



Sasakologi: Politeness Research in Sasak by Lalu Nurul Yaqin

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Abstract

This is a book written by Lalu Nurul Yaqin to study about the communication dynamics of Sasak community in Lombok, Indonesia. The uniqueness of everyday conversation and discussions in Sasak's wedding rituals has become a central part of this study. The objective of this book review article is to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of this book as well as giving recommendations. This book has analysed qualitative data that was recorded during the author's field trips and attending rituals. However, the lack of visual images and thorough explanations has made it difficult to visualize the communication activities and rituals especially if the reader is not familiar with the traditions in Lombok. It was suggested that adding images and comparative studies from various sources regionally and internationally would greatly benefit the book. Overall, it is a comprehensive book suitable for students or academics in various fields such as anthropology, sociolinguistics, and communication.

Keywords: Politeness; Lombok; Sasak Community; Indonesian Wedding.

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INTRODUCTION

This book, authored by Lalu Nurul Yaqin, was published in 2020 by LPPM Universitas Gunung Rinjani (UGR). Yaqin, formerly an academic at the Faculty of Education at Gunung Rinjani University, is now an Assistant Professor at Universiti Brunei Darussalam. Generally, this book is a comprehensive read suitable for students or academics in various fields such as anthropology, sociolinguistics, and communication.

The main objective of this book is to examine the pragmatics of politeness within the Sasak community. The Sasak community is a group of people who reside on the island of Lombok, Indonesia. Lombok, with an area of 4739 km², is considered a hub for the growth and development of the Sasak ethnic group (Yaqin, 2020). Geographically, Lombok is located in the West Nusa Tenggara region (NTB), east of Bali and west of Sumbawa Island. The island is bordered by the Java Sea to the north and the Indian Ocean to the south (Yaqin & Shanmuganathan, 2018).

The Sasak tribe constitutes the majority, accounting for 90% of the population on the island, with over 2.6 million people. More than 80% of the island's inhabitants are Muslims, and they are spread across the mainland of Lombok, particularly in rural

areas. (Yaqin et al., 2023). The Sasak language is still used by over 2 million people on the island, consisting of five dialects: *Ngeno-Ngene*, *Meno-Mene*, *Meriak-Merikuk*, *Kuto-Kete*, and *Nggeto-Nggete*. Language plays a significant role in society's customs and culture (Yaqin & Shanmuganathan, 2020). Therefore, this book can serve as a valuable supplementary study alongside research on the economy, history, religion, and other aspects of Sasak society.

The main objective of this book review article is to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the book as well as giving recommendations. This article will comprise three sections which are a summary of each chapter and then an evaluation of the book's strengths and weaknesses. To conclude this article, we will give suggestions and recommendations at the end of the section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first chapter of this book explores the concept of "Being Polite in Sasak". The Sasak community upholds a value system known as '*Tendeh*', which promotes honesty, kindness, and fairness in communication. The objective of this value system is to develop a sense of self-identity and highlight the unique characteristics of the community. The Sasak people's culture is deeply rooted in patience and generosity which are embedded in their way of life. In this chapter the author analysed the nature of utterances in the data using Grice's theory (1975). A qualitative approach with ethnographic methods was employed to collect data, with 20 respondents selected from diverse educational and occupational backgrounds to ensure wider coverage. The study employed surveys, recordings, notes, and monitored daily conversations to gather data. By utilizing this approach, the study could obtain reliable insights from real-life experiences (Denscombe, 2010).

Several conversational situations have been recorded in Sasak daily conversation, such as discussing the price of a mobile phone, love interests, business profits, and salary inquiries. The researcher discovered that many of the utterances did not adhere to Grice's maxim principle, but this is considered normal in informal speech. The speech was indirect but honesty is frequently utilized in these settings. Although some participants may have limited formal education, their social behavior remains polite. Questions pertaining to private financial information are often left vague or evaded, and conversations may shift topics. The writer's analysis of the data suggests that the Sasak society values the virtues of gentleness and politeness. This chapter effectively portrays the culture and politeness of the Sasak community from diverse educational backgrounds utilizing a linguistic perspective.

