

An Analysis of Pembayuns Speech Acts in the Sorong Serah Ceremony of Sasak Marriage: A Ritualistic Discourse Study

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Abstract

This study investigated the *Pembayuns* speech acts in *Sorong Serah* ceremony of the *Sasak* marriage. As such, it examined the speech events that occurred within the ritual of the ceremony. It was designed as a descriptive qualitative research of the ethnography of communication type and employed observations and interviews as methods of data collection. Video recording and note-taking techniques were applied. The data analysis was affiliated with Wijana's (1996), Austin's (1975) and Searle's (1969) models of speech act theory and was done following Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model of data analysis. The findings of the study showed that the *Pembayuns* in *Sorong Serah* ceremony conveyed speech acts of certain types that can be categorized as direct speech acts, indirect speech acts, literal speech acts, nonliteral speech acts, direct literal speech acts, direct nonliteral speech acts, indirect literal speech acts, and indirect nonliteral speech acts. Among those eight forms of speech acts, indirect speech act was used most dominantly by the *Pembayuns* as it was seen as a politeness strategy. In relation to the force of utterances, it was found that the illocutionary acts used by the *Pembayuns* in *Sorong Serah* ceremony comprise a strategy that was oriented to face saving politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987). All the five types of speech act were found to be used by the *Pembayuns* in *Sorong Serah* ceremony, namely: directive, commissive, expressive, representative, and declaration. These types of speech act were mainly concerned with values and wisdom related to politeness principles.

Keywords: Speech Acts, cultural, Sorong Serah, Sasak Marriage

Introduction

Language is one of the most crucial human cultural symbols. Discussing language and culture is often symbolized as two sides of one coin as the two notions cannot be separated (Mahyuni, 2007). This is most basic argument that has to do with the nature of language in social practices. An effort to separate language from its cultural context is to neglect social conditions that give resonance and meaning in communication. Culture consists of the beliefs, behaviors, and other characteristics common to the members of a particular society. Through culture, society's members shared values, which include many societal aspects, such as language, customs, values and norms (Schiffrin, 1994).

Related to the socio-cultural and linguistic behavior, the *Sasak* community has uniqueness in their customary marriage ceremony. As suggested by Dhana (1989: 6-7) “*Marriage in the Sasak custom regulates matters of marriage, while the marriage ceremony is a habit in Sasak community which is an effort to finalize the process of marriage*” (the writer’s translation).

As mentioned above, the *Sasak* customary marriage involves all the institutions and norms of social and cultural matters relating to marriage, while the marriage ceremony is a series of events in which the cultural institutions lay down certain rules so that the marriage is considered legitimate from the standpoint of the culture of the society. Customary marriage and the marriage ceremony constitute a unity so that the two cannot be separated even though between them there are fundamental differences. Marriage *ceremony* is an inseparable part of customary marriage.

Marriage ceremony in *Sasak* community consists of four stages, namely: *Sejati*, *Selabar*, *Sorong Serah*, and *Nyongkolan*. From the four stages of the marriage ceremony, *three* of them, namely, *Sejati*, *Selabar*, and *Sorong Serah* are cultural events that comprise an oral tradition, which consists of speech events. These three ritual events are carried out in the form of certain types of communicative events in which certain speech acts, or pragmatic forces, are used in different functions according to the role, purpose, and urgency of each stage of the process.

The first ceremony is called “*Sejati*,” which takes place after “*elopement*,” that is, a process in which a man as a prospective husband elopes with a woman who will become his prospective wife. The man’s family has an obligation to inform the village government (head of village/hamlet). In this traditional ceremony the family of the groom delegates two persons as “*Pembayuns*” with several companions to come to the head of the village. The ceremony is held with the aim of telling the authorities that one *woman* has “*eloped*” (*Kawin Lari/Merarik*) with a man of her choice. This ceremony consists of dialogues between the “*Pembayuns*” of the prospective bridegroom’s family and the head of the village, who represents the village government. After the “*Sejati*” ceremony has been completed, the head of the village immediately contacts the woman’s family to give the information that the *Pembayuns* set by the family of the prospective husband has come.

The second stage of the marriage ceremony, which is held after the *Sejati* ceremony, is called *Selabar* ceremony. The prospective bride’s and bridegroom’s families as well as representatives of the village government and traditional leaders attend the *Selabar* ceremony. The ceremony aims at breaking the news to the family of the bride

about the truth of the information that has been conveyed in the *Sejati* ceremony. In the ceremony presided over by the head of the village, the woman's family conveys the terms and conditions that must be covered as custom duty by the family of the prospective bridegroom. Besides that, the ceremony is also meant to determine the time of the wedding and *Sorong Serah* ceremony. In this ceremony, there are rituals in the form of a dialogue between the *Pembayuns* and the head of hamlet on behalf of the prospective bride's family. The topics are around the terms and conditions of the custom duty that the prospective bridegroom's family has to cover to marry the woman.

