POLITENESS PRACTICES IN BUGIS SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses politeness practices as one of the important cultural norms in Bugis society. The main focus is to see the factors influencing Bugis practices of politeness such as social status, age, gender, and familiarity. This paper is a part of my study on politeness in Bugis society, conducted in 2005 in two different Bugis communities in South Sulawesi: the first was in Awangpone, a rural area a few kilometres north of the regional peninsula of South Sulawesi; the second was in Parepare, the second city of the province located on the west coast, about 155 km north of Makassar. The result of the research shows the significant influence of those above factors in the practices of Bugis politeness. There is a high tendency to act and speak with a high degree of politeness to signify their high status. However, other factors such as age, gender, and familiarity counteract each other to perform high level of politeness of Bugis people.

Key words: Politeness, Social Status, Age, Gender, Familiarity, Bugis Society

ABSTRAK

Makalah ini membahas praktek kesantunan sebagai salah satu aspek budaya masyarakat Bugis. Fokus utama adalah melihat faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi praktek kesantunan masyarakat Bugis seperti status sosial, umur, gender, dan familiaritas. Makalah ini merupakan bagian dari studi kesantunan yang telah dilakukan oleh penulis di dua kelompok masyarakat Bugis pada tahun 2005, yaitu di daerah pedesaan, Awangpone dan di daerah perkotaan, Parepare. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa faktor-faktor di atas mempengaruhi tingkat kesantunan masyarakat Bugis. Faktor yang paling menonjol adalah status sosial. Meskipun demikian faktor lain seperti umur, gender, dan familiaritas juga saling mempengaruhi.

Kata Kunci: Kesantunan, status sosial, umur, gender, familiaritas, masyarakat Bugis

1. Introduction

Research on politeness has been hotly and creatively debated recently as an important aspect of linguistics-related research in areas such as social anthropology, linguistic anthropology, and sociolinguistics. Watts, Ide, and Ehlich (1992:1) note that the study of politeness is significant in social anthropology because it links 'the study of certain forms of language usage such as address terms, honorifics, indirect speech acts, formulaic utterances, etc. and the study of processes of socialisation and consequent social behaviour'.

Some research has been conducted on politeness in non-Western countries, for example in China (Zhan 1992), Thailand (Kummer 1992), and Japan (Pizziconi 2003). In Indonesia, the study of politeness was pioneered by Geertz (1960), who refers to politeness as 'etiquette' in Javanese society. Other studies on speech styles in languages such as Indonesian (Wouk 2001), Javanese (Geertz 1960, Kartomiharjo 1981, Errington 1985, 1986, 1988, 1998, Berman 1998) and Sasak in West Timor (Mahyuni 2003), have also discussed politeness as one aspect of speech styles.

The discussion of politeness in this paper is mainly based on Brown and Levinson theory which considers a number of variables which might affect the level of politeness, such as power, distance, and rank of imposition (1987:74). One of the important factors influencing politeness is power relations. According to Brown and Levinson (1987:77), power is 'the ability of one person to impose their will on another.' Thus, one of the factors influencing power is the age differences. Conversations between people of different ages frequently show different level of politeness. Mizutani and Mizutani (1987:4) affirm that differences in age will influence the formality of speakers and hence the degree of politeness. It has become a rule in Japan that older people talk in a familiar way toward younger people,

and younger people talk politely to older people. In contrast, people of the same age commonly use familiar speech styles in conversation.

Another aspect of power is the notion of status, which is derived from the Latin term for 'standing' and relates simply to one's position in society, conferring 'rights and obligations upon a person as a citizen within a political community' (Turner, 1988:2). According to Bonvillain (1993:145-146), status differences may be based on 'combinations of income, occupation, education, and resulting differences in access to social, economic, and/or political power and this reflect inequalities among sectors of a population'.

Such aspects of power relations determine the low or high level of conversations. Therefore, the choice of polite language may become an indicator of the status of people. Mizutani and Mizutani (1987) emphasize that 'often talking to high status people requires a more polite speech whereas people of high social status will use familiar speech to the lower social status people'. Watts (1992:44) also notes that 'politeness was a sign of good breeding and high social status, but it did not necessarily correlate with consideration of deference towards other individuals'.

