

Politeness Realization and Social Identity in *Friends* TV Sitcom

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Abstract— *This study explores politeness strategies in regards to different settings and purposes to recognize different identities. Many scholars discuss the relationship between discourse analysis and pragmatics. Discourse analysis focuses on the form of language use above the level of sentence in its cohesion, coherence, and macrostructure; while pragmatics sees illocutionary (functional purpose) and perlocutionary (response to) elements of the language used. Thus, pragmatics analysis is part of discourse analysis.*

Some linguists, however, have learned that both focus on the interface between the content and the purpose of the language being used and how the linguistic and social contexts influence the meaning. Politeness utterances as varieties of language are interpreted by using Gee's tool of inquiry called social languages. It is linguistic varieties or politeness one employs depending on social identity that one chooses based on the setting. This study observed a speaker in two or more different settings and compared the politeness employed based on the settings of the speaker. The utterances are taken from utterances spoken by the speaker in Friends TV Sitcom. The result shows that the speaker employs politeness in informal setting with young child in different form of politeness compared with politeness in more formal setting with mutual adult hearer.

Keywords— *discourse analysis, politeness, pragmatics, social identity*

I. INTRODUCTION

In regards to why one uses the language, for instance the grammar, the words or other aspects like ways of addressing people, pragmatics provides the reasons of the choices and effects of it. In the case someone calls a friend by the name Mat, Matty, Mathew or Matthousand, the friend will not mind. That is because both friends had a history of relation in the previous time that the nickname of the friend is Matthousand. The pragmatics dimensions are that *first*, pragmatics is the study of speaker meaning. An utterance: "Are you coming home early?" brings the listener to interpret that the speaker may need to meet the listener this afternoon; *second*, pragmatics studies contextual meaning. An utterance "Morning, Ani. How are you?" and the answer "Nice weather today, isn't it?" shows that the utterances are grammatically correct but unfit the context and situation; *third*, pragmatics is the study of how

more gets communicated than is said. An utterance "Please close the door" brings the invisible meaning that outside is too noisy for the class to start; *fourth*, pragmatics is the study of the expression of relative distance. The physical and social closeness determine what needs to be said. (Yule, 1996) (Tarjana, 2006). An utterance "The movie we watched last weekend was awesome". It means that the use of 'we' and 'the movie' can be clearly understood by people who watched what movie.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Related to language use as communication, according to linguists Bronislaw Malinowsky, Benjamin Lee Whorf, John Rupert Firth, Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday language use is *context-dependent*, which depends on its situational context (Tarjana, 2006)

As medium of communication, language has three functions that show three different yet dependent realities among them. As ideational function, language is used to express physical-biological related to interpretation and experience representation. As interpersonal function, language is used to show social reality related to the interaction between speaker/writer and audience/reader. As textual function, language is used to show semiotic reality or symbol related to text creation within the context (Matthiessen, 1992/1995: 6; Halliday & Martin, 1993C: 33; Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999: 7-8 in Wiratno, 2018: 41)

In line with the above explanation about the significant communication functions, it can also be said that a clause has three functions, they are ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions. In a physical/biological reality (ideational), language is used to report the content or meaning of writer/speaker's observation result which includes everything within and around the speaker/writer. In social interpersonal function, language is used to show the role of speaker/writer and audience/reader. This role is based on language as a tool to form and explain the social interaction. In semiotic/symbol (textual) function, language reveals the content through lingual form appropriate with the expression (Wiranto, 2018: 42). In a sentence: *Mother could cook here* shows the three functions simultaneously. Its ideational clause' function is that the speaker delivers the message to the listener. Its interpersonal

clause function is showing the social relation between the speaker and listener, the use of *could* shows that the speaker gives freedom to the listener to cook here. Textual clause function is the media through which the message is delivered that is the utterance.

The relationship is indeed basic among language, text, and context. The language use in sentence is text in context. Text is language unit to show contextual meaning (Wiratno, 2018: 45). There are two contexts within a text that is context of situational and context of culture. Malinowsky assured that context of culture has a larger scope than context of situation. If context of situation is direct context in the text, cultural context is more abstract and contains institutional global insights. Based on his study of Polynesian society, Malinowsky distinguished three major functions of language, they are the pragmatic function as real forms of action; magical function as a means to control environment; and narrative function as collection of information to be shared in order to preserve historical accounts (Tarjana, 2006)

Even though he has successfully identified semantic role between situational and cultural context, and also developing language function within communication, Malinowsky has not formulate these contexts to explain the meaning of language in general because he only used language to understand human behavior in anthropological framework.

