

## The Islamic Ideology of Indonesian Linguistic Politeness

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**Abstract** - This article is aimed at describing the ideology of Islam in the Indonesian linguistic politeness system. The population was the emails posted to the mailing list by the members of Indonesian Moslem Society in America (IMSA) and the topic of discussion was Islam. The reason for choosing the topic is that it has potential to reveal expressions of linguistic politeness even as it encourages participation of the members, since it is a topic of interest to everyone. The sample was the email threads triggered by an article entitled 'Mendeteksi virus liberal' (Detecting the liberal virus), which followed by four, more-focused topics of discussion derived from the first, chronologically: Kaca retak (Cracked mirror), Apakah Islam Agama yang Sempurna? (Is Islam a Perfect Religion), Apakah status ke-Islam-an JJ? (Is JJ a good Muslim?); and Memutus Rantai Permusuhan (Breaking the chain of enmity) which cover 57 emails during the period of April 26, 2011 to Mei 16, 2011 and written by 25 members of the IMSA. The method of study was discourse analysis by following the procedure such as: a) Identifying the expressions of disagreement; b) Identifying politeness strategies used; c) Classifying the politeness strategies; d) Identifying dispreferred utterances; e) Classifying dispreferred utterances; and f) Finding out the ideology of Islam in Indonesian linguistic politeness system. The findings show that the politeness strategies used are: a) professing personal-inadequacy on the matter at hand; b) posing questions; c) referring to Al Qur'an/Al Hadits and the precedents set by other pious Muslims; and d) complimenting, honouring, and praying for one another. Dispreferred utterances include: a) those who complimenting themselves; b) those who criticize others, making jokes on others, gossiping others, and making the situation more critical; and c) those who threaten others. The ideology of Islam that lies behind linguistic politeness is: a) the ideology of "*watawa shaubil haq watawa shaubish shabr*", an Arabic phrase meaning 'Muslims must point one another towards the truth and they must do it patiently'; b) The ideology that implies that linguistic politeness is not only concerned with the present but is believed to have consequences for the hereafter; and c) The ideology which believe linguistic politeness does not merely concern communication and living in harmony with others, as previous theories suggest, but more importantly it concerns with keeping Muslim brotherhood and with one's self-actualization as obedient to God. It is suggested for future researchers to compare the findings with data from oral communication.

**Keywords** : Islamic ideology, Indonesian language, politeness

**Paper Type:** Research Paper

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### Introduction

Studies on linguistic politeness has not sufficiently yet covered the ideology of religion in speaking politely. Except Geertz (1960) who suggests the spiritual aspect of linguistic politeness in Java Indonesia, references such as Brown and Levinson (1978), Leech (1983), Lakoff (1990), Gunarwan (1994), Holmes (1995), Yule (1996), Spolsky (1998), Salzmann (1998), Reiter (2000), (Saeed, 2003), Eelen (2001), Watts (2003), Bharuthram (2003), Aziz (2003), Lakoff and Ide (2005), Janney and Arndt (2005), Allan and Burrige (2006), etc focus on the on-going communication need of the participants rather than the need to keep religion brotherhood and the hereafter consequence they believe as resulted from being polite.

Indonesian people consider themselves as religious people. No matter what religion they believe in, they mostly agree to say that one of the main reason to speak politely include religious aspects such as following and obeying God's rule, expecting reward- not sin- from God, and dreaming of to be in the category of pious people. Sauri (2004) identifies six principles of politeness in the Al Quran, i.e. a) *qaulan shadida* (Q.S. 4 an-Nisa: 9), that is, speak the truth; b) *qaulan baligha*, (Q.S. 4 An-Nisa: 63), that is, speak effectively and clearly using appropriate words, those that are accurate, precise and accomplish one's goals; c) *qaulan maysura*, (Q.S.17 Al-Isra: 28), that is, speak well and appropriately, so that people are not disappointed; d) *qaulan ma'rufa*, (Q.S.4 An-Nisa: 8), that is, speak using language that pleases the heart, do not use language that hurts the feelings of others; e) *qaulan karima* (Q.S. 17 Al-Isra: 23), that is, speak in a dignified and uplifting manner, in a way that blends together content, instructions, and goals that are good, praiseworthy and noble; and f) *qaulan layyina* (Q.S. 20 Thaha: 44), that is, speak kindly.

Indonesian Muslim Society in America (IMSA) is one of the Muslim Indonesian communities in America. The IMSA mailing list is used as a communication media to study about Islam and other matters of interests in the spirit of Islam. Observing the emails, specifically those discuss Islamic religion, they believe that studying Islam is not merely studying about the content of the teachings but also as the moment of practicing the Islamic teaching itself such as speaking politely as posted by one of the member '*semoga diskusi ini menjadi lebih sehat dan cenderung pada watawa shaubil haq watawa shaubish shabr*' (Hopefully the discussion proceeds smoothly and towards pointing one another patiently towards the truth). However, it is also observed that some of the participants perceive speaking politely is not their very main concern. They consider speaking the truth is more important because it is the way to defend Islam and to get reward, not anger, from God.

As face refers to the identity people claim or attribute to each other in specific social situations (Tracy and Baratz, 1994: 287), the study analyses the communicative strategies that are enactment, support, or challenge of Islamic identities of the participants. The topic of discussion chosen in the mailing list is about Islam and the reason for choosing the topic is because it has potential to reveal expressions of linguistic politeness even as it encourages participation of the members, since it is a topic of interest to everyone.

