

POLITENESS OF BREAKING BAD NEWS IN CLASSIC NOVELS AS A CULTURAL REFLECTION

Amanda Puspanditaning Sejati¹, Heri Ridwan², Raffika Rosyda³, Dewi Dolifah⁴

^{1,2,3,4}Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia
amanda.puspanditaning@upi.edu

ABSTRACT

Delivering bad news is a sensitive act that requires careful communication strategies to reduce its negative impact on the recipient. Politeness plays a crucial role in this process, helping to maintain social harmony and mitigate emotional distress. This study examines politeness strategies in delivering bad news as portrayed in Indonesian classic novels. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a pragmatic perspective. The data consist of utterances conveying bad news found in selected Indonesian classic novels, namely Katak Hendak Jadi Lembu (1935), Salah Pilih (1928), and Sengsara Membawa Nikmat (1929). The study applied Leech's politeness theory as the analytical framework to identify the strategies used in these texts. The findings reveal that both adherence to and violations of politeness maxims are present in the novels. These variations are influenced by key contextual factors such as Social Distance (D), Power (P), and Rank of Imposition (R). The way bad news is delivered depends on the relationship between the speaker and the recipient, the social hierarchy, and the severity of the message being conveyed. In some cases, indirect speech, euphemisms, and expressions of sympathy are used to soften the impact, whereas in others, direct and blunt language is employed, often reflecting power dynamics or urgency. The study also finds that politeness strategies in these novels align with cultural values such as respect for elders, hierarchical social structures, and collectivist tendencies in Indonesian society. For example, the form of indirect speech in conveying bad news is found in the Novel Katak Hendak Jadi Lembu in the speech of Raden Natanegara who conveys the bad news that he cannot lend money to Suria. In his speech, he did not directly state that he rejected the request, but began the rejection by stating his ideal condition first. This reflects the tendency of Indonesian society who tend to want to soften their speech which may have a negative impact by conveying the intention indirectly. Another example is in the Novel Salah Pilih, when Asri wanted to tell his mother that his wife's behavior was not as he expected. He used the word 'kebalikannya' as a euphemism to soften the term that refers to a bad situation. This can show a reflection of respect for older people, which is in line with Indonesian culture. This study provides valuable insights into Indonesian linguistic politeness and its cultural significance. By analyzing politeness strategies in classic literature, it sheds light on historical communication norms and how they reflect societal values.

Keywords: *politeness, bad news, classic novels*

ABSTRAK

Menyampaikan kabar buruk merupakan tindakan sensitif yang memerlukan strategi komunikasi yang cermat guna mengurangi dampak negatif terhadap penerima. Kesantunan memegang peranan penting dalam proses ini, karena membantu menjaga keharmonisan sosial dan mengurangi tekanan emosional. Penelitian ini mengkaji strategi kesantunan dalam penyampaian kabar buruk sebagaimana digambarkan dalam novel-novel klasik Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan perspektif pragmatik. Data yang dianalisis berupa tuturan-tuturan yang menyampaikan kabar buruk yang ditemukan dalam novel-novel klasik Indonesia terpilih, yaitu Katak Hendak Jadi Lembu (1935), Salah Pilih (1928), dan Sengsara Membawa Nikmat (1929). Studi ini menggunakan teori kesantunan dari Leech sebagai kerangka analisis untuk mengidentifikasi strategi yang digunakan dalam teks-teks tersebut. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dalam novel-novel tersebut terdapat baik kepatuhan terhadap maksim kesantunan maupun pelanggaran. Variasi ini dipengaruhi oleh faktor-faktor kontekstual utama seperti Jarak Sosial (D), Kekuasaan (P), dan Peringkat Imposisi (R). Cara penyampaian kabar buruk bergantung pada hubungan antara penutur dan penerima, hierarki sosial, serta peringkat imposisi pesan yang disampaikan. Dalam beberapa kasus, digunakan tuturan tidak langsung, eufemisme, dan ungkapan simpati untuk memperhalus dampaknya, sementara dalam kasus lain digunakan bahasa yang langsung dan lugas, yang sering kali mencerminkan dinamika kekuasaan atau situasi yang mendesak. Penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa strategi kesantunan dalam novel-novel tersebut selaras dengan nilai-nilai budaya seperti penghormatan terhadap orang yang lebih tua, struktur sosial yang hierarkis, dan kecenderungan kolektivistik dalam masyarakat Indonesia. Sebagai contoh, bentuk tuturan tidak langsung dalam penyampaian kabar buruk dapat ditemukan dalam novel Katak Hendak Jadi Lembu, dalam ucapan Raden Natanegara yang menyampaikan kabar bahwa ia tidak dapat meminjamkan uang kepada Suria. Dalam tuturnya, ia tidak langsung menyatakan penolakan tersebut, melainkan memulainya dengan menggambarkan kondisi ideal terlebih dahulu. Hal ini mencerminkan kecenderungan masyarakat Indonesia yang cenderung memperhalus tuturan yang berpotensi menimbulkan dampak negatif dengan menyampainya secara tidak langsung. Contoh lain terdapat dalam novel Salah Pilih, ketika Asri ingin menyampaikan kepada ibunya bahwa perilaku istrinya tidak seperti yang ia harapkan. Ia menggunakan kata "kebalikannya" sebagai eufemisme untuk memperhalus penyebutan terhadap situasi yang kurang baik. Ini mencerminkan sikap hormat terhadap orang tua, yang sejalan dengan budaya

