

## A Sociopragmatic Study of Cooperative Principles in a Group of Middle-Aged Women's Conversation

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### Abstract

Communication is a way to interact with others and also a process of delivering information from the speaker to a hearer. In formal communications, Grice's cooperative principles tend to be recommended to be applied in a certain context. This research is aimed at identifying the use of cooperative principles by middle-aged women when having interaction in the kitchen at the wedding party. The research is conducted by using a qualitative approach in 2 regencies in West Sumatera Indonesia. The data were recorded and also note-taken in the field toward 27 women selected by purposive sampling. These women were around 45-60 years old. The interview was conducted with one Bundo Kandung, three customs leaders, and two intellectual people. The aspects related to context and politeness became the consideration in analyzing the data. The results showed that only two forms among the four maxims at cooperative principle used by the middle-aged women when they had communication in the kitchen at the wedding party. They are 1) the maxim of quantity and 2) the maxim of quality. Some number of utterances were violating the maxim in cooperative principles. A number of utterances found are categorized as violations of the maxims if it is based on Grice's theory. However, that does not apply to the utterances in a group of middle-aged women in Minangkabau during the cooking tradition. It is because there are social and cultural contexts that must be considered when understanding and analyzing these utterances.

**Keywords:** Cooking Tradition, Cooperative Principles, Middle-aged Women, Minangkabau

### 1. INTRODUCTION

People in their lives use language to communicate because communication is a way to interact with others and also a process of delivering information from the speaker to a hearer so that the hearer can understand what the speaker is talking about.

The function of language in communication depends on who, what, to whom, and with what language is used. Language is one of the most important things in life. Each language has variations and styles of language that are different and unique. The difference is very closely related to the perspective and values adopted by the community. Nowadays, we see many languages used can cause disputes due to misinterpretation. Besides, language also reflects the culture of a society—the greater the cultural differences, the more different the communication between people.

In communication, cooperation between speaker and hearer are needed so that the communication can run smoothly. Moreover, cooperation is motivated by the same knowledge, references, context, and intentions. In pragmatics, there is a theory that suggests building communication that can work well. The theory is known as the principle of the cooperative. In interacting, the information which is conveyed by the speaker must use utterances that are informative, true, relevant, concise, not cryptic, or unambiguous so that the information captured by the hearer can be informative, true, relevant, and clear.

Leech (1983) says that in interacting, it is necessary to consider and apply the Polite Principles. The principle of courtesy is a set of maxims that govern the form of behavior in language, both linguistic and sociolinguistic behavior. Furthermore, politeness cannot be seen from the symbols of spoken language. Even politeness is the result of a cultural manifestation embraced by the community (Leech, 2007).

Politeness in Minangkabau is related to the rules or norms adopted by the community (Khairiah et al., 2020; Oktavianus & Revita, 2013; Ike Revita, Marwati, et al., 2020). Politeness is not only about using the language to achieve the purpose of conversation and show someone's honor and dignity to others. But more than that, politeness also concerns aspects of culture and philosophy that are believed to be true by the community (Jewad et al., 2020; Marpurdianto, 2019; Sifianou, 2019). This belief is extracted via language used in communication.

Communication is an activity with a social dimension. Like other social activities, communication can take place well if the participants are all actively involved in the process. If there are one or more who are not actively involved in communication, certainly, the speech cannot run smoothly (Chłopicki, 2019; Rosita Ambarwati, Joko Nurkamto, 2019). In reasonable communication, it is assumed that a speaker is articulating the utterance to communicate something to the person he is speaking to, and to the person he is speaking with can understand what he is trying to communicate. For this reason, the speaker always tries to make his speech relevant to the context, clear, and easy to understand, compact, and concise, and always to the problem so that it does not spend the time of the interlocutor (Wijana, 1996; Revita et al., 2012).

