Disagreeing Strategies in University Classroom Discussions among Indonesian EFL Learners

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Abstract

This study aims at finding out patterns of the relationship between students' strategies in disagreeing and their English proficiency using qualitative conversational analysis. Students joining Seminar on Linguistics course in the School of Culture Studies at Universitas Brawijaya (UB) Indonesia in the odd semester of 2010-2011 were the participants of this research. They were classified into four levels of language proficiency: *pre-intermediate, intermediate, pre-advanced,* and *advanced* according to their TOEFL scores. The data of this study were students' utterances containing the force of disagreement, their TOEFL scores, and their responses to interviews. The findings of this research suggest that students' strategies in disagreeing can be classified into two macro strategies: *direct* and *indirect strategies.* Direct strategy covers four micro strategies: *refusal, denial, correction,* and *strong criticism.* Indirect strategy was represented in four micro strategies: *mild-criticism, internally-contrasting, reminding,* and *suggestion.* Besides, the findings revealed that students having higher levels of English proficiency tended to use indirect strategies, but those at lower levels used direct ways in disagreeing.

Keywords: Disagreement, Diret strategy, Indirect strategy, English proficiency

1. Introduction

In the field of foreign/second language learning, communicative competence is the one that deals with the knowledge of how to use the target language. It covers, among other things, linguistic and pragmatic competence. In the past, linguistic competence was the main concern of second/foreign language practitioners. Drilling and memorizing were teaching techniques commonly applied by teachers.

At present, pragmatic competence supersedes the dominance of linguistic competence. Activities in teaching and learning process are dedicated to achieving students' pragmatic competence. Methods of teaching through drilling are put aside and replaced with communicative activities enabling learners to communicate in the target language. Teaching materials focusing on grammar are changed into the one giving large opportunities to students to use the target language. The changing of this trend is due to the tenet saying that language is a means of communication.

Pragmatic competence is concerned with the language users' knowledge of social norms of the target language. This competence is very important since communication in any language should be socially acceptable. Language learners need to be aware that the same utterances might have different functions because of social factors, such as gender, age, education, power, and many others.

In real communication, both linguistic and pragmatic competence are complementary to each other. Language learners need linguistic competence, otherwise they will find many obstacles in using the target language. They need to have sufficient pragmatic competence in order to be able to communicate in socially-acceptable ways. The question is whether high linguistic competence automatically implies high pragmatic competence. This study tries to investigate the pattern of relationship between those two competencies.

TOEFL scores were the measurement used to measure the students' linguistic competence, and disagreement realizations were the medium used to see their pragmatic competence. The rationales of choosing the speech act of disagreement are (1) disagreeing is a very common act in academic settings, (2) expressing disagreement is performing an act which might threaten the social relationship among/between interlocutors. To minimize the threat, appropriate politeness strategies are called for. The appropriateness of strategies are dependent much on social factors, such as social distance between/among interlocutors, social power, gender, and many others. As such, choosing appropriate strategies is the domain of pragmatic competence. (3) compared to other speech acts, the act of disagreement gets less attention from pragmatic researchers.

Disagreement is one of speech acts that commonly occurs in academic settings. This is an act in which a speaker shows a different stance—directly or indirectly—on prior statements/claims/facts stated by previous speakers. The different stance can be represented in denials, objections, or criticisms to prior statements or facts stated by previous speakers. Hence the act of disagreeing is face-threatening act for previous speakers, in Brown and Levinson's (1978) term.

In Austin's classification, disagreement can be subsumed into commissive speech act since it suggests a speaker's commitment to his/her belief, idas, or concept. This is in line with the Austin's definition of commissive verbs: verbs indicating the speaker's commitment to certain course of action (1975: 157). To Searle's classification, disagreement is classified into representative act because it is concerned with a speaker's commitment to the truth of the expressed utterances (1976). In line with those ideas, Fraser (1975: 192) classifies disagreement as an act of asserting given that it deals with the speaker's assessment of the appropriateness of the state of affairs resulting from some prior act expressed by the proposition. On the basis of Leech's illocutionary classifications, disagreement can be classified in conflictive speech act since the realization of this act might cause social disharmony between/among interlocutors (1983: 104). In addition, according to Sornig, disagreement is a reactive speech act (1977: 364) since the occurence of this act is stimulated by preceding utterances.

Strategies which make up the speech act of disagreement can be classified into macro and micro strategies. Macro strategy is used by language users in performing the act of disagreeing, namely direct and indirect strategies. Some research findings confirming the existence of direct and indirect strategies in disagreeing are Rohmah (2006), Locastro (1986), Blum-Kulka (2002), and Behnam and Niroomand (2011).

Relying on those research findings, it can be underlined that direct strategy is the one in which the force of disagreeing is explicitly stated. As such, utterances stating the disagreement are singly-interpretable. The indication of direct strategy is the use of disagreeing markers (DM). The act of disagreement can be indicated with the use of the performative verb *disagree* or the phrase *do not agree* and the particle *not* or negation of previous statements. Kreutel's (2007) study reveals that the performative verb *disagree* and the phrase *do not agree* are the least-being-used linguistic features by the subjects of his study. Turning to the use of *not,* Scott (1998) confirms that *negation* is one of the linguistic features that dominantly occured in his study.

