

## **An analysis of Indirectness of the Lexical Choice as Strategies of Communication among Prostitutes and Clients in Surabaya**

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### **Abstract**

*This research was aimed to analyze indirectness of the lexical choices used in making offers of sale of 'sex' among prostitutes in Surabaya. The data obtained from of transcribed oral interactions among the 'sellers' and the clients. the subjects can be categorized as lower class prostitutes who offer their service for the price ranging from Rp.50,000,00 to 70.000,00 for one session. The rates of the sex services are based on four criteria: length of service, age and physical features (for example skin colour and body shape) of the prostitutes as well as the skills they possess. The subjects also revealed that when the clients haggled for a price lower than the pasarane (standard price) price offered, it is a sign that the clients are of the lower socio-economic status. Observations of the subjects in action revealed that the subjects do indeed confirm or adjust the judgements made during the initial assessments of the clients' social status as they begin to speak to the potential clients. Although Indonesian language is preferred, when Javanese language was used, lexical choices were made based on the different speech levels. The data found euphemism was mostly used communication among the 'sellers' and the clients.*

**Keywords:** indirectness, communication, and prostitutes

### **INTRODUCTION**

In modern life, people as human being, we cannot avoid to communicate with others. Human communication has many variables. In addition, Ismadi (2009:1) adds that communication involves two or more people coding and encoding messages to each other through the medium of language. Thus, a language is a crucial tool for human beings to express their desires, moods, feelings, and needs. On a more complex level, language is not just a communication tool but an instrument for social interaction. Just as there are many languages in this world, some similar in some ways and others totally different in every way, communication through these languages also require the use of specific linguistic features

and rules to convey meaning effectively. Hence, communication is a tool of human being in fulfilling of the human needs.

Furthermore, Ismadi (2009:1) communication will be influenced by the background of the speaker, for instance, their culture. In the Javanese culture, for example, indirectness in speech and action is considered more polite than being direct; indirectness therefore is a daily practice. Therefore, it is aimed to preserve a good relationship between the speaker and the hearer. The Javanese language has three speech levels with three distinct social dialects: lower level (*ngoko*), middle (*boso*) and the upper level (*kromo inggil*). Different speech levels are used at different times depending on the social status of both the speaker in relationship to the hearer and vice versa. When using these different levels, the Javanese speaker will choose appropriate words with the relevant person (hearer). *Boso* is also known as 'refined language' whereas *ngoko* is known as 'coarse language'. Where these two levels are normally used in daily communication, the *inggil* level is used in special occasions, for instance in a formal or traditional ceremony. At the same time, there is the Indonesian language which is the national language of the Republic of Indonesia. Indonesian has replaced the local language as the alternative language of communication for the Javanese speaker without considering the social background of the hearer.

Thus, communication within a particular group sharing the same language, cultural and social values will demonstrate communication features which are appropriate to a particular group and understood by all its members. In this sense, group members of different social status share and understand the same communication style and features, whether they are lawyers, housewives, students or prostitutes. However, within each group, there are sub-groups that share another set of communication features appropriate to their needs. Nevertheless, they are aware of the inter- and intra- cultural differences and similarities between the subgroups and would be able most of the time to use the relevant features where appropriate.

According to Ismadi (2009:4) that in Indonesia, where the main religion is Islam which does not condone prostitution, the profession is thriving to a point that the business of selling and buying of sex is done in the open. This can be viewed that in a country where poverty level is rising and jobs are insufficient to support a rapidly growing population, many resort to prostitution for survival. This is very contrast with the condition of the Surabaya City known as religious city but the prostitution is still grown up. This is due to urgently economic needs to survive in the big city such as Surabaya. Hence, Ismadi (2009:5) adds that

competition is strong as every seller is selling the same item and every buyer is looking for quality and best price.

In this research, the prostitution is viewed in term of communication among prostitutes and clients. This research will analyze the language used by the prostitutes. It views former researchers. One of the codes used by the prostitutes is '*ijo mas*' (literally translates to 'Green, sir') to signal that she is free and ready to serve the client.

