

## A Closer Look on Linguistic Politeness among Bugis Youth: *Tabék* in Situational and Philosophical Context

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### ABSTRACT

With a more globalized society, the use of politeness language, especially among youths, has been considered in jeopardy. However, the understanding of whether or not the youths are still acknowledging and exercising politeness in their language use is still tiny. This matter is due to a lack of study investigating the politeness language among youths. This study aims to find the politeness formula and speech patterns for three different situational contexts: asking for help, asking for information, and rebuking in the Bugis language. This study uses a mixed quantitative-qualitative method and random sampling to gather 20 youths aged 11 to 21 as participants. The instrument used for the experiment is the Discourse Completion Test to collect the utterances. Data utterances were coded and then analyzed using a concordance and cluster-N-Gram features in the AntConc 3.5.8 application to find the sentence pattern variations with the Bugis word *tabék*. Interpretation of the data uses the theories of Brown & Levinson (1987), Leech (2014), Watts (2003), and Darwis (1995). The analysis revealed (1) the *tabék* politeness formula as a polite sign at the beginning of their speech in all situational contexts and to clarify their intentions. (2) There are several sentence patterns used by the Bugis youths for each situational context; six patterns in asking for help, five patterns in asking for information, and eight patterns in rebuking. This finding shows that Bugis youths still understand the philosophy of politeness in their socio-cultural interactions, namely *sipakatau* (mutual humanizing), *sipakaraja* (mutual respect), and *sipakalebhi* (mutual glorification) through various politeness strategies.

### 1. Introduction

Politeness is essential in social interaction to achieve the speech objectives and maintain harmony between the speech interlocutors. In order to accomplish these purposes, speakers should utilize politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983; Watts, 2003). Furthermore, Lakoff (2004) argues that politeness strategies can minimize friction in the interaction. One of the strategies is to use linguistic units of a regional language, referred to as the politeness formula (Schlund, 2014). Schlund (2014) defines the politeness formula as repetitive linguistic units which are stereotypically motivated by their function. For example, the English word 'please' can be considered a politeness formula that functions depending on the social situation. Schlund (2008) also finds that the function becomes a strong motivation for the formal arrangement of Slavic and German politeness formulas. Using a different perspective, Aijmer (2015) examines the impolite function of the

English word 'please' to build or emphasize a harmonious relationship between the interlocutors (rapport-strengthening impoliteness). The use of 'please' is regarded as a mock impoliteness and should be understood positively because youths consider this word funny and entertaining (Aijmer, 2015).

In the Bugis community of South Sulawesi, Indonesia, the Bugis word *tabék* is used as one of the formulas for the politeness strategy. Existing literature about *tabék* only addresses the physical aspect accompanying the word (Husnawati, 2018; Jamaluddin, 2016). Husnawati (2018) and Jamaluddin (2016) also add that there has been a shift in the use of the word *tabék* in social interaction, especially among youths. The present article evaluates the linguistic aspect associated with the Bugis word *tabék* as a verbal politeness strategy to achieve specific goals. Two central problems will be addressed: (1) How the Bugis youths use the word *tabék* in their politeness strategies in three different situational contexts, namely asking

for help, asking for information, and rebuking, and (2) How the sentence patterns containing the word *tabék* are in those three different contexts. These problems are based on the argument that differences influence politeness strategies in speech and cultural situations. Leech (1983) argues that several points affect the strategies: the interlocutors, the context of the utterance, the purpose of the utterance, and speech as the form of action and as a product of verbal acts. Furthermore, to address the research problems, the present articles use approaches from the socio-pragmatic perspective (Leech, 2014) and the politeness theory by Brown & Levinson (1987).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Politeness

There have been abundant numbers of research that have been conducted on the topic of politeness. Two could be two main perspectives to view politeness, (1) social appropriateness (Escandell-Vidal, 1996) and (2) functional or strategic politeness (Leech, 1983; Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Social appropriateness is a perspective of politeness based on social adequacy. Furthermore, social adequacy takes the cognitive approach into account, together with two indicators, namely the perspective of a particular context and the expectation of a particular recipient (Meier, 1995; Escandell-Vidal, 1996). According to this approach, language investigation needs to consider the context and the society speaking the particular language. Escandell-Vidal (1996) states that different cultures lead to different categories of factors that contribute to politeness. Therefore, even though abstract notions of factors are universal, there will be some specific contents depending on the peculiarities of particular cultures. Escandell-Vidal (1996) also adds that different cultures can manifest radical differences in their politeness system. In other words, what is considered adequate or polite in one culture can be seen as inappropriate or rude by another person coming from a different culture.

