

The Use of Politeness Strategies by Tourism Practitioners

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Keywords: English, Polite, Tourism, Practitioner.

Abstract: It cannot be denied that people, when talking to others, will try to do their best to make their interlocutors comfortable so that their communication will run well without misunderstanding or hurting each other. For this purpose, people may use polite strategies as expressed in diction, sentence types, or other means. In English, there are some linguistic forms to be applied when one wants to communicate politely. This paper is going to explore what politeness strategies in English needed by tourism practitioners in Yogyakarta. It is based on structured interviews with tourism practitioners such as tour guides, travel agents, receptionists in hotels and money changers, tourism police, and horse cart drivers. It was found out that respondents' English mastery needs improving so that they can communicate more politely. In practice, the respondents tend to be practical. They do not know to apply polite strategies reflected in their English. What matters is that the tourists can understand what they say without considering the proper or polite way as to make their interlocutors comfortable in communication.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the long run, tourism in Indonesian is hoped to be one of the main revenue sources for this country. Consequently, tourism with its all aspects needs developing. One of the aspects of the service given to the tourists is good and polite communication conducted by tourism practitioners so that tourists will feel welcome and stay longer. In this regards the tourism practitioners need strategies to communicate with tourists in the hope that the communication between them can run well.

However, it is not always easy to have good communication for there are some barriers such as language and culture (Holmes, 2001). In language, for example, certain polite linguistic devices for certain occasions such as requests, offers, compliments, apologies, thanks, greetings, leave takings, addressing, and the responses need to be mastered by the practitioners. Foley (2012) puts forwards that politeness is a key to social interaction skills the goal of which is to ensure that everyone interlocutors feel secured in social interaction. Brown and Levinson (1987) point out that politeness strategies are conducted in order to save the hearer's

face, meaning that people try to avoid embarrassing the others, or making them feel uncomfortable in communication. In this sense, when tourists feel comfortable and respected, it is expected that they will stay in this country longer, and more money will be spent on their accommodation needs.

This study will dig out some information on what strategies they used, and their reflection on their English ability in serving the tourists.

2 METHOD OF STUDY

This study is based on some structured interviews with some tourism practitioners. The interviews were conducted in some tourist objects, travel agents, police office, money changers, hotels, and a tourist information center, located in Yogyakarta special territory province. There were twenty respondents who were interviewed in July and August, 2017.

The data were collected by conducting structured interviews, and the voice in the interviews was recorded by using digital voice recorders. The voice was transcribed for further analysis. Some pictures

were also taken at the interview sites. The data were then analyzed to find out the kinds of the strategies that the practitioners applied in communicating, and whether their strategies were appropriate compared to the minimum standard of politeness in English.

3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After the data were analyzed, here are some findings related to the polite strategies that the practitioners have in mind and in practice

3.1 The Importance of Being Polite

Most of the practitioners agree that it is important to be polite to speak to foreign tourists despite their shortcomings in their English proficiency. Being polite is the key to having tourist with them. The failure to be so will result in the tourists' leaving. One of the practitioners said: "*Sangat penting karena ketika pelayanan kurang sopan, tamu asing akan menilainya.*" (It is very important to be polite in serving the tourists. They will be critical in judging our being polite.)

Another practitioner commented: "*Penting sekali karena kalau ga mereka ga akan kecantolke sini dan ga akan beli ke sini.*" (Being polite is very important. If we fail to show our politeness, they will not come to us, and they will not buy something from us)

A tour guide said: "*Sangat penting sebagai wujud kesan pertama.*" (Being polite will give good first impression to tourists).

3.2 Building Communication

In greeting the tourists, the respondents just said that they tried to do their best to greet their foreign guests, and they began to smile and to introduce themselves. One of the respondents mentioned three S's in welcoming his guests, they were *salam*, *sapa*, and *senyum* (greeting, saying hi and smiling). They used very ordinary expressions such as *hi*, *hello*, and *good morning*. They said that it was just a kind of courtesy. Another respondent said that he tended to say "*Hello, good morning, sir. Please sit down, please. My name is A, officer in here. I can help you*". He tried to greet his guests despite his limited English expressions.

3.3 When Communication Breaks Down

When their communication broke down for some reason, the respondents said that they apologized but they seldom explained their reason in detail due to their limited knowledge on how to deal with the problem. One respondent mentioned that it was more difficult when the guest was from France. He might just say "*Excuse me*". Sometimes they tried to use google translate to cope with the problem

3.3 Giving Compliments

To give compliments to the tourists, many of the respondents said that they seldom gave compliments. One respondent mentioned that he just said "*Nice choices. You look so great. Thanks for coming here. I hope we can make for the other chance*" when giving compliments. They did not use the expressions by using *what ...!* or *how ... !*

3.4 Asking

To raise questions the respondents tended to use the basic forms of questions such as "*Hallo, can I help you?, May I help you, Can I help you?* and *Do you need my help?* They did not use the polite forms by using expressions beginning with *Would you ...*, *Could you...*, *Do you mind if ...*, or *What if ...* .