Indonesia. Studi ini memberikan wawasan berharga mengenai kesantunan berbahasa dalam konteks Indonesia dan signifikansi budayanya. Dengan menganalisis strategi kesantunan dalam sastra klasik, penelitian ini mengungkap norma-norma komunikasi masa lalu dan bagaimana hal tersebut mencerminkan nilai-nilai sosial masyarakat.

Kata kunci: kesantunan berbahasa, berita buruk, novel klasik

Introduction

Language plays a crucial role as a medium for reinforcing social harmony, which, when achieved, can bring significant benefits to both individuals and society as a whole (Esther, 2023). The concept of social harmony refers to a condition in which individuals behave with politeness, virtue, and respect toward social hierarchies and interpersonal relationships (Shek, Yu, & Fu, 2013). Several positive outcomes may arise from the realization of social harmony in a community, including the creation of a sense of safety and comfort (Haymovitz, Houseal-Allport, Lee, & Svistova, 2018), the enhancement of interpersonal relationship quality (Ip, 2014), the reduction of conflicts and disputes (Wong, 2020), and the improvement of individuals' mental and emotional well-being (Taormina, 2014). Overall, the establishment of social harmony provides a strong foundation for societal advancement and well-being across various aspects of life. The use of language that has the potential to minimize conflict and reinforce social harmony is reflected through politeness. In the field of linguistics, politeness refers to communicative behavior that aligns with prevailing social and cultural norms, aiming to demonstrate respect, courtesy, and appreciation toward the interlocutor (Xafizovna, 2021). According to Brown and Levinson, the choice of politeness strategies is influenced by factors such as social distance (D), relative power (P), and the ranking of impositions (R) (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010).

One of the communicative domains in which politeness strategies are frequently employed is the delivery of bad news, as this context is inherently sensitive and may have a negative impact on the recipient (Studer, Danuser, & Gomez, 2017), potentially triggering emotions such as anger, stress, depression, regret, and dissatisfaction (Sweeny & Falkenstein, 2015). To mitigate these adverse effects, it is essential to convey empathy both verbally and nonverbally when delivering bad news (Leloirain, Cortot, Christophe, Pinçon, & Gidron, 2018). In this context, empathy refers to the ability to understand and share the thoughts and feelings of others (Zhou, Aiello, Scepanovic, Quercia, & Konrath, 2021), while simultaneously demonstrating respect, courtesy, familiarity, and politeness (Pounds, 2010). Verbal empathy may be expressed through language that adheres to the principles of politeness (Fukushima & Sifianou, 2017), whereas nonverbal empathy can be conveyed through friendly gestures, direct eye contact, smiling, and physical touch (Lorié, Reinero, Phillips, Zhang, & Riess, 2017).

Politeness is a universal linguistics phenomenon practiced across various cultures and societies worldwide, both in spoken and written communication (Sifianou & Blitvich, 2017). For example, in spoken interactions, requests are often phrased as questions to sound more polite (Tawalbeh & Al-Oqaily, 2012). Additionally, in written forms such as job rejection letters, statements expressing sympathy may be included as a form of politeness (Jansen & Janssen, 2010). Furthermore, manifestations of politeness can also be found in literary works, such as novels (Abbas, 2013).

