

REALIZATION OF DISAGREEMENT STRATEGIES BY INDONESIAN SPEAKERS

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Abstract: This study investigates the realization of disagreement strategies employed by Indonesian speakers. The strategies are then related to the interlocutor's level of power. The data is collected using DCT Type B adapted from Azis (2000) and analysed using adapted disagreement strategies from Muntigl and Turnbull (1998) and Chen (2006). The results shows that Indonesian speakers tend to use different disagreement strategies to different level of power of the interlocutor. To the interlocutor with the higher power (the superior), the speakers tend to use counterclaims and no disagreement strategies. In addition, to the speakers with the same level of power, the contradiction strategy is preferred. In the meantime, to the interlocutor with the lower level of power, the speakers are likely to choose challenge. These various selections of disagreement strategies are also influenced by concept of FTAs of Brown and Levinson (1987).

Keywords: *disagreement, power, face, FTAs*

INTRODUCTION

Disagreement is mentioned as an expression performed as the opposite view from the speakers (Sifianou, 2012). Pomerantz (1984, as cited in Fernández, 2013) asserts that this act happen when assessment is initiated by a speaker to achieve one more action. The action will be realized in forms of either agreement or disagreement. In this case, disagreement is regarded as dispreferred action since it usually is being linked to impoliteness or face-threatening condition. Therefore, it is usually mitigated and avoided by the speaker (Siafanou, 2012).

Since the use of disagreement is quite risky, speakers tend to use disagreements in various strategies. Then, in selecting the strategies, the speakers tend to consider several factors

such as context, face and politeness (Siafanou, 2012). Several studies about disagreement related to these two factors have been conducted by many researcher (e.g. Han, and Liang, 2005; Xuehua, 2006; Fernández, 2013). Besides context, face and politeness factors, level of power is also usually taken into account to determine several disagreement strategies. It is since sometimes the speakers, especially Indonesian, tend to agree with the statement of the interlocutor with the higher power, although, in fact, s/he actually disagrees with it. Therefore, this study is intended to investigate the realization of disagreement strategies employed by Indonesian speakers in relation to the interlocutor's level of power.

Realization of speech acts are frequently characterized by the presence of strategies in conveying the speech acts. In many speech act studies, several classifications of strategies are proposed by the researchers (e.g., Cohen and Olshtain's, 1981; Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984, in apologizing; Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984, in requesting; Azis, 2000 in refusing; Al-Omari and Abu-Melhim, 2013, in promising). Chen (2005) believes that these classifications are generally made based on semantic formulas used to respond the interlocutor's statement. Hence, the speaker's strategies in a certain speech act might be identified from several features within his/her utterances. Especially in realization of disagreement speech acts, a number of classifications of disagreement strategies have been created by several researchers (e.g. Beebe and Takahashi, 1989; Dogancay-Aktuna & Kamisli, 1996; Muntigl and Turnbull, 1998; Lin, 1999 as cited in Chen, 2006).

However, in the current study, Muntigl and Turnbull's (1998) and Chen's (2006) frameworks are adapted and utilized. This adaptation is intended to accommodate strategies which are not covered by one of frameworks, e.g. the absence of opt-out in Muntigl and Turnbull (1998). Thus the strategies used in the investigation consist of no disagreement (ND), irrelevancy claims (IC), challenges (CH), contradictions (CT) and counterclaims (CC).

No disagreement strategy or ND (Chen, 2006) is used by the speaker when he/she chooses to opt-out (silent) or using particular verbal strategies, such as agreement and avoidance, to avoid disagreement or arguing with the interlocutor. Chen, furthermore, explains that there must be some reasons for the speaker to use no disagreement

strategies especially when keeping silent. He mentioned the reasons are in connection with six aspects, namely: both the interlocutor's and the speakers' positive face (Brown and Levinson, 1987), conditions for the act of disagreement (e.g. unimportant, respect, inappropriate context), relationship of the act with the speaker's goal, relationship of the act with social goals (e.g. for maintaining relationship), and contextual factors (e.g. status, social distance, and gender).

