

# Speech act criticism as a mechanism of social control in the ethnic madurese community

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## 2 Speech Act Criticism as a Mechanism of Social Control in the Ethnic Madurese Community

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The article investigates the speech act of criticizing as a means of social control in the ethnic Madurese community. The aim is to understand how the ethnic Madurese use the verbal criticism strategy (VCS) and the silent criticism strategy (SCS) and their relation to the intensity of a criticism, and how the VCS is expressed in various situational contexts using the parameters of public and non-public ( $\pm$ Pu) and their relation to contexts of criticism that are favoured and less favoured. The data were collected through DCTs and informant interviews. The results show that in the ethnic Madurese community, VCS tends to be more widely used than SCS. This tendency indicates that the intensity of a criticism as a means of social control in the ethnic Madurese community also tends to be high. Furthermore, the expression of a criticism (using VCS) in the ethnic Madurese community has taken into consideration the parameter of social distance ( $\pm$ D). It appears that the parameter ( $\pm$ D) tends to determine whether a criticism in a particular context should be expressed publically/openly (+Pu) or privately (-Pu), while the parameter of power ( $\pm$ P) does not have a significant effect. The social parameter ( $\pm$ D) also determines whether a particular context of criticism tends to be favoured or not favoured.

**Keywords:** Ethnic Madurese; speech act of criticizing; social control; SCS; VCS; context of criticism.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The speech act of criticizing is interesting to study because it is prone to become a Face Threatening Act<sup>1</sup>. This is so because the criticizing speech act is mostly expressed by giving a bad or negative evaluation of the behaviour, act, or action of the person receiving the criticism<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, a criticism has an important function in the social life of a community, since it constitutes one of the tools that can be used for carrying out social control. Social control is a mechanism for preventing social deviance and encouraging and directing people to behave and act according to the norms and value systems that prevail in a society<sup>3,4,5</sup>

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There are many studies on the speech act of criticizing, such as Gunarwan (1996)<sup>6</sup>, Tracy, et al. (1987)<sup>7</sup>, Tracy, K and Eisenberg (1990)<sup>8</sup>, Wajnryb (1993)<sup>9</sup>, Toplak and Katz (2000)<sup>10</sup>, Nguyen (2005)<sup>11</sup>, and Hoang ThiXuangHoa (2007)<sup>12</sup>.

From the previous studies, none relates criticizing to its function as a means of social control. Here, the researcher focuses on the fact that criticisms are made in order to control. Therefore, it should be taken for granted that a study about criticism should be related to its function which is as a tool for social control.

In this paper, criticism is defined as an act of speech which contains a negative evaluation of the behaviour of an individual. The intention of this negative evaluation is that the person concerned will engage in introspection or self-correction so that his or her behaviour becomes better in the future<sup>13, 14, 15, 16</sup>

Criticism strategies are divided into two main types, namely (1) the Verbal Criticism Strategy (VCS) and (2) the Silent Criticism Strategy (SCS). VCS is a strategy in which the criticism is expressed verbally using certain linguistic forms in a particular context so that the meaning of the criticism can be understood by the person receiving the criticism, or the recipient (R). SCS is a strategy in which the criticism is only expressed internally or silently. In other words the criticizer (C) intends to criticize R but due to certain considerations the criticism is not expressed verbally but only internally (C remains silent). If this is related to Brown and Levinson's view (1987), VCS is an adaptation of the strategy "doing the FTA" (or making the criticism), while SCS is an adaptation of the strategy "not doing the FTA" (not making the criticism). The parameters to construct the context of a criticism in this paper is limited to two parameters (Brown and Levinson, 1987):  $\pm$  Power ( $\pm$ P) and  $\pm$  Distance ( $\pm$ D). This parameter is the parameter of  $\pm$  Public ( $\pm$ Pu). So, these three parameters refer to the characteristics of the recipient R. The three parameters can be combined with each other to form contexts of criticism which are quite complex.

This article is to understand how the Verbal Criticism Strategy (VCS) and Silent Criticism Strategy

(SCS) are used in various situational contexts in the ethnic Madurese community and the relation to the intensity of the criticism as a means of social control and how VCS is expressed in various different situational contexts based on the parameters of Public and non-Public ( $\pm$ Pu) and also its relation to contexts that are favoured and less favoured.

