

IMPOLITENESS: AN ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION VIA SMS

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Abstract

Impoliteness is a kind of attitude that is regarded breaking the rule and the norm in social life. In communication, impoliteness is really avoided since this may threaten one's face and bring about the miscommunication. Once miscommunication occurs, the disharmony may come up. Thus, being impolite must be denied. However, impoliteness sometimes can not be prevented in communication, specifically when it is done via short message service (SMS). This writing is aimed at describing the phenomena of being impolite in communication via SMS. The objective of the writing is identify the motivation of being impolite in communication via SMS. The data are any SMS sent by English Department Students Andalas University to some lecturers. The data are collected by observational method and analyzed by pragmatic and referential identity method. The result of analysis is presented narratively and descriptively. Having related to the concept of impoliteness proposed by Culpeper (1995) and Oktavianus and Revita (2013), it is found that there are several motivations bringing about the students being impolite in communication via SMS. They are (1) lack of pragmalinguistic competence and (2) sociopragmatic considerations.

Keywords: Impoliteness, Pragmalinguistic, SMS, Sociopragmatic

A. INTRODUCTION

Communication is one of human's need. In common communication, at least there are two participants involved, speaker and hearer. This speaker and hearer will speak by turn. Each participant in conversation will take their turn when the time comes. However, it is possible that there is overlapping in conversation in which both speaker and hearer speak at the same time. They do not wait for their turn. This is due to some factors. For example is many things want to be delivered by participants because many things in their mind. It is of possibility to the character of the participants in which they are not patient enough to wait for the turn.

Such kind of situation in conversation, in one case, is permitted. Especially when the participants involved are at the same social status. This will be regarded impolite when the context is different. When the lecturer is speaking to the student, and that student directly takes his turn without waiting for the time. The lecturer may be angry. This can be seen in the following dialog (1).

- (1) Lecturer: *Ok, students. I want to review about the topic last week. I assigned you...*
Student: *But I didn't come last week, Mom*

At the class opening, the lecturer wanted to review the previous week material given to the students. The lecturer tried to stimulate the students by guiding them to the very topic. Before she came to the point, a student directly informed that he did not come last week. What the student mean is that he probably could not answer the question due to his not coming to the class. Unfortunately, that student took his turn before the time. This made the lecturer angry since what the student did is regarded impolite. He was not expected to speak before the lecturer pointed him.

Another example is as being seen in (2)

- (2) Lecturer: *What I wana tell you is...*
Student: *I get the point, Mom.*
Lecturer: *Listen to what I am telling you. Don't cut off when someone is not finished yet!*

What the student did makes the lecturer angry. The lecture even says that the student not to ever cut off the speaking of someone when it is not done yet. This utterance is followed by other advices related to the aspect of politeness in conversation.

This phenomenon is one of many others which inspire the writing of this article. Another fact is that when one of my friend told me that how the student sent her short message service (sms) by saying

- (3) Student: *Buk, ngampus kini?*
'Mom, are you going to campus today?'

The problem is the way student asked the information. She sent message via sms and used very simple question with some deletions in the element. For instance is *ngampus*. *Ngampus* is not good Indonesian word in such situation. *Ngampus* is the shortended expression of *pergi ke kampus*. Such word *ngampus* is proper to be used to friend of the same age. Furthermore, the student gave no greet. She directly came to the point of the conversation.

The lecturer really got angry. She shared this to many people. She even assured that every lecturer must care with such impoliteness. The students must know that the must know where and to whom the dialog is addressed in communication. Lecturers are of great responsibility to educate their students.

Such way of communication is commonly done. Due to the afraidness of inability of answering the question or personal character, the speaker disobeys the rule of um taking in communication. This kind of phenomena is called impoliteness.

The impoliteness does not only occur orally but also in written. Even when communication uses media categorized as semi-oral like chatting. I name chatting via instrument like internet or mobile phone as semi-oral because the way the language used is like oral communication but via certain media.

This impoliteness is a little bit bothering since it happens globally. Many people complain the way one communicates via short message service. The way they communicate seems ignoring the rule of politeness. This must be soon prevented. Otherwise, the impolite generation will grow bigger and bigger.

Based on the above phenomena, I am interested in describing the impoliteness in communication via short message service (SMS). The object of this writing is to identify the reasons or motivation of students being impolite when communicating via SMS.

Data are any SMS sent by English Department students to the lecturer. Data are collected by observational method, note taking and unstructured interview. The analysis is done by using pragmatic and referential identity method. To analyze the data, the concept of politeness proposed by Culpeper (1995) and Oktavianus and Revita (2013) is used. The result of analysis is descriptively and naratively done.

B. IMPOLITENESS

Impoliteness is a kind of action via speech that can threaten other people face. This view is in line with the opinion of Oktavianus and Revita (2013); Bousfield and Locher (2008) that impoliteness is behavior that is face - aggravating in a particular context. Impoliteness is not only visible from speech language, but also other aspects, such as attitude and behavior that has the potentiality to make someone else insulted.

