



**HOW POLITENESS REFLECTS SOCIAL BEHAVIOR
IN JAVANESE AND BATAK LANGUAGE**

A FINAL PROJECT

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PRONOUNCEMENT

The writer honestly confirms that she compiles this project entitled “How Politeness Reflects Social Behavior in Javanese and Batak Language” by herself without taking any results from other researchers in S-1, S-2, S-3, and in diploma degree of any university. The writer ascertains that she does not quote any material from other publications or someone’s paper except from the references mentioned.

Semarang, 29 September 2015

Yuyun Tiarawati

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

“In my life, I’ve been a joke to everyone. In the future, I wish they can either laugh with me or let me laugh at them back.”

“I wasn’t born with anything. My weapon is hard work and determination.”

— *Lee Seunghoon*

“You have to leave the city of your comfort and go into the wilderness of your intuition. You can’t get there by bus, only by hard work and risk and by not quite knowing what you’re doing, but what you’ll discover will be wonderful. What you’ll discover will be yourself.”

— *Alan Alda*

This project is dedicated to my beloved parents

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ABSTRAK

Indonesia sebagai negara yang memiliki keanekaragaman budaya mampu mempertahankan berbagai dialek yang tersebar diseluruh penjuru negara. Walaupun masyarakat Indonesia memiliki Bahasa Indonesia sebagai bahasa resmi mereka, mereka masih menggunakan berbagai dialek yang juga merupakan bahasa ibu mereka untuk berkomunikasi dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Masyarakat suku Jawa dan suku Batak adalah dua suku dengan karakteristik berbeda yang tercermin dalam penggunaan bahasa mereka. Ada penilaian dari masyarakat Indonesia secara umum kepada kedua suku tersebut. Masyarakat biasanya menilai masyarakat suku Jawa sebagai masyarakat yang berbicara secara sopan dan halus, sedangkan masyarakat suku Batak sebagai masyarakat yang berbicara secara kasar dan blak-blakan. Dalam penelitian ini, penulis mencoba untuk mengetahui alasan dibalik penilaian masyarakat Indonesia secara umum tersebut dan menguraikannya dengan Teori *Politeness* dari Brown dan Levinson.

Kata kunci: suku Jawa, suku Batak, dialek, penilaian, *Politeness*.

1. Introduction

People use language as a means of communication to convey their thoughts. Furthermore, language is not only a means of communication, but also a tool to reflect someone's identity. Indonesian people say, "Bahasa menunjukkan bangsa", which means when language shows someone's identity, like their social status, gender, age, ethnicity and their social networks.

Language is not only a social phenomenon, but also a cultural phenomenon. As a social phenomenon, language facilitates human to be able to communicate with others. Meanwhile, as a cultural phenomenon, language is a system that we inherit. It exists in the culture and becomes a part of that culture.

In producing language, there is different strategy used by one group to their language choices because every group has their own view and belief influencing them. In every population, there are many speech communities that cause language system to become overlapped. As language is already a strong system so that people cannot do too many changes on it, even though every speech community has different characteristics, they share the same common linguistic code (Alwasilah, 1985)

Holmes stated in her book that,

“It is easiest to see the evidence for social dialects in places such as Indonesia and India where social divisions are very clear-cut. In these countries, there are caste systems determined by birth, and strict social rules govern the kind of behavior appropriate to each group.... Not surprisingly, these social distinctions are also reflected in speech differences. A person’s dialect reflects their social background.” (Holmes, 2001:134)

Indonesia, as a big country with more than 13,000 islands, has approximately 600 different languages in different ethnic groups (Scott Pauww, 2009). Those different ethnic groups are living harmoniously since Indonesia is famous of their friendly and polite citizen. In Indonesia, social behavior is very important and it is reflected in how people speak in their social interactions.

In addition to the hospitality, Indonesian people are family orientated as they were commonly born and raised in their nuclear family so that they are very loyal to their family and they are willing to do anything for their family. As Pessoa (2013) said that Indonesian are well-known for being polite, warm and friendly, religious, tolerant, and low-profile. Thus, in Indonesia, elders must be respected, people should be polite in doing and speaking, and sometimes they must be modest and not arrogance. These traits had become Indonesia’s identity since long time, so if an Indonesia doesn’t act like that, means he/she can be seen as a not good Indonesian.