Brown and Levinson (1987) introduce the term 'face-saving act' in contradictory to 'face-threatening act' as the explanation for polite and impoliteness. In addition to this, Watts (2003) introduces the middle ground or the ground between the two acts as 'politic behaviour' which is concerned with a neutral zone in which the language used is normative, neither to save nor to threat the faces of the participant. The term 'dispreferred utterance' is introduced by Schegloff (2007) as referring to impoliteness. In the study, the terms polite and dispreferred languages were used to analyze the data and the term politic language were used to help recognizing the two.

The study discusses the ideology of Islam in Indonesian linguistic politeness system. The focus of the study was expressing disagreement. The research problems are: 1) how is the structure of communication in the email threads? 2) what are the politeness strategies used in expressing disagreement in the email threads?; 3) What are considered as dispreferred utterances in the email threads?; 4) How are the politeness strategies and the dispreferred utterances reflect the ideology of Islam in Indonesian linguistic politeness system?

## Research Methods

The population of the research was the emails posted to the mailing list by the members of Indonesian Moslem Society in America (IMSA) in the topic of Islam. The sample was the email threads triggered by an article entitled '*Mendeteksi Virus Liberal*' (Detecting the liberal virus), which followed by four, more-focused topics of discussion derived from the first, chronologically: *Kaca Retak* (Cracked mirror), *Apakah Islam Agama yang Sempurna?* (Is Islam a Perfect Religion), *Apakah status ke-Islam-an JJ?* (Is JJ a good Muslim?); and *Memutus Rantai Permusuhan* (Breaking the chain of enmity) which cover 57 emails during the period of April 26, 2011 to Mei 16, 2011 and written by 25 members of the IMSA.

The method of study was discourse analysis (Schiffrin, 1994). The procedure of collecting data were: a) identifying the structure of communication in the email threads; b) identifying the expressions of disagreement; c) identifying politeness strategies used and dispreferred utterances; d) categorizing the politeness strategies and dispreferred utterances; Data were analysed to find out how the politeness strategies and dispreferred utterances reflect or actualize the implementation of the ideology of Islam in the emails.

## Results and Discussion

### *The Structure of the Email Threads*

Before presenting the data, it is considered necessary to present the structure of communication in the emails based on the number of moves, as shown in Figure 1, as the following:

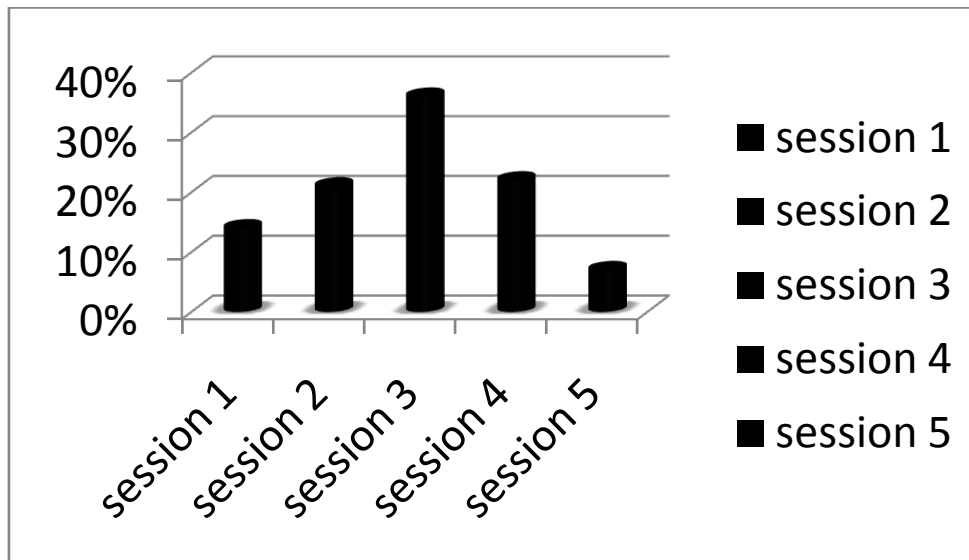


Figure 1. The Number of Moves in Each Session of Discussion

The number of moves in each session reflects the level of participation given by the members to the discussion in the mailing list. The biggest number (35,6%) occurs in session three of the discussion titled 'Is Islam a perfect religion' followed by two topics of similar number of moves which are 'Cracked mirrors' (22%) and 'Is JS a good Muslim?' (22%). From the Graph, it is understood that the discussion on the topic of 'Is Islam a perfect religion' is the most challenging topic to the participant 35,6%), followed by "Cracked Mirrors" (22%), "Is JS a good Muslim?" (22%), "Detecting Liberal Virus" (13,6%), and "Breaking the Chain of Enmity" (6,8%).

In addition, the speech acts occur in the moves include: a) initiating the topic of discussion, b) thanking/appreciating, c) criticizing, d) defending one another, e) showing interest by posing questions, f) clarifying by providing argumentation, g) complimenting, honouring, and praying for one another; h) making jokes on others, gossiping, making the situation more critical, and h) threatening others.

In session 1, there are 8 moves occurred in the session involve the speech acts as the following:

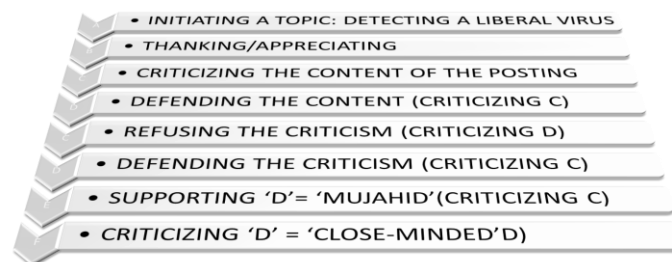


Figure 2. The Structure of Communication of Session 1

Looking at the moves, there are two opposing parties formed directly dealing with the first issue *Detecting Liberal Virus*. The first party includes C and F and the second party involves D and E. The area of disagreement lies in the references used in interpreting 'freedom' from 'chaos'. C believes that western theories that he knows can best explain the issue. F, who is in agreement with C, also believes that Muslim people should open their mind to find the truth even from non-Muslim experts. Meanwhile D, and he is supported by E, believes that western theories are misleading, so he suggests C to study more from Muslim theories, as presented in Figure 3.

