

POLITENESS IN LANGUAGE DURING THE FIRST PUBLIC DEBATE OF THE 2024 TEGAL REGENCY ELECTION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR LEARNING

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the principles and scales of politeness in the first public debate of the 2024 Tegal Regent and Vice Regent candidates and to examine their implications for Indonesian language learning in high school. The research employs a qualitative approach, with data consisting of utterances from the debate participants analyzed using Leech's theory. The results show a dominance of utterances adhering to the principles of politeness, particularly the tact maxim (34.78%). The implications of this study can be utilized as teaching material for debate texts to instill the value of politeness in Indonesian language education.

Keywords: Politeness, politeness principles, politeness scales, public debate, implications.

1 INTRODUCTION

According to Devitt & Hanley (as cited in Rostina, 2024), language is a message intended to be conveyed through expression as a tool of communication in various situations and activities. In the context of pragmatics, language use does not only focus on structure but also considers the context and purpose of communication, including politeness in language. Politeness in language is an essential aspect of maintaining social relationships and reflects the speaker's identity.

According to Tarigan (as cited in Simarmata & Sulastri, 2018), debate is a process of exchanging arguments between individuals or groups with the aim of winning over one side. One form of public communication that demands politeness is political debate. Public debates between regional head candidates serve as a platform for the candidates to present their vision, mission, and work programs in an argumentative manner. In debates, word choice and manner of delivery greatly influence public perception of the candidates' credibility and language ethics.

According to Nasution (2017:9), learning is an activity of organizing or structuring the environment optimally and connecting the organizer with the learners to facilitate the learning process. In this context, the first public debate of the 2024 Tegal Regent and Vice Regent candidates is not only part of a political campaign but can also be utilized as a learning resource. Debate as a learning method can create a well-organized learning situation where students are trained to express opinions clearly, logically, and politely. Thus, debate activities become an effective means of enhancing students' speaking skills in line with learning objectives.

Furthermore, debate also contributes to the development of language skills, both in terms of sentence structure and the appropriate use of vocabulary. Beyond linguistic aspects, this activity also trains students to think critically and analytically, as well as to respond to opposing arguments appropriately. Therefore, debate plays a significant role in Indonesian language learning, particularly in developing speaking competence and higher-order thinking skills in the debate material for Grade X Senior High School, Phase E. In line with the objectives of language learning, which are to develop oral and written communication skills (Depdikbud, 1995, as cited in Laki, 2019), debate is a relevant and effective strategy to implement.

2 METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach. According to Hasnunidah (2017:10), a qualitative approach is a research method that produces descriptive data in the form of oral or written narratives from the

research subjects, as well as observable behaviors. The process of this research includes several stages: data collection, data processing, data analysis, and presentation of the analysis results.

The initial stage of this research began with collecting as much relevant data as possible related to the research topic. The required data consisted of utterances spoken by both pairs of Regent and Vice Regent candidates during the first public debate that contained aspects of Leech's politeness principles. The data were collected using the observation method (*metode simak*).

According to Sudaryanto (1933, as cited in Hartati, 2018), the observation method is carried out by carefully listening to utterances that occur during the communication process between the speaker and their interlocutor. This method involves follow-up techniques, namely recording and note-taking. In this research, the recording technique was conducted by downloading the video of the first public debate of the 2024 Tegal Regent and Vice Regent candidates from the YouTube channel of the Tegal Regency General Election Commission (KPU).

The second step involved data processing and analysis, in which the collected data were organized into specific categories and analyzed using a descriptive approach. The data analyzed consisted of utterances containing Leech's politeness principles and scales. The data analysis technique used was the pragmatic equivalent method (*metode padan pragmatis*), which was carried out through the following steps:

- (1) identifying utterances from the public debate,
- (2) examining the situational context, social relations, and communication goals,
- (3) classifying utterances based on Leech's politeness principles and scales, and
- (4) drawing conclusions regarding the forms of politeness in political debate. The third stage was the presentation of the data analysis results, which was done informally. Informal presentation means that the analysis results were conveyed using language that is easy to understand, without using specific symbols or signs.

