

Searching for Values in the Empathetic Discourses of Business and Promotion

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ABSTRACT

Discourse provides insight on the function and nature of cognitive-emotional phenomena. Empathetic notions of a community can be traced from their discourses and how the community members use them, especially in the context of business and promotion. This paper explores how values are reflected in the English and Javanese empathetic business and promotional discourses especially the business and promotional idioms, expressions, taglines, and descriptions. 31 out of 50 online English empathetic business idioms and 21 out of more than 300 printed Javanese proverbs and sayings were analyzed using the perspectives of ESP with a thick description on the context of both cultures. Additionally, a reflective analytical lens was also included considering that the author is a Javanese herself who is using and practicing the Javanese language and culture on daily basis. Findings of the study suggest a strong ground of how cultural beliefs and values transmitted from the ancestors for-grounding the practice of business interactions with some innovations following changing of time and expectations.

Keywords: empathetic, discourse, values, ESP.

1. Background

The new era of digitalization and industrial revolution 4.0 indicates a tremendous change in many respects. Experience has been a very important commodity to sell, share, and buy. Millennials are even happy to spend their money on buying experience rather than buying houses. Additionally, selling experience is collaboratively done by the millennials with sharing experience and buying experience (Kanchananiyot, 2020).

Changes move exponentially; a linear perspective seems to lose its attraction. Disruptive stress may mean disruptive opportunity. Additional spectacular innovations are the 3 D printing to print our internal organs, babel-fish earbuds, and internet of things. Those are the success stories of the magnificent digital revolution. However, the mechanistic and technologically-based style of life has consequently made human beings longing for their human outstanding values like creativity, collaboration, and empathy.

In the era in which machines and technology play a pivotal role, feeling and emotion, caring and compassion are likely hard to get. Scientifically, many experts believe that discourse is the legitimate source of insight on the function and nature of cognitive-emotional

phenomena (Martinovsky, 2006; Edwards, 1997; Allwood, 1996; Chafe, 1994).

Helen Reiss, writer of a book entitled 'The Empathy Effect' convinces that the ability to connect empathetically with others, meaning to feel with them, to care about their well-being, and to act with compassion is critical to our lives. They help us to get along, work more effectively, and thrive as a society. Empathy refers to the ability to understand and share the feelings of another (Martinovsky, 2006).

Institutions ignoring customer empathy are losing additional opportunities by not fully exploring what their customers truly think and feel about their products and services. The knowledge and insights that can be obtained from a more empathetic approach could capitulate insights into new features, better user experiences, or completely new verticals and product or service line extensions that would otherwise remain unnoticed.

Additionally, being empathetic can improve health care and improves human interactions in general. Empathy can strengthen human bond and add the music to the words of life. The rapid change of population dynamics as projected by Keidanren (2019) in their draft of Society 5.0 affects economy and geo-politics significantly. Consequently, there is an increasing demand to solve sustainability and

social inclusion issues.

Once again social collaboration and empathy are put at stake with the coming of corona virus in the covid-19 pandemic of early 2020. The pandemic outbreak was started in Wuhan, China and rapidly infected people in Italy, Spain, England, Germany, Asian countries and many other 200 countries. Doctors and health specialists feel hopeless. Consequently, death of the patients are determined based on age. The older the patients the less likely health facilities are provided for them due to life expectancy consideration.

Considering the dynamic phenomena described previously, this work aims at exploring how discourse can be a valuable source of empathy used by communicators and communicants. This paper tries to address the fact that empathy is a universal issue when it comes to influencing and persuading people to be loyal as prospective buyers. Specifically, it discusses the way Javanese idioms and expressions represent the deep crystallization of values, norms, mindset, and philosophy of life including the philosophy of business in which relationship, sharing, and humanism become the most challenging key words. To address the universality, it also attends Gobe (2002) 'Emotional Branding' as a crucial perspective in looking at both ways to the functionality of the discourse of empathy in business and promotion.

