

**LINGUISTIC BEHAVIOUR OF BARACK OBAMA AND  
JOKO WIDODO: UNDER LEECH'S POLITENESS THEORY**



**THESIS**

*Submitted to the English Literature Program of Faculty of Cultural Science,  
Hasanuddin University in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements to obtain  
Sarjana Sastra Degree*

**BY:**

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**ENGLISH LITERATURE PROGRAM  
FACULTY OF CULTURAL SCIENCES  
HASANUDDIN UNIVERSITY  
MAKASSAR  
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THESIS

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BY

NURUL HIDAYAH

Student Number: F21116011

It has been examined before the Board of Thesis Examination

on December, 28<sup>th</sup> 2020

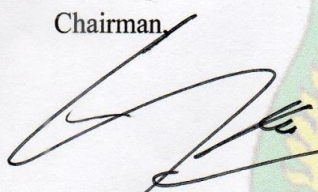
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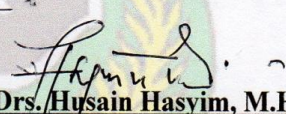
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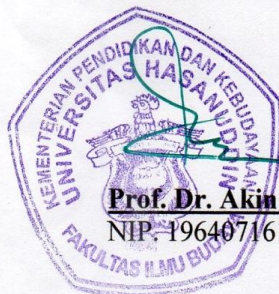
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Today, Monday, December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the Board of Thesis Examination has kindly approved a thesis by **NURUL HIDAYAH** (Student Number: **F21116011**) entitled:

**LINGUISTIC BEHAVIOUR OF BARACK OBAMA**  
**AND JOKO WIDODO: UNDER LEECH'S POLITENESS THEORY**

Submitted in partial fulfillment one of the requirements of undergraduate thesis examination to obtain Sarjana Sastra (S.S) Degree at the English Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University.

Makassar, December 28<sup>th</sup> 2020

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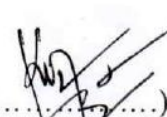
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The thesis by **NURUL HIDAYAH** (Student Number: **F21116011**) entitled, **LINGUISTIC BEHAVIOUR OF BARACK OBAMA AND JOKO WIDODO: UNDER LEECH'S POLITENESS THEORY**, has been revised as advised during the examination on Monday, December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and is approved by the Board of Undergraduate Thesis Examiners:

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Menyatakan bahwa Skripsi yang berjudul **“Linguistic Behaviour of Barack Obama and Joko Widodo: Under Leech’s Politeness Theory”** adalah BENAR merupakan hasil karya saya sendiri, bukan merupakan pengambilan tulisan atau pemikiran orang lain.

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Makassar, 04 Januari 2020



(Nurul Hidayah)

# DEDICATION

THIS THESIS IS DEDICATED TO FOREMOSTLY MY PARENTS  
AND FAMILY MEMBERS. SECONDLY, FOR ALL OF MY  
SUPPORT SYSTEM AND BELOVED FRIENDS.

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR THE ENDLESS SUPPORTS AND  
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## ABSTRACT

**NURUL.** 2020. *Linguistic Behaviour of Barack Obama and Joko Widodo: Under Leech's Politeness Theory.* (Supervised by **Prof. Dr. Abdul Hakim, MA.** and **Drs. Husain Hasyim, M.Hum.**)

