

# UPGRADING STRATEGIES IN DISAGREEMENT AMONG INDONESIAN EFL LEARNERS

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**Abstract:** This study was aimed at finding out patterns of relationship between English language proficiency levels and upgrading strategies in disagreement by using conversation analysis. Students taking Seminar on Linguistics course in the School of Cultural Studies at Brawijaya University were selected as the subjects of this study. They were classified into pre-intermediate, intermediate, pre-advanced, and advanced levels. The analysis result show that students performed direct and indirect disagreement, each of which resulted in different upgrading strategies. Pre-intermediate, intermediate, and pre-advanced students dominantly used *double negation strategy*. Advanced level students never performed direct disagreement. Indirect disagreement used by students across proficiency were dominated by the use of *you* strategy.

**Key Words:** Direct disagreement, indirect disagreement, upgrading strategies, double negation strategy

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan pola keterkaitan antara tingkat kemahiran berbahasa Inggris dengan strategi menyangatkan ketidaksetujuan dengan menggunakan analisis percakapan. Subyek penelitian adalah mahasiswa yang mengambil matakuliah Seminar on Linguistics di Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Brawijaya. Mereka dibagi ke dalam 4 kelompok: *pre-intermediate*, *intermediate*, *pre-advanced*, dan *advanced*. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa menyampaikan ketidaksetujuan dengan cara langsung dan tak langsung, yang masing-masing disangatkan dengan cara yang berbeda-beda. Mahasiswa pada tingkat kemahiran *pre-intermediate*, *intermediate*, dan *pre-advanced* sangat sering menggunakan strategi *double negation* sedangkan strategi penyangat digunakan dengan frekuensi yang sangat kecil. Mahasiswa dengan tingkat kemahiran *advanced* tidak pernah menyatakan ketidaksetujuan langsung. Ketidaksetujuan tidak langsung disangatkan dengan menggunakan *you* paling sering digunakan oleh mahasiswa di semua tingkat kemahiran.

**Kata kunci:** Ketidaksetujuan langsung, ketidaksetujuan tak langsung, strategi menyangatkan, strategi *double negation*, strategi *the use of you*

Speaking a language is performing speech acts such as making statements, giving commands, asking questions, making promises, and so on (Searle, 1983:16). Speech acts can be used as

a medium to study language users' linguistic performance. Studies by Ernawati (2004), Rohmah (2006), Kamisili and Dogancay-Atkuna (1996), and Yu (1999) confirm that linguistic and cultural behaviors are recognizable from speech acts. Likewise, viewed from the perspective of language acquisition, analyzing the learners' speech act performance, one will be able to uncover how learners transfer the realization of a given speech act in their L1 to their use of L2 (Ellis, 1986:39). On the basis of the importance of investigating speech acts, many language researchers are interested in studying it, including those who are actively involved in second/foreign language teaching. Second/foreign language researchers are generally interested in studying how learners perform a certain speech act in the target language such as English.

Disagreement is one of speech acts commonly performed by Indonesian learners learning English as Foreign Language (EFL). Disagreement is an act indicating different stance between an addresser and his/her addressee in viewing prior statements or behaviors. This act can be performed either directly or indirectly, both of which have different characteristics. So far, this act performed by English learners has been studied by some scholars, three of which are by Rohmah (2006) and Xuehua (2006). Rohmah's (2006) study revealed that Indonesian doctorate students in an English study program performed the act of disagreement in direct and indirect ways. Besides, her study yielded some strategies performed by subjects in responding to the act of disagreement. Behnam and Niroomand's (2011) study investigated politeness strategies associated with people from different status in disagreement performed by Iranian EFL learners across different English proficiency levels. Xuehua had a study on the strategy used in showing agreement and disagreement to others' opinion among Chinese EFL learners. Results of the last two studies suggested that the use of mitigating devices in disagreeing is positively correlated with students' English proficiency.

