# THE COMPARISON OF POLITE REQUEST STRATEGY USED BY STUDENTS OF BIMA AND SASAK IN MATARAM UNIVERSITY

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## ABSTRAK

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui penggunaan strategi permintaan sopan oleh mahasiswa Sasak dan Bima di Universitas Mataram. Data diperoleh berdasarkan kuesioner kesopanan dalam tiga situasi sosial yang berbeda, orang Sasak dan Bima sebagai peserta dalam penelitian ini diminta untuk membuat permintaan dalam tiga situasi. Situasi diklasifikasikan berdasarkan tiga sistem kesopanan berdasarkan hubungan sosial antara pembicara dan penerima: hirarki, rasa hormat, dan solidaritas. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa kedua kelompok cenderung menggunakan strategi persiapan pertanyaan. Namun, karena perbedaan budaya antara orang Sasak dan Bima, responden dalam dua kelompok tersebut berperilaku berbeda dalam hal bagaimana mereka memodifikasi permintaan sopan dan bagaimana mereka menggunakan penanda kesopanan.*

*Kata kunci: pembelajaran bahasa pertama; kesopanan; meminta strategi*

## *ABSTRACT*

This study aims to investigate the use of polite requesting strategy by students of Sasak and Bima in Mataram University. The data were obtained based on a questionnaire of politeness in three socially different situations, the Sasak and Bima people as participants in this study were asked to make requests in the three situations. The situations were classified according to the three politeness systems on the basis of social relationship between speaker and addressee: hierarchy, deference, and solidarity. This study demonstrates that both groups tend to use the query preparatory strategy in making requests. However, due to cultural differences between Sasak and Bima people, the respondents in the two groups behave differently in terms of how they modify the polite strategy and how they use the politeness markers.

*Key words: first language learning; Politeness; Request strategies*

## INTRODUCTION

In express the first language ormother tongue, the knowledge of language itself will not be useful if it is not combined with the knowledge of language use (Hymes, 1972). The use of mother tongue or first language,people need to be equipped with pragmatic knowledge, or knowledge of how the language should be connected with a particular context or situation, therfore they can judge the appropriateness of a given utterance in the language itself. In the particular contex, we often found that when peopleinteract each other, they try to use the appropriate language as a tool for communication based on their own region. It is specifically happen in Indonesia as huge country which has varieties of language, religion, culture, or ethnic. For example, Bima people will use Bimanese, sasak people will use Sasaknese, orBali people will use Balinese, etc. those languages have the important rule in social interaction.

In context of using alanguage, for example making request, people may not be aware that they are carrying their own habitual or character when they talk to their family at home. It is unconsciously happen when they communicate with people in the social interaction. Sometimes they use impolite request, butthey

consider it as polite way. For them it may be considered as polite, but for the listener it might be indicated as impolite way. It is very likely that misunderstandings may happen.

Interestingly, the polite request could be express with some strategies as Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) have mentioned nine request strategies such as mood derivable,performatives, hedge performatives, obligation statements, want statements, suggestory formulas, query preparatories, strong hints, mild hints.

By looking at the nine polite request strategies, this study aimed to examine those strategies to see how polite request delivered by studentsof Bima and Sasak who study in Mataram University.Interestingly, it is due to Bima and Sasak students have very different language and culture. It is indicated that they have different way to use the strategy in requesting something. Therefore this research can be formulated such as first,how the students of Bima and Sasakuse the polite request strategies to the interlacutor? Second, what is the dominantpolite request strategies used by students of Bima and Sasak in Mataram University based on Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper' theory (1989)?

## POLITENESS THEORIES

The most theories of politeness have been proposed by a number of experts one of them is the politeness theory introduced by Brown and Levinson (1987) seems to be the most influential. Brown and Levinson (1987) argued that we all have two kinds of face wants such as negative face and positive face. Negative face refers to the freedom of action and freedom from imposition, while positive face is the expression of involvement or belonging in a group, which includes the desire to be liked and approved of (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.62). For Brown and Levinson, speech acts can be "face threatening" in the sense that someone's strategy, for example in making a request, may endanger his/her personal relationships with the addressee. In order to maintain a good relationship with the addressee, a speaker has to choose an appropriate strategy in performing speech acts.

Dealing with the face wants, Brown and Levinson (1987) differentiated two different types of politeness: positive politeness and negative politeness. Positive politeness is solidarity oriented and therefore it emphasizes shared attitudes and values. When someone communicates to a friend, he/she will normally use the friend's first name rather than his/her last name. it indicates that positive politeness is expressed when the interlocutors do not focus on their status differences. By contrast, negative politeness pays people respect and avoids intruding on them. Indirect requests such as "This job's taking longer than we predicted" may be interpreted that you would like your addressee to stay longer to finish the job. Negative politeness, thus, is expressed when the speaker thinks that there is a social distance between him/her and his/her addressee.

