

# Politeness Strategy in Directive Speech Acts of *Tolea Pabitara* on Traditional Marriage Ceremony of Tolaki-Mekongga Ethnic Group

Nur Ihsan

## Abstract

This research was based on the politeness in speech acts at traditional ceremonies for Tolaki-Mekongga ethnic group as native ethnic in the mainland of Southeast Sulawesi province. In traditional wedding procession, it was known as *Tolea-pabitara* (spokesman), both *Tolea-pabitara* represented the family of the bridegroom, and *Tolea pabitara* represented the woman's family. The competence of politeness in speech act at the traditional procession to the continuity of interaction was crucial and was the responsibility of *Tolea-pabitara*. The problem in this research was how the use of directive speech acts of *Tolea pabitara* as politeness strategies in a traditional wedding ceremony of Tolaki-Mekongga ethnic group in Southeast Sulawesi. There were two objectives in this research. The first was to describe strategies of *Tolea pabitara* in using directive speech acts as a strategy of politeness in a traditional wedding ceremony of Tolaki-Mekongga ethnic that reside in mainland of Southeast Sulawesi. The second was to describe the types of directive speech acts that were used by *Tolea pabitara* in the traditional wedding ceremony of Tolaki-Mekongga ethnic group in Southeast Sulawesi.

**Keywords:** pragmatics; directive speech acts; *Tolea-pabitara*;

[www.dx.doi.org/10.21113/iir.v7i2.336](http://www.dx.doi.org/10.21113/iir.v7i2.336)

## 1. Introduction

Tolaki-Mekongga ethnic group was one of the native ethnics that live on the mainland of Southeast Sulawesi Province. Besides Tolaki-Mekongga ethnic group, there are also other ethnics such as Muna, Buton, Bugis-Makassar, Java, Bali and other ethnics that reside in the mainland and islands of Southeast Sulawesi. Tolaki-Mekongga ethnic group is the majority who reside in the mainland of Southeast Sulawesi that spread to several districts and cities, such as Kolaka, North Kolaka, East Kolaka, Bombana, Konawe, South Konawe, North Konawe, and Kendari.

Like other ethnic groups in Indonesia that have culture, traditions and customs, Tolaki-Mekongga ethnic group as indigenous people also have customs that were held in celebration completion. Some celebration ceremonies are such as a marriage, death rituals, farming rituals and so on.

In practice, the traditional wedding ceremony is the most unique traditional ceremony and attractive for many people, especially for other ethnics that also live in the mainland territory of Southeast Sulawesi. As a traditional procession, the traditional wedding ceremony involves many people and has a very long series of activities that are practiced since a long time ago.

The uniqueness in the marriage procession is the involvement of *Tolea Pabitara* (spokesman) at every stage in the completion of customary. *Tolea Pabitara* is an important person for the completion of custom settlement. Thus, the traditional procession is crucial and cannot be held if *Tolea Pabitara* is not involved in a procession of traditional ceremonies.

*Tolea Pabitara's* task is to become a spokesman for the parties that need to be represented in the ceremonial procession. In the traditional wedding ceremony, *Tolea pabitara's* task is to represent and to be the spokesman for both parties to the marriage, namely *Tolea pabitara* represented the family of the groom, and *Tolea pabitara* represented the family of the bride.

Here are examples of different speech in Indonesian language with local dialect. The example of dialect of *Tolaki-Mekongga* which is often spoken is "*Kau tidak ikutkah?*" (you do not come, don't you?), with a high tone. It can explicitly be interpreted that the speaker directly asked the listener. In the standard of Indonesian language, it can be constructed into "*Apakah kamu tidak ikut?*" (Don't you come, do you?).

The speech continuity is in the form of a question if it is viewed in theories of speech acts politeness. It is included in utterances that do not

follow the principles of politeness role in communication. The first reason is that the diction or word choice “kau” (you as informal word in Indonesian language) is considered as inappropriate word to greet someone in the same social status between the speaker and the listener. The second is that the continuity of speech in communication is seen as less polite.

### **1.1. Problem Statement**

Based on the description in the background, then the problems in this research are:

- a. How is the use of directive speech acts of *Tolea pabitara* as politeness strategies in a traditional wedding ceremony of Tolaki-Mekongga ethnic group in Southeast Sulawesi?
- b. What are the types of directive speech acts that are used by *Tolea pabitara* in a traditional wedding ceremony of Tolaki-Mekongga ethnic group in Southeast Sulawesi?