The study of politeness has become an engaging topic for several reasons. It helps in understanding the differences in politeness norms across cultures, which can reduce misunderstandings and promote more effective communication (Mills & Kádár, 2011). It can also enhance the quality of interpersonal relationships in both personal and professional contexts (Gonzales, 2013), and serve as a foundation for character development in educational settings (Prayitno, et al., 2021). Consequently, numerous studies have explored politeness practices in both spoken and written communication. In spoken communication, politeness can be observed in various contexts such as interviews with political figures (Putri, 2019), negotiations in market transactions (Aryani, 2020), everyday conversations (Ryabova, 2015), classroom learning activities (Mahmud, 2019), and children's conversations within the Japanese cultural context (Nakamura, 2014). Moreover, research on politeness in written communication includes interactions on social media platforms (Li, Hickman, Tay, Ungar, & Guntuku, 2020; Theodoropoulou, 2015), academic communication via email (Chejnová, 2014), requests made through electronic correspondence (Savić, 2018), formal written communication reflecting power hegemony (Mulyono, Amalia, & Suryoputro, 2019) as well as interactions depicted in literary works such as novels (Alviah, 2014; Solihin, Junita, & Sukawati, 2019).

Based on previous studies on politeness, it can be concluded that manifestations of politeness have been confirmed in both spoken and written communication. However, specific research that explores politeness in the breaking bad news within novels representing Indonesian culture remains limited. Moreover, studies dedicated to examining the use of politeness in the social contexts of earlier eras, as

reflected in classic novels, have not been widely conducted. Therefore, the findings of this study are expected to provide a deeper understanding of the application and interpretation of politeness in literature, enrich linguistic and literary theory, support the development of relevant language learning materials, and offer cultural and social insights into the values of Indonesian society.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to examine the use of linguistic politeness in the delivery of bad news in classic Indonesian novels. A qualitative approach was chosen to understand how politeness functions within the context of sensitive communication in literary works. The data consisted of utterances related to bad news found in selected novels. These novels were selected based on specific criteria: they contained contexts that depict the delivery of bad news, either through dialogue or narration; they reflected Indonesian cultural values and social norms to capture the use of politeness; they were widely recognized in Indonesian literature to ensure their relevance to cultural and linguistic studies; and they were published before 1990, as this period marks the transition from the New Order regime to the Reform Era in Indonesia. The selected novels include *Katak Hendak Jadi Lembu* (1935), *Salah Pilih* (1928), and *Sengsara Membawa Nikmat* (1929).

Data collection encompasses observation, note-taking, and document analysis. Observation involves reading and marking the novels to identify relevant utterances. Note-taking includes recording significant details, while document analysis entails reviewing secondary sources to support the analysis. The analytical process begins with the selection of classic Indonesian novels as the primary data sources, followed by thorough reading to identify contexts in which bad news is delivered. Relevant utterances are marked and coded, taking into account factors such as context, participants, social distance (D), relative power (P), and ranking of imposition (R). These factors are used as guidelines to determine the relationships between speakers, which are classified into the following eight types [1] Dd:Ps:Rr (close social distance : equal power level : low degree of imposition); [2] Dj:Ps:Rr (distant social distance : equal power level : low degree of imposition); [3] Dd:Pb:Rr (close social distance : unequal power level : low degree of imposition); [4] Dd:Pb:Rt (close social distance : unequal power level : high degree of imposition); [5] Dj:Pb:Rr (distant social distance : unequal power level : low degree of imposition); [6] Dj:Pb:Rt (distant social distance : unequal power level : high degree of imposition); [7] Dd:Ps:Rt (close social distance : equal power level : high degree of imposition); dan [8] Dj:Ps:Rt (distant social distance : equal power level : high degree of imposition).

The analysis is grounded in Leech's principles of linguistic politeness to explore how politeness strategies are employed in the delivery of bad news. The data analysis refers to Leech's politeness theory, which categorizes linguistic politeness practices into six maxims: the maxim of tact, the maxim of generosity, the maxim of approbation, the maxim of modesty, the maxim of agreement, and the maxim of sympathy. In addition, a literature review on linguistic politeness within Indonesian culture is expected to enrich the analysis and interpretation of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Violation of Politeness

a. Violation of the Tact Maxim

Data 1.2 is found in the novel *Katak Hendak Jadi Lembu*. The context of the utterance is a domestic setting, taking place at home, and involves two participants (husband and wife). In this situation, the wife (Zubaidah) informs her husband (Suria) that a debt collector has come, while at the same time, they also need to pay their children's school fees. The relationship between speakers based on the DPR factor is the relationship [3] Dd:Pb:Rr (close social distance : unequal power level : low degree of imposition). In terms of social distance, the relationship between the interlocutors is close, as they are husband and wife. Regarding power dynamics, the relationship is unequal, as the husband holds greater authority, particularly in matters concerning family economics and decision-making. The level of imposition is low, as the message requires attention but still falls within the realm of familial responsibility. Furthermore, Suria perceives that the issue could potentially be resolved with the help of his parents-in-law (the wife's parents), thereby reducing the immediate burden on himself. This utterance is presented in Data 1.2 below.

