

THE USE OF POLITENESS PRINCIPLE MAXIMS IN PUTRA NABABAN'S INTERVIEW WITH BARACK OBAMA ON MARCH 22ND, 2010

(Penggunaan Maksim-maksim Prinsip Kesopanan dalam Wawancara Nababan dengan Barack Obama pada tanggal 22 Maret 2010)

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the maxims of politeness principles and the pragmatic scales. It is found in the interview between Putra Nababan and Barack Obama on March 22nd, 2010. The purpose of this study is to determine how far the maxims of politeness principles and the pragmatic scales affect Nababan and Obama utterances. The data are taken from the utterances of both participants. It is collected by understanding and taking a note the utterances in the interview. This study analyzes the context of situation in the interview. It also analyzes the maxims and pragmatics scales to know the purpose of using politeness principles. This analysis uses Leech's politeness principle maxims (1983) and Searle's speech acts (1969) theories. Mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative methods) are also used in this analysis. From the analysis, there are 31 of 115 utterances in the interview. It can be concluded that politeness principles and pragmatic scales also have a role in the interview. This is because they maintain the polite attitudes and polite utterances to keep the harmonious relations between the two countries. This interpretation shows that politeness is very important to maintain the social balance and the friendliness of the relationship between Nababan and Obama.

Keywords: Interpretation, mixed methods, context of situation, illocutionary act, pragmatic scales, politeness maxims, interview.

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini membahas maksim-maksim prinsip kesopanan dan skala-skala pragmatik. Hal ini ditemukan dalam wawancara antara Putra Nababan dan Barack Obama pada tanggal 22 Maret 2010. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui sejauh mana maksim-maksim prinsip kesopanan dan skala-skala pragmatik mempengaruhi ucapan Nababan dan Obama. Data diambil dari ucapan-ucapan dari kedua peserta. Data tersebut dikumpulkan dengan cara memahami dan mencatat ucapan-ucapan dalam wawancara tersebut. Penelitian ini menganalisis konteks situasi dalam wawancara. Penelitian ini juga menganalisis maksim-maksim dan skala-skala pragmatik untuk mengetahui tujuan dari penggunaan prinsip-prinsip kesopanan. Analisis ini menggunakan teori maksim prinsip kesopanan Leech (1983) dan tindak tutur Searle (1969). Metode campuran (metode kuantitatif dan kualitatif) juga digunakan dalam analisis ini. Dari hasil analisis, ada 31 dari 115 ucapan dalam wawancara tersebut. Penelitian ini dapat disimpulkan bahwa prinsip-prinsip kesopanan dan skala-skala pragmatik juga memiliki peran dalam wawancara tersebut. Hal ini karena mereka mempertahankan sikap dan ucapan-ucapan sopan untuk menjaga keharmonisan hubungan antara kedua belah negara. Interpretasi ini menunjukkan bahwa kesopanan sangat penting untuk mempertahankan keseimbangan sosial dan keramahan hubungan antara Nababan dan Obama.

Kata kunci: Interpretasi, metode campuran, konteks situasi, tindak tutur ilokusi, skala pragmatik, maksim kesopanan, wawancara.

Introduction

Language is a tool of communication with others. The important factor in communication is the speaker, the hearer, and the messages. In communication, the speaker and hearer are not only paying more attention to know how they speak, but also they should pay more attention to the principles which are embodied in politeness. In this study, Nababan and Obama show their polite attitudes and utterances in the interview. Therefore, this study deals with pragmatics, especially politeness principles maxims, pragmatic scales, and speech acts (illocutionary acts). The finding of this thesis is expected to contribute to the understanding of pragmatics analysis, especially politeness principles. In addition, the result is expected to help out the reader to understand the utterances in order to avoid hurting other's feeling.