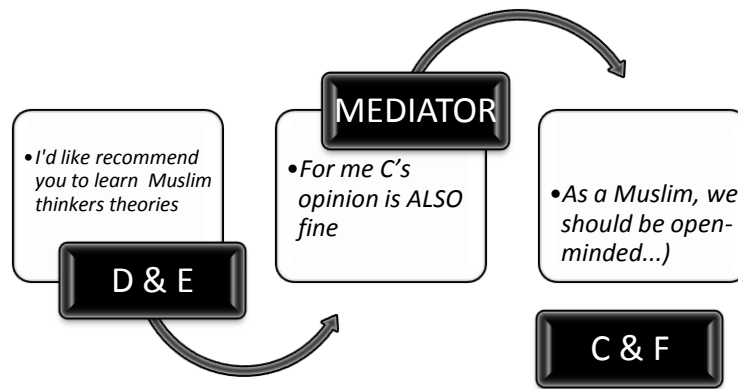


Figure 3. The Opposing Parties and the Mediator in Session 1

From the chart, it is clearly seen that D&E are in the opposition to C&F in their opinion on whether or not Muslim thinkers should refer to non-Muslims theorists. As written in the left side column, D&E believe that Muslim thinker's theories are the best references to talk about Islam. However, the right side box where C&F's opinion lays state a Muslim should have an open mind to learn about non-Muslim thinkers theories as well. As found in most discussions, there is always email writer (s) who play(s) the role as a mediator

### ***The Expression of Disagreement***

Some examples of the expression of disagreement are presented here. In the topic of 'Detecting Liberal Virus', D labels C as western-minded which C (and F) refuse. D writes,

*'you must be in the school at the moment ... I'd like recommend you to learn Muslim thinkers theories as well... your claimed "educated" comments seemed to me very demeaning, sarcastic, and judgemental...'*

The argument, which is written in English instead of Indonesian pragmatically, means that D proclaims himself to be an educated person and as an educated person he claims C's opinion as "educated" in quotation mark, which means 'not really educated.' Clause 'you must be in the school at the moment' implies that D emphasizes the fact that C is still in his school years which pragmatically means that D proclaims himself as having passed the school years. In another words, D underestimates C's education and knowledge about Islam.

E supports D by writing,

*Sepertinya udara panas di dalam dada lantaran masih harus terus memperjuangkan Syari'ah di TN semakin menguatkan aqidah dan mendidihkan darah mujahid yang selalu ingin mengibarkan panji2 Islam. Subhanallah. (I know that you are fighting for shari'ah in TN and understand very well why statements like C's make you furious. You are such an Islamic hero. Subhanallah)*

The statement pragmatically means that E claims D as far better than C in his Islamic knowledge and commitment. According to E, D is an Islamic hero (a *mujahid*). The use of the final word '*subhanallah*' implies that E is proud of D because Allah has chosen him to defend Islam, among others, from wrong interpretation. At the same time, it implies that D does not really like C and he underestimates him too.

On the other side we have F who is on C's side. He writes,

*Sebagai seorang Muslim seyogyanya kita memiliki pemikiran yang luas. Ibarat kapal kita berlayar ke negeri-negeri yang jauh sebelum akhirnya berlabuh di pelabuhan terakhir. Pelabuhan yang sejati. Sebagai seorang Muslim, seyogyanya kita membuka cakrawala seluas-luasnya karena kebenaran adalah milik umat manusia. Seorang Muslim, karena keimanannya kepada Allah, tidak pernah ragu apalagi gentar mempelajari pemikiran dan filsafat apa pun. Entah itu liberal, entah itu progresif, entah itu fundamentalis. Semuanya dikembalikan kepada dirinya dan diputuskan lewat nalar sehatnya yang mendapat bimbingan wahyu Ilahi. (As a Muslim, we should have a wide firmament. Just like a ship, we should travel far away before we stop at the last seaport, the real seaport. As a Muslim, we should be open-minded because the truth belongs to human beings whoever they are (Muslims or non-Muslims). As a Muslim, because he believes in God, he should have no doubt in studying other*

*philosophies no matter if they are liberal, progressive, and fundamentalist. All can be understood by his own logic, which is under the guidance of God).*

From F's statement we understand that he opposes D's opinion on referring only to Muslim thinkers when talking about Islam. It implies that he agrees with C and sees C as a good Muslim too because a good Muslim, according to him, is someone who has bravery to see other truths besides the ones he finds in Muslim theorist's statements. F considers C is also under the guidance of Allah, just as the other participants are. Therefore, F's interpretation on C is contradictory with D's and E's.

Observing the heat between the two parties, a member tries to mediate and writes,

*Bagi saya pribadi, pandangan dan yang disampaikan oleh ... juga tidak salah, hanya masih perlu ditambah lagi di kemudian hari. Namun, karena saat ini bab pelajarannya sedang sampai di situ... ya ndak pa-pa (For me C's opinion is just fine, it only needs some enlightenment. However, if he is now still in that chapter, it's just fine).*

The statement implies that the writer agrees with D to say that C is still studying on the case. However, he also sees C as someone who is still in the process of learning. In addition, he considers his opinion as something that will do no harm either on Islam or on other Muslims. However, he does not elaborate the enlightenment that C still needs.

