

UNMASKING LINGUISTIC POWER DYNAMICS: EXPLORING POLITENESS VIOLATIONS IN THE “FERDI SAMBO” COURTROOM

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Submitted:

Accepted:

Abstract: In the courtroom, all participants are expected to cooperate fully to clarify the case. This research aimed to investigate the types of politeness violations committed by the participants in the Ferdi Sambo case and the causes of these violations. The participants in this study included judges, the defendant, witnesses, advocates, and public prosecutors. This research employed a qualitative-descriptive approach. The techniques for analyzing the data included identification, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. During data identification, the violations were classified using Leech's (1983) politeness strategy theory. The findings revealed that the types of politeness violations included refusal, interruption, sarcasm, emotional outbursts, and non-verbal cues. Additionally, the causes of these violations were attributed to the participants' mood, emotions, and the pressure they experienced during the trial. This research provides significant benefits, particularly for English students, by enhancing their cultural awareness, professional communication skills, and conflict resolution abilities. Understanding politeness norms can help students become more aware of cultural differences in communication, which is essential for effective interaction in diverse contexts.

Keywords: Ferdi Sambo Case; Politeness; Violation; Courtroom;

INTRODUCTION

A language is a tool of communication (Thomas & Jenny, 1995). They add that as a tool of communication, a language is not only used to express intended meaning, but also to do something. Additionally, people usually used the strategies in communication in order to make their intention clear (Brown, Penelope, & Levinson, 1987). It means, a strategy in communication plays an important role for achieving effective, impactful, and purposeful communication. According to Revita and Oktavianus (2013), communication is a complex process, especially in formal situations where the people usually use formal expressions to demonstrate their politeness. Thus, politeness is one of the topics in language use especially, in pragmatism.

Furthermore, Brown, Penelope, and Levinson (1987) divide the politeness strategies as positive politeness, negative politeness, and offensive politeness. Positive politeness is as direct politeness means directly addressing the needs and desires of the speakers. The negative politeness is as indirect politeness means involving a more indirect way as using implicit language to avoid imposing on the speaker. The last is offensive politeness is more like joking or mocking that involves humour or sarcasm to convey a message indirectly. Additionally, Clark (1996) politeness involves speakers aligning themselves with their audience and they also demonstrate sharing knowledge and understanding. Hence, politeness serves as a lubricant for social

interactions, smoothing the rough edges of communication and promoting positive engagement between individuals.

Regarding politeness theories, Leech (1983) divides the politeness into six maxims namely, tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy maxims. Tact maxim means maximizing the expression of beliefs that imply benefit to others. Generosity is minimizing the expression of beliefs that express or imply benefit to self. Approbation is maximizing the expression of beliefs that express or imply praise of others. Modesty is minimizing the expression of beliefs that express or imply praise of self. Agreement means minimizing the expression of beliefs that express or imply disagreement with others. Lastly, sympathy means showing and understanding and empathy to others or showing a positive feeling. Furthermore, Leech (1983) explains the behaviours that violated the six principles of politeness as interrupting and ignoring social norms involving politeness violation since interrupting someone while speaking is impolite. He further says that the types of politeness violation are offensive, interrupting, being emotional, refusal, verbal cues, and sarcasm. Therefore, Culpeper (2011) argues that politeness violation can occur for various reasons namely, cultural differences, social power dynamics, intentional Face Threatening Acts (FTA), lack of awareness, mood and emotions, communication style differences, in group or out-group dynamics, and contextual factors.

Moreover, Correo (2014) also defines one of the functions of politeness. It is a tool for managing potential conflict, expressing respect, and fostering cooperation and the politeness strategy that uses appropriate language and tone are seen as essential for successful communication. Regarding politeness in the education field, it enhances communication in the educational setting because it gives clearness and respectful communication between teacher and students (Oandasan, 2021). Also, it promotes understanding and minimizes misunderstanding (Alafnan, 2014). It means, politeness facilitates a more effective teaching and learning process. Actually, people use politeness in their daily life especially when they have a conversation and it can be found in formal and informal situations (Kithenge, 2018). Thus, the conversation in the courtroom is one of the examples in formal situations.

