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Principles of Politeness Used and Violated by Acehese-Speaking *Khatibs* in Their Friday Prayer Sermons

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Abstract

This research focused on the politeness of the preachers (henceforth, Khatibs) in delivering sermons. The objective was to find out how politeness principles were applied in the Acehese language sermons delivered by the Khatibs in Friday prayer processions in Aceh Besar, Indonesia. The data for this research was 15 Friday sermons given at seven sub-districts in Aceh Besar. This study used naturally occurring data from the Friday sermons collected over two months by recording them at 15 mosques within the area of Aceh Besar. Data were transcribed and analyzed using Grice's maxim theory. The results showed that out of the six politeness maxims, only two maxims, the sympathy maxim, and the tact maxim were found and identified to be applied in the Friday prayer sermons. The sympathy maxim was dominantly used by the Khatibs with 52 occurrences or 68.4% of data, while the tact maxim was found to be used in 24 occurrences or 31.6% of data. Meanwhile, the approbation maxim, the agreement maxim, the modesty maxim, and the generosity maxim were not found in the data. This might be attributed to the nature of

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the discourse of the sermons as one-way dialogues. It can be concluded that Friday prayers only used the sympathy maxim and tact maxim of politeness because of the one-way communication of Friday sermons. The reasons for the absence of the other four politeness maxims are contextually discussed in this paper.

Keywords: Acehese language, Friday sermons, politeness principles.

1. INTRODUCTION

Politeness strategies in discourse are a part of pragmatic studies. According to Yule (1996), pragmatics examines speakers' meaning according to contexts and the social distance determining the participant's involvement in specific conversations. Speakers construct politeness to the audience as a form of respect to the listeners, such as in sermons (monologues) or to the interlocutors (i.e., speech partner(s) or a dialogue).

Politeness is essentially a matter of taking into account the feelings of others as to how they should be treated in communication, including behaving in a manner that demonstrates appropriate concern for interlocutors' social status and their social relationships (Brown, 2015). From Fraser's (1990) point of view, there are four principles of politeness: the social-norm perspective, conversational maxim, conversational contract, and social indexing. Chaer (2010) asserts that the language rules to acquire politeness in conversations include formality, hesitancy, and equality. In addition, Brown and Levinson (1987) reveal that the categories of politeness can be reviewed based on the negative and positive faces and Leech's (1983) cost/benefit scale. Fraser (1990) further adds that the application of politeness language categories must be under the conversational contract.

As Indonesia is a multilingual, multiethnic, and multicultural country, every group of speakers uses their mother tongue as their daily language. As a national language, Bahasa Indonesia is used in formal contexts and situations. In Aceh, Acehese and other vernacular languages have the most significant number of speakers. Considering that most native Acehese is Muslims, it is expected that Acehese sermons, announcements, and lectures in semi-formal contexts are conveyed in Acehese because many of the religious discussions are delivered in the native language. Moreover, the self-identification of religion through language is more complex and cannot be understood in complicated ways (Bhimji, 2005). Therefore, in most cases, the Acehese language is considered more appropriate for expressing religious discussions among the Acehese people.

Nevertheless, there have been incidents where Acehese *Khatibs* (preachers) were being brought down from their lecterns or platforms during the sermons of Friday prayers. Friday prayers, or congregational prayers, or the *jumu'ah* in Arabic, are a prayer that Muslims hold every Friday during the afternoon instead of the *Dzuhur* prayer typically held during that time on other days. A Friday prayer is half the *Dzuhur* prayer, preceded by a *khutbah* (a sermon) and followed by a congregational prayer led by the *Imam* (the prayer leader). The occasions where Acehese *Khatibs* were being protested and brought down by the *jama'ah* (or worshippers attending the Friday prayers) were reported in several Aceh districts, such as Pidie, Pidie Jaya, and Banda

Aceh. One of the instances was when a Khatib at Abu Beureueh Mosque in Pidie was forced to step down by one outspoken prayer congregation member (audience) in the middle of the sermon because the Khatib spoke at length about issues central to views that divides two sects of Islam in Aceh (Muhammadiyah and Ahlussunnah), and the majority of members showed their support for the action of the member (Kabar Aceh, 2012). In 2017, a similar incident took place at Al Makmur Mosque. Other cases are also reported by Miswar (2022) who views these phenomena as a contestation of religious authority. These incidents were, partly or entirely, motivated by controversial content delivered by the Khatibs by tapping into topics sensitive to political views. Mosques are deemed sacred venues, and thus, sensitive issues can disrupt the peace of the people attending the Friday prayers.

