

THE PERCEPTION OF LYING OF INDONESIANS LIVING ABROAD

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ABSTRACT

There are four common requirements of the definition of 'lie'; they are (1) falsehood of a statement, (2) speaker's belief regarding the falsehood, (3) intention to deceive the hearer, and (4) belief that the hearer will be deceived by the statement (Mahon, 2015). Speaker's belief or subjective falsity is the most important element as argued by philosophers and linguists. This argument is true for speakers of English (Coleman & Kay, 1981), Arabic (Cole, 1996), and Spanish (Hardin, 2010; Eichelberger, 2012), but not for Indonesians (Adha, 2020) or Chinese people (Adha & Li, 2021). Indonesians and Chinese people consider objective falsity as the most important element in the definition of 'lie', but the latter group also emphasizes on intention, speaker-hearer relationship, and situational context. Since cultures have a role in shaping the choice and moral judgements about truth and deception (Fu, Xu, Cameron, Heyman & Lee, 2007), would Indonesians living and experiencing foreign cultures have a different perception about a lie? Specifically, would Indonesians living in China have a perception that is similar to Chinese people? A questionnaire consisting stories in Chinese Mandarin was distributed to 45 Indonesian respondents. All respondents have lived at least one year in China as foreign students in a Chinese university and have at least lower intermediate levels in Mandarin language. The result shows that the Indonesian respondents living abroad exhibit more uncertainty in their responses compared to Indonesian respondents in Adha's (2020) study. Thus, it is feasible to argue that a new environment with a different culture may affect one's perception.

Keywords: lie, culture, pragmatics, second language use

INTRODUCTION

What is a lie and how should it be defined? Those are common questions among researchers on the topic of deception and lie, either researchers from the subject of communication studies, philosophy or linguistics. Mahon (2015) describes four common requirements of the definition of lying, they are (1) falsehood of a statement, (2) speaker's belief regarding the falsehood, (3) intention to deceive the hearer, and (4) belief that the hearer will be deceived by the statement. Mahon (2008), who is a philosopher, defines a lie as a statement which is believed false by the speaker either with the intention that it will be believed true by another, or believed that it is believed to be true by the speaker, or with both intentions. Other philosophers such as Jennifer Lackey and Stephen Wright integrate the speaker's belief about the statement in their definitions. Lackey (2013) argues that the speaker lies when s/he states a statement that is believed to be false with the intention to be deceptive to another, while Wright (2018) insists that a speaker lies when s/he believes that the statement is false and/or believes the opposite truth of the statement. Linguists are also in line with philosophers' definitions in terms of including subjective falsity in the definition of lie. Dynel (2016: 202) proposes that a lie is what is said in the form of an assertion violating the first maxim of Quality that is "do not say what you believe is false". Furthermore, Meibauer (2014) defines lying as an insincere assertion where the liar acts as if s/he sincerely asserts propositional content *p* while s/he does not believe *p*. In an experimental research, Coleman & Kay (1981) conclude that subjective falsity is the most important element in the definition of lie.

Coleman & Kay's (1981) study was aimed at finding out the prototypical definition of lie based on three proposed elements: falsehood, speaker's belief and intention. Eight situations were created based on the combinations of these elements and then English speakers as respondents were asked to judge if the characters in the situations were lying or not. The result suggests that English speakers consider the characters' beliefs regarding the statement as the most important element. In other words, if a statement believed to be false turns out to be true, the statement is still a lie. As mentioned before, in their concluding remarks, Coleman & Kay (1981) argue that the prototypical lie in English is based on the subjective falsity as the most important element, followed by intention then falsehood. The same results

