

Indirect criticism in the ethnic Madurese community: Its various semantic formulas, lingual markers, and context of use

by Edy Jauhari

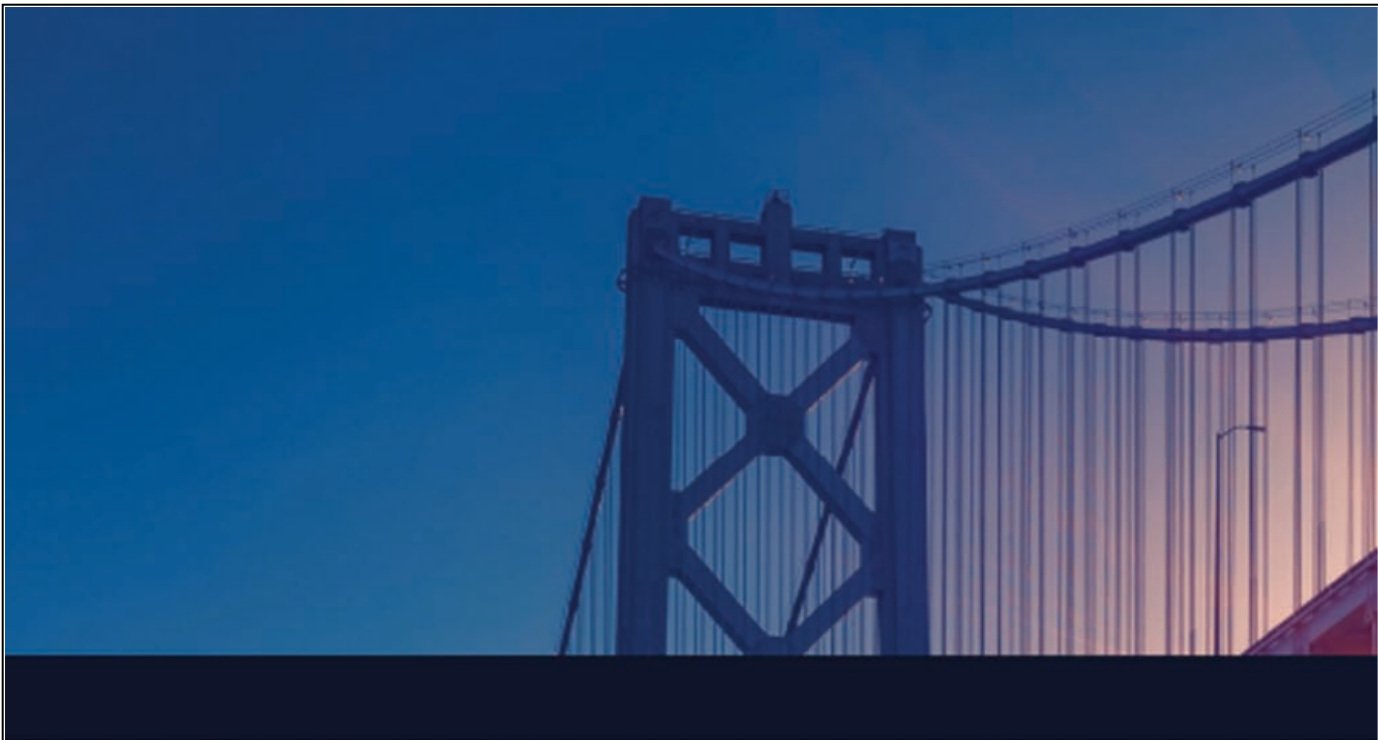
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Indirect criticism in the ethnic Madurese community: Its various semantic formulas, lingual markers, and context of use

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ABSTRACT: This article studies the speech act of criticism in the ethnic Madurese community (in Indonesia). The study focuses on indirect criticism. The goals are to explain the various semantic formulas that are used to express indirect criticism in the Madurese community, to identify the lingual markers, and to understand the different contexts of use according to the cultural norms of the Madurese community. The data was collected through the methods of Discourse Completion Tasks and interviews. The results of the data analysis show that the semantic formulas that are used to express indirect criticism in the ethnic Madurese community vary widely. In general, each semantic formula has specific lingual markers which indicate the type of semantic formula. Each type of semantic formula is generally used in a different context.

Keywords: indirect criticism, semantic formulas, Madurese community

1 INTRODUCTION

Criticism is a kind of speech act which is interesting to study because its characteristics make it prone to be face-threatening (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Criticism has an important function in the social life of a community, as a tool for social control. Criticising is, in truth, performing an act of control. Performing an act of control means correcting or rectifying a deviant behaviour.

