

TWO TYPES OF REALIZATIONS OF MAKING REFUSAL IN SUNDANESE CONTEXT : A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study was motivated by the previous research which suggests that In Indonesian context, indirectness, especially when making a refusal, is viewed as an indication of politeness. The purpose of the present study is to find out whether or not there are Indonesian (especially Sundanese ethnic) people who use indirectness with doing both saving and 'loosing face' their addressees when making refusal. The subjects of this study were some Sundanese people's refusals in some natural conversations. Observation on people's natural conversations was done in collecting data. This study employed qualitative analysis of data. The result of this study showed that the realization of making refusal in Sundanese can be grouped into two: expressed in indirectness with employing saving face only, and expressed in indirectness with employing both saving face and 'losing face'. The two types of refusal strategies used by Sundanese people are still in Indonesian culture of politeness.

KEYWORDS: Indirectness, politeness, saving face, and losing face

A. Introduction

Every utterance is uniquely designed for its audience. A speaker may say "Will you increase my pay next month?" when asking his/her addressee for salary increase. In other case s/he may say: "I should therefore be grateful if you could give serious consideration to the possibility of increasing my salary..." (Wilkins, 1972). People have a variety of reasons of why they speak indirectly. The universal reasons of the use of indirectness are such as the desire to make one's language more or less interesting, to increase the force of one's message, competing goals, and politeness/regard for face (Thomas, 1995)

Individuals and cultures vary widely in how, when, and why people use indirect speech act rather than a direct one. Indirectness takes place when there is a difference between the expressed meaning and the implied meaning (Thomas, 1995). Dascal (1983) as cited in Thomas (1995) stated that indirectness is costly in the sense that an indirect utterance takes longer for the speaker to produce and for the hearer to process. He also made a point that indirectness is also risky, meaning that the hearer may not understand what the speaker's meaning. The choice of different words and utterances, including directness and indirectness way of speaking, is generally influenced by the main factors such as relative power, social distance, degree of imposition, and relative rights and obligations. (Thomas, 1995).

The present research formulates the research problems in the following question, *Are there Indonesian people who use indirectness with doing both saving and loosing their addressees' face, especially in making refusal?* This study is designed to find out whether or not there are Indonesian people who use indirectness, especially in making refusal, with doing both saving and loosing their addressees' face.

In addition, in this paper, the concept of *face* will be based on Brown and Levinson theory of politeness as proposed by Goffman (1967; cf Aziz, 2012a; 2012b, Thomas, 1995). And the term '*losing face*' here is meant as saying something that potentially causes the interlocutor to lose his/her self-image or getting embarrassed. This paper focuses on *indirectness for politeness*. The term politeness here is employed in an utterance level, not in general social behaviour level.

B. Literature Review

1. Indirectness

In 1975 Grice introduced the concept of the Cooperative Principles (CP) which suggested that in order to make an efficient communication, a speaker has to make his/her contribution as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which he/she engaged. Further, Grice proposed the four maxims of the CP: Quantity, quality, relation, and manner (Thomas, 1995). The *quantity* maxim says: make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange); the *quality* maxim: try to make your contribution one that is true; the *relation* maxim: be relevant; and the maxim of *manner*: be perspicuous (Thomas, 1995; Leech, 1983; Yule, 1996; Grundy 2000). But, then a problem emerged, because Indonesian people, including people from Sundanese ethnic, are often so indirect in conveying what they mean. It means that speaking indirectly means breaking one or more the maxims. Keenan (1974) as cited in Leech (1983) argued that the CP is not universal to language, because there are linguistic communities to which not all of them apply.

