Rituals of Politeness in Bugis Society

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1. Introduction

Research on politeness has been conducted in many different countries. In Western countries, studies on politeness have been pioneered (Lakoff 2005; Brown and Levinson 1987, 1979, 1980; Austin 1962; Blum-Kulka 1992). In non-Western countries, politeness has also been investigated as important linguistic aspect (Zhan 1992), Thailand (Kummer 1992), and Japan (Pizziconi 2003). In Indonesia, the study of politeness was pioneered by Geertz (1960), who refers to politeness as 'etiquette' in Javanese society. Other studies on speech styles in languages such as Indonesian (Wouk 1998, 2001, 2006), Javanese (Geertz 1960, Kartomiharjo 1981, Errington 1985, 1986, 1988, 1998, Berman 1998) and Sasak in West Timor (Mahyuni 2003), have also discussed politeness as one aspect of speech styles.

This paper discusses politeness as practiced in Bugis community, South Sulawesi. The Bugis, one of the largest ethnic groups in Eastern Indonesia, have a rich cultural, religious, and social system. Their cultural norms as reflected in the concepts of *pangngaderreng* (a system of conduct)*, siri' na pessé* (shame and compassion)*,* and the symbolism of *sarung sutra* (silk sarong) are the main principles in Bugis society (Mahmud 2008). The Bugis are also known to have a strong adherence to Islamic belief. Other important facets of the Bugis social system such as social status, age, and gender differences contribute to the strong and unique characteristics of Bugis society. These Bugis life had been captured by intensive studies by both Indonesian and foreign scholars (Millar 1989, Brawn 1993, Pelras 1996, Idrus 2003).

In this paper, I explore how the Bugis people who are rich with their traditional, religious, and social system apply their politeness practices through the use of speech acts such as greetings, thanks, apology, and invitation. A speech act,

according to Austin (1962:109), implies that someone saying something is normally also doing something. In that way, people may perform less or more polite interactions. In relation to politeness, some types of speech acts may lead to face threatening acts, such as giving instructions/making requests, agreeing/disagreeing, and asking and answering questions. However, other types of speech acts can be used to express politeness: greetings, apology, thanks, and invitations as a media for being polite. According to Holmes (1995:8), speech acts like greetings, compliments, apologies can function to encode politeness.

2. Methods

The data taken for this paper is partly taken from my Ph. D thesis. It was based on the fieldwork that I conducted for one year in 2005 in two different Bugis communities, one is in rural area, Awangpone, Kabupaten Bone, and another is in urban area, Parepare.

To collect data, I employ an ethnography of communication using some strategies such as participant observation, informal interview, and recording conversations. I interviewed and observed the local people to understand their concepts of politeness. I also recorded a variety of conversations between men and women using tape recorders. Conversations were recorded in three contexts: single-sex settings (male and male or female and female) and mixed-sex settings (female and male) in a variety of both in formal (offices and schools) and informal settings (family and neighbourhood). Aspects like age and social status were examined in both similar and different age groups. Participants were housewives, graduate students, officials, teachers ranging from 15 to 50 years old.

3. Findings and Discussion

In Bugis society, people exploit the usage of some speech acts to express their politeness. They are greetings, thanks, invitation, and apology.

3.1 Greetings

The first important speech act for expressing politeness in Bugis culture is by greeting. When Bugis people meet, they are expected to greet each other to show that they are not arrogant. To be polite is to recognize the presence of others by greeting

them whenever and wherever one meets them. As stated by Bonvillain(1993:104), 'greetings function to begin communicative interactions or to acknowledge the presence of others.

For Bugis, greeting exchanges are mostly initiated by younger people to older ones or lower status people to high status ones. The greeting is often accompanied by handshaking and nodding. Greetings can be expressed in several ways. One of them is by using the Islamic greeting *Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh* 'peace be upon you'. This reflects Islamic teaching. They can also use Indonesian greetings, such as *selamat pagi* 'good morning', *selamat siang* or *selamat sore* 'good afternoon', and *selamat malam* 'good evening'. These greetings are commonly used in very formal situations. For people who already know each other, however, they can greet each other by asking *mau ke mana?* 'where are you going?' or *dari mana?* 'where have you been?' depending on circumstances. Examples can be seen in the following extracts:

Extract 1: A meeting with a school headmaster[1]

Pak Sahar (S, 47)[2], the school principal, conducted a meeting about the *UAS* [*Ujian Akhir Sekolah*—Final School Exam][3]. One of the participants, Pak Kamil (K, 43) wanted to give comments about the topic of the meeting.

