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The Effects of Interruptions on Rapport Orientations in Formal Meetings

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Abstract: This research aims to find out the effects of interruptions on rapport orientations. The data of the research were obtained from two meetings held in an educational institution in Makassar. The data were collected through a video recording of the meetings to identify the interruption use performed by the meeting participants and by giving the meeting participants the questionnaire containing questions concerning the use of the interruptions in the meetings. The data were then transcribed and extracted into several parts to be analysed. The data were also obtained by carrying out a participant observation by which the researcher obtained the meeting participants' perceptions and their responses on the use of the interruptions during the meetings. This research indicates that the interruptions have a number of effects on the rapport orientations. There are two types of interruptions, i.e. competitive and cooperative interruptions. The interruption effects are primarily regarding to the enhancement and threats to the three interconnected rapport components which are: face, social rights and obligations, and interactional goals. The interruptions occurring also have several roles in the meetings which are closely related to the rapport management like clarifying and supporting main speakers' points in the meetings, as the way to do relational work and back-channeling of the statement of the main speakers resulting in the type of rapport orientations applied by the meetings' participants.

Keywords: *competitive and cooperative interruptions, rapport orientations*

1. Introduction

In daily life, communication is an inevitable and a vital activity that is conducted by people. Nowadays, people communicate each other in many situations either formal or non-formal especially for those who live in cities with their tight activities. Attending seminars or classes, chit-chatting with

friends, having a discussion or meeting seem to be daily activities for urban people who work in either state or private sector and even those who are still school and college students. In formal situation like in the middle of a discussion or meeting, people should consider several norms that rule the social interactions among the

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participants. This set of norms is set in Rapport Management. Also, in daily conversation, agreement and disagreement between speaker and hearer frequently occur. Strategies in managing rapport that are applied by social interlocutors may have significant effect on the rapport orientation and vice versa (Reski 2018). A hearer may agree or disagree with a speaker and the other way around. These agreement and disagreement will be found more frequent in a discussion and meeting since they are situations in which people discuss and argue their opinion. In such situations, the agreement and disagreement are sometimes realized in a number of interruptions.

A. Rapport Management

Rapport Management was proposed by Spencer-Oatey as the response of Brown and Levinson's politeness principle. Spencer-Oatey proposes a modified framework for conceptualizing face and rapport. She formulized the Rapport Management that consists of three components, namely face, sociality rights and obligations, and interactional goals.

B. Rapport Management Orientation

Rapport orientation is a key factor to the rapport management. There are two fundamental orientations that have to be noticed: support of one's own face needs, sociality rights and interactional goals, and support of the other person's. Spencer-Oatey suggests that speakers can hold any of the following four types of rapport orientation that she proposes:

1. Rapport enhancement orientation: a desire to strengthen or enhance harmonious relations between the interlocutors.
2. Rapport maintenance orientation: a desire to maintain or protect

harmonious relations between the interlocutors.

3. Rapport neglect orientation: a lack of concern or interest in the quality of relations between the interlocutors (perhaps because a focus on self).
4. Rapport challenge orientation: a desire to challenge or impair harmonious relations between the interlocutors.

C. Interruptions

According to Yang (1996), interruptions can be seen as situations in which one person intends to continue speaking but is forced by the other person to stop speaking, at least temporarily, or the continuity or regularity of that person's speech is disrupted. Yang then classifies these interruptions into two kinds, competitive interruptions and cooperative interruptions. Competitive interruptions are interruptions that a speaker does to take control from another speaker by intruding while the speaker is still in the middle of his utterance. On the other hand, cooperative interruptions are done when a speaker wants to support or give additional information from another speaker's argument or utterance. This type of interruption is mostly aimed to help another speaker without disrupting the other speaker's main point.

Lots of studies dealing with the rapport management have been conducted and have found significant findings. Aoki (2010) found that Japanese and Thai handle interpersonal relationships differently during his study on rapport management in social talk of both languages. Bambaren (2011) explores how changes to rapport occur in one sample of political discourse. Chen (2012) figures out the way that people from different national and cultural backgrounds manage rapport through the use of language at work. This study not only focuses on rapport itself but instead, tries to find out how interruptions have

significant effects on meeting participants' rapport orientations.

