CONVERSATIONAL OPENING IN ACEHNESE:

THE PRAGMATIC PERFORMANCE OF NATIVE SPEAKERS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine and analyze the conversational opening in Acehnese and the pragmatic performance of native speakers. This research uses descriptive qualitative method which refers to the native speakers of Acehnese usually enggage in lengthy opening with include several Phatic Inquiries (PIs) and Phatic Responses (PRs). As the data have shown, The data were obtained through observation, conducted in Ulee Kreng Banda Aceh. Acehnese conversational openings are initiated differently depending on the age of participants. The intial opening sequence may be a PI followed by a PR when participants are of the same age. Where there is a age different between the interlocutors, this PI/PR sequence must be preceded by a respectful greeting sequence. The younger participants initiated the opening by using a respectful geeting form.

Keywords: Conversational Openings, Pragmatic Performance, Acehnese.

INTRODUCTION:

According to Meriam webster online dictionary, "*a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior*" (Merriam Webster, 2017). The need to communicate, naturally develops the 'first language' in human beings. One learns how to communicate i.e., send and receive messages in an effective manner so as to accomplish the social goals i.e., living together. It is a common definition that communication is just transmitting the information (Communication Theory, 2013, pp. 5). Communication is governed by certain set of rules that specify certain things in a conversation like who can participle, who initiates it, how turns are taken, who choose the form of address, and so on. All these entities may vary from one speech comunity to another. Acehnese language (Achinese) is a Malayo-Polynesian language spoken by Acehnese people natively in Aceh, Sumatra, Indonesia. This language is being used by more than 3.5 million people in Indonesian region (Ethnologue, 2000)

RESEARCH PROBLEM AND AIM OF THE STUDY:

In the current research, the researcher intended to identify the answer for the research question, how do Native Speakers (NS) of Acehnese open a conversation? It is a known fact that the way how conversations are opened is important discourse function in Acehnese community and that the children of Acehnese, from a very early age, are taught with the art of greeting, and they are reprimanded if they do not perform this function appropriately. So this reseach has been planned on how speakers of Acehnese perform this important aspect of discourse. The need for such a study is that the specified population looks for the art of greeting from the early childhood and no such studies were conducted so far in this context and setting according to the researcher's knowledge. Further, a number of studies regarding pragmatics and language learning were conducted only focusing the performance of language learners, leaving the conversational opening arena. It is important to examine the pragmatic knowledge of learners of the language as well.

This study is aimed at examining how the native speakers of Acehnese open conversation. Either it may be for the researchers or for the goverment, it is important to examine the pragmatic knowledge of the languages among the learners. As it is known that Acehnese is one of the language in Indonesia. By doing this study, hopefully we know the culture or tradition how Acehnese behave.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Communication:

Cristcal (1991) opined that communication is one another form of transmitting information from a source to the receiver with the help of a signaling system. In terms of linguistics, both source as well as the receiver are interpreted as human beings whereas the system mentioned is 'language' and the notion of responding to the message plays a critical role here. Human beings can communicate within themselves using any one or more than one sensory modes such as hearing, sight etc., available to them. A variety of these modes present in the communicative activity occur in simotics. In contract, psychologists differentiate the communication into two such as verbal and non-verbal in which the latter uses facial expressions, gestures as a form of communication without any need for linguistic features of communication. But the ambiguity of the terminology, verbal communication denotes that language is just words uttered between the human beings for communication and limited only to linguistics.

Grice's theory of Conversation:

A number of analyses were performed by various philosophers to discuss the gricean analysis of communication who had the primary concern to define the terms, 'meaning' and 'communication'. Generally, communication need not necessarily to involve a distinct and homogenous set of empirical phenomena. The primary aim is to find out the unexplored mechanisms in human psychology on how human beings communicate with one another. These unexplored mechanisms should be considered as a theoretical base for psychologically-well founded definition and typology of communication, though such a definition is challenging.

Grice's analysis is such a possible option for the theoretical account mentioned above. However, grice's analysis still possess the disadvantage of explaining the communication in a poor manner, not to mention in a vague manner. This code model do get the merit of explaining the process of how communication could be achieved in principle. Though it doesn't fail on the explanatory part, but it does so on descriptive side. There is no encoded and decoded thoughts exists in the human being communication. The tempting to get back to code model is always powerful until the inferential model is not developed as a plausible explanatory account of

communication. But, the base for such an account is put forth by Grice's another work called 'Williem James lectures. In that work, he goes on to explain the views that communication is governed by a co-operative principle and maxims of conversation (wilson & Sperber, 1995).

