

Pronominal Shift in Indonesian Reported Speech: A Discourse-based Study

Pronominal forms or person referents are the most significant illustrations of the notion of shifter in Indonesian. The term “shift” derives from Jacobson’s “shifters” (1970). Silverstein refers to the same phenomenon of the meaning-making practices of identifying and referencing to social entities and their interaction as “referential indexes” (1976). According to Silverstein, “...a referential index has been called a shifter, because referents “shift” regularly, depending on the factors of the speech situation (p. 24). Shifters are operating at the levels of code and message. In addition: Shifters or referential indexes are usually linguistically marked by deictic forms, for example, person referents (e.g. pronouns), places (e.g. locatives and prepositions), and time (e.g. tenses).

This paper investigates the shift of pronominal forms or person referents that take place when speakers report past conversations. The shift demonstrates change in footing and displays multiple identities of the speakers. Person referents denoted by pronominal and register shifts also distinguish reported speech from the rest of the conversation in the local interaction. Furthermore, they link to the bigger discourse issues of social identities and relationships between social entities.

The language data for the analysis consists of 10 hours of video-taped naturally-occurring conversations carried out by Indonesians who live the United States (California, Michigan and Wisconsin) and in Indonesia (Sidoarjo and Banyuwangi, East Java). The speakers have diverse linguistic and geographical backgrounds that influence their spoken Indonesian. Their multi-party interactions took place at parties, dinnertime, and family gatherings. The data were collected from the year 2000 to 2002. Qualitative research methods involving discourse analysis, conversational analysis and ethnography of communication are used to analyze the data.

In this paper I will demonstrate the ways in which the shift in person referents invokes the quoted frame, reveals the social identities of the quoted speakers and further indexes the social relationship between the speaker and his coparticipants. The analysis will focus on the changes of the first and second person pronouns and the term of address used to refer to the addressees in the quoted frame. The analysis will demonstrate that the shifts that take place index the social identities of the quoted speakers and depict a complex social relationship between the quoted speakers of past-situated interactions, and the social relationship between the speakers of the reported speech and their coparticipants in the local interaction.