

## SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF EFL STUDENTS: SERIES OF FAMILY INTERACTION IN THE TIME OF ONLINE LEARNING

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### ABSTRACT

*Given the prevalence of the Covid-19 pandemic and Indonesian higher education in carrying out learning from home (LFH), the present study aims at investigating how EFL students develop their communicative competence during family interaction. This study employs ethnographic study where the data was acquired through the duration of one academic semester during students' LFH context. Furthermore, the present study observes how students' family behave and communicate in relation to the students' communicative competence viewing from Canale and Swain (1980) model. Online interview and internet social media documentation undertaken to strengthen the distant observation in collecting data on the differences in the way students' family interact and communicate in relation to the students' communicative competence and the extent to which the attitudes they perform in home setting. The results divided into two areas: interactions among family members who have the same level and interactions with respected family members. It was revealed that appropriateness and intimacy existed in the interactions carried out among family members who have the same level. Meanwhile, the interactions that occur between EFL students and their respected family members covers humble and enjoyable communication. It can be concluded that these types of interaction were based on the fact that EFL students have ample opportunities to build closeness due to the realization of learning from home and the dominant role of their home culture to all family members.*

**Keywords:** Sociolinguistic Competence, Family interaction, EFL students, Higher education

### INTRODUCTION

The development of communicative competence relies on the theory that it confers some convincing to deal with developing the academic skills and concepts in both languages (Cummins, 2009). Cummins (2009) further claims that a high level in both languages (source and target language) is essential for attaining the maximal level of language competency. In support of this, Lambert in Sampath (2005) strongly urges a positive contribution of bilingualism to additive context in which second language or target language is socially related and is acquired by supplementing the first language replacing it. This suggests that bilingualism directly or indirectly influences academic attainment and social mobility.

Regarding the above issue, developing communicative competence in Indonesia is essential for generating qualified and competitive Indonesian citizens who are superior in handling global communication practices, having intercultural

awareness, and holding international perspectives to engage in the worldwide context. Also, being competent is believed to strongly mind the link of symbols, concepts, and referents across languages because the ideas and the realization of the mental lexicons of the two languages are assumed to be stored in separated folders of mind on the part of the bilinguals (Weinreich, 2005) so that they could succeed in the meaning-making of English texts and the English language attainment (Margana, 2013). In short, the development of communicative competence in Indonesia is an urgent issue that contributes to dragging Indonesia to be one of the major countries.

Many types of research had been conducted dealing with communicative competence for Indonesian learners in several contexts. For example, Nurhikmah, Basri & Abduh (2020) studied the development of EFL students' bilingual communicative competence viewing from university context; Tomyuk, Dyachkova, Shutaleva, Novgorodtseva & Dudchik (2019) analyzed the problem of intercultural communication and identifying the significance of bilingual practices in the context of globalization; Abduh & Rosmaladewi (2018) examined the promotion of intercultural competence within bilingual higher education in Indonesia; and Masaud, Mugaddam & Eljack (2017) investigated linguistic appropriateness and social variable performed by university students. Despite these previous studies, there is still limited research that focuses on communicative competence development at home context.

Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap. This research attempts to investigate family interaction on the development of EFL students' communicative competence during learning from home in the time of crisis.

## **LITERATURE REVIEWS**

Sociolinguistic competence and its position within models of communicative competence

Canale (2014) defines competence as the most general term for the capabilities of a person and that it is dependent upon both knowledge and use. Moreover, Canale (2014) explains the direct relationship between general interactional competence and linguistic competence. The first competence defines

the role of the second. Canale highlights the knowledge of distinction of verbal and nonverbal codes and their interrelation. Therefore, it is important to take into account the concept of performance while discussing development of linguistic competences. There are the three aspects of communicative competence taken from Canale (2014): grammatical possibilities in a language, feasibility and appropriateness.