K: *Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.* Sehubungan dengan ujian kelas tiga, saya belum paham betul tentang masukan yang dipergunakan, apakah itu minimal.. jadi.. atau kita ikut dimana, dan kapan naskah kita ambil untuk UAS

'peace be upon you all. In relation to the class three test, I do not really understand about the input to be used, whether that is minimal..or which one to use?, and when our draft is taken for the *UAS*?'

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[1] In conversation extracts, I use different fonts for each language. *Times New Roman* is generally used for Bugis. For Indonesian or Bugis-Indonesian, I used Comic Sans MS, whereas for foreign languages such as Arabic or a term that is adopted from foreign words I used Arial font.
[2] I use initials for names of speakers mentioned for the first time followed by the age, such Puang Aji Madi (PAM, 50) or Ibu Wahyuni (W, 36).
[3] Abbreviation is written with Italics giving in parenthesis containing what the abbreviation stands for and its meaning in English.

S: *jadi terima kasih, itu langkahnya sama dengan tahun lalu...*

'so, thanks. The steps are just the same as those last year...

As this was a very formal meeting between the school principal and his colleagues, the conversation tended to be very formal. The speaker used the greeting *Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh* 'peace be upon you all' to begin his question. This is a common greeting used by speakers in the beginning of their comments or questions.

Extract 2: A comment during a meeting

In a meeting, Pak Yasin (Y, 50) who was *Pak Penilik* 'inspector' was going to give comments on the explanation given by *Bapak Kepala Dinas,* or the head of *CDK* office.

Y: *Bismillahirrahmanirahim. Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh. Bapak Kepala Dinas yang saya hormati. Bapak Pengawas Penilik yang saya hormati. Bapak Ibu Kepala Sekolah yang saya hormati,* yaé..*setelah kita mendengar daripada ulasan dari Bapak Kepala Dinas..sedikit ingin saya tambah Pak! Sedikit ingin saya tambah, sedikit saya perjelas...*

'In the name of God. Peace be upon you all. Respected Head of Education Department Branch, respected school supervisors and inspectors, *Bapak Ibu,* respected school principals. This one, after hearing the explanation from the Head of Education Department Branch, I would like to add a little bit, *Pak*. I would like to add a little more and clarify'

Pak Penilik was being extremely formal in his greetings. First he uttered *Bismillahirrahmanirrahim* followed by his Islamic greeting *Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh*. He then greeted all the important persons who were present at the time such as *Bapak Kepala Dinas yang saya hormati* 'respected Head of Education Department Branch', *Bapak Pengawas Penilik yang saya hormati* 'respected school supervisors and inspectors', *Bapak Ibu kepala sekolah yang saya*

hormati '*Bapak Ibu,* respected school principals.' This indicates how choice of greetings is affected by level of formality.

Therefore, besides acknowledging the presence of other people, greetings may have a ritual function to establish rapport before moving to the main topic. Also they can become a way of softening subsequent comments or questions.

3.2.   Thanks

Another speech act used by Bugis people to express their politeness is thanks/ gratitude. Interestingly, there are no Bugis words or expressions that literally mean thanks. Bugis speakers often use *tarima kasi',* derived from the Indonesian word *terimah kasih* 'receive love'. Often this expression is followed by the politeness marker *di'* to make it even more polite, such as *tarima kasi' di'*. In Indonesian, this expression may be shortened to *makasi'*.

Saying thanks is commonly expressed when receiving goods or services. Passengers giving money to the driver will say thanks and vice versa. In a very formal meeting, when there is a formal speech, the speaker or the audience who want to ask and answer questions or to give comments often express their thanks. This can be seen in extract 1 above, when the headmaster, Pak Sahar, said thanks before answering the question from the audience. That is a way of being formal. It is also more polite to say thanks to those asking questions, even though the questions may sometimes be very critical or sarcastic. Other examples are in the following extracts:

Extract 3: A meeting in a Village Office

This is a meeting conducted in an office in Awangpone about the choice of the new village head. The chair, Pak Sanusi (S, 59), informed the audience that the *Ibu Desa* 'the wife of the village head' or the head of *PKK* [*Pendidikan Kesejahteraan Keluarga*—Family Welfare Movement] in the village, was one of the candidates for the position. He asked for support from the audience. At the time, the current village head, Pak Abdullah (A, 42) was present.

