

## **Observance of Principles of Mutual Consideration (PMC) and Its Relation to the Presence of Three Levels of Politeness**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study entitled “Observance of PMC and Its Relation to the Presence of Three Levels of Politeness” investigates politeness realizations according to Principles of Mutual Consideration (PMC) between two different cultures and its relation to the presence of three levels of politeness: pre-event, on-the-spot, and post-event politeness as proposed by Aziz (2000). PMC works as a cause and effect logic which consists of four sub-principles: i.e. harm and favor potential, shared-feeling, prima-facie, and continuity principles. The main data of the study were retrieved from [www.rcti.tv](http://www.rcti.tv) on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2010 which contained the opening-part of an interview script between an Indonesian Journalist and the President of the United States. Using the PMC framework, the study found that there is balanced-order in observing PMC’s sub-principles. This is due to the fact that both the interviewer and the interviewee had the intention to favour one another. This was realized in their complete observance of four PMC’s sub-principles. The study concluded that the observance of PMC together with its three levels of politeness is mainly motivated to balance and create harmony.

**Keywords:** *Principle of Mutual Consideration (PMC), Three Levels of Politeness*

## BACKGROUND

Human-beings are social creatures that have the need to communicate with others. Communication is defined as a process by which we assign and convey meanings in an attempt to create shared understanding, both the speaker and hearer should hold to general rules or principles. An often used principle to achieve this is politeness. Leech (1983: 15) defines politeness as “a form of behavior that establishes and maintains comity”, that is, “the ability of participants in a social interaction to engage in interaction in an atmosphere of relative harmony”. In many ways, politeness theory has been developed time by time.

There are language researchers who have been interested in politeness phenomena, such as Goffman (1967), Brown and Levinson (1978;1987), Grice (1975), and Leech (1983). Firstly Goffman came up with his *concept of face* derived from Chinese culture K’ung Fu Tzu ( ± 2500 SM)

that stand on social harmony only. It leads Brown and Levinson (1978;1987) to propose a new concept about face. They came with the strategies to minimize *face-threatening acts (FTAs)* which refers to individual freedom. Unfortunately, two preceding language researchers only focus on speaker or hearer (social or individual) . As a result Grice (1975) describes his *Cooperative Principles (CP)* as a characteristic of such cooperative communication between speaker and hearer, but its maxims are too rigid. Furthermore, Leech (1983) describes Grice’s CP in more detail which was formulated in what he calls *Politeness Principle (PP)*. PP is treated as tautological principles because of its repetition. Challenging this idea, Aziz then proposed a new horizon in looking into the phenomena of politeness realizations; namely Principle of Mutual Consideration (PMC) which consist of four sub-principles: i.e. harm and favor potential, shared-feeling, prima-facie, and continuity principle that should be observed by speaker and hearer.

Rather than formulated as a tautology, this theory is described in a cause and effect model. Presupposition analysis is used in the present study in order to investigate what sub-principles are observed by speaker or hearer through utterances since it is a way to reveal what meaning behind each utterance. According to Yule (1996:25) “presupposition is something the speaker assumes to be the case prior to making an utterance”. The PMC and presupposition analysis can be combined in oral-communication likewise in an interview.

The interview between an Indonesian Journalist and the President of the United States America has attracted the researcher because the interview involved two people in two different cultures, social status, and power. Beside that, the President of the USA once lived in Indonesia during 1967 and Putra Nababan is the first Indonesian journalist who had the opportunity to conduct an interview with the President of USA in a face-to-face interaction. Thus, it can be a

representation of communication of different cultures. The interview was conducted on 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2010 at the White House. It was mainly intended to clarify the news around the postponement of his trip to Indonesia.

Previous studies by using politeness theory have been conducted in many years. Khalimatus (2005) applied politeness theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) in social media “Internet Relay Chat” (IRC). She found that most people/chatters tend to use bald-on-record in their chatting.

