

Politeness in Requests of Maudy's Ayunda Talk Shows to Different Genders

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to find out the ways Maudy Ayunda, as the talk show's host, performs requests and responds to Ayu's and Nadiem's requests which have different genders. Also, the analysis was leveled up to the relation of politeness and gender. The main theory used was Watts (2003), focusing on the first-order politeness connected to Indonesian (Javanese) culture. Other supporting theories and studies from Suseno (2003), Kuntjara (2009), and Mills (2003) were used. The method used is a descriptive qualitative approach using utterance/s as the unit of analysis. The findings revealed that Maudy mostly used indirect patterns in conveying the requests and accepted the guests' requests as her response. Several direct patterns were found but could be considered appropriate if analyzed based on the context. Concerning gender, Maudy used more direct patterns to answer Nadiem's requests than Ayu's.

Keywords: politeness, first-order politeness, requests, utterance

INTRODUCTION

Politeness is considered one of the most researched topics in contemporary linguistics. (O'Keeffe, Clancy, & Adolphs, 2011). According to Watts (2003), there are two types of politeness: first-order politeness and second-order politeness. The first-order politeness depends on an individual's interpretation to decide whether one's behavior is polite or not. In contrast, second-order politeness measures polite behavior according to certain theoretical models (Watts, 2003). In this study, I focus on analyzing politeness based on the first-order politeness concept, tailoring it to Indonesian (Javanese) culture for three important reasons.

First, politeness has a high correlation with the culture or context where the interaction happens, as each culture might have different standards to measure politeness. Second, the culture chosen is Indonesian (Javanese) because the host and the guests in the talk show that I used as the subject of this study are Indonesian. Last, Javanese linguistic structures are so rich that many linguists are fascinated to observe the language (Sukarno, 2015).

The speech act chosen to be analyzed is the requesting speech act because Javanese perform requests in daily communication both directly or indirectly to give orders, instructions, or do favors (Sukarno, 2015). A request is an act of asking someone to do something that could be considered a Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) because it is beneficial to the speaker but costly to the hearer (Chiravate 2012, as stated in Sukarno, 2015). As Javanese commonly perform the speech acts of requests, various linguistic devices and parameters could be used to imply a different level of directness within certain requests.

For the subject of this study, I chose Maudy Ayunda's talk shows with Ayu Aradhita and Nadiem Makarim that are broadcasted through Instagram Live. I chose Maudy's talk shows because of her excellent reputation in both academic and career life and her experiences to be the talk show's host

who brings the topic around education and social politics (Anindita, 2018). Moreover, Maudy's talk show with Ayu was the first talk show hosted on her Instagram that has successfully been viewed 366,560 times and received 85,477 likes and 675 comments per August, 26th 2021 (Maudy Ayunda, 2020). They discussed the experiences of working and studying abroad and the lessons and struggles learned. Meanwhile, Maudy's talk show with Nadiem received the highest number of views (1,664,937 views), likes (268,697 likes), and comments (2,909 comments) among the other Maudy's talk shows on Instagram (Maudy Ayunda, 2020). They talked a lot about the direction of Indonesia's education during the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges that Indonesia's Minister of Education and Culture had to deal with.

There were three research questions in this research: 1) How does Maudy Ayunda perform requests in the talk show with Ayu Aradhita and Nadiem Makarim? 2) How does Maudy Ayunda respond to Ayu Aradhita's and Nadiem Makarim's requests? 3) What are the similarities and differences of Maudy Ayunda's ways in performing requests and responding to Ayu Aradhita's and Nadiem Makarim's requests?

In terms of the theoretical framework, I used the politeness theory defined by Watts (2003) for the main theory. He divided two concepts of politeness: first-order politeness and second-order politeness. The first-order politeness depends on a person's interpretation to define politeness, and it might differ in certain contexts and cultures. Meanwhile, second-order politeness brings a particular theoretical model that could be used to measure politeness. However, Watts mentioned that second-order politeness could not escape from the nature of first-order politeness. If there are certain theoretical models used to measure politeness, it must be made according to the research in particular culture or context.

