

## POLITENESS MAXIM OF MAIN CHARACTER IN *SECRET FORGIVEN*

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### ABSTRACT

Maxim of Politeness is an interesting subject to be discussed, since politeness has been taught since our childhood. We are obliques to be polite to anyone either in speaking or behave. Somehow we manage to show politeness in our spoken expression though our intention might be not so polite. For example we must appreciate other's opinion although we have objection towards the opinion. In this study, the analysis of politeness is based on maxim proposes by Leech. He proposed six types of politeness maxims. The discussion shows that the main character (Kristen and Kami) use all type of maxim in their conversation. The most commonly use are approbation maxim and agreement maxim.

Key Word : politeness, maxim

### ABSTRAK

*Kesantunan dalam komunikasi sangat menarik untuk dikaji, sebab kita telah diajarkan sopan santun sejak kita kecil. Kita diwajibkan untuk senantiasa santun kepada siapa pun baik dalam tuturan maupun tindakan. Seiring dengan waktu, kita mampu menunjukkan kesantunan dalam bertutur walaupun tujuan kita untuk mengkritik. Sebagai contoh, kita diharapkan mampu menghargai pendapat orang lain walaupun kita keberatan dengan pendapat tersebut. Dalam penelitian ini, analisis tentang kesantunan didasarkan atas teori yang dicetuskan oleh Leech. Leech membedakan kesantunan menjadi enam kelompok. Analisis menunjukkan bahwa Kristen dan Kami menggunakan semua bentuk kesopanan yang ada dalam tuturan mereka. Bentuk yang paling umum di pergunakan adalah approbation maxim dan agreement maxim.*

*Kata Kunci : kesopanan, tuturan.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Politeness becomes an important aspect in the society; it is used to recognize social-culture within a community in a region. It means that politeness can also be regarded as some kind of social norm determined by

the convention of the community. Sometimes, they have to be polite in order to show that they are civilized people and they will not be accused as rude people who have bad manner. Even though

politeness can be used to recognize social-culture, in many ways, it is a universal norm.

Politeness is a branch and one of the major topics of pragmatic study. Pragmatics is a study of language in its relation to language use and how the language is used by its speaker in their interaction in the speech community. Pragmatics also studies the language in its context and the relation between language and context that are grammaticalized, or encoded in the structure of a language. The context in this case can be the context of situation or context of culture. Pragmatics is very important because it gives people the skills to behave in society so that in its development many people developed some theory of pragmatics to support their skills in communicating. One of them is Geoffrey Leech with his Politeness Principles (PP) theory.

According to Leech, Politeness Principle is minimizing the expression of impolite beliefs, and there is a corresponding positive version or maximizing the expression of polite beliefs which is somewhat less important. Leech proposed it to produce and understand language based on politeness. The purpose of Politeness principles itself is to establish feeling of community and social relationship. Further, Leech proposed six maxims, namely Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim, and Sympathy Maxim.

Politeness has become one of the major topics in most and recent pragmatic research; it used often to analyze daily ordinary conversation among people. However, there are few studies of politeness principle that had been conducted in scope of literature. It happened due to the fact that most of literary works were created in form of

written text not in form of conversational. According to its type, literary work can be divided into three: poetry, prose, and drama. Drama is the only literary work which created in form of conversational. Therefore, it is possible to analyze conversation among characters in drama by using Leech's Politeness principle.

This article analyzes the application of politeness maxims in the conversations of main character in the drama *Secrets Forgiven* by Valerie A. Klaus based on the Politeness Principles theory proposed by Geoffrey Leech. They are as follows: Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim, and Sympathy Maxim.

## II. RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a qualitative study which emphasizes on library research. Note taking technique was applied on the study to identify the politeness maxim occurred and later classified them into the maxim categorization. Books about communicative interaction in particular which concerns about politeness were reviewed and noted. The found data presented descriptively.