Although people tend to use politeness strategies, there is a possibility that people do some violation in speaking (Elisya, 2018). According to Revita and Oktavianus (2013) politeness violation refers to behaviours or expressions that deviate from accepted social norms or convention related to courtesy, manners, and respectful communication. Ardi, Mangsor, and Ahmad (2021) add that violation in politeness can be actions or languages that are perceived as rude, disrespectful, or offensive particularly, in a cultural or social context. Then, it is very important for the students to learn the politeness violation since it is to understand how the people

navigate social interactions and consequences of breaching the politeness norm in different contexts.

Regarding politeness violation, there are four segmental aspects that need to be considered such as the use of word, particles, greeting, and hedges. For suprasegmental aspects, they are intonation and gestures (Ulandari & Ramdhani, 2023). Then, those aspects can influence the meaning of the intended meaning by the speakers. Besides, the politeness violation also can be found in the conversation (Elisya, 2018). Usually, the people expect that the listeners will give their participation in speaking but sometimes, they do not give their participation as it is required since many of them speak unclearly. Thus, if the people do it purposely, it means that they are violating politeness. According to Revita and Oktavianus (2013), the unclear conversation is often found in a particular place as in the courtroom.

In Indonesia, one of the cases that went viral in the year of 2022 is the Brigadier Yosua murder case. Nofriansyah Yosua Hutabarat or Brigadier Yosua was a police especially the aide of Ferdi Sambo. Ferdi Sambo is the head of the Police Propam Division. He became a defendant because he was suspected of being the perpetrator of murder of Brigadier Yosua. Therefore, in the court session of the Brigadier Yosua murder case, the participants in the courtroom do not always perceive the politeness principle because the participants sometimes violate politeness for various reasons. Revita and Oktavianus (2013) mention that there are some factors that influence people to violate politeness as the context and relationship. The setting and context of a conversation can give an impact to the politeness expectation and the relationship between communicators can affect the politeness as the people who have a close relationship may forgive the politeness violation. For these reasons, this research attempts to identify the types of politeness violations committed by the participants in the Ferdi Sambo case, particularly in the courtroom, using Leech's (1983) theory of politeness. Additionally, this research wants to investigate the causes of politeness violations based on Culpeper's (2011) theory, as word choices and diction are significant reflections of politeness (Leech, 1983). While several prior studies provide a foundation for this research as the studies conducted by Ardi, Mangsor, and Ahmad (2021), Ulandari and Ramdhani (2023), Rohmahwati and Yuliasri (2017), and Nisa, Rustono, and Haryadi (2021). These works primarily focus on politeness strategies and violations in general contexts. However, they do not explicitly explore the causes of politeness violations in courtroom settings, nor do they apply Leech's (1983) theory to a high-profile legal case such as the Ferdi Sambo trial. This indicates a clear research gap in understanding how and why politeness violations occur in high-stakes courtroom interactions.

In addition, the novelty of this research lies in its application of politeness theory to a real-world courtroom scenario, offering insights into how politeness strategies are challenged or

disregarded in legal discourse. By analyzing the Ferdi Sambo case, this study bridges the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical applications in a high-pressure setting. Furthermore, examining politeness violations in courtroom interactions contributes to the field of study by highlighting the role of language in professional and institutional communication. It enhances understanding of how politeness affects courtroom dynamics, conflict resolution, and perceptions of justice. This research is particularly relevant for students and professionals in English language education, cultural studies, and legal discourse analysis, as it promotes awareness of cultural and situational nuances in communication.

METHOD

The main objective of this research is to find out the types of politeness violation in the courtroom of Ferdi Sambo as the defendant of Brigadier Yosua murder case and the causes of politeness violation in the courtroom. Thus, the appropriate research approach in this research is qualitative approach, especially qualitative-descriptive research. According to Creswell (2015), the qualitative approach is used to explore the attribute of relationships, activities, situations, or materials. Also, the data refers to the words. Additionally, the data in this research were based on the speakers' utterances. Then, the researcher used descriptive analysis since descriptive research is based on the fact of language phenomena (Sudaryanto, 1993).