Another factor relating to differences in communicative styles is gender, based on the idea that men and women are different in their language. One of the differences is that women are said to be more polite than men. According to Speer (2002:347), women have a higher tendency than men to apply politeness strategies in their speech such as the use of more compliments, more apologies, and more thanks. Hobbs (2003:243) notes that when talking with same sex peers, women will use many positive politeness strategies. On the other hand, men in similar circumstances do not show this tendency.

Another factor influencing politeness is the social distance or the familiarity among speakers. Brown and Levinson (1987:74) called this 'social distance' and referred it as 'the degree based on stable social attributes the reflex of social closeness'. This suggests that how familiar speakers are with each other will determine how politely they behave. The closer they are, the less polite they need to be.

Situation or speech situation, either formal or informal, is also an influential factor in communication. Normally, people talking in formal situations will use more polite speech whereas in informal situations, speakers tend to use a more familiar style of speech. In addition, people also change levels of speech depending on the situation, even when talking with the same person. Holmes (1995:17) refers to this as the 'formality dimension', which concerns the situational factors that influence people to be polite or not. She further states that 'context is a fundamental influence on the expression of politeness…Politeness is always context dependent' (1995:19, 21).

This paper is going to explore the politeness practices of Bugis people as influenced by aspects such as age, social status, gender, familiarity, and situation. The Bugis people who mainly occupied the South Celebes or Sulawesi are rich with their cultural, religious, and social system (Abdullah 1985, Idrus 2003, Mahmud 2008, Pelras 1996). In Bugis society, practices of politeness are greatly influenced by such factors such as social status, age differences, gender, familiarity, and situation.

This study then provides invaluable and additional insights into Bugis culture since it focuses specifically on Bugis and politeness. It is a valuable contribution toward the literature and debate on linguistic anthropology

2. Research Method

The data taken for this paper is partly taken from my Ph. D thesis. It was based on the fieldwork that I conducted for one year in 2005 in two different Bugis communities, one is in rural area, Awangpone, Kabupaten Bone,

and another is in urban area, Parepare. To collect data, I employed an ethnography of communication using some strategies such as participant observation, informal interview, and recording conversations. I interviewed and observed the local people to understand their concepts of politeness. Interviews were conducted with adat 'culture leaders,' religious leaders, and professional workers aged from 23 to 73 years old, both men and women in different contexts to compare the theoretical concept of politeness with the local perspectives of people. To obtain spoken Bugis language, I recorded a variety of conversations between men and women using tape recorders. Conversations were recorded in three contexts: single-sex settings (male and male or female and female) and mixed-sex settings (female and male) in a variety of both in formal and informal settings. Conversations were recorded in formal settings such as in offices and schools and in informal settings such as in families and neighborhood. Participants included housewives, graduate students, office workers, teachers ranging from 15 to 50 years old.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Bugis Society

According to Pelras (1998:25), 'Bugis society is one of the most complex and apparently rigidly hierarchical of any in the archipelago, with distinct strata comprising several degrees of mobility'. This hierarchical system can be traced by looking at social status, referred to as *onrong*, *onro*, and *a'batireng*, which all mean 'place' or *derajat* and *status* which both mean 'social status'.

There are four important status in Bugis society. The first important status is the nobles known as *bangsawan* or *to-arung*, who have ancestors of the *arung* 'the king' in past times and could preface their chosen names with the honorific, *Andi* (Brawn, 1993:38). The second important status is religious status, influenced greatly by the strong adherence of the

Bugis people to Islamic teaching and acquired by performing pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The third social status is educational status by going to universities to attain degrees, and therefore given the title *to-acca* 'clever people'. After graduating from universities, people then get the chance to seek good and permanent jobs. This creates occupation status for Bugis people.

As a whole then, a status for the Bugis relates to many facets of life and is interrelated to form Bugis hierarchy. This is an example of Ossowski's (1963:49) observation that 'social status is determined by several factors, and that, within certain limits at least, these factors may compensate for one another'. This creates a 'synthetic gradation' of status, in which, the social status of an individual does not only depend on 'each separate factor involved in the evaluation' but also on 'the degree of consistency among those prestige-conferring factors' (Ossowski, 1976:50, 53).

