

Politeness Strategy in Interlanguage Pragmatics of Making Request Performed by Indonesian Young Child

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Abstract

Since oral language is related with the sounds that convey meaning, a child must be a remarkable subject to be observed in using it in social interaction. Then surely a child must acquire pragmatic competence. Speech act are commonly given to specific labels such as apology, complaint, compliment, invitation, promise, or request'. Request is the first focus of this research. Afterward, regarding relative distance, a child needs to know a range of ways in making request politely. Thus, other pragmatic competence like using several different politeness strategies needs to be performed by a child. In this case, this paper attempts to answer the following research question: How does a bilingual child negotiate meanings involved in interlanguage pragmatics of request in a casual conversation? The subject of this paper is a bilingual child from *Mondial Education* who has English as a medium of instruction being spoken three hours a day at school and the data is in the form of transcription, both of them were taken from related research journal. The transcription was then analyzed and interpreted. The findings show that the subject that use English as second language are able to use various politeness strategy but fail to gain awareness of social distance (relative distance).

Keywords: interlanguage pragmatics, politeness strategy, request

Abstrak

Karena bahasa lisan berkaitan dengan bunyi-bunyi yang menyampaikan makna, maka seorang anak harus menjadi subjek yang patut diperhatikan dalam menggunakannya dalam interaksi sosial. Maka tentunya seorang anak harus memperoleh kompetensi pragmatis. Tindak tutur biasanya diberi label tertentu seperti permintaan maaf, keluhan, pujian, ajakan, janji, atau permintaan'. Permintaan menjadi fokus pertama penelitian ini. Selanjutnya, mengenai jarak yang relatif, seorang anak perlu mengetahui berbagai cara dalam mengajukan permintaan dengan sopan. Oleh karena itu, kompetensi pragmatis lainnya seperti menggunakan beberapa strategi kesantunan yang berbeda perlu dilakukan oleh seorang anak. Dalam hal ini, makalah ini mencoba menjawab pertanyaan penelitian berikut: Bagaimana seorang anak bilingual menegosiasikan makna yang terlibat dalam pragmatik permintaan antarbahasa dalam percakapan santai? Subjek tulisan ini adalah seorang anak bilingual dari *Mondial Education* yang menggunakan bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa pengantar yang diucapkan tiga jam sehari di sekolah dan datanya berupa transkripsi, keduanya diambil dari jurnal penelitian terkait. Transkrip tersebut kemudian dianalisis dan diinterpretasikan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa

Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol. 3 No. 1 pp 65-74

subjek yang menggunakan bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa kedua mampu menggunakan berbagai strategi kesopanan namun gagal memperoleh kesadaran akan jarak sosial (jarak relatif).

Kata kunci: pragmatik antarbahasa, strategi kesantunan, permintaan

INTRODUCTION

It has been accepted widely that language is used as a communication tool. According to Soekemi (1995: 2) language is fundamentally oral, and that the oral symbols represent meaning regarding life context, he also emphasized that language has a social function which effect to the existence of society. Something which can be derived from those statements, inasmuch as it stated about oral system which represent meaning and social function within a society, is the social interaction happened among the community. Adult and a child are considered as the part of community. Numerous investigations and researches have been conducted concerning the interaction between adult and a child in relation to the second language acquisition and pragmatics competence of a child.

There is an explanation about the relationship between second language acquisition and pragmatics competence of a child. Kasper and Blum-Kulla (1993) mentioned about Carrel (1981) founding which further established by Ervin-Tripp et al. (1987) in the statement below.