The second chapter, titled "Strategic Politeness in The Bride-Kidnapping Practices of Sasak Culture", delves into the cultural practices of the Sasak community, specifically '*merariq*' or 'elopement' of the bride. The author provides a historical overview of this custom and its influence from the kingdoms of Bali and Java. Although the act of kidnapping girls to be taken as concubines is considered a breach of custom and law in various countries, the Sasak community perceives it as an honorable act since it is based on love. Nevertheless, it is crucial for the traditional leader known as '*Pembayun*' to intervene and hold a discussion with the family of the bride. Discussions are conducted in three rituals, namely *Sejati*, *Selabar* and *Sorong*

Surah. These discussions were used as research data to see the politeness in Sasak society.

The method employed a qualitative approach through the recording and observation of live discussions during a cultural event. It covered many topics including discussions about the traffic situation prior to the event and the wedding gifts exchanged. The author utilized Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model theory to analyze the discourse between the representatives of the bride and groom's families. The analysis results indicate prioritizing decency during their discussions to maintain status and dignity. It is not just about preserving one's image, but it is also seen as a moral obligation in Sasak society.

The examination of Sasak community marriage customs is extended in the third chapter with a supplementary investigation titled "Strategic Politeness Among the Sasak: A Sociopragmatic Parameters Study." The author initially describes the wedding ceremony and roles of the groom and bride's families. In addition to the matter of face-to-face interactions and polite language, the writer examines the social distance, power, and status parameters involved in the meeting between the Pembayun (representing the groom's family) and the female family's representative.

Like the previous two chapters, qualitative methods were utilized to gather research data on different parameters. The researcher went into the field and recorded a conversation lasting approximately nine hours during one of the marriage rituals, known as *Sorong Serah*. Based on the collected data, the writer found that the language used will be more esteemed and sophisticated when the counterparts have higher social distance, power, and status. Diplomatic communication is employed to maintain control over emotions and facial expressions. He concluded that politeness strategies encompass not only cultural elements, but also Sasak society's values and norms.

The book's final chapter is titled "Pembayuns Speech Acts: A Ritualistic Study Methodology." The author lists the different types of Speech Acts and wedding rituals - *Sejati*, *Selabar*, and *Sorong Serah* - practiced in the Sasak community. The subsequent section explains the function and significance of these ritual ceremonies in detail. This explanation should have been provided earlier for the reader to comprehend the arrangement and purpose of the associated rituals more effectively.

In this study, the approach taken was qualitative. Data collection was carried out using audio, video, and note-taking recordings. The conclusion drawn by the author is that direct speech is preferred for requests that comply with polite standards, such as greetings, apologies, and soliciting permission, while indirect speech is utilized for orders and requests to minimize feelings of discomfort and threat towards the counterpart. Insults and sarcasm are not used in this discussion to maintain respect and harmony among all parties. The author suggests that the tradition of displaying politeness during marriage ritual is one of their valuable cultural practices that should be preserved and taught to future generations.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

This book presents numbers of strengths as a valuable reading material that provides detailed information about a unique ritual in Indonesia.

- i. Firstly, the writing layout is generally well presented, and the author has initiated an explanatory study on the Sasak community's demographics. After that the book explores the connection and the importance of language and socio-culture within the Sasak community before going in-depth analysis of the subject matter.
- ii. The study is focusing on conversations and utterances to demonstrate the existence of politeness within the Sasak community. The author had successfully framed the data with Grice's Maxim theory by analysing informal and daily conversation. Subsequently, the study progressed with formal conversations carried out during the wedding ceremony by the representatives selected by the bride's family.
- iii. The research methodology involved qualitative approaches and fieldwork, which lends strength and reliability to the findings. By utilizing data recording from real-life events, it is possible to portray the events and conversations with authenticity and accuracy (Denscombe, 2010).

Several weaknesses have been identified in this book, particularly about the explanation of wedding rituals in Sasak communities.

