



**PRAGMATIC TRANSFER IN THE APPLICATION
OF SUGGESTION STRATEGIES BY THE STUDENTS
OF SEMARANG STATE UNIVERSITY**

a Thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Master's Degree Program
in English Language Education

by

Anisykur Dzakiyah

0203513022

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APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis entitled “PRAGMATIC TRANSFER IN THE APPLICATION OF SUGGESTION STRATEGIES BY THE STUDENTS OF SEMARANG STATE UNIVERSITY” by:

Name : Anisykur Dzakiyah

SRN : 0203513022

Study Program : English Education

has been examined and defended on February 17th, 2016 in front of the Board of Thesis Examination.

Semarang, 18 February 2016

Chairperson,

Secretary,

Prof. Dr. H. Achmad Slamet, M.Si.

Dr. Januarius Mujiyanto, M.Hum.

NIP. 196105241986011001

NIP. 195312131983031002

First Examiner,

Second Examiner,

Prof. Dr. Warsono, Dip.TEFL, M.A.

Prof. Mursid Saleh, M.A., Ph.D.

Third Examiner,

Drs. Ahmad Sofwan, M.A., Ph.D.
NIP. 196204271989011001

DECLARATION

I honestly declare that this thesis is definitely my own work. I am completely responsible for the content of this thesis. Other writers' opinions or findings included in this thesis are quoted or cited in accordance with the ethical standards.

Semarang, 18 February 2016

Anisykur Dzakiyah

NIM. 0203513022

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

Language is not only meant to convey meaning but also bridges cultures

Dedicated to:

The Almamater of English Language Education in Semarang State University

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A very great grateful is dedicated to Allah SWT the Almighty for bestowing me so enormous blessing in every moment that finally I am able to finish my thesis.

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ABSTRACT

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Keywords: suggestion strategies, gender, naturalized role play, pragmatic transfer

The present study is a pragmatic study about the pragmatic transfer in the application of suggestion strategies by the students of Semarang State University. There were five objectives guiding this study: (1) to describe the students' suggestion strategies in Bahasa Indonesia as their native language, (2) to describe the students' suggestion strategies in English as their target language, (3) to describe the differences between the suggestion strategies applied in Bahasa Indonesia and English, (4) to describe the differences between male and female students in the application of suggestion strategies, and (5) to explain how the pragmatic transfer occurs in the suggestion strategies by the students of State University of Semarang.

This study applied descriptive qualitative research. The data were collected by implementing the Naturalized Role Play which is proposed by Tran (2010) from three situations. The participants of this study were 32 graduate students consisting of 16 female students and 16 male students as the informants and two conductors. The data of this study were classified and analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively based on Hossein Abolfathiasl (2013: 239), Li (2010), and Kasper (1992) classification of pragmatic transfer which is classified into two classifications; pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic transfer.

The result of the study showed that there were a total number of 656 suggestion strategies; 308 suggestion strategies in Bahasa Indonesia and 348 suggestion strategies in English. The most often strategies applied in Bahasa Indonesia and English were conventionally indirect strategies, but the application in English has more percentage than in Bahasa Indonesia. Although the most often strategies applied were conventionally indirect, but the students tend to use more direct strategy in Bahasa Indonesia than in English. The students focused on hearer oriented in realizing the suggestion strategies, either in Bahasa Indonesia or English. Based on the gender difference, female students applied suggestion strategies more direct than male students whether they responded the same or different gender. Pragmatic transferred occurred since the students transferred their L1 suggestion strategies to their L2. Both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic transfer occurred in the application of suggestion strategies. For the next researchers, more social variables such as relationship, status, and power should be considered in order to make this kind of study more comprehensive.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|---|
| ASEAN | Association of Southeast Asian Nations |
| DCT | Discourse Completion Test |
| EFL | English as a Foreign Language |
| FTA | Face Threatening Acts |
| FS | Female Students |
| IELTS | International English Language Testing System |
| ILP | Interlanguage Pragmatics |
| L1 | Language 1 (native language) |
| L2 | Language 2 (target language) |
| MS | Male Students |
| NRP | Naturalized Role Play |
| TOEFL | Test of English as a Foreign Language |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an introduction of the thesis that provides the background of the study, the reason for choosing the topic, the statement of problems, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, the scope of the study, the definition of terms, and the outline of thesis report.