Leech (1983) and Brown & Levinson (1987) analyze politeness as a strategic tool interlocutors use to achieve specific goals. Moreover, functional or strategic politeness is a language behavior carried out to save the face of the interlocutors (Brown & Levinson, 1987), where saving face results from a desire to achieve social approval (Kang, 2011). According to this perspective, politeness is a form of behavior that has been developed in society with the purpose of reducing friction in personal social interaction (Lakoff, 2004). Meanwhile, Fraser & Nolan (1981) describe politeness as a result of conversational contracts made by participants to maintain socio-communicative verbal interactions that are conflict-free. Thus, politeness can be explained as a socio-culturally determined behavior that is directed at establishing and maintaining the state of balance of the personal relationships between individuals of a social

group in their ongoing interaction process, whether the relationships are open or closed (Watts, 2003, p. 52)

Politeness is considered by Leech (1983) to lie in the domain of interpersonal rhetoric, meaning that politeness can be described as the skill of a speaker with the purpose of persuasion when using language. Leech (1983) formulates the Politeness Principle aiming to minimize the expression of impolite beliefs and also promotes six interpersonal maxims. Each of these maxims is associated with a pragmatic score and independent scale. In addition, Leech (1983) explains that politeness in language should pay attention to these maxims. The maxims are (1) the maxim of wisdom or the tact maxim (in the illocutionary and commissive illocutionary), which prioritizes the benefits of others in a conversation, and (2) the generosity maxim (in impositive and commissive illocutions) which prioritize the cost to self rather than the self-benefit of a conversation, (3) the maxim of acceptance or approbation (in expressive and assertive illocutionary) mainly prioritizing the praise or approval of other parties, (4) the modesty maxim (in expressive and assertive illocutions) which maximize dispraise of self, (5) the maxim of suitability or the agreement maxim (in assertive illocution) putting forward the agreement between self and other, and finally (6) the maxim of opportunity or the sympathy maxim (in assertive illocution) which maximizes the sympathy between the self and other. These six maxims suggest that politeness is universal; however, individual linguistic structures and cultural varieties create different expressions and forms. Thus, politeness behavior can be realized differently according to the appropriateness of expressions in certain situations, societies, and cultures.

Brown & Levinson (1987, p. 74) suggest three indicators that can influence the politeness level and the indicators are solidarity, distance, and power. For the present article, we will focus on the power indicator. Power is the ability of a person to impose his or her will on others. One factor which can affect power is the age difference. Conversations between people of different ages often result in different levels of politeness as Mizutani & Mizutani (1987) claim that age differences will have an effect on the formality of the speaker, hence the level of politeness. In Japan, it is a rule that older people speak in a friendly manner to younger people, whereas younger people are expected to speak politely to older people. As people of the same age, they usually use a familiar style of speech in a conversation.

In addition to the age difference, other aspects that might influence the use of politeness strategies are social status, intimacy, and gender. These aspects may also affect the choice of direct and indirect language (Blum-Kulka, 1987). Regarding status, derived from the Latin term 'standing,' Turner (1998) describes it as one's position in society, conferring on one's rights and obligations as a citizen in the political community.

According to Bonvillain (1993), differences in status may be based on the combination of income, employment, and education. This combination results in differences in access to social, economic, and/or political power and reflects inequalities between people with different statuses. Therefore, the choice of polite language may indicate the status of one person. Mizutani & Mizutani (1987) adds that speaking to people with higher status requires one to use a more polite speech, and on the contrary, higher-status people tend to use a common and casual speech to people with lower status. Watts (2003) also notes that politeness may be seen as a sign of upbringing and social status, but it does not necessarily connect to the respect that one has for other individuals.

## 2.2 Bugis: Speech Community and Politeness

The Bugis community of South Sulawesi, Indonesia, recognizes three different ways of speaking in social interaction, based on the context of the speech and the status difference between the speaker and the listener (Mahmud, 2013). The three ways of speaking are speaking *cuku* 'down', speaking *sanraa* 'equally,' and speaking *conga* 'up' (Darwis, 1995). Both speaking *cuku* and *conga* exhibit the difference of power between the interlocutors. In the case of speaking *cuku*, the speaker has more power than the listener, conversely, the speaker has less power than the listener when speaking *conga*. As for speaking *sanraa*, both the speaker and the listener are equal. Brown & Gilma (1968) describe these differences as power and solidarity or social distance between the speaker and the hearer. In addition, Wardhaugh (2006) suggests that social distance, ability, and conversation topics may determine the spoken language choice in the interaction within a speech community. From the perspective of politeness theory, social distance is one of the critical sociological factors in determining the speaker's level of politeness towards the listener (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Moreover, the social distance between the interlocutors also determines the level of civility in interaction, where close social distance tends to create disrespect towards each other (Mahmud, 2013, p. 59).