By contrast, indirect strategy is the strategy to express disagreement in which the force of disagreeing cannot be clearly seen. The main characteristics of indirect disagreement are the absence of DMs and the multiplicity of meanings of utterances.

In addition to the macro strategies which make up the speech act of disagreement, there are micro strategies that can represent the direct and indirect strategies. Kamisili and Dogancay-Atkuna (1996) studied how Turk EFL learners realize English disagreement. The writers devise that the speech act of disagreement is sometimes semantically realized in the form criticism, suggestion, positive preface, gratitude, empathy, postponement of decision, and token agreement. Holmes (2006) discussed how to manage disagreement in a workplace: conflict avoidance, negotiation, and resolution by fiat. Pomerantz (1984: 57-90) presented strategies to withold the speech act of disagreement: silence, request clarification, agreement prefacing, and directly contrasting prior statements with other facts.

In studying the speech act of disagreement among second/foreign language learners, researchers frequently compare learners' performance and that of native speakers. Kamisili

and Dogancay-Atkuna (1986), Kreutel (2007), Locastro (1986) are the examples of writers focusing on comparative study between the disagreement perfomed by English learners and that by native speakers of English. Such a comparative study results in similarities and differences between two distinct speech communities, rather than to understand the learners' development of target-like pragmatic competence (Davies & Tyler, 2005: 133).

In addition, the studies by Behnam and Niroomand (2011) and Xuehua (2006) were concerned with the interaction between the learners' English proficiency and linguistic features used by English learners in realizing disagreement. Results of those studies suggested that the use of mitigating devices in disagreeing was positively correlated with students' English proficiency. It means that high level proficiency in English is followed by an increase in the use of mitigating devices, and the low level of English proficiency is followed by a decrease in the use of mitigating devices. In the study that will be subsequently presented in this paper, the interaction between English proficiency levels of Indonesian EFL learners and their strategies in disagreeing is further expanded.

2. Research Method

2.1 Design

This research aimed at finding out patterns of students' strategies in disagreeing in relation to their English proficiency levels. Relying on this aim, qualitative approach using conversational analysis was applied.

2.2 Research Participants

Students (21 female and 7 male) of School of Culture Studies at Universitas Brawijaya (UB) taking Seminar on Linguistics course in the odd semester of 2010-2011 participated in this study. They were selected on the basis of their performance during the seminars. Those performing the act of disagreeing were automatically considered as the research participants. On the basis of their TOEFL scores, they were classified into pre-intermediate, intermediate, pre-advanced, and advanced levels. The students were not equally distributed across gender, ethnicity, and English proficiency levels. See Table 1 for the characteristics of the participants.

Table 1. Number of Students Performing Disagreements across English Proficiency Levels

TOEFL Scores	Language Proficiency Levels	Ethnicity		Sub-total
		Javanese	Non-Javanese	
400-449	Pre-Intermediate	3	-	3
450-459	Intermediate	9	-	9
500-549	Pre-advanced	13	-	13
550 and more	Advanced	2	1	3
Total				28

2.3 Data Collection Procedures

The main data of this research were naturally occurring data: the students' utterances

containing disagreement. These data were obtained by observing the students' weekly classroom seminars. Collecting the main data, the researchers were aided by a camera person to record the seminars. The main data were collected for 10 weeks each of which ran for 2.5 hours, totaling 25 hours of observation. Prior to the observation, we let the students know that their activities would be recorded for a research.

Students' TOEFL scores were another data of this research. The data were collected by documenting the students' TOEFL scores available in the institution. Students' responses to interviews were another data used in this research. Some students performing disagreements during the seminars were interviewed. The interviews were designed to compare our interpretation of the students' utterances to that of their interpretation. This comparison was important since our interpretation was likely different from theirs. The questions raised in the interviews moved from general questions to specific ones. To retrieve their memory of what had taken place during the seminars, their transcribed disagreements were presented, and their recorded performance was played.

2.4 Data Analysis

In this step, the realizations of disagreement were analyzed. It included two steps: coding and determining patterns of disgreeing strategies among students.

2.4.1 Coding

Coding is the disagreement identification by reading and rereading and giving specific markers to students' utterances in the transcribed conversations. Students' utterances containing disagreement were coded by adapting Sornig's idea (1977: 347-374). The parameters of disagreement set up by Sornig are comments upon a pre-text by questioning part of its semantic or pragmatic information, correcting it, or negating it.

Coding systems in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) by Blum-Kulka *et al* (1989) were adapted in this study. The coding process resulted in macro strategies in disagreeing: direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategy was realized in utterances containing disagreeing markers (DMs): the use of performative verb *disagree* or *do not agree* and the negation of previous statements.

Besides, the coding process involved the identification of hints indicating indirect disagreement. The indication of indirect strategy was multiplicity of meanings of utterances. Understanding context is vital in determining whether the force pertaining in the utterances was disagreement or others. As the level of directness and indirectness was determined, each utterance was coded for micro strategies (e. g. whether the disagreements were represented in refusals, criticism, and others).