In line with this, Pragmatics is compatible with communicative functions because pragmatics is the study of how language is used in communication (Revita, 2020; Revita, 2018; Revita et al., 2017). One of the pragmatic studies with the most obvious role in communication is the implicature of conversation. So the concept of the implicature is used to explain the differences that often occur between "what was

said" and "what is implied" (Anindya et al., 2019; Pratama, 2019; Rett, 2020). In formal conversations, Grice's cooperative principles are still relevant to apply. In this case, the principle requires the use of effective and efficient language as shown in the maxims or the principle of cooperative. In other words, the principle of cooperative is needed to more easily explain the relationship between intention and speech. The principle of cooperative by Grice (H.Paul., 1975) is divided into four maxims; those are 1) maxim of quality, 2) maxim of quantity, 3) maxim of relevance, 4) maxim of manners. This research is about the principles of cooperative delivered by speakers and hearer related to the data obtained. So, from the above explanation, the writer aims to describe the principles of cooperative used in the group of middle-aged women's conversation during the wedding cooking tradition in Minangkabau.

Related to this pragmatic study, the writers examined the conversations of Minangkabau middle-aged women who took place during the cooking tradition in Minangkabau. In having a conversation among them, the Minangkabau language becomes the dominant one as the local language mostly used in Minangkabau. Due to the scope of the study is in Minangkabau, the social context is the writers' concern when conducting this research. Utterance and social context are very important to understand whether the speaker and hearer have complied with the principles of cooperative and politeness.

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1. Concept of Pragmatics

Simply, communication can be interpreted as an act of exchanging information between speakers and hearers through a system of symbols, symbols, or signs or behavior. Looking at the definition, it can be seen that the communication process is at least constructed of three components (Fetzer & Osiho, 2011). They are (1) participants; there are information providers and information recipients. (2) things to be informed, of course, many ideas or thoughts about something. (3) tools, meanwhile, the third component is the means used to convey information. These tools can be in the form of symbols or codes that function as language substitutes. In the communication process, language as a tool, both linguistic aspects and paralinguistic aspects, the information conveyed, as well as the participant as the provider of information and the recipient of the information; together form what is called the speech situation and the speech event in a speech act.

Pragmatics view context as shared knowledge between speaker and hearer, and that knowledge leads to the interpretation of a speech or utterance. Specific knowledge or context can cause humans to identify different types of speech acts. Language is always expressed in context. In the world of sound and meaning, there is a context that affects the harmony of a language system. According to (Ike Revita, 2013; I Revita, 2020; Sbisa & Turner, 2013), context is something that becomes a means of clarifying an intention. The context covers two aspects: the first is in the form of expressions that can support the clarity of intention, and the second is in the form of situations relating to an event. The context in the form of an expression that can support the

clarity of that intention is called co-text. Meanwhile, the context in the form of a situation related to an event is commonly called context (context) only. Thus, the study of language use cannot be done without considering the context (Cunha, 2019; Patten, 2018). Meanwhile, Leech (1993) said that the science that is able to study the meaning of speech is pragmatic science. This is different from the semantics that examines the meaning of sentences. Thus, it can be said that semantics studies the meaning of linguistics, while pragmatics examines the purpose of the utterance.

Furthermore, Meibauer (2019) & Levinson (1983) explain a number of pragmatic understandings. First, to understand the meaning of language, a speaker is required not only to find out the meaning of words and the grammatical relations between the words but also to draw conclusions previously said. Second, pragmatics is the study of the suitability of sentences spoken by language users with the context in which they are based. Leech (1993) argues that pragmatic principles are basically non-conventional, which is motivated by the purpose of the conversation. In line with this opinion, Wijana (1996) said that pragmatics is the study of the relationship between language and the context that underlies the explanation of language understanding.

The inclusion of context in understanding and/or producing speech or utterance is intended to establish principles of cooperative and politeness in communication so that communication purpose can be achieved effectively. The context is related to behavior, situation, interpretation, and culture that differ from one community to another. What is considered important and interesting by certain people, it is not impossible to be considered normal by other communities. This shows that the pragmatic theory basically considers the factors of the communication process. Hymes (2013, 2016, 2020) suggested some components that marked the occurrence of the event with the abbreviation SPEAKING. According to Hymes, in the speech event, there are a number of factors that indicate the existence of the event, they are (1) setting or scene, the place and the atmosphere of the speech event; (2) participant, i.e., speakers, hearers, or other parties; (3) end or destination; (4) act, which is the action taken by the speaker in the speech event; (5) key, which is the tone of voice and the variety of languages used in expressing the utterances; (6) instruments, which are tools or writing; (7) norm, which is the rules of the game that must be obeyed by each participant and (8) genre, namely types of activities such as interviews, discussions, and so on.

