Interlanguage Pragmatics: Gender Influence on Suggestions Performed by Indonesian EFL Learners

(Pragmatik Bahasa Antara: Pengaruh Gender pada Ungkapan Saran yang Digunakan oleh Pembelajar Bahasa Asing Indonesia)

Ari Erviana, Wisasongko, Dewianti Khazanah
English Department, Faculty of Letters, University of Jember (UNEJ)

Jln. Kalimantan 37 Jember 68121

E-Mail: ari_erviana@gmail.com

Abstract

This study intends to investigate gender influence on the performance of suggestions made by Indonesian EFL learners. The goals of the study are to examine the way male and female students perform suggestions differently in English and investigate the motives resulting the differences. Further, this study expounds suggestion types and mitigation devices employed by male and female students. Thus, the theory of suggestion types proposed by Jiang (2006) and mitigation devices proposed by Farnia *et al.* (2014) are applied. The data are collected through DCT (Discourse Completion Task) and interview. The findings show that male and female students perform suggestions differently in three kinds of interaction. First, in low to high interaction, females perform *performative* more frequently than males. In addition, males utilize more *awareness as suggestion,* whereas females perform *awareness to modify suggestion.* Second, in high to low interaction, males use more *imperative,* whereas females employ more *modal.* Other finding shows that females tend to perform *combination to modify suggestion* more frequently than males. Third, in equal interaction, females use *performative* more frequently than males. In addition, females tend to perform more *combination to modify suggestion* than males. The motives resulting those differences are closely related to the way male and female students perceive suggestions in English.

Keywords: EFL learners, interlanguage pragmatics, speech act, suggestions

Abstrak

Kajian ini ditujukan untuk meneliti pengaruh gender *pada ungkapan saran yang digunakan oleh pembelajar bahasa asing Indonesia. Adapun tujuan dari kajian ini diantaranya untuk maneliti perbedaan antara laki-laki dan perempuan dalam mengungkapkan saran menggunakan Bahasa Inggris dan menyelidiki alasan-alasan yang mengakibatkan perbedaan tersebut. Selanjutnya, kajian ini membahas tentang jenis-jenis ungkapan saran dan* mitigation devices *yang digunakan oleh mahasiswa laki-laki dan perempuan. Dengan demikian, kajian ini menggunakan teori tentang jenis-jenis ungkapan saran yang digagas oleh Jiang (2006) dan teori tentang* mitigation devices *yang digagas oleh Farnia dkk. (2014). Selanjutnya, data diperoleh dari* DCT (Discourse Completion Task) *dan wawancara. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa laki-laki dan perempuan mengungkapkan saran berbeda pada tiga macam interaksi. Pertama, pada interaksi sosial status antara yang lebih rendah kepada yang lebih tinggi, perempuan cenderung menggunakan* performative *dibandingkan dengan laki-laki. Selanjutnya, laki-laki cenderung menggunakan* awareness as suggestion*, sedangkan perempuan lebih sering menggunakan* awareness to modify suggestion*. Ke-dua, pada interaksi sosial status antara yang lebih tinggi kepada yang lebih rendah, laki-laki lebih sering menggunakan* imperative*, sedangkan perempuan lebih sering menggunakan* modal*. Hasil dari penemuan ini juga menunjukan bahwa perempuan cenderung menggunakan* combination to modify suggestion *dibandingkan dengan laki-laki. Ke-tiga, interaksi sosial status yang setara, perempuan cenderung menggunakan* performative *dibandingkan dengan laki-laki. Selanjutnya, perempuan juga cenderung menggunakan* combination to modify suggestion *dari pada laki-laki. Alasan yang menyebabkan perbedaan-perbedaan tersebut berkaitan dengan bagaimana mahasiswa laki-laki dan perempuan melihat ungkapan saran dalam Bahasa Inggris.*

Kata kunci: pembelajar bahasa asing, pragmatik bahasa antara, tindak tutur, ungkapan saran

