

# Politeness in the Samawa Ethnic Language on Social Media

*Mahsun Mahsun*<sup>1\*</sup>, *Aswandikari Aswandikari*<sup>1</sup>, *Sukri Sukri*<sup>1</sup>, *Burhanuddin Burhanuddin*<sup>1</sup>,  
*Laili Yuparni Durratun Yatimah*<sup>2</sup>, and *Eva Novita Sari*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Mataram, Jl. Majapahit No. 62 Mataram, Indonesia 83125

<sup>2</sup>Master Program in Bahasa Indonesia, University of Mataram, Jl. Majapahit No. 62 Mataram, Indonesia 83125

**Abstract.** This research explains politeness in the Sumbawa ethnic language on social media, including the types of politeness that tend to be used. The politeness theories of Lakoff, Leech, Brown and Levinson, Grice, and Pranowo are the theories used to explain this. Data was collected using documentation methods through the use of language on social media sites such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp, either individually or in groups. The data was then analyzed using principles in pragmatic studies. The research results show that not all types of language politeness proposed by experts are used by the Sumbawa ethnic group. The politeness type of giving sympathy, showing agreement or similarity, giving praise, and avoiding arguments are the dominant types of politeness used with the person you are talking to. Comprehensive studies need to be carried out in all domains to obtain a politeness model for the Sumbawa ethnic language.

## 1 Introduction

Language is unique, and this can be observed at various linguistic levels, including phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon, semantics, and pragmatics. Linguistic studies regarding the uniqueness of a language until the second decade of the 21st century was more oriented towards structural aspects, while pragmatic aspects (especially language politeness) received less attention. This research aims to explain (types of) politeness in the Sumbawa ethnic language on social media from various existing politeness theories.

On the other hand, the Sumbawa ethnic group uses social media both individually and in groups. Commonly used social media include Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, both in Sumbawa and Indonesian. As an ethnic group, it is possible for its speech acts to be uniquely different from other ethnic groups. It is important to know these differences not only to reveal the language politeness model but also how the Sumbawa ethnic group can defend itself or not defend itself in a speech event. Knowledge about this is very important so that participants can identify things that they can and cannot do in communicating with the Sumbawa ethnic group. Because conceptually, in a speech event, participants will be faced with two speech act choices, namely, threatening face or not threatening face.

---

\* Corresponding author: [mahsun@unram.ac.id](mailto:mahsun@unram.ac.id)

Considering that communication on social media is generally used for transmitting information, building harmony, and other positive purposes, face-threatening speech acts are important to identify. This is based on the consideration that face-threatening speech acts can be learning material for social media users, especially Sumbawa ethnic groups who use social media. So that communication can be carried out politely when dealing with the person you are speaking to. Apart from that, as an ethnic group that has its own characteristics, the Sumbawa ethnic group has a unique knowledge system regarding the types and tendencies of language politeness. The availability of communication signs on social media for the Sumbawa ethnic group is important, considering the increasing use of language in the digital era.

In a speech event, each speech act is a reflection of the attitude of an individual or group. This means that every speech act can reflect politeness, so it is very important for a speaker to master language politeness, especially in group communication. Participants who are less able to act appropriately will be placed in a disadvantageous position in a speech event. Such conditions, in pragmatic terminology by Brown and Levinson, are called threatened face speech acts [1]. To avoid these face-threatening conditions, the authors proposed language strategies including, for example, avoiding conflict, increasing attention/sympathy, identifying oneself with the speaker, and so on. Such strategies were proposed by many researchers [2-13].

How the speech acts of the Sumbawa ethnic group involved in speech events are seen from the various politeness theories above needs to be researched. In other words, this research explains how the realization of politeness in the Sumbawa ethnic language is seen from the theoretical perspective [1-4,13]. The realization of politeness was examined in speech events that occurred on WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram in the period from March to September 2023. This research also revealed the types of politeness that are dominantly used by the Sumbawa ethnic group.

Before explaining the research findings, it is necessary to state several important terms related to this study. This study is included in the subfield of pragmatics (in the field of linguistics). In the study of pragmatics, there are the terms politeness and politeness, which are not contradictory in this article. Politeness refers to behavior that is in accordance with social rules in society, which can be demonstrated through concern and sensitivity towards others [1,3,4,13-16]. [2] believes that politeness is related to three things, namely (1) formality (the speech participants involved must feel completely comfortable in the entire speech act); (2) indecisiveness (the participants feel comfortable with each other and have many choices for speaking); and (3) equality/friendship (the speaker must consider the speaker as their friend while speaking). Language politeness is related to six things, namely (1) making the other person's benefits maximum and making the speaker's losses minimal; (2) making your own profits as small as possible and making your own losses as large as possible; (3) criticize others as little as possible and praise others as much as possible; (4) praise yourself as little as possible and criticize yourself as much as possible; (5) create as little disagreement as possible and as much agreement as possible; and (6) reduce feelings of antipathy as little as possible and increase feelings of sympathy as much as possible [3]. Another researcher believes that language politeness is characterized by several things, namely (1) the speaker is able to maintain the dignity of the speaker (not being embarrassed); (2) the speaker does not say anything bad about the speaker; (3) the speaker does not express joy at the speaker's misfortune; (4) the speaker must not express disagreement with the speaker so that he feels his self-esteem falls; and (5) speakers must not praise themselves [4]. Pranowo emphasized that language politeness can be done in six ways, namely (1) humility, (2) respect, (3) curt, (4) satire, (5) happy tone, and (6) concerned tone [13].

