



Introducing speech politeness in the Islamic da'wah

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Abstract

This paper is aimed at describing the importance of speech politeness in the Islamic da'wah. It is known that polite language uttered by a da'i (the one who does the da'wah) would harmonize people and establish harmony amongst religious communities. The inevitability of pluralism in Indonesia and Qur'anic argument which states that Islam is a mercy for all the creatures promote the need to build a more polite, friendly and peaceful strategy of da'wah. Politeness strategy applied in a da'wah speech may lead to building a character of a wise, polite and smart nation and may help preserve Indonesia's diversity by keeping social and cultural conflict at bay.

Keywords: speech, maxim, politeness, da'wah, diversity

1. Introduction

Language plays an imperative role in the practice of Islamic da'wah (Sjuhada, 1965: 91; Suhandang, 2013: 182) ^[15, 17]. Delivering the da'wah in a polite and proper language and in accordance with the context is a requirement and a major factor for a successful da'wah presentation (Ghazali, 1997: 5; Tajiri, 2014: 206) ^[6, 18]. Speech politeness has always been associated with the use of speech acts. This notion is supported by Siregar (2011:97) ^[14] where he claims that in using a speech act, in addition to expressing intention and desire, a speaker naturally aims to create and maintain certain social relationships between the speaker's self and his interlocutor. This statement implies that politeness in communication can be represented through the use of speech acts (Cutting, 2002: 20, 119; Thomas, 1995: 124; Baryadi, 2012: 31; Leech, 2014: 11) ^[9, 5, 21, 2].

There are several reasons why da'wah should be delivered in a polite manner. Firstly, speech politeness in da'wah has been regulated in the Qur'an in Surat An-Nahlu (bee) verse 125. In the Qur'an, there is an explanation of how should a Muslim speak. In brief, the six principles of speech are elaborated in the Qur'an (Saefullah, 2007: 68; Aliyudin & Enjang, 2009:147) ^[12]. These principles include (1) *qaulansadidan* (QS An-Nisa: 9; Al-Ahzab: 70) that is speaking truthfully and honestly ; (2), *qaulanbalighan* (Q.S An-Nisa: 63), that is speaking effectively; (3), *qaulanma'rufan* (QS An-Nisa: 5, 8, Al-Baqarah: 235, Al-Ahzab: 32) that is speaking kind words, which are pleasing to the soul and instilling sense of peace in the heart; (4), *qaulankariman* (Q.S Al-Isra ': 23) that is speaking noble words that encourages and brings joy; (5), *qaulanlayyinan* (Q.S Thaha: 44) that is speaking gentle words; and (6), *qaulanmaysuran* (Q.S Al-Isra ': 28), that is speaking pleasant, appropriate and understandable words.

The second reason is based on a reality and a social phenomenon that, at times, when it comes to delivering

da'wah, a da'i uses words with the intention of prohibiting, commanding, counseling, praising, thanking, praying, affirming, warning, asking questions, explaining, and even threatening. Based on this phenomenon, a da'i should mind his language in delivering da'wah. The use of inappropriate, impolite "harsh" language inconsistent with the context will negatively impact the image of Islam and the da'i himself (Tajiri, 2015:1) ^[19].

The third reason is the inevitability of cultural pluralism in Indonesia and the Qur'anic argument which states that Islam is a mercy for all the creatures (*rahmatanlil 'alamin*) promote the need to build a friendlier and more peaceful strategy of da'wah (Shihab 1998: 34) ^[13]. A more polite and peaceful da'wah delivery may form an integrative reflection amongst the heart, thoughts, deeds and appreciation of a culture that is evolving.

The fourth reason is that the use of polite language has not received much attention, particularly, in Islamic da'wah. This is due to the fact that language user is not aware of the fact that there is a politeness structure in a language structure (Pranowo, 2009: 4) ^[11]. Pranowo further adds that a polite language structure is a language structure prepared by speakers for the purpose of not offending interlocutor.

Based on these reasons, this paper seeks to apply Leech's politeness model (2014) ^[9] in the practice of Islamic da'wah. This is done under assumption that the phenomenon of language use in Islamic da'wah may be referred to as the use of different kinds of speech act that have specific aims, functions and objectives, and are designed to produce some effect, impact, or results on the listeners (see, inter alia, Tarigan, 1990: 145; Griffiths, 2006: 148; Brasdefer, 2014: 323) ^[20, 7, 3].

2. Methodology

Based on its paradigm, this research is qualitative in nature (see, Moleong, 2010: 14; Bungin, 2007: 43) ^[10, 4]. The main

data of this research is da'i speech in the forms of words, phrases and sentences. The data were collected by using observation method (Sudaryanto, 2015: 202) ^[16], wherein the researcher observed da'i language during his preaching at Masjid Al-Jihad Medan and Masjid Ar-rahman Deli Tua in October 2016. Furthermore, the data were analyzed by using identity method and distributional method (Sudaryanto, 2015:15-18) ^[16].

