

## **Politeness Maxim In the film " Laskar Pelangi"**

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### ***Abstract***

Sentential implicature is something meant or implied that is proposed to avoid impoliteness in making harmonious conversation. For the sake of politeness it was postulated cooperative politeness and maxims; *tact maxim*, *approbation maxim*, *generosity maxim*, *modesty maxim*, *agreement maxim* and *sympathy maxim*. The measurement of politeness or impoliteness is also determined by the four factors; power, range, distance and familiarity. In "Laskar Pelangi" the movie, it was found some maxims with Indonesian cultural background for its politeness. Politeness was shown by addressing someone just by name or by saying "Mr." and "Mrs", according to the power and relationship, minimizing dispraise of others, and mentioning something or someone indirectly.

**Key words:** *Implicature, maxim, politeness*

### **Introduction**

In making conversation runs well sometimes it needs strategy and skills. It is often found some conversations get stuck because of losing connection between speaker and hearer. For these, some people raise strategy called sentential implicature. Implicature has been invoked for a variety of purposes, from defending controversial semantic claims in philosophy to explain lexical gaps in linguistics. An implicature is something meant, implied, or suggested distinct from what is said (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/implicature/>). The speaker doesn't have to say what he intends to do or means directly to avoid impoliteness or misinterpretation. A Sentential implicature is used as a bridge for linguistic gaps for making harmonious conversation.

The concept of politeness may be different in one place to others. It may be influenced by the culture. In the film of "Laskar Pelangi", directed by Andrea Hirata, it was told how the people in the

film use maxims in the terms of politeness. The film itself used Indonesian culture as a background. There are many ways in showing politeness; by greeting, addressing others not by name and etc.

Film "Laskar Pelangi" has interested many viewers from any places and social status. As a thrillers film it has taken sympathy and big impression from its viewers. In this film, it was told how ironic the life in Belitong, one of Indonesian richest islands. The island with abandon of tin, but the people lived in poverty. To pay the school fee they didn't have capacity that they had to keep a very poor school with strong religious principle. The school was nearly collapsed, but there was no ability to reconstruct the building. With merely the struggle and fighting of three teachers, Muslimah, Mr. Harfan and Bakri, the school kept its existence. In describing how the living and daily life, it was used maxims and Sentential implicature in making the fluency of the utterances. Sentential implicature with politeness principle can be used to minimize the belief of impolite expression and maximize the belief of polite expression. In term of politeness someone may lose the face.

In this paper, I'd like to reveal the use of politeness maxims in film "Laskar Pelangi". Here, I'd like to show how politeness maxims in Indonesian cultural background in the aim of showing people's respect to others. "Laskar Pelangi" will give a few description of the part of Indonesian people's way of life.

### ***The Concept of politeness***

The Politeness or impoliteness of our utterances is not only influenced by the word choice, but also by the appropriateness use of language. The dimension on which act of communication may be located are no less complex than those relevant to the social location of the speaker. Halliday (1978:33) in Hammond et al (1992: 2) distinguishes three general types of dimension: field (the purpose and subject-matter of communication), mode (the means by which communication takes place; by speech or writing) and tenor (the relations between participants). The three dimensions are called register.

Hymes (1972) proposed thirteen separate variables determine the linguistic items selected by the speaker that provide a framework within which any relevant dimensions of similarity and difference may be located. One of the dimensions is the relations between the speaker and addressee. It involves the dimension that is called power. Power is the relationship between speaker and addressee whether the addressee is subordinate, equal or superior to the speaker.

In the term of politeness it is also involved four components; they are power, range, distance and familiarity. Power distinguishes relatively intimate relations from more distant with the addressee by means of the choice of terms of addressee, e. g. Saying “Mr.” ..., “sir”, “mate” and etc. Meanwhile, familiarity is a habit in a particular culture, for example in Indonesia it is common to greet someone by “Where are you going?”, but it is not common in English.

### ***Politeness in terms of principle and maxims***

Grice (1913–1988) was the first in systematically studying cases in which what a speaker means differs from what the sentence used by the speaker means. Grice introduced the technical terms *implicature* and *implicature* for the case in which what the speaker meant, implied, or suggested is distinct from what the speaker said. The conversational implicature is a message that is not found in the plain sense of the sentence. The speaker implies it. The hearer is able to infer (work out, read between the lines) this message in the utterance, by appealing to the rules governing successful conversational interaction.

The success of a conversation depends upon the various speakers' approach to the interaction. The way in which people try to make conversations work is sometimes called the cooperative principle. Grice postulated a general “Cooperative Principle,” and four “maxims” specifying how to be cooperative (Levinson and Brown, 1987:61). The maxims are: (1) Maxim of Quality: *Make your contribution true; so do not convey what you believe false or unjustified;* (2). Maxim of Quantity: *Be as informative as required;* (3) Maxim of Relation: *Be relevant;* (4) Maxim of Manner: *Be perspicuous; so avoid obscurity and ambiguity, and strive for brevity and order.* (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/implicature/>)

## **Research methodology**

### ***Subject of study***

The subject of the study is text or script of film “Laskar Pelangi”. The film tells us the life of Belitong people in 1974. Belitong is one of Indonesian richest islands. There was abundant of tin in it. Ironically, many people lived in poverty. They became a coolie. There, there was a school that merely collapsed for the poor. The teachers; Mr. Harfan, Muslimah and Bakri struggled with the ten-God-

sent students to keep the school existed. In this text, I'd like to focus the study in finding politeness maxims used in the utterances.