2. Empathy in Business and Promotion

There are three perspectives of looking at empathy. First is affective empathy that refers to the ability to share emotions of others. People with affective empathy tend to feel others' pain very strongly within themselves when seeing others in pain. Secondly, cognitive empathy is the ability to understand the emotions of others. For example, psychologists, who understand the emotions of their clients, but do not really share them in an intuitive sense. Finally, **emotional regulation** is the ability to regulate one's emotions. For example, surgeons need to control their emotions when operating on a patient.

Empathy is important because it helps us understand how others are feeling, so we can respond appropriately to the situation. By employing empathy, it easier to find a common

language and work out a solution that suits both sides. Understanding customers is the key to providing good service which in turn results in deep customer relationships and a positive reputation. Additionally, Carnegie (1936) firmly asserted that people are not creatures of logic, they are creatures of emotion.

When handling customers, business front liners are able to make use of the ten most important empathy sources to get the most of the business transactions. To begin with, we need to listen carefully to our clients and recheck what they say to assure them that we are listening and comprehend. Stephen Covey (2004) reminds us that "Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply."

Empathetic listening means paying attention to another person, asking questions to help people express what is going on, identifying his emotions, and responding with compassion, without judgment.

Smiling seems to sound cheesy but in reality a smiling shop assistant can make a huge difference to the customers' emotions especially when it comes to telephone conversations. Clients are able to feel the empathy through our voice.

Ownership of the customers' complaints and problems will certainly add to their convenience when doing a business transaction, because a one-to-one relationship like this strengthens their business engagement to the products or services we offer and make them return to do repeat orders. Regarding an angry client, it would be wiser to let them release emotions without interruption while finding the best way to fix the problem. In this context, to be careful with our tone is a must because tone of voice is the vital key to empathy. A sincere and nice expression will otherwise bring a different impression when delivered using a raising tone of voice. Likewise, being respectful to our clients is another important clue with regard to empathy skills a businessman requires to master. Any negative feelings that a customer expresses about our products or services will be much better to be approached like a regular and professional

conversation. For that particular response, the customer will appreciate it.

Sharing the clients' perspectives and looking at things using their perception' lens is another pivotal point to consider. Hamid (2020) asserts that empathy is about finding echoes of another person in yourself. In emergency situation, it is impossible for a customer to purchase everything he/she wants, a shop assistant can take the initiative to suggest priorities to help him/her make decisions. In return, the client will feel that he/she is taken care of.

Caring is another diamond of empathy skills. A sick client will feel being cared for when a seller asks her about the recovery. This bite of caring can booze the client's enthusiasm and believe that business is not done on profit-making basis only. Responding a complaint with a positive statement is another thing expected by a client from a seller; a short, direct statement of intent will provide a feeling of convenience to a frustrated customer when facing a problem. A simple expression like 'Okay, we will sort out the problem for you' or 'Don't worry, we can fix this for you' is a soothing chain of words they want to hear from us. Last but not least, is avoiding assumption upon our clients because what they really need is our active listening to them.

3. Methodology

This literature study combines diverse sources of literature and personal reflection of the author as a Javanese member of the community. First, data of the English and Javanese business taglines, idioms, expressions, proverbs, and descriptions taken from printed sources like Ambarsari's (1986). *Ngangsu Kawruh Basa - SLTP Tulatto*, online advertisements and advertorials from <https://www.topcorrect.com/blog/50-common-business-idioms/>; <https://aircall.io/blog/customer-happiness/how-to-win-your-customers-with-empathy/>; <https://www.copypress.com.blog> were collected and synthesized to look deeper in the level of socio-cognition and mindset of the respective groups with an elaboration on contexts of situation and context of culture. The synthesized notions of the business and promotional taglines,

idioms, expressions, proverbs, and descriptions were then compared using the cultural horizon as the main analytical lens to clarify why a particular business writes, behaves, exposes their identity the way they do. Communicative purpose, formulaic expressions and elaboration of the discourse community of users were significant issues drawn from English for Specific Purposes (ESP, Swales, 1990) to especially see how values were constructed in which ideology, perception, and cultural experience of the members of the discourse community engulfed.

