

# The Speech Act of Request: Analysis of Students' Interaction with Lecturers via Media Social

Ayumi and Ike Revita

English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Andalas, Padang, Indonesia

Keywords: Education, Request, Speech Act.

Abstract: Being polite is very important since politeness is closely related to our relationship with others when interacting. The politeness must be necessarily concerned. Otherwise, one may be labelled impolite. This writing is aimed at describing how students construct their request to their lecturers via media social. The data are the impolite utterances used by students when they are doing request via social media WhatsApp. Observations, note-taking, and interviews were used in collecting data. The analysis was based on the concept proposed by Culpeper (1996). The results of the analysis is presented narratively and descriptively and indicates that students construct their request to their lecturers via WhatsApp using different sequences. They are 1) 1 in 1 sequence; 2) 2 in 1 sequence; 3) 3 in 1 sequence; 4) 4 in 1 sequence and 5) multi in 1 sequence.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

One of the primary functions of language is to maintain the continuity of relationships between its users (Wardhaugh, 1986). Language is analogous to a tool with very complicated rules that regulate how a person speaks so that his interpersonal relationships are always maintained (Wijana, 2014). The rules that govern language use etiquette differ from one community to another and from one language to another. Thus, when an interaction occurs, misunderstandings may potentially occur due to these differences.

A speech event that demands a good ability to speak with appropriate etiquette is making a request. A request is a speech in which the message contained makes the interlocutor act according to the purpose of the speech (Revita, 2005). In other words, the purpose of the request is the basis for the hearer's action. Therefore, a request can cause interlocutor to lose face because their freedom of action is imposed on (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

The limitations of the interlocutor in acting will become more evident if the form of speech chosen is not appropriate, especially when directed towards a hearer with a different cultural background. This can lead to conflict because in a different culture a request may be considered normal, while other cultures value

it very highly. For example, in Minangkabau culture, requests are considered polite if done implicitly. They are better preceded by pre-requests, such as questions or ending with post-requests, such as reasons. That is, the longer the speech that precedes the core of the request, the politer the speech is. In other cultures, the opposite may be true, a request is expected to be delivered explicitly without being complicated (Gunarwan, A. 1997).

To minimize the loss of face of the hearer with a request speech act, the right strategy is needed (Felix-Brasdefer, 2005). The strategy can be seen in the method used or step chosen so that the hearer captures the intent of the request.

The interactions between students and their lecturers are susceptible to impoliteness particularly when the student is making a request to the lecturer.

This paper describes impoliteness in the students' interactions with their lecturer via social media. The data are text messages containing a request that the students sent to the lecturers via social media WhatsApp. The research was conducted at English Department Andalas University.

## 2 METHOD

Data were collected through an observational method, note-taking and interviewing. Text messages containing impolite request were recorded using a screenshot. The respondents were then interviewed to find out the reasons for their choice of language.

Pragmatics and a referential identity method were used in conducting the analysis. The result was then presented using formal and informal methods.

## 3 REQUESTS AND IMPOLITENESS

The request is utterance in which the speaker appeals to the hearer to do something for the benefit of the speaker. Bach and Harnish state that a request expresses the speaker's desire that the hearer does something in which the hearer takes this desired expression as the reason to act. A request does not contain an obligation for the hearer to fulfil the required act like a command does. It means that a request has the potential to be granted or rejected.

Requests are closely related to the loss of face of both the speaker and the hearer. The speaker will lose face if the request is rejected or denied. On the other hand, the hearer will lose face if the strategy used in delivering the request is unsuitable. Thus, in order for both the speaker and hearer to save face, a specific strategy should be employed.

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain proposes nine strategies in making a request: (1) mood derivable, (2) performative, (3) hedged performative, (4) obligation statement, (5) want statement, (6) suggestive formulae, (7) query preparatory, (8) strong hint, and (9) mild hind (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984).

The nine strategies are also found in Bahasa Indonesia but with more varieties. The variations appear due to contacts that have happened to the speakers from a different culture. In delivering a request, the speaker will consider both the speaker and hearer's cultural background. It will result in a different strategy that does not put a certain culture above the other.

The sequence of the request is another form of request making strategy. Revita (2007) states that there are four sequences used in making a request. The four sequences are:

1. **2 in 1 sequence.** This sequence uses two kinds of strategies where one of them is the intended request itself. The request can either be before or after the supporting utterance. Either way,

the position influences the focus of attention. A request where the main request precedes the support is more focused than the other way around.

