

POLITENESS STRATEGIES PERFORMED BY EFL LEARNERS' WITH ENGLISH NATIVE SPEAKERS IN MEDICAL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research was to find out what politeness strategies used by EFL learners when they are having a conversation with English native speakers and the factors for selecting these particular strategies. The research applied a descriptive qualitative research. The participants were 28 non-English major (medical students) students in the first semester. The instrument of the research was data from videos presenting students' conversation with english native speakers. They were analyzed by using Brown and Levinson categories of politeness. The result shows that the learners use three among four politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson namely positive, negative, and off-record strategies. The positive politeness strategies become the most widely used ones.

Keywords: politeness strategies, English learners, native speakers

INTRODUCTION

Language is widely viewed as a means of communication. It plays an important role in humans' everyday life because it is a way to convey their messages and feelings. However, conveying their messages and feelings in particular situations is challenging because humans differ in gender, ethnicity, age, social status, and others. Sometimes, it is not easy to say what speakers want to say and do not want their interlocutors to feel bad because of what the speakers say by imposing on, threatening, or criticizing the interlocutors. In addition, Brown and Levinson (1987) have stated that people generally try to employ some strategies to lessen the threat of the hearers. The strategies are politeness strategy.

Being polite in a daily conversation is crucial to make communication more acceptable by others. It is important to develop a politeness strategy to save the hearer's face. Face means the respect that a speaker has for her or him (Brown & Levinson, 1987). It is usually done by trying to make other people embarrassed or uncomfortable. This is in line with Face Threatening Acts (FTA) by Brown and Levinson (1987).

Similarly, Yule (1996) has viewed politeness as a mean to express awareness of the hearers' face. It could occur in a situation involving closeness of social distance. The speakers need to think not only what they are going to say but also the way they say something including the used

dictions, intonations, and types of sentences.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), there are four strategies to perform politeness. Those are bald-on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record politeness. Bald-on record refers to the action when the speaker addresses the hearer as a mean of expressing the speaker's need. This strategy usually occurs in an emergency. Moreover, positive politeness reflects the distance between the hearer and the speaker. Negative politeness reflects the far distance between speaker and hearer in the conversation. Off-record politeness reflects the actions that the speaker gives hints to the hearer about his/her needs.

There are 15 strategies to perform positive politeness. those are (1) notice (attend to a hearer), (2) exaggerate, (3) intensify interest to a hearer, (4) use in-group identity markers, (5) seek agreement, (6) avoid disagreement, (7) presuppose/raise/assert common ground, (8) joke, (9) assert or presuppose speaker's knowledge and concern for hearer's wants, (10) offer and promise, (11) be optimistic, (12) include both a speaker and a hearer in the activity, (13) give (or ask for) reasons, (14) assume or assert reciprocity, and (15) give gifts to a hearer (goods, sympathy, understanding and cooperation).

On the other hand, there are 10 strategies in negative politeness, those are (1) be conventionally indirect, (2) question and hedge, (3) be pessimistic, (4) minimize the imposition, (5) give deference, (6) apologize, (7) impersonalize a speaker and a hearer by avoiding 'I' and 'you', (8) state the FTA as

a general rule, (9) nominalize, and (10) go on record as incurring a debt or as not incurring H.

Moreover, the speakers can prefer not to perform positive or negative strategy. They can use off-record strategies. The strategies are (1) give hints, (2) give association clues, (3) presuppose, (4) understate, (5) overstate, (6) use tautologies, (7) use contradictions, (8) be ironic, (9) use metaphors, (10) use rhetorical questions, (11) be ambiguous, (12) be vague, (13) over-generalize, (14) displace a hearer, and (15) be incomplete and use ellipsis.

Brown (2011) in Kádár and Haugh (2013) has agreed that politeness is an essential matter by taking into account the feelings of others like how they should be interactionally treated and should behave in a manner that demonstrates appropriate concern for interactors' social status and their social relationship. However, in non-English speaking countries, most of the English language learners do not have much exposure to talk with native speakers. The learners still encounter a number of problems particularly in maintaining the conversation and selecting strategies related to politeness. The problems are not only limited to their linguistic competence but also their communicative and pragmatic competence. The different culture between the speakers also hinders communication. Some English learners are very good at grammar, but they fail to use the language appropriately.

Politeness has become an interesting topic in East Asia and attracts some researchers from some countries such as China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and Singapore to investigate the topic further. Indonesian students can develop their politeness both in verbal and written languages in communicating for academic and social purposes. In the classroom context, students use leveling words to address their teachers such as 'Sir' and 'Master' as a sign of their politeness (Mariani, 2016). Supporting politeness strategies, Indonesian students commonly use 'sorry' and 'I am sorry' to represent request realization instead of 'excuse me' as an English native speaker does (Syahri, 2013).

The research in politeness is conducted by Murphy and De Felice (2019). They look at the use of word 'please' in British and American English. They find out that British English sees it as a politeness marker while American English considers it as relationship asymmetric marker. In Japan, Miura (2017) has researched politeness performed by English language instructors in different shopping situations. It shows that Japanese speakers have lower agreement on requests for asking permission. The different result shows in the research of Brazilians EFL learners. They have a higher rate of politeness in giving an explanation (De Lima Zanella, 2017).

Showing politeness also occurs in complaining. In expressing their complaints, Indonesian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students use Brown and Levinson principles. It shows that Indonesian EFL learners mostly use bald-on record and positive politeness in complaining among their colleagues. Indonesian students also use negative politeness as a strategy to show their complaints, but the frequency is not as many as the two first strategies. Meanwhile, off-record is rarely used (Wijayanto et al., 2013).

