

# Delivering Message Through #BaliAman Vlog : President Joko Widodo Communication Strategy

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## Abstract

Since the seventh and current president of Indonesia, Joko Widodo (Jokowi), launched his personal video blog (vlog) channel, there has been a relatively sharp increase of studies on the President's use of communication strategies on his vlogs. One video in particular, hashtagged with #BaliAman, was quite unique in the fact that it was meant to reduce Indonesian citizens' fear of the state of the island after the Mount Agung's eruption on November 2017. This present study covered the gap of the #BaliAman vlog being never studied in terms of how President Jokowi communicated the idea that Bali was safe in the face of the public's vehement belief of the opposite. Using Penelope Brown & Stephen Levinson's politeness theory, this present study reviewed the #BaliAman vlog to see the president's use of the communication strategy. The results indicated that President Jokowi employed three strategies: positive face, negative face, and face threatening acts. Aside from how politeness theory applies to all situations that occur in our daily lives, this present study is significant for leaders who need to communicate safety ideas during a crisis.

**Keywords:** *Politeness Theory, Positive Face, Negative Face, Face Threatening, President Joko Widodo, Communication for Leaders*

## 1. Introduction

On November 27, 2017, the island of Bali in Indonesia suffered a natural disaster in which one of the mountains of the land, Mount Agung, experienced an eruption. The incident lasted for quite a long time, thus, residents on the island of Bali had to evacuate and leave the dangerous disaster area from the impact of the eruption of hot clouds, lava flows, rock falls, incandescent stones, and heavy ash rain that were all fatal for all ages. The disastrous state of the Mount Agung was worsening with other hazards coming into being in the form of rain lava floods that made the citizens nearby panicked and the people remote fearful.

This incident pushed the 7th and current Indonesian President, Joko Widodo (Jokowi), to step onto the field to minimize the panic and fear of his citizens. Two months after the eruption, on December 22, 2017, President Jokowi recorded his walk

along the Kuta Beach of Bali with the locals and even tourists. Acknowledging the on-going assessment of the natural disaster, the President declared that the island of Bali was safe to visit and live in. The video record of the president's personal video blog (vlog) on his YouTube account 'JKWVLOG', which he hashtagged with #BaliAman to promote the declaration that Bali was safe to quell the panic, is what interested this present study to analyze.

In recent years, there has been an exponential increase of publications regarding the current president of Indonesia. This can be attributed to the Presidents' relatively recent decision to create a personal vlog channel on September 26, 2016 after having been inspired by his son's. For the #BaliAman video in particular, this present study found two previous studies that have focused on the topic. A year after the incident, Besman et al. (2018) used Roland Barthes'

semiotics methodology to review the surface visual signs of the video to determine the President's image as a capable country leader. Two years after the incident, Taarufi & Handajani (2018) used Robert Entman's framing analysis to see how online media *Tribunnews.com* framed the news about the natural disaster. Three years after the incident, this present study used Brown & Levinson's politeness theory to examine how the country leader presented an idea that contrasted the public's belief and fear. While this present study acknowledged that the natural disaster is no longer a hot issue, the significance of this analysis may aid leaders on how to communicate a seemingly polarizing content or statement to the given current situation (Junaidi, Yandra, & Hamuddin, 2018).

Brown and Levinson (1987), who were inspired by Goffman (1967), that being polite is caring about the "face" or "face," both of the speaker, and of the speech partner. "Face," in this case, is not in the sense of physical appearance, but "face" in the sense of a public image, or perhaps the exact equivalent of the word is "self-esteem" in the eyes of the public.

The face concept has its roots in traditional concepts in China, which were developed by Confucius in relation to human values (Aziz, 2008). Regarding the face, in Chinese tradition, it is attached to a social attribute that is self-esteem, an award given by society, or owned individually. The face is a "community loan," as an academic degree is given by a college, which can be withdrawn at any time by the one who gives. Therefore, the owner of the face must be careful in behaving, including in language.

Brown and Levinson (1987) state that face is a personal attribute possessed by every human being and is universal. In this theory, faces are divided into two types: faces with positive desires, and faces with negative desires. A positive face is related

to the values of solidarity, informality, recognition, and inconsistency. Meanwhile, the negative face boils down to one's desire to remain independent, free from outside interference, and the existence of external respect for that independence (Aziz, 2008). Seeing that the face has values as mentioned, the values are worth keeping, and one way is through polite language patterns, which do not damage the values of the face.

