Criticism Strategy:

Pragmatic Competence English Department Students Need to Acquire

Indrawati

English Department
Universitas Negeri Semarang, UNNES
Semarang, Indonesia
indrawatisudarmono1@gmail.com

Abstract— **Departing from Leech's definition of criticism as an expression of Speaker's psychological act toward Hearer's inappropriate conduct (Leech, 1983) in a communication as a risk to face (Scollon R and Suzanne Wong Scollon, 2001) … strategy of criticism as pragmatic competence could be realized (Nguyen, 2005), without damaging harmonious interpersonal relationship (Brown and Levinson, 1987). This paper investigates two problems: first, student's criticism strategy; and second, their second language appropriateness. The subjects were twenty English Department students who responded to nine situations written in Discourse Completion Task (DCT) in regards of different status levels of familiarity, social distance and age. Students' responses were analyzed based on Nguyen's criticism strategy of direct and indirect and combined strategy. In addition, their second language appropriateness is also analyzed. The results show that 1) criticism strategy realized by students are combined strategy of inter combination and intra combination and indirect strategies of request change, demand change, and advice. Their second language appropriateness as performed by students through their written criticism strategy was categorized as below average. Their inappropriate language was found in the aspects of grammar, lexis and language context such as factors of social distance and age. It is expected that the language instructor considers to enrich students with pragmatic competence or skill of non-native speakers in using second language in the teaching as this could widen students' view towards English as the language that the native speakers use in real life communication.**

Keywords— criticism strategy; combined; direct; indirect; discourse completion task

I. INTRODUCTION

Pragmatics as the field of study that encourages skills in implementing clarity and politeness of communication is considered necessary to be taught to English Department students of UNNES. In the community practice of language use where students are expected to interact politely in English, students' knowledge of language aspects (grammar and lexis) as well as contextual knowledge known as language appropriateness aspect are both crucial. For example, when someone suddenly stands in front of someone else's position in a queue, an utterance of criticism as "Hi, don't do that stupid thing, go away, queue at the back line!" is considered impolite that it could inflict harassment to the person being criticized. Another utterance as "Who are you? This is the seat for the committee. Back off' is also an impolite utterance that criticizes someone's act in spite of the fact that the person acts not with a bad purpose or that maybe the person has no idea about where to sit.

Those utterances can be considered bad criticism as they were produced by speakers causing bad feeling of being driven away with insult because of the use of negative language and rude manner. The speaker thus reacts to hearer's bad act (Austin, 1962).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Criticism in a Communication*

Criticism as the expression of speaker's act toward hearer's negative act (Leech, 1993) could violate the politeness strategy as criticism bears harassment and embarrassment result to the hearer (Tracy, Van Dusen and Robinson in Young (2004), where criticism functions as negative judgment (Tsui, 1994). Students should implement pragmatic competence by attending face-maintaining strategy in uttering speech threatening act like criticism (Brown and Levinson, 1987). In addition, pragmatic competence is meant to keep good relationship between the interlocutors (Tracy, van Dusen, and Robinson, 1987), in which criticism strategy should be implemented, covering factors of superiority, level of education, and age (Gunarwan, 2001) and pragmatic language (Nguyen, 2005).

Nguyen states that criticism strategy comprises of either direct or indirect strategy. Direct strategy of criticism covers negative evaluation as follows: a) disapproval; b) expression of disagreement; c) statement of difficulty; d) statement of the problem; whereas indirect strategy covers: a) correction; b) indicating standard; c) demand for change; d) request for change; e) expression of uncertainty; f) advice about change; g) suggestion for change; h) asking/presupposing.

B. Criticism in Interlanguage Pragmatic Study

Interlanguage Pragmatics studies the nonnative speakers' use and acquisition of second language pragmatic knowledge. In other words it is the study of appropriate use of second language of criticism speech act. This paper discusses how students of English Department of UNNES express their criticism in second language which is done in a certain contextual situation as stated in questionnaire items of discourse completion task (DCT). Although this result may not be comprehensively revealing reality as students are not doing real communication, this DCT result is expected to describe students' pragmatic competence.

