

AN ANALYSIS OF POLITENESS MAXIMS USED BY THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN *ME BEFORE YOU* MOVIE

PUTRI MUHALING, SANERITA T. OLI, PAULA L. HAMPP

Universitas Negeri Manado

Correspondence author: saneritaolii@unima.ac.id

Received: 22 June 2023

Accepted: 28 July 2023

Published: 23 August 2023

Abstract: This study aims to analyze the maxims of politeness used by the main characters in the film *Me Before You*. The research method used is qualitative method. In analyzing the data, the writer used the theory of politeness maxims from Geoffrey Leech (1983). There are 6 kinds of politeness maxims proposed by Leech, namely: Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Agreement Maxim and Sympathy Maxim. The data in this study were taken by the main characters utterances in *Me Before You* movie, Louisa and William. The result of this research is that there are 20 politeness maxims used by the main characters in this movie. All kinds of politeness maxims are used by the main characters, 1 Tact Maxim, 3 Generosity Maxim, 3 Modesty Maxim, 6 Approbation Maxim, 5 Agreement Maxim, and 2 Sympathy Maxim. The most dominant kinds of maxim used in the movie is Approbation Maxim. The most dominant maxim used by Louisa is Generosity Maxim and the most dominant maxim used by William is Approbation Maxim.

Keywords: *Pragmatics, Politeness Maxims, Movie, Linguistics*

INTRODUCTION

Communication is a basic human need to live as a social being. Communication can be described as the interchange of information, ideas, perspectives, or notions between two or more individuals. Nevertheless, inadequate communication often leads to difficulties in interactions. Lack of communication skills makes it difficult for people to convey their intentions and goals appropriately. As a result, the listener will likely feel offended, and will even avoid communicating with that person. It can affect relationships between family, friends, coworkers, and even lovers. This is precisely the reason why individuals must foster effective communication skills in their daily lives to enable them to engage with others in various social settings (Maniku, et al., 2018).

The use of good language to communicate can be learned through pragmatics. Pragmatics is the study of the meaning of an utterance with respect to the context of the utterance. Yule (1996) in Fitri (2022), Pragmatics concerns itself with understanding the intended meaning of a communication between a speaker and a hearer in a specific situation. Therefore, Pragmatics is the examination of meaning in context. A connection between context and language is necessary to accurately convey meaning (Damopolii, et al., 2020). Proficiency in pragmatic skills, comprising conversational abilities, soliciting, providing and acknowledging information, alternation of turns, seeking clarification, adapting language to the context, and offering or soliciting assistance suitably, are among the proficiency that language learners ought to acquire. This is due to the fact that these competencies are frequently employed in our everyday interactions, specifically during conversations.

In communicating with someone, in order for the intent of the speaker's speech to be understood by the hearer, the speech hearer must understand the existing context such as the time, situation, or place of communication at that time. According to Pangemanan (2019), the situational elements in which verbal exchanges take place are the decisive factors that govern the happening of interaction. The context that is usually considered in pragmatics is the social context. When communicating, speakers do not simply communicate ideas and information but must also be mindful of cultural norms. The use of language must also be adjusted to social situations, such as differences in social status, level of familiarity and formality. Therefore, the language used must contain politeness.

Politeness is a way of acting that enables social interaction to take place in a setting where there is largely harmony (Leech, 1983). Politeness in communication intends to build a strong bond between *self* (speaker) and *other* (hearer). Politeness is not only a relationship between one human and another, but politeness has become a social and cultural value in society. Politeness in communication aims to express thoughts, feelings well and politely, without hurting and offending others. Leech also developed this politeness into a politeness principle, where there are 6 maxims included in it, namely: Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim And Sympathy Maxim.

Me Before You is a romantic movie released in 2016 that was helmed by Thea Sharrock and produced by Karen Rosenfelt and Alison Owen. This film is an adaptation of a novel by Jojo Moyes with the same title as the film. The story centers on a woman named Louisa (Emilia Clarke), who becomes the caretaker of Will (Sam Claflin). The man himself is severely depressed due to being paralyzed in an accident. The two then go on an adventure together that eventually changes both of their lives. Louisa and William are the main characters in this movie and it was found that the main characters used politeness maxim in their utterances.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This research used qualitative research design. According to Moleong (2016) Qualitative research is research that aims to comprehend the phenomenon of what is experienced by the subject of research, for instance investigation subject such as conduct, cognition, incentive, and operation through the utilization of explanations in the structure of terms and language, in a distinct natural framework and by employing diverse natural techniques.