Brown and Levinson specifically put forward a language politeness strategy known as "face-saving," namely speech acts that contain certain intentions and characteristics as a

manifestation of appreciation or respect for individual members of society [1]. The face-saving language politeness strategy includes two interrelated aspects, namely (a) negative face (the speaker's desire to be free to act/do something) and (b) positive face (the speaker's desire to be accepted or liked by other parties). They are called negative politeness and positive politeness, respectively [1]. In accordance with the research objectives, the positive politeness theory will be depicted in the speech acts carried out by the Sumbawa ethnic group. Positive politeness is an approach that creates the same impression as the person you are talking to. To reduce the disappointment of the interlocutor, Brown and Levinson offer fifteen action strategies to the interlocutor, namely (1) paying attention to interests, desires, behavior, or goods; (2) exaggerating feelings of interest, approval, sympathy; (3) increasing interest; (4) shows a common identity/group; (5) seek approval; (6) avoid conflict; (7) presupposes the perception of a number of speakers' similarities; (8) making jokes; (9) presupposes that the speaker understands the wishes of the interlocutor; (10) making offers and promises; (11) shows a sense of optimism; (12) trying to involve the speaker in a particular activity; (13) giving and asking for reasons; (14) offers a reciprocal action, namely if the interlocutor does X then the speaker does action Y, and (15) giving sympathy to the person you are talking to [1]. If you look closely, strategies (1), (2), (3), (11), and (15) can be grouped into one, as well as strategies (4), (5), and (6) can be grouped into one so that in fact there are nine politeness.

The results of searching for several accessible literature related to this research take Indonesian as an object, including the study by [13, 17-21]. Two studies showed Perceptions of Directive Politeness in Indonesian among Several Ethnicities in Jakarta and Implicature and Politeness in Language: Some Insights from the Drama Ludruk [17,18]; Rahardi studied Pragmatics: Imperative Politeness in Indonesian and Sociopragmatics: Imperative Studies in the Context of Sociocultural Context and Situational Context [19, 20]; and Pranowo studied politeness in using Indonesian and speaking politely [13]. When viewed from the aspects and objects studied, those studies are different from the present study but overlap in terms of politeness. However, the discussion of politeness in this article is more focused on politeness strategies (positive) rather than in general, as studied by the three linguists above. Other studies were conducted by [22-27] but are not related to this research.

## 2 Method

This research was conducted from March to September 2023 by observing the use of the Sumbawa language on social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Data collection was carried out on language use, both individually and in groups. Individual use of the Sumbawa language is taken from statements made on the homepage, while groups through Sumbawa associations are found on the three social media above. Thus, data was collected using the documentation method (compared [21]). The data collected is in the form of speech acts that are thought to contain politeness, as hypothesized by experts. The data is then analyzed by comparing the found speech with existing politeness theories. This model analysis is called the intralingual matching method and the extra lingual matching method [21]. The intralingual equivalent method compares the analyzed speech act with the speech acts before and after it, while the extra lingual method compares the analyzed speech act with the context (units in the form of non-language elements, such as who is speaking, where, when, about what, etc.). Data were also analyzed based on the concepts previously described [28]. The analyzed data is then quantified simply by counting the total number of speech acts and based on their type.

### 3 Results and Discussion

As stated above, Lakoff argued that language politeness is related to formality, indecisiveness, and similarity/friendship [2]. Of the three types, only the types of indecisiveness and sameness are used by the Sumbawa ethnic group on social media.

- (1) *Aida nda maras lamin nonda Pak Saleh.* 'Aida (phatic marked), it wouldn't be fun if Mr. Saleh wasn't there.'
- (2) *Jam pida nawar ada waktu sia bos.* 'What time do you (respectfully) have tomorrow, boss?'
- (3) *Lamin nene sate maras, nene ajak gama Pak Saleh.* 'If you want to have fun, you should invite Mr. Saleh, '

The strategy of similarity or camaraderie is also used by the Sumbawa ethnic group, namely by treating the person they are saying as truly their friend.