The concept of status differences and social distance is also adopted in Scollon and Scollon's (2001) politeness systems. Scollon (2001) argues that there are three politeness systems on the basis of social relationship between speaker and addressee: (a) hierarchical politeness system, (b) deferential politeness system, and (c) solidarity politeness system. The hierarchical politeness system is one where the relationship between speaker and addressee expresses power and social distance [+Power, +Distance]. In the deferential politeness system, the interlocutors are considered to be equals or near equals but treat each other at a distance [–Power, +Distance]. As for the solidarity politeness system, it involves neither power difference nor social distance [–Power, –Distance].

As maintaining and saving desired aspects of others' face are crucial to performing politeness, the two elements, power and distance, have to be carefully considered before a speaker chooses a strategy. In this case, Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed four different types of politeness strategies in order to avoid face threatening:

(a) *Bald on record strategy*: This strategy is normally used by a speaker whose relationship with the addressee isquite close. An example is a direct request expressed by a mother to her daughter: "Do the dishes. It's your turn."

(b) *Positive politeness strategy*: This strategy is commonly used in situations where the interlocutors know each other fairly well. An example of positive politeness strategy is a request such as "I know you've been really busy lately, but could you type this letter for me?"

(c) *Negative politeness strategy*: This strategy presumes that the addressee's negative face is potentially threatened if the speaker does not show respect to the addressee. By uttering a direct request such as "I need $50" the possibility is that the speaker may not get what he wants if his/her addressee's negative face is uncomfortable. However, by using a negative politeness strategy such as "If it is possible, I would

like to borrow $50 from you. I need some money to purchase an important book" it is more likely that the speaker will achieve his/her goal because he/she gives more freedom of choice to the addressee.

(d) *Off-the-record strategy*: This strategy uses indirect language and removes the speaker from imposing his/her will on the addressee. For example, by saying "It's getting hot in here" the speaker may suggest that the addressee would open the windows or turn on the air conditioning without directly asking him/her to do so.

In making requests strategies, Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989, p.18) mentioned nine types of strategies, start from the most direct to the most indirect strategies as mentioned below:

1) *Mood derivable*: utterances in which the grammatical mood of the verb indicates illocutionary force. E.g. Clean up the mess.
2) *Performatives*: utterances in which the illocutionary force is clearly mentioned. E.g. I'm asking you to close the window.
3) *Hedge performatives*: utterances in which the statement of the illocutionary force is modified by hedging expressions. E.g. I would like to ask you to prepare my bill.
4) *Obligation statements*: utterances which state the hearer's obligation to perform the act. E.g. You have to clean the mess.
5) *Want statements*: utterances which indicate the speakers desire that the hearer performs the tasks. E.g. I really wish you'd stop smoking.
6) *Suggestory formulas*: utterances which include a suggestion to do something. E.g. How about lending me some money.
7) *Query preparatories*: utterances containing reference to preparatory conditions (e.g. ability, willingness) as conventionalized in different languages. E.g. Could you lend me five pounds, please? Would you mind closing the door behind you?
8) *Strong hints*: utterances containing partial reference to an element needed for the performance of the act. E.g. You have left the kitchen in a terrible mess.
9) *Mild hints*: utterances that make no reference to the request proper, but can be interpreted as requests by context. E.g. I'm a nun (in response to a persistent hassler).

These strategies are often referred to as head acts (Blum-Kulka, 1982), or the main strategies that are employed to make requests. The head acts are often accompanied by the use of lexical/phrasal downgraders (internal modification), such as the use of *please*, or supportive moves (external modification).


## RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, the writer used descriptive qualitative research.The participants were native speakers of the Bima language and Sasak language. The native speakers of Sasak language I recruited from postgraduate students of Mataram University. While the native speakers of Bima language I recruited from students who study in Mataram as well. The samples of the study were10 persons of Sasak(5 males and 5 females) and 10 persons of bima (5 males and 5 females). The object of this study, I want to know the kinds of politeness strategies are applied by Bima and Sasak people.

The instrument used in this study is a discourse completion test (DCT), which was originally developed for comparing the speech act realization patterns of native speakers (Blum-Kulka, 1982). The test consists of six scenarios representing socially different situations. The situations were classified according to the three politeness systems proposed by Scollon and Scollon (2001): hierarchy, deference, and solidarity. The DCT for both the Sasak and Bima people was presented in Indonesianfor each situation. However, all participants were encouraged to ask questions for clarity if they had problems understanding the situations.