These incidents, from the pragmatics point of view, can be deemed to have been caused by the Khatibs' violation of the politeness principles in communication. Violation of politeness principles can cause potential conflicts both in conversational dynamics and one-way communication such as in speeches and sermons. In conversations, Davies (2007) states that it is a norm in communication to deliver information by using politeness, effectiveness, and humor to please listeners or interlocutors to prevent misunderstandings and resentment between the speakers and listeners, thus effective communication is achieved. Kádár and Haugh (2013) said that the politeness of a speaker is interpersonal rhetoric that is influenced by knowledge and relationship with the audience. In one way-communication speech events, such as in religious sermons, overlooking politeness principles can be a source of resentment from the audience. Mansoor (2018) said an *Imam* who does not make strategic use of politeness elements may risk the efficacy of his sermon. Principles of politeness need to be observed both in giving speeches and having conversations with others.

Therefore, it is essential to observe principles of politeness, especially when speaking in front of large audiences. This is in line with several researchers who have investigated the politeness in Khatibs' sermons in Indonesia where researchers reside and in other countries where Muslim communities settle. A study by Wahidah and Wijaya (2017) on the politeness of Religion (as a school subject) teachers teaching at the Yogyakarta Ibnul Qoyyim Putra Islamic Boarding School identified violations of principles of politeness using Leech's (1983) theory. Violations of the politeness principle came about when the teachers discussed issues in the maxim of an award. For example, the teacher gave instructions to a student to read the text of a related subject matter. However, these instructions tended to be less polite because the teacher used short command sentences which were regarded as rude. These violations posed negative impressions on the students toward the teachers.

Nevertheless, when the Khatibs deliver their sermons by following the principles of politeness, they will positively influence the congregation to follow their sermons attentively. It is as found by Avineri and Avni (2016) on the politeness principles employed by Catholic Church clerics to spread religious preaching and they succeeded by doing it that way. In addition, Herniti et al. (2016) state that politeness in multicultural preaching is a must to achieve the purpose of preaching. Listeners appraise speech infringements by Khatibs, and the congregation can follow the style of speech since, in general, Khatibs are usually role models to the congregation.

As stated earlier, this research is concerned with the principles of politeness used and violated by Khatibs in their Friday prayer sermons in the Greater Aceh District, Aceh, Indonesia. Considering the incidents of Khatibs who delivered their sermons by

provoking their audience's resentment, the researchers believed that there is a need to study this state of affairs. Speaking politely in official forums, especially on Friday sermons, should be put into practice by the Khatibs. The audience that performs Friday prayers consists of worshippers of different ages, from young to old. The researchers would like to investigate the use of politeness principles and whether these Khatibs violate them. Because the language used in religious rituals is different from everyday language and has its characteristic variations, such as *shalawat* (a prayer for the prophet) and *shahadat* (an Islamic oath), it is interesting to examine and understand how the Khatibs use politeness in their sermon to convey their messages and at the same time to pinpoint when they commonly use vile language and violate the principle of politeness in a sermon, at what context, and the reason behind the use of those languages. Furthermore, only a few studies have discussed and published this issue, especially in the context of Acehese, and therefore this research intends to fill in this gap. Consequently, "communication plays a crucial role in human life, and politeness is important in speech communication" (Song, 2012, p. 135).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Politeness Principles

Leech (1983) introduced the Politeness Principles (PP) theory, similar to Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory, in which he classifies the politeness principle as a series of maxims to explain how politeness operates in conversational exchanges. He defines politeness as behaviors between participants that show feelings of comity. For Leech (1983), "politeness is about strategic conflict avoidance and showing regard for others" (Terkourafi, 2015, p. 957). Leech (1983) divided the politeness principle into six maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. The first and second ones form a pair, as do the third and the fourth whereas both the fifth and the sixth. These maxims vary among cultures; the meaning may be considered polite in one culture but may be strange or downright rude in another. Leech (1983) argued that negative politeness is more critical than positive politeness.

The principle of politeness is associated with two participants of the conversation, i.e., self and other. The self is the speaker, the other person is the hearer, and the third person is being discussed by the speaker and the hearer (Wijana, 1996). Maxim is a linguistic rule in verbal interactions that govern actions, language usage, and interpretations of the actions and utterances (Leech, 1983; Widya, 2017). In addition, the maxim is also referred to as a pragmatic form based on cooperative and politeness principles. These maxims suggest people express their beliefs politely and avoid impolite speech.