of this study were also obtained in the replicated studies with speakers of other languages, such as Arabic (Cole, 1996), and Spanish (Hardin, 2010; Eichelberger, 2012). However, in other replicated studies with Indonesians (Adha, 2020) and Chinese participants (Adha & Li, 2021), different results were acquired. For Indonesians and Chinese people, a lie is defined on its objective falsity, whether the statement is consistent with factual reality. To give a picture, when a person believes that her statement is false, but then the statement later turns out to be true, the character cannot be considered to be lying because the statement is compatible with reality. Turri & Turri (2015) explain that in such situations, the person only thinks s/he was lying but what s/he says is not a lie. Both Indonesian and Chinese people consider objective falsity or falsehood of the statement as the most important element. Moreover, the Chinese group emphasizes on intention, speaker-hearer relationship and situational context. These varying results may suggest that it is feasible to argue that cultural environment influences how 'lie' is perceived. Fu, Xu, Cameron, Heyman & Lee (2007) prompt that cultures have a role in shaping the choice and moral judgement about truth and deception. Now, questions may arise; how will the perception of someone who grew up in a certain cultural environment be when s/he experiences living in a country with a different culture? To be specific, will Indonesians living and experiencing Chinese cultures have a different perception about a lie? Will Indonesians living in China have a perception that is similar to Chinese people?

METHODOLOGY

In order to answer questions from the previous sections, a similar methodology applied in Adha's (2020) and Adha & Li's (2021) was also used for an experiment for this article. The methodology follows the one from the original study by Coleman & Kay (1981). As mentioned earlier, Coleman & Kay (1981:31–32) constructed eight stories based on the possible permutations of three elements of a prototypical lie; falsehood, belief, and intention. The stories were then modified by Adha & Li (2021: 4) so that the stories are linguistically and culturally applicable to their Chinese respondents. The present experiment also used the stories from Adha & Li's (2021) experiment. Below are the stories in their experiment.

1. Xiaoming ate the cake that Xiaohong wanted to give to the company. Xiaohong later asked Xiaoming: "Did you eat my cake?" Xiaoming replied: "No."
2. Manager Li, Manager Zhang and Manager Wang were playing golf. Manager Li carelessly stepped on Manager Zhang's ball. When Manager Zhang came back from the bathroom, he saw his ball stepped into the grass and asked. Manager Zhang: "Mr. Wang, did you step on my ball?" Mr. Wang: "Not me, Mr. Li did."
3. Zhang Hua knew that the fruit market was on the way from his home to the swimming pool. However, this was not true because the fruit market had moved away. His mother usually did not allow him to go swimming during the week. On one weekday, he planned to go swimming. When his mother asked him where to go, he replied: "I will go through the fruit market."
4. He Liu had a math exam one morning, but she did not want to take the exam because she did not prepare for it. So, she told her mother, "I'm sick." But what surprised her was that her mother took her temperature and found that she was really sick. Later in hospital, she was diagnosed with measles.
5. Zhang Jie was invited to his boss's house for dinner. After the dull dinner, Zhang Jie said to the hostess, "Thank you, today's dinner is great." He said this not because he really thought the dinner was great or he wanted to show others that he enjoyed the dinner. He only wanted to say something nice to the hostess, the wife of his boss, even though he didn't think she would believe what he said.
6. Li Hong and Zhang Yugang fell in love. One night, Zhang Yugang asked Li Hong "Have you seen Sun Kai this week?" (Sun Kai is Li Hong's ex-boyfriend). Li Hong replied, "He has broken his leg in these two weeks." Sun Kai did have a fracture for two weeks, but Li Hong did meet Sun Kai the night before.
7. Two patients were waiting for a surgery. The surgeon pointed to one of the patients and asked nurse Xiao Wang, "Is Li Gang here for appendectomy or tonsillectomy surgery?" Unfortunately,

Xiao Wang was confused by patients' medical records. Although she had just read the medical records of the two patients and did not want to lose her job, she still answered, "It's appendectomy surgery." Poor Li Gang was actually there for a tonsillectomy surgery.

8. Xiao He had two tickets for the basketball championship game. He was very happy and showed it to his boss. But his boss said to him, "Xiao He, if you don't come to work one day, you need a better excuse than that." Xiao He said, "I get it." On the day of the game, Xiao He called the boss to ask for a sick leave "Boss, I can't get to work today, I am sick." Unfortunately, he did not manage to watch the game because his little stomachache was later found to be a symptom of food poisoning. Xiao He was indeed sick when he said it on the phone.

