

The Language of Respect: Exploring the Dynamics of Honorifics in a Balinese-Japanese Marriage

Ida Ayu Putri Gita Ardiantari^{1*}, Ni Wayan Meidariani², I Gusti Ayu Agung Sintha Satwika³

^{1,2,3}Faculty of Foreign Language, Mahasaraswati Denpasar, Indonesia

Corresponding author's email: idaayupugitaa@unmas.ac.id

Abstract

In multicultural societies, understanding how people communicate respectfully, especially in marriage, is important. Respect can be shown by the use of honorific in communication. This study focused on the dynamics of honorific usage in the context of a Balinese-Japanese marriage family in Payangan and Ubud Distric of Gianyar Regency, as this intermarriage can be found easily. This study aimed to explain how language serves as a tool for respect and social harmony. The data of this research were in the form of dialogue between Balinese and Japanese in daily life. The method used in collecting the data was observation method that support by listening and note-taking. Through qualitative analysis, this research examined the common patterns and the types of honorifics found in the interaction and the cultural factors influencing the use of honorific. These findings revealed diverse linguistic practices, in which honorifics function not only as linguistic markers, but also as embodiments of cultural values and relational hierarchies. By studying how respect is expressed in Balinese-Japanese marriages, this research helps us better understand intercultural communication and life in a multicultural society.

Keywords: honorific usage; social interaction; Balinese-Japanese marriage

INTRODUCTION

Honorifics is linguistic forms that express respect, deference, and social hierarchy. It plays a pivotal role in many cultures. In Japanese, honorifics are a deeply embedded aspect of communication, reflecting intricate social structures and relationships. Similarly, in Balinese culture, language is a vital medium for expressing respect and social order, though the mechanisms and expressions differ from those in Japanese.

Honorific is part of politeness. Language politeness strategies is affected by the cultural background of both spouses in intercultural marriages (Andriyani, 2022: 134). The honorific system exists in Bali is underlined by the terms of *Jaba (Sudra)* and *Tri Wangsa (Brahmana, Ksatria, Weisya)* (Riana in Riani, 2023). These terms are known as *wangsa*, social group which is related to the professions of the ancestors This existence

also supported by Mayuko (2015) who stated that Balinese local people still communicate by concerning this social group difference which directly influences the language choice used for their conversation including terms of address.

The honorifics in Bali are implemented at the language level and reflect the social status of the person. The language level is known as *Sor Singgih Basa Bali* or the levels of respect and formality in the Balinese language. This term specifically refers to the system of linguistic stratification in Balinese, where “*sor*” means “low” and “*singgih*” means “high”. It describes the hierarchical structure in Balinese language usage, where different levels of language are used to address people of different social statuses. It reflects the social hierarchy and context in which the language is used.

This study searched into the intersection of these two rich linguistic traditions within the framework of a Balinese-Japanese marriage. By examining how spouses handle and integrate their respective systems of honorifics, the sociopragmatic processes that govern their communication and relationship dynamics can be uncovered.

This research is situated within the broader field of sociopragmatics, which examines how social contexts influence language use and interpretation. By focusing on a cross-cultural marriage, this study provides insights into how individuals from different linguistic backgrounds negotiate meaning, respect, and social harmony through their use of honorifics. This exploration not only enhances our understanding of the role of honorifics in intercultural communication but also contributes to the discourse on cultural adaptation and integration in mixed marriages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research has examined the honorific, including research results showing that variations in the form of personal pronouns, including greetings to relatives, are influenced by status, familiarity, feelings and activities. Sunarni (2023) studied honorific in language of Dayak Kanayatn in Banying village. The study showed that the utterances found contain kinship terms, both kinship due to blood relations and kinship due to marriage relations. Sartika (2016) also found that the greeting words contained in the Manggarai language appear based on kinship relationships, professional and position greetings, self-name greetings, and pronoun greetings. These researches showed that honorific reflect kinship or social group as stated in other study by Mayuko (2015) which found that the honorific in Bali also effected by the social level. In the other hand, related to Japanese, Surya (2022) studied the use of Japanese honorific forms used on emails by the employees in a Japanese company. The honorific found was used to address the receiver with higher and lower social status than the sender. This research shows that the social status in a working environment is not an absolute factor in the use of honorifics. Moreover, Sunarni (2023) examined the word *tsuma* that used in greetings to address wife by the husband in Japanese. It found that the word *tsuma* can express and symbolize the cultural reality that women as wives only play a role in domestic affairs and as complements to their husbands. Review these two last researches, the honorific not absolutely state the higher status but can be the lower. Starting from the literatures review above, a distinguishing line can be drawn between previous research and this current research. This research entitled The Language of Respect: Exploring the Dynamics of Honorifics in a Balinese-Japanese Marriage, was focused in examining and

exploring the honorific used by family of Balinese-Japanese intermarriage in their daily life.