This study is a pragmatic study that emphasize on the act of politeness in linguistic behaviour and the correlation of linguistic behavior with the background of the speaker. The objectives of this research are (1) identify the most obeyed politeness maxim by Obama and Jokowi, (2) identify the most violated politeness maxim by Obama and Jokowi, and (3) describe Obama's and Jokowi's character from their linguistic behaviour based on politeness principle linked to their background. This research used the politeness theory proposed by Geoffrey Leech (1986). This research conducted in descriptive-qualitative method. The data collected by watching the interview videos and read the transcript which were downloaded from internet sources. First, the writer identified and classified the six maxims of politeness principle from the utterances in the interview. Then, the writer counted the most obeyed and violated maxim by Obama and Jokowi. The last step, the writer described Obama and Jokowi's linguistic behaviour based on their performance in politeness principle and the correlation to their background. The results of this research reveals five out of six maxims in politeness principle performed by Obama and Jokowi. Agreement maxim is the most obeyed maxim by Obama and Jokowi. Obama in 32 utterances and Jokowi in 19 utterances that performed agreement maxim. The most violated maxim by Obama is modesty maxim with 3 utterances. Meanwhile, the most violated maxim by Jokowi is Agreement maxim with 5 utterances. The linguistic behaviour of Obama and Jokowi shows the correlation with their background. There are some events in Obama and Jokowi's life that proves their characters and linguistic behaviour are reasonable.

**Keywords:** Politeness principles, linguistic behaviour, Obama, Jokowi.

## **ABSTRAK**

**NURUL.** 2020. Perilaku Linguistik Barack Obama dan Joko Widodo: Dalam Teori Kesopanan Leech. (Dibimbing oleh Prof. Dr. Abdul Hakim, MA. dan Drs. Husain Hasyim, M.Hum.)

Penelitian ini adalah penelitian pragmatik yang menekankan pada tindak kesopanan dalam perilaku linguistik dan korelasinya dengan latar belakang penutur. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah (1) mengidentifikasi maksim kesopanan yang paling ditaati oleh Obama dan Jokowi, (2) mengidentifikasi maksim kesopanan yang paling banyak dilanggar oleh Obama dan Jokowi, dan (3) mendeskripsikan karakter Obama dan Jokowi dari perilaku linguistiknya berdasarkan prinsip kesopanan yang dikaitkan dengan latar belakang mereka. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori kesopanan yang dikemukakan oleh Geoffrey Leech (1986). Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan menonton video wawancara dan membaca transkrip yang diunduh dari sumber internet. Pertama, penulis mengidentifikasi dan mengklasifikasikan keenam maksim dalam prinsip kesopanan dari ujaran-ujaran dalam wawancara. Kemudian, penulis menghitung maksim yang paling ditaati dan dilanggar oleh Obama dan Jokowi. Terakhir, penulis mendeskripsikan perilaku linguistik Obama dan Jokowi berdasarkan penggunaan prinsip kesantunan dan korelasinya dengan latar belakangnya. Hasil penelitian ini mengungkap ada lima dari enam maksim dalam prinsip kesopanan yang ditaati oleh Obama dan Jokowi. Maksim kesepakatan adalah maksim yang paling ditaati oleh Obama dan Jokowi. Obama dengan 32 ujaran dan Jokowi dengan 19 ujaran yang menunjukkan maksim kesepakatan. Maksim yang paling banyak dilanggar Obama adalah maksim kerendahan hati dengan 3 ujaran. Sedangkan maksim yang paling banyak dilanggar oleh Jokowi adalah maksim kesepakatan dengan 5 ujaran. Perilaku linguistik dari Obama dan Jokowi menunjukkan korelasi dengan latar belakang mereka. Ada beberapa peristiwa dalam kehidupan Obama dan Jokowi yang membuktikan karakter dan perilaku linguistik mereka masuk akal.

Kata kunci: Prinsip kesopanan, perilaku linguistik, Obama, Jokowi.



# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will present the background of this writing, the problem that has been identified by the writer, research question, objective of the research and significance of the research.

### **1.1 Background**

Communication is a process of exchanging information from one person or group to others. As social creatures, people have to communicate with their fellow human beings. Language is used in their contact as a means of communication. Language is important to humans for the exchange of thoughts, information and desires.

Conversation is one form of communication. One of the important aspect to convey message in conversation is speak politely. The act of politeness is part of the socialization process to be accepted as a members of human society. People can make a sociable atmosphere and show that they respect each other's values by being polite. Politeness might involves ideas like being tactful, modest and nice to other people.