3 RESULTS

The results of this study will provide significant contributions to the wider community, particularly in fostering active and critical voters who are engaged in the dynamics of regional politics. The treatment of the analysis results is not limited to academic study, but also directed toward public education and literacy materials that can help the public understand how language ethics are reflected in political communication, especially through public debates.

By mapping the politeness strategies used by the candidate pairs, the public is expected to gain the ability to assess the quality of the candidates' communication, both in terms of content and delivery of ideas. This is important because a candidate's way of communicating reflects their attitude, character, and level of maturity in dealing with differing opinions and public pressure.

In addition, the results of this study can serve as a reference or reflective reading material for the general public who wish to gain a deeper understanding of language use in the political domain. By reading and understanding both polite and impolite communication strategies in public debates, the public is expected to respond more wisely to political statements and become more selective in making their choices. Thus, the findings of this study are expected to make a meaningful contribution to fostering language awareness and critical thinking within society, especially in facing the ever-evolving dynamics of political contests.

The following is the result of the data analysis conducted in this study, presented in table form. The table contains the number of utterances that adhere to or violate the principles of politeness based on the classification proposed by Leech. Through this presentation, the researcher was able to identify the tendency of each candidate pair to apply politeness principles in the public debate, as well as determine which maxims were most dominant and which were least frequently used in their utterances.

Table 4.1 Distribution of Utterances Based on Politeness Principles

No	Principles of Politeness in Language	Complying	Violating	Number of Utterances	Percentage
1	Tact Maxim	15	1	16	34,78%
2	Generosity Maxim	5	-	5	10,87%
3	Approbation Maxim	9	2	11	23,91%
4	Modesty Maxim	2	1	3	6,52%
5	Agreement Maxim	5	1	6	13,04%
6	Symphathy Maxim	5	-	5	10,87%
	Total			46	100%

Meanwhile, the results of the analysis regarding the frequency of politeness scale usage by each candidate pair in the public debate are presented in more detail in the following table.

Table 4.2 Distribution of Utterances Based on Politeness Scales

No	Politeness Scale	Number of Utterances	Percentage
1	Cost-Benefit Scale	12	38,71%
2	Option Scale	7	22,58%
3	Indirectness Scale	7	22,58%
4	Authority Scale	3	9,68%
5	Social Distance Scale	2	6,45%
	Jumlah	31	100%

3.1 Politeness Principles in the First Public Debate of the 2024 Tegal Regent and Vice Regent Candidates

Based on the research conducted, various forms of politeness principle application were found in the first public debate of the 2024 Tegal Regent and Vice Regent candidates. A total of 46 utterances containing politeness principles were collected, although some of these utterances were found to violate the principles. While the overall data reflect a diversity in application, this section presents only examples of the most frequently occurring maxim the tact maxim and the least frequently occurring maxim the modesty maxim. This presentation aims to provide a representative overview of the findings.

The dominant and less frequently appearing politeness patterns during the debate are illustrated below.

Data (1)

Context: At Syailendra Hall, Bima, the Regent candidate from Candidate Pair One, responds to a question from the panel regarding issues in the field of education.
Utterance:

“guru harus dilepaskan dari administrasi-administrasi yang menyulitkan ini akan kemudian bisa mendorong guru untuk bisa lebih kreatif.”

This utterance reflects compliance with the tact maxim, particularly in the phrase “guru harus dilepaskan dari administrasi-administrasi yang menyulitkan.” Here, Bima, as the regent candidate from candidate pair one, expresses concern for teachers by proposing to ease their administrative burdens, allowing them to focus on creativity. This is offered as a solution to pressing issues such as declining student morality, student brawls, and bullying despite teacher certification programs aimed at fostering quality learners. The administrative overload has detracted from teachers’ effectiveness as educators. Therefore, this utterance exemplifies the tact maxim, as it maximizes benefit for others in this case, the teachers.

Data (2)

Context: At Syailendra Hall, Bima, the Regent candidate from Candidate Pair One, expresses appreciation that Candidate Pair Two shares a similar stance on a program.
Utterance:

“Tinggal mana yang nanti kemudian diberikan oleh masyarakat, tinggal mana nanti yang diberikan mandat oleh masyarakat.”