Malinowsky's theory is used as the basic development of context of situation concept in linguistics that explains predictability in communication event, Firth formulated it into four aspects below:

1. Participants in event, it is people who are involved and their role in the events of communication.
2. Participants' action, including verbal and non-verbal action that they performed.
3. Other relevant situational features which include things or events affecting the communication.
4. Impact of verbal action which means the impact that happens as a result of participants' utterances.

Hymes (1972: 58-65) is also formulating another context of situation within text which is called ethnography of communication. Hymes proposed situational context to analyze model related to how speaker within a group communicates and describes the social relation between speaker and listener and how this relation influences the variety of language use. Hymes states that conversation as a speech event includes 16 (sixteen) components which form the acronym SPEAKING (Situation, Participants, Ends, Act sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genres)

Another context of situation is also proposed by Halliday. This context of situation influences the variety of language which is characterized by three values. They are: 1) *field of discourse* as the main topic in the text, 2) *tenor of discourse* as participants in a discourse, 3) *mode of discourse* as a mode or media discourse and the creation of text (Halliday, in Halliday & Hasan, 1989: 12-14 in Wiratno, 2018: 51)

Context of situation with field, tenor, and mode is the closest context where context works. Context of culture is a place that accommodates the text in its existence. For example, a text in the context of friendship among individuals with a close social distance could appear in communication in which positive politeness is prevailing and the place where they interact is probably places such as coffee shop, apartment, and other public places for people to hang out and relax.

According to Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf in Hussein (2012), the speaker's language skill is built unconsciously by its community's speaking habits. It is supported by the fact that human beings live and grow in their own community system and by their experience of using language, they acquire the expertise in using their own language. Language is flexible and evolves over time. It depends on its native speakers as well as on the reality that language is also part of culture that is always changing.

Culture is structured system of patterned behavior (Lado, 1957: 111 in Tarjana, 2006), so from language alone people can identify the pattern behavior of the native speaker community as part of their culture.

The language use from pragmatic perspective requires acceptable pragmatic competence which is clarity and politeness. Between clarity and politeness, people tend to choose politeness over clarity to maintain the partner's mutual understanding and social harmony between the speaker and hearer.

Language use in conversation as seen in a movie is a form of communication or interaction orally (Carol, 1980: 26), and in the pragmatic study it is discrete acts (Marcellino, 1993: 60) which can be seen through speech act that is the realization of language use in accordance with its social context. (Stubbs, 1983: 1).

As a part of pragmatic studies, politeness is analyzed through interpretation of meaning as expressed in speech acts of representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declaration.

As the significant aspect of pragmatics, politeness comes as the leading interest. Based on its functions, politeness is categorized into the maxims of tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy (Leech: 1983).

The conversation found in *Friends* TV series is a text that the screenplay be viewed not only as a shooting script but as an independent text (Boon, KA, 2008: 44). *Friends* is a text as mental evidence of American culture which is assumed as the medium to reveal American values.

Linguistic research within American values perspective enables researchers to analyze language politeness that mirrors American values.

The significant aspect of pragmatic concern is context both linguistic and social contexts. These contexts influence the meaning of an utterance. Context is a particular background knowledge that is attached to a text so that the readers of a book or the listeners of a speaker or the viewers of a show, television or film can interpret the meaning.

Context is such an important aspect in pragmatic analysis that allows an interpretation of meaning, even if utterances do not sound familiar in daily usage.

Context is changing which influence the meaning, as stated by Fillmore:

"The task is to determine what we can know about the meaning and context of an utterance. I find whenever I notice some sentences in context, I immediately find myself asking what the effect would have been if the context (who speaks to whom, what purpose, how a speaker says, when and where aspects) had been slightly different." (Fillmore, 1997:119)

Cutting (2008) stated that context is knowledge acquired by the speaker and the hearer of physical world, social world, and socio-psychological factors that could influence communication. Further, Cutting identifies context into three aspects, that is situational context, background knowledge context, and context. Context of situation relates to situations where the place of communications carried out. Context of background knowledge relates to background of speaker and hearer as individuals or people as part of community. Context is a background of a text and by knowing the kinds, types, and genres of text, people can interpret the text easily.

