

# Strategies to Create Polite Expressions in Indonesian Communication

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Received: Nov. 3, 2018

Accepted: Nov. 14, 2018

Published: November 29, 2018

doi:10.5296/ijl.v10i6.13851

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v10i6.13851>

## Abstract

Indonesian is the national and official language that is widely used in Indonesia archipelago. It is commonly spoken for communication among tribes and for formal situation as well. Indonesian belongs to languages that do not have language-level. However, speakers of this language also want to make their Indonesian communication go on well and harmonically. For this reason, this study aims at finding out the strategies they have to create polite expressions in Indonesian communication. Based on data collected from informants living in Denpasar through observation method completed with interview technique, it was found that there are 5 strategies to create polite expressions when they have communication in Indonesian. The strategies cover (1) the the use of indirect speech act, (2) the use of particular person deixis, (3) the use of proper nouns, (4) the use of formal forms, and (5) the use of particular passive verbs. By those strategies the speakers do not have any problems when they have to use Indonesian in their communication.

**Keywords:** Deixis, Indirect speech, Proper Noun, Passive verb, Indonesian

## 1. Introduction

Indonesian is the national language spoken in Indonesia country. In addition to Indonesian language, in Indonesia there are many local languages which are often used as a means of communication. Thus, Indonesian people which come from various tribes and customs use their own regional languages, Indonesian and even foreign languages, especially English, in their daily communication.

Language is a tool of integration and social adaptation and when we adapt to a particular social environment we will choose the language and use it depending on the situation and conditions we face. People will use different languages when they communicate with different people. In Indonesia it often happens. Someone uses non-standard language in a particular environment or use standard language when he is communicating with certain people. In tourism destinations in Indonesia, some people often use local languages, Indonesian, and even English for specific purposes and to certain people. For example, local languages are used when people communicate with ones coming from the same regions and tribes, especially in situations related to customs, culture and religion. Indonesian is used in certain situations, for example in schools, offices and other formal environments, especially when they are talking to people from different islands, regions, and different tribes. Meanwhile, English is used in situations related to international events and t tourism business.

There are studies discussing politeness in using language. Lorenzo-Dus and Bou-Franch (2003) determined the relation of gender and politeness in their study. The study revealed both gender groups were oriented towards politeness and showed similarities and differences in their perception regarding the expression of solidarity and deference. Navratilova (2005) examines the strategies of politeness in institutional speech acts. Based on his study, socio-pragmatic situation motivates the choice of directive and expressive speech act verbs and their co-occurrence. In addition, he describes that negative politeness is expressed by the use of indirect directive speech acts with a speech act verb mitigating the illocutionary force of the utterance and allowing for some ambivalence in its interpretation, while positive politeness markers are used in expressive speech acts and are confined to the choice of speech act verbs marked for high degree of formality and the use of pre-modifying adjectives for intensifying positive stance.

Wibowo (2005) in his study explained some efforts to maintain and develop Javanese language. The use of Javanese language in families, society, communities, mass media, the courage to speak the language and the application of the language in teaching are the ways believed to maintain and develop Javanese language. Vilkki (2006) argued that the notions of politeness and face should be not equated. In addition, it is stated that the commonsense and the theoretical notions of politeness should be distinguished. The paper also briefly discusses the relationship between epistemic meanings and meanings, related to face work.

Wijayanto, et.al (2013) investigated politeness strategies in complaints relating to different social status levels and social distances. This study found that bald on record and positive politeness were the most pervasive strategies used across status levels and social distances.

