Symmetrical and Asymmetrical Relations of Makassarese Language Users: Ages, Social Status, and Politeness Strategies

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Abstract

This research was conducted to explore how ages and social status can be revealed by the used of Makassar language. The data were taken by interviewing 14 people who have lived in Makassar since they were born. This research was descriptive using a qualitative approach. The methods used in collected data were recording and transcribing. The findings of this research showed that the participants used politeness strategies as their indirect ways to show ages and social status differences. Those strategies are divided into six, which are; deference in kinship, deference in non-kinship, intimacy in kinship, intimacy in non-kinship, hierarchy in kinship and hierarchy in non-kinship.

Key words: Age, Makassarese language, politeness, social status.

Introduction

The English term 'polite' has been around since the fifteenth century. It derives from Late Medieval Latin politus which means 'smoothed', 'accomplished'. Polite is always related to concepts such as 'polished', 'refined' and other terms when it is being referred to people. Based on The Oxford Dictionary of Etymology in the seventeenth century, a polite person is defined as someone 'of refined courteous manners'.

When people are asked to define what is polite based on their reference, the answers will be all different since every person must have their own preference. If one talks about politeness, then it directly or indirectly refers to the society. Although the act of behaving politely is based on every individual agent. There are some standards to be regarded as 'polite' which lies beyond the act itself and beyond the actor and the hearer [1]. Some people would consider being polite when 'he always shows a lot of respect towards his superior', or 'she is always very helpful and kind', or 'she speaks really well', or 'he always opens doors for the ladies or helps them on with their coats', etc. and some people feel that polite behaviour is equivalent to socially 'correct' or appropriate behaviour; others consider it to be the hallmark of the cultivated man or woman. Some might characterize a polite person as someone who is always considerate towards other people; others might suggest that a polite person is self-effacing. There are even people who classify polite behaviour negatively, characterising it with such terms as 'standoffish', 'haughty', 'insincere', etc [2].

Theoretical Reviews

In linguistics theory, the first systemised politeness has been released [3]. As the continuation from earlier scholars, Brown and Levinson carried out a comparative study of the way in which three speakers of three unrelated languages, which are English, Tamil and Tzeltal, departed from the observance of the conversational maxims for motives of politeness. They found out that there are many similarities in the linguistic strategies employed by the three different languages speakers and observed the employment of the same strategies in other languages, therefore they are assuming the universality of politeness as a regulative factor in conversational exchanges:

“One powerful and pervasive motive for not talking Maxim-wise is the desire to give some attention to face... Politeness is then a major source of deviation from such rational efficiency, and is communicated precisely by that deviation,” [3].

All adults in the society are concerned about their ‘face’, the self-image they present to others, and that they recognise other people have similar ‘face’ wants. They distinguish two kinds of ‘face’ which they believe are universal and refer to two basic desires of any person in any interaction, and those are ‘negative face’ and ‘positive face’. ‘Negative face’ described as an individual’s basic personal rights, including their personal freedom. One’s negative face is a rejection of all factors which represent a threat towards individual rights. The example is the freedom of speaking and expressing opinions, and that includes one’s need to not be interrupted by other people while speaking. ‘Positive face’ is described as a person’s individual desire to be appreciated by others. In addition, here includes how a person wants to be noticed by their social group. Example of this positive face is the appreciation of someone’s achievements. According to this definition, a writer would desire others’ appreciation of his/her novels or poem [3].

Although certain types of communicative acts are intrinsically polite or impolite [4], some suggest that certain acts basically threaten the ‘face’ needs of one or both participants. However, what is basically threatening or non-threatening based on Brown and Levinson, is determined by the theoretical framework used to account for politeness phenomena [3]. Politeness is a strategy of people in being polite to build a harmony in terms of communication [5].

There is a scale design that has been proposed to evaluate the degree of politeness required in a specific situation [3]. The design of this politeness level showed that a speaker appraises the required face work according to three independent and culturally-sensitive social variables, which they claim are universal. First is the social distance (D) between the speaker and hearer, where the speaker and the addressee are on a scale of horizontal difference. The second variable is the relative power (P) between the participants, where the speaker and the addressee are located on a scale of vertical difference. The third variable is the absolute ranking (R) of impositions in a particular culture, the degree of imposition intrinsic to a particular act [3]. Many people do not really conscious about intimidation and symbolic violence through language domination. Utterance is not only being uttered to be understood but it is also being a sign of wealthiness and authority that must be obeyed [6].