In the topic 'Is Islam a perfect religion', the participants argue about the perfection of Islam. G and other participants believe that Islam is a perfect religion in the meaning that it is always relevant to all situation in the present and the future. However, F believes that some of the ayahs in the Qur'an are not relevant anymore to the present. G argues the opinion by writing,

*Apakah pernyataan "Masalahnya adalah siapa yang masih mau memelihara hamba sahaya di zaman modern seperti ini? Ini kan artinya ayat ini sudah tidak sesuai lagi dengan kondisi dan situasi sekarang ini? adalah pendapat individu Mas Jajang atau mungkin pendapat Institusi seperti asal sekolah atau sekelompok peminat Islam??? Saya masih merenung-renung, jadi yang keluar sebagian besar masih pertanyaan Mas Jajang (Does your statement "who wants to keep slaves nowadays" mean that the ayah is no more relevant to the present situation? Is it your individual opinion or the opinion of a particular institution? I am still thinking about this, that is why I can only quote your statement for now).*

In his question, G implies that F's opinion on the ayah of slavery - which F considers not relevant anymore- is contradictory to his previous knowledge and he is eager to know whether it is F's individual or institutional opinion. G clearly opens his mind to the statement although he also admits that he is trying to oppose it by giving better argument. By asking the possibility of the opinion as institutional, G considers the statement serious and alerts about it since it is contradictory to what he believes. So when F once again emphasizes his opinion that the ayah is truly not relevant anymore to the present situation by saying,

*"Saya mengatakan ayat ini tidak relevan lagi kecuali kita memiliki tafsir lain. Wallohua'lam bishawab. (I am saying that the ayah is no more relevant except that we have different interpretation on it. Only Allah knows everything), G replies, "Terimakasih, sebuah ringkasan yang jelas dan menambah wawasan" (Thank you, your summary has widen my firmament)-*

*which is a short reply that shows his intention to step back from the forum, perhaps because he needs time to study more about the topic in order to be able to oppose the opinion? However, F finds G a good partner to chat with and continues writing to him,*

*Ayat "alyanma akmalu," hemat saya, tidaklah menunjukkan Islam agama yang sempurna, namun memberi tahu Nabi dan kaum Muslim bahwa proses pewayhuan sudah selesai, misi sudah dilaksanakan. Itu saja. **Penafsiran saya bisa saja salah.** Namun bagi saya pernyataan bahwa Islam agama yang sempurna, dalam pengertian tidak membutuhkan apa pun, tak lekang oleh panas, tak lapuk oleh hujan, sulit diterima. Banyak sekali ayat al-Qur'an yang sudah tidak sesuai lagi dengan perkembangan peradaban manusia, karena yang terakhir senantiasa berubah (The ayah 'alyauma akmalu, according to me does not mean Islam as a perfect religion. To me it means the process of revelation is finished. **My interpretation can be wrong.** However, if Islam is considered as always relevant to human culture is not acceptable since the culture is always changing. There are so many ayahs in the Qur'an, which is no more relevant).*

In the statement, F again emphasizes his refusal to say that Al Quran will always be relevant to the development of human culture. However, he also writes, 'my interpretation can be wrong' which means that he is still studying about it and there is a possibility that his opinion might change later in the

future. Knowing that G shows decreasing interest on the topic, other member who finds the topic challenging too (Q), takes over the turn and writes,

*Indah sekali penuturan Mas Jajang ini. Bahwa pemahaman kita tentang Islam mengalami perubahan dari waktu ke waktu, saya setuju. Bahwa kita tidak bisa mengklaim kesempurnaan pemahaman kita terhadap agama Islam, saya juga setuju. Tetapi kalau mengatakan bhw Islam ibarat rumah salah desain yang ketebuan belangnya sepeninggal nabi Muhammad, dan karenanya tidak bisa disebut agama yang sempurna, saya tidak setuju (The words you choose are very beautiful. I agree to say that our understanding about Islam is changing from time to time. I also agree to say that our understanding about Islam is not perfect. However, I do not agree with your statement when you say Islam after Muhammad is like a wrong-design house, which makes it not a perfect religion).*

In the statement, Q appreciates the way F puts his opinion into words. It implies that he is influenced by the way F argues on the topic. However, he mentions that the beauty of the words does not mislead him. He is capable to localize the statements he agrees with and the ones he does not. Perhaps he sees it important to do, so the next responses either from F or/and other participants would be focused on the area of 'disagreement'.

Other participant (S) shows his understanding on Q's intention and supports him when he writes, *So basically, mas Rois, the problem is not Islam. Islam is not the problem. The problem is the actualization of Islam, the realization of Islam, the interpretation of Islam, the thinking of Islam and so on ... kira2 ?Mohon maaf kalau salah. (I'm sorry if I'm wrong)*

In the statement, S writes to Q, not to F, which implies that he agrees with Q's opinion. It also implies that S knows Q well but not F. Using English in his email might also mean that both Q and S are educated persons and have learned enough about the topic.