S: *sekarang ada input bahwa untuk pimpinan desa yang diinginkan wanita, Ibu Kepala Desa atau dengan istilah di sini ketua tim penggerak PKK desa. Bagaimana? éé setuju untuk calongkangngi ro?*

'we have now had some input that since it is hoped that the village head will be female. [We have] the wife of the village head, or in local terms the head of *PKK* in the village. What do you think? umm..[do you all] agree to nominate [her]'

A: *ka dénré* **pertanyaan***ma Pak Alimuddin kuro*

       'Pak Alimuddin wants to ask a question [he has raised his hand]'

S: *ada? Siapa tahu..*

       'is there? who knows?'

Al: <u>*terima kasih*</u> *atas kesempatan yang diberikan kepada kami...*

       'Thanks for the chance given to us [me]...

Pak Alimuddin (Al, 45) was going to ask a question or give a comment. After the village head, Pak Abdullah (A, 42), gave him a chance, he said *terima kasih* 'thanks' before beginning his question. Like extract 1 above, the use of thanks in this extract also functions as ritual, which is commonly done in a meeting to establish rapport in the interaction. In addition, it can function to soften any possible offence caused by the comment, hence protecting the face of the interlocutors. Compare this with extract 4 below:

Extract 4: A visit in a school

Two headmasters were talking: Pak Haris (H, 54) and Ibu Nurmi (N, 40). Pak Haris was visiting the location of Bacukiki, a subdistrict in Parepare, which is near Ibu Nurmi's school. After getting a lot of information about that, Pak Haris left. Before that, he said thanks to Ibu Nurmi.

H: (talking about the previous school principal) *oh, Pak Yunus dulu di sini di'*?

       'oh, *Pak Yunus* was here before [as a school principal], wasn't he?'

N: *iyé'*

       'yes'

H: *Pak Yunus*

       '*Pak Yunus*'

N: *dia pindah di delapan tiga*

       'he had moved to *SD* [*Sekolah Dasar*—Elementary School] 83'

H: *Delapan Tiga sekarang pensiun*

       '[SD 83] now pensioned'

N: *kan sudah perampingan dulu empat tahun baru Wa' Jare' yang usulkan kembali lagi…*

       'there were school closures four years ago, weren't there? It was *Wa Jare'* [an important figure in the location] who just suggested opening it again'

H: *éh, terima kasih banyak Bu*

       '[okay] thanks a lot, *Bu'*

N: *iyé'*

       'yes'

This extract above shows another use of thanks in Bugis society. Unlike the use of thanks in extract 1 and 3 above, the thanks expressed by Pak Haris in this extract is not merely a way to be formal and polite. Indeed, Pak Haris said *terima kasih* 'thanks' followed by *banyak* 'a lot' showing that he was really thankful for Ibu Nurmi's help.

3.3.   Invitations

Besides using greetings and thanks, Bugis people also use invitation as their ritual for expressing politeness. Al-Khatib (2006:272) defined invitations as 'a communicative act addressed to the invitee's face needs and intended to enhance and strengthen good and healthy relations between the inviter and the invitee'. In practice, people inviting can have real function or *genuine invitation* in one hand and in the other hand, *ostensible invitation*, which is not real (Salmani-Nodoushan, 2006:906).

Invitations in Bugis are known as *mappisseng, mappada',* or *mangngobbi'*. There are two main types of invitation: by *undangan* 'a formal written invitation using a letter' and oral invitations. Written invitations are thought to be more real by some members of Bugis society and are mostly used for very formal occasions such as a wedding party. An oral invitation is quite informal and may be given by delegating some people to go to other houses to invite the residents to a particular party.

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Influenced by Islamic teachings, Bugis people value invitations as a way to maintain solidarity. Therefore, it is recommended that they give and accept invitations to other people, especially close neighbours and relatives. Often people who cannot come to the event or the party will still try to return their *passolo'* 'money or gift for invitations'.