While there are ‘positive face’ and ‘negative face’, on the other hand, some scholars observed that the process of granting ‘face’ is much more dynamic and multifunctional than that, [4]. They categorize politeness variables into three, and those are Deference (D), Solidarity (S), and Hierarchy (H). Deference built from less Power (P) and more Distance (D), or can be formulated as ‘-P+D’. This politeness system shows the interaction between participants who are in the same social status (-P) but they are not familiar with each other (+D). Solidarity built from ‘-P-D’ which means they are in the same social status and close to each other. This system shows interaction between someone close, like friends or colleagues. Hierarchy built from ‘+P-D’ which means the participants are not in the same social status or rank, but the distance could be close or far. This system is the example of interaction between a boss and his/her subordinate [7].

In a face system like what has been mentioned above, the relationships are asymmetrical. By asymmetrical, it means that both of the participants do not use the same face politeness strategies when they speak to each other. The participant who was in the upper position, or who has the higher social status will use involvement strategies in speaking “down”, for example calling someone by their given name without any title attached and the other participant who was in lower position or lower social status use independence strategies in speaking “up”, for example calling someone by their surname with title attached on it [7].

A new theoretical framework which is developed from the previous politeness’ theoretical framework has been released and seems like more suitable to use in researching language heritage in Indonesia. The politeness methods used by the participants in an interaction are governed by social relation patterns and he put it on to six types of social interaction [8] [9].

Symmetrical Relations

- Deference in non-kinship (-P, +D, -K), for example interaction between people who barely know each other.
- Deference in kinship (-P, +D, +K), for example interaction between distant family members, or extended family.
- Intimacy in non-kinship (-P, -D, -K), for example interaction between close friends.
- Intimacy in kinship (-P, -D, +K), for example interaction between brothers or sisters.

Asymmetrical Relations

- Hierarchy in non-kinship (+P, +D, -K), for example interaction between upperclassmen and juniors
- Hierarchy in kinship (+P, -D, +K), for example interaction between parents and their children.

Figure 1. Yassi's Politeness Theoretical Framework

Methodology

Research Design

This research concerned with politeness strategies in Makassarese language. This research used a descriptive qualitative method, because the data are in the form of words, phrases, and sentences, and to explain and describe the research question and anything that related to politeness. This research mainly focused on how Makassarese showed their differences of ages and social status by how they talked to each other.

Data Collection

To collect data for this research, the writer conducted some steps. The first step is interviewing and recording, the researcher interviewed and recorded some Makassarese native speakers. The second is transcribing the recording into text form. The third is filtering the data, and taking what is essential for the research, and finding out whether there are some politeness strategies in the conversation or not.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, the researcher used an "interactive model" as proposed by Miles and Huberman, which includes 3 activities such as data reduction, data display, and data conclusion drawing and verification, [10]. Since the step of collecting data has been discussed in the previous discussion, the researcher will discuss the rest of the analysis components.

Data Reduction

Data reduction refers to the process of sorting out, aiming, simplifying, summarizing, and transforming the collected data into transcriptions. Data reduction is a continuous process from collecting data, which is a part of the analysis.

The data that has been collected will be sorted out, focused, simplified, and summarized in such a way to get a final conclusion.

Data Display

Data display is the next step after doing the data reduction. Generally, a display is an organized, compressed assembly of data that allows or leads us to the next step, which is conclusion drawing and verification. Observing displays will lead us to know what is happening and to try and do something, either analyzing more or taking action based on understanding.

Conclusion Drawing and Verification

The third step is conclusion drawing and verification. The data conclusion may not appear until the process of collecting data is done. The three steps; data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification, intertwined before, along, and after collecting data in parallel form, to make up an analysis.

Findings and Discussion

After interviewing 14 people who used Makassarese language, the researcher found out how the Makassarese ethnic used politeness strategies to show whether they are in symmetrical or asymmetrical relations.

Extract 1 (Symmetrical Relations)

The conversation below happened between two people who are close to each other and around the same age. (-P, -D, +K)

Awal: *Erokko mange ri anjo anu vespayya mungko?* (Do you want to go to the Vespa thing tomorrow?)”

Wahyu: *Issengmi, cini' mami mungko kah garringi ammakku. I kau iya erokko kah?* (I don't know, we will see it tomorrow since my mom is sick. What about you? You want to?)