Finally, In order to find the main strategy types used by both groups, the elicited data are analyzed based on Blum- Kulka, House, and Kasper's (1989) classification. Another aspect that is analyzed is the use of modification to the request strategies, which involves internal modifications and external modifications.


### Finding and Discussion

This section focuses on the results of the discourse completion testDCT, followed by a discussion about the findings. It deals with the use of request strategies and modifications to the request strategies used by both Sasak and Bima people who learn in Mataram university. It also addresses the cross-cultural differences that affect the choice of the politeness patterns.

## Request Strategies

Following Blum-Kulka House, and Kasper (1989),the data were analyzed to find the request strategies applied by both groups. The six scenarios represent three different situations which depict three kinds of relationship between speaker and addressee. Scenario 1 and 2 indicate a hierarchical politeness system, Scenario 3 and 4 a deferential politeness system, and Scenario 5 and 6 a solidarity politeness system.

### 1. *Scenario 1 and 2: Hierarchical Politeness Relationship*

The first two scenarios designed for the DCT indicate a hierarchical politeness system where the relationship between speaker and addressee expresses social power and distance. Below are some sample responses forscenario 1 and 2 delivered in Sasak and Bimanese:

**Scenario 1:** You are a university student. Your assignment is due tomorrow, but you need a few more days to finish it. You ask your professor for an extension. What would you say to him/her?

[1] *tunas maaf prof. ndeq man jari tugas niki isiq tiang. Lueq aloq tugas saq ndeq man tiang gaweq leq bale kance leq sekolak .tunas tepebeloq waktu ne nggih prof*"excuse me prof. I have not done the assignment yet. Because there are so many assignment that I have not done yet at home and at school. Please give me more time prof". (Sasak)

[2] *Pak santabeta mada watipu loaku ka boro sanai ake tugas. Mada raho kalembo ade ita mbeija mada waktu tolu nai wali di karawi kai mada tugas ede.* "Sir, I'm sorry, I cannot submit the assignment today. I ask a pity on you to give me time for three days to do the assignment" (Bimanese)

**Scenario 2:** You are an employee. You are not feeling well at the moment and you ask your boss whether you could go home earlier. What would you say to him/her?

[3] Bos, tiang kurang maik idap awak, tiang mele uleq juluan jelo nike
    "Boss, I am not felling well. I want go home early today"(Sasaknese)

[4] *Santabe ta pak, mada raho dula ulu sanai ake, ne'e bolu ba hengge sarumbu mada kepak.*"excuse me sir, I'd like to ask for a permission to go home early today, because I'm not feeling well." (Bimanese)

The following table shows the request strategies used by Sasak and Bimanese. Both groups favor to use an indirect request type: query preparatory. Only 4% of the Sasak prefer a direct strategy: want statement. None of the Bimanese, in this case, use the direct strategy.

Table 1.Request Strategies for Scenario 1 and Scenario 2

| Relationship | Scenario | Strategy | Sasaknese | Bimanese |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hierarchical (+Power,+Distance) | 1 | Want statement<br>Query preparatory | 80%<br>20% | 90%<br>10% |
| | 2 | Want statement<br>Query preparatory | 96 %<br>4 | 100%<br>0% |

Table above shows that both Sasak and Bima people tend to use the 'want statement' then 'query preparation' in request strategy even though Bima people are more dominant then Sasak people.

### 2. Scenario 3 and 4: Deferential Politeness system

Scenario 3 and 4 are designed to elicit request strategies indicating a deferential relationship, where speaker and addressee are more or less at the same social level but they treat each other at a distance. Below are some sample responses:

**Scenario 3**: You are a university student. You and your colleague are in the middle of a discussion. You want to write down something but you do not bring your pen. Then you asked him whether he could lend you his pen. What would you say to him?

[5] *maaf* semeton, kanggo tiang singgak polpen de? "sorry guys, May I borrow your pen? (Sasak)

[6] *Cina, loaja sepe bolpoin daimu samporo...? ndaiku ma tunti nara diskusi ndaita. "*brother, may borrow your pen for a moment..? I want to write our discussion.(Bimanese)

**Scenario 4**: You want to smoke but you don't bring a lighter with you. Then you ask a stranger for a light for your cigarette. What would you say to him/her?

