Developing Indonesian Oral Proficiency Guidelines and Reflections on Their Cultural Implications

Ellen Rafferty

(emraffer@wisc.edu)
University of Wisconsin–Madison, USA

Erlin Barnard

(esbarnard@wisc.edu)
University of Wisconsin–Madison, USA

Abstract

ACTFL generic proficiency guidelines describe what learners are able to perform at various proficiency levels. These guidelines, in particular the oral proficiency guidelines (OPG), have been widely used to assess learners' proficiency across institutions – via the oral proficiency interview (OPI) technique – irrespective of curriculum, teaching methods, and materials. Many institutions and organizations place great emphasis on such assessments in making decisions regarding placement, scholarship, and program evaluation. Although the usefulness of the OPG has been widely acknowledged, it is also recognized that the guidelines lack details regarding the specific features and characteristics of any particular language. As we know, each language carries specific linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural features that affect the descriptors of the various proficiency levels of a particular language. In the case of the Indonesian language, for example, tense is not a determining factor in defining proficiency. However, cultural aspects such as the use of pronouns, terms of address, and passive voice are important indicators of communicative ability at various levels. This paper will: 1) address the importance of developing descriptors of oral proficiency for Indonesian; 2) describe the significance of the collaborative process of developing the guidelines; and 3) explore some implications for the teaching of cultural competence in Indonesian.

1 Introduction

The proficiency movement which began in the 1980s in the United States continues to flourish, and its significant impact on foreign language instruction is demonstrable. The motivational force behind the movement was the realization that language instruction should prepare students to become competent users of a foreign language. Thus, foreign language instruction should no longer put such heavy emphasis on discrete-grammar teaching that imparts knowledge about a target language, but rather the instruction should be proficiency-oriented, focusing on developing communication skills. Given this new focus, learners are then expected to use the language in performing various real-life tasks in the target language. A significant body of research in second language acquisition and its application to instructional practices has demonstrated the growing significance of proficiency-based instruction on second language acquisition (Ellis, 1997; Lantolf, 1994; Lee & VanPatten, 2003; Omaggio Hadley, 2001; Shrum & Glisan, 2005).

The rise of proficiency-based instruction began with the publication of the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency guidelines, produced in collaboration with government and educational agencies, namely, the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) and the Educational Testing Service (ETS). ACTFL established a set of non-language specific guidelines "to further examine and promote the notion of a common metric for measuring and describing foreign language abilities and the adaptation of the FSI scale for academic use" (Freed, 1989, p. 53). These generic guidelines provide descriptions of what tertiary level learners are able to perform at the following four levels of language development (novice, intermediate, advanced, and superior) in the skill areas of speaking, reading, listening and writing.

While the generic guidelines have encouraged the development of proficiency-based instruction in many areas such as curriculum development, assessment, and materials development, they are not without concerns and criticism. One central critique is that the guidelines are too Eurocentric, basing the descriptions on the features of European languages, such as French, German, and Spanish (Thompson & Johnson, 1988). When applied to non-European languages, the generic guidelines present problems, at the very least, in terms of the role and timing of the acquisition of grammatical features (e.g. tense and gender) and cultural appropriateness. Thompson and Johnson (1988) pointed out that "[t]he two most obvious problems were: 1.) a bias toward grammatical categories of western European languages, such as tense and gender; and 2.) the concern that learners would require much time to master the principles and mechanics of non-Roman writing systems" (p. 1). They further stated that "[t]heoretical problems in adapting the generic guidelines to a particular language include complex morphologies in Russian, diglossia in Arabic, the presence of Hindi-English code-switching at high levels of proficiency among educated native Hindi speakers" (1988, p. 2). For example, the ACTFL oral proficiency guidelines (OPG) stipulate that at the Intermediate Mid level, "[…] they provide some information but have difficulty linking ideas, manipulating time and aspect, and […]." However, many less-commonly-taught languages such as Indonesian do not have verbal tenses and gender distinctions that are considered key benchmarks in the acquisition of oral proficiency. Moreover, other grammatical features and cultural knowledge, such as the use of passive voice, formal verbal affixes, register distinctions, and control of pronominal usage are indicative of a learner's acquisition of proficiency in Indonesian. These unique features are not captured in the generic guidelines.

The three objectives of this paper are to discuss the importance of developing OPG for Indonesian; to emphasize the significance of the collaborative process for developing the guidelines; and finally to explore some implications for the teaching of cultural competence in Indonesian language instruction.

