

# Politeness Principles

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## Politeness Principles in Traditional Market Interactions

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### ABSTRACT

This research outlines how the interaction among Javanese women takes place in traditional markets from a linguistic stand point. It aims primarily at describing the politeness principles in the speech of Javanese women taking place at Karangploso traditional markets in Malang city, East Java Province. There is evidence that women dominate the interaction of selling and buying that occurs in traditional markets considering their role in the domestic domain. The speech act of Javanese women in traditional markets in Malang city was analyzed based on Leech's politeness principles. These principles consist of six maxims namely generosity maxim, tact maxim, approbation maxim, agreement maxim, modesty maxim, and sympathy maxim. The Javanese women's speeches were classified on the basis of all of the maxims' characteristics. The method used is a qualitative method in accordance with Bodgam and Taylor theory. The results showed that all maxims of politeness principles were found in the interaction involving women in traditional markets in Malang city. More importantly, the use of high Javanese language as a means of communication containing the realization of politeness principles may reduce the probability of verbal abuse occurring in the interaction among Javanese women in Kaarangploso traditional markets in Malang city.

**Keywords:** Javanese women, Politeness Principles, Traditional Market

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## INTRODUCTION

Communication strategy between speaker and hearer is pivotal in order for both to achieve the goals. Successful strategy may result sincere attention to the speaker. Moreover, according to Huang (2008) in communication with others, it is best to consult what is appropriate in act and culture in order to avoid misunderstanding which is caused by culture differences. It means that different social and culture setting needs different communication strategies to get communication benefits. Furthermore, the use of communication strategies are also depicted in the life of Javanese women.

The central role of Javanese women can be seen in two areas i.e public and domestic domains in which their involvement is irrefutable. In relation to their role in public and domestic domains, interaction among Javanese women may take place in various settings from a community hall to traditional markets. To fulfill their daily needs and the equipments for ceremonies, most Javanese women go to the traditional markets

considering that the price for fruits, young coconut leaves and traditional cakes which are often needed to make offerings is cheaper.

The research on the interaction among women taking place in traditional markets demonstrates interesting finding. Ambarwati (2013) argued that traditional markets are one of the places where verbal abuse often happens. There is evidence that women dominate the interaction taking place in traditional markets involving two parties namely sellers (Slr) and buyers (Byr). Interaction in the form of transaction process between sellers and buyers is reflected from the speech acts and gestures. The speech events in traditional markets may result in inconvenience like the expression of anger, pressure, anxiety, or an insult that sometimes happens during the process of bargaining. Take for example if a buyer wants to bargain in her way that causes disappointment of the seller. Having done the analysis, then, Ambarwati (2013) classified five factors that influence verbal abuse in several traditional markets like intention to convey something, to express mood, to express one's feeling concerning environment, particular situation and the state of social level.

Despite the research finding on the existence of verbal abuse in traditional markets posed above, it is this paper that tries to investigate the realization of politeness principles that may create new opposing atmosphere in the interaction among Javanese women in traditional markets. The research was conducted based on the assumption that women are potential social beings who may respect each other through the language they use to exchange information. In addition, it is clear that in the study of speech act, politeness is part of speech event that is variously proposed by several linguists with the aim of describing the principles of showing politeness between the speakers and the hearers. Thus, this study aims at outlining how the interaction among Javanese women takes place in traditional markets from a linguistic stand point. It aims primarily at describing the politeness principles in the speech of Javanese women taking place in several Karangploso traditional markets of Malang city.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Yule (1996) stated that the concept of politeness is strongly related to how people as human beings interact to each other and show their politeness within a particular culture. Two possibilities that may be clearly seen in defining the concept of politeness is that (1) the term "politeness" is understood and believed as a fixed concept related to a phrase etiquette or 'polite social behavior', within a culture, (2) politeness shares a number of various wide-ranging principles to be polite in social interaction inside a particular culture. Politeness principles can be seen as being modest, tactful, generous, and sympathetic toward other people. Before specifying what politeness is, Yule (1996) assumed that people who are involved in the interaction setting are commonly aware that there are norms and principles that should be obeyed in the society. Based on the setting where it is realized, politeness exists in different places like, for example, in a work place. The concept of "face" which means the public self-image of a person is related to the principles of politeness since the term refers to the self social sense and emotional owned by anyone which is to be recognized by others. Politeness in a communication is used as a means of demonstrating awareness of another person's face. Frequently, this awareness is the realization of respect

in a socially distant interaction. Meanwhile, the realization of friendliness, camaraderie or solidarity is the equivalent awareness in a socially close situation.

