

AN ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIC COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH FOR TENUN IKAT ARTISANS IN UMIN JAYA VILLAGE

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Abstract

In the era of globalization, English language skills are important for local businesses, including ikat artisans in Umin Jaya Village. Their Tenun Ikat products are recognized internationally, but limitations in English proficiency pose a barrier to marketing their products on a broader scale. This study aims to analyse the strategic English language competence applied by the artisans and to examine the extent to which these competences are related to their ability to communicate with foreign consumers. This study employs a descriptive qualitative method with data collection techniques through semi-structured interviews of six ikat artisans who have interacted with foreign tourists or buyers. The focus of the study is on the application of five indicators of strategic competence: paraphrasing, asking for clarification, using communication strategies, circumlocution, and initiating conversation. The results indicate that most artisans have not fully mastered verbal communication strategies in English, often relying on body language, simple English phrases, and assistance from third parties. Use of translation tools remains minimal. Despite this, interest in English learning is high, though hampered by access to training and resources. The artisans' strategic competence remains limited but can be improved through contextual training, simple media use, and ongoing mentoring.

Keywords: *strategic competence, English language, artisans, communication, Umin Jaya*

INTRODUCTION

In the arts and crafts industry, especially traditional crafts, possesses great potential to compete in the global market. However, the Tenun Ikat artisans in Umin Jaya Village face communication challenges when dealing with international customers. Their limited English proficiency hinders product marketing and the establishment of cross-border collaborations. This highlights the importance of strategic competence in English, which helps artisans to overcome language barriers and opens up opportunities for market expansion. Umin Jaya Village, located in Sintang Regency, is home to many weaving artisans. The Tenun Ikat produced in this village has evolved into a micro, small, and medium enterprise and has become one of the community's primary sources of livelihood. Tenun Ikat from Umin Jaya carries historical and cultural value as a legacy passed down from generation to generation. Today, it is recognized both nationally and internationally.

According to the Head of the Culture Division of the Sintang Regency Education and Culture Office, Siti Musrikah, Tenun Ikat from Sintang has gained recognition in countries such as the United States, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, and several other European nations. Many foreign buyers are passionate about this craft and often do not question the price, allowing the artisans to continue receiving orders (Yasyi, 2025). Despite the product's appeal, artisans still encounter difficulties in promoting their Tenun Ikat internationally. The primary challenge is their limited English proficiency, which is a crucial tool in global trade. English is not merely a communication medium but also a vital link between artisans and foreign buyers

or business partners. In this context, strategic competence in English becomes essential for effective communication and successful business transactions.

Previous research supports the importance of strategic competence in language use. For instance, Octaviana (2021) explored the relationship between strategic 12 competence and students' speaking performance at a senior high school in Garut. The study, which used a descriptive method and involved 14 students, found a positive correlation between strategic competence and speaking ability. Communication strategies such as borrowing (including literal translation and language mixing) were commonly used by students. Another study by Yonata and Saptani (2019) investigated communication strategies used by advanced Indonesian EFL learners in casual conversations. Using spoken discourse analysis from recorded conversations, the study revealed that fillers were the most frequently used strategy, followed by repetition, appeal for help, and self-repair. Although participants had sufficient linguistic knowledge, they struggled to verbalize thoughts due to lack of practice.

Miles (2007), in a six-month case study, examined the connection between second language (L2) use and strategic competence. Focusing on a French immigrant of Senegalese descent in a multilingual U.S. workplace, the study highlighted how strategic competence helped the participant navigate L2 identity and professional success through effective language strategies and identity negotiation. These studies emphasize that communication strategies, or strategic competence, are essential in overcoming language limitations. In the case of Umin Jaya's artisans, the lack of adequate English proficiency highlights the need for strategic communication competence to bridge language gaps. Therefore, this research aims to examine how these artisans apply strategic competence when communicating in English and to explore the relationship between strategic competence and their communication performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tenun Ikat

Examining the meaning of the word rajin is important because it is closely related to the concept of kerajinan, both in terms of language and practice. In the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), rajin is defined as an attitude that likes to work, is active and diligent in doing activities. Meanwhile, kerajinan refers to the result of a work process that is carried out continuously with diligence and certain skills. According to Kumparan (2023) diligence is not only related to the frequency of work, but also the quality of effort that produces something meaningful. In this case, kerajinan is a tangible manifestation of the spirit of hard work and perseverance. For example, in the process of making Tenun Ikat, the beauty and value of the products produced are the result of the diligence and consistency of the artisans, reflecting the true meaning of the word rajin. Thus, understanding the concept of rajin gives us a more in-depth view of kerajinan as a cultural product full of dedication and hard work.

Crafts are objects produced by hand skills that have complexity, technical skills, and require high diligence in the manufacturing process (Chotimah, 2022). Woven fabrics have functions in several aspects of the lives of the people who make them, both social, economic, religious, and aesthetic aspects. The weaving artisans were housewives. Weaving artisans are female workers who come from their own household members and some hire workers from neighbours near the house. The work of being a weaving craftsman is mostly undertaken by women because weaving requires high accuracy, tenacity, and perseverance so that women are more suitable for doing this work (Chotimah, 2022).

