

# Conversational Analysis of Interruption in *Suits Series Season 1*

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**Abstract.** This research aims to find out the types of interruptions based on Ferguson's theory in Beattie (1982) and the functions of interruptions based on Kennedy and Camden's theory in Li (2001) in *Suits Series Season 1*. It was conducted by using descriptive qualitative method, while the data were all utterances taken from the *Suits Series Season 1*. The results showed that from four types of interruption, there was only one type unfound with 70 occurrences in total of interruptions found in *Suits Series Season 1*. Simple interruptions were used most in the series with 50 occurrences, followed by 18 occurrences of overlap interruptions, and 2 occurrences of butting-in interruptions, and no silent interruption found. The results also showed that there were six of seven functions of interruptions found in the research. The most found function was floor taking with 22 occurrences, followed by 13 occurrences of agreement, 12 occurrences of topic change, 10 occurrences of clarification, 9 occurrence of assistance, 4 occurrences of disagreement, and no tangentialization found. This means that the use of interruptions in characters' utterances of *Suits Series Season 1* mostly was to take the floor from the other speaker and propose another topic to discuss.

**Keyword:** *Conversation, Conversational Analysis, Interruption, Speech, Linguistics*

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## 1. Introduction

Language plays a critical part of human life. It is something of a social phenomenon. Keraf in Smarapradhipa (2005) states that a language is a communication system that uses vocal symbols (speech sound) which are arbitrary. Language as a means of communication is used in culture to communicate messages, to disagree or to transmit thoughts, desires and emotions to one another. It is used in different fields, such as industry, government, education, law, entertainment, etc. In

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other words, for communicating with one another, language cannot be isolated from human life. In general, people interact through conversation.

Conversation is a type of communication that takes place between two or more individuals (speaker and listener) to exchange messages, ideas, or knowledge. According to Liddicoat (2007:1), conversation is the way in which people socialize, develop, and sustain their relationship with each other. The people involved in the conversation should know what to speak and listen to in order to create a productive discussion. Therefore, they will think about taking turns. Coulthard (1985:59) states that turn-taking is one of the basic facts of conversation: speakers and listeners change their roles in order to begin their speech. Meanwhile, according to McCarthy (2002), sometimes people do not want to take turns and reply with backchannel response, such as “hm”, “right”, “really”, and “yeah”. It means that in conversation, turn-taking doesn’t necessarily have to be a sentence, but also can be responded with backchannel response to give a sign that the listener are listening but do not want to take turn, yet.

Wooffitt (2005:26) states that at the beginning of any period of interaction, neither party knows in advance how many turns they will take, what the topics will be or the order in which they will be dealt with, how long each turn will be, whether or not anyone else may join, and if they do, how to assign turns between the respective parties, and so on. However, gaps or overlaps sometimes occur in conversation. For certain cases turn-taking may not always be effective because at the same time more than one person is talking. It is called interruption.

In some situations, interruption is considered disturbing and impolite by many people. However, interruption is not always disturbing and impolite in conversation. Speaker and listener will also find interruption beneficial. It depends on the forms and interruption functions. The researchers were interested in analysing it based on this phenomenon.

Conversation analysis (CA) is necessary to analyse this phenomenon. Conversation analysis is a branch of discourse. Paltridge (2012:90) states that conversation analysis is an approach to the analysis of spoken discourse that looks at the way in which people manage their everyday conversational interactions. It explores how the spoken debate is structured and evolves as these conversations are carried out by speakers. The data can be transcribed in the form of video in conversation research.

Television series is one in every of the favourite diversion broadcast for several individuals. Through the series, people can get some advantages, as well as pleasure and knowledge. If people watch TV series, they will see the reflection of their life within the story, whether or not it’s concerning the ethical worth or language phenomenon. Varied TV series take way of life because the theme, therefore, interruptions can not be excluded among conversations in the series.

Interruptions appears on television program besides in daily conversation. In talkshow and news interview, for example, when the host interviews the guest, interruption can happen during the process. Both host and guest can interrupt to show agreement, disagreement, or even interest in other's statement. In addition, interruptions also often appear in television drama or series.