2.4.2 Determining Disagreeing Strategies in Relation with English Proficiency Levels

To determine patterns of students' disagreeing strategies in relation to their English proficiency, the first step was counting the occurrence of each strategy in each level. From this, a comparison could be made, and patterns of relationship between disagreeing strategies and proficiency levels could be determined.

3. Research Findings

Data analysis suggests that strategies performed by students to realize their disagreement can be classified into two big clusters: direct and indirect strategies. In this research, those strategies are called macro strategy. The direct strategy was represented in four sub strategies: *refusal, denial, correction,* and *strong-criticism,* while the indirect one was realized in four other sub strategies: *mild-criticism, internally-contrasting, reminding,* and *suggestion.* Those sub strategies are called micro strategy.

Concerning the realization of those strategies among students, it is found that advanced-level students and pre-intermediate ones show an extreme difference. Advanced-level students performed disagreements indirectly, but pre-intermediate students realized this speech act directly. Out of disagreements performed by pre-intermediate students, only one was expressed indirectly. This research also revealed that intermediate and pre-advanced students were moderate, in that their disagreement realizations were not dominated by a certain strategy. In other words, direct and indirect strategies were equally performed by students at these two groups. Thus, the dominance of direct and indirect strategies was the point of difference among the four English proficiency levels. The findings on macro and micro strategies in disagreement are displayed in Table 2, presented from the most direct disagreement to the least one.

Table 2. Students' Strategies in Disagreement

Lg. Proficiency Level	Direct Strategies				Indirect Strategies			
	Refusal	Denial	Correction	Strong Criticism	Mild Criticism	Internally-Contrasting	Reminding	Suggestion
Pre-Intermediate	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	+
Intermediate	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
Pre-advanced	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+
Advanced	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	-

(+)　　: appears in the data　　　　(-)　　　　: not appears in the data

3.1 Direct Strategies in Disagreement

Direct strategies in disagreement found in this research are refusal, denial, correction, and strong criticism, each of which is discussed in the subsequent parts.

3.1.1 Refusal Strategy

Refusal is an act of responding negatively to suggestions, invitations, offers, or requests. Data analysis of this study reveals that there are eighteen disagreement discourses realized in refusals, performed by pre-intermediate, intermediate, and pre-advanced students. This type of disagreement was realized by directly refusing suggestions given by previous speakers. The main characteristic of refusals occurring in this study is that they are realized in negative

declarative sentences functioning to negate the suggestions. Accumulatively, there were 18 disagreement discourses realized through this strategy. The distribution and characteristics of refusal strategy is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution and Characteristics of Refusal Strategy

Language. Prof. Levels	Frequency of Occurrence	Aspects being Refused	Syntactic Realization	Lexical Indications
Pre-Intermediate	7	Suggestion	Negative Declarative Sentence	The particle *NOT*
Intermediate	7	Suggestion	Negative Declarative Sentence	The particle *NOT*
Pre-advanced	4	Suggestion	Negative Declarative Sentence	The particle *NOT*
Advanced	-	-	-	-

Excerpt (1) that follows is an example of the use of refusal strategy performed by a pre-intermediate student. The opposed idea in excerpt (1) is An's suggeston in lines 1-3: *why you don't try to interview experts?* The suggestion realized in an interrogative sentence was refused directly by Pri in lines 6-7. It says...*I must not interview the expert for my thesis* (line 6-7). The refusal implies that Pri refused the suggestion since she considered that interviewing experts did not have great significance for her future research.

　　　　Excerpt (1)

Pre Intermediate/Refusal

Semiotic Study of Mural Wall's Meaning in Malang

1	An	*Maybe that the design graphic students create the murals to*
2		*say something and you your interpretation maybe different*
3		*with the creator I mean **why you don't try to interview experts?***
4	Pri	because in my problem of the study,　　you know.... you can see
5		in my paper,... I wrote what is possible meaning murals walls
6		in Malang..... so it is just what is possible meaning, so ***I　must not***
7		***interview the expert for my thesis***
		(Observed on October 20th, 2010)

3.1.2 Denial Strategy

Denial is a claim that something is not true. Using this strategy, an arguer denies the truth of statements made by previous speakers. Eight disagreement discourses were realized through

this strategy, performed by pre-intermediate and pre-advanced students. The disagreements produced by students at those two groups have some similarities and differences. The data produced by pre-intermediate students are syntactically realized in negative and positive declarative sentences, and are lexically indicated with the use of *not* and *but*. On the contrary, the disagreements produced by pre-advanced students are syntactically realized in negative declarative sentences with the use of *not* as the lexical indication. The distribution and characteristics of denial strategy is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution and Characteristics of Denial Strategy

Language. Prof. Levels	Freq. of Occurrence	Denied Aspects	Syntactic Realization	Lexical Indications
Pre-Intermediate	3	The truth of previous utterances	Negative Declarative Sentence	NOT
			Positive Declarative sentence	BUT
Intermediate	-	-	-	-
Pre-advanced	5	The truth of previous utterances	Negative Declarative Sentence	NOT
Advanced	-	-	-	-

Excerpt (2) that follows is an example of a disagreement realized in denial strategy, performed by a pre-advanced student. The opposed idea in the extract of conversation is in lines 1 and 2; it says *Alay language users usually add N in the end of the word, and change the word AND into N*. The head act of disagreeing performed by D in line 8 says *that is not from the theory of language.* It is a **direct strategy** since the force of disagreeing is intelligible in it, or the utterance containing the head act has a single interpretation.

