POLITENESS PRINCIPLES IN BARRACK OBAMA’S INTERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This study was focused on the types of politeness principles. This research was conducted by using descriptive qualitative design. The data were the transcript of Barrack Obama’s interviews which were downloaded from internet. The findings showed that there were 31 utterances which contained 6 types of politeness principles. Obama tended to use the expressions of agreement maxim (51.61%), approbation maxim (22.58%), generosity maxim (12.9%), tact maxim (6.45%), modesty maxim (3.22%), and sympathy maxim (3.22%). The most dominant type of politeness principles was agreement maxim which means that Obama tried to minimize disagreement between self and others and maximize agreement between self and others.

Keyword : politeness principles, types of politeness principles, interview.
INTRODUCTION

In our daily life, we will always need someone to interact, share, or even help us. Yule (1996:35) says that speakers and listeners involved in conversation are generally cooperating with each other. There are things that we need to notice in doing interaction. One of them is being polite to others. Huang (2008:97) states that generally, we act politely in order to show our wishes, to start a friendly relation with someone, or to maintain it if it is already existing, or to mend it if it is being threatened for some reasons. It means that whenever we want someone to do us a favor we have to make the request in a polite manner. The politeness principles is the principles of communication when the participants in a social interaction have the ability to engage in interaction in an atmosphere of relative harmony.

Pakzadian (2012:357) in his study on Politeness Principle in the Presidential Debates between Mc Cain and Obama found that there was a complex situation for audience in responding scientific articles. He also considered politeness principle as a crucial factor which contributes to the candidates face in debates. So, it is interesting to analyze the utterances in Barrack Obama’s interview.

Research Questions

The research questions of the present study are; what kinds of politeness principles are used in the utterance of President Barrack Obama’s interview? What kind of politeness principle is the most dominantly used in the utterance of President Barrack Obama’s interview?

Pragmatics

According to Yule (1996:3) Pragmatics is the study of contextual meaning. It means pragmatics is concern with the implicit meaning which is unsaid. It might be considered as the investigation of invisible meaning.

Politeness Principles

Holmes (1992:5) defines politeness as “behavior which actively expresses positive concern for others, as well as non-imposing distancing behavior.” In the book *Principles of Pragmatics* published in 1983, Leech (1983) defines politeness as forms of
behavior that establish and maintain comity and he proposes what he terms “The Politeness Principle” as a way of explaining how politeness operates in conversational exchanges, indicating the ability of participants in a social interaction to engage in interaction in an atmosphere of relative harmony.

Politeness principles is a series of maxim which Leech has proposed as a way of explaining how politeness operates in communication to other. Rahardi (2005:59) states that politeness principle that until now was considered as the most complete, most established, and relatively most comprehensive have been formulated by Leech. Leech analyzed politeness by the use of politeness principle that described in six maxims.

Types of Politeness Principles

Politeness principles consists of six maxims that namely Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim, and Sympathy Maxim.

1. Tact Maxim
   The tact maxim states: minimize cost to other; maximize benefit to other.

2. Generosity Maxim
   The generosity maxim states: minimize benefit to self; maximize cost to self.

3. Approbation Maxim
   The approbation maxim states: minimize dispraise of other; maximize praise of other.

4. Modesty Maxim
   The modesty maxim states: minimize praise of self; maximize dispraise of self.

5. Agreement Maxim
   The agreement maxim states: minimize disagreement between self and others; maximize agreement between self and other.

6. Sympathy Maxim
   The sympathy maxim: minimize antipathy between self and other; maximize sympathy between self and others.
**Definition of Talk Show**

Talk show is included in unscripted entertainment. A talk show always presents an interactive conversation and relates to the context (issues). Hutchby (2006:185) defines that television talk show is a program which famous people talk to each other and are asked questions about different topics. It means that the content of the program is presenting the speaker to be a source of the show and is discussing a different topic each episode by presenting the famous persons as speakers. The television talk show has three elements, such as the host (interviewer), the guests (the interviewees) and discusses a certain topic, where all those elements involved during discussion.