The Suits series season 1 is an American drama series created by Aaron Korsh. The first season of the American legal comedy-drama Suits originally aired on the USA network in the United States between June 23, 2011 and September 8, 2011. The first season of Suits contains of 12 episodes. The season was produced by hypnotic films and television and Universal Cable Productions. The producer executives are Doug Liman and David Bartis.

Suits is one of the American TV series that deals with the daily lives of a number of corporate lawyers and paralegal at Pearson Hardman's Office. This law firm only accepts a Harvard Law school graduates, one thing that makes it respected.

Suits Series Season 1 is selected as the subject of the study because not only that this series succeeded to become one of the most popular drama-comedy series in America, but also this shows the world of corporate lawyer with a conflict of interest and romance among personalities, which represents the real life of corporate in America. The viewer will not be bored and confused with the constant arguments after arguments. In the series, interruption happen a lot during the conversation between characters. The researchers found some interruption represented in daily life basis as corporates and lawyer, so that the phenomenon attracts the researchers' attention to conduct this research.

This research attempts to identify the types of interruption found in Suits Series Season 1 in terms of conversation analysis by using the theory of Turn-taking and Interruption proposed by Ferguson in Beattie (1982) and to find out the functions of interruption in conversation analysis by using the theory of Cooperative and Intrusive Interruptions proposed by Kennedy and Camden in Li (2001).

## **2. Research Method**

This research was conducted by using descriptive qualitative method by Creswell (2014). Qualitative approach is used to analyse data in the text form to explore the social phenomenon and describe the pattern of the study in detail. Since the transcription is in the form of text, qualitative method fits the best for this research. The sources of the data of this research were the transcriptions of the video of *The Suits Series Season 1* consisting of 12 episodes. The data of this research were the utterances of all the characters.

The researchers collected the data by using several steps. They are (1) watching the Suits Series Season 1 on Netflix, (2) understanding the contents of the show, especially the interruption found in the talk show, (3) transcribing the series into text, (4) listing the types and functions of interruption found in the data, and (5) collecting all the data needed.

Based on the data analysis techniques proposed by Creswell (2014), the researchers analysed the data with several steps. They are (1) reading all the clauses or sentences, (2) identifying all the clauses or sentences, (3) analyzing all the clauses or sentences based on Ferguson’s types of interruption theory in Beattie (1982), (4) analyzing all the clauses or sentences based on Kennedy and Camden’s functions of interruption theory in Li (2001), (5) classifying the clauses or sentences into four types of interruption according to Ferguson’s theory in Beattie (1982), (6) classifying the clauses or sentences into two categories of functions and 7 subcategories of functions according to Kennedy and Camden’s theory in Li (2001), and (7) making conclusion.

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### 3.1 Result

There were 70 interruptions found in the Suits Season 1. The researchers found three types of interruption in the data, they were simple, overlap, and butting-in interruptions. The simple interruption was the found most interruption type in the data. Respectively, there were 50 occurrences of simple interruption, 18 occurrences of overlap interruption, and 2 occurrences of butting-in interruption. The researchers also found six functions of interruption. They were agreement, clarification, assistance, disagreement, floor taking, and topic change. Floor taking was the found most interruption function in the data. There were 23 occurrences of interruption with cooperative function and 47 occurrences of interruption with intrusive function. Respectively, there were 22 occurrences of floor taking, 13 occurrences of agreement, 12 occurrences of topic change, 10 occurrences of clarification, 9 occurrence of assistance, and 4 occurrences of disagreements. The details of the number of occurrences of the interruption types and functions are described in the following table.

**Table 1.** Types and Functions of Interruption in Suits Season 1

Interruption	Types		Simple	50	70		Total
			Overlap	18			
Butting-in	2						
Silent	0						
Functions	Cooperative	Agreement	4	23	70		
		Assistance	9				
		Clarification	10				
	Intrusive	Disagreement	13	47			

			<b>Floor Taking</b>	22			
			<b>Topic Change</b>	12			
			<b>Tangentialization</b>	0			

## 3.2 Discussion

### 3.2.1 Types of Interruption

There were 72 characters in the whole season 1 of the series, 22 of which involved in a conversation with interruptions in it. Those 22 characters are going to be symbolised with their first name as follows: Harvey, Mike, Donna, Jessica, Louis, Rachel, Clifford, Gregory, Dana, Vanessa, Edith, Wyatt, Donald, Aaron, Lisa, Quentin, Lola, Renee, Kyle, Jerome, Tori, and Jenny. Only several characters are shown in the data examples below.