The third stage is the *Sorong Serah* ceremony. The ceremony is conducted with the purpose of implementing the terms and regulations of custom duties to be done by the bridegroom's *family*, including *Ajigama*, *Ajikrama*, *Dowry (Mahar)* and other requirements. In this *Sorong Serah*, *Pembayun Pisolo* and *Pembayun Penyerah* represent the groom's family, while *Pembayun Penampi* represents the bride's family. *Sorong Serah* is a cultural event held in the form of dialogues, in which utterances are exchanged, so that, it can thus be referred to as a speech event. The third stage of the marriage procession is carried out to cover different subjects or concerns so that the dialogues among participants are arranged accordingly with different durations.

Sorong Serah is the culmination of a marriage ceremony. It is different from “*Sejati*” and “*Selabar*.¹” *Sorong Serah* ceremony aims at submitting the terms and regulation of the bridegroom's custom duty. The ceremony takes place in the form of discussion through which utterances are exchanged toward the implementation of the terms and regulations in which the handover of the custom duty matters from the bridegroom's to the bride's family is done. In the discussion, a speaker called *Pembayun* represents both sides. The dialogue among the participants of the ceremony is conducted in a relatively long duration.

The dialogues in the ceremony involve utterances exchanged among participants called *Pembayuns* from both the groom's and the bride's families. The former is called *Pembayun Pisolo* and *Pembayun Penyorong* or *Pembayun Penyerah* who speak on behalf of the groom's family, while the latter is called *Pembayun Penampi* or *Pembayun Nanggep*, serving as the speaker of the bride's family. In *Sorong Serah* ceremony, *Pembayun Pisolo*, *Pembayun Penyerah* and *Pembayun Penampi* are involved in dialogues relating to the terms and regulations customary to a marriage ceremony (*Ajikrama*) which must be fulfilled as an obligation of the bridegroom's family.

The *Sorong Serah* ceremony as a speech event has its own uniqueness. This can be seen in the three languages used, namely, the ancient Javanese language (*Bahasa Jawa Kuno*), Sasak Utami Language (*Bahasa Sasak Utami*), and the Balinese noble language (*Bahasa Bali Halus*). The spoken discourse in *Sorong Serah* ceremony includes: opening discourse (*Pangaksama Penyolo*), the main discourse, that is, the discourse of the discussion on the terms and conditions customary to the wedding ceremony (*Pangaksama Ajikrama*), and closing discourse (*Amutus Wicara*), which are carried out in dialogues with a variety of discourse entertainments (*Egar-Egar Serira*) in the form of puzzle songs (*Pepinja*) and Rhymes (*Lelakaq*).

In addition, the uniqueness is also evident in the utterances that are used by the *Pembayuns* as speech participants in the dialogues to discuss the customary terms and regulations (*Ajikrama*). The dialogue sometimes comes to a deadlock when both *Pembayuns* persist on their respective points. They may even attack each other using utterances so that the situation becomes heated. However, the utterances used by the *Pembayuns* are polite. Another uniqueness of the speech event of *Sorong Serah* is the use of gestures that accompany the utterances, comprising a motion of the hand and head, mimic and movement of certain limbs, all of which have a special significance.

Inspired by the background above, the problems of this study was focused on the types, forces, and speech act functions of the utterances used by the *Pembayuns* as speech participants in *Sorong Serah* ceremony. The specific problem addressed in the study are (1) what are the types of speech acts embedded in the utterances used by the *Pembayuns* in *Sorong Serah* ceremony in the *Sasak* marriage? (2) what are the forces of the utterances used by the *Pembayuns* in *Sorong Serah* ceremony in the *Sasak* Marriage? and (3) what are the functions of the illocutionary acts conveyed by the *Pembayuns* in *Sorong Serah* ceremony in the *Sasak* marriage?

This study was mainly concerned with analyzing the utterances expressed by the *Sasak Pembayuns* in the *Sorong Serah* event of the *Sasak* marriage ceremony. As such, the study was meant to be an analysis of the speech event that occurred within the ritual of the ceremony, which was affiliated with certain theories such as Wijana's (1996) theory for analyzing the types of speech acts occurring in the discourse of *Sorong Serah* ceremony. The study also adopted Austin's (1975) classification of speech acts to analyze the force of the utterances in *Sorong Serah* ceremony, and Searle's (1969) conception to analyze the function of the illocutionary acts in *Sorong Serah* ceremony. The analysis of the types and functions of the *Pembayuns'* speech acts was based on the politeness principle perspectives, such as those of Brown and Levinson's (1987).

