



POLITENESS PRINCIPLES: THEIR REALISATION IN INDONESIAN APOLOGIES

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Abstract : *The politeness principles in the realm of pragmatics are known to be universal. Yet, to what degree the universality of such principles applies to a particular language is worth revealing. This study has a two - folded purpose, i.e. to look at the realisation of the politeness principles in Indonesian apologies and to demonstrate the patterns of this particular speech act according to the CCSARP coding scheme as proposed by Blum Kulka & Olshtain (1998).*

Key words : *politeness principles, pragmatics, Indonesian apologies*

INTRODUCTION

Gumperz in introduction of 'Politeness : Some Universals in language Usage' (Brown & Levinson, 1978) stated that politeness phenomena are basically universal. They are applicable to any society. However, he further continued that what counts as polite may differ from one group to another, from one situation to another or from one individual to another. Similarly, Frase (1985) as quoted by Blum Kulka & Olshtain (1980) claimed that the strategies for realizing Speech Acts, for conveying politeness and mitigating the force of utterances, are essentially the same across languages and cultures, but that the appropriate use of any given strategy will not be identical across different cultures.

It is based on such assumptions that this study is conducted. Its main goal is to find out to what extent the issue of universality in politeness principles suggested by Brown & Levinson (1978) applies to Indonesian as reflected in the speech act apologies. In addition to that this study also

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attempts to demonstrate the realisation patterns of the Indonesian apologies through the analysis of this speech act using the CCSARP coding scheme designed by Blum Kulka, Olshtain et al. for their CRRP project (Blum Kulka & Olshtain 1989). Some important factors influencing the choice of strategy in making apologies in Indonesian will also be touched upon in this study.

The relevance of speech acts to the issue of universality has been highlighted by Blum & Olshtain et al. through the undertaking of the CCSARP project which was based on their views that :

Speech acts operate by universal pragmatic principles and vary in conceptualization and verbalization across cultures and languages. Their modes of performance carry heavy social implication and seem to be ruled by universal principles of cooperation and politeness (Blum Kulka & Olshtain, 1989)

APOLOGIES AS SEEN FROM THE POLITENESS PRINCIPLES POINT OF VIEW

Apologies are by definition face threatening acts (Brown & Levinson, 1978)

By apologising the speaker recognizes the fact that a violation of a social norm has been committed and admits to the fact that she is at least partially involved in its cause. (Blum Kulka & Olshtain, 1984)

Hence, apologies involve loss of face for the speaker and support for the hearer.

EMPIRICAL DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Following Brown & Levinson's idea on politeness principles (1978), 3 factors determining the kind of politeness strategy used in communication are power (P), distance (D) and the absolute ranking of impositions (R). Based on such factors, the following politeness principles are put forward :

- Negative politeness
- Positive politeness
- Bald on record
- Off record
- Not said

Each type of politeness consists of various strategies (See Brown & Levinson, 1978).

According to Blum Kulka, House & Kasper (1978), degrees of social distance and power between participants are among the most important factors determining variation in speech acts. Hence, in the study, the role relationship between the interlocutors is shown by the social parameters 'dominance' and 'social distance'. The parameter 'dominance' is used to indicate the existence or absence of authority of one interlocutor over the other, whereas the parameter 'social distance' is used to show whether the interlocutor know each other or they have never met before. Based on those parameters, the following role relationship constellation are derived :

1. Status unequals, non intimataes
(+ dominance, + social distance) = authority figures / subordinates.
2. Status equals, non - intimates.
(- dominance, + social distance) = strangers
3. Status equals, intimates
(- dominance, - social distance) = friends of near acquaintances.
4. Status unequals, intimates
(+ dominance, - social distance) = parents / children

The data in this study are grouped according to the above role constellations and they are analysed based on :

- a. Politeness principles (Brown & Levinson, 1978) and
- b. The CCSARP (The Cross Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project) coding scheme (Blum Kulka & Olshtain, 1989)

DATA ELICITATION

The data are elicited from a variety of social situations involving the speech act under investigation, i.e. apologies. They are obtained mainly by means of tape recording and field - not taking. Thus, all the data collected mentioned above, we recorded conversations occurring between authority figures and their subordinates, strangers, friends or near acquaintances, parent and their children.