- Zubaidah : *Lebih baik Akang sendiri berhadapan dengan tukang rekening.*
- Suria : Apa? Aku akan melayani mereka itu? Terima kasih. Bukantah segala gajiku sudah kuserahkan kepadamu?
- Zubaidah : Tetapi tak cukup buat pembayar utang Akang sendiri. Seada-adanya sudah saya bayarkan kepada yang perlu-perlu benar. Banyak lagi yang belum diangsur sedikit jua. Sebentar lagi mereka itu datang kemari.
- Suria : Janjikan saja bulan depan.
- Zubaidah : Bulan depan rekening sudah bertumpuk-tumpuk pula. ... Dan, uang sekolah anak-anak sudah dua bulan belum terbayar.
- Suria : Tunggu saja kiriman dari Tasik! Itu bukan tang ... Selesaikan saja olehmu.

A violation of the tact maxim is evident in Zubaidah's utterance: "*Lebih baik Akang sendiri berhadapan dengan tukang rekening (It would be better if you yourself dealt with the bill collector).*" This utterance conveys bad news that has the potential to elicit a negative emotional response, such as anxiety, from the hearer. The utterance can be considered a violation of the tact maxim because it does not attempt to benefit the hearer. This breach of politeness may be attributed to the social closeness between the interlocutors, namely the husband and wife relationship. Although Zubaidah can be said to have violated politeness principles, she still incorporates a politeness marker through the use of the term *Akang*. In Sundanese cultural context, *Akang* is used to refer to a male who is respected, typically due to being older. Furthermore, politeness in Sundanese culture is also reflected in the way the bad news is delivered—indirectly—by suggesting that her husband handle the debt collector, rather than stating the issue bluntly. The violation of the tact maxim in delivering bad news in Data 1.2 can be attributed to the factor of close social distance between the speakers, causing the bearer of bad news to potentially produce utterances that do not take the addressee's face into consideration. When the speaker feels socially close to the interlocutor, there is a tendency to communicate more informally and directly, which may lead the speaker to neglect the sensitivity required in conveying bad news (Anjarani, 2023).

b. Violation of the Approbation Maxim

Data 1.4 is found in the novel *Katak Hendak Jadi Lembu*. The context of the utterance is a domestic setting, taking place at home, involving two participants (a mother and her son). In this situation, the mother (Zubaidah) informs her son (Abdulhalim) that she intends to leave his house and return to her parents' home in Tasik. According to the DPR (Distance, Power, and Ranking of imposition) framework, the relationship between speakers based on the DPR factor is the relationship [4] Dd:Pb:Rt (close social distance : unequal power level : high degree of imposition). Social distance between the interlocutors is close, as the relationship between mother and child typically involves emotional intimacy. The power relationship is asymmetrical, with the mother holding higher authority within the family hierarchy; however, this authority is diminished in economic terms, as she is living dependently in her son's household. The ranking of imposition is high, as the utterance carries emotional weight and has the potential to trigger feelings of conflict or guilt. This utterance can be observed in Data 1.4 below.

- Abdulhalim : Apa, Ibu?
- Zubaidah : Aku hendak berunding dengan engkau.
- Abdulhalim : Berunding - tak baik di sini, lebih baik kita masuk ke kamar tulis, Ibu.
- Zubaidah : *Malang engkau berorang tua, Lim. Hidup menyempit dan menyusahkan engkau saja.*
- Abdulhalim : Ibu, apa yang Ibu sebut itu? Tak ada yang menyempit dan menyusah di sini.
- Zubaidah : Lebih baik aku kau lepas ke Tasik. Dari dahulu aku minta kepadamu, tak engkau biarkan. Tapi sekarang, biar aku pulang pada nenekmu. Tak terlihat, tak terpancang olehku hal keadaanmu seperti sekarang ini.
- Abdulhalim : Ibu, wahai ...