2. Politeness

Leech (1983), in his book *Principles of Pragmatics*, proposed the Politeness Principles (PP) which consists of maxim of Tack, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement and Sympathy. According to Thomas (1995), Leech's politeness principles are as a crucial thing in explaining 'why people are often so indirect in conveying meaning'. His Politeness Principles reflects a more general law of politeness which is focused more strongly on *other* (the addressee) than on *self* (the speaker) (Leech, 1983). Previously, Brown and Levinson had put forward the theory of politeness in 1978 (Aziz, n.d.; 2012a; 2012b). The central to their theory of politeness is the concept of *face*, as proposed by Goffman in 1967 (Aziz, n.d.; 2012a; 2012b). The term *face* can be understood as self-image, reputation, or good name. He hinted that the concept of politeness is *saving face* (Thomas, 1995). *Saving face* is to say something to lessen the possible threat to other people (Yule, 1996). In other words, a speaker should minimize other people's *loss of face* (Grundy, 2000). In Brown and Levinson's notion of *face*, *face* comes in two varieties, positive and negative face. *Positive face* is a person's wish to be liked, approved of, respected and appreciated by others. Whereas *negative face* is a person's wish to be impeded or put upon, to have the freedom to act as one chooses (Thomas, 1995; Grundy, 2000). Specifically, the concept of politeness in Indonesia was proposed by Aziz (Aziz, n.d.; 2012a; 2012b). He introduced *Prinsip Saling Tenggang Rasa* 'The Principle of Mutual Consideration'. This principle is formulated as follow: (a) Use expressions to your interlocutor which you would like to be addressed to you if you were in his/her position, and (b) avoid using expression to your interlocutor which you would not like to be addressed to you if you were in his/her position.

Some previous works relate to this study are outlined below. Guo's study (2012) showed that Chinese and Americans in making refusals preferred to use indirect refusal strategies rather than direct ones. Chen (1996; cf Tanck, 2003) found that an expression of regret common in American speakers' refusals. On the other hand, Ebsworth and Kodama (2001) found that Japanese people often use postponement to express refusal. In Indonesian context, Indirectness is also viewed as an indication of politeness. Aziz (n.d.) has found that Indonesian people (especially Sundanese), regard indirectness, especially when making a refusal, as part of speakers' decision and attempt to maintain the existing social order of society and interpersonal harmony. They tend to use obscure (not clear) strategy accompanied by various softener expression and apology for not being able to accomplish their interlocutor's requests. The studies above concern the use of directness in making refusal as a reflection of politeness in certain culture/community which is also the main concern of the present study.

C. Research Methodology

This research is a case study. The subject of this study was seven natural real conversations containing refusal in real settings performed by Sundanese people in Bandung. The researcher observed the conversations without being known by the people who were having the conversations. The talk exchanges took place in different places, different time and were done by different Sundanese people in Sundanese language. Those seven real conversations were transcribed and analysed through qualitative method.

D. Result and Discussion

The data from the observation about the strategy of *saving face* and *losing face* used by speakers when making refusal to his/her addressee can be seen in the following table.

Situation	Indirect Refusal	
	saving face	losing face
#1 A woman responds to a door to door saleswoman who offers her merchandise.	√	-
#2 An officer responds to a student who asks information about the score.	√	-
#3 A trader responds to a seven years old boy who buys iced-yoghurt and asks for a bonus.	√	-
#4 A trader responds to his customer's bargain.	√	-
#5 A young woman responds to a younger woman who requests money loan.	√	√
#6 A woman (B) responds to a door to door saleswoman (A) who asks for permission to do washing demonstration in her house using a certain brand of washing machine. Previously B refused to buy a unit of washing machine which was offered by A.	√	√
#7 A trader responds to a consumer who bargains the price of a certain goods.	√	√

Table 1. The strategy of *saving face* and *losing face* used by speakers when making refusal to his/her interlocutor

Based on the data above, it is found that Sundanese people commonly use indirectness when they are making refusal. This finding supports Aziz's (2000) finding that Indonesian people (especially Sundanese) tend to use indirectness when making refusal.

As stated previously, the term ‘indirectness’ is saying something which is different between the expressed meaning and the implied meaning (Thomas, 1995). Based on the data, there were no speakers who directly said ‘no’ or ‘not’ when making refusal to their interlocutor (*see* Appendix I). Like Aziz’s finding, Sundanese people commonly use obscure (not clear) strategy for not being able to accomplish their interlocutor’s requests. The obscure strategy which was found in this study was giving explanations (Response in situation #1, #3, #4, #5, and #6), delaying accomplishing the speaker’s request (Response in situation #2), offering alternative solution (Response in situation #4, #7), and giving criticizing (Response in situation #5). To make it clear, let’s examine the example below:

Situation #4

[A trader responds to his customer’s bargain.]