Extract 5: Invitation to a party at home

Minah (S, 30) was inviting Suri (S, 30) to come to a *Maulid* 'celebration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad *SAW* in her house. Both of them are teachers at junior high school. Besides that they are close friends. Being busy as well as having another *Maulid* party at the same time, Suri rejected the invitation.

S: *tetté' siaga? Masalana pa' mammaulu' tokka' matu' Juma'na. Pakkuihé to. Pakkuihé. Yakko polé maniakka..'*

'what time? The problem is I also have *Maulid* on Friday. It is like this. Like this. If I am on the way south..'

M: *éé..lok..essona éé. Ko kani Idaku' to. Kakkai Idaku, éé kokkai Idaku, éé jajini, apa' ko dé'gaga éé..*

'on that day..If my Ida [my aunt Ida] has arrived, it can be done. If she has not arrived yet, [then no].

S: *éé agato?..Agana wisseng? Lo'ka' lokka sikolaé di awa*

'what..?How would I know? I want to go to school there'

M: *lokkaka' di bolata' ku arawéngngi*

'If it is in the afternoon, I can come to your house [to pick you up]'

The above extract shows how Minah wanted Suri to come to her home to celebrate the Maulid party. She suggested some ways: *lokkaka' di bolata' ku arawéngngi* 'I go to our [i. e your] house in the afternoon'. The above example clearly shows someone offering an invitation because they would really like the invitee to attend. Often, though, people make invitations which they don't expect people to respond to in any meaningful way. Compare the above with extract 6 below:

Extract 6: Invitations before leaving

The female speaker Bunga (B, 45) was inviting everyone to come to her house. At the time, she was visiting the house of Pak Mahmuddin, her relative, during the celebration of Maulid.

B: *(inviting me) <u>lo diattangmuki' mai jokka-jokka.</u>*

      'we [i.e. you] can go to the south [my house] to drop in'

R: *iyé'*

      'yes'

B: *(inviting all of the people in the house) <u>lo diattangmanekki' mai</u>*

      'come all of you to the south [my house]'

All: *iyé'*

      'yes'

The above extract is the last part of the conversation when Bunga was going to leave. First she asked me to come with her to her house and later she invited everyone there. These could have either been real invitations or *basa-basi* 'small talk' because it is not polite to leave a house after visiting without saying something. This is an example of an 'ostensible invitation' (Salmani-Nodoushan, 2006:906) as discussed in the previous part.

3.4   Apology

Another ritual for politeness in Bugis culture is by expressing apology, which is 'a conventional form for showing appreciation to someone for accepting an imposition or in reciprocating an FRA (Face Respecting Act)' (Geis, 1995:109). This type of speech act, unlike greetings, is considered a negative politeness device which aims mostly to express respect rather than friendliness, solidarity, or intimacy. Holmes (1995:154) notes that an apology is a polite speech act used to restore social relations following an offence. As noted by Wouk (2006:1457), 'if a speaker fails to make an apology when an infraction has occurred, this threatens the recipient's face'.

Bugis people recognise the term *méllau dampeng* 'asking to be forgiven' or mappatabé', which can be expressed in both verbal and non-verbal ways. In Bugis society, apologies can be made in many ways such as by saying *tabé'* 'excuse me', *tabé' mena* 'excuse me anyway', or by using the Indonesian term, mohon maaf 'I am

sorry'. If someone passes in front of other people or when someone touches other people accidentally, he/she should say *tabé'* for an apology. People can say *tabé'* while touching the addressee's by hands firmly. By saying *tabé'*, the person touched will understand that the speaker did not mean to do it, and will accept the apology. This can also be said while bowing or nodding.

This act of apologizing also has a ritual function. Speakers who apologize may not necessarily do or regret their mistakes. It is just a way to be formal in order to maintain rapport among speakers. Such ritual apologies are commonly made in formal meetings, especially at the beginning or during last part of the meeting. One of the examples is when people are late for the meeting. Bugis people, like most Indonesians, are commonly known to have *jam karet* 'rubber timer', which indicates that the hours in Indonesian time can be as elastic as rubber and punctuality is optional (Torchia, 2007:242). At the end of the meeting, people apologize for any mistakes made during the meeting, whether *disengaja atau tidak* 'intentionally or not'. Quinn (2001:864) also notes that 'at the close of a public speech, it is very common for the speaker to apologize for shortcomings in the speech or for possible offence that might have been given, even if unwittingly'. If this is delivered in Bugis, the speaker usually says *tabé' ta'dampengekka' koka sala* 'please forgive if I did something wrong'. Compare the two extracts below:

Extract 7: Apologizing for not coming to a party

Ibu Cia (42) was talking to Pak Adi (29) in a school. Both of them are teachers in the same school. Ibu Cia was apologizing to Pak Adi for the fact that she could not come to Pak Adi's younger sister's wedding party.