2. Method

This research was conducted at Jakarta Intensive Learning Center in Makassar, an education institution in Makassar, in order to figure out whether the interruptions have significant effects on rapport orientations of the meetings participants. In order to answer this research goal, the researcher opted to obtain the view of meetings' participants in line with this topic and their activities while they were in the middle of discussions and the meetings were video recorded to obtain the data. Specifically, among the meetings that were fortnightly conducted at JILC, two meetings were video recorded and the participants of the two meetings were asked to give their comments while reviewing the video recordings at the end of the meetings.

The source of the data was taken from the video recordings of the meetings involving the respondents and the provided questionnaires that were given to the respondents. These two sources of data were combined and the researcher then analyzed the correlation of these two sources of data.

3. Results and Discussion

The findings of the research focus on the analysis of the meetings' participants' use of interruptions, the effects of the interruptions on the rapport management of the meetings' participants and the roles of the interruptions. These things are analyzed by studying the video recordings and the questionnaire given to the meetings' participants and considering the responses and the answers of some questions asked to the participants in the video recording reviews at the end of the meetings. There are two video recordings for each meeting and they are divided by several extracted parts based on their contexts. These extracted parts are then analyzed one by one

to find out the interruptions applied by the participants and they are compared to the data taken from the questionnaire given to the participants and the questions asked to the participants that function to identify the participants' intention when they interrupt their fellow participants and their reaction and opinion about the interruptions given to them by other participants.

The analysis in this chapter answers the research questions about the effects of the interruptions on the rapport management of the meetings' participants, the roles of the interruptions and the relationship between the interruptions and the rapport management. These questions are answered through a series of analysis by studying and analyzing the video recordings, the questionnaires, and the questions asked to the participants at the end of the meetings.

Data Presentation and Analysis

a. First video recording

This is the recording of the first meeting. This meeting went on about twenty-five minutes and involved sixteen participants. The meeting was held to discuss the plans for the new project and the ongoing project of the institution. Despite informally situated due to the time of the meeting, the meeting was directed by a branch director considering the urgency of the agenda. There are a total of thirty-eight interruptions made in this meeting with twenty-two competitive interruptions and sixteen cooperative interruptions.

Extracted Part 1

Context : the first speaker asks the two beginner class teachers to tell him the problems they have in teaching the class.

Speakers involved : first speaker, second speaker and third speaker.

2nd Speaker:

(1) Saya kan ambil semua mata pelajaran . . .

I take all of the subjects . . .

1st Speaker → :

(2) Wah hebat. Apa apa yang lima itu?
Ou, great. What are those five?

2nd Speaker:

(3) Eh.
Hmm

1st Speaker:

(4) Eh?
Hm?

2nd Speaker:

(5) Eh, kecuali bahasa Inggris kak.
Hmm, but English sir.

1st Speaker:

(6) Oh, empat itu. Apa itu yang empat?
Hm, it's four then. So what are those four?

2nd Speaker:

(7) Empat, IPS . . .
Four, social sciences . . .

1st Speaker →:

(8) IPS,
Social sciences,

2nd Speaker:

(9) Matematika . . .
Mathematics . . .

1st Speaker →:

(10) Matematika
Maths

2nd Speaker:

(11) Bahasa Indonesia.
Bahasa Indonesia

1st Speaker:

(12) Bahasa Indonesia juga?
Is Bahasa Indonesia also included?

2nd Speaker:

(13) iye.
Yes

1st Speaker:

(14) Oh, begitu ya.
Oh, I see

3rd Speaker:

(15) Dua dua ji kak memang, dua tentor ji.
There are two sir, there are only two teachers.

1st Speaker:

(16) Oh, iya dua tentor, dua tentor. Jadi . . .
Oh, right, two teachers, two teachers.

So . . .

3rd Speaker →:

(17) Umm, tentor . . .
Umm, teacher . . .

1st Speaker →:

(18) Jadi tentor . . .
So, teacher . . .

3rd Speaker →:

(19) Jadi tentor . . . tentor seluruh . . .
So teacher . . . teacher for the whole . . .