The phrase *"whom the people ultimately entrust the mandate"* demonstrates the speaker's modesty. In a political debate, where candidates typically highlight their strengths to gain public support, this statement takes a different tone. The speaker refrains from asserting superiority or claiming to be the best choice. Instead, the speaker sincerely defers to the people's decision, showing no intention to dominate or influence public opinion aggressively. This highlights the democratic value of allowing the people to decide freely. By not overtly promoting himself, the speaker maintains a polite tone, thereby fulfilling the modesty maxim within the politeness principle.

3.2 Politeness Scales in the First Public Debate of the 2024 Tegal Regent and Vice Regent Candidates

In addition to identifying the principles of politeness, this study also analyzes the use of politeness scales that appear in the public debate. Based on the results, a total of 31 utterances were found to contain politeness scales. These findings indicate a variation in the degree of consideration between speakers and interlocutors when conveying ideas. To provide a more specific overview, this section presents sample data based on the most dominant scale the cost-benefit scale and the least frequently used scale the social distance scale.

Data (3)

Context: At Syailendra Hall, Kholid, the Vice Regent candidate from Candidate Pair Two, presents the *Sa Lapor Sa Alus* program.
Utterance:

“.....menang akan ada jaminan bahwa infrastruktur akan ada infrastruktur yang alus, apik, dan mulus. Dan kami juga ada program sehari sa lapor sa alus, satu hari lapor, satu hari alus, artinya ada kecepatan.....”

This excerpt demonstrates the cost-benefit scale, as it emphasizes significant benefits for the public namely, improved infrastructure and fast service. The speaker focuses on citizen welfare and providing convenience in public services, especially in repairing damaged roads. By highlighting these advantages, the utterance reflects a high consideration for the listener's (in this case, the public's) gain, which aligns with the cost-benefit politeness scale.

Data (4)

Context: At Syailendra Hall, Bima, the Regent candidate from Candidate Pair One, expresses appreciation toward Candidate Pair Two.
Utterance:

“terimakasih Mas Ischak dan Mas Kholid.....”

This utterance reflects the social distance scale, in which Bima, as a Regent candidate, acknowledges and respects the social distance between himself and the interlocutors. They are not strangers, but neither are they close friends. The use of the term *"Mas"* demonstrates recognition of social status and interpersonal relations between speaker and hearer. By addressing them as *"Mas"*, the speaker implicitly acknowledges that the relationship is familiar enough to allow such a term, yet still maintains politeness and respectful boundaries. This form of address strikes a balance between formality and familiarity, conveying both respect and warmth hallmarks of the social distance scale.

3.3 The Implications of Politeness in the First Public Debate of the 2024 Tegal Regent and Vice Regent Candidates for Indonesian Language Learning in Senior High School

The findings of this study have positive implications for Indonesian language learning. The results can be utilized by Indonesian language teachers in designing materials or teaching resources related to politeness in language. Therefore, in the implementation of teaching and learning activities, teachers can integrate the results of this study into project-based learning activities or class discussions.

One practical implementation can be applied to the learning material *Expressing Opinions Through Debate* in Grade X, particularly in the second meeting with a focus on analyzing debate structure. In the core activity, students will watch a video of the debate and then participate in a question-and-answer session discussing the structure of the debate and the language used by the debate participants.

4 CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that Leech's politeness principles are widely applied in the public debate of the 2024 Tegal Regent and Vice Regent candidates, particularly the tact maxim, which dominates the utterances of Candidate Pair One (Bima and Mujab). The use of this maxim reflects a polite communication strategy focused on public interest. The politeness scales also play a role, especially the cost-benefit scale, indicating the candidates' efforts to deliver messages that benefit the audience. This strengthens a positive image and enhances communication effectiveness. These findings have implications for Indonesian language learning in senior high school, especially in debate-related material. Students can learn to express opinions politely, critically, and contextually through the analysis of politeness principles and scales.

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