Politeness has a different meaning from the regular use of politeness (Hamuddin, 2012). The word polite means to show respect for the speech partner, while the word polite means the language (or behavior) based on the social distance between the speaker and the speech partner (Hamuddin & Wardi, 2017). The concept of the face above is really related to the issue of politeness and not politeness. The respect shown through language may be polite, the article is, polite language will preserve the face if the speaker and speech partner have a great social distance (for example between lecturers and students, or children and fathers). However, being polite in language often does not have the effect of being polite, especially if the speaker and speech partner do not have great social distance, such as colleagues, girlfriend, and etc. (Hamuddin & Noor, 2015). To better understand the concept of this face, the article will present the following examples, both positive and negative faces, in the concept of politeness in language.

The theory of politeness is suitable to be used in handling incidents on the island of Bali on November 27, 2017 the eruption of Mount Agung so that residents become panicked and worried because of the incident with concept face strategies.

## 2. Literature Review

Susanti et al. (2018) found that President Joko Widodo in his speaking used a strategy that reflects the character of a head of state, namely, maintaining politeness in order to avoid

misunderstandings and conflicts that arise. Similarly, Risa Mufliharsi and Heppy Atma Pratiwi (2018) found that the vlogs applied politeness strategies even in informal situation both vlogs. Burhanuddin and Sumarlam (2015) found that mainly caused by the socio-cultural inferences, which influence the speaker to perform speech acts. Nurul Fitriani and Tri Pujianti (2018) found that obtain an overall understanding of indirect speech acts found in some State Address by the President of Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, regarding various things. Syaifudin N, Zain (2013) found that the form of implicature in Jokowi's speech contains some mean affects, refusal, convincing, quips, rule, forbidding, threatening, clarification, and complain. Paiman Raharjo (2016) found that Jokowi mostly uses a communication style as a doer, promoting fast move, to the point, and results-oriented; no wonder if people call him as a Regional Head who likes conducting "blusukan" directly to the field.

### 3. Method

The approach applied in this study is a qualitative approach to cope with the data being in the form of spoken words and observed behavior. The data was obtained from YouTube as Jokowi's blog is accessible for anyone, specifically the video with the hashtag #BaliAman. This qualitative research aims to build a natural perception of an object, so researchers may obtain an insight to the object as a whole. Thus, the approach used in this study is a structural approach. This approach is carried out by clarifying and describing the contents of the video #BaliAman in the context of politeness.

### 4. Result

Based on the review of articles and books on Brown & Levinson's theory, several types of the strategies were found, there are:

(1) Saying something as it is (bald-on record). People directly address the other as a means of expressing our needs. It is

usually used in emergency situations, regardless of who is being addressed, such as "Don't touch that! Get out of here!" This bald-on record form may be followed by expression like "please and would you" which serve to soften the demand and are called mitigating devices.

(2) Off record. We utter no word but give hints. For example, when we need to borrow a pen, we just search rather obviously through our pocket and then rummage in our bag. Even if we need to say something, we do not actually have to ask for anything. We might just simply say, "Uh, I forgot my pen".

(3) On record Positive Politeness and Negative Politeness. This leads the speaker to appeal to a common goal and even friendship through expressions such as, "How about letting me use your pen?" Such on-record expression often represents a greater risk for the speaker to get a refusal. However, in most English-speaking context an FSA is more commonly performed via a negative politeness strategy.

### 5. Discussion

Based on the results, this present study found 3 types of politeness strategies:

#### 5.1 Positive Face

The positive face is related to the values of intimacy between the speaker and the speech partner. Consider the following example of an Angkot driver conversation (sorry if this example contains harsh words):

Driver A : (Mus, have you heard from your STNK that was detained by the police?)

Driver B: (eh drunkard, since when do you care about my problem? Not yet, don't know maybe they have already burned ...)

Driver A : (Ah ... just give 150 money so they take care of it as soon as possible ...)

Driver B: (Gosh, you think the police are your in-laws? I tried, but they don't want to).

For a moment if seen, a brief conversation between the two angkot drivers seemed rude, not polite. Maybe some think that it's natural for them to communicate like this, arguing that they are close friends, and may have little education. There is nothing wrong with these opinions. From the politeness aspect, the way they communicate is odd; but from the politeness aspect, through the positive face concept, this way of communicating is to preserve each other's faces.

Speech driver B has a positive charge so that the distance between them (driver A and driver B) is maintained. Said driver B, by saying "drunkard" is to show the closeness of social distance, camaraderie sense, so that psychologically there is no distance either. The closeness of social distance that is reflected by the use of language as above has a positive face value. If driver B responds to driver A's question with polite rhythm like "there is no news sir ..." then of course the social distance between them becomes tenuous, and their faces are threatened.

The purpose of face threatening is to threaten identity as close friends, konco, and so on. The central issue of threatening the face is the estrangement of social distance caused by the use of language that is relatively impolite, or does not meet the rules of positive facial concepts.