The scoring method also followed Coleman & Kay (1981) in which the respondents were required to respond to two questions after reading each story. The first question is, "Do you think <the character>'s reply is?" (1) a lie (2) not a lie, or (3) I am not sure. This question is to evoke the degree of lying, while the second question is to evoke the respondents' degree of certainty. The second question is "I am ___ most people's answers are consistent with mine." The choices are (1) very certain, (2) certain, or (3) not certain that other people agree with them. After the questions, an optional comment section was also provided for the respondents to elaborate their choices. Respondents were free to provide the comments either in English, Indonesian, or Chinese Mandarin.

The following table shows the scoring scale used for the analysis. For example, the score 7, which is the most prototypical lie, was given when the respondent thought that the character was lying, and s/he was very certain that others would agree with her/him. Furthermore, if s/he was certain or uncertain that the character was lying, score 6 and 5 would be assigned respectively. When the respondent chose "I am not sure" for the first question, the second question's responses would be disregarded. Refer to the table below for an elaborated score assignment.

Table 1. The 7-Scoring Scale

First question response	Second question response	Scores assigned
lying	Very certain	7
	Certain	6
	Uncertain	5
I am not sure	(any)	4
Not lying	Uncertain	3
	Certain	2
	Very certain	1

Coleman & Kay (1981:31) constructed Story 1 to be the most prototypical lie whereas Story 2 to be not a lie. Accordingly, respondents who falsely responded for any of these stories, were discarded from the results and analysis. The questionnaire was circulated online using *Google Form* to 45 respondents. To be a respondent, the person must fulfill requirements, such as having lived at least one year in China as foreign students in a Chinese university and having at least HSK3 certificate, which equals to a lower intermediate level in Mandarin language. There were 5 respondents wrongly answered Story 1 without providing their reasons. Meanwhile, 7 respondents incorrectly answered Story 2. One of them provided an alternative assumption that is out of the context of the story. In the end, to follow Coleman & Kay's methodology, 12 respondents were not taken into analysis, leaving only 33 valid respondents.

Table 2. The Scores and Mean Scores for Each Story

Story	Total score	Mean score
1. (+++)	219	6.63
2. (---)	65	1.97
3. (+-+)	125	3.78
4. (-++)	155	4.69
5. (++-)	153	4.63
6. (--+)	137	4.15
7. (+--)	151	4.57
8. (-+-)	104	3.15

Table 2 above exhibits the stories, the scores and the mean scores from all valid respondents. In the column about stories, the symbols signify the presence (+) or the absence (-) of the respective

elements: falsehood, belief, and intention. For example, Story 1 which was constructed to be the most prototypical lie has all three elements present, meanwhile Story 6 has only one element, that is the element of intention.

ANALYSIS

This paper aims to find out whether there is an influence of culture in people's perception about lying. Specifically, the paper wants to find out if the perception about lying of Indonesians living abroad is similar to the natives of the country living in, in this case to Chinese people. For the analysis, the results of similar methodology from Adha & Li's (2021) work are taken into consideration. In addition, Adha's (2020) replicated study with Indonesian respondents is also presented. This will give us a more comprehensive understanding regarding the perception of lying of Indonesians living abroad.

Figure 1 below exhibits the mean scores of each story placed on the lie-value continuum. The numbers above the line are stories from each experiment. The results of the present experiment are represented by the triangles, the results with Chinese respondents (Adha & Li, 2021) are given in the circular shapes, and the results from Indonesian respondents (Adha, 2020) use rectangular shapes.