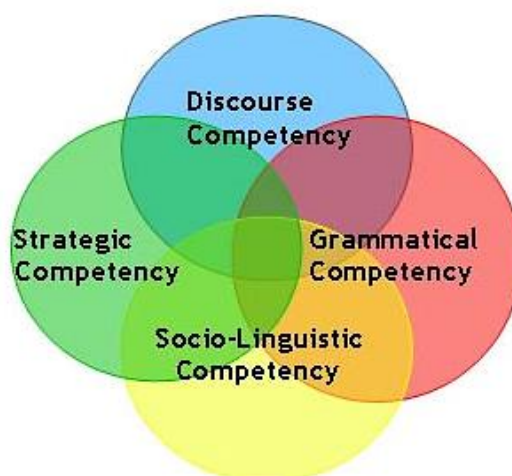


Figure 1. Models of communicative competence (Canale and Swain)

In order to elucidate the concept of communicative competence, Canale and Swain (1980) state the following dimensions of the competence: the grammatical, the psychological and the social which are to be included in language teaching and learning. In particular, Canale (2014) incorporated both the rules of grammar and the rules of use into the certain framework defined by answering question Whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible, feasible, appropriate and done? Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence consisting of grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, communication strategies, and discourse competence. Zhuang (2007) disagrees with the emphasis they place on appropriateness while restraining it just to the context and on the other hand, that they do not consider the grammatical accuracy to be equally important in the concept as other features. However, it is necessary to acquire sociolinguistic skills to complement "pedagogical application in communicative language teaching". The mentioned types of knowledge are bound to be interlinked by the communicative approach. Canale and Swain (1980).

The third model of communicative competence is suggested by Bachman (1990). It is represented by language competence, strategic competence and psychophysiological mechanism forming communicative language ability. Zhuang summarises that the theoretical framework of communicative competence focuses on three components: organizational competence, pragmatic competence and strategic competence. Zhuang (2007) describes organizational competence to be dealing with grammatical and contextual abilities. Pragmatic competence focuses as well as on "signs and the persons it refers to" and the relationship between them as on "the users of language and the context of communication".

Sociolinguistic competence refers to the ability to use language that is appropriate to social contexts. Alptekin (2002) explains that social context refers to culture-specific contexts that include the norms, values, beliefs, and behavioural patterns of a culture. For example, thanking a friend in a formal speech is different from how it is done over a meal. Sociolinguistic competence also refers to the ability to select topics that are appropriate for a communicative event. For example, expressing strong views about politics and religion over dinner is generally avoided. This rule is also moderated depending on the relationship between the guest and the host. If politics and religion are their favourite topics and if they know each other very well, these topics might well be appropriate.

### Family Interactions

#### *Family systems theory*

Hall (1981) explained about structure and patterns of interaction. It views that the family as a structure of related parts or subsystems, each part carries out certain functions. These parts include the spousal subsystem, the parent child subsystem, the parental sub system and the personal subsystems. One of these sub systems important tasks is maintaining their boundaries. The 4 sub systems should interact each other even though they are separate. Within family systems theory the focus is on with how we relate to one another. We build a collection of interactions called a system. The system is a family and the focus is on the system rather than just on individuals.

#### *Symbolic interaction*

Symbolic interaction theory describes the family as a unit of interacting personalities. This theory focuses attention on the way that people interact through symbols: words, gestures, rules, and roles. The symbolic interaction perspective is based on how humans develop a complex set of symbols to give meaning to the family. Meaning evolves from their interactions in the family. These interactions are subjectively interpreted through existing symbols. Understanding these symbols is important in understanding human behavior.

### *Family communication*

Families can use two basic processes to establish shared social reality. One process, called conversation orientation, involves discussing the concept in questions among all family members to discover its innate quality and attributes. The other process, called conformity orientation, involves a family member in authority, usually a parent, to define social reality for the family. As a result, they are consequential not only for the communication within families, but also for the emotional climate of family relationships, how families approach problem solving, coordination of behaviors, and conflict behaviors, among others. They also affect child development and adjustment in predictable ways.

## **METHOD**

### Research Design

The approach taken for this study is ethnographical. A form of ethnography will be emphasized here is remote observation. Remote observation taken in this study to minimize the physical interaction between researcher and participant being studied to support the protocol of emergency situation. This study provides mundane details of family interactions among the participants studied. The researcher used family life as standard category for description in this study. Moreover, online interview material and documentation applied in this study to strengthen the data in the observation. The data was analyzed based on sociolinguistic competence from Canale and Swain (1980) model of communicative competence.

