

THE VALUE OF LANGUAGE POLITENESS IN THE EDUCATION

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Abstract

The paper discusses how the ethics of language used in communication becomes deficit in educational interaction of student-teacher during educational process. The time changes and the value follow the changes. That is what happens in the social life. The language used by students has nearly broken the norms of politeness strategies. The global era, in which everybody involves in the display of any kind of commercials and action from visual media; the parents do not really care about being together in the family to form heart by heart communication; and the teachers are busy with overload jobs, is assumed to be the causes. Thus, providing students with more language instructional activities related to the discourse of language politeness strategies should be seriously considered in constructing language educational instruction as the part of character buildings.

Key Words: language politeness, deficit, communication in education, character

A. INTRODUCTION

Language as a social phenomenon has different functions. One of them is the interpersonal function. This function can be seen from the communication activities of humans to maintain the totality of social relations. In communication, speech acts is fortified by the norms of language in social life. Of the norms, politeness and language formality are determined by the relative power and social distance between speakers and listeners. The further the relationship between a speaker and a listener, the more formal and polite the utterances are expressed.

As the time goes on, the value of social life follows to change. That is happening, more or less in our educational communication. Both positive and negative changes affect learners' way of thinking and behaviour. Such changes can no longer be separated from the development of technology. Learners' ability in observing the environment around them is one of the factors that determines the direction of communication development.

Rapid technological development and its power to influence the way students communicate likely determine the direction of changes of education in Indonesia. There is an indication of moral value deficits, one of which is the problem of communication ethics in context of education. Thus, the Indonesian government policy concerning the curriculum content is more directed to character building of the learners.

Now, the tendency of the decline of ethics in communication arises. One of the visible symptoms is lack attention to the hierarchy of communication in interaction in educational environment. Let's take an example of the utterance addressed to the lecturer when a student wanted to consult her: *Saya kan sudah datang kemarin ke sini, tapi Ibu tidak ada*. In performing speech acts, this student did not consider the level of social variable, concerning her status and position in the interaction. He has violated the maxim that causes the hearer (in this case the lecturer) to feel less comfortable. It might be more polite and more comfortable for the her when the utterance is cured with: *Kemarin saya datang Bu. Kebetulan saya tidak ketemu Ibu. Mungkin Ibu ada kegiatan yang mendadak.*

This paper discusses the value of language politeness of students that covers the causes making possible deficit of politeness. In addition, it also reviews relevant language learning instruction to restore the level of language politeness, either at the university level or at educational institution as a whole.

As we can understand, the communication built, either in oral or written forms carries a message. In addition, language is a way of communicating, and as a means of channeling ideas and messages to be delivered. Delivering a message through a language is not only prior to the content, but also politeness as a factor to determine the strings of good and effective communication.

Theoretically, politeness refers to the two main definitions. In general, this can be interpreted as the use of different approaches and perspectives in getting a form of politeness. In a narrow context, politeness is

defined as the choice of strategies used in communicating to minimize discomfort of interlocutors (see Brown and Levinson, 1987). In this sense, politeness is an attempt to keep another person's facial expressions for avoiding bringing up an unpleasant situation between the two interlocutors. On the other side, politeness can also be understood as a type of linguistic structures that expresses the speaker's attitude and thus it contains pragmatic meaning (Held (2005: 134).

Furthermore, language politeness is to maintain good relationship of people who involve in communication. It gives priority to form and appropriate linguistic expressions, as well as attitudes towards discourse, such as initiating topic selection, based on the situation; choosing communication media, using the right words for the context, and controlling frequency of the words used (Usami: 2004). Since the elements mentioned are led to language politeness, language function as the device of delivering message adjusted to the existing situation and context should be reviewed.

Another factor related to language politeness is the norm and conventions of language users. This is shown in the use of language strategies built in the interaction of speakers. A meaningful communication is governed and constrained by norms as it is the conventions of the community with a particular culture. Such convention has become implicit rules of language users in uttering appropriate discourse to convey ideas. Then, sustainability of effective and proper communication, according to Usami (2006b), rises when speakers consider various elements existing in the society. And it should be basically adapted to the cultural context. Communication built, as a matter of fact, has rules and restrictions that control the discourse patterns and options used based on the context and situation of the ongoing communication.

An instance of language convention considered is the accuracy of form in the use of *greeting* expression in certain situations. The use of addressing expression, for example, in formal and non-formal situation could be different for some people in certain environments. Besides, the formality will also determine the choice of addressed words or lexical choice, and attitudes in the use of such language are adapted to existing social norms.