Next, Holtgraves and Yang (1990,1992) extends the validity of Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory by investigating the non-linguistic aspects of politeness in two cultures. The study found that politeness strategies were communicated non-linguistically as well as linguistically and that non-linguistic strategy usage was related to social and contextual factors.

Next, Chen (1993) from California State University investigated politeness strategies of American English Speakers (AES) and Chinese Speakers (CS) used to respond to compliments within the framework of Leech's (1983). The two groups were found to use largely different politeness strategies: the AES's strategies are mostly motivated by Leech's Agreement maxims, whereas the CS's strategies are motivated by his Modesty Maxim. This difference is then related to differences of social values between the two cultures, particularly in their respective beliefs about what constitutes self-image.

Since there is no study about politeness within framework of Principle of Mutual Consideration (PMC), in this present study, the researcher tries to investigate what sub-principles of PMC are observed by interviewer and interviewee as well as how those observances relate to the presence of three levels of politeness. All those things are grasped in

Principles of Mutual Consideration (PMC) proposed by Aziz (2000) through presupposition analysis.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Observance of Principle Mutual Consideration's (PMC) sub-principles can be traced by the analysis of presupposition. Presupposition itself can be understood as what speaker means rather than what speaker says through his/her utterances. In this case, interview between Indonesian Journalist and United States' President has been decided as a object/data of this study. The data have been chunked into utterances in each part of question-answer.

The total utterances of opening part in Putra Nababan's questions are 18 and 43 utterances for President Obama's responses. Due to the findings, both interviewer and interviewee observed four sub-principles of PMC completely. It is regarded to 100% observances of *harm and favor potential, shared-feeling, prima facie, and continuity*

*principle*. The findings are presented in table below:

No.	Sub-Principles of PMC	Observance					
		Indonesian Journalist (Putra Nababan)			United States' President (Barrack Obama)		
		Total Utterances	Total Observed	%	Total Utterances	Total Observed	%
1.	Harm and Favor Potential	18	18	100	43	43	100
2.	Shared-feeling	18	18	100	43	43	100
3.	Prima-facie	18	18	100	43	43	100
4.	Continuity	18	18	100	43	43	100

*Table 1: Distribution of Observances PMC's sub-principles*

The findings show that there is **balanced-order** in observing PMC's sub-principles. This is due to the fact that both the interviewer and the interviewee had the intention to favor one another. After findings, next will be described and interpreted each sub-principle was observed by Indonesian

Journalist and United States' President.

- **Harm and Favor Potential**

From the findings above, both interviewer and interviewee have observed "harm and favor potential" completely 100%. When interviewer aims to favor the interviewee, he/she

will pay attention to harm and favor potential as long as communication takes place, so that he/she will think first before say something to his/her interviewee and even vice versa. In this case, Indonesian Journalist and United States' President have same intention in favoring one another whereas both of them are in different **power** and **social distance**, below exemplifies this:

[A first part of interview between Putra Nababan (PN) and President Barrack Obama (BO)]:

PN : Mr.President thanks fot the very first time having interview with RCTI. Apa kabar?

BO : Baik-baik (smile around)

Putra Nababan in the example above used "Mr.President" as a greeting expression, he presupposed that *President Obama has spared the time for conducting the interview*. Next he said ".....for the very first time..." he presupposed that *President Barrack Obama never had interview with RCTI*

*before*. Then, he said "apa kabar? (in Bahasa Indoensia)", he presupposed that *United States' President knows Bahasa Indonesia*. As cited in Chapter II "A presupposition is something the speaker assumes to be the case prior to making an utterance" (Yule, 1996:25). "....for the very first time..." belongs to lexical presupposition while "Mr.President" belongs to existential presupposition.

Putra Nababan's question shows that he has observed harm and favor potential. Aziz (2003:184) holds that "The harm and favor potential in PMC,.... before uttering an expression, a speaker should consider the potential benefit of his utterance against the potential loss both to himself and to his interlocutor". Here, interviewer observed the harm and favor potential when he wants to favor his interviewee by thanking him up and used "Mr.President" for greeting. It means that interviewer is so grateful for having such an interview with the President of USA (nomor one country in the world).