In order to support the main theory, I used several studies and theories that discuss the Indonesian (Javanese) concept of politeness, like Suseno (2003), Kuntjara (2009), Errington (1988) as stated in Kuntjara (2009), Mills (2003) and others. There are two basic principles that organize Indonesian (Javanese) society, as Suseno (2003) stated. First is the principle of *rukun* [harmonious] that can be reached by minimizing elements that have a chance to raise disputes and break the harmonious condition. The use of indirect methods during the conversation is encouraged as blunt statements are considered a lack of morals (Suseno, 2003). Second is the principle of *hormat* [respect] that needs to be adjusted to the speech partners' level, and position as Javanese society is controlled by a hierarchical order. Showing *hormat* [respect] can be reflected through the language used, the way one brings him/herself, and the behavior they perform to others (Suseno, 2003).

In performing requests, indirect patterns are suggested because it could be considered an effort to minimize the chance of conflict since Javanese society upheld the principle of indirectness. There are several varieties that make the requests considered as the indirect ones. One example from Kuntjara (2009) study showed that an informative statement was considered an indirect request, so it is more appropriate regarding the context. The requests conveyed information to Kuntjara that the customers would use a particular table. The informative statement indirectly asks Kuntjara to move into another table. It balances between the pragmatic clarity through the use of clear information while at the same time also lessening the directness of a request (Kulka, 1987, as stated in Kuntjara, 2009).

Sometimes, a request might seem more direct than the others but could be considered appropriate based on the context. Another example found in Kuntjara (2009) study explained that some direct requests are made for clarity. If a person uses the indirect pattern, it might make the statement

ambiguous and fail to reach the goal of a certain order (Kuntjara, 2009). In another context, the hearer can ask a question to the speaker after he/she finishes talking to show that the hearer pays attention to what the speaker says. This action supports the principle of *nggatekake* [paying attention to the hearer]. The use of direct and indirect forms needs to be analyzed thoroughly based on the context because no one fixed formula explains Indonesian (Javanese) politeness. As Errington (1988) explained, Javanese people rely heavily on the notion of proper (*pantes*) and usual in measuring whether one's act is appropriate or not (as stated in Kuntjara, 2009).

There are two possibilities that one can do in responding to the requests: accepting or rejecting (Suseno, 2003). Rejecting the request is delivering a negative response toward the speaker's request, which is usually called refusals. It is considered rude and impolite because it can create a chance of conflict or ill feelings, especially if a speaker makes the request to a higher social status than the hearer (Suseno, 2003). Therefore, the hearer will mostly accept the speaker's request within a short time span from when the speaker asks the request.

When the speaker wants to deliver a refusal, he/she is suggested to reject the request using an indirect pattern, which is usually called indirect refusal. Suseno (2003) suggested that the most appropriate response to give is a polite *inggih* [yes] and not directly convey the word *mboten* [no]. Using an indirect refusal helps prevent the chance of conflict, which is highly important because it maintains the *rukun* [harmonious] principle. One skill that is highly encouraged in Javanese society to preserve the *rukun* [harmonious] principle is the ability to talk about things that can threaten one's face using an indirect way (Suseno, 2003).

In relation to gender, women prefer to use vague and indirect requests, whereas men use obvious and direct requests (Kuntjara, 2003). Women's preference of using indirect requests could be affected by the general assumption of the society that considers women's position as lower than men (as stated in Kuntjara, 2003). Women tend to be afraid of offending others' feelings, so they use indirect language. In addition, the use of tag questions in conveying the requests also represents one way of women's preference in indirect language as it shows their insecurity in the statement they convey (Lakoff, 1975, as stated in Oktapiani, et al., 2017). Tag question contains an inverted auxiliary form put at the end of a sentence according to the auxiliary in the main clause and pronouns that agree with the subject in the main clause (Edbert & Ginet, 2003, as stated in Siwi, 2017). Tag questions are primarily associated with women's speech because they do not feel as confident as men because of society's perception that their position is lower than men's.

