

## **DIRECT SPEECH ACTS, FACE THREATENING TOWARDS THE ELDERLY AND POLITENESS IN THE SPEECHES OF INDONESIAN CAREWORKERS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper aims at examining the relationship between direct speech acts and face threatening towards the elderly and the politeness of the language used by the Indonesian careworkers in the nursing home for the elderly in Japan. This study of speech is a research object in pragmatics which is frequently examined beside other pragmatics phenomena, like implicatures and maxim flouting. The subjects of this study are 68 Indonesian careworkers who work in the elderly nursing homes in three regions, namely Yokohama, Toyohasi and Okayama, Japan. Those participants consist of 63 female and 5 male careworkers. Direct speech act is the type of speech act mostly used by the careworkers in their interaction with the elderly. From 285 conversation data collected, 260 of them contain direct speech acts. The data collection is conducted by recording the communication process between the two participants on daily basis for three months. The recording is done in a few locations (settings) to result in a comprehensive discussion. From the analysis it could be concluded that direct speech acts are frequently used by the Indonesian careworkers to ease the communication process, reduce the social distance between the two interactants, and promptly tell about the intentions of the speeches. The direct speech acts used include interrogative, declarative and imperative types. The functions are directive and representative. The direct speech acts used by the careworkers do not threaten the faces of the elderly, proven by the harmonious communication of both interactants.

**Keywords:** pragmatics, direct speech act, face-threatening, careworker, the elderly

### **I. Introduction**

This article is a part of the writer's dissertation which in whole studies about politeness in the language used by Indonesian careworkers towards the elderly in Japan. In this article, the area which will be analyzed is the direct speech acts of the Indonesian careworkers towards the elderly in Japan. Every speech act, be it direct or indirect can be regarded as face threatening action, that can be positive or negative. The results of preliminary studies conducted by the writer in April 2017 for three weeks at an elderly nursing home revealed a phenomenon which contradicted the politeness concept of Brown&Levinson (1978;1987). In universal concept of politeness, the more indirect, the more polite a speech is. On

the other hand, the more direct, the more impolite a speech is. However, the writer had observed that most of the Indonesian careworkers used direct speech acts in their interactions with the elderly. That phenomenon is the basis of this study, which aims at finding out in what situations those direct speech acts take place and the reasons of the careworkers in using them.

The speech data which are analyzed are 5 speech events with 5 different scenes; the times when the elderly had meal/drinks, laid down, washed hands, rinsed his/her mouth, and enjoyed leisure time in the living room. Those five speech events are chosen and used for data analysis based on the consideration that they fulfill the criteria of purposive sampling technique.

The analysis is carried out by identifying the types of the direct speech acts, which is done by seeing the types of the sentences (declarative, interrogative, and imperative that have the meanings of informing, asking and giving orders), the functions of the speech acts (declarative, interrogative, imperative, expressive, directive, commissive, and representative), the use of the speech levels in Japanese language, as well as the relationship between the use of the direct speech acts and face threatening towards the elderly.

Many studies regarding speech acts in general and specific and their relationship with politeness or face threatening of the elderly had been conducted previously. There is a study by Pizziconi (2004) which discusses about the relationship between the honorific language in Japanese and politeness. There is also as a study by Backhaus (2009) which analyzes choices on politeness strategies by the residents who work in the elderly nursing homes in Tokyo, Japan and Germany. Backhaus' study reveals that there are two strategies used by those residents, namely jokes and compliments. Rahayu (2013) in her dissertation discusses about the system and functions of speech levels in Japanese in the domain of offices. The implementation of the theories of Hymes and Kabaya also has significant relevance to this study as in the theory of Kabaya (2009), the social factors which influence the speeches of the careworkers are also analyzed. The study by Rahayu (2013) shows that the system and functions of speeches in Japanese language based on the markers of lexical, morphological, and syntactic forms are found in the domain of offices. It is also revealed that there is impact of the social factors on the implementation of the speech levels in Japanese language used. Those three studies give significant contribution as cross references for this present study. Culpeper (2017: 11-35) in his book "The Palgrave Handbook of Linguistic (Im) Politeness" explains that studies on politeness are always related to face notion as stated by Brown&Levinson (1987). This book has significant relevance to this study, as it provides additional information related to speech act, conversational implicatures, Face Threatening Acts (FTA), cooperation maxim, politeness strategies, and variables of speech contexts. All of them would be discussed in this study.

