

SOME FACTORS OF REGISTERS PREFERENCE BY STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITAS BINA DARMA PALEMBANG

Tita Ratna Wulandari
Universitas Bina Darma
Jl. Ahmad Yani No. 3 Palembang
Sur-el: titawulandari@mail.binadarma.ac.id

Abstract: Spoken language will always be interesting and attracting to discuss. It has many dimensions which can be investigated into detail. This study investigated some factors of registers preference by the students of Universitas Bina Darma. The samples were taken from Pendidikan Bahasa Indonesia students, Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan who are taking their English subject at English Language Centre Universitas Bina Darma. They were twenty nine students – three male and twenty six female. The data were taken from questionnaire. It was found that there are six factors which contribute to the students' registers preference. They are age, situation, addressee, social status, gender/sex, and topic.

Keywords: Dimensions, Registers, and Registers Preference

Abstrak: Bahasa lisan selalu menjadi objek yang menarik untuk dibahas. Banyak dimensi yang dapat dikaji menjadi sangat detil dalam sebuah ujaran pada bahasa lisan. Penelitian ini menelaah beberapa faktor yang mempengaruhi pemilihan bahasa oleh mahasiswa Universitas Bina Darma. Sampel penelitian diambil dari mahasiswa Pendidikan Bahasa Indonesia, Fakultas Pendidikan dan Ilmu Keguruan Universitas Bina Darma yang sedang mengikuti perkuliahan di Lembaga Bahasa Universitas Bina Darma. Sampel terdiri dari dua puluh sembilan mahasiswa – tiga laki-laki dan dua puluh enam perempuan. Data diambil dari kuesioner. Ditemukan ada enam faktor yang mempengaruhi mahasiswa memilih penggunaan bahasa mereka, yaitu umur, situasi, pendengar, status sosial, jenis kelamin, dan topik pembicaraan.

Kata kunci: Dimensi-dimensi, Register-register, dan Pilihan Register-register

1. INTRODUCTION

World is full of the essence of expressing feelings, ideas, and objections. Then, language takes its important role as a means of expressing them. Of course, speakers will vary their ways in communicating and expressing them. As Holmes (1999) stated that people speak differently to younger and older people, and in formal and informal situation according to its uses, users, addressees.

In expressing ideas speakers are trying to elicit the 'same' information from the addressee, but the context dramatically affects the form of query. Therefore, language varies according to its uses and users, according to where, to whom,

and to who is using it. The addressees and context affect our choice of code or variety, whether language, dialect or style. For example, these three queries below. (1) *From a friend.* Where were you last night? I rang to see if you wanted to come to the pictures? (2) *In court from a lawyer.* Could you tell the court where you were on the night of Friday the seventeenth of March? (3) *From a teacher to his pupils in school on the day after Hallowe'en.* I know some of you went 'trick-or-treating' last night and so I thought we might talk a bit today about how you got on. Did you go out last night Jimmy?

The differences between the three utterances in example above are called stylistic differences. It means the difference occurs

according to the type of situation, the person addressed, the location, the topic, and etc.

These kinds of influencing and changing form of speaking are some interesting topics discussed by sociolinguists.

Sociolinguistics study aims to see the relation between society and language. As it is stated that teaching sociolinguistics is so important since it involves at least two disciplines, i.e. social studies and linguistics (Sunahrowi: 2007). In addition, sociolinguistics scopes some social aspects such as sex, age, status and classes. Then, those factors will create language variation in which varieties used in community. Language variation is usually influenced by at least three factors: (1) Regional: dialect variation; (2) Social: social classes and status; and (3) Educational background. Those aspects develop social dialect and register.

Social dialect which is also called sociolect means a variety of a language used by people belonging to a particular social class (Richards, Platt, and Platt: 1997). The sociolects may be classed as high (in status) or low (in status). For instance, *He and I were going there* (higher sociolect); *Im'n me was goin' there* (lower sociolect). In addition, the sociolect with the highest status in a country is often the standard variety. Sociolect happens due to the educational background and socioeconomic status in community. Furthermore, taking sociolect into Indonesian can be seen from the used of Javanese language. Javanese social status reflects a choice of linguistic forms, varieties, stylistic level. *Kowe* is for low status or low social status but *Padjenenganis* for high status or

high social status. *Kowe* and *Padjenengan* have the same meaning which mean YOU.

Most speakers of a language know how to use many dialects, using one with friends, another when on a job interview or presenting a report in class, and another with talking with family. For example, a radio announcer would not use a very formal language used by lawyers and judges in a courtroom, nor a minister would order something to shopkeeper as he delivers a speech in front of public.