The data were analyzed descriptively to explain and inform the utterances containing maxims of politeness used by the main characters in *Me Before You* movie. Therefore, the writer focused on words rather than numbers. Ary (2010) states that qualitative research deals with data in the form of words or images rather than numbers and statistic.

Data Collection

The data collection method is as follow:

- Downloading *Me Before You* movie script from internet (https://www.scripts.com/script/me_before_you_13548).
- Watching the movie *Me Before You* to have a better understanding about the storyline and context of the speech.
- Using Simak Bebas Cakap technique and Catat technique as data collection methods. Catat technique is to record relevant data from language use in written form (Mahsun, 2005).

Data Analysis

After collected the data, the writer proceeded to scrutinize it by implementing the steps of qualitative analysis proposed by Ary (2010), which encompass three distinct processes. The said procedures are as outlined below:

1. Familiarizing and Organizing

The writer re-watched the movie, re-read the script, and listened to the movie audio repeatedly to become familiar with the movie or the characters in the movie. Then the writer writes and organizes the data that has been found. To ensure the data is properly arranged and comprehensible, the writer sorted it into categories and identified patterns before determining the relevant aspects for analysis.

2. Coding and Reducing

The next step is Coding and Reducing. Coding means developing concepts from the raw data and then selecting them into categories and then into themes, which is commonly referred to as the Reducing process. In this study, coding is done on the utterances or sentences of the main characters that contain maxims of politeness.

3. Interpreting and Representing the Data

Interpretation includes contemplating the expressions and actions of the subjects under analysis and extracting significant insights from them (Ary, 2010). Here, the writer interprets the data through Leech's theory which was used to explain and describe the meaning of the data. Finally, the writer presented the data containing the maxims of politeness used by the main characters of the movie and the most dominant maxims used by the main characters through descriptive details.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Familiarizing and Organizing

After re-watch the movie and re-read the script, the writer then wrote down the data taken, or the dialogue from the main characters in the movie that contained the politeness maxims.

No	Data	Time
1	Camilla : Will was injured in a road accident two years ago. Louisa : Ah, I'm sorry.	00:08:59 – 00:09:06
2	Camilla : Louisa, some visitors are on their way. Friends of Wills, it's unexpected. You might need to Louisa : I'll make some tea or coffee and I'll make myself scarce.	00:19:34 – 00:19:48
3	Patrick : You can't blame her. Are you really saying that you'd stick are with me if I was paralyzed from the neck down? Louisa : Of course I would!	00:22:33 – 00:22:44
4	Patrick : How do you fancy, Norway? Louisa : Norway! Wow! Yeah, Okay!	00:23:04 – 00:23:19
5	Louisa : I just thought if I could see if I could fix some of these. Or um, y'know Louisa : If you wanted to get new ones, I could go into town at lunch time.	00:24:14 – 00:24:18
6	Louisa : You were riding a motorbike? William : Actually I wasn't. The bike, hit me. Louisa : I am sorry.	00:37:23 – 00:37:31
7	William : Do you know what I see when I look at you? Louisa : Do not say potential.	00:42:02 - 00:42:15
8	William : Do you know what I see when I look at you? Louisa : Do not say potential. William : Potential.	00:42:12 – 00:42:16
9	William : This is delicious, Mrs. Clark. Josie: Oh, Josie, please!	01:00:10 – 01:00:21
10	Patrick : Tights?	01:03:10 – 01:03:32

