
‘Men More Polite Than Women?’: Gender Differences Study of Bimanese Interaction in Requesting

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Abstract

This study examines gender differences in request speech and politeness, focusing on how men and women use different linguistic strategies to convey requests politely. This study aims to analyze the alerter and supporting speech elements in request speech in the Bima language as spoken by male and female students. It also compares the request speech elements used by men and women. Using a qualitative approach, the data analyzed consists of request utterances in the Bima language. Data were collected through recording techniques and discourse completion tests. The data analysis involved categorizing the speech elements as units of analysis, focusing on alerter and supporting elements, and classifying them based on Blum-Kulka’s framework. The analysis revealed that male speech tended to demonstrate familiarity with the interlocutor through the varied use of alerter greetings, while female speech showed politeness by employing supporting speech. This difference indicates that men are more inclined to use positive politeness strategies, whereas women tend to use negative politeness strategies.

Keywords: Gender Differences, Request Speech, Politeness, Bima Language

1. INTRODUCTION

Men and women have distinct roles and functions in society, particularly in eastern societies. Women, more than men, are often associated as the gender that is more instrumental and responsible for children's education. In his research, Haas, (1979) found that men frequently use direct and informal speech, whereas women tend to speak more politely and expressively. Therefore, this finding inspires us to compare the language of men and women in Bima, focusing in request speech.

Request is one of the most frequently used in daily conversation. In the request, there is a burden to the interlocutor, so this speech has the potential to cause irritation on the part of the speech partner. Therefore, effective strategies are needed in expressing requests so that the harmony of relationships between individuals and groups can be maintained. Failure to understand how the signs that apply to a language can be avoided through knowledge of the culture and use of a language, including when there are differences in the use of language used by different genders.

Blum-Kulka (1989) divides request speech into several elements to facilitate focused analysis. These elements are alerter, core speech, and supporting speech. The alerter attract the attention of the interlocutor at the beginning of the speech. The core speech is an element that can stand alone without the presence of other elements. This is because in the core speech lies the intention of the speaker's request. As for the supporting speech, it requires the core speech so that the speaker understands the speaker's intention.

However, in certain contexts, supporting speech can function as core speech if the speaker wants to convey his request with an indirect strategy. Therefore, research that discusses the alerter elements and supporting elements of request speech is important. A series of stages in order to research this matter are needed in order to get an in-depth explanation related to this. After knowing the unit of analysis of an utterance, the politeness aspect can also be analyzed guided by politeness theory.

There are a number of scholars who are concerned with this issue of politeness. They see politeness from different perspectives, making it possible for researchers to choose one or more ideas that suit the needs and character of the data in their research. Brown & Levinson (1987) politeness theory is one of the most renowned, although it has also been controversial due to its perceived cultural limitations. This idea was contested because it was considered that it could only explain the phenomenon of politeness in one culture and could not be used to explain politeness in other cultures. Nevertheless, the expert's findings have been the foundation for the development of politeness theory over time.

On the other hand, articles that discuss Bima language associated with gender have been conducted by (Arwan, 2020; Nursyahidah, 2017; Oya dkk., 2020) found the cultural ethics of Bima language represented through greeting words. Arwan (2020) investigated taboo words more frequently than women, reflecting the patriarchal culture in the Bima language. Meanwhile, Oya et al (2020) concluded that students do not understand the concept of politeness when sending chats to their lecturers because they violate the principle of politeness. However, these studies were conducted at a descriptive level only, so that how the form of politeness in Bima language that appears in speech has not received adequate explanation.

Referring to the existing research on language and gender as well as politeness in Bima language, this research intends to fill the gap that has not been answered by the existing research. The researcher would like to focus on a speech element that is often overlooked in politeness research because it may not have much influence on the politeness of request speech.

The problem to be answered through this paper is how the form of request speech of male and female students in terms of alerter and supporting speech elements. In addition, how is the difference between male and female language in Bima language in terms of alerter elements and supporting speech in request speech. Therefore, this study aims to describe and compare the language used by male and female students in terms of the use of alerter and supporting elements in Bima language request speech.