There are four maxims involving two-pole scales in politeness principles, namely cost-benefit and praise-dispraise (Leech, 1983). These four maxims are the tact maxim, the generosity maxim, the approbation maxim, and the modesty maxim. The other two maxims (the agreement maxim and the sympathy maxim) involve scales of only one pole, the scale of agreement and the scale of sympathy (Widya, 2017). Although both scales are related, each maxim is distinctly different because it has a different rating scale. The maxims of the Politeness Principle tend to go in pairs as (1) Tact maxim (in impositives and commissives): (a) minimize the cost to other; [(b)

maximize the benefit to other]; (2) Generosity maxim (in impositives and commissives): (a) minimize benefit to self; [(b) maximize cost to self]; (3) Approbation maxim (in expressives and assertives): (a) minimize dispraise of other; [(b) maximize praise of other]; (4) Modesty maxim (in expressives and assertives): (a) minimize praise of self; [(b) maximize dispraise of self]; (5) Agreement maxim (in assertives): (a) minimize disagreement between self and other; [(b) maximize agreement between self and other]; and (6) Sympathy maxim (in assertives): (a) minimize antipathy between self and other; [(b) maximize sympathy between self and other] (Leech, 1983, p. 132).

2.1.1 *The tact maxim*

It is considered the essential maxim since it focuses more on the other than the self (Firdaus & Simatupang, 2022; Wijana, 1996). In this maxim, the participants are supposed to keep the principle always to minimize the expression of beliefs that imply cost to others and maximize benefit in communicating. It is used in directives/impositives and commissives. A directive means an utterance used to command something directly or indirectly, such as requesting, advising, ordering, etc. (i.e., ‘Could I interrupt you for a second?’); while a commissive means an utterance used to declare a promise or offer something (i.e., ‘If I could clarify this then’). The person who holds and performs the tact maxim can be regarded as a polite person (Widya, 2017).

2.1.2 *The generosity maxim*

The generosity maxim requires the speaker to minimize benefit and maximize cost to self (Firdaus & Simatupang, 2022; Rachmawati & Al Arif, 2020). It is used in directives and commissives like offers, invitations, and promises as in the tact maxim, but it is self-centered to show other-oriented expressing positive politeness. Unlike the tact maxim, the generosity maxim focuses on the speaker, and others should be put first instead of the self. In this maxim, the speech participants are expected to respect each other. Respect for others will happen if people can minimize benefit to self and maximize cost to self, for example, ‘You relax and let me do the dishes’, ‘You must come and have dinner with us’ (Leech, 1983).

2.1.3 *The approbation maxim*

In this maxim, the speaker has to minimize the expression of beliefs that express dispraise of others and maximize praise/approval of others (Rachmawati & Al Arif, 2020; Wijana, 1996). It is used in expressives and assertives. The expressive is an utterance used to describe the speaker’s psychological attitude toward a situation, such as thanking, congratulating, welcoming, apologizing, praising, etc. The assertive is an utterance commonly used to declare the truth proposition, such as giving opinions, comments, suggestions, complaints, etc. At this maxim, a compliment will be greatly appreciated; the speech utterances that are reproaches, ridicule, or even insults will not be appreciated. The operation of this maxim is relatively apparent: all things are equal, and we prefer to praise others. The first part of the maxim avoids disagreement; the

second part intends to make other people feel good by showing solidarity (Leech, 1983).

2.1.4 *The modesty maxim*

This maxim requires the speaker to minimize self-praise and maximize dispraise of self (Firdaus & Simatupang, 2022; Wijana, 1996). It is also applicable in expressive and assertive utterances like self-devaluation as in the approbation maxim. In other words, praise yourself as little as possible and dispraise yourself as much as possible. Modesty is possibly a more complex maxim than the others since the quality maxim can sometimes be violated in observing it. For example, ‘Oh, I’m so stupid’, and ‘I didn’t make a note of our lecture! Did you?’ (Leech, 1983).

2.1.5 *The agreement maxim*

The speaker needs to minimize disagreement between self and others in agreement maxim and maximize agreement between self and others (Rachmawati & Al Arif, 2020; Widya, 2017). It is expressed in representatives that require the speaker to reduce the disagreement between himself and the speaker and increase the agreement between the two parties. Making a disagreement between one speaker and another is not often because the hearer should totally or partially show agreement with the speaker. If the speakers show disagreement, their speech would be impolite. It is in line with Brown and Levinson’s (1987) positive politeness strategies of ‘seek agreement’ and ‘avoid disagreement’, to which they attach great importance. However, it is not being claimed that people avoid disagreement. It is observed that they are much more direct in expressing agreement than disagreement. For example, ‘I don’t want my daughter to do this; I want her to do that’, ‘Yes, but ma’am, I thought we resolved this already on your last visit’ (Leech, 1983).

2.1.6 *The sympathy maxim*

In the sympathy maxim, the interlocutors are expected to maximize the attitude of sympathy between one party and another (Firdaus & Simatupang, 2022; Rachmawati & Al Arif, 2020). The attitude of antipathy will be regarded as a disrespectful attitude. It is also expressed through representatives. It includes a small group of speech acts such as congratulation, commiseration, and expressing condolences to attend to the hearer’s interests, wants, and needs. For example, suppose one lost somebody, and the hearer felt sorry. In that case, he is showing sympathy to the speaker, and the utterances would employ the sympathy maxim (i.e., ‘I was sorry to hear about your father’). Briefly, reduce the antipathy between yourself, and increase the amount of sympathy between yourself and others (Leech, 1983).

