

Communication Strategy Adopted by Indonesian Students when Learning Japanese: Linguistic and Cultural Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Communication strategy is a systematic technique used by foreign language learners to convey messages when they face difficulties in communication because they do not have enough knowledge of target knowledge (B2). Indonesian students learning Japanese (ISLJ) use linguistic forms that deviate from Japanese grammatical norms. Deviation is considered a negative phenomenon, but this phenomenon is considered positive by ISLJ as a communication strategy. About 30 students (72%) practice literal translation strategy and code exchange from mother tongue (B1) to B2, 6 (15%) mixed strategy code (borrowing) in English and BI, 4 (9%) strategy of linguistic deposition (disappearance), and 2 (4%) mime strategy (using gestures) and silence. The form of politeness in Japanese (Keigo) and the implementation of Japanese culture are not well realized among ISLJs but a few ISLJs use teinei form in their communication. In terms of culture and language accuracy, errors in appropriate vocabulary selection are found and disturb the communication fluency.

Keywords: communication strategy, politeness, Japanese, Japanese culture.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Japanese (or Bahasa Jepang/BJ) is a foreign language in Indonesia and is definitely different from Bahasa Indonesia (BI). By learning BJ, Indonesian students could increase their knowledge on Japanese culture, so they have big opportunities to adopt Japanese technology as well as to work for Japanese companies in Indonesia. Of language system each language has difference which causes problems to the learning process. Not only understanding the grammatical form in foreign language (B2), BJ learner should also master the deviant forms when using B2. The aberrant form is a different form with norm B2 and it

is said that this state applies as a result of the difference of existence between two languages.

The phenomenon of irregularities in learning B2 is referred to as interference and Weinreich (1970: 1) states that interference is a form of deviation in the use of language from existing norms as a result of language contact or to know more than one language in the circle of speakers. Furthermore, Corder (1973: 132) argues that essentially learning B2 is not the process of acquiring new languages, but rather the addition of learning a number of new alternatives for the subset of known language rules used to understand speech and to produce speech. If the first language element or mother tongue

(B1) is the same as the element in B2, it will make it easier for learners to learn B2. This is known as positive or easy transfer, whereas if B1 is different from B2, it will cause negative transfer or interference.

Although irregularities are considered a negative phenomenon, but this phenomenon may also be considered a strategy among students studying a foreign language like B2. For example, moving element in B1 to B2 during B2 learning considered may be viewed as positive in the student strategy. According to Corder (1973: 132-133) this interference is not due to negative displacement, but the effect of borrowing. The point is that if students have difficulty in communicating their ideas because of the lack of necessary target language sources, then they will return to their B1 to cover the shortfalls. In this case, the interference as appearing in B1 interference and the intervention are considered as a communication strategy. Krashen (in Corder 1975: 86) also explains that learners can use their mother tongue to initiate speeches if they do not have enough knowledge needed for the target language. In this case, he argues that B1 students may be the source and may be used to overcome the limitations of this target language source.

Students who study B2 will be faced with two important issues; first, they must learn B2 system and second, they must learn how to use B2. The second issue deals with social and cultural dimensions. B2 in this study is BJ as a foreign language in Indonesian. Studying BJ by non-native speakers requires creativity, especially in oral communication. This is because when producing speech in communication, students must apply lexical, grammatical, morphological, syntactic and cultural social systems. Mastering a foreign language requires competence in spontaneous and verbal communication which becomes the symbolic activity through the use of symbols and messages used. Symbols can be interpreted as arbitrary conceptual representations. A good spoken language is

a language that can be understood by the other person. According to Kasper (in Moore 2000: 115), language competence is a person's knowledge on the linguistic level of a language. A language user will describe his knowledge from the point of treatment and speech. Tarone (1988: 59) asserts in his study that only a few B2 learners can finally master a complete foreign language as native speakers of the foreign language. The majority of students are trapped at one point in the B1 and B2 interlanguages and as a result they create a single system.