Leech (1983:81) stated that politeness principles is minimizing (other things being equal) the expression of impolite beliefs, and there is corresponding positive version maximizing (other things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs which is somewhat less important. On the other hand, Searle (1969:16) says, "The reason for concentrating on the study of speech acts is simply this: all linguistic communication involves linguistic acts. The unit of linguistic communication is not has generally been supposed, the symbol, word or sentence, or even the token of the symbol or word or sentence, but rather the production or issuance of the symbol or word or sentence in the performance of the speech acts." This study also use the context of situation in the analysis. Brown and Yule (1983:36) propose that context can be understood through the speaker, the hearer, place, and time in the context features. The study is held to find out:

1. How are politeness principles reflected in the interview between Putra Nababan and Barack Obama?
2. What is the possible purposes of using politeness principles in the interview?

Research Methodology

According to Denscombe (2007:248), this study applies two research methods are qualitative and quantitative research. These research methods are needed because the data are in the form of clauses and the quantitative research is used to count the number of the dominant maxim. In addition, Mackey and Gass (2005:4) states that this research applies mixed approaches because this research applies qualitative and quantitative methods. Then, these approaches are used to analyze, describe, and count the result of this research. Moreover, the data of this study are taken from www.youtube.com which are the largest video sharing site on the Web. In this study, the data are also taken from Nababan and Obama utterances. The total of the data are 31 utterances from 115 utterances.

The techniques of the data analysis are descriptive, statistical, and interpretative. The descriptive technique is used to analyze the maxims and the pragmatic scales by

Leech's theory and Searle's theory about the categories and functions illocutionary acts. Then, statistical technique is used to determine the dominant maxim. The last, the interpretative technique interprets the utterance goals according to Brown and Yule's theory about the context of situation.

Results

Based on the result, there are 31 utterances contains maxims of politeness principles, pragmatics scales, types of illocutionary acts, and illocutionary functions. There are 11 utterances contain *tact* maxim, 2 utterances in *generosity*, 10 utterances in *approbation*, 4 utterances in *modesty*, 1 utterance in *agreement*, and 3 utterances in *sympathy*. In pragmatics scales, *cost-benefit* scale of 16 utterances, *optionality* are 1, *indirectness* are 1, *authority* are 4, and *social-distance* are 14. The types of illocutionary acts; *assertives* are 11 utterances, *directives* are 7, *commissives* are 6, *expressives* are 7, and *declarations* are 0. Illocutionary functions has *competitive* by 7 utterances, *convivial* are 13, *collaborative* are 11, and *conflictive* at 0.

Discussion

Based on the analysis, the utterances use the types of politeness principles and pragmatic scales in the interview. politeness principles are related to *tact*, *generosity*, *approbation*, *modesty*, *agreement*, and *sympathy* maxim. In addition, pragmatic scales are *cost-benefit*, *optionality*, *indirectness*, *authority*, and *social-distance* scales. Furthermore, there are some types of illocutionary acts are used in the interview. They are *assertives*, *directives*, *commissives*, *expressives*, and *declarations*. Moreover, the illocutionary functions are also used to analyze the utterances in the interview. The functions are *competitive*, *convivial*, *collaborative*, and *conflictive*. The context also has an important role in this discussion. The analysis of the data will be described in the discussion below.

1. Tact maxim

- Utterance : "Please sit down!"

- Context of situation

Speaker : Obama

Hearer : Nababan

Place and Time: The form of the interview was spoken.

This interview was held by Putra Nababan in the White

House. It was held on sunny morning in March 2010.

Obama invited Nababan to sit.

The utterance "Please sit down!" can be classified as *tact* maxim. The utterance does not diminish the benefit to Nababan because Obama tries to invite Nababan to sit. Moreover, Obama's utterance aims to make the interview more comfortable. Then, the word "Please" provides an increase of politeness to show his polite utterance to

Nababan. Therefore, his utterance is classified as a polite utterance.

Meanwhile, the utterance “*Please sit down!*” contains *social-distance* scale. In the utterance, the level of respectfulness of Obama is very good to his guest. The utterance suggests that the social relationship does not distinguish between Obama and Nababan. On the other hand, Obama tries to show his politeness to Nababan even though he is a president. Hence, Nababan assumes that Obama is very respectful to others.

