THE STUDY OF SPEECH ACT SETS OF REFUSAL
ON INDONESIAN STUDENTS SPEAKING ENGLISH

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Abstrak : Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui apakah ada perbedaan produksi ujaran dalam menolak undangan antara siswa yang memiliki kemampuan Bahasa Inggris yang tinggi dan rendah. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif dengan menggunakan purposive sampling. Sasaran penelitian ini adalah 4 siswa dengan nilai IELTS lebih dari atau sama dengan 6.5 dan 4 siswa dengan nilai IELTS kurang dari atau sama dengan 5. Tes berbicara dengan metode *roleplay* digunakan sebagai alat pengambilan data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa dengan kemampuan Bahasa Inggris yang tinggi mampu memproduksi ujaran yang lebih bervariasi dalam menolak undangan dan mampu menggunakan strategi penolakan yang berbeda dalam situasi sosial yang berbeda.

Abstract : The aim of this study was to find out whether there was a difference of speech act set of refusal between high proficiency and low proficiency students. This research was qualitative research using purposive sampling. The subjects were 5 students who have 6.5 IELTS score or higher and 5 students who have 5 IELTS score or lower. Speaking test and roleplay method were used to collect the data. The result of this research showed that high proficiency students produce more uterances to express refusal than the those with low proficiency. This indicates that higher proficiency students produce various uterances in the different social contexts.

Keywords: speech act, refusal, high proficiency, low proficiency.

INTRODUCTION

In the end of 2014, I had gone to Seattle, Washington, and I had stayed with the local family consisting of five people and worked in a small office consisting of seven people. For three weeks, I had communicated with them and used some of utterances that I had on my mind to express some refusals. At those time I realized that we had a difficulty to communicate effectively. I had have difficulties to produce appropriate utterances to refuse my co-worker inviations or offers. I realized that I had need something beyond a grammatically correct to interact with them. In other words, I, as language user needs to use the language not only correctly (based on linguistic competence), but also appropriately (based on communicative competence).

According to Hymes (1972), "…a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner. In short, a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others."

After going back to Indonesia, I met my friend who had lived in Australia for a year. She is really good at English, proven by her IELTS score which is higher than 7.5. Both of us, told our experience overseas and discussed about our life there. From her story, I knew that she did not have any communication problem like me. Looking at my IELTS score which lower than her (only 5) at those time, I was inspired to do the study comparing a sociolinguistic competence between high and low proficiency of EFL speakers.

According to sociolinguistic competence theory, in Canale and Swain (1980) this component included both sociocultural rules of use and rules of discourse; here only the former set of rules is referred to. Sociolinguistic competence thus adresses the extend to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts depending on contextual factors such as status of participants, purposes of the interactions, and norms or conventions of interactions.

Appropriateness of utterances refer to both appropriateness of meaning and appropriateness of form. Appropriateness of meaning concerns to the extents to which particular communicative functions (e.g. commanding, complaining, and inviting), attitudes (including politeness and formality) and ideas are judged to be proper in a given situation. For example, it would generally be inappropriate for a waiter in a restaurant to command a customer to order a certain menu item regardless of how the utterance and communicative function (a command) were expressed grammatically.

Appropriateness of form concerns to the extend to which a given meaning (including communicative functions, attitudes, and proportions/ideas) is represented in a verbal and/or non-verbal form that is proper in a given sociolinguistic context. For example, a waiter trying to take an order politely in a tasteful restaurant would be using inappropriate grammatical form if he were to ask , "OK, chump, what are you and this broad gonna eat ?". This notion of appropriateness of form thus includes what Richards (1981) and others have called 'interactional competence', which addresses appropriateness of kinesics and proxemics. It is clear that the notion of naturalness or probability of occurance

(Hymes, 1972) can also play an important role in determining the appropriateness of meaning and form: however, this notion may be of limited value given the unpredictable and creative aspect of communication.

There is a tendency in many second languange programmes to treat sociolinguistic competence as less important than grammatical competence. This tendency seems odd for two reason. First, it gives the impression that grammatical correctness of utterances is more importance than appropriateness of utterances in actual communication, an impression that is challanged by data from first language use (Terrel, 1980) and second languange use (Jones, 1978). Second, this tendency ignores the fact that sociolinguistic competence is crucial in interpreting uterances for their 'social meaning' for example, communicative function and attitude-when this is not clear from the literal meaning of utterances or from non-verbal cues (e.g. sociocultural context and gestures). There is no doubt universal aspect of appropriate languange use that need not be relearned to communicate appropriately in a second languange (Canale and Swain, 1980).