Since women are generally considered as having a lower position than men, they usually give a positive response like "yes" or "I understand," so they prioritize building good relationships with the participants within the interaction (Mills, 2003). On the other hand, men have a more flexible and free choice in responding to requests because they have a higher status and power than women. Men have less feeling of *sungkan* or *pekewuh*, an embarrassing feeling that shows respectfulness and politeness (Suseno, 2003). As Tannen (1990) explained, men like to argue, not avoid conflict like women (as cited in Mills, 2003). Men do not feel afraid of conflict because men's lives are driven by competition. Unlike women, men see language as a tool to convey information, so they are not concerned about the relationship with others (Mills, 2003).

METHOD

In this study, I used a descriptive qualitative approach. The data were Maudy's utterance/s that perform the speech acts of conveying requests and responding to Ayu's and Nadiem's requests. The

source of the data was Maudy's Instagram account: @maudyayunda. The talk show with Ayu was held on October, 18th 2020, while the talk show with Nadiem was held on November, 27th 2020 (Maudy Ayunda, 2020). In collecting the data, I downloaded the talk shows' videos and watched them three times to be more familiar with the flow of the talk shows. Then, I transcribed all the utterances in these talk shows. After finishing the transcription, I re-read them two times and used yellow highlight color for the utterances that have the speech acts of conveying requests and responding to the requests. The utterance/s highlighted were used as examples that the writer put in the findings and discussions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this section, I discuss several of the findings found related to the research questions of this study. There are three research questions that will be answered in each of the heading as follows:

The Ways Maudy Performs Requests to Ayu and Nadiem

1. Declarative Statements

Maudy performs requests to Ayu and Nadiem through declarative statements as written through the examples below:

(1) *Mbak aku kemarin ada pertanyaan beberapa nih.* (A, line 419)

[Mbak, yesterday I had several questions]

(2) *Mungkin ini bisa mbak Ayu jawab juga nanti ...* (A, lines 430)

[Maybe you can also answer this later]

(3) *Nah, let's talk about teachers now.* (N, line 352)

(4) *... aku membuka pertanyaan ... buat mas menteri yang bisa dijawab* (N, lines 633-634)

[I ... open Q and A session for *mas menteri* that can be answered]

In example (1), Maudy requests Ayu to be cooperative by answering the questions she will ask. Instead of stating the request explicitly by asking Ayu to answer the question, she gives information that there are several questions. The use of an informative statement supports the finding in Kuntjara's (2009) research that an informative statement could be seen as an indirect request. It could be seen as an effort to balance pragmatic clarity and avoid coerciveness, as Kulka (1987) stated about the notion of politeness (as cited in Kuntjara, 2009). Maudy obviously informs Ayu of several questions but does not explicitly use linguistic devices that force her to answer the questions.

In example (2), Maudy employed the use of the adverb of possibility: "*mungkin*" [maybe] within the request she made. The context is that Maudy wants to answer one of the audience's questions about the US people's first impression of Maudy. Then, Maudy wants to include Ayu in the activity, so her requests could represent her sympathy or attention to Ayu. She gives a chance for her to answer this question according to Ayu's own experience. The word *mungkin* [maybe] can be categorized as a hedge, as stated by Brown and Levinson (1987). It represents that Maudy is uncertain about the statement she makes. In this context, it might mean that Maudy does not want to make the request sound too coercive, so the word "maybe" helps lessen the compulsion of the request that could be considered more appropriate.

The next example showed Maudy's request to invite Nadiem to move the discussion by talking about teachers. Interestingly, Maudy performs the request more optimistically than the previous example. She does not use any linguistic devices, indicating her lack of confidence. Although it could be seen as less direct, this request could mean for the sake of clarity that the discussion will be moved into a different topic. The finding in Kuntjara's (2009) study showed a direct pattern could mean for the sake of clarity, supports this situation. Maudy uses a more direct form of a request to reduce the ambiguity that makes the Nadiem unable to understand Maudy's idea easily.