Excerpt (2)

Pre-Advanced Level/Denial

Sociolinguistic Study on Alay Language Used on Facebook

1   W   *Alay language users usually add N in the end of the word and*

2   *change the AND into N.*

3   D   OK, I want to know your previous study, because I used to read a

4   proposal. I want to know about the theory of Alay language. Ehm..

5   our teacher said to me that you cannot write anything without

6   theory, so like what you said that if users of Alay language changing the

7   word AND into N. It seems to   me that you conclude it by yourself.

8   ➔   ***That is not from the theory of Alay langauge...***

(Observed on October 27th, 2010)

The directness can be traced up from the use of a negative declarative sentence in line 8.

English grammar confirms that prefix **-dis** and the adverb **not** have an equal function: to negate a positive form. Thus, despite the absence of the lexical choice *disagree* or *do not agree,* the negation of the preceding statement as written in line 8 is the indication of direct disagreement.

The micro strategy of the disagreement realization is ***denial.*** The sense of the denial can be seen from the content of D's utterance. Her utterance denies the truth of the theory proposed by W. She convincingly stated that what W had stated was not a theory from Alay language, but it was just his own conclusion.

3.1.3 Correction

Correction is a form of disagreement disputing verifiable facts; the truth of the facts is easily verified. In such a disagreement, an arguer voices his/her disagreement by trying to make previous statements or behavior right or more appropriate. In addition, the arguer generally exposes alternative facts (Jefferson in Rees-Miller, 1995: 10).

This research revealed that correction was the micro strategy of direct disagreement that dominantly occurred. Eleven disagreement discourses were realized through this strategy. Pre-advanced, intermediate, and pre-intermediate students respectively produced six, three, and two disagreements. A negative declarative sentence was the syntactical realization of correction across the English language proficiency levels performing this strategy, and *not* was the lexical indication. Presenting alternative facts or solutions was another characteristic of correction in all English proficiency levels. The distribution and characteristics of direct disagreements realized in the correction strategy is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Distribution and Characteristics of Correction Strategy

Language. Prof. Levels	Freq. of Occurrence	Methods of Correction	Syntactic Realization	Lexical Indications
Pre-Intermediate	2	Providing alternative facts/actions	Negative Declarative Sentences	The particle *NOT*
Intermediate	3	Providing relevant facts	Negative Declarative Sentences	The particle *NOT*
Pre-advanced	6	Providing alternative facts	Negative Declarative Sentences	The particle *NOT*
Advanced	-	-	-	-

Excerpt (3) presents an example of direct disagreement using correction strategy performed by a pre-intermediate student. It contains a disagreement performed by Ind through which she tried to make the presenter's performance better. The correction occurred because Ind found the presenter's way in presenting his paper inappropriate. To Ind's view, reading a text on a screen was not a good attitude as there would not be an eye contact with the audience.

Excerpt (3)

Pre-Intermediate/Correction

Viewers Frame in Comprehending Surya 16 Advertisement

Published on Television

1	F	(Presented his paper by not facing his audience, but he kept looking at
2		the screen)
3	Ind	And then,....I want to give suggestion (e.....) actually ....
4	→	when you want to read your slide, (e....) *it is better*
5		*for you to read your slide,.....on your notebook, **no**t the*
6		*Screen because you cannot face the audience.*

(Observed

on November 10th, 2010

The disagreement in excerpt (3) is realized directly. The directness can be seen from the disagreeing marker (DM): a negative declarative sentence. The negative element—***not***—in the head act lies in the object of the verb *read,* and the negation here functions to negate the preceding behavior: reading a text on a screen. Due to the negative element pertaining in the object of the verb, the meaning is equal with *reading a text on a screen while presenting the text is not appropriate.*

3.1.4 Strong Criticism

Criticism is basically a negative comment on others' ideas or behavior. The observation shows that students' criticisms could be classified into direct and indirect strategies in disagreeing. It is included in a direct strategy when the negative opinion is realized in negative declarative sentences using adjectives having positive connotations, such as ***appropriate.*** Such a strategy is called strong criticism. It constitutes an indirect strategy when the criticism is syntactically realized in interrogative or declarative sentences. It is called a mild criticism. As such, syntactical realization is the point of difference between criticism in direct and indirect strategies. The distribution and characteristics of strong-criticism is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Distribution and Characteristics of Strong-criticism Strategy

Language. Prof. Levels	Frequency of Occurrence	Methods of Criticizing	Syntactic Realization	Lexical Indications
Pre-Intermediate	-	-	-	-
Intermediate	-	-	-	-
Pre-advanced	6	Giving negative comments	Negative declarative sentences	Not, adjectives
Advanced	-	-	-	-

Six disagreement discourses were realized in strong-criticism strategy, performed by

pre-advanced students. Those disagreements were syntactically realized in negative declarative sentences. Accordingly, the particle *not* and judgmental adjectives were the lexical indications.

