



Indonesian EFL Learners' Ability to Comprehend and Produce Implicature

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Abstract

According to Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2019), implicature can be defined as the act of implying meaning by saying something else. The aim of using implicature is to mislead a response without lying while also maintaining a good social interaction. Implicature is very much related to the culture of the language. Most Indonesian EFL learners are still having issues in comprehending English implicature due to the lack of cross-cultural understanding of the target language. Hence, this study was done to identify Indonesian EFL learners' capability in comprehending and producing implicature, one of pragmatics subfields. The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative research, using survey method for data collection. The data was collected through assigning an open-ended questionnaire test on comprehending and producing implicature and doing further interviews on Universitas Brawijaya students. The result of the study shows more than half of students are able to comprehend and produce implicature in English. The type of implicature they used was conversational implicature, one of the principal subjects of pragmatics. As for the minority of the students who were having issues in understanding implicature, the reason being their lack of comprehension in the material implicature.

Keywords: EFL learners; Implicature; Pragmatic competence

Introduction

In the English language, there are two types of speakers. There are native speakers and non-native speakers. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, native speaker is a person who learns to speak the language of the place where he or she was born. The language that they speak is also considered as their first language. On the other hand, In Cambridge Dictionary, a non-native speaker is defined as a person who has learned a particular language as a child or adult rather than as a baby. As non-native speakers, they learn English in two ways, such as an ESL (English as Second Language) learner and EFL (English as Foreign Language) learner.

A study from (Harlig&Dornyei, 1998) found that ESL and EFL learners have particular differences in interpreting social context. ESL learners tend to understand English Sociopragmatics better than EFL learners. Sociopragmatics plays an important role in daily communication. Based on (Vellenga, 2004). To be able to make that choice, one has to understand the function of pragmatic competence. In other words, by having good pragmatic competence, learners are

able to produce utterances which are socio-culturally appropriate and grammatically correct. (Lestari, 2017).

Lestari (2017) explained how in Indonesia, the most common instrument being used for EFL learners is a textbook, however, it does not show authentic social interaction of native speakers. Students' ability to acquire English pragmatics is very limited and hence obstructed. The reason this is happening is because as stated by Retnowaty (2017), pragmatic competence of English as Foreign Language (EFL) "has not been the focus in language learning". A study done by Suprijadi (2013) concluded that in Indonesian EFL classrooms, activities given by teachers do not have the objectives of giving students the opportunity to practice their communicative exercise or increasing their pragmatic competence.

There are very few studies which have talked about the issue implicature. One of the views is library research on types of implicature from Amrullah (2015) which elaborates detailed explanations on various types of implicature. Other than that there are also several various studies on the use of various types of implicature on students' daily life researched by Rahayu&Safnil (2020). The result of this study was that two types of implicature were discovered on students' usage in their daily conversation.

Based on the explanation above, there are still limited studies about students' ability in comprehending and producing implicature in general for EFL learners. From this point of view, the research gap is found. Therefore, the question that needs to be answered in this study is: What are the capabilities of Indonesian EFL learners in comprehending and producing implicature?

Since studies done on Indonesian EFL learners' ability to comprehend and to produce implicature are limited, hence, this issue is being brought up to be studied further. The purpose of this study was done to identify Indonesian EFL learners' capability in comprehending and producing implicature, one of pragmatics subfields.

Method

The approach for this study is a descriptive qualitative approach, using survey study method. The survey method used in this study was open-ended questions in a form of five-question comprehension and production implicature test. Other than giving questionnaires, further interviews were also done with the participants who were having trouble answering the implicature test. The participants of the study consisted of 27 students of Universitas Brawijaya majoring in English Education. The reason why researchers chose the 27 students of English Education major in Universitas Brawijaya was due to the compatibility of the students who were taking the Pragmatics course. The students were already exposed to the basic knowledge of Pragmatics. Thus, making them suitable to be the participant of this research. The questionnaire consisted of five questions and the further interview consisted of two questions regarding students' comprehension on the instruction of the questionnaire and their ability to produce implicature.

The data were analyzed by confirming with the theory on Betty J. Birner's book namely "Introduction to Pragmatics", published in 2013. Specifically, the analysis of the data was based on the theory from the chapter

"Gricean Implicature", talking about types of implicature. The analysis was also done by looking at the similarities and differences of the answers on the questionnaire until categories were developed and identified.