With the exception of Rohmah's study, studies on disagreement cited above, however, are concerned with patterns of relationship between strategies in disagreeing and learners' English proficiency levels. None of them discusses upgrading strategies in relation to learners' English proficiency levels. Upgrading strategy in disagreement deals with strategies performed by students to intensify the strength of their disagreement. Upgrading strategies in disagreement so far has been studied by, among others, Kakava (2002), and Scott (1998). Kakava (2002) touches on intensifying strategies in disagreement performed by her subjects. Her study revealed that the adverbs *really*, *always*, and the expression *I think* might function to intensify the force of disagreeing. In addition, Scott's (1998) study revealed that disagreement can be intensified by way of repetition and absolutes. She further explains that repetition is frequently used to emphasize and stress an idea. Turning to absolute expressions, her study suggested that expressions such as *no one* might be used to booster one's argument. In consequence, such expression can intensify the force of disagreeing.

Viewed from the perspective of EFL teaching, learners' upgrading strategies in disagreeing shows how Indonesian EFL learners organize their interactions in the target language to achieve their goals. It could be the case since upgrading the strength of disagreement is an integral part communication strategy in the target language. As pointed out by Ali (2000:137-141), one of the aspect in communication strategy, particularly in a target language, is emphasizing. Besides, learners' strategies in intensifying disagreement can also be used as a medium to look at universality and specificity of disagreement. As widely known, disagreement is a universal act, in the sense that it appears across languages. However, the realization differs from one culture to another. Accordingly, strategies in

upgrading the act are different across languages. This difference can be used as the point of departure in studying the transfer of norms in L1 to the ones in L2.

All in all, disagreeing is one of the speech acts that is commonly performed by students. Many aspects of disagreement can be studied, one of which is upgrading strategies. Viewed from the perspectives of EFL teaching and Pragmatics, studying upgrading strategies among Indonesian EFL learners is beneficial. On the basis of the background, this study was aimed at investigating patterns of relationship between upgrading strategies in disagreement and students' English proficiency.

## METHOD

This study is qualitative conversational analysis. Students of Cultural Studies at Universitas Brawijaya (UB) taking Seminar on Linguistics academic year were selected as the subjects of this study. The total number of students participating in the course was 34 individuals, and 28 of them (21 females and 7 males) performed the act of disagreeing. On the basis of TOEFL scores available in the institution, they were classified into four English proficiency levels: *pre intermediate*, *intermediate*, *pre advanced*, and *advanced* groups. The distribution of the subjects is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1 Number of Students Performing Disagreement across English Proficiency Levels**

| TOEFL SCORES | Language Proficiency Levels | Sub Total |
|--------------|-----------------------------|-----------|
| 400-449      | Pre-Intermediate            | 3         |
| 450-459      | Intermediate                | 9         |
| 500-549      | Pre-advanced                | 13        |
| 550 and more | Advanced                    | 3         |
|              | <b>Total</b>                | <b>28</b> |

Three types of data were collected: (1) students' utterances containing upgrading strategies in disagreement, (2) TOEFL scores, and (3) students' responses on interviews. The first data were collected by observing the students' seminars and recording their dialogues during their classroom seminars. The observation was conducted within 10 weeks, each of which ran for 2.5 hours with total 25 hours of observation. The obtained data from observation were analyzed by adapting the parameters of disagreement set up by Sornig (1977:347-374) and coding systems in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) by Blum-Kulka *et al* (1989).

Data of TOEFL scores were available in the institution. Accordingly, I did not administer a TOEFL test. Those performing the act of disagreement were interviewed as disagreements strategies were identified.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data analysis suggests that strategies in realizing disagreement can be classified into two macro strategies: direct and indirect strategies each of which resulted in several micro strategies. Direct strategy was represented in *refusal*, *denial*, *correction*, and *strong criticism*. Indirect strategy covers *mild criticism*, *internally contrasting*, *reminding*, and *suggestion*. Each micro strategy was upgraded or intensified with various strategies.

### Upgrading Strategies in Direct Disagreements

Something worth noting is that advanced students did not perform direct disagreement. In consequence, this group of students did not have any upgrading strategies. Quantitatively, it was found that the students realized 43 direct disagreements. It was reported that five upgrading strategies were used by students to intensify their direct disagreements: *double negation*, *the use of you*, *giving reasons*, *giving clarification*, and *reiterating*. The first two strategies are internal upgrading ones, in the sense that the upgraders are inside utterances containing disagreement. By contrast, the remaining strategies are externally upgraded. It means that reasons, clarifications, and reiteration, all of which function to upgrade disagreement, are present before or after the head act.