In Indonesia, every ethnic group has their own characteristics, like their dialects, that differentiate one dialect to another one. Thus, grammatical, lexical, or phonological features differ from one to another. The factors behind them are the distance between islands, the different culture of each ethnic group, the way of living, and the religion or belief (Tobing, 2014). With the variation of dialects makes Indonesia to become a country with rich culture and tradition.

Javanese and Batak language are two of many dialects in Indonesia that have very particular characteristics in the way they communicate that many linguists are interested in studying those dialects. Muryantina, (2011:1) said that, Javanese and Batak are usually seen as two opposite cultures based on the way they interact with other people. Javanese people are always seen as indecisive because they speak softly and politely, while Batak people are always seen as rude because they speak outloud in an aggressive manner.

I interested in chosing the topic because with the particular characteristics of Javanese and Batak language, I think it is easier to compare them. Addition to that, I want to know more about these two languages together with the culture and tradition in order to understand about the use of Politeness Strategy that reflects Javanese and Batak people's social behavior.

After the research, I expect myself to understand more about Javanese and Batak language, so that I am no longer only listen and believe in stereotypes in the society because I understand the factors and reasons of how Javanese and Batak people use their languages.

2. Politeness

The terms Politeness and social behavior cannot be separated from the way Indonesian people communicating. As Indonesian people are famous of being polite, they oftenly use Politeness Strategy that further, reflected into their social behavior.

Hoff (2001:304) said that using language appropriately means knowing what styles that different situations require, when to use what register, and what relevant features of the situations. When communicating, people are determined by their social relationships. People aware of the relative status of the participants because they are obligated to use the right words to the right occasion and the right person. According to Yule (1996:59) the status could be based on external factors including age, status, and power, and the internal factors including degree of friendliness.

Politeness is what people see as the norms and principles to be polite. Lakoff (1990:34) defined Politeness as a system of interpersonal relations to minimize conflict, to establish levels of mutual comfort, and to show awareness of another person's face. Brown and Levinson (1987)

added that face itself is someone's self-image that should be maintained while interacting with others.

In Brown and Levinson's Politeness, there are negative and positive face. Negative face claims to personal freedom that cannot be invaded by others, while positive face tries to create positive image to gain acknowledgement. If someone gives a threat to another, it means threatening someone's face. By acting opposite to someone's wants and desires can damage the face of the addressee. Face threatening acts to someone's positive face include some actions such as disapprovals, criticism, complains, and insults, while to someone's negative face include giving orders, advice, requests, threats, and warnings (Brown & Levinson, 1987:61)

Politeness Strategy is used to lessen the threat to someone's face or can be called as face saving acts. To someone's positive face, face saving acts can be in the form of showing solidarity or sharing common interest, while to someone's negative face in showing deference or concerns. There are two types of Politeness used in interaction, negative and positive Politeness. Negative Politeness is stated as "the most elaborate and the most conventionalized set of linguistic strategies" because it concerns with someone's negative face to show deference and emphasize the important of others. Meanwhile, Positive Politeness is stated as "redress directed to the addressee's positive face, his perennial desire that his wants (or the actions/acquisitions/values resulting from them) should be thought of as

desirable” because it includes face saving acts to show solidarity (Brown & Levinson, 1987:18)

In the way of using Politeness strategy, Javanese people tend to use negative Politeness, as when they are showing deference to the addressee and minimize imposition. They use appropriate terms of social distance and very aware of status differences. Batak people tend to use positive Politeness as they focus on showing solidarity. They try to minimize status differences and be as informal as possible to show that they are familiar to each other.

The use of Politeness Strategy in Javanese and Batak language has its own characteristics. Javanese people can only use positive politeness to show solidarity to their friends on close relatives, otherwise, they can violate the honorific levels in their language. Meanwhile, Batak people think that the use of negative politeness can be a burden since they need to be polite. They believe that every one of them is equal, so they need to show solidarity, which can only be shown by dropping polite speech.

3. Social Behavior

Language holds a big role in social life because people have to communicate with each other. When people communicate, they make social interactions in the form of acts, actions, or practices. Social interactions require mutual orientation and awareness of each other. The

acts, actions, or practices reflect someone's behavior. These behaviors show what is on someone's mind or how is someone's feeling.