One more thing that cannot be avoided is the strategy of language use. As a form of politeness in speech acts, the accuracy of choosing the utterances used measures a person's ability in building positive interaction based on moral values and politeness in society (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Based on the condition and situation of speech acts, there are five levels of politeness suggested as a guide that can serve as benchmarks, namely the very formal, formal, consultative, ordinary, and intimate.

In applying interactional language, either directly or indirectly, the maxims of politeness should be our concern. Three maxims of politeness proposed by Lakoff, 1973 in Chapelle (2013) can be a guide in having speech acts. The first is not to burden the interlocutor (*Do not impose*) with the speech act being delivered. The second is to provide interlocutor with the choice (*Give options*). And the last is to provide comfort to interlocutor (*Be friendly*). By understanding the maxims, language politeness achieved well.

B. STUDENTS' LANGUAGE POLITENESS

Language proficiency is determined not only from the content of the conversation, but also from the various aspects of morality of one's ability to communicate by bringing about elements of educational world. The choice of words that are no longer in an appropriate way and addressed to the improper individuals, causes moral failures and politeness in language. Because lack of respect to elders has become a common practice, the speech act for the peer may be addressed to his teacher. Ironically, the phenomena is shown in the world of education.

In educational institutions, in which the high competent intellectual gather, the language users are assumed to be able to consider the various elements in communication. They are able to select and use appropriate language strategies suited to the context and discourse carried out. At the same time, they commonly face any level of interlocutors, to whom language politeness should be applied. In addition, they also know that the factor of politeness gives the effects to the smoothness of the interaction in any communication type chosen.

The phenomena of the failure in developing language competence, which is mostly based on politeness strategy, occurs not only in the middle and lower level of educational environment, but also at the university level. The language used by students to their lecturer is categorized very ironic. Not only the students at undergraduate level (S1), but also the students at the graduate level (S2), many of whom have got married, show the weakness in applying language politeness.

The result of informal discussion of lecturers at UNP Padang, especially in language courses, is many complaints about the attitude of students in communicating, either directly or indirectly (short message). What is often done by students is sending a short message (SMS) to lecturers in class activity or in consulting regarding their final project. The following data are from a type of speech act, students utterances addressed to lecturers via text message.

Of the 27 speech acts collected from the lecturers of the English department, only three meet the criteria of language politeness, while others tend to violate the norms of politeness in the speech act. Here are the sample of data that violate the norms of politeness suspected.

- (1) *Ms, ni X ms. Hr ini ada di jurusan ms?*
- (2) *Miss, kapan ada d kampus? Y mw mnta acc proposal.Thanks*

Data (1) and (2) are from different speakers (student X and Y) addressed to the same interlocutor (lecturer). The strategy of questioning doesn't reflect of the speech delivered to the lecturer. If utterance (1) is revised to become *Blh X menemui Ms hari ini di jurusan, Ms?*, and utterance (2) becomes *Apa blh Y menemui Ms di kmpr hr ini utk konsultasi prop.Ms?*, the lecturer may feel comfortable reading it. Here, the improper choice of words makes the speech act less polite and the receiver feels uncomfortable with it. It indicates that the closeness felt by the sender (student) is not in line with what the lecturer perceives. As a matter of fact, the sender has normatively violated the maxim of convenience (Lakoff, 1973).

Data data (3) and (4) are also the utterances from different students to a lecturer with the intention to ask for help. But the two utterances seem to have the meaning of "command", different from data (1) and (2). Although it is ended with *tq (thanks)* in data (4), the receiver (lecturer) still feels forced. In this case, the utterance does not only violate the maxim of *comfort* in politeness, but also the maxim that is *not burdensome* (still based on Lakoff's maxim theory).

- (3) *Di mana bpk skrg? Saya perlu tanda tangan.*
- (4) *Pak J di mana skrg. Saya perlu diskusi, Tq.*
- (5) *Bu, saya Q. Ibu janji hari ini pukul 10 sy bisa ketemu Ibu. Saya sudah di kantor Ibu, tapi Ibu tidak ada. Sampai jam berapa sy tunggu Ibu.*

The meaning of data (5) can be interpreted as blaming the receiver (lecturer) with the speech of *Saya sudah di kantor Ibu, tapi Ibu tidak ada*. The continuation of the speech act *Sampai jam berapa sy tunggu Ibu.*, has the implied meaning of asking the receiver (lecturer) to be with him soon. Surely this clearly gives the impression of inconvenience to the receiver. For this case, he has violated the maxim of acceptance (Chaer, 2010), in which he should minimize the profits for himself.