Criticism can be expressed using a direct or indirect strategy. Direct criticism occurs when the speaker's intention is the same as the linguistic meaning or semantic meaning of the utterance. In contrast, indirect criticism occurs when the speaker's intention is not the same as the linguistic meaning (Thomas, 1995). The speaker presents a primary illocutionary act through a secondary illocutionary act (Searle, 1996). This article investigates indirect criticism in the ethnic Madurese community. The goals are to understand the various kinds of semantic formulas, the lingual markers, and the contexts of use in the Madurese community.

Ethnic Madurese are one of the ethnic communities found in Indonesia who live predominantly on the Island of Madura, in East Java. The people in this community are known to be somewhat sensitive about their self-esteem, as reflected in the popular expression: "angoanpotetolangetembangpotemata", 'Better the white of bones than the white of eyes'. The meaning of this saying is that it is better to die and be buried in the earth than to have no self-respect. It gives an implication of how important the matter of self-respect is for this community, and criticism is a linguistic act that tends not to respect the person towards whom the criticism is directed. Therefore, it is interesting to observe how the people in this community express criticism while taking care to respect the person who is the target of the criticism.

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Up to now, there have been no studies on the specific act of criticism in the ethnic Madurese community, although studies on criticism in various other cultures have already been carried out by a number of experts. They include Tracy, et al. (1987), Tracy and Eissenberg (1990), Wajnryb (1993), Gunarwan (1996), Toplak and Katz (2000), Mulac et al. (2000), Nguyen (2005), Hoang Thi Xuang Hoa (2007), Min Shang-chao (2008), and Nguyen (2008). The results of their studies are, of course, highly beneficial as a background to the writing of this article. Nevertheless, the study of criticism in this article is different from the studies of criticism by previous experts because this article focuses on criticism in its function as a tool for social control.

3

2 METHOD

The data in this article were collected using the method of a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) and interviews. The DCT was distributed to informants in a number of government offices in the towns of Bangkalan, Sampang, and Pamekasan. Since the people completing the DCT were office employees, the material of the DCT was related to office matters. The completed DCT was then used as material for interviewing the informants. The goal of the interviews was to affirm that the data contained in the DCT matched the conditions of the Madurese community in the field. In addition, interviews were held to obtain additional relevant information. The context of the DCT was determined based on the alternations of \pm Power and \pm Distance (Brown and Levinson, 1987). The data collected were then sorted into two groups based on the strategy chosen, either direct or indirect. Subsequently, the data which showed indirect strategy was analysed further to understand the various semantic formulas used, as well as the lingual markers and contexts of use according to the cultural norms of the Madurese community.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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The results of the data analysis show that indirect criticism in the Madurese community can be expressed through a variety of different semantic formulas, including: (1) request, (2) prohibition, (3) command, (4) suggestion, (5) rhetorical question, (6) irony, (7) comparative expression, (8) sarcasm, (9) expectation, (10) advice, and (11) admonishment. These various kinds of semantic formulas are explained further in the following section.

3.1 Semantic formula 'request'

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Criticism is sometimes expressed through the semantic formula 'request' in the Madurese community. This means, the speaker makes a request but the substance of the utterance is not really a request but a criticism. see example (1) below.

1. *Abdhinasadhajasaroju' manabikodhudisplin. Namongabdhinajhughannyo'on Saleranama rengoconto se sae da' ka baba'anna. Ka'dintojhughanka'angghuykabhaghusansadhajana.* (Uttered by an employee [a subordinate] to the head of the office who orders his employees to behave in a disciplined manner but does not set a good example of discipline himself to his subordinates.)

In the Madurese community, the semantic formula 'request' is often characterized by the use of the word *nyo'on* 'request' or the word *menta* 'ask', which appears explicitly in utterance (1). However, not all utterances containing a request are criticisms. A request which is a criticism is a request that is intended to enforce control over a deviant behaviour.

Criticism which is expressed using the semantic formula 'request' is felt to be soft criticism. This is understandable because the negative evaluation that forms the substance of the criticism is not stated explicitly or overtly but is stated covertly or is disguised in the form of a request. Perhaps this formula can be found in various situational contexts such as the context (+P+D), (+P-D), (-P+D), or (-P-D).

1

3.2 Semantic formula 'prohibition'

Indirect criticism in the Madurese community contains criticism but it is expressed with a semantic formula which is in the form of prohibition. Consider example (2) below.