Aduh, neng, tambahan deui atuh! Emang teh da nyandak untung-na
itrjctn. girl add again part. uncle part because take profit-it’s

ge ngan saalit. Upami tilubelas teuing mah teu aya kanggo emangna.
also just a little if thirteen too part. not there for uncle-the

‘O, girl, add it more, because I take just a little profit of it. If it is only thirteen (thousands rupiah), I will get no profit.’

From the example above, it is found that the speaker (the trader) refused his interlocutor’s request (to reduce the price) indirectly. He did not say ‘no’ directly, but he used obscure (not clear) strategy for not being able to accomplish their interlocutor’s requests. In this case, the strategy that the speaker used was offering alternative solution (by saying *tambahan deui atuh* ‘add it more’) and giving an explanation (by saying *Emang teh da nyandak untung-na ge ngan saalit. Upami tilubelas teuing mah teu aya kanggo emangna* ‘because I take just a little profit of it. If it is only thirteen (thousands rupiah), I will get no profit.’). In addition, the speaker tried to save the addressee’s face by saying something to lessen the possible threat to other people and not expressing something that can cause the hearer loose face.

On the other hand, there are also speakers who do (potentially) loose the hearers’ face. Three of seven speakers did both save and (potentially) loose the interlocutors’ face (*see* the table 1.). Now, let’s take a look to the refusal below.

Situation #5

[A young woman responds to a younger woman who requests money loan.]

Uang saya teh tinggal dua ratus ribu. Gajian seminggu lagi. Saya
money I part. left two hundred thousand payday one-week again I

takut nanti uang saya enggak cukup. Kan yang dulu juga seratus
afraid later money I not enough tag which last time also one hundred

ribu belum dibayar.
thousand not yet paid

‘My money is two hundred thousands rupiah left. I still have one week before the payday. I am afraid I will run out of money. Your last debt one hundred thousand rupiah has not been paid yet. Has it?’

In the example in situation #5 above, it can be inferred that the speaker did both save and (potentially) lose the interlocutor’s face even these strategies were used in indirect way. At the beginning of her response, the speaker attempted to save her addressee’s face by not saying ‘no’ directly. She used the obscure strategy of refusing by giving explanation or reason of why she could not accomplish her interlocutor request. But, at the end of her response, she produced an utterance (*Kan yang dulu juga seratus ribu belum dibayar.* ‘Your last debt one hundred thousand rupiah has not been paid yet. Has it?’) which potentially loses the hearer’s face. She criticized the hearer about the same thing that the requester requested before (see Appendix 2). In her mind, she probably communicates ‘Your last debt one hundred thousand rupiah has not been paid yet. So, how come I’ll lend you some money again?’ It seems to me, the use of indirectness like in the end of the speaker’s response in situation #5 above (beside for the reason of politeness) is to increase the force that the speaker refuse to lend some money to her addressee.

Now, let’s see the refusal in situation #6 below.

[A woman (B) responds to a door to door saleswoman (A) who asks for permission to do washing demonstration in B’s house using a certain brand of washing machine. Previously B refused to buy a unit of washing machine which was offered by A.]

Ibu, saya tahu mesin cuci itu bagus. Tapi kan saya sudah punya
madam I know machine washing that good but tag I already have

mesin cuci, dan itu pun belum setahun saya beli. Walaupun ibu
machine washing and that also not yet one year I buy although madam

demo nyuci di sini, saya tetap enggak akan beli.
demonstrate washing in here I persist not will buy

‘Madam, I know that washing machine is good. But (as I told before) I already have one, and it has not been one year since I bought it. Although you do washing demonstration here (in my house), I will not buy it.’

