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Silence and Politeness in *Nias* Island

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Abstract

The research aims to know the benefits of silence and politeness in *Nias* Island connected to the value of language and communication. Silence is an attitude of someone in language conducted according to the situation of community. Politeness is a behavior conducted by someone in a community. *Nias* Island has cultural values still upheld in the modern era. Crystal (2003: 14) says that the fundamental value of a common language presents unprecedented possibilities for mutual understanding and thus enables people to find fresh opportunities for communication. From this it is seen that silence has become a part or an element of a language, commonly termed silent language. In social context, silence is associated with politeness. The ways of speaking, as a part of cultural integrity, show politeness; or in other words it is said that politeness is reflected through language used. A silent person is considered to be polite. Qualitative research method supported by phenomenological approach is applied in the whole study [6]. The findings show that silence and politeness are a part of regional culture in Nias Island and still found in the communities to uplift peace and environmental tranquility.

Keywords: culture, language, silence and politeness

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1. Introduction

Language signifies the culture of a region and one could know where someone comes from the language used. Culture, according to Ashkanasy (2011: 14) is then understood to be a system of common symbols and meaning. Culture can be thought of as a series of layers of personality formation resulting from the various groups into which a person has been socialized. But in society there is a culture that requires a person to have a Silence and Politeness attitude that has a certain value and meaning. In *Nias* Island of north Sumatera province, people have unique culture in certain events or situations, those are Silence and Politeness and these two points of discussion are related to the use of language and according to Alison (2010: 6) a primary function of language is for humans to convey information to each other or request services of some kind in a variety of situations.

According to Krauss (1980) language is implicated in most of the phenomena that lie at the core of social psychology: attitude change, social perception, personal identity, social interaction, intergroup bias and stereotyping, attribution, and so on. Moreover, for social psychologists, language typically is the medium by which subjects' responses are elicited, and in which they respond: in social psychological research, more often than not, language plays a role in both stimulus and response.

Parikh (2001: 12) states that communication is the main typical use and intended information flowing between agents. Communication typically involves two people. In language and communication there is always a style of language that can affect a person's situation and understanding. Communication implies a relative openness of information flow. In particular, the speaker's intention is revealed in communication. The easiest way to think of communication is through its common meaning in several languages: as transportation, or a means of getting a message from one point to another. In fact, some of the earliest models of communication emphasized this mechanical means of moving a message.

2. Literature Review

As the study goes to the analysis of silence and politeness, theories concerning these two points are presented below.

Silence, according to Bao (2013: 17) plays a role in monitoring language, develop communication strategy. While according to Paulston (2012: 211) politeness is thus a matter of interactional negotiation between participants, with social relationships constructed through the interaction itself.

Then Al-Harahsheh (2012: 247) says that silence is a multifaceted and complex linguistic phenomenon, because its interpretation is ambiguous and relies heavily on the socio-cultural norms of a certain society, and the context of situation. The function of silence not only marks the boundaries of utterances, but also has the stylistic function of emphasizing arguments and ideas. While Politeness is necessary in conversation, because it represents the strength, or the depth of social rapport between speakers. Al-Harahsheh (2012: 254) further says that conversation in general is based on respect between participants. The attitude of silence and politeness in the community gives value and sense of a certain meaning, so that a sense of kinship and respect to others.

3. Research Method

The research was conducted by using qualitative research, supported by Phenomeno-logical approach to find answers the points of discussion. Finlay (2009: 8) says that phenomenological research is phenomenological when it involves both rich description of the life world or lived experience. The participants involved in data validation are 5 males and 5 females, who absolutely know about the culture of Nias, especially the ones tied to silence and politeness.

4. Discussions

Silence and politeness have meanings in society in order to establish a good relation-ship with each other. Prayer, as an example of silent language, is to thank God for the blessings and grace given to us. In Nias Island praying is usually carried out before bed and as soon as getting up and also can be done whenever appropriate to the situation. And mostly people are silent in time of praying.

Apart from being silent as cultural phenomena, Nias people are also demanded to be polite in any situation, especially in social gathering. Politeness is one of the central features of human communication. It is a human phenomenon yet expressed differ-ently in different cultures. Politeness is communicated both verbally and nonverbally. Politeness norms and behaviours are culturally and socially learned, and misunder-standings are therefore intercultural common.

Politeness is a great virtue. A person who behaves politely towards others is not only respected but loved also. People speak well of him/her on all occasions. Politeness towards others means that we are civilized and cultured. A rude person can never be called cultured. He always gives offence to others with his bad manners. But a polite person will always please others by his polite behavior and good manners. Politeness means consideration for feelings of others. A polite man always puts the feelings of others first. He will not say things that will hurt them; he will never speak in a rude way that will offend them. Politeness has been called the oil of the social machine.

Silence and politeness are interrelated. Silence means politeness and reversely politeness should be supported by silence. Both are language phenomena. In matters of politeness, *Nias* people have certain dictions reflecting the importance of politeness as well as silence in some contexts. The data are shown below.