**Why Barrack Obama**

The data is taken from the utterances used by Barrack Obama in a talk show named Morning Show in CNN TV. Barrack Obama has been voted as 44\textsuperscript{th} president of the USA. He won the election battle against John McCain. He is the first afro-American president. Obama has been dubbed as the most liberal Senator in his political life. ([http://obama-zone.com/biography/](http://obama-zone.com/biography/))

**Methodology**

This study was a descriptive qualitative in which the data were the utterances taken from two selected episodes in Morning Show at CNN TV. They are on September 17, 2012 and August 23, 2013. The episodes were chosen because invited the president candidates, so that the talk show became more interesting. In this case, the data supported information on various sources was taken from the dialogs between the host and the speakers in Morning Show.

The data were collected by identifying the conversations that contained type of politeness principles based on theory that is suggested by Leech (1983), classifying the types of politeness principles per episode and per speaker into tables, counting and percentaging the violation of maxims, after that finding the reason why the most dominant type of politeness principles is used by the speaker.
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The analysis showed that politeness principles can be occurred in interview as Morning Show. Barrack Obama in Morning Show used all the types of politeness principles.

Table 1. The Occurrence of Politeness Principles in Barrack Obama’s Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Politeness Principles</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Tact Maxim</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6,45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Generosity Maxim</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12,9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Approbation Maxim</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22,58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Modesty Maxim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Agreement Maxim</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>51,61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Sympathy Maxim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total Number</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that Barrack Obama in Morning Show used all the types of politeness principles. He dominantly used agreement maxim (16 utterances, 51,61%), because he minimized disagreement between self and others; maximized agreement between self and other. Then it is followed by approbation maxim (7 utterances, 22,58%), generosity maxim (4 utterances, 12,9%), tact maxim (2 utterances, 6,45%), modesty and sympathy maxim (1 utterance, 3,22%).

The most dominant type of politeness principles that used in this interview is agreement maxim (16 utterances) because Obama wanted to unite thought, hope and mutual understanding between him and the interviewer, so he maximized agreement between self and other. This maxim also can be used to reduce conflict between the hearer and the speaker.

Discussion

The data of this study were obtained from the conversation in the two episodes Morning Show. This study found that there were 31 utterances containing the types of
politeness principles. The speaker in this talk show used all types of politeness principles, they are: tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim and sympathy maxim.

Tact Maxim

The tact maxim states: minimize cost to other; maximize benefit to other. There were 2 tact maxims that are used by Obama in his interview. Here is the data of the analysis:

JOHN: If reducing consumption is a good idea, could you see the potential for value-added tax in this country?

OBAMA: You know-- I know that there's been a lot of talk around town lately about the value-added tax--that is something that has worked for some countries. It's something that would be novel--for the United States. And before, you know, I started saying, "This makes sense or that makes sense." I want to get a better picture of what our options are. And my first priority is to figure out how can we reduce wasteful spending so that-- you know, we have a baseline of the core services that we need and the government should provide. And then we decide how do we pay for that. As opposed to figuring out how much money can we raise and then-- not have to make some tough choices on the spending side.

Implication: The utterance above was one of tact maxim that Obama used to maximize the benefit to other. He reduced consumption and added tax for a reason. As what he stated above, government should provide the people. He added tax to make people become wiser in using their money. The tax will be used to provide and serve people.

Generosity Maxim

The generosity maxim states: minimize benefit to self; maximize cost to self. There were 4 generosity maxims that is used by Obama in his interview. Here is the data of analysis:
CUOMO: Nobody knows better than you that it is a big part of the job of the president to make that happen. How much of the lack of action in Washington do you put on yourself, in terms of blame?

OBAMA: Well, look, ultimately, the buck stops with me. And so any time we are not moving forward on things that should be simple, I get frustrated. And, **you know, I've said before -- and I continue to say -- you know, I'm willing to do whatever it takes to get Congress -- and Republicans in Congress in particular -- to think less about politics and party and think more about what's good for the country.**

Implication: The selected bold text shows that Obama tried to maximize cost to himself. He stated that wanted to do whatever to make Congress more care about the country. It shows that he is not selfish and respect for others.

*Approbation Maxim*

The approbation maxim states: minimize dispraise of other; maximize praise of other. There were 7 utterances of approbation in Obama’s interview. Here are some of expressions of approbation maxim that were found in the Obama’s interview:

CUOMO: Mr. President, I appreciate the time.

OBAMA: I enjoyed it. Thank you very much.