Leech (2014) views politeness as a social phenomenon which embodied mainly through the use of language. Therefore, politeness should be discussed in terms of the relationship between language and social behaviour. This area of linguistic study is typically called pragmatics.

Futhermore, Leech (1983) gives his definition of pragmatic that is, “Pragmatics can be usefully defined as the study of how utterances have meanings in situations”. From this definition, it can be seen that pragmatics is a study which understands the meanings of utterances by looking at the situation when the utterances happen. In pragmatics, politeness is an important aspect to complement the cooperation in an interaction between speaker and hearer.

The act of politeness in a conversation can reflect someone’s character. If someone speaks politely then we can assume that the person is polite and respects the person they talk to. Someone's background is very influential on the formation of one's character. So that we know someone's background, it is easier to know someone’s character even only through a conversation.

In this research, the writer compares the linguistic behaviour of Obama and Jokowi in terms of politeness. These two popular figures are very influential, both for their country and the world. Obama is the 44th American president served from 2009 to 2017, author, attorney, former Illinois state senate and U.S. Senate member. In May 2007, Barack is selected by *Time* magazine as one of the world’s most influential people. Meanwhile, Joko Widodo is the 7th also the current president of Indonesia. He used to be a successful timber entrepreneur. Previously, he is a Mayor of Solo, leads his hometown and became Governor of the capital city of Jakarta.

Both Jokowi and Obama enter the world of politics without political background. They make some people doubt their credibility however they are able to build public trust that they want to bring progress together with the people. Jokowi with all of his simplicity and 'Blusukan' as a way to connect with his people and Obama with his intelligence, honest and charismatic rhetoric in a patriotic and hopeful message for change.

Jokowi and Obama success in bringing change and progress to their own country in their own way. People often seen the resemblance and similarities of Jokowi and Obama, physically or in the way they lead and connect with people, which is unlike any other placeman. Jokowi and Obama as important and influential figures probably very careful in the way they act and speak. So the writer intends to do a reasearch entitled Linguistic Behaviour of Barack Obama and Joko Widodo: under Leech's Politeness Theory.

The politeness principle formulated by Geoffrey Leech has six maxims: tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim, and sympathy maxim. The writer identifies which maxim dominantly obeyed and violated by Obama and Jokowi and connected the results with their background to describe their character.



The interview was chosen as the object of research because the interview situation make the respondent give answers spontaneously without making it up. So that it is more authentic to be a measure in assessing the character of the respondent. The interview that is analyzed in this research is an exclusive interview with the former U.S. President, Barack Obama and First Lady, Michelle Obama in Oprah Show on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011 and an Interview of Jokowi with John Micklethwait from Bloomberg Market and Finance named A Conversation with Indonesian President Joko Widodo on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

## **1.2 Identification of the Problem**

The problems that can be identified based on the explanation above can be explain below:

1. There are politeness maxim mostly obeyed by Obama and Jokowi.
2. There are politeness maxim mostly violated by Obama and Jokowi.
3. Obama and Jokowi's linguistic behaviour can be linked to their background.

## **1.3 Research Question**

1. What kind of politeness maxim that mostly obeyed by Obama and Jokowi?
2. What kind of politeness maxim that mostly violated by Obama and Jokowi?
3. How Obama and Jokowi's linguistic behaviour linked to their background?

#### **1.4 Objective of the Research**

The purpose of this research based on the explanation above are:

1. To identify the most obeyed politeness maxim by Obama and Jokowi
2. To identify the most violated politeness maxim by Obama and Jokowi
3. To describe Obama and Jokowi's character from their linguistic behaviour based on politeness principle linked to their background.

#### **1.5 Significance of the Research**

The significance of this research explained as follows:

1. This research helps the writer learn how to conduct a scientific study and gives a worthwhile experience which is a source of insight for the writer to conduct a better scientific research in the future.
2. This research will help the reader to acknowledge the best way of improving cooperation between participants in conversation. Furthermore, this research will help the reader realize that speak politely is important in order to carry out a good cooperation in conversation and could also help the reader to know someone's character through polite way of speaking.
3. This research intends to be an authentic and informative source about pragmatics, precisely, the politeness principle by Leech for the linguistic concentration students and lecturers in Hasanuddin University.