Introduction

This study attempts to examine gender as the focus of the research. Gender is one of the social variables effecting to the different language use. The different language use is clearly seen with regard to males and females' language characteristics. Lakoff argued in respect of males' language characteristics as cited in Pishghadam and Sharafadini (2011:236) "Men's speech is more assertive and direct than that of women". In addition, Crawford also supported females' different language characteristics compared to males' as cited in Pishghadam and Sharafadini (2011:236) "Female language is less forceful and indirect". Moreover, a number of studies have been done to probe different language gender used such as Zangoei *et al.* (2014), Ariff and Mugableh (2013), and Aminifard *et al.* (2014). The

studies resulted the findings indicating to the gender differences.

The study investigates gender based on interlanguage pragmatics perspective. According to Huang (2007), interlanguage is language in intermediate position between the learner's native language and his or her target language. Kasper then stated in relation to interlanguage pragmatics as cited in Trosborg (2010:219) "interlanguage pragmatics is often defined as the study of non-native speaker's use and acquisition of L2 pragmatics knowledge". In respect of interlanguage pragmatics, certainly it refers to two possible contexts namely in the context of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and ESL (English as a Second Language). The study then focuses on the investigation in the context of EFL.

Indonesian learners use English as a foreign language. Indeed, in the context of EFL, English is less used in their daily communication. They use English only in the class instrument when they have a lecture. This certainly leads to the particular difficulties such as being influenced by the first language, less knowledge of the English context and so forth. Further, the study tries to look at how Indonesian EFL learners perform suggestion speech act in English. Hence, with regard to the phenomenon, this study attempts to investigate gender in interlanguage of Indonesian EFL learners context. Its aims at investigating are to examine how male and female of Indonesian EFL learners perform suggestion differently in English and what factors motivate the differences in performing suggestion.

In accordance with the phenomenon, this study tries to answer following questions:

1. How do male and female of Indonesian EFL learners perform suggestions differently in English?
2. What aspects motivate the differences?

In line with those questions, this study is designed to achieve following goals:

1. To examine the way male and female of Indonesian EFL learners perform suggestions differently in English.
2. To probe cases which motivate the differences male and female of Indonesian EFL learners when performing suggestion in English.

Research Method

This research applies quantitative and qualitative method. The objects are 12 male and 12 female students of English Department Faculty of Letters Jember University in academic years of 2012/2013. The data are then collected through DCT (Discourse Completion Task) and interview. The DCT is adopted from Pishghadam and Sharafadini (2011) consisting of six situations in which the respondents are required to perform suggestions in low to high, high to low, and equal interaction. This DCT is very helpful to find out how male and female students perform suggestions differently in English. In addition, the researcher uses semistuctured interview to investigate the reasons in resulting the differences.

Result

Following tables are the results of suggestions performed by male and female students with regard to the theory of suggestion types proposed by Jiang (2006) and mitigation devices proposed by Farnia *et al.* (2014). The frequency and percentage of suggestion types and mitigation devices are provided below:

Table 1 Suggestion types performed by male and female of Indonesian EFL learners based on Jiang (2006) taxonomy in low to high interaction

Suggestion Type	Male		Female	
	f	%	f	%
Imperative	3	20%	5	25%
Performative	1	6.7%	5	25%
Modal	5	33.3%	6	30%
Yes-no question	1	6.7%	0	0
Wh-question	2	13.3%	2	5%
Conditional	1	6.7%	0	0
Extraposed to-clause	2	13.3%	2	10%
Total	15	100%	20	100%

As shown in table 1, suggestion type used dominantly by males and females is *modal* with the highest rate which is 33.3% in males and 30% in females. It can be found that males and females are different in the use of *performative*. Females use *performative* 25%, whereas males only use 6.7%.