Research Methods

This study was a descriptive qualitative research with a natural setting as the direct source of data with the researcher taking a role of being the key instrument (cf. Bodgan and Biklen, 1982). That is, that the researcher had an authority in elaborating what had been found in the source and applying the appropriate theory to answer the research questions.

This study was an ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1974) in which the starting point was the ethnographic analysis of the communication conduct of a community. It was concerned with observing, analyzing and explaining what people do when they communicate with each other in actual events of social interaction within a community. By using ethnography, the researcher was able to provide holistic insights into people's views and actions, as well as the nature (sights, sounds) of the location they inhabit, through employed methods of data collection such as observations and interview. The observations and interviews were video recorded and note-taking techniques were also applied. In the data analysis, which was carried out along and after data collection, the researcher used three flows of activity, proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), namely: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, or verification.

Findings and Discussion

This section gives an overall picture of the results of this study, which corresponds with the research questions postulated. The research questions to be answered are concerned with speech act types, utterance force, and the speech act functions found in the *Pembayuns'* utterances that occur in the speech event within the ritual of *Sorong Serah* ceremony. The following description present the results of data analysis that answer each research question, covering the types of speech acts, the force of utterance, and the functions of speech acts used by *Pembayuns* in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony.

Findings Concerning the Types of Speech Acts in the Sorong Serah Ceremony

The speech act types that were used by the speech participants (*Pembayun Pisolo*, *Pembayun Penyerah* and *Pembayun Penampi*) in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony, cover: (1) direct speech acts, (2) indirect speech acts, (3) literal speech acts, (4) nonliteral speech acts, (5) direct literal speech acts, (6) direct nonliteral speech acts, (7) indirect literal speech acts, and (8) indirect nonliteral speech acts (Wijana, 1996).

The use of direct speech acts by speech participants in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony can be identified through the mode of utterance that was used by speech participants was the same as their purposes. Based on the results of data analysis, the direct speech acts were used by speech participants for various purposes, namely: (1) the disclosure of the intention of proposition through declarative mode, (2) the disclosure of the intention to ask through interrogative mode, and (3) the disclosure of the intention to command through imperative mode.

The direct speech acts used by speech participants in *Sorong Serah* ceremony were in forms of declarative, interrogative, and imperative utterances used to express speech functions such as greetings, asking permission, apologizing, giving permission, and welcoming the guests. The speech participants used direct speech acts to express something that was not in contrary to the politeness principles. This is in accordance with the fact that the speech participants hold on politeness principle by showing good attitude towards speech partner (Seken, 2004). Politeness principles are shown by the speech participants by using direct speech acts for expressing different language functions such as: greeting, asking permission, apologizing, giving permission and welcoming the guest which are intended to eliminate speaker's superiority and the inferiority of the speech partner. The use of direct speech act by speech participants in *Sorong Serah* ceremony was in line with three of the six maxims of politeness stated by leech (1983) covering, tact maxim, approbation maxims, and modesty maxims.

The indirect speech acts depicted in the utterances used by the participants in *Sorong Serah* ceremony could be identified from the content of the intention expressed by speakers (the meaning behind the utterance). These utterances were used to express different intentions. Based on the analysis of the speech acts used in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony, it was discovered that the forms of indirect speech acts used by speech participants in the ceremony, included: (1) the use of declarative utterance to express a command, (2) the use of interrogative utterance to express a command, and (3) the use of declarative to express a request.

Based on the three forms of utterances of indirect speech acts used by speech participants in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony, the most dominantly used utterances was declarative utterance to declare command. The intention to command is refined by declarative and interrogative utterances, that can be seen as an attempt of speech participants to perform “face saving” to speech partner which is related to the face notion of Brown and Levinson politeness theory (1987). The use of indirect speech acts by speech participants in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony could be viewed as an effort to reduce the threatening of speech act utterances that were used by speech partners.

From the point of view of the politeness principle, indirect speech act does not necessarily indicate the speaker's politeness. The indirect speech acts used are often considered less polite if it means to satirize (Gunarwan, 2004). Indirect speech act is considered to be related to the politeness principle when used instead to make the point sarcastic, mocking, or insulting. In this case, the speaker's intention was revealed through indirect utterances closely linked to socio-cultural context in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony. There were no utterances containing indirect speech acts used to express the senses of being sarcastic, mocking or insulting the speech partners.