In Searle's categories, the word “*sit down!*” is also categorized as *directives*. The utterance includes in command. Command itself is a kind of *directives*. Obama orders Nababan to sit. It can be concluded that this category intends to produce some effects through Nababan's actions. Then, Nababan understands what Obama mean and he sit in the chair. In addition, the utterance “*Please sit down!*” also includes in *competitive* function. Basically, if Obama does not add the word “*Please*”, then his utterance is discourteous. Therefore, He adds the word “*Please*” to reduce impolite utterance.

Obama's utterance implies that the *tact* maxim is the maxim that shows a better utterance to Nababan. The polite utterance will make others more comfortable in conversation. Therefore, Obama's utterance is very appropriate to be pronounced because it belongs to *social-distance* scale.

2. Generosity maxim

- Utterance : “*We can find you becak if you come on in summer!*”
- Context of situation
 - Speaker : Nababan
 - Hearer : Obama
 - Place and Time: The form of the interview was spoken. This interview was held by Putra Nababan in the White House. It was held on sunny morning in March 2010. In the utterance, Nababan promised to Obama.

The utterance “*we can find you becak*” contains *generosity* maxim. It includes in the word “*can*”. In the utterance, Nababan implies that the Indonesian government will find becak for Obama when Obama comes to Indonesia. Nababan's utterance promises becak to Obama. It means that Obama reminisce with Indonesia. It is emphasized in the utterance “*we can find you becak.*” In addition, generosity will provide a positive impact on relations between the two sides.

Nababan's utterance uses two scales, they are *cost-benefit* and *social-distance* scales. *Cost-benefit* indicates that Nababan's utterance provides the benefits for Obama. In the utterance, Nababan provides a transfer of goods. He also provides some opportunities for Obama to reminisce uses becak. Thus, they will know how to serve a guest. In addition, *social-distance* scale contains in the utterance because Nababan's utterance assumes that Obama lives in Indonesia for a long time. He hopes that the Indonesian government provide becak in order that Obama could remember his past in Indonesia. However, he also shows his

respectfulness to Obama through his utterance. Nevertheless, Nababan's utterance is a form of solidarity where Nababan says that Indonesian government will find becak for Obama.

On the other hand, the utterance “*we can find you becak*” can be classified as *commissive* category. It categorizes that Nababan performs some future actions. In this case, Nababan's utterance promises to find becak for Obama. Promise itself is the future action. Furthermore, his utterance also contains *convivial* function. His utterance involves the function because Nababan offers becak to be used by Obama when he comes to Indonesia. Then, offering is a kind of *convivial*.

The use of the maxim is to minimize the benefits and maximizes the costs to Nababan. It relates to the scale are exist in the utterance. Thus, it can be said as the costs to Nababan and such utterance is a polite utterance. In addition, Obama considers that the utterance above is a form of hospitality of Indonesian people.

3. Approbation maxim

- Utterance : “*Quite very good in Indonesian, still remember?*”
- Context of situation
 - Speaker : Nababan
 - Hearer : Obama
 - Place and Time: The form of the interview was spoken. This interview was held by Putra Nababan in the White House. It was held on sunny morning in March 2010. Then, Nababan gave praise to Obama.

The utterance “*Quite very good in Indonesian, still remember?*” is *approbation* maxim. It means that Nababan's utterance does not humiliate Obama's Bahasa mastery even though Obama sometimes find it difficult to pronounce Bahasa. His utterance respects the efforts of Obama. Respect itself includes in this maxim. Thus, they will more comfortable in the interview.

On the other hand, *social-distance* scale also has an important role. In the utterance “*Quite very good in Indonesian, still remember?*”, Nababan tries to remind Obama whether he still could speak Indonesian or not. In the utterance, Nababan also praises Obama's mastery in Bahasa. He gives the praise because Obama is not Indonesian. He feels reasonable to give the praise to Obama who learn Bahasa. The praise shows Nababan's respect to Obama. This suggests that their social relationships are distant. In addition, the praise increases the pride of Obama towards his mastery in Bahasa because his efforts are appreciated. Thus, Nababan's utterance is considered as a polite utterance.

The utterance relates to Searle's category. It is *expressive*. It means that Nababan's utterance expresses the praises to Obama in his mastery of Bahasa. In addition, Nababan's utterance also contains *convivial* function. It means congratulation to the effort or the success of Obama. Congratulation is one of courteous form in utterances.

