

Politeness Strategy by Indonesian EFL Teacher-Learners Classroom Interaction

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Abstract

The ability to speak and act politely reflects on the culture and characters of the nation. In the globalization era the realization of politeness is highly decreased. The conflicts related to impoliteness are highly found in public. Therefore, it is very important to implement politeness strategy to children in early time since it is not an instant product which can be produced directly. The study aims to know types of politeness strategy of teacher and young EFL learners at English One course during conversation activity. The participants of this study were elementary level learners consisting of fifteen learners. The data was obtained through recording the conversations between instructors and the learners in teaching and learning activities. The primary sources of data were the conversation between learners and instructor which had been recorded. The datum were analyzed and discussed based on the theory of politeness of Brown and Levinson (1987). The results of this study revealed that there were various expressions used by young EFL learners to encode their politeness during ELT process. The expressions were in the forms of informing, reporting and fillers. These expressions were categorized as positive politeness.

Keywords: *Politeness Strategy, Speech acts, English for Young Learner*

INTRODUCTION

Communication is a process conveying ideas or thoughts to the interlocutor. As social beings, communication has a prominent meaning since human cannot live alone so they need another one to share feeling, ideas or just for chit chat. In this part, people need to do interaction or communication with one another. Therefore, language is needed as a tool to do interaction. In communication, misinterpretation or misunderstanding between speakers and hearers becomes an obstacle in conveying ideas or feeling to one another. Thus, it is very important to learn the knowledge of a persons' ability. In general, persons need to learn the knowledge of a person's ability in deriving meaning from specific kinds of speech situations (Chaer, 1995:61). Speech situations are the occurrence of linguistic interactions in one or more forms of speech involving two parties, namely the speaker and the interlocutor, with one

main utterance, in a certain time, place and situation (Chaer, 1995:61- 62). By learning speech act, it will enabling people to understand an expression.

Currently, a central focus of intercultural pragmatic theory has been on speech acts. Speech act is the implication of speech in communication. In principal, speech act is a pragmatic branch that involves speaker and hearer in conversation. Theory of speech act was first discovered by Austin. In his book entitled *How to Do Things with Words* in 1962. Some scholars such as Austin (1962) and Searle (1975) claim that pragmatic tendencies work by universal principle which specify the rules that govern the uses of language in context. According to Searle in Schiffrin (2007: 70) that speech act is the basic unit of communication. In addition, Searle (1980) pointed out that "theory of speech acts starts with the assumption that the minimal unit of human communication is not a sentence or other expression, but rather the performance of certain kinds of acts, such as making statements, asking questions, giving orders, describing, explaining, apologizing, thanking, congratulating, etc". It could be said that speech act is not only telling something, but also doing something based on the speech. In particular theorists have proposed models of cooperation and politeness.

Being polite in social interaction is very important. It is used to avoid the conflict that may occur in communication. Politeness is the way how people treat one another in daily interaction. Politeness in speaking should be grown up to children since early, because it cannot be acquired instantly. Therefore, parents have an essential role to educate their children how to act and speak politely. A study by Yenni, Yusriati and Sari (2018) revealed that all parents agreed about teaching language politeness to their children in a family environment based on some reasons. First, family is the first place for children to learn about politeness. Second, teaching language politeness to children is one way to maintain our culture and third, teaching language politeness to the children can make them far from the dispute. Teaching language politeness to the children must be done through refraction, instruction, control, and modelling.

In teaching learning process, understanding the strategy of speaking between students and teachers is very important. Children need to be taught how to speak politely toward the teacher both in the classroom and outside the classroom. Through polite speech strategies, children will get used to conveying ideas and feeling to their interlocutor in polite language. Brown and Levinson (1987) asserted that some speech acts intrinsically threaten positive and negative face of speakers and hearers or face-threatening acts (FTA). For example disagreement and criticism threaten hearers' positive face, while requests threaten hearers' negative face. Therefore, Some strategies are needed. There are three aspects that can be used to calibrate the strength of FTA, namely P

(power), D (social distance), and R (the degree of imposition). Three wants have to be considered, if speakers intend to communicate FTA are the wants to communicate the contents of FTA, the want to be efficient and or urgent and the want to maintain hearers' face to any degree.