1st Speaker →:

(20) tentor multi-talent sama tentor multiple choice (joking) . . .
Multi-talented teacher and multiple-choice teacher (joking).

(21) Divisi lain bahasa Inggris ya?
The other division is English, right?

3rd Speaker:

(22) iya kak.
Yes, sir.

There are seven occurrences of interruption in this first extracted part. All of them are cooperative interruptions. We can see that the interruptions occur in line two, eight, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen and twenty. We can see the pattern of the interruptions by paying attention to those lines. Every time the speakers interrupt other speakers, they tend to do it to back-up the other speakers' point without disrupting their continuation. Thus, the interruptions are categorized as cooperative interruptions. We can see this in the first occurrence of interruption in which the first speaker interrupts the second speaker by complimenting her to support the second speaker's point.

This compliment shows the speech act strategy of rapport management. Complimenting is one of five common speech acts that speaker normally select in order to reflect their rapport orientation (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). The illocutionary domain is concerned with the rapport threatening/enhancing implication of performing speech act (Yiqi, 2001: 97) and compliments are usually intended to have a positive effect on interpersonal relations (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). Therefore this

interruption by complimenting initiated by the first speaker affects on the rapport enhancement between the two speakers.

The other interruptions are similar to the first interruption, for example, the second interruption occurs due to the intention of the first speaker to confirm the second speaker's statement. Thus, we can say that the speaker is supporting the other speaker when he interrupts their fellow speaker and sometimes the interruptions are only in single-word interruption like the second and the third interruptions when the first speaker interrupts by saying *IPS* (8) and *Matematika* (10). These single-word interruptions are categorized as cooperative since they second (backchannel) the main speaker's point and in the form of short commentaries (Yang, 1996). The interruptions are made by the first speaker to confirm the subjects that the second speaker tells him since he asks her what the subjects are. Based on categorization of interruptions (Yang, 1996), the seven interruptions are categorized as cooperative since the speakers are not trying to disrupt other speakers and they are made to support or reinforce the main speakers' points.

The effects of the interruptions made in this situation are concluded from the questions asked to the speakers who interrupt and those who are interrupted and from the fieldnotes taken during the meetings. In the first interruption, the first speaker is asked about the interruption that he has made and he immediately says that he does it in order to express his appreciation to the second speaker. Thus, it can be concluded that the first speaker applies rapport enhancement orientation which is the desire to strengthen or enhance harmonious relations between the interlocutors (Spencer-Oatey, 2008) by cooperatively interrupting the second speaker. And as previously stated that compliment is one of five common speech

acts that speakers normally select to reflect their rapport orientation, it can be concluded that the first speaker interrupts by complimenting to enhance his rapport orientation with the other speaker. Thus, the effect of this interruption is the enhancement or the maintenance of interpersonal rapport between the two speakers. This can be seen from the relaxing, non-threatening situation at the beginning of the meeting. Moreover, second speaker who is interrupted by the first speaker says that she feels more comfortable if a discussion session in a meeting is started with jokes and compliments.

The second and the third interruptions are simply used to clarify the statement stated by the second speaker and to do relational work (Locher and Watts, 2005). Therefore, the roles of these interruptions are to clarify the previously stated point and to do relational work, and the effect is the enhancement of the interpersonal rapport between the speakers. The other four cooperative interruptions also have the same effect. This explains the joke told by the first speaker as the final interruption of this part. The first speaker thinks that he needs to tell some jokes to maintain the good mood of the meeting's participants.

Considering this fact, this situation provides us the example of rapport management maintenance because the speakers are maintaining other speakers face by only interrupting cooperatively and without disrupting other speakers.

Extracted Part 2

Context : *The first speaker continues the discussion about the subjects taught in beginner class.*

Speakers Involved : *first speaker, second and third speakers along with*

the rest of the speakers.

1st Speaker:

(1) Oh, iya betul betul betul.

Oh, that's right,

(2) Jadi Matematika juga, Bahasa Indonesia juga.

so, Mathematics and Bahasa Indonesia as well.

(3) Dan kalo SD memang begitu?

And that applies for elementary school?

(4) Begitu kah memang kalo SD, saya lupa mi juga?