A violation of the approbation maxim is evident in Zubaidah's utterance: "*Malang engkau berorang tua, Lim. Hidup menyempit dan menyusahkan engkau saja (You are unfortunate to have such a parent, Lim. My presence only brings hardship and burden to your life).*" This utterance involves the delivery of bad news, which may evoke negative emotional responses, such as sadness and guilt, in the hearer. The utterance can be considered a violation of the approbation maxim as it does not serve to praise or uplift the hearer. This breach may be attributed to the social closeness between the interlocutors, in this case a mother and her son. Although Zubaidah may be seen as violating politeness norms, she still employs a politeness strategy through her utterance "*Lebih baik aku kau lepas ke Tasik (It is better if you let me return to Tasik)*" as a mitigated alternative to issuing a direct command. Additionally, Zubaidah seems to blame herself, reflecting the Sundanese cultural value of *tepa salira* (empathy or self-awareness). Furthermore, the bad news is delivered indirectly, which is also a marker of politeness in Sundanese culture. The violation of the maxim of approbation in Data 1.4 may be attributed to the social closeness between the speaker and the hearer, which in this context refers to the relationship between a mother and her child. Such a close social relationship allows the speaker to deliver bad news without taking into account the face of either herself or the hearer (Vergins, 2017).

2. Fulfillment of Politeness

a. Fulfillment of the Modesty Maxim

The fulfillment of the modesty maxim can be observed in Data 1.3 from the novel *Katak Hendak Jadi Lembu*. The context of the speech event takes place at home, involving two participants: Suria (a former subordinate) and Raden Natanegara (a former superior). In this situation, Suria informs Raden Natanegara that he is unable to repay his debt. According to the DPR (Distance, Power, and Ranking of imposition) framework, the relationship between interlocutors is [5] Dj:Pb:Rr (distant social distance : unequal power level : low degree of imposition). The degree of distance between the interlocutors is not close, as their relationship is limited to that of a former superior and subordinate. The direction of power is unequal, with Raden Natanegara holding a higher status as a respected former superior. The level of imposition is low, as Suria perceives that Raden Natanegara is financially secure and thus would not be heavily burdened by the delayed repayment. This utterance is shown in Data 1.3 below.

Suria : Sesungguhnya kedatangan saya kemari pada malam ini -- maaf, saya telah mengganggu kesenangan Juragan -- berhubung dengan ... untung anak itu. Ketika ia akan mulai berumah tangga di kota besar itu, amat banyak ia mempergunakan uang. Segala dibeli: meja, kursi, lemari, dan lain-lain. Dari mana didapatnya uang? Tentu dari kantong ayahnya juga. Sekalian isi simpanan saya sudah saya keluarkan, saya kirimkan kepadanya. Oleh karena hendak menyenangkan hati anak, saya tak ingat lagi akan keperluan diri sendiri, ya, lebih baik saya katakan keperluan rumah tangga anak-beranak di sini. *Saya lupa selupa-lupanya bahwa saya ada berutang lelang.*

Raden Natanegara : Oh. saya maklum, teruskan.

Suria : Mujur Juragan lekas maklum akan kesempitan saya sekarang ini. Sebab itu tak guna saja berpanjang kalam lagi tentang maksud kedatangan saya ini. Sudah Juragan hindarkan batu besar yang menghimpit dada saya, yang menyesak napas saya akan menghamparkan perasaan. Luka di badan dapat ditutup-tutup dengan baju, tetapi luka di kening bagaimana akan menyembunyikannya ? juragan lepaskanlah saya dari sesak, pinjamilah saya uang seratus lima puluh rupiah. ... Takkan lama Juragan, dan segala syarat syaratnya akan saya turuti dan penuhi. Tolong benarlah saya sekali ini -- jangan sampai saya mendapat malu besar.

The fulfillment of the modesty maxim is evident in Suria's utterance "*Saya lupa selupa-lupanya bahwa saya ada berutang lelang (I completely forgot that I had a debt from the auction).*" This utterance constitutes the delivery of bad news, which has the potential to provoke negative emotions such as disappointment in the hearer. The utterance can be considered to fulfill the modesty maxim because Suria deliberately downplays himself and avoids self-praise. This fulfillment is likely influenced by the power asymmetry between the speakers—Raden Natanegara, as both a former superior and the creditor, holds greater

authority in this interaction. Additionally, elements of Sundanese cultural politeness are reflected in Suria's delivery of the bad news. These include the use of the term *juragan* to respectfully address the hearer, the act of apologizing before stating his intention, and the indirect manner in which the message is conveyed. The fulfillment of the modesty maxim in Data 1.3 may be attributed to the presence of significant social distance between the speaker and the hearer. As a result, the speaker attempts to maintain social harmony and avoid face-threatening acts both to the hearer and to themselves by adopting a self-deprecating stance. In communicative situations where the speaker and hearer do not share social and emotional closeness or are engaged in a formal relationship, the speaker tends to be more cautious in delivering information, especially when the information is negative or breaking bad news (Widya, 2018).