4. Verbal and Non Verbal Empathy: The Western and Eastern Ways

Why empathy is crucial has been addressed by Barrack Obama, the previous President of the United States. He has been quoted as saying:

'The biggest deficit that we have in our society and the world right now is an empathy deficit. We are in great need of people being able to stand in somebody else's shoes and see the world through their eyes'.

Empathy is not only verbally expressed, but stated nonverbally as well. Verbally, empathy can be maximized by using hedging and rhetorical question as follows:

1. *Mohon maaf mengganggu waktu istirahat ibu, saya ingin mengingatkan bahwa ibu menguji saya hari ini (Please apologize me to disturb your break, I would like to remind you that you are supposed to examine me today).*

2. Have you heard that you no longer need to be in hassle to access our products?.

Both examples above are verbal emphatic expressions as they reflect speakers' understanding about their partners' emotion and feeling and try to accommodate that notion in their communication strategies.

To the westerners, maintaining eye-contact properly can make us look more confident, attractive, trustworthy and memorable. Besides, it also makes the recipient feel recognized, understood and validated. To the Javanese however, a long eye contact is undesirable. It makes people feel clumsy. Stealing sight and smiles are commonly practiced among Javanese people and other Asian countrymen to avoid losing face because they are face-conscious societies.

It is generally believed that postures, facial expressions, and hand gestures reveal more than what we say in words. 60 % of all human communication is delivered using non-verbal body language to communicate feelings and intentions. In reality, likeability and confidence are perceptions favorable to the general publics both personally and professionally.

Different cultures may have different ways of handling conflicts, complaints or problems in business interactions. The Javanese business behavior tends not to merely seek for material and financial profit. Instead, they do believe in the principle of doing selling and buying transactions in the market and they classify different commodities to be sold using different groupings of market days, *wage*, *pon*, *kliwon*, *legi*, *pahing*. Besides, they have a strong notion of link and relationship manifested in their saying 'tuna sathak, bathi sanak' which is socially driven rather than financially driven. This value is taken from the established mantras 'Sugih tanpa bandha' (to be rich without wealth), 'Menang tanpa ngasorake' (to win without disgracing), 'Nglurug tanpa bala' (to attack without troops), and 'Digdaya tanpa aji' (to be powerful without weapon). Sharing and collaboration therefore are significant values the

Javanese do believe and practice up to now. Peacefulness for the Javanese is gained through sharing of food (*bancakan/kenduri*, *slametan*) to be enjoyed and consumed together among community members.

In many respects, studies related to the business and promotional discourse in Javanese are still few in number compared to that of English. For that reason, the author is using Javanese expressions, idioms, proverbs and sayings to extract the notions of empathy in business and promotion. In contrast, some ready-made verbal expressions in English are available in the internet to help saving face in 'hot' situation when complaints and problems are arising. One significant thing to note however, Asian people including Javanese tend to avoid employing aggressive 'hard-selling' approach, raising voice, displaying anger or openly criticizing business partners. The followings are examples of business and promotional expressions in English and Javanese.

Table 4.1. English and Javanese Empathetic Expressions in Business

English Empathetic Expressions in Business	Javanese Empathetic Expressions in Business
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1. Thank you for remaining so positive.	1. Matur nuwun sampun paring paitan (Thank you for giving us initial capital).
2. I appreciate your patience	2. Sampun Kapok nggih? (Please visit us again).
3. I want to thank you for taking the time to speak with me today	3. Waaah...njanur gunung, wonten tamu agung to? Mangga...manga (What a surprise! we have a very special guest, do come in).
4. Your business means a lot to us	4. Ingkang pun dalemi pundi bu? (Where do you live?).
5. I can see that you've been with us for years. That's a long time!	5. Nyuwun pangapunten anggenipun negga radi kedangon nggih pak? (I am sorry to keep you waiting for long, sir!)
	6. Kagem penjenengan menika pantes saestu (It fits you perfectly).