Irrelevancy claims or IC (Muntigl and Turnbull, 1998), on the other hand, refer to strategies in which the speaker asserts that the interlocutor's statement is out of topic or irrelevant to the present discussion. This strategy is usually performed in overlap or without pauses from the previous statement. Besides, this strategy is regarded as the most face-threatening strategies. The next strategy is challenges (CH) in which the speaker shows reluctance and doubt in expressing disagreement by utilizing an interrogative form, such as *when, why, who, where, whom, and how*. Challenges are typically accompanied by inquiry regarding the proof of the prior statements.

Muntigl and Turnbull (1998) also propose contradiction strategies (CT). In this strategy, the speaker performs an opposed statement from the interlocutor's. This is usually preceded by negations or opposition markers such as *no, I disagree, I do not agree, not at all, I don't think so* etc. However, Chen (2006) claims that contradictions are not always preceded by a negation, but it also occasionally start with contradictory statement, such as "I thought it was so boring." The last strategy is counterclaims (CC), in which the speaker uses token or partial agreement using *but (yes, but...)*. This way is considered as

the least face threatening strategy (Muntigl and Turnbull, 1998) since it is initiated by pauses, prefaces and mitigated devices, such as hedges (Orfano, 2012). Similarly, Fernández (2013) asserts that this mitigated device is to soften the treat to the hearer's face. In short, the counterclaims is used to indirectly disagree with the interlocutor by agreeing the proposition first to minimize the FTAs, and then followed by the speaker's claim.

The use of strategies in the speech acts, e.g. disagreement, is usually affected by social distance, power differential, and ratio of imposition (Brown and Levinson, 1987). These

elements affect the degree of face-threat to be redressed by appropriate linguistic strategies. However, in this study, the disagreement strategies will be discussed mainly in relation to the different level of power.

METHOD

This research involved four male (40%) and six female (60%) postgraduate students from of one state university in Bandung. The participants' age ranges from 23 to 26 years old. Besides, they come from different origins in Indonesia with different language background. The details of the information can be seen as follow:

Table 1. Information details of the participants

Variables	Categories
Origins	West Java(30%) East Java(10%) West Sumatra(10%) Tidore(10%) Lampung (20%) Medan(10 %) Aceh(10%)
First Language	Bahasa Indonesia (60%) Sundanese (10%) Minang (10%) Javanese (10%) Aceh (10%)
Daily Language	Bahasa Indonesia=60% Bahasa Indonesia and Sundanese= 30% Bahasa Indonesia and Minang=60%

A survey design was employed in this study. Bell (2005) asserts that a survey is generally aimed at attaining information from a representative sample of certain population by asking the same questions to them. In this study, the respondents were asked the identical information about their disagreement strategies by using a Discourse Completion Test (DCT).

To obtain the strategies of disagreement from the respondents, a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) is

used. First adapted in 1982 by Blum-Kulka for a speech act investigation, the DCT is a questionnaire consisting several discourse or situation in which the respondents of the study are required to write the response of the given situation (Varghese and Billmyer, 2011). However, Nurani (2009) indicates that the use of the DCT frequently gets criticisms because of its disadvantages, such as unnatural data (Huock and Gass, 1995), oversimplification of complex interaction (Brown and Levinson, 1987), and

inability to get emotional information from the response in depth (Beebe and Cummings, 1995). Nevertheless, the DCT is still widely used to examine several speech act strategies (Aziz, 2000) since it allows researchers to “collect large amount of data in a relatively a short time” (Nurani, 2009: 670) and applicable for respondents with different cultural background (Huock and Gass, 1995).

The DCT employed here was adapted from the DCT Type-B developed by Aziz (2000). This kind of DCT provides multiple choice and open-ended questionnaire which allows the respondent to select one of given strategies then fill possible responses for the chosen strategy. In this study, the DCT consists of three different situations in Bahasa Indonesia which indicated setting and level of power of the interlocutors. The given situations were designed to elicit the respondents' disagreement, which is also in Bahasa Indonesia.

After being collected, the data from the DCT were analyzed using categories of disagreement strategies adapted from Muntigl and Turnbull (1998) and Chen (2006). Based on this adapted categories, disagreement strategies can be divided into: no disagreement (ND), irrelevancy claims (IC), challenges (CH), contradictions (CT) and counterclaims (CC).