These social status differences in Bugis society require people to show respect for each other. This was stressed by Andi Mappasissi (70), an important adat leader in Awangpone, that 'Pa' ya bawannatu pangka'é, ripasang lipa'mi, akku arung, asli' which means that 'Rank based on occupation is only worn like sarong, noble status is original'. Therefore, more respect should be given to the nobles because the title cannot be acquired easily like acquiring other titles.

Therefore, the nobles receive different treatment from commoners. When talking to nobles, commoners are recommended to use polite speech. Not only in the ways of talking, in other aspects, noble people should be treated in a more respected way than commoners. If they also have other higher status such as hajj or higher education or occupations, they will be respected even more.

Millar (1983:479-480) notes that Bugis society also recognises a hierarchy determined by age. Bugis acknowledge the age differences

in society, and have the notion of *to-matoa* 'the eldest'. These people may be as young as 25, but should have 'valued aspects of age' such as high fated *bateng* 'inner condition' amplitude; *lahireng* 'socially manifest behaviour and accomplishments'; and exhibit the quality of *malebbi*' 'a noble excellence' and authority.

Most younger people confirm their need to be polite to older people. Askar (28), a male informant in Parepare stated that politeness involves bagaimana cara menghargai orang yang lebih tua dari kita 'how to appreciate older people'. Older people confirm this idea and note that politeness between the older and younger generation should be mutually expressed as encapsulated in the Indonesian saying: yang muda menghargai yang tua, yang tua menyayangi yang muda 'the young respect the old, the old love the young'. Children are therefore expected to be polite to older people. This can be done by educating young people to respect the elders either at home or at school.

The notions on gender differences also influence how men and women in Bugis society should communicate to each other. Millar (1983:489) notes that for the Bugis, it is important for men to behave aggressively and formally, reaffirming their family social location by acting on family decisions, whereas it is important for women to behave cautiously and informally, containing family rank and generating information crucial for making family decisions.

Being familiar or not with one's interlocutors can influence the level of politeness of Bugis speakers. Marwiah (27), a female informant in Parepare illustrated the strong relationship between the level of familiarity and level of politeness. She told me that if they meet for the first time politeness is needed to be shown. This implies that if she is not familiar with her interlocutor, she will act more politely. She then becomes even more polite if she meets her in-

terlocutor in a formal place, such as a school or office.

Therefore, being a stranger or being familiar to someone will determine the ways of speaking. To maintain politeness one needs to be more distant or more familiar depending on this relationship. The more distant the interlocutors are, the more polite they are likely to talk. Conversely, the more familiar they are, the less polite they talk, marked by very familiar language and less polite expressions.

3.2 Examining Politeness Practices in Bugis Society

This part illustrates some extracts of conversations between informants from different social status and age that I recorded in two different Bugis communities.

Extract 1: Suggestion to talk

Two female speakers of a similar age and status, who are close relatives and neighbours, Puang Aji Masi (PAM, 50) and Puang Aji Semma (PAS, 50) were talking. Both of them are hajj and noble. PAS did not know what to talk about as I recorded them and PAM suggested talking about the time she went to Cempalagi, a hamlet in Mallari.

PAS : aga lo' ubicara?

'what should I talk about?'

PAM: awwé, akkeda<u>ko</u> poléna' Cempalagi 'awwé, you say I have just come from Cempalagi [a hamlet in Awangpone]'

PAS : *iya* 'yes'

PAM : poléka'.. anuni sé', poléka' Cempalagi, kedano sé'!

> 'I have been.. [try] then, I have just come from Cempalagi, you just say it then'

PAS : iya

'yes'

PAM used the second person pronoun –

ko in akkedako instead of the first plural inclusive pronoun—ki' in akkedaki'. This direct use of the second person-ko by PAM to PAS is acceptable because the interlocutors are of similar status and are close relatives and neighbours. This familiarity encouraged PAM to use the familiar pronoun-ko.

Extract 2: Asking a female fish seller

PAM was talking to a female of similar age but different social status, Hunaeda (H, 50), a commoner without any hajj or noble status. Hunaeda was selling shrimps and prawns to PAM and other females: Puang Aji Semma (PAS, 50) and Puang Mari (PM, 50).

