

RESPECT AND ETIQUETTE ROUTINES THE JAVANESE AND WESTERN CONCEPT OF *SUNGKAN*: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Culture can be described through languages. The culture in western country is slightly different from the one in eastern. The differences and similarities can be seen from their etiquette behaviour, daily routines, etc. After finding Respect and Etiquette routines the Javanese concept of *Sungkan* in Indonesia which represent eastern culture and good manners in Australia that represent western culture. They have some differences and similarities. Australians have a tradition of denigrating people who are achieve status for some reason other than sport. They do not have a culture similar to Javanese where respect is something separate and ingrained. In specific situation western culture has the similarities to eastern, in this case the Indonesian especially Javanese has a special. Emotional attitude of this kind is so elaborate. The people from lower class that is called caste or the younger people are taught to be *Sungkan* to upper class and older people and it is untranslatable.

Key words: Respect, etiquette, *sungkan*, good manners.

ABSTRAK

Budaya dapat digambarkan melalui bahasa. Budaya di negara barat sedikit berbeda dari yang ada di timur. Perbedaan dan kesamaan dapat dilihat dari perilaku etiket mereka, rutinitas sehari-hari, dll. Setelah menemukan Respect and Etiquette rutin konsep Jawa *Sungkan* di Indonesia yang mewakili budaya timur dan sopan santun di Australia yang mewakili budaya barat. Mereka memiliki beberapa perbedaan dan kesamaan. Orang Australia memiliki tradisi merendahkan orang-orang yang mencapai status untuk beberapa alasan selain olahraga. Mereka tidak memiliki budaya yang mirip dengan bahasa Jawa di mana rasa hormat adalah sesuatu yang terpisah dan mendarah daging. . Dalam situasi tertentu budaya barat memiliki kesamaan dengan timur, dalam hal ini orang Indonesia khususnya Jawa memiliki keistimewaan. Sikap emosional semacam ini sangat rumit. Orang-orang dari kelas bawah yang disebut kasta atau orang muda diajarkan untuk menjadi *Sungkan* untuk kelas atas dan orang tua dan itu tidak dapat diterjemahkan.

Kata kunci: Rasa hormat, etiket, *sungkan*, sopan santun.

I. INTRODUCTION

Every culture has its own ways of speaking, closely related to the culturally endorsed ways of thinking and behaving,

but beyond this rudimentary universal model, cultures differ enormously in their assumptions, expectations, and norms, concerning human psychology and social interaction. One way of approaching these

differing assumptions, expectations, and norms is to think of them as of unconscious “cultural rules” – rules for thinking, rules for feeling, rules for speaking, rules of doing things.

Cross-linguistic investigations suggest that all human beings assume the same (presumably innate) model of a human person, defined by a small set of universal predicates, which includes the following elements (lexicalized, in all probability, in all languages of the world): Think, Know, Feel, Say, Hear, Do and Live (Wierzbicka 1992 and in press of Goddard & Wierzbicka, eds. 1994: cf. also Bruner 1990)

Culture can be described through languages. The culture in western country is slightly different from the one in eastern country. These differences can be seen from their Etiquette behaviour, daily routines, etc.

This paper discussed the differences of daily routines between Balinese and Javanese related to Respect and Etiquette; the concept of *Sungkan*. Because the problem is very wide, so it will be limited for the topic of Respect and Etiquette the Javanese of *Sungkan*; its differences between western and eastern people in expressing Respect and Etiquette in their country.

Based on the above background, the problems which are going to be discussed in this study are: 1) in what situations, the expressions of Respect and Etiquette related to the concept of Javanese *Sungkan* and good manners are generally expressed by western and eastern people?; 2) what are the differences between the expression of Respect and Etiquette in daily routine by western and eastern people?

- a. To describe in what situation are Respect and Etiquette used by western and eastern people.
- b. To analyze the differences and similarities between the expressions of Respect and Etiquette by western and eastern people.

This paper is limited to the discussion of both Respect and Etiquette by western and eastern people. Australian is chosen as the representation of western country. It is also to find out the differences and similarities between both Respect and Etiquette expressed by the western (Australian) and eastern (Indonesian) people.

II. RESEARCH METHODS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The data was taken from the Australian and Indonesian people, those were interviewed and were asked to fill in the questionnaire because they represent western and eastern culture and countries. The data was being analysis in this discussion was taken from the spoken language, that was noticed from the Australian and Indonesian in expressing Respect and Etiquette. The methods used in collecting the data were interview and questionnaire

There are an Australian and an Indonesian being taken to provide the data for this research. The data were collected by asking some questions to the Australian related to Respect and Etiquette in general. Then they are asked to answer some questions in the questionnaire. The process of collecting data was on 4 January 2006. The place of finding the data from the Australian person was at Campus of Dhyana Pura University and from the Indonesian person was at the respondent's house at Jl. Watu Renggong XIV/3, Denpasar.

There are six questions in the questionnaire to be answered by the respondents. The first part questions are the general questions related to the topic discussed. The second and the third part of questions are the specific ones about certain situations.