### **1.2. The Objectives of the Research**

There are two objectives in this research, namely:

- a. to describe the directive speech acts of *Tolea pabitara* as a strategy of politeness in a traditional wedding ceremony of Tolaki-Mekongga ethnic group that reside in the mainland of Southeast Sulawesi.
- b. to describe the types of directive speech acts that are used by *Tolea pabitara* in the traditional wedding ceremony of Tolaki-Mekongga ethnic group in Southeast Sulawesi.

## **2. Literature Review**

There are some opinions or views of the experts about; (1) The concept of pragmatics (2) the definition and types of directive speech acts, (3) the principles of politeness in conversation.

### **2.1. The concept of Pragmatics**

Pragmatics related to the use of language, how the speakers used the language in real interaction situations, not in a situation that was abstracted or fabricated by linguists. In contrast to other linguistic sub-disciplines (i.e. phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics), pragmatics is a sub-

discipline that linked the language as a symbol with the language user (Mey, 1998) in Gunarwan, 2007: 1-2).

Pragmatics is a field of study in linguistics that is related to the semantics. This connection is called as semanticism. The pragmatics is seen as a part of linguistics. There is also pragmatism. The semantics is considered to be a part of pragmatics. In addition, there is complementarism, where the semantics and pragmatics are seen as two complementary fields (Leech 1983: 6 (in Gunarwan 2004: 2).

Furthermore, to see the importance of pragmatic in linguistics, Leech (in Eelen 2001: 6) differentiates semantic and pragmatic into two views. Firstly, semantics examined the meaning (sense) of the sentences that were abstract and logical, while pragmatic examined the relationship between the meaning of speech and the power of pragmatic (force). Secondly, semantics was bound to the rule (rule-governed), while pragmatic was bound to the principle (principle-governed).

## 2.2. Directive Speech Acts

Directive speech acts realized the effort of the speakers so the speakers could do anything to achieve the goal. This speech acts had a match from the world to the word; the world was adapted to the uttered word. In this directive speech acts, there was an obligation that should be done by the listener (Searle, 1977: 22).

Furthermore, Bach and Harnish stated that the directive speech acts expressed the speaker's attitudes toward the actions that would be carried out by the speaker. If this sense were limited, the directive would be a constative speech act with restrictions on the content of the proposition, the action addressed to the speaker. However, directive action could also express the desire of the speaker (desire, hope), so the speech or gesture expression was used as a reason to act by the speaker.

Bach and Harnish included six main subcategories of directive action, namely requests, questions, requirements, prohibitives, permissions, and advisories.

*Requests* - Requests express the speaker's desire to do something. In addition, requests expressed what the speaker meant (or if it was clear that he did not expect compliance). Requests expressed the speaker's desire or hope, so the speaker used the reason to act. Appropriate per-locution was that the speakers really had the desire and intent that one expressed and that the listener did what the speakers requested.

*Questions*- Questions are requests in specific cases; the request is asked by the listener in giving certain information to the speaker. There are differences between different types of questions, but not all of them are important for illocutionary taxonomies. The question that is not well suited for the analysis of speech acts namely, the exam questions, a rhetorical question, interrogation, test questions, and investigate.

*Requirements* -Requirements are the intention that is expressed by the speaker, so the listener responds the speaker's utterance as the reason to act. Thus, the speaker's utterances are served as the causes of the action. The impact is the command which do not have to involve the expression of the speaker, so the speakers act in a certain way. In expressing appropriate beliefs and intentions, the speaker presupposed that he has a higher authority than the listener.

*Prohibitives* -Prohibition or restriction is basically an order that the listener did nothing. Smoking prohibition is the same as telling him not to smoke.

*Permissions* -Permissions are like orders and prohibitions. The speakers presupposed the authority. Granting permission expressed speakers' belief and meant so the listener believed that the speakers' speech contained a sufficient reason for the listener to feel free to do a certain action. The obvious reason for generating permission seemed that the speaker presupposed the existence of a request to permit it or presupposed the existence of restrictions on the permission.

*Advisories* -Related to the advisories, the speakers did not express the desire that the listener acts in a certain way, but the belief that action is not something good and the action is just the interests of the listener. The speakers also express the intention that the listener believed the speaker's utterances as a reason to act.