Triggered by F's opinion on the non-relevancy of some of the ayahs in the Qur'an, many participants start questioning about F and the quality of his religion. In the topic "Cracked Mirrors?" for example, H writes,

*Pak, terimakasih atas penjelasannya. Kalau boleh saya ingin mengajukan beberapa pertanyaan lagi sbb: 1. Saat Bapak memutuskan untuk beragama (memeluk agama), apa alasan/dasarnya? 2. Saat Bapak memutuskan ber-Islam (beragama Islam bukan yang lainnya), apa juga alasan/dasarnya? Mohon pencerahannya. (Mr..., thank you for the explanation. If you don't mind I would like to ask several questions: 1) When you decide to choose Islam as your religion, what is your consideration?; 2) When you decide to live as the way Islam teaches you to, what is your consideration? Please give me some enlightenment).*

In the statement, it seems that H sees F not satisfied with Islam, so he is curious about the reason why F chooses Islam as his religion. However, he is open-minded and shows a positive attitude to F when he writes, "Please give me some enlightenment." Other participant (N) is also questioning about the quality of F's Islam. She writes,

*Bolehkah saya bertanya tentang ke-Islaman Bapak? (Mohon maaf, ilmu saya sedikit sekali dan saya suka to the point, saya juga tidak pandai merangkai kata-kata). (May I ask about your Islam?(I'm so sorry, my knowledge is only a little and I tend to speak frankly, I am neither able to speak flowery).*

The phrase "May I" seems to be successful in deriving sympathy from F who writes, *Saya adalah seorang Islam, dilahirkan dari keluarga Islam, sekolah di sekolah Islam, dan bekerja di pusat pengkajian Islam. Saya dalam proses 'becoming' instead of 'being' Muslim (I am a Muslim, was born in a Muslim family, went to Islamic schools, and work in an Islamic research center. I am in the process of 'becoming' Muslim instead of 'being' Muslim).*

By the statement, F emphasizes that his 'uncommon' ideas about Islam religion is not without any adequate background knowledge. At the same time, F implies that he is in the brotherhood with other Muslims include the members of the mailing lists.

However, many participants does not see F as belong to the brotherhood. U writes, *"Oh ternyata Pak ... ini belum muslim, dalam proses becoming muslim, artinya bahkan belum bersyahadat? Pada awalnya saya kira beliau ini JIL atau Islam Liberal" (Oh, I now understand that Mr... is not a Muslim yet, in the process of becoming Muslim, which means that he not yet pronounce himself as a Muslim. In the beginning I thought he is a Liberalist." Other participant writes, "Has anybody read novel 'Kemi' by Adian Husaini? Hopefully F is not like Kemi..."*

F clearly does not like U's statement and writes,

*Saya ingin klarifikasi beberapa hal, karena email ... saya anggap keterlaluan, melakukan tuduhan keji (sesat, pemelintiran segala macam, saya belum bersyahadat).Mari kita bermujadalah dengan kata-kata yang baik. Begitu bukan pesan Al Qur'an! (I would like to clarify some things since I consider the email is unacceptable and has rude accusation (I am an astray, misleading, not pronouncing myself yet as a Muslim). Let us have a good discussion since Al Qur'an tells us to do so).*

### **Politic, Polite, and Dispreferred Utterances in the Email Threads**

The language used by the participants has triggered the use of politic, polite, and dispreferred utterances. The politic utterances are those which are interpreted as the participant's move in pointing one another toward the truth; the polite utterances are those which are interpreted as the participant's move in pointing toward the truth while maintaining his collaboration with others which makes him choose not to threaten the face of other people; and dispreferred utterances which are those interpreted as the participant's pointing toward the truth but not maintaining his collaboration with others which makes him choose to threaten the face of other people.

The distribution of politic, polite, and impolite utterances in the email threads can be explained as follows: The percentage of the polite and impolite utterances is not very significant: 34% for polite utterances and 37% for dispreferred utterances, and the rest 29% for politic behaviour utterances. This again proves the previous statement that participants believe that they can either choose to merely point towards the truth, point towards the truth while maintaining good relationship, and point towards the truth without any needs for maintaining good relationship.

Back to session 1 of the discussion, the participants are split into two groups concerning their acceptance of F and his opinion about Islam. The data show that some of the participants are open-minded to F's interpretation on the Qur'an, thus slowly approach the writer and treat him patiently (doing a face-saving act). Meanwhile, some participants refuse to do so and directly try to find and expose publicly every single fault in the statements written by F (doing a face-threatening act). However, there is a middle ground in between in which the participant simply telling the truth without any effort of doing either a face-saving act and a face threatening act.

One of the example of the open-minded participant who has treated F patiently and which is interpreted as **polite utterance** is as the following,

*Indah sekali penuturan ... Bahwa pemahaman kita tentang Islam mengalami perubahan dari waktu ke waktu, saya setuju. Bahwa kita tidak bisa mengklaim kesempurnaan pemahaman kita thd agama Islam, saya juga setuju. Tetapi kalau mengatakan bhw Islam ibarat rumah salah desain yang ketabuan belangnya sepeninggal nabi Muhammad, dan karenanya tidak bisa disebut agama yang sempurna, saya tidak setuju. (I really appreciate the choices of words you made which are so beautiful to me. I agree to say that our understanding about Islam is changing over time. I also agree to say that our understanding about Islam is not perfect. However, I do not agree to say that Islam after Mohammad is no more perfect).*

In the statement, it is clear that the writer has taken some time to try to understand the idea posted by the previous writer. Before expressing his disagreement on the issue, he starts by posing the good things in the opinion and declaring the parts of the opinion he agrees and the one he does not. He clearly shows his care and patience.

Contradictory utterance is seen through the quotation,

*'Oh ternyata .... belum muslim, dalam proses becoming muslim, artinya bahkan belum bersyahadat? Pada awalnya saya kira beliau ini JIL atau Islam Liberal'(So he is not yet a Muslim, just in the process of becoming Muslim which means that he has not declared himself as Muslim? In the beginning, I have prejudiced him as liberalist).*

In this quotation, the writer purposely expose the literal meaning of the statement *becoming Muslim*, which to him, means "*not yet Muslim*". This is interpreted as **dispreferred utterance**.