The forms of the language used in a short message sevice (SMS) becomes a very disturbing phenomenon, for the sentences used contains language that does not reflect the values of politeness. The sentence patterns in the speech above do not describe the proper use of language by a student to a teacher. Considering the symptoms that have reached worrying point, an analysis of the running educational process, in formal (at schools) and non-formal (families) education is the basis of moral education and the sustainability of language politeness. In other words, moral education and values of politeness should be one of the main priorities in the development of the learners. As stated by Dewey in Johnston (2003), education, in general, is the one that not only focusses on academic factor but also emphasizes on morality. So, the attention to the development othe learners on moral values and politeness should be the top priority in today's education. For that purpose, the paper also discusses the possible factors causing the decline of politeness and the alternatives to develop language learning activities as the basis of the development of moral values and language politeness of the learners.

C. POSSIBLE CAUSES OF LANGUAGE POLITENESS DEFICIT

Information technology (IT) has grown significantly. Its development directly or indirectly shares positive and negative effects on the learners' language development. The emergence of gadgets and other various technological devices, on the one hand, can increase the English language skills of learners because most instructions are in English. Even there are learners who can simply communicate in English because they are accustomed to watching the program of English: shows / movies. On the other hand, these devices begin to replace the function of communication usually done to build social interaction and relationships with others. Various technological superiorities began to infuse younger generation and drown out the role and importance of togetherness as well as social values in an environment. In addition, technological developments that lead to these negative symptoms are worsened because the working parents who are very busy with their job outdoor do not have time to control the activities of their children at home.

Warmness and interactions within the family that should arise in a harmony with the time being together to share stories, disappear along with the absence of parents, busy with their jobs. Family that should be a place where the members start to understand and apply the elements of politeness and internalization of moral values no longer offers a logical social life. The role of the parents to provide warmness to family members through their ability to communicate with a polite way no longer exists. It can be seen from the experience of a student who wants to inform his success in school to his father and it is shown in the following speech acts:

- Anak : *Pa, gambar Abang dibilang bu guru bagus.*
Papa : *Humm, (terus memencet HPnya untuk menghubungi seseorang)*

Anak : *Papa. Ibu guru memuji Abang tadi.*
 Papa : *Ah, Papa sibuk. (kesal karena telponnya tidak nyambung)*

From the data above it is pictured out that the son didn't get good response from the father, even he felt he was blamed, by saying *Ah, Papa sibuk*. As we know that children like to imitate adults. Whenever they always face the situation in which parents mostly use rude words, the children tend to imitate them. They rarely get the knowledge of language politeness from home. This, of course, becomes a negative impact in the development of moral values and understanding of the social norms in the society. In turn, in saying things, learners speak without caring the norms of politeness.

In the context of communication, the changes of attitude faced by the child in family's daily communication are the basis of the changes of their attitude. Nothing can replace the function of communication in social relationships to be the basic moral values and politeness for learners. It is clear that technology and the information cannot be separated from everyday life. Then, integrating them with communication in the social life is an effective way in introducing the values of politeness. It is the idea of McKee (1992) saying that personal and environmental approach must be integrated with the use of various tools and electronic media and communications.

This communication problem is not only happening in the social environment in general. This phenomenon spread up to the level of formal education. Lack of knowledge on forming good personality in family environment leads to low application of moral values and politeness in a formal educational environment, not to ignore the university level. Problem in educational institutions can be a factor of weakening language politeness. Among them, the teachers who are currently busy with overload work that is not synchronized with their capability led to the lack opportunity to rise dialogue with learners. The implementation of the program of the institutions that are likely not well planned and impressed round suddenly, causes the program of discussion forum with students which has been arranged in advanced to be postponed. Since the frequency of student-teacher interaction is reduced, the discomfort in both sides happens. This situation triggers unhealthy communication that eventually leads to using a less polite language. Speech act in data (5), for example, implies dissatisfaction of students to lecturers. And this is indeed a dilemmatic problem because at the same time there is an appointment with the students, and a sudden meeting held by the institution.

The high degree of inaccuracy of using language based on social norms requires teachers to improve the value of politeness in communication. In relation to the function of teachers, Johnston (2003) confirms the difference between "the teaching of morality" and "morality of teaching". Teaching of morality refers to moral teaching explicitly while teaching morality is an act of the teacher in the classroom that represents moral values he holds. The interesting thing is on the morality of teaching. It emphasizes the importance of language politeness shown by the teacher in the classroom. It is also as a model that describes the moral values and politeness to be owned by the students.