- i. The author had mentions numerous marriage rituals including *Merariq*, *Sejati*, *Sorong Serah*, and *Selabar*, they are not clearly explained at the beginning of the book. This lack of clarity makes it challenging for readers to comprehend the ceremony's sequence and traditional function within the Sasak community.
- ii. Additionally, the absence of visual aids, such as photographs or images of the event or the conversation among elected representatives, greatly detracts from the quality of this book. Visual material is significant in helping readers comprehend the events that occurred during the discussion. Elements that cannot be conveyed through conversation, such as body language, are observable through images.
- iii. Furthermore, the definition of elopement marriage in the context of Sasak society is inadequately explained. The presence of both literal and symbolic elopement rituals may cause confusion for readers. Elopement could give rise to legal issues since it is deemed illegal under Sharia and Islamic law in Indonesia (Hasan et al. 2022). This presents an ironic situation, as the book stated that Muslims made up nearly 80% of the communities but engaged in unlawful matrimonial customs.
- iv. Finally, this book lacks local and regional comparative studies. Numerous studies have examined the elopement ritual and speech politeness, including those conducted by Hasan et al.'s (2022) on rituals in Monta Bima; Indonesia, Hussin (2023) on rituals in Malaysia; Mehmood and Rahman (2018) on rituals in Pakistan and Prayitno et al.'s (2021) on politeness in social media. These are some of the examples that could be used as comparison and similarities. Through these studies the uniqueness of rituals, dynamics of speech politeness and its impact can be observed and analyse from different perspectives.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Recommendations describe things that will be done related to the next idea of the research. Barriers or problems that can influence the results of the research are also presented in this section. Overall, this book has made a significant contribution to the fields of anthropology, sociolinguistics, and communication. This book offers a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the pragmatic aspects of politeness within Sasak society. It provides valuable insights for both scholars and practitioners.

Yaqin's study is particularly noteworthy as it highlights the unique ways in which politeness is constructed and expressed in a community that is often overlooked in mainstream research. The findings from this study have important implications for our understanding of politeness not only in other Austronesian languages but also in cultures characterized by a strong sense of community and hierarchy. While the book provides valuable insights, there are areas to further enhance its comprehensiveness and depth such as below:

- i. Firstly, there should be a section or chapter that provides clearer explanations of all their wedding rituals. The book touches on various wedding rituals, such as *Merariq*, *Sejati*, *Sorong Serah* and *Selabar*, but fails to provide sufficient explanations at the outset. By offering clearer explanations of these rituals, readers would gain a deeper understanding of their significance and role within the Sasak community.
- ii. Secondly, it is recommended that the author provide more visual material to enhance the reader's comprehension and visualization of the events and discussions depicted in the book. By including images or photographs, the reader can gain additional context and observe non-verbal cues, such as body language, which play a crucial role in understanding communication dynamics.
- iii. Thirdly is the importance of including comparative studies from regional or international case studies. Although the book primarily focuses on the Sasak community, it would greatly benefit from incorporating comparative studies involving other communities that engage in similar rituals or possess similar cultural practices. By undertaking such comparative studies, valuable insights can be gained into the distinctiveness of Sasak culture and its influence on the surrounding community, thereby enriching the overall analysis.
- iv. Finally, gaining a deeper understanding of the influence of gender and social status on the formation of politeness customs in Sasak society could have provided useful perspectives. Additionally, establishing a strong connection between these findings and wider concepts in politeness studies, such as the complex interplay between politeness and power, would have been beneficial.

By implementing these suggestions, we believe the book could significantly enhance its comprehensiveness and provide a deeper understanding of the politeness and cultural practices within the Sasak community.

As a conclusion this book offers valuable insights into the pragmatic facets of politeness within the Sasak community. This research is a significant contribution to the field of politeness studies, providing timely and relevant information. It is highly recommended for individuals who wish to enhance their understanding of politeness or engage in research related to this topic.

Author Contributions

Norazmie Yusof; Introduction, Results and Analysis, Conclusions. Ena Wasli; Strengths and Weaknesses, Suggestions, Conclusions.

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Conflict of interests

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