- Louisa : Only the best pair of tights, ever! I am going to try them on!
- Louisa : Oh! I can't tell you how much I love them. Really, thank you.**
- 11 Bernard : We are celebrating Lou! I've got a job! 01:07:07 – 01:07:17
Louisa : Oh Dad, that is fantastic!
- 12 William : But I thought you would be pleased. 01:07:41 – 01:07:50
Louisa : No, I am, I am pleased. I just, I dont know, I feel weird.
- 13 William : He's a nice guy. He fancies you. 01:10:55 – 01:11:02
Louisa : He needs glasses.
- Louisa : He needs glasses.
- 14 William : Don't do that. 01:10:55 – 01:11:02
William : You look beautiful.
- William : Are they all appalled?
- 15 Louisa: Yes. 01:13:42 – 01:13:49
William : Move closer, you smell fantastic.
- 16 Patrick : But you said you'd support me! 01:15:54 – 01:16:02
Louisa: I am supporting you, Patrick
- Louisa : Would you like me to take over for a while?**
- 17 Camilla: I would really like to change my clothes. 01:17:48 – 01:18:05
- 18 Louisa : You're glad you came, right? 01:27:23 – 01:27:30
William : Yes.
- William : I don't want you to miss all the things that someone else could give you.
- 19 **William : And selfishly I dont want you to look at me one day and feel even the tiniest big of regret or pity.** 01:29:28 – 01:29:43
- Louisa : I would never would think that!

William : Will you stay?
 20 Louisa : As long as you want me to. 01:42:10 – 01:43:07
William : Can you call my parents in?

Coding and Reducing

After the familiarizing and organizing step, the writer then takes the existing data and organises it according to the appropriate type of maxim.

No	Data	Maxim
1	Louisa : Ah, I'm sorry.	Sympathy Maxim
2	Louisa : I'll make some tea or coffee and I'll make myself scarce.	Generosity Maxim
3	Louisa : Of course I would!	Agreement Maxim
4	Louisa : Norway! Wow! Yeah, Okay!	Agreement Maxim
5	Louisa : If you wanted to get new ones, I could go into town at lunch time.	Generosity Maxim
6	Louisa : I am sorry.	Sympathy Maxim
7	Louisa : Do not say potential.	Modesty Maxim
8	William : Potential.	Approbation Maxim
9	William : This is delicious, Mrs. Clark.	Approbation Maxim
10	Louisa : Oh! I can't tell you how much I love them. Really, thank you.	Approbation Maxim
11	Louisa : Oh Dad, that is fantastic!	Approbation Maxim
12	Louisa : No, I am, I am pleased. I just, I dont know, I feel weird.	Agreement Maxim
13	Louisa : He needs glasses.	Modesty Maxim
14	William : You look beautiful.	Approbation Maxim
15	William : Move closer, you smell fantastic.	Approbation Maxim

16	Louisa: I am supporting you, Patrick	Agreement Maxim
17	Louisa : Would you like me to take over for a while?	Generosity Maxim
18	William : Yes.	Agreement Maxim
19	William : And selfishly I dont want you to look at me one day and feel even the tiniest big of regret or pity.	Modesty Maxim
20	William : Can you call my parents in?	Tact Maxim

Interpreting and Representing the Data

In this step, the author then analyses and interprets the data in the form of the main character's speech in the film that contains the maxims of politeness.

Tact Maxim

Tact maxim is related to impositive sentences. Impositive sentences are directive sentences that can be direct or indirect. This type of sentence can be found in sentences such as inviting, ordering, giving directions, asking for help, etc. Indirect commanding, using sentences such as please, would you mind, if you don't mind, can you, is considered polite and respectful. In communication, the speaker must speak politely and kindly. By reducing the benefit for oneself, the speaker can be considered as a polite person.

An example of the use of tact maxim is in data no. 20 (***William: Can you call my parents in?*** - 01:43:07). Louisa then went to see William and his family. Arriving there, Louisa found William and his parents in the room. William's parents then came out to let Louisa see William. Louisa and William then talked and hugged. In this data, William applies tact maxim in his speech by asking Louisa for help with polite sentences. William maximizes Louisa's benefit by not using harsh language even though William asks Louisa's help to call his parents.

Generosity Maxim

The maxim of generosity requires participants in communication to minimize self benefit and maximize self loss. In this maxim 'others' must be prioritised over 'self'. Prioritising others means that self must increase the burden on itself by offering help to others. actions such as helping, offering help, doing other people's work, and giving things are considered polite and kind.

