



## POLITENESS IN OFFICIAL LETTERS

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to explain politeness and describe the potential negative faces in terms of formal invitation letter sentences. This research belongs to the realm of pragmatics and examines data qualitatively. The results of this study indicate that in the invitation letter there is politeness based on Leech's maxims and the potential for negative faces to appear.

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## INTRODUCTION

Letters have been commonly known as a medium for conveying messages through written language. In its development, letters in ancient times were delivered using physical media, in the form of palm leaves, bark, animal skins, papyrus, paper, and so on. As for now, letters can be submitted by using algorithmic (digital) programs, no longer limited to physical media in the form of paper. Letters can be written on "digital paper" in electronic devices such as computers or smartphones. Based on the context of their importance, letters can be divided into two types, namely official letters and personal letters. Official letters have stricter provisions compared to personal letters which, if not written in accordance with the provisions, will be able to give negative assessments from other parties, namely the letter recipients. In other words, the sender's reputation is bad in the eyes of the recipient or other parties who know about the letter. The provisions in the official letter are in the form of structure and language that is polite or non-offensive. While private letters do not have very binding provisions like official letters, personal letters are more flexible and fluid. According to Lakoff (in Hollinger 2005: 2) the main rule that has become the differentiator between formal politeness: "not imposing will on others" and more or less formal politeness: "offering a

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choice". This research is in the scope of pragmatics which specifically examines the politeness of official invitation letters (official) based on the use of language. The politeness of the letter is studied based on the form of politeness and the potential negative face. The theory used in this study is based on Leech's politeness maxims and Brown and Levinson's politeness. Research on the form of politeness has been abundant. The closest previous research to the study was an article by Hollinger in Synergy entitled "Business Letters." This research is expected to be one of the doors to understanding politeness, especially politeness in the context of official invitation letters.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The Maxim of Politeness of Leech, as described by Rahardi (2005) consists of: (1) Maxim of Wisdom, (2) Maxim of Generosity, (3) Maxim of Appreciation, and (4) Maxim of Simplicity.

### **The maxim of Wisdom (Tact Maxim)**

The maxim of wisdom (Rahardi, 2005: 60) in the principle of politeness is that speech participants should adhere to the principle of always reducing their own benefits and maximizing the benefits of others in speaking activities. People who speak and carry out the maxims of wisdom can be said to be polite.

### **Maxim Generosity**

The maxim of generosity (Rahardi, 2005: 61) occurs when the participants of the speech can respect others. Respect for others will occur when people can reduce benefits for themselves and maximize profits for others.

### **Maxim of Appreciation**

Maxim of appreciation (Rahardi, 2005: 63) states that a person is considered polite when speaking always tries to give appreciation to other parties. With this maxim, it is hoped that the participants in the discussion will not mock each other, insult or humiliate each other. Speech participants who often make fun of other speech participants in speaking activities will be said to be rude people. It is said that because the act of mocking is an act of disrespecting others.

### **The Maxim of Simplicity**

According to Rahardi (2005: 63) in the maxim of simplicity or the maxims of humility, speech participants are expected to be humble by reducing praise for themselves. People will be said to be arrogant if in speaking activities they always praise and give priority to themselves.

## **Brown-Levinson Model of Politeness**

### **Face Wants**

In daily social interactions, people generally behave as if their expectations of their public self-image will be appreciated by others. If a speaker says something that is a threat to other people's expectations of their self-image, that action is said to be a Face Threatening Act (FTA). Alternatively, a person can say something which is less likely to be threatening. This is known as the Face Saving Act (FSA).