## 2. METHOD

The criticism discussed is limited to ones that take place in the office domain. This domain is chosen because the power structure in this domain is quite clear. The data were collected from 40 informants in Bangkalan, Sampang, and Pamekasan, (sub regions in Madura city, part of Indonesia) and was gathered by using the method of Discourse Completion Task (DCT). The DCT method in this article was formulated in the form of a description of a situation which described the existence of a particular deviation in behaviour or violation of social norms, as performed by an individual in the contexts (+P+D), (+P-D), (-P+D), (-P-D), (=P+D), and (=P-D). In these contexts, the informants were asked to make a criticism of an individual who had violated certain norms, using an appropriate strategy for the criticism, either VCS or SCS. From this, data was collected which showed the tendency to use VCS or SCS in various situational contexts. This tendency could then provide information about whether the level of social control in the ethnic Madurese community is high or low.

Subsequently, when an informant in the DCT chose to use VCS, he or she was then asked to choose whether the criticism would be expressed privately (-Pu) or openly (+Pu), such as in an office meeting. This provided data that showed in what type of contexts VCS may be used in the ethnic Madurese community either openly or privately.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. VCS and SCS Strategy, Their Distribution in Various Situational Contexts and Relation to Intensity of Criticism

In VCS the criticizer, C, executes the criticism verbally. In turn, in SCS, for various reasons, such as reluctance or the wish to avoid conflict, C expresses the criticism internally or silently. Based on the analysis of the data, the results show that in the ethnic Madurese community there is a wider distribution of VCS than SCS. This is the case in various different situational contexts, as shown in the table 1 below.

**Table 1**  
**Comparison of Distribution of VCS and SCS in Various Situational Contexts in the Ethnic Madurese Community (Office Domain)**

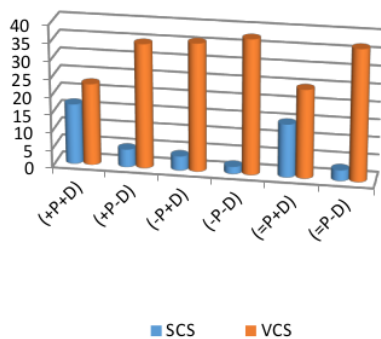
TYPE OF	CONTEXT	Strategy Distribution
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MATERIAL		SCS	VCS
A	+P+D	17	23
B	+P-D	5	35
C	-P+D	4	36
D	-P-D	2	38
E	=P+D	15	25
F	=P-D	3	37

If we look at table 1 above, it can be seen that in the context (+P+D), VCS (with material A) is chosen by 23 informants, while SCS in the same context is chosen by 17 informants. In the context (+P-D), VCS (material B) is chosen by 35 informants, while SCS is chosen by 5 informants. In the context (-P+D), VCS (material C) is chosen by 36 informants, while SCS is chosen by 4 informants. In the context (-P-D), VCS (material D) is chosen by 38 informants, while SCS is chosen by 2 informants. In the context (=P+D), VCS (material E) is chosen by 25 informants, while SCS is chosen by 15 informants. In the context (=P-D), VCS (material F) is chosen by 37 informants, while SCS is chosen by 3 informants. Based on the data above, it is clear that VCS has a greater distribution than SCS.

The distribution of VCS and SCS as shown above could not have happened by chance but must have been influenced by the socio-cultural characteristics that prevail in the ethnic Madurese community. The graph 1 below can be used to understand the influence.

**Graph 1**  
**Tendency for Use of VCS and SCS in the Ethnic Madurese Community (Office Domain)**



In graph 1 above, it can be seen clearly that the columns representing VCS (shown in brown) are always higher than the columns representing SCS (shown in blue). The highest column is found in the context (-P-D). The second highest is found in the context (=P-D). The third and fourth highest are found in contexts (-P+D) and (+P-D), and the lowest is found

in context (+P+D). If we look more closely, we can see that even the lowest use of VCS (in the context (+P+D)) is still higher than the use of SCS. This indicates that in the ethnic Madurese community, the use of VCS is more common than the use of SCS in the contexts described above.

The use of VCS is clearly not random but is influenced by a dominant parameter. The dominant parameter is the parameter ( $\pm$ D). In the contexts which contain the parameter (-D), the use of VCS tends to be higher, while the use of SCS is lower. Therefore, the contexts (-P-D), (=P-D), and (+P-D) are said dominant. This is proved that the factor of familiarity has a strong influence on the use of VCS in the ethnic Madurese community. Meanwhile, in the contexts which contain the parameter (+D), the use of VCS is inclined to be lower, while the use of SCS is somewhat higher, except in the context (-P+D). In the context (-P+D), the use of VCS is still much higher than SCS. It seems that the use of VCS still tends to be high even when it is directed towards a recipient (R) who is not known well (+D) by the criticizer (C), as long as the status of C is higher than that of R (-P). For this reason, in the context (-P+D), the use of VCS is still much higher than the use of SCS.