Those strategies, however, were not equally used by the subjects. It was found that *double negation* was the most-frequently used strategy. It appeared in almost all micro strategies performed by the students across English proficiency levels. In other words, students from pre-intermediate to pre-advanced groups frequently used this strategy to intensify their disagreement. *Giving reasons* was another strategy frequently performed by the subjects. It was used by the students across English proficiency levels in almost all micro strategies. In addition, another strategies—*the use of you* and *reiterating*—were used by the students at those groups just once or twice.

On the basis of the distribution of the upgrading strategies among students, it can be underlined that pre-intermediate and pre-advanced students are not different quantitatively. Students at both groups used four upgrading strategies, but the variety of strategies they used is slightly different as shown in Table 2. These two groups, however, are quantitatively different from intermediate group. It is reported that intermediate students performed only two upgrading strategies: *double negation* and *giving reasons*.

**Excerpt 1** is an example of a direct disagreement performed by an intermediate student. It was realized through refusal strategy, and the strength of the disagreement was upgraded with double negation. The sense of disagreement in excerpt 1 is traceable from the use of *I don't know...* in the main clause (line 3) functioning to refuse the suggestion since the speaker—LH—is not knowledgeable with Discourse Analysis theory. The refusal was then intensified by mentioning *...I don't use...* in line 4. The use of *...I don't use...* functioned to emphasize that Discourse Analysis was not relevant to the research. Repeating *don't* in one turn resulted in a very strong disagreement. Excerpt 2 is an example of a direct disagreement realized through denial strategy and upgraded with *giving reasons* strategy. It was performed by a pre-intermediate student.

The disagreement by means of denial strategy is recognizable in An's utterance in line 6 saying...*your research is not document analysis, but ethnography*. This disagreement is upgraded by giving reason strategy. Disagreeing with the presenter's research, an initiated her disagreement by explaining the reason of denying the type of research proposed by presenter. The reason says: *Ehm...I think,...because you have observation...* (line 5). The reason in line 5 is reiterated in lines 11-13. The argumentation in those lines suggests that the disagreement voiced by the speaker is not the one without reasons.

To summarize, this study suggests that advanced students are in sharp contrast to those at other levels. Students at advanced level did not produce any upgrading strategies since they never realized direct disagreements. Pre-intermediate, intermediate, and pre-advanced students, on the contrary, produced various upgrading strategies. Besides, data analysis shows that pre-intermediate to pre-advanced students are not different qualitatively, in the

sense that they performed relatively similar upgrading strategies: *double negation*, *giving reasons*, *the use of you*, and *reiterating*. They, however, are quantitatively different. Pre-intermediate and pre-advanced students performed four strategies, but intermediate learners used only two strategies.

**Table 2. The use of Upgrading Strategies in Direct Disagreements**

| English Prof. Levels | Micro Strategies of Disagreement | Upgrading Strategies          |                       |                               |                      |             |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
|                      |                                  | Internal Upgrading Strategies |                       | External Upgrading Strategies |                      |             |
|                      |                                  | Double Negation               | The Use of <i>You</i> | Giving Reasons                | Giving Clarification | Reiterating |
| Pre-Int              | Refusal                          | +                             | -                     | +                             | -                    | -           |
|                      | Denial                           | -                             | -                     | +                             | -                    | -           |
|                      | Correction                       | +                             | +                     | -                             | +                    | -           |
|                      | Strong-Criticism                 | +                             | -                     | -                             | -                    | -           |
| Intermediate         | Refusal                          | +                             | -                     | +                             | -                    | -           |
|                      | Denial                           | -                             | -                     | -                             | -                    | -           |
|                      | Correction                       | +                             | -                     | +                             | -                    | -           |
|                      | Strong-Criticism                 | +                             | -                     | -                             | -                    | -           |
| Pre-advanced         | Refusal                          | +                             | -                     | -                             | -                    | -           |
|                      | Denial                           | +                             | +                     | +                             | -                    | +           |
|                      | Correction                       | -                             | -                     | +                             | -                    | -           |
|                      | Strong-Criticism                 | +                             | -                     | +                             | -                    | -           |
| Advanced             | Refusal                          | -                             | -                     | -                             | -                    | -           |
|                      | Denial                           | -                             | -                     | -                             | -                    | -           |
|                      | Correction                       | -                             | -                     | -                             | -                    | -           |
|                      | Strong-Criticism                 | -                             | -                     | -                             | -                    | -           |