Her findings are at odds with those established by Ervin-Tripp, Strage, Lampert, and Bell (1987), who found that children acquiring their first (L1) and second language strongly base their pragmatic comprehension on situational information, disregarding form. (p. 5)

Therefore, in this case, a child is considered acquiring their first language and second language when they have mastered their pragmatic competence on situational information rather than when they have mastered the grammatical form. Ever since this paper subject is a bilingual child of Indonesia who mostly use English as her second language at home, it comes to the field of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) which focused on the second language use as asserted by Kasper and Schmidt (1996) that,

To date, ILP has thus been primarily a study of second language use rather than second language learning. (p. 150)

A child does not go through acquiring second language use on interlanguage pragmatics field by him/herself. Zerey (2014) stated that,

Naming the process “socialization”, Schieffelin & Ochs (1986: 165) assert that both the child and the adult are active agents in the dynamic contribution of meaning when interacting with other members of a social group. (p. 1208)

In addition a child needs to acquire pragmatic competence with the help of adult, whether it is parent or teacher, in an interaction. Zerey (2014: 1208) named parent or teacher as the competent adult.

Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol. 3 No. 1 pp 65-74

One of those pragmatic competences has been mentioned in the abstract, a child may possess, is speech act. Yule (1996: 47) described speech act as an action performed by using utterances, and he also determined that, in English, speech act is generally labeled to the following case such as apology, complaint, compliment, invitation, promise, or request. Making request will be the focus in this paper. Another pragmatic competence a child needs to be performed is the using of various politeness strategies, in accordance to social distance. Several studies related to a child's speech act of making request have been conducted in different purposes. First, the research completed by Palupi (2006) defined that a three-year-and-four-month-old child has a great awareness on using communicative act (speech act) of requesting someone to do something which, based on Ninio and Snow (1996) included in category of Directives and Responses, with the occurrence percentage of 25.15%, just one level after Questions and Responses with occurrence percentage 33.96%. Second, Zerey (2014) focus on his study was to investigate a number of request strategies used by preschool children in three-way interaction: child-child, child-teacher, and teacher-child, in the field of first language acquisition context. The participant were 40 students with mean ages of 4,6 and 5,2 in two different classes and different teachers. The finding was that,

.... the three interaction groups indicated a sharp similarity concerning the request type they mostly uttered in a classroom setting. Significant consistency was found in the propensity of teachers to use request in indirect embedded imperative form, which indicated the elaboration to pay a cautious attention to the language used in child interactions, directing and modelling the conversation as sustainers of language development. Within the child-child interactions frame, the developmental findings highlighted children's growing awareness of pragmatic rules with respect to functions and forms of requests. There did not exist a significant developmental difference in the child-teacher interactions. (p. 1220)

Third, is the study of the interlanguage of young learner of English in the field of second language acquisition conducted by Sutopo (2013). This study was descriptive one. The finding of this study was that a child who used English as a second language had been able to perform speech functions, and it also concluded that the language realization didn't meet complicated pragmatic level of politeness. Politeness in Indonesia, especially in Javanese culture, semantically refers to *Sopan Santun*. But it may have different terms in the pragmatic field. These studies aimlessly describe or show the politeness strategies used by a child. But they can be a further fundamental research reference for another researcher.

For that reason, this paper purposefully attempts to describe the politeness strategies in making request used by a bilingual child to negotiate meaning in casual conversation which the data is in transcription taken from Sutopo's work (2013).

Interlanguage Pragmatics

As mentioned in the Kasper and Schmidt (1996), they described that Interlanguage Pragmatics as,

Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol. 3 No. 1 pp 65-74

...., the study of the development and use of strategies for linguistic action by nonnative speakers ... (p. 150)

They, then, added that,

focus is given to the ways NNSs' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge differs from that of native speakers (NSs) and among learners with different linguistic and cultural back-grounds. (p. 150)

It implies that interlanguage pragmatics deals with second language use since it was cited that interlanguage pragmatics is the study of nonnative speakers development and their proficiency in conveying intended meaning through the use of strategies. Moreover, Yule (1996: 88) described interlanguage pragmatics as an investigation which focuses more chiefly on the communicative behavior of nonnative speakers when they are attempting to communicate in their second language. In this paper, the nonnative speaker is an Indonesian young child who speaks English as her second language. Then what is the major interest of interlanguage pragmatic on young child second language? Blum-Kulka and Kasper (1993: 59) defined interlanguage pragmatics as interlanguage speech acts performance which consists of thanking, apologizing, complaining, requesting, and correcting. They also emphasized that there is a large amount of empirical and theoretical establishment for language pragmatics to work from for the study of requests and apologies.