2.2 **Islamic Friday Sermon**

In Islamic tradition, the Friday sermon, or *khutbah*, serves as one of the primary formal occasions for public preaching (Hashem, 2010). It is conducted before every Friday prayer for Muslims to hear. The Friday sermon has rules that must be applied by the Khatib so that the implementation of Friday is valid and Allah (the one and only

God in Islam) accepts the worship. The terms and pillars that characterize the validity of this sermon must be carried out (Muhyiddin, 2013, pp. 302-303). The conditions for the Friday sermon are as follows (Muhyiddin, 2013):

1. The sermon is done before the Friday prayer.
2. Intention.
3. In Arabic. If you are unable to speak Arabic, you are required to read only verses in Arabic.
4. The sermon is done on time.
5. Both sermons are spoken aloud.
6. The first and second sermons are carried out successively.
7. Deliver the two sermons by standing up if you can.
8. Sit between two sermons with a moment of silence.
9. The Khatib is clean from ritual impurity and covers the private parts during his two sermons.
10. Khatib is a person who is obliged to Friday prayers.

The pillars of the sermon are as follows (Muhyiddin, 2013):

1. Praise Allah.
2. *Shalawat* to Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) in his two sermons.
3. Willing with piety in both sermons.
4. Read a verse of the Quran in one of the two sermons.
5. Pray for the believers, especially in the second sermon.

3. METHODS

The data for this qualitative study was collected from the Acehese Khatibs in seven sub-districts out of 23 sub-districts in Aceh Besar, Indonesia. Due to the limitation of this study, only seven sub-districts were chosen as the location of the research, they are (1) Darul Imarah, (2) Baitussalam, (3) Ingin Jaya, (4) Krueng Raya, (4) Blang Bintang, (5) Montasik, (6) Kota Jantho, and (7) Seulimuem. From each place, two different mosques were chosen every week for one month thus there were four Friday sermons in each mosque. The researchers specifically choose two different mosques in each sub-district to avoid biases. The prejudices may be caused by the specific and diverse cultures of each place hence thus dissimilarity may attract particular sermon styles and languages of Khatibs. A total of 56 Friday sermons were recorded for this study with consent from the Khatibs, whose names remain anonymous.

There were different 56 Khatibs involved in this study. Each of the Friday sermons was recorded separately. The researchers used a smartphone to record the sermons. The recording device was placed right beside the Khatibs during the Friday sermons. Each sermon lasted for 30 minutes, making 1.680 minutes or 28 hours of digitally audio-recorded data. Subsequently, the recorded sermons were transcribed into the Indonesian language before it was translated into English. The data transcription was then identified and examined to find a common pattern of maxim used by the Khatibs in their Friday sermons as well as to examine whether all Khatibs used maxim in their sermons.

Following Miles and Huberman (1994), the data analysis phase was divided into three stages: data selection, classification, and conclusion. After the recordings had been transcribed, they were selected for relevant information to this study. The sentences or phrases that applied and violated the politeness principle were identified and coded or classified based on politeness comprising tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy (Leech, 1983). Finally, each principle was described in the data presented.

4. RESULTS

The results revealed that only two maxims were found in this study. Out of six maxims, the researchers discovered that the Acehese Khatibs only used the tact maxim and the sympathy maxim in their Friday sermons. Below are the frequency and percentage of results obtained from 15 Friday sermons.

Table 1. The principle of politeness in the Friday sermons.

| Srm* | Tact | | Sympathy | | Generosity | | Modesty | | Agreement | | Approbation | |
|------|-------|------|----------|------|------------|---|---------|---|-----------|---|-------------|---|
| | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % |
| 1 | 3 | 3.9 | 7 | 9.2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 | 0.0 | 4 | 5.3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | 1 | 1.3 | 2 | 2.6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | 1 | 1.3 | 3 | 3.9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | 3 | 3.9 | 3 | 3.9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 6 | 0 | 0.0 | 7 | 9.2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | 2 | 2.6 | 2 | 2.6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 8 | 2 | 2.6 | 7 | 9.2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 9 | 2 | 2.6 | 4 | 5.3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 10 | 1 | 1.3 | 3 | 3.9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 11 | 4 | 5.3 | 5 | 6.6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 12 | 3 | 3.9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 13 | 2 | 2.6 | 1 | 1.3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 14 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2.6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 15 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2.6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Tot. | 24 | 31.6 | 52 | 68.4 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 |

*Sermon

Table 1 shows that only two maxims occurred in 15 Friday sermons, namely the tact maxim and the sympathy maxim. Overall, there were 24 utterances (31.6%) for the tact maxim and 52 utterances (68.4%) for the sympathy maxim. On average, the Khatibs used the tact maxim twice in their sermons with one of them using it four times in one sermon. Compared to the tact maxim, one Khatib used up to seven sympathy maxims in one sermon. On average, the Khatibs used two to seven sympathy maxims in one sermon. Interestingly, none of the other four maxims was found in the recorded sermons.