- (4) *Sanak, sate saya katoan, apa berita ta, tetu atawa hoax?* 'Brother, I want to ask whether this news is true or a hoax.'
- (5) *Khusus buat Ami Mack lagu Taliang.* 'This song is especially for Mr. Mack Taliwang'
- (6) *Ko ko ko, na barola kotar ompa ke linglung yammara saya, karing tudadi ngajar online.* 'Well (phatic marker), quickly get tired and confused like I am now, teaching online.'

Of Leech's six theories of politeness [3], there are five that are used by the Sumbawa ethnic group. First, make your own profits as small as possible and make your own losses as large as possible.

- (7) *Kajulin eneng maaf luk ngka saya bau datang sarawi Dea Papen eee.* 'I (gently) apologize because I couldn't come to Grandpa Haji's place last night.'

Second, criticize others as little as possible and praise others as much as possible.

- (8) *Walaupun video ta nopoka terbukti, tapi video ta bukti ARB ta tau batutu ke pintar.* 'Although this video cannot be said to be proof, it shows that ARB is serious and smart'.
- (9) *Ba Kakuda, talo seda panyani asli deta?* 'Wow, his voice beats the original singer's voice.'
- (10) *Maras suara nan, balong agol na ampo.* 'His voice is very melodious, his rhythm too.'
- (11) *Keras hebat Pak Ketua.* 'That's great, Mr Chairman.'
- (12) *Lamin ka mo komen Pak Ketua sudamo.* 'If the Chairman has commented, it's all over.'

Third, praise yourself as little as possible and criticize yourself as much as possible.

- (13) *Eee nanta kami, ta nya rua kami telas.* 'Eee (phatic marker) poor us, this is our life.'
- (14) *Eee, kami ta tau nonda.* 'Eee (phatic marker), We are no one.'

Fourth, make as few disagreements as possible and make as many agreements as possible.

- (15) *Karing meluk dadi balong mo*. 'It's up to you how to get better'.
- (16) *Tutu si, nan bua kubarari mole*. 'That's right, that's why I'm going home.'
- (17) *Jam pida nawar ada waktu sia bos*. 'What time are you free tomorrow?'
- (18) *Insha Allah nawar nopoka lohor atau jira lohor bau si, no saya to Pak Saleh*. 'Insha Allah, tomorrow before or after midday prayer too. I don't know Mr. Saleh.'

Fifth, reduce feelings of antipathy as little as possible and increase feelings of sympathy as much as possible (including data (3), (11), and (12)).

- (19) *Ya Allah, bau gama nya nan ya sabebas*. 'God, I hope he is released'.
- (20) *Hahaha. Hebat benar, basampanas*. 'Hahaha, what a great incitement'.
- (21) *Na jina peno sia ngajar Prof, sia sandunu kesehatan*. 'Don't teach too much Prof, take care of your health'.
- (22) *Lamin ada senyum poto, terang balong aten ke merakyat tau na*. 'If the photo shows a smile, maybe the person is good and popular'.

Of Grice's five politeness theories [4], only four are used. Politeness that is not used is not expressing joy at the misfortune of the person you are saying. First, the speaker is able to maintain the dignity of the addressee (not humiliated), including data (15).

- (23) *Deh sejar hobi, Abang, jaga-jaga kam i kirim dangdut, hehehe*. 'Deh (phatic marked), because my brother is a hobby, I sent him a dangdut song early in the morning, hehe'

Second, the speaker does not say anything unfavorable about the person he is speaking to, including data (20) and (27). Third, the speaker must not express disagreement with the person he is speaking to so that he feels his self-esteem fall, including data (1), (16), and (27). Fourth, speakers should not praise themselves.

- (24) *Puji diri si lalayang*. 'Praise yourself like a kite.'

Of Pranowo's six polite manners [13], four are used by Sumbawa ethnic groups on social media. Firstly, humility (data (25)); secondly, showing respect (data (17), while thirdly showing a sense of joy (data (3), (6), and (9)); and fourthly, showing a concerned tone (data (19)).

- (25) *Ngaro mo sia tulung*. 'Please (respectfully) help.'

Based on the theory of Brown & Levinson [1], nine types of politeness were found to reduce the disappointment of the interlocutor. First, pay attention to interests, desires, behavior, or goods (data (26)).

- (26) *Me pang desa darat ade nyanyi ta*. 'Where does this singer come from?'

Second, exaggerating feelings of interest, approval, and sympathy for the person you are talking about, including data (9), (19), and (27). Third, increasing feelings of interest (data (3), (4), and (27)), and fourth, showing the same identity/group (data (6) and (12) to the interlocutor. Fifth, seek agreement (data (15)), and (18), and sixth, avoid conflict (data (12), (15), (17), and (27)) towards the interlocutor.

(27) *Saya meling sohibul hajat prof.* 'It's up to you what the event wants.'