Speech act term is depicted as an action performed via utterances (Yule, 1996: 47). By using some utterances the speaker generally expect that they are being recognized by the hearer under a certain circumstances, which called as speech event (Yule, 1996: 47). Yule (1996: 53) classified speech acts into 5 types, those are, Declarative, Representative, Expressive, Directive, Commissive. Request, as the important focus on this paper, is determined as the Directive act (Yule, 1996: 47). It is also stated by Kasper and Blum-Kulla (1993)

In Searle's (1976) typology, thanking, apologizing, and complaining represent expressive speech acts; requesting is a directive act; and correcting, a representative act. (p. 59)

Yule (1996: 55) also distinguished speech act based on the structure and stated that an act '*which is used to make command or request is functioning as indirect speech act*'. Subsequently, he emphasized that '*Indirect speech acts are generally associated with greater politeness in English than direct speech acts*'. It is motivating topic if this paper first major topic is the interlanguage pragmatic proficiency of request of an Indonesian child who speaks English as her second language.

Politeness Strategy

The second major topic of this paper is the politeness strategy in relevance when a bilingual child performing act of Directive (request). If it comes to the surface to talk about politeness strategy, one must first refer to politeness and face. Some prior experts in this study have established the idea of the face-work, they were, Goffman (1967), Lakoff (1977), Leech (1983), and Brown and Levinson (1986). Wijayanto et al (2013) stated that

Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol. 3 No. 1 pp 65-74

Goffman (1967) views face as a public image in the flow of social events which is temporarily loaned to an individual from society as long as he or she is worth to it. (p. 189)

Other expert, Yule (1996), affirmed that face is the public self-image which related to emotional and social sense of self that everyone posses and expects everyone else to recognize. Meanwhile, politeness according to Yule (1996: 60) is defined as '*the means employed to show awareness of another person's face*'.

Brown and Levinson's concept of face-work (1986) is influenced by Goffman (1967). Yet, initially this paper tends to use the concept of face limited to Brown and Levinson's (1986) and Yule's work (1996); and then continues to use only Yule's theory of politeness strategy. Central to the concept of face proposed by Brown and Levinson (1986) is that they divided it into 2 aspects as the following statement,

Negative face: The want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others.

Positive face: The want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others. (Brown and Levinson, 1986: 62, as cited in Gilks, 2010: 94)

Sometimes, the expectations of a person's public self-image to be respected is endangered when a speaker utters something which indicates a threat, called as Face Threatening Act (FTA). To lessen the possible threat, one can gain awareness and say something in different way which is considered as face saving act. Face saving act can be performed in a range of strategies (Yule, 1996: 61). What Brown & Levinson's (1986) and Yule (1996) suggested to lessen FTA is by using different ways of face saving act or politeness strategies. Yule (1996: 61-64) suggested 6 different ways, those are, negative politeness, positive politeness, off record, on record, bald on record, and say nothing. Negative politeness strategy can be seen as deference strategy given that it shows awareness to a person who socially distant, whereas positive politeness strategy can be seen as solidarity strategy given that it shows awareness to a person who socially close (Yule:1996: 65-66). That's why politeness based on Yule (1996: 60) '*can be accomplished in situation of social distance or closeness*' (relevance distance). Searle et all (1980: 114) mentioned that '*Politeness as being the chief motivation for using indirect speech acts*'.

METHOD

The definite method used in this paper is library research approach. Following this approach, it is important to collect data about some related articles/journal and books to the issue emerged in this paper. In collecting the data, the following steps needed to be paid attention.