This research is crucial for understanding politeness within the cultural context of Bima society. By doing so, it aims to prevent misunderstandings caused by cultural differences, particularly for individuals outside Bima. Indonesia as a nation known as a multicultural nation needs this kind of knowledge to create harmony in differences.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The differences between men and women in terms of language have become an issue that attracts many scientists to study it. Febriani (2021) who examined women's language utilized data from novel *A* and found that women in the story of the novel *suluk mu'tazilah* emphasized the establishment, maintenance and development of relationships between individuals through language. As for men, through language they get information conveyed. Santoso, (2007) studied women's language using a critical discourse perspective. The research led him to four conclusions, namely that what is always represented by women through language is women's interpretation of the whole world about life and life, and the language of men and women is represented asymmetrically. Firman (2016) also examined women's language ideology. She found that women actually fight for a certain ideology when using language as a result of the symbolic violence experienced by Indonesian women. By understanding this, men can contribute to creating harmonious relationships with women.

With a different approach, linking gender and politeness, Nihayati (2018) found that men and women differ in choosing politeness strategies. Women tend to use off record strategies, while bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness are strategies that men tend to choose. In addition to politeness, the study was also conducted with a discussion of impoliteness. In this case, Ambarita, et al (2022) found that female teachers utilize figurative language or convey it indirectly because they still think about the aspects of politeness in their speech. Meanwhile, male teachers do not hesitate to convey impoliteness in language directly because they have a more open and courageous character.

The syntactic level is also tried to be associated by researchers with gender. Through a movie, Hasanah & Wicaksono (2021) tried to find out the linguistic characteristics of Javanese women and found that, subtle cursing interjections, tag questions, hedges, and intensifiers are parts that are often used by women in their speech and characterize the language of women themselves. Nimas, et al (2013) found that persona pronominals, sentence ending particles, interjections, nouns, and verbs are features that can be used to see the language differences between Japanese women and men in the movie *chibi maruko chan*.

Research on requests and politeness is not only conducted in the medium of movies or books as mentioned earlier. This kind of study was also conducted on text messages such as Tanto (2018) who conducted research on politeness analysis of Indonesian request strategies in text messages. They found that people tend to use negative strategies to interlocutors with higher power and use a combination of negative and positive politeness to interlocutors who are lower than them. In addition, email is also not spared to be the object of request speech act research as (Deveci & Hmida, 2017) did, namely by comparing speech acts between native speakers and non-native speakers in email which proves that the two parties are different in terms of discourse structure, strategy types, and modifiers. Although these studies have provided insight into research

on requests, similar research needs to be done but on more natural speech objects spoken directly by speakers when faced with a situation.

Research comparing the language of women and men that examine the speech act of requesting had been conducted too by researchers, namely Nugroho, 2012 and Precisely, 2017). Related to the core utterance in requests, Jannah, et al (2022) conducted research on internal modifications used in Indonesian speech and found that many internal modifications cannot be applied to Indonesian speech due to grammatical differences. therefore, he encouraged that research related to modifications in Indonesian and local language request speech be carried out.

These writings focus their analysis on the core speech act of request and supporting speech acts are also analyzed although not as deep as the discussion of the core speech act. The alerter element is rarely the focus of existing studies. The request speech strategy makes the core speech as the unit of analysis, but the alerter elements and supporting speech are no less important to be studied in order to see the attitude or politeness of the speaker to the speech partner.

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Referring to the existing research on language and gender as well as politeness in Bima language, this research intends to fill the gap that has not been answered by the existing research. The researcher would like to focus on a speech element that is often overlooked in politeness research because it may not have much influence on the politeness of request speech.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach. In addition, Simple quantitative analysis was also used to determine the tendency of alerter and supporting speech used in men and women. The students involved in this study were 30 consisting of 15 male and 15 female. Respondents involved in this study were taken from one class at the STKIP Taman Siswa Bima campus who met the criteria as respondents.

