

**FORMAL ORAL INDONESIAN REGISTER USED  
IN OPEN EXAMINATION  
A SYNTACTICAL-PRAGMATIC STUDY**

NI WAYAN SARTINI

Indonesian Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences  
University of Airlangga Surabaya  
Email: [yaniwiratha@yahoo.com](mailto:yaniwiratha@yahoo.com)

Ketut Artawa

Doctorate Program in Linguistics, Faculty of Letters, Udayana University  
Made Budiarsa

Doctorate Program in Linguistics, Faculty of Letters, Udayana University  
Made Dhanawati

Doctorate Program in Linguistics, Udayana University

Abstract

This study explored the formal oral Indonesian register ‘Bahasa Indonesia ragam lisan formal’ (hereinafter referred to as BIRLF) used in open examinations from syntactical-pragmatic perspective. In general, this study aims at analyzing the grammatical-pragmatic elements of the formal oral register used in open examinations; in particular, it aims at analyzing the forms of speech acts and the forms of politeness used in the open examinations held at the University of Airlangga ‘Universitas Airlangga’ (Unair) and the State University of Surabaya ‘Universitas Negeri Surabaya’ (Unesa).

The theories used were the structural theory and the theory of pragmatics. The structural theory was used to analyze the grammatical structures of the sentences used in the dialogues taking place in the open examinations. The theory of pragmatics used in this study refers to the theory of politeness proposed by Lakoff (1972), Leech (1983), Brown and Levinson (1987), and the theory of speech act developed by Austin (1962) and Searle (1975).

The data analysis showed that, based on the direction of extension in which the verb was the center, and the extending components, eleven types of imperative sentences were found. The extension took place to the left, to the right and to the left and to the right from the verb simultaneously. The extending components included words, phrases, clauses and combinations of phrases and clauses. The interrogative sentences used were both the close interrogative sentences and the open interrogative ones. The declarative sentences used were the complex coordinative and subordinative ones. Deletion, pronominalization,, and repetition characterized the two types of sentences.

To identify politeness, the layers of the components constructing the sentences were analyzed. The imperative politeness was expressed grammatically and lexically. Grammatically, the grammatical politeness was shown by passivizing the verb, shifting moods, and changing sequences. Lexically, politeness was expressed by adding lexical items functioning to refine the directive force. The interrogative and declarative politeness was shown by hedging utterances using words functioning as politeness markers.

Keywords: imperative, interrogative, declarative, and politeness.

## **1. Introduction**

The essence of the language used in an open examination is dialogue. Taylor and Cameron (1987) state that in the last fifteen years the analysis of conversations and dialogues has been one of the language and communication fields of study which has been developing the fastest and most actively. The analysis of dialogues or conversation has been the focus of inter disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and linguistics. Firth (1957: 32) states that the analysis of conversations or oral languages as the object of linguistic study is the key to a better understanding of what language is and how it works.

The open examination refers to a procession carried out by the Post Graduate Program of a university to promote a new philosophical doctor. How the language is used in the open examination is highly interesting to be analyzed from the syntactical-pragmatic perspective.

As stated by Leech (1983: 70), a formal and functional analysis is needed in order to be able to discuss a linguistic object comprehensively. Therefore, the language used in the open examination discussed in the current study is observed from two perspectives; formal perspective and functional perspective. Formally, the linguistic level analyzed in this study is the syntactical level; and functionally, what is analyzed is the aspect of speech act and the aspect of politeness included in pragmatics.

The micro linguistic data or syntactical data were used as the basis for understanding the pragmatic meaning in this present study. In other words, grammatical structure can represent the pragmatic aspects such as politeness. This shows how grammar and pragmatics work together in the scientific discourse and how pragmatics uses grammar at the same time.

Basically, grammar and pragmatics are two things which complete each other and have complex relationships. Ariel (2008) states that, when a language is used, many aspects are implicitly left in an utterance. Therefore, it will be better if grammar and pragmatics are applied together. Grammar refers to a set of codes which is explicitly related to a statement; and pragmatics is a set of conclusions drawn from the bases of such codes.

From the library research conducted by the researcher, it can be stated that no researcher had conducted any research in formal oral Indonesian register from the perspective of syntactical-pragmatic study. The combination of syntactical study and pragmatic study is relatively new and no complete combination has been done. Therefore, it has been a challenge for the researcher to conduct a further study.