In the #BaliAman video, an example on the use of positive face is President Joko Widodo uploading a vlog that tries to give back to the community the level of security in the island of Bali after the eruption of Mount Agung. President Joko Widodo represented his image as the country's leader who was able to provide a sense of security for the people. With the video, Jokowi reached the goal of deflecting the original public opinion that Bali is disaster-

prone as he gave a strong promotion on the idea that Bali is safe.

### 5.2 Negative Face

The negative face of the speaker and the speech partner expect the preservation of the values of intimacy, informality, inconvenience, then this negative face where the speaker and the speech partner expect social distance. Consider the example of a conversation between two angkot passengers who don't know each other below:

Passenger A: (Sorry, I'm still asking, is Sasa still far from here?)

Passenger B: (Wow, bro, it's now arrived at Kastela. Where do you want to go?)

Passenger A: (I told the driver I wanted to get off at Sasa, sorry, so is Sasa still far away?)

Passenger B: It's not that it's still mas, but it's so jao. Maybe lebe bae mas will go down here, and then I'll just take it from him, then say he will go down at Sasa. (It's not that it's still far, bro, but it's already too far. Maybe it's better to just get off here, then take another angkot from the south, then say get off at Sasa).

Passenger A: Wow, thank you e? (Wow, thank you?)

Passenger B: You're welcome, sir (you're welcome).

It is very clear that the two participants (speaker and speech partner) in this conversation showed intimacy, or formality. This can be seen from the use of the word "sorry" which is repeated twice by passenger A. The use and repetition of the use of the word "sorry" by passenger A is to keep negative face of passenger B. That is, passenger A does not want to seem familiar and at will, and do not want to disturb the individual territory of passenger B.

Like wise with the repeated use of the word "brother" by passenger B, which is a polite greeting for passenger A who is suspected of being a migrant, not a native community. By using and repeating the word "brother", passenger B tries to show that he respects the identity of passenger A as an individual who is valued for his individual attributes, including as migrants and not native people.

Based on the video, an example for negative face is President Joko Widodo inviting the citizens who wanted to take a photo together with Jokowi after the Mount Agung eruption incident. Another example is President Jokowi shaking hands with the local residents even though he did not recognize the residents on the island of Bali so that it could minimize the panic of Balinese citizens about the eruption of Mount Agung.

With both examples, it is clear that in language, we must always consider the social distance between us and the speech partner. The modesty of language does not lie in diction, but rather lies in the level of familiarity or social distance, including age, gender, social strata, and academic strata.

### 5.3 Face Threatening Act

Language can be interpreted as a designation of awareness of the faces of others (Yule, 2006: 104). A person's face will experience threats when a speaker declares something that contains a threat to the expectations of individuals regarding his own good name (p.106).

Face threats through speech act will occur if the speaker and speech partner do not speak the language according to social distance. Consider the following example, where interactions occur between neighbors who are old and young:

The old man : (Heh ... it's already late, why is it so noisy?  
There's no home, huh?)

Young man : (Me, uncle. We apologize).

In the context of interactions like the one above, older speakers do face threatening by saying "no home huh?" This is called face threatening because of the social distance (age and maybe also the distance of intimacy) between them far. In fact, this does not only threaten the faces of young speech partners, even the faces of older speakers themselves. This is caused by the fall of social "self-esteem" by using harsh statements.

Response from young speech partners is a face-saving act; that is by way of doing negative politeness by issuing statements that show awareness of social distance and the negative face of older speakers. That is, young speech partners realize the desire of the face of old speakers to be independent and have the right not to be disturbed.

The threat to this face is also positive and negative. If the speaker and speech partner have a close social distance, then the threat of face is negative. Meanwhile, if the speaker and speech partner have a great social distance, then the threat of the face is positive.

In essence, a positive face is the desire of participants to be accepted by the speech partners as well as the social closeness between them; negative face is the desire to be free from interference, pressure, or interference from other parties, including speech partners. If the desire for a positive face is not achieved in speaking, then the threat is on a positive face. Additionally, if the desire for a negative face is not achieved, then there is a threat to the negative face. The logical consequence of this face threat is losing face, or in simple terms is shame or loss of self-esteem. This act is one that is not found in the #BaliAman video of President Jokowi's

## 6. Conclusion

Based the discussion in the text above, this present study can conclude that the President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, expressed the use of positive and negative faces in his #BaliAman video. Positive face usage is shown by his success in promoting a sense of security for his citizens, whereas negative face usage is shown by his friendly interaction with strangers who were tourists. This present study did not find President Jokowi using the face threatening act at any point of the video's duration.

These results confirm that politeness is centralized at social distance, which at the same time regulates our language manners. Courteous means not threatening the face, not stating things that contain a threat to one's self-esteem, or not tarnishing one's face or one's own face. Further study to analyze the possible creativity on the use of words (Derin et al., 2019) as well as motives (Hamuddin et al., 2019) in the video or other relevant videos may be of interest for future researchers.

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