### 2.1 Concept of Politeness

There are various definition regarding politeness, however, this study tries to elucidate the definition of stated in Wikipedia and another two definitions taken from Kasper and Brown. It is stated that Politeness is the practical application of good manners or etiquette. It is a culturally defined phenomenon, and therefore what is considered polite in one culture can sometimes be quite rude or simply eccentric in another cultural context. (Wikipedia)

Kasper (1990) summarized the work of Lakoff (1973) by mentioning that

Politeness is viewed as a rational, rule governed, pragmatic aspect of speech that is rooted in the human need to maintain relationship and avoid conflicts. In the other hand, according to Brown (1980:114) "What Politeness essentially consists is in a special way of treating people, saying and doing things in such way as to take into account to other's person feelings. Linguistic politeness, then, reflects cultural values.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

### 2.2.1 Politeness Principle

According to Geoffrey Leech, there is a politeness principle with conversational maxims similar to those formulated by Paul Grice. The cooperative principle and the politeness principle have close relationship because they study about the use of language in communication a set of principle or maxim that manages it. Further, Leech proposed six maxims, namely Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim, and Sympathy Maxim.

#### a. Tact maxim

Tact maxim refers minimize cost to other and maximize the benefit to other. In this maxim, the speaker minimizes the cost (and correspondingly maximizes the benefit) to the listener.

#### b. Generosity maxim

Generosity maxim refers to minimize benefits to self and maximize cost to self. This maxim is self oriented while tact

maxim is directed to other (focuses on the speaker and says that others should be put first instead of the self).

#### c. Approbation maxim

Approbation maxim refers to minimize dispraise of others and maximize praise of others. This maxim is used to avoid saying unpleasant things about others, especially to the hearer.

#### d. Agreement maxim

Agreement maxim refers to minimize the expression of disagreement between self and other and maximize the expression of agreement between self and other. The disagreement in this maxim is usually expressed by regret or partial agreement.

#### e. Sympathy maxim

Sympathy maxim refers to minimize antipathy between self and other and maximize sympathy between self and other. In this case, the achievement being reached by other, for instance, must be appreciated and evaluated. On other hand, the calamity happens to other must be given sympathy or condolences.

#### f. Modesty maxim

Modesty maxim refers to minimize praise of self and maximize dispraise of self. Both approbation maxim and modesty maxim concern with the degree of good or bad evaluation of other or self that is performed by the speaker. However, this maxim usually occurs in apologizing something.

## III. RESULT & DISCUSSION

As it is shown in the title of this article, the analisis focus on the maxim use by the

main character. The main character in drama *Secrets Forgiven* are two women, they are Kirsten and Kami.

### 3.1 Tact Maxim

#### Data 1:

KAMI : ... I don't want to go alone, **will you go?**  
SHELLY : Well I'm not gonna go on a date with you, that would be stupid. (Act 1, scene 3)

In this utterance, Kami uses *tact maxim* that refers to minimize cost to other and maximize the benefit to other. Kami tries to be more polite with no intention to force

Shelly and gives Shelly the flexibility in answering the question by asking a question with an auxiliary verb "will".

#### Data 2:

KIRSTEN : OK, I'll be ready. **Hey will you be at the church early tonight?**  
JORDAN : Yeah, what's up. (Act 1, scene 5)

Kirsten asks Jordan uses an auxiliary verb "will" in her question. In this case, "will" used to ask Jordan without coercion and gives the interlocutor the flexibility in answering the question. Therefore, the

question is purposed to minimize cost to other and maximize the benefit to the hearer and it can be classified as the use of *tact maxim*.

#### Data 3:

KIRSTEN : Are you sure; **you could have something to eat if you want to.** (Act 1, scene 6)  
KAMI : No, a shake's fine.

According to the Kirsten's question, she asks Kami to order something that Kami wants to eat. In this question, Kirsten wants to treat Kami in the restaurant which means she minimizes cost to Kami and

maximize the benefit to Kami. In line with the definition of *tact maxim* of the politeness principle, then the Kirsten question can be called performing the *tact maxim*.

### 3.2 Generosity Maxim

#### Data 4:

KAMI : Kirsten, Kirsten. **Wait I need to talk to you.** (Act 1, scene 4)

In this utterance, Kami uses *generosity maxim* because she minimizes benefit to herself and maximizes cost to herself. Further, Kami implies that cost of

the utterance is to her self. Meanwhile, the utterance implies that benefit is for the hearer (Kirsten).