Meanwhile, Getkham (2013) discussed how writers can politely present ideas in research writing. This study revealed that professional research writers employ both positive and negative politeness strategies in research writing. Senowarsito (2013) also explored the politeness strategies in teacher and students in two 90-minute lessons in a senior high school. Based on the study, the students tend to use some interpersonal function markers. The politeness strategies employed are positive politeness, negative politeness and bold on-record strategies. Jumanto (2014) argued that a language should be directed to politeness (distant language) and camaraderie (close language). Distant language is formal while close language is informal. The ignorance or incompetence of this may cause impoliteness. His study found that there are three types of utterances in Indonesian language, namely: formality-based, directness-based and meaning-based utterances. The politeness in Indonesian language use is classified into two categories, namely distant and close Indonesian language. The impoliteness of course happens when the rules of distant and close language are being broken.

Nishijima (2014) examined politeness in sign expressions. He compared English, German and Japanese language. Based on the study, it is pointed out that each language has its preferred styles of politeness, even for sign expressions, which are expected to give relevant information or instructions to passengers in a clear, direct manner. Azwan (2018) determined the politeness strategies of refusal used by Ambonese in refusing request and the effects of social relationship towards politeness strategies of refusal used by the Ambonese in refusing requests. The study showed that Ambonese people tend to use negative politeness strategy.

All the study that have been conducted revealed the importance of politeness in using a language. Whatever the language they use, it is necessary to pay attention to language manners so that communication works well and harmoniously. When they use Indonesian in their communication, they must pay attention to language manners even more when the communication runs on formal situations and to people who deserve respect. Meanwhile, it is known that Indonesian does not recognize language levels. For this reason, how do people speak polite Indonesian in their communication? That is a question that will be answered in this study.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

To discuss the problems proposed in this research, some concepts will be described. The concepts deal with the function of language and the indirect speech act proposed by some linguists.

### *2.1 Function and Role of Language*

Corder (1977) said that language is an object like a tool that we take, we use it for a specific purpose and we put it back after we finish using it. Language is also said to be something we know because with what we know we can communicate with others. Language is also something we do, it means that with our language we speak, write, read and listen to information in good or bad. Language has a very close relationship with culture and individuals. Language is one of the seven elements of culture. The way of community groups

use language is part of that culture. Thus, differences between languages are not only seen from the different ways of pronunciation and structure, but different in the way of speaking of a community group with other groups. For example in English, social deixis is more expressed through the addressing system using the first name and sure name, mentioning or calling (title) with Mrs., Boy, Doctor, or Your Honor.

## 2.2 Indirect Speech Acts

Speech acts refer to the relationship between certain types of sentences and speech acts. Speech acts can be distinguished into direct speech and indirect speech acts. Direct speech acts show a harmonious relationship and are in line between certain types of sentences, for example an interrogative sentence is used to ask something. Meanwhile, indirect speech acts are a relationship of discrepancies between certain types of sentences and speech acts, for example interrogative sentences are used to express orders or requests. This is more clearly seen in the following example (Saeed, 1997)

Utterance	Direct Act	Indirect Act
Would you mind passing me the ashtray?	Question	Request
Why don't you finish your drink and leave?	Question	Request
I must ask you to leave my house	Statement	Order / request
Leave me and I'll jump in the river.	Order / statement	Threat

Searle (1979) stated that direct speech acts are called as literal use and non-literal use for indirect speech acts. Searle pointed out that in communication a speaker tends to use indirect speech acts more than direct speech acts. For instance, sentence 1a-3a below may be considered as request, but sentence 1b-3b show pure imperative:

1. a. *Can you pass the salt?*  
b. *Please pass the salt.*
2. a. *I wish you wouldn't do that*  
b. *Please don't do that*
3. a. *Aren't you going to eat your cereal?*  
b. *Please eat your cereal*

Leech (1983) stated that another way to find out the politeness scale is to see the same speech content by using various forms of indirect speech. For example, consider the following example.