3.5 Answering Question

When answering questions, the respondents tried to behave politely though they did not know exactly how to answer questions politely in English. One respondent said: "*Pertama saya bilang juga sama dia, mohon maaf karena bahasa saya juga tidak begitu lancar ya, tidak begitu bagus ... kalau kita sudah merendah duluan ... biasanya dia juga sudah tahu, jadi dia tidak mempermasalahkan kekurangan kita.*" (First, I will tell him that my English is not good. So I apologize. Once we apologize, he will understand and will not care much about our weakness)

3.6 Offering

When the respondents offered something to the tourists, they tended to raise questions first by

saying such as “*Have you visited Bali?, Have you been to Borobudur? or Have you seen the ballet?*” One respondent said that he might say, for example, “*We have some tour and massage for you. If you need we can arrange for you*” when he offered a package tour. They did not say “*what if ...?, or how about ...?*”

3.7 Rejecting

To reject a guest's offer or request, respondents tended to say *sorry* followed by some reasons. They said, “*Sorry, we don't have it, Sorry, we don't serve it, Sorry, I can't, or Sorry we don't have it for you*”. They did not use expressions such as *I would love to ... but ...*, or *I would be ... , but ...* One respondent said that he had to be very careful in rejecting. One respondent said, “*Biasanya kita ngomongnya pelan aja, tidak terlalu keras, sopan juga.*” (We usually speak softly, not too loudly, but politely)

3.8 Getting Mad

When the tourists got mad, the respondents said that they just apologized by saying “*Sorry for that*” or *I'm sorry* and tried to comfort them. One respondent said, “*Mereka jarang sekali marah.*” (They rarely get mad). Mostly, tourists got mad because the respondents could not be on time.

3.9 Response to Complaint

To respond to a complaint, the respondents told that they apologized and offered some help by saying, for example, “*Sorry for the inconvenient. We'll do for the better What can I do for you Sir, Miss.*” One respondent mentioned that he apologized and offered some help by saying, for example, *what can I do for you Sir, Miss?*

3.10 Misunderstanding

When there was misunderstanding between the respondents and the tourists, the respondents apologized and explained the cause. One of the respondent said, “*Kita minta maaf. Kita terangkan yang berlangsung di sana begini.*” (We apologized and explained what was really going on). Another respondent said, “*Biasanya dengan bahasa tubuh orang itu sudah tahu, sudah paham.*” (We usually use body language, and they already understand)

3.11 Saying No

To say no, the practitioners tended to use simple language such as “*I'm so sorry, Sorry, I don't have it for you, We can't help you and We can't help you*”. The respondents did not use expressions such as *It sounds great, but ...*, *Wouldn't it better if ...*, or *I'd love to, but ...*

3.12 Closing

In closing a conversation, the respondents used common expressions such as “*Thank you, Enjoy your vacation, Have a nice day and Take care of yourself*”. They did not say expressions such as “*I will see you later, I will see you again, I will see you around.*”

3.13 Using Gadget

When asked about the use of gadget in their work, most of the respondents said that they used it to facilitate their business. Their gadget could help them communicate, and could also help them find some terms in their profession supposed they had not understood them yet. One respondent said that about 95% of the practitioners used a gadget to help them in their work.

3.14 The Use of Technology

When they were asked whether they were willing to use a program to help them in their profession via android, most of them agreed to use it. One respondent said, “*Sangat bersedia*” (Very willing to use it). Another respondent said, “*Sangat setuju*” (Strongly agree)

Based on the interviews, it was found out that the tourism practitioners agreed that politeness was very important in their profession. They said that politeness in English conversation played an important role to maintain good communication so that the tourists would feel welcome to be with them. By so doing, they could make their guests stay with them longer.

In real communication, politeness is often neglected. Those who do not have background study of English do not pay much attention to the politeness in talking with tourists. Most of the practitioners just want to be effective and practical in their jobs, neglecting the politeness strategies that

may affect their next business. Mostly, they do not want to use complicated and theoretical expressions of English. They tend to use the practical ones.

They do not care much about the expressions of politeness in maintaining a conversation. They do not know much about how to express some polite gambits in English. They have little knowledge about the variation of the degree of the politeness. Take for example, when they are asking something, they say "*Can I help you?*" instead of saying "*Could I help you?*", "*Do you need help?*" instead of saying "*Would you like me to do something, Sir?*", "*You like coffee?*" instead of "*Would you like some coffee?*".

They tend to say something directly and bluntly in order to be closer to the tourists and to be effective so that they ignore the formal expression, for instance when they are asking, they say "*Come in please, where are you going?*" instead of saying "*Would you come in please, where would you like to go?*"

Tourism practitioners who have good background of English will pay much attention in politeness because they know how to use the variety of polite gambits in English. They usually have enough knowledge about cross-cultural understanding. They maintain a conversation with tourists by using politeness strategies. They know how to cope with misunderstanding in a polite way.

It was found out that to communicate with tourist, the tourist guides often used gestures or body language. When the communication broke down, they just said sorry. The utterances they used are just simple and humble. In fact, they need some kind of knowledge on how to communicate with tourists politely.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Tourism practitioners realize that it is very important to be polite to the tourist when they communicate. Being polite will make the tourist feel comfortable and welcome, and in return the tourists will stay longer with them, or they will make successful deals in business.

To communicate with tourists politely, tourism practitioners tend to use simple expressions due to their lack of knowledge of politeness strategies. What they practice is just enough to be able to communicate in a simple way. They just want to be simple and practical without knowing the impact of what they say to the tourists.

Tourism practitioners need some kind of training to enable them to communicate with tourists politely. They lack knowledge of certain polite

expressions in English. They need some kind of manual or program that they can refer to any time they want to communicate in a polite way. Examples of polite English expressions in their job are needed.

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