Notes : (+) : appears in the data (-) : does not appear in the data

(Excerpt 1)

| Intermediate/Refusal/Multiple negation  |    |   |
|---|----|---|
| Sociolinguistic Analysis of Register Used in the Book of Surabaya Double Cover: Sex in the City by Bonary |    |   |
| 1   | An | I think you have to use the register in Discourse Analysis as the     |
| 2   |    | Review of related literature.....                                     |
| 3   | LH | <i>Oh, I don't know Discourse Analysis because my title is</i>        |
| 4   |    | <i>Sociolinguistics so I don't use Discourse Analysis theory.....</i> |
| 5   |    |   |

Referring to the patterns of relationship between language proficiency levels and upgrading strategies and the frequent occurrence of *double negation* strategy explained previously, it can be interpreted that advanced students tend to be close to the target-language norms. By contrast, pre-intermediate to pre-advanced students tend to diverge from the norms of the target language. This interpretation is based on research findings by Kamisili and Dogancay-Atkuna (1996), Yu (1999), Xuehua (2006), and Kreutel (2007). Those findings were concerned with acts threatening interlocutors' faces, including disagreement. Those

findings confirmed that English speaking people tend to use indirect ways in realizing acts which potentially threaten their interlocutors' faces. Thus, direct disagreement upgraded with *double negation* performed by pre-intermediate to pre-advanced students is the indication of the divergence from the native-like performance.

## Excerpt (2)

| <b>Pre-Intermediate</b>   |     |  |
|---|-----|--|
| <b>The Study of Jargons Used by Street Children of the Shelter for Children in Malang</b> |     |  |
| 1   | Re  | First, type of research. This study is conducted using qualitative                 |
| 2   |     | <i>research and the type of research is document analysis, because</i>             |
| 3   |     | <i>the data are the text of the utterance. ...</i>                                 |
| 4   | An  | OK, thank you. OK.....I want to...want to give you some                            |
| 5   | →   | comments. <i>Ehm.....I think,....because you have observation,</i>                 |
| 6   | →   | <i>....your research is <b>not</b> document analysis but ethnography.</i>          |
| 7   |     | Second, for your research question number two,....I think you                      |
| 8   |     | should change to what are the Linguistic process of forming the                    |
| 9   |     | jargons used by the street children?   |
| 10  | Re  | OK, ehm.....why....why....must I use ethnography?                                  |
| 11  | An  | Yeach,....because you enter to your research subjects' place. Ehm                  |
| 12  |     | .....as I know if you do the observation,.....it is an ethnography....             |
| 13  |     | not document analysis  |
| 14  | Re→ | <i>Ya,....thank you....<b>but</b> observation is just for collect the data. In</i> |
| 15  | →   | <i>doing the analysis I use document analysis. As I said before, I will</i>        |
| 16  | →   | <i>observe them, I take notes, and record, so it is document</i>                   |
| 17  | →   | <i>analysis.</i>   |
| (Observed on November 24, 2010)   |     |  |

One comment concerning L2 communicative competence is relevant for the findings. The absence of upgrading strategies among advanced students' disagreements and the high frequency of the occurrence of *double negation* strategy among pre-intermediate to pre-advanced students' data suggest the relationship between English proficiency and the ability to use the language appropriately according to the communicative situation. High level of language proficiency in the target language may lead to the target-like performance and vice versa. The relationship between the two implies that grammatical competence is the requirement of socially-acceptable communication.

Data from interviews suggest that language proficiency levels contribute a lot to the choice of upgrading strategies. For some students, low English proficiency level prevents them from speaking in the target language in a quite long time. In consequence, effective communication is the main goal for students at these groups. As such, expressing direct disagreements and upgrading them with *double negation* are their choice. The contribution of the low language proficiency to the directness and the upgrading strategies can be confirmed in their testimony.

“Menurut saya, juga karena menggunakan second language, dan saya dalam kondisi presentasi, jadi apa yang ada seharusnya saya keluarkan itu tiba-tiba blank. Ya,....akhirnya saya langsung saja ngungkapinnya..... Seperti itu Ma'am” (Prt).