2 Developing language-specific proficiency guidelines

As briefly mentioned above, the application of the generic proficiency guidelines to Indonesian failed to capture some important performance indicators specific to Indonesian. To further illustrate this, students learning Indonesian quickly discover the diglossic nature of the Indonesian language when they see the important distinctions between written and spoken registers. There are also further distinctions within the spoken language, depending on a variety of factors, such as the formality of the situation, the social status and age relationships between the speaker and addressee, the setting, and the topic of the conversation. As such, students are compelled to make decisions as to which forms are appropriate to use in a given situation. One of the basic forms that students learn early on is the appropriate use of a number of personal pronouns and terms of address. Without proper usage of these forms, it would be difficult for anyone to gain entry into and engage in social interaction in Indonesia. Hence, it is important for the Indonesian OPG to incorporate these pragmatic features.

The formulation of standard Indonesian proficiency guidelines requires careful assessment of critical features of Indonesian, including language functions, significant cultural knowledge, and linguistic (grammatical) features. An understanding of cultural assumptions is key for the acquisition of oral proficiency. For example, discussing the weather is not a common topic of small talk

in Indonesian, whereas it is in some European languages. To acquire a language function, one must learn how to accomplish the function in a culturally appropriate manner. For example, to successfully present a disagreement in Indonesian, one must learn how to express one's opinion in an indirect manner. Grammatical features present different levels of difficulty. For example, the ability to narrate past and future events in grammatically correct constructions in Indonesian does not pose the same level of difficulty as this task does in tense-based languages such as English.

In the absence of a proficiency-based textbook and materials, the role of proficiency guidelines for less-commonly-taught languages is even more critical. The guidelines are able to provide tertiary-level instructors with a 'road map' for classroom instruction in particular, and for the language program more generally. From the guidelines, teachers can learn the specific descriptions of students' abilities at each of the developmental stages along the continuum from novice to superior levels of proficiency.

In the early 1990s, in response to the need for language specific descriptions of language features at the various proficiency levels, a team of experienced Indonesian instructors from two U.S. tertiary institutions, namely, Author 1, James Collins and Author 2, collaborated on a project to develop Indonesian OPG, derived from the generic proficiency guidelines. The drafted guidelines were produced based on an examination and analysis of the various aspects of Indonesian language mentioned above (linguistic, functional, and cultural) and on the team's observation of students' performance over the years. The project outcome was then disseminated to other U.S. institutions that taught Indonesian with the hope that it would help teachers and programs in their efforts to incorporate proficiency-based instruction into their teaching. The reception was, however, lukewarm at best. The guidelines, as far as we know, did not have any apparent impact on curriculum or materials development in U.S. institutions where Indonesian is taught. Over the past twenty years, there was little mention of any instructor using or referring to the guidelines for any instructional purpose, with perhaps one exception, the *Consortium for the Teaching of Indonesian* (COTI) oral proficiency assessment for its summer abroad language program. Students of Indonesian from tertiary institutions throughout the U.S. compete for a Department of Education scholarship to an 8-week in-country language program. The selection of students for this scholarship uses the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) and these previously developed OPG served as a reference and basis for the interview to measure a student's overall language ability irrespective of materials, curriculum, or methods of learning.

Given the important role of OPG, Author 1 and Author 2 felt the need to re-examine the formulation process of the existing Indonesian OPG. Since the Indonesian guidelines were a product of collaboration among only a few individuals, the rest of the professionals in the field were likely to not have the same degree of ownership and interest in the materials. The guidelines may have been perceived as a prescribed product, based on restricted analysis by a few individuals without having the input of fellow experts in the field. Author 1 and Author 2, then, decided to spearhead a new collaborative project to reformulate the Indonesian guidelines based on a totally different approach.

3   The process of developing Indonesian oral proficiency guidelines

It was clear that when it comes to guidelines formulation, the importance of having consensus from the Indonesian educator community cannot be underestimated. The new project which began in 2010 set as its goal the inclusion and participation of all of the Indonesian instructors nationwide who were members of COTI. Another crucial difference with the new project was the method used to formulate the guidelines. The previous guidelines were formulated based on the analysis of the structure of the language and on student language development as observed by a few experienced instructors, whereas the new project sought to formulate guidelines based on recorded language samples of students who were studying Indonesian; each sample would thus exhibit different levels of proficiency. Rather than prescribing what students should be able to do at the novice, intermediate, advanced, and superior levels, the new project attempted to describe student ability as exhibited by actual data/samples of speech of students. The project team, comprising Indo-

nesian language teachers from around the U.S., recorded language samples of their students, which became the data for this project. .