Seventh, presupposing that the speaker understands the wishes of the interlocutor (data (17)), and eighth, making offers and promises (data (28)). Ninth, giving a feeling of sympathy to the interlocutor includes data (19), (23), (25), and (27).

(28) *Datang bakedek ko bale.* 'Come play at home'.

## 4 Conclusion

The results of this research indicate that not all existing theories of politeness are used by the Sumbawa ethnic group on social media. Of the types of politeness that exist, there are those that are dominant in use compared to others, namely showing sympathy, expressing similarities, avoiding disagreements, and giving compliments. A speech act can have different illocutionary powers or be classified into several types of politeness. This means that a speech act contains several politeness strategies determined by the context of the speech. This means that the politeness theory developed by Western experts needs to be more relevant to the types of politeness that exist in Indonesian culture. In order to explore Sumbawa ethnic politeness strategies further, a comprehensive study needs to be carried out, not only on use on social media but also in other wider areas. Apart from that, in order for this research to be useful, it needs to be disseminated by the parties.

## Acknowledgment

Thank you to the members of the Mahof Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Mataram University, which has carried out much of this research.

## References

1. P. Brown, S. C. Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*, (Amerika Serikat: Longman 1987)
2. R. Lakoff, *Language in Society*, (Amerika Serikat: Cambridge 1973)
3. G. N. Leech, *Principles of Pragmatics*, (New York: Cambridge 1983)
4. P. Grice, *Aspects of Reason*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press 2001)
5. H. G. Tarigan, *Keterampilan Berbicara*, (Jakarta: Pustaka 2001)
6. G. Keraf, *Diksi dan Gaya Bahasa*, (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka. Utama 2005)
7. H. Haerul, *Seni berbicara dalam Pembelajaran*, (Jakarta: Pustaka 2010)
8. A. Chaer, *Kesantunan Berbahasa*, (Jakarta: P.T. Rineka Cipta 2010)
9. A. Chaer, *Ragam Bahasa Ilmiah*, (Jakarta: P.T. Rineka Cipta 2016)
10. A. Chaer, *Sosiolinguistik sebuah Pengantar*, (Jakarta: P.T. Rineka Cipta 2017)
11. Y. Handayani, *Ragam Bahasa di Indonesia*, (Jakarta: Gramedia 2018)
12. O. Olif, *Lancar Berbicara: Kapan, di Mana, dengan Siapa Saja*, (Jakarta: Pustaka 2019)
13. P. Pranowo, *Berbahasa Secara Santun*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar 2009)

14. J. R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, (Cambridge University Press 1979)
15. B. Fraser, *The Concept of Politeness*, Paper at the 1985 NWAVE Meeting. Georgetown University (1975)
16. I. B. Putrayasa, *Pragmatik*, (Yogyakarta: Graha Ilmu 2014)
17. A. Gunarwan, Asim, *Beberapa Prinsip dalam Komunikasi Verbal: Tinjauan Sociolinguistik dan Pragmatik* in Pranowo (2005), (Yogyakarta: Universitas Sanata Dharma 1992)
18. A. Gunarwan, *Beberapa Prinsip dalam Komunikasi Verbal: Tinjauan Sociolinguistik dan Pragmatik* in Pranowo (2005), (Yogyakarta: Universitas Sanata Dharma 2007)
19. K. Rahardi, *Pragmatik: Kesantunan Imperatif Bahasa Imperatif Bahasa Indonesia*. (Jakarta: Erlangga 2005)
20. K. Rahardi, *Sosio pragmatik*, (Jakarta: Erlangga 2009)
21. M. Mahsun, *Metode Penelitian Bahasa: Tahapan, Strategi, Metode, dan. Tekniknya*. (Jakarta: Rajagrafindo Persada 2017)
22. B. Badelah, M. Mahsun, B. Burhanuddin, *Jurnal Lingua*, **16**, 2 (2019)
23. B. Burhanuddin, S. Sumarlam, *Jurnal Adabiyat*, **12**, 2 (2015)
24. B. Burhanuddin, S. Sumarlam, *Tindak Tutur Imperatif Khutbah Jumat dalam Tabloid Suara Muhammadiyah* in Prosiding Prasasti, Program Studi S-3 Linguistik Universitas Sebelas Maret, pp. 464-469 (2015)
25. B. D. I. Cahyani, J. Syamsinas, B. Burhanuddin, *Jurnal Bastrindo*, **1**, 2 (2020)
26. A. Islam, B. Burhanuddin, S. Saharuddin, *Mabasan*, **15**, 2 (2021)
27. S. A. Lestari, S. Sukri, B. Burhanuddin, *Jurnal Ilmiah Mandala Education*, **7**, 2 (2021).
28. F. X. Nadar, *Pragmatik dan Penelitian Pragmatik*, (Yogyakarta: Graha Ilmu 2009)