**Data 5:**

KAMI : **Can we talk somewhere. I can meet you somewhere?** (Act 1, scene 4)

In this utterance, Kami uses generosity maxim that refers to minimize benefit to self and maximize cost to self. Kami offers the hearer that implies the cost

of the utterance is to her self and she ask the hearer to give the benefit for the hearer too that implies in the utterance.

**Data 6:**

KIRSTEN : Kami, **would you like me to talk to your mom with you?** (Act 1, scene 6)

In the question of Kirsten above, she offers herself to talk to the hearer's mom along with the hearer (she takes the actions by herself). Therefore, Kirsten's question

performs the *generosity maxim* because she maximizes cost to self and minimizes the benefit to self.

**Data 7:**

KIRSTEN : ...**I'll go with you as soon as I clear it**, but you need to see her, OK.

KAMI : OK. Oh, oh, Kristen, hide me, hurry! (Act 1, scene 6)

In this utterance, Kirsten performs the *generosity maxim*. It can be seen from Kirsten's statement which tells about her willingness to be burdened by Kami in doing something. It means that Kirsten

maximizes the cost to herself and minimizes the benefit to herself too. Instead, Kirsten gives more benefit to Kami.

**Data 8:**

KIRSTEN : If I find her **I'd like to keep her tonight and take her to church tomorrow.** (Act 2, scene 2)

In the utterance above, Kirsten says that she would like to keep her tonight and take her to church tomorrow. The words "would like" in the statement represents her willingness to be burdened by the other. It

can be seen as Kirsten minimizes benefits to self and maximizes cost to self. Therefore, Kirsten's utterance performs the use of *generosity maxim*.

**Data 9:**

KIRSTEN : I know, he told me. **Can I come pick you up?** Your dad said you can stay with me tonight. (Act 2, scene 2)

The question of Kirsten above performs the use of *generosity maxim* because it purposes to minimize benefits to self and maximize cost to self. She announces her willingness to come and

pick the hearer which means she maximizes cost to the self, while she maximizes the benefit to other because only her who takes the actions.

### 3.3 Approbation Maxim

#### Data 10:

MRS. GREER: Sounds good, but I can't eat like that anymore. The pains of getting old.

KIRSTEN : Oh mom, **you're not old.** (Act 1, scene 1)

The statement of Kirsten in responding the Mrs. Greer's can be categorized as the use of *approbation maxim*. It refers to the way of Kirsten to minimize dispraise of others and maximize

praise of others. In this utterance, Kirsten tries to avoid saying unpleasant thing about her mother. Therefore, she disproves her mother's statement which tells that her mother is old.

#### Data 11:

KIRSTEN : Wow, a real date, what's up?.

JORDAN : I figured it was about time we had a romantic evening together.

KAMI : **Oh, romantic, how sweet.** Someday I'll find a man just like you, Jordan. (Act 1, scene 5)

In the Kami's utterance above, she says good thing and avoids saying unpleasant thing in responding what Jordan says. She minimizes dispraise of Jordan

and maximizes praise of Jordan – says pleasant thing and praises Jordan. Therefore, it can be categorized as *approbation maxim*.

#### Data 12:

KIRSTEN : ... **She's a good woman and I know she'll be able to work through this,** she wouldn't want you to blame yourself ... (Act 1, scene 6)

According to the statement above, Kirsten tries to convince the hearer about someone who is kind and able to face all problems. She convinces the hearer by

praising someone. She performs *approbation maxim* which refers to minimize dispraise of other and maximizepraise of other.

#### Data 13:

KAMI : ... Kirsten, do you think I'm horrible because I hate my dad?

KIRSTEN : Oh Kami, **I don't think you're horrible.** All of us have our little secrets. It's not for me to judge ... (Act 1, scene 6)

Kami says that she is horrible person because she hates her dad, but Kirsten disproves the statement by saying that she is not horrible because Kirsten does not think about that. In this case, the Kirsten's statement has the function to say the

pleasant thing to other and it is in line with the definition of the *approbation maxim* that says to minimize dispraise of others and maximize praise of others. Therefore, the utterance from Kirsten can be categorized as *approbation maxim*.