The data collected incorporated presentational, interpersonal, and interpretive modes with the purpose of including the different modes of communication stipulated in the "Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century" (National Standards, 2006). Students studying Indonesian were first given a picture or text stimulus (interpretive mode) from which they prepared an oral presentation. They were then asked to describe, narrate, or summarize the content of the picture or the text (presentational modes). Next, the teacher followed up with several questions related to the presentation (interpersonal mode). Subsequently, the teacher asked personalized, open-ended questions to elicit further language production. Using the criteria in generic proficiency guidelines as a reference, the teacher explored the student's speaking ability to determine the highest sustained level of performance (i.e. floor), and the level where student cannot sustain his/her performance (i.e. ceiling). In doing so, teachers referred to the following categories: Global Tasks/Functions, Context, Content/Topics, Accuracy, and Text Type (see Appendix 1).

The project commenced with a workshop to orient members to the concept of proficiency guidelines and to train teachers to conduct the interview for the collection of the speech samples. The samples, collected from various institutions within a one-year period, were then pooled together in the management office, which randomly coded and distributed the samples to be rated by members of the project in order to determine the level of proficiency of each student/sample. In line with the ACTFL generic guidelines, there are four main levels of proficiency, that is, novice, intermediate, advanced, and superior levels. With the exception of the superior level, each of these levels can be further divided into low, mid, and high sub-levels. Each sample was rated by two teachers in order to establish inter-rater reliability. When the two raters yielded different ratings, a third party would be asked to review the sample and determine the rating. After all the samples were rated and levels established, the project team members were asked to analyze the language data in each of the four levels (novice, intermediate, advanced, and superior) and describe the level-specific features including context, function, topic, accuracy/linguistic features, and text type that characterized each of the proficiency levels. A follow-up meeting was then organized for the project members to jointly discuss the findings and to reach a consensus on the distinctive, level-specific descriptors. Results of this discussion are currently available in the document "Indonesian oral proficiency guidelines draft" on the Center for Southeast Asian Studies website (see http://seasia.wisc.edu/)

4   Implications for the teaching of cultural competence

The language samples analyzed by the Indonesian OPG team not only offer data for establishing a set of descriptors for the four proficiency levels, but they also give evidence of the acquisition of cultural competence. While it is true that higher levels of oral proficiency are correlated with a better understanding of culturally appropriate language patterns, such as register distinctions in Indonesian, there are other important patterns, such as the use of address terms, which in this study were rarely used by the students. The uneven acquisition of socio-pragmatic rules essential for cultural competence points to the importance of adding materials to the curriculum that focus on the development of cultural competence. From the data analyzed, it is argued that the following four areas of language use are key areas to focus on when teaching for cultural competence: 1) address terms; 2) registers; 3) expressive/emotive terms; and 4) idiomatic expressions, metaphors, and prosodic features. Thus, the secondary benefit of developing the language-specific OPG is the highlighting of an uneven acquisition of language use patterns that enhance cultural competence, highlighting the need to develop new curricular materials.

The OPG project focused on assessing and describing students' proficiency levels in terms of accuracy (intelligibility and grammatical structure), content (vocabulary), and context (register broadly defined as formal versus informal). Thus, cultural competence was not a specific objective of the definitions for the OPG. Yet, socio-pragmatic rules (cultural competence) of a language directly affect the speaker's ability to communicate and therefore should be acknowledged as an

important element in the development of language proficiency. Since the project did not directly focus on analyzing and describing the acquisition of socio-pragmatic rules that reflect a community's patterned ways of speaking, all intelligible utterances were accepted as fulfilling the communicative requirement. One example that is communicative but somewhat unnatural is the utterance (see Note 1 below) with the repeated use of the first person pronoun, *saya*. A native speaker would likely avoid the repetitious use of the pronoun *saya*, preferring other ways of expressing the same referential idea.[1]