Social behavior is behavior that is socially oriented, it is directed towards society and between the members of their kind. Rummel (1976:261) said that social behavior expects other to response through acts and actions. Tomasello (1999:207) added that, social behavior is not only determined by society, but also by thoughts and ideas. It allows social behavior to be modified and adapted during an individual's lifetime, through learning or cultural transmission.

Language and social behavior are related because language can be called as a social behavior as language shows the identity of the user. In using language, people convey their thought and expect other to response to them. While conveying their thought, people use some expressions or actions that can be categorized as behavior. It does not have to be in a spoken form because smiling or crying are the forms of their behavior as well.

4. How Politeness Reflects Social Behavior in Javanese and Batak Language

4. 1. Javanese Language

Javanese are people mainly living in Central Java, East Java, and Special Region of Yogyakarta. According to the survey of *Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia* in 2010, the total amount of

population in these three provinces is 73.316.905 out of 237.641.326 population of Indonesia. Javanese people use Javanese language as their daily language and their mother language. Javanese language has different dialects in different region. It is spoken by 47.8 percent Indonesian, spreading all over the country. Pauww (2009:7) said that Javanese language is mainly used in Java and spreads to other provinces as a cause of migration by native Javanese.

The existence of Javanese population has been formed long ago and it is even recorded as the oldest and biggest population in Indonesia. Based on the evidence in the form of inscriptions and paleography, the earlier stage of Javanese script was started before the eight century (Sakti & Nakamura, 2014). For the reason above, Javanese people are usually considered to influence the main tradition and ways of lives in Indonesia. It is supported by Anwar who stated that,

“Due to their enormous influence in the sociocultural and political life of Indonesia, if the Javanese insisted on the official acceptance of their undisputed superior language throughout the country, they would undoubtedly be in a strong position to do so.” (Anwar, 1980:2).

According to a study conducted by Scott Pauww in 2009, Javanese language has particular characteristics compared to other dialects in Indonesia. It has variation depending on their social class, contexts, styles, and registers which is completely different in every degree depending on the age and the social class of the addressee.

Each style has its own vocabulary and grammatical rules. These complex structures make Javanese language difficult to be learned by outsiders (Pauww, 2009:2)

There are three degrees of formality in Javanese language, *ngoko*, *krama*, and *madya*. *Ngoko* is informal speech used to communicate with friends or close relatives; *madya* is the intermediate level of *ngoko* and *krama*; and *krama* is the polite and formal style used to communicate with elders, people with higher position, or respected people.

4. 2. Batak Language

The term “Batak” defines the people who live in North Sumatra. According to the survey of *Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia* in 2010, the amount of Batak population is 12.982.204 citizens, who are not only live in North Sumatra but also spreading all over Indonesia. Batak, similar to Javanese, has a long history as it is categorized as one of the oldest populations in Indonesia, which makes Batak able to create a certain system in their language that is still used until today. Batak tribe had been established for around 800-1000 years ago and developed six subtribes. Every ethnic group in Batak has particular characteristics in their dialects even though they came from the same roots (Sakti & Nakamura, 2014:47-48)

Batak people have a family name known as *marga* to show their lineage of ancestors. This is important to determine their relation each other. In Indonesia, Batak people are popular of having rich culture and tradition that is still be preserved until today.

4. 3. Comparison of Javanese and Batak Language in Representing Social Behaviors

Javanese language and Batak language have different characteristics as following.

1. Speech Act

Javanese people have three honorific levels in their society depending on social class, context, style, and register *ngoko*, *krama*, and *madya*. On the other hand, Batak people do not have that kind of honorific level. There are some factors behind the use of that certain degree of formality in Javanese language. In a study conducted by Tobing, it is believed that the use of certain degree of formality in Javanese language is influenced by their culture and way of living. (Tobing, 2014:4)

According to Tobing (2014:8), she said that Javanese people were divided into two classes, *priyayi* and *rakyat jelata*. The previous class is higher while the last class is lower. They use degree of formality because they believe that every people should use the right register to the addressee depending on their social

class, status, age, and profession. Meanwhile Batak people do not have that such of social class, because they believe that every one of them is equal. Thus, there are no higher and lower class.