The same situation occur in between those who points one another toward the truth and those who do it patiently in the discussion on topic *Cracked mirrors* and *Is JJ a good Muslim?* Again, some of the participants approach the writer slowly and patiently thus give him chances to expose himself sufficiently before they provide him different perspectives on the issue. Meanwhile, some participants refuse to provide such chances since they believe astray thinkers are dangerous so F should be directly guided to the right path. As we see, the three groups of participants who choose to produce respectively politic, polite, and dispreferred utterances believe that they choose to behave the way they do because they follow and obey God's rules in defending Islam.

### **Polite Language**

The polite utterances involves five categories, they are: a) professing personal-inadequacy on the matter at hand; b) posing questions with the expectation that the answers will not be astray; c) referring to Al Qur'an/Al Hadits and the precedents set by other pious Muslims; d) complimenting, honouring, and praying for one another.

#### **Professing personal-inadequacy on the matter at hand**

In the strategy, the email writer tries to be polite by emphasizing his inadequacy on the topic being discussed. A participant for example writes, *Sengaja saya memulai dengan Basmallah agar mendapat penjagaan dan petunjuk yang lebih dari Allah Swt (I purposely recite Bismillah before starting to write in order to have God's guidance).* The statement implies that without the kindness of God what one understands as true can be untrue without he realises it. The writer clearly emphasizes his need of God's protection and guidance on whatever he writes to avoid sin. Other example, a participant writes, *Wallahua'lam bissawab (Only Allah knows everything)* in the end of his elaboration. By this statement, it is also very clear that the writer admits his limited knowledge and he is humbling himself in front of God on what knowledge he shares in the milist.

The strategy of professing personal-inadequacy on the matter at hand is not only used to humble oneself in front of God but also to humble oneself in front of other human being. A participant for example writes "*Mohon dikoreksi dan ditambahkan bila ada yang salah dan kurang*" (Please correct me if I am wrong)." Another participant writes, "*Semoga saya tidak salah*"(Hopefully I am not wrong). Both statements pragmatically mean that the writer states his limited knowledge on the matter. However, the members of the milist must also understand the most important pragmatic meaning of the statements discussed above, i.e. the warning to the participants that they also can be wrong so the wisest thing to do is to humble oneself to one another. So rather than merely stating their opinion on something or sharing their knowledge about something, in doing so the participants humble themselves in front of God and other human beings.

#### **Posing questions with the expectation that the answers will not be astray**

The second polite strategy to respond to statements that one does not agree is to pose questions. By asking questions, the reader takes a careful step in his judgement to the email writer. A reader for example asks,

*"Bolehkah saya bertanya tentang ke-Islam-an Bapak? (Mohon maaf, ilmu saya sedikit sekali dan saya suka to the point, saya juga tidak pandai merangkai kata-kata). (Would you mind if I ask you about your Islam? (I am sorry, my knowledge is very limited and I always speak frankly, and I cannot speak flowery language))?"*

In the question, the reader clearly shows his concern on the Islam quality of the previous writer. She takes a careful step in judging him although it is clear that she has got a negative assessment on it. However, she expects contradictory fact, i.e. the email writer is a good Muslim. She tries to be polite by posing questions so the person gets the chance to expose himself to the audience that he is a good Muslim. The email writer seems to appreciate the chance and replies politely,

*Ibu ..., terima kasih atas tanggapannya.Saya adalah seorang Islam, dilahirkan dari keluarga Islam, sekolah di sekolah Islam, dan bekerja di pusat pengkajian Islam. (Mam...thank you for the response. I am a Muslim, was born as a Muslim, went to Islamic schools, and work in the center for Islamic studies).*

With the reply, the negative judgment on the email writer is vanished because the fact is he is a good Muslim.

Similar situation happens in another email, such as

*Pak..., terimakasih atas penjelasannya. Kalau boleh saya ingin mengajukan beberapa pertanyaan lagi sbb: 1. Saat Bapak memutuskan untuk beragama (memeluk agama), apa alasan/dasarnya? 2. Saat Bapak memutuskan ber-Islam (beragama Islam bukan yang lainnya), apa juga alasan/dasarnya? Mohon pencerahannya. (Sir..., thank you for the explanation. If you don't mind I would like to ask some more questions, such as: 1. When you decided to choose Islam as your religion, what is your consideration? When you decided to live as a Muslim, what is your consideration? Please give me some enlightenments).*



In the email above, the reader asks the email writer about his considerations when he decides to choose Islam and to be a Muslim. By asking questions, the reader gives a chance for the email writer to expose his good statement on the case that he is a good Muslim. By this effort, it is clear that the reader does not expect that the answer will be astray. The response from the email writer is also positive on the question. He writes,

*Saya percaya jalan menuju Tuhan banyak. Dan saya memutuskan untuk menggunakan kendaraan bernama ISLAM untuk menuju ke sana. Saya yakin kendaraan ini bandal dan bisa mengantarkan saya sampai tujuan (I believe the road to God is many. I decide to choose ISLAM as my vehicle. I believe that this is a good vehicle and can take me there).*

By this reply, again the reader's expectation is fulfilled. The email writer is not an astray person and he has got a chance to prove it because the questions sent by the reader.