Communicative Competence

In language, proficiency competence and performance is the basic thing. Underlining this communicative competence is important to perform well the target language. Communicative competence is a combination of language knowledge and other aspects of language use with skill essential for communication (Canale & Swain, 1980 as cited in Alem, 2020). The aim of communicative language teaching is to improve the communicative competence of students (Meenakshi, 2015 as cited in Alem, 2020). So, in communicative competence there are four components which are grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. According to the widely accepted theory of Canale and Swain, communicative competence as a whole can be explained in terms of three component competencies, grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence.

Strategic Competence

Strategic competence is one type of communicative competence that has been postulated by Canale and Swain (1980 as cited in Alem, 2020). However, the most neglected component of communicative competence by course books and teachers is strategic competence. According to Canale and Swain, strategic competence refers to “verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that can be used to compensate for disruptions in communication caused by performance variables or inadequate competence”. In simpler terms, strategic competence refers to the ability to convey one's meaning successfully to a partner. There are different types of strategy competencies such as word coinage involves making up an entirely new word out of existing words, for example, if a learner did not know the word scissors, he or she might refer to ‘cutters’. Paraphrase or circumlocution: involves giving extensive descriptions as a substitute for unknown vocabulary items or describing or exemplifying the target object or action, for instance, if a learner did not know the word for calculator, he or she might say something like ‘a small machine that is used for mathematical calculations’ and ‘the thing you open wine bottles with’ for ‘corkscrew’, or ‘small fast military plane’ for ‘fighter’. Approximation: using a word which expresses the meaning of the intended lexical item as closely as possible, for example.... a big boat... for ‘ship’, ‘ship’ for ‘sailing boat’, or ‘fish’ for ‘carp’. Non-linguistic means: (e.g. We use pointing, gestures, drawing pictures, mime, gesture, or imitation). Borrowed or invented words: (e.g. ‘auto’ for ‘car’, or ‘house controller’ for ‘caretaker’).

METHOD

The approach used in this research was qualitative. According to Sugiyono (2021) qualitative research was sometimes defined as a method of inquiry that sought to understand human experiences, behaviours, and interactions by exploring them in-depth. A common distinguishing feature of qualitative research was that studies often aimed to explore and understand, rather than measure phenomena and behaviours. According to Hassan (2024), descriptive research design was a systematic methodology used to describe the characteristics of a population, event, or phenomenon. This research was conducted at the home of Umin Jaya Tenun Ikat artisans located in Umin Jaya Village, Dedai District, Sintang Regency, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. This research targeted Umin Jaya Tenun Ikat artisans who had interacted directly with tourists during regional exhibitions that brought in tourists from outside. This was chosen so that the writer could directly know and ensure the relevance of the data collected.

The selection of Umin Jaya Tenun Ikat artisans was deliberate, taking into account several factors such as the latest education, artisans who used social media or mobile phones in marketing products and artisans who had interacted directly with foreign tourists using

English. The research focused on six artisans aged 25-45 years. According to Sugiyono (2021) Primary data was a data source that directly provided data to data collectors. Primary data sources were obtained through interview activities with research subjects. In this case the writer obtained data directly either individually or in groups, oral or written. Primary data sources in this study were in the form of words, sentences, expressions, atmosphere, and conversations obtained from interviews with artisans in Umin Jaya village. Data collection instruments, writers used semi-structured interview methods. According to Sugiyono (2021), this type of interview is included in the in-depth interview category. Its implementation was freer than structured interviews. The purpose of this type of interview was to find problems more openly. The writer interviewed six weaving artisans and was assisted by a notebook. The writer's data collection instrument consisted of 15 main interview questions to the artisans. The writer interviewed the artisans within 15 minutes to answer questions based on their experiences. The data analysis technique used in this research is descriptive qualitative, following the interactive model proposed by Sugiyono (2021). This method consists of four main stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

At the time of this research the writer could only interview six Tenun Ikat artisans from Umin Jaya Village. All of the participants were women, with ages ranging from 25 to 45 years old. In terms of educational background, one respondent had completed elementary school, another had finished junior high school, and the remaining four had graduated from high school. Regarding their experience in weaving, one artisan had been involved in the craft for less than five years, four had between five to ten years of experience, and one had been weaving for over ten years. Six respondents had direct experience communicating with foreign tourists or customers. Tenun Ikat from Umin Jaya has distinctive motifs and high artistic value, but still faces challenges in expanding the market, especially to the international level. One of the main obstacles is the lack of strategic competence in English to communicate with foreign consumers, promote products, and participate in international exhibitions. The artisans generally work independently or in small family groups, with varying levels of education and limited access to language training. At the time of conducting the interview, the writer faced several obstacles in collecting data, including the road access to the village of Umin Jaya which was damaged, getting several rejections from the interviewees when they wanted to be interviewed and short answers from the interviewees.