The fulfillment of the modesty maxim can also be observed in Data 2.4 from the novel *Salah Pilih*. The context of the speech event takes place in a domestic setting, involving two participants: Hasan Basri and a messenger assigned to deliver a marriage proposal. The situation centers on Hasan Basri's act of conveying his decision to reject the proposal brought by the messenger. Based on the DPR (Distance, Power, and Ranking of imposition) framework, the relationship between the interlocutors is categorized as [8] Dj:Ps:Rt (distant social distance : equal power level : high degree of imposition). The social distance between the participants is considered distant, as their relationship is limited to casual acquaintanceship. The power dynamic is equal, as both individuals are members of the same community, while the degree of imposition is high, given that the matter involves the dignity and honor of the proposer's family. This speech act is illustrated in Data 2.4 below.

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| Utusan | : Bagaimana, Sutan, permintaan saya tempoh hari! Sudah dapatkah saya menerima kata putus sekarang? |
| Hasan Basri | : <i>Sudah saya katakan kepada Engku, bahwa saya miskin ... Miskin dengan uang, miskin dengan kaum keluarga, dan miskin betul dengan adat istiadat yang biasa dipakai orang dalam negeri kita ini. Ya, saya sebatang kara di atas dunia ini.</i> Bagaimana saya akan dapat bergaul dengan orang kaya seperti saudagar, yang mengutus Engku itu? Susah sekali |
| Utusan | : Saya pikir, pasangan demikianlah yang sebaik-baiknya. Andaikata benar seperti kata Sutan itu: miskin segala-galanya tetapi saya percaya dan yakin akan kebalikannya, — baiklah kita melekap kepada orang kaya Sekalipun kita takkan jadi kaya pula, sekurang- kurangnya kena kesebarannya. Kita senang, sebab kita tak perlu mengeluarkan apa-apa. Asal Sutan mau kawin dengan anak saudagar kaya itu, Sutan akan tinggal naik saja! Segala keperluan rumah tangga sudah tersedia belaka! Apalagi yang kita kehendaki hidup di atas dunia ini, kalau tidak kesenangan? |
| Hasan Basri | : Jadi, saya tak usah berbelanja, tak usah memikirkan rumah tangga saya? |
| Utusan | : Tidak perlu. |
| Hasan Basri | : Kalau begitu, enak betul jadi laki-laki, jadi suami. Tak usah menghiraukan kewajiban sebagai tumpangan, junjungan. Apa sebab maka timbul keadaan serupa itu? |

The fulfillment of the modesty maxim can be observed in Hasan Basri's utterance: "*Sudah saya katakan kepada Engku, bahwa saya miskin ... Miskin dengan uang, miskin dengan kaum keluarga, dan miskin betul dengan adat istiadat yang biasa dipakai orang dalam negeri kita ini (I have already told you, Engku, that I am poor... Poor in money, poor in family ties, and truly poor in the customs commonly upheld in our land)*". This utterance occurs in the context of breaking bad news, namely the rejection of a marriage proposal. The context is categorized as bad news because it carries the potential to cause disappointment for the hearer. The utterance can be considered as fulfilling the modesty maxim because Hasan Basri attempts to minimize self-praise and instead emphasizes self-deprecation. This fulfillment may be attributed to the high degree of imposition inherent in the situation. Additionally, the speaker seeks to minimize the negative impact of the utterance, which has the potential to threaten the hearer's face. In high-imposition contexts, where the content of the utterance concerns highly significant, sensitive matters that may hurt the hearer's feelings, the speaker tends to employ linguistic strategies that humble themselves in order to maintain social harmony and reduce the potential for conflict (O'Hagan, 2018).