Prayer is the thanksgiving to the Lord for His blessings and grace to His people so that His people get a better life. In Nias language, "*Fangande yaia dae bawangande saohagele khe lowalangi mbei yaita bere meno ibee kheda waauri sile aetu*".

TABLE 1: Contextual Silence and Politeness.

No.	Participants	Situation/ Cause	Meaning in Nias
1	A	Prayer	Mangande
2	A	Marriage	Mangowalu
3	A	Religious	Famati
4	A	Party	Karamia
5	A	Election of customary head	Famili satua mbanua
6	B	Greeting	Yahowu
7	B	Marriage	Mangowalu
8	B	Religious	Famati
9	B	Party	Karamia
10	B	Election of customary head	Famili satua mbanua

Marriage is the blessing of men and women to husband and wife both in religion and government texts. In Nias language," *Mangowalu yaia dae bawofabebe nono matua ba ono alawe enae tobali ira hasambua mongambate ba khe lowalangi ba khe famareta"*.

Religion is a belief in an all-powerful God over the life He has given. In Nias language, "Famati *yaia dae faafarisayo khe lowalangi so mbei yaita"*.

Party is a crowd held on gratitude and thanks for the blessings gained. In Nias language, "Karamia *yaia dae angowuloata niha sato faomuso dede kheda bazino alua sisekhi"*.

Election of customary head is the granting of a person to the agreement of a group of people who have agreed that in the future the head is entrusted to take decisions in the customs of the community. Meaning in Nias language, *"Famili Satua Mbanua yaia dae famee dadaoma khe niha sino mufili sino hasara dede niha sato, bawololohe bawamakhoi angetula hada bakha bambanua"*.

Greeting is an expression to a person in a meeting signifying the cultural characteristics of the island of Nias. In Nias language, "*Yahowu yaia dae fangowai niha sifalukha kheda sitobali hada banono niha"*.

The percentage of Relationship between Silence and Politeness is counted by using formula:

$$N = \frac{X}{Y} \times 100\%$$

In which,

N = the Percentages of Situation/ Cause

X = the Silence Meaning and Politeness Meaning

Y = the Total Relationship Silence and Politeness

TABLE 2: Situation/ Cause, Silence and Politeness.

No	Situation/ Cause	Silence /Meaning	Politeness /Meaning	Relationship Silence and Politeness
1	Prayer	Wishing	Trust	People pray to God to fully trust him.
2	Marriage	Respect	Advice	The bride should appreciate and listen to the advice of their parents
3	Religious	Appreciating	Believing	Religious events provide deep meaning by appreciating and believing
4	Party	-	Thanks God	-
5	Election of Customary Head	Appreciate	Listening	Customary heads when giving speeches to his peer group appreciated by listening
6	Greeting	-	Culture	-

TABLE 3: Result Percentage of the Relationship Between Silence and Politeness in *Nias* Island.

No	Situation/ Cause	Silence (X_1)	Politeness (X_2)	Total Relation	Percentage
1	Prayer	1	1	2	20%
2	Marriage	1	1	2	20%
3	Religious	1	1	2	20%
4	Party	0	1	1	10%
5	Election of Customary Head	1	1	2	20%
6	Greeting	0	1	1	10%
	$\sum N$	$\sum X_1 = 4$	$\sum X_2 = 6$	$\sum Y = 10$	100%

Prayer = $\frac{2}{10} \times 100\% = 200 : 10 = 20\%$; Marriage = $\frac{2}{10} \times 100\% = 200 : 10 = 20\%$; Religious = $\frac{2}{10} \times 100\% = 200 : 10 = 20\%$; Party = $\frac{1}{10} \times 100\% = 100 : 10 = 10\%$; Election of Custom Head = $\frac{2}{10} \times 100\% = 200 : 10 = 20\%$; Greeting = $\frac{1}{10} \times 100\% = 100 : 10 = 10\%$.

Based on the percentage above, the relationship between Silence and Politeness in *Nias* Island: Prayer: 20%, Marriage: 20%, Religious: 20% Party: 10%, Election of Customary Head: 20%, Greeting: 10%. with silence of six situations/ causes: Prayer, Marriage, Religious Event, Party, Election of Customary Head and Greeting.

5. Conclusions

In Nias Island both silence and politeness are interconnected in carrying out cultural customs. Tied to linguistic politeness is a very complicated issue influenced by multiple factors including general face want of participants, the participants' societal positions and social relationships, social norm that the participants share, and discernment or

interpretation of the social rules, as well as immediate context of the interaction, and possible strategies for the interactions to choose under the constrains of the other simultaneously functioning factors.

Silence and Politeness in Nias Island had relationship within a society that unifies the existing cultural diversity. The relationship can be seen from the situation / causes of the occurrence of activities such as weddings that begin with greeting each other related to religion, belief, and the involvement of the customary head that cannot be separated from the attitude of respecting to God with a grateful and pray.

It is necessary that any cultural norms and phenomena be preserved. Silence and politeness are the pillars of the cultural contexts in *Nias* Island and these two things could be found in the daily activities of the local people.

Acknowledgments

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