### **Leech's Politeness Principles**

The term politeness is the reflection of manners, etiquette or custom meaning the custom of respecting others in a civilized society in order to maintain a good relationship between human beings (Sibarani, 2004). Politeness principles are maintained between two parties in a particular setting of speech event. These principles include the involvement of participants that play their roles as speakers and hearers. Among many linguists who discussed politeness in a speech event, Geoffrey Leech formulated six maxims which represent the features of polite behavior in an exchange of information. Leech's politeness principles demonstrate how language should be understood and produced on the basis of politeness. The six maxims proposed by Leech are respectively presented as follows:

**1. The Tact maxim**

This maxim represents the effort of expressing politeness by making other's cost minimum and making maximum benefit to other. Leech emphasized that the tact maxim may be found as the impositives that make the hearer do something. The tact maxim is realized in the utterance that shows the intention of showing politeness by asking someone indirectly.

**2. The Generosity Maxim**

The maxim of generosity is realized by minimizing benefit to oneself and maximizing cost to others. This maxim focuses on the one as a speaker that should maximize cost to the hearer. It is usually realized in an advice utterance and impositives. Simply said, the generosity maxim is to reduce benefit of the speaker and add the benefit of the hearer. By utilizing this maxim, the speaker is expected to respect others by declining the profits for him/herself and incline benefits for others. (Rahardi, 2005)

**3. The Approbation Maxim**

The realization of the approbation maxim is when one minimizes dispraise of other and maximizes praise of other. In particular, this is such an effort to avoid expressing unpleasant words/things about the listener. Unlike the tact maxim and the generosity maxims that often occur in the form of impositives, the approbation maxim is realized in assertives/representatives and expressives. Through assertives/representatives and expressive, there are chances for the speaker of utterances to say the true propositional as well as to show the speaker's feeling. A good example of this maxim is the courtesy of congratulation and giving compliment to others.

**4. The Modesty Maxim**

The maxim of modesty gives a chance for the participants to lower praise of oneself and maximize or escalate the dispraise of the hearers. Similar to the maxim of approbation, this maxim is used in assertives/representatives and expressives to demonstrate the speakers' expression on the levels of bad or good evaluation of oneself or other. To represent the effort of minimizing praise of oneself and

maximizing dispraise of hearers, the maxim of modesty is often represented by the apologies.

**5. The Agreement Maxim**

The agreement maxim is realized by maximizing agreement between interlocuter and interlocutee and minimize disagreement between self and other. The expression of regret and partial agreement are the examples of this maxim. It is usually expressed in assertives/representatives that is intended to be more polite. In the case of exchanging information from speaker to hearer, such politeness will give effect to those who hear the utterance.

**6. The Sympathy Maxim**

Mostly applied in assertives/representatives, the maxim of sympathy aims at reducing the antipathy between interlocuter and interlocutee and escalating sympathy between interlocuter and interlocutee. This maxim usually occurs when one has reached an achievement and others should express their sympathy through the courtesy of congratulation. The sympathy or condolences must also be given when the calamity occurs to others. The sympathy maxim sometimes is also used to maintain the solidarity between the speaker and the hearer.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a qualitative descriptive research since it aims at finding out the lingual phenomenon of the Javanese women when the research is undertaken, particularly the realization of politeness principles. The method used is a qualitative method in accordance with Bodgam and Tailor (Moleong, 1999). Qualitative method enables the production of descriptive data either in written or in verbal forms. In this study, the data were collected naturally by involving the researchers to the interaction with Javanese women in their roles as sellers and buyers in traditional markets.

The data were obtained through observation method and interview method (Seale, 2012). In addition to gaining the validity, note taking technique (Sudaryanto, 1993) with its range to sort the data to determine reaction and the level of audibility was also applied. The speech of Javanese women were observed through the activity of selling and buying between the subject of the reserach i.e the Javanese women as the sellers and the reserachers as the buyers. In the results and discussion, the conversation showing the realization of politeness principles is presented with the seller abbreviated as (Slr) and the buyer abbreviated as (Byr) in different settings of Karangploso traditional markets in Malang city.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

All principles of politeness including tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim and sympathy maxim are realized in the interaction of Javanese women in Karangploso traditional markets in Malang city. The following is the classification of Javanese women utterances produced in the transaction process that usually takes place in four traditional markets chosen as the site research.