The type of data obtained is in the form of utterances obtained from the use of discourse completion test. Data collection in this study was carried out through several stages. First, respondents were given a piece of paper containing situations or scenarios. Second, the respondents were asked to give a response in the form of speech to each

situation given orally. At the same time, the speech of the respondents was recorded. Third, the recorded speech was transcribed and then coded to facilitate data identification. At the data analysis stage, the utterances were sorted based on the elements to be studied, specifically the alerter elements and supporting utterances. These speech elements were classified according to framework proposed by **Blum-Kulka & Olshtain Elite (1989)** and subsequently interpreted.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Alerter Elements and External Modification in Male Request

The alerter elements in male request speech include greetings, salutations, and expressions such as “excuse me”. The greetings found vary and include kinship and familiarity greetings. The choice of greeting as an alerter is not something without motivation. The speaker consciously uses a greeting to describe the speaker's attitude to the speech partner. In line with this, Kurniawati et al., (2021) found that different forms of greeting are used to socialize values that parents want to impart to their children. This implies that the selection of greetings can be examined further to find out the background that encourages speakers to use them and the attitude of speakers to speech partners. In this study, men addressed their speech partners with terms like *lenga*, *bang*, *sae*, *cina*, and *amancawa*.

(1) *Santabe ta, amancawa. Tiwara ja bolpoi ma ncewi ro di se sepe di tunti kai tugas ke?* (Excuse me, Sister. Isn't there an extra pen to borrow for writing this assignment?)

In this instance, the speaker uses the greeting *amancawa* which means sister. The speaker and the speech partner do not have a family relationship because the situation requires the speaker to talk to someone unfamiliar. This call is used by the speaker to show that he respects the female speech partner by considering her as his own sister. In this speech, it can also be seen that the elements of request speech only consist of alerter and core speech. The speaker does not include any supporting speech either before or after the core speech. A similar pattern is observed in the following example:

(2) *Santabe ta, cina, kombi ta loa pa bantu ndaiku, ne'e sepe balpoi ru'u tandatangan kai ake samporo.* (Excuse me, brother, can you do me a favor? I'd like to borrow his pen to sign this for a second.)

Here, *Cina* means brother and is used as a kinship greeting. When viewed from the context of the situation, this speech is addressed to someone whose social distance is far away and more precisely to someone who has just been met. Nevertheless, the speaker chooses the Chinese greeting to the speech partner as an effort to eliminate the distance between the speaker and the speech partner. The speaker wants to create a familiar atmosphere between himself and the speech partner and that way the speaker shows his

politeness to the speech partner. Similar to the previous speech, in this speech there is no supporting speech. Apart from these two greetings, another kinship greeting used by speakers as an alerter is *sa'e* which in Bima means brother. A greeting with a similar meaning is *bang*. These two greetings do not describe the family relationship between speakers and speech partners, so it can be concluded that these greetings are used by speakers solely to show respect to speech partners. The following is data that shows the use of *sa'e* and *bang* greetings.

(3) *Santabeta, Sa'e, mada ke ne'e tandatangan ntauku surat ake, pala kabune ku mada nefa wa'a balpoi, waraja to'i neo rima ita ni sepeja balpoi bantu ja ari ta ke samporo.* (Excuse me, brother, I want to sign a letter, but the problem is that I forgot to bring a pen, would you be so kind to lend me the pen? Please help your brother for a moment).

(4) *Assalamu'alaikum, Bang, loa sepe balpoi samporo?, balpoi madake wara entah ra nefa tis mbora, mada ne'e sepe di tandangan kai ake samporo.* (Assalamu'alaikum, Brother, can I borrow the pen for a moment? I have a pen, but I don't know if I left it or lost it, I want to borrow it to sign this for a moment).

Furthermore, speakers were also found using the greeting alerter *lenga*. In speech 4, there is also an alerter in the form of greetings in Islam, namely *Assalamu'alaikum* because the majority of Bima's population is moslem so this greeting is commonly used to start a conversation. In almost all utterances, speakers begin their speech by saying *santabe* which means excuse me. Both forms of alerter besides greetings are also aperter used to convey courtesy to speech partners. From this data, it can be seen that in addition to using kinship greetings, speakers also show politeness by using alerter greetings which mean friends as follows.

(5) *Santabe ta, lenga, loa ta sepe balpoi samporo? Di tanda tangan kai ake samporo pa.* (Excuse me, friend, can I have the pen for a moment? Just to sign this for a second).

Male speakers also use two types of supporting speech elements: preparators and grounders. Grounder, as seen in data (3) is used by the speaker to explain the reason for his request with the aim of softening his request to the speech partner. The speaker's intention can be categorized as a polite action because he wants to show respect to the speech partner. In addition to preparators, other supporting speech used by speakers is preparators.

