



## Politeness Strategies Employed in Communication with Santri and Ustadz in an Islamic Boarding School in Indonesia

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**Abstract**— This study on politeness and morals is a learning strategy used in the interaction between santri and kyai/ustadz in Pesantren Salaf Al-Qur'an Sholahul Huda Al-Mujahidin. This study examined the politeness strategies of both santri and kyai/ustadz in their daily interactions and the factors underlying their use of such systems. Furthermore, a case study qualitative approach by doing observation and interview was employed as the study method. To figure out the phenomenon, Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness strategies was applied in analyzing the data: Bald on Record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off Record. From the analysis, it was figured out that all types of politeness strategies were realized in kyai/ustadz utterances. In contrast, only three politeness strategies were performed by santri. It was identified that some social factors of power and social distance triggered the santri and kyai/ustadz to execute such plans. However, another influential factor that was found to encourage the participants to employ those strategies was Pesantren Sholahul Huda Al-Mujahidin's culture of akhlak encompasses several values based upon Islamic values declared in Al Quran and Al Hadith. Maintaining and nurturing this akhlak and morality is believed to be the basis of the realization of peace.

**Keywords** — Moral Education Learning; Islamic Boarding Schools; Communication; Politeness Strategies

### I. INTRODUCTION

Communication is an inseparable part of human life because all our steps are always accompanied by communication [1]–[3]. The communication in question is the process of delivering Islamic messages using Islamic communication principles [4], namely communication with noble character

or ethics. Communication with noble character means communication that originates from the Qur'an and al-Hadith [5].

In the Qur'an it is straightforward to find concrete examples of how Allah always communicates with His servants through revelation. To avoid mistakes in receiving messages through these verses [6], [7], Allah also

gave freedom to the Messenger of Allah to edit His revelations through the eyes of hadith. Both hadiths are Qouliyah (words), Fi'iliyah (deeds), and Taqrīr (approval) of the Apostles, then added to the birth of commentators so that through their hands collected many books of interpretation. Islamic messages conveyed in Islamic communication cover all Islamic teachings [8], including aqidah (faith), sharia (Islam), and morals (ihsan). Regarding the method (kaifiyah), various guidelines are found in the Qur'an and al-Hadith so that communication can run well and effectively [9]. We can term it a rule, principle, or ethics of communication from an Islamic perspective. In Islam, there are several ethics in communication, such as, first the words spoken must be in the form of kindness (Qaulan Karīman), the speech of truth (Qaulan Ma'rūfan), and the right words (Qaulan Syadīdan), speech that gives understanding (Qaulan Balīghan), and gentle speech (Qaulan Layyinan).

In this study, the authors tried to link moral and moral education with the use of language. The importance of ethical and moral education in the modern era is a big challenge for all parties, especially educational institutions as centers of education and teaching for the younger generation. This is the main foundation point for creating peace. Because if each individual has a good character and morals, this will be the key to realizing peace [10].

In everyday life, everyone will communicate by building a specific pattern on how the intended message can be conveyed well to the other person. This kind of goal can be achieved by following the Gricean Maxims Theory: the maxims of quality, quantity, relation, and manner [11]–[13]. By following these principles, communication is expected to run well and be as informative as expected. Furthermore, Ide states that such communication is always associated with using a language known as politeness [14], [15]. From this, we can see that polish can help and play a role in determining a person's communication success. Furthermore, in their theory, Brown and Levinson (1987) also asserted the essential social part of politeness is its ability to function as a way of controlling potential aggression between interactional parties, or it can be concluded: "Basic social role in politeness is an ability that

functions as a way to controlling potential discomfort between interacting parties" [16].

However, some things make it possible that an act of verbal communication can be considered polite in one society and disrespectful or even disrespectful in another. In Kuntjara's opinion, "politeness is much influenced by culture in a society which includes values and norms" [17]. Therefore, something is considered polite when it conforms to the norms and values prevailing in a particular society. This can also occur in smaller communities such as in pesantren, as "mini societies," where these communities make religious rules their fundamental values and norms. In this case, politeness is essential. It is also one of the foundations of the creation of peace. Moreover, politeness is a sub of a big umbrella called moral and character education, which is essential in this era because many young people are starting to leave the culture of politeness [18].

In this study, the authors chose Islamic Boarding School Salaf Al-Qur'an Sholahul Huda Al-Mujahidin Malang as the object of research. The Salaf Al-Qur'an Islamic Boarding School Sholahul Huda Al-Mujahidin Tumpang is a boarding school established about 12 years ago and has developed very well. In addition to maintaining salaf values, this Islamic boarding school also opens itself to the progress of the times. One indicator of its success is that many alumni are accepted into public and private universities. Moreover, 81% of the alumni of this pesantren continue their studies to a higher level.