Discussion on some registers used would be beneficial for all language users to prevent misunderstanding when having communication, especially the factors which influence the speakers' preference of languages used in a conversation. Therefore, it would be more interesting to discuss some factors which influence speakers' preference of registers in Palembang community. This study will try to find out the influencing factors of speakers of Bahasa Palembang and Bahasa Indonesia in speaking different registers and to compare the factors found to the factors stated in previous literature.

Register is one of the fields in sociolinguistics. They are discussing about the use or the choice of a language in communities whether they are formal or informal language chosen for certain social context and situation. They are interested in explaining why we speak differently in different social contexts, and they are concerned with identifying the social functions of language and the ways it is used to convey social meaning. This examining the way people use language in different social contexts provides a wealth of information about the way

language works, as well as about the social relationships in a community.

The eight articles which have been examining to support this study show and support that there are some factors which might influence language choices in a community. The eight articles entitled (1) Do South Korean Adult Learners Like Native English Speaking Teachers more than Korean Teachers of English?"; (2) Stylistic Gender Differences in the Literary Representation of Detective Talk; (3) The Year's Work in Stylistics 2005; (4) Language Style and Lifestyle: the Case of a Global Magazine; (5) Corpus Stylistics in Translation Studies: Two Modern Chinese Translations of Don Quijote; (6) Communicating in English: Flexibility Within a Norm; (7) A View of the Past the Third Decade (1983–1992); and (8) Informal Communication in Organizations: Form, Function, and technology.

According to Holmes, there are some factors which might influence this language choice. However, not all factors are relevant in any particular context but they can be grouped in ways which are helpful for us. In any situation, language choices will generally reflect the influence of one or more of the following components:

1) The participants

Who is speaking and who are they speaking to? This is also called speaker, the one who speaks, and listener, the one who listens.

2) The setting or social context of the interaction

Where are they speaking? This shows where the conversation takes place such as at school, home, market, college, and office.

3) The topic

What is being talked about? Speakers and listeners will have conversation about this for one time, if, they have discussion out of this then people call it out of context.

4) The function

Why are they speaking? This is mainly about the aims or purposes of the conversation. Whether the speakers need to clarify something or the speakers need to offer a dinner invitation. There will be different function for different topic of speaking.

Furthermore, McKay and Hornberger (1997) highlighted some other factors of language choice. They stated that as a discipline, sociolinguistics provides the methodology for analysis and description of the interactional contexts: who uses what language with whom and for what purposes? It provides frameworks with which to analyze the linguistic choices available to the multilinguals and their reasons for choosing one code from among the several that are available to them.

It is also believed that the domains as intimate (family), formal (religious-ceremonial), informal (neighborhood), and intergroup (economic and recreational activities as well as interactions with governmental – legal authority) are also the influencing factors of register used in communities Barber (1952) as cited in McKay and Hornberger (1997).

Furthermore, it is also found that gender or sex could be the influencing factor for speakers to utter some linguistic form. The finding of a study from Ortells and Posteguillo (2002) showed us that gender influence the linguistic form and register used by men and women. In short, men and women speak

differently in their linguistic forms and functions.

Norm and culture governs someone's way or style in speaking. An individual who breaks the norm is considered impolite. People in Indonesia think that age and social status are the essential marker that one should speak politely or impolitely. A younger person tends to speak politely to older person. And/or a high social status person tend to use more command to a low social status person. These kinds of differences are also called stylistic differences. As Holmes (1999), stylistic differences mean the difference occurs according to the type of situation, the person addressed, the location, the topic, and etc. Therefore, it could be concluded that norm and culture take their important part in forming someone's style of language and it might influence someone's language preference.

From the all above literature reviews, the writer is interested in searching and investigating whether those factors mentioned above also occur to people in Palembang who have more than one language in choosing their register used. However, Bahasa Palembang and Bahasa Indonesia are widely and mostly used in Palembang area. Therefore, the problem of this study was formulated as follows: What are the factors which influence the students' register preference of UniversitasBinaDarma. The writer hopes that by investigating the factors can help teachers and students comprehend what make them differ in each conversation seen by their lexical choices and register. Lastly, the objective of this study is to describe all factors found from the data collection.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

2.1 Investigation on Influencing Factors of Speakers' Preference in Register

In doing this study, the writer investigated the third semester students of Univesitas Bina Darma Palembang who take an English course. They are major in PendidikanBahasa Indonesia. They are chosen as the samples because they could represent the users of Bahasa Palembang and Bahasa Indonesia. There are twenty nine students which consist of three male students and twenty six female students. The students are given questionnaire which includes eleven questions – six essays and five scales questions – the scale is in form of Likert Scales. These aim to get the data of the influencing factors of speakers' preference in their registers, in this study is Bahasa Palembang and Bahasa Indonesia. For further information, the writer also had short interview to the students.