## **2. Research Method**

This study explored the formal oral Indonesian register ‘Bahasa Indonesia ragam lisan formal’ (referred to as BIRLF) used in the open examinations carried out by the Post Graduate Programs of the University of Airlangga Surabaya and the State University of Surabaya. This study used phonological approach, that is, an approach applied to an object of study understood as a dynamic phenomenon reflecting the reality of the speakers’ daily life (Moleong, 1995). As part of phonological approach, this study is classified as a qualitative study or a descriptive qualitative study. The method used to collect the data was non participative observation method supported by note taking and recording techniques (Bungin, 2001).

The collected data were analyzed using what is referred to as *agih* method and *padan* method. The *agih* method refers to the method using lingual elements as the determining instrument (Sudaryanto, 1993). These methods were supported by the technique which was used to sort particular elements and the technique which was used to divide direct elements. The *padan* method refers to the method using non lingual elements as the determining instruments. The results of analysis were formally and informally presented (Sudaryanto, 1993).

## **3. Discussion**

In this sub section, the types of sentences used in BIRLF are discussed based on the syntactical forms, verb forms, forms of speech acts, and forms of politeness used in the open examination.

### **3.1. Types of Sentences in BIRLF Used in the Open Examination**

Based on the syntactical forms, the types of sentences used in the open

examinations were imperative sentences, interrogative sentences, and declarative sentences. The imperative sentences used here are the extended ones. The extension of imperative sentences could be observed based on the direction of the extension and the extending components. Using the verb as the center, the imperative sentences were extended to the left, to the right, and to the left and to the right simultaneously. Based on such criteria, in this study eleven imperative sentences were found with the following patterns.

- Imperative sentence type 1 : (S) + V
- Imperative sentence type 1 : (S) + V + word
- Imperative sentence type 3 : (S) + V + phrase
- Imperative sentence type 4 : (S) + V + phrase + interrogative clause
- Imperative sentence type 5 : Clause + (S) + V
- Imperative sentence type 6 : (S) + word + V + phrase
- Imperative sentence type 7 : V + phrase + clause
- Imperative sentence type 8 : (S) + clause
- Imperative sentence type 9 : Clause + (S) + V + interrogative clause
- Imperative sentence type 10: (S) + V + word + clause
- Imperative sentence type 11: Clause + V + Phrase

Based on the patterns of imperative sentences above, it was found that the verb is the obligatory component and that the extending components are optional.

The types of interrogative sentences in BIRLF used in the open examination were the close interrogative sentence and the open interrogative sentence. The interrogative sentences were marked by the rising intonation in the end of the sentences; the polar interrogative sentence, and the alternative interrogative sentence. The interrogative sentence with rising intonation was derived from the declarative sentence using the rising intonation in the end of the sentence.

The interrogative sentence in this present study was marked by the existence of one of the words *apa* (what), *mengapa* (why), *bagaimana* (how), *siapa* (who), *di mana* (where), and *sejauh mana* (to what extent). The word *apa* (what) was distributed either in the beginning or in the end of the sentence. The open interrogative sentences in this

present study were marked by one or more questions words such as *apa* (what), *mengapa* (why), *bagaimana* (how), *siapa* (who), *di mana* (where), and *sejauh mana* (to what extent). The question word in the end of the sentence and appearance of the variants of the questions words such as *gimana* (how) and *kenapa* (why) characterized the oral forms of the interrogative sentences. In the open examinations, the examiners tended to use interrogative sentences as part of the declarative sentences. This caused the interrogative sentences to lose their interrogativeness. The pragmatic implication was that the illocutionary force of the interrogative sentences was low.