Like other salaf pesantren, this pesantren always prioritizes morals in everyday life. The literature indicates this in moral books studied at this institution. Good morals are the first thing to be instilled because this is closely related to the realization of peace in the community.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. *Politeness Strategy*

To discuss the politeness of communication between santri to the kyai, the authors applied the theory of politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) [19], which defines politeness strategies as strategies developed to secure the interlocutor [20], [21]. There are four types of politeness strategies: Bald On-Record (without a strategy), positive politeness (stating an

equal degree with listeners to get closer and closer), negative politeness (speakers are more passive in communicating to avoid misunderstandings), and Off-Record (strategy indirectly through specific signals or codes) [22], [23]. According to them, this type of politeness strategy is triggered by social factors such as power, distance, and rank of imposition. Therefore, various social factors can influence each kind of politeness strategy.

### *B. Morals*

Moral comes from Arabic, plural from the mufrad (singular) form 'khuluqun,' which means character, temperament, behavior, and character. Meanwhile, according to the term is the knowledge that explains good and bad (right and wrong), regulates human interaction, and determines the ultimate goal of business and work [24], [25]. Another meaning of morality is the essential nature that has been buried within and appears to the surface through the will/behavior and is carried out without being compelled by one reason or another [26].

### *C. Language Variations*

As a social symptom, language and language use are not only determined by linguistic factors [27], [28] but also by non-linguistic factors, including social and situational factors. With the existence of social and situational factors that influence the use of language [29], then language variations arise. At the same time, the presence of various language variations indicates that language or rather the use of language is heterogeneous. Language diversity appears in its use individually or in groups; individually, we can observe this event in the use of language. We can see this difference in the song or intonation, choice of words, sentence structure, way of expressing ideas, and so on [30]. Social and situational factors influence language use and cause language variations.

### *D. Speech Level*

Speech level is a variation of language whose difference is determined by the speaker's attitude to the interlocutor or the third person being spoken to [31], [32]. Differences in age, degree of social level, and distance of intimacy between the speaker and the interlocutor will determine the

variation of the language chosen. When speaking, errors in the selection of language variations will lead to irregularities and are considered impolite [33]. There are three levels of language use in Javanese, namely Ngoko, Krama Madya, and Krama Inggil. Ngoko is usually used for speakers with higher social strata than those who are lower. Meanwhile, Krama Madya is used when the speaker has the same social strata as the interlocutor. Inggil manners are used when communicating with interlocutors with higher social strata than the speaker [34].

Of course, there is a specific relationship between the two in terms of language and peace. Peace Education is an effort made to realize values, behaviors, and ways of life that support creating a culture of peace. In terms of the morals inherent in education [35], Islamic education with a moral paradigm can be instilled [36], among others, by continuing to hone and strengthen the values of brotherhood, tolerance, and respect for differences. This can be developed of them through the habit of interacting and communicating in a good way so that students have knowledge and awareness of the reality of pluralism in society and can be accepted in society.

## III. METHOD

In this study, the authors conducted research using case studies in a qualitative approach [37]. This was chosen because this study aims to examine the daily life of a particular community, namely pesantren, by observing and interviewing several informants at the Salaf Al-Qur'an Islamic Boarding School Sholahul Huda Al-Mujahidin. In addition, the authors also read literature related to the pesantren to strengthen ideas about the values that apply to the pesantren. Furthermore, the authors used two instruments: an audio recorder and a recording of students' utterances during the interview. The authors chose to use audio recording because the data needed was in the form of speech. This instrument was used when the informants talked to their kyai/ustadz.

In this study, the authors examined the speech challenges that contained politeness in students' communication and kyai/ustadz because, in qualitative research, the primary data are the words and actions of the informants [38]. In determining the informants, the authors chose

male students in the pesantren because of the prohibitions and rules that a male may face to enter the female dormitory [39]. In addition, the informants in this study were students with Javanese ethnic backgrounds who spoke Javanese in their daily lives. This makes it possible that the data to be obtained is sometimes presented in the form of Code-Switching between Indonesian and Javanese.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before further discussing and interpreting the data, according to Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, we need to understand that four strategies arise in theory. First, those strategies are Bald on Record, or utterances did clearly and openly. Second, positive politeness is a strategy to reduce the high social distance by positioning the speaker himself as the listener. Third, negative politeness is an action intended to keep the listener's feelings so that the speaker is more passive and minimizes speech to the listener. So negative politeness does not contain the connotation that this politeness is sinister, but a politeness strategy that is carried out minimally and more passively between speakers and listeners. At the same time, the last process is Off Record, a procedure carried out in an unclear way that requires the listener to translate the meaning intended by the speaker himself, such as gesturing and others. Furthermore, three abbreviations indicate informants, such as U for ustadz and S for single students, and Ss for students in the plural.

