POLITENESS IN COMMUNITY PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

People in all types of societies organize themselves in relation to each other for work and other duties, and to structure their interactions. People's behaviours and roles are guided by prevalent norms and regulations so influential that their particular characteristics might be seen by others as distinctively belong to certain groups of societies. Easterners and Westerners might be seen as having distinctive features regarding politeness in human relation. Eastern societies organize themselves primarily according to behaviours showing polite treatment for the sake of moral sanction and socio-cultural harmony. This probably explains easterners preference for a communal life. As with Western societies, they tend to esteem positive politeness related to intimacy and negative politeness related to individual freedom that is attached to their preference for individualism. Eastern societies and Western societies perform distinctive politeness strategies having their own reasons and tendencies as bounded by pragmatic backgrounds of their existence. Pragmatic aspects include language use of various societies, the direct and indirect utterances, explicature and implicature, politeness strategies and many more. International communication calls for world attention toward respecting these distinctive features of various cultural backgrounds. And the direct realization of this cultural pragmatic communication is looking at and doing communication pragmatically.

Key words: politeness strategies, positive politeness, negative politeness, cultural pragmatic communication

INTRODUCTION

An individual or a group involving in isolated speech acts or longer-stretches of talk within the context of community practice takes account the feeling of others, to avoid or minimize the threat of their face. Face notion as used in the world of theatre was first introduced by Goffman and later on applied by Brown and Levinson to mean individual needs of self respect (Trosborg, 1995:25). The latter established politeness theory on the basis of positive face referring to an individual needs of being accepted and admitted by others, and negative face referring to an individual needs to be respected of one's freedom. A community practice is a group of people who live together around mutual engagement in some common endeavour and develop ways of doing, talking, belief, values, power relation - in short - practices emerge in the course of their joint activity around that endeavour (Eckert & Mc Connell-Ginet, 1998:490). The use of the term community practice and cultural group is applied here interchangeably to mean the same thing. Both focus on values, practices, knowledge, and interpretation of experience that signify group members. Every group is distinctive in its principles of politeness. It is debatable to discuss the concept of politeness between Western and Eastern groups of culture. In one hand, Western culture embraces the notion of individual autonomy; on the other hand, in Eastern culture, that notion plays less important role as in Western culture. This paper intends to explain Western politeness of Brown and Levinson's theory of face wants and Sperber and Wilson's theory of relevance. It also explains Eastern politeness formulated by Yueguo Gu of Chinese

politeness, Sachiko Ide of Japanese politeness and Indonesian politeness, in particular, Javanese politeness of its philosophy, as considered in this paper. As Pragmatics explores the language use, this paper wants to discuss the use of language by various speech communities in relation to politeness principles by which people apply politeness strategies, the use of explicature or implicature, the use of direct or indirect utterances, and the like. Thus, the use of language is regulated by pragmatic conditions, which means by the cultural values of the community practice. This paper concludes its discussion by looking into possible implication of those various politeness on interlocutors' effort in building a cross cultural pragmatic communication.

CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION

Communication is approached in the linear fashion of Western logic, and culture is compartmentalized into unrelated tiny boxes labeled 'religion,''child rearing,''marriage patterns,' or the like. Of the many ways the complex relationships of communication and culture can be shown, the linear is the least useful. The schema of culture and communication is presented below:

Culture and Communication (Damen, 1987: 92)
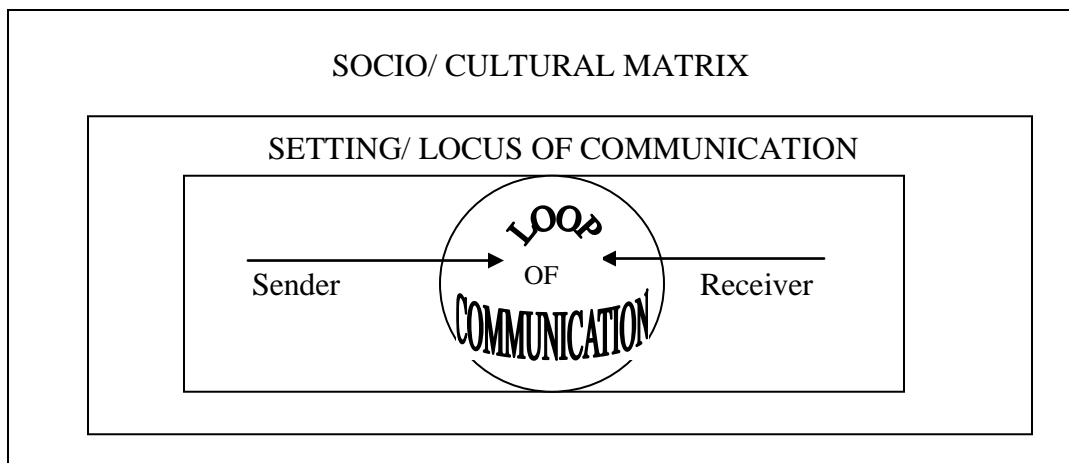
A communicative act takes place within the context of a socio-cultural matrix whose boundaries are drawn by the identification of a number of individuals as sharing given cultural assumptions, behaviours, and patterns. The setting which operates within the general matrix, provides the locus of communication, it is also culturally conditioned, such as in the uses of communication, manner of speech, or styles of communication (Damen, 1987: 93). Culture influences communication as she further states in her book that the study on patterns of interpersonal criticism in Japan and the United States shows that there are various modes of giving criticism between a group of Japanese and a group of Americans. The Japanese favored a more passive form of criticism and often engaged in banter, while their American counterparts were more active and angry in their patterns. In expressing criticism, the Japanese took into account the status of their communicative partners, the Americans, the type of provocation. Yet, each group favored expression of dissatisfaction.

The relationship between language and culture, world view, thought, and reality is that 1) language is more than speech; it's a rallying symbol, a means of identification, a tool, a lens through which reality is seen; 2) language responds to and at the same time influences the observations of its speakers and mediates their experiences; 3) language provides the embroidery for the world of its speakers; 4) language provides easy and familiar ways to classify the world of its speakers; 5) languages contain categories that reflect cultural interests, preoccupations, and conventions; 6) language is a tool rather more than a prison, but we are still limited by our partcular tools (Condon and Yousef, 1975 in Damen, 1987:131).
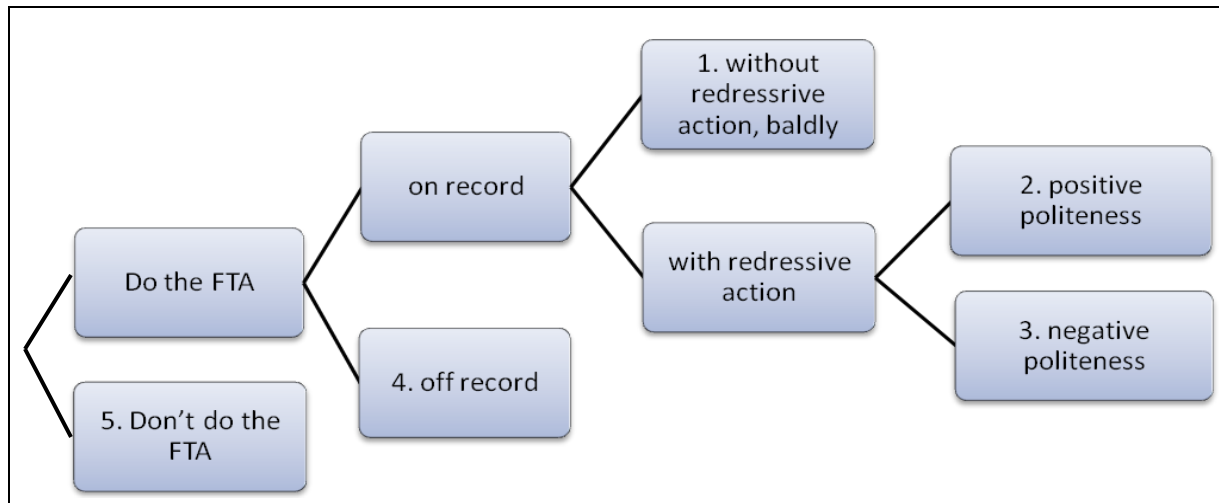
POLITENESS