(“In my opinion, it was because at that time I was using a second language, and I was a presenter. So, anything that I would like to say suddenly disappeared. Yeach,....I eventually expressed everything directly”) (Prt).

“Ya, saya gimana ya Ma’am, ya karena saya waktu itu nervous, Ma’am,...banyak yang lihat, Selain itu kendala bahasa juga, ya, karena ini disampaikan di dalam bahasa Inggris makanya yang langsung saja saya bilang apa yang ada di pikiran.....” (Ystn).

(Yeach,...I don’t know, Ma’am,... yeach....because I was nervous, Ma’am....many people looked at me. Besides, it was because of the language,...everything was stated in English, so I expressed my ideas directly.....(Ystn)).

Based on the findings, it can be underlined that acquiring pragmatic competence in L2 is different from L1. As explained by Hymes, a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner (1974:277). Findings of this study, as explained previously, suggest that learners learn grammar first. Their grammar knowledge is the tool to learn the pragmatic knowledge. These findings are in response to Canale’s caution concerning the relationship between grammar and sociolinguistic competence, ‘*this theoretical framework is not a model of communicative competence, where the model implies some specification of the manner and order in which the components interact and in which the various competencies are normally acquired*’ (1983:12).

### Upgrading Strategies in Indirect Disagreements

How were indirect disagreements upgraded by students? Data analysis yields nine strategies to upgrade indirect disagreements: giving reasons, the use of **you**, reminding, confirming, request for clarification/confirmation, reiteration, contrasting, doubting, and complaining. It was found that those strategies were not used equally by students. The use of **you** is the strategy used by students across language proficiency levels. Regardless of their strategies in disagreeing, the use of **you** consistently appeared. On the contrary, another strategies appearing in the data had the very minimum frequency. They appeared in the data just once or two times.

It was found that advanced students ranked in the first position in the use of upgrading strategies. Out of nine (9) strategies, five (5) of them appeared in the data produced by advanced students. Pre-advanced students used less various strategies in upgrading. The act of disagreeing was upgraded by means of four (4) strategies: *the use of you*, *giving reason*, *reminding*, and *confirming*. In other words, pre-advanced students ranked in second. Intermediate and pre-intermediate students were respectively in the third and fourth position. Intermediate students realized two strategies (*the use of you* and *reiteration*), and *the use of you* was the only strategy performed by pre-intermediate students. On the basis of this, it can be concluded that advanced and pre-intermediate students showed a sharp contrast in terms of different varieties of strategies. In other words, the conclusion from this is that the increase in the English proficiency level is followed by the increases in the variety of upgrading strategies. The distribution and the use of upgrading strategies among students across language proficiency levels are presented in Table 3.

Excerpt 3 is an example of *the use of you* strategy performed by a pre-advanced student. The opposed ideas in the excerpt 3 are in Kar’s utterances concerning her data source (line 1) and data collection method (lines 2-4). The hint of the disagreement is in lines 9-13 (*Or you are...so you really collect your data from the Internet, ...but in your data source you said that the written utterances in slogan form?*).