### **2.3. The Principles of Politeness**

Politeness is a pragmatic mechanism that involves various structures following the speaker's intention to achieve good communication. Conversation and speech acts that are performed in the conversation placed along the politeness continuum that is stretched from the very impolite to the very polite. Lavandera, (1988: 1196) stated that polite and impolite were not the meaning of linguistic forms. No sentence was inherently polite or not polite. Politeness did not lie in the linguistic

expression itself, but when the utterances happened, it determined the politeness assessment.

Leech adopted various maxims and Grice's cooperation principles and added one more maxims, which he called as the maxim of wisdom. The politeness model in 1980 also included a definition of politeness scale as a function of two scales, the scale of the cost-benefit and optionality. Speech act politeness could be improved, for example by keeping the cost-benefit factor (how much offense refers to the propositional content of the speech act that was considered as beneficial or burdensome for the speakers and the listeners) and increased optionality factors (extent to which performance of acts of the choice of speakers or listener). Leech put politeness concept modesty to explain the linguistic pragmatics mapping from the sense of power to indirect language expression.

Leech added that there was a combination of three factors that created the importance of politeness, namely authority, solidarity, and the level of risk of conflict. Leech then predicted that besides authority factor and strong solidarity factor, it was important to use discretion in order to reduce factors of conflict. Leech argued that wisdom was the property of speakers that could be done without waiting in exceptional circumstances when the authority and solidarity factor were strongly enough.

Then he also stated that not only the politeness that was a scale; wisdom was also a matter of degree. Finally, Leech asserted that there was no contradiction between direct and indirect illocutionary. There was only the level of continuity. The politeness principle which was based on the same format as the principle of cooperation was analyzed in a series of maxims, namely the maxim of wisdom (tact maxim), philanthropy (generosity maxim), praise (approbation maxim), humility (modesty maxim), agreement (agreement maxim), and sympathy (sympathy maxim).

Briefly, the maxims that were paired could be expressed as follows.

1. Wisdom maxim (in negative and commissive illocutionary)
  - a. Make the losses of others as small as possible
  - b. Make the benefit of others as much as possible
2. Generosity maxim (in negative and commissive illocutionary)
  - a. Make your own benefit as small as possible
  - b. make your own loss as big as possible
3. Praise maxim (in expressive and assertive illocutionary)
  - a. Claim others as little as possible
  - b. Praise others as much as possible

4. Humility maxim (in expressive and assertive illocutionary)
  - a. Praise yourself as little as possible
  - b. Claim yourself as much as possible
5. Agreement maxim (the assertive illocutionary)
  - a. Make sure your agreement with another occurs as little as possible
  - b. Make sure your agreement with another occur as much as possible
6. Sympathy Make sure your agreement with another (in the assertive illocutionary)
  - a. Reduce your empathy with others as small as possible
  - b. Increase your sympathy with others as much as possible.

### 3. Discussion

In this section, the researcher presents discussion about the main problem and the objectives that would be achieved in this research. Based on the main issue, this research discussed the politeness strategies in directive speech acts and other types of directive speech acts that were used by Tolea-Pabitara in a traditional wedding ceremony of ethnic Tolaki-Mekong as follows.

#### 3.1. Politeness Strategies in Requestive Speech Acts

*Kikii'itoka ai oru mokolako ikeito ino osara!*

**Perhatikanlah agar cepat kalian melangsungkan untuk kita adat ini!**

(Keep attention, please! So we can start this ceremony quickly)

Context: It was uttered when the traditional procession was about to begin. As usual, before the traditional procession began, the government ordered Tolea from the bridegroom to start traditional procession after Tolea from the bridegroom first asked permission to ask the government.

In the example (1) puutobu ordered Tolea to establish a traditional ceremony immediately by saying "Keep attention, please! So we can start this ceremony quickly." The spoken commands were raised because of the strong motivation to immediately carry out the ceremony. The speakers treated the listener as people who should be subject to the speakers, namely the listener wanted to do something that caused it to emit (social costs, physical, psychological, etc.) and cause freedom was limited. The utterance

violated the tact maxim because it maximized profit for yourself and minimized the advantage for the other side.

