Analysis Pragmatic Competence in Student Interviews With Foreign Tourists in Seminyak, Bali

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Abstract In Indonesia and many other EFL contexts, English is often taught in structured classroom settings that rely on scripted dialogues and controlled practice. This limits students' exposure to spontaneous, real-life communication, reducing their ability to use English naturally and appropriately in authentic situations. This study investigates the pragmatic competence of Indonesian students during English interview interactions with foreign tourists, using Grice's Cooperative Principle as the theoretical framework. Five video recordings were analyzed, featuring elementary and secondary students conducting unscripted interviews with tourists at Seminyak Beach, Bali. While the students generally demonstrated adequate grammatical control and vocabulary range, the findings reveal recurring challenges in sustaining natural and cooperative conversations. The most frequent violations involved the Maxims of Relation, Quantity, and Manner, with students often failing to respond appropriately to tourist answers, providing minimal elaboration, or speaking in unclear and disorganized ways. The results highlight the need for English language teaching to include explicit instruction in pragmatic skills, such as turn-taking, topic development, and interactional awareness.

Keywords: EFL Learners, Cooperative Principle, Grice's Maxims, Pragmatics

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the emphasis in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction has shifted from purely grammatical accuracy toward communicative competence. However, within this communicative approach, one essential component is often underdeveloped: pragmatic competence. Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately in various social and cultural contexts. It includes not just what to say, but how, when, and why to say it (Kasper & Rose, 2001). Learners may produce grammatically correct sentences, but if they fail to follow the norms of interaction such as responding to questions or acknowledging the speaker's input the communication may still break down.

In Indonesia and many other EFL contexts, students are typically trained in controlled classroom settings where interactions are often scripted, leading to limited exposure to spontaneous, real-life conversations. This lack of practice in authentic interaction affects students' ability to use English naturally and appropriately. As such, analysing student performance in real world speaking contexts is crucial to understanding their pragmatic development.

This study examines how students in Bali engage in authentic English conversations with foreign tourists. The interactions were recorded during speaking practice activities at Seminyak Beach, where students asked tourists about personal identity, daily routines, and

leisure activities. While the students were generally able to ask questions correctly, they often failed to respond or follow up, resulting in conversations that lacked coherence and engagement. One important aspect of communication is pragmatic competence. It is the ability to use language appropriately depending on the situation and the listener. This includes knowing how to start a conversation, take turns, respond politely, and keep the conversation flowing.

However, there is limited research that specifically investigates student interactions with native or foreign English speakers in informal public settings. The present study fills this gap by analysing spontaneous conversations between Indonesian students and foreign tourists in a natural environment. This allows for deeper insights into how students manage real-time conversation and what pragmatic challenges they encounter.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to analyse these interactions, the study uses Grice's Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1975). The theory explains how people usually behave in conversation to help each other understand and communicate effectively. This theory believes that when we talk, we naturally try to cooperate with the person we are speaking to. It explained this cooperation through four conversational rules, which he called maxims. These are not strict rules, but general guidelines that help people make their speech clear, polite, and meaningful. Those four conversational maxims that guide effective and meaningful communication; maxim of quantity, maxim of quality, maxim of relevant, maxim of relation. Maxim of quantity means that we need to provide the right amount of information during the conversation. Maxim of quality is being truthful and provide evidence when we do a conversation. Maxim of relevant says that your answer should be related to the topic. Irrelevant answers can confuse the listener or stop the conversation from flowing Maxim of manner is being be clear, brief, and orderly in speech.

Several researchers have studied pragmatics and the use of Grice's maxims in language learning. For example, Herawati, A (2013) discussed how native speakers of Indonesian observed Grice's maxims. The results show that Grice's maxims are fulfilled in many conversations.

Other studies have focused on pragmatic competence of Indonesian EFL learners. Based on the analysis of Retnowaty, R. (2017) most learners have quite low pragmatic competence in implicature and speech act part. Although cultural background is usually a quite problem for us, it can be handled by a good cooperation and good awareness of pragmatic

aspects between the speaker and the hearer. Therefore, we should increase our pragmatic competence in everyday life with many kinds of English activities because English is still a foreign language in Indonesia.

Besides, Taguchi (2011) investigated the development of pragmatic skills among Japanese learners and found that exposure to real conversational input improved their ability to produce appropriate responses. Similarly, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) emphasized that learners often lack pragmatic awareness even when their grammatical competence is well-developed. Besides, Putri and Widiati (2020) conducted classroom-based research examining pragmatic awareness among high school learners. They noted that although students could perform basic speech acts like greeting or thanking, they struggled with sustaining topic relevance and giving appropriate responses. It is common challenges related to the Maxim of Relation.

Another relevant study is Wahyuni (2013), who explored how Indonesian learners responded to compliments and requests. She found cultural factors strongly influenced their pragmatic choices, often leading to responses that sounded unnatural or inappropriate in English. This shows that pragmatics is not only a linguistic but also a cross-cultural skill.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study draws on five video recordings of EFL students conducting English-language interviews with foreign tourists at Seminyak Beach, Bali. The participants consist of elementary school students (ages 9–11), and secondary school students (ages 13–15). In each video, students ask tourists about their name, nationality, daily activities, and leisure preferences in Bali. These interactions are part of a speaking practice activity designed to promote authentic language use in a real-world setting. The students used prepared interview questions, but the interactions were unscripted beyond those prompts. The transcripts focused on turn-taking, student responses to tourist answers, and overall conversational flow. The analysis uses Grice's Cooperative Principle as a framework to examine students' pragmatic behaviour. Specifically, the study investigates how students respond (or fail to respond) to tourist answers, maintain or break conversational relevance, use discourse markers and acknowledgment phrases, and adhere to the maxims of relation (be relevant) and manner (be clear and orderly).