If we pay attention very closely to the English empathetic expressions in table 4.1 above, it is obvious that time and patience become the central values that people generally consider as a true sacrifice that most people are reluctant to give way. Those expressions remind us of the English proverb 'Time is money' reflecting the notion of being materialistic and time conscious. The Javanese however, sees engagement, relationship, and intimacy as ice-breaking media to build rapport with the clients, a typical behavior associated with a more feeling and emotion oriented community. Those values have never been existing in vacuum, meaning that they are internalized through a long process of learning and nurturing in the socio-cultural context where the community members were born and raised (Pitoyo, 2008). Besides, the notions of likeability, avoiding violence, keeping harmony are crucial issues among Javanese

business doers. Likeability is represented by a Javanese idiom 'Katon cepaka sawakul' (literally: 'It looks like a basket of lily' which means adored by many people), while 'Tuna sathak bathi sanak' (links and relationships are necessary despite small profit earned) indicates how relationship for an initial process of business is believed to set a good foundation of profit making in the future. Links and relationship as business foundation among the Javanese might be drawn from two basic norms of living, namely the principle of harmony and respect (Suseno, 1991).

With regard to the impression that Javanese use more of their emotions rather than their logic seems not absolutely right as they also rely on business strategies by using senses found in the idioms of 'Kakehan gludhug kurang udan' (a metaphor meaning facts are always better than claims for excellence of products/services); 'Dikena iwake, aja nganti butheg banyune' (obtaining something intended without violence); 'Beras wutah arang mulih marang takere' (A bad reputation will hardly be recovered); 'Ana rega ana rupa' (The price determines quality).

The business ethics that the Javanese believe are 'Titen, telaten' (having strong memory and painstaking); 'Gemi, nastiti, ngati-ati' (thrifty, prudent, careful); 'tekn, tekan, tekan' (earnest, skillful, successful); 'Alon, kelakon' (slow but sure); 'Sareh, pikoleh' (patience, to get result). When looking very closely at that business ethics, we are able to conclude that following rules of the game in life is something that the Javanese consider crucial in order to be the winner in some one's life path. In terms of style, the Javanese are keen on using repetition and assonance to achieve euphonic effect.

Indeed, like many other Asian ethnics, Javanese have similar characteristics like the Thais who believe that smiles and gentle words boost harmony. 'Jay Yen' which literally means 'cold heart' suggests that Thais are avoiding raising voice, displaying anger or criticizing openly to business partners.

Discourse has offered an insightful

source of cultural values and norms a particular cultural group is practicing. The English idioms ‘ahead of the pack’ which means to be more successful than the competitor for example, shows a strong notion of competition (Martinovsky, 2006; Edwards, 1997; Allwood, 1996; Chafe, 1994) as a cultural value internalized among westerners. The idea of competition is also supported by another business idiom that says ‘corner the market’ meaning to dominate the market. Based on my observation, other similar values like working hard, controlling others, taking risk, setting standard, being positivistic, using senses, employing confrontation, stability, and going beyond are typical of the western norms drawn from the practice of expansionism. For businessmen working away from home-countries, they are seeking for fairness as the most fundamental issue in business interactions overseas. Donaldson (1996) suggested some working tips for those doing business away from home countries, namely respecting core human values, respecting local traditions, and perceiving that context matters when deciding what is right or wrong.

5. Conclusion

The society 5.0 as a new human-centered society has opened up a potential ground for empathy and emotion to flourish. With the new business paradigm of encouraging the migration from industrial-based economy into people-based economy has opened up an opportunity for empathy to play a good role in setting up a ground for purchase making. There has been an obvious shifting from rationality to feelings and emotions; objectivity metamorphoses into subjectivity in which buying is meant for owning. With that in mind, Javanese people could optimize their values, norms, and living principle to inspire their business strategies for a better and long living engagement with their customers. As a more feeling and emotion oriented society, a more promising opportunity lies ahead because decision to buy a product or service in many occasions is determined by emotion rather than logic (Gobe, 2002). Empathetic narration for products and services using social media and many other digitalized

platforms may encourage the mood of buying.

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