## Pragmatics

Pragmatics can be defined as a study on the relationship between language and context, which includes the coding of meaning (in large extent) in the lexicon, morphology, syntax, and phonology of a language. Considering that in pragmatics, the context that determines meaning is in the discourse, it also reviews meaning based on the intention of the speaker (Levinson, 1991: 11). Hence, pragmatics reviews all aspects of utterance meaning.

The definition of pragmatics (*goyouron*) according to a Japanese linguist (Hayashi, 1990: 171) is a science which studies theoretically the relationship between language and scenes or situations used by the language. Hence, it can be concluded that pragmatics studies about the interpretation of a speaker in one conversational context. There are some considerations needed to determine the meaning of a speech act. The elements which are considered are the speaker, interlocutor, place, time and in what circumstances it takes place. This is reaffirmed by Yule (1996:3), who states that pragmatics is a branch of linguistics which studies meaning from the communication context.

In line with the statement that pragmatics is dependent on contexts; humans, with certain mental situations and as parts of the society, always attempt to choose suitable forms of utterances depending on the interlocutors, where the speeches take place and in what situations they take place. Speakers always try to choose the forms of speeches based on the contexts. According to Mey (1993:38), pragmatics is a study on the conditions of language use by humans and emphasizes that the use of language is determined by social habits. Mey adds that what is meant by contexts is the people that a speaker talks with, people who are present, things in the surrounding, places where the speeches take place, situations of the speeches including the habits or the accepted culture, social background, politics, and history that enable the interactants to interact so that their speeches can be understood.

Similarly, Cutting (2002: 3) also explains that situational contexts refer to what is known by the interactants when talking about various things around them, the interactants' general or specific educational background or the knowledge on culture that both interactants have, and the context of what is being talked about by the speaker and the interlocutor. According to Cutting (2002), context can be divided into three types, namely (1) situational context, that is the context where the speakers know the ongoing situation at that time, (2) background context, that is when they know each other and the topic being discussed, (3) cotext context, which is their mutual knowledge on something.

In other words, pragmatics is a science that studies about the way one utterance makes meaning in one certain situation (Leech, 1983: X). Leech (1983: 6) states that semantics and pragmatics are two different disciplines. Leech states that meanings in semantics are limited by the properties of an expression in one

language, while meanings in pragmatics are determined by the speakers of the language. Pragmatics is a sub-discipline of linguistics which views a language as a symbol system with its users. In line with the definitions of semantics and pragmatics above, Wijana&Rohmadi (2009:5) state that semantics studies linguistic meaning and pragmatics studies the intention of a speaker.

### **Speech acts**

Schiffrin (1994) mentions that speech acts are the language used to do actions that focus on the relationship between meanings and actions in language. Rohmadi (2004) states that speech acts are products or results of a sentence in certain conditions and are the smallest unit of linguistic communication. Further, Rustono (1999:32) explains that speech acts are activities of doing actions with certain intentions. To support the theories of speech acts mentioned above, a supplementary theory from Yule (1996) is also used as a reference here.

Yule (1996) classifies speech acts based on the types, functions, and meanings. Below is his explanation.

#### **a. Speech Acts based on the Types**

According to Yule (1996), speech acts based on the types of the sentences can be classified into two, namely direct and indirect speech acts. There are three modes of speech acts, namely declarative, interrogative and imperative. Their purposes are informing, asking and giving orders. Yule (1996: 55) argues that the speech acts whose modes and meanings are directly related are direct speech acts. On the contrary, if the modes and the meanings are not directly related, the speech acts are the indirect ones.