The example of a direct disagreement represented in a strong criticism using particle ***not*** combined with a judgmental term is found in excerpt (4). The directness is recognizable from a negative declarative sentence (lines 3-5). The sense of criticism is seen from the combination between the particle ***not*** and the adjective ***appropriate*** resulting in a negative sense.

Excerpt (4)

<div align="center">

Pre Advanced/Strong-Criticism

Gender Differences between Men and Women of Speech Style in Faculty of Culture Studies

</div>

1	Wid	[Presented slides containing a lot of pictures]
2	Sh	I want to give a suggestion for you. I think ***your slide***
3	→	***is not appropriate with a formal situation like seminar***
4		***of thesis proposal***. *You make something like pictures*
5		*and if you still use this kind of style in the real seminar*
6		*maybe the auidience will not give much attention to the*
7		*content, they will just pay attention to the pictures of*
8		*the slides.*
9	Wid	OK

<div align="center">(Observed on October 27th, 2010)</div>

The point of difference between the speaker and the addressee is the slides containing a lot of pictures presented by Wid (presenter). The act of disagreeing was performed by Sh (lines 2-4), shown with an arrow and written in bold letters: *I think your slide is not appropriate with a formal situation like seminar of thesis proposal*. The negative comment on the slides indicates that the speaker did not agree with the previous behavior. Despite the absence of the performative verb ***disagree*** or ***do not agree,*** the negative comment on the slides presented was an expression of disagreement.

3.2 Indirect Strategies in Disagreement

As touched on earlier, indirect strategies in disagreement occurring in this study are *mild-criticism, internally-contrasting, reminding,* and *giving suggestion.* Each strategy is elaborated in the subsequent parts.

3.2.1 Mild Criticism Strategy

Mild-criticism strategy is a negative comment on prior statements syntactically realized in interrogative or positive declarative sentences. Twelve disagreements were realized through this strategy, performed by students at intermediate and advanced levels. Lexical clues signalling the disagreement are adjectives having a negative connotation. The distribution and characteristics of this strategy is presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Distribution and Characteristics of Mild-Criticism Strategy

Language Prof. Levels	Freq. of Occurrence	Syntactic Realization	Lexical Indications
Pre-Intermediate	-	-	-
Intermediate	4	Interrogative sentence	Adjectives
Pre-advanced	-	-	-
Advanced	8	Positive Declarative sentences	Adjectives

The dialogue in excerpt (5) is one of the disagreements realized by means of mild-criticism strategy, performed by an advanced student.

Excerpt (5)

Advanced/Mild-Criticism

Morphology of Word Formation Processes in Michael Jackson's

Lyrics of Album 2010

1	Nk	... So in my study I conduct that the title of my study is
2		Morphology of word formation process in Michael Jackson's
3		Lyrics of Album 2010. ...
4	Mel	Thank you for the time, ehm...my question is
5		related to your title, it is about eh...in Michael Jackson's
6	→	lyric of Michael album 2010, *eh...for me as a reader it is a kind*
7	→	*of* **confusing title** *because eh...what I have in mind in here....later on*
8	→	*you analyze about the lyrics of certain songs but you wrote*
9	→	*Michael album 2010.* So I think you should reconsider again
10		about your title. And the second is...
11	Nk	OK, thanks for attention (laugh)
12		You mean,...to be specific ya?
13	Mel	Ya......

(Observed on December 15, 2010)

The opposed idea is the relationship between the title of Nk's research proposal and its data source, and the hint of disagreement is in lines 6-9. Mel's negative comments in line 7 saying *...it is a kind of confusing title...*and her suggestion in lines 9-10 might be interpreted as merely a comment and a suggestion. As such, they have the forces of commenting and suggesting. It can, however, be conceived as a disagreement. A disagreement generally occurs because of weaknesses pertaining in statements. Relying on this, the addressee in the above dialogue was aware of the possibilities of interpretation. Therefore, she asked a question to clarify the intended illocutionary force by asking *you mean...to be specific ya?*(line 12). The question indicated that she could catch the Mel's intention: disagreeing with her title.

3.2.2 Internally-contrasting Strategy

Internally contrasting is a strategy of indirect disagreement in which a speaker tries to make

correction over previous statements by restating preceding statements and contrasting them with contrary facts. This research finds that students at intermediate, pre-advanced, and advanced levels applied this strategy. Eighteen disagreement discourses were realized in this strategy. This type of disagreement was syntactically realized in positive declarative sentences. Most of them were compound sentences containing two clauses, coordinated with the conjunction **but.** One of the disagreements was syntactically realized in an interrogative sentence, followed by a sub-clause preceded with the conjunction *but.*

The conjunction *but* functioned to relate two contradictory facts existing in the first and second clauses. Something worth noting is that the conjunction *but* was not used by subjects to show the contradiction between a speaker and his/her addressee, but it was used as a device to present the contrary facts existing in the addressee's ideas. As such, the conjunction *but* could not obviously indicate a contradiction between a speaker and his/her addressee, but it is just a clue to a disagreement. The distribution and characteristics of this strategy is displayed in Table 8.