4.1 The Tact Maxim

The tact maxim is an essential kind of politeness. It is expressed as follows: (a) Minimize cost to others [(b) Maximize benefit to others]. The Khatibs used the tact

maxim 24 times or 31.6% in delivering the Friday sermons in Aceh Besar. The tact maxim was used so that the congregations of the Friday sessions felt that the Khatibs did not discredit them regarding the contents of their sermons. The application forms of the politeness principle in the tact maxim are as follows. The data for each utterance from the sermons are labeled with D1, D2, and so on.

- D1 *Alhamdulillah, tanyo geupeugöt le Allah lam bentuk yang sungguh luar biasa, meunyo tabandéng ngon makhluk yang laén, selaén malaikat...jeuet takalon binatang, tumbuhan, dan selaén-laénnya. Luar biasa geutanyo mulia, tanyo gèt luar biasa, geupeuduk ulèe u wateuh, kemudian geubôh mata, kemudian idông, mulut, telinga, badan dan sebagainya, luar biasa, geubri até le Allah, na mata na geulinyung dan sebagainya.* [‘Praise be to Allah, we were created by Allah in an extraordinary form comparing to other creatures except angels...look at the animals, plants and etc. We are remarkably noble, we are magnificent with the head placed on top, then we were given eyes, along with nose, mouth, ears, body and etc. that Allah provided them wonderfully for us, we got eyes, ears, and etc.’]
- D2 *Mandum nyan peureulèe geutanyo teupu ban mandum nyan. Meunyo han tateupu ibadah geutanyo hana bèrèh. Hana geuteurimong lé Allah. Jangankan geuteurimong lé Allah, sah hana.* [‘We have to know all these matters. If we don’t know how to worship, we are not righteous people, and our worship is not accepted by Allah and is even invalid’.]
- D3 *Mudah-mudahan dengan berhati-hati geutanyo terhindar dari fitnah-fitnah bak akhé zameuen nyo, dan mudah-mudahan beu geupeutunyok lé Allah subhaanahu wa taa’aala, geutanyo ban mandum. Amin ya rabbal ‘aalamiinn.* [‘Hopefully, we can avoid the *fitnah* (slander) of the end time, and may Allah the Most Holy and the Most High show the right path for all of us. Amen’.]
- D4 *Beugèt-gèt bèk rugo tasembahyang, tetapi dijebloskan oleh Allah kedalam neraka Jahannam.* [‘Be careful in our prayer, don’t let Allah throw us into hell’.]
- D5 *Melalui mimbar khutbah ini, Khatib memperingatkan diri supaya bèk lalèe geutanyo, bèk ta puja dro geutanyo, bèk sombong geutanyo, beu ta teupu yang töh yang paling afdal di hadapan Allah.* [‘Through this sermon, the Khatib warns us not to be negligent and arrogant by worshipping ourselves. We need to know what is the most ritually pure in front of Allah’.]

The data above is an application form of the politeness principle in the tact maxim. As seen in D1, the Khatibs used words that persuaded the congregation without them being cornered to do so. The instruction is expressed indirectly in a polite way. In the data, it can be observed that the Khatib used the tact maxim in delivering the sermon to avoid different interpretations between the Khatib and the congregation. The Khatib delivered a one-way sermon without allowing the congregation to interrupt or express opinions. It is in accordance with Pfister’s (2010) opinion which says the politeness maxim is part of the rational conversation among potentially aggressive parties.

In D1, the tact maxim occurred three times: *tabandéng* ‘(we) compared’, *takalon* ‘(we) can see’, and *geutanyo* ‘we are’. In all three contexts, the Khatib asked the congregation to think up and contemplate God’s creation of human beings. The Khatib put in his request indirectly and politely. He tried to maximize the congregation’s profit and persuade them by mentioning both parties without degrading the other party. That is why he chose specific first-person plural pronouns such as *geutanyo* (we), not ‘you’, by including the audience and himself. A similar situation also happened in D2 and D5 in which the Khatib presented the explanation in an inclusive but indirect way to prevent misunderstanding and offense to the audience.

In contrast, D3 and D4 start their context by voicing a polite directive command with a wish (*mudah-mudahan* ‘hopefully’ and *beugèt-gèt* ‘(we) be careful’). The Khatib did this to encourage the congregation to do something rewarding for themselves. However, he also inserted the plural pronoun to express his intention by using a word such as *geutanyo* ‘we’, not ‘you’, and by putting the focus on others.