[7] maaf semeton, kanggok tiang singgaq colok de? "sorry guys, may I borrow your lighter? (Sasak)

[8] *Santabe ta dou cinae, loa kombi sepe afi kera ndaimu samporo..? di ka'a kai rongko ake.*"excuse me brother, can I borrow your lighter a moment, for burn this cigarette". (Bimanese)

The following table shows the request strategies used by the two groups:

Table 2. Request strategies for Scenario 1 and Scenario 2

| Relationship | Scenario | Strategy | Sasaknese | Bimanese |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Differential (-Power,+Distance) | 3 | Want statement Query preparatory | 2 % 98% | 4% 96% |
| | 4 | Want statement Query preparatory | 0 % 100 | 0% 100% |

Unlike the first two scenarios, in these two scenarios almost all people prefer to use the query preparatory strategy. For the deferential relationship, all the Sasak and Bima people use the query preparatory strategy, indicating that they pay attention to the [+Distance] relationship.

## 3. Scenario 5 and 6: Solidarity politeness relationship

The last two scenarios (Scenario 5 and 6) are designed to elicit a solidarity relationship. In this case whether there is power or distance between speaker and addressee. Interestingly, both the Sasak and Bima people tend to use the 'query preparatory strategy' for Scenario 5, but a more direct strategy (mood derivable statement strategy) for Scenario 6. However, the Sasak and Bima people are more expressive and they sound very direct when the interaction involves siblings. The examples are stated below:

**Scenario 5**: You missed an important lecture yesterday. You want to borrow your friend's notebook for just one day. What would say to him/her?

[9] *baute singgaq catetan de si rubin? Rubin ndeq tiang tame kuliah."can I borrow your notebook yesterday? I didn't attend class yesterday.*(Sasak)

[10] lenga, loa nahu sepe buku catatan mu sanai? Nahukan wati mai kuliah ku awina re. "Friend, can I borrow your notebook for just one day...? Yesterday I didn't attend the class. (Bimanese)

**Scenario 6:** You are in your room doing your homework. You think that the TV is too loud. You ask your younger brother who is watching TV to turn down the volume. What would you say to him?

[11] *Dik, kodegang tipi tie, kenyeka ku berajah ni.* "Younger siblingturn down the TV volume!'I am studying now" (Sasaknese)

[12] *ari, loakato'I wali eli TV re? nahu ma tana'o ke wati loa focus. Na ipi ku na'e na elina re. .* "Younger sibling, can you turn down the TV volume. I am studying now, l cannot focus. The sound is too loud".

The following table shows the request strategies used by the two groups:

Table 3.Request Strategies for Scenario 5 and Scenario 6

| Relationship | Scenario | Strategy | Sasaknese | Bimanese |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Solidarity (-Power,-Distance) | 5 | Want statement Query preparatory | 1% 99% | 1% 99% |
| | 6 | Want statement Query preparatory | 0 % 100 | 0% 100% |

As seen in the table above, although scenarios 5 and 6 indicate a solidarity relationship, it seems that for both the Sasak and Bima people the quality of the relationship determines the politeness strategy. The degree of distance plays a significant role here. To a sibling, you can be very direct, but to a friend, the distance may not be as close as when you talk to your sibling.

## 2 Modifications to the Request Strategies

In the previous section we can see that basically both the Sasak and Bima people apply the same strategies when they make requests in their native language. Although the politeness system indicates the same relationship, the quality of the relationship matters. The quality of distance and power between you and your colleague and you and a stranger you met on the street is not the same. The same thing also happens between you and your friend or between you and your sibling.

Apart from the request strategies mentioned in the previous sub-section, the two groups under this study also make modifications to the strategies by using some elements in order to minimize or intensify the effect of their requesting strategies. This section discusses some typical modifications to the politeness strategies produced by both groups. The modifications involve (a) internal modifications, such as the use of address terms and politeness markers, and (b) external modifications, such as the use of additional statements before or after requesting statement.

## a. Internal Modification

Internal modification to the request strategies is meant to give a semantic effect to the requests. It involves the use of address terms, politeness markers, and attracters.

## 1. Address Terms

The following table shows the types and frequency of use of the address forms used by the subjects for all scenarios.

Table4. Use of Address Terms

| Address terms | Sasak | Bimenese |
|---|---|---|
| Pak/bapak "sir" | 11 | 28 |
| Ibu "modem" | - | - |
| Prof "professor" | 8 | 2 |
| Boss | 5 | - |
| Ari/dik "younger sibling" | 10 | 10 |
| Sa'e/kakak/mas "older brother | - | 2 |
| Batur/semeton/lenga/cina "friend" | 10 | 8 |

Table 4 above shows that Bima people tend to use pak/bapak "sir" for terms of address for example it happen 28 times and it distributed for all situation accept for situation 5 and 6.however,in case of professional titles such as professor or boss, the Sasak people use these more frequently than Bima people. Interestingly, both Sasak and Bima people tend to use ari/dik "younger sibling" than direct name when they order to do something for example see no. 10 above on scenario 6. The last Sasak people more dominant to use semeton/batur "friend" to respect the +distance evidence.