The interlanguage data were analyzed based on Nguyen's (2005) strategies of criticism. Realizing criticism is of two broad categories, direct strategy and indirect strategy. The data containing two or more types of strategies are classified into combined strategy, so there are three main categories of criticism strategies. The participants of English Department students are analyzed in terms of their strategies, whether the strategies fall to direct strategy, indirect strategy or combined strategy.

Direct strategy refers to the strategy of criticism which is realized explicitly and directly pointing out to the problems being criticized. This category includes the strategies of;

- Negative evaluation (usually expressed via evaluative adjectives with negative meaning or evaluative adjective with positive meaning plus negation)
- Disapproval (the speaker's attitude towards the hearer's problem)
- Expression of disagreement (usually realized by means of negation word "No" or "I don't agree" or via arguments against hearer.
- Statement of the problem (stating errors or problems)
- Statement of difficulty (usually expressed by means of such structures as "I find to understand…", "It's difficult to understand").
- Consequences (giving warning about negative consequences of the conduct).

Indirect strategies refer to those which are expressed by implying the problems, just to raise the awareness of the inappropriateness. This category includes the strategies of;

- Correction (fixing errors by asserting specific alternatives).
- Indicating standard (a rule which the speaker thinks is commonly agreed upon and applied to all).
- Demand for change (usually expressed via such structures as "you have to", "you must", "it is obligatory that", or "you are required" or "you need", "it is necessary").
- Request for change (usually expressed via such structures as "will you…?", "can you…?", "would you…?" or imperatives, or want-statement)
- Advice about change (usually expressed via the performative "I advise you…", or structures with "should")
- Suggestion for change (usually expressed via the performative "I suggest that …" or such structures as "you can", "you could", "it would be better if" or why don't you" etc.)
- Expression of uncertainty (to raise the awareness about the inappropriateness).
- Asking/presupposing (rhetorical questions to raise the awareness about the inappropriateness).

Combined strategy includes inter-combination strategy and intra-combination strategy. Meanwhile, intra-combination refers to the combination among two or more strategies existing in the same category of strategy, direct strategy or indirect strategy.

a. Inter-combination
Inter-combination strategy refers to the combination among two or more strategies existing in different category of strategy, direct strategy on one hand and indirect strategy on the other hand.

b. Intra-combination
Intra-combination refers to the combination among two or more strategies existing in the same category of strategy, direct strategy or indirect strategy.

III.   METHOD

The following discussion is based on research conducted to Cross Culture Understanding (CCU) subject in order to find out criticism strategies implemented by English Department Students of UNNES. This study collects data from primary source that is

a questionnaire of discourse completion task (DCT) to the students as participants. The questionnaire gives nine stimuli from which they elicit a criticism. The stimuli provides three different status levels about either different age occupation level (lower, equal, higher) and three social distances (close, familiar, unfamiliar). Participants are expected to write their criticism on those nine stimuli that is called their critical commands.

Below are the discourse completion task (DCT) items of questionnaire.
DCT 1: your friend treats his/her younger brother/sister in a bossy way.
DCT 2: your younger brother/ sister ignores your mom's advice to bring umbrella to school.
DCT 3: your older brother/ sister returned your broken down laptop.
DCT 4: your classmates refused to join group discussion assigned by lecturer.
DCT 5: your junior friends in campus are unenthusiastic on ESA Programs.
DCT 6: your lecturer refuses giving test score.
DCT 7: someone younger than you parks motorbike blocking your way
DCT 8: a younger boy/girl than your age throws paper on the side road.
DCT 9: a middle-aged man smokes in a bus you are taking in.