In Indonesia, the implementation of politeness strategy in education has an essential aspect. It is relevant with curriculum 2013 which emphasize good character because politeness deals with people's ability to show their good character. According to Zaenul (2016), politeness is used to make a harmonious interaction between teacher and students in EFL teaching activity. However, in the globalization era in which everything is connected to technology, it gives impact toward students' manner and behavior. The education minister of Indonesia asserts that politeness of Indonesian students is getting decline. Therefore, in accordance to Indonesia's education regulation No 20, Year 2003, Article 3 in which national education functions to develop capacity, character, and a dignified society by enhancing its intellectual capacity, so that politeness become one of the crucial issues in education, specifically in a classroom interaction. Therefore, the teachers are obliged to implement it in the language learning activities along with language usage.

Concerning pragmatic competence that "the ability to use language effectively to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context" (Thomas; 1983), politeness has become a major issue on how a particular form of language is used strategically in order to achieve the speaker's goal (Thomas, 1995). Implementing politeness strategy in EFL process has a great impact toward learners' manner and behavior in the act and speak to the teacher or other students. There are different types of politeness strategy used by learners to express their politeness during the teaching learning activity. Mahmud (2019) found that to encode the politeness in the classroom, English students used different kinds of expressions to encode their politeness in the class. Those expressions were in the forms of greetings, thanking, addressing terms, apologizing, and fillers. Meanwhile, Rahayuningsih, Saleh and Fitriati (2020) revealed that there were four strategies realized in the classroom. The teacher dominantly used positive politeness to show solidarity and to maintain a close relationship with the students, bald on records to give a clear and unambiguous instruction, negative politeness to minimize the coercion to the students, and off record to give hints. It is influenced by sociological factors, namely distance, power, and degree of imposition influence the choice of politeness strategies. A study by Fitriyani and Andriyanti (2020) points out that there were a total of 13 excerpts containing three politeness strategies: positive politeness strategy, negative politeness strategy, and bald-on-record strategy. The conversations were dominated by the teacher. Moreover, the politeness strategies which occurred in the classroom interactions were influenced

by some factors such as age difference, institutional position, power, and social distance.

The same issue takes place in other countries. As reported by Etae, Krish and Supyan (2016) that most of Malaysian students were likely to use Positive politeness, followed by Bald-On-Record politeness, Negative politeness and off-Record politeness strategy when posting online entries to the lecturer. Another study by Aliakbari and Moalemi (2015) indicated that most Iranian learners used Negative and positive politeness strategies during conversation class, whereas the least used by Iranian learners was indirect strategy and only a minor portion of students chose avoidance of face threatening act strategy. Age and gender were the factors affecting the use of politeness strategy in classroom. There was statistically significant differences between male and female respondents in three scenarios. Further, the respondents' mother tongue was not found as a determining factor in the kind of politeness strategies the Iranian respondents would adopt. Some variation politeness strategies in conversation reported by Ghilzai and Sundas (2017) that negative politeness strategies were more common used in Turkish dramas than positive politeness strategies. Whereas most frequently used in Indian dramas were positive politeness strategies. Meanwhile in Pakistan both negative and positive politeness strategies are almost equal in number. There were some factors affecting these politeness variation, in Indian dramas show what is not happening here in reality, they depict that they always use positive politeness strategies. Whereas Pakistani dramas taking both strategies along because it was important somehow to maintain a balance between these strategies. On the other hand, Turkish dramas were showing the negative side of their people by using negative politeness strategies more than positive politeness strategies.

All the strategies mentioned previously are very effective to improve the learners' politeness in EFL process, nonetheless they have not adequately yet to elaborate EFL learners' strategies to improve their speaking ability. The present research explores politeness strategies used by young Indonesian EFL learners to improve their English speaking ability. One of the important aspects in conversation is politeness strategies, the main focus of this study.