METHOD

This research focused in examining and exploring the honorific used by family of Balinese-Japanese intermarriage in their daily life. The primary data of this research was in the form of dialogue among couple and their family member. The data were taken from Balinese-Japanese marriage in Payangan and Ubud Disctric of Gianyar Regency as intermarriage can be found easily. This study used a qualitative research method to explore the use and significance of honorifics in a Balinese-Japanese marriage. The primary methods employed in collecting data was participant observation. Participant observation was carried out in the couple and family daily interactions. This method allowed for the direct observation of honorific use in natural settings, providing contextual insights into how respect and hierarchy are used in real-time. Field notes were taken to document interactions, and particular attention was given to how honorifics were adapted or blended in the couple's communication. The collected data were then analyzed by thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns in the data. This involved coding the field note and followed by the identification of themes related to the use of honorifics, cultural adaptation, and interpersonal dynamics. The analysis aimed to uncover how the spouses balance their cultural norms and create a shared linguistic repertoire that respects both traditions. The analysis used Politeness Theory by Brown and Levinson (1987) which provides a framework for understanding how individuals manage face-threatening acts in communication. This theory is essential for analyzing how honorifics are used to express respect and deference, mitigate social distance, and maintain harmony in interpersonal interactions. The results of the data analysis were presented descriptively and a precise transcription of the dialogue were presented to serve as the basis information of the analysis.

FINDINGS

Politeness theory is highly relevant to the study of honorifics in a Japanese-Balinese marriage life. Brown and Levinson (1987), provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals manage face-threatening acts in communication which also reflect honorific. The theory is built on the concept of 'face', which refers to a person's self-esteem or emotional needs during interaction. In this research, can be found the terms face, both positive face and negative face in the interaction among couple and their family.

Table 1. Results of the study

| Speaker and Interlocutor | HONORIFIC |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Husband (Balinese) to wife (Japanese) | Jero, Rijasa, Komang, Mang, Ma |
| Children to mother (Japanese) | Mama, Ma |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Other person to the mother (Japanese) | Bu Jero, Jero, Jero Rijasa, Mok Jero Komang, Mang |
| Wife (Japanese) to husband (Balinese) | Gung Aji, Ajik, Agung, Bli, Papa |
| Children to father (Balinese) | Ajik, Papa |
| Other person to the father (Balinese) | Gung, Bli Gung, Bli, Komang |

DISCUSSION

Dialogue 1

Context

- Speaker : Jero Rijasa (wife) (Japanese woman)
- Speech partner : Gung Oka (husband) (Balinese)
- Location : Residential house
- Theme : Intimate conversation
- Situation : The wife calls her husband to say that her child is waiting in front of the house to go to the course together

Dialogue

- Speaker : Pa, Ely sudah di depan nunggu (Pa, Ely (their daughter) is already in front of the house waiting.)
- Interlocutor : Ya, ma, suruh antos kejep. Ajik ngambil helm. (Alright, ma. Tell her to wait a moment. Ajik gonna get helmet.)
- Speaker : Oh, Ajik, itu helmya di atas kursi. (Oh, Ajik, the helmet is right on the chair)

From the dialogue script above, the result of the analysis can be formulated as follow:

1. Honorifics and Address Terms.

The honorific and address terms that can be found are “**Pa**”, “**Ma**”, and “**Ajik**”.

The wife used “**Pa**” to address her husband, a common term in Indonesian for father, implying respect and familial intimacy. The husband reciprocated with “**Ma**”, a term of endearment for mother, reflecting mutual respect and affection. Moreover, the husband also used “**Ajik**” for himself, a Balinese honorific term indicating respect within the family, which the social level or *Wangsa* of the husband is *Triwangsa*.

2. Cultural Politeness Strategies

Cultural politeness strategies that found in the data were grouped into respect and hierarchy and the language mood. Related to the respect and hierarchy, the use of familial terms “**Pa**” and “**Ma**” shows a balance of respect and affection, blending Japanese and Balinese politeness strategies. Furthermore, in the language mood, it can be detected the indirect requests. The husband used of “*suruh antos kejep*” (tell her to wait a moment) is an indirect request, a common politeness strategy in both cultures to mitigate the imposition.

3. Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication that can be explored from the data are language mixing and in the cultural adaptation. The language mixing or also known as code mixing reflect this intercultural communication. The dialogue included a mix of Indonesian and Balinese. It reflected the linguistic adaptation in a multilingual household. And related to cultural adaptation, it can be reflected on the dialogue. The wife used of Balinese honorifics and the husband respond in Indonesian demonstrated their adaptation to each other cultural norms.

Dialogue 2

Context

- Speaker : Gung Putra (Agung Oka's brother)
Speech partner : Jero Rijasa (sister in law (Japanese woman))
Location : Residential house
Situation : Gung Putra looking for Agung Oka while the Japanese is sweeping the house yard.

Dialogue

- Speaker : Mok Jero, Bli Gung dija? (Mok Jero (sister) where is Bli Gung?)
Interlocutor : Gung Ajinya di luar masang Penjor. (Gung Aji is out side decorating Penjor.)
Speaker : Sama siapa? (with whom?)
Interlocutor : Sama Gung Sely (with Gung Sely)

From the dialogue script above, the result of the analysis can be formulated as follow:

1. Honorifics and Address Terms

The honorific and address terms that can be found are "**Mok Jero**", "**Bli Gung**", and "**Gung Aji**". Gung Putra used "**Mok Jero**" an honorific term for addressing his sister-in-law, combining respect and affection within the family context. "**Mok**" means elder sister and "**Jero**" is addressing status that given by because this Japanese woman married to man from *Tri Wangsa* social group. Moreover, "**Bli Gung**" is used to refer to Agung Oka, with "**Bli**" being a Balinese honorific for an elder brother, showing respect. In the other hand, the Japanese used "**Gung Aji**" to refer to her husband, a respectful and familiar term within the family.

2. Cultural Politeness Strategies

Cultural politeness strategies that found in the data were grouped into respect and hierarchy and the language mood. Related to the respect and hierarchy reflected by the use of familial and honorific terms like "**Mok**", "**Bli**" and "**Gung**" indicates a high level of respect and familiarity, blending Japanese and Balinese cultural norms. Furthermore, in the language mood, it can be detected the indirect requests. The utterance of Gung Putra was a direct question "Bli Gung *dija*?" ("where is Bli Gung?"). It showed a straightforward communication style within the family context, typical in close-knit familial relationships.

3. Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication that can be explored from the data are language mixing and in the cultural adaptation. The language mixing or also known as code mixing reflect this intercultural communication. The conversation mixes Indonesian and Balinese, reflecting the multilingual environment in the household. And the use of Balinese honorifics by the Japanese wife showed her adaptation and respect for her husband's cultural norms.

Dialogue 3

Context

Speaker : Wayan (husband)
Speech partner : Komang Ayu (wife (Japanese woman))
Location : Residential house
Situation : Wayan asked his wife, Komang, where the keys to her motorbike were.

Dialogue

Speaker : Mang, dije kel jang kunci motore? (Mang, where did you put the motorbike keys?)
Interlocutor : Dije nah? Mungkin di paon. (Where do I put it? Maybe in the kitchen.)
Speaker : Ngudiang ngejang kunci di paon? (Why did you put the key in the kitchen?)
Interlocutor : Saya lupa, Bli. Mungkin di paon, tadi dari warung (I forgot, Bli. Maybe in the kitchen, I came from the stall earlier.)

From the dialogue script above, the result of the analysis can be formulated as follow:

1. Honorifics and Address Terms.

The honorific and address terms that can be found are "**Mang**" and "**Bli**". Wayan, the husband, used "**Mang**" to address his wife. "**Mang**" is the shortened of "**Komang**". It is the term used in naming the third child in a family. This term is somehow used by the *Jaba Wangsa*. The Japanese woman who married to this social group sometimes also has a Balinese name based on the birth order. In this case, the Japanese is the third child in her family, so she was named **Komang**. "**Mang**" in this dialogue is a term of endearment that also serves as an honorific, showing affection and respect. Her husband tended to use this Balinese name to show that they are in one family now and to show the kinship. Similar with the husband, the Japanese, Komang, used "**Bli**" as an honorific for husband in Balinese, showing respect and familiarity. The term "**Bli**" is not only for elder brother, but also for husband.

