3. Pragmatic Transfer

by Dwijani Ratnadewi

The Pragmatic Transfer of Javanese Sojourners'
English in Conversation Strategies

Dwijani Ratnadewi
Dwijani_ratnadewi@fkip.um-surabaya.ac.id
Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya

ABSTRACT

The use of home cultural schemas in English interactions in an English-speaking host country as a form of discrepancy leading to misunderstanding. This study investigated the pragmatic transfer phenomenon, namely the use of Javanese culture in English conversation. It aimed at finding an occurrence of pragmatic transfer in the Javanese English conversation in the host country; the conversation strategies the transfer takes place and the tendency of pragmatic transfer in the conversational strategies. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews and field notes. The analysis used the narrative analysis using emergent key themes based on the principle of the pragmatic transfer, the conversational strategy and the Javanese norms. The result indicated the availability of negative and positive pragmatic transfer in four strategies, namely making the most of others' praise, indirect response, denial over compliments, mitigating taboo or imposition marked with Javanese terms, idioms and jargon insertion. In addition, motivation is the most important aspect that determines the existence of pragmatic transfer in English interactions.

Keywords: Pragmatic transfer, Conversation strategies; Javanese norms

INTRODUCTION

Being in a new environment with a new culture, sojourners need modification and acquisition of their own home into the new host culture schemas which means altering and managing the native to adapt the new culture (Nishida, 2005). This includes the integrating values, beliefs and behaviors from the native culture into their new cultural worldview (Chan, 2014). Sojourners as members of the weaker groups are compelled to accept aspects of the host culture community, causing changes of their native/home culture. To adapt in a new environment, pragmatic competence of the host culture, language and appropriateness is the goal of this adaptation. It is part of communicative capability and it maintains an ongoing negotiation of meaning and purpose through the use of language   (Chan, 2014). Pragmatic competence produces meaning that is intended, felt and anticipated in various contexts, cultures, channels, and even media (Kramsch & Hua, 2016).

To achieve this pragmatic competence, cultural differences become a significant obstacle, like Javanese as a society with high context culture, which is more unspoken, implicit and highly relies on context is different from Australia, a low context culture society where communication prioritizes explicit verbal communication. The difference is

quite strong, considering that Javanese has principles that have been preserved and practiced among Javanese people until now. They are hiding true feelings, avoiding open conflict and being silence as better and commendable (Wiryomartono, 2016), prioritizing togetherness, respect   (Suseno, 1985), modesty, harmony, empathy, feeling awkward toward a respectful person, responsive in implicit signs and feeling aware of one's own position (Sukarno, 2010). When this is maintained in conversations in the host language, then it can be considered as a pragmatic transfer.

Pragmatic transfer is encouraged or hindered from certain contexts, this transferability constraint (Franch, 1998) might be caused by some sociolinguistics factors that are influenced by native culture context. Pragmatic transfer is negative when interfering and positive when facilitating meaning. Pragmatic transfer phenomena were found in various cases seen in some researchers' works. The first is the fact that the high proficiency foreign language learners had lower pragmatic transfers, due to their ample control over the second/foreign language (Bu, 2012), they also used reversed pragmatic transfers like acceptance strategies in their mother tongue, which were more like English in responding compliments (Cao, 2016). Alhadidi (2017) found out that the first language transfer was considered to be higher in the group of Saudi English beginners, thus the pragmatic transfer rate decreased as their level of English language proficiency developed. Pragmatic transfer occurred on some types of refusal of various language speakers. Some are seen in the refusal of Persian foreign language learners (Hashemian, 2012), which looked a lot like their first language; in the Iraqi Arabic native speakers who neglected to apply 'verbal' refusal strategy (Abed, 2011), also in the Javanese learners of English refusal variety which was similar more to that of native Javanese refusal (Wijayanto, 2016). Positive pragmatic transfers were found existing in rejection that reflected some socio-cultural aspects related to the first language, such as non-verbal rejection and mention of God in English (Darwish, 2018). Pragmatic transfer as seen in retaining the first language habits and patterns of communication was found when the speakers used other language. This was seen in timid and vague hedges that considered to be the first language rhetorical construction influence (Alonso et al., 2012); in a variety of English texts written by Afrikaans who relied on Afrikaans pragmatic patterns (Kruger & van Rooy, 2016), and in the Japanese gender conversation styles that existed in the Japanese male and female students English (Itakura, 2002).