The relationship built in learners and teachers forum is not only to communication containing *transferring the knowledge* but also the values and norms of politeness as the reflection of learners themselves. In this sense, McLennan (2006) states:

"The students have spiritual and moral expectations of the teacher, at the same time with the expectations of their intellectual development; the teachers must teach, not just transmit knowledge. All these aside, the teacher must maintain the integrity of the taught discipline; the teacher must encourage his students to learn how to adopt an ethical attitude, periodically revised in the light of critical reflection and life experience; As the goal of the university is not just to transmit knowledge but also "to help students to develop their intellectual capacity – not just career-wise – but also for their participation in family life and politic field."

It strengthens that the task of the educator is not only related to the delivery of science, but also an agent to internalize moral values and politeness to the learners. Internalizing such value can be seen through language learning techniques in building up communication skills based on the values of politeness, especially in education. This is in line with Johnston (2003) statement, saying that teachers are moral agents therefore the teacher or lecturers plays an important role in the moral development of students.

D. LANGUAGE LEARNING DEVELOPMENT

Based on the experience and data obtained in the field, the development of language learning that emphasizes on personality establishment and the growth of politeness values cannot be postponed anymore. From the data obtained, the indicator that internalizing politeness value in a language still must be addressed. Learning a language still has the tendency to the language and use of language, both Indonesian and English as

a foreign language. It has not shown fully the integrating values of politeness in speech acts, more or less in a short message service (SMS).

Realizing that language is a means to convey the message in communication, language learning strategies should prioritize the language form and strategies that includes moral values and politeness. Johnston (2003), in general, distinguishes language learning model from the elements of politeness on *the teaching of morality* and *morality of teaching*. The first is learning about the values of politeness. The development of language as a form of implementing politeness values can be applied through the moral teaching as a learning. Here, teachers / lecturers invite learners to create verbal things in real activity, of other things are creating a slogan that contains the values of politeness and morality.

Furthermore, in the learning process, all components of language teaching and moral values and politeness are integrated in the educational process in general (Jackson in Johnston, 2003). He suggests three ways of applying morality of language learning in the classroom, namely, classroom rules, structured learning programs, and expressive morality.

The rules having been prepared are implemented by applying them through the commitment made by teachers/lecturers and learners, so that all behave within the boundaries and corridors which are set together. One example is the regulation governing how to ask questions, provide feedback, and give arguments in polite language when participating in the class activity.

The program is a structured language learning activities most associated with increased politeness. The four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing, can be applied through a variety of text types. All types of texts (genres) have different social functions to the content of certain social norms that led to the creation of linguistic politeness. Learning with topics selected by the constructive learning techniques need to be designed so that the learners directly apply the skills that are planned. Thus, the internalization of social norms in language skills can be achieved. This is in line with the stated Jackson in Johnston (2003) comprises "conditions that operate and to sustain and facilitate teaching every session in every school in every subject within the curriculum".

Furthermore, the application of expressive morality is performed through implicit action; however, it reveals which is right and wrong, leads to an understanding of what is good and what is bad. This is done by language teachers through oral language and actions, gestures, facial expressions, even the rules of arranging seat of learners. Teachers' effort in showing the use of polite language indicated in the educational process is an activity that needs to be considered.

From the explanation above, it is seen that language teachers play a major role in shaping common choral opinion in the classroom by demonstrating that each activity undertaken in the classroom is not only aimed at academic achievement, but also led to an agreement for mutual understanding, mutual respect and be friendly among individuals by using polite language. This opportunity is formed through a process conducted by teachers continuously in every meeting and learning process in the language classroom.

In terms of language ability, involving the establishing of politeness as an indicator of good communication can also be done by applying the morality of teaching (Johnston, 2003). The values of politeness need to be set in as early as possible because this requires a process that emphasizes modeling and real implementation in everyday life.

E. CONCLUSION

Language is a means of determining the relationship of human social communication. Social and cultural norms are internalized in the use of language is crucial smoothness of communication in society by relying on language politeness. From time to time, in line with changes of the social order, in the field of education, the perceived value of language politeness has faded. It is probably caused by globalization, which allows one to communicate with the use of advanced technology products. In addition, individual activities which are very varied in their respective jobs, both in the family and in educational institutions led to the distraction of social relationships among individuals. This makes the interaction is less well implemented. Even if there is communication, it often perceives violation of the rules of politeness.

To overcome this problem, the teachers / lecturers / instructors need to improve language learning strategies. At least there are three things to consider, namely the rules in the classroom, structured learning programs, and expressive morality. In designing language instructional programs with polite language learning activities, the integration of social norms and culture of the language through the appropriate genre is one of the ways suggested. By designing a program of language learning activities based on the three components above, and with appropriate learning techniques, we are expected to minimize the deficit of language politeness.

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