Implication: The selected text bold has shown clearly the approbation maxim. The first utterance above was used by Obama. He was very happy of Indonesian and Cairo’s welcome. His utterance contained praise which indicated that he was very happy and feel comfort in the conversation with the interviewer. This utterance can build a good relationship between them.

*Modesty Maxim*

The modesty maxim states: minimize the expression of praise of self; maximize the expression of dispraise of self. There were 1 utterances of modesty maxim in Obama’s interview. Here is the expression of modesty maxim that found in the speech:

CUOMO: There's strong proof they used them already, though, in the past.

OBAMA: ... then that starts getting to some core national interests that the United States has, both in terms of us making sure that weapons of mass destruction are not proliferating, as well as needing to protect our allies, our bases in the
region. So, you know, I think it is fair to say that, as difficult as the problem is, this is something that is going to require America's attention and hopefully the entire international community's attention.

Implication: The utterance above indicates that Obama is humble and not arrogant because he minimized praise of self. He still needs American’s attention and even the entire international community’s attention to solve problem.

*Agreement Maxim*

The agreement maxim states: minimize disagreement between self and others; maximize agreement between self and other. There were 16 expressions of agreement maxim in Obama’s interview. Here were some expressions of agreement maxim that found in the speech:

**CUOMO**: There's no question that the key to it is cost. The numbers of your own, income 16 percent, college education costs are going up by well over 200 percent.

**OBAMA**: Right.

Implication: The utterance above showed that Obama and the interviewer have the same understanding about the topic that they were talking about. Maximize agreement can increase a good conversation and relationship between them.

*Sympathy Maxim*

The sympathy maxim: minimize antipathy between self and other; maximize sympathy between self and others. There was 1 expression of sympathy maxim in Obama’s interview. Here is the expression of sympathy maxim that found in the interview:

**CUOMO**: Senator McCain came on "New Day" very strong on this. He believes that the U.S.'s credibility in the region has been hurt, that a situation like Syria -- that he believes there's been delay, and it has led to a boldness by the regime there, that in Egypt, that what many believe was a coup wasn't called a coup that led to the problems that we're seeing there now, do you think that's fair criticism?

**OBAMA**: Well, you know, I am sympathetic to Senator McCain's passion for helping people work through what is an extraordinarily difficult and
heartbreaking situation, both in Syria and in Egypt, and these two countries are in different situations.

Implication: The utterance above indicates that Obama used sympathy maxim to show that he respected Senator McCain’s passion for helping people. The expression of sympathy can raise the solidarity between others.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

After analyzing the data, it can be concluded that: Firstly, there were six types of politeness principles used in the interview of Barrack Obama; it consists of 2 (6.45%) Tact Maxim, 4 (12.9%) Generosity Maxim, 7 (22.58%) Approbation Maxim, 1 (3.22%) Modesty Maxim, 16 (51.61%) Agreement maxim and 1 (3.22%) Sympathy Maxim. Therefore, there are 31 expressions of politeness principles that are found in the Obama’s interview.

Secondly, the most dominant type of politeness principles that was used by Barrack Obama in his interview was agreement maxim. It means Barrack Obama minimized disagreement between self and others; maximized agreement between self and other. He used agreement maxim to get respect from others because people usually will be glad and welcome someone who have the same understanding and point of view. It also aimed to reduce conflict between him and the interview and also all people in the world because this interview must be watch by many people.

Suggestions

With reference to the conclusions, there are some suggestions needed to be considered. It is suggested that everyone who wants to do a similar research should focus the attention to politeness principles used in the interview so that they could get fuller understanding about the types and the function of it and other researchers should conduct further researches on politeness principles in other setting of communications to complete the study it, so the reader could be comprehend about it. It is also advised that students who have studied in applied linguistics should use politeness principles in their daily life because people will feel comfortable to interact to someone who talks politely.
REFERENCES


http://obama-zone.com/biography/
Declaration

Except where appropriately acknowledged, this thesis is my own work, has been expressed in my own words and has not previously been submitted for assessment.

I understand that this thesis may be screened electronically or otherwise for plagiarism.

Author Biography

Conny’s research used catagorize and decriptive qualitative technique. She hold a S.S from State University of Medan. This Journal is partial fulfillment of the requirement for degree of Sarjana Sastra