The findings indicate that the implementation of strategic competence among Tenun Ikat artisans in Umin Jaya is limited but practical. The artisans rely on simple, frequently used English expressions such as “sir,” “handmade,” “one-ten,” and “morning.” These phrases are often accompanied by non-verbal elements like hand gestures, body movements, and smiling to support the message they are trying to convey. All six informants reported using gestures and product demonstration to help explain when verbal explanation was insufficient. Moreover, they rarely attempted to paraphrase or use alternate English expressions when they forgot a word or did not understand a question. Most informants admitted to simply smiling or calling an officer to assist, rather than clarifying or asking the foreign customer to repeat themselves. Only one informant (Devi) said she used a translation tool (Google Translate) to help in communication, showing an early adoption of external support. This is consistent with Miles (2007), who noted that strategic competence is shaped by context, identity, and necessity. While the artisans are not fluent English speakers, their strategic use of gestures and limited vocabulary allows them to participate meaningfully in multicultural communication. Their behaviour reflects adaptive communication, which is central to strategic competence in low-proficiency speakers.

Strategic competence is shown to have a direct influence on the artisans' communication performance. Although their English skills are basic, they are able to maintain interaction with foreign buyers during exhibitions through the use of compensatory strategies such as using body language, visual aids (showing the product), and key vocabulary. These strategies allow them to overcome linguistic limitations and still deliver essential information about their products, such as price, process (handmade), and dye types. This relationship mirrors the findings of Octaviana (2021), whose study on high school students showed that strategic competence positively influences speaking performance. While Octaviana's participants used to borrow and code-mixing, the artisans relied more on physical demonstration and simple memorized phrases. Despite the difference in strategy type, the purpose and outcome are the same: strategic competence allows individuals with limited language knowledge to communicate effectively.

Furthermore, similar to the study by Yonata and Saptani (2019), which revealed the frequent use of fillers and appeals for help among EFL learners in conversations, the Umin Jaya artisans use non-verbal "appeals for help" (like calling staff or shaking their heads). Their communicative performance may not be fluent, but it is functional and goal-oriented, which supports the notion that strategic competence contributes to communication success even in low-proficiency contexts. Overall, the artisans' ability to engage with international customers, though limited in language, reflects the practical value of strategic competence in enhancing communicative effectiveness. It allows them to participate in exhibitions, respond to basic inquiries, and represent their cultural products on a global stage. This research focused on five aspects of strategic competence in English: paraphrasing, asking for clarification, using communication strategies, circumlocution, and initiating conversation.

The following is an analysis based on interviews with six Tenun Ikat artisans from Umin Jaya Village: Paraphrasing: Only one respondent was able to explain a concept in English using different words. When asked if they had ever explained something using another English word or description, all six informants answered "never." Asking for Clarification: Five out of six respondents did not understand how to ask someone to repeat or clarify something. They usually responded with a smile, shook their heads, and called an officer for help. Only one artisan, Devi, said she responded with, "Sorry sir, I don't know." Using Communication Strategies: All six respondents demonstrated the use of gestures or showing direct objects to communicate. For example, Poni and Selvi mentioned using "hand gestures." Rosmini added, "smile and hand gestures," while Rantika and Susi mentioned "shaking head and gestures." Devi said she "most often uses gestures." Circumlocution: The use of circumlocution was very rare. One or two respondents showed this tendency, but in general, the artisans relied on gestures or direct object references rather than verbal explanations. Initiating Conversation: Artisans who had interacted with tourists used simple phrases like "Hello" or "Morning, sir." Phrases like "handmade," "colour," or stating prices with hand movements were common. For example, Rosmini and Selvi said, "I say 'sir' while moving my hands... handmade." Susi said, "Good morning, sir... mention the type of colour."

Conclusion

Based on the results of interviews conducted by the writer regarding Strategic Competence in English for Tenun Ikat Artisans in Umin Jaya Village, several important points can be concluded as follows: The artisans had limited formal education in English and no understanding of strategic competence, but they demonstrated the use of several competence strategies when interacting with foreign tourists or consumers who communicated using English. Only one artisan demonstrated the ability to paraphrase or reformulate sentences in English, indicating very limited capacity in this area. In terms of asking for clarification, the majority of respondents (five out of six) did not understand basic phrases such as "Can you

repeat that?”, which highlights a gap in interactive listening strategies. However, all artisans demonstrated the use of communication strategies, especially through non-verbal means such as gestures or by showing physical objects, which can effectively help with their limited vocabulary. Circumlocution, or explaining unknown words by using explanations, was rarely seen, with only one or two respondents showing signs of this ability. Meanwhile, starting a conversation is practiced by those who have already interacted with tourists, usually using simple English phrases such as “Hello” or “Good morning, sir.” In addition, artisans often rely on external assistance such as Google Translate or help from the organizers.

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