#### **b. Speech Acts based on the Functions**

According to Yule (1996) there are five basic actions that somebody can do in communicating, namely: declaratives, representatives, expressives, directives and commissives.

#### **c. Speech Acts based on the Meanings**

According to Yule (1996), there are three related acts in producing an utterance, namely locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act. Locutionary act is the speech act that expresses intentions by certain sentences and utterances.

### **Face threatening**

Face threatening is a verbal and non-verbal action intended to threaten someone's image in public. This definition is proposed by Brown&Levinson (1978:66) who state that face is self image in public that everybody wants to own. There are two types of face; positive and negative. Positive face is willingness to be liked, appreciated and recognized by other people. Negative face is the

willingness of someone not to be disturbed or not to be hindered by someone else from getting what he/she wants. This face concept is universal. Participants in a communication work together to save each other's faces as the faces of both participants are easy to attack.

According to Brown&Levinson (1978), in communication, face threatening is unavoidable. It is threatening a speaker's face by opposing him/her. However, this face threatening can be done more politely by decreasing the emphasis on it. Face threatening is done due to three wants (Brown&Levinson, 1987: 73), they are:

- 1) the want to communicate the content of the face threatening act
- 2) the want to be efficient and urgent in communicating the face threatening act
- 3) the want to maintain the interlocutor's face to any degree

Cutting (2008:43) also suggests the same opinion about the concept of face: "In order to enter into social relationship, we have to acknowledge and show an awareness of the face, the public self image, the sense of self, of the people we address. It is a universal characteristic across cultures that speakers should respect each others' expectations regarding self-image, take account of their feelings and avoid Face Threatening Acts (FTAs)".

Face needs are considered applicable in all cultural levels, and face is defined as something that can be missing, needs to be taken care of and supported. This theory is based on the assumption that face is continuously under risks as all forms of language actions which are said as face threatening acts and function to connect the speakers with the interlocutors are seen as threats for the interlocutors. As a result, all face threatening acts have to be neutralized by using appropriate politeness. Politeness is defined as a basis to result in a social order and is a means to facilitate interactions.

## II. Method

The subjects of this study were 68 Indonesian careworkers who came from Bali, Java, Sulawesi and Sumatera, Indonesia. The age range was from 19 until 30 years old. While the elderly who were selected as informants were the ones who aged between 65 until 105 years and had been residents in the nursing home for more than one year. Data collection was conducted by applying several methods. The first method was observation, which was carried out by applying recording technique by recording the interaction between the careworkers and the elderly. The results were utterances of the Indonesian careworkers. The second method was interview, which was conducted by carrying out in-depth interviews with the careworkers and the elderly. These in-depth interviews were intended to reveal

things related to the topic which were not answered by the careworkers' speech data.

Interviews with the elderly were conducted to find out the responses of the elderly towards the utterances used by the Indonesian careworkers. The last method applied was distributing questionnaires to the subjects of the study. The data expected by applying this method were the choices of lexicons used by the careworkers in certain speech situations and their reasons of choosing them. The data in the forms of the careworkers' utterances from the recorded conversations were transcribed, glossed and classified based on the research questions. Discussions were then presented by relating the meaning of the utterances to their contexts.

### III. Findings and Discussion

The speech data which are analyzed below are taken from five examples of interactions between the careworkers and the elderly in different situational contexts.

Speech (1):

CGI : あついのがいい? (a)

*Atsui no ga ii ?*

Would you like to have the hot one ?

PL : ぼっけ あつい。

*Bokke atsui.*

Very hot.

CGI : ぼっけ あつい (b)

*Bokke atsui.*

Very hot.