The above studies examined the occurrence of pragmatic transfer in a certain particular strategy in conversation or writing, for example the presence of pragmatic transfer in a refusal, in gender language, on hedges, on positive or negative transfers.

This study examines a pragmatic transfer indication in various emerging strategies embracing all the strategies observed in the above studies including essential consideration towards related cultural aspects in understanding the phenomena. This study examined the phenomenon that marked the emergence of pragmatic transfer in the host environment. The aims were to find an occurrence of pragmatic transfer in the Javanese English conversation in the host country, under what conversation strategies the transfer takes place and to see how far the pragmatic transfer appears in the strategies.

METHOD

This research applied the qualitative ethnographic ways of observing phenomena of Javanese culture, this is an ethnographic efforts to understand utterances (Brewer, 2000). The respondents of the research were Javanese native speakers from Mataraman area (Central Java and the western part of East Java Province of Indonesia) consisting of 13 Javanese native speakers and they have stayed in English speaking countries for more than two years. They stayed in Perth, Melbourne and Adelaide. The primary data of the research were the respondents' English utterances taken from conversations, the secondary data containing the respondents' background and other supporting data, like education and personal motivation. Data collection was an unstructured, open-ended interview protocol, and the key instrument was the researcher herself. Demographic questionnaires were given in advance to acquire proposed sampling of the respondents. The data were analyzed through the following successive steps : develop the concept, categorize, code and interpret the data. The transcribed utterances framed by foregrounding (Paltridge, 2012) the utterances based on the phenomena sought. The narrative analysis was applied using the emergent key themes from the data and the selective focus was adopted based on the principle of the pragmatic transfer, the conversation strategy and the Javanese norms.

DISCUSSION

The pragmatic transfer phenomenon was found in how the respondents applied Javanese patterns and ways of interacting with others, not only through choice of words, phrases, sentences, kinship terms, idioms, metaphors, but also jokes. This pragmatic transfer phenomenon is indicated in the conversation strategies discussed in the following discussion.

1. The Negative and Positive Pragmatic Transfer

Pragmatic transfer is an interference towards the host language and culture, due to the influence of the home language and culture. It can be temporary or permanent depending on various things such as motivation, communication needs, language environment, language exposure and other causes. Pragmatic transfer can be negative or positive, negative if it interferes meaning, so it provides multiple interpretations, misunderstanding or failure to understand. Meanwhile, it is positive when it facilitates the understanding of meaning, because there are similarities of the home and host word meaning. The use of Javanese language habits was found in English conversations so that this form is believed to be a form of pragmatic transfer. The following are the forms of the pragmatic transfer in the respondents' conversation strategies in English utterances. The strategies found were illustrated in Table 1 and discussed as follows:

a. Making the Most of Others' Praise

The negative pragmatic transfer phenomenon was seen by applying certain forms of addressing others using Javanese and Indonesian ways in the respondents' English. Some forms of addressing in Javanese terms, such as *pak* 'sir', *bu* 'ma'am'/'Mrs', *mas* 'older brother' and *mbak* 'older sister' remained in use, although they were speaking English. This structured and pragmatic addressing style is part of the way to reach the speaker's goals (Koentjaraningrat, 1989). This kind of practice were seen in some conversations, for example in the utterance 'May be *Bu* 'Mrs' M (mentioning the husband's name) can play to Perth' instead of saying 'May be you can play to Perth' is likely to be a sign of the effort to apply the mutually understood addressing style vocabularies to facilitate and fulfill the intended meaning. The word *bu* 'ma'am' is used not only to greet mothers or adult women, such as friends, colleagues or strangers, but at the same time it is used to express the aspect of *kurmat* 'respect' of the Javanese principles for maintaining relationships.

Among adults or married people, *Kromo* style (formal Javanese speech style) is used to address each other (Sukarno, 2010), unless the interlocutors are close friends, the way of addressing people is usually in *Kromo* style. The respondents were not close friends, so, the addressing term *bu* signifies *panjenengan* the highest 'you' in formal Javanese speech style, this way the use this kinship term is somehow raising the addressee' status to reach as high as this level of the word

'you' it represents. This way the speaker respected the hearer through the kinship term, or at least the speaker wanted the hearer to have the notion that the speaker respected her. This implies that he preserved for Javanese *unggah-ungguh* 'norms' that should be applied in the respective situations.