Results

Questionnaires on implicature of acceptance and refusal

The 27 students of English Education major in Universitas Brawijaya were given questionnaires containing sentences which need to be answered with implicature on accepting or refusing offers.

Table 1. Implicature of acceptance and refusal: Correct answers

Questions	Participants	Response	
		Acceptance	Refusal
If you like, I'll fix your computer tomorrow	Participant 1	See you tomorrow, then	
	Participant 2		No thanks, I will do that
	Participant 3	Thanks, I'll contact you tomorrow.	
	Participant 4	Really? Yeah, sure. Thanks a lot.	
	Participant 5		Nah, don't bother with it. I'll try it on my own for now.
	Participant 6		No thanks.
	Participant 7		I will take it later to the repairman.
	Participant 8		I can't go home tonight.
	Participant 9		I'll bring it to the service center.
	Participant 10	Thank you. That's very kind of you.	
	Participant 11		My father will fix it today.
	Participant 12		Don't worry about it. I'm doing all I can do
	Participant 13		Looks like it's going to rain all day tomorrow.
	Participant 14		I have to work tomorrow.

	Participant 15	It's okay. Please fix it carefully.
	Participant 16.	Sure. I'll wait for it.
	Participant 17	Oh of course with pleasure.
	Participant 18	What time can you pick it up?
	Participant 19	Yes, you can fix my computer tomorrow.
	Participant 20	Call me if you're on your way to my house then, thanks.
	Participant 21	Thank you for offering, but my sister will fix it later.
	Participant 22	Thank you, but I've already asked someone to fix it.
	Participant 23	I'll go to my grandma's house tomorrow.
How about seeing the movie tonight?	Participant 1	I think I caught a cold
	Participant 2	I am sorry, I am busy tonight
	Participant 3	I have no plans tonight
	Participant 4	I don't think I can
	Participant 5	Sure why not? I am free tonight anyway
	Participant 6	I really enjoy it
	Participant 7	I will buy the popcorn
	Participant 8	I have headache
	Participant 9	I have an appointment
	Participant 10	I am sorry I can't. I have a meeting tonight.
	Participant 11	My cousin come to my house tonight for doing

		his assignments
	Participant 12	I won't be any fun tonight to refuse your invitation
	Participant 13	I'm a good one to choose a movie.
	Participant 14	yeah, pick me at 7 pm
	Participant 15	Sorry, I am in a full-day business meeting.
	Participant 16	Sounds good, I'm in!
	Participant 17	I think yes
	Participant 18	I have done my assignment so...
	Participant 19	my car has broken down
	Participant 20	I already have plan to visit my friend tonight
	Participant 21	My mother came tonight.
	Participant 22	That will be fun!
	Participant 23	I have no other occasions tonight
	Participant 1	Sounds good to me.
	Participant 2	Sure
	Participant 3	I have a sore throat
	Participant 4	Let's go!
Let's have some ice cream.	Participant 5	I think my nose is runny today, I don't think I am able to get that now.
	Participant 6	I'd love to but i have a fever maybe someday
	Participant 7	I have a toothache.
	Participant 8	You can buy me then
	Participant 9	I just saw a doctor, this is my

		cold medicine.
Participant 10	yeah cool, that's a good idea	
Participant 11	I like the strawberry one	
Participant 12	That would be great	
Participant 13	I like vanilla!	
Participant 14		i do not like ice cream
Participant 15		Forgive me, Ice cream makes my allergies come again
Participant 16		ah I'm full
Participant 17	Okay come on	
Participant 18		I am sick
Participant 19		I'm finishing my assignment
Participant 20	good idea, today is really hot.	
Participant 21	I would love to freeze my brain after that unbearable task.	
Participant 22	Sure!	
Participant 23		My throat feels like disagree with it
	Participant 1	If you don't mind, yes please
	Participant 2	I think I can handle it
	Participant 3	It is pretty light, actually
Do you want me to carry your suitcase?	Participant 4	Thank you for the offer but, I can carry it myself
	Participant 5	Thanks, but I'll handle it myself thank you
	Participant 6	Its sound nice but thank you
	Participant 7	My brother will arrive soon