### **Referring to Al Qur'an/Al Hadits and the precedents set by other pious Muslims**

When the heat increases between the participants, another polite way to warn each other is by writing statements that referring to Al Qur'an/Al Hadits and the precedents set by other pious Muslims. A participant writes, *Mari kita bermujadalah dengan kata-kata yang baik. Begitu pesan Al Qur'an (Let us discuss the case by using good words. That is how Al Qur'an teaches us)*. By referring to Al Qur'an, the email writer warns the participant to behave as told by Al Qur'an. Another participant writes, *Mari kendurkan dulu urat syaraf dan teduhkan hati dengan menyimak ini. Sambil rileks saja yah? ... Akal Mencari Tuhan MP3. (Let us rilex by listening to the MP3: logic searches for God)*. Indirectly, the reader warns the email writer about the danger of searching for God through logic. However, he finds also the media she suggested to listen to (MP3) as relaxing and fun so it is good to calm the heat. Another participant refers to model persons to warn other participants to behave; that is by following the model persons. He writes,

*Waduh kok responnya jadi begini...Ini diskusinya sudah menjurus personal sifatnya. Isinya tidak lagi soal bagaimana mendukung atau menolak suatu argumen...Berkali-kali Mas ..., Pak ..., dan juga Mas ....sudah memberi contoh bagaimana berdiskusi dengan santun... (Why does the discussion go on this way...It is personal already...not providing logical arguments anymore. Many times brother..., Mr..., and brother ...have given the models of how to argue on a particular case.*

### **Complimenting, honouring, and praying for one another**

When the participants realize that they are in the area of disagreement, they also try to be polite by complimenting, honouring, and praying for one another. A participant addresses the email writer by *Mas ... yang cendekia (Dear smart brother ...)*. By this, the reader means the email writer is logical although he also pragmatically implies that logic can also be misleading. Other participant writes, *Terimakasih, sebuah ringkasan yang jelas dan menambah wawasan (Thank you, a very clear summary and widen my firmament)*. It pragmatically means that the reader is not influenced at all by the statement posted by the writer although he can follow the logic. Another example is, *Prihal pendapat beberapa agama mempunyai Tuhan yang sama, dan ada kemungkinan agama selain Islam adalah juga benar? Apa iya? ...Semoga Mas ... sebat selalu dan sukses.(About your opinion on the same God for several religions, and the possible truth in other religions besides Islam? Do you think so?...Wish you healthy and successful)*. The question, *Do you think so?* means the participant does not agree with the previous writer's statement. However, he prays for him and writes, *Wish you healthy and successful*.

### **Dispreferred Utterance**

Those who are categorised dispreferred utterance include: a) those who complimenting themselves; b) those who criticize others, making jokes on others, gossiping others, and making the situation more critical; and c) those who threaten others.

### **Complimenting themselves**

After judging the email writer as not a good Muslim, a reader writes, *Beryukur bahwa kita terlahir dari rahim orang-orang shalibah,...meyakini bahwa Islam sudah sempurna (We have to thank God that we were born from a good Muslimah womb, ... who believes that Islam is a perfect religion)*. By this statement, the writer compliments himself and other participants who have similar opinions with him. At the same time, he judges the email writer as not born from a good Muslimah womb ...so he does not believe that Islam is a perfect religion.

### ***Criticizing others, making jokes on others, gossiping others, and making the situation more critical***

The behaviour which is considered impolite also those, which criticize others, making, jokes on others, gossiping others, and making the situation more critical. A reader writes,

*Manusia tidak perlu sombong atau berlagak dengan logikanya (A human being does not need to be arrogant by boasting with his logic).* This statement pragmatically means that the previous writer is criticized as arrogant and boasting with his logic. Other participant writes,

*Allah SWT menganugerahi akal kepada setiap manusia untuk salah satunya manusia itu sendiri menunjukkan apakah dirinya ini konyol atau justru terpuji (God gives logic to every human being for one among other reasons, i.e. to prove himself as vain or praiseworthy).*

This statement means that the author is making jokes on the previous writer as someone who has got logic but he is vain. Another example is,

*Buruk muka, cermin dibelah. Otak manusia adalah otak yang sempurna...oh ya?...Ada satu lagi ajaran yang belum ada di dalam Islam. Yakni yang mengajarkan bahwa sebenarnya ada satu tuhan lagi yakni nafsu. Oh, satu lagi...iblis. (you have the defect but you consider Islam is the defect. You said, human brain is perfect. You are such a fool...There is one more god, i.e. desire. Oh, one more ...devil).*

The email means that the previous writer is astray because he has his logic and desire as his God.

### ***Threatening others***

Threatening others is also found in the email. A participant, for example writes to another participant,

*Hati-hati Anda menuduhkan kesesatan pada orang lain...Iblis menjadi kafir karena sifat kesombongan di dalam dirinya. (Be careful for accusing someone astray...iblis becomes kafir because he is arrogant).*

This statement implies that the writer threatens the previous writer that he will end as iblis because of his arrogance.

### **The Ideology of Islam in Indonesian Linguistic Politeness**

The most interesting things to put forward from the data is that politeness strategies is closely related to the matter at hand. Politeness studies dealing with religion corpus, as the study shows, derive more perspectives in understanding politeness. The analysis on the emails posted in the milist at least proves to things: 1) The participants are proud of being Muslim; They show big responsibility in studying about Islam but also sensitive and alert on new perspective in interpreting Islam even from Muslim brothers; 2) In the email communication they teach and learn from each other about Islam and about how to behave as a good Muslim; 3) The responsibility in one side and the sensitivity (shown by more or less prejudice) on the other side has driven the participant to react the way they do. The responsibility with little prejudice will derive more patient attitude (*watawa shaubish shabr'*: the patience is more prominent), while the responsibility with more prejudice will derive less patient attitude (*watawa shaubil haq*: the truth is more prominent). Therefore, it is between telling the truth and telling the truth patiently that the politeness occurs in the corpus of Muslim communication as observed in the milist.