2. Pak Fauzi, *sampeyanonenglakohkantorkitanekasangatbanyak ben kaduhsegerapanakehaghin. Dedihitolongsampeyan ta' ngurusilakohsampingan mon jam dinas.* (Uttered by the head of an office to his employee who often spends time on other business in working hours.)

Utterance (2) above is a prohibition (marked by the use of the word *ta'* 'don't'); its substance is criticism. Utterance (2) is to control the behaviour of the person to whom the utterance is directed (the employee) so that he does not conduct his own business during working hours. In the Madurese community, the semantic formula 'prohibition' is usually expressed overtly and is often marked with the word *jha, je'*, or *ta'* which appear explicitly in the utterance. Prohibitions which represent criticisms are utterances which intend to prevent or control the addressee.

Criticism in the form of prohibition is categorized as quite harsh for the Madurese community because it is expressed overtly and explicitly. Based on the analysis, criticism using the semantic formula 'prohibition' is mainly found in the context (-P+D) or (-P-D). However, with the aid of modifiers (whether internal or external), the semantic formula 'prohibition' can potentially also be used in the context (+P+D) or (+P-D).

3.3 Semantic formula 'command'

In the Madurese community, indirect criticism is sometimes expressed as 'command'. Thus, the substance of the utterance is, in fact, a criticism but semantically it is formulated as a command. See example (3) below.

3. Pak Fauzi, *kalakoankita se utamapanekahnengkantor. Deddihlastarehagihgelluhkalakoan se bedehnengkantor, mangkenmanabiamponlastareh, sampiyanbisangelakonihkalakoan se laen.* (Uttered by the head of an office to a subordinate who often neglects his office work to manage his own business.)

Semantically, utterance (3) above is a command. A command is marked by the use of a verb without a prefix, in this case *lastarehagih* 'finish'. However, from the point of view of its illocutionary force, utterance (3) above has the intention of encouraging the addressee (Pak Fauzi) to engage in self-correction, or to stop conducting his own personal business during office hours. In this case, the command utterance is considered a harsh criticism. However, if the command is expressed using a passive verb, the harshness of the criticism can be reduced by several degrees. The semantic formula 'command' is largely found in the Madurese community in the contexts (-P-D) and (-P+D). However, if the degree of harshness is reduced by the use of a modifier or the command is expressed in a passive form, the semantic formula 'command' is sometimes also used in the context (+P+D) or (+P-D).

3.4 Semantic formula 'suggestion'

In the Madurese community criticism is also expressed through the semantic formula 'suggestion'. The substance of the utterance is criticism but is also expressed through the semantic formula 'suggestion' (See example (4)).

4. *Ta' langkong Pak, sopajakedisiplinannengkantorka'dintokengengterrosejaga, abdhinaghadhuwanusul. Kadhiponapamanabi Bapak menangkapimpinannengka'dintojhughanmarengenco nto se sae da' ka baba'annaepo.* (Uttered by an employee [a subordinate] to the head of the office who often orders the employees to behave in a disciplined manner but does not set a good example of disciplined behaviour himself to his employees.)

Semantically, utterance (4) expresses a suggestion. This is indicated by the use of word *usul* 'suggest' which appears explicitly in the utterance. However, from the point of view of its illocutionary force, utterance (4) above is clearly not only intended to convey the suggestion

that is seen in its semantic meaning but is also intended as a criticism. Through utterance (4) above, the speaker (the employee) intends to enforce control over the addressee (the head of the office) who has acted in an inappropriate manner, by ordering his employees to behave in a disciplined manner while never setting a good example of discipline himself to his subordinates. In the Madurese community, the semantic formula 'suggestion' tends to be expressed in a performative manner by using the word 'suggest' (*usullusulen'usul'*).

Not all utterances expressing suggestions are criticisms. Suggestions that are not intended to carry out control are, of course, not criticisms but only common utterances of suggestion. In the Madurese community, a criticism that is presented through the semantic formula 'suggestion' is regarded as a very soft form of criticism. The hearer does not feel face-threatened because the criticism is expressed as a suggestion. Criticism which is presented through the semantic formula 'suggestion' is primarily found in the context (+P-D) or (+P+D).

3.5 Semantic formula in the form of a rhetorical question

Criticism in the Madurese community may also be expressed through the semantic formula of a rhetorical question. In this type of criticism, the speaker expresses his or her criticism by asking the addressee a question, but the question does not require an answer because the answer is, in fact, already known, both by the speaker and the addressee. The main goal of the speaker in asking the question is to perform control (criticise) of the addressee so that s/he carries out self-correction of the deviant behaviour that s/he has been engaging in. Take a close look at example (5) below.