## Participants and material procedures

Data were collected in EFL students home setting through audio recording and documentation of internet social media. The participants in this study are last semester students of English language department in an Indonesian private higher education. The consideration of choosing the participants and the context are based on the theme, timeline, and access of the study.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Interaction with family members who have the same level

Table 1. Rayhan's interaction

Rayhan (Ra) was declining his older sister's (RaS) request to take her sister's money from her sister's friend Sury		
RaS	<i>Nanti Ibu Sury Kusuruh ambilkanka baru di Bu Sury nuambil itu uanga. Bisajako??Ka kalau nda koambilki nda ada kudapat ka libur orang..na temanku datang semua besok di sekolah.</i>	Source language
	I'll tell Ms. Sury to get my money, and then you take it from there, can you? Tomorrow is off, so it's only time for today.	English translation
Ra	<i>Kita tommo nanti ambilki deh nakiraki nanti siapako</i>	Source language
	You take it by yourself. She doesn't (even) know me	English translation
05/2021 Whatsapp chat		

This section provides information of EFL students' interaction among family member who has the same level. In Table 1, when Rayhan was declining his older sister's request, he used impolite responses but It appears that it is appropriate for declining an intimate relation addressee.

Similarly, Mona' responses in requesting a cousin to help make cakes used a simple request for help (see Table 2). It appears that the responses are an appropriate form to be used for requesting an intimate relation addressee. Even this request sound impolite if it's phrased as a command since the interlocutors are of similar status and are close relatives.

Table 2. Mona's interaction

Mona (M) was declining an invitation from her cousin (MC) because of being lazy		
M	<i>Dekat ji kost ku. Malaska ke kampus</i> My boarding house is close to campus but I am lazy to go to campus [right now].	Source language English translation
MC	<i>Siniko do</i> Come here [please]	Source language English translation
M	<i>Belumpa mandi</i> I have not taken a bath [I'm lazy to go there]	Source language English translation
03/2021 Audio recording		

In her responses, Mona used another reason to declined her cousin's invitation *belumpa mandi* [I have not taken a bath (I'm lazy to go there)]. Even the responses sound impolite, but It appears appropriate form to be used for declining close relatives' addressee with similar status. The speech act of inviting appears when speaker is showing his/her intention to request hearer's participation in or attendance at a certain occasion (Suzuki, 2009). Moreover, understanding communicative competence helps students to create more ideas, think clearly, speak more, foster a better self-expression in interaction, and maintain self-interest (Nurhikmah, Basri & Abduh, 2020).

Table 3. Eva's interaction

Eva (E) asked her younger brother (EB) if he had prayed		
E	<i>Sudahmako sholat?</i> Have you prayed?	Source language English translation
EB	<i>Sudah</i> Yes, I have	Source language English translation
E	<i>Siniko menghafal. Al Ghashiya. Ada sudah nakirimkanka mamanya Miko fotonya anu itu surah doa harian tapi kayaknya terhapus i.</i> Come closer to memorize [surah] Al Ghashiya. Miko's mother has sent me that photo is a daily prayer surah but seems to have been deleted	Source language English translation
04/2021 Audio recording		

In the situation when Eva interacted with her younger brother, she asked her brother if he had prayed. Her expression *sudahmako shalat?* [have you prayed?] used a familiar *-ko*, but it sounds more intimate. Being familiar with her younger

brother encouraged her to use regular rather than the distant pronoun. The response is appropriate for that such situation.

The way students interact in the home context depends on the relationship's closeness and the age and status of the addressee. For members of the same level like siblings and cousins, they prefer simple language even though it sounds impolite, but it is considered following the existing situation to show warmth and intimacy.

To speak appropriately, Richards and Schmidt (2010) stated that a speaker needs to know what is grammatical and what is suitable (appropriate) for the particular situation. Therefore, there are some social factors that play a significant role in being appropriate or the vice versa and in any situation, linguistic choices will generally reflect the influence of one or more of the following components: the participants, the setting, the topic and the function speaking (Holmes & Wilson, 2017). According to Fraser and Nolan (1981), the realization of politeness varies from context to context, and they point out that politeness is actually a contextual judgment. No sentence is inherently polite or impolite. So, polite behavior is assessed according to the different paralinguistic factors such as distance, solidarity, gender, etc.