**Table 3 Upgrading Strategies in Indirect Disagreement**

| Lg. Prof.<br>Levl | Indirect<br>Strategies | Upgrading Strategies in Indirect Disagreement |                                |                |                 |                          |                  |             |               |             |
|-------------------|------------------------|---|--------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
|                   |                        | Giving<br>Reasons                             | The<br>use<br>of<br><i>you</i> | Remind-<br>Ing | Confirm-<br>Ing | Request<br>for<br>clarif | Reite-<br>ration | Contrasting | Doub-<br>ting | Complaining |
| Pre-Int           | Mild-criticism         | -   | -                              | -              | -               | -                        | -                | -           | -             | -           |
|                   | Internal-cont          | -   | -                              | -              | -               | -                        | -                | -           | -             | -           |
|                   | Reminding              | -   | -                              | -              | -               | -                        | -                | -           | -             | -           |
|                   | Suggestion             | -   | +                              | -              | -               | -                        | -                | -           | -             | -           |
| Interm            | Mild-criticism         | -   | -                              | -              | -               | -                        | +                | -           | -             | -           |
|                   | Internal-cont          | -   | +                              | -              | -               | -                        | -                | -           | -             | +           |
|                   | Reminding              | -   | +                              | -              | -               | -                        | -                | -           | -             | -           |
|                   | Suggestion             | -   | +                              | -              | -               | -                        | -                | -           | -             | -           |
| Pre-<br>advanc    | Mild-criticism         | -   | -                              | -              | -               | -                        | -                | -           | -             | -           |
|                   | Internal-cont          | -   | +                              | +              | +               | -                        | -                | -           | -             | -           |
|                   | Reminding              | +   | +                              | -              | -               | -                        | -                | -           | -             | -           |
|                   | Suggestion             | +   | +                              | -              | -               | -                        | -                | -           | -             | -           |
| Advanced          | Mild-criticism         | +   | +                              | -              | -               | +                        | -                | +           | +             | -           |
|                   | Internal-cont          | -   | +                              | -              | -               | +                        | -                | -           | -             | -           |
|                   | Reminding              | +   | +                              | -              | -               | -                        | -                | -           | -             | -           |
|                   | Suggestion             | -   | -                              | -              | -               | -                        | -                | -           | -             | -           |

Notes : (+) : appears in the data (-) : does not appear in the data

Excerpt (3)

| <b>Internally-Contrasting/Pre-Advanced</b>  |     |  |
|---|-----|--|
| <b>Politeness Strategies Used in the Slogan of Malang Regent Election Campaign 2010</b> |     |  |
| 1   | Kar | <i>The data source of this study are written utterances in slogan form...</i>    |
| 2   |     | <i>... The writer use the following steps to collect the data for the first,</i> |
| 3   |     | <i>browsing the slogan in the internet and then eh... selecting the data</i>     |
| 4   |     | <i>from Malang regent slogans, and the next is data analysis...</i>              |
| 5   | W   | <i>In your data source you said that your data is written utterances in</i>      |
| 6   |     | <i>slogan form, then in your data collection method you said that</i>            |
| 7   |     | <i>you get the data from browsing slogan from the internet, so what</i>          |
| 8   |     | <i>about the other form, I mean your written utterances in chap or</i>           |
| 9   |     | <i>baliho maybe or what? Or you are....you are...so you really</i>               |
| 10  |     | <i>collect your data from the internet?</i>                                      |
| 11  | Kar | Yes  |
| 12  | W → | <i>but in your data source you said that the written utterances in</i>           |
| 13  | →   | <i>slogan form.....</i>  |
| 14  | Kar | I mean that I found the slogan from internet.                                    |
| 15  |     | (Observed on November 10, 2010)  |

W upgraded the disagreement by presenting facts prior to the hint of the disagreement. In lines 5-6 W reiterated Kar's utterances concerning her data and data collection methods. The reiteration is then followed with the reminder saying that Kar's data might be taken from sources other than the internet (lines 8-9). Confirmation of data collection method comes



afterward (lines 9-10). The reiteration, the reminder, and the confirmation make the disagreement stronger. In addition to that, the disagreement is upgraded with the second-pronoun *you*. Using the pronoun *you* repeatedly while presenting the inappropriateness between data and the data collection method, W directly associates the inappropriateness with Kar. Thus, the *you*-s in the excerpt is accusational.

It is necessary to clarify why the pronoun *you* might intensify disagreement. In English, in order to soften threat, the pronouns *I* and *you* can be replaced or impersonalized with *one* (Brown & Levinson, 1983: 197). *One should change the title into....* sounds much more polite than *you should change the title into....* On the basis of this, when the pronoun *you* is used to address a specific person, and it contains accusatory and imperative forces, then the disagreement gets stronger. In such a case, the speaker does not merely threaten his/her addressee's positive face because of the disagreement, but the speaker also adds to the disagreement another FTAs: directive that threatens the addressee's negative face. In excerpt 3, particularly in lines 6-8, Ev used the pronoun *you*. The use of the pronoun in those lines has the accusatory force. In consequence, the threat because of the disagreement is added with another FTA: accusation. In addition, the use of *you* in line 12 indicates that Ev adds another FTA, namely directive act.