1.1 Background of the Study

Humans are social being. In order to survive, humans need to interact with each other. During these interactions, humans exchange their thoughts in the form of meaning. The act of exchanging meaning is what we call as communication. Obviously, humans need a means to communicate and that is language. Among those languages, there are some which are used in many countries and considered as global language. One of them is English. English plays an important role in the world. One example is along with the establishment of ASEAN Free Trade Area, communications among countries of ASEAN's members are also becoming more and more intense. Of course each of the ASEAN members has its own national language such as Bahasa Indonesia, Tagalog, Melayu or even Chinese. This is where English takes part as an international language to bridge the gaps in communication. However, sharing one common language does not guarantee that communication will run smoothly since the parties involved in the communication

have different L1 and non native to English. Consequently the difference in L1 will influence the way they convey their meaning in English.

However, to make the communication run smoothly, we have to maintain the good message when communicating with people from a different language and culture. This is in line with Zegarac and Pennington (2000), when people from different cultures communicate with each other without perceiving their different pragmatic knowledge, miscommunication may happen. Such phenomenon is due to transfer of native pragmatic knowledge in situations of intercultural communication.

Olshtain and Chen (1989) as cited in Hashemian (2012) referred to the pragmatic transfer as L2 learners' strategy of incorporating native language based element in L2 production. Such pragmatic transfer is shaped by culture-specific knowledge. Pragmatic transfer based on Kasper (1992: 207) refers to the influence exerted by learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than second language on their comprehension, production, and learning of second language pragmatic information. Thus, it can be concluded that pragmatic transfer is the learners' influences from their native language either they are from linguistic or cultural aspect when they learn, comprehend, and produce pragmatic competence in the target language. The target language that was discussed in this study is English and the native language is Bahasa Indonesia since this study deals with the Indonesian EFL learners especially the students of Semarang State University.

As we know that English in Indonesia is a foreign language; as stated by Ellis (1994: 12) it refers to the language that ‘plays no major role in the community’ which means English is not commonly used in daily communication, instead it is used in limited community such as school, tourism, or business. The way our learners acquire English is also limited. Most Indonesian learns English through formal education instead of daily conversation. English which is taught in our formal education mostly focuses on grammar and lexicon. Only little attention is given toward teaching pragmatics. Therefore the chance for the learners’ L1 pragmatics competence, in this case Indonesian, to influence their L2 is high.

Based on my personal observation when I was studying English at the English Department of State University of Semarang, I found out there were pragmatic transfers occurring in speaking, especially when the students were having their discussion. The utterances such as, ‘*Here, I would like to explain about.....*’, ‘*According to me, it’s.....*’, and ‘*Are you satisfied with our answer?*’. The patterns of the utterances are correct, but the senses are Indonesian. It seems that the students tend to transfer the Indonesian utterance to the English directly. They are different from English, and it is possible for the native speakers to misunderstand the meaning of the utterances, or at least they feel awkward and unfamiliar. Even at the advanced learners, pragmatic transfer still can occur. This is in line with Mukaromah (2011); even if the students have good proficiency in English and have rich vocabulary, they may still fail in performing a proper apology.

Language as a means of communication cannot be separated from the use of speech act. Austin (1962) defines speech acts as acts performed by utterances such as giving order, making promises, complaining, requesting, and suggesting. When we utter a sentence or a phrase, we are performing an act to which we expect our listeners to react with verbal or nonverbal behavior. Among those speech acts, suggestion has rarely become the topic of research. Suggestions based on Rintell (1979:97) in Al-Aedeli (2013) are acts in which the speaker asks the hearer to perform an action that will potentially benefit the hearer. Of course those whom we express our suggestion to will react in various ways from complete compliance to total refusal. Those reactions depend on various factors. One of the factors is the way we make the suggestion or suggestion strategy.