This research conducted in a hope that it could be useful for theoretical or practical significance. Hopefully, this research can help other researcher for a further study related to the politeness principle.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THEORITICAL BACKGROUND**

In this chapter, the writer presents the previous study related to the topic and the literature review as the writer's references in this research.

#### **3.1 Previous Study**

There are previous reserachers conducted a study of politeness in different aspects. First, a thesis entitled **Politeness Principle in “The Lesson” Drama (A Discourse Analysis)** wrote by Najmiah Daud (2012). In this research, the writer used the theory of politeness principle by Leech to identifies the kinds and the violation of politeness principle by each character in “The Lesson Drama”. The writer used a library research and descriptive qualitative method. The result of analysis reveals all kinds of politeness principle found in “The Lesson” drama and there are some utterances that disobey politeness principle in the drama.

The second research is a thesis entitled **Politeness Principle in Mark Zuckerberg’s Interview** by Anandya Kesuma (2017). The research discusses about speech-event types and politeness principle. The objectives of the research are to find out the speech-event types and the kinds of maxim of politeness principle in the utterances of Mark Zuckerberg’s interview with Mathias Döpfner. The theories used in this research are speech-event by Searle (1979) and politeness principle by Leech (2014). This research is descriptive qualitative. The source of data in this research is the interview

transcript of Mark Zuckerberg. The result of this research shows that there are only two speech-event types from four types performed by Mark Zuckerberg that are found, namely *assertive* and *expressive*. From ten maxims of politeness principle, only five maxims performed by Mark Zuckerberg are found out.

Another research entitled **The Analysis of Politeness Principle Based on Leech Theory in “Cinderella Movie” Directed by Kenneth Branagh** conducted by Velmiwaty R. Amir (2017). The study focuses to analyze politeness maxims in Cinderella Movie directed by Kenneth Branagh. This study leads by Leech theory (1993). The methodology of this research is standing on descriptive method for analyzing the data. In analyzing the data this study refers to Creswell (2009) technique. The result shows that the most maxim occurs in Cinderella movie is approbation maxim.

Compared to the politeness researches above, this research compares the linguistic behaviour of Barack Obama and Joko Widodo in terms of politeness by using Geoffrey Leech’s politeness principle. The researcher focuses on analyze Obama and Jokowi’s linguistic behaviour through their performance in politeness principle on their respective interview video and connected it with their backgroud.

## **3.2 Literature Review**

### **3.2.1 Pragmatics**

Pragmatics is basically a branch of linguistics that studies the use of language in certain situations. The development of pragmatics is fairly rapid with a wide scope of studies despite their relatively young age (Leech, 1983). There are several definitions of pragmatics, almost all of them lead to the opinion that pragmatics examines language as it is used in a particular context.

Levinson (1983) argued that pragmatics is the study of those relations between language and context that are grammaticalized, or encoded in the structure of language.

Yule (1996:3) defined pragmatics as “the study that focuses on the meaning as communicated by a speaker and interpreted by a listener.”

Gazdar (1979) stated that pragmatics has topics which meanings of utterance can not be interpreted simply by the actual situation.

Here, it is clear that pragmatics is a linguistic study emphasizing on the relation between language and context. Context itself is the surrounding and situation where the people had their conversation. The role of context is really important in pragmatics. Leech (1983) defines context as something that both speaker and hearer understand and as a support for the hearer to get what the speaker's imply in the utterance.

### 3.2.2 Politeness

Politeness is a topic which linguist scholars and researcher have a various opinions. Wijayanto (2014) said,

“Generally, being polite is taking others feeling which make others feel comfortable and using appropriate linguistic choices to create relationship with others. Politeness is a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange.” (p. 11)

Yule (1996) defined politeness as the means employed to show awareness of another person’s face within an interaction.