PAS : magi Hunaeda?

'what's the matter with it [i.e. you],

Hunaeda?'

H : nulléna

'how can this be'

PAM: nulléna. Balaceng ibalu'

'how can this be? [We] sell shrimps'

H : lo'<u>ki'</u> melliwi?

'are we [i.e. you] going to buy some?'

PM : dé'to

'not really'

PAM: tassiawaé' loppanutu?

'how much is a cup of those prawns

of yours anyway?'

H: duwa sitengnga, Aji

'two and a half [two thousand five

hundred rupiahs], *Aji*'

Although they are familiar as close neighbours, are of similar age and have been friends since a young age, the different status PAM has as hajj and noble encourages the non-reciprocal use of pronouns. PAM used the familiar possessive pronoun—nu when she was asking about the price of the prawns, tassiawaé' loppanutu? 'how much is a cup of those prawns of yours?'. Conversely, Hunaeda used the distant pronoun—ki' in lo'ki' melliwi? 'are we [i.e. you] going to buy

some?'. This shows the asymmetrical relations among the interlocutors are influenced by their status differences.

Extract 3: Asking an older fisherman

PAM was talking to Mardi (M, 65), an older fisherman without any hajj or noble status. She was asking about Mardi's daily activities as a fisherman.

PAM : dé' muno' tasi'é?

'didn't you go to the sea [fishing]?'

: ba, polémuwa..' M 'yes, I have been..'

PAM : dé'ga <u>mu</u>wala?

'didn't you catch anything [fish or any

other seafood]?'

M : kamuwa na..

'yes [there are] some but..'

PAM asked Mardi using the familiar pronoun mu- in all of her questions above: dé' muno' tasi'é 'didn't you go to the sea [fishing]?' and dé'ga <u>mu</u>wala? 'didn't you take anything [fish or any other seafood]?'. Like extract 2 above, this extract also shows an asymmetrical relation between the speakers influenced by their status differences. Although Mardi is older, and male, because of the high status of PAM, Mardi was addressed using the familiar pronoun.

Extract 4: The mosque donation

PAM was talking to an older male with high status since he is a hajj and noble, Puang Aji Akil (PAA, 64), who is also a close relative and neighbour. At the time, they were talking about the money owned by the mosque.

PAA : ko mabbicara makkeda iya' malamanengngi, tappa uti' maneng lao masigi'é 'if [someone] accused me of taking all [the money], then I would take [the money] directly to the mosque'

PAM : <u>iti'</u> maneng lo'ka masigi'é? 'we [i.e. you] took all [the money] to the mosque, didn't we [i.e. you]?'

PAM used a polite device *i*- in *iti* 'instead of using mu- in muti' which would have been expressed in the utterance: muti' maneng lokka masigi'é. This extract shows the use of the first person plural inclusive agent marker as a generic marker, where no direct reference to a first person agent is entailed. It is used to refer to a second person agent, PAA, and it made her more distant and polite. This extract also shows that although both speakers are familiar, being close relatives and neighbours and have similar status as hajj and noble, pronoun choice is influenced by age and sex differences.

Therefore, PAM used familiar pronouns and distant pronouns to different interlocutors. The first important aspect is familiarity. Talking to a speaker who is closely related and a neighbour as well as being a similar age and status encouraged her to use familiar pronouns. With Hunaeda in extract 2, PAM also used a familiar pronoun. In her conversation with Mardi in extract 3, status seem the main determinant because Mardi is older and a male. When she was talking to PAA in extract 4, she used different pronouns. Although PAA was also her close relative and neighbour and has a status as high as PAA as hajj and noble, she uses the more distant pronoun because PAA was an older male with high status.

Extract 5: Wahyuni and a male village head

Ibu Wahyuni came to visit Umiati's house and had a chance to talk to AL before Umiati got dressed. AL is a village head and Umiati is Ibu Wahyuni's close friend. AL was telling Ibu Wahyuni that his friend, who is also a close relative of Ibu Wahyuni, had visited AL the day before.

AL : *Ilyas* 'Ilyas'

W : magi <u>Puang</u>

'what's the matter with it, *Puang*?'

AL : engkai wenni' kué 'he was here yesterday?'