The fulfillment of the modesty maxim can also be observed in Data 3.2 from the novel *Sengsara Membawa Nikmat*. The context of the speech event takes place at home, involving two participants: Midun and Ayah Halimah. In this situation, Midun is requesting permission from Ayah Halimah to go to Batavia in search of work. Based on the DPR (Distance, Power, and Ranking of Imposition) framework, the relationship between the speaker and the hearer is classified as [6] Dj:Pb:Rt (distant social distance : unequal power level : high degree of imposition). The social distance is considered distant, as the two participants are not yet bound by any family relationship. The power dynamic is unequal, as Midun is staying as a guest in Ayah Halimah's house. The degree of imposition is high, as the request involves the speaker's personal dignity and future. This speech act is illustrated in Data 3.2 below.

- Midun : Bapak! Yang saya maksud dari Padang akan mengantarkan Halimah kemari, sudah sampai dan selamat tidak kurang suatu apa. *Sudah hampir sebulan saya di sini, hilir mudik tidak keruan saja*. Sekarang biarlah saya mencari untung nasib saya barang ke mana. Akan begini saja sepanjang hari, tentu tidak boleh jadi. Tidak saja janggal pada pemandangan orang keadaan saya ini, tetapi bersalahan pula. Saya berjalan tidak jauh, melainkan di tanah Jawa ini juga. Akan pulang sekali-kali tidak, karena alangan yang sudah saya ceritakan kepada Bapak. Sebab itu, saya harap Bapak izinkanlah saya pergi dari sini. Mudah-mudahan kelak, jika ada hayat dikandung badan, kita bertemu pula.
- Ayah Halimah : Bagi Bapak, kalau boleh, Anak tinggal di sini saja. Anak, Bapak pandang tidak sebagai orang lain lagi, melainkan sudah sama dengan Halimah. Ada sama kita makan, tidak sama ditahan. Lagi pula Halimah tentu akan canggung Anak tinggalkan, sebab Anak sudah disangkanya ... tidak sebagai orang lain lagi.
- Midun : Benar kata Bapak itu, tetapi akan begini sajakah selamanya? Syukur kalau Bapak masih mencari, tetapi jika Bapak tidak kuat lagi, bagaimana? Sebab itu, saya berharap benar-benar, Bapak izinkan juga saya pergi hendaknya. Tentang Halimah, saya rasa tentu dia akan mengizinkan, sebab saya berjalan ini dengan maksud baik, lagi tidak jauh. Besok seboleh-bolehnya dengan kereta api pagi saya berangkat ke Betawi.

The fulfillment of the modesty maxim can be observed in Midun's utterance "*Sudah hampir sebulan saya di sini, hilir mudik tidak keruan saja (I've been here for almost a month now, just aimlessly coming and going)*". This utterance occurs in the context of breaking bad news, namely Midun's request for permission to leave Ayah Halimah's house to seek employment in Batavia. The context is categorized as bad news because it has the potential to cause sadness or disappointment for the hearer and their family. This utterance fulfills the modesty maxim because Midun consciously lowers himself by portraying his presence as unproductive. In pragmatic terms, this indicates that Midun is intentionally minimizing the positive image of himself (minimizing praise) and instead emphasizing negative aspects (maximizing self-criticism), with the aim of placing himself in a socially and emotionally lower position. This strategy is used to reduce the threat to the hearer's face, particularly in situations involving a high degree of imposition. Moreover, given the relatively distant and hierarchical nature of the relationship, Midun being a guest or someone temporarily staying in Ayah Halimah's home. The fulfillment of the modesty maxim becomes essential for maintaining social harmony and avoiding potential tension or misunderstanding (Cai, 2012). Therefore, it can be concluded that the fulfillment of the modesty maxim in Midun's utterance is influenced by the high degree of imposition, as well as the unequal power dynamics within the speaker-hearer relationship.

b. Fulfillment of the Approbation Maxim

The fulfillment of the approbation maxim is evident in Data 2.2 from the novel *Salah Pilih*. The context of the speech event takes place in a domestic setting, involving two participants: Asnah (a young woman) and Hasan Basri (a friend of Asnah's older brother). In this situation, Asnah conveys to Hasan Basri that she cannot accept his marriage proposal. According to the DPR (Distance, Power, and Ranking of imposition) framework, the relation between interlocutors is [8] Dj:Ps:Rt (distant social distance : equal power level : high degree of imposition). The degree of social distance between the interlocutors is not close, as their relationship is limited to that of acquaintances. The power relationship is symmetrical, as Asnah perceives

Hasan Basri as a friend unaffected by hierarchical authority. However, the ranking of imposition is high due to the emotionally sensitive nature of the utterance, which carries the risk of hurting the man's dignity. This utterance is presented in Data 2.2 below.