Does it? I've forgotten it.

2nd Speaker along

with other speakers:

(5) Begitu memang

It does

1st Speaker →:

(6) Tidak perasaan

I don't feel the same way

3rd Speaker →:

(7) Begitu, kecuali olahraga.

It does, but sport.

2nd Speaker → :

(8) Begitu kak kecuali olahraga dan agama

It does sir but sport and religion

1st Speaker →:

(9) Oh, tunggu dulu.

Wait up.

(10) Perasaan ada yang namanya Matematika.

Wait up. I think there was this Mathematics.

(11) Apa dulu waktu kelas lima kelas enam

I don't know for sure, when I was on fifth or sixth grade

2nd Speaker and

other speakers →:

(12) kelas lima

Fifth grade

1st Speaker:

(13) oh, kelas lima . . . memang yang dirubah. Oh.

Oh, it is the fifth grade that is adjusted.

Oh.

2nd Speaker:

(14) kalo kelas tiga, dua, satu . . .

About grade 3, 2, 1 . . .

1st Speaker →:

(15) Oh, soalnya saya tamat SD dua puluh tahun yang lalu.

Oh, the problem is I was graduated from elementary school twenty years ago.

(16) Saya angkatan 2006 ya atau 2007.(joking)

I am a student of year 2006 or 2007.

There are six occurrences of interruptions in this example, two cooperative and four competitive interruptions. The participants have shown their disagreement to their fellow participants in this situation. This is shown by the occurrence of competitive interruptions. However, the first speaker notices that such situation may cause the other speakers to feel awkward, thus, he tries to joke to prevent it. The first occurrence of competitive interruption occurs when the first speaker disagrees with the other speakers because he is unsure that there are only three teachers teaching in elementary school for each grade with one teacher teaching almost every subject. This disagreement causes the occurrence of other competitive interruptions between the first speaker and the other speakers. The other speakers who are much younger than him are certain that there are indeed three teachers teaching each grade in elementary school. The first speaker is not sure because he has been graduated from elementary school many years ago. Realizing his mistake, the first speaker finally agrees, but interestingly, he competitively interrupts the second speaker to avoid further disagreement of the discussion. This is his strategy to maintain the interactional goals that he has set up in order to avoid annoyance due to the disagreement. However, it can be assumed that he, at the same time, threatens his fellow speaker's face by competitively interrupting the second speaker.

The competitive interruptions that happen one after another in this situation

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are caused by the mutual vulnerability of face (Brown and Levinson, 1987). If person A attacks person B's face, then person B is likely to attack person A's face in return (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). This is what happens in the occurrences of the competitive interruptions in this situation

Therefore, the competitive interruptions in this situation affect negatively on the rapport orientation enhancement that has been harmoniously built in the previous situation. The first speaker naturally realizes this. He then implicitly admits his mistake by saying that he has been graduated long ago which explains his not knowing. This is his strategy to maintain the interpersonal rapport between him and the other participants.

The two cooperative interruptions in this situation serve as the support to main speakers' points. Besides, the second cooperative interruption also functions to save the first speaker's face since it is made to confirm what the first speaker hesitates about. Therefore, the effects of these interruptions are saving the other speaker's face and enhancing the interpersonal rapport among the participants.

b. Second video recording

This is the recording of the second meeting. This meeting went on about forty-five minutes and involved ten participants. The meeting was held to discuss the two important agendas for the upcoming program of the institution. The situation is formal because the meeting was held in working hours. Similar to the first meeting, there are a total of thirty-eight interruptions made in this meeting but with twenty-three competitive interruptions and fifteen cooperative interruptions.

Extracted Part 1

Context : The first speaker who is the director of curriculum of the institution opens the

discussion by telling the agenda of the meeting to all of the participants.

Speakers involved : Seven speakers, first to the seventh speaker

1st Speaker:

(1) Ada dua agenda penting yang mau saya bahas

There are two important agendas that I will discuss

(2) Jadi simulasi UN, prediksi UN, dengan persiapan training

So, we have the simulation for UN, UN's prediction test and the preparation for Super Intensive training.

2nd Speaker:

(3) Handbooknya masih berlaku ji kak di'?

