Techniques of Data Analysis

Analyzing the data was a very important way in this research. Data analysis is a process in organizing the data into a categorical pattern and unit of basic analysis. To analyze the data the researchers used some steps: Analyzing the data to find out the elements of ethnography of communication in the First Presidential Debate between Governor Mitt Romney and President Barack Obama, classifying the elements of the ethnography of communication which occur in the debate by Hymes (1972a, 55-57), interpreting the data deeply.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Table 4.1 the elements of Ethnography of Communication used in the first presidential debate between President Barack Obama and Governor Mitt Romney.

Elements of Ethnography of Communication	Description	Turn
Setting and scene	<p>Setting of time: dated on October 3, 2012. In the Evening at 9.00p.m-10.30p.m Eastern Time</p> <p>Setting of Place: in the Magness Arena at the University of Denver in Denver, Colorado.</p> <p>Scene of debate: the situation in the debate is</p>	1

	serious and quite.	
Participants	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jim Lehrer as a moderator 2. President Barack Obama as a president candidate from Democratic Party 3. Governor Mitt Romney as a president candidate from Republican Party 	1
Ends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ends of the presidential debate is to discuss on differences about domestic issues in United States between the candidates. • The ends of Jim Lehrer in the debate is to give topic discussion and control the debate (control the time management in the debate) • The end of President Barack Obama in the debate is to explain his mission and give argumentation in domestic policy to people in the United States. • The end of Governor Mitt Romney in the debate is to explain his mission and give argumentation in domestic policy to people in the United States. 	<p>1</p> <p>1, 52, 99, 168, 198, 226</p> <p>2, 57, 102, 171, 201, 231</p> <p>4, 53, 114, 118, 169, 203, 229</p>
Act Sequences	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Opening stage: The opening stage can be shown in the beginning of the debate when Jim Lehrer (moderator) greeted to the people in the entire world especially in United States. 	1
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Middle stage: The middle stage is shown from the discussion among Jim Lehrer (moderator), President Barack Obama (first candidate) and Mitt Romney (second candidate). The discussion about domestic issue in United States. 	<p>1,2,4;</p> <p>52,53,57;</p> <p>99,102,</p> <p>114,118;</p> <p>168,169,171;</p> <p>198,201,203;</p> <p>226, 292,231</p>

	3. Closing stage: The closing stage is known when Jim Lehrer said thank you to both candidates and everybody who has joined in the first of the 2012 presidential debate.	236
Key	The key of the presidential debate is serious, but occasionally, the participants make jokes and laugh.	53, 168, 231
Instrumentalities	The instrument of this presidential debate is spoken text.	1
	Turn taking	100-102
	Standard grammar	2
	Filler	99-100
	Reparation	235
	Repetition	127-130
	Colloquialisms	17-18
	Incomplete clause	88-90
	Closing statement	233,235
Norms	The speakers use positive politeness, because there is social status difference between them.	74-76, 138-140.
Genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition Motion 	1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas Development 	1, 52, 99, 168, 198, 226
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rebuttal 	106-111
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linguistic features: 	
	The use of question and answer	63-66
	The use of present tense	210,211
	The use of future tense	22

	The use of Past tense	2
	The use of Modal Verbs	53
	The use of Hedging Utterances	211, 233, 55, 10, 26, 233

The finding can be explained as follows:

Setting and scene

Setting time and place of the debate is dated on October 3, 2012. In the Evening at 9.00p.m-10.30p.m Eastern Time and take a place in the Magness Arena at the University of Denver in Denver, Colorado.

Scene of the debate is refers to the situation in the debate is serious and quite.

It can be seen in the excerpt below:

Turn speaker utterance

1 Lehrer **“Good evening from the Magness Arena at the University of Denver in Denver, Colorado. I'm Jim Lehrer of the "PBS News Hour," and I welcome you to the first of the 2012 presidential debates between President Barack Obama, the Democratic nominee, and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, the Republican nominee. ...”**

1 Lehrer **“... The audience here in the hall has promised to remain silent. No cheers, applause, boos, hisses — among other noisy distracting things — so we may all concentrate on what the candidates have to say. There is a noise exception right now, though, as we welcome President Obama and Governor Romney. (Cheers, applause.) ...”**

Participants

The participants in the debate are Jim Lehrer (the moderator), President Barack Obama (the president candidate from Democratic Party), and Governor Mitt Romney (the president candidate from Republican Party). The participants of the debate can be seen in the utterance below:

Turn speaker utterance

1 Lehrer **“Good evening from the Magness Arena at the University of Denver in Denver, Colorado. I'm Jim Lehrer of the "PBS**

News Hour," and I welcome you to the first of the 2012 presidential debates between President Barack Obama, the Democratic nominee, and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, the Republican nominee. ..."