#### 3.2.1.1 Simple Interruption

Simple interruption is the type of interruption that occurs 50 times in the data, which makes it the most found type of interruption in the research. Simple interruption happens when the interrupter succeeds in taking the floor and causes the interrupted person cannot finish their utterances, therefore their utterances are not complete. Some appearances of simple interruption found in the Suits Season 1 are shown below.

**JESSICA** : And I told you I disagree.

**LOUIS** : Why?

**JESSICA** : Because—

**HARVEY** : Because when you put two bullies in the same room together, things generally don't go so well.

From the conversation above, the current speaker, which is Jessica, stops talking the moment Harvey talks. This means that the interruption is succeed, and Harvey takes the floor from Jessica.

**HARVEY** : Civil liability associated with agency is based on several factors, including—

**MIKE** : Including the deviation of the agent from his path, the reasonable inference of agency on behalf of the plaintiff, and the nature of the damages themselves.

The other example above also shows simple interruption. Mike successfully takes the floor from Harvey explaining about the civil liability, and Harvey stops his saying once Mike starts talking. This shows that Mike as the interrupter, succeeded in interrupting Harvey, the interrupted.

### 3.2.1.2 Overlap Interruption

Overlap interruption is the type of interruption that occurs 18 times in the data, which makes it appears second most frequently in this research. Overlap interruption happens when the interrupter does not completely succeed in taking the floor and causes the interrupted person still continues their utterances when they are being interrupted, therefore their utterances are still complete. Some appearances of overlap interruption found in the Suits Season 1 are shown below.

**MIKE** : Miss Webster. Joanna. This man is a predator. And if you don't help stop him, he will do it again. All you have to do is *give a deposition*—  
**JOANNA** : *I'm sorry. I can't do it.*

In the conversation above, Mike is being interrupted by Joanna since he tells her what to do. However, he still manages to finish his sentence due the fact that he was being interrupted. This shows an overlap interruption between the two characters.

**HARVEY** : Aside from subjecting him to you in a towel, what happened?  
**LOUIS** : I beat him in straight sets, if that's what *you're getting at*—  
**HARVEY** : *Don't play dumb, Louis.* Tell me what you did to him.

The conversation above shows an overlap interruption happens between Harvey and Louis. Harvey interrupts Louis in the middle of his utterance when he knows what he is going to say, yet Louis finishes his utterance completely.

### 3.2.1.3 Butting-in Interruption

Butting-in interruption is the type of interruption that occurs 2 times in the data, which makes it appears least frequently in this research. Butting-in interruption happens when the interrupter does not succeed in taking the floor and causes the interrupted person still continues their utterances when they are being interrupted, therefore their utterances are still complete. Some appearances of overlap interruption found in the Suits Season 1 are shown below.

**AARON** : I was wondering if you might need a hand sometime with one of your matters. Uh, any one.  
**HARVEY** : Well, *Allen*—  
**AARON** : *It's Aaron.*  
**HARVEY** : *I think that says it all, don't you?*

In the conversation above, it shows an example of butting-in interruption, in which Aaron tries to interrupt Harvey, but doesn't succeed because Harvey continues talking and finishes his sentence despite of being interrupted. Aaron is trying to interrupt Harvey to correct his name, but Harvey just ignore him and completes his utterances.

**MIKE** : Yes, I was helping people cheat, okay, *but—*

**RACHEL** : *But what?*

**MIKE** : *It's not the whole story.*

The short conversation above shows another butting-in interruption between Rachel and Mike. Rachel tries to cut Mike's explanation while he continues his utterances to complete it. This means that Rachel doesn't successfully interrupting Mike at all.

### **3.2.1.4 Silent Interruption**

Silent interruption happens when the speaker stops talking for a while to remember about what to say, or simply taking a breath, and another speaker takes that chances to take the floor from the former speaker. However, this interruption does not occur at all in the Suits Season 1.