Respect for others is described within the concept of *Siri na pesse* in Bugis culture (Abdullah, 1985). *Siri* lit. 'shame' is the root of the Bugis philosophy about humanizing each other. The feeling of shame may refer to when Bugis people are insulted, unaccepted, or unequal. By acknowledging the feeling of shame, Bugis people may struggle with *pesse*, shortened from *pesse bebua* lit. 'pain in the stomach'. *Pesse* is about feeling the pain towards others, showing the deep compassion to neighbors, relatives, or fellow members in the society. *Pesse* also signifies the solidarity, not only to someone who has been humiliated, but also to anyone in the community who is suffering from certain illness or misfortune and in need of help (Abdullah, 1985). *Pesse* is also an identity of Bugis people especially those who live in contact with other people from different ethnic groups. *Pesse* is based on the

concept of *sempugi* which can be described as 'sharing the same feeling' or 'showing compassion towards others' (Yatim, 1983). There is a common Bugis saying, 'If a Bugis friend does not feel *siri* from me, at least that Bugis friend will get the *pesse*'. Therefore, solidarity and togetherness among the group members is a vital force, especially among people experiencing the same difficulties in war or among Bugis people living as non-natives in another city or place. In these situations, Bugis people are expected to help whenever needed. This expectation among Bugis people leads to awareness that they belong to the same community and also implies that Bugis people can never forget of fear of losing their honor.

Living as a Bugis means being solid and cooperative towards each other, which has been practiced since ancient times. Bugis people are familiar with communal works, such as doing together all the process of planting the rice, from planting the seed at the rice field, harvesting then selling the harvest, to organizing the harvesting festival as a token of gratitude for the harvest. For Bugis people, *assédینگeng* 'unity' is an integral part of solidarity and togetherness (Mahmud, 2013; Sidin, Rivai, & Bulu, 2020). The Bugis women also take part in the communal work by supporting their husbands' business from home, bringing food to the rice field, and selling the harvest in the market (Pelras, 1996, p. 162). The support of the wife to the husband is called *sibali pari* in the Bugis language, meaning 'sharing joys and sorrows.'

Power and solidarity designate the politeness level of the Bugis people. Gusnawaty (Gusnawaty, 2011, p. 180) finds that Bugis kinship terms are used for three different situations. First, titles describing either the noble strata or occupation are used in situations where the speaker and the hearer have a far distant social status. This is the highest form of greeting among Bugis people. There are two most common noble titles used to indicate social distance, namely *Petta* 'mister/madam' and *puang* 'sir/madam'.

The speech pattern for this situation is begun with a third person pronoun, followed by a noble title, and then ended with an occupation title. The pattern can be seen in the following the sentence, *wettunani Alena mabbicara Petta Camat* 'it is his/her time to speak, he/she mister/madam head of the district'. Second, the relatively distant social status between the speaker and the hearer is indicated by the use of noble title of *puang*. The speech pattern for this situation is a sentence followed by the noble title. For example, *leppaki maé puang* 'you (honorific) should stop by, sir/madam.' This sentence is typically used by a neighbor to ask someone with a noble status to stop by for a visit.

Finally, the least distant social status can be manifested through the use of honorific enclitic for third person *-ki*. The use of third person's context shows politeness and respect for the hearer. To

maintain the harmony of the relationship in the conversation, Bugis people must always utilize any of this pattern, especially in a conversation with people who have higher social status or older, and also with people who are familiar or even stranger. By using the kinship term or honorific enclitic, the hearer would feel respected as a human being. This attitude is reflected in the Bugis proverb, *ada Emmi nariyasekki tau* words reflect one's identity.

Moreover, Bugis people are considered to be complex due to their tough character and respect for others (Pelras, 1996). In implementing those characteristics, Bugis society has three concepts used in Bugis politeness strategies during interactions. The concepts are *sipakatau* 'mutual humanizing', *sipakaraja* 'mutual respect, and *sipakalebbi* 'mutual glorification. Each of these concepts will be explained in the subsequent paragraph.

First, *sipakatau* refers to a human relationship in which people must respect one another, and everybody should be considered equally without discrimination (Sulo, 2018). Moreover, Gusnawaty & Nurwati (2019) point out that *sipakatau* is the general foundation of all aspects of life in the interaction of Bugis people, whether in a formal or informal situation, with younger or older partners, and whether the people are coming from the same or different social status. By applying the concept of *sipakatau*, it means that Bugis people have conformed the context of *sitinaja* 'appropriate, reasonable, fulfilling, and not excessive' in their interaction. Next, *sipakaraja* 'mutual respect' is a social ethic that considers several aspects, such as the participants, the location, the time, and the topic of the interaction. In other words, *sipakaraja* is the way of speaking which shows the speaker's knowledge about the world. Bugis people should understand what and how to say something to anyone, whether in formal or informal situations. A Bugis who implements *sipakaraja* is considered *tau-makkeade* 'a person who keeps his/her ethical manner.' Finally, *sipakalebbi* 'mutual glorification' is the highest conduct of the interaction in Bugis society, whether the actions are verbal or non-verbal (Gusnawaty & Nurwati, 2019). This concept is realized by expressing compliments on other people's courtesy and by forgetting other people's flaws in order to strengthen relationships between each other (Rahim, 2019, p. 34; Sulo, 2018). The implementation of this concept usually uses the highest respect, as indicated by the use of politeness language. For this, interlocutors will usually utilize address terms, politeness formula, indirect speech, honorific markers, and other politeness features.