b. Indirect Response

The use of Javanese concepts in English is likely to cause interference. The negative pragmatic transfer as seen in how the interlocutors saved face over some sensitive topics appeared with underlying cultural reason. Given questions about polygamy, a female respondent seemed reluctant to accept or reject it openly, instead she gave an implied meaning statement as in 'God give us think …… to think a::: talk brain, good brain to think and to somehow make sense of his teaching'. She answered the interviewer's question indirectly, while she must have been able to say 'I don't agree' or 'I do agree'. There is a possibility that she did not answer, first, it is the realm of religion, so it is individual domain, none of your business aspect, so reluctance was performed. The second she tried to save the interviewer' face, since she did not know which side the interviewer was on, whereas both answers had consequences. Indirectness might save herself, and the interviewer could get the disagreement (if it were) less painfully. Still, adequate context is required to understand this implicature sentence. The concept of indirectness and the ability to understand it is included in Javanese concept of *tanggap ing sasmita* 'responsive in signs' (Sukarno, 2010) which refers to a person's sensitivity to read and understand the sign given in the symbolic information (Koentjaraningrat, 1989). It is usually followed by *laku ing sasmita amrih lantip*, meaning 'practice in order to be sharp', or a recommendation to learn reading the signs. All of these Javanese principles underlie the emergence of interference in English sentences.

Table 1 : The Pragmatic Transfer in Conversation Strategies

Strategies	Negative/Positive
Making the most of others' praise	Using Kinship terms (-)
Indirect Response	Applying Implicature (-)
	Creating jokes with jargon (-)
	Using non-deictic pronoun (+)
Denial over compliments	Making use of idioms (-)
	Creating Humours (-)
Mitigating taboo or imposition	Applying Implicature (-)
	Using Metaphor (-)
	Using Modal auxiliary (+)

An indirect response was also seen in different utterances, it uses humorous expression. Instead of thanking or rejecting a compliment, a respondent utilized a jargon to respond it indirectly. The Javanese jargon of *mangan ra mangan ngumpul* which mean 'harmony must be maintained even if there is no food to eat' referring to the Javanese old philosophy when Indonesia once experienced food crisis where *mangan* 'having meals' was very desirable. In this instance, the need for food was made less important compared to togetherness (Suseno, 1985). Behind its textual meaning, the jargon is often exploited as a lazy attitude to gather more for fun than to work for a living. She indirectly rejected the praise given to her by considering herself contrary to the compliment given. In addition, because this jargon has been deemed incompatible with the current situation then its use is usually aimed for a particular purpose, usually to create humor. The humor is created by changing some words, they are *ra* 'no' to *yo* 'yes' and *tur* 'also' into *mangan yo mangan tur ngumpul* becomes completely the opposite meaning 'the food and harmony', it intentionally creates humorous effect.

Different utterances illustrated other kind of indirect response, but because it facilitated the meaning of the sentence, it did not cause misunderstanding in English. This phenomenon of positive pragmatic transfer, for example, was seen in the use of general or impersonal 'you' as seen in one of the respondents' statement: 'I cannot force you to follow me' and 'I cannot justify you as bad', when invited to comment on someone's behavior. Both the words 'you' are non-deictic use of pronoun referring to people in general about what is common (Downing, 2015). The use of this pronoun seems to be relevant to a Javanese culture concept where people feel *ewuh pakewuh* 'awkward' (Koentjaraningrat, 1989) to talk about bad or sensitive things, so that they will pretend (Geertz, 1960) or use other means to avoid hurting others' feeling in stating the topic. The use of the impersonal 'you' is not only as a means to cover the awkward feeling when revealing the unpleasant topics, but also to avoid referring directly to the listener (Downing, 2015). Non-deictic form is much easier to apply to any level of addressees and saving face even more because it has effect of 'distancing' the speaker from the threat (Payne, 2011). In English there are similar expressions such as 'you reap what you sow' which may mean 'You finally have to face the consequences of your actions'. Nevertheless, the difference is this is not used to avoid, or indirectly response, but rather to remind someone like 'I told you'. Whereas in Javanese the pattern is

required to maintain each other's face to avoid conflict and retain peace so as to create awareness of balance and preservation of human life (Amrih, 2008).