Cunningham stated in his study that,

“In general, princes ruled over areas of their own ethnic group, though some areas were multiethnic in character, particularly larger ones in Java or the port principalities in Sumatra and Kalimantan. ... Stratified kingdoms and chiefdoms were entrenched in much of Java. ... Not all Indonesian societies were as socially stratified as that of Java. ... The Batak of North Sumatra developed an egalitarian political order and ethos combining fierce clan loyalty with individuality.”
(Cunningham, 2009:11)

According to Cunningham the reason why there is such a class stratification in Indonesia is because some provinces used to be ruled by king, such as in Java, Sumatra, and Kalimantan. Meanwhile, Batak and Minangkabau people are able to combine the system with a clan loyalty.

Here are the comparison between the use of degrees of formality in Javanese and Batak language:

1. Javanese people have degrees of formality

a. *Badhe tindakan to?*

(Are you going somewhere?)

It is usually used for the addressee who are older or in higher position than the speaker.

b. *Kowe arep lungo?*

(Are you going somewhere?)

It is usually used for friends or family.

2. Batak people do not have degree of formality

a. *Naeng tudia do hamu bah?*

(Where are you going?)

(Tobing, 2014)

2. Traits

Indonesian people usually judge Javanese and Batak people to have some different traits based on the way they interact with people. According to Muryantina (2011:1), the common stereotype is that Batak people usually speak outloud in an aggressive manner. So, people often considered them as '*kasar*' or rude. On the other hand, Javanese people usually speak politely and calmly. So, people often seen them as polite, and else '*tidak tegas*' or indecisive.

I think, the factors behind the existence of these traits are more complicated than what people think as stereotypes, because the traits are affected by the way of living, culture, and tradition.

Javanese people believe that they cannot be straight-forward while talking about some problems to people because it can be considered as rude or impolite. On the other hand, Batak people are straight-forward and believe that if there is any problem they should solve it right away. They also usually speak in a high tone, harsh, and confident. For people who do not know this fact, Batak people are considered rude. However, Batak people believe that it does not matter as long as it does not insult other.

1. Javanese people avoid being straight-forward

- a. *Nyuwon pangapunten, menawi bapak kagungan wedhal, kulo badhe sowan bapak benjang sonten.*

(Excuse me, if you have time, I will visit you tomorrow evening.)

It is usually used for the addressee who are older or in higher position than the speaker.

- b. *Nek kono ono wektu, aku arep nenggonmu sesok sore.*

(If I have time, I'll visit you tomorrow evening.)

It is usually used for friends or family.

2. Batak people are straight-forward

- a. *Molo boi, naeng tu jabumuna do ahu marsogot bah.*

(If I can, I'll visit you tomorrow.)

(Tobing, 2014)

From the example above, it can be concluded that Javanese people always use degree of formality and consider what kind of register they need to use depending on the addressee as the form of Politeness strategy, while Batak people do not use degree of formality. Also, Javanese people like to add small talk to avoid to be straight-forward because they believe it can save someone's face. On the other hand, Batak people are straight-forward and say only what they want to say.

Javanese and Batak people's speech behaviors can be compared by the way they express their opinions to people. While communicating, Javanese people usually seek agreement with the opponents, because they believe in the term of *mufakat*, which means a solution that can satisfy everyone. Meanwhile, Batak people usually argue with the opponents because they believe that everyone is equal so that they need freedom or democracy in speaking their thoughts (Muryantina, 2011:9)

A study conducted by Muryantina in 2011 shows how Javanese and Batak people deal with an argument. She used an analysis from an Indonesian movie called *Nagabonar Jadi Dua* (2007), which focuses on its main characters as Batak people.

There is a Batak entrepreneur called Bonaga, who has a Javanese friend called Pomo. In the story, Bonaga tried to make new

business but he had to use an area where his family's cemetery located. He then asked suggestion from his friends.