Regarding the data of this research, the data source was from the verbal language. The participants of this study were the judges, defendants, public prosecutors, advocates, and eyewitnesses. In the courtroom, every participant has his/her own way to make good communication. Also, they used the politeness strategy. However, the politeness violation still happened. Furthermore, in gathering the data, the researcher watched four sessions of trials as defendants of Ferdi Sambo. In the courtroom, Ricard Eliezer is as the eyewitness, two advocates, public persecutors and the judges. Then, this study used observational with non-participant observational technique. The observational method is by observing the participant language used (Sudaryanto, 1993).

The process of gathering the data where the researcher watched the session of Ferdi Sambo's trial at Jakarta, 13th December 2022. Also, taking note related to the types of politeness violation and the causes of the politeness violation in the courtroom of Ferdi Sambo's trial. The trial sessions were face-to-face conversation which indicates they will be full of politeness. Thus, the techniques in analysing data included data identification, data presentation and drawing conclusion. In data identification, the utterances of the speakers were classified based on the categories of politeness violation proposed by Leech (1983). Also, it identified the causes of politeness violation from Culpeper (2011) by analysing the context. Then, the text steps were presenting the data and drawing conclusions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study and discussion in relation to answer the research questions in this study as the types of politeness violations committed by participants in the Ferdi Sambo courtroom and the underlying causes of these violations. By employing Leech's (1983) politeness theory and Culpeper's (2011) framework on impoliteness, the study highlights how linguistic behavior in a high-stakes courtroom setting is influenced by emotional and situational factors. Thus, the followings are the findings of this study

The types of politeness violations

The study identified several types of politeness violations committed by the participants in the courtroom trial of Ferdi Sambo. The identified types of violations namely, refusal, interruption, sarcasm, emotional outbursts, and non-verbal cues. These violations, analyzed using Leech's (1983) theory of politeness, illustrate how participants in high-pressure environments deviate from expected linguistic norms.

Datum 1

Description: the advocates of Ferdi Sambo asked the eyewitness about the event at 5th July 2022. In the courtroom, the participants including advocates, eyewitnesses, and public prosecutors aimed to present their arguments persuasively to gain the judges' trust. The trial session involving Ferdi Sambo, with Ricard Eliezer serving as the eyewitness, was marked by intense tension and a heated atmosphere. On one side stood Ferdi Sambo and his legal team, while on the other were the public prosecutors, with the eyewitness positioned at the center of the proceedings.

- (a) Advocate: apakah anda pernah membuat surat pernyataan tanggal 5? (Have you ever made a formal statement on the 5th?)
 (b) Witness: pada saat tanggal 5 itu masih bohong (On the 5th, I was still lying)
 (a) Advocate: masih bohong? saudara berbohong? (Still lying?, were you lying at that time?)
 (a) Advocate: apakah kamu dalam tekanan waktu itu? (Were you under pressure at that time?)
 (b) Witness: Tidak dalam tekanan (I was not under pressure)
 (a) Advocate: pada tanggal 5 saudara menyampaikan dalam surat tersebut bahwa saudara tidak menembak. nanti kami perlihatkan buktinya. Di tanggal 5 Kenapa saudara masih bohong? (On the 5th, you stated in the letter that you did not shoot. Later, we will show the proof. On the 5th, why were you still lying?)
 (b) Witness: Saya masih bohong bapak (I was still lying sir)
 (a) Advocate: kenapa berbohong? (Why were you lying?)
 (b) Witness: Tidak ada bapak (Nothing, sir)
 (a) Advocate: Kenapa? (Why?)
 (b) Witness: Saya Masih bohong (I was still lying)
 (a) Advocate: kenapa berbohong? (Why were you lying?)
 (b) Witness: Karna masih bohong aja! (Because, I was still lying)
 (a) Advocate: Siapa yang suruh berbohong? (Who told you to lie?)
 (b) Witness: tidak ada, tidak ada yang suruh (No one, no one told me to lie)
 (a) Advocate: pada saat itu saudara dalam tekanan tidak? (At that time, weren't you under pressure?)
 (b) Witness: tidak pak, karna masih berbohong aja. (No sir, because I was still lying).