### **Negative and Positive Face**

According to Brown and Levinson, a negative face is the basis of claims on territory, private property, and the right not to be disturbed and a positive face is a positive image and remains from an external perspective on itself and a desire to be accepted. In other words, a negative face is a need to be independent and a positive face is a need to connect (build a relationship). Regarding the negative and positive faces, it can be concluded that the FSA is oriented towards negative faces and prioritizes the interests of others, even including apologies for the disturbances that were created. FSA like this is called negative politeness. Meanwhile, the FSA which is oriented towards a person's positive face will tend to show solidarity and emphasize that both parties (speakers and speech partners) want the same thing and the same goals. FSA in this form is called positive politeness.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a pragmatic approach. According to Brown and Levinson (1983: 7) pragmatics is the study of language from a functional perspective, which explains the aspects of linguistic structure by referring to non-linguistic stresses and causes. Crystal (1987: 120) says that pragmatics studies the factors that regulate our language choices in social interactions and the influence of our choice of words on others. In theory, we can say whatever we like. In practice, we follow a large number of social rules (mostly unconsciously) that limit the way we speak. The type of data in this research is qualitative data. The research data is in the form of sentences collected from the official invitation letter. The sentences in the official invitation letter which are identified as containing politeness are further analyzed to determine the form of politeness. This research instrument is a tool for selecting data. The instrument is determined based on the specific research objectives. In this study, the researcher acts as a key instrument. Researchers act as researchers, instruments and evaluators. In other words, researchers will become research designers, data collectors, data processors, as well as reporters of research findings. Then, the supporting instrument in this research is the analysis table which contains the classification of forms of engagement contained in the official invitation letter document.

The data collection of this research was carried out in the following steps: (1) selecting the text of the letter in the official invitation letter to be examined for politeness, (2) reading to really understand the meaning of the text under study, (3) sorting out the phrases those identified have politeness values, and (4) classify phrases that have politeness values based on their maxims. The data analysis stages of this research are as follows: read carefully all data sources, reduce data, understand data, identify data according to research objectives, classify and categorize all data according to the subject matter, and finally describe politeness based on the maxima. In this study, checking the validity of the findings was carried out by using triangulation techniques which included: (1) theoretical triangulation (2) method triangulation (3) expert triangulation.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

In this article, we will present the results of research on the politeness of official invitation letters. Of the 29 letters of invitation to service, there are 146 sentences and not all sentences in the letter contain Leech's maxim of politeness. Some of the sentences have politeness based on Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies, some of them are quite long explanations that theoretically politeness is still classified as politeness. The

results of the research on the politeness of the official invitation letter are represented by three letters, namely letter 1, letter 4, and letter 29.

**Tabel 1: Maksim Kesantuan dalam Surat 1**

No.	Sentences text	Types of maxim
1	Dengan hormat,	Maxim of wisdom, maxim of appreciation, maxim of simplicity.
2	Semoga senantiasa dalam keadaan sehat wal afiat dan dimudahkan urusannya.	Maxim of sympathy.
3	Dalam upaya menjaga silaturahmi dan soliditas pada masa Pandemi COVID-19.	
4	Mohon izin memberitahukan bahwa Paguyuban Kepala SMK Wilayah 1 Jakarta Timur, akan melaksanakan koordinasi luring dengan tetap mentaati protokol kesehatan dan PSBB	Maxim of wisdom, maxim of appreciation, maxim of simplicity.
5	Demikian pemberitahuan ini, terima kasih	Maxim of appreciation

In letter number 1 there are five sentences, 4 of which contain Leech's maxims of politeness, namely the first, second, fourth, and fifth sentences, namely the maxim of wisdom, the maxim of appreciation, the maxim of simplicity, and the maxim of sympathy.

**Table 2: Maxim of Politeness in Letter 4**

No.	Sentence Text	Maxims Types
1	Dengan hormat,	Maxim of wisdom, maxim of appreciation, maxim of simplicity
2	Sehubungan dengan akan diselenggarakannya rapat tahunan perusahaan untuk membahas masalah yang ada selama setahun ini, maka bersama surat ini kami mengundang Bpk Suharyanto dan seluruh Branch Manager di seluruh wilayah Indonesia agar sudi kiranya hadir dalam rapat tersebut	Maxim of consensus and maxim of simplicity
3	Demikian surat undangan ini kami sampaikan untuk anda, mengingat sangat pentingnya agenda acara ini, maka kami sangat berharap kehadiran Bapak /Ibu sesuai dengan agenda yang sudah ditentukan	Maxim of wisdom and maxim of simplicity
4	Atas perhatian anda, kami ucapkan terima kasih.	Maxim of appreciation
5	Hormat kami,	Maxim of wisdom, maxim of appreciation, maxim of simplicity.