Socio-pragmatic rules teach the language learner how to use language in culturally appropriate ways, that is, how to effectively utter speech acts (Austin, 1962) in order to accomplish tasks with family, friends, and co-workers. The socio-pragmatic rules shape the language into culturally acceptable patterns of speech. For example, a complaint may be best rendered as a question to a third party rather than as a direct statement of dissatisfaction to the person in a position of authority. The acquisition of a community's socio-pragmatic rules confers upon the speaker communicative competence; that is, the ability to match language patterns with specific cultural contexts (e.g. how to politely debate with elders, how to request permission from a peer and from a social superior). Although measuring cultural competence is not a goal for the American Council of Teaching Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency guidelines, this is an area that warrants further attention in the field of foreign language teaching, because becoming a proficient user of the language requires more than the learning of the phonology, morphology and syntax of a language. Mastering a language entails learning how to do things (i.e. how to accomplish social tasks) in a language community. While cultural competence is often acquired inductively by participating in the community, the authors argue that a curriculum that includes modules that explicitly teach socio-pragmatic rules will support and enhance the acquisition of cultural competence.

The data indicates that the control of sociolinguistic rules in the following four areas, 1) address terms, 2) register, 3) expressive/emotive terms, and 4) idiomatic expressions and metaphors, is weak, suggesting that improved curricular materials that teach these rules will improve the acquisition of oral proficiency and cultural competence. The recommendations given below indicate the timing for the teaching of the productive use of these language features; whereas exposure to, and passive comprehension of, these language features may be introduced at an earlier stage in the development of proficiency. The use of address terms is a language pattern that can be introduced from the novice level when students are learning to greet others. The use of distinct language patterns to mark informal and formal contexts can be usefully introduced at the intermediate-mid level when the students are learning to control verbal affixation. Expressive/emotive terms are best introduced at the intermediate-high level and above when the students are producing connected discourse, because emotive expressions are posited on the reaction of a speaker to a prior statement or state of affairs. Finally, idiomatic expressions and metaphors are best introduced at the superior level when students can express abstract concepts.

The interaction between language use and cultural values is a rich area of the curriculum that is optimally developed beginning at the novice level and continued on through the superior level. At each stage in the acquisition process, the interaction between language use patterns and socio-cultural values evolves. Student understanding of the interaction between cultural values and social structure of a society is an important element in the curriculum, beginning with the novice level; and the understanding of this interaction becomes increasingly more complex as proficiency increases. The acquisition of cultural competence should not be considered a feature that is tacked on at the superior level; it is an integral part of the shaping of the language patterns and affects the linguistic structures. Different aspects of culture should be addressed at each level in the process of acquiring oral proficiency. For example, the teaching of socio-pragmatic skills in the field of Indonesian language teaching begins at the novice level when the student learns to use different address terms and formulaic greetings in different contexts. In this manner, the student gains an understanding of the cultural importance of acknowledging social status. Thus, it behooves those in the field of Indonesian language teaching to add a cultural competency component to the curriculum to address the language socialization process.

4.1   Language socialization: Learning to talk in culturally appropriate ways

The language socialization process refers to the process whereby individuals learn local ways of feeling, knowing, and acting via language patterns (Ochs, 2002); this socialization process entails learning how to perform speech acts (e.g. how to apologize, invite, excuse, disagree, etc.) in culturally appropriate ways. To effectively utter a speech act entails tailoring one's language to the social context while paying close attention to factors such as the setting, the social status of the interlocutor, and the topic of the conversation. Below we discuss the implications for the following four areas with respect to the acquisition of cultural competence: 1) address terms; 2) registers; 3) expressive/emotive terms; and 4) idiomatic expressions and metaphors.

4.2   Terms of address and reference

The manner in which a speaker uses pronouns, kin terms, titles, and names to address an interlocutor and refer to himself is an important cultural feature of Indonesian and one that requires culturally nuanced teaching materials. The choice of terms of address and reference not only establishes a social relationship (a hierarchy) between the conversational participants, but it also creates the emotional tone of the utterance. This tone either keeps the interlocutor at a distance from the speaker or establishes a circle of inclusion between the speaker and interlocutor. In Indonesian, the choice of terms of address and reference is made complex by the numerous options; learning how to choose from among the possibilities is an important element in the process of acquiring cultural competency.

Despite the fact that in many Indonesian social contexts there is a preference for the use of kin terms, titles, or names rather than pronouns for terms of address and reference, the OPG language samples show an almost exclusive use of pronouns. In the superior category, there are a number of instances where speakers use kin terms as terms of address, but one would expect that the use of kin terms would be more frequent, and also that it would begin at the novice level. The paucity of use of kin terms indicates a need for increased exposure to these culturally appropriate language patterns and explicit explanations regarding their cultural meanings. With such training, the student will be able to judge when the kin terms should be used. Below are two examples from the data that demonstrate the inability to choose culturally appropriate terms of address or reference, followed by a description of a number of sources of models for developing materials to teach the use of terms of address and reference.