This conversation was between the eyewitness and advocate representing Ferdi Sambo. The witness was from the public prosecutor's side. In this conversation, the advocate of Ferdi Sambo asked about the event on 5th July 2022 and his reasons for lying at that time. However, the witness repeatedly avoided providing an explanation for the lie. Even though the advocate asked the same question multiple times. Advocate asked "*Why were you lying?*", then the witness answered

“*Nothing sir, because I was still lying*”. This behavior constituted a violation of politeness violation, as the witness refused to answer the advocate’s question without providing a valid reason. Additionally, the witness exhibited evasive behavior by persistently avoiding an explanation for the lie as he said: “*I was still lying because I was still lying*”. According to Leech (1983), refusal is classified as a type of politeness violation because it involves deliberately choosing not to respond to a question. Besides, refusal behavior is also considered impolite because it disrupts the cooperative principles of communication. It is in line with Nisa, Rustono, and Haryadi (2021) who state that cooperative principles of communication are fundamental to maintaining effective and respectful interactions, particularly in the formal settings as a courtroom. Rohmahwati and Yuliasri (2017) add that the refusal to answer a question without a valid reason violated the agreement maxim, which emphasizes cooperation and mutual consent in a conversation.

Datum 2

Description: This conversation captures an exchange between the advocate of Ferdi Sambo, a witness, the public prosecutor, and the judge during a courtroom trial. The discussion is focused on clarifying testimony given by the witness, with visible tension between the advocate and the prosecutor.

- (a) Advocate: saksi menyatakan Yosua paling berbeda sendiri dibandingkan senior ADC lainnya. Yosua digambarkan sebagai orang yang baik namun menurut saudara Ricard, Yosua seseorang yang temperamental dan beberapa kali keluar malam pergi ke tempat liburan (The witness stated that Yosua was the most different compared to other ADC seniors. Yosua was described as a kind person, but according to Ricard, he was temperamental and Yosua went out several times at night to clubs.)
- (b) Prosecutor: Apa yang mau di tanyakan? (what is the question?)
- (a) Advocate: saya mau tanyakan yang mulia. Apakah terkait yang saksi sampaikan diabsivor ini benar atau tidak cuman itu saja, apa bisa dijawab aja? kan saksi ini sudah jujur. (I would like to ask, Your Honor, whether what the witness mentioned in the absivor is true or not. That’s all I’m asking. Can you just answer it? The witness has already been honest.)
- (c) Witness: benar almarhum sering keluar malam sama saya juga. (That’s true! Almarhum (the deceased) often went out at night with me too)
- (a) Advocate: benar itu aja sebenarnya, jaksa jangan marah-marah dong (Right, that’s all. Prosecutor, there’s no need to get upset!).
- (b) Prosecutor: Bukan marah boss kita hanya menjelaskan (I’m not upset, boss. We are just explaining)
- (d) Judge: sudah-sudah jangan di tanggapi (Alright, alright, don’t respond!)
- (b) Prosecutor: omongannya kurang enak pak. dia katakan Saya marah-marah di sini (his words are inappropriate, sir. He said that I was upset here).

In this session, both the public prosecutor and advocate of Ferdi Sambo engaged in acts of politeness violation. The session initially involved a conversation between the advocate and the eyewitness. However, the public prosecutor suddenly interrupted by asking, “*Apa yang mau di tanyakan? (what is the question?)*”. This interruption constitutes a polite violation. According to Leech (1983), it is considered impolite to interrupt someone while they are speaking. It is supported by Revita and Oktavianus (2013). One of the examples of politeness violation is the behavior that disregards the fundamental principles of pragmatics in conversation, which emphasize maintaining respect and turn-taking. Additionally, both the advocate and the prosecutor displayed emotional reactions during the conversation. For instance, the advocate sarcastically said, “*jangan marah-marah dong (there is no need to get upset!)*”. This statement