Leech (2014) proposed the eight characteristic of politeness, that are, (1) politeness is not obligatory, (2) there are varying gradations of polite and impolite behaviour, (3) there is often a sense of what is normal, (4) how far politeness will occur depends on the situation, (5) there is a reciprocal asymmetry in polite behaviour, (6) it can be manifest itself in repetitive behaviour, (7) it involves the passing of some kind of transaction of value between the participants, and (8) it’s tendency to preserve balance.

The politeness theory is formulated 1978 and revised in 1987 by Brown and Levinson with the concept of ‘face’. Face means a public self image. According to Mansoor (2018), the concept of face becomes the most relevant concept in the study of linguistic politeness as the various definition of politeness by linguists refers to face concept.



### 3.2.3 Leech's Politeness Principle

In exchanging utterance, the speaker and the hearer are not only respecting cooperative principle but also the politeness principle in order to create a good communication. As Leech (1983) argued that politeness oftentimes interpreted superficially as a 'simply civilized act' but the main point is politeness as the lost significant link between the cooperative principle and the problem of connecting sense and force.

The general point of politeness is the matter of relationship between two participant, namely *self* and *other*. In conversation, *self* is identified as *s* and *other* is identified as *h*. In addition, "the speaker also show politeness to third parties, who may or may not be present in the speech situation" (Leech, 1983:130).

Leech formulated the politeness principle with six maxims dealing with polite behaviour as explained below.

#### a. Tact Maxim

Tact maxim outlines that each participant have to minimize the losses of *other*, or maximize the benefits of *other*. This maxim is expressed by means of an impositive or directive and commissive illocution. Directive or impositive illocution are intended to have an effect through the hearer's actions, for example ordering, suggesting, advising, begging, requesting, commanding, and recommending. Comissive illocution expects an act in the future,

such as promising, offering, swearing, and praying. The examples of tact maxim as below.

1. Help yourself.
2. Have another sandwich.
3. Will you answer the phone?

The examples above imply the benefit of *other*. The first and second examples is a commissive with indirect illocution to elevate the politeness degree. Meanwhile, the third example shows that the politeness degree is not only limited to indirectness but also the hearer's freedom to choose not to perform the action, in this case, answering the phone.

b. Generosity Maxim

Generosity maxim requires the participant to minimize the benefit of *self* and maximize the cost of *self*. This maxim also expressed in impositive and commissive. It is obvious to see the bilateral correlation between tact maxim and generosity maxim. Tact maxim is *other*-centered while generosity maxim is *self*-centered. The examples of generosity maxim as below.

1. I can lend you my car
2. You must come and have dinner with us
3. Would you like these pencils sharpened?

The examples above imply the cost of *self* and benefit to *other*. The first and third example is a commissive namely offering.

The second example is an impositive namely inviting. The third example shows how the speaker's role as the benefactor is minimized and give impression as if the offerer not loss at all so that it is polite enough for the hearer to accept the offer.

c. Approbation Maxim

Approbation maxim requires each participant in coversation to minimize the dispraise on *other* and maximize the praise on *other*. This maxim is presented in expressive and assertive illocution.

Expressive has the function of expressing, uttering, or informing the speaker's psychological attitude towards a statement that is predicted by illocution, for example saying congratulations, saying thanks, praising, expressing condolences, and so on. Assertive illocution involves the speaker on the truth of the expressed proposition for example stating, boasting, claiming, complaining, suggesting, reporting, and so on.

In this maxim, the negative aspect is the concern, which is do not say something unpleasant to *other*. Therefore, a praise such as "*What a delicious food u cooked!*" is more appreciated so that an expression such as "*what an owful food u cooked!*" is not appreciated.

#### d. Modesty Maxim

The modesty maxim calls upon each participant to maximize self-disrespect, and minimize self-respect. Modesty maxim is also expressed in expressive and assertive speech. Whereas the generosity maxim is centered on *other*, the modesty maxim is *self*-centered. the examples as below.