c. Denial Over a Praise

The phenomena of negative pragmatic transfer was also seen in how some respondents denied themselves over a praise, the laudable Javanese way of refusing (Wijayanto, 2016). After being complimented, a respondent stated an idiom of 'I don't know', according to Merriam-Webster dictionary the idiom 'I don't know' is used to express disagreement, uncertainty or doubt. However, this meaning is not used to respond to a compliment, a person is generally grateful for praise and the saying of 'thank you' is the most common. Javanese people believe that humility is a trait that one really wants, so when someone praises, you have to disagree with her or show that you do not deserve it. Therefore, it seems that the respondent used this intention to deny the praise. Another respondent reacted by lowering or denigrating (Sukarno, 2010) herself stating 'I don't know anything, I am very bad' . She might performed the Javanese *andhap-asor* 'modesty' principle (Amrih, 2008) which recommends Javanese to lower/humble themselves. Although this is a seemingly self-defeating statement (Geertz, 1960), but the reasons for doing this is not pretending, nor negligence of telling the truth as Geertz believed. This is more likely to avoid the arrogant impression (Sukarno, 2010) when she was praised that she was good or successful. The refusal way of using the first language path is similar to the Hashemian's findings (Hashemian, 2012).

Reacting to compliments that a respondent and friends were successful people, she performed an act of denying signified as lowering oneself by stating the utterance of 'we are *pringas-pringis*' 'like to perform a wry smile, smirk' or similar other meaning . This Javanese negative nuance phrase is often used to tease or remind close friends, younger people or children, but certainly not for elderly, higher status and powerful people. The joke was meant to refer to themselves, it thus led to the image of lowering herself, and although the intention was shown in the form of jokes, the aspect of the self-defeating or denigrating (Sukarno, 2010) was visible, through the meaning contained in the humor. This negative impression of the Javanese expression was utilized as a denial of herself and her friends towards the praise given. This reinforces the notion that these Javanese people used the Javanese cultural schemas in their English.

d. Mitigating Taboo and Imposition

In managing talks containing taboo and imposition Javanese cultural mitigation was carried out. Taboo and imposition should be avoided and not discussed to maintain harmony, because there is the principle of *rukun agawe santosa* 'harmony creates tranquility' and *congkrah agawe bubrah* 'conflicts makes disparity' (Hermawan et al., 2018) attached to the Javanese people. Therefore, such expressions must be refined so as not to cause unrest. Strategies to mitigate them were found in the data when the interviewer and one of the participants were talking about polygamy concept. In the utterance, 'I'd like to look for another door to heaven than through that door'. The words 'door' for the followers is believed to be the reward to heaven and 'look for another door' implied that she did not agree to the idea, yet the phrase 'another door' alleviates the rejection, since the topic being discussed might be considered as 'non-free good' (Thomas, 1981) or taboo words to be talked about freely.

Some metaphors were found to reduce imposition, like the utterance found in the interview 'I want (to) eat egg' and 'I want (to) eat chicken' to illustrate a choice a man may face when he decides to marry another woman after his wife. Being hard to say bluntly, he made use of a metaphor to reduce the imposition. The representation of the concept of 'marrying' to 'eating' and 'a woman' to 'egg' and 'chicken' (food) seems rude, yet the Javanese metaphor is currently known among Javanese society as a mockery or a joke. In his research Darwis also confirmed the existence indigenous socio-cultural knowledge in the foreign language (Darwish, 2018). Different kind of mitigation was found in the phrase 'may be' that mostly appear before the propositional utterances. As in '...I want (to) eat ..ee ... egg may be ..' a refinement of somewhat taboo statement when he likened women to food. The use of the English word 'maybe' with the intention to smooth out taboo expressions makes this phenomenon inclined to positive pragmatic transfer.

The respondent use of the repeated phrase 'may be' may illustrate the speaker's realization that his words was harsh and offended or gave himself a bad impression for stating a certain bad idea, so the phrase is used in advance. Alonso found this as a fuzzy hedging (Alonso et al., 2012) to soften statements (Locher, 2004). The difference perception of taboo creates awkwardness in cross culture communication. Certain taboo topics are by no means universal, especially sexual or

religious one; yet, the kinds and degrees of taboo concept are culturally different and it promotes pragmatic transfer.

2. The Pragmatic Transfer Tendency

The need to survive in the host country makes sojourners struggle to acquire the host culture. There are particular aspects influencing the development of pragmatic competence in a host culture that have an impact on the emergence of pragmatic transfer. This study found the respondents transferred back the pragmatic force of their first language in their foreign/host language, this may be considered as having insufficient or developing pragmatic competence, because this may encourage misunderstanding and hinder communication. Some facts may provide reason why it happened. This is what Kasper (Kasper, 1994) considers them as non-structural factors that affect the emergent of pragmatic transfer, namely, as also found by Darwish (Darwish, 2018), some socio-cultural factors like home and host cultural schemas, degree of interaction (exposure) with the host society and other factors like host language proficiency, length of stay and motivation.