was delivered in a sarcastic tone, especially with facial expressions or laughter, which further emphasized its sarcasm. Also, it was inappropriate humor especially in the formal setting of a courtroom, where such behavior undermines the seriousness of the proceedings. Similarly, Leech (1983) mentions that sarcasm can be perceived as a lack of tact since it often involves a hidden criticism that may offend the listener. Besides, it is in line with Elisya (2018). Elisya (2018) mentions that sarcasm belongs to politeness violation because it often involves saying something insincerely to criticize someone and it can violate politeness principles in formal context, especially in the courtroom.

Furthermore, the public prosecutor displayed heightened tension by saying *“Bukan marah boss kita hanya menjelaskan (I’m not upset boss, we are just explaining) and omongannya kurang enak pak, dia katakan Saya marah-marah di sini (his words are inappropriate, sir. He said that I was upset here)”*. In this context, the persecutor felt the need to clarify and justify his tone after being accused of being upset. It means that this defensive remark implies that the prosecutor was either genuinely trying to explain his reaction to the advocate’s sarcastic comment about being upset. According to Leech (1983), politeness in being emotional can show happy, sad, love, brave and anger sentences. Additionally, this action violates the principles of tact, agreement and sympathy maxims. This action can be caused by the pressure since in the courtroom there can be high-pressure situations then, it can make people have emotional responses, including sarcasm. It is in line with Nisa, Rustono, and Haryadi (2021). They mention that emotional responses, particularly in high-pressure situations such as courtrooms, may result in reduced adherence to politeness principles, as individuals focus on asserting power, defending themselves, or controlling the interaction.

Datum 3

Description: the conversation was between advocate, eyewitness, and public prosecutor. The situation in this conversation highlights rising tension in the courtroom. The advocate aggressively questions the witness about inconsistencies, demanding clarity and pressing for specific answers. The witness defensively explains being pressured by the advocate’s client and expresses difficulty recalling events.

(a) Advocate: dari ketiga Keterangan saudara dalam bab ini, ya ini tidak konsisten semua. Jadi, saya mau tanya yang mana yang benar (From the three statements or descriptions you provided in this chapter, none are consistent. I just want to ask, which one is true?).

(b) Witness: jadi begini Bapak dapat saya jelaskan biar bapak tidak menanyakan lagi tentang (Sir, may I explain? so you don’t have to ask about this again!).

(a) Advocate: Harus saya tanyakan! (I must ask!)

(b) Witness: Bapak bayangkan dari tanggal 8 Juli sampai di bulan Agustus itu saya di doktrin terus menerus oleh klien Bapak tentang skenario (Sir, you can imagine, from July 8th until August, I was continuously indoctrinated by your client about this scenario.)

(a) Advocate: Siapa yang doktrin? Dimana? (Who is indoctrinated you? Where?)

(b) Witness: di lantai 3! (on the third floor)

(c) Public prosecutor: Saudara tidak perlu sampai membentak (you don’t need to snap)

(b) Witness: saya mencoba mengingat-ingat kembali kejadian demi kejadian itu mengingat kembali kejadian tidak mudah (I am trying to recall each event step by step. Recalling events is not easy.)

(c) Public prosecutor: *penasehat hukum ini menanya sama saksi sudah menekan (This legal counsel has been pressing the witness while questioning).*