Bugis language has features of a politeness formula that can be used as a politeness strategy. The term politeness formula is not satisfactory considering it might express something that may not be polite at all, but it can also be neutral or rude. The term politeness formula denotes politeness as a fundamental dimension of analysis rather than a ritualized interpersonal

exchange (Ferguson, 1976). As previously mentioned, politeness formulas are repetitive linguistic elements that are stereotypically associated with politeness and are motivated by their functions (Schlund, 2014). Therefore, politeness formulas should not be limited by the understanding that the actual politeness formulas occurred in natural speech, but the politeness formulas also reflect the speaker's polite intention and the hearer's interpretation.

There are five words serving as politeness formulas in Bugis language, they are *tabek*, *iye*, *tulunga*, *tarimakasi*, and *tadampengekka*. The last formula has several variations, such as *taddampengengenga*, *dampengeng*, *addampengen*, and *ddampengka*. These politeness formulas can be used in various modes of conversation, such as declarative, imperative, and interrogative modes. Moreover, the formulas can also be used in various types of sentences, for example, praising and giving advice, ordering, admonishing, asking for help, and asking for information.

Based on the characteristics of the linguistic forms and contexts, Gusnawaty (2011) finds that Bugis people have three categories of politeness in their interaction: the rude category, the slightly rude category, and the non-rude category. In the rude category, a Bugis person uses familiar personal pronouns or possessive clitics such as *-ko* and *-mo*. The speaker who uses the formula of this category also gives an unexpected answer, disregards the social norms such as the power and the social distance of the others, and is usually in the public domain. The second, the slightly rude category, has the characteristic of using a familiar pronoun and possessive clitics such as *-ko* and *-mo*, in accordance with the social norms. Finally, the non-rude category has the characteristic of personal client *-ki*, possessive clitic *-ta*, sentences with passive form, and the person markers are removed.

### 2.3 Tabék

As mentioned above, *tabék* is one of Bugis's politeness formulas. The term is a loanword from the Sanskrit language, *ksantavya* or *ksantawya*, which means 'greeting', 'goodbye', and 'sorry'. Malay people cannot pronounce the sound /v/. Therefore the sound becomes /b/ when adopted. Thus, the original word changed into *ksantabya*, eventually becoming *santabe* and even *tabék* or *tabik*. In a certain sense, *tabik* also means respectful greetings (Gonda, 1973). As a politeness formula, the word *tabék* has several functions and meanings based on the form of the sentence and the contexts where the word is being used. For example, *tabék* may mean asking for permission, asking for help, or even asking to forgive. Even though Bugis people have a term for asking for forgiveness, that is *méllau dampeng*, *mappatabé* is also used for this context. *Mappatabé* can be expressed in verbal and non-verbal ways (Mahmud, 2011). In social interaction, the word *tabék* is considered a polite word, and the people who use the word are perceived to be

polite and would be appreciated by others (Jamaluddin, 2016).

Moreover, *tabék* is understood by Bugis people as a cultural value that has become a part of their characters and is also recommended to be taught since *tabék* denotes good manners through speech and gestures (Rahim, 1985). Therefore, *tabék* in Bugis society plays a strategic and significant role in building and developing a polite and respectful manner. And at the same time, *tabék* also functions as a politeness strategy within the Bugis speech community.

## 2.4 Request in the Context of Culture and Politeness

In a cultural context, the speech act of request may reveal the language of politeness. A request is determined as a demand made by the speaker for the hearer to do or not to do something or a wish expressing the need or desire for something (Rue & Zhang, 2008). The speech act of request is related to politeness in a way that this particular speech act is a Face Threatening Act (Brown & Levinson, 1987) because a request tends to impose something on the hearer. This aligns with the argument made by Levelt (1989, p. 60) that the purpose of a request is to make the hearer do something. In most cases, the speaker's intention in making a request is to ask the hearer to perform a particular action that is beneficial for the hearer and at the expense of the hearer. Some examples of requests are asking for help, certain information, and even asking the hearer not to do something (or rebuking).