	Indirectness	less polite
(1) Answer the phone	↓	↓
(2) I want you to answer the phone		
(3) Will you answer the phone?		
(4) Can you answer the phone?		
(5) Would you mind answering the phone?	↓	↓
(6) Could you possibly answer the phone?		
Etc		more polite

### 3. Method

This descriptive study examines data obtained from Indonesian-speaking informants. Data was collected through observation method with its techniques (Djajasudarma, 1993; Sudaryanto, 1993). The observation method was completed with interview method for some purposes. The data collected by applying observation method was analyzed based on the problems discussed in terms of polite speech. To find out whether a speech stated by the speaker is considered as polite or impolite speech can be known through interviews to the informants when they are communicating by Indonesian.

### 4. Result and Discussion

Indonesian in general does not recognize language levels. However, in Indonesian several strategies were found to show politeness in their use for communication. Some strategies found based on the collected data are explained below.

#### 4.1 The use of Indirect Speech Acts

Based on the collected data of Indonesian, the use of indirect speech act is often found. Indirect speech act refers to the use of certain sentence of which meaning does not match the type of the sentence. Some examples of the use of indirect speech in Indonesian as the way to express politeness are as follows.

- (1) Wah, panas sekali ruangnya.  
‘Wow, the room is very hot’.
- (2) Bisakah anda menyelesaikan pekerjaan itu dalam tiga hari?  
‘Could you complete the job in three days?’

Speech (1) above is in the form of declarative sentence whose basic function is to provide certain information to hearers. However, the fact that the speaker used the declarative sentence not to tell information about something but he wanted to make a request or command to the hearer so that the hearer performed a certain action for the speaker. The speaker wanted the hearer to turn on the AC in the room and the hearer did it. Likewise with the speech in the form of a question in (2), the speaker did not intend to ask questions that require a yes or no answer, but he wanted to ask or instruct the hearer to complete his work in three days. Actually the speaker could express it with imperative sentences such as "Please complete the work in three days!" But the speaker preferred using the Interrogative sentence to imperative sentence to make a polite command in his communication.

#### 4.2 The Use of Particular Person Deixis

Indonesian has several lexicon variations that can be used to show politeness. The lexicons are primarily related to personal pronouns. For example, the form of *hamba* is often used to refer the first person (speakers) when they are talking to God. *Bapak* and *Ibu* refer to the hearers whose socio-economic status is higher than the speakers. The other form is *beliau* which refers to the third person (someone being discussed/talked) who has higher socio-economic status than the speakers. This can be seen in the following speech.

(1) Ya Tuhan, Ampunilah **hambamu** ini

‘Oh my God, forgive your servant’.

(2) Maaf Pak, **Bapak** ada di rumah besok?

‘Sorry sir, are you at home tomorrow?’

(3) **Ibu** ada acara siang ini?

‘Do you have a program this afternoon?’

(3) Pak Sudirman Halim akan tiba 15 menit lagi. Sekarang **beliau** dalam perjalanan ke sini.

‘Mr. Sudirman Halim will be arriving in 15 minutes. He is now on the way here’.

Pronouns used in the speeches above are called person deixis. The form of *hamba* in (1) shows the speaker's courtesy when he said something to the hearer (God) and in this case the speaker feels that he is powerless and nothing in front of the hearer (God). The forms of *Bapak* in (2) and *Ibu* in (3) refer to second person who he is talking with to substitute the standard form of *anda* or *kamu*.

Likewise with the form of *beliau* to substitute the form of *dia* for a single third person. *Beliau* is chosen to express a respect and courtesy of the speaker to the third person he is talking about or referring to.

The Indonesian speakers tend to use *saya* rather than *aku* since *saya* is considered much politer than *aku* in some area in Indonesia. Thus, *saya* is commonly used for formal situation and *aku* is more used in informal situation. For that reason, *saya* is more often used in Indonesian communication. In addition to the use of certain forms as mentioned above, recently there is also the inappropriate use of pronoun of *kami* as in the following examples.

(1) **Kami** sudah buat pak, tapi belum selesai semua.

‘I have already made Sir, but it hasn't been finished yet.’

(2) Demikain **kami** sampaikan dan atas perhatiannya diucapkan terima kasih

‘That is all I could say and thank you for your attention.’