In the following segment, an intermediate-low speaker refers to Kevin by using his name alone, even though the interviewer has referred to Kevin as *Om Kevin* (Uncle Kevin), conferring upon him a level of respect appropriate for a member of the older generation. The omission of the address term, *Om*, indicates that the interviewee does not understand the cultural importance of using kin terms to refer to members of the older generation.

> Interviewer: *Oh baik. Apa Om Kevin sudah bekerja?*
>   Oh good. Has uncle Kevin started to work?
> Interviewee: *Kevin bekerja. Kevin ...*
>   Kevin works. Kevin ...
> Interviewer: *Dia sudah bekerja atau masih sekolah?*
>   Has he started to work or does he still go to school?
> Interviewee: *Oh, Kevin tidak kerja. Kevin sekolah uh belajar ...*
>   Oh, Kevin does not work. Kevin school, uh, studies ...

In the segment below, the use of the word, *okay*, in response to the question about where Betsy comes from is slightly awkward. It may be interpreted as somewhat impolite by someone who is not used to interacting with a non-native speaker, because it seems to imply that the interviewee is reluctant to answer the question. In the context of this interview, the teacher understands that the

interviewee is simply processing the question and using the English expression to buy some time to think through the answer.

Interviewer:	*Bisa menyebutkan nama dan ...?*
	Can you say your name and …?
Interviewee:	*Uhm … nama saya? Nama saya Betsy … uhm dan apa?*
	Uhh … my name? My name is Betsy, … uhm and what?
Interviewer*:*	*Betsy berasal dari mana?*
	Betsy, where do you come from?
Interviewee:	*Okay … saya berasal dari Arizona sekarang uhm … tapi saya sudah uhm tinggal di Ohio …*
	Okay … I came from Arizona now uhm, … but I have uhm lived in Ohio.

The data from the OPG project also offers some examples of the effective use of kin terms by superior level speakers. In the two utterances below, the kin term *Bu* (ma'am) is used as a vocative to address the interviewer and, in this manner, to show respect and deference by asking for her opinion.

Interviewee:	*Jadwalnya cukup padat, ya **Bu**?*
	The schedule was quite full. Isn't that right ma'am?
Interviewee:	*Pendapat saya ya, kita seharusnya melawak sewaktu berkuliah, ya **Bu**? Karena bisa mengurangkan stress, mengurangkan beban untuk menjadi mahasiwa itu.*
	My opinion is that we should make jokes while in class, don't you agree ma'am? That's true because it can decrease stress and decrease the burden of being a student.

This superior level speaker has spent time in Indonesia and, thus, it is likely that the cultural knowledge regarding the use of an address term was acquired in-country, demonstrating the effectiveness of cultural immersion in the acquisition of cultural competence. Despite this, in this paper, we argue that teaching materials can aid in the acquisition of cultural competence by offering models and explanations of culturally appropriate language patterns. Thus, it is important to develop materials that include models of conversations where a variety of terms of address and reference are used, accompanied by explanations of the social and cultural meanings of these choices.

A rich source of data for developing such teaching materials is the media (films, television, radio, magazines, and social media). For example, the following quote from Helvy Tiana Rosa's 2011 novel, "Ketika Mas Gagah Pergi dan Kembali," demonstrates the use of kin terms instead of pronouns in a conversation to show the social relationship (hierarchy) between the older man and the young girl. In the example below, the terms *pak* meaning father/sir and *adik* meaning younger sibling/friend are used as fictive kin terms meaning *you* (second person singular) between strangers. The fictive kin terms create a closeness (using the analogy of a family) between the conversational partners and show respect for the man.

Young woman:	*Ada apa Pak? tanyaku.*
	What is it, sir? I asked.
Older man	*Adik ini dari yayasan mana?*
	What organization are you with?