5. *Pak Gum, kher-akhernekahkaulahngatelakbedehbanyakpegawai se korangdisiplin. Apahkaadaannekahepennenggahpak?* (Uttered by an employee [subordinate] to his superior [the head of the office], who has been allowing the employees to behave in an undisciplined manner in carrying out their office duties.)

In utterance (5) above, the speaker (the employee) is not simply intending to ask the addressee (the head of the office) why he is allowing the employees to behave in an undisciplined manner. In addition to that, the speaker's intention is to criticize (control) the addressee for violating certain norms, in this case, as the head of the office, for allowing his employees to behave in an undisciplined manner. Therefore, the response required from the addressee is not simply an answer to the question asked by the speaker but also an act of self-correction. In the Madurese community, this type of criticism is felt to be a soft criticism because the negative evaluation which forms the substance of the criticism is expressed covertly through a question. Due to its soft nature, this type of criticism can potentially be used in various situational contexts such as (+P+D), (+P-D), (-P+D), or (-P-D).

3.6 Semantic formula 'irony'

Indirect criticism in the Madurese community is sometimes expressed through the semantic formula of irony. For this semantic formula, when expressing a criticism to the addressee, the speaker utters a statement which says the opposite of what he or she actually means. Example (6) below is expressed through the semantic formula 'irony'.

6. *Musyafak, ta' pa-rapahkalowankantorba'na ta' taurus, se pentengkalakowansampengannaajhalanterros.* (Uttered by the head of an office to one of his employees (Musyafak) who often conducts his own business affairs during office hours and as a result, his office work is neglected.)

If we look at the context, the speaker (the head of the office) in utterance (6) above clearly does not intend to give permission to the addressee (Musyafak) to conduct his own personal business and neglect his office duties. On the contrary, the speaker is performing an act of control so that the addressee does not conduct his personal business while neglecting his office work. On the basis of this, it is clear that utterance (6) above is a criticism that is expressed through the semantic formula irony. In general, this semantic formula does not include

specific lingual markers and tends only to be understood semantically. In the Madurese community, this kind of semantic formula is used in the context (-P+D) or (-P-D).

3.7 *Semantic formula in the form of a comparative expression*

The data also shows that criticism in the Madurese community may also be expressed using a semantic formula which is in the form of a comparative expression. In this case, the speaker, when presenting his or her criticism, makes a comparison between himself or herself and the addressee, or between another person and the addressee about the same or a similar type of problem. In making ³ his comparison, the speaker shows that, in doing the same or similar kind of thing, the speaker can do it without violating any norms, unlike the addressee. In the Madurese community, a criticism that is expressed by means of a comparative expression such as this does not have any particular lingual markers. This kind of comparative expression can usually only be understood semantically. In order to better understand this semantic formula, see example (7) below (in the same context as example (6) above).

7. *Pak Musyafak, Pak Ahmad rowa pada andi' kalakowansampengananyar. Tape Ahmad ta' tomangurusinnengjhamlakoh.* ('Pak Musyafak, Pak Ahmad also has his own business. But Pak Ahmad never conductshis own business during office hours'.)

Utterance (7) above contains a comparison between two people (both employees in the same office), Pak Musyafak and Pak Ahmad, both of whom have their own personal businesses in addition to their office jobs. Through utterance (7) above, the speaker (the head of the office) is not intending simply to compare the business of Pak Musyafak with that of Pak Ahmad. By making this comparison, the head of the office, of course, is making a criticism (control) of Pak Musyafak so that he does not let his own personal business interfere with his office work, which Pak Ahmad never does. It is hoped that this comparison will encourage Pak Musyafak to carry out introspection and self-correction. In the Mad¹urese community, a criticism that is expressed using a comparative expression is primarily found in the context (-P+D) or (-P-D).

3.8 *Semantic formula 'sarcasm'*

In the Madurese community, indirect criticism may also be expressed using the semantic formula 'sarcasm'. A criticism which is expressed through sarcasm is usually formulated in such a way that the addressee is not mentioned directly in the utterance but instead the speaker makes a generalisation. In other words, when making the criticism, the speaker does not refer specifically to the person to whom the criticism is directed but rather expresses it as a general criticism. In the Madurese community, the semantic formula 'sarcasm' appears not to have any particular lingual markers and tends only to be understood semantically. Consider example (8) below.

8. *E kantorreyapossa' pongghaba se lebbimelengurusinkalakowansampengannanengjhamkantoretombhengkakalowanotamana. Areyatakekenningtoro!* (Uttered by the head of an office to his employee by the name of Pak Fauzi who often conductshis own personal business during office hours so that his office duties are neglected.)