The concept of impoliteness is elaborated by several experts like Bousfield (2007), Culpeper (1996), and Terkourafi (2002). This elaboration demonstrates that the impoliteness has several features, namely:

- (a) Deliberately intended to threaten other's face, so selected utterances are conflictive;
- (b) The speech act used causes other become embarrassed or insulted;
- (c) The utterance dose not obey the convention and out of context

These three features can also be the way to identify whether the utterance is polite or impolite. When an utterance is intentionally used to threaten one's face and run out from the common convention, the very utterance is regarded impolite.

Impoliteness tend to involve the participants from different social background. At household, from instance, the impoliteness may occur from husband to wife, mother to children, older sister/brother to the younger. This impoliteness really bothers the social relationship, and bring about the disharmony among participants.

Culpeper (1996) impoliteness into two, namely (1) inherent impoliteness and (2) mock impoliteness. Inherent impoliteness is called as the antisocial utterance. Antisocial means that the speech act really does not care about one's face, especially positive face. The antisocial is of great possibility to threaten one's face. It is also offensive.

Mock impoliteness does not mean to insult or make someone else embarrassed, but just for the sake of mocking. Even though it is not intentionally threatening, this mocking may come up to be something insulting. This happens when the hearer does not get the context fully. He may interpret the utterance as the threat. This threat is of great potentiality to make him shy even more than that.

Mock impoliteness, according to Leech (1983) can also be used to indicate the solidarity among participants of communication. This mock impoliteness can increase the intimacy of a social relationship. The closer the relationship, the more impolite the utterance will be. However, there must be a shared knowledge between participants that the utterance is only for mocking not insulting.

C. SLIGHT DESCRIPTION OF SMS

Short message service (SMS) is a kind of way communicating via certain media, that is mobile phone. Every mobile phone is equipped with the tool of SMS. Every mobile phone has different way of providing this SMS. In the sense that, the more sophisticated the mobile phone, the more complicated the feature of SMS.

Sending message via SMS is limited into certain space. The length of the space is limited into certain character. Some mobile phones provide many characters for each space. It can be 350 characters, even 600 characters.

The limited space of SMS sometimes make the writer be wise. In other words, the more they write the character, the more space they use, and the more money needed. This brings about the SMS users try to minimize the number of the character. One way is by deleting certain character, like vocal or consonant and by replacing similar sound word with the number. For example, to say 'you, they only write 'u'; the word 'thank you' is replaced by 'tx'; or the word 'before' with 'b4'.

This way of writing SMS is not conventionally done yet. However, every writer and user of SMS can understand and get the point of the symbol used. Even, some emoticons are applied to make the information clearer or to express the feeling.

Having related to the concept of politeness, the longer the utterance, the more polite the utterance will be. This implies that when some deletions and replacements are done in writing SMS, the utterance is of great possibility to be impolite.

D. IMPOLITENESS IN COMMUNICATION VIA SMS

Nobody wants to be regarded impolite. Everybody wants to be polite in communication. However, in some cases, they cannot avoid to be impolite. This is due to some internal and external factors. What I mean by internal factor is the incompetence of using linguistic choice. The lack of knowledge makes someone use wrong diction or strategy in communication. Furthermore, because of certain motivation or consideration, the users of SMS communicate impolitely. For instance is economical consideration, using the space as minimal as possible, or anger expression.

This sub topic discusses the factors of being impolite in communication via SMS. There are two general factors bring about the impoliteness in communicating via SMS. They are pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic factor.

1. Pragmalinguistic Factor

Pragmalinguistic is the term proposed by Leech (1983) to divide general Pragmatic. Pragmalinguistic is of relation with grammar and lexicon. In communication, this pragmalinguistic aspect is very important. This is also closely related with the concept of *langue* proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure. How can someone communicate when they do not know the pattern followed and the lexicon to fill that pattern.

Thus, lack of pragmalinguistic competence make the user of SMS send the impolite one. This can be seen in the following utterance (4) – (5).

(4) Student: *I warn you to come to my thesis exam at...*

(5) Student: *L mg ni tdk bs k kmpus. Ank L skit. Kr2 mg dpn kpn n hr pa bu kmps?*

'El cannot come to the campus this week because my daughter is sick. When will you be in campus next week?'

Utterance (4) is uttered by a student when he tried to remind the lecturer the schedule of his thesis examination. What he means is that only a kind of reminding. However, he used the verb *warn* which is synonymous with *remind*. The meaning is almost the same but the sense is very different.

Seemingly, the student only pays attention to the similar meaning of the two words. He forgot that *remind* and *warn* are two words that semantically similar but different in use. *Remind* has denotative sense but not *warn* that a little bit has connotative sense.

The lack of competence of understanding the use of verb *remind* and *warn* make the student applies them interchangeably. This causes the lecturer gets angry since the student is regarded dictating and commanding her. Consequently, at the time of thesis exam, the lecturer takes almost all of her time educating the student with politeness.