From a very simple questionnaire given, it is found that students do have their registers preference. They use Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Palembang interchangeably according to some influencing factors of their registers preference. According to Holmes (1999), topic, age, gender, addressee, situation, educational background, socioeconomic status, and social status will influence someone style in speaking. For example, a mother, whose daughter is a student in her class, will of course speak in the same style of language to her daughter just as she speaks to her students. However, she would not speak in her classroom speaking style to her

students when she is at home. These two different styles are obviously seen as a result of situation and social status influenced. Classroom is a formal situation which will also create a formal language used. But, home is more relaxing or informal situation therefore the style used will not be formal as well. In addition, a teacher or mother is a different social status based on place therefore it also influences the way or style of someone in speaking. Then, the factors which the students stated from the questionnaire given are the same as the influencing factors stated by Holmes in his book. They stated that they will change their register based on the situation, place, age, gender, addressee, educational background, socioeconomic status, and social status. The writer will try to descriptively explain all factors found and relate them to the previous literary works.

2.2 The Influencing Factors of Registers Preferences

The writer found some influencing factors of speakers' preference in their registers. They are these below:

1) Age

People tend to speak differently because of the age. It is found that the students used high formality level to the older speakers than younger/teenager speakers. And older speakers tend to use formal language and younger/teenager speakers tend to use non formal language when having conversation. As McKay and Hornberger (1997) stated that variation in language according to age may

reflect either age grading or change in progress. Age grading involves features associated with specific age groups as a developmental or social stage, as in the two – word utterances of children around eighteen months of age (“Mommy sock”, “Drink soup”), or the in – group of teenagers (rad, “cool”, gnarly, “gross” or “cool”). Normally, speakers abandon the features associated with a particular stage as they grow older, and they begin to speak pretty much like the members of the age group above them as they mature. In this case of change in progress, however, age differences reflect an actual change in community norms.

The students stated that they could be categorized as the users of “Bahasa Gaul” when they speak to their same age such friends. And, they tend to use “Bahasa Palembang” to the older person they know. For example, they want to question about “where are you going?”, the students will utter: “*Bew, nakemano, Bro?*” (to their friend) and “*Na kemano Pak de?*” (to the elder). This variant is obviously happened because of age differences between the speakers and addressees or the users and the listeners. In brief analysis, the word ‘*bew*’ performs as the addressing signal to the same age people. It is only applicable and acceptable for those who are very close and having known each other for, at least, more than three months. Meanwhile, the word ‘*Bro*’ represents the opponent of the speaker. The speaker tries to address the listeners by using this word. It is also acceptable and applicable for informal situation and the same age teenagers.

In addition, people generally talk differently to children and to adults. People

sometimes like to use sing-song intonation when talking to infant or children. Then, people tend to use simple vocabulary and grammatical instructions compared to adults.

For example,

(a)

Dear Paul,

Thanks for your last letter and the subsequent postcards from exotic resorts. We were all expenses paid! How do you get to be so lucky!

Thanks also for the great T-shirt you sent for Rob's birthday. He has vowed to write to you in order to express his gratitude personally – but don't hold your breath! He is particularly embroiled in some new complex computer game at present which is absorbing every spare moment.

Yours,

Renata

(b)

Dear Michael,

Thank you very much for the letter you sent me. It was beautifully written and I enjoyed reading it. I liked the postcards you sent me from your holidays too. What a lovely time you had swimming and surfing. I wished I was there too.

Robbie liked the T-shirt you chose for him very much. He has been wearing it a lot. He has promised to write you soon to say thank you but he is very busy playing with his computer at the moment. So you may have to wait a little while for his letter. I hope mine will do instead for now.

Yours,

Grandma

The above two letters represent different addressee. Letter (a) is for adult and (b) is for children. It is obviously seen by the grammar and vocabulary distinction. In conclusion, most people use language differently to the very young and the very old.

In conclusion, age would be one of the influencing factors in registers preferences. The younger the speakers are, the more informal language they prefer. And the older the speakers are, the more formal language they prefer.

2) Situation

Situation could differ the way of someone's speech. In this case, situation could be categorized into two categories, formal and informal situation. According to Kraut, Fish, Root, and Chalfonte (1990) stated about the differences of formal and informal situation. Formal is scheduled in advance, arranged participants, participants in role, preset agenda, one-way, impoverished content, formal language and speech register activities. Meanwhile, informal is unscheduled, random participants, participants out of role, unarranged agenda, interactive, rich content, informal language and speech register activities. Therefore, it could be concluded that the more formal situation, the more formal language the speakers use. However, the more informal situation, the more informal language the speakers use.