What is accepted in the emails are discussions and arguments by using good words:

*Mari kita bermujadalah dengan kata-kata yang baik. Begitu bukan pesan Al Qur'an! (Let us discuss the case by using good words. That is how Al Qur'an teaches us). In addition, it is also expected that the participants avoid enmity by criticizing those who have different opinions (Saya cuma menebak saja, bahwa posting ini dipost Mas ... untuk mengingatkan kita agar menghindari permusuhan dengan mencela orang lain yang berbeda pendapat (I am just guessing that the posting posted by brother ... is to warn us to avoid enmity by criticizing others who have different opinions from us).*

These two pillars are the code of conduct for email writers: putting forward good reasons and avoiding enmity to keep Muslim brotherhood. Therefore, whatever the content of the posting, as long as it fulfils the two criteria, it will be acceptable for the members or interpreted as politic behaviour. The postings, which will be assessed as dispreferred, will be those emails without good reasons such as attacking individuals, gossiping, and making jokes on individual. In contrary, the postings will be judges as polite when it fulfils the criteria of good reasons and keeping Muslim brotherhood plus complimenting, praying for each other, showing appreciation and patience. Therefore, the most challenging area in the communication in the milist occurs in the range of two pillars: argumentation (giving a statement of belief to support or to reject an opinion) and keeping Muslim brotherhood.

As the main objective of the communication as observed in religion corpus is not to give information or to entertain each other but to share the truth, the communication becomes very sensitive: sensitive to the sense of believing Islam as the only religion which encourage the responsibility for defending Islam from wrong thinkers, and sensitive to reward and punishment got from God as resulted from the way they think about Islam and the way they treat Muslim brothers. Therefore, politeness strategies as observed in religion corpus cover mainly to area, i.e. in sharing the religion content and in conducting certain behaviour as demanded by the religion.

As observed from the emails posted in the milist, when the content introduces new perspective, the response will be of three kinds: 1) to agree; 2) to argue; and 3) to criticize. When different opinions arise, the expected behaviour is to argue and/or to argue patiently, not to criticize because Muslim brotherhood must be maintained. So it is very clear that the ideology that lies behind linguistic politeness is the ideology of *'watawa shaubil haq watawa shaubish shabr'* which means 'Muslims must point one another towards the truth and they must do it patiently.'

In accordance with the ideology, in practice, there are four strategies that the participants do to be polite, i.e. by : a) professing personal-inadequacy on the matter at hand; b) posing questions with the expectation that the answers will not be astray; c) referring to Al Qur'an/Al Hadits and the precedents set by other pious Muslims; and d) complimenting, honouring, and praying for one another. The four strategies clearly show slow and patient moves the email writers do to approach the matter and other participant as suggested by *watawa shaubish shabr*.

On the contrary, based on the ideology, those who are considered impolite include: a) those who compliment themselves; b) those who criticize others, making jokes on others, gossiping others, and making the situation more critical ; and c) those who threaten others. The three strategies reflect the impatient move conducted by the email writers to approach the matter and other participant. It is perhaps due to the need of prioritizing *watawa shaubil haq* and as the consequence paying less attention to considering Muslim brotherhood.

It is transparent that the email writers' consideration not mainly on maintaining smooth communication as suggested mostly by politeness theories. Their main consideration is to find the truth in Islam and at the same time to keep Muslim brotherhood. Both are regarded as similar importance. The success of achieving both will lead them toward the road to Allah. That is why *"watawa shaubil haq watawa shaubish shabr"* which means 'Muslims must point one another towards the truth and they must do it patiently cannot be separated from the system of linguistic politeness. For Indonesian where the majority of population is Muslim, the ideology of *"watawa shaubil haq watawa shaubish shabr"* is the ideology of Indonesian linguistic politeness.

For Indonesian, to be polite, is not only concerned with the present but is believed to have consequences for the hereafter. Indonesian people believe that by being polite, they will get reward from God. In contrary, by being impolite, they will get punishment. In Islamic schools, teachers educate the children to speak politely so they will get Allah's love. Mother will be angry with the impolite language used by their children because it will make God be angry with them. Mothers even warn the children that the impolite language they use will be written by angels who are accompanying them wherever they go so they will not be able to ignore it. They have to ask for forgiveness from God and from those whose heart they have to escape from sin. Therefore, it is very clear that the linguistic politeness system does not only include the material need such as to smoothen the communication but it also involves spiritual lives.

As linguistic politeness does not merely concern with communication and living in harmony with others, as previous theories suggest, the data also proves that being polite is part of one's self-actualization as obedient to God. The data show that the participant try to obey and warn other participant to obey, not the rule of communication, but the rules of God for communicating.

## Conclusion

In Indonesia, politeness is integrated into religious and social/political ideologies and it is integrated also into the system of linguistic politeness of Indonesian language. The ideology that lies behind linguistic politeness is the ideology of *"watawa shaubil haq watawa shaubish shabr"*, an Arabic phrase meaning 'Muslims must point one another towards the truth and they must do it patiently.'

This ideology is realised in four strategies, by: a) professing personal-inadequacy on the matter at hand; b) posing questions with the expectation that the answers will not be astray; c) referring to Al

Qur'an/Al Hadits and the precedents set by other pious Muslims; and d) complimenting, honouring, and praying for one another.

Based on the ideology, those who are considered impolite include: a) those who complimenting themselves; b) those who criticize others, making jokes on others, gossiping others, and making the situation more critical ; and c) those who threaten others.

It implies that linguistic politeness is not only concerned with the present but is believed to have consequences for the hereafter. In addition, linguistic politeness does not merely concern communication and living in harmony with others, as previous theories suggest, but more importantly it concerns one's self-actualization as obedient to God.

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