PL : (Nods his head) (D.01)

The analysis:

Speech (1) is a direct speech act as there is direct relationship between the mode and meaning of the utterance. The mode of speech (1) is interrogative, and the meaning is to ask a question. In pragmatic concept, the interrogative sentences used by the careworker are not always in the exact structures of interrogative sentences. The meanings of utterances (a) and (b) function to provide two choices; to agree or not to agree with the interlocutor. If seen from the markers, utterances (a) and (b) are informal language (*futskuukei*) as they omit the *gimonshi ka* and copula *desu*.

Seen from the functions of the utterances, the careworkers' utterances in the part of conversation above have directive function, as one of the characteristics of directive speech acts is "to ask" (Kurnia, 2010: 2). In the above

example, the careworker asks the choice of the tea the elderly wants to drink. The illocutionary act or the communicative force of the utterance is an offer to the interlocutor whether he wants “hot, warm or cold” tea. The perlocutionary act or the effect of the utterance that is considered by the speaker is that the speaker asks the interlocutor to choose ‘hot, warm, or cold’ tea. The data in speech (1) displays harmonious relationship between the interactants, which is marked by the response given by elderly to answer the careworker’s question. This indicates that even though the caregiver uses direct speech, with vocabulary of informal type (*futsuukei*), face threatening towards the elderly does not take place.

Speech (2):

- CGI : 先生が来られました。 (a)  
*Sensei ga koraremashita*  
 A teacher came.
- PL : どこの先生?  
*Doko no sensei?*  
 Teacher from where?
- CGI : インドネシアから (b)  
*Indonesia kara*  
 From Indonesia.
- PL : 何?  
*Nani?*  
 Excuse me?
- CGI : インドネシアから (c)  
*Indonesia kara*  
 Dari Indonesia.
- PL : この人ええや  
*Kono hito ee ya*  
 This person?
- CGI : うん、先生、大学の先生 (d)  
*Un, sensei, daigaku no sensei*  
 Yes, a lecturer, a lecturer from a university.
- PL : とおいな  
*Tooi na*  
 Far, isn’t it? (D.02)

The analysis:

The part of conversation (2) above takes place in a living room when the elderly patient enjoys his leisure time in the afternoon. The careworker opens the conversation with an utterance in formal language (*teineigo*) by using the –*mashita* form in utterance (a). The ending of –*mashita* in Japanese language is



used to tell something that happened in the past. The following utterances of the careworker (utterances b-d) are informal language (*futskuukei*), marked by the omission of copula *desu* and the use of *un* which is the informal form of ‘*hai*’ (yes). The informal language is used so that the elderly can easily understand the explanation of the careworker and the communication will be smooth.

In the domain of service for the elderly, shorter utterances are easier to understand by the elderly. If seen from their type, the coworker’s utterances are direct speech acts, as there is direct relationship between the modes and meanings of the utterances. The mode is declarative and the meaning is to inform. The function of the sentences in speech (2) is representative as there is an effort of the careworker to describe the person who is the topic of the conversation to the elderly by expressing facts. Utterances (b), (c), and (d) respectively tell factual things, namely the origin and the job of the person who is the topic of the conversation.

If seen from the meaning, the locutionary act of the utterance is that the careworker gives information to the elderly about the person who they talk about. The communicative force or the illocutionary act is an offer for the elderly to get to know the person who is the topic of the conversation. While the perlocutionary act or the effect of the utterance considered by the speaker is that the interlocutor understands what is said by the speaker. This example also indicates that face threatening does not take place even though the careworker uses direct speech act in his communication with the elderly.

### Speech (3)

CGI : お邪魔します (a)

*Ojama shimasu*

I am sorry that I disturb you.

PL : (Silent)

CGI : たがわさん、手を 洗いましょう。ちょっと てを の ば してください。 (b)

*Tagawa san, te wo araimashou. Chotto te wo nobashite kudasai.*

Mr. Tagawa, let us wash hands. Please open your hands.

PL : (nods his head)

CGI : 洗いますね。 (c)

*Arimasune.*

I will wash them, oke.

PL : (nods his head)

CGI : ふきますね。だいに のえてください (d)

*Fukimasune. Daini noete kudasai*

I will wipe them, oke. The other hand, please.