THE CCSARP CODING SCHEME ON APOLOGIES

According to Blum Kulka & Olshtain, 1989), the linguistic realisation of the act of apologising can take one of following two basic forms or a combination of both :

1. **Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID)** which is considered the most explicit realisation of apology.
It consists of expressions of regret, such as : (be) sorry, apologize, regret, excuse, etc; the IFID serves as a signal of regret on the speaker's part for the violation that motivated the need to apologize and is therefore intended to placate the hearer. Blum Kulka et al. further stated that for each language there is a scale of conventionality of IFID realisations. In Indonesian, the most common forms are : 'maaf' (sorry) and 'sori - sori' (sorry)
2. Another way to perform an apology (with or without an IFID) is 'to use an utterance which contains reference to one or more elements from a closed set of specified propositions the semantic content of which relates directly to the apology preconditions' (Blum Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). Thus, in addition to IFID, there are 4 potential strategies constituting the apology speech act. They are as follows :
 - a. An explanation or account of the cause which brought about the violation,
 - b. An Expression of the speaker's responsibility for the offence,
 - c. An offer of repair, and
 - d. A promise of forbearance.

In the apology coding scheme, the above strategies are coded and sub - categorised into :

1. **Taking and responsibility**
This strategy is taken by speaker when she / he chooses to take on responsibility for the offence which creates the need to apologize. Trosbory (1987) subcategorised this strategy into :
 - a. **Implicit acknowledgment**
e.g. I can see your point; perhaps I shouldn't have done it.
 - b. **Explicit acknowledgment**
e.g. I'll admit I forgot to do it
 - c. **Expression of a lack of intent**
e.g. I didn't mean it
 - d. **Expression of self deficiency**
e.g. I was confused. You know I'm bad at it.

- e. Expression of embarrassment
e.g. I feel so bad about it
 - f. Explicit acceptance of the blame
e.g. It was entirely my fault. You're right to blame me.
2. Explanation or account of cause
 - a. Explicit : the bus was late
 - b. Implicit : traffic is always so heavy in the morning.
 3. Offer of repair
 - a. Repair : I'll pay for the damage
 - b. Compensation : You can borrow my dress instead
 4. Promise of forbearance
e.g. This won't happen again

The illocutionary force of the apology can be intensified or downgraded by the following devices :

Intensification

- a. An intensifying expression within the IFID
e.g. I'm very sorry
- b. An expression of explicit concern for the hearer
e.g. have you been waiting long ?
- e. The use multiple strategies (\pm IFIDs and any one or more of the four other strategies).
e.g. I'm terribly sorry for the damage. I'll pay for it.

Downgrading

Downgrading is an addition to the strategy used by the speaker to minimize the offence.

THE ANALYSIS OF THE INDONESIAN APOLOGIES

The grouping of the data also follows the four role relationship constellations, i.e. :

1. + dominance, + social distance
apologies performed by authority figures towards their subordinates.
2. - dominance, + social distance
apologies performed by strangers

3. - dominance, - social distance
apologies performed by friends or near acquaintances
 4. + dominance, - social distance
apologies performed by parents towards their children.
1. Apologies performed by authority figures towards their subordinates.
- a. (in a staff meeting in a university. The Head of the Department. D. Who was supposed to preside over the meeting came 5 minutes late. He made an apology

D : Maaf, teman-teman, saya agak terlambat karena ada 1 mahasiswa perwalian saya yang ingin bertemu untuk suatu masalah yang juga akan saya bicarakan dalam rapat ini.