## 2. Politeness Markers

The table below shows the politeness markers used by both groups and their frequency of use:

Table 5. Use of Politeness Markers

| Politeness markers | Sasaknese | Bimanese |
|---|---|---|
| Tunas/ mohon (sasaknese), raho/ dodoku"beg" | 10 | 10 |
| Tolong/ "help" | 3 | - |
| Maaf /kangampu "sorry" | 9 | 1 |
| Tabe/ Santabe/ "excuse me" | - | 9 |

Table 5 indicates a significant difference between the Koreans and the Indonesians in terms of the use of politeness marker *tolong*'help.' For the Indonesians, *tolong*can be used in any situations, even in a solidarity relationship. For the Koreans, on the other hand, the closer your relationship is, the more direct you can be.

Another politeness marker that is not used by the Koreans is *mohon*"(I) beg". This word is usually used when you make a request to someone older than you are or someone you respect.

Interestingly, the Koreans make a distinction between *maaf*"sorry" and *permisi*"excuse me". This is because each of the words has its equivalence in the Korean language. "Sorry" is equivalent to *mi an ham ni da*, and "excuse me" to *silré ham ni da* (personal communication).

### b. External Modification

In general, the two groups do make considerable external modifications to request strategies, commonly for the hierarchical, deferential relationships and solidarity. The modifications can be either prior or after the request strategy. Examples are the following:

[13] *tuna smaaf prof. ndeq man jari tugas niki isiq tiang. Lueq aloq tugas saq ndeq man tiang gaweq leq bale kance leq sekolak .tunas tepebeloq waktu ne nggih prof.* "excuse me prof. I have not done the assignment yet. Because there are so many other assignment that I have not done yet at home and at school.please give me more time prof (Sasaknese)

[14] *Pak santabeta mada watipu loaku kaboro sanai ake tugas. Mada raho kalembo ade ita mbeija mada waktu tolu naiwali di karawi kai mada tugas ede*"Sir, I'm sorry, I cannot submit the assignment today. I ask a pity on you to give me time for three days to do the assignment" (Bimanese)

The following table shows how the two groups make external modifications to the request strategies - either prior or after the head acts.

Table.6 Use of External Modifications

| Relationship | Scenario | External modifications | Sasaknese | Bimanese |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hierarchical (+power +distance) | 1 | Prior | 10 | 10 |
| | | After | - | - |
| | 2 | Prior | 9 | 10 |
| | | After | 1 | - |
| Differential (-power +distance) | 3 | Prior | 6 | 5 |
| | 4 | After | 4 | 5 |
| | | Prior | 8 | 7 |
| | | After | 2 | 3 |
| Solidarity(-power – distance) | 5 | Prior | 3 | 2 |
| | 6 | After | 7 | 8 |
| | | Prior | - | 1 |
| | | After | 10 | 9 |

Table 6 demonstrates that when the hierarchical relationship is valued, then speakers tend to use an external modification that is prior to the head acts of request strategies. This indicates that the hearer's negative face is potentially threatened and so it is very important for the speakers to state a good reason for making the requests. In contrast, when the relationship is solidarity-oriented, bothgroups tend use an external modification after the head acts. This suggests that for this particular situation, negotiation prior to the request is not considered important.

## CONCLUSION

The linguistic data provided in this paper shows how the Sasak and Bima people respond to different situations using polite requesting strategies in their native language.

An interesting finding from this study is that both the Sasak and Bima people do not use all nine request strategies that are proposed by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989). The strategy that occurs mostly is query preparatory. Strategies such as suggestory formula, strong hint, or mild hint do not occur in the data. Further research that involves more participants may result in the use of more strategies.

Both Sasak and Bima people, since hierarchy is a very significant aspect in their culture, the way they show the polite strategy they tend to use politeness markers such as tunas (sasak) or santabe/dodoku (Bimanese) "beg". Politeness marker *santabeta* 'excuse me' is often used by the Bimaneses in any situations. While *tunas or nunasan*'beg' is politeness marker that tend to be used by Sasak people.

Another interesting finding is the fact that in the both Sasak and Bima peopletend to used indirect way when they request something. In addition, Sasak people prefer to use professional titles than the kinship terms of address. In Sasak, when two people of asymmetrical status are involved in a conversation, the one with a lower status will address the other with an honorific title. In Bima, on the other hand, kinship terms of address are more preferable than honorific titles.

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