(6) *Santabe ta, Bang, loa raho bantu? mbei ja sepe balpoi samporo ta di tandatangan kai ake?* (Excuse me, Brother, can I ask you a favor? Can you lend me a pen for a moment to sign this?)

Preparator is used by the speaker before the core speech with the intention of conditioning the speech partner by first asking if the speaker can ask for help to the speech partner. After that, the speaker conveys the core of the speech of the request. That way, the speech partner has more time to consider the speaker's request.

Alerter Element and External Modification in Female Speech

In female request speech, alerters such as *lenga*, *abang*, and *kakak*. *Abang* and *kakak* are used by the speaker to show respect to the speech partner. As previously explained, the context of the situation is someone who is unfamiliar and has just been met by the speech partner. In speech (7) the speaker does not know for sure whether the age of the speech partner is older than him, but the speaker still addresses the speech partner as brother to the female speech partner and brother to the male speech partner. Meanwhile, supporting speech is found to precede and follow the core speech as in speech (8) and (9).

(7) *Santabe ta, **Kaka**, loa mada sepe bolpoi samporo ta? Mada wara ne'e tanda tangan kai sura ra ro'o samporo, **nefa ku wa'a bolpoi**.* (Excuse me, Sister, can I borrow the pen for a moment, I want to sign this document for a moment, I forgot to bring a pen).

(8) *Santabe ta, **lenga**, wara balpoimu ma ncewi? Nahuke ti wara wa'aku balpoi dei tas ke. Kombi loa pa bantu ni balpoimu samporo.* (Excuse me, friend, any more pens? I don't have a pen in my bag, maybe you can lend me one for a moment).

(9) *Santabe ta, loa ta raho bantu ta sepe balpoi ta **watisi kani ta ni, wunga si kani re tibune na**.* (Excuse me, can I ask you to borrow the pen if you're not using it, if you're using it, that's fine).

(10) *Lenga, sepeja balpoimuni soalnya nahuke tiwara dawa balpoiku sepe balpoi ngomi samporo **nahu kambali pede ya**.* (Friend, lend me your pen because I don't have a pen. I'll borrow your pen for a while and then I'll return it).

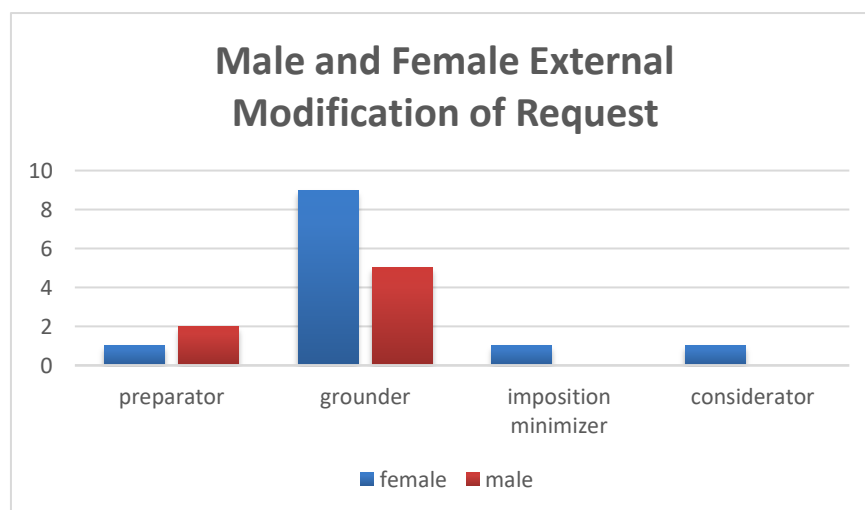
In speech (7), the supporting speech of the grounder type is uttered by the speaker after the core speech. The speaker realizes that the core speech of the request that he has just conveyed has given a burden to the speech partner and he wants to reduce the impact of the face threat to the speech partner arising from the speech of the request. In data (8), supporting speech of the preparator type is found before the core speech. Although it is located before the core speech, this supporting speech is intended for politeness because the speaker prepares the conditions before delivering his request for the speech partner to lend him a pen. In addition, this speech is intended to prevent the core speech from being spoken directly by giving distance to the core speech. Speech (9) appears that the speaker

includes supporting speech after the core speech in the form of imposition minimizer. The supporting speech is included as a form of politeness to speech partners because speakers reduce the burden on speech partners. The speaker reduces the illocutionary power of the core speech by showing the speech partner that he frees the speaker from having to grant his request. This step is done to maintain the negative face of the speech partner who wants the speech partner to be free from all forms of burdens. In speech (10), it appears that the type of supporting speech is promise, namely the speaker promises the speech partner to return the pen he borrowed to the speech partner.