Most of students stated that they speak differently when they are in different situations. If they are in a meeting - where more formal action required – the students speak with their Bahasa Indonesia but if they are in a party –

where more informal action required – the students speak with their Bahasa Palembang. For example, A: “*Sayamengertiapa yang andamaksud.*” (in a meeting) or A: “*Aku tau la apomaksudkau.*” (in a party). Let see the example above, both sentences represent the meaning that the speaker ‘A’ understand what the opponent means. However, it is again influenced by the situation. It would be very impolite to use Bahasa Palembang in a very formal situation such as meeting. And, it would be very funny or inappropriate to use very formal language in informal situation (in a party). In conclusion, it is also obviously seen that situation whether it is formal or informal will influence the speakers as well. We can say that the more formal situation is, the more formal language used. Then, the more informal situation is, the more informal language used.

3) Addressee

“*Ibu, sarapan apo kito pagi ni?*”, “*Selamat pagi, Ibu*”, and “*Bangun Sayang sudah pagi*”, they are all examples of different addressee when someone speaking. First speech is for a mother, second is for a teacher, and third is for spouse. Actually, the speakers want to express the same idea that is “Good Morning.” The students used this different utterance because of the close feeling to the addressees. The speaker feels close and safe to use his or her mother tongue, in this case, Bahasa Palembang, to his or her mother. Meanwhile, the speaker feels impolite or uncomfortable to use Bahasa Palembang to his or her teacher since he or she feels there is a gap between them. Therefore, the

closer someone to their addressee, they will perform the informal register.

Another sentence to see is from this utterance “*hai...*”, “*woi...*”, and “*hello*”. The three words are essentially used for greetings. But the speaker will use “*hai..*” to the one they firstly meet or not really close enough. “*woi...*” to their very close friends, and “*hello*” to the strange people.

4) Social Status

As previous example of a mother and also a teacher for her social status will speak differently to her daughter when they are in classroom and at home, it proved that the social status is also an influencing factor for register preference. Based on the interview and questionnaire given to the students, it is found that the students tend to use a very formal language, in this case Bahasa Indonesia, to speak to someone who possesses a very high social status. Then, they tend to use a very informal language, in this case is Bahasa Palembang, to speak to someone who is low in their social status.

This is also explained by Holmes (1996) in his book, about the status scale. He described that social status could influence someone or speaker in registers choice. The higher social status, the more formal language used and vice versa. This below is the diagram of the status scale by Holmes.

Figure 1. The Status Scale

Superior	High Status
Subordinate	Low Status

Taken from Holmes, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*: 1996

For instance, someone will have different lexical choices when they are talking to a governor and/or to beggar. They will be more formal when they speak to a governor and they will be more informal when they speak to a beggar.

People will express the same meaning in different way based on the addressees' social background. It is because the speaker is wanted to be easily accepted and understood by his or her addressee. For example, June is a travel agent. When June is speaking to the people from the same social background as her own she pronounces as her people pronunciation or accent. But when she is talking to the customers from a lower social class, she adapts her pronunciation to their speech. In addition, the same person reading the news in middle level station reads in a very much less formal style than on higher brow concert program. These are strong support for the view that the addressee or audience is a very important influence on speaker's style.

5) Gender or Sex

The linguistic forms used by women and men contrast – to different degrees – in all speech communities. There are other ways too in

which the linguistic behavior of women and men differ. It is claimed women are more linguistically polite than men, for instance, and that women and men emphasize different speech functions.

Furthermore, the finding of a study from Ortells and Posteguillo (2002) also gave us an evidence of different style occurs based on gender. The study discussed about different style used in detective talk in stories written by four authors – two females and two males. It found that men and women do talk differently but in contradiction with stereotypes; for example women ask fewer questions than men. This finding proves us that gender differences influence their style in speaking.

The students stated that they tend to listen to a man use their imperative sentence than a woman does. It also proves to us that this finding of my mini inquiry support the description above – previous expert in Sociolinguistics.

6) Topic

This topic deals with what is being talked about between the speakers and listeners. From the questionnaire and interview given, it is found that someone tend to use their vernacular language – in this case Bahasa Palembang - when they have a simple or daily topic but they will use High Language – in this case Bahasa Indonesia – when they are talking about certain issue.

For instance, when two people are talking about their daily life problems or activities they will feel comfortable to use their Bahasa Palembang. But, when they are talking about political issue or industrial issue, they feel

comfortable to use their Bahasa Indonesia. This is due to someone's preferences in language choice.

3. CONCLUSION

From all the above findings, we could assume that all factors which firstly mentioned in literature review also occur to people in Palembang. They follow the same patterns of language choice or register used in speaking. Participants in Holmes and Intimate in Barber could be the same as addressee in this study finding. Age is also in participant as Holmes stated. Social status could be in participants and intergroup classification. Meanwhile, situation could be in setting and social context and also formal and informal aspects in the above literature review. Furthermore, sex or gender is also found in this study which is in line with the study from Ortells and Posteguillo (2002).

Therefore, it could be concluded that whatever the language used, whoever the speakers are, whomever the addressees are, whenever the situation are, and wherever the conversation is, they represent the same pattern in the language choice as the general rules.

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