**Data 14:**

- KYLE : No, I am not on the Quiz Team or the Chess Team, sorry to disappoint you, Kami. I don't have the brains for those two.
- KIRSTEN : **You do pretty good in my classes.** (Act 1, scene 6)

Kyle says that he is not on the Quiz Team or the Chess Team because he does not have the brains for those two teams. In responding this statement, Kirsten says that Kyle does pretty good in her classes. According to the Kirsten's statement, it can

be seen that she praises Kyle without saying something not good to him. She to minimizes dispraise of Kyle and maximizes praise of Kyle so that the statement can be categorized as *approbation maxim*.

**Data 15:**

- KIRSTEN : ... **This is really nice Jordan, what a special treat.** (Act 3, scene 1)

In the utterance above, Kirsten praises what Jordan does and it can be categorized as the use of *approbation maxim*. In this case, Kirsten minimizes dispraise of Jordan

and maximizes the praise of Jordan. She avoids saying unpleasant things about others, especially to Jordan.

**Data 16:**

- JORDAN : I got a letter this week from the Theological Seminary. I've been accepted and need to start this fall.
- KIRSTEN : **That's wonderful Jordan.** I know you've been waiting for this along time. I'm happy for you. (Act 3, scene 1)

In responding Jordan's announcement, Kirsten praises what he has received by saying how wonderful the job. In this case, Kirsten wants to express her happy feeling to Jordan. Further, Kirsten performs the use

of *approbation maxim* because she minimizes dispraise of others – avoids saying something bad to Jordan - and maximizes praise of others.

**3.4 Agreement Maxim****Data 17:**

- SHELLY : Oh gross Kami, you always come up with the worst possible ideas.
- KAMI : I bet you I'm right. Hey, I know. **Tell him I'd love to go out. But that I don't give out what he's looking for.** (Act 1, scene 3)

In the conversation above, Kami agrees with what Shelly says to her by saying, "I bet you I'm right. Hey, I know. Tell him I'd love to go out." but in the next utterance, she expresses her disagreement

by saying, "But that I don't give out what he's looking for." According to those statements, Kami can be seen performing the use of *agreement maxim* because she minimizes the expression of disagreement

between herself and Shelly, and maximizes the expression of agreement between

herself and Shelly.

#### Data 18:

SHELLY : This is weird.

KAMI : **Yeah, but that's how it is with boys.** I wonder what made him think I would?  
... (Act 1, scene 3)

Kami can be said performing the politeness principle, *agreement maxim*, because in the first, she maximizes the expression of agreement between herself and Shelly by saying "yeah (this is weird)",

but in the next utterance, she also minimizes the expression of disagreement between herself and Shelly by saying "but that's how it is with boys".

#### Data 19:

SHELLY : Wow, that's a long ways away.

KIRSTEN : **Yeah, too far, but they grew up there** and there's friends and family there.  
(Act 1, scene 4)

Based on the conversation between Shelly and Kirsten, Kirsten performs the *agreement maxim* in which she agrees with Shelly's statement by saying "yeah, too far". Her utterance shows that she

maximizes the expression of agreement with Shelly's. However, in the next utterance, she adds her utterance which minimizes the expression of disagreement with Shelly's utterance.

#### Data 20:

SHELLY : I bet you miss them.

KIRSTEN : **Yep, I do, but they come around and I fly out there.** It works OK. ... (Act 1, scene 4)

Kirsten in this conversation with Shelly performs the agreement maxim. It can be seen from her utterance in response to Shelly's utterance by saying "Yep, I do", in which she agrees with Shelly. In addition

to her utterance, Kirsten says "but they come around and I fly out there", that can be considered as minimize the expression of disagreement.

#### Data 21:

KAMI : Why doesn't he, he's the adult.

KIRSTEN : **That's true but it doesn't really matter.** ... (Act 2, scene 3)

The conversation above between Kirsten and Kami shows that Kirsten agrees with Kami which also performs agreement maxim. In her utterance "That's true", she maximizes the expression of agreement in

the conversation with Kami. While, in the other hand, she says, "but it doesn't really matter...." which shows that she minimizes the expression of agreement.