Data analysis suggests that a consistent similarity among students across language proficiency levels was the preference in *the use of you* in intensifying disagreement. In all situations, however, this preference was done unintentionally, in the sense that the students did not make their addressees offended. Interview data reveals that the choice of the strategy was made naturally. The students were unaware of the pragmatic meaning of the pronoun *you* in their utterances. A pre-intermediate student explained that she did not realize that the use of *you* might intensify her disagreement. Likewise, advanced students stated that they used the pronoun *you* without any awareness of how accusative and directive it is.

Does the use of *you* cause a big problem as it sounds? Superficially, the use of *you* is indeed not a big deal. It means that it does not make the communication stuck. It, however, results in a pragmatic error, that is an error because an addressee might understand the propositional content but misunderstand the pragmatic intent. In such a condition, a native-speaker addressee might respond unfavourably. He/she might consider the non-native speaker to be rude or impolite.

The arising question is, "Why is the use of the pronoun *you* strategy favored by Indonesian EFL learners?" Avoidance of the *I* pronoun is the most probable reason. It seems to be very common in the Indonesian culture that the pronoun *I* is avoided in academic settings. The use of pronoun *I* in academic writings such as *skripsi* (a Bachelor's thesis), *magister's thesis* (Master's thesis), dissertation, and research reports in journals tend to be avoided; the phrase *the writer/s* is more favorable. The motive for avoiding the *I* pronoun is to eliminate subjectivity and to minimize over self-confidence. To most Indonesian people, the phrase *the writer/s* sounds more humble than *I*. Two students from pre-advanced and intermediate levels explained that they did not feel confident of using the pronoun *I* in their writings. They considered that they are novice researchers, so addressing them-selves with the *writer/s* sounds more socially acceptable.

This habit of avoiding the pronoun *I*, however, is not necessarily appropriate for spoken language such as in academic classroom seminars. The use of the phrase *the writer/s* might have different connotations when it is stated in classroom seminars. If the phrase *the writer* is stated by a speaker in a seminar, the underlying impression is that she/he is talking another person. In other words, the phrase *the writer/s* implies that it does not refer to the speaker,

but other party. In consequence, the use of *I* is much more appropriate in oral presentation. Indonesian speakers are hampered by the avoidance of *I* that commonly happens in academic settings. Three students from pre-advanced, advanced, and pre-intermediate levels stated that when presenters of papers mentioned *the writer/s*, they should determine the reference of the phrase.

Thus, there are two linguistic norms in the Indonesian culture: the avoidance of *I* in academic settings and the constraint on the use of the phrase *the writer/s*. As such, Indonesian EFL learners are frequently constrained by those two norms when they express ideas in academic seminars. Living within those linguistic norms on the one hand and the necessity to intensify their disagreement on the other, Indonesian EFL learners choose the pronoun *you* by default. This is the analysis that can explain why the use of *you* is the most frequently used strategy in upgrading disagreement among students across language proficiency levels.

The other arising question is, "Viewed from the second language acquisition perspective, what does it imply?" The frequent occurrence of the use *you* in upgrading strategies implies that the culture of the students' L1 cannot be easily superseded by the one of L2. The culture of L1 keeps influencing English language learners, regardless of their long duration in learning English. From this, it can be deduced that English proficiency levels do not hamper students to realize universal aspects of speech acts such as upgrading strategy. It means that students across language proficiency levels are able to intensify their disagreement. On the other hand, when it deals with disagreement intensification realization, this study proves that language proficiency levels does not contribute a lot. Regardless of what their language proficiency level is, the culture of L1 keeps significantly influencing.

## CONCLUSION

To summarize, direct disagreement and indirect one result in different upgrading strategies. This study suggests that *double negation* and *the use of you* are the most frequently used strategy to intensify direct and indirect disagreements, respectively. On the basis of the research findings, the conclusion can be drawn as follows. First, in terms of upgrading strategies in direct disagreement, English language proficiency level can be used as a point of difference. The high frequency of the use of double negation strategy among intermediate students and the absence of this strategy among advanced students are the evidence of it. Dealing with upgrading strategies in indirect disagreement, however, students across English proficiency levels are not different from each other. Second, learning an L2 is not automatically learning the culture of it. Understanding linguistic rules of an L2 and implementing them in socially appropriate needs a very long process. Juxtaposing between linguistic competence and pragmatic competence in exactly the same line is a rocky road for both English learners and practitioners.

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