Blum-Kulka (1980) distinguishes three types of rules that interact in determining how effectively a given communicative function is conveyed and interpreted : pragmatic rules, social-appropriateness rules and linguistic-realization rules. Pragmatic rules refer to the situational preconditions that must be satisfied to carry out a given communicative function (e.g. to give a command, one must have the right to do so). Social-approriateness rules deal with whether or not a given function would normally be conveyed at all and, if so, with how much directness (e.g. asking a stranger how much he or she earns). Linguistic-realization rules involve number

of considerations, such as the frequency with which a given grammatical form is used to convey a given function, the number and structural range of forms associated with each function, the generality of forms across functions and situations, and the means on modulating the attitudinal tone of a given function.

Blum-Kulka's own concluding statement expresses very well the importance of sociolinguistic competence for second languange pedagogy: 'It is quite clear that as long as we do not know more about the ways in which communicative function are being achieved in different languanges, (second languange) learners will often fail to achieve their communicative ends in the target languange, and neither they nor their teacher will really understand why.'

In the end, this research investigates the difference between high proficiency and low proficiency of English Foreign Language speakers' production of refusals. The discovery of more general patterns of pragmatic failure as produced by a group of subjects from varying first languange backgrounds could be helpful to Indonesian EFL educators who must address the needs of classrooms to enhance students speaking ability. The results should provide examples that English teachers can use to illuminate situations in which students may fail pragmatically-sociopragmatically, and, in turn, to develop curricula to address these problem areas.

METHODS

This research is focused on analyzing the differences of speech act sets of refusal between high proficiency and low proficiency students. This research is conducted in GoGoCourse, a local English' course, which prepares their students to pursue

master degree overseas, using purposive sample and role play method. She chose purposive samples which consist of ten students; five students with a high proficiency level and five students with a low proficiency level.

The researcher designed two types of roleplay situations of refusal and compared the productions of speech act strategies between those two group. At the end, the researcher analized the frequency, order, and content of semantic formulae from their speaking production. Furthermore, the researcher acts as an observer to find out the speech act sets on their speaking.

RESULTS

The results are organized in the order of power and distance of the interlocutor (+Power, +Distance), (-Power, +Distance), and by an invitation stimulus types. In each section, the high proficiency group results are presented first followed by the low proficiency group. For each group, the frequencies, the order, and the content of semantic formulas are examined. At the end of this chapter a summary of results is presented.

Refusal to an Invitations from Professors (+Power, +Distance)

Frequency of the semantic formulas in the first situation of the roleplay, which involves an invitation from professors to a graduation celebration, are shown in Table 1 below. This may be a good place to say a few words about what the number in Table 2 represents. As an example, 100% of high proficiency and low proficiency

students told a reason/excuse/explanation on their refusal strategies. This value indicates that all Indonesian students think wether they are needed to tell a reason when they refused an invitation from someone.

Table 1. *Frequency of Refusal Strategies Used in Situation 1*

Semantic formulas	High proficiency	Low profeciency
Direct		
Negative willingness/capability		60%
Indirect		
Statement of regret	60%	40%
Wish	20%	
Reason/excuse/explanation	100%	100%
Future possibility	40%	20%
Adjunct to refusal		
Gratitude	60%	20%
Positive opinion	20%	
Request for empathy	20%	

The majority of low proficiency students expressed a direct refusal while none of high proficiency students used it. Most common word that they used in giving a direct refusal was Sorry, I can't !. Another commonly used strategy was to give a statement of regret (40 %). As shown in Table 2, the direct refusal was also followed by future possibility (20%).

The result also showed there are several differences between the low proficiency and high proficiency students. All of the high proficiency students used indirect refusal. The tendency was consistenly followed with statement of regret (60%) and future possibility (40%). Almost all of the high proficiency students use a wider variety of strategies than did the low proficiency. It is shown by the use of adjuct such as gratitude (60%), positive opinion (20%), and request for empathy (20%).

Table 2. *Order of Refusal Strategies Used in Situation 1*

Semantic formulas	High proficiency					Low proficiency		
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3
Direct								
Negative willingness/capability					-	40%	20%	
Indirect					-			
Statement of regret		20%	40%		-	20%	20%	
Wish	20%				-			
Reason/excuse/explanation		60%	40%		-	40%	20%	40%
Future possibility			20%	20%	-		20%	
Adjunct to refusal								
Gratitude	60%				-		20%	
Positive opinion	20%				-			
Request for empathy		20%			-			

The order of semantic formula used by all Indonesian students both high proficiency and low proficiency to situation 1 is summarized in Table 2. Again, this may be a good place to explain what the percentage values in Table 2 represent. We may see that high proficiency students has more various strategies than low proficiency students. On average, high proficiency students has four strategies' order and almost low proficiency students has two strategies' order only. This value also indicated that 60% of high proficiency students expressed a gratitude as the first strategy's order on refusing someone invitations and followed by reason/excuse/explanation (60%) in the second order. Otherwise, in the third order, high proficiency students expressed statement of regret (40%) or reason/excuse/explanation (40%) than future possibility.