Suggestion is important, since based on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987) in Bu (2011), it is regarded as a face threatening act since the speaker is in some way intruding into the hearer's world by performing an act that concerns what the latter should do. This importance becomes greater when the suggestion is made in the foreign language to the speaker or hearer since it involves not only the knowledge of grammar and lexicon but also pragmatic aspects of the target language. The comprehension of the speakers about the suggestion strategies used will ensure the meaning to be conveyed in the best way possible and reduce the possibility of threatening the hearer or the addressee. In addition, based on Banerjee and Carrell (1988) in Jiang (2006) nonnative speakers were significantly less likely to make suggestions in slightly embarrassing and potentially embarrassing situations than native speakers. They also found that

nonnative speakers might unintentionally appear to be impolite or at least less polite when making suggestions.

There are previous studies investigating the speech act of suggestions. The first study was conducted by Jiemin Bu (2011), he investigated pragmatic transfer in suggestion strategies by Chinese learners of English. His study aimed to find out what kind of pragmatic transfer occurs in suggestion strategies by Chinese learners of English and how it occurs in their intercultural communication. He applied written Discourse Completion Test (DCT) in obtaining the data. The data analysis used in classifying the suggestion strategies was based on Hinkel's study. The result of the study revealed that pragmatic transfer is transferred from Chinese culture and teaching-induced errors respectively, which provides pedagogical implications for both language teachers and language learners. The differences between Jiemin Bu's study and this current study are the method used in gaining the data and the analysis of the data. This current study applied Naturalized Role Play and the analysis of the data was based on the taxonomy of suggestion strategies by Hossein Abolfathiasl (2013), perspective in suggestion strategies realization by Li (2014), and the pragmatic transfer proposed by Kasper (1992).

The second study was conducted by Reza Prishghadam and Maryam Sharafadini (2011) who investigated a contrastive analysis into the realization of suggestion speech act between English and Persia. The findings show that there were variations in most of the suggestion types, moreover gender proved to be a significant factor in production of suggestion strategies. The last study was

conducted by Maryam Farnia, Akbar Sohrabie, and Hiba Qusay Abdul Sattar (2014) who investigated a study on the speech act of suggestion by Iranian native speakers of Farsi. The result of the study shows that the respondents used more directive strategies than conventionalized form and indirect strategies. Moreover, the data revealed the frequent use of mitigating devices to redress the face-threatening act. The similarity between this current study and their study is that both deal with pragmatic transfer in suggestion strategies. However, the differences are the purpose of the study, the theory used, the method of the study, and I add gender as a variable in applying the suggestion.

This study focused on the pragmatic transfer in the suggestion strategies applied by the students of Semarang State University. The participants were the graduate students majoring in English Education of Semarang State University. I would like to find out how the pragmatic transfer occurred in the suggestion strategies in their L2 which obviously has differences compared to the strategies used in their L1.

1.2 Reason for Choosing the Topic

This study focus on pragmatic transfer of speech acts suggestion was chosen for several reasons. First, research on pragmatic transfer in EFL learners is still popular especially in Asia where English is a foreign language. There were many studies on pragmatic transfer such as pragmatic transfer in compliment response, request, and apology.

Second, in our EFL, teaching pragmatic aspects of language remain almost untouched since it is focused on grammatical competence of the language learners at the level of phonology, morphology, and syntax. Even teaching grammar is highly prioritized and language teachers generally rely on grammar instruction rather than focus on pragmatic meaning. It is obvious that overall instruction should be closely related not only to the knowledge of phonology, morphology, and syntax, but also to the pragmatic concerns since the main goal of EFL teaching is to make learners successfully use English as a means of communication both in written and oral conversation. This is in line with Abdulrahman (2012), in the education systems, to produce a good and proficient EFL learner, those teachers who teach English to the EFL learners should not only teach the grammar and other linguistic materials, but they also have to provide them with good instructions about the pragmatic competence in order to make the EFL learners aware and competent when he or she faces interaction in the language.

The third reason is that the suggestion speech act is rarely investigated compared to the other speech act, for example request, refusal, compliment, and apology. However, suggestions are commonly used in daily conversation, such as between the lecturer and the students, the lecturer and their colleagues, the students and their colleagues, etc.