The handbook is still the same, isn't it?

1st Speaker:

(4) Kecuali Bahasa Indonesia.

Yes, but Bahasa Indonesia is an exception.

(5) Bahasa Indonesia itu ada dua bab yang baru.

There are two new chapters in Bahasa Indonesia.

(6) seandainya kalo kita siap harusnya ada tambahan

Actually, I wish we were prepared to have at least two extra chapters.

(7) Jadi tidak persis sama dengan handbook tahun lalu.

So, the handbook would be different from the one used last year.

(8) Tapi Bahasa Indonesia kemarin

(9) saya minta dua bab yang terbaru.

I wanted the latest two chapters from Bahasa Indonesia the other day.

(10) Dan memang sudah beda sekali.

And it's been totally different.

(11) Kalo tidak salah ini handbook intensif, saya yang revisi . . .

If I'm not mistaken, this intensive handbook was revised by me . . .

3rd Speaker →:

(12) Empat tahun. Empat tahun lima tahunan.

Four years. Four to five years.

1st Speaker:

(13) Kayaknya bukan empat tahun deh. . .

I don't think so . . .

4th Speaker:

(14) Dari tahun 2006 kayaknya kak.

I think it was revised in 2006.

1st Speaker:

(15) Hm, 2006 karena . . .

Yes, in 2006, because . . .

3rd Speaker:

(16) 2006, delapan tahun mi.

2006, it's been eight years then.

4th Speaker:

(17) Iya.

Yes.

1st Speaker:

(18) Iya karena masih di sebelah, JILC sebelah.

Yes, because we were still in the neighboring office.

(19) Yang saya masih ingat sekali itu waktu saya sama Sapar . . .

I can recall that it was me and Sapar . . .

3rd Speaker →:

(20) Yang masih lengkap anu kak, ada Litbang.

When there was still the Division of Research and Development.

6th Speaker:

(21) Iya, masih ada Litbang.

Yes, when we still had that division.

3rd Speaker:

(22) Kayaknya di situ kak.

I think that was the last time . . .

1st Speaker →:

(23) Ndak, waktu ada Litbang itupun. . .

No, when we still had the division

3rd Speaker →:

(24) Waktu ada Litbang, belum direvisi di?.

It had not been revised

1st Speaker →:

(25) Belum direvisi, tidak pernah direvisi.

It had not been revised, never been revised before.

3rd Speaker →:

(26) Soal UKA ji yang pernah diganti.

Only the questions for UKA that were revised.

1st Speaker →:

(27) Iya, soal itu ji saja.

Yeah, only that.

(28) Jadi memang ini handbook jadul sekali mi . . .

So, this handbook is really outdated . . .

(29) Kalaupun berubah, dia cuma diubah ubah bab.

If it was revised, the one that was revised was the arrangement of the chapters.

2nd Speaker:

(30) Oh, tentornya kak di?.

Well, the teachers right?

1st Speaker:

(31) Tentornya. Siapa yang terakhir, Iya, the teachers. Who are the last ones,

(32) yang tidak pernah pi mengajar di ini intensif, the ones that have not been teaching in Intensive program, the ones to be included?

5th Speaker:

(33) Seandainya ada yang sudah memang mengajar

If there are teachers who have taught in Intensive Program before

(34) tapi saya mau anu lagi, bisa? but I still want to train them, can they be included?

1st Speaker:

(34) Bisa.

Yes, of course.

2nd Speaker:

(35) Bisa ji itu.

Indeed.

1st Speaker:

(36) Misalnya . . .

For example . . .

6th Speaker → :

(37) Kayaknya mau semua ini ikut . . .

I think every teacher should be included

. . .

1st Speaker :

(38) Iya, kan banyak (irony)

The problem is there will be too many .

. . .

6th Speaker:

(39) Supaya kita mandat . . .
So, we can oblige them to . . .

1st Speaker →:

(40) Ndak, yang kita wajibkan toh.
No, only the teachers that are obliged to take the training.

(41) Kan ada yang diwajibkan, yang kena peraturan wajib.

There are some teachers that are obliged to do so.

(42) Artinya kalo dia tidak ikut . . .
It means that when they . . .