## 2.2. Sociopragmatic Framework in Politeness Analysis

Sociopragmatic related to sociological problems so that the pragmatic inference generated is essentially a sociological inference. Sociopragmatic studies are thus directed at sociopragmatic descriptions that are found in certain cultures (Revita, 2008; Bababayli, 2020; Muhyidin, 2020). It can be said that communication events are always related to two contexts, namely the context of language and cultural context. The context of language, in this case, refers to the context of speech or the context of the situation, which can include aspects of the participant's identity, the time and place of the communication event, the topic of speech, and the purpose of speech (Levinson,

1996; Levinson, 1993). The cultural context is a relatively general context that applies to language societies. This cultural context implies that every language user in carrying out social interactions or communicating is always patterned by their culture. If seen from the perspective of the speaker, the language works personally (Halliday, 1996; Halliday & Hasan, 2014). That means the speakers express their attitude towards what they are speaking, and if seen in terms of the hearer, the language works directly by adjusting the hearer's behavior (Finnocchiaro 1974). The language does not only make the hearers do something but performs activities in accordance with what the speaker wants (Revita, 2013; Revita, Trioclarise, et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the term Pragmatics departs from studies on the use of language in general. This means that pragmatics do not cover more specific things, for example, the forms of wisdom and culture of a particular society (Ariel, 2019; Danziger, 2020). Research on language in society is not seen solely as a reality of language, but also a social reality and involves cultural issues related to the fact that the representation of modesty is related to the systems and norms that are believed to be true by the public. Therefore, the framework of the right theory to understand the phenomenon is sociopragmatic. The sociopragmatic framework is a combination of social theory and pragmatic theory. The pragmatic theory explains that a speech is not merely a linguistic unit but as a pragmatic unit, which is the smallest element in linguistic communication in the form of a combination of illocution and prepositions. Pragmatic units are examined in relation to communication purposes and social goals. However, pragmatic theories are seen as insufficient.

Therefore, this research also uses social theory. The social theory explains that the interaction processes such as status (position) and role (function) are placed in accordance with the cultural value system adopted by the community. Status concerns position, both as individuals and groups, which are determined by position, education level, age, gender, and so on. At the same time, related to the role that is related to what must be done related to that status.

### 2.3. Cooperative Principles

In sensible communication, it can be assumed that the speaker articulates the utterance with the intention to communicate something to the speaker and hopes that the speaker can understand what is communicated. For this reason, the speaker always tries to make the utterances always relevant to the context, clear and easy to understand, compact and complete, and always related to the issues or topic of conversation, so that no one could misunderstand. When a conversation occurs deviation, there are certain implications tried to be reached by the speaker. If the implication is absent, then the speakers are considered uncooperative. Shortly, it can be assumed there is a kind of cooperative principles that must be fulfilled by the speakers and hearers in order for the communication process goes well. The forms of the prevalent principle in language use and the term given to the principles are known as cooperative principles (Anindya et al., 2019; Gotzner, 2019; Sullivan, 2019).

The principle of cooperation is a principle that must be fulfilled by speakers

and hearers so that the communication process can go well. Grice (1976) states that in the principle of cooperative, each speaker must be in accordance with 4 (four) maxims, they are 1) maxim of quantity, 2) maxim of quality, 3) maxim of relevance, and 4) the maxim of manner. Furthermore, the cooperative principle is announced further as follows:

### **2.3.1. Maxim of Quantity**

Maxim of quantity requires every speech participant to give a contribution as adequate as or as many as needed by the hearer. Within the maxim of quantity, a speaker is expected to provide information as informative as possible, sufficient and relatively adequate. Such information must not exceed the information actually needed by the hearer or require the speaker to contribute sufficiently, not excessive, just say as much as the hearer needs. Utterances that do not contain information really needed by the hearer can be considered violating the maxim of quantity in the principle of cooperative. Vice versa, if the utterance contains excessive information, it can be considered as violating the maxim of quantity

### **2.3.2. Maxim of Quality**

Maxim of quality requires every speech participant to tell the truth. The participants' contributions should be based on sufficient evidence. If you abide by this principle, never say something that is believed to be not quite correct or incorrect. In the maxim of quality, the speech participant is expected to be able to convey something real and in accordance with the actual facts in the speech or want the speaker to tell the truth with adequate evidence arguments. That fact must be supported and based on clear evidence.