The language always changes during B2 acquisition. In the intermediate language stage, students always make mistakes because they have not mastered B2 perfectly and are still influenced B1. Students often have problems saying what they want to say because their knowledge is not enough, meaning their comprehension in phonology, morphology, syntax (grammatical) and lexical causes failures in communication. In case of Japanese, students try to use various communication strategies because they do not have enough linguistic knowledge of this language. Communication strategy is a systematic way that shows B2 students consciously overcome the lack of language skills by developing limited knowledge to communicate. This is true if the intermediate language structure is not sufficient to convey student ideas when interacting with native Japanese speakers (or penutur asli bahasa Jepang (PABJ)). That is, B2 students do not have enough knowledge on B2 system so they use communication strategy. In particular, the problem of knowledge insufficiency in B2 can be viewed from a linguistic as well as nonlinguistic perspective.

From a linguistic point of view, incompleteness applies because students do not master or fail to understand linguistic systems in phonological, morphological, syntactic (grammatical) and lexical rankings. To solve this problem, students use a communication strategy that involves all linguistic rankings and all non-linguistic angles. Students fail to understand

sociolinguistics in the selection of strategies and to use external and internal modifications when communicating in BJ. When communicating in BJ, students can not avoid one distinct gulf that is cultural differences. This is why BJ students are faced with two problems, namely 1) the use of good and correct BJ, 2) Japanese culture. Although this is non-linguistic culture but directly involved in communication; the failure to understand the cultural aspect will lead to communication failure. For example, an Indonesian employee working for a Japanese company summones his Japanese superior Yamada San with Mr. Yamada; this employee uses the father's name as it is normally done in Indonesian greeting. Unlikely, in Japanese culture, it is normative to greet Yamada Shachoo' director of Yamada' instead of just calling with Mr. Yamada.

From another angle, the employee has successfully communicated by bringing the B1 system culture into BJ although he has actually used an inappropriate greeting form. Students are required to have sufficient knowledge about the language and cultural aspects of B1 and B2. Language and cultural differences both in B1 and B2 will cause language errors. Language errors will occur because students are not aware of the differences between B1 and B2. Samover (in Soepardjo 1999: 2) asserts intercultural communication are always found in direct communication situations or between message senders and recipients of different cultural background messages.

A Japanese language student will face problems in BJ when he lacks of sufficient linguistic and cultural knowledge on Japanese, and will use certain communication strategies to solve his communication problems. Students' mother tongue contributes to bring problems in communication. This paper raises two questions: How do ISLJ students and PABJ use communication strategies in communication among them and handle

cultural barriers and how do ISLJ students realize politeness in communication?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Moore (2000) studied the acquisition and communication strategy in B2 stating that communication strategy used by B2 learners relies on interlanguage. Roslina (1999) argues that in learning, achievement strategy helps students who have difficulty in communication. Suthandhiradevi (2003), when doing research on "Malay Speech Language in Indian Student Communication", concluded the achievement of Malay Indian students in Malaysia was still low due to the differences between Malay and Indian. The communication strategy in the delivery of message is related to the strategy based on the mother tongue. Diana (1999) described the politeness in Indonesian language is strongly influenced by the interactive strategy in acting speech but does not have a strict level of speech. Meanwhile, Ide (1989) states the politeness in Japanese enables active speakers to choose strategy. Hasibuan (2010) argued that the central point in cross-cultural communication is the speech partner. The speaker must have a pragmatic socio-political knowledge of his or her partner. Because the different socio-cultural habits between speaker and speech partner cause difficulty in communication.

If pragmatics fails, communication will be very dangerous because it can cause damage to the relationship among communication participants. Practically, Leech (1983: ix) described pragmatics as the study of speech in certain situations. Furthermore, Levinson (in Tarigan 1986: 33) proved a pragmatic limitation as a study of the relationships between language and context which are the basis for communication participants. Tarone (1983: 56) defined communication strategies from the point of interaction. Communication strategy is an effort between two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in one particular situation. There must be a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on

meaning in structures where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared. Furthermore, Corder (1983) described communication strategy as a systematic technique used by speakers to express meaning when they face difficulties. Communication strategy is the dynamic interaction of components of language processing that balance the degree of engagement each other (Bialystok, 1990: 138). While Poulisse (1992: 192-193) stated the compensation strategy is the process of conceptual representation and linguistic knowledge adopted by the language user in creating alternatives when the linguistic deficiency makes it impossible to communicate the intended meaning.