Moreover, President Obama responded by answering “baik-baik”, that expression presupposed that *he is in good condition*. It belongs to factive presupposition. In this case, President Obama has observed “harm and favor potential” as well as what Putra Nababan did before. President Obama has respected Putra Nababan through his utterance in Bahasa Indonesia, it means that President Obama has favored Indonesians who heard his answer.

- **Shared-feeling Principle**

Shared-feeling is one of principle in PMC which stands for hearer’s feeling. When speaker want to be addressed something favor, he/she will formulate an utterance which shows a caring to his/her hearer’s feeling.

Whether Putra Nababan (interviewer) or President Barack Obama (interviewee) observed “harm and favor potential”. Because of PMC works as cause-effect logic, the observance before can be an effect to the next sub-principles. Putra Nababan and President Obama have

good outset before, as a result they care about one another’s feeling. Likewise in example above, when interviewer used “Mr.President” for greeting interviewee, it reflects that he really respect to Obama’s position in United States. In the other word, Putra Nababan realizes that he is only journalist who has less power than a President, but he wanted to be respected as well as he respected President Obama.

In line with President Obama who really care about interviewer’s feeling, he gave compliment as nice as he can do. His compliment as if shows that when President of other country says about US’s citizens he wants something good to be heard, not mocking or blaming. Therefore, both of them have observed “shared-feeling” principle. “Shared feeling principle can be achieved when speaker has the same consideration on his hearer “(Aziz, 2003). Interviewer will formulate his utterance first before he utters it directly to the hearer. Thus, interviewer and interviewee who has

mutual consideration will not say something which is able to hurt or loss hearer's face as well as he/she does not want to be harmed or hurt back.

- ***Prima-facie Principle***

Furthermore, interviewer observed 18 times (100%) for prima-facie principle. Prima-facie principle is a sequel or result of two sub-principles before. Interviewer has already created a prima-facie principle. He wants to give a good image to his interviewee in order to make interviewee/hearer being comfortable for taking interview with him. As a result, interviewee will have such impression toward interviewer itself. Interviewee can appraise when an interviewer is willing to cooperate by evaluating in interviewer's utterance meaning or body language instead. It is line with Aziz in his writing entitled *Theorizing Politeness in Indonesian Society* argued that "... it is necessary that when a communicative exchange takes place, the speaker give an impression to his interlocutor that he is

willing to cooperate (prima facie principle)"(2000:184).

- **Continuity Principle**

When someone has given a good image and impression toward hearer, she/he has a desire for having a continuity for the relationship or communication with hearer in the future. See examples before, it signs that by thanking up, the hearer will be comfortable for having interview again in the next time. Interviewer is so polite, so that the continuity principle has been realized and observed well. In this case, Putra Nababan has observed continuity principle for 100%. Thus, Putra Nababan has shown his background-image as a journalist in front of thousand people who pay attention to him. He is patience, unblaming, and down-to-earth journalist. For example by greeting "Mr.President" and then "say thanks". They are such expressions that can make hearer be happy and feel respected.

Due to the findings, President Obama's responses have shown 100% of observance continuity principle. Those are aimed to maintain relationship in the future and his image as a President/leader of USA and want to favor interviewer who stands for Indonesia. Moreover, President Obama as interviewee has shown his desire to keep the relationship being continue afterwards. Because of President Obama has managed the conflict well, so that continuity potentially will be exist next. Continuity principle belongs to 'post-event politeness' or politeness after an act take place.

Four sub-principles of PMC are supposed to create individual freedom, social harmony, and Godline contentment through three-levels of politeness. Therefore, PMC is like combination for three key notions for politeness frameworks in the latest 60s - 80s.