### **2.3.3. Maxim of Relevance**

Maxim of relevance requires that each speech participant makes a contribution that is relevant to the issue of the conversation. The maxim of relevance requires the speaker to make a relevant contribution to the topic of the speech. In this maxim, it is stated that in order to establish good cooperation between the speaker and the hearer, each should be able to make relevant contributions about the thing being spoken of.

### **2.3.4. Maxim of manner**

The maxim of manner requires that every speech participant speaks directly, not blurred, not taxed, and not overdo it, and collapse. The implementation maxim requires that participants speak directly, clearly, not blurred, and not equivocal (ambiguity) so that it does not mislead and cause misunderstanding for the hearer. People who speak without considering these things can be regarded as violating the principle of cooperative.

### 3. METHODS

#### 3.1. Design

The research is conducted qualitatively. Bogdan and Biklen (Moleong, 1998) state that qualitative research has the characteristics of (1) using natural settings, (2) being descriptive, (3) considering processes more than results, (4) analyzing data inductively, and (5) meaning is the main part. The purpose of this research is to describe the application of the cooperative principles in the conversation of among middle-aged women during the cooking tradition in Minangkabau. The data used in this study were taken or sourced from natural settings, namely conversations conducted by the group of middle-aged women in Minangkabau. The data are any utterances produced by Minangkabau women when they had interaction in a cooking process as part of wedding preparation. In discussing the results of the analysis, the researchers obtained data in the form of records and field notes, both in the form of descriptions and reflections. The interview was also conducted to ensure the information and utterances were produced.

Based on the formulation of the problem presented. Thus the source of the data in this study comes from data that contains forms of the cooperative principles used by the group of middle-aged women in Minangkabau. The term of the research subject in this study has a reference that is almost the same as the term of informant used. Allen (2017) states that the informant is a speaker of the target language used by researchers to obtain data. The subjects of this study were a group of middle-aged women in Minangkabau.

#### 3.2. Data Collection Techniques

There is no single best method that can be used to collect research data on language usage patterns in society. The exact use of the data collection method depends on the relationship between the researcher and the language user community, the type of data collected, and the specific situations encountered in the data collection activity. Moleong (2000) says that the method used to collect data can be through participatory observation, non-participatory observation, and interviews. The observation method was carried out as follows. First, researchers engage directly and continuously and involve themselves actively in the interaction of the subject. Second, researchers only act as recipients and not as targets of speech acts.

Data acquired through observation is enriched with additional information obtained through interviews. The interview method is used to uncover or clarify the phenomena that arise. In addition, researchers also do the recording used as primary data in data analysis. To maintain data reliability, triangulation activities are carried out. Data triangulation in this study was done by (1) adding data from research subjects and (2) discussing data with experts and colleagues about the reliability of the data.

#### Data Analysis Techniques

This data analysis was performed with a flow model adapted from the qualitative data analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman. Qualitative data analysis consists of three activities that occur simultaneously, namely data reduction, data

presentation, and data triangulation, and drawing conclusions. Data with interactive-dialectical models, as stated by Miles and Huberman (1992) which are based on the principle that data analysis is carried out during and after data collection. Therefore, together with data collection and data reductions, as soon as data are obtained. This data reduction activity includes identification, classification, and codification. Data collected through recording are transcribed into written form, specifically the data needed in this study.

Next, the data that are described are identified by giving the serial number of the file. Furthermore, the data that has been identified is classified and codified according to the data to be determined. After the data is reduced, then a temporary conclusion is made. Before the final conclusion, triangulation is carried out.

## 2. Result and Discussion

According to Grice (Paul., 1975), the conversation will lead to the equalization of elements in the cooperative transaction that was originally different from the way of (1) equating short-term goals, even though the final goal is different or even contradictory (2) bringing together participant contributions so the speaker and the hearer need each other, and (3) make the speaker and the hearer understand that the transaction takes place in a certain pattern that is suitable unless it intends to end the cooperation. In this regard, data analysis yields a number of conclusions. The forms of cooperative principles that are reflected in a group of middle-aged women's communication in Minangkabau is as follows.