The interlanguage data were analyzed based on Nguyen's (2005) strategies of criticism. Realizing criticism is of two broad categories, direct strategy and indirect strategy. The data containing two or more types of strategies are classified into combined strategy, so there are three main categories of criticism strategies. The participants of English Department students are analyzed in their strategies whether the strategy is direct strategy, indirect strategy or combined strategy.
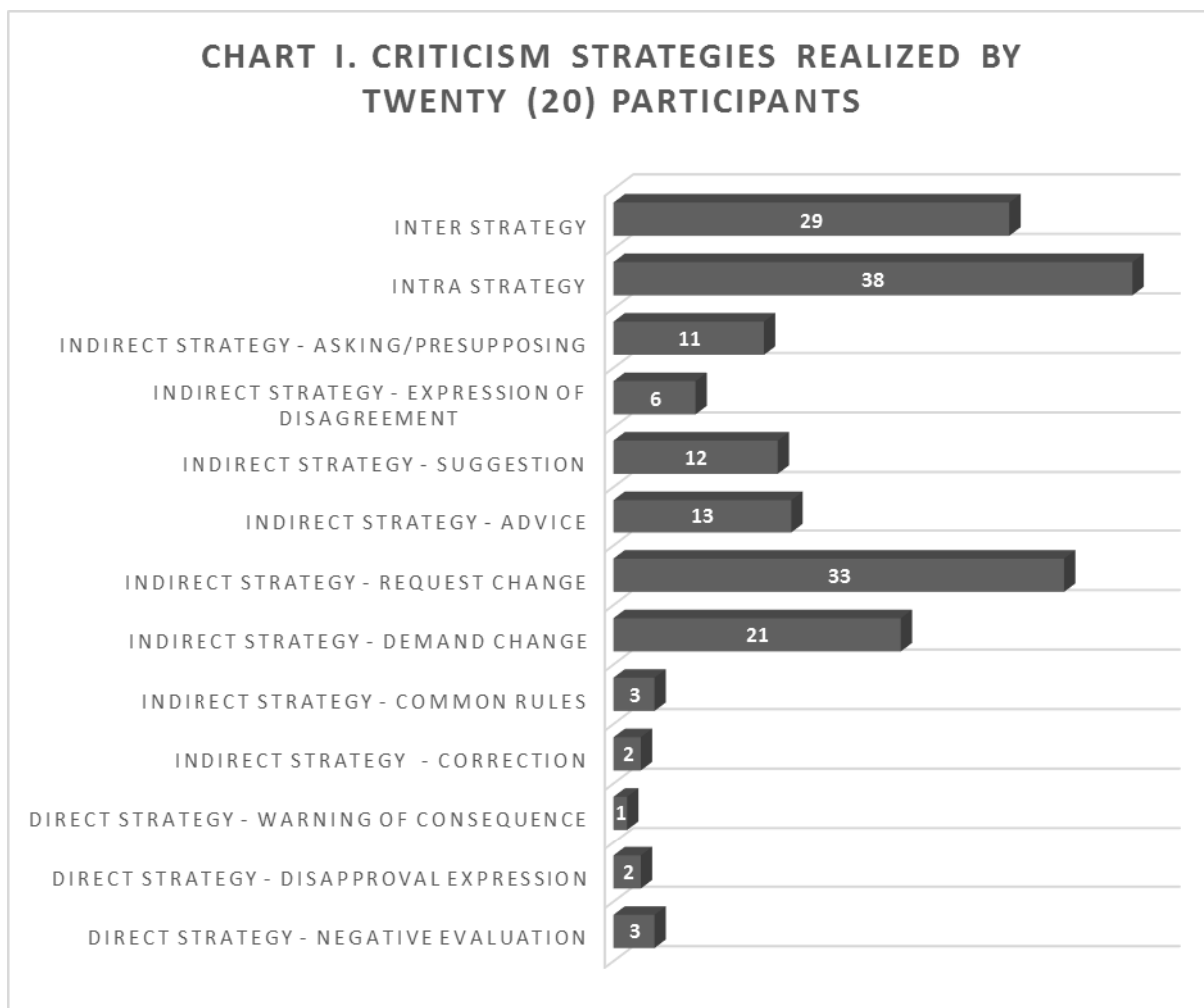
IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study intended to find out how English Department students criticize others in different contexts; however, knowing their criticism being polite or impolite only is not sufficient, because other language aspect like appropriateness (grammar, lexical, context) is deemed very necessary, too.