In the last example, Maudy performs a request using an informative statement like in her talk show with Ayu in example (1). In this context, the arrangement of the words "*membuka pertanyaan di Insta story buat mas menteri yang bisa dijawab*" [open the Question session in the Instagram story for *mas menteri* that can be answered] sounds to be less coercive than "*membuka pertanyaan di Insta story agar mas menteri jawab*" [open the Question session in the Instagram story for *Mas Menteri* to answer]. The second statement could be considered blunter since it seems that Maudy opens the Questions session in the Instagram story and throws those questions to Nadiem to give his answer. Maudy's decision to keep using an indirect pattern might represent a sign of respect and appropriateness, as suggested by Suseno (2003) that any blunt statement was considered as lacking morals and can break the *rukun* harmonious principle.

Another pattern that is used by Maudy to convey requests to Ayu and Nadiem is through the use of interrogative statements as presented in the examples below:

(5) *Sempet kaget ngga sih mbak?* Culture shock. (A, line 162)

[Have you ever felt surprised? Culture shock]

(6) *Aku penasaran ... menjadi menteri ... apa yang paling surprising?* (N, lines 89-90)

[I am curious ... become minister ... what is the most surprising?]

Example (5) could be seen as a direct request as Maudy immediately conveys the question Ayu needs to answer in a to-the point manner. However, Maudy might ask this question to show her attention to Ayu's experience while working abroad, whether or not she has ever felt culture shock. Thus, although the request is performed in an indirect manner, however, according to the context, it is still considered as appropriate as the question aims not only to achieve Ayu's answer. It implicitly create an impression that Maudy cares for Ayu.

Example (6) is Maudy's request to Nadiem in an interrogative statement about the most surprising activity Nadiem feels as a minister. Maudy does not directly state the question, but she shows her curiosity first through the word "*penasaran*" [curious] that could make Maudy appear to be more serious as she is interested in listening to Nadiem's answer. The use of linguistic devices that show Maudy's high curiosity might make the request appear to be more sincere rather than stating the exact question directly.

The Ways Maudy Responds to Ayu's and Nadiem's Requests

The followed explanation discusses the findings to answer the second research question. In responding to Ayu's and Nadiem's requests, Maudy mostly gives a positive response by accepting the requests, however, there is a certain point that she conveys a refusal as given through the examples below:

(7) *Boleh, aku boleh kirim nantik ...* (N, line 187)

Can, I can send later ...
 [Yes, I can send it later]
 (8) *Aku pengen nanya dulu nih ke mbak Ayu.* (A, line 252)
 [I want to ask you first].

Example (7) represents the most frequent response that Maudy gives to Ayu's and Nadiem's requests. In this statement, Nadiem asks Maudy's permission to read her paper about the *Merdeka Belajar* program. Maudy directly accepts Nadiem's request by permitting him to read her paper. The positive responses that Maudy usually gives to Ayu's and Nadiem's requests might aim to maintain the *rukun* [harmonious] principle as Suseno (2003) suggested. The act of rejecting the request can be considered rude, as it can create a chance of disappointment for the guests.

Although Maudy always accepts the guest's requests, in a certain situation, as given in example (8), Maudy refuses Ayu's request. In this context, Ayu invites Maudy to move the discussion into the Q and A session by answering the questions from the Instagram audience. Ayu might hope Maudy will be cooperative with her request. However, Maudy refuses to cooperate with Ayu and rejects Ayu's request. The pattern of refusal that Maudy uses is the indirect one, by informing Ayu that she wants to ask a question first to Ayu. The informative statement acts as Maudy's indirect refusal to cooperate with Ayu when inviting her into the Q and A session. Suseno (2003) explained that using indirect refusal could minimize the chance of ill feelings that break the *rukun* [harmonious] principle.