This Grice calls the co-operative principle. He then develops into 9 maxims classified into four categories:

1. Maxims of quantity
   a. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange)
   b. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
2. Maxims of quality
   a. Do say what you believe to be false
   b. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence
3. Maxims of relation
   a. Be relevant
4. Maxims of manner
5. Supermaxims: Be perspicuous
   a. Avoid obscurity of expression
   b. Avoid of ambiguity
   c. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)
   d. Be orderly

Adding to the above, (wahab, 1998) explains that the people are directed by four general principles who are talking about what to do in order to obtain maximum results, efficient, rational and cooperative. For that he must speak honestly, relevant, clear and willing to provide sufficient information required.

Method of Study:

This study is a systematic process of collecting the data and analyzing the information in order to achieve the goal (Emzir, 2010). The current study is about how conversational opening in Acehnese occurs. This research deploys descriptive qualitative method which refers to the native speakers of Acehnese who usually engage in lengthy opening that includes include several Phatic Inquiries (PIs) and Phatic Responses (PRs). It was inferred from the data that (The data was obtained through observation conducted in Ulee Kreng Banda Aceh) acehnese conversational openings are initiated differently based on the age of the participle.

The writer emphasizes the note through strong description of the sentences that describe the actual situation to support the presentation of the data. Therefore, qualitative research is generally referred as 'qualitative descriptive approach' (Satori, 2012).

This method is used based on several considerations Of which the first is, this method is easier to use in the form of the text analysis research. Second, this method presents the direct nature of the relationship between the researcher and the data sources. Third, this method is more sensitive and able to adjust for sharpening the value patterns encountered (J.M.L, 2007).

The Activities of Communication:

Prior to the discussion regarding components in a conversational opening and age as a parameter, it is useful to highlight the activities of communications in general. There are three basic activities one usually engages in, during the communication process: Expression of intention (send messages), Interpretation of intentions (receive messages), and Negotiation of the intention of these messages (Back, 1994).

Expressing Intention:

A lot of parental effort is directed when a child is learning the native language towards the teaching on how to express the intentions in a socially acceptable manner and how to interpret the intentions of others. Because this training is such an integral part of the native people's early language learning.

One must come to believe that there is certainly only one right way to send and receive messages. Right way defines that one must learn to evaluate the messages according to the rules of interpretations. It is possible to act negetively when message is received in the way which we do not understand or expect (Grice, 1989)

Interpreting Messages:

Learning to interpret what others mean is also complicated. Because we learn early to interpret meanings by the form of expressions, a person uses. There is much room for misunderstanding in this case which may lead us to

make value judgments and get convinced, that a speaker is not sincere, dishonest, or disrespectful at the instance when we misread the intentions or the significance of a message within social settings.

One example for the need to 'use and understand' the socially appropriate messages, is in the determinations, when a speaker has said 'no'. In many languages and societies, people usually do not say 'no' directlly. Instead, they have different way to express their refusal.

Negotiating the meaning:

A speaker's meaning need not be always perfect and clear, and in some cases, messages might be deliberately ambiguous. Negotiations is possible and indeed often in Acehnese, an invitation is sometimes negotiated. Negotiotion may also takes place to determine whether a response is a definite no.

Recognizing when the word no is actually meant to take a great deal of social knowledge and learning. Expressing, interpreting and negotiating the meaning are parts of the normal communication process (Back & Harnish, 1979). And, of course, in conversational openings too, these play an important role.

The Components of a Conversational Opening:

A conversational opening in Acehnese consist of several parts. The major part in conversational openings is made up of Phatic Inquiries (PIs) and Phatic Responses (PRs). Kasper (1989) defined 'Phatic Inquiry' as a ritualised inquiry after the interlocutor's wellbeing, realized by a routine formula: it has an eliciting dicourse function. He further defines a Phatic reply as a ritualised response to Phatic Inquiry realized by a routine formula; it has responding discourse function. For example, *Assalamualaikum* and following by *Peu Haba*? 'How are you?" are routines formulae for PIs in Acehnese society. And the respective routine formulae for PRs are "Wa*'alaikumsalam, haba get, I fine, etc*".

The rapidity in which PLs and PRs are produced results in either PI/PR overlap, PI/PI overlap, or two PIs in row. Another part of acehnese conversational opening is a respectful greeting sequence which usually precedes the PI/PR sequence when there is an age difference between participants in a conversation.