### a. Maxim of Quantity

The maxim of quantity principle requires a speaker to be able to provide sufficient and concise information. In addition, the speaker must also speak as is it, without adding and subtracting the conversation. The maxim of quantity examples can be seen in the following data,

Context: The utterances below occur when a group of middle-aged women in the cooking tradition is cleaning the fish.

#### (01/Int-1)

S1: *Barasian ikan, Buk?*

'Are you cleaning the fish, Mam?'

S2: *Iyo ikan*

'Yes, fish.'

S1: *Ka dimasak a rencana, Buk?*

'What are you going to do with the fish, Mam?'

S2: *Mau digoreng*

'It will be fried.'



The conversation involved two middle-aged women in a cooking area where the wedding preparation is being conducted. Both S1 and S2 have complied with the principle of cooperative, the maxim of quantity because S2 as the hearer has given sufficient and clear information to the S1 that S2 was cleaning fish, and the fish would be fried. S2 was listening to S1 while cleaning the fish. The maxim of quantity in the S2's utterances is found in "*iyo, ikan*" and "*ka digoreng*". The utterances have complied with the rules set by Grice. If looking at the social context, the utterance of S2 in the data could be a violation of the quantity maxim because it only gives sufficient answers, but looking at the age level between T as a speaker who is much younger than S2 as a hearer, then it is still accepted and does not violate the maxim of quantity.

Context: The utterances below occur when a group of middle-aged women in the cooking tradition is cleaning the meat. Each of them was talking about their hometown, and Ibuk II told Ibuk IV where exactly her hometown was.

**(20/Int-19)**

Ibuk II: *Diateh parak gadang. Lai tau Parak Gadang?*  
'After Parak Gadang. Do you know where Parak

Gadang is?'

Ibuk IV: *Lai*

'Yes, I do.'

Ibuk II: *Teh itu loh Katapiang*

'So, Katapiang is after Parak Gadang)

Ibuk IV: *Iyo bararti uni di Katapiang?*

'I see, so you are from Katapiang?'

Ibuk II: *Iyo*

'Yes.'

The participants of the above dialog were Ibuk II as speakers and Ibuk IV as the hearer. In their interaction, both participants have complied with the maxim of quantity because both of them gave sufficient and clear information. Both gave an answer based on the need of the question. Such question came to us as some middle-aged women who became the object of the research are not from Minangkabau. These women are those who have to stay in Minangkabau because of getting married to Minangkabau men. They, then, have to live in Minangkabau.

Context: The conversation below occurred when a group of middle-aged women fried tofu in a cooking tradition.

**(28/Int-27)**

Y : *Permisi, Buk. Iko untuak acara kini atau acara bisuak buk?*

'Excuse me, Mam. The food is for today or tomorrow?'

Ibuk I: *Acara bisuak.*

'It is for tomorrow.'

The utterances of the dialog above have complied with one of cooperative principles. It is the maxim of quantity. Maxim of quantity forces the hearer to provide sufficient and clear information as much as needed. It has shown by how Ibuk I answered the question. Y asked when the wedding will be holding. The question is related to the time and Ibuk I just gave the answer as sufficient as possible. The response *acara bisuak* clearly fulfills the need of the question. The utterance does not violate the maxim at all.

#### b. Maxim of Quality

Maxim of quality is used to convey something tangible in accordance with facts. In addition, this fact must be supported by clear evidence. In other words, the speakers try to convey what they believe to be true (Artikasari, 2020; Cahyani et al., 2019). The examples of the use of quality maxim can be seen in the following analysis.

Context: The utterances below occur when a group of middle-aged women in the cooking tradition is cleaning the fish.

**(02/Int-1)**

- T: *Digoreng balado, Buk?*  
'Will it be fried with chilly sauce, Mam?'
- Ibuk I: *Balado pacah-pacah, lado dendeng*  
'With the chili, jerky with chilies.'
- Ibuk II: *Digoreng jo lado pacah-pacah*  
'It will be fried with coarsely ground chilies.'