Criticism (8) above is expressed using a semantic formula in form of sarcasm. When making his criticism, the speaker (the head of the office) does not mention the name of the employee to whom he is referring. Nevertheless, based on the context, the person who is the target of the criticism, namely Pak Fauzi, knows precisely that the criticism² being expressed is intended for himself and not for anyone else. A criticism that is expressed with sarcasm appears to have the intention of 'saving face' because the name of the person who is the target of the criticism (the addressee, Pak Fauzi) is not stated explicitly². In the Madurese community, a criticism that is expressed using the semantic formula 'sarcasm' is found in the context (-P+D). However, due to the soft nature of the criticism, it also has the¹ potential to be used in other contexts.

3.9 Semantic formula 'expectation'

Indirect criticism in the Madurese community is sometimes also expressed using the semantic formula 'expectation'. In this case, the utterance of the speaker expresses an expectation but the substance of the utterance is not expectation but criticism. In the Madurese community, a criticism expressed with the semantic formula 'expectation' is usually marked by the appearance of the word *ngarep/arep* 'expect/hope' in the utterance. See example (9) below.

9. *Pak Fauzi, sampayanollebeihgeduenbisnissampingan e luarkantor, tapehabdinangarepbisnis-sampayanloksampe' eganggulakoh e kantor.* (Uttered by the head of an office to his employee who often leaves the office during work hours to take care of his own personal business.)

In criticism (9), the speaker expresses his hope that Mr. Fauzi will prioritise his job at the office. A criticism which uses the semantic formula 'expectation' is mainly used in the context (-P+D) or (-P-D).

3.10 Semantic formula 'advice'

Indirect criticism is also actualized using a semantic formula 'advice'. In this case, the utterance is presented semantically in the form of advice but, in substance, it is not advice but criticism. Consider example (10) below.

10. *Sabelummahkaulahnyo'onsapora hpak, manabiapa se kaulahdhebunekahkorangnyaman. Kadihneka hpah, manabibapakmentah kami gebeyasekapdisiplin, alangkahbegussahbapakjunganmerrikcontohdisiplin se begus ka kami. Manabientenkaulapekkeranjuranbapakneka hmlaratelaksanaagih.* (Uttered by an employee [subordinate] to the head of the office who often orders the employees to have discipline but does not set a good example of discipline himself to his employees.)

This semantic formula 'advice' can be seen from its head act, which has the lingual marker *alangkahbegussah* 'how much better it would be'. On the basis of this, it is clear that criticism (10) above is expressed with the semantic formula 'advice'. In the Madurese language, there are several lingual forms that can be used to mark the semantic formula 'advice', including *alangkahbegussah* 'how much better it would be', *langkongsae* 'it would be better', *saestonah* '[you] should', *lebbibecek* 'it would be preferable'. In the Madurese community, criticism using the semantic formula 'advice' is viewed as soft criticism and, as such, it can be used in various situational contexts, such as (+P+D), (+P-D), (-P+D), and (-P-D).

3.11 Semantic formula 'expectation'

In the Madurese community, indirect criticism is also sometimes actualized using a semantic formula which is in the form of a reminder or admonishment. See example (11) below.

11. *Pak Fauzi, kalakoanotamalebhipentengetembangkalakoansampingan. Polanakaulengenga'aghinsopajakalakoansampinganlokaganggukalakoanutama.* (Uttered by the head of the office to one of his employees (Pak Fauzi) who spends time working on his own personal business during office hours.)

It is clear that semantically criticism (11) above is an admonishment. This semantic formula can be observed from its head act (*Polanakaulengenga'aghinsopajakalakoansampinganlokaganggukalakoanutama*). In this head act, the speaker explicitly uses the word/phrase *ngenga'aghin* 'remind' to convey his criticism. In the Madurese community, a criticism that is expressed with this kind of semantic formula is considered to be quite a soft criticism. Nevertheless, this kind of semantic formula is mainly used in the context (-P+D) or (-P-D).

4 CONCLUSION

People in the Madurese community use various kinds of semantic formulas to express indirect criticism. These semantic formulas include (1) request, (2) prohibition, (3) command, (4) suggestion, (5) rhetorical question, (6) irony, (7) comparative expression, (8) sarcasm, (9) expectation, (10) advice, and (11) admonishment. Each of these semantic formulas generally has its own specific lingual markers which indicate the type of semantic formula. In addition, each semantic formula also has its own different contexts of use.

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