- Asnah : Kanda Hasan, hati Adinda sangat sedih dan rawan. *Permintaan Kanda itu menjadi tanda kepada Adinda, bagaimana Kakanda menghargai dan memuliakan diri Adinda ini*, dan niscaya Adinda akan berbahagia sekali, jika permintaan Kanda itu dapat Adinda perkenankan. Akan tetapi apa boleh buat, Kanda — permintaan itu mesti Adinda jawab dengan 'tidak'. Belum pernah Adinda menyangkakan Kanda ada menaruh perasaan kepada Adinda, lain daripada perasaan persahabatan dan persaudaraan. Adinda sendiri pun hanya selalu memandang Kanda seperti seorang sahabat saja dan kawan Kanda Asri, lain tidak. Adinda tidak dapat jadi istri Kanda, dan bukan buatan sedih dan sayu hati Adinda, sebab terpaksa dan mesti berkata sekasar itu.
- Hasan Basri : Adinda tolak demikian sajakah permintaan saya itu, Asnah? Dengan tidak beperjanjian sedikit juga? Tidak bolehkah saya berharap lagi?
- Asnah : Tidak, Kanda, niscaya pekerti Adinda akan jahat dan bengis sekali, jika Adinda bangkitkan dalam hati Kanda suatu pengharapan, yang takkan dapat Adinda penuhi. Kanda sangat Adinda muliakan, sebab itu Adinda tak sampai hati akan mengiakan permintaan Kanda, jika "ia" itu cuma di mulut saja.

The fulfillment of the approbation maxim is evident in Asnah's utterance: "*Permintaan Kanda itu menjadi tanda kepada Adinda, bagaimana Kakanda menghargai dan memuliakan diri Adinda ini* (Your request, dear brother, is a sign to me of how much you honor and respect me)." This statement appears at the beginning of her speech delivering bad news—namely, the rejection of a marriage proposal. Such rejection may be classified as delivering bad news, as it carries the potential to evoke negative emotions, such as disappointment. Asnah's utterance can be seen as adhering to the approbation maxim, as it attempts to offer praise to the interlocutor in order to mitigate the threat to their self-esteem caused by the rejection. The fulfillment of this maxim may be attributed to the high level of imposition involved, which carries significant emotional risk (Sui, 2024). Furthermore, the realization of politeness in the Minangkabau cultural context is reflected in Asnah's strategy of not expressing the rejection directly but rather prefacing it with a compliment (Alpetoti & Fakhri, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study aims to describe the use of politeness strategies in breaking bad news in Indonesian classic novels. The research analyzes how utterances in the novels reflect politeness strategies in sensitive communicative situations, such as the delivery of bad news. The findings indicate that in the context of breaking bad news, two forms of politeness strategies emerge i.e. violations and fulfillments of maxims. Violations are found in the tact maxim and the approbation maxim, while fulfillments appear in the approbation maxim and the modesty maxim. Furthermore, violations of the politeness principle in delivering bad news are generally influenced by the social closeness between the speaker and the hearer, for instance, in familial relationships such as between mother and child, or husband and wife. This closeness allows the speaker to speak more directly and emotionally. On the other hand, the fulfillment of politeness strategies, such as the modesty maxim, tends to occur in socially distant relationships and situations with a high degree of imposition, for example, when the speaker holds a lower social position or when the content of the utterance touches on sensitive matters such as personal dignity or family honor.

This study has several limitations, namely that the data used are derived from classic novels, which do not fully reflect the current linguistic practices in contemporary society. Additionally, the analysis of social context cannot be conducted comprehensively due to the limited information available in literary texts, resulting in an underexplored understanding of cultural background, character relationships, and the surrounding social values. Future researchers are advised to use more contextual and up-to-date data, combine pragmatic approaches with cultural or sociological analysis, and examine interactional structures more thoroughly in order to gain a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of politeness strategies in communication.

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Curriculum Vitae

Complete Name	Institution	Education	Research Interests
Amanda Puspaditaning Sejati	Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia	Magister of Linguistics	Pragmatics, Sociolinguistics, SFL
Heri Ridwan		Magister of Nursing	Nursing Management
Rafika Rosyda		Magister of Nursing	Medical Surgical Nursing
Dewi Dolifah		Magister of Nursing	Nursing Community