Preston (in Suandi et.al. 2016) pointed out that two people are engaged in the conversation, only a small fraction of the total message is contained by kinesics, or the combination of gestures, postures, facial expressions, clothing and even scene. Furthermore, Tarone (in Cook 2001: 107) proposed eight aspects of communication strategy, such as indirect delivery (circumlocution), using an alternative term (approximation), formation of new words, non linguistic signal, literal translation, transfer code and mix code, ask for help from the other person, and strategy to gain time. Courtesy is a social behavior rule that is determined and agreed upon by a society. SANADA Shinji (1993: 48) stated Japanese courtesy is based on KEIGO (敬語) language diversity containing 3 types: sonkeigo (尊敬語) referring to a variety of languages used to talk about a third person whose social standing is higher or older than a speaker, kenjougo (謙讓語) relating to the kind of language the speakers use to humble themselves, and teineigo (丁寧語) regarding to the variety of languages spoken by speakers when communicating to counterparts who are of equal social standing and age.

Matsumoto (2000) defined linguistic politeness as a strategy of adapting the form of language to social status. In addition to linguistic politeness, there are forms or

expressions that Japanese uses in communication. This form is called aizuchi, a form of exclamation which is a typical form in BJ. This means that the speaking partner listens and understands the message that the speaker delivered.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The paperis quantitative method (Brown, J.D and Rodgers, T.S 2002) which was carried out to analyze the use of communication strategies in terms of quantity and provided descriptive statistics for qualitative research analysis. The respondents of this research were students at the Japanese Literature Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences at USU and at UNAND. The students had passed fifth semester and were at semester 6 and 8 and they were divided into seven groups; each group consisted of sixnon-native members and 1 Japanese native speaker who was determined as the partnerand who was a Japanese teacher in high schools in Medan and Padang. Respondents were asked to converse with a predetermined topic. Conversations between students and native speaker were analyzed by applying the use of communication strategies proposed by Tarone (1983), Tarone (in Cook 2001), and SANADA Shinji (1993).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The instruments used are the structured conversationsin relation to identity, family, hobby, big cities in Japan, and free conversations between ISLJ and PABJ. The result shows that Indonesian students learning Japanese usedthe following communication strategies, such as 1) 30 students (72%) used literal translation and language code change, 2) six students (15%) used external code or lending strategies that are mixed in English and Bahasa Indonesia, 3) four students (9%) used descriptive strategy; the percolation used by students were in the form of disappearing grammatical sign, and 4) two students (4%) used mime strategy (using

gestures) and silence for not being able to communicate their idea.

Literal Translation and Language Code Change

Communication strategies used by B1 were most commonly used. Students thought in B1, then translated before communicating the message. As a result of B1's intervention to cover up their B1 shortcomings, students used distorted forms (interference) for both grammatical and lexical interferences. Students used linguistic errors and deviated from Japanese language. They also transferred the lexical and B1 structure into B1 (this is a deviation), however, in communication, students chose this as the main strategy. The strategy of literal translation and interpretation can be seen in the following examples:

1. The longer phrase *sumimasen, konnichiwa mina san, chotto 1 group wa hokkaidou wo soudan shite kudasai* should be written as *mina san, konnichiwa* 'good afternoon everybody'.
2. The phrase *watashi no tanjoubi wa 25 nichi ichigatsu desu* should be written as *ichigatsu 25 nichi desu* 'January 25th'.
3. The phrase *hokkaidouwa ichiban shima ue desu* should be written as *ichiban ueniarushima* 'the uppermost island'.
4. The phrase *hana lavender* should be written as *lavender no hana* 'lavender'.
5. The phrase *sensei nihon go* should be written as *nihongo no sensei* 'Japanese teacher'.
6. The phrase *bukka to tabemono toukyo to chigaimasu* should be written as *toukyo no tabemono* 'Tokyo foods'.
7. The passive sentence *kyuushu jin wa niku to yasai wa dochiraga ooi tabamemasuka* should be written as *niku to yasai to dochiraga ooku tabemasuka* 'meats and vegetables are mostly consumed by us'.
8. The sentence *demo, yama, umi, kawa, shizenga takusan arimasu, kyuushu ni...* should be written as *demo, kyuushu ni yama toka, umi toka, kawatoka, shizen*

toka takusan arimasu 'but, in Kyuushu there are many mountains, seas, rivers, and nature'.