- a. Searching related articles/ journals and books in library
- b. Gaining additional information via internet access
- c. Scanning the appropriate statements by expert in relevance to the issue
- d. Note-taking the statements and making cohesiveness from one statement to another one
- e. Putting thought into sequences
- f. Working on the paper

The data gathered is in the form of behavioral events, as acknowledged by Sutopo (2013)

In order to describe the process this study needs data in the form of 'behavioral events' or 'observable data to which we

Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol. 3 No. 1 pp 65-74

can relate theoretical predictions' such as utterances which are produced when the learner attempts to say sentences of the target language. (p. 176)

It can be said that the data which gathered in the form behavioral events could contribute in this paper to relate observable data which consist of utterances created by the learner who use sentences of the target language to theoretical prediction. Yet, the focus of this paper remains the same, that is second language use, not second language learning. The subject of this paper is a child of *Mondial Education* who uses English as her second language and has English being taught for three hours a day at school as medium of instruction.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The data below is the conversation transcription between Aza, her Mommy, and her Granfather whom she called as 'Denpa'

(Febr 23, 2023)

(Four years and 8 months)

Aza : Denpa (Grandpa), Can you buy me honey?

Grandpa : Honey? Is it something to drink?

Aza : Honey is not to drink, Denpa. Honey is to lick. Like baby.

(Febr 24, 2013)

Aza : Denpa. I want to ride bicycle. (Please, accompany me)

Grandpa : Mommy. (You can ask Mommy to accompany you)

Aza : Mami don't want to ride bicycle. (Mommy doesn't want to accompany my riding on bicycle).

(Febr 24, 2013, few hours later)

Aza : Den, where have you been? Why you don't ride bicycle with me?

Grandpa : Because I am tired and sleepy.

Aza : You have take a nap.

Grandpa : I tidy up everything, first. I had to take a bath, too. Why were you in a hurry to go?

Aza : Because I have to ride bicycle before already night.

(Tuesday, Febr 26, 2013. On the way to go to a ballet class)

Aza : Den, do you have money to buy something?

Grandpa : Yes. Don't worry.

Aza : I have (ballet) performance at Java Mall. I need costume. Can you buy me costume?

Grandpa : Okay.

Aza : Thank you, Denpa.

(Friday, March 1, 213. In the living room)

Aza : Tomorrow I want to "Toko Ada". Do you join me?

Grandpa : I'm afraid I cannot.

Aza : Why?

Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol. 3 No. 1 pp 65-74

Grandpa : Because I'm working tomorrow. What do you want to buy?
Aza : I cannot tell you.

(Saturday. March 2, 2013. In the living room)

Aza : Denpa, Can you play with me?
Grandpa : Ok. What is it?
Aza : Android. I show you how to play the game. Now you do it by yourself.
Grandpa: I'll make a try.

(Sunday. March 3, 2013. In the bedroom)

Grandpa : Hi, Aza. What are you doing?
Aza : I'm not done my project. Can you help me?
Grandpa : Project? What is it?
Aza : I make shapes. Can you make holes?
Grandpa : Ok
Aza : Make something with this string.
Grandpa : Ok

(Sunday. March 4, 2013. At home)

Aza : Let's make a cake.
Mommy : Okay.
Aza : Mommy, I need sugar. Can you gave me sugar?
Mommy : I have no sugar.
Aza : Just pretend, Mommy.
Grandpa : I have some sugar. Here it is.
Aza : Thank you, Dendpa. Now I need butter.
Grandpa : Here it is.

(Thursday March 7, 2013. On the way home from school)

Aza : Mommy, tomorrow is a Pet Day.
Mommy : Really? So what?
Aza : Can you buy me pet? I need to bring pet to school tomorrow.
Grandpa : You can borrow Grandpa's bird.
Aza : Thank you, Denpa.