The use of generosity maxim can be found in data no. 5 (***Louisa: "If you wanted to get new ones, I could go into town at lunch time."*** -00:24:18) When William's ex-girlfriend and her best friend came over to his house, he became upset and threw some photos including his photo with his ex-girlfriend on the floor, damaging the frame. William then found Louisa repairing the picture frame. Louisa said that she only fixed the picture frame of William and his mother, but if William wanted a new picture frame, she would go to the city to buy it. In this data, Louisa is being generous by minimizing her own benefit by going to the city to buy the picture frame.

Another example of the use of generosity maxim is in data no. 2 (***Louisa : I'll make some tea or coffee and I'll make myself scarce."*** - 00:19:41) When Louisa came to work at William's residence as usual, she met Camilla. Camilla said that William's friends were coming to visit. Before Camilla could continue, Louisa quickly responded by saying that she would make tea and would not disturb them. Louisa applied Generosity Maxim because she maximizes others benefit by saying that she will make tea or coffee, and minimizes her benefit by not disturbing them.

Approbation Maxim

Approbation maxims are maxims that minimize dispraise for others and maximize praise for others. With this maxim, it is expected that the participants in the conversation do not mock, insult, or hurt each other's feelings. This approbation maxim also involves expressive speech acts. Expressive speech acts are utterances that express the feelings of the

speaker towards a situation. Praising, thanking, complaining, and criticising are examples of expressive speech acts.

Data no. 8 (**William: "Potential"** - 00:42:14) is an approbation maxim because when Louisa and William were talking outside the house, Louisa said that she was interested in fashion and William maximized Louisa's praise by saying that Louisa had potential in fashion. William praises and motivates Louisa to pursue her dreams because life is only once. Maximizing compliments for others and minimizing compliments for oneself is considered an act of respect for others.

Data no. 14 (**"William : You look beautiful"**. - 01:11:02) is also an example of utterance that contain approbation maxim. When Louisa says that Freddie needs glasses because he doesn't think he's worthy of being liked, William immediately refutes this. William says that Louisa looks beautiful. The above speech is an example of the application of Approbation Maxim where William maximizes praise for Louisa by saying that she looks pretty. This compliment makes Louisa happy because she often puts herself down.

Modesty Maxim

Modesty maxim is a maxim that minimizes praise and maximizes self-disparagement. People who praise themselves are considered arrogant and not humble. In this maxim, speakers usually reject other people's compliments to themselves.

The use of modesty maxim in the speech in Me Before You movie can be seen in data no. 13 (**Louisa: "He needs glasses"** - 01:10:58). William takes Louisa to go to the wedding of Alicia, his ex-girlfriend. After the blessing at the church, William goes out and meets up with his former coworker, Freddie. William then introduces Louisa to Freddie. After Freddie left, William then said that Freddie was a good person and he liked Louisa. In this data, Louisa applies Modesty maxim by minimizing her praise by saying that Freddie needs glasses. The meaning of this utterance is that she is not that beautiful to be liked by someone.

Minimizing praise for oneself is considered a polite speech because it does not seem haughty or arrogant.

In data no. 19 (***"William : And selfishly I dont want you to look at me one day and feel even the tiniest big of regret or pity."*** - 01:29:35) William also applied modesty maxim in his speech. Not long after Louisa and William were talking on the beach, Louisa later assured William that they could live happily together. William then says that he can't stay by Louisa's side because he is disabled and can't do anything for her. Louisa tries to convince William but William minimizes the praise for him and says that he doesn't live with her because he doesn't want Louisa to be with him because he feels sorry for her disabled condition. He also doesn't want Louisa to regret living with him. William's speech is a modesty maxim. Because even though Louisa feels that she and William can live together, William minimizes the praise for himself by saying indirectly that he is disabled and does not deserve to be with Louisa.

Agreement Maxim

Agreement maxims are maxims that minimize the disagreement of participants and maximize the agreement of participants. This means that participants should avoid disagreement as much as possible in order to establish good communication. However, it is not completely avoiding disagreement but it is better to express agreement with others.

