

ABSTRACT

Culture seems to play a significant role in almost any aspect of human life. An individual's cultural background might affect his/her patterns of behavior, basic values and beliefs, attitude, and deed. In foreign language learning context, a learner's native culture may also appear to be influential as well. However, this phenomenon has not been discussed much in the field of sociolinguistics. Eventhough many researches attempt to investigate the influence of C1 upon C2 or that of L1 upon L2, very few of them focus on the role of learners' native culture in the target language use. Therefore, it still remains a big problem for many language learners, unexceptionably those in the Indonesian setting.

Considering that, this study was conducted to investigate the role of Indonesian learners' native culture in relation to their English language use. It aimed at finding out whether the Javanese concept of hierarchy (JCH) -as one of their dominant systems of value, still affected them in identifying a variety of English-word nuances in terms of meaning.

The methodology employed in this research was a descriptive study, describing the choice of the word nuances made by the students. For this reason, a sample of 40 students was taken from semester IX students in the English Language Education Program of Sanata Dharma University of the academic year 1991/1992. This sample consisted of two groups of students, i.e. 20 Javanese-speaking students and 20 non Javanese-speaking ones. They were selected using the stratified sampling technique. The instrument for the data collection was a questionnaire containing multiple choice items and some background information. In this case, some euphemistic words having similar meanings were used for the alternative answers in the questionnaire. During the research, the subjects were assigned to complete the questionnaire at home before submitting it the day after.

The data gathered were then analyzed using the t test statistical analysis. For this purpose, the words chosen by each student were all scored first based on the assigned rating scales. Then, the t test was applied to test whether there was a significant difference in the word choice between the two groups of students. Furthermore, several descriptive data, i.e. the students' language use, the influential factors in the word choice, and the reasons for the word choice were used as supporting evidence for the result obtained from the t test. After being collected, these data were then analyzed descriptively.

It was found from the t test computation that there was no significant difference in the two groups' choice of the words. In other words, both groups' word choice seemed to be of the same kind, and thus could be said to be equally euphemistic. The finding from the descriptive data also showed that Javanese-speaking students tended to focus more on the participants involved in the communication, while non Javanese-speaking ones seemed to pay more attention on the context in which the communication occurred. This further implies that Indonesian students' choice of English words still reflects JCH, though they may have different bases for choosing the words. Thus, it can be concluded that JCH still affects their choice of words in their English language use.