In situation #6 above, it can be seen that the refusal was communicated indirectly. The speaker did neither say ‘no’ explicitly nor tell the hearer directly that she refuse her interlocutor request to be allowed to do washing demonstration in the speaker’s house. In her refusal, firstly she admitted the strength of the goods (the washing machine) that the saleswoman previously offered. Secondly, she re-explained that she already have one. Thirdly, she told the saleswoman that the one she owns is new. The second and the third utterance is actually the speaker’s hint that she would not buy the product (the washing machine), and therefore she need not to see washing demonstration. Finally, the speaker performed an expression which potentially loses the hearer’s face because

she directly said *enggak akan* 'will not' or refused to buy the product even the saleswoman's request was to get permission to do washing demonstration. The speaker gave a clearer hint that she actually did not allow the saleswoman to demonstrate how saleswoman's washing machine works by saying *Walaupun ibu demo nyuci di sini, saya tetap enggak akan beli* 'Although you do washing demonstration here (in my house), I will not buy it'. The speaker did understand that the main goal of the saleswoman was not to show how the washing machine works, but to attract the speaker's desire to buy the product. To conclude, the speaker made refusal realization indirectly employing the strategy of both saving and losing face. The saving face strategy as use for politeness reason, while the losing face strategy is likely more function to emphasize the speaker's force in refusing the interlocutor's request. Let's examine the following exchange.

Situation #7

[A trader gives a final respond to a consumer who bargains the price of a certain goods.]

Dua belas lima saya kasih. Kalau mau duabelas, cari aja di tempat lain.
twelve- five I give If want twelve find out just in place another

'I'll give you (the price of that goods) twelve thousand and five hundred (rupiahs). If you want twelve (thousand rupiah), just find it in other place (other shop).'

Like the last two previous speakers, the speaker in Situation #7 also employed indirectness with two kinds of face work, saving and losing face. In the first part of her respond (refusal), she tried to be polite and save the interlocutor's face by not saying 'no' directly but prefer to refuse indirectly through offering another solution (saying *Dua belas lima saya kasih*. 'I'll give you (the price that goods) twelve thousand and five hundred rupiah'). In the second part of her respond, she still use indirectness in making refusal, but here, she express her meaning by saying something that potentially loses the addressee's face. She said something that increase the possible threat to other people by saying *Kalau mau duabelas, cari aja di tempat lain* 'If you want twelve (thousand rupiah), just find it in another place (shop).'

It means that the speaker would not accomplish the interlocutor's request in reducing the price, and, therefore, she directly asked the customer to find out another shop or trader who could give the 'suitable' price. Again, like in situation #5 and #6, the losing-face work more functions as the sharpener of the speaker's force (rather than as politeness language-behavior) that she could not fulfill her request.

E. Conclusion and Suggestion

1. Conclusion

Based on the finding and the discussion above, the question of this mini research could be answered. *That is*. some of Indonesian (Sundanese ethnic) people employ both the notion of saving and losing face. Some other express their refusal in the notion of saving face only. However, even they use different strategy (saving face only, and both saving and losing face) all of them perform their refusal indirectly. It seems to me, the 'losing

face' strategy used by the speaker when making refusal is to show the speaker's attempt to increase or to sharpen her/his force of refusal.

2. Suggestions

Finally, it can be concluded that: *first*, in Indonesian context, especially Sundanese, the realization of making refusal can be grouped into two: expressed in indirectness with employing saving face only, and expressed in indirectness with employing both saving face and 'loosing face'. *Second*, these two types of refusal realization still hold Indonesian culture of politeness since both of those types are communicated indirectly (expressed in indirectness), because Aziz (n.d.) has stated that In Indonesian context, indirectness, especially when making a refusal, is viewed as an indication of politeness.

Since the research was only conducted in a limited scope and time and subject, there are several points that might be useful for next research exploring this topic. First, next research needs to develop better means of collecting data to elicit a better data and result. Second, the next researchers need to collect more data to gain deeper and better result. *Finally*, further research may include the main factors of indirectness use such as relative power, social distance, degree of imposition, and relative rights and obligations.

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Appendix I

The talk exchanges between the speakers and their interlocutors

Situation #1

[A woman (B) who is about 30 year-old responds to a door to door saleswoman (A) (about 45 year-old) who offers her merchandise.]