Table 2 Mitigation devices performed by male and female of Indonesian EFL learners based on Farnia *et al.* (2014) in low to high interaction

Mitigation		Male		Female	
		f	%	f	%
Justification	Jastification to modify suggestion	6	27.3%	5	21.7%
	Jastification as suggestion	3	13.6%	2	8.7%
Awareness	Awareness to modify suggestion	1	4.5%	4	17.4%
	Awareness as suggestion	4	18.2%	0	0
Compliment	Compliment to modify suggestion	0	0	1	4.3%
Combination	Combination to modify suggestion	6	27.3%	9	39.1%
	Combination as suggestion	2	9.1%	2	8.7%
Total		22	100%	23	100%

As shown in table 2, males use frequently more *justification to modify suggestion* (27.3%) and *combination to modify suggestion* (27.3%) than other mitigation devices. It is similar to females, *combination to modify suggestion* emerges nine times or equal to 39.1 % as the highest percentage. The difference between male and female students can be clearly seen in the use of *awareness*. Males

apply more frequently *awareness as suggestion*, whereas females apply more frequently *awareness to modify suggestion*.

Table 3 Suggestion types performed by male and female of Indonesian EFL learners based on Jiang (2006) taxonomy in high to low interaction

Suggestion Type	Male		Female	
	f	%	f	%
Imperative	6	28.6%	4	18.2%
Performative	3	14.3%	4	18.2%
Modal	5	23.8%	10	45.5%
Wh-question	3	14.3%	2	9.1%
Yes-no question	1	4.8%	1	4.5%
Conditional	1	4.8%	0	0
Extraposed to-clauses	2	9.5%	1	4.5%
Total	21	100%	22	100%

According to table 3, suggestion type dominantly used by males is *imperative*. *Imperative* reaches 28.6% in this interaction. On the other hand, females use more frequently *modal* in 45.5%.

Table 4 Mitigation devices performed by male and female of Indonesian EFL learners based on Farnia *et al.* (2014) in high to low interaction

Mitigation		Male		Female	
		f	%	f	%
Justification	Justification to modify suggeston	11	64.7%	8	38.1%
	Justification as suggestion	0	0	2	9.5%
Awareness	Awareness to modify suggestion	2	11.8%	6	28.6%
Compliment	Compliment to modify suggestion	1	5.9%	0	0
Combination	Combination to modify suggestion	1	5.9%	5	23.8%
	Combination as suggestion	2	11.8%	0	0
Total		17	100%	21	100%

Based on table 4, both males and females have same preference. Both use dominantly more *justification to modify suggestion* than other mitigation devices. *Justification to modify suggestion* is on the percentage of 64.7% in males and 38.1% in females. Males and females are different in the use of *combination to modify suggestion*. *Combination to modify suggestion* emerges 23.8% in females, whereas males only employ this mitigation 5.9%.

Table 5 Suggestion types performed by male and female of Indonesian EFL learners based on Jiang (2006) taxonomy in equal interaction

Suggestion Type	Male		Female	
	f	%	f	%
Imperative	6	27.3%	4	16.7%
Performative	1	4.5%	4	16.7%
Modal	8	36.4%	12	50%
Wh-question	2	9.1%	1	4.2%
Yes-no question	2	9.1%	1	4.2%
Conditional	1	4.5%	2	8.2%
Extraposed to-clause	2	9.1%	0	0
Total	22	100%	24	100%

According to table 5, it can be seen that both use dominantly *modal*. *Modal* gets 36.4% in males and 50% in females. The difference between males and females can be seen in the use of *performative*. Females perform *performative* 16.7%, whereas males perform this suggestion 4.5%.