The first was told by someone to his lecturer. The use of the form *kami* which refers to the speaker (first-person singular) seems inappropriate in the speech because *kami* is a pronoun of the first exclusive plural pronoun used to refer to speakers and other people on his side. In this case, the use of *kami* is to substitute *saya* to show good manners or politeness.

#### 4.3 The use of Proper Nouns

In Indonesian communication, especially when someone speaks with his family members and relatives and colleagues, the use of proper nouns is often found in daily discourse. This could be seen in the following speech.

- (1) Bu, **Diva** pulang telat ya. Masih ada kegiatan di sekolah.  
'Mam, Diva will come home late. There are still activities in school.'
- (2) **Komang** ikut Ibu keluar, mau beli buku.  
'Komang want to come with you Mom, I want to buy a book.'

The use of proper nouns such as *Diva* and *Komang* in the utterances above is to substitute first person pronoun I (the speaker). The selection of proper noun of *Diva* and *Komang* aims to show politeness. The use of both proper nouns looks better and more polite when someone speaks to his family or relatives. Thus, the use of proper nouns has caused communication work well.

#### 4.4 The Use of Formal Forms

In addition to the above strategies, another strategy was also found to show politeness in Indonesian communication. The strategy is related to the use of formal forms as presented in the following examples.

- (1) Pada kesempatan ini saya ingin **ngomongin** tentang program kita bulan ini.  
'On this occasion I would like to talk about our program this month'
- (2) Yang saya ingin **omongkan** adalah masalah yang berkaitan dengan kakak anda  
'What I want to say is about your older brother's problem'
- (3) Hal itu **nggak usah** dibahas lagi.  
'That doesn't need to be discussed again.'
- (4) Yang **cewek-cewek** duduk di sebelah sana dan **cowok-cowok** di sebelah sini  
'The girls sit down there and the boys sit down here'

The 4 speeches above use non-standard forms, such as *ngomongin* in (1), *omongkan* in (2), *nggak usah* in (3), and *cewek-cewek*, *cowok-cowok* in (4). The use of the non-standard forms has caused the speeches to be less polite. To make the speeches more polite the strategy that could be implied is to replace the non-standard forms with standard ones, as in example 1a-4a below.

- (1) a. Pada kesempatan ini saya ingin **mengatakan** tentang program kita bulan ini.
- (2) a. Yang saya ingin **katakan** adalah masalah yang berkaitan dengan kakak anda
- (3) a. Hal itu **tidak perlu** dipermasalahkan lagi. Mari kita perbaiki bersama-sama.
- (4) a. Yang **perempuan** agar duduk di sebelah sana dan **laki-laki** di sebelah sini.

From data above it is known that standard language is not only good for grammatical aspect but it is good as well for the communication manner.

#### 4.5 The Use of Particular Passive Verbs

Several passive verbs are also possibly used to express polite expression in Indonesian communication. The passive verbs showing polite are commonly used in a formal ceremony particularly spoken by a master of ceremony. The examples of polite expression using passive verbs are as below.

- (1) *Hadirin dimohon berdiri.*  
'Attendees are requested to stand.'
- (2) *Pak Ketua disilahkan untuk menempati tempat yang sudah disediakan*  
'The Chairperson is pleased to occupy the chair provided'

The forms as *dimohon* and *disilahkan* are passive verbs used to show polite expression in Indonesian communication. Besides formal event, those two passive verbs are also possibly used in other discourses or situations. It means that every utterance that contains those verbs will have good and polite values and result in good and harmonious communication.

### 5. Conclusion

Every language speaker wants to carry out good communication with others. To have harmonious communication, communication's manner and the way to express polite communication becomes very important to do by speaker. Indonesian as one of languages that do not have language level also has certain strategies to express politeness in communication. The strategies include the use of (1) indirect speech acts, person deixis, proper nouns, formal forms, and particular passive verbs.

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