It is based the above that this research investigated the communication strategies used by the subjects during talk with their clients involving the offer of their services. In addition, this research is also aimed to analyze the lexical choices made by the subjects.

### **Indirectness of the Javanese Culture**

Javanese is the people mostly live in central Java, East Java, Special Are of Jogjakarta, and northen coastal area of West Java Province. Indirectness is commonly used by the Javanese. Therefore, indirectness is one the Javanese politeness features in communication among Javanese people, even others. The Bataks who live in North Sumatra tend to speak strongly and directly. It is contrast with the Javanese culture, indirectness to show politeness is mainly conveyed in conversation.

### **The First principle of Javanese Culture**

The First principle is *rukun* (harmony). This principles explains that the Javanese's attitude of living with other different ethnic groups in a society. Harmony indicates a behavioral manner or characteristic. This can be taken to be a guideline on how to behave in a harmonious life, to eliminate signs of tension in the society or among individuals of different backgrounds so that the social relationship can be well maintained always.

### **The Second Principle of Javanese Culture**

The second principle is *hormat* (respect). This principle has great power in maintaining of surviving of communication. Therefore, this principle of respect expects that every person should have a polite attitude in order to be able to posit himself in another's position when interacting with him either verbally or non-verbally. If this concept is applied in real life the whole elements of the society will live harmoniously. Therefore, this principle can be viewed as high speech level of Javanese. The use of speech levels is the living representation of the principle of respect.

Furthermore, people who use of speech levels, respectable attitudes are developed through family education from childhood on. Geertz (1961) also describes Javanese families

as teaching their children the practice of respectable attitude through three stages of education: *wedi* (feeling afraid), *isin* (feeling ashamed), and *sungkan* (combination of feeling afraid, shy, ashamed, and respect). *Wedi* means being afraid-- either in reaction to physical threat, and/or as an effect of wrong conduct. This all above considered as indirectness as strategies in communication of the Javanese.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research used the subjects consisted of 7 prostitutes working at a cheap brothel in Surabaya because recently the government of the Surabaya city strictly prohibited and closed some brothels in around the city. Therefore, the subjects can be categorized as lower class prostitutes who offer their service for the price ranging from Rp.50.000,00 to 70.000,00 for one session

The collecting of the data used the recordings. This was of naturally occurring conversations; the subjects were not trained or guided in any sense. They were asked to conceal on their body the voice activated tape recorder which has already been turned and to carry on as they usually do with their potential clients. The conversations were audio recorded with permission from the subjects as well as their caretakers. Audio recording was chosen as it would be difficult to obtained permission to carry out video recordings because the subjects would not want their faces recorded.

## **RESULTS**

This was based on the data found. So, the Javanese language has several levels of usage based on the social status of the speakers as well as the context of the speech. Within these levels, certain words have several synonyms which are used depending on the context and the relationship between the speakers.

The offer was aimed specifically to the clients. Therefore, the clients was obliged to say something or to appropriately respond to the offer. At the initial stage, the hearer may feel happy and or unhappy with the offer made. Choice of words therefore plays an important role in making the offer effectively.

The subjects also revealed that when the clients haggled for a price lower than the *pasarane* (standard price) price offered, it is a sign that the clients are of the lower socio-economic status. Observations of the subjects in action revealed that the subjects do indeed confirm or adjust the judgements made during the initial assessments of the clients' social status as they begin to speak to the potential clients.

Although the negotiations discussed here refer to offers of sex services, the subjects are observed to avoid referring to sex directly when negotiating with their potential clients. They use different words when negotiating with potential clients depending on the age, and social status of the clients and also on the age, educational background and experience of the subjects themselves. The data will be illustrated as some of these euphemisms in following below.

Therefore, euphemism is most appropriate strategy to use in order to attract the potential client's attention and to protect both faces as well. Protection of face for Javanese people is taken seriously to avoid *isin* (feel ashamed), and *perkewuh* (sense of humility or humbleness) in case the negotiation of sex is known to other people present.

### Data Display

In the data display that the subjects still shows euphemism of 'service'. Therefore, the euphemism is as the lexical choice in offering of the 'sis most appropriate strategy to use in order to attract the potential client's attention and to protect both faces as well. Protection of face for Javanese people is taken seriously to avoid *isin* (feel ashamed), and *perkewuh* (sense of humility or humbleness) in case the negotiation of sex is known to other people present.