## **3.2.2 Functions of Interruption**

The analysis of the functions of interruption is based on the theory proposed by Kennedy and Camden's functions of interruption theory in Li (2001). They state that interruption has several functions. They are cooperative and intrusive functions. Kennedy and Camden also divide those two functions into sub category. The cooperative function consists of agreement, clarification, and assistance. The intrusive function consists of disagreement, floor taking, topic change, and tangentialization.

### **3.2.2.1 Cooperative Interruption**

Cooperative interruption intends to help the speaker by giving assistance on the process of the current conversation. In other words, this function of interruptions is used to show the interrupter's enthusiasm and interest in the topic discussed by the current speaker.

#### **3.2.2.1.1 Agreement**

Agreement occurs 4 times in the whole Suits Season 1. Agreement appears when the interrupter interrupts the current speaker to show concurrence, compliance, understanding, and support. The occurrences of agreement can be seen in the data examples below.

**MIKE** : Wait a minute, are these all—  
**RACHEL** : Still printing? Yeah. I'd give it about a half hour.

In the short conversation above, it can be seen that Rachel tries to cut off or interrupts Mike to show her understanding regarding what Mike is going to say, and therefore completes the sentence for Mike. This also shows that Rachel agrees on what Mike is about to say.

**JESSICA** : You're here representing the firm, Louis. And we've always  
been committed to giving back to the community.  
**LOUIS** : Jessica, is that—  
**JESSICA** : Tori. Yes, and I owe her a call.

In the conversation above, it is clear that Jessica finishes Louis's sentence for him, showing that Jessica is aware of what Louis is going to say, and she agrees on it. Below is another example of agreement found in the data.

### 3.2.2.1.2 Clarification

Clarification is the function of interruption that appears third to least in the data with 10 occurrences. Clarification occurs when the interrupter asks the current speaker to give a better explanation about the information she/he's just said, to ensure they're on the same page, or simply because the interrupter does not fully understand it. The following conversations show some occurrences of clarification in the data.

**LOUIS** : But he had no proof.  
**MIKE** : And now he does.  
**LOUIS** : Okay, I hate to disagree with you here, but I took a little poll *of the partners*—  
**JESSICA** : *Whoa. You did what?*  
**LOUIS** : Well, I was discreet, I assure you.

In the conversation above, Jessica interrupts Louis to get a better explanation regarding the poll of partners he takes, because Jessica as his boss never orders him to do such thing. This shows that Jessica's interruption is to ask for clarification.

**RACHEL** : You mean the reason why I became a lawyer or your friend dealt  
drugs or you used to cheat?  
**MIKE** : I cheated because *I needed the money*—  
**RACHEL** : *You couldn't make money any other way?*



In the conversation above, Rachel cuts off Mike's sentence to ask for more information regarding the information he says to her, and to get a better explanation of his *money needs* or the way he gets the money in the first place.

### 3.2.2.1.3 Assistance

Assistance occurs 9 times in the whole Suits Season 1. Assistance occurs when the interrupter try to help the current speaker to complete his/her utterance because he/she. The following conversations show the occurrence of assistance found in the data.

**TORI** : Proof of what?  
**JESSICA** : Those are all legitimate corporations used for—  
**HARVEY** : Stealing money and lining your own pockets.

In the conversation above, Harvey is interrupting Jessica to help her finish her sentence about what she is about to say, which is about the crime Tori has done.

**LOUIS** : Mike, that goes for you too, up and at 'em.  
**MIKE** : Uh, yeah, Louis, I'd love to, but I have some work to do for—  
**LOUIS** : His Majesty can wait. All associates in the library now.

The conversation above shows Louis interrupts Mike in order to finish Mike's utterance, because he stutters a little bit when saying it. Louis, who gets what Mike is about to say, assists him to complete his sentence for him.

### 3.2.2.2 Intrusive Interruption

Intrusive interruption means that an interruption that occurs is considered to be impolite because it disturbs the speaker on process of conversation by taking the floor on purpose.