The declarative sentence refers to the sentence whose content informs something to the reader or listener. In this present study, the declarative sentence used was the simple and complex ones. Based on the analysis, it was found that the complex declarative sentences were more frequently used than the simple ones. This characterized the density or complexity of the sentences used in the oral register. The complex sentences found in this present study were coordinative complex sentences, declarative complex sentences, and mixed sentences (coordinative and declarative). Deletion, repetition, and pronominalization characterized the complex sentences used. Deletion refers to a medium syntactically used to reduce the degree of redundancy as the repetition of the same element constitutes a redundancy from the point of view of information. The face to face dialogues between the speakers might cause deletion to take place. The deletion of linguistic elements could be stated as an attempt to psychologically and social converge, meaning that the speakers were so psychologically and socially close that there was a high solidarity between them. Repetition, as the other characteristic, refers to the fact that one element in one clause was repeated in the other clause in a complex sentence. Apart from the two types of subordinative and coordinative sentences, the mixed sentences (the combination of the subordinative and coordinative sentences) were also frequently used. The appearance of the mixed sentences was closely related to the speakers' spontaneity in using the language. The more spontaneous the speakers, the more the sentence structures used in the communication became uncontrolled.

### **3.2 Forms of the Verbs in BIRLF Used in the Open Examination**

The verbs used in BIRLF were simple and serial ones. The simple verbs referred

to the basic forms of the verbs and the affixes added to them. The affixes included the prefixes such as {meng-}, {di-}, {ber-}, and {ter-}. The deletion of the prefixes {meng-} and {ber-} and the use of the basic forms of the verbs characterized the oral forms of the verbs of BIRLF. This is in accordance with what was stated by Widjono (2011: 24) that the words used in oral registers tend not to use affixes (either prefixes or suffixes).

The serial verbs used in this present study were verb + verb, and adjective + verb. Such verbs could be observed from their syntactical forms and behaviors. From the form point of view, the serial verbs found were active+active, active+passive, passive+active, and passive+passive. From the syntactical point of view, the serial verbs were those functioning as object and complement. The deletion of the words *untuk* (for) and *bahwa* (that) between two verbs featured the oral forms of the serial verbs in BIRLF. As stated by Andrew (1977) and Shibatani (2009), the serial verbs in BIRLF could be classified into symmetrical and asymmetrical verbs. The symmetrical serial verbs are formed from the verbs classified under the open word class or the verbs to which affixes are added; and the asymmetrical serial verbs are those formed by the verbs classified under the close word class which are attached to the verbs classified as the open class. In this case, the asymmetrical serial verbs could be the serialization of modality. The symmetrical serial verbs dominated the asymmetrical serial verbs in BIRLF. This is in accordance with the feature of the Indonesian language as an agglutination language in which affixes are easily attached.

### **3.3 Forms of Speech Acts Used in the Open Examination**

The speech acts in this present study were classified into the types of speech acts and the functions of speech acts. Based on the classification of speech acts proposed by Wijana (1996) and Parker (1986), the types of speech acts found in this present study could be classified into direct speech act, indirect speech act, literal speech act, direct and literal speech act, and indirect and literal speech act. The harmony between the lexical units and the speech moods used in this present study characterized literalness. Such a characteristic was in accordance with the topic as a scientific study. The other characteristics of a scientific register are that it has simple meaning, and objective, meaning that its justification can be measured by the public, and it avoids subjective

expressions.

The functions of speech acts discussed in this present study were the expressive and directive functions. They are closely related to pragmatics. As far as the expressive function is concerned, what was found included praising, congratulating, thanking, and criticizing. In the present study, compliments were given to the *promomendus* using lexical items with positive meanings such as *bahagia* (happy), *bagus* (good), *gigih* (persistent), *sabar* (patient), *terharu* (surprised), *sempurna* (perfect), *menarik* (interesting), *cerah* (bright), *senang* (glad), *berkontribusi* (contribute) and *mengapresiasi* (appreciate). Pragmatically, compliments could enhance the face quality of the *promovendus*. They caused his/her face to be positive. The illocutionary function of giving compliments was making the *promovendus* happy (convivial). From the point of view of the illocutionary functions, the speech act ‘*memberikan selamat*’ (congratulating) and ‘*mengucapkan terima kasih*’ (thanking) were also classified under the convivial function. Then, the speech act *mengkritik* (criticizing) was expressed by (a) explicit disagreement, (b) negative evaluation, (c) question, and (d) positive remark. Among them, explicit disagreement and negative evaluation expressed low politeness. They were regarded as causing the *promovendus* to lose his/her face.