Bugis people consider a request or demanding other people for something as a burden, not only for the speaker but also for the hearer. Therefore, maintaining self-image and the image of others requires specific strategies. According to Leech (2014), the language used for a request should take into consideration the choice of language features, which is appropriate for the context and the speech situation. For this, a politeness strategy should be utilized (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

## 3. Method

The present article uses a mixed method of quantitative and descriptive qualitative research. The research data are utterances in Bugis language, which were collected through an experiment with Discourse Completion Tests or DCT. The DCT contained three different situations that participants were asked to complete. The situations are as follows.

### a) Asking for help

You are doing something important, and you cannot just leave it. There is thunder outside and it is about to rain. You suddenly remember that you dried your clothes or shoes in the yard. What will you say to someone who happens to be around you to ask for help?

### b) Asking for information

You are on the side of the street and confused because you have not found your old friend's house that you are looking for. Luckily, there is someone you can ask for direction. What will you say to the person?

### c) Rebuking

You are attending a seminar in one meeting room. You are being attentive to the presentation given by a speaker. However, at the same time, people who are sitting beside you are having some discussions, and they distract you. What will you say to rebuke them?

The participants were selected using the purposive sampling technique based on their age and gender. There were 20 participants with ages ranging from 11 to 21 years old. The gender distribution of the participants is in balance; there were ten male and ten female participants. All participants were coming from either Barru or Pinrang Regencies. These two locations were chosen since Bugis is the native language for people in these areas and is still commonly used in social interactions.

Moreover, both regencies act as land and maritime hubs for people coming to and leaving Sulawesi. These geographical conditions create opportunities and provide tendencies for people to experience language changes in their social interactions. The data were analyzed using coding stages developed by Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2014). First, the coding is based on three politeness indicators: power, distance, and rank. Each of these indicators has two or three divisions. For example, the power indicator is divided into older, coeval, and younger, the distance indicator is classified into the close or far social distance. In contrast, the rank is about the physical environment of the situation and is divided into private and public rank.

The next stage of coding was based on the situational contexts of the speech, namely asking for help, asking for information or address, and rebuking. In the final stage, the data was processed into the application of AntConc G.5.8 (Anthony, 2005). Before being processed in the application, the data files were converted into txt format. Concordance and cluster/N-Gram features were used to answer the research problems.

Concordance was utilized to find exactly three-row position sequences of *tabék* Keywords in Context (KWIC), whereas cluster/N-Gram obtained the politeness formula patterns of *tabék* for each situational context. The application outputs are summarized in the subsequent tables to make the result analysis more practical, informative, and convenient. The data was validated through discussions between research members and native speakers of Bugis, who acted as the expert judges.

The results were interpreted with a qualitative analysis using the socio-pragmatic perspective (Leech, 2014) and the politeness theory by Brown & Levinson (1987).

The socio-pragmatic perspective pays attention to the pragmatic goals of the speaker, and politeness theory emphasizes the social context in which the interaction occurs.

Four-scale indicators were used to determine the level of politeness of utterances made by the participants, ranging from very polite, polite, and somewhat polite to impolite. In addition, five words functioning as Bugis politeness formula mentioned in the previous sections were used as references. Polite sentences use patterns that have politeness features, namely politeness formulas, polite requests, politeness markers (Watts, 2003), address terms (Brown & Levinson, 1987), and direct or indirect speech (Leech, 2014), and Bugis honorific markers (Darwis, 1995).

The results of this stage were then calculated and classified by the politeness formula pattern of *tabék* used by the Bugis participants.

## 4. Results

The introductory section of the article mentions two research problems that need to be explored. The first is how Bugis youths use the word *tabék* as a politeness strategy in three different contexts, and the second is about the sentence patterns of the politeness strategy, which contain the Bugis word *tabék*. After the analysis of the data, the results exhibit that the participants use several variations of politeness formula patterns with the word *tabék*.

There are six different patterns in the case of asking for help, five sentence patterns in asking for information, and eight patterns for rebuking others in the interaction. The following subsections will describe each of the results of these situational contexts.

### 4.1 The Sentence Pattern Variations of *Tabék* in Asking for Help

The findings below show that the participants use six different variations of sentence patterns with the Bugis word *tabék* as a politeness strategy in asking for help from the hearer. The findings are depicted in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1.** The Sentence Pattern Variations of *Tabék* in the Bugis Politeness Strategy Used by Participants in Asking for Help in a Private Context Situation