1.3 Statement of the Problems

The problems are formulated as follow:

1. How do the students apply suggestion strategies in Bahasa Indonesia as their native language?
2. How do the students apply suggestion strategies in English as their target language?
3. What are the differences between the suggestion strategies applied in Bahasa Indonesia and English?
4. What are the differences between male and female students in their application of suggestion strategies?
5. How does the pragmatic transfer occur in the suggestion strategies applied by the students of Semarang State University?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. to describe the students' suggestion strategies in Bahasa Indonesia as their native language.
2. to describe the students' suggestion strategies in English as their target language.
3. to describe the differences between the suggestion strategies applied in Bahasa Indonesia and English.
4. to describe the differences between male and female students when they applied suggestion strategies.

5. to explain how the pragmatic transfer occurs in the suggestion strategies applied by the students of Semarang State University.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The result of this study hopefully will give contribution in teaching learning process of EFL.

Theoretically, this study hopefully will give a contribution to enrich the pragmatic knowledge about speech acts especially the suggestion strategies and pragmatic transfer.

For the students, this study is expected to give them better understanding of speech acts especially speech acts on suggestion by giving the detailed description on how the pragmatic transfer occurs in the suggestion strategies applied by the students of State University of Semarang.

From pedagogical point of view, this study on pragmatic transfer in suggestion strategies applied by the students of Semarang State University hopefully will also give benefits for the teachers to develop the teaching and learning material related to suggestion speech acts. Hopefully, this will improve the students' competence not only textual and grammatical aspect of English but also the pragmatic aspects as well.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is limited to analyze the pragmatic transfer in the suggestion strategies applied by the students of Semarang State University. I

would like to find out how pragmatic transfer occurs in the suggestion strategies performed by the English Department Graduate students of Semarang State University. The participants of the study were categorized into male and female learners. I would like to find out if the gender gives some contribution in the application of the suggestion strategies.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

Pragmatic is the study of the relationship between language and the context as the basis in understanding the meaning of language. (Levinson, 1983)

Interlanguage pragmatic is the study proposed by Larry Selinker (1972) as an attempt to scrutinize the gaps which exist between L1 and L2, especially between English and other languages.

Pragmatic transfer is transfer of L1 sociocultural communicative competence in performing L2 speech acts or any other function of language, where the speaker is trying to achieve a particular function of language. (Beebe, Takahasi, & Uliss-Weltz 1990)

Pragmatic transfer refers to the influence exerted by learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than second language on their comprehension, production, and learning of second language pragmatic information (Kasper, 1992)

Speech acts are "doing things by words" such as asking, thanking, apologizing, ordering, promising, requesting, warning, challenging, threatening and so on (Searle, 1969)

Speech act “refers to the total situation in which the utterance is used”
(Austin 1962)

Suggestions are acts in which the speaker asks the hearer to perform an action that will potentially benefit the hearer. (Rintell, 1979)

Strategy is a specific method of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned design for controlling and manipulating certain information. (Brown, 2000)

1.8 Outline of the Thesis

The discussion of this study is divided into chapter and subchapters. The explanation of each chapter can be elaborated as follow:

Chapter one introduces the background of the study, reason for choosing the topic, research questions, objective of the study, scope and limitation of the study, significance of the study and definitions of key terms.

Chapter two covers review of related literature, which includes review of previous studies, review of theoretical studies, and theoretical framework. Review of previous studies presents some researches which ever been conducted related to the topic of this study. Besides, review of related literature presents some theories embodied the study which is used as the references. It is included definition of interlanguage pragmatics, pragmatic transfer, speech acts, classification of speech acts, speech act of suggestion, suggestion strategies, politeness strategies, and gender differences. The last one is theoretical framework. It is the conclusion from both reviews of previous studies and theoretical studies.

Chapter three describes the research methodology. It consisted of approach of the study, subject of the study, data and data source, instruments of the study, unit of analysis, technique of data collection and data analysis.

Chapter four presents the research findings and discussions. It deals with the analysis with the findings of data obtained and discussion of the result.

Chapter five presents the conclusion of the study together with suggestion for improvement.