Nababan's utterance above makes Obama feels happy to hear it. This is because it contains *approbation* maxim. In the utterance, Nababan decreases the dispraise and increases the praises to Obama. Then, Nababan shows his respect to

Obama. This is because they want to show their social relationships. Therefore, the utterance above can be said as polite utterance because it belongs to *social-distance* scale. Nababan considers that his utterance is reasonable to give encouragement to others who want to learn something, like language.

4. Modesty maxim

- Utterance : "Yes I do actually, when I was.....by accident."

- Context of situation

Speaker : Obama

Hearer : Nababan

Place and Time: The form of the interview was spoken. This interview was held by Putra Nababan in the White House. It was held on sunny morning in March 2010. Next, this interview discussed the recognition of Obama for the accident.

The utterance "yes I do actually" includes in *modesty* maxim. It can be found in the word "actually." It means that Obama acknowledge his actions at the time. Furthermore, he also maximizes the dispraise of him. Thus, other people will praise his own confession.

Obama's utterance indicates that his utterance contains *cost-benefit* scale. It contains in Obama's utterance because it has the benefits for Nababan. The benefit is the recognition of Obama about the accident that happens to his friend at the time. Obama's story makes Nababan knows the mischief of Obama in his childhood. It may be painful for his friend. An acknowledgment of the error will not drop the honour and dignity of a person. However, such recognition must be based on a sincerity and patience.

Besides, there is also *assertive* category in Obama's utterance. It includes in his utterance because he is bound to the truth of the accident which he admits. It means that he admits his actions. However, his utterance also has a function. It is *collaborative*. In this case, Obama gives his statement about the incident at the time. Then, his statement is irrelevant to politeness. This is because Nababan does not know whether Obama's statement is true or not. It means that he sincerely confess his actions or not.

Recognition is one of humility from Obama. It will make Nababan comfortable to hear the utterance. Therefore, it contains *modesty* maxim. Furthermore, Obama's utterance provides the benefits to Nababan. It is included as polite utterance because it contains *cost-benefit* scale. Moreover, Obama makes the heartache of his friend are reduced.

5. Agreement maxim

- Utterance : "That's not true, I think I remember reading one of my teacher saying that I was planning to be president when I was six, you know when I was six, I wanna, I think to be a fireman. Alright."

- Context of situation

Speaker : Obama

Hearer : Nababan

Place and Time: The form of the interview was spoken. This interview was held by Putra Nababan in the White House. It was held on sunny morning in March 2010. Then, this interview discussed Obama's aspires when he was six.

Obama's utterance shows that his utterance contains *agreement* maxim. It can be seen in the utterance "That's not true." In the utterance, Obama does not agree to Nababan's opinion because Nababan thinks that Obama aspires to be a president. Obama's utterance mitigates the disagreement by expressing regret to Nababan's opinions. This regret may be a bit painful for Nababan because Nababan conveys information that is not appropriate. However, Obama also provides the clarification on such information. Therefore, his utterance is called as polite utterance.

Furthermore, the scale that contributes in the utterance is *cost-benefit*. We can look at the utterance "That's not true". In the interview, Obama's utterance cost to Nababan because he expresses the disagreement directly. However, Obama's utterance also provides the clarification of such information. Thus, the utterance is not too painful for Nababan.

The utterance "that's not true" can also be categorized as *assertive*. It explains that Obama's utterance contains a statement. In this case, Obama is tied to the truth of the expressed proposition. It means that he states Nababan's opinion are not appropriate. In addition, illocutionary function that contains in the utterance is *collaborative*. This means Obama gives a statement in his utterance. However, he does not know whether it can be accepted or not.

Obama minimizes disagreement to Nababan. Obama's action makes Nababan more comfortable. Meanwhile, disagreements will harm Nababan. Furthermore, Obama shows his decisiveness to Nababan's opinion that is not appropriate.

6. Sympathy maxim

- Utterance : "Please tell him that I apologize for that, I felt so bad, I remember, feeling terrible."