C: *saya mohon maaf, tidak bisa hadir*

       'I do apologize, I could not come'

A: *wah, ndak apa-apa*

       'wah, it is okay'

C: *karena ada satu hal yang paling mendesak*

       'because there was something very urgent'

A: *iya*

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'yes'

C: *terpaksa saya titipkan saja sama teman-teman*

'I had to ask [our] friends to drop off [the envelope containing money]'

Ibu Cia used a formal way in her apology, *saya mohon maaf, tidak bisa hadir* 'I do apologize, [I]could not come' followed by explaining her reasons: *karena ada satu hal yang paling mendesak* 'because there was something very urgent' and *terpaksa saya titipkan saja sama teman-teman* 'I had to ask [our] friends to return [my envelope]'. This extract shows a real apology.

Extract 8: A meeting in an office

This meeting was conducted in Awangpone. Pak Taufik (T, 52), who wanted to make a comment during the meeting, apologized first before beginning his comment or question.

T: *Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh*!

'peace be upon you'

All: *Waalaikumussalam*!

'peace be upon you too'

T: *saya mohon maaf karena saya ini..sehubungan tadi apa yang diumumkan oleh rekan-rekan...*

'I do apologize because I am..in relation to what has been announced just now by my colleagues...

Pak Taufik said *saya mohon maaf* 'I do apologize'. Unlike the type of apology in extract 7, which is a real apology, the apology in this extract, like greetings and thanks, functions as a ritual in a meeting to establish rapport. In addition, it can also function as *basa-basi* 'small talk' in order to be polite before giving a comment. He had not actually made mistakes, but he apologized as a part of the ritual in such a formal meeting which can also soften his following comments.

The above extracts show how Bugis people exploit the use of speech acts as media for expressing politeness. As observed, speakers especially in the meetings, greet, thank, and apologize at the beginning of their speech, comments, or questions.

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In this way, these speech acts are not performing their real functions; rather they serve as rituals to smooth social relations. In this way, they soften interactions.

These speech acts may also function as *basa-basi* 'small talk'. Someone may greet people by saying *mau kemana*? 'where are you going?' without any real desire to know exactly where someone is going. A person may also invite others to come to his/her house but he/she may not really want people to come to his/her house. In this case, these speech acts only serve as *basa-basi* in order to be polite. In practice, these greetings often function as *basa-basi* 'small talk', which are polite rather than really asking for information. Geertz (1960:242) reports that the failure to offer a comparable greeting in Javanese can cause considerate offence.

This is in relation to what Schneider (1988:9) notes that small talk is intended to ease things along, i.e. to cover up embarrassment or to mitigate a face threat. Moreover, Schneider states that small talk defines interpersonal relationships as it can serve to establish contact, signalling an interest in the person addressed. (1988:11).

Malinowski, the British Anthropologist refers this use of language as phatic communion, that is, a type of speech in which the ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words (1949:315). Malinowski goes on to say that phatic communion serves to 'establish bonds of personal union between people brought together by the mere need of companionship and does not serve any purpose of communicating ideas' (1949:316).

4.   Conclusion

In this paper, I have explored the use of some speech acts in Bugis culture as the ways to express their politeness. Some speech acts, such as greetings, thanks, and apologies may have extended functions and can be used in different ways by Bugis speakers. They can be used as a ritual before and after speaking in a meeting, such as when giving comments, asking and answering questions, or disagreeing with other speakers. The use of an apology in a meeting, for example, is sometimes not a real apology, that is asking for forgiveness or expressing regret for mistakes. Other functions of these speech acts are as *basa-basi* 'small talk'. Another example is the use of an invitation, which is not real, to merely be formal and polite.

5.   References

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