This courtroom session was highly tense and emotional. It was proven by the advocate's aggressive questioning, the witness's defensive responses about being "indoctrinated" and the prosecutor's intervention to address the advocate's tone. The utterances are "***Harus saya tanyakan! (I must ask!) and Siapa yang doktrin? Dimana? (Who indoctrinated you? Where?)***". In this part, the witness also responded with a raised voice, indicating a sense of frustration or distress, and pointed directly at the advocate. This gesture and tone suggest that the witness was feeling under pressure. The witness said "***Bapak bayangkan dari tanggal 8 Juli sampai di bulan Agustus itu saya di doktrin terus menerus oleh klien Bapak tentang scenario skenario (Sir, you can imagine, from July 8th until August, I was continuously indoctrinated by your client about this scenario.)***". The situation became tense as both parties raised their voices, which led to a violation of politeness due to their emotional reactions and the use of impolite body language. This aligns with Leech (1983), who notes that negative body language can be considered impolite, as it contradicts the maxim of generosity. Impolite body language often conveys a superior or condescending attitude. Ulandari and Ramdhani (2023) also state that negative body language, such as crossing arms or eye-rolling, can convey disrespect or a lack of empathy, undermining the cooperative nature of communication.

The causes of politeness violation

There are some reasons that the participants in the courtroom committed the politeness violation as when the witness showed a lack of cooperation in the courtroom. In other words, the witness showed unwillingness to cooperate or provide a consent in the conversation exchange. It was found that the underlying cause of this violation was attributed to the witness's emotional distress as expected from traumatic events surrounding the murder of Brigadir Yosua. According to Culpeper (2011), mood and emotion can be influencing the way people communicate. Mood and emotion can affect how people communicate because it influences how situations are understood, messages are interpreted, and responses are made (Ulandari and Ramdhani, 2023). Then, it can be said that people in a positive mood tend to interpret messages more optimistically and cooperate in conversations.

Additionally, another reason that makes the participant commit politeness violation is they are under pressure and mood or emotion because the courtroom is a high-stakes environment where participants, including advocates, prosecutors, and witnesses, are under constant scrutiny and expected to perform their roles effectively while addressing sensitive or contentious matters. According to Culpeper (2011), This heightened pressure can evoke strong emotional responses, such as frustration, defensiveness, or even sarcasm, as individuals struggle to navigate the

dynamic and often adversarial nature of legal proceedings. Furthermore, Culpeper (2011) explains that in a high-pressure environment, such as a courtroom, individuals may have heightened emotions, which can affect their behavior and communication style. This pressure may lead to emotional outbursts, confrontational tones, or the use of impolite language and body language, all of which can contribute to a violation of politeness norms.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the main objectives of this research are to find out the types of politeness violation in Ferdi Sambo's courtroom according to the theory of politeness proposed by Leech (1983) and to find out the causes of politeness violation based on Culpeper (2011). Hence, there were five politeness violations committed by the participants as the advocate, public prosecutor and witness. The politeness violations were refusal, interrupting, sarcasm, being emotional, and non-verbal cues. In addition, these actions violated the maxims of tact, agreement, sympathy, and generosity. Also, the causes that made the participants commit the politeness violations were participants' mood and emotion, as well as they were under pressure. Besides, among the five types of politeness violation, being emotional was dominant. There are some reasons why the participants committed the violation. It was because they felt insecure and they attempted to hide the information. The participants also violated the politeness because they wanted to protect themselves, hide their feelings and hide the real attention as well as they wanted to get the judge's belief. Finally, This study contributes to the field of pragmatics and sociolinguistics by examining politeness violations in a real-world legal context, specifically in Ferdi Sambo's courtroom, through the lens of Leech's (1983) politeness theory and Culpeper's (2011) framework for causes of violations. Additionally, the findings highlight how refusal, interruption, sarcasm, emotional responses, and non-verbal cues manifest as politeness violations, offering insight into how these behaviors disrupt professional communication. Then, this study is particularly beneficial for English learners, as it enhances their understanding of cultural norms, pragmatic competence, and the importance of maintaining politeness in high-pressure, formal settings such as courtrooms. Although this study offers valuable contributions, it also has a limitation as this study is limited to a single courtroom setting, focusing only on the Ferdi Sambo case, which may not be representative of politeness violations in other cultural or legal contexts. Then, it is recommended for future researchers to expand the scope beyond a single courtroom setting to include various cases and legal contexts.

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Disclaimer: The article has been reviewed by a team from the Indonesian English Lecturers Association at the 2nd Hybrid International Conference on Global Trends in English Language Pedagogy: Navigating New Horizons.

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