Based on the data above, we know that the word appeal marks the Khatib’s application of the tact maxim, namely *mudah-mudahan* ‘hopefully’ in D3 and *beugèt-gèt* ‘(we) be careful’ in D4. The form of politeness for the Khatib is also indicated by the use of the first plural pronoun, namely *geutanyo* ‘we’ as found in D1, D2, D3, and D5. Meanwhile, in D4, the first plural pronoun is indicated by using the word *ta+sembahyang* ‘we pray’. With the use of these pronouns, the Khatibs not only appeal to the congregation but also advised themselves. From the five transcripts above, all of the Acehese Khatibs demonstrated their wise nature and wisdom in delivering the sermons without necessarily passing blame to the congregation.

4.2 The Sympathy Maxim

The principle of sympathy maxim in politeness is used to make the participants in the speech able to uphold the attitude of sympathy between the speaker and the interlocutors. The sympathy maxim is used for two purposes: (a) to minimize antipathy between self and others, and (b) to maximize sympathy between self and others. This study indicates that the Khatibs’ sympathy maxim was dominantly used when delivering Friday sermons in Aceh Besar. From the 15 Friday sermons, there are 52 sympathy maxims with 68.4%.

D6 *Kaôm muslimin sidang jama’ah jumat yang dirahmati oleh Allah subhaanahu wa taa’aala, kewajiban geutanyo dalam buleuen Ramadan adalah berpuasa.* [‘Dear Muslims, the congregation of this Friday assembly whom Allah blesses, fasting is our obligation during Ramadan’.]

In D6, the *Khatib* opened the Friday prayer sermon by addressing all the attendees of the congregation. He specifically uses the word *dirahmati* ‘blessed by’ to assert his intention. In this case, this word can represent more than one meaning. First, it was used to articulate the obvious fact that Allah had blessed the congregation. Second, it was an indirect gesture of expressing gratitude to Allah that every human being is in his mercy. By using this word, the Khatib expressed his own sympathy while at the same time inviting all the attendees to be grateful. Through implication, the Khatib had successfully asserted his stand politely and inclusively without being offensive and judgmental.

D7 *Allah subhaanahu wa taa’aala geuyu bak geutanyo untuk tapeubut sembahyang. Disampéng geutanyo tapeubut sembahyang, Allah subhaanahu wa taa’aala cit geuyu geutanyo untuk tabayeue zakeut. Jika salah sidro ureueng ditém peubut sembahyang tapi han ditém bayeue zakeut maka ibadah yang dilakukan hana sempurna dan sembahyang ureung nyan han geuteurimong lé Allah subhaanahu wa taa’aala.* [‘Allah the Most Holy and the Most High tells us to pray and pay *zakat* (almsgiving). If a person does pray but does not pay *zakat*, the worship he performs is not perfect (complete), and Allah does not accept his prayer’.]

D8 *Hanya dengan taubat nasuha lah geutanyo saban tabersihkan diri daripada dosa-dosa besar. Oleh sebagian ulama neupeugah, wajéb taubat ngon lhèe syarat kheun ulama, tinggal maksit sekalian yang pertama, yang kedua dum ata gob tapulang mandum tajak lakèe meu’ah meunyo hana dipeumeu’ah, teuma yang keu lhèe taseusai dro but yang lalu han meuriwang lé*

beurangkajan selama-lama. [‘We can cleanse ourselves from major sins with repentance. Some scholars say that there are three conditions for repentance: leaving the sin that we have committed, returning other people’s things that we have taken if it has not been explained, and regretting the actions we have done and will not do it again’.]

Consider examples D7 and D8, where both used the word *geutanyo* ‘we’ to include the speaker and the attendees. He gracefully injected the word in the sentence to avoid confusion about whom he was addressing. By doing so, he could easily avoid miscommunication or offending the audience about the topic he was going to address. The topic is a sensitive one since he was asking the congregation to pay attention to their worship and sins. In his speech, the *Khatib* was indirectly criticizing those who neglected their worship and warned them about their sins. However, he did it politely because he did not want to admonish them, a stranger.

D9 *Kaôm muslimin sidang jama'ah Jumat yang dirahmati oleh Allah subhaanahu wa taa'aala. Nyo limong malam nyo adalah malam-malam yang dikehendaki mustajabah do'a salah satu jih yang akan tanyo meurumpok enteuk malam Senin nyo insya Allah malam phôn-phôn that ditamong buleuen Rajab*. [‘Dear Muslims, the congregation of this Friday assembly whom Allah blesses. These five nights are the desired nights for prayer, one of which is the first Monday night of the Rajab month’.]

