
Politeness Maxim in Real Time with Bill Maher Shows with Elon Musk

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this study is to examine the politeness maxims that appeared in Real Time with Bill Maher talk show program. The research of this study used qualitative descriptive methods. The researchers applied Geofrey Leech's (1983) theory of politeness maxims to analyze the data. Leech presented six different types of politeness maxims: the Tact Maxim, the Generosity Maxim, the Modesty Maxim, the Approbation Maxim, the Agreement Maxim, and the Sympathy Maxim. The conversation between William Maher and Elon Musk provided the data for this study. The study's findings indicate that the presenters of these shows used twenty eight politeness maxims. The presenter uses a variety of politeness maxims, including: seven tact, four generosity, four approbation, four modesty, four agreement, and five sympathy. The tact maxim and sympathy maxim are the ones Maher uses the most, while the tact maxim and modesty maxim are the ones Musk uses the most. It can be concluded that In the *Real Time with Bill Maher talk show* program, people who have close relationships minimize harm to others and maximize their benefits, especially to their loved ones.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In order to spread the information in social life, communication is a basic necessity. Initially, we require a convention of some sort, no matter how arbitrary, to specify what constitutes a "communication" occurrence in our eyes. According to Mackay (in Royal Society, 1972) The word "communication" comes from the Latin "communication" which means "sharing" or "distributing." In the term of communication, Pragmatics is a useful tool for learning how to communicate effectively using language. A branch of linguistics called pragmatics focuses on communication. It is the study of language use in interpersonal interactions and provides an explanation of how language is used in context, including the impact that context has on speech and the objectives that speakers hope to achieve through their use of language corroborated by one theory, according to Yule (1996). The study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and understood by a listener (or reader) is the focus of pragmatics. Therefore, pragmatism is important in communication, this is due to the fact in the study of pragmatism that it is often used in our daily interactions, especially during conversations that can make communication better.

In pragmatics, the social context is the context that is typically examined. In addition to conveying concepts and details, speakers also need to be aware of cultural standards when speaking. It is also necessary to modify language use to fit social contexts, including variations in formality, familiarity, and social standing. Consequently, politeness must be included in the language. It's possible that politeness influences both what is

said and done throughout an exchange. It conveys that the speaker has high moral standards. Yule (2000) defines "politeness" as the method used in an interaction to demonstrate awareness of another person's face. This idea explains how the speaker behaves when they are aware of the other person's face. Salsabila & Rahayu (2023) politeness involves the thoughtful manner in which individuals express themselves to safeguard the feelings of others. Additionally, as the addressee is more important than the speaker, the speaker will always act with caution and respect when facing him or her. Additionally, According to Leech (1983), being polite is a mode of behaving that facilitates social interaction in an environment that is mostly harmonious. Politeness is divided into four strategies: positive politeness, on record, off record, and negative politeness. A comfortable dialogue between the speaker and the listener is another goal of using politeness in conversation. Politeness techniques are another tactic used in the use of politeness. Moreover, A politeness strategy is employed to prevent and lessen the damage to one's self-image that may arise from face-threatening actions performed by the speaker. (Salsabila & Rahayu, 2023, p. 132) A tactic for being kind when communicating is called a politeness strategy. In addition, the concord-building tactic is employed through politeness.

Forms of politeness can be found when watching a program such as a talk show. In this research, this time it was found in *Real Time with Bill Maher*, it is a talk show that has been running since around 2006, the show where conducts many interviews with influential figures by discussing current or related topics. This time Maher invited Musk to talk about his influence in social life and how his regulations affect the social network "Twitter" or now changed to "X". in this talk show and it was found that the speaker and host used the maxims of politeness in their communication.

The purpose of this research is to recognize that politeness is very important because it can enhance our understanding of social dynamics, communication, and cultural differences. Politeness influences interpersonal interactions, promoting harmony and reducing conflict in a variety of situations, from everyday conversations to professional environments. By studying politeness, it is possible to develop strategies to improve communication skills, foster inclusive and respectful communities, and overcome problems such as miscommunication.

The aim of this research is to examine the theoretical foundations of politeness maxims as proposed by major linguists, to analyze the application of politeness maxims in various real-life communication scenarios, for example in the present study, to analyze the application of the maxim and shows what kind of types and forms of politeness are found in talk show *Real Time with Bill Maher* with Elon Musk, then also to provide practical recommendations for incorporating politeness maxims into daily communication to improve interpersonal relationships.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This part consists of the theory supported by the concept of shows, politeness theory, and some expert theory, then the researchers aim to help the readers to understand with an explanation of this review of literature such as the terms used in this study. The basic theory of this study uses politeness in Leech theory and maxim as its Leech's perspective of politeness. maxim, which is the main focus of the study, relies on behavior of the society, where people use language to talk with another person in everyday life communication, in different ways with different people. These principles of maxim are identified and analyzed in the *Real Time with Bill Maher* shows by William Maher that it can be seen clearly how the use of maxim actually provides. Therefore, a theory about politeness is also needed because the language used in *Real Time with Bill Maher* by William Maher and Elon Musk is related to maxim characteristic that occurs in the shows.