From the pragmatic perspectives, as mentioned previously, people are entitled to consider the two distinctive requirements to do communication, that is being clear and polite. The underline of speaking politely means that persons realize the strategy to perform politeness in conversation to maintain social harmony and to keep the other's self-esteem.

A. Politeness Theories

Some linguists (Fraser, 1990: 219; Marques Reiter, 2000: 5-6; Nguyen, 2005: 20; Huang, 2007: 116) have mentioned that there are four main politeness theories. They are a) model of face-savings; b) model of conversational maxims; c) model of conversational contracts; and d) model of social norms. The following politeness theories of Lakoff and Leech are as follows:

Related to how to maintain other people's self-respect which is congruent with social norm and ethics, many linguists have proposed politeness strategies. Lakoff (1975) based her theory on three aspects, they are from aspect of formality which is stated as *Don't impose* which means do not force others to do something; *hesitancy* stated as *Give option* in which let others choose their preference and *camaraderie* which is stated as *Make a feel good* which means that one is expected to preserve the atmosphere of joyful.

In realizing interpersonal communication, Leech (1983) proposed politeness notion on maxims of tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy which are based on the scales of cost and benefit, indirectness and optionality. Leech adds his politeness strategies with other strategies, they are irony, banter, hedged performative, phatic, and Pollyana.

B. Friends TV Sitcom

Referring to *Friends* as discourse, it can be stated that the script of the film fulfills the requirements of a discourse, that 1) it is meaningful because of the context, 2) fulfills the requirement of participants that the characters are six friends who communicate among them intensively every day and also between the individual and other individual outside of the six friends, 3) it is built on the responsibility to perform relationship, and 4) it is bounded by structure or meta pragmatic grammatical constructions. Discourse is the tool to study social life as stated by James Paul Gee from Arizona State University. He further mentioned that discourse relates to three aspects. They are the *first*, the speaker and the writer or based on the listener and the reader; *second*, social identity based on social group people belong to which shows closeness or social distance of their relationship; *third*, social language that is used whether as vernacular or primary discourse and specialized language or academic or dominant discourse.

In the topic of social identity, Carl Rogers an expert and author of *on Becoming a person*, has stated that there are parts of social identity; they are 1) personal identity or the things unique in a person such as personal traits, habits or unique characteristics, and 2) social identity based on categories of age, gender, skills, career and many more.

This paper would like to discuss utterances found in the film and the script of the film in order to find politeness of utterances that are realized by different speakers in relation to her/his and her/his social identity.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study is a descriptive qualitative study to reveal how utterances are realized by speakers belonging to different social groups carrying particular social identity. In this case the utterances are realized by Rachel, the character of *Friends* in her interaction with three different listeners of different social groups.

The first interaction is between Rachel and Ben (Ross' son, a little boy at the age of five). The second interaction is between Rachel and her friend, Ross as Ben's father as shown in the film. The third interaction is between Rachel and her father.

The characters (Rachel and Ben) are engaged in a conversation in which Rachel and Ben are of social relation with distance. Rachel as an adult has superordinate position over Ben. Ben as a little and proud young man talked to her with confidence, however, Rachel showed power over Ben. Rachel refused to do what Ben wants to do as shown in her utterance: *No, Ben, I'm funny but I'm not stupid* when Ben asked through his utterance: *Can I do it to you?*

The characters (Rachel and Ross) are engaged in a conversation in which Rachel and Ross are socially close. Both of them are equal in power, besides close friends, both are having a crush on each other at the same time. Anyhow, Rachel found it hard to be involved in romantic love with Ross. She thought her feeling for Ross is more as close friend rather than lover. A broken hearted lovers usually end up hating each other. While Rachel and Ross are equal power in general matters, in Ben's case, Ross demands superordinate position and placed Rachel in subordinate position. What to do with Ben should be under Ross' consent, otherwise, Ross would be cross and this hurts their relationship as seen below:

You know I hate practical jokes. It means stupid. I don't want my son to learn that. The only thing you taught him, right?