The Similarities and Differences of Maudy's Ways in Performing Requests and Responding to Ayu's and Nadiem's Requests Responds to Ayu's and Nadiem's Requests

From the previous discussions, I found two similarities and a difference when Maudy performs requests to Ayu and Nadiem. For the similarities, in both talk shows, Maudy mostly uses indirect patterns in performing the requests through informative statements and exaggeration of interests. The use of informative statements could aim to lessen the directness of the requests, which is seen as more appropriate since direct statements need to be avoided to maintain *rukun* [harmonious] principle suggested by Suseno (2003). In relation to gender, Maudy's use of informative statements supports Mill's (2003) theory that women's language preference in using indirect and vague language as they prioritize maintaining relationships during the conversation. Using indirect statements could make the requests become not too compulsive that reduce the risk of damaging the relationship with Ayu and Nadiem.

Besides, the indirect patterns also appear through the exaggeration of interest through a high degree adverb like *banget* [very] before giving the exact request, especially in the interrogative statements. Exaggerating Maudy's interests could improve the sincerity of the requests that support women's preference in using a positive strategy during the conversation, like explained by Mills (2003). Maudy might put more concern to Ayu's and Nadiem's faces and feelings, so she shows her interest to make the guests feel that their answers are important and not only needed as a formality of the talk show.

In terms of the difference in performing requests, I noticed that Maudy uses a tag question when asking a request to Ayu in one situation. However, she never uses a tag question to Nadiem. According to Lakoff (1975), tag questions represented women's insecurity as their position is generally seen as lower than men in the society (as stated in Oktaviani, et al., 2017). Maudy's

tendency to use tag questions to Ayu rather than to Nadiem might be unrelated to the general assumption. According to the theory, Maudy needs to use tag questions when conveying requests to Nadiem, not Ayu. It proves that the general stereotypes are not always related to the modern language's usage. Hence, the common statement differentiating between women's and men's language must be questioned again and analyzed thoroughly based on the context as Kuntjara (2003) suggested.

Moving on to the ways Maudy responds to Ayu's and Nadiem's requests, I found one similarity and difference. The similarity is that Maudy mostly gives a positive response to Ayu's and Nadiem's requests by accepting their requests and being cooperative with them. Maudy's response could support Mills's (2003) theory about women's priority in maintaining relationships during the conversation. Maudy might think that giving a negative response to Ayu's and Nadiem's request could create a chance of ill-feeling that can damage their relationship. Hence, Maudy does not want to risk her relationship with Ayu and Nadiem by rejecting the requests.

Although most of the time Maudy accepts Ayu's and Nadiem's requests, there is a difference in the pattern of response she used between answering Ayu's and Nadiem's requests. Maudy uses a less direct pattern when responding to Ayu's requests that she does lip service or talking around first before coming to the exact answer. On the contrary, Maudy uses a to-the-point response to Nadiem's request. Maudy's action might support Mills (2003) that described men's preference toward direct language while women prefer indirectness. They usually put a high concern to build a good relationship with others during the conversation. Maudy might think that the method of talking around when responding to Ayu's request can expand the conversation, so it will not only answer the question being asked.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings from this study prove that conducting a politeness study through the perspective of culture is notable as it has a high connection. Throughout this study, Maudy uses indirect patterns in conveying the requests and gives a positive response to the guests' requests. Maudy's action might connect to the principle of *rukun* [harmonious] described by Suseno (2003). In relation to gender, some findings show that the ways Maudy performs and responds to the guests' requests support Mills (2003) theory about men's and women's language. Women tend to prioritize relationships, while men see language only as a tool during a conversation. Yet, the theory is not wholly related to the findings, which could be affected by the changing era marked by the feminist and gender equality movement that blurs the difference between men's and women's language.

Despite the findings that I found, this study had some limitations. I suggest future researchers conduct a study comparing the concept of first-order politeness and second-order politeness applied in a talk show. Another possibility is by using talk shows that come from two different countries as the subject of the study. It will be helpful to reveal the similarities and differences of the politeness standard held in different cultures and contexts.

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