#### 3.2.2.2.1 Disagreement

Disagreement appears 13 times in the whole Suits Season 1. Disagreement appears when to show disagreement with the idea or the topic being conveyed by the current speaker. The following conversations show some occurrences of disagreement found in the data.

**LOUIS** : Hi, Donna. Harvey and I were just talking about you and—  
**DONNA** : No.  
**LOUIS** : You don't even know what I was going to say.

In the conversation above, Donna interrupts Louis to say she disagrees with what he is about to say. She is aware with Louis's utterance and says she disagrees directly.

- MIKE** : A patent? I don't know how to file a patent.  
**HARVEY** : Figure it out.  
**MIKE** : Can't we do that after—  
**HARVEY** : No, and you keep talking, I'm gonna start billing you. And my time runs \$1,000 an hour.

The conversation above shows that Harvey interrupts Mike's utterance to show his agreement to do a file patent after something else, and ask him to do it right away. Not only that, he also asks him to stop talking indirectly.

### 3.2.2.2.2 Floor Taking

Floor taking is the function of interruption that occurs most which is 22 times in the data. Floor taking occurs when the interrupter try to broaden the topic that is being discussed by the current speaker to get a broader explanation regarding the topic. There are some occurrences of floor taking in the data are shown below.

- HARVEY** : You're sympathizing with Stan because you think he's you.  
**MIKE** : That doesn't mean that—  
**HARVEY** : You need to learn something from what just happened, not the least of which is how anyone, no matter how valuable, can be let go.

In the conversation above, Harvey interrupts Mike's utterance about he's thinking he's like Stan, and adds to the topic that it's not always like what Mike thinks.

- HARVEY** : Has she distributed the money yet?  
**MIKE** : No, she hasn't, but she's—  
**HARVEY** : She hasn't, and she won't, because what she wants is her daddy's attention.

In the conversation above, Harvey again interrupts Mike to give more information about their subject of conversation, that she's not going to distribute the money because she's doing that only to get her father's attention.

### 3.2.2.2.3 Topic Change

Topic change occurs to take the floor from the current speaker and change the topic being discussed because the interrupter is not interested in the topic being discussed. There are 12 occurrences of topic change found. Some of them are shown below.

- HARVEY** : One that requires access to sealed court documents.
- ANTHONY** : Can it wait till tomorrow? I got this backlog of case—
- HARVEY** : When you came to me two years ago in the middle of the night, did I tell you it had to wait till tomorrow?

In the conversation above, Anthony is telling Harvey that he's busy with a bunch of backlog case he has to do when Harvey interrupts him and change the topic to the time when Harvey never tells him he's busy whenever he comes to him.

- HARVEY** : Wrong, that's the adult table in there. And you haven't earned the privilege yet.
- MIKE** : But I, I played air hockey *with him*—
- HARVEY** : *You need to go back to the office and file a patent for the phone.*

In the conversation above, Mike is talking about how he has done something worthy to be in the adult table. However, Harvey interrupts him before he is able to finish his sentence by ordering him to file a patent instead.

#### **3.2.2.2.4 Tangentialization**

Tangentialization appears to give a summary about what the current speaker wants to say because the interrupter has known the topic already and no longer wants to hear it again. However, tangentialization is not found at all in the data.

## **4. Conclusion**

Based on the analysis of the research about types and functions of interruption in the Suits Season 1, the researchers conclude that there were three types of interruption found. They were simple, overlap, and butting-in interruptions. Simple interruptions were used most in the series with 50 occurrences, followed by 18 occurrences of overlap interruptions, 2 occurrences of butting-in interruptions, and no silent interruption found.

Also, there were six functions of interruption found. They were agreement, clarification, assistance, disagreement, floor taking, and topic change. There were 23 occurrences of interruption with cooperative function and 47 occurrences of interruption with intrusive function. The most found function was floor taking with 22 occurrences, followed by 13 occurrences of

agreement, 12 occurrences of topic change, 10 occurrences of clarification, 9 occurrences of assistance, 4 occurrences of disagreement, and no tangentialization found. This means that the use of interruptions in characters' utterances of Suits Series Season 1 mostly was to take the floor from the other speaker and propose another topic to discuss.

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