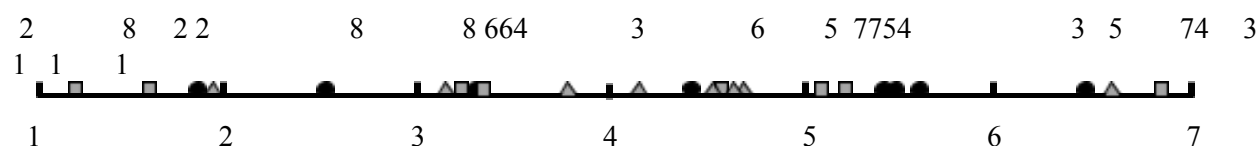


Figure 1. Stories from Three Different Experiments Placed on the Lie-Value Continuum

According to the figure, results of Story 1 and 2 from the present experiment are closer to results from the experiment with Chinese respondents. Adha & Li (2021) argue that the Chinese respondents tolerated other opinions and they were being modest in their responses for Story 1. However, the respondents in the present experiment focused more on the character's denial, which is in line with the explanation in Adha's (2021) study. Similarly, for Story 2, the majority of the respondents in this experiment believed that the character for this story lied, but they were more uncertain in their responses compared to respondents in Adha's (2020) experiment.

Story 5 result is also in the close proximity to the Chinese' result. But, unlike in Story 1 and 2, the comments from the present experiment also mirror the respondents from Adha & Li (2021). The respondents stated that a white lie was done to have a positive face, to be nice, and to follow the ethics. This means that the Indonesian respondents in the present experiment emphasized more on the acceptability of a white lie.

The result for Story 3 is relatively lower than the previous replicated studies. Furthermore, the respondents mainly considered the character did not lie had he not known the fruit's market had moved. Majority stressed the knowledge about the market's move when they had to determine if the character was lying. Or in other words, there is a recognition of the element of belief by many respondents. This recognition of the element of belief also suggests a new finding in replicated studies with respondents from Asia since this element is barely mentioned by the respondents in previous studies (Adha, 2020: 20; Adha & Li, 2021: 9). This recognition of the element of belief, however, did not occur in responses for Story 8, which was constructed to contain only an element of belief. However, the main score for this story is way higher than the other experiments.

The debates regarding languages influence thought or vice versa have been going on for decades. The finding in the present experiment supports the idea that languages indeed affect the way ones think. According to the respondents' comments in the present experiment, respondents who provided comments in Chinese Mandarin tend to align with Chinese people's comments in Adha & Li's (2021) study, meanwhile, when the comments were made in Indonesian, the comments mirror those from Adha's (2020) study. These results can be seen in responses for Story 4 in which the respondents show more empathy like Chinese people (Adha & Li, 2021: 9). Moreover, the comments for Story 8 focused on trust and losing confidence in a professional environment, which were barely given by respondents in Adha's (2020) study. As for the comments made in Indonesian, respondents mentioned about a lie becoming

reality for both Story 4 and 8. These comments can indeed be reflected in Indonesian saying, *perkataan adalah doa* ‘your words are your prayers’.

The mean scores for Story 7 for two different Indonesian groups appear to be almost similar. The comments received for the present experiment are also in line with the comments in the Chinese experiment (Adha & Li: 10) in which the statement was considered a lie because of its fatality or harm caused by the nurse’s mistake.

Finally, Story 6 has a mean score that is way higher than the previous results (Adha, 2020; Adha & Li, 2021). Indonesian respondents in Adha’s (2020) experiment considered the character in Story 6 to be not a liar since what she said was coherent to reality. She was just not telling the whole of the story. Meanwhile, the Chinese’s slightly higher mean score is caused by the element of intention as argued by Adha & Li (2021: 10). As for the present experiment, the respondents made comments that focus on deviating the answer when the comments were made in Indonesian, and the comments on inconsistency with the facts and the reality were mentioned when they were made in Chinese Mandarin.

CONCLUSION

Findings in the present experiment with Indonesian respondents living in China turn out to be resemblant to the findings from the experiment with Chinese people by Adha & Li (2020). The comments about positive face, empathy, ethics and trust were also found in the present experiment but were hardly mentioned by respondents in Adha’s (2020) experiment. This suggests that living in China, to some extent, influences Indonesians’ perception in their judgement of situations where a lie occurs.

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