In letter 4 there are five sentences and the sentences as a whole contain the maxims of Leech's politeness. The identified maxims of Leech politeness are the maxim of wisdom, the maxim of appreciation, and the maxim of simplicity.

**Tabel 3: Politeness Maxim Kesantunan in Letter 29**

No.	Sentence Text	Types of maxim
1	Demikian kami sampaikan, atas perhatiannya kami ucapkan terima kasih.	Maxim of appreciation

In letter number 29 there are five sentences, 4 of which do not contain Leech's maxims of politeness, there is only 1 sentence which contains the maxims, namely in the fifth sentence. The maxim contained in the fifth sentence is the maxim of appreciation.

## DISCUSSION

This study has two specific objectives, namely: (1) knowing the form of politeness in the official invitation letter based on Leech's politeness maxims (2) knowing the syntax errors that trigger negative faces.

The politeness of the official invitation letter is based on Leech's maxims of politeness

### 1) Letter of Invitaton 1

Dengan hormat,  
Semoga senantiasa dalam keadaan sehat wal afiat dan dimudahkan urusannya. Dalam upaya menjaga silaturahmi dan soliditas pada masa Pandemi COVID-19. Mohon izin memberitahukan bahwa Paguyuban Kepala SMK Wilayah 1 Jakarta Timur, akan melaksanakan koordinasi luring dengan tetap mentaati protokol kesehatan dan PSBB, pada:  
Demikian pemberitahuan ini kami sampaikan, terima kasih.

Invitation letter 1

Sincerely,

Hopefully you will always be in good health and make your business easier. In an effort to maintain friendship and solidity during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Please give permission to inform that the Association for the Head of SMK Region 1 East Jakarta will carry out offline coordination while adhering to the health protocol and PSBB, at:

Thus, we convey this notification, thank you.

In the first sentence, the part of the opening greeting, the sender of the letter gives a salute (maxim of appreciation) to the recipient of the letter. Respect for others also sacrifices one's own gain (maxim of wisdom) and simultaneously shows humility (maxim of simplicity).

Then, the sender of the letter in the second sentence prays for the recipient of the letter to be healthy and have convenience. This shows that the sender of the letter is sympathetic (maximal sympathy) to the recipient of the letter.

In the third sentence the party sending the letter conveyed the background of the event. The politeness in the sentence is reflected in how the sender of the letter explains the reason for the meeting. This is considered politeness because the length of the speech indicates a desire to be polite.

In the fourth sentence the party who sent the letter asked the recipient for permission to attend coordination while still adhering to health protocols. The Paguyuban is actually the organization that houses the invitees but humbly uses the word "ask for permission" in delivering messages. The maxim in this sentence is the maxim of wisdom, the maxim of appreciation, and the maxim of simplicity.

In the last sentence, the sender of the letter expressed his appreciation to the recipient of the letter. The recipient of the letter is deemed pleased to receive, read, and care about the message that has been conveyed in the letter. The maxim contained in this sentence is the maxim of appreciation.

2) Surat undangan 4

Dengan hormat,

Sehubungan dengan akan diselenggarakannya rapat tahunan perusahaan untuk membahas masalah masalah yang ada selama setahun ini, maka bersama surat ini kami mengundang Bpk Suharyanto dan seluruh Branch Manager yang ada di seluruh wilayah Indonesia agar sudi kiranya hadir dalam rapat tersebut, yang akan diagendakan pada:

Har/Tanggal: Senin dan Selasa, 16-17 April 2020

Waktu: 08.00-17.00 WIB

Tempat: Head Office -PT. Toyota, kawasan MM2 100

Demikian surat undangan ini kami sampaikan untuk anda, mengingat sangat pentingnya agenda acara ini, maka kami sangat berharap kehadiran dari Bapak/Ibu sesuai dengan agenda yang sudah ditentukan. Atas perhatian anda, kami ucapkan terima kasih.