(Sorry, friends. I came a bit late because one of my advisees wanted to see me for a very serious problem that I'm also going to discuss in this meeting)

The politeness strategy used by D is a bald on record. Coming a little late to a meeting is not a serious offence in our culture. Yet, being the chairman of a meeting, D was expected to come on time. Therefore, his late coming is a breach of a social norm and an apology is required. Regarding the CCSRP coding scheme, the above apology can be described as follows :

Dimension	Category	Element
a. Alerters	Address term	'teman-teman' (friend)
b. IFID	-	'maaf' (sorry)
c. Explanation or cause	Explicit account of	'saya agak terlambat karena ada mahasiswa saya yang ingin bertemu untuk suatu masalah yang sangat serius. (I am a bit late because one of my advisees wanted to see me for a very serious problem)

- b. (S, G's subordinate came to see G at his house. He didn't make an appointment before. G is out and S had to wait for about an hour).

G : Sudah tunggu lama, Pak S ? mobil saya mogok di jalan.
(Have you been waiting long, Mr. S ? My car broke down on the way home)

S : Oh, tidak apa - apa, Pak.
(Oh, it's all right, Sir)

G didn't explicitly apologise for his coming late, even though S was waiting for him and was waiting for him at his house. Yet, he showed his concern for S by asking 'Sudah tunggu lama, Pak S ?' (Have you been waiting long, Mr. S ?). This utterance together with the next one, i.e. 'Mobil saya mogok di jalan.' (My car broke down on the way home) which serve as an explanation indicate that the strategy he used is an off record (strategy 2: give association clues: Brown & Levinson, 1978) What he actually wanted to say is : 'I couldn't get home soon because my car broke down. Therefore, you have to wait long and I fell sorry or you'. Regarding the CCSRP coding shame, the above apology can be coded as follows :

Dimension	Category	Element
a. Alerters	Address term	'Pak S' (Mr. S)
b. IFID	-	-
c. Intensification	an expression of concern for the hearer	'Sudah tunggu lama ?' (have you been waiting long?)
d. Explanation or account of cause	Explicit	'Mobil saya mogok di jalan' (My car broke down on the way home).

2. Apologies performed by strangers

- a (P Bought a new battery at a shop but when he tried it at home it didn't work. He went back to the shop and made a complaint to the shopkeeper. The shopkeeper, S, made an apology to P

when she found out that there was something wrong with the battery. She decided to change it with another one).

P : Mbak, batrai yang baru saja saya beli tidak mau nyala.
(Miss, the battery I have just bought didn't work.

S : Coba lihat ! (Let me have a look at it !)
(She tried it and finally she said;) Oh, maaf Pak, ada yang tidak beres dengan batrai ini. Saya ganti saja dengan yang lain. (Oh, I am Sorry Sir, There is something wrong with this battery. I'll change it with another)

The strategy used by the shopkeeper above is a bald on record and the analysis of the apology is as follows;

Dimension	Category	Element
a. Alerters	Address term	'Pak' (Sir)
b. IFID	-	'Maaf' (I am soory)
c. Explanation or account of cause	Explicit	'ada yang tidak beres dengan baterai ini' (there is something wrong with this battery)
d. Offer of repair	Compensation	'Saya ganti dengan yang lain' (I'll change it with another)

b (in a shop, A wrongly took B's umbrella. They didn't know each other before. A is a teenage girl, and B is an elderly woman).

A : maafkan saya, Bu. Saya salah ambil payung. Saya kira payung ini kepunyaan saya soalnya mirip benar dengan kepunyaan saya. (I am sorry, Madam. I wrongly took your umbrella. I thought this umbrella was mine because it looks exactly like mine).

B : Oh, tidak apa - apa. (Well, that's all right)

In performing her apology, A in the above situation used

on record strategy which is expressed through the use of an explicit term of apology 'maafkan saya, Bu'. (I am sorry, Madam).She also gave a long explanation to B in order to mitigate her guilt. The fact that her umbrella looks exactly like B's is a mitigating circumstance which serves as an indirect apology. The analysis of her apology is as follows :

Dimension	Category	Element
a. Alerters	Address term	'Bu' (Madam)
b. IFID	-	'Maafkan saya' (I am sorry)
c. Taking on responsibility	Explicit acknowledgment	'Saya salah ambil payung'(I wrongly took your umbrella)
d. Explanation or account of cause	Explicit	'saya kira payung ini kepunyaan saya soalnya mirip benar dengan kepunyaan saya' (I thought this umbrella is mine because it looks exactly like mine).