Kasper states that politeness is defined as strategic conflict avoidance. Another definition of politeness is given by Brown and Levinson that politeness is defined as redressive action to counter balance the disruptive effect of face-threatening acts (FTAs) (Kulka, S. Blum and Kasper, 1990:194). Politeness is an entity that is hard to describe, as a result, research on politeness tends to focus on impoliteness. Normally, at least some participants are aware when a breach of perceived norms has taken place. Impoliteness only exists when it is classified as such by certain, usually dominant community members, and/or when it leads to a breakdown in relations. In general, an act is judged as polite in relation to whether or not an utterance appropriate to norm perceived situation and community practices. Lakoff (1990) states that there are three requirements for an utterance to be called polite. They are:1) don't impose; 2) give options; and 3) make a feel good, be friendly. In addition, he underlies that one culture tends to give emphasis to politeness strategy differently from other cultures. In this case culture influences towards social distance (D), deference or respect (D), and camaraderie or friendship (C) (Lakoff in Eeleen,2001:3). In determining the level of politeness which a speaker(S) will use to a hearer (H), there are three dimensions to social relation, they are relative power (P) of H over S, the social distance (D) between S and H, and the ranking of imposition (R) involved in doing the FTA (Brown and Levinson, 1987:15)

P. Brown and S. C. Levinson (1987)

The focus of politeness covers two aspects: a) the manner to reveal social distance and the difference in role relationship; and b) the use of face in communication as an effort to show, nurture and save face in a communication. Politeness is revealed distinctively throughout languages, which Brown and Levinson separate into two: positive politeness strategies referring to positive face and negative politeness strategies referring to negative face. Positive politeness strategies are used to show closeness, intimacy, and good relation between a speaker and a hearer whereas negative politeness strategies are used to show social distance between a speaker and a hearer. The following is the schema of Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies.

The schema of five politeness strategies of Brown and Levinson.
(Brown and Levinson, 1987: 69)

Bald on record

Bald on record is the politeness principle applied in uttering speech acts in connection with cooperative principles of Grice (1975) of the maxims of quantitiy, quality, manner, and relevance. These principles are applied on the expense of being polite to meet the emergency conditions, as follows:

(1) Come inside.
(2) Open the door.
(3) Help!
(4) Listen every one!

Positive politeness

Positive politeness is done by uttering fifteen speech acts to refer to positive face needs to show closeness, intimacy, and good relationship between a speaker and a hearer, as follows:

(1) show interest in a hearer's needs and possessions 'Great house you have'
(2) exaggerate interest, support, and sympathy 'That's a brilliant idea'
(3) show sincere care'Are you sure you are oke?'

(4) use terms of group identity 'Don't worry we both are new students.'
(5) seek an agreement 'All right then, we'll see again at lunch.'
(6) avoid disagreement 'Oke, I'll go with you tonight.'
(7) show togetherness 'We are close friends, remember?'
(8) use a joke 'A: What do you call a sheep without legs?. B: 'Cloud'.
(9) show attention to a hearer's needs 'Yes, I know, you have worked hard last night.'
(10) show a promise 'Oke, then. I'll bring the book tomorrow.'
(11) show optimism 'I believe that you can finish your homework tonight.'
(12) involve a hearer in an activity'Shall we practise playing guitar now?'
(13) ask or give reason'Here, put on this jacket. It's windy.'
(14) show reciprocal action How about exchanging novel, so both of us can read two stories?'

(15) give a gift, understanding, cooperation, as illustrated in the following: 'Here's a song I'll sing for you, mom.'