The directive functions found in this present study were expressed by *memohon* (proposing), *memerintah* (instructing), *meminta* (requesting), and *memberi saran* (giving suggestion). From the data analysis it was found that the directive functions in the open examination were expressed using (a) imperatives; (b) explicit performatives; (c) hedged performatives; (d) statements expressing necessities; (e) formulation of suggestions; (f) strong signals; (g) preparation of questions; (h) refined signals; and (d) statements expressing desires.

### **3.4 Forms of Politeness Used in the Open Examination**

The forms of politeness were analyzed in three moods of utterances; they are imperative politeness, interrogative politeness, and declarative politeness, as described below.

### 3.4.1 Imperative Politeness

In the open examination, the examiners used the imperative mood to give instructions to the *promovendus*. Such a mood was in the form of direct instructions. Different ways were used to downgrade the illocutionary force of the instruction and to give impression of politeness. The politeness using the imperative mood was expressed lexically and grammatically. Lexically, the politeness expressed using imperatives was formed by adding words, phrases, and clauses functioning as hedges and mitigation. Grammatically, politeness was formed by changing verbs into the passive construction, shifting moods, and changing the sequence of utterances. So, lexically and grammatically, the politeness markers can also be termed as downgraders of the directive force and pragmatically, it is called hedged performative. *Tolong* (please), *silakan* (please), *mohon* (will you/could you...), *coba* (try), and *mari* (let) exemplified it. The passive form was considered as polite as the imperative target was indirectly mentioned. Apart from that, the use of passive form could also avoid the target from being directly mentioned. This was in accordance with what was stated by Verhaar (2001: 259) that in the Indonesian language the refined imperative was usually formed by using the passive form or adding particular phrases.

### 3.4.3 Declarative Politeness

Declarative mood constitutes an indirect directive which is hedged by particular words, phrases and clauses which may refine the illocutionary force. Such an utterance is termed as hedged performative, which, in the declarative mood, was marked by the words *barangkali* (perhaps) and *mungkin* (possible) with *mungkin bisa* (possibly can), *mungkin nanti bisa* (possibly can later), *mungkin perlu* (possibly necessary), *mungkin anda bisa* (possibly you can), *mungkin seperti itu* (possibly like that), *mungkin saran saya* (my possible suggestion), *mungkin ada saran* (there may be suggestion) as their varieties. The utterances hedged by the above expressions could lead to politeness. From the communication function point of view, the expressions used to hedge utterances above functioned to represent hesitancy and infirmity. Such an infirmity in an utterance was one factor of politeness as, pragmatically, it could downgrade the illocutionary force. So,



declarative mood was a polite directive as it was classified as an indirect directive accompanied by hesitancy.

#### **4. Novelties**

From the analysis above, the novelties of the present study can be described as follows.

##### **(a) Sentence markedness**

The markedness of a sentence could be seen from two sides, that is, from the structure and the frequency of use. From the structure point of view, a simple sentence is unmarked and a complex sentence is marked. From the frequency of use point of view, the sentence which is more frequently used is unmarked and the sentence which is less frequently used is marked. Based on the frequency of use, the novelty was that the simple sentences were marked and the complex sentences were unmarked.

##### **(b) Types of imperative sentences**

The results of analysis showed that there were eleven types of imperative clauses in BIRLF used in the open examination. They were all extended types of imperative clauses. Each type was extended using the extending components such as words, phrases, and clauses. Using the verb as the center, the extension was made to the left, to the right, and to the left and right simultaneously.

##### **(c) The oral characteristic of verbs**

In BIRLF used in the open examinations simple and serial verbs were used. The deletion of affixes such as prefixes {meng-}, {ber-} and confix {pe-an} was the oral characteristic of the simple verbs in BIRLF. The deletion of prefixes and the deletion of the words *untuk* (for) and *bahwa* (that) between the first word and the second word were the oral characteristics of the serial verbs in BIRLF.

##### **(d) Oral characteristic of BIRLF**

The speech acts used in the open examinations could be classified into (1) direct and literal speech acts; and (2) indirect and literal speech acts. Literalness characterized

BIRLF used in the open examinations in which scientific topics were discussed. One of the characteristics of the scientific register is that its lexical units have simple (literal) meanings.