4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This section presents the findings of the study, focusing on students' use of conversational strategies in interviews with foreign tourists. The analysis is grounded in Grice's Cooperative Principle, which includes four conversational maxims: quantity, quality, relation, and manner. Each maxim is examined in terms of whether it was adhered or violated by students during interactions.

- Maxim of quantity

According to Grice (1975), the maxim of quantity requires speakers to provide as much information as needed, but not more than necessary. In the observed data, this maxim was frequently violated. Students typically delivered minimal, formulaic responses and rarely elaborated on their questions or acknowledged the interlocutor's responses. Their utterances were often restricted to basic interrogatives such as "Where are you from?" or "What food do you like?" followed by an immediate transition to the next question, regardless of the content of the answer.

Data 1:

Student: "Where are you from?"

Tourist: "I'm from Australia. I came here with my family for a two-week vacation."

Student: "What is your favorite Indonesian food?"

In this case, the student did not respond to the tourist's answer or ask a follow-up question. This exchange indicates a tendency toward under-informativeness, suggesting that students may have memorized a list of questions without being trained to adapt to authentic conversational turns.

- Maxim of Relation

The Maxim of Relation means that we should say things that are connected to the topic. Violations of the maxim of Relation, which expects speakers to be relevant in their contributions, were the most prevalent. Students frequently shifted topics abruptly and failed to follow up on tourists' previous statements. This led to interactions that appeared disjointed and mechanical.

Data 2:

Student: "What do you usually do in the morning?"

Tourist: "In the morning, I go for a walk and then have a smoothie near the beach."

Student: "What is your favorite color?"

In Data 2, a tourist described their morning routine, saying, "In the morning, I go for a walk and then have a smoothie near the beach." The student responded with, "What is your

favorite color?", this is a question unrelated to the previous utterance. This lack of thematic continuity reflects a disconnect between listening and responding, and suggests that students were more focused on completing a predetermined list of questions than on participating in meaningful dialogue.

However, some other instances showed greater relevance:

Student: "What do you usually do in the morning?"

Tourist: "I usually surf in the morning."

Student: "Oh, cool! Do you surf every day?"

This exchange demonstrated a successful application of the maxim of Relation. The student listened and asked a related question. This shows the student followed the Maxim of Relation well.

• Maxim of Manner

The maxim of Manner pertains to clarity, orderliness, and the avoidance of ambiguity. In the data, students generally used simple and grammatically correct language, but their delivery often lacked fluency and naturalness. There were frequent pauses, overlapping questions, and unclear turn-taking, particularly in videos involving three students.

Data 4:

Student A: "What is your name?"

Tourist: "My name is Kate."

(Pause)

Student B: "What do you like?"

The absence of transitions or acknowledgment, such as "Nice to meet you, Kate," resulted in conversations that felt abrupt and disjointed. Additionally, students rarely employed discourse markers (e.g., "I see," "That's interesting") to manage conversational flow. This suggests a violation of the maxim of Manner due to a lack of organizational and interactional clarity.

Based on the data above, the students could use basic English grammar and vocabulary correctly. However, many of them had difficulty using English in a natural and effective way during real conversations. This means their pragmatic competence (how they use language in real-life situations) was still weak. Their main problems were related to the rules of conversation from Grice's Cooperative Principle. The first maxim is maxim of relation. Most students asked good questions, but they did not show interest in the answers. For example, when a tourist answered a question about their favorite activity, the student often said nothing and just continued to the next question. This made the conversation feel unnatural. This breaks

the Maxim of Relation, which says that people should say things that are related to what the other person just said. The second maxim is maxim of quantity. Many students only said short words like "ok," "nice," or "thank you" and didn't ask follow-up questions. They gave too little information and did not help the conversation grow. This breaks the Maxim of Quantity, which means you should say enough (not too much or too little) to help the other person understand and keep talking. The third maxim is maxim of manner. Some students spoke in a way that was not clear. Their words were in the wrong order, or they stopped too often. This may be because they were nervous or not used to speaking with foreigners. This breaks the Maxim of Manner, which says we should speak clearly and in a way that is easy to understand. The last maxim is not found. This maxim is maxim of quality which means "do not say what you believe to be false or say something without enough evidence," is usually concerned with truthfulness and accuracy. It is not found because: Students mostly ask questions, not give information. So, they're not in a position to lie or provide false facts. When they do speak (e.g., by responding with "nice" or "thank you"), they are usually being polite, not giving factual information. There was no evidence in your findings that students were saying things that were untrue or misleading.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study examined the pragmatic competence of elementary and secondary students during English interview practices with foreign tourists, applying Grice's Cooperative Principle as the analytical framework. The analysis of five video-recorded interactions revealed that although students possessed basic grammatical and lexical skills, their pragmatic performance in real-time communication was limited. The most frequent issues observed were violations of the Maxim of Relation, where students failed to respond appropriately or build upon tourist answers; the Maxim of Quantity, where responses were minimal or overly brief; and the Maxim of Manner, characterized by unclear or awkward phrasing. These patterns suggest that students often viewed the interview as a rigid question-and-answer session, rather than a fluid and meaningful conversation. Such tendencies may stem from classroom practices that emphasize structural correctness over communicative fluency. The findings highlight the need for pedagogical approaches that integrate explicit instruction in pragmatic competence, including strategies for sustaining dialogue, responding relevantly, and engaging naturally in conversation.

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