W: éé.. <u>Andi, Andi Ilyas</u>?.. <u>Andi Ilyas</u> anu? Perhubungan? anu? Perdagangan paé'

'umm.. <u>Andi, Andi Ilyas</u>?..That <u>Andi Ilyas</u>? [who work] in communication? That is? In commerce anyway'

When asking a question to clarify who was visiting, Ibu Wahyuni used the address term *Puang* in *magi Puang* 'what's the matter with it, *Puang*?'. In the last turn, she also used the title *Andi* to refer to her relative: *Andi Ilyas*. This shows her respect although she herself has acquired similar noble status. This might be influenced by her gender. Females are traditionally respectful towards males in Bugis society. However, when the females have higher status such as nobles and older, male speakers, especially commoners may show their high respect by using the address term *Puang*. See the following extract:

Extract 6. In a small shop

Puang Sitti (PS, 50), a noble woman who has a *ga'dé-ga'dé* or *warung* 'a small shop' in her house was talking to a male buyer, Tame (T, 35). Tame was buying something and still had some changes to be returned by PSS.

PS : siyaga doi'<u>mu</u>?

'how much is your money?'

T: (counting his money to be returned by PS) enneppi sitengnga lisu

<u>Puang</u>. Enneppi sitengnga lisu

<u>Puang</u>

'six thousand and five hundred left *Puang*. Six thousand and five hundred left *Puang*'

In answering PS's question in the first turn, Tame answered politely by using the address term *Puang*. PS, however, asked him using *-mu* (the second singular pronoun) in *siyaga doi'mu*? 'how much is your money?' This shows an asymmetrical relation between a seller and a buyer both in the use of pronouns and in the use of address term.

Bugis speakers in the urban area also applied politeness strategies as influenced by the above aspects. This can be seen in the conversations of Haji Erna (HE, 29) with several interlocutors below. HE to some extent has higher status as hajj and is senior in her teaching activities in Parepare as well as having a high educational background due to her Masters Degree from a university in Australia. HE was familiar with me as she was my junior at university.

Extract 7: Asking a becak driver

Haji Erna was speaking to an older *becak* 'pedicab' driver, Sanu (S, 55) in Bugis. She was bargaining about the price to get to Lasinrang street.

HE: tassiaga lokka di Lasinrang?
'How much to pay to go to
Lasinrang [a name of street]'

S : tellusse'bu

'Three thousand rupiah'

HE : dua se'bbuna di'?

'just two thousand, okay?'

HE used Bugis, tassiaga lokka di Lasinrang? 'how much to pay to go to Lasinrang?' to ask the driver. When they agreed on the price, she turned to me and said in Indonesian, dua ribu kak 'two thousand, kak'. When I asked why she used Bugis with the driver, she stated that it was mainly because she was talking to an older person whom she had to respect, despite her high status as a teacher and a hajj.

Extract 8: Agreeing to swap classes

HE was talking to Pak Bakri (B, 37), her male colleague, in the school about the need to swap their classes. Pak Bakri asked if he could teach in the first section because his subject was sport which may be dangerous for students to conduct in later hours.

B : saya mau bawa ke (lapangan)
'I want to take [the students] to the field [for sport]'

HE : (oh boleh-boleh) 'yes, okay, okay'

B : karena atletik kalau dengan lari jam-jam sembilan bah- resikonya besar, (bisa-bisa dia..)

'because [for] athletics, running at nine o'clock carries a huge risk, they can [get hurt]'

HE: (éh, iya-iya), oh, jadi pariwisata dua olahraga, jam olahraga itu? 'yes, yes! oh, so, class two tourism has sport class, is it time for sport?'

B : *iya jam pertama* 'yes, the first hour'

HE: bisa-bisa 'okay'

B : supaya langsung saja, lagi pula materinya ndak (terlalu anu)

> 'so it can be done directly [I can teach them sport directly], and also the materials are not too much'

HE : (oh iya), udah selesaima<u>ki'</u> 'oh, yes, have you finished it?'