In utterance (5), the student wrote SMS with Indonesian language. Some deletions of the words are used. *L* is the name of the student namely *El*. What the student means by her SMS is *L mungkin tidak bisa ke kampus. Anak El sakit. Kira-kira minggu depan kapan dan hari apa ibu ke kampus?* 'El cannot come to the campus this week because my daughter is sick. When will you be in campus next week?'

Almost all of the words used are deleted. Theoretically, the deletion can only be done when the participants involved in conversation are at the same social level. The use of deletion is the reflection of informality. Meanwhile, the SMS is sent to her lecturer.

The understanding of the use of such kind of utterance is very minimal. This makes the student failed to apply the utterance correctly.

2. Sociopragmatic Factor

Sociopragmatic according to Leech (1983) and Canale (1983) is a kind of appropriateness of using utterance. How certain utterance is used in certain social contexts becomes the focus in this sociopragmatic aspect.

In communication via SMS, the sociopragmatic consideration is frequently ignored. This is demonstrated in the following utterance (6) – (7).

(6) Student: *Mom, tomorrow is the day of my thesis exam. Don't forget to come. Be on time!*

(7) Student: *Ibu, hari ini saya mau konsultasi. Dimana Ibu sekarang?*
'Mom, I would like to discuss with you today. Where are you, Mom?'

Utterance (6) is sent by a student to his lecturer. That student is going to face the thesis exam. He, then, reminds one of the examiners about the time of the exam by sending SMS. He wrote SMS and reminding the lecturer not to forget his exam and to come on time.

This utterance really insulted that lecturer. She got angry with the student. She expressed her anger by warning the student after thesis exam conducted. The student is not supposed to write such SMS. She may remind the lecturer, but by appropriate way.

What the student did via SMS is the reflection of the appropriateness of social consideration. As the student who asks the lecturer to come to his thesis exam and writes it via SMS to the lecturer, based on social phenomena, can be done by more polite way. The student may not command or direct his lecturer. However, because of under pressure or the willingness that the exam can run well, the student choose such kind of utterance.

The utterance (7) is uttered when a student wanted to see her lecturer for thesis consultation. To assure whether the lecturer is at campus or not, she sent an SMS. Her SMS was about the information that she wanted to consult. Her information is followed by asking the position of the lecturer.

Commonly, when the student wants to see the lecturer, they may see the schedule of teaching-time or wait in that lecturer's room. Every lecturer has their office room at campus. Furthermore, they can send SMS to assure but not to ask the exact location of the lecturer. This can be regarded impolite.

The lack of understanding of using the appropriate utterance to certain person makes many students use direct utterance in such a way. Besides, most students just think about their business. They just think about what they want comes true. They ignore the aspect of politeness.

The more ironical utterance had ever been received by me. When a postgraduate student wrote SMS in which she wanted me to check her thesis proposal soon. She informed that she was shy because everybody asked about her proposal and her study.

After being analyzed, this attitude is regarded as the character of the SMS sender. She often uses SMS without considering that the SMS is impolite. What she likes is what she wants comes true, whatever it is (Revita, 2010).

The newest SMS that I received was when one of student whom I becomes her thesis supervisor. She wrote me SMS asking for my attendance to campus the week after and when it will be because she wanted to see me. Her SMS is in the following utterance (8).

(9) Student: *Salam, bu..bsk ibu ada d kmpus? Jam brpa bu? el*
'Good afternoon, Mom. Will you be at campus tomorrow? What time? (name of SMS sender)'

The SMS is very simple in which seemingly the sender is at the same age as the SMS receiver. Such SMS was quite often written by that student. She tends to be less motivated in doing many things. She wanted to do thing instantly. That is why such SMS becomes her choice.

E. CONCLUSION

Though it sounds easy, communication basically needs one to think quite hard. This is due to the speaker has to consider many aspects. These aspects are called context. Context is very influential in selecting the appropriateness of an utterance. The appropriateness is in line with the form and the use. This is what is called as general pragmatic.

The appropriateness of form in related to grammar or form that so called as pragmalinguistic. Meanwhile, the appropriateness of use considering social aspect is called as sociopragmatic.

Good communication will take place when these two aspects cohere each other. The coherence of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic can be seen as:

Pragmalinguistic + Sociopragmatic = Good Communication
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This formula indicates that when someone successfully combines these two aspects, communication is regarded running smoothly. The smooth communication is related with the politeness. The running communication may not insult others.

Thus, pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspect must be known in a communication. A speaker, then. May choose appropriate utterance in communication, especially when the communication is done via instrument like SMS.

This happens to students who send message to their lecturer via SMS. Most of them fails to have successful communication. This is due to lack of their understanding about pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspect. Most students tend not to understand the use of appropriate form in certain context. Consequently, they are regarded impolite. Their utterances insult the SMS receivers and threaten their face.

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