This study provides evidence from lines of language spoken in a form written as identification, which is then discussed and analyzed using the theories laid down and previous studies that can be used for reference or as a comparison to obtain a more critical discussion. when analyzing data, it discusses the review of literature used in this study. It is described that this study has connection with the language used in maxim characteristics.

2.1 Related Studies

In examining various studies on politeness maxims in different media contexts the researchers have collected other similar studies to get better understanding of politeness maxim, several similarities and differences emerge. For instance, Rini, Eko Heriyanto, and Ahmad Muhid's (2023) research scrutinizes the employment of Leech's maxims in the dialogues of 'The Grand Final of America's Got Talent 2021,' aiming to dissect the types and functions of politeness maxims utilized in the communication among judges and participants during the event. Similarly, Ni Wayan Pramiwidari's (2018) study on 'The Forest movie' explores how cultural settings influence the deployment of politeness maxims, especially in conversations within the film's context. Furthermore, Buha Nisa H. Tampubolon, Rahmadsyah Rangkuti, and Ely Hayati Nasution (2021) work on 'The Kelly Clarkson Show' categorizes three main types of maxims—Approbation, Agreement, and Modesty—and examines their roles within convivial and collaborative speech events. Additionally, Martin Axcel Panjaitan and Masda Surti Simatupang's (2020) analysis of the *Eclipse* movie dissects the characters' utterances based on Leech's politeness principles, shedding light on various politeness scales such as the cost-benefit and optionality scales portrayed in

the interactions. Lastly, Rafif Syauqi Firdaus and Ervina CM Simatupang's (2022) study on 'The Squid Game' scrutinizes the adherence of the characters' interactions to Leech's politeness maxims, unraveling the speech acts and politeness scales embedded within the popular South Korean television series. These comprehensive studies collectively offer a nuanced understanding of how politeness operates in diverse social and cultural contexts, enriching our insights into effective communication practice.

Conclusions about the five studies listed above can be drawn based on their similarities and differences. One thing all of the previous studies have in common is that they all focus on the application of the politeness maxim in conversation. Additionally, the qualitative technique is used in all five investigations, which apply Geoffrey Leech's theory of politeness of maxim. On the other hand, the distinctions are initially apparent in the format of the research; each of the five studies is a journal article. The five studies included entertainment media, including films and talk shows, as its object; this is where the second difference is evident. Therefore, these five studies investigate how dialogue in media entertainments that we encounter on our daily digital gadgets offers a politeness maxim. Additionally, the Geoffrey Leech theory was used to categorize the politeness maxim, and the exchange between Bill Maher and Elon Musk on talk shows served as confirmation.

2.2 Principles of Politeness Maxim

Politeness is the act of demonstrating awareness of another person's face (Yule, 1996). Yule also mentioned two faces, specifically: Positive and Negative Politeness. According to Leech (1983), being polite also refers to one's capacity to engage in social interactions with others in a relatively harmonious manner (during a conversation, for example). Leech (1983) states that the courtesy concept applies to a discourse involving two people. These are the other as the hearer and the self as the speaker. The six maxims that comprise the politeness principles are as follows;

