BIKOL POLITENESS AND FACE: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

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Drawing on the Politeness theory posited by Brown and Levinson (B&L), this study attempted to analyze the politeness phenomenon in the Bikol language.

Specifically, this study explored the a) type of face prevalent in the speech of Bikol interlocutors, b) the preferred face threatening strategies these interactants employed when confronted with different face threatening acts; c) the linguistic devices and markers used to express politeness; and d) the social variables that influence the choice of strategy of the participants.

Using descriptive-qualitative design, this investigation was also best achieved through Discourse Analysis via a corpus of twenty collected live encounters characterized by natural or spontaneous speech. Using fieldwork and ethnomethodology, the collection was made through tape and manual recording or note-taking of the conversations in the exact language they occurred. Contact situations were set in Partido and Naga City whose dialects are considered almost similar in structure except for their intonations. The recorded data were transcribed and coded for analyses.

Frequency count was used to get the prevailing type of face expressed by the participants and the dominant face threatening act strategies they chose.

Findings reveal that most Bicolano interlocutors profess a positive face, the desire for approval and belongingness which supports the collectivist culture of the Bicolanos, like those of other countries in Asia. This study also shows that Bicolanos generally use positive politeness strategies when confronted with face threatening acts, but these are closely followed by Bald on

Record Strategies which were used mostly for efficiency. However, it can also be ascertained that the Bald on Record Strategy can both be a strategy and a threat; thus, I call it a "pseudo strategy" for its dual nature.

Results also reveal that Bicolanos have their own distinct polite markers and the most dominating among these is the word "tabi" or "please" and the use of kinship honorifics specifically "Manoy" and " Pay" usually uttered before the first name for male reference, whose female counterparts are "Manay" and "May" as used in conversations. As regards the social variables-power, distance and rank of the imposition-these were observed to point out to specific strategies. Power strongly influences the use of the Bald on Record Strategy, the social distance triggers the Positive Politeness Strategy while the Cost or Rank of Imposition prompts the Negative Politeness Strategy. Moreover, it is also seen that these are not strictly independent of each other since they sometimes interplay as one decides what type of strategy to use but the dominant variable surfaces depending on the degree of the face threat.

Finally, this study also shows that not all speech acts are face threatening as what B&L claim in their theory. Some casual interactions were simple conversations merely for enjoyment and not for a predetermined goal.

It is recommended that another study be made using a wider scope of settings from other parts of Bicol to further verify the conclusions of this investigation. Moreover, it would also be better to narrow down on one strategy only and relate its role to one specific speech act like directives.