- Context of situation

Speaker : Obama

Hearer : Nababan

Place and Time: The form of the interview was spoken. This interview was held by Putra Nababan in the White House. It was held on sunny morning in March 2010. Furthermore, this interview discussed Obama's apology to his friend.

The utterance "Please tell him that I apologize for that" can be classified as *sympathy* maxim. It includes in the utterance because Obama apologizes for the accidents that he is done to his friend. The apology seems in Obama's utterance. In the utterance, Obama regrets to his actions.

Moreover, *authority* scale contributes in the utterance. It shows the social status relationship between Obama and Nababan. The social status relationships both of them are distant. It is shown in the utterance "Please tell him that I apologize for that." We can look at the word "Please". It

shows that Obama's respect when he needs help from others. It also includes as polite utterance. Moreover, Obama's utterance makes other people proud because the recognition of error comes from a president of the United States. Thus, this interview represents Obama's regret where he hurts his friend in the past.

In addition, Obama's utterance can also be categorized as *expressive*. In this case, Obama's utterance conveys an apology and condolences over the incident. This can be interpreted as an expression of Obama's psychological attitude towards the incident. Furthermore, *convivial* function contains in the utterance. It means that Obama tries to show the comity by apologizing to his friend. He conveys his apology on the interview.

Obama shows his sympathy to Nababan, he can be called as polite person. This is because Obama cares about the incidents is experienced by his friend. In addition, the status relationship will determine the utterance's use in the conversation. Furthermore, Obama's utterance shows his remorse to the accident that happens in the past.

In the interview above, Obama and Nababan produce some utterances. Obama produces 24 utterances, while Nababan 7 utterances. Their utterances contain politeness values. It is used to avoid conflicts between them in the communication process. In addition, the polite utterances allow them to respect each other. Conversely, if they do not use polite utterances, then it will lead to disparage one another. Furthermore, politeness refers to the language elements, such as the choice of words, tone of the utterances, and the ways of expressing the utterances. The discussion above concludes that both participants strongly consider the utterances they use. Therefore, their utterances tend to be polite.

Conclusion

Based on the result of data analysis and discussion, it deals with the study of Pragmatics which focuses on the politeness principles and pragmatic scales are used by Barack Obama and Putra Nababan in the interview. The study of politeness principles and pragmatic scales are applied in this study. They are used to determine how far the maxims and the level of politeness influence the utterances. Furthermore, the study of illocutionary acts is used to support this study. Then, this study aims to show the answer of the research questions.

In the interview, Obama and Nababan use all six maxims. The sixth maxims are tact, generosity, modesty, approbation, agreement, and sympathy. Those maxims have important role in the interview. The role aims to find out how important the politeness in the interview. They use tact maxim (11 utterances), generosity (2 utterances), approbation (10 utterances), modesty (4 utterances), agreement (1 utterance), sympathy (3 utterances). In this analysis, the result of the dominant maxim is tact. They use it to show their politeness in the interview. They also use a variety of ways to respect each other. These ways include they respect to each other, not degrade, reduce the unwitting arrogance, reduce the disagreement, and provide a sense of sympathy. One form of the respect is the provision of

opportunity for Obama to clarify his statement. Meanwhile, Obama gives several statements to Nababan politely. His statement provides information to Nababan. Such information is also related to the delay of his visit. In this case, they seek to maximize the benefits. They try to show how to speak politely, although there are some words are less polite. However, they also put the utterances that are not hurts the feelings. These ways make their utterances are considered as polite utterances. Therefore, they also make communication more comfortable.

The discussion above proposes that Nababan and Obama need the maxims and pragmatics scales in the interview. This is because the interview has a formal situation. Moreover, they do not know each other. They prioritize politeness to show their respects. Therefore, their purposes are generally to maintain the polite attitudes and polite utterances. In addition, they also maintain their politeness to keep the harmonious relations between the two countries through their utterances.

Finally, this study expects that it will contribute to the study of politeness principles, especially for the study which analyse maxims and pragmatic scales. The application of the politeness principles will maintain the social balances and hospitality relationship with the interlocutors.

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