No	Order of the Politeness Formula in the context of Asking for Help						%	Remarks	Hearer
	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>			
1	<i>tabék</i>	address term	<i>tatulungka</i> 'you (hon.) help me'	<i>Jolo</i>	direct request	-	45	very polite	older and distant
2	<i>tabék</i>	address terms	-	-	indirect request	-	10	polite	coeval and distant
3	<i>tabék</i>	-	<i>Millau tolongnga</i> 'I would like to ask for help'	-	direct request	-	30	polite	coeval and distant
4	<i>tabék</i>	address term	-	-	direct request	-	5	polite	coeval and close
5	<i>tabék</i>	-	-	-	direct request	<i>Jolo</i>	5	polite	younger and distant
6	<i>tabék</i>	-	-	-	indirect request	-	5	somewhat polite	younger and close
Total							100		

The table above illustrates that the participants use six different sentence patterns with the word *tabék* as the Bugis politeness strategy in asking for help. These speech variations are based on certain physical (rank) and social (age and distance) indicators. The rank indicator is private in which the interaction occurs. As for the social environment, the age indicators of the hearer in the situational contexts are divided into older, similar or coeval, and younger, whereas the distance indicators are close and far distant social status.

As seen in the table, the first pattern is the very polite category, and the majority of the participants (45%) use this pattern to ask for help from an older and socially distant speech partner. There are four politeness features used for this category. The sentence starts with the word *tabék*, followed by an address term and then a request for help, after that the word *jolo* signifying delay, and finally the request itself. The

sentence patterns for the second, third, fourth, and fifth use only two politeness features; thus, the patterns can be considered polite patterns. The use of address terms as in the second and the fourth sentence patterns with direct or indirect request depend on the age and social distance indicators between the speaker and the hearer. Finally, the politeness formula with the combination of the word *tabék* and an indirect request is used by 5% of the participants for a younger and socially closer distant hearer.

#### 4.2 The Sentence Pattern Variations of *Tabék* in Asking for Information

The participants use the word *tabék* to their hearer in the situational context of asking for information, which in this case, information is about the address of the old friend. The analysis results show five variations of the *Tabék*, and the results are described in Table 4.2

**Table 4.2** The Sentence Pattern Variations of *Tabék* in The Bugis Politeness Strategy Used by Participants in Asking Information in a Private Context Situation

No	Order of the Politeness Formula in the context of Asking for Information					%	Remarks	Hearer
	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>			
						33,33		<i>older and distant</i>
1	<i>tabék</i>	address term	<i>meloka makkutana</i> 'I would like to ask'	-	direct question		polite	
2	<i>tabék</i>	address terms	-	-	direct question	7,41	polite	<i>older, close, and distant</i>
3	<i>tabék</i>	-	<i>meloka makkutana</i>	-	-	29,63	polite	<i>coeval/close and distant</i>
4	<i>tabék</i>	-	-	<i>di</i>	direct question	12,96	polite	<i>younger/close and distant</i>
5	<i>tabék</i>	-	-	-	direct question	16,67	somewhat polite	<i>younger/close and distant</i>
Total Hits 54						100		

In Table 4.2. can be seen that participants use two levels of politeness in asking for information from their hearers, namely the polite and somewhat polite levels. The majority of the participants (83.33%) use polite sentence patterns to ask for information, whereas the rest of the participants (16.67%) use somewhat polite sentence patterns. This finding is different from the findings in the situational context of asking for help as in the previous subsection. The most common formula for the politeness strategy is used by 33.33% of the participants for a speech partner who is older and socially distant from the hearer. This formula is considered to be a polite formula. As for the

somewhat polite remark, 16.67% of participants use this formula, consisting of the word *tabék* and followed by a direct question. Compared to similar remarks in the previous situational context, the percentage of somewhat polite for asking for information is relatively high.

### 4.3 The Sentence Pattern Variations of *Tabék* in Rebuking

Table 4.3 illustrates the eight variations of sentence patterns used by participants as a politeness strategy in rebuking the speech partner.

**Table 4.3** The Sentence Pattern Variations of *Tabék* in The Bugis Politeness Strategy Used by Participants in Rebuking in a Public Context Situation

No	Order of the Politeness Formula in the Context of Rebuking						%	Remarks	Hearer
	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>			
1	<i>tabék</i>	address term	-	direct prohibition phrase	<i>cedde</i> 'a little'	-	13,46	polite	older and close
2	<i>tabék</i>	address term	<i>mellau addampengka</i> 'I would like to ask for forgiveness'	direct prohibition phrase	-	-	2,85	polite	older and distant
3	<i>tabék</i>	address term	-	direct prohibition phrase	-	-	11,54	polite	coeval and distant
4	<i>tabék</i>	-	-	direct prohibition phrase	<i>Jolo</i>	-	11,54	polite	coeval and close
5	<i>tabék</i>	-	-	direct prohibition phrase	<i>ladde</i> 'a lot'	-	5,77	polite	coeval and close
6	<i>tabék</i>	-	-	-	<i>di</i>	indirect prohibition phrase	7,7	polite	younger and distant
7	<i>tabék</i>	-	-	-	-	indirect prohibition phrase	26,92	somewhat polite	younger and distant
8	<i>tabék</i>	-	-	direct prohibition phrase	-	-	4,85	somewhat polite	younger and close
Total Hits 20							100		



As shown in the table above, there are eight variations of sentence patterns with the word *tabék* in rebuking. The majority of the participants (26.92%) used the seventh sentence pattern with the politeness formula consisting *tabék* and followed by an indirect prohibition phrase. This formula is used for a younger and socially far speech partner.