2. Cultural Politeness Strategies

Cultural politeness strategies that found in the data were grouped into language mood, the direct inquiry and apology and explanation. Related to the direct inquiry, the husband, Wayan, used direct question in asking about the keys. It reflected a straightforward communication style typical in close family settings. While, the

apology and explanation showed by response by Komang. It included an apology and an explanation, softening the potential reprimand and maintaining harmony.

3. Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication that can be explored from the data are language mixing and in the cultural adaptation and understanding. The dialogue blended Indonesian and Balinese, showcasing the multilingual environment in the household. And the use of Balinese honorifics by Komang indicates her adaptation to her husband's cultural norms and enhances mutual understanding.

CONCLUSION

This research explored the dynamics of honor and politeness strategies in Balinese-Japanese marriages. This research analyzed how elements related to honorifics can facilitate respect and communication between cultures. Dialogue analysis showed the adaptive use of honorifics such as “Pa”, “Ma”, “Ajik”, “Mok Jero”, “Bli Gung”, “Gung Aji”, “Mang”, “Bli” and the others. The honorific reflects a perfect blend of Balinese and Japanese cultural norms. These findings revealed the important role of language in fostering mutual understanding, respect and family harmony in multicultural households.

As a result, by showing how intercultural couples manage their linguistic interactions, this research contributed to the broader fields of sociopragmatics and intercultural communication, providing insight into maintaining relational dynamics in diverse cultural environments. Future research could expand on this by examining similar dynamics in different cultural couples or exploring the long-term impact of linguistic adaptation on family cohesion and identity.

In short, this research not only increased understanding of intercultural communication but also offered practical implications for couples, educators, and policy makers in supporting multicultural families. These findings highlighted the importance of linguistic adaptability and respect in building harmonious intercultural relationships, thereby contributing to progress in the fields of sociopragmatics and intercultural studies.

REFERENCES

- Andriyani, A. A. A. D., Ardiantari, I. A. P. G., Santika, I. D. A. D. M., & Nurita, W. (2022). Language Politeness Strategy in Japan-Bali Inter-marriage among Balinese Family. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 6(3), 134-141. <http://dx.doi.org/10.32601/ejal.803011>
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage* (Vol. 4). Cambridge university press.
- Dewi, N. P. A. K., & Subaker, I. W. (2022). The Mapping of Honorific Balinese Address Terms Translated into English. *ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 5(1), 146–150. <https://doi.org/10.34050/elsjish.v5i1.20481>.
- Mayuko, H. (2015). “ Bentuk Hormat ” Dialek Bahasa Bali Aga Dalam Konteks Agama. *Jurnal Ilmiah Masyarakat Linguistik Indonesia*, 33(2), 121–133. <http://linguistik->

- indonesia.org/images/files/05. Bentuk Hormat Dialek Bahasa Bali - Hara Mayuko (121-133) - 050416.pdf.
- Riani, G. A. P. L. (2023). The Use of Address Terms by Local People in Pedawa Village. *Journal of Linguistic and Literature Studies*, 1(2), 49-63.
- Sartika, M. A. (2016). SAPAAN DALAM BAHASA MANGGARAI DI PROVINSI NUSA TENGGARA TIMUR. *Sintesis*, 10(2), 91-112. <https://doi.org/10.24071/sin.v10i2.920>
- Sunarni, N. (2023). MAKNA KATA TSUMA SEBAGAI SEBUTAN DARI SUAMI TERHADAP ISTRI DALAM BAHASA JEPANG. *Jurnal Sastra-Studi Ilmiah Sastra*, 13(1), 110-116. <https://doi.org/10.56413/studi%20ilmiah%20sastra.v23i1.369>
- Sunarni, S., Patriantoro, P., & Seli, S. (2023). Kata Sapaan Dalam Bahasa Dayak Kanayatn: Kajian Sociolinguistik. *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research*, 3(3), 6622-6636. <https://doi.org/10.31004/innovative.v3i3.1331>
- Surya, M. A., Marnita, R., & Usman, F. (2022). HONORIFIK BAHASA JEPANG (KEIGO) DALAM SURAT ELEKTRONIK DI PERUSAHAAN JEPANG. *LINGUA: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pengajarannya*, 19(1), 48-58. <https://doi.org/10.30957/lingua.v19i1.661>
- Surya, M. A., Marnita, R., & Usman, F. (2022). HONORIFIK BAHASA JEPANG (KEIGO) DALAM SURAT ELEKTRONIK DI PERUSAHAAN JEPANG. *LINGUA: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pengajarannya*, 19(1), 48-58. <https://doi.org/10.30957/lingua.v19i1.661>