D10 *Hadirin sidang jama'ah Jumat yang dirahmati oleh Allah subhaanahu wa taa'aala. Maka tuntutan ilmee hai yang pertama getanyo lakukan, kon fisik dan kekuatan nyan poh ajaran sesat, teutapi ilmée nyo keuh nyan poh ajaran sesat*. [‘Dear Muslims, the congregation of this Friday assembly whom Allah blesses. Learning is the first thing we must do. The physic and strength cannot protect us from heresy, but knowledge can’.]

In D9 and D10, the *Khatib* also used the inclusive ‘we’ (*tanyo* and *geutanyo*) to minimize the distance between him and the congregation, indicating that everyone belongs to the same group. In this part of his speech, he was trying to remind the congregation about the importance of knowledge, and the blessings of the last five days of Ramadhan (a month of fasting, prayer, reflection, and community in the ninth month of the Islamic calendar). However, instead of saying it directly and blaming them for their negligence, he used the art of sympathy to attract their attention.

The application of the sympathy maxim occurred when the *Khatib* minimized the degree of antipathy in his sermon by including both himself and the addressee when he addresses a negative circumstance. One of the most frequent occurrences of sympathy maxim in this study was the use of the first plural pronominal *geutanyo* ‘we’. Furthermore, the *Khatib* applied the sympathy maxim with assertive and expressive speech. Assertive speech binds the speaker to the truth of what is said. In the data above, it can be seen in *tuntut ilmee hai yang pertama getanyo lakukan, kon fisik dan kekuatan nyan poh ajaran sesat, teutapi ilmée nyo keuh nyan poh ajaran sesat* ‘learning is the first thing we must do. The physics and strength cannot protect us from heresy, but knowledge can’. The *Khatib* applied non-assertive speech in the sympathy maxim to give affirmation. [Yuyun \(2014\)](#) believed that the *Khatibs* should address his topic by using different ways of speaking to make their argument sound more assertive to listeners.

Table 2 presents the forms of sympathy expressions uttered by the Acehnese *Khatibs* in this study. These forms are thanking, criticizing, and blaming.

Table 2. Expression of sympathy by the Khatibs.

| The sympathy maxim | Examples |
|--------------------|---|
| Thanking | <i>Kaôm muslimin sidang jama'ah Jumat yang dirahmati oleh Allah subhaanahu wa taa'aala.</i> ['Dear Muslims, the congregation of this Friday assembly whom Allah blesses.] |
| Criticizing | <i>Jika salah sidro ureueng ditém peubut sembahyang tapi han ditém bayeue zakeut maka ibadah yang dilakukan hana sempurna dan sembahyang ureung nyan han geuteurimong lé Allah subhaanahu wa taa'aala.</i> ['Allah the Most Holy and the Most High tells us to pray and pay <i>zakat</i> (almsgiving). If a person does pray but does not pay <i>zakat</i> , the worship he performs is not perfect (complete), and Allah does not accept his prayer'.] <i>Hanya dengan taubat nasuhalah geutanyo saban tabersihkan diri daripada dosa-dosa besar</i> ['We can cleanse ourselves from major sins with repentance'] |
| Blaming | <i>Nyo limong malam nyo adalah malam-malam yang dikehendaki mustajabah do'a...</i> ['These five nights are the desired nights for prayer...] <i>...tuntut ilmee hai yang pertama getanyo lakukan, kon fisik dan kekuatan nyan poh ajaran sesat, teutapi ilmée nyo keuh nyan poh ajaran sesat.</i> [...learning is the first thing we must do. The physic and strength cannot protect us from heresy, but knowledge can.] |

According to [Indriyani et al. \(2019\)](#), the sympathy maxim in expressive speech is in the form of speech acts intended by the speaker so that his speech is interpreted as an evaluation of the things mentioned in the speech, including utterances of thanking, complaining, congratulating, flattering, praising, blaming, and criticizing. In this study, the Khatibs expressed their sympathy in the form of thanking, criticizing, and blaming (see Table 2).

During the sermon, the Khatibs tend to use directive speech acts and speech acts of suggestion to deliver and emphasize the message ([Nugroho et al., 2018](#); [Wardoyo, 2017](#)). However, assertive and expressive speech acts do not make a Khatib delivering a sermon violate the principle of the politeness maxim of sympathy. For example, when the Khatib said *kewajiban geutanyo dalam buleuen Ramadan adalah berpuasa* 'fasting is our obligation during Ramadan', he politely asserted that fasting is an obligation upon all Muslims, including himself without exception.

The Khatibs also did directly criticize the congregation at the Friday sessions, but he also criticized or blamed himself. It can be observed when the Khatib said *hanya dengan taubat nasuhalah geutanyo saban tabersihkan diri daripada dosa-dosa besar* 'we can cleanse ourselves from major sins with repentance'. He made sure that he also included himself in the criteria. The principle of delivering the sermon itself requires that the truth always comes from God, while humans may have been wrong in conveying something.