Data No. 16 (***"Louisa: "I am supporting you, Patrick" -*** (01:16:00) is an example of speech that contains agreement maxim. When Louisa finds out that William actually intends to end his life, Louisa tries to change William's mind and wants to take him on vacation, as William used to do. Louisa then told her boyfriend Patrick that she couldn't go on vacation with Patrick in Norway because she had to work to take care of William and she had to take William on vacation. Patrick then felt sad and said that Louisa has been supporting Patrick all this time. In this data, Louisa applies the maxim of agreement by agreeing with Patrick's statement. Louisa says that she supports Patrick.

Maximizing agreement and minimizing agreement can prevent participants from misunderstanding in communication.

Another example of the use of agreement maxim is in data no. 18 ("**William : Yes.**" - 01:27:30) Louisa, William and Nathan went on vacation in an attempt to cheer William up. Once there, they have fun by enjoying the beautiful beach for a few days. On their last night there Louisa invited William to enjoy the beach at night. Louisa then said that she didn't want to go home because the vacation was so much fun for her. Louisa then asked William if he felt the same way. In this data, William maximizes agreement in their communication by saying that he also feels happy to come to that place for a vacation.

Sympathy Maxim

The Maxim of Sympathy is a maxim to minimize unsympathy and maximize sympathy between participants. Speakers should show solidarity, either for the happiness or sorrow experienced by others.

The use of sympathy maxim can be found in data no. 6 (**Louisa : "I am sorry."** – 00:37:31). William suddenly falls ill and his nurse Nathan cannot be reached. Louisa then frantically tries to help William. After Nathan came, William slowly started to get better. Louisa then looked after William overnight. Then Louisa asked what really happened to William. William said that he was hit by a motorbike. In this data, Louisa applies the maxim of sympathy by feeling sad for what happened to William.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

After analyzing the data, the writer concluded that there are 20 politeness maxims spoken by the main characters in Me Before You Movie. The six types of politeness maxims from Geoffrey Leech are applied by Louisa and William as the main characters in this movie, namely Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Agreement Maxim and Sympathy Maxim. The writer found that there are 1 Tact Maxim, 3 Generosity Maxim, 3 Modesty Maxim, 6 Approbation Maxim, 5 Agreement Maxim, and 2 Sympathy Maxim used by the main

characters. The most dominant politeness maxim used by Louisa is Generosity Maxim, because Louisa often maximizes the benefits of others and minimizes her own benefits. Meanwhile, the politeness maxim used by William is Approbation Maxim, because he often maximizes praise for others and minimizes praise for himself. Overall, the most dominant maxim used by the main characters in *Me Before You* movie is Approbation Maxim. In addition, The writer hopes that future research can examine more broadly and deeply about language politeness by using more contemporary objects, to find out the development of speech politeness that occurs in the world of cinema. Because movies can also be one of the learning resources that are widely used in this modern era.

REFERENCES

- Ary, D. (2010). *Introduction To Research In Education (8th Edition)*. USA: Cengage Learning
- Levinson, S.C. 1983. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Damopolii, V. L. F., Tuerah, I. J. C., Tulus, A., & Tuilan, J. (2020). *Indexicals Used by UNIMA Community: Pragmatic Study*. International Joint Conference on Science and Technology.
- Fitri, Z. (2022). *A pragmatic analysis of politeness strategies in Mulan movie*. English Education Journal, 13(2), 185-201.
- Leech, G. 1983. *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Longman Group Limited.
- Mahsun. 2005. *Metode Penelitian Bahasa*. Jakarta: PT Raja Grafindo Persada.
- Maniku, J., Maru, M. G., & Liando, N. (2018). *Watching Movie Clips As A Strategy To Improve Students' Listening Skill*. Journal of english Language And Literature Teaching, 1(01), 17-25. <http://doi.org/10.36412/jellt.vli01>.
- Moleong, L. J. 2016. *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif Edisi Revisi*. Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Pangemanan, N. (2019). *Improving Speaking Skills: Development Of Speaking Models In Semester II Students Department Of Indonesian Language And Literature Education FBS UNIMA*. Journal of Educational Method and Technology.
- Yule, George. 1996. *Pragmatics*. Hawaii: Oxford University Press.