9. The verbal phrase *yosakoi wa kyuushu kara desu ka* should be written as *kyuushu kara kimashita ka* 'come from Kyuushu'.
10. The phrase *ramen kyuushu to ramen tokyo wa dou omoimasuka* should be written as *kyuusu no ramento tokyo no ramen* 'Kyuushu and Tokyo noodles'.
11. The sentence *chuugokunichikaiumi, nihon ...* should be written as *chuugoku wa umi ni chikai* 'China is near by over the sea'.
12. The phrase *takusanna o mise tabemono ga atte* should be written as *tabemono no misega takusan atte* 'many food stores'.
13. The sentence *Medan, Padang, Bukittinggi, Lampung imasu NP wa* should be written as *NP wa Medan, Padang, Bukittinggi, Lampung ni imasu* 'Nihon partners are located in Medan, Padang, Bukittinggi and Lampung'.

ISLJ used the mixed (or lending) code strategy because they did not find the exact equivalent words in Japanese. They mixed English with Indonesian words to realize their ideas. The examples of expressions spoken by ISLJ and PABJ who used mixed code can be seen in the followings.

1. ISLJ : *jibun de dekiru seikatsu wa?*
PABJ : *hai*
ISLJ 1 : *hitorikiri ka? tabun*
ISLJ 2 : *kansai no ko wa mandiri?*
2. PABJ : *eigo de kikimasu ka?*
ISLJ : *hai, demo ne....translate, translate*
3. PABJ : *Indonesia jin wa byouki no hito ni nani wo motte ikimasuka?*
ISLJ : *mango toka furuutsu wa souvenir ni shimashita*

Restrictions

Students deleted the form of grammatical sign, for example particles (auxiliary words) and copula 'desu' because

they thought Japanese grammar is the same as B1 that does not use particle. The particles they removed were the 'no' particles as a possessive sign. The examples of restriction that students used are shown in the followings (students were using communication strategy):

1. The phrase tabemono tokyo should be written as **tokyo no tabemono**.
2. The phrase mise no tabemono should be written as **tabemono no mise**.
3. The phrase watashimonihon go sensei should be written as **watashi mo nihon go no sensei desu**.
4. The question Mizuki san washumi ga nan? should be written as emizuki san wa shumi ga nan desu ka?

Mime Strategy

This strategy is known as a way of using gestures and silence. Students used this strategy because they did not understand the message delivered by PABJ. Examples of conversation using mime can be seen in the followings.

PABJ : namae wo oshietekudasai

ISLJ : hai. **(Silent)**

PABJ : namaewa?

ISLJ : 'watashiwa desu.

PABJ : hokkaidou wa sakana ga oishii desu, sakana toka, kai toka ga oishii desu.

Kudamono mo oishii desu.

ISLJ : **(silent and smile, then asks the PABJ to repeat the question)**

The correct examples of using Japanese teinei Watashi wadesu can be seen in the examples below.

1. Mango toka furuutsu ni shimashita.
2. Ramen Tokyo wa dou omoimasuka.

CONCLUSIONS

About communication strategy which is chosen by Indonesian students who are learning Japanese, it is concluded that 30 students (72%) have used literal translation and language switch, 6 (15%) code mixed strategy (BI and English), and 4 (9%) grammatical marking strategy. Students remove Japanese particles (auxiliary words)

and copula 'desu' form. Only 2 students (4%) use Mime strategy (using gestures) and silence. The different elements in Japanese and BI lead to a deviation of good and proper Japanese language. However, students should be facilitated in communication using the deviant Japanese patterns which can be used as a strategy to make smooth their communication with the PABJ. Students' deviations are not caused by negative displacement, but due to borrowing. This is because ISLJ do not have enough knowledge and lack of Japanese resources needed to communicate their messages or ideas and to cover up the shortcomings. ISLJ are not able to apply the forms of Japanese politeness (keigo) but a few can use the form teinei. Pragmatic errors are still widely found; students use the inappropriate words and the sensei to PABJ, although 3 PABJs are not teachers. Furthermore, students do not use the aizuchi when PABJ tells about big cities in Japan.

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