A: *Neng, manawi peryogi kekesed, ieu mah tina bahan kaos, cai teh*
address term perhaps need doormat this part. from material sock water part.

nyerep pisan, jaba kekesedna ageung. Pangaosna opat rebuan
absorb very also doormat-the big price-its four thousands

‘Neng, perhaps you need a doormat, these are the doormats which are made of sock material. Water will be absorbed well. The doormats are also big. Each of them is four thousands rupiah.’

B: *Ibu, abdi mah gaduh keneh kekesed mah. Da abdi mah ari meser*
Madam I part. have still doormat part. because I part. part. buy

kekesed teh tara hiji-hiji, osok dua atanapi tilu. Janten itu aya keneh.
doormat part. rare one-one often two or three so that there still

‘Madam, I still have a doormat, because if I need a doormat, I usually buy two or three, not only one. So, I still have a stock of the doormat.’

Situation #2

[Some students enter an office to meet an officer (B) at 11.40. One of them (A) asks B about their score. Then, a short dialogue takes place between A and B.]

A: *Pak, mau lihat nilai.*
sir want see score

‘Sir, we want to see our score.’

B: (He looks at the clock on the wall and says) *Nanti ya, setelah jam satu.*
later yes after hour one

‘Next time, after one o’clock. ok?’

Situation #3

[A seller (B) responds to a seven years old boy (A) who buys iced-yoghurt and asks for a bonus.]

A: *Umi, beli es yoghurt lima ratus-eun. Bonusnya satu ya, jadi dua.*
name buy ice yoghurt five hundred bonus-it’s one yes so two

‘Umi, I want to buy iced-yoghurt in the amount of five hundred rupiah. Give me one bonus, so I’ll get two bar of iced-yoghurt.’

B: *Beli satu mah enggak ada bonusnya. Kalau beli dua ribu-eun baru*
buy one part. no there bonus-it's if buy two thousand new

dikasih bonus satu.
given bonus one

'If you buy only one bar, you will not get any bonus. But, if you buy at amount 2,000 rupiah, you will get one free.'

Situation #4

[A trader (B) responds to his customer's (A) bargain.]

A: *Mang, tilubelas rebu we nya?*
uncle thirteen thousands part. yes

'Uncle, how if the price is thirteen thousands rupiah, is it ok?'

B: *Aduh, neng, tambahan deui atuh! Emang teh da nyandak untung-na*
it's again part. uncle part because take profit-it's

ge ngan saalit. Upami tilubelas teuing mah teu aya kanggo emangna.
also just a little if thirteen too part. not there for uncle-the

'O, neng, add it more, because I take just a little profit of it. If it is only thirteen (thousands rupiah), I will get no profit.'

Situation #5

[A young woman (B) responds to a younger woman (A) who requests money loan.]

A: *Teh, boleh enggak saya pinjam uang? limapuluh ribu.*
sister, may not I borrow money fifty thousand

'Sister, may I borrow some money? It is fifty thousands rupiah'

B: *Uang saya teh tinggal dua ratus ribu. Gajian seminggu lagi. Saya*
money I part. left two hundred thousand payday one-week again I

takut nanti uang saya enggak cukup. Kan yang dulu juga seratus
afraid later money I not enough tag which last time also one hundred

ribu belum dibayar.
thousand not yet paid

‘My money is two hundred thousands rupiah left. I still have one week before the payday. I am afraid I will run out of money. Your last debt one hundred thousand rupiah has not been paid yet. Has it?’

Situation #6

[A woman (B) responds to a door to door saleswoman (A) who asks for permission to do washing demonstration in her house using a certain brand of washing machine. Previously B refused to buy a unit of washing machine which was offered by A.]

A: *Kalau begitu, boleh kami demo mencuci di sini?*
if like that may we demonstrate washing in here

‘If so, may we do washing demonstration here?’

B: *Ibu, saya tahu mesin cuci itu bagus. Tapi kan saya sudah punya*
madam I know machine washing that good but tag I already have

mesin cuci, dan itu pun belum setahun saya beli. Walaupun ibu
machine washing and that also not yet one year I buy although madam

demo nyuci di sini, saya tetap enggak akan beli.
demonstrate washing in here I persist not will buy

‘Madam, I know that washing machine is good. But (as I told before) I already have one, and it has not been one year since I bought it. Although you do washing demonstration here (in my house), I will not buy it.’