This pattern is considered in the level of somewhat polite. The second formula is the least used politeness formula. The sentence pattern begins with the word *tabék*, followed by an address term, then *mellau addampengka*, and ends with a direct prohibition phrase. This formula is categorized in the polite level, with only 2.85% of participants using it.

The results for the situational context of asking for information and rebuking have a similarity in which there is no politeness formula that is in the level of very polite. Furthermore, age and social indicators might have an influence on the variations of the sentence patterns with the word *tabék*.

## 5. Discussion

This study aims at identifying the use of *tabék* as a Bugis politeness strategy to achieve the purposes of asking for help, asking for information, and rebuking in social interactions. The results from the previous section exhibit that the participants use several variations of sentence patterns with the word *tabék* for different situational contexts. The use of the word *tabék* is done as a politeness strategy to the hearer in social interaction. Participants use six variations of sentence patterns with the word *tabék* for the context of asking for help, five variations for the context of asking for address information, and eight variations in the context of rebuking.

Moreover, the results also show that the participants use three different levels of politeness to their hearer in the context of asking for help, namely the level of very polite, polite, and somewhat polite. As for the contexts of asking for address information and rebuking, only sentence patterns with the levels of polite and somewhat polite are obtained. For the level of being very polite, the sentences made by the participants were directed to speech partners who were older and unfamiliar. As Table 4.1.1 indicates, 45% of the participants use these patterns. One of the examples of utterances made by one respondent is *Tabék Daéng, tatulungka jolo taalai sessae* 'Sorry brother/sister, please help me, could you take my clothes.' In this sentence structure, the particular respondent uses four features of Bugis politeness, namely the politeness formula of *tabék*, the address terms of *Daéng*, the politeness phrase of *tatulungka*, a Bugis mitigating word *Jolo*, then ended with the request itself.

This point shows that the respondent understands the basic principles of politeness by considering the speech situation (Leech, 1983, 2014) and the indicators of age dan rank (Blum-Kulka, 1987; Brown &

Levinson, 1987; Mizutani & Mizutani, 1987) when choosing the level of politeness.

The finding that many participants still use a very polite sentence pattern is in line with the understanding among Bugis people, especially when asking for help. As mentioned before, this situational context demands other people to do something, which can be considered a burden or Face Threatening Acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987) for both the speaker and the hearer. Moreover, this speech situation (Leech, 2014) has the burden of maintaining self-image and the image of others (Gusnawaty, 2009; Mattulada, 1997). Therefore, youths are expected to use the highest level of politeness since the purpose of a request is to make the speech partner do what the speaker wants (Levelt, 1989). Based on these findings, it can be argued that the participants still understand the principle of politeness as a way to achieve goals and as a part of the character of the Bugis community.

All the sentence patterns in the tables in the previous section show that the word *tabék* is always used before the phrase or sentence of requesting, questioning, and prohibiting. This choice of word order signifies the assertive character of Bugis people and their respect towards each other when having an interaction (Pelras, 1996). Some sentence patterns in the context of asking for help have a direct and indirect request in them. The direct sentence is referred to by Brown & Levinson (1987) as bald-on-record, where the strategy behind the use of this type of sentence is to minimize pleasantries and avoid obscurity. According to Rimbang & Kapoh (2020) and Riyanto (2017), the use of direct sentences is because of the influence of social media use as an interaction platform. As in the case of Bugis language, direct sentences have three categories based on the linguistic form and context characteristics. The categories are the rude category, the slightly rude category, and the non-rude category. The first category is the rude category which uses familiar personal and possessive clitics such as *-ko* or *-mo*. For this category, the speaker gives an unexpected answer to social norms. It can also signify that the speaker has no power, far social distance, and is in the public domain. The second, the slightly rude category, uses familiar personal or possessive clitics, such as *-ko* and *-mo* as well to follow the social norms. And finally, the non-rude category has the characteristic of personal clitic *-ki*, possessive clitic *-ta*, sentences with the passive form, and the person markers being removed (Gusnawaty, 2011).