Ends

The ends of the debate aims to discuss on differences about domestic issues in United States between the candidates. It is very important for people in U.S who want to know about vision and mission that will be carried of both candidate. The candidates delivered their plan about domestic policy particularly in economy, health care, the role of government, and governing. So, people in America have a view about their own candidate and their plans. It can be seen from Lehrer's utterance:

Turn	speaker	utterance
1	Lehrer	"... Tonight's 90 minutes will be about 'domestic issues' , and will follow a format designed by the commission. There will be six roughly 15-minute segments, with two-minute answers for the first question, then open discussion for the remainder of each segment. ... "

Act sequence

Act sequence refers to the actual form and content of what is said: the precise words used, how they are used and relationship of what is said to the actual topic at hand. The presidential debate consists of three stages such as, opening stage, middle stage and closing stage. The excerpt of the opening stage can be seen below:

Turn	speaker	utterance
1	Lehrer	"Good evening from the Magness Arena at the University of Denver in Denver, Colorado. I'm Jim Lehrer of the PBS NewsHour, and I welcome you to the first of the 2012 presidential debates between President Barack Obama, the Democratic nominee, and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, the Republican nominee. ..."

Key

The key of the presidential debate is serious, but occasionally, the participants make jokes and laugh. It can be seen from the video and the transcript that the candidate uses some gesture while speaking. The seriousness in the debate can be seen in the excerpt from the transcript below:

Turn	speaker	utterance
53	Lehrer	“Well, good. I'm glad you raised that. And it's a — it's a critical issue. I think it's not just an economic issue. I think it's a moral issue. I think it's, frankly, not moral for my generation to keep spending massively more than we take in, knowing those burdens are going to be passed on to the next generation. And they're going to be paying the interest and the principle all their lives. And the amount of debt we're adding, at a trillion a year, is simply not moral...”

Instrumentalities

The instrument of this presidential debate is spoken text. It contain of some elements, such as: Turn taking, Standard grammar, Filler, Reparation, Repetition, Colloquialisms, Incomplete clause, and Closing statement. The used of standard grammar can be seen below:

Turn	speaker	utterance
2	Obama	Well, thank you very much, Jim, for this opportunity. I want to thank Governor Romney and the University of Denver for your hospitality.

Norms

The norms of the debate can see from the speakers use positive politeness, because there is social status difference between them. Positive politeness can be seen in the following excerpt:

Turn	speaker	utterances
74	Lehrer	“ That's true, right? “
75	Romney	“ Absolutely. “
76	Obama	“ OK, so — “

Genre

Genre of this text is debate. It contains definition motion, ideas development, and rebuttal. Besides that, it has specific linguistic choice, such as: The use of question and answer, the use of present tense, the use of future tense, the use of Past

tense, the use of Modal Verbs, and the use of Hedging Utterances. The definition motion in the debate can be seen in the following excerpt:

Turn speaker utterance

1 Lehrer “... Tonight's 90 minutes will be about **domestic issues**, and will follow a format designed by the commission. There will be six roughly 15-minute segments, with two-minute answers for the first question, then **open discussion for the remainder of each segment**. ...”

CONCLUSION

This thesis studies about ethnography of communication by using Hymes' framework, which is called SPEAKING grids, from First Presidential debate between President Barack Obama and Governor Mitt Romney, and there are significance elements of ethnography of communication, such as setting and scene, participant, ends, act sequence, key instrumentalities, norms, and genre. The setting in which the debate occurs in Magness Arena at the University of Denver in Denver, Colorado on October 3, 2012. It can be seen from the video of the debate. Scene in the debate is the situation that focuses only on the debate, the scene is serious and quite. There are three participants in the debate, they are, Jim Lehrer becomes the moderator, President Barack Obama is a president candidate from Democratic Party, and Governor Mitt Romney is a president candidate from Republican Party. The end of the presidential debate is to discuss on differences about domestic issues in United States between the candidates. The act sequence in the debate consists of three stages such as, opening stage, middle stage and closing stage. The key of the debate is serious, but occasionally, the participants make jokes and laugh. The instrument of this debate is spoken text. The norm of the debate uses positive politeness, because there is social status difference between the speakers. The genre of this text is debate. This genre contains of definition motion, idea development, rebuttal, and the linguistic features are the use of question and answer, present tense, future tense, past tense, modal verbs, and hedging utterances.

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