No disagreement strategies as mentioned by Chen (2006: 41) are the situation where the speaker prefers to be silent (NDs) or to use verbal strategies, such as agreement (ND: Ag) and avoidance (ND: Av), rather than disagree with the interlocutor's statement. Then, irrelevancy claims refer

to a disagreement strategy in which the speaker claims that the interlocutor's statement is irrelevant to the present discussion. On the other hand, challenge strategy is for the one where the speaker questions and/or asks for proves the interlocutor's statement by using interrogative words (e.g. *what, why, when, where, who, and how*). Another strategy is contradictions. Here, the speaker bluntly disagrees with the interlocutor statement by saying *no, I don't or I disagree*. The last is counterclaim strategy in which the speaker partly agrees by expressing agreement at the beginning yet being followed by alternative claims (e.g. *Yes, but...*).

Next, after being categorized, the data will be discussed with regard to the level of power or superiority. The level of power involved in this study are higher power (superior), equal power and lower power (subordinate). Considering this superiority levels, it can be seen whether or not the disagreement strategies chosen by the participants for those categories different each other. Furthermore, it will also discuss the “why” of the participants' preferences in expressing certain disagreement strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The collected data from the DCT are then classified and analyzed using adapted classification of disagreement strategies from Muntigl and Turn (1998) and Chen (2006). After the classification and the analysis, the realization of disagreement strategies used by Indonesian postgraduate students in this present study is obtained. The general results of the data analysis are presented in the following table:

Table 2. *Disagreement strategies employed by the Indonesian postgraduate students*

Strategies	Level of Power			
	Higher Power (Superior)	Equal Power	Lower Power (Subordinate)	TOTAL
Contradictions (CT)	1	5	3	10
Counterclaims (CC)	4	-	1	4
Challenges (CH)	-	2	4	6
Irrelevant Claims (IC)	-	-	-	-
No Disagreement (ND)				
Silent (NDS)	2	2	1	5
Avoidance (ND:Av)	3	1	-	4
Agreement (ND:Ag)	-	-	1	1
TOTAL	10	10	10	30

In the following section, the findings and discussions will be presented in relation to the level of power or superiority of the interlocutor.

Disagreement strategies used to the superior (higher power)

From the analysis results, it is found that the strategies utilized by the participants are: contradiction (10%), counterclaims (40%), no disagreement: silent (20%), and no disagreement: avoidance (30%).

Looking at the data, it seems that the participants prefer choosing strategies which possess less face threatening acts, such as counterclaims (Muntigl and Turnbull, 1998) and no disagreement: silent and avoidance. Counterclaims can be easily identified from its structure (*yes, but...*) and its features such as mitigating devices (Orfano, 2012). One of the mitigating devices used in this strategy is hedges. For example:

Counterclaims

R1: *Mungkin benar yang Bapak sampaikan tadi, tapi menurut saya keduanya memiliki kelebihan dan kekurangan, ...*
(Perhaps, what you have just said is right, but I think both

of them have strength and weaknesses...)

The word "*mungkin/perhaps*" and "*menurut saya/I think*" are the hedges or mitigating devices utilized in the counterclaims strategy. The use of hedges here seems an indicator of the participants' caution in expressing disagreement to the interlocutor. This might happen since the interlocutor is his/her lecturer who has the higher power. So, there is no place for the participant to exercise the power.

This cautious action is also visible by the use of another strategy, no disagreement. So, rather than disagree with the lecturer, the other participants choose to perform silence and avoidance, as the safer strategies. Apparently, this is intended to avoid conflicts with the lecturer. As R9 who chooses silence, she expresses that the choice of being silent is to avoid arguing with the lecturer. This is due to, as Fairclough (2001) states, the ability of more powerful participants to control and constrain the contribution of the less powerful participants. Similarly, with respect to this, Chen (2006) suggests that one of the reasons of speakers' silence in a conflict talk is contextual factors, such as higher status, social distance, and unfamiliarity.

The last is in the contradiction strategy. Although the strategy is basically used to directly disagree, in this case, the statement used is also still carefully expressed. For instance:

Kalau menurut saya keduanya punya sisi kekurangan dan kelebihan. Tapi, calon X tersebut dirasa lebih banyak sisi positifnya pak/bu.
(I think both of them have positive and negative sides, but, I feel the X candidate has more positive sides.)