Extract 1 shows social relations in intimacy in kinship (-P, -D, +K) between the participants. As we can see, Awal asked Wahyu about the Vespa event and he used -ko- instead of -ki because they are about the same age and same social status. Because they are close and at the same age, Awal and Wahyu do not bother to use -ki.

Extract 2 (Asymmetrical Relations)

The conversation below is between husband and wife. This contains hierarchy in kinship where the husband has more power than the wife (+P, -D, +K)

Sadiq: *Ra, kamae nuboli' baju kebo'ku?* (Ra, where did you put my white t-shirt?)

Rara: *Ri tas ta ji njo.* (It is in your bag.)

Sadiq: *Tenai. Boya sai rong eh.* (Nothing. Find it for me.)

Rara: *Iye lekbakpi kuje'ne' I Shanum.* (Yes, I will after I bathe Shanum.)

The extract above shows hierarchy in the kinship politeness system (+P, -D, +K). We can see that the husband has more power than the wife by how he commanded his wife to find his t-shirt. In Makassar, people believe that men have more power than women because they are the head of the family.

Extract 3 (Symmetrical Relations)

The dialogues below happened between two securities in a housing area. They are close but not really close to each other (-P, -D, -K)

Dg. Nai: *Inai subanngi ngerang appel?* (Who brought apples last night?)

Dg. Tawang: *Pak Robi anjo ri blok B nomor 11. Ngalle tong maki kah nasare ngasengki anjo.* (Mr. Robi from house B 11. You can take it too since he gave it to all of us.)

Dg. Nai: *Oh kukana katteji nasareang.* (Oh I thought he only gave it to you.)

Dg. Tawang: *Tena.* (No.)

Extract 3 contains intimacy in the non-kinship politeness system (-P, -D, -K). As we can see, Dg. Tawang used -ki whe answered Dg. Nai's question. And also, Dg. Nai used -katte to reply to Dg. Tawang. Here, they are using the same politeness strategies when they are talking to each other.

Extract 4 (Symmetrical Relations)

The conversation happened between a brother and a sister who are not in the same age. The brother is older. (-P, -D, +K)

Ika: *Yu, mange saiko rong pesang galon. Tallu mo.* (Yu, go order water gallons. Order only three.)

Wahyu: *Edede sinampepi deh. Kau kah tena nukkana-kana battu ri sumpaeng.* (Huft, in a moment. Why don't you say it sooner.)

Ika: *Ih kah nampapi lakbusuk.* (It just ran out.)

Extract 4 contains intimacy in kinship (-P, -D, +K). As we can see, Ika, as the younger sister, commanded his older brother to go order some water gallons but the older brother refused to do it. This shows that the relationship is at the same status where the power is balanced.

Extract 5 (Asymmetrical Relations)

The conversation below happened between a boss and his subordinate. The boss is much younger than the subordinate (+P, +D, -K)

Arya: *Siapa subanngi napesan galon pak Bambang?* (How many gallons does Mr. Bambang order last night?)

Agus: *Appa' bos, siagang gas.* (Four, boss, and also gas.)

Arya: *Lekbakmi nabayara'?* (has he already paid for it?)

Agus: *Tenapa bos kah nakana tena doe' ca'dina nampa tena doe' sussungku. Nakana tong pak Bambang lekbak maki napoang.* (Not yet, boss, because he said he does not have small change and neither I. He also said that he already told you.)

Arya: *O iyo paeng.* Jangko lupa pesan gas sebentar. (Oh okay. Don't forget to order gas later.)

Agus: *Iye bos siap.* (Yes, boss.)

Extract 5 contains hierarchy in non-kinship (+P, +D, -K) which is the relationship between boss and his subordinate. As we can see above, the subordinate uses polite language by using honorific -ki in -maki instead of -mako. Even though the boss is much younger, he does not bother to use honorific toward his subordinate. It is because they have different social status. So the boss uses -ko instead of -ki.

Extract 6 (Symmetrical Relations)

The conversation below happened between neighbors (-P, -D, -K)

Erni: *Haji, erokka suro pare' kanrejawa panada limangpulo biji ri katte. Kulleji?* (Haji, I want to order panada cake fifty pieces. Can I?)

Nurhamida: *Iye kulleji. Siapanna na ero' ki alle?* (Yes. When do you want to take it?)