(Rosa, 2011, p. 88)

Another function of the address term is to add politeness and deference to speech acts in which the speaker is requesting assistance from an interlocutor of higher social status. The person making the request uses a respectful address term (e.g. *pak, bu*) in order to emphasize the degree of respect for the addressee, the dependence of the requester, and the significance of the request. The more frequent the use of the address term, the greater the deference and respect being expressed. Below

is an example from an email from a student who is requesting a letter of recommendation from her professor. The request reads as follows:

> *Kabar saya baik* **Bu**. **Ibu**, *boleh saya minta bantuan,* **Ibu**? *Saya mau mendaftar universitas,* **Bu**. *Apa* **Ibu** *bersedia menulis surat rekomendasi buat saya? Terima kasih banyak,* **Bu**. *Saya tunggu kabar dari* **Ibu**.
>
> I am well, ma'am. Ma'am, may I ask your help, ma'am? I want to apply to the university, ma'am. Are you, ma'am, willing to write a letter of recommendation for me? Thank you very much, ma'am. I await news from you, ma'am.

In this short request for a letter of recommendation, the writer uses the respectful term of address *ibu (bu)* seven times. Although this is a written request, a spoken request would also use the respectful term *ibu* in a similar manner. Because the language pattern in Indonesian is significantly different from a similar speech act in English, the second language learner needs to be exposed to a wide variety of examples before being asked to produce a culturally appropriate request similar to the one above.

Another commonly used manner of addressing a conversational partner or referring to oneself is to use a given name rather than a kin term, title, or pronoun. In the following passage from a short story, the speaker refers to himself as *Eron* (the speaker's name) rather than using a pronoun, meaning *I*.

> *Pulang kuliah hari ini cepat, jadi Eron ajak mampir.*
> Because (I) was coming home early today, so Eron (I) invited (implied her) to stop over.
>
> (Rosa, 2011, p. 119)

In the first clause above, the subject of the clause is deleted, while in the second clause the speaker's name, *Eron*, is used instead of the pronoun *I* (*saya*). In conversation, it is common to avoid the use of the pronoun *I*. For example, *Melisa sudah makan*? (Have you (Melisa) eaten) *Ya, sudah*. (Yes, (I) have.) In this example, the response does not contain the pronoun *I*.

In addition to kin terms, titles such as *dok* for doctor or *prof/professor* for professor are used as terms of address when the context is formal. The following quote, taken from a radio interview produced by Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) from Australia, shows the use of the title *professor/prof* to address and give respect to the interviewee. The interviewer begins the interview with a greeting of welcome and then presents her initial question. In the two-sentence segment below, the interviewer uses the honorific term of address (*professor/prof*) five times to express respect for this scholar.

> *Selamat siang* **professor** *dan selamat datang kembali di Melbourne* **prof**. **Prof**, *sampai dengan saat ini, kalau* **profesor** *melihat kerja sama antara kedua negara itu, dialog regional ini, hal apa lagi yang masih perlu ditingkatkan itu,* **prof**?
>
> Good afternoon professor and welcome back to Melbourne, prof. Prof, up until now, when you observe cooperative projects between the two countries or regional dialogue, what is it that still must be improved upon, prof?
>
> ("Dialog Australia Indonesia," June 25, 2013[2])

The use of the title connotes respect for the interviewee and formality for the setting; and the repetition of the title adds respect for the interlocutor.

The mastery of the culturally-nuanced meanings of terms of address and reference (pronouns, kin terms, and names) described above is a complex task that requires a culturally rich set of models and carefully crafted explanations of the meanings and appropriate contexts for these language patterns. Despite the nuanced cultural meanings and the varied contexts in which the non-pronoun terms of address and reference are used, it is important that some of these uses are taught to the novice and intermediate level speakers so that they begin to acquire an understanding of the social

and cultural values of Indonesia. As proficiency increases, the second language speaker will gain a better control of the terms and contexts in which they are used.

The acquisition of cultural competence is a long, slow process and one that involves a great deal of exposure in order to learn the language patterns, their contexts, and meanings. It is worth noting that students did not use the informal pronoun, *kamu*, because they have been taught socio-pragmatics of that pronoun. Students have been taught that *kamu* is only appropriate in informal contexts where the interlocutor is of the same or lower social status. The teaching of socio-pragmatic rules in this case has been effective in creating more culturally competent speakers. Since the use of kin terms, names, and titles rather than pronouns does not involve the mastery of difficult grammatical constructions, students at the novice and intermediate levels can begin to learn some of the terms of address. It is likely that the preference for using pronouns rather than names, kin terms, or titles is merely the result of lack of exposure to culturally appropriate language patterns. This gap in cultural competence can be addressed through the development of culturally rich models drawing on authentic material.