Although the example above is a contradict strategy, the hedges “I think” is still used. The may be seen as speaker’s effort to minimize the FTAs or as speakers’ respect to the one with the higher power. In this case, Fernández (2013) asserts that this mitigated device is to soften the threat to the hearer’s face. This kind of effort is essential especially for the disagreement to the higher power since the bigger gap between the speaker’s and the interlocutor’s power, the higher the face-threat is (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

Disagreement strategies used to interlocutor with equal power

In the meantime, when facing the interlocutor with the same level of power, such as classmates, the participants use different composition of disagreement strategies. The strategies consist of contradictions (50%), challenges (20%), no disagreement: silent (20%) and no disagreement: avoidance (10%).

Different from the strategies used to the superior, the use of contradictions by the participants seems dominant. Another strategy employed is challenges in which the speaker feels doubt about

the proposition so that s/he asks for proof (Muntigl and Turnbull, 1998). These two strategies are classified by Chen (2006) into direct disagreement. It means that the speaker bluntly refute others’ opinion by stating the opposing statement. For example:

Contradiction

Belum tentu, elektabilitas itu naik turun. Dengan visi misinya saya yakin presiden pilihan saya akan terpilih
(Not really, electability is dynamic. With his vision and mission, I believe my choice will win.)

Challenge

Wah, iya ya? Kata siapa tuh lebih unggul? Ada surveynya ga?
(Was it? Who said he is winning? Is there any survey?)

Unlike contradiction in the previous context (disagreement to the superior), the contradiction strategies in the first example shows blunt disagreement device –*belum tentu/not really* – and expression of certainty –*saya yakin/I believe*. Besides, in the second example also it is apparently that there is no doubt of the speaker to “attack other’s competency” (Muntigl and Turnbull, 1998 as cited in Orfano 2012) by asking the proof of the statement – ‘is there any survey?’ These elements, somehow, express the speaker’s tendency to aggravate the interlocutor’s face. That is no wonder that Orfano (2012) mentioned challenges as ‘moderate cost of face.’

This, again, might be caused by the power factor. In this occasion, the power of the speaker and the interlocutor is equal. This power equality, furthermore, allows both of the speaker and the interlocutor to directly and frankly disagree with any of their statement. It is

since they have the same chance to exercise their power, so they cannot control or hinder contribution of one another (Fairclough, 2001).

Disagreement Strategies used to the Subordinate (Lower Power)

Meanwhile, the result shows that various strategies also employed by the participants to disagree with the one with the lower power, e.g. younger brother/sister. The strategies include contradiction (30%), counterclaims (10%), challenges (40%), no disagreement: silent (10%) and no disagreement: agreement (10%).

The most frequently used strategies in disagreeing with the subordinate are contradictions and challenges. Basically, those dominant strategies are the same as those which are used to the equal power. But, in this context, challenges strategies has a bigger number than contradictions. As it has been mentioned previously, challenges are so called moderate cost of face (Orfano 2012) since the possibility of interlocutor' losing face is bigger than the counterclaims strategies (low cost of face) but smaller than the irrelevancy claims strategy (high cost of face). In relation to this, Muntigl and Turnbull (1998) also state that challenge is an undesirable perception, attitude and action which are attributed to addressee. So, it means that in disagreeing with the subordinate, the participants tend to sacrifice the interlocutor's positive face.

For this situation, level of power is not the only factor. The choice of challenge strategies is also in association with social distance or closeness of the speaker and the interlocutor. As mentioned by Brown and Levinson (1987 as cited in Grundy, 2008: 197), there are three aspects in determining the degree

of face-threatening acts, namely social distance, power differential, and ratio of imposition. It means that the lesser the gap between social distance and power differential, the smaller degree of face-threat to be redressed by appropriate linguistic strategy. Thus, although the power of the speaker is higher than the interlocutor and the nature of challenge strategy is 'moderate cost of face' (Orfano, 2012), this strategy would not really cause a high degree of face-threat since the interlocutor – participants' sister/brother – has close social distance,

CONCLUSIONS

It can be concluded that the Indonesian speakers tend to use different disagreement strategies to different level of power of the interlocutor. To the interlocutor with the higher power (the superior), the speakers tend to use counterclaims and no disagreement strategies. In addition, to the speakers with the same level of power, the contradiction strategy is preferred. In the meantime, to the interlocutor with the lower level of power, the speakers are likely to choose challenge. These various selections of disagreement strategies are also influenced by concept of FTAs of Brown and Levinson (1987).

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