<b>Subject 1</b>	<b>Translation</b>
(5) S1 : <i>Istirahat keNE</i> / [smile]	Have a rest here / [smile]
<b>Subject 2</b>	
(3) S2 : [smile] <i>Pijet-pijetan THO?</i>	[smile] just massage, <i>THO</i> (Will you) ?
<b>Subject 3</b>	
(1) S3 : <i>Mas pijetan mas....?</i> [smile]	Sir, get massage sir....?[smile]
<b>Subject 4</b>	
(5) S4 : <i>Pak ayo istirahat...[smile].</i>	Sir let's take a rest.....[smile]
<b>Subject 5</b>	
(3) S5 : <i>Mau istirahat / apa minum dulu?</i>	Will {you} take a rest / what {you} drink first?
<b>Subject 6</b>	
(3) S6 : <i>Mau minum atau istirahat?</i>	Will {you} drink or take a rest?
<b>Subject 7</b>	
(3) S7 : <i>Pa mas servisnya seperti nDoli?</i>	What you {want}service like {in} nDoli sir?
<b>Subject 8</b>	

- (3) S24 : *Mau minum apa mau nyewek?* {What} will {you} want to have a drink or will make a love?

### Data analysis

The data analysis of the research is shown among the subjects in this study, the data provided evidence that the more commonly used word for 'having sex' is '*istirahat*' which translates into English as '*take a rest*' or '*relaxation*'. By using *istirahat*, among the subjects above have placed themselves in a much lower position than their potential clients. From the interview they have all explained that they did so because their livelihoods depend on securing a deal with the potential clients. As the 'seller', they must do all they can especially at the negotiation stage, to persuade the clients to like them and hence hire them. To them the customer is 'king' and must therefore be spoken to with utmost respect.

S2 and S3 used *pijet-pijetan* in place of the more polite *istirahat* mainly because at this point all they want to get across to the potential clients is whether they wanted their services or not. Therefore at this stage the main strategy is the use of direct question forms. Once the potential client indicates interest, the negotiation will move into getting an agreement on the price. *Pijet-pijetan* translates as a *massage*, however, used in this context, it is an offer of more than just a massage but also sex. As most initial offers made by the subjects in the study, both S2 and S43 accompany their utterances with a smile, which in itself is a show of respect and friendliness.

In the data (S7) on the hand uses the English word *servis* (*service*) as a euphemism for sex which is also a strategy to mitigate her offer. This is regarded as more polite than using the Indonesian equivalent *melayani* (*to serve*). So, if S7 had used *melayani* she will be risking hers as well as the client's face because *ngalayani* (Javanese word) has the connotation of service provided by a servant (lower class) to the employer (upper class). In addition, S7 also gives respect to the client because English in Indonesia is associated with highly educated speakers. With S7 in particular, she is talking to is a younger client who looks educated and she perceived that he would be pleased if she uses English with him (as revealed by S7 during the interview with her). Furthermore, based on her perception of him, she also made reference to the *nDolly* (name of high class brothel) type of service. The suggestion made here on the part of S7 to the potential client is that she sees him as a person who would want more than just the usual services provided in this area and she is the one who can actually provide him with the type of services he deserves as she knows the quality

of service provided at the *nDolly* brothels.

This part concluded that the subjects found in this research show that they tends to use euphemism in their offer of 'sex' to the clients. Therefore, the present study is based on the notion that communication is culture-bound; that members of a particular culture particularly Javanese culture.

## **DISCUSSION**

The data found that the use of Indonesian language more often used by the subjects in their communication as Indonesian language is an alternative in choosing of the words or language among Javanese speaker to avoid misuse of the language speech levels and the inability of the speakers to use right Javanese stylistic level, especially used by young subjects.

It can be concluded that the Javanese language has several levels of usage based on the social status of the speakers as well as the context of the speech. Speakers' age, their social status and the speech context were shown to have influenced the subjects' lexical choice during interaction in selling the 'service'.

## **REFERENCES**

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