Situation #7

[A trader (A) gives a final respond to a consumer (B) who bargains the price of a certain goods.]

A: *Bu, kalau boleh duabelas, saya ambil dua.*
madam if may twelve I take two

‘Madam, if the price is twelve (thousand rupiah), I will buy two (pieces).’

B: *Duabelaslimalima saya kasih. Kalau mau duabelas, cari aja di tempat lain.*
twelve-five I give If want twelve find out just in place place

‘I’ll give you (the price) twelve thousand and five hundred rupiah. If you want twelve (thousand rupiah), just find it in another place (shop).’

Appendix II

Refusal responses performed by speakers to their interlocutors

Situation	Indirectness Refusal with Saving Face	Indirectness Refusal with Loosing Face
#1	<p><i>Ibu, abdi mah gaduh keneh kekesed mah. Da abdi mah ari meser</i> Madam I part. have still doormat part. because I part. part. buy</p> <p><i>kekesed teh tara hiji-hiji, sok dua atanapi tilu. Janten itu aya keneh</i> doormat part. rare one-one often two or three so that there still</p> <p>‘Madam, I still have the doormat, because if I need a doormat, I usually buy two or three, not only one. So, I still have a stock of the doormat.’</p>	—
#2	<p><i>Nanti ya, setelah jam satu.</i> later yes after hour one</p> <p>‘Next time, after one o’clock. ok?’</p>	—
#3	<p><i>Beli satu mah enggak ada bonusnya. Kalau beli dua ribu-eun baru</i> buy one part. not there bonus-it’s if buy two thousand new</p> <p><i>dikasih bonus satu.</i> given bonus one</p> <p>‘If you buy only one, you will not get any bonus. But, if you buy at amount 2,000 rupiah, you will get one free.’</p>	—
#4	<p><i>Aduh, neng, tambahan deui atuh! Emang teh da nyandak untung-na</i> itrjctn. girl add again part. uncle part because take profit-it’s</p> <p><i>ge ngan saalit. Upami tilubelas teuing mah teu aya kanggo emangna.</i> also just a little if thirteen too part. not there for uncle-the</p> <p>‘O, neng, add it more, because I take just a little profit of it. If it is only thirteen (thousands rupiah), I will get no profit.’</p>	—
#5	<p><i>Uang saya teh tinggal dua ratus ribu. Gajian seminggu lagi. Saya</i> money I part. left two hundred thousand payday one-week again I</p> <p><i>takut nanti uang saya enggak cukup.</i> afraid later money I not enough</p> <p>‘My money is two hundred thousands rupiah left. I still have one week before the payday. I am afraid I will run out of money.’</p>	<p><i>Kan yang dulu juga se-ratus</i> tag which last time also one-hundred</p> <p><i>ribu belum dibayar.</i> thousand not yet paid</p> <p>‘Your last debt one hundred thousand rupiah has not been paid yet. Right?’</p>
#6	<p><i>Ibu, saya tahu mesin cuci itu bagus. Tapi kan saya sudah punya</i> madam I know machine washing that good but tag I already have</p> <p><i>mesin cuci, dan itu pun belum setahun saya beli.</i> machine washing and that also not yet one year I buy</p> <p>‘Madam, I know that washing machine is good. But (as I told before) I already have one, and it has not been one year since I bought it.’</p>	<p><i>Walaupun ibu demo nyuci di</i> although madam demonstrate washing in</p> <p><i>sini, saya tetap enggak akan beli</i> here I persist not will buy</p> <p>‘Although you do washing demonstration here (in my house), I will not buy it.’</p>
#7	<p><i>Duabelaslima saya kasih.</i> twelve-five I give</p> <p>‘I’ll give you (the price) twelve (thousand) and five (hundred rupiah).’</p>	<p><i>Kalau mau duabelas, cari aja</i> If want twelve find out just</p> <p><i>di tempat lain.</i> in place other</p> <p>‘If you want twelve (thousand rupiah), just find it in another place (shop).’</p>