TABLE I.   CRITICISM STRATEGIES REALIZED BY TWENTY (20) PARTICIPANTS

No	Strategy	Type of Strategy	Quantity
1	Direct Strategy	Negative evaluation	3
		Disapproval Expression	2
		Warning of Consequence	1
2	Indirect Strategy	Correction	2
		Common rules	3
		Demand change	21
		Request change	33
		Advice	13
		Suggestion	12
		Expression of disagreement	6
		Asking/Presupposing	11
3	Intra Strategy		38
4	Inter Strategy		29

The above table shows that students realize criticism strategy indirectly. Request change and advice are two kinds of strategies that students use to criticize indirectly, thus they express in a more polite way, not directly which tend to impress rudeness or harshness. Both combined strategies (intra and inter strategies) are used; thus, students tend to utter long criticism not only using one utterance.

ATLANTIS
PRESS

CHART I. CRITICISM STRATEGIES REALIZED BY TWENTY (20) PARTICIPANTS

Strategy	Count
INTER STRATEGY	29
INTRA STRATEGY	38
INDIRECT STRATEGY - ASKING/PRESUPPOSING	11
INDIRECT STRATEGY - EXPRESSION OF DISAGREEMENT	6
INDIRECT STRATEGY - SUGGESTION	12
INDIRECT STRATEGY - ADVICE	13
INDIRECT STRATEGY - REQUEST CHANGE	33
INDIRECT STRATEGY - DEMAND CHANGE	21
INDIRECT STRATEGY - COMMON RULES	3
INDIRECT STRATEGY - CORRECTION	2
DIRECT STRATEGY - WARNING OF CONSEQUENCE	1
DIRECT STRATEGY - DISAPPROVAL EXPRESSION	2
DIRECT STRATEGY - NEGATIVE EVALUATION	3

As appropriateness is also considered to identify their pragmatic competence in Interlanguage Pragmatics, students have to show how they speak in terms of appropriateness. It is then necessary to analyze whether or not they are mastering or lacking of grammar, lexical, and contextual knowledge. Going deeply into their utterances, this study reveals that students are lacking of grammar, lexical, and contextual knowledge as well.

The followings are two grammatical mistakes of students' answer:
DCT 3: Your older brother or sister returned the laptop he/she borrowed from you broken down
Answer : why it is broke? You should be more careful you know.
DCT 4: your classmates refused to join in a group discussion assigned by your lecturer.
Answer: you must be respect because it is your assignment, too.

The followings are two lexical mistakes of students' answer.
DCT 7: A boy or girl your age parks his/her motorbike blocking the way.
Answer: Why don't you parks in a correct way.
DCT 9: A middle aged man smoked in a bus you are taking in.
Answer: excuse me, Sir. Could you turn your cigarette off?

The followings are two contextual mistakes of students' answer.
DCT 6: Your lecturer refused to give back your test paper for you to know your score.
Answer: I'm sorry, Sir. I need to see my score. Perhaps, I can get more best score.
DCT 9: A middle aged man smoked in a bus you are taking in.
Answer: Go to the hell alone.

V. CONCLUSION

The study of criticism in Interlanguage Pragmatics above was far from comprehensive. However, the brief and simple observation on the students' appropriate language use in second language mastery is necessary to be known by lecturers in order to map students' inter-language knowledge at present time and in the future, provide appropriate and important language items to be taught.

....

Acknowledgment

References

Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words.* Oxford. Clarendon Press.

Gunarwan, A. (2001). *The Speech Act of Criticizing among Speakers of Javanese.* University of Indonesia

Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics.* London: Longman.

Nguyen T. T. M. (2005). *Criticizing and Responding to Criticism in a Foreign Language: A study of Vietnamese Learners of English.* PhD Thesis. The University of Auckland.

…………… .(2007). *Criticizing in an L2: Pragmatic Strategies by Vietnamese EFL Learners. Walter de Gruyter.*

Tracy, K., Van Dusen, D., & Robinson, S. (1987). Good and bad criticism: A descriptive analysis. *Journal of communication 37, 46-59.*

Tsui, A.B.M. (1994). *English conversation.* New York: Oxford University Press.