**(1) The Tact Maxim**

Through the principle of maxim of tact that is reducing cost to other and adding benefit to hearers, speakers can show good manners to avoid envy and jealousy to others. (Rahardi, 2005). The tact maxim implies the attitude of “being wise” to show respect to others as an effort to maximize benefit to other. The conversation below demonstrates the realization of tact maxim taking place between a woman who wanted to buy young coconut leaves for a ceremony.

Data (1) Dialogue with a young coconut leaves seller

Byr : Pinten Januripun setunggal iket?

How much is a bunch of young coconung leaves?

Slr : Butuh pinten? Kaleh ewu mawon

How many do you need? Two thousands five hundreds only (rupiahs)

Byr : Wah, reginipun sami kalian wonten jawi. Tingali janure, teksih enem sanget wonten janur alit ten lebete

Wow, it is the same as in stall (outside the markets). See the coconut leaves. They are young leaves. They are small (leaves) inside

Slr : **Nggih, butuh pinten? Saget kirang sekedik**

**Yes, how much do you want to buy? You can bargain**

Byr : Ngapunten, mboten siyos, januripun alit-alit

No, I won't take them. The leaves are small

The principle of being wise is applied by the seller through her attitude of respecting the buyer. This conversation shows the effort of the seller to reduce cost to hearers and maximize benefit to hearers. In the conversation posed above, the tact maxim can be found in two situations involving the seller and the buyer in the big traditional market in Malang city named Karangploso market. First, despite the negative sense in the buyer's statement, “Wow, it is the same as in the stall (outside the market). See the coconut leaves. They are young leaves. They are small (leaves) inside.”, the seller was not offended. Instead, she shows her patience by continuing the conversation to maximize the benefit of the buyer by saying, “Yes, how much do you want to buy? You can bargain.” The directive “you can bargain” demonstrates clearly that the seller applied the tact maxim in order to establish good interaction with the buyer. As initiated by the seller, the realization of the tact maxim in the conversation above will avoid the possibility of verbal abuse because one of the participants involved in speech event tried to be polite and wise toward others.

**(2) The Generosity Maxim**

The concept of generosity maxim is to show the feeling of being generous by minimizing benefit to oneself and maximizing cost to others. This maxim is mostly applied in an advice utterance and impositives. The generosity maxim is to reduce benefit to the speaker and add the benefit of the hearer. The realization of this maxim makes the speakers show respect to others by reducing the profits for themselves and maximize profits for others. (Rahardi, 2005). Data (2) demonstrates

the application of the generosity maxim when the seller gives a friendly response to buyer who buys tomato.

Data (2) Dialogue with vegetable seller

Byr : Bu, punopo wonten tomat nggih

Bu, do you sell tomato?

Slr : wonten, kagem pinten?

Yes, how much do you want?

Byr : **Gangsal ewu. Pangapunten nyuwun pilihaken ingkang sae nggih  
Ten thousand (rupiahs). Please, choose the good quality tomato.**

Slr : nggih....

okay...

Byr : Here is the money

Ini uangnya bu

Slr : Makasi nggih

Thank you

In accordance with Sibarani (2004) who proposed that politeness equals to manners or etiquette or custom that exists in a civilized society to maintain a good relationship between human beings, the realization of generosity maxim is found in the conversation between the buyer and the seller. This conversation took place in Karangploso traditional market as one of the research sites. The vegetables seller and the buyer talked to each other by means of high Javanese language. Such a conversation demonstrated polite speech level presented by both the speaker and the hearer. The specific characteristic of generosity maxim is to establish mutual respect involving the participants of the speech event. The generosity maxim is found to be applied in the utterance, "Please, choose the good quality tomato" which is an idiomatic translation for, "Pangapunten nyuwun pilihaken ingkang sae nggih" This utterance shares a polite directive from the buyer to the seller by using the high Javanese language.