The variations in the use of the word *tabék* can be addressed from the aspects of macro, meso, and micro. First, the macro aspect in the politeness perspective is the speech situation (Leech, 1983, 2014) which includes the politeness indicators and the goal(s) of utterances. The power or age indicators are between the interlocutors whether the speech partner or the hearer is older, coeval, or younger than the speaker. The social distance indicators are either close or far

social distance. And for the rank indicators are private or public context situations. As for the goals of utterances, there are three, namely asking for help, asking for address information, and asking to be quiet or rebuking. Second, the micro aspect in the politeness perspective is the interlocutors themselves. And finally, the meso aspect is the aspect that bridges between the macro and micro aspects, which in this case is the speech of Bugis. It can be argued that the Bugis youths are good at using variations of the *tabék* as a politeness strategy towards their interlocutors. However, this group tends to ignore the use of very polite speech toward the speech partner, especially to people who are older than them.

The results of the present experiment show some differences compared to previous studies, especially in the experiments' methodologies, locations, and samples. The research by Jamaluddin (2016) used qualitative methods regarding the tradition of *mappatabék* in social interaction. The research was conducted in the District of Pulau Sembilan, Sinjai Regency. The results of this research show that there is a shift in *mappatabék* tradition because of the influence of information technology. As for the findings of the research by Husnawati (2018), *mappatabék* has a symbolic meaning of respect towards others which can be done with gestures by bending the body, and the right hand is directed downwards. Husnawati (2018) also finds several perceptions about the meaning of *tabék*, such as asking for permission, asking for help, soft language in rebuking others, an initial greeting, and at the same time, apologizing when youths have made a mistake. Similar to Jamaluddin's (2016) methodology, the research findings were also obtained through a qualitative descriptive method where the data was in the forms of verbal and non-verbal of a community tradition in Kajuara District, Bone Regency.

The research results should drive the policymakers to maintain awareness and understanding of the polite language of the youths. One of the policies that can be undertaken should encourage positive characters through education. The form of this education should overcome the fundamental causes of the shift in youth's linguistic politeness. Language teaching, both regulatory and practical aspects, should be a part of this education. The current regulatory aspect shows that the character or behavior of politeness in the language is not included among the eighteen characters that are prioritized by the government. Moreover, in the practical aspect, the existing model and integration of the development of politeness in language, either in informal and/or non-formal educational institutions, are not yet optimal. This argument is supported by Rohali (2011), who argues that a character-building education needs to be explored and reinstated in the learning process. The existing forms of development need to be improved (Putra, Imron, & Benty, 2020) because politeness in a language plays an essential role

in building the positive character of the youths, as well as in representing the national identity (Zamzani, Musfiroh, Maslakhah, Listyorini, & R., 2011). Therefore, a character-building education as a pillar must be integrated into various subjects and adapted according to each subject's characteristics (Nurgiyantoro & Efendi, 2013). It is feasible to argue that there could be some disadvantages for the youth with a low level of politeness in global interaction. For instance, the youth will face problems or difficulties in building interactions with other people, either with prospective employers or colleagues. Research exhibits that a global interaction requires a person to have communication and negotiation skills (Wibowo, 2019).

This research provides conceptual implications for the need for a new perspective in politeness research. Research and development of politeness learning models may draw sources from the local wisdom and regional languages (Alam & Al-Muthmainnah, 2020). One local wisdom regarding the ancient Bugis people is that children were taught to use euphemistic speech or strategies referred to as *masobe* in the Bugis language. By practicing *masobe*, the children would not attack the integrity of the elders or make the elders lose their face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Children should also be taught about the most basic forms of speech to have a successful conversation, that is, to greet and address the elders appropriately (Salifu, 2010). Putra, Imron, & Benty (2020) argue that three factors can be obstacles to developing politeness in language use. The factors are environmental factors, the factor of student diversity, and the factor of not making the right friends. Therefore, the education for character building and politeness in a language requires the cooperation of all parties and the existence of a standard development model.

## 6. Conclusion

The results show that Bugis youths still apply politeness strategies in social interactions and understand the philosophical context by using the word *tabék* as a politeness formula in various sentence patterns and various situational context. There are six variations of sentence patterns in asking for help, five sentence patterns in asking for address information, and eight variations in sentence patterns for the situational context of rebuking. However, direct sentences are also quite common to be used by the Bugis youths regardless of the speech events. Other finding also showed that the Bugis philosophical concepts of *sipakatau*, *sipakaraja*, and *sipakalebbi* which are regarded as the Bugis politeness strategies are connected to Leech's (1983) concept of the speech events as well as *sitinaja* (Bugis) 'appropriate, reasonable, fulfilling, and not excessive'. The application of these strategies may help to establish solidarity in the social interactions between the members of the Bugis community. Regardles its

limitation to the use of *tabék* formula as a politeness strategy in three situational contexts or speech situations among Bugis youth, this present study contributed to the identification of *tabék* as a politeness strategies and *tabék* formula pattern in the context of speech events of the Bugis people.

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