4.3   Registers

Language registers are important markers of speech events; they characterize the level of formality of an event based on social characteristics such as the speaker's identity, setting, topic and intent of the speech act. Although one can distinguish between registers used in written and spoken contexts, there is also a wide range of variation within the categories of oral and written speech events and no clear boundaries between the various registers. A more formal register is characterized by the following linguistic elements: the use of verbal and nominal affixation; vocabulary choices that are marked as formal; the explicitness of the utterance; the use of respect terms; and the absence of many of the expressive particles. The student of Indonesian must first learn how to control the linguistic features that increase formality and then learn how to recognize what constitutes a context that warrants various degrees of formality. These two tasks demand that the student listen to numerous speech acts that express varying degrees of formality, understand the culturally important contextual differences, and then be able to produce the appropriate registers in new contexts. There are, of course, many levels of formality for speech events, and not just two, informal and formal; this makes the mastery of registers complex. The control of appropriate registers is a skill that only slowly emerges, beginning at the intermediate-high level when students begin to control the relevant linguistic components that are used to mark a speech event as formal.

At the intermediate-high and advanced levels, the student begins to control the use of the *ber-*, *meN-*, and *di-* verbal prefixes that are used to indicate formality. For example, advanced students begin to distinguish between the uses of the expressions, *bersama anak-anak* and *sama anak-anak.* In addition, the second-language learner recognizes the differences between pairs of words that carry equivalent referential meanings but are used in different registers. For example, the verb *to say* in an informal context is *bilang*, while in a formal context it is *mengatakan*. At the advanced level, there is increasing skill at tailoring the language to the formal register through the use of verbal affixation (*ber-, meN-, di-*) as well as the nominal affixation (*per-an, peng-an, ke-an*) and the use of the verb *adalah* to define terms.

Despite the emerging awareness of the role of registers, the OPG data suggest that the speakers in this sample were frequently unable to maintain register consistency. This inability may be due to a lack of control of the linguistic elements that mark formality and/or a lack of ability to focus on register consistency. In the following sentence, the *meN-* verbal prefix on the verbs *tolong* and *dapat* is indicative of an effort to use a formal register, yet the sentence ends with the colloquial word, *kerjaan* rather than the formal noun, *pekerjaan* (as well as an incorrect passive verb formation).

> Interviewee: *Apa yang dia akan lakukan untuk menolong ekonomi AS dan menolong orang*
>   *penduduk AS mendapat kerjaan?*
>   What will he do to help the U.S. economy and help the U.S. citizens find work?

In another example from the OPG data, a speaker chooses a register that is too formal for the setting. When asked what his favorite dessert is, a student offers a response that has characteristics of a formal register typical of academic discourse (including the words *yaitu* and *adalah*) rather than of an informal register used in casual conversations about food preferences.

> Interviewee: *Ada satu dessert yang saya suka, yaitu es krim goreng. Itu adalah makanan baru yang*
>   *saya suka.*
>   There is one dessert that I like, that is fried ice cream. That is new food that I like.

Register choices and register consistency are difficult aspects of the language socialization process that require a great deal of exposure and practice. The speakers in the OPG project demonstrate the need for more explicit teaching of the linguistic features of different registers and the cultural contexts in which they are used.

4.4   Expressive particles

At the superior level, there are a number of instances that demonstrate the appropriate use of some expressive terms such as *sih, kok, kan, lho,* and *nah*. These expressive terms offer 1) meta-comments on the truth value of the speaker's statement or the interlocutor's prior statement (*sih, kok, kan, lho*) or 2) express a conclusion or discourse coherence (*nah*). The superior level students who primarily used the particles *sih*, and *nah* have lived in Indonesia and thus their skills have likely been acquired in-country and not from curricular materials.

These expressive terms are primarily used in spoken, informal and semi-formal discourse contexts where one is asserting an opinion or debating a point. In general, formal (written) discourse requires that the writer be explicit about presuppositions and assertions, and thus expressive particles are avoided. The data from this project show that the superior level speakers are able to appropriately use some of these expressive particles to assert and support an opinion that differs from the one the interviewer presents. This ability to argue a point is a feature of the superior level. See the example below.

> Interviewee: *Mereka ya tidak ditangkap **sih**, tapi mereka dibawa kembali ke sekolah atau ke rumah.*
>   They were not captured (contrary to your assumption), but they were taken back to school or to their homes.