2. **3 in 1 sequence.** This contains three consecutive strategies in which the main request can be at the beginning, middle or end of the whole utterance.
3. **4 in 1 sequence.** This uses four different strategies to achieve one goal of the request.
4. **Multi in 1 sequence.** Request with multi in 1 sequence is constructed using five or more strategies. This form of request is not commonly found.

To communicate is related to preserving the other person's face. When talking to others, speaker or hearer can threaten their interlocutor's face. This means that both speaker and hearer may cause the other to feel embarrassed or offended. Any utterance that makes others feel embarrassed or offended can be categorized as impolite. Culpeper calls this as impoliteness (Culpeper, J. 2005)

Impoliteness is an attitude which threatens another's face. Impoliteness is reflected in an attitude that creates discomfort to the hearer. The discomfort is displayed through shame, anger, hurt, or being offended. The feeling of shame or hurt, according to Brown and Levinson in Eelen is called a Face Threatening Act (FTA) (Eelen, 2001).

To avoid attacking or threatening people's face, suitable strategies are applied in communication. Revita state that in communicating with others, a speaker will use specific strategies so that what is uttered will not hurt other people's feelings (Revita, 2013).

Culpeper distinguishes two forms of impoliteness, inherent and mock. Inherent impoliteness is any utterance that is explicitly designed to attack face. For example, a command, threat, or criticism [4] [12]. The utterance '*Kamu kira keberadaan mu diperhitungkan?*' (Do you think your existence counts?) is considered a criticism. This criticism is seen as impolite because it is rude and anti-social and not in line with the rules and norms applied in the society. The impoliteness can visibly be identified if it is said in order to degrade the hearer. Mock impoliteness is superficially impolite, but the force is not intended to attack face.

Impoliteness in communication can be avoided. One of the ways to do that is by applying language use rhetoric. Leech distinguishes two rhetorics, the interpersonal and the textual rhetoric [12]. Textual rethorics demands that when talking, one must be clear, coherent, and relevant according to the

principle of cooperation proposed by Grice (1975). Interpersonal rhetoric urges the participants to treat others politely and uphold the principle of modesty.

Several factors motivate linguistic form selection. The selection is made based on (1) the social distance between speaker and hearer, (2) the magnitude of the difference of power and domination between them, (3) the relative status of speech acts in the culture concerned. In another word, the utterance must be considered not to be face threatening [12] [13] [14] [15].

These factors are known as context. Context is any background knowledge shared by the participants that surround or is associated with the condition when the utterance is produced. Different understanding of an utterance can be influenced by social contexts, such as the social role and status, right and obligations, as well as the experiences of the said participants.

Leech [12] states that context includes these aspects:

1. Addressers or addressees (speaker/writer or hearer/reader) that include aspects relating to the participants of the given utterance, such as age, socioeconomic background, gender, level of familiarity, and other.
2. The context of utterance: all the physical aspects and the relevant social setting of the utterance in question [13] [14] [16]
3. The speaker's intended goal(s) of an utterance.
4. Utterance as a form of act or activity, referring to a verbal utterance that relates to acts that occur in a specific situation.
5. Utterance as a verbal act. It means that the utterance produced is a form of the verbal act.

Impoliteness comes in many different forms. Culpeper [9] proposes five model of impoliteness, (1) bald on record impoliteness, (2) positive impoliteness, (3) negative impoliteness, (4) sarcasm or mock politeness, and (5) withhold politeness.

## 4 DISCUSSION

The progress of sophisticated technology brings about the change of the way people communicate [17] [18]. The direct way or explicit utterances have become the preference. However, this way of saying something does not occur holistically. Minangkabau people, for example, tend to speak implicitly [19]. They will not directly express what they want to say but through the process of thinking and rethinking.

One process of thinking and rethinking is in the strategy of speech acts used. Oishi[17] states that speech as action via utterance. In the speech act, the action is performed via utterance [18]. Five performances exist in the speech act. They are assertive, expressive, declaration, expressive, and directive [20] [21] [22].

These five performances are done via language. As a means of communication, language plays a very important role in human's life [23] [24]. To express feelings, to inform, or to direct are some of the common functions of the use of language [13].

One common function of language is directive. Directive means the utterance is used to direct someone else [25]. The directive impinges on the others' face [22]. Thus, a directive has great possibility to be regarded impolite if it is not correctly done [26]. This is what is generally found in interactions via social media. Impoliteness is more common in the utterances the students use to communicate with their lecturers.