### (3) The Approbation Maxim

In a speech event, the approbation maxim is applied when the speaker tries to decline dispraise of the hearer and incline praise of the hearer. The realization of the approbation maxim is, in fact, an effort to avoid expressing something unpleasant about the interlocutee or hearer. The characteristic of approbation maxim is different from the maxim of tact and the maxim of generosity that are mostly found in the form of impositives, assertives/representatives and expressives. The use of assertives/representatives and expressive often lead someone to say the true propositional and to express the speaker's feeling. The courtesy of congratulation and giving compliment to others are the two real examples of the approbation maxim.

Data (3) Dialogue with a seller who offered goods

Slr : Pinarak **Bu Hajah**, tahunipun putih-putih enggal saking pabrik

Please come here, **Hajah Lady**.

The tofu is white and just now produced from factory

Byr : Matur nuwun Bu..., sampun wonten  
Thanks, bu but I have had it.

Although the dialogue presented above does not take much time, the sellers and buyers interact in a convenient atmosphere in which the characteristic of the approbation maxim is realized. The seller addressed the prospective buyer by the phrase “Bu Hajah” which literally means Hajah Lady (a call for woman who has gone for hajj in Mecca). It aims at establishing comfort and convenience to the hearer. Based on the observation, “Bu Hajah” is usually used to greet attractive young women who come to the traditional market. The seller’s way of calling the buyer and the women who passed in front of the seller by the term of address “Bu Hajah” can be classified as an effort to apply the characteristic of approbation maxim. This maxim may reduce the possibility of insulting others. Conversely, it increases praise of the hearer as an expression of politeness to other.

#### (4) The Modesty Maxim

The modesty maxim is realized through to the concept of minimizing dispraise of the hearer and maximizing praise of the hearer. This maxim is usually expressed in assertives/ representatives and expressives to show the speakers’ expression on the degree of good or bad evaluation of other or self. The apologies are appropriate examples to represent the effort of reducing praise of self and increasing dispraise of self. Data (4) presents the conversation between Javanese women conducted in the process of bargaining for a pair of sandals. Apologies are implied in the dialogue that makes it strongly presents the characteristic of the modesty maxim.

Data (4) Dialogue with a sandals seller

Slr : Pados sandal nggih?  
Are you looking for sandals?

Byr : Inggih, pinten ingkang niki, Bu? Nggadah ingkang cemeng?  
Yes, how much are these (sandals), Bu? Do you have the black ones?

Slr : Meniko Rp 30.000,- Ngapunten, dalem namung nggadahi ingkang abrid, **Umi**  
They are Rp 30.000,- sorry, I have only the red ones, **Umi**

Byr : Kulo remen sakmeniko, empuk Bu. Angsal kirang?  
I like the sandals. They are comfortable, Bu. Can I bargain?

Slr : Ngapunten, sampun regi pas, namung Rp. 25.000,- sampu mirah meniko  
(Sorry), it has been good price. Just take them Rp 25.000,-.  
It is cheap price.

Based on the theory, the principle of modesty maxim is demonstrated by reducing praise of oneself, and add to the praise of others. This maxim is often referred to the situation when speakers are expected to keep a low profile by reducing the praise to himself/herself. Apologies are proper examples of the modesty maxim that may be established in a situation when the seller felt sorry that



she did not have the alternative colour asked by the buyer. In addition, the seller also called the buyer using the term of address “Umi” which is usually used as term of address to a Javanese woman from a high social statues including those who has done hajj in Mecca, who are well educated, who has professional job, and who has special position in society or being wife of someone important in society. In the dialogue, the two topics including the apologies and term of address can be interpreted as an effort to reward the hearer.

#### (5) The Agreement Maxim

Maximizing agreement between self and other and reduce the disagreement between speaker and hearer is the specific characteristic of the agreement maxim. The statement or expression of regret and partial agreement are the examples of this maxim. It is usually expressed in assertives/representatives that are used to show politeness. The conversation below presents the realization of the agreement maxim in order to keep the interaction flowing which gives effect to the hearer.

Data (5) The setting is in a fruit seller:

- Slr : Pinarak Bu, monggo dipun tumbas apelipun kersane kulo saget wangsul  
Come here, beautiful lady, please buy the fruits here so I have money  
to go home
- Byr : Pinten niki Bu?  
How much is it?
- Slr : **Rp. 10.000, mawon Bu**  
It is (fixed) Rp 10.000, Bu
- Byr : **Rp. 8.500 nggih, kulo mendet tigang kilo**  
Can I have it Rp. 8.500?, I take 3 kg
- Slr : **Inggih.. Monggo Bu..**  
Yes, you can take them.