The tendency to use VCS and SCS above is closely related to the intensity of social control. As already stated, the use of VCS is a concrete realization of social control (because the criticism is executed verbally), while the use of SCS indicates a weak level of social control (because the criticism is only expressed internally or silently). This means that the higher the use of VCS, the higher the intensity of social control in the community concerned. On the contrary, the higher the use of SCS, the lower the intensity of social control in the community concerned. It has been proven that the use of VCS is much higher than the use of SCS. This shows that the intensity of social control in the ethnic Madurese community is quite high. The highest level of intensity is found in the context (-P-P). The second highest level is in the context (=P-D). The third and fourth highest levels are in the contexts (-P+D) and (+P-D), and the lowest level of intensity is found in the context (+P+D).

That is meant by the intensity of criticism is that when there is a deviation in behaviour or a violation of certain social values or norms in the ethnic Madurese community, whether by a superior or a subordinate, whether in a close or distant relationship, the violation tends to be immediately prevented or controlled rather than be allowed to continue without any kind of control.

**2 Verbal Criticism Strategy (VCS), Its Use in Various Situational Contexts Based on the Parameter ( $\pm$ Pu) and its Relation to Contexts of Criticism**

When a criticizer, C, makes a decision to use VCS (instead of SCS), then C must think about whether the criticism should be expressed openly (+Pu) or whether

it is more appropriate to be expressed privately (-Pu). In the ethnic Madurese community, the decision to express a criticism openly (+Pu) or privately (-Pu) cannot be made without certain considerations. An inappropriate choice of these two types of parameter has the strong potential to cause tension or even conflict between C and R. As an example, a criticism that is made in a certain context (such as (+P-D)) is culturally more appropriate to be made privately (-Pu), but instead, C makes the criticism openly, or publically (+Pu). This kind of criticism may cause R to feel embarrassed or humiliated and has the potential to lead to conflict. The table 2 below shows how a criticism (using VCS) is expressed in various situational contexts (in the office domain), by taking into consideration the parameters (+Pu) and (-Pu).

**Table 2**  
**The Use of VCS in Various Situational Contexts**  
**Based on the Parameter (±Pu)**

Strategy and Parameter Type of Context and Material of Criticism	VCS		Number of Informants
	(+Pu)	(-Pu)	
(+P+D), (Material A)	20	20	40
(+P-D), (Material B)	9	31	
(-P+D), (Material C)	19	21	
(-P-D), (Material D)	7	33	
(=P+D) (Material E)	15	25	
(=P-D), (Material F)	10	30	

In table 2 above, it can be seen that in the context (+P+D) with material A, 20 of the informants choose to execute the criticism openly or publically (+Pu), while the other 20 informants prefer to execute the criticism privately (-Pu). This means that making a criticism in both of the contexts (+P+D+Pu) and (+P+D-Pu) is considered normal according to the cultural norms of communication in the ethnic Madurese community. Meanwhile, in the context (+P-D) with material B, 9 informants choose to execute the criticism openly (+Pu) while the other 31 informants choose to execute the criticism privately (-Pu). This means that in the ethnic Madurese community, making a criticism in the context (+P-D+Pu) is considered to be more face-threatening than making a criticism in the context (+P-D-Pu).

Furthermore, in the context (-P+D) with material C, 19 of the informants choose to execute the criticism openly or publically (+Pu), while the other 21 informants prefer to execute the criticism privately (-Pu). This means that making a criticism in both the contexts (-P+D+Pu) and (-P+D-Pu) is considered normal according to the cultural norms of communication in the ethnic Madurese community. In the context (-P-D) with material D, 7 informants choose to execute the criticism openly (+Pu) while the other 33 informants choose to execute the criticism privately (-

Pu). This means that in the ethnic Madurese community, making a criticism in the context (-P-D-Pu) is more common in the ethnic Madurese community. Meanwhile, in the context (=P+D) with material E, 15 of the informants choose to execute the criticism openly (+Pu), while the other 25 informants prefer to execute the criticism privately (-Pu). This means that making a criticism in the context (=P+D-Pu) is preferable to making a criticism in the context (=P+D+Pu). Finally, in the context (=P-D) with material F, table 3 above shows that 10 of the informants choose to execute the criticism openly (+Pu), while the other 30 informants prefer to execute the criticism privately (-Pu). This means that making a criticism in the context (=P-D-Pu) is more often preferred to making a criticism in the context (=P-D+Pu).