Typing message in social media via android or gadget results in these students disobeying the rules of polite communication. For example, when they make requests of the lecturers. There are at least four strategies used by students to their lecturers in requesting, some of which are regarded as impolite in Minangkabau culture.

- 1) *Bu, saya mau bertemu Ibu hari ini. Pukul berapa ibu bisa?*  
'I want to see you today, Mam. When can I see you?'
- 2) *Bapak ke kampus hari ini? Saya boleh bimbingan tidak?*  
'Are you going to campus today, Sir. Can I be supervised?'

Undergraduate students delivered the above two requests to the lecturers via WhatsApp. The students wanted to see the lecturers for thesis supervising. They used two utterances comprising information *Bu, saya mau bertemu Ibu hari ini* and question *Pukul berapa ibu bisa?* Both information and questions are intended as a request. The main idea is available at the first utterance *Saya mau bertemu Ibu hari ini*.

This is also similar with 2 in which the student gives two questions—1) *Bapak ke kampus hari ini?* And 2) *Saya boleh bimbingan tidak?* The two questions intended as a request.

Both 1 and 2 are regarded impolite since there is no introduction preceding the utterance or closing or other statements to end. This strategy is categorized

Table 1: The occurrence of strategies in speech of request from students to lectures via media social.

Data Number	Total Number	Strategy				
		2 in 1	3 in 1	4 in 1	Multi in 1	1 in 1
1, 3, 39, 24, 40, 42,	6					
2, 4, 5, 7, 10, 26, 28, 35, 36,	9					
6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 27, 29, 30, 31, 34, 35, 37, 38	19					
11, 17, 22, 26, 28, 32, 33	7					
14, 18, 23, 25, 41	5					

as 2 in 1 in [27] [28] the sense that to deliver the request, the speakers use two kinds of speech act.

The 2 in 1 strategy is one of four strategies [26] used when making requests via social media. There are three others ordered in frequency of occurrence-- 3 in 1, 4 in 1, multi in 1, and 1 in 1. The 1 in 1 strategy is categorized very impolite because the students directly make the request to the lecturers. For example, is as displayed in 3.

- 3) *Bu, saya mau bimbingan dengan ibu hari ini.*  
'I want to be supervised by you today, Mam.'

The utterance 3 is directly and explicitly stated. His request to be supervised by the lecturer is delivered by using a literal request [25]. No supporting utterances are preceding or following the request. Such kind of request is regarded impolite because of the length, the strategy, the directness, and the choice of words [29]. Such a strategy is sometimes used by students who are not aware that they are communicating with their lecturers. Furthermore, this strategy needs to be avoided when addressed to one older than the speaker in the Minangkabau culture-- the culture of both speakers and hearers-- people who share a set of rules of speaking [25].

*Kato nan ampek* 'the four words' has *kato mandaki* 'up grading', *kato manurun* 'down grading', *kato mandata* 'horizontal', and *kato malereang* 'sloping'. These four words consider mostly the age of the hearers but the relationship and the power among participants also play a role [26] [30]. Those who fail to implement *kato nan ampek* in Minangkabau context are regarded not only impolite but also disrespectful [31].

The occurrence of the strategies in requesting via media social from students to lecturers can be seen in table 1.

It clearly seen that the use of 4 in 1 strategy is most commonly used, followed by 2 in 1, 3 in 1, 2 in 1, and 1 in 1. Among these four, the multi in 1 is regarded the politest because it is the longest. The longest the utterance, the more polite it will be [3][14]. The use

of 2 in 1 and 1 in 1 is due to the lack of knowledge of how to communicate with an older interlocutor [16] and the character of students which ignore the aspect of politeness.

The depiction of the occurrence of the strategy in percentage is shown on fig 1 below.

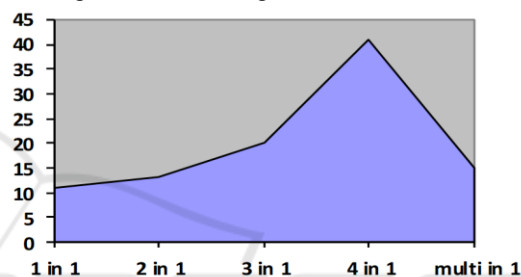


Figure 1: The Occurrence of Strategy of Request from Students to Lecturers via Media Social

### 5 CONCLUSIONS

As students who interact with their lectures in daily basis, the strategies used by the undergraduate students in making and delivering their requests to their lectures who are older than them many could be considered impolite. The occurrences of multi in 1 sequence are very low compare to the other strategies. This may be caused by the lack of knowledge of how to communicate the right way according to the norm and culture of Minangkabau. Education on *Kato nan ampek* to students in Minangkabau should be given more in schools so that they know how to interact with people older than them politely and respectfully.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Huge thankful to Rector of Universitas Andalas and Dean of Faculty of Humanities, for funding the research. The Lecturers and Students around Universitas Andalas, and the respondents thank you for the kindness and cooperation in providing data.