Negative politeness

Negative politeness is realized by uttering ten speech acts to refer to negative face needs to show social distance between a speaker and a hearer as follows:

(1) use indirect speech act 'Could you pass me the salt, please?'
(2) use hedge 'If I'm not mistaken, the Theory of Pragmatics test will be done tomorrow.'
(3) show pessimism 'I expect you to be here tonight, but I suppose you are busy, right?'
(4) use minimal imposition 'I'll help you unpacking your things, oke?'
(5) use deference 'Would you move back a bit?'
(6) ask apology 'Sorry for an intrusion, but please sign your name here.'
(7) avoid using 'I' or 'you' 'It's oke. Accidents are beyond control.'
(8) use common FTA 'Taking picture is prohibited in this museum .'
(9) use nominalization 'This mutual cooperation between our companies must be continued.'
(10) say something to impress a hearer 'I'm committed to complete our project.'

Off record

Off record is politeness strategies which are shown by uttering fifteen ways of uttering speech acts as follows:

(1) give cues 'I misplaced my pen' (Lend me yours)
(2) give associated cues 'Are you going out?' (Buy me some sugar)
(3) use presupposition 'Will you watch Harry Potter again?' (You have watched it previously)

(4) use understatement 'She's an old crack' (She has been a successful actress for a long time)
(5) use overstatement 'I'm hungry. I could eat a horse' (I'm very hungry)
(6) use tautology 'Finally, I got my chance to speak. Every cloud has a silver lining.'
(7) use contradiction 'I do mind waiting, but it's oke. I am waiting.'
(8) use irony 'You always make your room.' (You never make your room)
(9) use metaphor 'You certainly an angel for me.' (You have been very helpful)
(10) use rhetorical question 'Who doesn't need any money?' (It's clear every one needs money)
(11) use ambiguous utterance 'Someone is up to something.'
(12) use vague utterance 'Let me buy something to eat.'
(13) use over generalization 'Come on, don't cry. Boys don't cry.'
(14) do not refer to the hearer directly 'Mom, give me some money' (Father gives money, instead of mother)
(15) use ellipsis, as illustrated in the following: 'This pen doesn't work....' (Give me another pen)

Don't do the FTA

Don't do the FTA or keep silent is a politeness strategy. This strategy is applied to show the speaker's politeness by not commenting on the interlocutor's utterance which is not appropriate.

    A: 'Dora is lazy and unorganized in everything she does, what do you think?'
    B: '.......' (keep silent).

Sperber-Wilson's Theory of Relevance

Theory of Relevance focuses on discussing explicature and implicature. An explicature of an

utterance is all forms of proposition which are communicated explicitly by means of uttering speech acts. Implicature, on the other hand is a proposition or an assumption which is communicated implicitly as it is not coded explicitly or not uttered completely. Sperber and Wilson state that implicature is contextual assumption and contextual implication as intended by the speaker who has an intention of uttering relevant speech acts. They further mention that in oder to establish a smooth communication, considered as an ostensive communication with optimal relevance, both interlocutors have to obey the principle of relevance, obtained from two kinds of implicature, that is implicated premise and implicated conclusion. Ostensive utterances of a speaker must guarante a cognitive effect on the hearer. So the stronger the cognitive effect of utterances is on the hearer, the most relevant the information is. In finding meaning, an interlocutor needs to draw inferences based on speech act component, including background of his/her interlocutor's culture to arrive at contextual implication (Cruse, 2000: 348).

The explicature and implicature as proposed in Relevance Theory are shown below.