Table 6 Mitigation devices performed by male and female of Indonesian EFL learners based on Farnia *et al.* (2014) in equal interaction

Mitigation		Male		Female	
		f	%	f	%
Opener	Opener to modify suggestion	1	6.3%	1	5.6%
Hedges	Hedges to modify suggestion	0	0	1	5.6%
Justification	Justification to modify suggestion	10	62.5%	9	50%
	Justification as suggestion	1	6.3%	0	0
Awareness	Awareness to modify suggestion	2	12.5%	0	0
Negative evaluation	Negative evaluation to modify suggestion	0	0	1	5.6%
Combination	Combination to modify suggestion	1	6.3%	6	33.3%
	Combination as suggestion	1	6.3%	0	0
Total		16	100%	18	100%

Based on table 6, Both use dominantly more *justification to modify suggestion* than other mitigation devices. *Justification to modify suggestion* is on the percentage of 62.5% in males and 55.6% in females. Males and females are different in the use of *combination to modify suggestion*. Females apply *combination to modify suggestion* 33.3%, whereas males apply this mitigation 6.3%.

Discussion

With regard to the findings obtained from DCT, males and females have different tendencies in performing suggestions namely suggestion types and mitigation devices.

In low to high interaction, females employ *performative* structure more frequently than males (for example: *I suggest you to buy this book in another bookstore*). Based on the result obtained from interview, females perform *performative* because their background knowledge in performing suggestion in L2 is solely by applying *performative*. Other motive is because they have lack of knowledge about the level of imposition. They think *performative* refers to formal and polite suggestion. Regarding the mitigation devices, males tend to utilize *awareness as suggestion* (for example: *Absolutely, but there's another book with lower price and of course with the same contain*), whereas females tend to utilize *awareness to modify sugesstion* (for example: *I have seen this book in a lower price in other bookstore. I think it's better to buy in that store, Sir*). According to the interview, they perform those *awareness* because they consider politness when they talk to the older.

In high to low interaction, male participants utilize *imperative* (for example: *Don't buy it! I had already taste it and it was awful*). This is because males are very aware of their higher social status compared to the iterlocutor. Therefore, they do not consider politeness strategy. On the other hand, females tend to employ *modal* (for example: *No, you have to look the packed is so bad and I think the taste is too*). This is because they want not to give pressure to the interlocutor. They think *modal* functions as an option. In respect of mitigation devices, females tend to perform *combination to modify suggestion* more frequently than males (for example: *Yes, but the taste is not as well. You can taste it, if you want to try. Actually, it is delicious candy, but you can taste it before buy*). According to the result of interview, the main excuse in performing this *combination* is to strenghten their suggestion.

In equal interaction, the difference between male and female students is clearly seen in the use of *performative* (for example: *I suggest you to take a rest*). Females tend to perform *performative* more frequently than males as what occurs in low to high interaction. This preferance occurs because they are on equal position impacting to the use of direct suggestion. This suggestion is uttered to build intimacy. In addition, other difference between male and female students can be seen in the use of *combination to modify suggestion*. Females tend to perform *combination to modify suggestion* more frequently than males (for example: *Of course, this is a good potato chip, but I think you have to look at the expiration date. Make sure you are buying some potatoes in good condition!*). The reason is the same as what happens in the previous interaction namely to strenghten their suggestion.

more frequently than males in low to high and equal interaction. The motives are different, *performative* is performed due to females' background knowledge in L2 and lack of knowledge of *performative'*s imposition force in low to high interaction, whereas *performative* is performed due to intimacy in equal interaction. In addition, males tend to employ *imperative* because they are aware of their higher social status impacting to less consideration of politeness in high to low interaction. On the other hand, females tend to employ *modal* because they want to give suggestion functioning as an option. In respect of mitigation, males tend to perform *awareness as suggestion,* whereas females tend to utilize *awareness to modify suggestion* due to politeness consideration. In addition, females tend to perform *combination to modify suggestion* more frequently than males in high to low and equal interaction because they want to strenghten their suggestions.

Acknowledgment

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Conclusion

The study deals with investigation on the performance of suggestions performed by male and female students in English. The result shows that gender contributes differences in every interaction. Females tend to perform *performative*