4.3 Discussion

The Acehese Khatibs used two types of politeness maxims in delivering the Friday sermons in Aceh Besar, namely the tact maxim and the sympathy maxim. The Khatibs applied the sympathy maxim to give encouragement and an invitation to the Friday congregation to perform good deeds. This is reinforced because the sermon data were collected during the month of Ramadhan. The Khatibs specifically invited the

Friday congregation to focus on worship in that holy month. The sympathy maxim (68.4%) is more dominant compared to the tact maxim (31.6%). The Khatibs used many sympathy maxims in the Friday sermons because they gave advice to the Friday congregation and encouraged themselves to do the same. It is evidenced by the use of the first plural pronominal *geutanyo* 'we'. In other words, the Khatibs also reminded themselves to commit to the advice they delivered in the sermons.

The Khatibs carried out the application of the tact maxim by delivering the sermons in long sentences. Wijana (1996) says that the longer a person's speech is, the greater the person's desire to be polite to the interlocutor. The number of applications of the tact maxim found in the 15 Friday sermons was 24 or 31.6%. The use of the tact maxim tends to be less than the sympathy maxim. Sympathy is found in assertive and expressive speech acts. The Khatibs tended not to use much of the tact maxim because they did not want to do blaming on the congregation in the Friday sermons in the form of expressive speech acts. Much praise and thanks were found to only be directed to Allah and Prophet Muhammad in their sermons.

Furthermore, the data did not contain all six principles of politeness. Approbation, modesty, agreement, and generosity maxims were not identified in the data. The generosity maxim was not found due to the nature of the communication in sermons; the generosity maxim is only practical in a two-way dynamic and requires bilaterality, where a speaker is able to demonstrate or impose his or her "self-centered" or "other-centered" orientation as indicated by Leech (1983). Thus, it is unlikely for this to occur in a sermon or a speech delivered by a Khatib at a Friday prayer congregation because communication is done one way (only the Khatib speaks, and the congregation listens).

The modesty maxim is close to the sympathy maxim. The modesty maxim requires the speaker to praise himself as little as possible and criticize himself as much as possible (Leech, 1983). Nurjamily (2015) asserts that the participants expect the sympathy maxim to maximize sympathy and minimize antipathy toward the speech partner. From the result of the research, there was no modesty maxim to be found in this study. One indicator of politeness in a conversation is praising others during the speech act. In Friday sermons, Khatibs tend not to use the approbation maxim because praise is only for Allah the Most Holy and the Most High in accordance with the pillars of the sermon. In addition, if a Khatib uses the approbation maxim, the negative aspect is saying unpleasant things about other people, especially about the one who delivered the speech himself.

The principle of the agreement maxim was also not found in this study. The principle of the Friday sermon is a monologue. The Khatib speaks to the congregation without asking them to respond to him. This one-way speech event does not open up space for dialogue and discussion. Following Leech's (1983) opinion, there are two conditions for the realization of the agreement maxim: (1) trying to make disagreements between self and others as little as possible, and (2) trying to make agreements between self and others as much as possible. Hence, this is not possible in Friday sermons.

As a final point, the study of politeness in regional languages is complex, we need to understand the culture of each region. Every region in Indonesia has different levels of politeness of its own. That is also the case in the province of Aceh, especially in the Friday sermons. Mahmud (2019) says that a cross-cultural context study of politeness is required to examine the cultural influence on practicing politeness.

Muthalib and Aziz (2022) point out that elements of politeness in the Acehese language are indicated by the choices of pronouns used. The data in this study has shown that the use of pronouns is prominent as a marker of politeness in the Acehese Khatib sermons.

5. CONCLUSION

The study addressed how the Acehese Khatibs used politeness in the Islamic Friday prayer sermons. The findings showed that out of the six politeness maxims (tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim, and sympathy maxim), only two types of maxim were found in the Friday sermons, namely the sympathy (68.4%) maxim and the tact maxim (31.6%). In the tact maxim, the Khatibs generally used the plural pronoun to address the congregation. It worked as a discourse strategy to persuade the congregation without them being cornered to do something against their will. Furthermore, the Khatibs utilized this speech act strategy to be polite and indirectly asserted their intention while at the same time avoiding misunderstanding. Similar to the tact maxim, the Khatibs also used the plural pronouns in the sympathy maxim. However, unlike the former, the Khatibs tended to be more assertive when they incorporated the latter style of politeness in their speech. They used it seamlessly to avoid upsetting the congregation with their directive speech act. The Khatibs used the art of sympathy to attract the audience's attention by not only practicing inclusivity of both parties but also using polite words.

The present study is limited to a small corpus, and therefore, its finding may not be representative of a larger context. Furthermore, it would be interesting if future researchers direct their focus on the indicator of language impoliteness in the Friday sermons.

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