**(e) Forms of politeness**

The forms of politeness in BIRLF used in the open examinations could be seen from the moods of utterances such as imperative, interrogative, and declarative sentences. Politeness was lexically and grammatically formed. Lexically, politeness was expressed using lexical items which could hedge utterances and enhance politeness. Grammatically, politeness was obtained using passivization, shifts in moods, and the sequences of utterances.

**(f) The use of the word *mohon* (please) as a politeness marker.**

The analysis showed that the use of the lexical item *mohon* (please) was more frequently used than the other lexical items. It was more frequently used by the examiners when giving instructions, although, if seen from the social distance and relationship, the examiners had higher status and power than the *promovendus*.

**(g) The use of the elements of Javanese language**

The Javanese language elements used within the highly formal context characterized BIRLF used in the open examinations by the academic society of Surabaya. They highly contributed to the dialogues between the examiners and the *promovendus*. They were taken from the refined variety of Javanese (*karma inggil*) to enhance politeness.

**(h) Method of analysis**

Methodological finding was another novelty in this study, which was in the form of a method which could be used to analyze the structure of a sentence based on the layers forming it. By analyzing the layers, the stages in which an utterance was formed could be identified. Such layers could show the nuclear layer and the optional layers.

## 5. Conclusions and Suggestions

### 5.1 Conclusions

Based on the analysis already done, several conclusions could be drawn, as described below.

- (a) The types of sentences in BIRLF used in the open examination were imperative sentences, interrogative sentences, and declarative sentences. The imperative sentences used were the extended ones with words, phrases and clauses as the extending components. Eleven types of imperative clauses based on where the extension was directed and what extending components were used were found. The interrogative sentences used in the open examination were both the close and open interrogative sentences. The open ones were marked by question words and the close ones used were classified as polar and alternative interrogative sentences. Deletion, repetition, and pronominalization characterized the coordinative and subordinative sentences used in BIRLF.
- (b) The verbs used in BIRLF used in the open examination were simple and serial verbs. The deletion of affixes such as prefixes {meng-}, {ber-} and confix {pe-an} characterized the simple verbs used; and the deletion of prefixes and lexical items such as *untuk* (for) and *bahwa* (that) characterized the serial verbs used.
- (c) The speech acts used in the open examination were classified into two; they were (1) direct and literal speech acts, and (2) indirect and literal speech acts. They functioned to give greeting (*mengucapkan selamat*), thank (*mengucapkan terima kasih*), praise (*memuji*), give suggestions (*memberikan saran*), and criticize (*mengkritik*). Those whose function to please were congratulating (*ucapan selamat*), thanking (*mengucapkan terima kasih*), and praising (*memuji*). The speech act whose function was to criticize was expressed by explicit disagreement, negative evaluation, questions, and positive utterances.
- (d) The forms of politeness in BIRLF used in the open examination could be observed from imperative sentences, interrogative sentences, and declarative sentences. Politeness was shown lexically and grammatically. Lexically, politeness was shown using lexical items which could hedge utterances and enhance politeness. Grammatically, politeness was obtained using passivization, shift in mood, and

sequences of utterances.

## **5.2 Suggestions**

The study in BIRLF is highly interesting as it contains many linguistic features which need to be further investigated using micro linguistic approach and macro linguistic approach. The things which need to be revealed are the intonation and the structure of information BIRLF contains. Intonation is an essential feature in oral register as it contributes to the meaning of an utterance. Therefore, it needs to be further explored, and the structure of information does too. The structure of information of an utterance can contribute to the understanding of the essential elements such as topics and focuses. In addition, the structure of information is closely related to what is intended to be achieved by a speaker.

## **6. Acknowledgements**

In this opportunity the writer would like to thank Prof. Drs. Ketut Artawa, M.A., Ph.D. as the main supervisor; Prof. Dr. Made Budiarsa, M.A. as co-supervisor I, and Dr. Made Dhanawaty, M.S., as co-supervisor II, and the Board of the Examiners such as Prof. Dr. Aron Meko Mbete, Prof. Dr. Drs. Ida Bagus Putra Yadnya, M.A., Prof. Dr. Wayan Simpen, M.Hum., Prof. Dr. Nengah Suandi, M.Hum., Dr. Made Sri Satyawati, M.Hum. for the input provided during the completion of this dissertation. A word of appreciation should also go to the administrative staff members of the Study Program of Linguistics of Udayana University.