	Participant 8	I am strong enough
	Participant 9	Wait for me to finish calling my mother
	Participant 10	No thanks
	Participant 11	I will carry it by myself
	Participant 12	I am a natural born to be a strong woman
	Participant 13	I'm a good one to choose a movie.
	Participant 14	yeah, i have a heavy suitcase
	Participant 15	Oh sure, you can brought it
	Participant 16	no, thank you it's okay i can carry it myself
	Participant 17	Yes, with pleasure
	Participant 18	It is not too heavy
	Participant 19	I'm okay, I can carry it myself
	Participant 20	don't worry, it's not too heavy
	Participant 21	No, I could carry this by myself.
	Participant 22	Yes, please
	Participant 23	It is light as feather
May I offer you a soft drink?	Participant 1	You are so generous and so kind, thank you!
	Participant 2	Please
	Participant 3	I'm cutting back on sugar
	Participant 4	That will be good. Thank you
	Participant 5	Sure! toss me a coke

Participant 6	Yes of course, thank you	
Participant 7		I have a mineral water here
Participant 8	I am thirsty	
Participant 9		I have one
Participant 10		It's ok I am not thirsty. thanks
Participant 11	Yeah, I want some strawberry banana smoothie	
Participant 12		Why don't you ask someone else?
Participant 13		I may have a cheeseburger after this
Participant 14		I am not thirsty
Participant 15	Sure, I wanted it one	
Participant 16		no it's alright I still have one with me
Participant 17	Yes,thank you	
Participant 18		No, just mineral water, please
Participant 19	yes, you may offer me a soft drink	
Participant 20		I prefer mineral water, thank you
Participant 21	Yes, why not?	
Participant 22		No, thanks.
Participant 23		I think I'm good

Table 2. Implicature of acceptance and refusal: Incorrect answers

Name	Responses
Participant 24	"Acceptance", "Acceptance", "Acceptance", "Refusal", "Acceptance"
Participant 25	"Acceptance", "Acceptance", "Acceptance", "Refusal", "Refusal"
Participant 26	"acceptance", "acceptance", "acceptance", "acceptance", "acceptance"
Participant 27	Acceptance: Thank you, that's really helpful Refuse: No thank you. I'll get my computer fixed this evening Acceptance: sure, i would love to

Refuse: i'm sorry, i'm kind of busy tonight
Acceptance: alright, what flavor do you want?
Refuse: no thanks, i'm allergic to ice cream
Acceptance: yes, if you don't mind
Refuse: no, but thank you for offering
Acceptance: sure, thanks
Refuse: no thanks

Discussion

The result of the questionnaires shows various answers from students. The answers were classified into the ones who are able and unable to produce implicature. For the ones who were able to produce implicature, most of them used particularized implicature, which is included as conversational implicature, one of the principal subjects of pragmatics. It is one type of implicature that is strongly based on context. It violates the maxim of relevance (Birner, 2013, p.62-65).

However, some of the students who were already able to produce implicatures still used explicit statements of acceptance or refusal, such as "yes" and "no". Implicature can be defined as an utterance that implies meaning beyond what is said. Therefore, to produce implicature, a speaker must not directly say what he or she means (Birner, 2013, p.62).

For the ones who were unable to answer, further interviews were done to find out the reason for their answers. Since there were not many incorrect answers, the interviews were conducted through one-on-one conversations. The questions on the interview were about their comprehension of the instruction of the questionnaire and how they answered the questionnaire. Out of 27 students, four students answered that they did not understand the instructions of the questionnaire and they had not fully comprehended the material as well.

A study done by Rızaoğlu&Yavuz (2017) on English Language Learners' ability to comprehend and produce implicature showed various results depending on the implicature type. However, the questions on this study's questionnaire are leaning to the implicature type that violates maxim of relevance. Resonating to that study, the result shows a considerable success on the comprehension of Relevance on implicature. In the case of producing implicature, the majority of the students' responses were already consisting of implicature. Thus, it could be denoted that upper-intermediate learners are able to deliver their message through implicature in Foreign Language.

Conclusion

Implicature can be considered as the most paramount aspect in the course of a successful conversation. From what we can see, without the knowledge of the speech act, speakers will be facing a hard time to understand and produce implicatures, specifically particularized conversational implicature. This indicates how complicated an utterance can be. Thus, it is important for Indonesian EFL learners to be able to understand and comprehend implicatures.

Researchers suggest future studies should do further exploration on the benefit and effect of implicature in cross-cultural communication. Moreover,

researchers suggest the application of teaching implicature to Indonesian EFL learners to enhance a better flow of conversation between native and non-native speakers of English.

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