*Inggomiu doki deela mesabea, Inggomiu lumasa deela meohai, hiapoka topoombi-ombi ato powuso-wusoi ato powele-wule ato poeri-eripi.*

**Wahai sahabat (oh my bestfriends), wahai famili (oh my family), marilah kita merokok-rokok (let's smoke!), atau kita makan sirih (or we eat a betel)**

Context: When the traditional procession was underway, *Tolea pabitara* from the woman's family invited *Tolea-pabitara* from the man's family to smoke before or invited to eat betel. Besides being attended by both of the *Tolea-pabitara*, there were also the government, religious leaders, and the entire family of the bride and groom.

In the example of (2) above, *pabitara* performed speech acts by telling *Inggomiu doki deela mesabea, Inggomiu lumasa deela meohai, hiapoka topoombi-Ombi* (oh my best friends, oh my family, let's smoke! or we eat a betel). The speech was meant to solicit or invite friends and relatives to smoke or chew betel nut. However, before the request or invitation, it was preceded by words of greeting "oh my best friends, oh my family."

The use of the greeting implied that the speaker wanted a more intimate and family atmosphere. An atmosphere like that would close the gap between the two sides. The use of the greeting has been softened and has a strong illocutionary power so that the listeners were greeted by friends and family as the third person. Thus, they would be happy with such a greeting.

### 3.2. Politeness Strategies in Questions of Speech Acts

*Kilaamesuko ine disi meparesa nepamarenda nodisi laa numai poluasi pamarenda*

**Kami bertanya ke kepala desa (we asked the village leader) bertanya di pemerintah (ask the government) karena kepala desa yang memiliki kewenangan ( because the village leader has authority)**

Context: in ongoing proposal traditional procession, *Tolea* asked the government whether the traditional procession could already begin. The relatives or participants who attended the procession were the government, *Tolea*, and the woman's and man's family.



In the example (3) above, Tolea asked the village leader to use politeness strategies in inquiring speech acts. Tolea said "*Kilaamesuko ine disi meparesa nepamarenda*" We asked the village leader, asked the government. If the speech was interpreted, it could be understood that Tolea was asked to the head of the village, because the village leader who has the authority and expansion.

Although the speech was not delivered in questions, Tolea needed the answer or blessing of the head of the village to begin the ceremony. Indirect speech acts were oriented to the listeners, namely the government, the strategy in asking and asking for permission. It can be seen in the next speech "*nodisi laa numai poluasi pamarenda*" or because the village leader has authority and expansion.

*Ku'onggoto bara mesuko mombependee nggo Inggomiu Tolea*  
**Kuakan bertanya (I will ask), meminta kejelasan (ask for obviously),  
 kepada Tuan Tolea (to Mr.Tolea)**

Context: Tolea from the bridegroom asked Tolea from the bride whether the procession could be resumed. The participants who attended in the procession were the government, Tolea from the bride and groom, and both families.

In the example (4) above, Tolea performed politeness strategies of inquiring speech acts by saying "*Ku'onggoto bara mesuko mombependee nggo inggomiu tolea*" I will ask and ask for obviously to Mr. Tolea. The speech can be interpreted that the speakers were asked clarity to the listeners, whether it has been granted permission to continue the ceremonies. This speech would have a high power of illocutionary. The listeners will certainly respond by providing answers regarding clarity of permission as desired by the speaker.

*le Inggomiu puutobu pu'usara Inggomiuto laa kumuukunggu'i osara bara, poi-  
 poindi'i atora*  
**Ya Tuan puutobu pu'usara (yes, Mr. puutobu pu'usara), Tuanlah yang  
 menggenggam adat katanya, menuntun aturan (you are who hold  
 the tradition and guide the rule)**

Context: At that time, *Tolea-pabitara* asked the government to use indirect speech. In the traditional procession it was attended by the

government, traditional leaders, religious leaders, and the invitation to participate in the traditional procession. In the example of data (5), Tolea asked puutobu as listener with indirect sentences by saying “*le Inggomiu puutobu pu'usara. Inggomiuto laa kumukuunggu'i osara, poi-poindi'i atora*” yes, Mr. Puutobu pu'usara. You are who hold the tradition and guide the rule.

The intention of Tolea that was expressed to *puutobu* in the speech that *puutobu* was the person who took decision and led the procession of tradition. Indirect speech was an attempt to refine the strategy and Tolea application to *puutobu*, so *puutobu* will do according to the Tolea desire. The speech acts will certainly have a very high per-locution effect. The types of speech acts contained in such interactions was a directive speech acts. In this interaction, the speaker tried to get the listener to do something to achieve the speakers' desire.