### ***Data collection***

Since it is a kind of discourse study, the data were collected by watching the film and reading the script thoroughly, and then finding the linguistics features studied, in this case politeness maxims. Discourse analysis would seek to uncover, through ideology critique, the repressive forces which systematically distort communication (Habermas, 1984 quoted by Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007: 389).

Discourse analysis requires a careful reading and interpretation of textual material, with interpretation being supported by the linguistics evidence (Coyle, 1995 as quoted by Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007: 390).

### ***Data analysis***

The data were analyzed for its meaning and inference; in this case was the use of politeness maxims. Discourse analysis is lack of systematicity for its emphasis on the linguistics construction of social reality "A discourse that in turn can be analyzed for its meaning and inferences, rendering the need for reflexivity to be high" (Ashmore, 1989 in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007: 391)

In analyzing the data it is also used the component of politeness; they are power, range, distance and familiarity between the speaker and the addressee. What the relations they are and whether the utterances chosen polite or not based on the components.

## **Discussion**

### ***Tact maxim in the text***

The function tact maxim is to minimize the expression of belief which imply cost to other; maximize the expression of beliefs which imply benefit to other. In the film it was found in (1).

(1) Rek : Take off your shirt! I'll make you a man ladies will pine for. Hey, this is a deadly secret! Quick take off your shirt.

Ikal : Ough, it hurts, Rek. Enough, Rek! You're crazy.

Rek : Not, yet. *Hold it a little more.*

Rek and Ikal are schoolmates. It's polite to say with this way. *A little more* will give positive opinion than about 15 minutes or an hour or others.

(2) Muslimah : Hi, Mrs. Hamidah.....

Mrs. Hamidah : How is my dress, Mus? You said it'd be done this Saturday.

Muslimah : *Sorry, a little bit more. I need to do the buttons.*

Mrs. Hamidah is Muslimah's neighbour. She is older than Muslimah and to show her respect Muslimah calls her by saying "Mrs" and did not just by calling the name. Vice versa, Mrs. Hamidah just calls Muslimah by name because she is older than Muslimah.

The use of *a little bit more* is to show that her job merely done. But to minimize the negative opinion about the job the use of this utterance was conveyed.

(3) Zul : I'm concerned about you, Fan. You have struggled to keep this school running for 5 years now. *I can only help a bit.*

Mr. Harfan : You have helped more than that, Zul. Don't worry, Bakri, Muslimah and I can still do it with the 10-God-sent students.

Zul and Mr. Harfan are close friends; even Zul is in higher position than Mr. Harfan. However, they are friends, so it is okay just to call him by name.

The use of *I can only help a bit* is to show the humbleness of Zul. He does not want to show his arrogance by saying the reality.

### ***Generosity maxim in the text***

Generosity maxim is to minimize the expression of benefit to self; maximize the expression of cost to self.

- (4) Mr. Harfan : Hei, children. Who wants to hear the story of prophet Nuh...making the biggest manmade ark ever?
- Muslimah : *Kuca, being a leader is a noble duty.*
- Sahara : Hey, Kucai, the Qur'an reminds us a leader will be accountable for his actions in the hereafter.

Kuca is Muslimah's student. She calls him just by the name and it is polite in Indonesian. To make her student proud of himself for his duty, she encourages him.

- (5) Muslimah : This is our Math class. Get your palm leaf ribs out. That's enough A Kong. Get back to your seat. I'll read a math problem.  $(12+4-5)$  equals..... go on.
- Lintang : -80
- Muslimah : *Very good, Coast boy. Correct.*

To show her respect to her diligent student she calls him as "Coastal Boy" that make him proud of himself.

- (6) Sahara : Harun, so you have 3 kittens with 3 color patterns all born on the 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- Harun : Yes, 1, 2, 3.....
- Sahara : *You're good at math now, Harun*

Sahara and Harun are friends. To show that Sahara is very proud of Harun she compliments him by saying "you're good in math" even though it is just a little progress for him.

### ***Modesty maxim in the text***

Modesty maxim is to minimize the expression of praise of self; maximize the expression of dispraise of self.

- (7) Muslimah : 9 or 10 students what the difference? We can still teach them, Sir.

Mr. Harfan : Yes, but you know what this is. *I'm so thankful to Allah Almighty because all of you have come here to save the oldest Islamic Elementary Education in Belitong.* A school is where moral lessons are taught to produce upright citizens. However, if eventually this school can't get 10 students, we can't open a new class. Let's all accept this whole-heartedly.

Mr. Harfan shows the respect to the audience that their coming is to save the school. So it gives benefit to the school and he thanks to the audience.

### ***Approbation maxim in the text***

Approbation maxim is to minimize the expression of beliefs which express dispraise of other; maximize the expression of beliefs which express approval of other.