Erni: *Mungko, aji.* (Tomorrow, aji.)

Nurhamida: *Karueng pi na kulle.* (You can only take it in the evening.)

Erni: *Iye karuang pi aji.* (Yes evening it is, Aji.)

Extract 6 contains intimacy in non-kinship relations (-P, -D, -K) which is a relationship between neighbors. We can see that both of the participants used honorific -ki- and -katte. This is because both of the participants were at the same age and close to each other.

Extract 7 (Symmetrical Relations)

The dialogues below happened between neighbors with different social status. One is the head of the neighborhood, and the other one is a resident. (+P, -D, +K)

Zainuddin: *Apa ki suro pare' pak RT?* (What do you order me to make, pak RT?)

Rizaldi: *Anu, mejang kasir.* (That, cashier table)

Zainuddin: *Battu ri kanal C siagang tripleks?* (From c conduit and triplex?)

Rizaldi: *Iye. Kira-kira siapang lawara' napake?* (Yes. Approximately, how many sheets do we need?)

Zainuddin: *Malli maki patang pappa' kanal c siagang silawara' tripleks.* (You can by four c conduit rods and a sheet of triplex)

Extract 7 contains hierarchy in kinship (+P, -D, +K) between neighbors because one of the participant is the head of the neighborhood. The conversation above shows how the resident, Zainuddin, used honorific -ki towards Rizaldi as the head of the neighborhood.

Extract 8 (Asymmetrical Relationship)

The dialogues below contain hierarchy in kinship (+P, -D, +K) between two sisters-in-law. One of the participants is older.

Dg. Puji: *Ki isengji kana anjo ba'leang balla'na I hamid buntingi seng?* (Do you know that Hamid's neighbor has remarried again?)

Dg. Baji: *Tena kuissengi. Nai poangko?* (I don't know. Who told you?)

Dg. Puji: *I Hamid caritai ri nakke.* (Hamid told me)

Extract 8 contains hierarchy in the kinship politeness system (+P, -D, +K). We can see how Dg. Puji as the younger one used honorific –ki towards the older, Dg. Baji. And on the other hand, Dg. Baji used –ko towards the younger one.

Extract 9 (Asymmetrical Relations)

The conversation below happened between uncle and his nephew (+P, -D, +K)

Zainuddin: *Wahyu, mangedo rong ballianga kaluru'* (Wahyu, go buy me cigarettes)

Wahyu: *Siyapa, om Nyikko?* (How much, Uncle Nyikko?)

Zainuddin: *Siroko' mo ballianga.* (Just buy me one pack.)

Wahyu: *Iye om. Doe'ku mo kupake kah nia' anne rejekiku.* (Yes, Uncle. Just use my money because I got a little fortune today)

Zainuddin: *Terima kasih banyak pae punna kamma anjo nak.* (Thank you very much, kid.)

Extract 9 contains hierarchy in the kinship politeness system (+P, -D, +K). The conversation starts with the uncle commanding the nephew to buy him cigarettes. The uncle, Zainuddin used casual honorific –ko. On the other hand, the nephew, Wahyu, used honorific –ki because the other participant is much older.

Extract 10 (Symmetrical Relations)

The dialogues above happened between two people that barely know each other (-P, +D, -K)

Sadiq: *Kamaeko akkuliah, Awal?* (What college do you go to, Awal?)

Awal: *Yek? Ri UMI.* (Yes? In UMI)

Sadiq: *Ih ka juniorku ko pale.* (Oh you are my junior then.)

Awal: *Oh iyekah? Semester siyapa maki katte iya?* (Oh really? What semester are you?)

Sadiq: *Semester sagangtuju ma nakke.* (I am in the eighth semester.)

Extract 10 contains deference in non-kinship (-P, +D, -K) between two strangers. They just met today and decided to get to know each other. Sadiq started the conversation casually using honorific –ko because he knows the other participant is younger. On the other hand, Awal as the younger one starts to use honorific –ki after finding out that Sadiq is his senior.

Conclusion

Politeness has become a key topic in the linguistic field. This research mainly discussed the politeness system introduced by Brown and Levinson, and then modified by Scollon and Scollon, and then adapted and modified again by Yassi. This research found out that the politeness framework introduced by Yassi is more compatible to use when researching or exploring languages in Indonesia. The symmetrical and asymmetrical relations also showed how people talked in different way according to their ages, social status, and their intimacy level

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