In the excerpt from extended discourse below, the superior speaker effectively uses verbal sign post, *nah*, to make the language coherent and flowing.

> Interviewee: ***Nah**, kalau sejauh saya tahu, belum ada cabang polisi begitu di Indonesia.*
>   Now, as far as I know, there is no branch of the police like that in Indonesia.

It is interesting to note that, in many Indonesian cultural contexts where there is a difference of opinion between a superior and a subordinate, it is inappropriate to use these language patterns. Rather than using one of these particles, a linguistic strategy of indirection to insure politeness would be demanded. This type of indirection is a characteristic of the distinguished level and thus beyond the ability of the superior speaker. It would be useful for teachers to expose the superior level students to examples of such indirection which characterizes a speaker at the distinguished level. On balance, the superior level speakers' command of a few of these expressive particles is impressive and reinforces the belief that, with exposure, students readily acquire the cultural competence implied in these particles.

4.5 Idiomatic expressions, metaphors and prosodic elements

The use of idiomatic expressions, metaphors, and prosodic elements begin to emerge at the superior level. For example, one interviewee used the metaphor, *mendarah daging* (literally to become flesh and blood).

> Interviewee: *Langsung itu sudah mendarah daging di dalam masyarakat orang Indonesia.*
> Right away that became second nature in Indonesian society.

At the superior level, other linguistic elements emerge, such as the use of repetition, stress, and intonation to add emphasis. The interlocutor can sense that there is a culturally appropriate melody in the speaker's language, as the speaker lengthens words for emphasis, adds stress on phrases to highlight thoughts, and uses rhetorical devices such as repetition to make a point. In extended discourse, the speaker effectively uses sign posts such as *nah*, to make the language coherent and flowing.

5   Conclusion

The OPG project has made a first step in developing descriptors for the oral proficiency levels of Indonesian in a bottom-up manner (See the draft of the Indonesian OPG at http://seasia.wisc.edu/Resources/OPG.htm), while also creating consensus among the Indonesian language teachers with respect to the value of the assessment tool. A beneficial side-effect of the project is to shed light on the importance of teaching cultural competence; second language uses must be socialized into the culturally appropriate language patterns that reflect the ways of thinking and interacting of the Indonesian speech community. These language patterns must be explicitly modeled and taught so that the second language learner can acquire cultural competence. The language socialization process is best begun in the early stages of language acquisition; some aspects such as the use of terms of address and reference can be introduced at the novice and intermediate levels, while other socio-pragmatic rules are best taught at the advanced and superior levels. Foreign language teachers must begin to consider the importance of teaching for cultural competence by including in the curriculum and the assessment tools authentic materials from literature, film, or social media that model culturally appropriate ways of uttering speech acts. Students will then learn the complex and nuanced social and cultural meanings of the different ways of saying 'the same thing.' The second language speakers will learn to control more than the vocabulary and the grammar of a language; they will gain an understanding of the cultural values and the social structure of the society and become culturally competent participants in the society.

Notes

[1] The following is a segment from an oral proficiency interview with a student studying Indonesian. In this interview, the speaker uses nine instances of the word *saya* in the subject position. The bold has been added to the transcription to highlight the use of the pronoun, *saya*: "**Saya** *suka belajar bahasa Indonesia. Bahasa Indonesia tidak sulit. Saya tidak berbahasa bahasa banyak, saya tau Spanyol sedikit dan bahasa Indonesia sedikit juga. Saya tidak tinggal di Meksiko, saya belajar tahu di immigrants. Tinggal di California.* **Saya** *belajar eh ... bekerja dengan mereka satu tahun.* **Saya** *pergi ke Calif,* **saya** *pulang, ehm* **saya** *mau berselancar satu dua ... satu hari.*"

[2] Available at http://media.sbs.com.au/audio/indonesian_130625_274096.mp3.

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Appendix 1

Assessment Criteria: Speaking Proficiency

Interviewee number/code: _____

Level		Global Tasks/Functions	Context	Content/Topics	Accuracy	Text Type
SUPERIOR						
ADVANCED		Function at the Superior Level, but not consistently.				
	H					
	Adv					
INTERMEDIATE		Function at the Advanced Level, but not consistently				
	H					
	Mid					
	L					
NOVICE		Function at the Intermediate Level, but *not consistently*				
	H					
	Mid					
	L	Essentially no functional communicative ability				