The characters (Rachel and her father) are engaged in a conversation in which Rachel and her father are of social relation with a distance. Rachel was his spoiled daughter who was not strong enough to stand against hardship mentally, socially, and financially. Her father provided all her needs that allowed him to have control over his daughter. Rachel rebelled anyway. She left behind her supposed to be husband in their church wedding ceremony. She thought at first she will be free from her father's domination by marrying Barry. She eventually was wrong. She did not love Barry or at least her love to Barry was not

sincere. When her father called her, she still wanted to be free from Barry. When her father sounded disappointed Rachel accepted the consequences of being free from her father's financial support. Her father's superordinate power was realized towards Rachel who as the subordinate one she challenged her father to be financially free., though she seemed in doubt at the end of their telephone conversation as follows:

Well, maybe I don't need your money. Wait! Wait! I said maybe.

It is expected that the politeness revealed in the three speech situations show particular characteristics: the data in the form of strategies utterances are analyzed by using politeness theory put forward by Leech.

A. Speech Situation 1 between Rachel and Ben

Rch : Ben, you know when you were baby, you and I used to hang out all the time, because I was your Daddy's good girl friend.

Ben : But you're not anymore.

Rch : No, I'm not

Ben : Because you and Dad are on a break.

Rch : No, we are not on a break

Ben : When is my daddy coming back?

Rch : Fifty two minutes.

Rch : So, no brothers or sisters, ha. But you know I had two sisters and we tortured each other.

Ben : Really, like how?

Rch : Well, we repeat everything the other said or we jumped out of closet to scare each other or switch the sugar for the salt so they put the salt on the cereal.

Ben : Yeah?

Rch : Yeah, you like that?

Ben : Yeah, you're funny.

Rch : I'm funny, oh thank God. I have tons of these. You take a quarter from your forehead to your chin without it leaving your face. And when they do it, it left with the big black pencil line right down the center of their face.

Ben : Can I do it to you?

Rch : Yeah, I'm funny Ben, but I'm not stupid.

B. Speech Situation 2 between Rachel and Ross

Rs : Ben learned a little trick. Saran wrap on the toilet seat so pee goes everywhere.

Rch : Oh that

Rs : Yeah that. You know I hate practical jokes. It means stupid. I don't want my son to learn that.

Rch : Come on. Saran wrap on the toilet seat. I think it's a little funny.

Rs : I was barefoot.

Rch : Oh

Rs : The only thing you thought him, right?

Rch : Yes.

C. Speech Situation 2 between Rachel and Her Dad

Rch : C'mon Daddy, listen to me! It's like, it's like, all of my life, everyone has always told me, 'You're a shoe! You're a shoe, you're a shoe, you're a shoe!'. And today I just stopped and I said, 'What if I don't wanna be a shoe? What if I wanna be a- a purse, y'know? Or a- or a hat! No, I'm not saying I want you to buy me a hat, I'm saying I am a ha- It's a metaphor, Daddy!

Rs : You can see where he'd have trouble.

Rch : Look Daddy, it's my life. Well maybe I'll just stay here with Monica.

M : Well, I guess we've established who's staying here with Monica...

Rch : Well, maybe that's my decision. Well, maybe I don't need your money. Wait!! Wait, I said maybe!!

IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

A. Speech Situation 1

Setting : In Ross's apartment

Speakers : Rachel, Ben

Background : Rachel was baby sitting Ben while Ross was having a faculty meeting. Rachel tried to start a conversation. When Ben did not seem to be interested in the conversation, Rachel was teaching Ben some tricks which Ben was interested in the ways Rachel told him how to do the trick.

Politeness :

1. Ben shows praise/admiration to Rachel's trick-teaching.

Utterances : 'Yeah, you're funny'
'Can I do it to you?'

2. Rachel realized *tact politeness* by saying that it is true that she was funny but she was not stupid.

Between Ben and Rachel, Ben shows subordinated position whereas Rachel was dominating the interaction or superordinate position. Rachel brought the topic that was congruent to Ben's needs to play, to try on the trick and to engage in physical activities.

B. Speech Situation 2

Setting : In Ross's apartment

Speakers : Ross, Rachel

Background : Ross came home from the meeting with disappointment and anger, Ross told Rachel how Ben put the prank on him, by putting the big black pencil line right down the center of his face. Ross' students made fun of him. Ross blamed Rachel for teaching Ben prank as Rachel

was ignorant toward everything and anything surrounding her. For Ross, Rachel should have taught Ben something better than the stupid prank.