The younger person is expected to use the greeting like *Pakiban haba droneuh, sehat?* Sir Are you fine?' and the older person responds with the routine formula, *Alhamdulillah, got that meudeh,* meaning. All the praises and thanks are to Allah, I am very fine". A verbal recognition like calling out somebody's name or an expression of joy at meeting another person, is another kind of a conversational opening in Acehnese. It may precede the PI/PR sequence or the respectful greeting sequence. For example:

"Peu haba adoe meutuah? (How are you my lovely brother/sister?).

"Aneuk keumum, peu haba gata? "(How are you nephew?)

"Hai Mae, peu haba gata"? (Hi Mae, how are you?

All the above sequences are preceded by a term of religious opening *Assalamua'alaikum* means peace be on you all. Moreover, this term is always used when one visits the house of another person.

Age as a Parameter:

Conversational openings differ based on the age of the interlocutors. When there is an age difference, it is considered polite for the younger participant to initiate the opening by using a respectful greeting from. Then the older person will respond and take an active role in the prduction of PIs. The younger person has a little passive role and produced PRs with limited Pis as well. If the participants are in the same age, sometimes, no respectful form is required and both participants compete for the active role of producing PIs. (The data was collected through observation in lamgapang Ulee Kreng Banda Aceh)

Conversation – 1: Different age dialogue; PI domination:

Tenglu Daud (45 year old) and Ridha (29 year old)

Ali   : *Assalamualaikum,* Tengku?
          Assalamualaikaum, Master?

Tgk   : *Wa'alaikumsalam*, Peu haba?
          Wa'alaikumsalam, how are you?

Ali   : Haba get Tgk
          Very fine Master

Tgk   : Sinyak pue haba?
          How about your son/daughter

Ali   : Alhamdulillah, sehat that tengku
          Alhamdulillah, very time Tengku

Tgk   : Ayah ngon Mie, peu na haba?
          News of your father and mather?

Ali   : Ureung nyan ban dua sehat that, saleum ke Teungku.

Both of them are very time, they send regard to you, Master

Tgk   : eh, eh treb that ka kamoe hana meurumpok, Mak aneuk miet hantom leumah lee peu   ka saket Hi, hi, it is very long we do not meet each other, how about conditions of the mather of your son/daughter, I never seen her, is she sick?

Ali   : Hana Teungku, tanyoe ka na aneuk miet ka dalee di rumoh
        No, she is fine. There are lot of housework to do

Conversation – 2: PI competiton, partial overlap

Husen and Abdurrahman are very close friends, they are in the same age group of around 28 and have not seen each other for a long time (The data was collected through observation in lamgapang Ulee Kreng Banda Aceh).

H   : Hai ... ?
        Hi ... ?

A   : Bak buo dok, peu haba?
        Fuck, how are you?

H   : Get hai ballot, kiban hai gata?
        Fine, how about you?

A   : Kee sit meu sabe, kiban ureung di rumoh?
        I haven't changed, news of your family?

H   : Sehat
        Fine

A   : Aneuk miet pakiban?
        How is your child?

H   : Ha ha si gam loen gadoh dijak drop bacee, dron?
        Ha ha my son has grown up well, your son?

A   : Bacut sahoe sit, gadoh nyan aneuk krup,
        He he, ata inoeng kiban?
        Same, he is very active now, he he how about your daughter

A   : Sehat, boh jak ta mita kupi?
        She is fine, lets have a cup of caffe

H   : Kee cit nyan kupreh
        I'm waiting for that

When the participant have the same age or they are close friends, each of the participant for an active role and may start speak as soon as the other person has stopped of course where a repectful form is not required. It is possible that one participant may dominate the PIs at the beginning by producing it at a rapid tempo even before the PRs of the other participant are complete, causing partial overlaps between PIs and PRs as in conversation turns 2 to 7 in example (2). When the other participant gets the floor for the PIs, she/he will try to do the same. In second conversation Husen ask the PIs for, turns 2,4 and 6 and again in turn 8 while the participant A gets the change to ask 1 PIs only in turn 3 and 7.

Sometimes, PI overlap because each participant take active role. The example of a PI overlap is seen in turns 4 and 5 of third conversation in which D initiated PIs and maintained the active role until R managed to take over and produced his second PI in turn 12. In the attempts to maintain an active role, a participant may produce two PIs in a row. D in third conversation, turns 10 and produces two PIs in a row. The first PI is usually ignored and a response is given to the second PI as R did in turn 13.