The following is a high-level explicature in the relevance theory literature which includes propositional attitude description:
(1) Susan :'My husband is a womanizing alcoholic.'
(2) a. Susan believes that her husband is a womanizing alcoholic
    b. Susan is angry that her husband is a womanizing alcoholic

The explicature (1) can be explained like this:
(2a) and (2b) may be the higher-level explicatures for (1). The propositional form of (1)

is embedded under a propositional attitude description (Huang, 2007: 194)

The following is an implicated premise or a contextual assumption intended by the speaker and supplied by the hearer and implicated conclusion or a contextual implication communicated by the speaker.
(3) Car salesman: Are you interested in test-driving a Rolls Royce?
    John : I'm afraid I'm not interested in test-driving any expensive car.
John's reply may yield the following implicature:
(4) a. A Rolls Royce is an expensive car
    b. John isn't interested in test-driving a Rolls Royce

The implicature can be explained like this:
(4a) is an implicated premise, and (4b) is an implicated conclusion of John's reply. (4b) follows deductively from (4a) combined with (3) (Huang, 2007:195)

Yueguo Gu
Politeness principle put forward by Gu (1990) is based on the concept of Chinese politeness in which it is explicitly associated with the norms of community practice. This politeness is by nature descriptive in the concept of Chinese *limao* or politeness with the moral sanctions of community practice. In this politeness, the notion of face does not serve as psychological wants, but norms dictated by community practice, not instrumentally, but normatively. An Individual face is not threatened if one wants is not fulfilled, but is threatened should an individual fail to meet the standard set by community practice. Politeness principle refers to a belief that individual behaviours must fufill community practice norms covering the attitudes of respectfulness, modesty, and warmth and refinement. There are four maxims of this

Chinese politeness: 1) self-denigration; 2) address system; 3) tact; and 4) generosity. Gu includes also the maxims of balance that calls for reciprocation of politeness, in the instances of performing a counter-offer, performing a counter-invitation, and others (Gu in Eeleen, 2001:9).

Sachiko Ide

Politeness principle put forward by Sachico Ide (1989) does not solely relate to speaker's strategic ways to communicate with a hearer; it rather functions as an indespensable part of communicative performance to reach socio-cultural harmony. Japanese politeness is based on the belief that politeness is viewed as the foundation of ostentive or smooth communication. Thanking is an important convention to show good relation, only if it is uttered in the expression of apology. Otherwise the one does the favour will admit one is in superior level, the feeling Japanese people see as self-denigration. Ide states that Japanese politeness does not focus on the active and free volition of a speaker, but stresses on discernment in the forms of verbal grammatical utterances required by the community practice. The theory of discernment relies on the usage of absolute and strong honorific or nonhonorific terms to address to specific relation between a speaker and a hearer denoting the socio-structural characteristics of them. Honorific as politeness realization is supported by social convention called *wakimae*. This theory states that the forms of honorific terms serve as socio-pragmatic equity of grammatical concord to obtain socio-pragmatic concord. This *wakimae* requires four conventional regulations as follows:1) respect those having a higher social position; 2) respect those who have power; 3) respect those who are older; and 4) respect all

situations set by the aspects of participants, occasions, and topic.

Javanese Philosophy Reflecting Politeness Principles

Politeness in Javanese culture stems from various prevailing proverbs heavily loaded with lesson for politeness, among others '*Ajining dhiri saka lathi, ajining raga saka busana', 'wanita ateges wani ditata', 'esem bupati dupak dubang', 'aja dumeh',* and many more. The first proverb requires people to speak and behave decently and politely to be respected; the second proverb requires women to obey others' advice; the third proverb requires people's awareness of the meaning of indirect and a non-verbal language; the fourth proverb requires people not to behave arrogantly. Ancient Javanese philosophy and literary writing such as *Tembang Macapat* provides rules of conduct which are taught at schools especially primary education. As part of the ancient literary writing, *Mijil* teaches politeness principles that require people to behave politely, modestly, and wisely; avoid excessive argument and respect other people's opinion. People must respect those who govern them by obeying them as well as must avoid conflict to preserve harmony.

Javanese song lyric called *Macapat Kinanthi* requires people to train their mind and feeling to have a clear mind to be able to interpret utterances and situation indirectly revealed. This rule of conduct also requires people to value sportmanship by helping others and paying respect to them. Politeness principles of common saying is the four principles of *kurmat, andhap asor, tepa slira, empan papan,* in which the four principles demand people to respect others, to behave modestly, to preserve self control and awareness, and to be considerate of place and

condition during which people are interacting with others (Kartomiharjo, 2001: 19).