- **Tact Maxim:** this principle suggests that we should aim to reduce any harm to others while also maximizing their benefits. It emphasizes thinking about the needs of others. For example: Mira: "Can I finish getting dressed, please? Thank you". Steffi: "All I am saying is, it could be you". The expression of "Can I finish getting dressed please?" shows a tact maxim. Steffi is not compelled by Mira's words to assist Mira. It implies that Mira's remarks demonstrate tact maxim.
- **Generosity Maxim:** this concept encourages us to prioritize others' needs over our own, often by increasing our own sacrifices while minimizing our personal gains. For example: Caroline: "At least let me buy you lunch. After all, we've only got each other to get through this humiliation". Chris: "Okay then" The expression of "at least let me buy you lunch after all" declares the maxim of generosity. Caroline extends an invitation to Chris to accept her lunch offer. Caroline applies the maxim of generosity by maximizing costs and minimizing benefits to herself.
- **Approbation Maxim:** this maxim defines that, it's best to avoid criticizing others and instead focus on praising them. This approach fosters positivity. For example: Mrs. Wright: "Marissa, you are so creative". Marissa: "Oh, Thank you". During that exchange, Mrs. Wright makes a helpful observation regarding Marissa's capacity to express gratitude to her. Maxim expressed approval by saying, "You are so creative."
- **Modesty Maxim:** this principle advises individuals to downplay their own achievements and avoid excessive self-praise. For example: John: "Please accept this small gift as your birthday present". Maria: "Oh my God! Thank you". The utterances stated by John, "Please accept this small gift," minimize small self-praise by saying the 'small', not the 'big' present. Therefore, his utterances are categorized as modesty maxim.
- **Agreement Maxim:** this concept focuses on minimizing disagreements and maximizing consensus. It encourages more harmonious interactions. For example: Bryan: "Mama, can we see the dolphin? Let's take a look at the dolphin". Jessica: "Five minutes". Jessica forbids her son from seeing the dolphin. She goes on to say that her son will only get five minutes to see the dolphin. Because Jessica reduces conflict and optimizes agreement with her son—even if it's just for five minutes—she exemplifies the agreement maxim by letting him see the dolphin.
- **Sympathy Maxim:** the premise here is to foster kindness and compassion towards others, especially during difficult times. For example: Mark: "I am sorry to hear about your father. My deepest condolences to you". Lucas: "Thank you". Mark feels sad at the death of Lucas's father. He expresses his sorrow to Lucas. Mark then makes the most effort to feel sorry for Lucas. Therefore, Mark's statements, "I am sorry to hear about your father," belongs to the sympathy maxim.

3. METHODS

The research of this study used a qualitative descriptive method employed in this study is a research approach that focuses on analyzing communication dynamics in detail. It allows researchers to examine the particulars of interactions with others and language use, particularly in the context of media discourse. Qualitative research involves the systematic collection, ordering, description, and interpretation of textual data generated from talk, observation, or documentation (S. Kitto et al., 2008). This approach enables researchers to deeply complexities of human interactions and behaviors, providing rich, detailed insights. Qualitative descriptive research, a specific subset of qualitative research, focuses on capturing an insider's perspective and representing it accurately (Jill L. Milne et al., 2005). It emphasizes flexible sampling, accurate transcription, and careful attention to context to ensure that the data reflects the true nature of the participants' experiences and viewpoints. By integrating these two perspectives, it becomes clear that qualitative descriptive research serves as an effective means of systematically gathering and interpreting detailed textual data, while maintaining a strong emphasis on context and accuracy.

Data Source

Title	Elon Musk (Full Interview) Real Time with Bill Maher (HBO)
Speakers	1. Bill Maher 2. Elon Musk
Year	Published in 2023
Channel	Real Time with Bill Maher

Data collection, the writer did some procedures in collecting the data for this study. The data collection process involved several steps such as: The first, downloading video Real Time with Bill Maher shows with Elon Musk. The second, watching the video several times to completely understand the communication dynamics and identify instances of politeness in this video. The third, the videos were transcribed to create written records of the conversations, ensuring accuracy and completeness. Data analysis accumulated data from video. The data were classified from several conditions such as: the Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement, and Sympathy. The data which were taken from the video transcript were analyzed. The theory applied for analyzing the data is theory politeness in language by Geoffrey Leech which he developed in 1983. His theory explains how people use language to maintain social relationships and avoid conflict.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

This section presents the findings of the study, analyzing the politeness maxims used by Bill Maher and Elon Musk in their *Real Time with Bill Maher talk show conversation*. The data is presented in tables below, followed by a detailed discussion of the results.

Tabel 1. Results of the study.

No	Kinds of Politeness Principles Maxims	Numbers
1.	Tact Maxim	7
2.	Generosity Maxim	4
3.	Approbation Maxim	4
4.	Modesty Maxim	4
5.	Agreement Maxim	4
6	Sympathy Maxim	5
Total		28

The analysis reveals that the speakers employed a variety of politeness maxims in their conversation. A total of 28 instances were identified, distributed across the six maxims.

4.2 Discussion:

- **Tact Maxim:** This maxim, focused on minimizing harm to others, was the most frequently used, appearing 7 times. This suggests that both Bill Maher and Elon Musk were conscious of avoiding direct criticism or offense. Examples include Bill Maher's question about Elon Musk's workload:

Bill: “Do you work on all these a lot of jobs do you do all these things every day do you work on all of them in a single day?” (0:46)

By phrasing the question this way, Bill is being tactful by not directly questioning Elon's capabilities or insinuating that it might be overwhelming for him to handle multiple tasks. In addition, It is stated by:

Bill: “Many examples where it's the op including Free Speech” (07:05)

Bill Maher is expressing his opinion with Elon Musk's perspective or previous statements about certain situations being the opposite of what people might think, specifically mentioning free speech as an example.