## REFERENCES

- Blum-Kulka S. and E. Olshain. 1984. "Request and Apologies: A Cross Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP)," *Applied Linguistics*, no. Volume 5, pp. 196-213, 1 October.
- Brown, P. and S. C. Levinson. 1987. "Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena," *Questions and Politeness*, p. 129.
- Cahyono, B. Y. 1998. *Kristal-kristal Ilmu Bahasa*. Surabaya: Airlangga University Press.
- Crystal, D. 2001. *Language and the Internet*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Culpeper, J. 2005. *Linguistic Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offence*. UK: Lancaster University.
- Dörnyei, Z., and P. Skehan. 2003. "Individual Differences in Second Language Learning," dalam *The handbook of second language acquisition*, M. Long dan C. Doughty, Penyunt., Malden, Blackwell P.
- Eelen, G. 2001. *Kritik Teori Kesantunan*. Surabaya: Airlangga University Press.
- Felix-Brasdefer, J. C. 2005. "Indirectness and politeness in Mexican requests," dalam *Selected Proceedings of the 7th Hispanic Linguistics Symposium*, Somerville, MA.
- Gunarwan, A. 1997. "Tindak Tutar Melarang di dalam Bahasa Indonesia di Kalangan Penutur Jati Bahasa Jawa," *Masyarakat Linguistik Indonesia*, no. 15.
- Leech, G. 1983. *Principle of Pragmatics*. New York: Longman.
- Oishi, E. 2006. "Austin's Speech Act Theory and the Speech Situation," *Eser. Filos*, p. 1-14.
- Oktavianus, and I. Revita. 2013. *Kesantunan Berbahasa*. Padang: Minangkabau Press.
- Navies, A. *Pemikiran Minangkabau Catatan Budaya A.A Navies*. Bandung: Angkasa.
- Poedjosoedarmo, S. 1979. *Tingkat Tutar dalam Bahasa Jawa*. Jakarta: Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa Depdikbud.
- Poedjosoedarmo, S. 2001. *Filsafat Bahasa*. Surakarta: Muhammadiyah University Press.
- Revita, I. 2005. *Tindak Tutar Permintaan dalam Bahasa Minangkabau*.
- Revita, I. 2007. "Strategi Permintaan dalam Bahasa Indonesia (Kajian Lintas Budaya)," dalam *Seminar Internasional Austronesia*, Bali.
- Revita, I. 2010. "Konstruksi Tutaran Permintaan dalam Komunikasi via SMS," dalam *Seminar Internasional*, Padang.
- Revita, I. 2010. "Tindak Tutar Mahasiswa Kepada Dosen," dalam *Seminar Internasional Multidisciplined Linguistics*, Padang
- Revita, I. 2013. *Pragmatik: Kajian Tindak Tutar Permintaan Lintas Bahasa*. Padang: FIB.
- Revita, I., R. Triolarise and N. Anggreiny. 2017. "Politeness Strategies of The Panders in Women Trafficking," *Bul. Al-Turas*, no. XXIII(1), p. 191-210.
- Revita, I. 2017. "Women Trafficking dalam Bingkai Sosiopragmatik," Visigraf, Padang.
- Revita, I. S. Wekke, and R. Triolarise. 2017 "Empowering the Values of Minangkabau Local Wisdom in Preventing the Activity of Women Trafficking in West Sumatera," p. 3-6.
- Revita, I. 2018. *Kaleidoskop Linguistik*. Padang: CV. Rumahkayu Pustaka Utama.
- Schneider, K. 2012. *Pragmatics of Discourse*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Searle, J. R. 1979. *Studies in the theory of speech acts*.
- Searle, J., F. Kiefer, and M. Bierwisch. 1980. *Speech act theory and pragmatics*, Dordrecht: D. Reidel.
- Wardhaugh, R. 1986. *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Basil Blackwel.
- Walters, J. 2005. *Bilingualism*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Wijana, I. G. P. "Teori Kesantunan dan Humor," in *Seminar Nasional Semantik*, Universitas Sebelas Maret, 2004.
- Yule, G. 2006. *The Study of Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.