(8) Kucai : Your shoes are pretty, Kal.

Ikal : *Dad, this one smells of sunburn*

He doesn't mention the name of the students, just saying that someone smells of sunburn.

(9) Ikal's father : I'm going now. Come, Kal.

Ikal's mother : Give my best regard to Mr. Harfan.

Father's friend : Where are you going? *You are going to put him in that collapsing school? That school's roof is falling apart.*

Ikal's father would not feel guilty with this utterance because his friends didn't mention the name of the school directly as a very poor school that merely falls down. It is to minimize the expression of making others guilty.

(10) Lintang : *Your big ears will grow as big as an elephants, Har.*

Ikal : What's playing on your radio, Har?

Mahar : What's playing, boy? There is plenty of powerful music here, boy. Now, listen to this. This is called jazz, Kal. Smart people's music.

Lintang and Mahar are friends. They usually make a joke and it is common to say that. But if Lintang criticizes him for his habit, he may get angry. But by his utterance, it will prevent of being upset.

### **Agreement maxim in the text**

Agreement maxim is to minimize the expression of disagreement between self and other; maximize the expression of agreement between self and other.

- (11) Muslimah : Excuse me. My diligent students are waiting
- Bakri : I'm going home, Uncle. Ass....
- Mr. Harfan : *There is nothing we can do about it, Mus.* The South Sumatra School Supervisors Letter clearly states our kids must take next week general exams at PN Elementary. Mus, you shouldn't feel obligated just because your Dad is in the photo with me. Your salary and Bakri have been delayed 2 months.

From the relations, Muslimah is Mr. Harfan's niece. So he is higher and older from Muslimah. According to Indonesian culture it is impolite to call the older one just by the name. To show the respect it is used the saying of "Mr." and vice versa the older may call the younger just by the name. To show disagreement of something not by saying "I disagree or I don't agree" but just showing the action that can't be done.

- (12) Father's friend: Where are you going? You are going to put him in that collapsing school? That school's roof is falling apart.

Father's friend : *What's school for? Hell end up being a coolie anyway!*

Ikal's father and his friends are equal. There is no certain word choice better than this. To show their disagreement they not saying "I disagree to ask the children going school", but asking what the school for. Because they know what the end of the school for the poor children. However, they don't want to hurt their friend.

### **Sympathy maxim in the text**

Sympathy maxim is to minimize antipathy between self and other; maximize sympathy between self and other.

- (13) Muslimah : What's your name, son?  
 Lintang : Lintang from Tanjung Kelumpang, Mam. I want to go to school.  
 Muslimah : *Dear God. You rode a bike this far? By yourself?*  
 Lintang : My father has to go out to sea. He can't come.

Muslimah is the teacher and Lintang is the student. Muslimah may calls Lintang by his nickname, but not vice versa. To show sympathy is not just by say it directly. For it she asks a rhetoric question for the children that has rode for the long distance just for going to school.

- (14) Zul : *I'm concerned about you, Fan. You have struggled to keep this school running for 5 years now. I can only help a bit.*  
 Mr. Harfan : You have helped more than that, Zul. Don't worry, Bakri, Muslimah and I can still do it with the 10-God-sent students.

Zul and Mr. Harfan are good friends. To show his sympathy he said directly. It's polite to show it to friend.

- (15) Ikal's father : Yes, I got half the day off.  
 Ikal's mother : *I hope they get 10 students. I want Ikal to learn about Islam from Mr. Harfan*  
 Ikal's brother : Just wear them, Kal. You'll look lovely. Ikal'

Ikal's mother and Mr. Harfan don't know each other. Ikal's mother knows him just from people said, so she calls Mr. Harfan by Mr. to shows her respect to him.

She shows her impression and sympathy to the teacher by asking her child to learn religion from him. She expects that Mr. Harfan can be the best teacher for her child.

- (16) Muslimah : How are you Mr. Mahmud?

- Mr. Mahmud : *I'm fine. It's you I'm concerned about.* Why did you turn down the job offer from PN Timah, Mus? What did you expect from that collapsing school? Kids who have no future? The offer is still available. I can talk to.....
- Muslimah : Excuse me. My diligent students are waiting.

Mr. Mahmud and Muslimah are friends. However, Mr. Mahmud is higher in social status that Muslimah must call him by saying "Mr.", while Mr. Mahmud just calls her by the name. He shows his sympathy directly.

### Conclusion

Sentential implicature and maxims are used in the conversation for the sake of politeness, avoid impoliteness and maximize praise of others. It can be used as a bridge of linguistics gaps in order to get harmonious conversation.

Film is just a description of some parts of people's life. However, this film has successfully describing a few portrayals about life of people in Belitong. There are so many ways in showing politeness to others. Politeness Maxims are used to minimize unwanted effect of utterances and make the utterances smooth. It also gives benefit to others. Belitong people may use different ways from other places in showing politeness. Some of these reflect Indonesian culture how to respect the old ones with regarding power, range, distance and familiarity.

After reading the paper it is hoped that the community are able to use politeness maxim for the sake of minimizing misunderstanding and getting stuck in conversation.

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