1. A: They were so kind to us  
B: Yes, they were, weren't they.
2. How stupid of me!
3. Please accept this small gift as a prize for your hardwork.

The first example shows it is polite to agree with a compliment that addressed to *other*. Meanwhile, the second example shows it is normal for this maxim to maximize the dispraise on *self*. For the third example, it is conventional in this maxim to minimize the humbleness.

#### e. Agreement Maxim

The agreement maxim defines each speaker and hearer to maximize the compatibility between them, and minimize the mismatch between them. The agreement maxim is also expressed in expressive and assertive illocution. The examples of agreement maxim as below.

1. A: the performance is amazing.  
B: yes. It is really amazing.

2. A: Today's lunch menu was so delicious

B: true, but the soup is a bit salty to be honest.

The first example shows both participant have the same opinion about the performance so B shows agreement and compatibility with A. The second example shows a partial-agreement which is more appreciated in this maxim rather than a full disagreement.

f. Sympathy Maxim

This maxim requires each participant to maximize their sympathy and minimize the feeling of antipathy to the other person. Sympathy maxim is also expressed in assertive and expressive Illocution. For example, "I'm sorry to hear about your cat" that implies something bad happened to the cat such as a death, or "I'm happy to hear about your cat" that implies something fortunate such as recovered from illness.

### **3.2.4 Maxim Violation**

Maxim violation is a condition where the conversation breaks the rules of conversational principle, in this case, politeness principle. It occurs when the speaker disobeyed maxim in their conversation. Cook (1990) argued that maxim violation occasionally intentional in conversation where the situation is, (1) the hearer realize the maxim violation, (2) the hearer perceive the speaker's intention to make the

hearer aware that there is a maxim violation, and (3) the maxim violated to make the speaker relevant.

The example for maxim violation of politeness principle as below.

- [1] Peel the potatoes.
- [2] You can lend me your car.
- [3] what an awful meal you cooked!

The three examples above are considered as impolite based on Leech's politeness principle. The example [1] violated tact maxim, which emphasize to minimize the cost of *other* and maximize the benefits of *other*. Meanwhile, the example [1] implies the cost of *other*. The example [2] is the violation of generosity maxim, which emphasize to maximize the cost of *self* and minimize the benefits of *self*. Meanwhile, The example [2] implies the benefit of self. Then, example [3] has violated approbation maxim that outlines to minimize dispraise of *other* and maximize praise of *other*". The example [3] is a criticism that maximize dispraise to *other*.

### 3.2.5 Linguistic Behaviour

According to Verhaar (2001), the word linguistic comes from Latin "*lingua*". A similiar word comes from French "*langue*" and "*langage*". English takes the word from French which now become language. Generally, the term 'linguistic' in English is related to language. Oxford Dictionary defined behaviour as an act in a particular way.

Valeyeva (2014) considered linguistic behaviour as a collective language action carried out by an individual or a group as the executant who express the message within the process of linguistic activity. Furthermore, Valeyeva says that,

“Primarily it is an intentional system of stimuli and responses in the form of a chain of actions taking triadic form of communication, internal monologue and expressive modes of evaluation defined in the language. This triad contains the main social functions of language communicative, cognitive and modal.” (p. 985)

In addition, Valeyeva stated the most distinct feature of the linguistic behavior is, “the fact that it is externally observable social behavior and one can clearly see and hear the actions of social actors related to the operation and development of the language” (p. 985).

### **3.2.6 Interview**

Interview is a conversation between two or more people and takes place between the interviewer and the respondent. As Moleong (2018) stated, interview is a conversation with specific purpose that involves two parties, namely interviewer and interviewee. Interviewer is the one who ask the question and interviewee is the one who give the answer.

The general purpose of interview is to get the right information from trusted sources. Subagyo (2011) argued that interview is an activity which carried out to obtain information directly by asking questions to the respondent.