Table 8. Distribution and Characteristics of Contrasting Strategy

Language Prof. Levels	Freq. of Occurrence	Syntactic Realization	Lexical Indications
Pre-Intermediate	-	-	-
Intermediate	7	Positive declarative sentences	But
Pre-advanced	3	Interrogative sentences followed by a *but* sub-clause	But
Advanced	8	Positive declarative sentences	But

Excerpt (6) presents three disagreements produced by an intermediate student within a single turn. The opposed ideas in the excerpt are the problem of study, the previous study, and the data collection method presented by the presenter (lines 1-5). The hints of disagreeing were performed by Ev in lines 6-8, 9-11, and 14-16. Listening to the presenter's explanation, Ev responded by refuting the research proposal. The refutation was done by presenting the inconsistency between (1) the single research problem and the previous study, (2) the previous study and the topic of study, and (3) the data collection method and the problem of study. Ev considered that they are not relevant to each other.

Excerpt (6)

Internally-Contrasting/Intermediate

A Study of Intended Meaning of Pepsi Advertisement Slogan

1	And	...Problem of study, what are the intended meaning of Pepsi
2		advertisement?... for the previous study, I read the thesis from
3		Yuwono, there is the title in cigarette advertisement. The study
4		know about analyzing the stylistic style that is used in cigarette

5		advertisement.
6	Ev	OK, in the problem of study, *you have only one problem of the*
7	→	*study that is about intended meaning of pepsi,* **but** *in your*
8		*previous study you also mention about stylistical theories.* ... And then
9		*the second your previous study you took the previous study*
10	→	*about the functional stylistic* **but** *your study is about the intended*
11		*meaning of Pepsi advertisement slogan.* Maybe it will be better if
12		you choose the previous study about the intended meaning or the
13		functional stylistic. And then the next is about the data collection.
14		*in the number 4, you will choose five slogans that consist of*
15	→	*ambiguous meaning* **but** *in the problem of study, you did not*
16		*mention the ambiguous meaning.* And the last, I just want to know about
17		The slogans. What kind of the slogans?
18	And	Here is the example of the slogans. *UNDER THE PEPSI, JOIN OR*
19		*WORK WITH PEPSI. ITS TASTE BITES THE OTHER STONE.* Ok, Ev,
20		that is all about the example. In may paper, I give the example of the
21		slogans, the words and the sentence of the slogans. It is used in the year
22		of 1961 until 1975. Thank you for you questions. How about the
23		intended meaning? I am sorry that I have a different thinking in this
24		morning so I change the slide. Ya...ya...I will find intended meaning for
25		my previous study

(Observed on December 10, 2010)

The series of irrelevant facts stated by Ev were considered to be indirect disagreements due to the opacity pertaining in those utterances. Superficially, Ev's statements merely informed the presenter that those aspects of research proposal were not relevant to each other. As such, the force behind the utterances was informing.The statements, however, might mean disagreement due to contextualized conventions. Ev's statements were the responses of previous utterances whose perlocutionary effect was either agreement or disagreement. Between the two possibilities, disagreement was more likely than agreement since Ev's statements contained refutation. Using those instruments—the refutation and contextualized conventions—And seemed to come to the conclusion that Ev's utterances were the representation of disagreement. His response in lines 23-24 indicates that he caught Ev's disagreement.

3.2.3 Reminding Strategy

Reminding is a strategy of indirect disagreement in which a speaker tries to make his/her addressee aware of something that she/he might forget. Twenty two disagreement discourses were realized in the reminding strategy. Students at intermediate, pre-advanced, and advanced levels respectively produced three, fifteen, and four disagreements. The distribution and characteristics of this strategy are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Distribution and Characteristics of Reminding Strategy

Language Prof.	Freq. of	Syntactic	Lexical Indications

Levels	Occurrence	Realization	
Pre-Intermediate	-	-	-
Intermediate	3	Positive Declarative Sentence	Verbs indicating carelessness (forgot)
Pre-advanced	15	Positive Declarative Sentence	Verbs indicating carelessness
		Interrogative Sentence	The conjunction *because*
Advanced	4	Interrogative Sentence	The conjunction *because*

Excerpt (7) is an example of the use of reminding strategy by an intermediate student.

Excerpt (7)

Reminding/Intermediate Level

Viewers Frame in Comprehending Surya 16 Advertisement

Published on Television

1	Fil	... and the next is **problem** of my study. *First,* ..., second,
2		..., third....
3	Ind	Thank you for Nurina Sheila, first maybe I want to give
4		comment for your problem of study that in there are three
5	→	problems here, *so maybe you you* **forgot** *to put S for*
6		*problems of study.*
7	Fil	Oh,...yes...yes.....
8		Yes,...
9		Yeach,....I write ***Problem of Study......*** ya,....ya....
10		

(Observed on November 10, 2010)

The opposed idea of excerpt (7) is the sentences saying *...and the next is problem of study. First,... second,... third...* (lines 1-2). The hint of disagreement is in the clause saying *...so maybe you forgot to put S for your problems of study* (lines 5-6).