B : *iyé' saya tinggal itu* 'yes. I have left [the students] there'

HE : kalau mauki' ambil waktu agak lama bisaji
'if we [i.e. you] are going to take

more time, it is okay too'

HE uses a distant Bugis pronoun –ki' in addition to her Indonesian to be more polite despite her higher educational status and her hajj status as can be seen in *udah selesaimaki'* 'Have you finished it?' and in *kalau mauki'*

'If we [i.e. you] are going'. The use of these Bugis pronouns in addition to Indonesian is a strategy of politeness of Bugis people. The inclusion of Bugis pronouns may create a more polite language to the use of Indonesian (Mahmud 2008a, 2008b). This is also a strategy of still using Indonesian with Bugis dialect.

Therefore, it can be seen that HE despite her high status in terms of education, occupation, and religion, uses different ways of showing politeness influenced by her interlocutor. The use of either Bugis or Indonesian and the choice of pronouns are used for this purpose. Other extracts of conversations show the influence of familiarity and social status that can be seen in the following two extracts:

Extract 9. Talking about jobs at home

Suaeni was talking to Marwiah (27) at home about their jobs as teachers. They were newly met

A : jadi belumpaki' prajabatan?

'So we [i.e. you] have not joined prajabatan?'

W: belum 'Not yet'

A : oh, berarti bersamaangngi anu..itu temanku BP, duwa orang di sekolah, I anu namanya, I Aming 'Oh, it means she is the same as that one, that is my friend, BP [Bimbingan dan penyuluhan—Guidance and Counseling]. There are two people in the school [where she teaches]. His name is I Aming'

W: oh kak éé..dimanaki' kak anu?
'Oh, kak, umm..where are we [i.e. you]? [teaching] kak?'

A : di SMP 10 'At SMP [Sekolah Me

'At SMP [Sekolah Menengah Pertama—Junior High School] 10'

Marwiah is a newly appointed teacher and has not undergone the compulsory training for teachers called *prajabatan*. Both of the speakers employ Bugis-Indonesian, recognized by the inclusion of the Bugis pronoun -ki' in some of the expressions. Suaeni's question, belumpaki' prajabatan 'so we [i.e. you] have not joined prajabatan?' for example, used -ki'. She could have used the Indonesian pronouns kamu/kau, for example kamu belum prajabatan?, but this would have been less polite. Marwiah also used the polite device -ki in her question, dimanaki' kak anu? 'where are we [i.e. you]?[teaching] kak?'. Compare this with extract 10 below, where she was talking to the researcher:

Extract 10: A talk to the researcher

S: nukenalkah Ramlah? 'do you know Ramlah?'

R : Ramlah siapa? 'Ramlah who?'

S : Ramlah bahasa Inggris dulu, sembilan satu, yang biasa itu.. terangkat..Samaka' dulu, mengajar dulu di Pinrang

> 'Ramlah, the English department student, in the year of 91. She was appointed as a teacher in Pinrang with me'

R : mungkin kukenal mukanya 'probably I know her face'

S : nakenal sekaliko bédéng 'she knows you very well anyway'

Suaeni and the researcher were known to each other before conducting research in Parepare. This meant she need not be so formal or polite despite the speakers' higher educational background. Suaeni asked in a familiar way using *nu*-, the second person pronoun, in *nukenalkah Ramlah?* 'do you know Ramlah' and –*ko* in *nakenal sekaliko bédéng* 'she knows you very much'. This shows that the choice of language can determine the level of politeness. Suaeni was using Indonesian with some Bugis pronouns (*nu*-, -*ko*, -*ka* and *na*), however these pronouns were less polite and more familiar. To be more polite, she could have used *kita* 'we inclusive' and–*ki*'.

The above two extracts show that language choices either Bugis or Indonesian can indicate familiarity or unfamiliarity and level of politeness. Both extracts use Bugis-Indonesian, but extract 9 uses more polite devices than extract 10. Bugis pronouns, whether the most polite—ki or the least polite—ko, were included in the speakers' Indonesian to mark their level of politeness.

4. Conclusion

This paper has discussed the politeness practices of Bugis people influenced by social relations. The first and the most important one is social status, arising from the hierarchical system of Bugis society. Other important aspects influencing Bugis politeness are age differences, gender, familiarity, and situation. The discussion also shows some strategies used by Bugis people to encode their politeness, such as the use of pronouns, address terms, and language choices either Bugis or Indonesian.

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