- PL : (nods his head)
- CGI : ほかの手、お願いします (e)  
*Hoka no te, onegaishimasu*  
 The other hand, please.
- CGI : 手を のばしてください。洗いますね。 (f)  
*Te wo nobashite kudasai. Araishimasune.*  
 Please open your hands. I will wipe them, oke.
- PL : (Nods his head)
- CGI : 手開いてください。 (g)  
*Te hiraite kudasai.*  
 Please open your hands.
- PL : (nods his head)
- CGI : ふきますね。 (h)  
*Fukimasune.*  
 I will wipe them, oke. (D.3)

The analysis:

The part of conversation in data (3) above takes place when the elderly patient has a rest in his room after lunch. The speech of the careworker is started with the exclamation **おじゃまします** in utterance (a) whose meaning is ‘I am sorry that I disturb you’, uttered when entering the elderly’s room after knocking the door two times. The utterance in (a) is polite language (*keigo*) which is included in *kenjougo* (language used to treat oneself to be in inferior position) marked by the use of prefix ‘O’+~*masu* as a morphological marker of *kenjougo*. *Kenjougo* is used to treat the speaker (caregiver) to be in inferior position to respect the elderly. Utterance (e) is also *kenjougo*, with the same morphological marker pattern with utterance (a), which is prefix ‘O’+~*masu*. It can be observed in utterances (b), (c), (d), (f), (g) and (h) that when the careworker serves the elderly in washing his hands, the careworker uses the formal language (*teineigo*), which is marked by the use of ~*tekudasai* form and verbs ending with *masu*.

Speech (3) above is a direct speech act as there is direct relationship between the mode and meaning of the careworker’s every utterance. The sentence mode is imperative and the meaning is to give order. The function of the speech is directive as they contain utterances that give instructions. In Japanese language, the grammatical features of directive speech acts are the ending particle ~*ね* (~*ne*) as in the word **洗いますね** ‘*araimasune*’ in utterances (c) and (f) and the word **ふきますね** ‘*fukimasune*’ in utterances (d) and (h), which are used by the speaker to decrease the face threatening caused by the instruction given by the speaker. The

ending particle *~ね* (*~ne*) is used as the speaker has close relationship with the interlocutor (the elderly). This is in line with the explanation given by Kose (1997:89), that in Japanese language, the element of intimacy is seen more when the particle *~ね* (*~ne*) is used, compared to when the particle is not used.

Based on the meaning, the communicative force or the illocutionary act of the utterance is an offer, shown by the fact that the interlocutor (the elderly) can do something based on the want of the speaker (the careworker). The perlocutionary act (the effect of the utterance) considered by the interlocutor is that the interlocutor does what is asked by the speaker.

Speech (4)

CGI : きたむらさん うがいしましょう (a)

*Kitamura san ugaishimashou*

Mr. Kitamura, you need to rinse your mouth.

PL : はい

*Hai*

Oke.

CGI : どうぞ

*Douzo*

Please.

PL : (nods his head)

CGI : もう一回しましょう (b)

*Mou ikkai shimashou*

Let's do it one more time.

PL : (nods his head)

CGI : 最後 (c)

*Saigo*

One more time.

PL : はい

*Hai*

Oke.

(D.04)

The analysis:

In part of conversation (4), the careworker asks the patient to rinse his mouth. If seen from its type, this utterance is a direct speech act as there is direct relationship between the modes and meanings of the utterances. The mode of the utterances of speech (4) is imperative and the meaning is to give order. Obviously the function of the speech is directive, as the invitation to rinse mouth said by the careworker is intended to suggest the patient to do something.