The methods which are used in analysis the data are the qualitative method. The following sequences were taken to conduct the analysis :

- a. The data was classified into two categories namely Respect and Etiquette. Each of them consists of three questions related to the topic discussed.
- b. The result of the data in the form of questionnaire were analyzed descriptively.
- c. The differences between the two routine expressions of Australian and Indonesian are explained based on the result of the questionnaires.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Universal and Cultural Relativism of Essential Similarities on the Differences on Language

Language is a tool for expressing meaning. We think, we feel, we perceive and we want to express our thoughts, our feelings, our perceptions. Usually we want to express them because we want to share them with other people, but this is not always the case. We also need language to record our thoughts and to organize them. We write diaries, we write notes to ourselves, we make entries in our desk calendars, and so on. We also use and exclaim, sometimes even when there is no one to hear us. The common denominator of all these different uses of language is not communication but meaning.

But if language is a tool for expressing meaning, then meaning, at least to some extent must be independent of language and transferable from one language to another. Yet is essential separateness and seperatability of meaning from language has sometimes been denied. For example, the eighteenth – century German thinker Johann Gotfried maintained that thinking is essentially identical with speaking and therefore differs from language to language and from nation to nation.

3.2 Contrastive Pragmatic

To understand the social meaning of Javanese calls for a knowledge of Javanese culture, and, in particular, of the socio-emotional concept *sungkan*, this is usually glossed in bilingual dictionaries ‘ashamed’, ‘embarrassment’, or ‘respect’, but *sungkan* does not correspond precisely to any of these English concepts. Essentially, it involves a sense of social differences, discomfort with being in the other person’s presence, and the desire to avoid acting in any way which might cause the other person to think anything unfavorable about one.

3.3 Courtesy as a Cultural Value

In English, every body (except perhaps the Queen) can be addressed in the same way. The English ‘you’ is democratic, the same for everyone.

Culture distinguishes sharply between spontaneity and emotionality on the one hand and informality on the other. Javanese language of respect does not involve humility and self-abasement, one pays respect to the status and rank of the addressee without ever lowering oneself. Furthermore, this respect the addressee is commonly combined with cordiality and affection. Courtesy and cordiality is best seen in forms of address or of personal reference. Australian differs in this respect from Javanese, which has also a wealth of devices for showing emotion, but which is not similarly rich in devices to show respect, courtesy, and non-intimacy one uses in Javanese a combination of full first name and patronymic cannot be combined with an affectionate diminutive. (Cf. Wierzbicka, to Apper, chaps. 7,8). In multi-ethnic country like Australian, the problem of speech acts and of their cultural significance is not a purely academic one. It is a problem of immense practical significance. As long as it is widely assumed that English conversational routines reflect what is ‘ordinary’, ‘normal’, and ‘logical’, the prospects for cultural understanding. If immigrants who speak passable English lend to utter flat

imperatives, they are likely to be seen as rude or boorish. If they fail to respond to pieces of elaborate 'indirectness' accompanied by juicy swearing can be as confusing to an immigrant as the directness, forcefulness.

3.4 Natural Semantic Metalanguage

According to Hildred Geertz (1974:58), *Sungkan* is 'something peculiarly Javanese'. It is one of 'three Javanese words, *Wedi*, *Isin*, and *Sungkan*, which denote three kinds of feeling states felt to be appropriate to situations demanding respectful behavior'. What is 'untranslatable' on the level of words is nonetheless translatable on the level of universal semantic primitives and near-primitives. In Javanese culture is well known from the writing of Clifford Geertz, Hildred Geertz, and other scholars. It is reflected in a number of Javanese words and other linguistic devices which have no 'respect' (*urmat*, *adji*) is a nation so peculiarly Javanese that it cannot be easily translated (Geertz 1974: 257). However, that no matter how 'unique' and 'untranslatable' an emotion term is, it can be translated on the level of semantic explication in a natural semantic meta language and that explications of this make possible that 'translation of emotional worlds' (Lutz 1985a) which seems otherwise impossible to achieve. Since the limitations of space prevent any detailed discussion of all the Javanese emotion concepts mentioned by Geertz. It will be confined to an attempt to 'translate' into a universal semantic meta language that one which Geertz presents as the most peculiarly Javanese: the concept of *Sungkan*.

3.5 Respect and etiquette routines

This is an analyzed about the result of the interview and questionnaire given to the respondents. It analyzed to know how Respect and Etiquette routine the Balinese and Javanese concept of *Sungkan* was compared. There are two aspects being analyzed, that is the explanation to the questionnaires about general questions related to Respect and Etiquette and specific

questions of certain situation from the total of six questions that are given to the respondents. The first questions are the general question asking about in what situations do Respect and Etiquette need to be expressed based on respondents' cultures. The second and third parts questions are specific questions about certain situations.

3.6 Responses to the Questionnaire

Questionnaire is a simple way to obtain the data between the culture of Indonesian and Australian in expressing Respect and Etiquette. The questionnaire consists of six questions, three of them are about Respect and the others are asking about Etiquette.