Principally speaking, the agreement maxim is applied to increase agreement between speaker and hearer. In data (5), the principle of agreement maxim is realized when the buyer bargained the fixed price of the corn that was firstly offered by the seller. The utterance in Javanese “Rp. 10.000 mawon, Bu” implies that the price offered for a kilogram of apple was just Rp. 10.000. It seems that there is no chance for bargaining. However, the buyer tried to propose new price supported with the intention to buy more than 1 kilogram of apple. Then, they met the agreed condition as the application of the agreement maxim through the utterance, “Inggih... Monggo bu,” that idiomatically means, “Yes, you can take them.” The expressive “yes, you can take them” can be interpreted as the agreement maxim which is particularly realized by the seller in response to the buyer’s proposal. Meeting the agreement that satisfies the involved parties is a form of mutual respect for each other. In addition, concerning the language used as a means of gaining the agreement, both the seller and buyer utilized the high Javanese language that makes the quality of respecting other who is higher.

**(6) The Sympathy Maxim**

The main idea of the maxim of sympathy is reducing the antipathy between ourselves with others and increasing self sympathy with others. It is interesting to present the conversation below as the representation of the sympathy maxim.

Data (6) The setting is in the spices seller

- Byr : Pinten setunggal bungkusipun, Bu?  
How much is a pack of the spices, Bu?
- Slr : Sedoso Bu  
Ten thousand (rupiahs) Bu
- Byr : Lah, sakniki sedanten langkung awis nggih Bu.  
Wow, everything is expensive now, Bu.
- Slr : Nggih, Bu  
Yes, Bu
- Byr : Bisanaipun namung gangsal ewu.  
It used to be five thousands
- Slr : Saniki sampun benten, punopo-punopo sampun awes  
It's different now. Everything is expensive.
- Byr : Menawi mekaten, setunggal bungkus mawon  
Well, give me one (pack) then
- Slr : Niki, bu  
Here you are
- Byr : Niku penjanengan tambahi lombok ageng setunggal nggih  
Give me a chili. Add to the spices (I buy)
- Slr : Mboten saget Bu, lombok ageng inggih awis  
No, chili is expensive now
- Seller's Sister : **Paringi, lah wong namung nyuwun lombok ageng setunggal.**  
**Give her one. She just ask for one chili.**
- Byr : Matur nuwun bu.... Kulo biasa langganan mriki  
Thanks, I usually buy the spices here

The sympathy maxim is expressed to reduce antipathy among the participants in a particular speech event. Although the utterance is not in the form of courtesy of congratulation and condolences, the speech act of the seller's wife can be interpreted as the application of the sympathy maxim. This maxim is also used to maintain the solidarity between the interlocuter and the interlocutee. The seller's sister expressed his sympathy to the buyer through her utterance showing the effort of avoiding antipathy. The utterance in Javanese "Paringi, lah wong namung nyuwun lombok ageng setunggal" refers to the expression of sympathy to others when the buyer wants to get a chili as her "free good" as she usually comes to the seller to buy spices. Thus, the sympathy maxim may not always be either in the form of courtesy of congratulation nor in the form of condolences. This maxim

can also interpreted based on the situation of the speech event that make it possible to be applied.

## CONCLUSION

From a linguistic stand point, the interaction among women is worth analyzing since the activities of selling and buying involves the exchange of information from one party to another party taking place by means of a language used to make communication happens. More specifically, the speech act of Javanese women in conducting the interaction as sellers and buyers, or among buyers and seller themselves can be analyzed from politeness principles that cover six maxims namely sympathy maxim, tact maxim, approbation maxim, generosity maxim, modesty maxim, and agreement maxim.

All principles of politeness are realized in the interaction of Javanese women in Karangploso traditional markets in Malang city. The politeness principles are found to govern most interactions as, basically, there is politeness underlying the communication involving people within various cultural backgrounds. It is the politeness that is considered as part as social attitudes that generally exist in most interactions. The principles are believed as the representation of human behavior to meet the harmony among participants every time they are performing social interaction. More importantly, the use of high Javanese language as a means of communication containing the realization of politeness principles may reduce the probability of verbal abuse occurring in the interaction among Javanese women in Karangploso traditional markets in Malang city.

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