Comparison of Male and Female Speech Elements

In the previous subchapters, the alerter and supporting speech elements of men and women have been discussed respectively. Furthermore, in this sub chapter, the discussion is intended to find the similarities and differences of these two things in each gender. This needs to be done to gain knowledge of how language differs between the two genders. Furthermore, this comparison is also done to understand the extent to which theories about male and female language can explain the phenomenon in Bima language. The comparison is not only done qualitatively or describing the forms found, but also simple calculations are done to measure the tendency of using elements by each male and female.

Quantitatively, male speakers use fewer supporting speech than female speakers, with only 7 men and 12 women incorporating them. Not only that, the variety of supporting speech also appears to be more varied in female speakers than male speakers. Female speakers use supporting speech variations of preparator, grounder, imposition minimizer, and considerator. As for male speakers, they only appear to use 2 variations, namely preparator and grounder. Nevertheless, both men and women are more likely to use supporting speech of grounder variation.



Seeing the differences in men's and women's request speech leads us to judge who is more polite between men and women. However, before making such a judgment, a clear understanding of the definition of politeness is needed. Politeness can refer to a condition when the speech partner can accept what the speaker conveys through words and does not feel offended by it. Starting from this definition, then the politeness of one's language can be assessed.

In relation to politeness, Brown and Levinson (1978) proposed 4 strategies that can be used by speakers to organize their speech to sound polite by speech partners, namely bald on record, negative politeness, positive politeness, and off record. Brown and Levinson's politeness strategy can be used to explain the male and female request speech in this study. Men's supporting speech is less than women's in terms of quantity and variety chosen. The absence of supporting speech makes men's speech shorter than that of women. Women even use several supporting utterances in one request utterance, so that women's request utterances are longer. On the other hand, in the alerter element, men use more variations than women. This finding shows that men and women have different ways of showing politeness to speech partners.

Women, through the use of supporting speech, attempt to mitigate the burden on the speech partner because they think their request will cause inconvenience to the speech partner. This is also reinforced by the use of alerter which tends to show more distance from the speech partner. Women attempt to show politeness by showing that they consider the needs of speech partners as individuals who are free and need to have their privacy respected. The opposite is found in Javanese female who tend to use positive politeness strategies rather than negative politeness because women are more familiar with their interlocutor (Sudartini, 2010).

As for men, through the selection of kinship greeting alerter, they want to minimize the distance between themselves and their speech partners. Men show politeness by accommodating the positive face needs of speech partners, namely the need to be recognized and accepted as part of a group or other people. This is what then encourages men to tend to convey their requests in the form of the core speech only.

Regarding this phenomenon, Lakoff (1973) argued that women speak with such politeness because since childhood they have been conditioned to take on different roles than men in society. Thus, women speak in such a way as a means to make them sound inferior not because they are actually inferior to men, but because women have been socialized to speak that way. She further explains that women play a role in maintaining morals and manners as one of the factors that cause women to take care of their speech so as not to offend their speech partners. As for men, they are not burdened with such roles so they can be looser and can be freer in expressing polite ways of speaking according to them.

5. CONCLUSION

In this study, various data have been analyzed to address the research question. The supporting speech forms found in male and female request speech are in preparator, grounder, imposition minimizer, and considerator. It is almost impossible for women to utter requests without including reasons or other supporting speech. In contrast, men prioritize how the request can be conveyed clearly. Therefore, men do not use or even do not use supporting speech.

This research is limited to a single speech situation with one variable, namely social distance. There are still other variables that need to be included so that it can be known what variables affect Bima language request speech and how these variables influence the form of request speech. Furthermore, this research is confined to one type of speech act. Similar research needs to be done on other types of speech acts because each speech act has its own characteristics that can reveal whether an utterance is acceptable in the community of speakers. Future researchers are encouraged to explore these areas to fill in the gaps left by this study.

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