3. Apologies performed by friends or near acquaintances

- a. (N & I are close friend. N borrowed I's book and promised to return it soon but she kept forgetting to bring the book).

N : I, aku lupa lagi bawa bukumu. Besok pagi, ya.

(I, I forgot to bring your book again. I'll bring it tomorrow, Ok?)

I : Sungguh ya, jangan lupa lagi.

(be sure not to forget it again, Ok ?)

The strategy chosen by N above is an off record (give hints). What she actually wanted to say is : 'I can't return your book now as I forgot to bring it.' Her utterance of apology can be analysed as follows :

Dimension	Category	Element
a. Alerters	Address term	'I'
b. IFID	-	-
c. Taking on responsibility	Explicit acknowledgment	'Aku lupa bawa bukumu'(I forgot to bring your book)
d. Offer of repair	Compensation	'Besok pagi, ya' (I'll bring it tomorrow, Ok ?)

- b. (Y & C are acquaintances. C is much older than Y. they have a formal relationship. Y couldn't come to C's party last Saturday so she apologized for it).

Y : Bu C, saya minta maaf karena tidak dapat datang hari sabtu yang lalu. Anak saya sakit, Bu. (Mrs. C, I'm sorry that I couldn't come last Saturday. My son was ill).

C : Oh, tidak apa - apa, Bu. Bagaimana anaknya sekarang ? (Well, that's all right. How's your son now ?)

While the language used in the previous situation is very informal, the one used by Y above is quite formal. Hence, the pattern of apology used here is also formal. A formal pattern of apology in Indonesian is marked by the use of complete sentence, e.g.

Saya minta maaf	Lit. means ; ' I beg
or :	forgiveness
saya mohon maaf '	

It is also normally performed by people having a formal relationship or in a formal setting or when a serious offence has occurred. The strategy used by Y above is a bald on record and the apology it self can be coded as follows :

Dimension	Category	Element
a. Alreters	Address term	'Bu C' (Mrs. C)
b. IFID	-	'Saya minta maaf' (I am sorry)
c. Explanation or account cause	Explicit of	'Anak saya sakit' (My son is ill)

4. Apologies performed by parents toward their children.

(a) (M, a mother, accidentally broke her 15 year old daughter's. (K's), favourite vase).

M : K, Mami tidak sengaja menjatuhkan vas bungamu waktu menaruh majalah di meja. Nanti mami belikan lagi kalau ke Jakarta. (K. Mommy accidentally knocked over your vase while putting this magazine on the table. I'll buy you a new one when I go to Jakarta).

In our culture, parents' making an explicit apology towards their children is not very common unless a serious offence has taken place. In the above example, M admitted that she broke her daughter's favorite vase and she felt sorry for what had happened. Her regret is expressed through her words 'nanti mami belikan lagi kalau ke Jakarta.' (I'll buy you a new one when I go to Jakarta). Yet, she didn't think it necessary for her to use an explicit term of apology, such as 'maaf' (sorry). The expression of a lack of intent (Trosborg, 1987). Regarding the politeness principles, M's strategy is an off record (Strategy 1 : give hints). What she actually wanted to say is : 'I broke your vase and I am sorry for that.' Based on the CCSARP coding scheme, the analysis of her utterance is as follows :

Dimension	Category	Element
a. Alerters	Address term	'K'
b. Taking on responsibility	An expression of a lack of intent	'mami tidak sengaja menjatuhkan vas bungamu.' (mommy accidentally knocked over your vase).
c. Explanation or account of cause	Explicit	waktu mau menaruh majalah ini di meja' (While putting this magazine on the table)
d. Offer of repair	Repair	'Nanti Mami belikan lagi kalau ke Jakarta'

From the analysis above, we can see that the apology in this example applies multiple strategies. As a cultural note, it is worth mentioning here that the self address term used by parents usually refers to their parental status. For example 'Ibu or Mami' (Mommy), 'Bapak or Papi' (Dad'ly). Thus, a mother or a father will not normally use the personal pronoun 'I' to address her self / him self when talking to her / his children. Accordingly, the children will not use the pronoun 'anda or kamu' (you) to address their parents. They will always use the term 'Ibu or Mami' to address their mother and the term 'Bapak or Papi' to their father.