Ranney (1992) provides a slightly more explicit description of appropriateness in her own definition of sociolinguistic competence, i.e., the ability to perform various speech acts, the ability to manage conversational turns and topics, sensitivity to variation in register and politeness, and an understanding of how these aspects of language vary according to social roles and settings.

Interaction with respected family members

Table 4. Rusdi's interaction

Rusdi (Ru) was asking his mother (RuM) about the things that his mother want him to buy for her. This conversation happened in Mini Mart.	
Ru	<i>Kita apa kubelikanki?</i> What do you [we] want me to buy for you?
RuM	<i>Anu? Apa itu? Eh</i> Um? What is that? Eh
Ru	<i>Yang kecil ka?</i> Little one?
RuM	<i>Bukan. Apa itu? Buavita do</i> [bugiss of Bulukumba dialect]



No. What is that? That Buavita	English translation
02/2021 Audio recording	

Opposite result was found when dealing with the interaction with respected family members. For example, Rusdi was asking his mother about the things that his mother want him to buy for her (See Table 4). This conversation happened in a Mini Mart. Rusdi's question *kita apa kubelikanki?* [what do you (we) want me to buy for you?] is a type of polite question. He used the first plural inclusive pronoun -kita and distant pronoun -ki to address his mother. It appears that the response is appropriateness used for parents and respected people.

Students' performance reflects an apparent influence of Indonesian-Bugis culture in their responses to some situations. In Bugis conversations according to Mahmud (2010), pronouns used are mostly from Bugis but some Indonesian pronominal term are used as well.

Slightly different from Eva response when she was jokingly declined her mother's request to give her younger brother a lift (See Table 5).

Table 5. Eva's interaction with her mother

Eva (E) jokingly declined her mother's (EM) request to give her younger brother a lift		
EM	<i>Kenapa adeknu,nak? Kenapa itu? Bonceng boncengngi tawwa. kakak!</i>	Source language
	What's the matter with your [younger] brother, girl? Give your [younger] brother a lift	English translation
E	<i>(Dengan nada bercanda) Ndak mauja boncengi ka tidak napercayaka</i>	Source language
	(in a joking tone) I don't want to give him a lift. He doesn't trust me	English translation
EM	<i>Eh, sudah sudah. Sudahmi itu.</i>	Source language
	Uh, stop stop it. Stop [joking].	English translation
02/2021 Audio recording		

Eva used a casual response to decline her mother's request to give her [younger] brother a lift by saying *Ndak mauja boncengi ka tidak napercayaka* [I don't want to give him a lift. He doesn't trust me]. Although it may sound impolite to respected people such as parents, it is an appropriate response for intimate interlocutors to joke.

In this section, the way the students communicate to respected people in the home context is more polite and can use language that fits the context when in a serious situation or a joking situation. Syam, Basri & Sahril (2020) stated that family interaction contributed most in improving students' linguistic knowledge. Furthermore, since the relationship between students and older people is significantly sensitive and, it is socially important that students should be conscious and serious in speaking with their parents.

## **CONCLUSION**

The results presented and discussed in this study are interactions in the home context divided into two areas: interactions among family members who have the same level and interactions with respected family members. Interactions carried out on family members of the same level show appropriateness. Appropriateness in this case means that the use of language in a particular context is carried out appropriately by considering the linguistic elements required in that context. In addition, this interaction also indicates the occurrence of intimacy in communicating with family members of the same level. Intimacy in communication patterns like this shows that close relations are shown not only physically but also linguistically. This is based on the fact that EFL students have ample opportunities to build closeness due to the application of learning from home during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Regarding the interactions that occur between students and family members who are more respected includes respectful and fun. In the respectful section, EFL students showed a communication pattern where the language used both utterance and meaning indicated elements of accuracy and politeness. Besides that, in the fun interaction section, it shows the flexibility of the language elements used between students and people who are valued in the home context. This happens because students still very much adhere to the culture at home and is applied by family members.

## PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATION

The implication for foreign language learning in this study have been highlighted. EFL students need to be prepared for their transition to authentic language users, capable of navigating through the sociolinguistic minefield in the target language. It may seem unfair that there always seem to be more ways to be unconsciously inappropriate in L1 and L2 competences rather than consciously appropriate. However, this should not discourage EFL students to take the plunge and become confident bilingual users.

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