In general, the utterances that contained indirect speech acts in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony were used to show good attitude. The speech participants honoring and rewarding his speech partners used indirect speech acts, which were beyond the social-culture context of the *Sasak* community that emphasized politeness principles in communication. This is in line with the assumptions stated by Gunarwan (2004) that say indirect speech acts are associated with politeness strategies in communication, the more indirect an utterances is the more polite the utterance it is.

Besides direct speech acts and indirect speech acts, the data analysis also showed that the speech participants also used the utterances containing literal speech acts and nonliteral speech acts. The literal speech acts used by speech participants were the utterances having meaning the same as the lexical meaning of words. While, nonliteral speech acts were not the same as lexical meaning of words. The use of literal speech acts and nonliteral speech acts by the speech participants in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony in addressing the speech participants had something to do with a choice related to topic, situation and socio-cultural in expressing something.

The literal speech acts in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony were used by speech participants in greetings, apologizing, asking permission, and expressing acceptance. These utterances were used by the speech participants because they didn't have alternative choice except using literal speech acts, besides, using them to declare the participants desire, to show his thoughts and good intentions explicitly to his speech partner point of view to maintain harmonious relationships among the speech participants. It can be regarded as one of the strategies used by the speech participants to show politeness. This strategy is in line with the politeness principles that are suggested by Brown & Levinson (1987) who state that the speakers can use different strategies in threatening speech partners fairly related to the topic of discussion, context of the situation and the background of the cultural context of speech events.

In relation to the direct speech act, the results of data analysis showed a number of utterances containing direct literal speech act and direct nonliteral speech acts that were used by speech participants in *Sorong Serah* ceremony. The direct literal speech act that were used by the speech participants were the utterances having the same meaning as the mode of utterances and the lexical meaning of words. The use of direct nonliteral speech acts utterances used were related to the mode (speech meaning). However, the words constructing the utterances did not semantically comply with the intention expressed by the speaker.

The results of data analysis in this study also showed that the use of indirect literal speech acts and indirect nonliteral speech act were in the forms of a number of utterances using modes that were the utterances having different meanings from the intention of the utterance and the lexical meaning of words. The indirect nonliteral speech act utterances used by the speech participants, were not consistent with the speaker's intention and were constructed by using lexical meaning of the utterances that did not have the same meaning as the purpose of the utterance. The use of indirect literal speech acts and indirect nonliteral speech acts by speech participants were adjusted to the topic, the context of the situation and the social cultural background of the speech events of *Sorong Serah* ceremony that was oriented to show the speech partners politeness.

Findings Concerning the Force of the Utterances in the Sorong Serah Ceremony

The analysis of speech act types depicted in the utterances used by speech participants makes use of theory of analysis suggested by Austin's (1975), comprising: locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts.

The results of the data analysis concerning the force of the utterances used by the speech participants in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony can be stated as follows. In general, all utterances used by speech participants contained locutionary acts. The act that implied was based on the lexical meaning and the syntactical rules by unquestioning the intention or function of utterances. However, the utterance used by speech participants also contained illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts. Based on the results of data analysis, the illocutionary acts utterances used by speech participants in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony could be seen from the intention, message, behind the lexical meaning of words.

The illocutionary act expressed hidden meaning beyond the lexical meaning of the utterances used by speech participants for asking, a command, a hope, a request or demanding, offering, praising and threatening. The illocutionary acts of the utterances used by speech participants were related to direct or indirect and literal or nonliteral speech acts. In addition, the illocutionary acts were different in terms of the lexical meanings of the utterance from the purpose expressed. The illocutionary act utterances used by speech participants were also different from the utterances that were used to convey purposes. The speech participants' utterance in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony had a tendency to declare a command, demanding and expectations through declarative or interrogative utterances. In using illocutionary act utterances, the speech participants in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony followed the rule of politeness maxims in communication.

In relation to the use of a command utterance, the speech participants in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony employed six maxims of politeness principles suggested by leech (1983) covering: tact maxims, generosity maxim, approbation maxims, agreement maxims, modesty maxim and sympathy maxim. By adhering to Leech's maxims through utterances containing illocutionary act, the speech participants intended to maintain politeness in communication. This was consistent with the politeness theory in communication in showing thoughts and good intention to the speech partners.

The purpose and message which constituted of illocutionary act utterances, were used by speech participants consciously, and were in accordance with the circumstances and socio-cultural context of the speech event in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony. This is in line with the *Sasak* community's points of view that uphold politeness, and mutual respect. The illocutionary act used planned and consciously by the speech participants were intended to achieve effectiveness of communication without showing the superiority, so that, the relationship among speech participants could be maintained.