Seen from the use of honorific language, the speech above uses two levels of speech, namely the formal language (*teineigo*) which is marked by the ending

~*masuyo* in utterances (a) dan (b), and the informal language (*futsuukei*) in sentence (c). This fact is on the contrary with the honorific concept of Japanese language that explains that in communicating with older people, particularly in the domain of giving service, the use of *futsuukei* is not advised. However, if we see from the situational context of the utterances in data (7) above, utterance (c) is uttered in the context of giving service of mouth cleanliness treatment which is a personal matter. This utterance could decrease the distance between the careworker and the elderly, so that the elderly will not feel awkward or ashamed being helped by a careworker in rinsing his mouth.

If seen from the meaning, the communicative force of the utterance or the illocutionary act is an invitation for the interlocutor. In this case, it is marked by invitation by the careworker to rinse the elderly's mouth. The perlocutionary act or the effect of the utterance considered by the careworker is that the elderly understands what is said by the careworker.

Speech (5)

CGI : 大丈夫？ (a)

*Daijoubu?*

Is it oke?

PL : (silent)

CGI : よこになりましょうか (b)

*Yoko ni narimashouka*

What if lying down?

PL : (nodded)

CGI : 足上げてよ (c)

*Ashi agete yo*

Please lift your legs.

PL : (lifts his legs)

CGI : 持ちますよ (d)

*Mochimasuyo*

I will lift you .

PL : (nods his head)

CGI : 一、二、の 三。 座ります？ (e)

*Ich, ni, no san.*

*Suwarimasu?*

One, two, three.

Do you want to sit down?

PL : (silent)

CGI : よこになりましょうか (f)

*Yoko ni narimashouka*

What if lying down?

PL : (nods his head)

CG : 足の靴、脱ぎますよ (g)

*Ashi no kutsu, nugimasu yo*

Your shoes, I will take them off.

PL : (nods his head) (D.05)

The analysis:

There is use of different speech levels by the careworker in data (5). It is indicated by the use of speech in informal form (utterances (a), (c) and (e)) which is marked by the use of vocabulary in *futsuukei* type, which is characterized by the absence of copula *desu* and question word (*gimonshi*) *ka* in utterance (a); the use of *~te* verb + ending particle *yo* in utterance (c); the use of basic verb form without the question word (*gimonshi*) *ka* in utterance (e); the use of polite language (*keigo*) which is classified in *sonkeigo* (the language to treat the interlocutor in superior position) which in utterance (f) is marked by *~ni narimasu* that is the morphological form of *sonkeigo* marker, as well as the use of formal language (*teineigo*) in utterances (b), (d), and (g).

As there is direct relationship between the modes and meanings of the utterances in speech (5), the speech is classified into direct speech act. The mode of utterance (a) is interrogative and the meaning is to ask about something. Utterances (b), (e), and (f) are imperatives and the meaning is to give order. While utterances (c), (d) and (g) are declaratives and the meaning is to inform. Regarding functions of the utterances of speech (9) above, for utterance (a) the function is directive and the meaning is to ask about something, while for utterances (b) until (g), the function is directive and the meaning is to give instruction.

Based on the meaning, the communicative force (illocutionary act) of the utterance is an offer from the careworker to the elderly (to lie down). The speech effect (perlocutionary act) which is considered by the careworker is the elderly understands what the careworker (the speaker) says. All the five speech data are direct speeches collected from different contexts of interactional situation.

#### IV. Conclusion

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that in the domain of service for the elderly in Japan, it is possible for the careworkers to use direct speech acts in communicating with the elderly, which is intended to ease the communication process, decrease the social distance between the two of them and tell the careworkers' intention immediately. The types of direct speech acts used are interrogative, declarative and imperative types; the functions are directive and representative. The direct speech acts used by the Indonesian careworkers do not threaten the elderly's faces, proven by the harmonious relationship between the two interactants. The results of the analysis in this article refuse the concept of politeness in general, which states that the more indirect, the more polite an

utterance is. On the contrary, the more direct, the more impolite the utterance is. In the domain of service for the elderly, the use of direct speech acts by the careworkers towards the elderly can be accepted by the elderly as direct speech acts minimize the social distance between the interactants, hence the elderly do not feel awkward as they can feel being in their places of origin.

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