3.6.1 The result of the Etiquette questionnaire

1. Based on the Australian culture, Etiquette is generally expressed in the situations as described below:

- a. In the commercial/business/political world to superiors people in authority and to people you are trying to impress.
- b. To people in positions of authority. The Australian '*I'm as good as you*' attitude comes into play here. The older generation was taught to be polite to people inferior to us.
- c. Within the family, only if required, either by the family and / on the schools.

In contrast with Indonesia: Etiquette is generally expressed in any situations.

2. The second question is about: How does your young generation behave in front of the older generation? The Australian stated that the older generation get little respect due to their age and many others do either in a general way. Obviously there are exceptions. The Indonesian said that the younger generation respect and polite to the older generations

3. The third question is about: How is Etiquette practiced related to concept of *sungkan*? The Australian said that for Australian Etiquette equals good manners at the dinner table and in upper level social activities but quite probably ignored in lower

levels. Some people might well 'mind their manners' in company but not at home, while the others good manners would be automatic old time. There is no broad-based rule. Indonesian said that good manners in Indonesian generally would cover all different behavior depending on caste, age and with whom we are dealing with.

3.6.2 The following the result of Respect Questionnaire

1. Based on the Australian culture, generally in what situation respect needs to be expressed? The Australian said that they have no special way of showing respect, other than through good manners. Apart from sports people, Australian do not like 'showing respect' to other people. That is a culture thing with them, while Indonesian said that respect need to be expressed in any situation.
2. The second question is about a delegation of an official visitor comes to your house and sits at your table, what are your response? The Australian said that simply to be polite (good mannered), in whatever way your idea of good manners dictates. The Indonesian said that she doesn't say anything although she doesn't like to see it.
3. The third question is about: If a guest comes to your house and you provide a dinner. Will you say, 'eat as if you were in your house?' The Indonesian said that she says 'Have a nice dinner'. While the Australian said on a formal occasion, the host would do their best in whatever way seemed appropriate to make the guest feel comfortable. But there is also an obligation on the guest's part to be well mannered. On a less formal occasion, much the same, but they would be more relaxed and casual (a change of manners appropriate to the occasion). On very informal occasions, such as barbeque or picnic, only basic rules of good manners usually apply on both sides.

3.6.3 The Differences and Similarities the Australian and Indonesian in Expressing Etiquette and Respect

There are some differences and similarities between Australian and Indonesian culture concerning the responses to the questionnaire. The differences are as follows:

1) The Indonesian expresses etiquette at any situation whereas Australian expresses the etiquette in certain situation to superiors, within in the family only if required or in the schools.

2) The Indonesian expresses in term of etiquette is practiced related to concept of good manners generally would cover all different behavior depending on caste, age and with whom they are dealing with, whereas the Australian term of etiquette related to good manners are equals at the dinner table and in upper level social activities.

3) In terms of Respect need to be expressed, the Indonesian expresses at any situation, whereas Australian said they have no special way of showing respect, other than through good manners. Australian do not like 'showing respect' to other people.

The similarities of Australian and Indonesian in expressing as the following:

1) The Australian and Indonesian do not say 'eat as if you were in your house' when they give others dinner. Both Australian and Indonesian will do their best to make the guest feel comfort and an obligation on the guest's part to be well mannered.

2) Both Australian and Indonesian behave respect and polite to the older generation in any situation.

3.7 General Comments on the Results of the Questionnaire

After finding Respect and Etiquette routines the Javanese concept of *Sungkan* in Indonesia which represent eastern culture and good manners in Australia that represent western culture have some differences and similarities.

Australians have a tradition of 'cutting tall to poppies down to size', or

denigrating people who achieve status for some reason other than sport. They always respect sports people no matter what they do. It is described in the answer of number 1 in respect questionnaire. They do not have a culture similar to Java where 'respect' is something separate and ingrained. The culture they live in – the 'Me first' attitude and if they find other irritating or bad mannered that is their problem and not mine.

In specific situation, western culture has the similarities to eastern culture, it is described in the questionnaire in terms of 'good manners' in question number 3, in this case the Indonesian especially Javanese has a special emotional attitude of this kind is so elaborate. The people from lower class or the younger people are taught to be *Sungkan*, to upper class and to older people and it is untransferable.

IV. CONCLUSSION

Respect and Etiquette are generally expressed differently by Indonesian and Australian people. Australian that represents

western culture stated that Etiquette is expressed in certain situation. Australian do not have special way of showing respect other than through 'good manners'. Indonesian that represents eastern culture stated that Etiquette and Respect is expressed in any situation

There are some similarities between the expression of Respect and Etiquette in Australia and Indonesia. Both Australian and Indonesian will do their best to make the guest feel comfortable if they provide dinner in their house. Australian and Indonesian behave respect and polite to the older generation.

The differences of Respect and Etiquette are expressed by Australian and Indonesian are as follows:

Etiquette that is related to concept 'good manners' in Indonesia are generally expressed in different behavior depending on age, level social and whom they are dealing with. While in Australia Etiquette is equal to dinner table and in upper level social activities.

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