The tendency of the data also indicated that low proficiency students expressed negative willingness/capability (40%) or reason/excuse/explanation (40%) and

followed by other strategies; negative willingness (20%), statement of regret (20%), reason (20%), future possibility (20%), or gratitude (20%) in the second order, while surprisingly, 40% of the low proficiency students use reason in the third order of the refusal strategies.

In term of the content of reason/excuse/explanation for the refusal, 100% of Indonesian students, both high proficiency and low proficiency provided a reason honestly that they do not know the graduates personally. What made both of them different was the sentences that they used. The high proficiency students used longer sentence such as "hmmmm.... that sounds good, but I don't know anyone on the party, so I'am affraid that it will be inconvenience to me and I will disturb the mood at that night,.. so, better for me to not go, and maybe next year, yeah.. next year I will join !" while the low proficiency only said "I can't professor, I don't know anyone there".

Refusal to an Invitations from Friend (-Power, +Distance)

Table 3. *Frequency of Refusal Strategies Used in Situation 2*

Semantic formulas	High proficiency	Low profeciency
Direct		
Negative willingness/capability		20%
Indirect		
Statement of regret	40%	60%
Wish	20%	
Reason/excuse/explanation	100%	100%
Future possibility	60%	20%
Statement of alternative	20%	
Adjunct to refusal		
Gratitude	40%	

The result from situation 2, which is a refusal to an invitations from friend is presented in Table 3. Similar to refusing the invitation from their professors, all of Indonesian students both high proficiency or low proficiency stated a reason/excuse/expalanation in their refusal strategies. In addition, 60% of high proficiency expressed future possibility and 60% of low proficeiency expressed statement of regret.

Some strategies are differently used in the second situation, for example in the first situation, 60% of high proficeincy students expressed gratitude and statement of regret on their refusal strategies, but in the second situation only 40% of them who expressed it. Additionally, 60% of high proficiency students stated a future possibility in the second situation and 20% of the students expressed future possibility. These patterns were similarly demonstrated by the low proficiency students. No one expressed gratitude and less of them used direct refusal but almost all of the low proficiency students (60%) stated expression of regret.

Table 4. *Order of Refusal Strategies Used in Situation 2*

Semantic formulas	High proficiency					Low proficiency		
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3
Direct								
Negative willingness/capability					-	20%		
Indirect					-			
Statement of regret	20%		20%		-	40%	20%	
Wish		20%			-			
Reason/excuse/explanation	60%	40%			-	40%	60%	20%
Future possibility		20%	20%	20%	-			
Statement of alternative			20%					
Adjunct to refusal								
Gratitude	20%	20%			-			

In the situation 2, the result of the refusal strategies to an invitation from a friend are shown in table 4. Different from the refusal strategies used in situation 1 (shown in Table 3), 60% of high proficiency students used reason/excused/explanation in the first order and 40% of them used it in the second order. The same tendency has also shown in the data of low proficiency students, where 40% of them used reason expression in the first order and 60% of the them used it in the second order. As an implication, only 20% of high proficiency students who expressed a gratitude. It may be caused by the close relationship between two friends (-Power, +Distance).

In the content of semantic formulae, both high proficiency and low proficiency students used an honest and friendly languages. This case was different from the situation 1 which tend to be formal, in this situation people speak more closely. Both of the groups gave a direct reason on why they do not like the genre of the movie. Otherwise the high proficiency students speak longer such as "hhmm.... actually I don't like drama, because it is too dramatic and melancolic. Better for me to watch action movie or comedy movie", while most of the low proficiency said "sorry, I don't like those movies".

In line with politeness theory of solidarity, most of the high proficiency students give a future possibility such as said "I will join in the other occasion" while the low proficiency students also spoke more enjoyably. Moreover, those enjoyable situations drove them to express the excuse easily without giving any gratitude or negative willingness first.

CONCLUSIONS

By analyzing two pattern above, researcher found several pattern, they are; (1) The high proficiency students have a good speaking strategies compared to the low proficiency students. (2) The typical of speaking strategies between high proficiency and low proficiency is consistent where the high proficiency students have a strong tendency to use adjuct and indirect refusal. Conversely, the low proficiency students have a strong tendency to use direct refusal and they produce less adjuct as one of their speaking strategies. (3) The using of different strategies was existed in the two different social condition. Students used a different strategies to refuse professors (+Power, +Distance), and friends (-Power, +Distance). And the last (4) There is a significant different strategy from both of the group on using expression to refuse invitation from two communications context.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the conclusion, the researcher puts forward the following suggestions:

1. The next researchers of this field should enhance the research on the comparative study of high proficiency and low proficiency students on producting speech act set of refusal with the native speaker speech act production. So, the Indonesian researchers could set a sociopragmatic standard for teachers who teach English as a foreign languange.

2. The English teacher should implement speaking strategy on teaching speaking for their students in the classroom. So, all Indonesian students have a knowledge to speak with a lot of people from various of the countries.

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