From the above analysis, it was found that all of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies can be found in this study with different amounts. This can be seen from the table below:

Table 4.1 Frequency of using politeness strategies

| Informant    | Positive Politeness | Negative Politeness | Bald On Record | Off Record |
|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------|------------|
| U            | 30                  | 24                  | 28             | 10         |
| S/Ss         | 52                  | 11                  | 1              | -          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>82</b>           | <b>35</b>           | <b>29</b>      | <b>10</b>  |

Those strategies are applied by U and S/Ss both when they are in formal or informal situations. The results show no different techniques used in the two contexts. In other words, no particular method dominates in formal or informal cases.

Then, U's positive politeness when they pray at the beginning and end of each lesson in class is

also triggered by the values of the pesantren. A teacher's prayer for students is believed to be something easy to be granted by Allah. Therefore, U did this to hope and pray that Ss would become a valuable and successful person in the future. In addition, U also prayed that they would be given sincerity in teaching, namely not expecting anything but blessings from Allah.

On the other hand, Ss tend to use positive politeness in communicating with U. In the data obtained, the utterances that Ss often convey are dominated by simple sentences such as expressions of approval such as 'Inggih ustadz'. Doing positive politeness, such as expressions of support, shows Ss's efforts always to obey and want to cheer U. Although U and Ss' social strength and social distance are pretty high, the values that exist in the Sholahul Huda Al-Mujahidin Islamic Boarding School allow U and Ss to be able to respect each other, especially in the focus of the discussion in this study which relates to the selection of strategies in their communication.

The results show that the expression of approval arises because of the perception that is a belief among students that the ustadz is a person they must respect and obey. Kyai, Bu nyai, and ustadz / ustadzah are considered teachers who spread blessings from God. The benefit (Barokah) that every santri hopes in their life can only be achieved by respecting and being kind to their Kyai and Ustadz in any case. The students got this insight from the learning process. These good attitudes include in terms of language, such as showing expressions that do not imply coercion, insinuate, or irritate others. One of them is the expression of the consent mentioned above.

Furthermore, students are obliged to do whatever is ordered by the ustadz so that the knowledge they get from their ustadz can be helpful for everyone around. Among their goals for doing this is to seek the approval of the ustadz and make their hearts happy and willing. Therefore, they are not allowed to be reluctant or even refuse what the Kyai and their ustadz have ordered them to do.

Another form of positive politeness is the use of the word 'God willing' in the students' communication when they are asked about their understanding of the lesson or when they want to do something. An Islamic principle advises every

Muslim to say 'God willing' in every statement about something that has not happened yet. This shows that Islam guides its followers not to precede the will of Allah because, at any time, everything can change by the will of Allah. This indicates that Ss and U instill the value of obedience and obedience to Allah and apply it through their words. This is in line with the theocentric principle of pesantren, namely, God as the main center of everything in this world (Mastuhu, 1994). This is the result of the learning process at the Sholahul Huda Al-Mujahidin Islamic Boarding School, based on Islamic values, namely geocentricity.

Indeed, regardless of the strategies used by Ss and U in the positive politeness category, the purpose and factors of their use are somewhat different; the use of politeness strategies by U tends to minimize the distance between them, while the use of politeness strategies by Ss is more to show respect and obedience to U as their teacher.

Furthermore, the politeness strategy that is often used is negative politeness. In some parts of the conversation, U and Ss seem to minimize or even avoid coercion to the listener. This strategy can be considered negative politeness. This strategy is the second most widely used strategy in this study. Ss does this strategy to show their respect to U. On the other hand, U also applies this strategy for several purposes; for example, U's use of "please" (please) in asking S to do something is U's attempt to show their affection as a teacher to S. Although this word is usually used to invite someone older or higher in his social position to do something respectfully, U also uses this word to show S that he also respects him as his 'son'. U did this to make S not feel too compelling to S to do what he ordered. Thus, they can carry out the order without feeling compelled.

The emergence of negative politeness based on the existence of these values is not only applied by students who must have a good attitude towards the ustadz but also must be applied by teachers who must be friendly and close to students. It is clearly stated in the book of Taysir al-Khollaq, one of the sources of learning in this pesantren, that the teacher is a 'guide' who can direct students to be good people.

The third strategy that many emerge is Bald on the Record. This type of non-redressive strategy

mostly appears in U's speech. When data is obtained, this strategy is used by U to prohibit, command, and warn Ss either about matters related to lessons in the Madrasah or their daily life of the pesantren. Prohibitions, warnings, and orders are ideally uttered in a clear, direct, and unambiguous. It is also due to several reasons. First, the speakers of the speech are usually powerful or have a higher social level than the speaker, in this case, the ustadz. Second, an action that is very urgent to take, as if in an emergency, makes the action more critical than just speech.