The disagreement was realized indirectly due to its opacity, in the sense that the utterance meaning did not provide with sufficient indication of the act of disagreeing. The opacity brought about the meaning vagueness in the utterance because of which it might have more than one intention. The utterance, indeed, had at least two possible intentions. First, the utterance is superficially nothing more than an attempt to remind the presenter of something that he might have forgotten: the letter **-s** after a plural noun. As such, it constitutes the act of reminding. Second, the utterance is probably to disagree with the presenter. Between the two probable intentions, the latter one is the most likely. It is on the basis of contextualized

conventions in an academic seminar. The presenter's statement saying ***problem of study*** (line 1) is the one whose perlocutionary effect is either agreement or disagreement. When a seminar participant puts forward an opinion, he/she is generally motivated to agree or disagree with preceding speakers. In the context of the present data, it seems that Ind had a different opinion from the presenter. Thus, despite the absence of disagreeing markers (DMs), Ind's utterance is the realization of a disagreement. This analysis is confirmed with Fil's acknowledgment of Ind's utterances (lines 7-10).

3.2.4 Giving Suggestion Strategy

Giving suggestion is a strategy of indirect disagreement whereby a speaker recommends that the addressee do something. The research finds that some students at pre-intermediate to pre-advanced levels produced indirect disagreements using this strategy. Seven disagreements were realized by means of this strategy. Those disagreements were syntactically realized in positive declarative sentences. Lexical and phrasal clues indicating suggestions were the modals *should* and *must,* and the expression *it is better.* The distribution and characteristics of this strategy are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Distribution and Characteristics of Giving-suggestion Strategy

Language Prof. Levels	Freq. of Occurrence	Syntactic Realization	Lexical Indications
Pre-Intermediate	1	Positive declarative sentence	The modal *should*
Intermediate	3	Positive declarative sentence	The modal *must*
Pre-advanced	3	Positive declarative sentence	The expression *it is better to...*
Advanced	-	-	-

Excerpt (8) that follows is an example of disagreement realized through suggestion strategy, produced by a pre-intermediate student. The opposed idea in excerpt (8) lies in line 2, that is the full name of a previous researcher. The hint of disagreement lies in lines 6-7, which says *...title in your previous study, it should eh..you should eh..type the last name of the writer* (lines 6-7).

Excerpt (8)

Giving Suggestion/Pre-intermediate

A Translation Analysis of Indonesian Subtitle in the Movie entitled

The Simpsons Movie

1	Er	I only find one previous study related to the translation
2		analysis by ***Diana Sari Puspita*** from Brawijaya university...
3	R	Eh, in your data source you said that the subtitle will be
4		transcribed, eh..can you give me eh..your explanation about how
5		how..how will you transcribe your data? I will give a comment
6		for you,..title in your previous study, *it **should** eh..you **should***

7		*eh..type the last name of the writer.*
8	Er	The last name? You..you mean...just Puspita?
9	R	Ya,....
10	Er	Ow,...ya...ya..

(Observed on December 1, 2010)

R's disagreement is categorized as an indirect one due to the multiplicity of its intentions. Firstly, R's utterance could be interpreted as a suggestion. The use of lexical choice ***should*** in line 6 is the indication of the act of advising. English grammar confirms that ***should*** can be used for advising others to do something. The suggestion, however, was made because there was a different opinion between the speaker and the addressee concerning how to write an author's name in an academic writing. Accordingly, the suggestion can be interpreted as a disagreement. This analysis on the basis of the context and Er's response in lines 8 and 9.

4. Discussion

As shown in Table 1, students at each level performed various strategies in disagreeing; advanced-level students were in sharp contrast to pre-intermediate ones. Advanced students consistently expressed disagreement indirectly, while pre-intermediate ones realized this speech act mostly in direct ways. It means that advanced learners tend to distance themselves from the act of disagreeing. Or, advanced learners in this study tended to apply the agreement maxim, in that they attempted to minimize disagreements (Leech 1983). On the contrary, pre-intermediate learners tended to be more open in disagreeing. They did not try to distance themselves from the act of disagreeing.

On the basis of this, it can be drawn two tendencies. The first tendency is that the more proficient the students are, the less direct the realization of their disagreements is. The patterns of relationship between language proficiency and indirectness in disagreeing found in this study confirm the previous studies by Xuehua (2006) and Behnam and Niroomand (2011).

Xuehua reported that with the increase of proficiency levels, Chinese EFL learners might use more mitigated and less direct strategies to express disagreement to minimize the face threat to the interlocutors (2006: 59). Likewise, Behnam and Niroomand's study about Iranian EFL learners in disagreeing found that with the increasing proficiency level, learners' use of direct, baldly on record way of disagreeing decreased, but indirect and off record way of disagreeing increased (2011: 213). The result of the present study, however, contradicts findings of the research conducted by Kreutel (2007) who found that there was no strong correlation between proficiency levels and the use of desirable or undesirable features of disagreement. Kreutel's study proved that lexico-grammatical proficiency did not automatically facilitate pragmatic proficiency.