3rd Speaker →:

(43) Saya kak mulai X-8
It starts from X-8 in my division.

1st Speaker:

(44) Ekonomi
Economy

6th Speaker:

(45) Bahasa Indonesia I-15 ke bawah.
Bahasa Indonesia starts from I-15

3rd Speaker:

(46) Syahrin, Syahidah, Fitri, Uceng . . .
Syahrin, Syahidah, Fitri, Uceng . . .

1st Speaker →:

(47) Mulai dari Syahrin di'?'
It starts from Syahrin right?

3rd Speaker:

(48) Iya kak. Jadi Uceng, Nidia, Helky, Reny, Adi, Agung.

It does. So, Uceng, Nidia, Helky, Reny, Adi, Agung.

This is the beginning of the meeting of which context is about the agendas of the meeting told by the first speaker. Unlike the first meeting, the beginning of this meeting has more occurrences of competitive interruptions. There are six competitive interruptions made in this example while there are five cooperative interruptions. The first competitive interruption in line twelve is made by the third speaker when he interrupts the first speaker and the second one is also made by the third speaker in line twenty which is addressed again to the first speaker. From the field note written during the meeting and in the review of the video

recording, it can be concluded that the first speaker's face is threatened by the third speaker's competitive interruptions and this makes the first speaker to interrupt the third speaker competitively in line twenty-three because she is somewhat annoyed by the third speaker's previous interruptions and her disagreement with what he is saying.

Half of the competitive interruptions are made by the third speaker. From six interruptions, three are made by the third speaker. The third speaker is also the most active speaker besides the first speaker and he makes the most interruptions compared to other speakers. The interruptions made by the third speaker may affect other speakers' face and they indeed offend the first speaker's face. Therefore, it is well said that the third speaker does not really care about the rapport management to their fellow participants because he fails to maintain the rapport management by the interruptions that he makes. It is in accordance to the questionnaire given to him where he shows that interrupting other speakers in a meeting is a normal thing to do and he says that he needs to do that because he has to tell other speakers what he feels right and important. When he is asked the possibility of the offence caused by his interruptions, he simply says that there will be no offence since it is a normal thing in the institution where meetings have many interruptions. It really proves that the third speaker holds the rapport neglect orientation; a lack of concern or interest in the quality of relations between the interlocutors, perhaps because of a focus on self (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). Moreover, the third speaker also disrupts the discussion between the first speaker and the sixth speaker in line forty-three that shows his negligence in maintaining rapport. This interruption has negative effect on the rapport management maintenance between him and the other speakers. Further

explanation about this is provided in the next parts where the same situation is caused by the same speaker (the third speaker).

The cooperative interruptions are made to support other speakers but the cooperative interruptions in line twenty-four to twenty-seven resulting in four simultaneous interruptions are almost like the competitive ones because there are only two speakers interrupting each other (signaling that both of them are trying to take the floor). However, the interruptions are still categorized as cooperative because the role is to support and there is no rising pitch and intonation in the interruptions.

4. Conclusion

Interruptions have a number of effects on the rapport management maintenance in meetings. The effects vary based on the kinds of interruptions.

- a. The effects of competitive interruptions are the threats to participants' three interconnected rapport components namely face, sociality rights and obligations, and interactional goals. The other effect is the reduced enhancement of interpersonal rapport
- b. The effects of cooperative interruptions are the enhancement of rapport orientation resulting in the rapport management maintenance among the participants of the meetings, saving other speaker's face and thus enhancing the interpersonal rapport among participants, and threats to interpersonal rapport if the interruption is not made properly.

The participants of the meetings make the interruptions for several purposes. This is reflected from the roles of the interruptions. The roles are to support main speaker's points (cooperative and competitive interruptions), to clarify the statement stated by other speaker (cooperative

interruptions), to do relational work (cooperative interruptions), to backchannel the statement of the main speaker (cooperative interruptions), to show disagreement (competitive interruptions), and to correct other speaker's mistake (competitive interruptions).

Interruptions are closely related to the idea of rapport management because interruptions are applied in social interaction like in meetings and the rapport management's domain is the aspect of language use in social interaction (Spencer-Oatey, 2008).

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