The power factor of the U as ustadz makes them feel free to rule and forbids Ss to do anything. However, that authority is by no means negative. According to one informant, the orders and prohibitions made by U were all done for the good of S. It was U's obligation as a teacher and educator to make them use such strategies. This is in line with the value and love of students by warning them when they do something terrible, which can cause them to get stuck in a problem. In the book of Tanwir al-Qulūb, it is not permissible for teachers to use rude language in warning students. This value must be instilled in each ustadz because they have been considered pious.

In addition, as understood by every ustadz, teachers are supposed to be wise and firm with their students. This intelligent and healthy attitude can be done when delivering lessons clearly and powerfully so that students can understand them easily. This kind of strategy can be seen in U's way of teaching S directly and unambiguously when the learning process is carried out. This can be seen from the responses of Ss, most of which show agreement or understanding about the things being discussed. The ustadz's strategy is to be firm and wise in teaching and educating students.

Furthermore, it is further that U will be held accountable by Allah later in the hereafter. Therefore, they are obliged to order the students to do something good or forbid them to do something terrible (Amar ma'ruf nahi Munkar). The Bald on record strategy used by U reflects the book's value that has been internalized within them.

Finally, the offline strategy is the least used politeness strategy in the interaction. Systems that consist of ambiguity and ambiguity make the informants think twice about using them. In this study, some Off record utterances were used by providing some clues to understand the words or

exaggerating reports that made the listeners interpret for themselves what was being said. Most of these strategies are implemented by U. They use this strategy to insinuate S about an action that should be taken.

In addition to warning S directly, the Off Record strategy is also more helpful in reminding S not to repeat actions that should not be done. This kind of strategy is strongly influenced by the strength of each informant, who has many differences and a relatively high social distance. The power of U as the 'parent' of Ss resulted in the understanding that they had the right to regulate and control Ss's life while at the pesantren, including reminding them not to repeat anything terrible.

According to the shari'ah (Islamic rules) as the primary root of values at the Sholahul Huda al-Mujahidin Islamic Boarding School, it is permissible for the ustadz to do this as long as it does not demean the students. Because in the Qur'an, it has been stated that no one is allowed to humiliate others, even though they have more power over others. Another reason why U applies this strategy in daily life is to let Ss get used to thinking about what's behind U's words and train their sensitivity. Doing this kind of thing will be able to cause Ss to think critically about everything that happens around them.

However, this strategy is not used by Ss because it is ambiguous and vague in conveying something. As Ss they should say things clearly and not confuse their teacher. Therefore, no Off record strategies appeared in Ss's speech. On the other hand, in U utterance, this strategy is also the least used. This is influenced by the principle of the ustadz in this pesantren not to confuse the students.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The concept of politeness as an element of building social relations and avoiding any conflicts is by the idea of politeness at the Sholahul Huda Al-Mujahidin Islamic Boarding School, which aims to always maintain good relations among the people of the pesantren, in this case, the santri and the Kyai/Ustadz. From the analysis of Kyai/Ustadz utterances, it is known that they apply all politeness strategies. Based on the number of strategies produced, the most common politeness strategies by Kyai/Ustadz are

Bald on Record, negative politeness, Off Record, and positive politeness. On the other hand, the students carried out not all procedures during this study. Therefore, there were only three strategies that appeared, namely: positive politeness, negative politeness, and Bald on Record. As explained in the theory of politeness by Brown and Levinson (1987), social factors such as social power and social distance have a role in using these politeness strategies. However, the culture of the Sholahul Huda Al-Mujahidin Islamic Boarding School, which includes several values, is another factor that dramatically influences the use of politeness strategies between students and Kyai/Ustadz in their daily interactions. These factors are related to several values that are internalized in each student, which are instilled through learning the yellow book adopted from two Islamic sources, the Qur'an and Hadith. These values are attitudes that must be possessed by both students and Kyai/Ustadz at the Sholahul Huda Al-Mujahidin Islamic Boarding School so that they can get God's blessing.

In general, the politeness strategy carried out by U and Ss is triggered by social forces, the social distance between speakers, and the cultural values of the pesantren that apply at the Sholahul Huda Al-Mujahidin Islamic Boarding School, which is based on Islamic values and is realized through learning resources in this pesantren, namely a yellow book. By analyzing this politeness strategy, it can be seen that there is a social distance between U and Ss on a reasonably large scale. However, sometimes there are some attempts by U to reduce it to be closer to Ss, which will make it easier for Ss to understand the lesson or some advice. Furthermore, the strengths of the two participants were not balanced because, as a teacher, U was highly respected by Ss under any circumstances. This was triggered by the belief in U's blessings that made Ss do this. In addition, U's sincerity in teaching and educating Ss by not expecting anything except God's grace and pleasure triggered them to adopt several strategies in their interactions with Ss.

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