*nggo windahoto bara mesuko sara mombepe ndee keno kuuto anamotuo'o keno koato toono meohai bara*

**akan tuntaskan adat bertanya memperjelas (we will finish by asking obviously tradition), kalau sudah lengkap orang tua dan saudara.(if the family and siblings are complete), kalau lengkaplah bersaudara katanya (if only the siblings are complete)**

Context: At that time, the traditional proposal procession, Tolea-pabitara asked the entire family whether the elder people and relatives or closest relatives had attended all. If complete, the traditional procession will begin.

In the example (6) above, Tolea asked permission speech act that “*nggo windahoto bara mesuko sara mombepe ndee keno kuuto anamotuo'o keno koato toono meohai bara*” we will finish by asking obviously tradition, if the family and siblings are completed, if only the siblings are complete.

The intention of Tolea in the speech was asked whether parents and siblings of the family of the woman were already present and already complete. If there were already present all, then the tradition settlement has been allowed to begin.

The type of speech acts contained in such interactions was a directive speech acts. In this interaction, the speaker tried to realize that what he wanted could be achieved and the listener wanted to achieve that goal. This speech act has the suitability of the world to say, the world adjusted to the uttered word. In this directive speech acts, there were obligations of listener to do.

### 3.3. Politeness Strategies in Permissive Speech Acts

*Ma ku laa masima ronga meparamesi ato ari-aringee leesu tinamoako sara mbondongo obite.*

***Saya minta permisi, (excuse me!), kita hentikan dulu adat peminangan. (we need to stop the proposal first)***

Context: Both sides of the family had just ended the ceremonies in making a proposal and there was an agreement between the two parties. The next topic of discussion was to calculate and determine spending money that becomes an obligation and must be borne by the family of bridegroom.

In the example (7) above, *pabitara* performed speech acts and said “*Ma ku laa masima ronga meparamesi ato ari-aringee leesu tinamoako sara mbondongo obite.*” excuse me,

we need to stop the proposal first. The speech act was intended to ask for permission and the customary pause in making a wedding proposal. The speech can be interpreted that the speaker asked for permission to temporarily stop first the proposal and will be followed by another topic, namely talking about spending money that should be borne by the bridegroom.

In this example Tolea requested permission to use indirect speech strategy that were oriented to the listeners. The speech acts performed by Tolea requested permission to *pabitara* mentioned above have to meet the principles of politeness because it has been minimizing the praise for yourself and maximizing the praise for the listeners.

### 4. Conclusion

Based on the discussion, we can conclude that:

- a. The politeness strategy of speech acts used by Tolea-*pabitara*, both Tolea-*pabitara* from bridegroom family and Tolea *pabitara* from bride family in a traditional wedding ceremony of Tolaki-Mekongga ethnic group in Southeast Sulawesi, has been truly done. This is done so that all participants in a traditional wedding ceremony were treated with friendliness and politeness.
- b. The type of directive speech acts of politeness strategies used in traditional wedding ceremony of Tolaki-Mekongga ethnic consist of

(1) Strategy politeness of requestive speech acts (2) politeness strategies of questions of speech acts (3) Politeness strategies of permissive speech acts.

### List of References

- Bach, Kent dan Robert M. Harnish. *Linguistics, Communication and Speech Acts*. Cambridge: MIT Press, (1979).
- Eelen, Gino. (2001) *A Critique Politeness Theories*. Menchester, UK: St, Jarome Publishing.
- Gunarwan, Asim. (2004) *Dari Pragmatik ke Pengajaran Bahasa (Makalah seminar bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia dan Daerah)*. IKIP Singaraja.
- Gunarwan, Asim. (2007) *Pragmatik: Teori dan Kajian Nusantara*, Universitas Atma Jaya: Jakarta
- Lavandera, Beatriz R. "The Social Pragmatics of Politeness Forms." *Sociolinguistics*, ed Ammon *et al.* Berlin: de Gruyter, (1988), (pp. 1196).
- Leech, Geoffrey. *Prinsip-prinsip Pragmatik*, terjemahan M.D.D. Oka. Jakarta: Universitas Indonesia, (1983).
- Searle, John R. *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (1969).