The factor of proficiency of the host language surely helps when people first live abroad; nevertheless, this is not yet sufficient to mingle with the host society. The occurrence of pragmatic transfer was found in the utterances of some respondents with English proficiency, which is not the same with Bu's and Alhadidi's research (Alhadidi, 2017; Bu, 2012) saying that pragmatic transfer decreases when English proficiency is high. Meanwhile length of stay does not automatically develop the pragmatic competence (Eslami & Ahn, 2014) and other aspects like motivation and degree of interaction with the host society was found to have impact upon the growth of the foreign/host schemas. As Nishida states that those who are sufficiently motivated may abandon the home schemas and modify their cognitive structures accordingly (Nishida, 2005). This is similar to the finding of the previous research (Eslami & Ahn, 2014) that motivation has a positive effect on pragmatic competence. It may determine the kind and degree of the pragmatic transfer found. Table 2 illustrates the phenomenon, the difference in motivation leads to weakening or reinforcing the pragmatic transfer in their English.

Table 2. Pragmatic Transfer Tendency

Strategies	most of others' praise	Indirect Response	Denial over compliments	Mitigating taboo or imposition

Group	Using Kinship terms (-)	Applying implicature (-)	Creating jokes with Jargon (-)	Using non-deictic Pronoun (+)	Making use of idioms (-)	Creating Humour (-)	Applying Implicatures (-)	Using Metaphore (-)	Using Modal auxiliary (+)
Highly motivated	-+	+	-	+	-	-	+	-	-
Moderate	+	+	+	-+	-+	-+	-+	+	+

Several motivations marked to the willingness to interact with the local community, namely high motivation, moderate motivation as an instrumental reason to get a job or to study and no or low motivation to integrate with host community. These motivations affected other aspects such as the choice of residence to be in the same location with home people or not, the side or main jobs, the activities and contact with the host people. The kind of motivation accelerates and decelerates the pragmatic transfer. The higher the motivation to acquire the host language and culture the greater the effort to communicate with host people, and the faster the understanding of the host culture the less pragmatic transfers were found in their language and vice versa. This phenomenon is seen in Table 2 where the low group used many indigenous jokes with jargon, expressions, implicatures, and metaphors, while the high group still utilized implicatures but Javanese expressions and jargons did not appear, and the moderate group used balanced strategies.

The implication of this research is that having certain foreign language proficiency is not yet a guarantee of being able to mingle with the host society well; one must also have the pragmatic competence of the culture of the host society. In addition to sufficient foreign language acquisition, intensive communication with native speakers needs to be created and maintained for the pragmatic competence to grow and develop. Consequently, a person who studies a foreign language in his/her own country may be able to acquire the language but cannot grow the pragmatic competence of the background culture of the foreign language learned, so what might happen is speaking a foreign language but thinking and using his own cultural norms. If this happens to a foreign language teacher, then the thinking schemas will spread to his students. This implication requires further research that proves that this is true and to see what impact it may have.

CONCLUSION

The pragmatic transfer was found in conversation strategies that describe the phenomenon of "speaking English with Javanese thinking schemas". There were negative and positive pragmatic transfer found in four conversation strategies, they were making the most of others' praise; indirect response, denial over compliments and mitigating taboo or imposition. In these strategies interference of home culture was seen, like the use of the kinship terms to raise people' status, applying implicature, employing humour with jargon and expression in indirect strategies. Humor was also found in denial toward compliments including the use of non-deictic pronoun and idioms. Implicatures, metaphore and modal auxiliary were particularly seen as a mitigation towards unwanted expression.

The tendency to use the pragmatic transfer in English utterances affected by several aspects such as host language proficiency, host culture schemas, length of stay, motivation and degree of interaction (exposure) with the host society. In addition, it seems that the motivational aspect to integrate with the host community is the most important one, which ultimately affects their degree of pragmatic competence. This pragmatic competence promotes and inhibits the emergence of pragmatic transfer in their English. The motivation can be high, moderate or low/no motivation to acquire the host language and culture, and resulted on the acceleration or deceleration of their host culture schemas figured out in the pragmatic transfer found in their utterances.

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