Politeness : *Tact politeness*. Ross shows his wisdom in educating his son, Ben, and so he protested Rachel for teaching prank to Ben. Believing that Ross was right, Rachel seemed to feel sorry, so she agreed not to teach prank. (*Agreement Politeness*)

C. Speech Situation 3

Setting : Monica's Apartment

Speakers : Rachel, her father

Background : Rachel called her father from Monica's apartment. She left Barry in the altar on their wedding. Rachel complained to her father for telling Rachel to do with her life. She beg her father to give her freedom to live her life.

Politeness : Rachel's father shows *tact politeness* judging from the reply or answer given by Rachel. Rachel gives her decision and be independent financially.

Rachel's tone and utterances show her subordinate position toward her father who superordinate. Her father shows wisdom and shows concerns toward his daughter's future. He doubts his daughter's strong will to live independently.

V. Conclusion

Friends shows politeness related to social identity. The three speech situations show that all show tact politeness in the utterances of superordinate speakers, that is Rachel in Speech Situation 1; Ross in Speech Situation 2; and Rachel's Father in Speech Situation 3. It can be concluded that social identity reveals relative power of superordinate speakers as compared to subordinate speakers which were realized in interaction.

Text of film *Friends* is a text of friendship where six friends interact about daily life's activities. The six friends go about their business and meet in the Central Perk the place for their hanging out in a joyful atmosphere.

As the utterances showed, the three speech situations present three particular contexts that show different meanings.

Speech situation 1: Rachel is superordinate. Ben is subordinate.

Speech situation 2: Rachel is subordinate. Ross is superordinate.

Speech situation 3: Rachel is subordinate. Her father is superordinate.

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Table 1. Table of three Speech Situations

NO	SETTING	SPEAKER	UTTERANCES	POLITENESS
1	Ross' Apartment	Rch	<i>Ben, you know when you were baby, you and I used to hang out all the time, because I was your Daddy's good girl friend.</i>	
		Ben	<i>But you're not anymore.</i>	
		Rch	<i>No, I'm not</i>	
		Ben	<i>Because you and Dad are on a break.</i>	
		Rch	<i>No, we are not on a break</i>	
		Ben	<i>When is my daddy coming back?</i>	
		Rch	<i>Fifty two minutes.</i>	
		Rch	<i>So, no brothers or sisters, ha. But you know I had two sisters and we tortured each other.</i>	
		Ben	<i>Really, like how?</i>	
		Rch	<i>Well, we repeat everything the other said or we jumped out of closet to scare each other or switch the sugar for the salt so they put the salt on the cereal.</i>	
		Ben	<i>Yeah?</i>	
		Rch	<i>Yeah, you like that?</i>	
		Ben	<i>Yeah, you're funny.</i>	Approbation
		Rch	<i>I'm funny, oh thank God. I have tons of these. You take a quarter from your forehead to your chin without it leaving your face. And when they do it, it left with the big black pencil line right down the centre of their face.</i>	
		Ben	<i>Can I do it to you?</i>	
		Rch	<i>Yeah, I'm funny Ben, but I'm not stupid.</i>	Tact
2	Ross' Apartment	Rs	<i>Ben learned a little trick. Saran wrap on the toilet seat so pee goes everywhere.</i>	
		Rch	<i>Oh that</i>	
		Rs	<i>Yeah that. You know I hate practical jokes. It means stupid. I don't want my son to learn that.</i>	Tact
		Rch	<i>Come on. Saran wrap on the toilet seat. I think it's a little funny.</i>	
		Rs	<i>I was barefoot.</i>	

3	Monica's Apartment	Rch	<i>Oh</i>	
		Rs	<i>The only thing you thought him, right?</i>	
		Rch	Yes.	Agreement
		Rch	<i>C'mon Daddy, listen to me! It's like, it's like, all of my life, everyone has always told me, 'You're a shoe! You're a shoe, you're a shoe, you're a shoe!'. And today I just stopped and I said, 'What if I don't wanna be a shoe? What if I wanna be a- a purse, y'know? Or a- or a hat! No, I'm not saying I want you to buy me a hat, I'm saying I am a ha- It's a metaphor, Daddy!</i>	
		Rs	<i>You can see where he'd have trouble.</i>	
		Rch	<i>Look Daddy, it's my life. Well maybe I'll just stay here with Monica.</i>	
		M	<i>Well, I guess we've established who's staying here with Monica...</i>	
		Rch	<i>Well, maybe that's my decision. Well, maybe I don't need your money. Wait!! Wait, I said maybe!!</i>	Tact