The efforts to achieve effectiveness of communication through illocutionary act utterances were showed by speech participants through politeness principles in communication. The use of illocutionary acts to show politeness in *Sorong Serah* ceremony by speech participants was intended to perform "face saving" to speech partner. The illocutionary acts were used by speech participants in order that the speech partner felt that their personal integrity was appreciated; therefore, good relationship among speech participants could be maintained. This is in line with politeness theory of face saving to speech partner; that the speakers ought to use an appropriate strategy of the level of politeness, which is in accordance with the politeness investment required in a particular speech situation (Seken, 2007).

Besides, the illocutionary act utterances used by the speech participants were oriented to give an effect or influence to the speech partners in order to perform an action. The speech participants used a number of utterances; besides containing the illocutionary acts that were showed by the speech partners as the effects after hearing the utterance disclosed by speakers. The acts or influences were expected from speech partners as an act of doing something. The results of the speech acts conveyed by the speech participants that could be influenced by doing something in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony are called perlocutionary act. The inflicted utterances used by the speech participants in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony, were the effects of command utterances.

The effects that were expected by the speech participants by utilizing the illocutionary act utterances were also parts of the politeness strategy. The four basic strategies that are suggested by Brown & Levinson (1987), include: impolite strategy, less polite strategy, polite strategy, and the most polite strategy. The utilization of illocutionary acts were used by the speech participants to achieve the most politeness strategy in communication.

Findings Concerning the Function of the Speech Acts in the Sorong Serah Ceremony

According to Searle's (1969), the analysis of illocutionary act consists of certain aspects, which are related to the message and content of the utterances that were used by speech participants. The results of the data analysis showed that the speech participants in *Sorong Serah* used certain types of illocutionary act functions that can

be categorized into directive, commissive, expressive, representative, and declaration functions.

Directive function of speech acts were used by the speech participants in expressing requests. The directive function to express the intention of a command was not found in the utterances that were used by the speech participants. To make the intention become soft using command in the form of a request, the speech participants mainly used certain utterances to show some characteristics, comprising: (1) the use of politeness pronouns based on the social status, to show respect and honor to the speech partners, (2) the use of certain verbs, bearing very soft connotation, and the utterances that implicitly stated the intention to request, and (3) the use of honorific utterances to show politeness and mutual respect to the speech partners.

Commissive function of speech acts used by the speech participants in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony could be seen from the utterances that were oriented to future action. This case was possible because of the substitutions occurring among the speech participants in the speech event of *Sorong Serah* ceremony. There are certain characteristics of what that are suggested by Searle (1969) and Levinson (1983), covering: (1) the conversation involves at least two speech participants acting as speaker and addresser, (2) the mutual interaction among speech participants, and (3) the results of the interaction among the speech participants which are in the form the acts of offering, promising and threatening.

The results of data analysis concerning the expressive function of speech acts used by the speech participants in *Sorong Serah* ceremony showed that there were certain forms speech acts that can be categorized into an expression of sympathy, happiness, and apologizing. However, the expressive speech act utterances used by speech participants in this study were not absolute, because the utterance could be revealed, as the expressions of sympathy as well as the expression of apologize.

According to Searle's (1969), the representative speech acts function is concerned with expressing the intention of message through the speakers' utterances. The results of data analysis related to the representative function of speech acts used by the speech participants could be categorized into various functions, namely: (1) The speakers express opinions to speech partners concerning the truth, (2) the speakers convey a conclusion about something to speech partners, (3) speakers propose an opinion to speech partner, and (4) the speakers convey advices to the speech partners. The use of the representative functions of speech act in *Sorong Serah* ceremony, were mainly intended to maintain good relationships among speech partners.

The declaration functions of speech act in the study were mainly concerned with the utterances produced by speech participants that were in accordance with proposition and reality. It means that, the utterances used by the speech participants to express the relevancy between the statement and the action happening. Thus, the declaration functions of speech acts were used in the speech events of *Sorong Serah* ceremony.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the results of the data analysis of speech acts in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony of *Sasak marriage*. It can be concluded that, the types, forces, and the speech act functions were used by the speech participants in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony as an

option toward strategies that could be used to express intention in certain situation and socio-cultural contexts that underlie the speech event. In relation to the forms of speech of acts, the indirect speech act was most dominantly used by speech participants in *Sorong Serah* ceremony which can be seen as a politeness strategy in communication.

While, the illocutionary acts function that were used by speech participants in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony could be viewed as a communication strategy which was in line with six maxims of politeness and the utterances used by the speech participants was intended to perform "face saving" to speech partners

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