Hormat kami,

Presiden Director PT. Toyota

Muramoto Takahashi

2) Invitation letter 4

Sincerely,

In connection with the company's annual meeting to discuss issues that have existed during this year, with this letter we invite Mr. Suharyanto and all Branch Managers throughout Indonesia to attend the meeting, which will be scheduled on:

Day / Date: Monday and Tuesday, 16-17 April 2020

Time: 08.00-17.00 WIB

Place: Head Office -PT. Toyota, MM2 area 100

Thus we convey this invitation letter to you, given the very importance of this agenda, we sincerely hope that the presence of you will be in accordance with the predetermined agenda. For your attention, we thank you.

Best regards,

President Director of PT. Toyota

Muramoto Takahashi

In the first sentence, the opening greeting, the sender of the letter gives a respectful greeting (maxim of appreciation) to the recipient of the letter. Respect for others also sacrifices one's own gain (maxim of wisdom) and at the same time shows humility (maxim of simplicity). The maxims in this sentence are the maxim of appreciation, the maxim of wisdom, and the maxim of simplicity.

The politeness in the second sentence is seen in several parts. First, the party sending the letter explains the reasons for the meeting. This is considered politeness because the length of the speech indicates a desire to be polite. Second, the mention of Mr. Suhariyanto shows the intensity of the speech which is also a form of politeness. Third, it is as if the party sending the letter is offering the recipient the option of attending the event indicated by the phrase "willingly". This phrase seems to indicate that the sender of the letter is at a lower social level. The maxim contained in this sentence is the maxim of wisdom and the maxim of simplicity.

In the fourth sentence the sender of the letter expressed his appreciation to the recipient of the letter for being willing to accept, read, and care about the message that was conveyed in the letter. The maxim in this sentence is the maxim of appreciation.

The sender of the letter gives respect (maxim of appreciation) to the recipient of the letter. Respect for others also sacrifices one's own gain (maxim of wisdom) and at the same time shows humility (maxim of simplicity). The maxims in this sentence are the maxim of wisdom, the maxim of appreciation and the maxim of simplicity.

## Syntax Errors as Cause of Negative Faces

### Invitation in Letter 1

In the third sentence, it is mentioned "*Dalam upaya menjaga silaturahmi dan soliditas pada masa Pandemi COVID-19*" (In an effort to maintain friendship and solidity during the COVID-19 Pandemic...)

The third sentence of invitation letter 1 is syntactically error, that is, the entire sentence functions as an explanation. In fact, a sentence in the form of an explanation without a subject and predicate cannot be counted as a sentence. This statement should be part of the next sentence in the letter. Letter readers who understand this error will have the potential to show a negative face.

### Invitation Letter 26

In the fourth sentence it is mentioned "*Mengingat pentingnya acara tersebut mohon untuk tidak diwakilkan*" (Given the importance of this event, please do not be represented)

In the fourth sentence of the invitation letter 26, the syntax error is in the form of not having a subject of the sentence. A good sentence in written language must have complete subject and predicate in it. The absence of either one will invalidate its status as a clause. In meaning, the recipient of the letter will easily understand the meaning conveyed, but for letter readers who understand this error, it will have the potential to show a negative face.

## CONCLUSION

In terms of politeness, the sender of the letter tries to convey his ideas politely in inviting. This is indicated by the discovery of many words or phrases which indicate that the sender of the letter is a writer who respects the respect of others, keeps himself simple, and highly appreciates the recipient of the letter.

Direct speech is very different from written speech. The delivery of written speech in an official invitation letter has more limitations than even formal direct speech. The written language in the official invitation letter must comply with the rules of writing and must uphold the value of politeness so as not to cause a negative face.

Findings contained in several letters show that some of the authors still do not understand well how to express ideas in writing, so that actions that threaten faces appear accidentally. Errors that appear in the form of syntax errors can potentially trigger a negative face.

The human brain is able to decode speech from clear to unclear information. Clarity of information is directly proportional to receipt of information. Errors in the syntax of letters may be considered normal so that they are not a problem or even not considered wrong, but for the recipient of the letter who is sensitive and understands the language with the correct rules, the error will be the cause of negative faces.

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