Apart from the above politeness principles inclusively written in literary writing, politeness in Javanese culture is revealed in the Javanese language of *krama, krama madya, and krama inggil.* The language shows a non-egalitarian society, that people are hierarchically arranged by fate. Javanese people's way of life is that one's position and power are premeditatedly arranged, so that one has to accept one's fate of either small or big portion as one *nrima ing pandum* without protest. Javanese tradition views the universe in terms of macrocosmos *jagad gedhe* and microcosmos *jagad cilik.* The cosmos is neither expanding or contracting. The total amount of power within it also remains fixed. Its total quantity does not change, even though the distribution of power in the universe may vary (Anderson, 1990: 23 in Gunarwan, 2004: 7). Gunarwan states that the terms *jagad gedhe* and *jagad cilik* account for inequality of power, that there are powerful people having a big power and there are powerless people having a small or no power. Javanese language requires politeness principles through the use of distinctive language levels, denoting honorific address to relate to the level of speaker, hearer, and the person they talk about. It is generally believed that Javanese community practice is of strata of aristocracy and non-aristocracy or common people which in turn calls for non-equal and non-solidarity relation among fellow Javanese people themselves. In spite of the fact that cooperation prevails or *gotong royong,* the true fact of non-equal and non-solidarity social convention does prevail stronger. Indonesian people in general and Javanese people in particular live in a communal way of life through cooperation regardless of their non-equal and non-solidarity type of relation. These cooperative

activities are manifested in villages and rural areas throughout the country in respect of national celebration, traditional and religious festivals and others. It is important and secured for someone to be part of communal life and to be admitted by other members. In relation to communal life of different strata, it is not a common practice to see the one from aristocratic strata to serve another of lower one for fear of social denigration (unless demanded by a profession like doctor-patient relation). In a community practice where solidarity is low, community members realize the existence of social class that regulates each other's rights and obligation. There is a strong atmosphere of preserving harmony by avoiding conflicts and cautiousness of face wants, thus each tends to communicate indirectly or realizes off record politeness principle of Brown and Levinson's.

THE IMPLICATION OF POLITENESS PRINCIPLES ON CROSS CULTURAL PRAGMATIC COMMUNICATION.

Differences in culture bring forth differences in language use in particular politeness manifestation. An utterance or gesture considered polite in one culture might be impolite in another culture. The example of that pragmatic confusion is excessively big in number, some of them are as the followings:

Japanese asking for an apology to express gratitude will confuse an American who understands that thankfulness is expressed in the context of being asked for one's well being, shown the right direction, and others.

A Javanese refusal to take offer for a meal, drink, and others will confuse an American, who thinks that the Javanese sincerely refuses it. An American shows sincerety in a direct utterance.The Javanese person declines an offer

expecting repetition of offer. A direct response is a self-denigration to the Javanese.

The teaching of communication requires not only verbal-grammatical rules, but also pragmatic principles, such as what speech acts are used to reveal the force or proposition, explicature or implicature, when to speak directly or indirectly, and others.

Teaching communication pragmatically is considered necessary because of the following tendencies: 1) there are more than one way to express the intended meaning of a speaker in relation to the context of speech situation; 2) negative face wants does not imply negative or unfavourable attitudes; 3) indirectness is not synonymous with obeying politeness principles; 4) cultural relativist sees differences in politeness principles in a positive way.

CONCLUSION

Different culture brings different linguistic politeness principles. Differences in cultural aspects such as face notion, individualism-way of life and directness speech act realization of Western culture and unprevailing face notion, communal life and indirectness speech act realization of Eastern culture should give reasons for the importance of teaching communication along with pragmatic aspects.

The study of politeness realization in particular community practices as in parts of Java and other wider Provincial areas need to be conducted to denote prevalent typical politeness strategies.

Aspects of Pragmatics as speech acts and the force of them in revealing the intended

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meaning not discussed in this paper need to be carried out as well.

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