**Data 22:**

- JORDAN : Why? We've been together for a year and friends longer than that. You love me, don't you?
- KIRSTEN : **Of course, I love you more than anyone on earth, but I'm just not ready.**  
(Act 3, scene 1)

Kirsten, in this conversation says, "Of course, I love you more than anyone on earth" as a response of Jordan's utterance. Her utterance shows that she agrees with Jordan, but, she also adds, "But I'm just not

ready yet". The last utterance of Kirsten shows that she disagrees with Jordan. Therefore, Kirsten performs agreement maxim.

**Data 23:**

- KIRSTEN: **I know all of this and I've tried to deal with it, but... in the process of me being in the hospital, I lost my children.** I'm sure it had something to do with my behavior before I went in, ... (Act 3, scene 3)

The conversation between Pastor Dan and Kirsten above indicates that Kirsten performs the agreement maxim. As a response to Pastor Dan's utterances, Kirsten agrees with him. However, at the end she sounds like disagree with Pastor Dan. It can be seen when she says, "I know all of this and I've tried to deal with it"

which shows that she minimizes the expression of disagreement between herself and Pastor Dan. Her disagreement can be seen when she utters "but... in the process of me being in the hospital, I lost my children." which shows her maximize the expression of agreement between herself and Pastor Dan.

**3.5 Sympathy Maxim****Data 24:**

- MRS. BLACK: Your dad does have some issues, but we all do. I have my own and one is that I've ignored the problems in my marriage. I've let them go too long. But I'm getting help and your dad is, too. He's agreed to see a counselor. It's going to be OK. He's a good man under all of that bluster.
- KAMI : **I'm glad you're so positive about it mom.** When are you coming home?  
(Act 1, scene 7)

Kami performs the use of *sympathy maxim* because she appreciates and congratulates the good thing which is reached by her mother (Mrs. Black) by saying "I'm glad you're so positive about it

mom." Kami minimizes the antipathy between herself and her mother, and maximize sympathy between herself and her mother by using the word "glad".

**Data 25:**

- JORDAN : Hold on, I want to do this right, we'll have to pick up where we left off Sunday night. Will you have dinner with me this Friday night?
- KIRSTEN : I'd love to, **Sorry about spoiling the last one**, same time and place? (Act 3, scene 4)

In the utterance of Kirsten above, it can be seen that she expressed her sympathy for what she has done before to Jordan by using word "sorry". Further, "sorry" is often used to express a condolence expression for misfortune event

and it is also used in the Kirsten's utterance. Kirsten minimizes antipathy between self and other and maximizes sympathy between self and other so her utterance can be categorized as the use of *sympathy maxim*.

### 3.6 Modesty Maxim

#### Data 26:

- JORDAN : You do look wonderful. That dress is new, isn't it? I've never seen it before.
- KIRSTEN : **Nope it's an old one I just don't wear it very often**. (Act 3, scene 1)

The utterance said by Kirsten above can be categorized as the use of *modesty maxim* because she minimizes praise of herself and maximizes dispraise of herself. Kirsten maximizes dispraise of herself by

disproving Jordan's statement and saying that her dress is an old one even though Jordan praises the dress looks wonderful for him.

## V. CONCLUSION

Based the above analysis, the main character in the drama *Secrets Forgiven* are two women; they are Kami and Kirsten. Further, the types of politeness maxims that performed by Kami and Kirsten are *tact maxim*, *generosity maxim*, *approbation maxim*, *agreement maxim*, *sympathy maxim*, and *modesty maxim*. It means that all types of six politeness maxims are performed by the main character. However, in the comparison of the number of the

politeness maxims performed by main character, the *tact maxim* performed three times, the *generosity maxim* performed six times, the *approbation maxim* performed seven times, the *agreement maxim* performed seven times, the *sympathy maxim* performed two times, and the last, the *modesty maxim* performed only once. Therefore, the types of politeness maxim that often appeared in the main character's conversation in drama *Secrets Forgiven* are the *approbation maxim* and *agreement maxim* (both performed seven times).

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