3. Leech's Politeness Model (2014)

Leech (2014:89) ^[9] puts forward that in order to communicate in harmony or maintain communicative concord, speakers must pay attention to and consider the appropriateness between social goals (maintaining harmony) and the purpose of illocution. In other words, to achieve communicative harmony, the purpose of illocutionary acts must be in accordance with social objectives.

Based on that, Leech points out that in order to deal with it, for example, the purpose of illocutionary acts of asking questions and addressing criticism against social goals, speakers may opt for negative politeness strategy. The speaker can apply politeness strategy by reducing or by weakening negative expression onto the speaker. According to Leech, Negative Politeness strategy includes indirectness, hedging and understatement. Meanwhile, to add up to the politeness image, speakers can use positive politeness strategy, that is by adding or strengthening expressions that spread positive values onto the speakers.

Based on these two politeness strategies, he developed a strategy in which he calls a General Strategy of Politeness (GSP). This model of politeness strategy consists of ten maxims of politeness. By utilizing General Strategy of Politeness, speakers can avoid disharmony with interlocutors. These maxims include:

Table 1: Maxims of the general strategy of politeness (Leech, 2014:91) ^[9]

Maxim (expressed by imperative modus)	Relation of pairs between maxims	Maxim Name	Types of speech acts
(M1) give a high value to O's wants	Generosity, Tact	Generosity	Commissive
(M2) give a low value to S's wants		Tact	Directive
(M3) give a high value to O's qualities	Approbation, Modesty	Approbation	Complimenting
(M4) give a low value to S's qualities		Modesty	Self-Devaluation
(M5) give a high value to S's obligation to O	Obligation	Obligation (of S to O)	Apologizing Thanking
(M6) give a low value to O's obligation to S		Obligation (of O to S)	Responses to thanks and apologies
(M7) give a high value to O's opinions	Opinion	Agreement	Agreeing Disagreeing
(M8) give a low value to S's opinions		<i>Opinion reticence</i>	Expressing opinion
(M9) give a high value to O's feelings	Feeling	Sympathy	Congratulating Commiserating
(M10) give a low value to S's feelings		<i>Feeling reticence</i>	Suppressing feelings

4. Applying Leech models (2014) ^[9]

The development of speech acts and the use of speech strategies with appropriate context may help a da'i in delivering da'wah in a polite manner. Consider the following excerpt.

(1) **Jama'ah:** [...] I think, that's all my question, Ustadz, thank you.

(2) **Dai:** Anytime, thank you. (DAJ1)

The above speech is an expressive speech act of "expressing a thank you" whose function is consistently in line with social goals (see Leech, 1983: 162) ^[8]. For that, the expression is considered as a polite speech. However, the expression can still be expanded for it to sound way courteous, such as:

- (2a) Thank you very much.
- (2b) Thanks for the question.
- (2c) Thank you for asking.
- (2d) Thank you, very good question.
- (2e) Masya Allah, what an extraordinary question, thank you.

Such an expansion strategy is called as a Positive Politeness strategy by Leech (2014:11) ^[9], that is the addition of or strengthening of expressions which express positive values to the speaker. Furthermore, he also named another strategy called as Negative Politeness strategy, which can be done by reducing or weakening negative expression to the speaker. According to Leech, Negative Politeness strategy includes indirectness, hedging and understatement.

Another illustration is shown in the following excerpt:

(3) **Dai:** Therefore, we should add more good deeds for preparation of the afterlife. (DAJ2)

The above speech is a directive "order" speech act whose function is consistently inconsistent with social goals (check Leech, 1983: 162) ^[8]. As such, that speech (3) is considered as a less polite speech. However, the speech (3) can still be changed in order to sound more polite by turning it into an indirect speech act with the interrogative mode as follows:

(3a) How many good deeds have we done for the Hereafter?
 Changing speech (3) to speech (3a) makes it sound more polite, as the interlocutor feels no direct command.

5. Conclusions

Being polite in giving a speech is an obligation for every Moeslim. This is as suggested in the Qur'an. From the results of this study, it was discovered that in da'wah, a da'i paid less attention to speech politeness. For example, a da'i gave a direct command. By applying of Leech's politeness model (2014) ^[9], the main goal of speech politeness can be achieved. This includes communicative harmony that may establish harmony and peace amongst religious communities. Hence, linguistically, speech politeness can be implemented by applying the politeness model proposed by Leech (2014) ^[9]. In doing so, we can spread the idea that Islam is a religion of peace and politeness that does respect diversity.

6. References

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