- Bonaga : *“Masalahnya di perkebunan kelapa sawit itu ada kuburan orang-orang yang paling dicintai oleh bapak gua, ada kuburan nenek gua, emak gua, paman gua, si bujang...”*
(The problem is that in the cemetery there is my beloved one's grave. There are grandmother's grave, my mother's grave, and my uncle Bujang's grave.)
- Jaki : *“Bilang aja ke bokap lo Bon, orang mati udah selesai urusannya samadunia.....”*
(Just say to your father Bon, dead people finished their business in the world.....)
- Pomo : *“Betul itu.”*
(That's right.)
- Ronny : *“..... Orang mati jangan nyusahin yang masih hidup.”*
(..... Dead people should not burden the living one.)
- Pomo : *“Betul.”*
(Right.)
- Bonaga : *“Mau lo apa sih dari tadi betul-betul betul-betul? Bulan puasa kemarin kau yang paling ngotot minta cuti tiga hari, kau bilang kau mau nyekar kuburan keluarga kau, gimana sih?”*
(What do you want by saying this is right and that is right? Last Ramadhan you were the most persistent one to ask for three day off because you said you wanted to visit your family's graves, weren't you?)
- Pomo : *“Itu juga betul, Bon!”*
(That's also right, Bon!)

(Muryantina, 2011)

From the conversation above, Pomo, who is a Javanese is the one who always agrees with every opinion stated in the conversation. That fact makes Bonaga mad because he is expecting Pomo to side

him since Javanese people understand the importance of family's cemetery and have a tradition called *nyekar* (visiting family's cemetery). However, the example shows the contrastive behaviors between Javanese and Batak people in dealing with an argument. Javanese people usually seek agreement with the opponents, while Batak people usually argue with the opponents.

3. Culture and Tradition

The culture and tradition in Javanese and Batak influencing the language their people used. It gives characteristics to the language and affects on forming their people's social behavior.

Javanese culture is influenced by the existence of kingdom, which still exists until today, such as the Yogyakarta Sultanate and Surakarta Sultanate. Javanese people are expected to speak softly and politely while giving the honor to the king.

Javanese people have many ceremonies in the form of prayers, then continued to held parade and carnival. The ceremonies function to show thankfulness to God of every adequacy that the Javanese people need, so they are able to continue living. The thankfulness of Javanese people reflects on the way they speak their choice of words.

It is stated that Batak people mainly live in mountains and their houses are far from each other. In order to make other people hear their voice, Batak people need to scream. That is believed to be the reason why Batak people are always speak very loud and in big tone.

After I done the research, I can to conclude that:

1. Javanese and Batak language are influenced by culture and tradition.
2. Javanese people tend to use negative politeness.
3. Batak people tend to use positive politeness.
4. Javanese language has degrees of formality.
5. In using the language, Batak people are influenced by their thoughts about equality.
6. Javanese people speak calmly and politely because they are influenced by the existence of the kingdom.
7. Batak people speak in loud voice and big tone in order to other people can clearly hear them because they mainly live in mountains.
8. Javanese people usually seek agreement and believe in term *mufakat*.
9. Batak people tend to argue with the opponents because they focus on equality.

Every community has their social norms and principles. That norms and principles are usually in the form of some kind of agreeable manner to control the member of community. They are informally enforced and the members were taught and follow them as long as they live in that community.

Politeness is one of manners as a part of social norms and principles, which reflects in someone's behavior. When people use the right Politeness strategy, they are considered as following social

norms and principles. By looking at the use of Politeness strategy, we can see the social behavior they have, whether they are polite or impolite towards other.

From the characteristics above, in the case of Politeness used by Javanese and Batak people, Javanese people tend to be seen as doing face saving acts by considering other's feelings and avoiding being impolite, while Batak people tend to be seen as doing face threatening acts by consider their personal freedom and needs in the form of their straight-forwardness, confidence, and boldness. By looking only at this phenomenon, someone can easily judge that Javanese people are polite and Batak people are, otherwise, impolite.

5. Conclusion

From the description above, it can be concluded that the strategy used in someone's speech shows the relation of social relation and culture between the speaker and the addressee. People use language as the social behavior when they communicate.

Both Javanese language and Batak language shows that language is not only a social phenomenon, but also a cultural phenomenon since the language they used reflects their culture and tradition. The different culture and way of living become the biggest influence on how Javanese and Batak people communicate.

Since Indonesia is famous of being friendly and polite, Politeness Strategy in speaking is very important because it reflects people's social behavior as well as their identity. When Batak people communicate, to some people who do not know them, they might be considered as rude and impolite because they have different characteristics from most Indonesian people. Thus, people who are commonly polite, should consider the factors that influence this behavior in order to understand them because someone's assumption can be different from the other and it can be wrong also.

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