The indirectness performed by advanced students and the directness by pre-intermediate ones suggests the relationship between English proficiency and the ability to use language appropriately according to the communicative situation. High 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. This analysis is on the basis of the research findings by Kreutel (2007:1), Locastro (1986), and Kamisili and Dogancay-Atkuna (1999: 199-222) suggesting that compared to non-native speakers, English native speakers tend to be more indirect and polite, in that their disagreements are mitigated with mitigating devices. Thus, the indirectness performed by advanced students in this study suggests that they are close to native-like performance.

Dealing with indirectness and directness performed by students, the raising question is: what factors contribute to the choice of disagreeing strategies? The question can be answered by considering Brown and Levinson's model in doing FTAs and their explanation of possible factors contributing to the choice of strategies in FTAs. The model suggests that the choice of the FTA strategy is determined by three social factors: the social distance (D), the relative power (P) of a speaker over his/her addressee, and the rank (R) of imposition or the severity of the act (1987: 68-84).

In terms of social distance (D), Brown and Levinson (1987: 68-84) propose that the degree of politeness for performing an FTA increases if the relationship between a speaker and his/her addressee is distant. The realization of a disagreement between two classmates is different from the one between a teacher and his/her students. Disagreement addressed by a student to his/her classmate might be blatant or even aggravated. By contrast, a student when required to disagree with his/her teacher will realize the disagreement in a more polite way. The choice of disagreement realization is due to the social distance (D). Classmate relation is close, while student-teacher relation is distant.

Dealing with the relative power (P), Brown and Levinson (1987: 68-84) explain that this is concerned with an asymmetric social status. Those having higher status, when required to have an FTA to the lower one, tend to use direct or open strategies. A different realization of FTA will be performed by those at the lower level. Next, in relation to the rank (R) of imposition, it is concerned with how a speaker views the degree of the severity of the act. The more severe the act, the more politeness the strategy should be.

In the context of this study, it can be underlined that the distance (D) among students participating in this study is close, since they are classmates. Concerning the relative power (P), they are equal because they are friends. Neither the arguer nor his/her addressee is more powerful. For some students, the rank (R) of imposition is the only factor that might contribute to the students' choice.

Advanced students consider that disagreeing has great imposition, and so do pre-intermediate ones. They admit that disagreeing is an act which can offend the addressee and break up the social harmony. That is why advanced students tended to distance themselves from this act, and they deployed indirect strategies politeness in disagreeing. At this point, this study confirms Brown and Levinson's model of FTA (1987: 68-84).

Despite their understanding of the importance of the social harmony, pre-intermediate students realized disagreement by means of the bald-on record strategy. It is by no means that

they intentionally would like to offend their interlocutors. Instead, they considered that bald-on record was an effective strategy to realize their disagreement. Interview data revealed that language mastery contributed much to the deployment of bald-on record strategy. Thus, in the context of foreign language teaching, D, P, and R variables can be superseded by language proficiency.

The interconnection between L2 pragmatic competence, politeness, and disagreement realization is illustrated in a framework in Figure 1. This framework proceeds from L2 pragmatic competence. The rationale of using L2 pragmatic competence as the starting point is that this study is concerned with the speech act of disagreement in the target language. Understanding a speech act means catching a speaker's intent, and it is the domain of pragmatic competence. With the pragmatic competence at hands, Indonesian EFL learners are able to measure the distance between them and their addressee, to see the existing relative power, and to estimate the face risk of the disagreement. Relying on those factors, they finally are able to decide which strategies they use to perform the disagreement. However, the knowledge of those social factors is not the only factor contributing to the learners' success in realizing disagreements. English language proficiency contributes significantly to the choice of disagreeing strategies in addition to the knowledge of social factors.
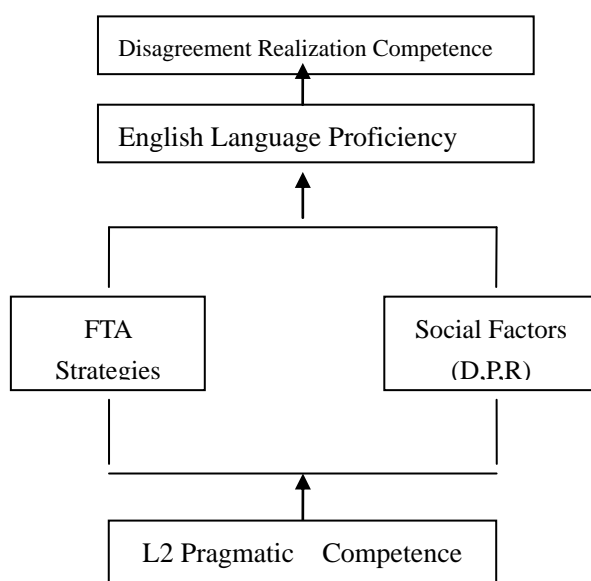

Figure 1. A Model of Disagreement Realization Competence

5. Conclusion

On the basis of the findings, it can be deduced that linguistic competence and pragmatic competence are not autonomous. They are interconnected, instead. Linguistic competence is the starting point to attain pragmatic competence. English learners having higher proficiency can realize the speech act of disagreement in more natural ways, in that they can avoid straightforward or direct ways. On the contrary, lower-proficiency learners are hampered by linguistic constraints so that they realize the speech act of disagreement in very direct manners.

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