(Thursday, March 14, 2013)

Aza : I wonder you could draw pets
Mommy : Let me try
Aza : What did you draw?
Mommy : I'm drawing kitty

The Directive acts (request) or The indirect speech acts (request) shown in the conversation uttered by the child are listed below:

1. Can you buy me honey?
2. Denpa.I want to ride bicycle.
3. Why don't you ride bicycle with me?

Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol. 3 No. 1 pp 65-74

4. (a) Den, do you have money to buy something?

(b) Can you buy me costume?

5. Do you join me?

6. Denpa, Can you play with me?

7. (a) Can you help me?

(b) Can you make holes?

(c) Make something with this string.

8. (a) Can you give me sugar?

(b) Just pretend, Mommy.

(c) Now, I need butter.

9. Can you buy me pet?

10. I wonder you could draw pets.

The most palpable indirect speech acts uttered by the subject is frequently happened to use the form of ‘*Can you...?*’ as in 1, 4(b), 6(a), 7(a)-(b), 8(b), 10. As asserted by Yule (1996: 64), face saving act which using the form of question containing modal verb (can, could, may, might), in English-speaking context, generally performed by negative politeness strategy. It can be indicated that the subject is actually performing request by using negative politeness strategy several times.

Nevertheless, the subject isn’t aware of the relevance distance given that negative politeness deals with awareness of a person who socially distant, regarding to negative face want, explained by Brown and Levinson (1986), which recognized as ‘competent adult’s want’.

In some other occasion the subject performs request in the form of indirect statement as in 2 and 8(c); and direct statement in the form of imperative as in 7(c), (8b), and (10). It’s interesting to observe that the subject in the age of 4 year-old can utter something to ask someone to do something by using indirect statement or which considered as off-record based on Yule (1996: 63). It explains that the subject indirectly addresses someone to perform request. While in other time, the subject performs request using statement which is directly goes to the addressee, called as on record, as in 10 (Yule, 1996: 63). And two other statements are belong to bald on record, since they are viewed as imperative form for requesting (Yule: 1996: 63). However, the subject doesn’t show an effort to soften the request by using mitigating devices such as ‘*please*’ and ‘*would you*’ as proposed by Yule (1996: 63).

There are some other forms to perform request uttered by the subject which using yes/no question and wh- question as in 3, 4(a), 5. This can be seen as a face saving behavior that occurs before other utterances performing request are produce. This fact then lead to examine the form of pre-sequences where speaker tend to utter something else before going to the Directive act, named as pre-request (Yule, 1996: 67).

Aza : Den, where have you been? Why you don’t ride bicycle with me?

Grandpa : Because I am tired and sleepy.

Aza : You have take a nap

Grandpa : I tidy up everything, first. I had to take a bath, too. Why

(=pre-request)

(=stop)

(=pre-request)

(=accept)

Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol. 3 No. 1 pp 65-74

In the conversation, subject uttering pre-reqs two times though after first pre-request her grandpa is actually rejecting to accompany her riding bike, it's indicating that the subject is gaining effort to ask her grandpa accompanying her to ride bicycle, she knows that her grandpa is lying, but she doesn't aware that actually it is a refusal for her and it is less polite in imposing someone to do something you ask. and is completing with the acceptance by her grandpa. The same thing happened in the second conversation, but she doesn't get a refusal in the first pre-request. She understand it easily because her grandpa says yes to her, then she continues with another pre-request. Meanwhile in the third conversation the subject does the first pre-request and gets refusal though. She even tries to ask why. It can be viewed that the subject doesn't aware again that it is less polite to continue asking when someone has refused your request.

CONCLUSION

A bilingual child who uses English as her second language negotiate meaning involved in interlanguage pragmatics of request in casual conversation using some politeness strategy.

Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol. 3 No. 1 pp 65-74

Mostly, the subject uses negative politeness strategy, and only few that she uses off and on record. Even she is able to use pre-request form before uttering something that indicate politeness strategy she uses. Nonetheless, she still doesn't aware the relative of distance, since talking with adult she needs to be more polite and soft.

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