Even though politeness strategies have been the rich field of study in Pragmatic Analysis, they have been scarcely studied in L2 learning. One important study that is relevant to the present research investigated types of communication strategies used by learners in formal school in Indonesia. The study found that the most dominant type of politeness strategies applied by the learners in the study was bald-on record (Sari, 2016). The English learners used the politeness strategies to create efficient interaction in the process of teaching and learning, respect communication, togetherness between teacher and students. To the best

of our knowledge, there has been limited studies that have investigated young learners' politeness strategies in informal schools. The present study explores English young learners' politeness strategy to improve their speaking ability at an English course. The research question in the study is what types of politeness strategy of young EFL learners at English One course during conversation to the instructor?

RESEARCH METHOD

The study used qualitative descriptive design in examining politeness expression in EFL classroom. By using this method, researchers could identify and analyse issues from the participant perspective and comprehend the meaning and interpretation that they give to behavior. To analyze types of politeness strategies used by learners and instructor in conversation class, the classroom discourse analysis was employed. Furthermore, to investigate and analyze learners' and instructor's utterance during the conversation class which focus on politeness strategies, researcher used pragmatic approach.

The study observed type of politeness strategies used by young learners and instructor in EFL class at English course Surakarta. There were fifteen English learners who took part in the study. They were studying English at English One course with fourth and fifth level. The researcher chose English Course as the research setting to inform and explain the EFL instructor and learners' classroom interaction in relation with the 2013 curriculums implementation which emphasize on character education, specifically on politeness.

The data in this research was 5 hours 45 minutes of conversations that contained politeness strategies used by both English learners and instructors in the language learning activities. The data of the study was obtained through observation, audio recording and interview. Further, the data was analyzed based on the model analysis introduced by Miles and Huberman (1994) which involved reduction of the data, data display and interpretation. The data analysis was based on Brown and Levinson's theory (1987) and focused on the teacher's and student's use of positive politeness strategies for dealing with Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) during the interaction in the EFL class.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings show the politeness expression used by teacher and student during the conversation class. The strategies can be seen in the forms of greetings, thanks, address terms, apologies and fillers.

a. Positive Politeness strategy

It is addressed to enhance the hearers' positive face. There were four excerpts that contained positive politeness strategy used in the classroom interactions. The elaboration of each excerpt is presented below.

Excerpt 1

Teacher	: Assalamu'alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh (Greeting)
Student	: Wa'alaikumsalam Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh
Teacher	: Good Afternoon, Jihan (greeting)
Student	: Good afternoon miss (greeting)
Teacher	: How are you today?
Student	: I am fine, <i>thank you</i> . And you?
Teacher	: I am great. Thank you. Are you happy today?
Student	: Yes, Miss

In the excerpt above, it shows that in the opening class, teacher started opening the class by saying "Assalamu'alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu". The student answered "Wa'alaikumsalam Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh". It kinds of Islamic greetings which are common uttered in Muslim community to spread the blessings to other people. The ways of Islamic greeting is expected to make student be polite to others. Eventhough they can also use kinds of greetings from different language such as 'good afternoon'. The use of Islamic greeting shows the students' good manner as indicator of politeness. The habit of using Islamic greeting is to drill students to act and speak properly and politely. Moreover, in the excerpt above it shows the student used the address term 'Miss' in good afternoon and 'Yes, Miss'. The addressing term 'Miss' represented the respect to her teacher. In addition, it also indicated that they wanted to be polite in interacting with her. Further, the student showed more positive politeness by complementing the teacher "i am fine. Thank you and you???" (Strategy 2, Exaggerate approval). And then the teacher replied with 'i am great thank you' which indicated the positive politeness (Strategy 2. Exaggerate approval).

Excerpt 2

Teacher	: Ok, Are you ready to study Jihan? Said "yes". Yes, I am ready
Student	: Yes, I am ready
Teacher	: Good. Let's start to study by reciting <i>bismillah</i> together.

Based on the conversation above there was three politeness strategies. First, before teacher start teaching the class, she asked for students' readiness for studying. The utterance "Ok, are you ready to study?" indicates that the teacher gives attention toward the student. Further, the act "good" with an exaggerate intonation was another example of positive politeness (strategy 2. Exaggerate approval). Third,

the teacher started opening the class by asking students to recite *bismillah* together, 'Let's start to study by reciting *bismillah* together'. This was an example of positive politeness (strategy 12. including Speaker and Hearer in one activity) by using the word "we" and "lets" show that they are engage in one activity.