Context: The utterances below occurred between two middle-aged women in the cooking tradition while they were cleaning the fish.

**(25/Int-24)**

- Y : *Bilo ko, Buk? Manikahnyo?*  
'When will the wedding be held, Mam?'
- Ibuk I: *Patang manikahnyo. Kini undang acara ka dapuanyo.*  
'The wedding was held yesterday. Today is the cooking tradition.'

Context: The conversation involved a group of middle-aged women who were frying tofu in the cooking tradition.

**(34/Int-32)**

- T : *Acaro apo se pakai tingkuluik tu, Buk?*  
'In what occasion is the *tingkuluik* (traditional shawl worn by Minangkabau women on certain occasions) worn, Mam?'
- Ibuk II : *Sagalo macam acara kami.*  
'We wear *tingkuluik* in every occasion or event.'

Ibuk III: *Baralek iyo.*

'Like for the wedding.'

The three utterances above have consented to the maxim of quality in the cooperative principle. All participants taking part in the conversation have provided information in accordance with reality. The information given is factual. The above data could be a violation of the quality maxim if the hearer does not provide correct or inappropriate information. However, the speakers gave as much information as needed. They did not talk more than what was being asked.

Among the four maxims proposed by Grice (H.Paul., 1975), only two maxims were used by middle-aged women when they had interaction in the cooking process for the wedding preparation. They were maxim of quantity and maxim of quality. Maxim of quantity is in line with giving information as needed (Davis, 2019; Saradifa, 2020). Meanwhile, maxim of quality required speakers to be honest and telling the truth (Khairiah et al., 2020; Ike Revita, Marwati, et al., 2020).

There is a tendency of middle-aged Minangkabau women to use maxim of quantity more than quality. It can be seen from the occurrence around 79% and maxim of quality around 21%. It can be seen in the diagram below.

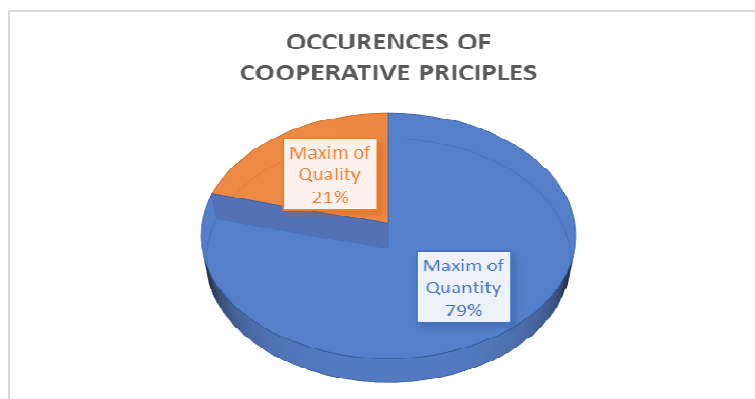


Diagram 1. The Occurences of Cooperative Priciples

The more dominant occurrence of maxim quantity in the dialogue involving middle-aged Minangkabau women is related to the role of them in the situation. These women came to the event to cook for the wedding. Most of them are were even hired to cook and be the chef. They, then, will talk as needed. These women will not talk more than being required. Moreover, while cooking, what these women talked about is mostly things related to cooking.

### 3. CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of language use in society can not only be seen as a pragmatic reality but must be seen as a social reality. For this reason, the right design to be used is the Sociopragmatic perspective. Data on language use is interpreted based on the cultural perspective of the language user. Therefore, the interpretation of pragmatic facts such as the role of the maxim, the situation, and the level of disturbance is related to cultural aspects such as cultural background, customs, and social environment.

After conducting research and analyzing the data dealing with the interaction among middle-aged Minangkabau women while in the cooking process for the wedding, it can be concluded as follows. First, the implementation of the cooperative principles only covers two maxims. They are the maxim of quantity and the maxim of quality. Second, there are a number of utterances used by these middle-aged Minangkabau women that can be categorized as violations of the maxims. Sociopragmatically, it is based on the social consideration like social status and social background of the participants. Moreover, cultural contexts also influenced the participants in having communication.

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