If we look more closely, it becomes clear that the choice of expressing a criticism either openly (+Pu) or privately (-Pu) is not random but rather there is a dominant parameter which acts as the axis. This axis is parameter (±D). If in a particular context, parameter (-D) is present, the criticism will more often be executed privately (-Pu) than openly (+Pu). This is why the execution of criticisms in contexts such as (+P-D-Pu), (-P-D-Pu), (=P-D-Pu) is chosen more often by the informants than the execution of criticisms in the contexts (+P-D+Pu), (-P-D+Pu), (=P-D+Pu). Meanwhile, parameter (±P), which is the partner of (-D), appears not to have a significant influence. If this is depicted in the form of a diagram, the tendency to execute a criticism openly or privately based on axis (-D) can be shown as follows (the asterisk indicates contexts which are less favoured). Furthermore, in certain contexts, in which the parameter (+D) is present, the execution of a criticism in the ethnic Madurese community is more varied. However, if parameter (+D) is combined with (=P), it is more common for the criticism to be executed privately. Hence, based on axis (±D) above, it can be seen that there are also certain contexts of criticism that are favoured or not favoured in the ethnic Madurese community. The contexts of criticism that tend to be favoured or are considered more common include contexts such as (+P+D+Pu), (+P+D-Pu), (+P-D-Pu), (-P+D+Pu), (-P+D-Pu), (-P-D-Pu), (=P+D-Pu), and (=P-D-Pu). The contexts that are less favoured include \*(+P-D+Pu), \*(-P-D+Pu), \*(=P-D+Pu), and \*(=P+D+Pu). Of course, executing a criticism in contexts that are not favoured has a higher risk of leading to tension or conflict.

**4. CONCLUSIONS**

In the ethnic Madurese community, the use of VCS is higher than SCS. There is quite a high level of social control which can be ranged from the highest level of intensity, which is respectively found in the context (-P-D), (=P-D), (-P+D) and (+P-D), and the lowest level of intensity occurs in the context (+P+D). This means

that when a violation of social values occurs, whether by a superior or a subordinate, whether in a close or distant relationship, the violation tends to be prevented or controlled rather than allowed without any control.

The use of VCS in various situational contexts based on parameter ( $\pm$ Pu) is strongly determined by its axis. It appears that parameter ( $\pm$ D) is this axis. If a context contains axis (-D), the criticism tends to be executed in private, while the parameter ( $\pm$ P) does not have a significant influence. If a context contains axis (+D), the parameter ( $\pm$ P) also influences the way in which a criticism is expressed. If axis (+D) is paired with (-P) or (+P), the criticism tends to be verbally expressed, either openly or in private. However, if axis (+D) is paired with (=P), the criticism tends to be executed in private (-Pu).

Based on the axis  $\pm$ D, it can also be seen that some contexts of criticism are more favoured and other contexts of criticism are less favoured in the ethnic Madurese community. The contexts of criticism that tend to be favoured are contexts such as (+P+D+Pu), (+P+d-Pu), (+P-D-Pu), (-P+D+Pu), (-P+D-Pu), (-P-D-Pu), (=P+d-Pu), and (=P-D-Pu). Meanwhile, the contexts that are less favoured are \*(+P-D+Pu), \*(-P-D+Pu), \*(=P-D+Pu), and \*(=P+D+Pu). Needless to say, executing a criticism in a context that is less favoured has a higher risk of leading to tension or conflict.

## 5. SUGGESTION

From the description of the results of the study above, the researchers provide the suggestion as the following.

Criticism within the ethnic Madurese community is suggestively expressed in such contexts as (+P+D+Pu), (+P+d-Pu), (+P-D-Pu), (-P+D+Pu), (-P+D-Pu), (-P-D-Pu), (=P+d-Pu), and (=P-D-Pu). These contexts are relatively safe for expressing criticism.

Criticism within the ethnic Madurese community is not suggested to be expressed in such contexts as \*(+P-D+Pu), \*(-P-D+Pu), \*(=P-D+Pu), and \*(=P+D+Pu). The criticism if expressed in these contexts may threaten one's face and even can arouse tension between criticizer (C) and recipient (R).

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