Excerpt 3

Teacher : **Ok, do you understand** the instruction of this question?

Student : **I don't understand.**

In excerpt above, the utterance "Ok, do you understand...?" was an example of positive politeness (strategy 3. Intensify interest to H) it can be seen from the linguistic marker "do you understand" that can be used to intensify the interest to H. further, the utterance "i don't understand" with an exaggerate intonation was another example of positive politeness (strategy 2. Exaggerate approval).

Excerpt 4

Teacher : Ok, now read the vocabularies and try to understand the meaning. I'll give some questions related it. **Ok??**

Student : Ok **miss**. O.. i think i have read it when i was grade 4.

Teacher : **O..really?** you have read it when you were 4th grade?

Student : Yes

The short excerpt above indicated that the positive politeness strategies used by teacher is seeking for agreement. Here the teacher offered an agreement to the student related to the rule during ELT activity. The word 'Ok' expressed the teacher's strategy to attract student following the rule during ELT process. This strategy allows the teacher to invite his students' understanding without threatening their positive face. Further, the address term "Miss" used by student shows the respect to her teacher.

b. Negative Politeness strategy

Negative politeness strategies are intended to avoid giving offense by showing deference. These strategies include questioning, hedging, and presenting disagreements as opinions (Brown and Levinson, 1987). The examples of negative politeness are presented on excerpt 5 and 6 below.

Excerpt 5

Student : *Miss, i will go to back please.*

Teacher : Pardon me,, do you mean that u will go to toilet?

Student : Yes miss,,

Teacher : O,,i see. You can say miss, may i go to toilet please,,,

Student : Miss, *may i go to toilet please*

In the excerpt above, there were 2 kinds of negative politeness employed by the teacher. First, the student used the word "please" to soften the request. The use of word "please", according to Brown and Levinson, is an example of negative politeness to indicate a conventionally indirect instruction (Strategy 1). Being indirect can be realized by including the insertion of sentence internal "please" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.133).

c. Bald on Record

It is one of the strategies used when the speaker made no attempt to minimize the threat to the other person's face. This strategy could be used when the speaker had more power than the listener (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Excerpt 6

Teacher : we are going to play the game. This is for memorizing. Jadi, kita akan melatih memory kita.

Student : **it's okay!!**

Ms. Diah : how is the rules? So, the rule is, there are six card of vegetables here. Now, we are going to close and open our eyes. When Ms. Diah says close your eyes. You should close your eyes. And then when Ms. Diah says open your eyes.

You should open your eyes.

In the excerpt above, the teacher gave some instructions to the students. It consists of bald on record, positive politeness and negative politeness. It indicated that the teacher was able to use the three kind of politeness strategies in a single turn. In relation with bald on record, the teacher said "we are going to play the game" which was a bald on record (strategy number 7. task oriented). She also said "you should open your eyes" which was an example of bald on record (strategy number 4. warning).

CONCLUSION

Politeness is the way how people treat one another in daily interaction. Politeness in speaking should be grown up to children since early, because it cannot be acquired instantly. This research focuses on Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies in EFL teacher-students classroom interaction. It aimed to know types of politeness strategies of young EFL learners at English One course during conversation to the instructor, namely positive politeness, negative politeness, and bald on record.

Based on the findings it can be summarized as follows; first, in relation with the types of positive politeness strategies in EFL teacher-students classroom interaction, it showed that positive politeness strategies are most dominant used by teacher and young learners in conversation class. There are 15 sub-strategies of positive politeness, 4 strategies are found in the data. These are: Notice, Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy; intensify interest to H; Use in group language identity markers; seek agreement; avoid disagreement; presuppose/raise common ground; joke, asset or presupposes; offer, promise; be optimistic; and include both S and H in the activity. The use of positive politeness in the classroom is important in order to maintain the positive relationship between the speaker and the hearer. Whereas Negative politeness strategies and bald on record strategies are least to use teacher and students in classroom interaction.

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