## **RELATION TO THE PRESENCE OF THREE-LEVELS OF POLITENESS**

Putra Nababan and President Barack Obama are such a representation between two cultures; Indonesia and United States of America. From the findings above, we can see that both of them really maintain the good relationship by doing politeness along the interview. In PMC, there are three levels of politeness which can reveal how people doing politeness. In the examples above, they have been shown that both interviewer and interviewee observed the three levels of politeness respectively since they are totally observed 100% of four sub-principles of PMC.

First is *pre-event politeness*. Pre-event politeness relates to the politeness before an act take place. From the findings above, whether interviewer or interviewee has fulfilled at least three sub-principles; harm and favor, shared-feeling, and prima-facie.

Both of them for the first time formulated his/her communicative intention before an act take place.

Second level is *on-the-spot politeness*. It is the realization of what utterances that has been formulated before. It deals with sub-principle of “prima-facie”. In this case, interviewee has given “good impression” toward interviewer by giving so many compliments and good responses. Then, interviewer has given “good impression” too toward interviewee because he has formulated the questions which favoring him and care about interviewee’s feeling.

Third level is *post-event politeness*. As we can see from the findings above, President Obama really shows his desire to maintain the communication exchange in the future through his utterances in responding Putra Nababan’s questions. Here, Putra Nababan and President Barack Obama observed the third level by observing three sub-principles or two levels of politeness before successfully. Putra Nababan shows that his ways conduct

the interview is purposed to maintain relationship in the future. In President Barack Obama’s responses, post-event politeness is clearly observed through his compliments and salutation, such as “Indonesia is such a beautiful place”, “Indonesia can be a first strength for democracy in the world”, and many more. It signs that he wants to take a communication again in the future and his interlocutor will feel the same way too.

In a nutshell, background image of Putra Nababan as a journalist is humble, cooling-down, unblaming. And also background image for Barrack Obama as a President is down-to-earth, humble, modest, and wise. The someone’s background image can reflects the way he/she in managing a conflict and keep a relationship with other people through his or her politeness act. Then, the sub-principles of PMC and three levels of politeness have been observed by them successfully in balanced-order. It means that both of them have the same intention to favor or respect one

another to keep the good relationship in the future.

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that there is balanced-order in observing sub-principles of PMC when the interviewer and the interviewee had the intention to favor one another. It is due to the cause-effect logic in PMC theory, when the first sub-principle is observed, automatically the following sub-principles have to be observed too. It is related to the center of PMC: management conflict and causality mechanism. In two different cultures, maintaining relationship in mutual consideration is highly essential to achieve individual freedom, social harmony for a unity, and Godlines contentment (relationship between human and his/her Lord).

Relation PMC and its three levels of politeness (pre-event, on-the-spot, and post-event politeness) proposed by Aziz (2000) can be revealed in the present study. Indonesian Journalist has observed

those three-levels as well as United States' President. First is "pre-event politeness" which deals with "harm and favor" and "shared-feeling principle" or before an act take place. In the findings, both of them have a good outset for favoring one another and care about one another's feeling. Second is "on-the-spot politeness" which deals with when an act takes place which create "prima-facie". In this case, whether Indonesian Journalist or United States' President have observed it well. They want to create good image in front of thousand people who watch the interview. The third is "post-event politeness" which deals with "continuity" principle or after an act take place. It is a result for the three sub-principles observed before. The continuity principle can be seen when someone has a desire to take a communication with someone else again in the future. Both interviewee and interviewer show the desire for maintaining the good relationship in the future.

## SUGGESTIONS

There are still several weaknesses in conducting this study, whether for the data or the method. Thus some recommendations are provided here.

The main data of this study is only interview script. The study will be more valuable if future researchers would like to analyze the realization of PMC in natural conversation among members of family or friends in campus when they refuse something by doing recording directly. Beside that, the data of this study is only different culture based, it will be more variative if future reserachers would like to compare the observance of PMC between different ages or gender-based. It can be done since gender also influence the politeness behaviour.

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