Conversation – 3: PI/PI total overlap:

In this conversation, Aminah and Juraidah meeting in the street.

A   : Ee ... Dah ... ?
        Hi ..., Dah, stand of Juraidah

J   : O,..., Pue haba Nah?
        O ...How are you Nah, stand for Maimunah

A   : Get, Kah pue haba lee?
        Good and how about you?

J   : Idroeuk keuh hana pue tanyoeng lee?
        I'am very very very fine

A   : Pane ban teuma?
        Where have you been?

J : Ku jak mita boh manok keu Cut Bang dua boh.
  I bought eggs to my lovely husband
A : Kalheuh ku peugah ku yu meukawen laju uroe jehken han ka pateh?
  If only you had had got married several years before
J : Keubit hai paken han uroe jehken .. hi .. hi
  You are right, if only i had done is several years several
A : Teuma pakiban hana jinoe?
  So what you feel now?
J : Hom, hai lage hie han ek tajak sahoe lee
  I do not know. I thinks i should stay home more often
A : Kah kibah na kajep boh manok?
  You laso need eggs, dont you?
J : He he he, neubie ata droeuneuh bacut
  He he he. I need your advise
A : Jeut hai, teuma gobnyan pakiban?
  Oc, How about him, is he fine?
J : Sehat, ka tekhem-khem lam padup uroe nyoe?
  Fine ya he looks like very happy
A : Pokok jieh kah sehat ken?
  The most important thing you are really fine, aren't you?
J : That leupah hi hi hi
  Do not worry about me, hi hi hi

PIs and PRs are recursive in nature and they reoccur after the main topic of a dialogue of following phatic remark. Turns 5,6,7 and 8 of the dialogue in third conversation provide a break in the PI/PR sequence which are resumed in turn 9. Obviously, these speakers do not consider five turns of a conversational opening as complete. Therefore, there is a need to continue with more turns. Recycling of PI/PR sequence occured in several other interactions observed, including telephone conversation. After recycling of PIs and PRs, a new topic may be introduced or the old may be continued.

In official settings, when the participants did not know each other well, opening sessions were short. PIs and PRs, in these situations served the function of attention getters. The dialogue in (4) and (5) were the example of conversational opening at the police station and post office in Banda Aceh.

As the data have shown, Acehnese conversational openings are initiated differently depending on the age of participant. The intial opening sequence may be a PI followed by a PR when participants are of the same age. Where there is a age different between the interlocutors, this PI/PR sequence must be preceded by a respectful greeting sequence. The younger participants initiated the opening by using a respectful greeting form. All the above sequences may be preceded by verbal recognition like calling out the interlocutor's name or an expression of joy.

Conversation – 4: PIs as Attention Getters:
(Nurdin wants to get a driving licence soon and asks Jamal, a policemen, to help him)
N : Assalamua'alaikum .. !
  Assalamua'alaikum ... !
J : Wa'alaikumsalam
  Wa'alaikumsalam
N : Pue haba Pak?
  How are you Sir?
J : Haba get. Peu na haba?
  Fine. What can I do for You?
N : Jadi meuno Pak, neu tulong peuget rebeweh lon siat
  This Sir, help me please to make a driving licence
J : Singoh neu gisa teuma beuh
  Return back tomorrow
N : Jeut Pak
  Oc Sir!

Conversation – 5: PIs as attention getters:
(Lisa wants to gets Ja'far's attentios. Ja'far's is talking to another visitors)
L   : Assalamua'laikum Bang Ja'far?
        Assalamua'laikum Brother Ja'far
J   : Wa'alaikum salam dek, peu haba Dek?
        Wassalamua'laikum salam, What can help me?
L   : Hana sapeu Dek, Bang Ja'far peu haba?
        Nothing Brother, Brother Ja'far How are you?
J   : Haba get Dek
        I am very fine Brother
L   : Neubi amplop dua on
        Would you give me two emplove
J   : Sait Dek beuh
        Oc, wait a moment

CONCLUSION:

In Acehnese, the performance of the native speakers in conversational opening depends on the age of the interlocutors. Mostly, younger person is expected to initiate an opening by using a respectful greeting form. Then, the older person responds and monopolizes the production of PIs while the younger person has the passive role of responding. Moreover, the native speakers of Acehnese who have the same age produce PIs and PRs at a rapid tempo resulting in overlap and successive production of PIs.

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