- (b) (E, a seven year old boy, has been asking his father, F, to buy him a toy soldier like the one owned by his friend many times but his father keeps forgetting it).

E : Mana tentara-tentaraannya, Pi ?

(Where is the toy soldier, Dad ?)

F : Aduh, Papi lupa lagi. Papi sibuk sekali tadi di kantor. Besok hari minggu kita pergi sama - sama ke toko mainan, ya (Oh, dear, Daddy forgot it again. Daddy was very busy at the office. Next Sunday we are going to a toy shop together, Ok ?)

Though admitting that he forgot to do what he promised to his son, the father in the above conversation didn't explicitly say 'sorry'. He tried to compensate for the inconvenience he caused by saying 'Besok hari Minggu kita pergi sama - sama ke toko mainan, ya' (next Sunday we're going to a toy shop together, Ok ?). His utterance 'Papi sibuk sekali tadi di kantor' (Daddy was very busy at the office) serves as an explanation or account of cause. With respect to the politeness principles, the strategy used here is called an off record (Strategy 1 : give hints). What the father actually wanted to say is : 'I didn't buy the toy for you because I forgot to do so and I feel sorry for this'. The following is the analysis of the utterance of apology above :

Dimension	category	Element
a. Takin on responsibility	Explicit acknowledgment	'Papi lupa lagi' (Daddy forgot it again)
b. Explanation or account of cause	Implicit	'Papi sibuk sekali tadi di kantor' (Daddy was very busy at the office)
c. Offer of repair	Compensation	'Besok hari Minggu kita pergi sama - sama ke took mainan, ya. (next Sunday we're going to a toy shop, Ok ?)

The apology in the above example also applies multiple strategies.

SOME COMMENTS ON THE RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS OF THE INDONESIAN APOLOGIES

Based on the analysis of the Indonesian apologies presented above, the following conclusions can be drawn :

1. The politeness principles seem to be applicable to Indonesian as can be seen from the realization pattern of the Indonesian apologies. Some strategies, however, are not commonly used by the Indonesians.
2. The choice of politeness strategies in the performing apologies seems to be influenced by following factors :
 - a. **Power**
It seem that a powerful apologizer tends to use a less explicit / direct apology. Situations 1b, 4a and 4b serve as instances of this phenomenon.
 - b. **Social distance / degree of familiarity.**
The closer the social distance between the interlocutors is, the less explicit / direct apology the apologizer uses. This can be seen in situations 3a, 4a and 4b.
 - c. **Culture**
It seems that older people tend to be less explicit / direct in apologizing to younger ones, e.g. situations 4a and 4b. on the other hand, young people tend to be explicit in performing their apologies towards elderly people, e.g. situations 2b and 3b.

- d. **Degree of offence**
The greater the degree of offence caused by the apologizer, the more direct strategy she / he uses, e.g. situations 2b and 3b.
- e. **Context / setting**
In a formal context, people tend to use a more explicit / direct apology, such as shown in situations 1a and 3b
- f. **Individual**
From the result of the data analysis, there is no indication the gender plays an important role in the choice of strategy. Further investigation on the relevance of this element and other individual factors to the choice of strategy in performing apologies is worth doing.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As stated in the 'introductions', the aims of this study are firstly, to find out to what extent the issue of universality in politeness principles applies to Indonesian as reflected in Indonesian apologies, and secondly, to demonstrate the realization patterns of this speech act in Indonesian through the use of the CCSARP coding scheme. Though the data used in this study are very limited in terms of number, the results of the data analysis show that the politeness principles to a certain extent are applicable to Indonesian and the realisation patterns of the Indonesian apologies can be revealed through the use of the CCSARP coding scheme. In addition to that, this study provides some evidence that basic pragmatic features of speech acts are universal and that socio - pragmatic strategies are indeed transferred from one language to another.

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