- **Generosity Maxim:** This maxim, focused on maximizing benefits for others, was used 4 times, primarily by Bill Maher. This indicates a willingness to praise and acknowledge Elon Musk's achievements and contributions. Examples his acknowledgment of Elon Musk's influence on the world. It proved by:

Bill: “Well I'm so thrilled you're here because you know we do a show where we talk about what changes happen in the world and but we just talk there's a very few people who actually make change happen you are one of those people probably” (1:03)

In this context, by calling Elon Musk a likable guy, Bill Maher is being generous in his assessment of Musk's likability, which can help to boost Musk's self-esteem and maintain a positive interaction. Moreover, In the conversation between Elon Musk and Bill Maher, Bill Maher's statement. **Bill: “I'm not even sure is a real boy” (2:12)** In this context, Bill Maher's remark can be interpreted as a light-hearted joke or playful comment aimed at Elon Musk. By suggesting that Musk may not be a "real boy," Maher is using humor in a generous and light-hearted way to engage in banter with Musk.

- **Approbation Maxim:** This maxim, focused on avoiding criticism and praising others, was also used 4 times, primarily by Elon Musk. This suggests a desire to maintain a positive and respectful tone in the conversation. Examples Bill's statement

Bill: “Well, you're a likable guy, I mean” (1:28)

In this case, Bill Maher is demonstrating his positive feelings towards Elon Musk by describing him as "likable." By expressing this sentiment, Maher is offering praise and approval to Musk, which helps to maintain a positive and respectful interaction between the two speakers.

Bill: “I love it that you have a sense of humor because a guy as important as you who makes changes could use your powers for evil and not good” (1:40)

In this context, Bill Maher is showing his appreciation and admiration for Elon Musk's sense of humor and positive influence.

- **Modesty Maxim:** This maxim, focused on minimizing self-praise and maximizing self-dispraise, was used 4 times, with both speakers contributing equally. This suggests a desire to avoid appearing arrogant or boastful. Examples include Elon Musk's statement about his long work day:

Elon: “I do have a long work day, um yeah so I work a lot.” (0:54)

By presenting his work ethic as a simple matter of fact without elaborating on his achievements or success, Musk is demonstrating humility and modesty, which can contribute to a positive and considerate interaction with Bill Maher. And Bill Maher's statement about wokeness being the opposite of liberalism:

Bill: “I feel the same way I feel like very often wokeness is it's not building on liberalism it's the opposite of liberalism” (6:57)

By expressing his opinion on "wokeness" and its potential impact on liberalism, Maher is engaging in a discussion of ideas and expressing his perspective on the matter.

- **Agreement Maxim:** This maxim, focused on minimizing disagreement and maximizing agreement, was used 4 times. This suggests a desire to maintain a harmonious and collaborative tone in the conversation. Examples include Elon Musk's agreement with Bill Maher's statement about free speech:

Elon: “Yeah, absolutely” (1:50)

In this context, Musk's response serves to maintain a harmonious and cooperative interaction with Bill Maher by indicating his agreement with the point raised in the conversation. and Bill Maher's agreement with Elon Musk's statement about the importance of free speech:

Bill: “Of course” (08:43)

This type of response can help to maintain a harmonious and cooperative interaction between the speakers by acknowledging and supporting the ideas being presented in the conversation.

- **Sympathy Maxim:** This maxim, focused on avoiding hostility and expressing sympathy, was used 5 times. This suggests a desire to show empathy and understanding towards each other's perspectives. Examples include Bill Maher's statement about Elon Musk's ability to laugh off criticism:

Bill: “You seem to laugh it off which I think is fantastic” (1:37)

By noting Musk's tendency to "laugh it off," Maher is acknowledging Musk's approach to handling negative feedback or challenging situations with humor or light-heartedness. and his expression of appreciation for Elon Musk's work:

Bill: “I can’t tell how much I appreciate you” (20:54)

which means by articulating the sentiment that he cannot fully convey the extent of his appreciation for Musk, Maher is expressing deep gratitude and admiration for Musk's achievements or actions.

The data suggests that both Bill Maher and Elon Musk were conscious of maintaining a polite and respectful tone throughout the conversation. They used a variety of politeness maxims to achieve this goal, with the Tact Maxim being the most frequently used. This suggests that both speakers were mindful of avoiding direct criticism or offense, while also expressing appreciation and understanding for each other's perspectives.

5. CONCLUSION

The author analyzes six maxims of politeness in the *Real Time with Bill Maher talk show* program. In research, of course, there are differences and similarities. The difference between this research and the previous research is in the object of study, in this research the author chooses a talk show program, besides that the results of the data produced are also obviously different. Then the similarity between this research and the previous one is in the type of study that is analyzed, namely analyzing the type of maxim. All types of maxims are found in this talk show, but the most common politeness maxim is Tact Maxim. In the *Real Time with Bill Maher talk show* program, people who have close relationships minimize harm to others and maximize their benefits, especially to their loved ones.

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