Moreover, a research about politeness interaction between strangers has been done by Azwan (2018) in the Ambonese community. The researcher shows that Ambonese speakers have great positive politeness strategy to underline the intimate among the speakers. The speakers build a relationship by expressing gratitude combined with

addressed form and reason and offering new solutions.

Another similar research investigating politeness strategies by students has been done by Kamlasi (2017). The researcher focuses on the use of positive politeness strategies used by students of English Study program. However, the research does not provide the comprehensive result as it described, only the address terms of positive politeness that is found in students' conversations without further discussion. Based on the result, it is found out that the top five address terms used by the students are greetings, thanking, praising, apologizing, and congratulating.

A surprising finding is found in recent research conducted on 200 Saudi Arabian EFL students. The result mentions that 83% of the students do not use politeness (by greeting) when they send emails to their professors in English. Therefore, it suggests that it is necessary to raise awareness among EFL students about politeness in sending emails (Almoaily, 2018).

Politeness is relevant and important in education such as in classroom teaching and learning practice. This research is different from the previous studies that it discusses the way English language learners apply politeness strategies to communicate with English native speakers. As mentioned previously, most of the previous studies discuss communication and politeness strategies between speakers from the same nationalities. The one investigating politeness strategies between speakers from different nationalities is still scant. As a developing country which becomes one of the tourism and business destinations, Indonesia has attracted lots of foreigners. Moreover, Indonesians have a wider opportunity to talk with them. Therefore, the research focuses on the way Indonesian students communicate with foreigners are necessarily to conduct.

There are some researchers who discuss politeness strategies. There are three strategies in performing politeness; do not impose, give the option, and make an addressee feel good (be friendly) (Lakoff in Fauziati, 2016). 'Do not impose' refers to the action of avoiding giving instruction into the interlocutor's want and creating social distance between speaker and hearer. 'Give the option' refers to the opportunity given to the hearer to respond or not to respond in a way that the speakers want. And 'make a hearer feel good' often happens in intimate relationships and it usually occurs between friends. Politeness strategies can be seen from the cost and benefits aspect (Leech in Fauziati, 2016). According to Leech in Fauziati (2016), the politeness strategies can be in the form of tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation/praise maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim, sympathy maxim, and consideration maxim. Compared to politeness strategies by Lakoff in Fauziati (2016), politeness strategies by Leech in Fauziati (2016) are more specific although they share similar categories.

Among the three theories mentioned, theory by Brown and Levinson (1987) gives more specific criteria to perform politeness. It is the most detail compared to the other two theories. By using the theory as mentioned earlier, the research aims at investigating what used politeness strategies by first-year medical students when they are communicating with English native speakers.

METHODS

To get the result of this research, the researchers use the descriptive qualitative method. The researchers

try to describe the phenomenon when the students apply the theory that they have already learned in the class. Descriptive research is a research that asks questions about the nature, incidence, or distribution of variables (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010). The design of this research is qualitative because the researchers want to get in details about the politeness produced by students when they use L2 outside in the classroom context. Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen (2010) have mentioned that one of the purposes of qualitative research is to examine a phenomenon as it is in rich detail. The data in this research are obtained from the students who submit their assignment on a conversation with native speakers.

The population of this research is the first-semester medical students who enroll in free conversation class. The class is taught as one of the compulsory subjects in the Bachelor program in one of the private universities in Yogyakarta. This research uses purposive sampling in choosing the sample. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research uses small samples. There are nine samples chosen randomly from the population. Eight of them are female, and only one is male. The students are asked to submit a conversation video with native speakers based on the topics that they have already learned in the class. From nine samples, it produces five conversation videos which are analyzed to get the data.

The primary data in this research are from the video submitted by the students. The researchers observe and transcribe the videos, give code, classify, analyze, and discuss it. The researchers transcribe the video to written forms and give the code for every produced data to classify the data. After that, the data are analyzed and discussed. The data in this research are in the forms of sentences, clauses, and words. The next steps require the researchers to code and classify the data based on politeness strategies categorized by Brown and Levinson (1987).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on data analysis, the researchers do a comprehensive discussion about the findings. Based on the result of the analysis, it reveals the politeness strategies used by first-semester medical students and its influence in the conversation. Table 1 describes the characteristics of the sample in this research.

Table 1 shows that the length of the videos ranges from 4:44 minutes to 11:37 minutes. Almost all students talk to only one speaker, but there is one student who talks to a couple. The nationalities of the interlocutors vary. They are from Australia, Germany, England, Holland, and Italy. Four of them are females, and two of them are males.

Table 2 presents the frequency of politeness strategy used by students. The most used strategy is positive politeness (67 utterances). The result is in line with the research conducted by Adel, Davoudi, and Ramezanzadeh (2016). They also find that positive strategies are the most commonly used by Iranian students in their class blog. Another research by Wijayanto et al. (2013) also shows a similar result. Their research reveals that positive politeness and bald on record are the most pervasive strategies used by Indonesian learners of English particularly in making complaints. The second most-commonly used strategies are off-record strategies (32 utterances). Moreover, 22 negative politeness strategies are also found. In contrary, no participants use bald on record strategies in this study.

Based on Table 3, it can be seen that almost all students show their interests, approval, and intensify interest in the speaker's contribution. It means that the Indonesian students highly show positive politeness toward the hearer although the hearer is a native speaker whom they have not known before. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), positive strategies include noticing and attending to the hearers, offering and promising, being optimistic, telling reasons, and others. These conversations from the videos can show these strategies.

S: I am sure you will enjoy exploring this city (being optimistic).

S: If you want to I can tell you some interesting places to visit (offering and promising).

In the first example of the conversation, the students show positive politeness by being optimistic. They want to ensure the hearer that the hearer will be happy to travel in the city. Another example is shown in the second utterance. The students try to help the hearer by giving some information about other attractive spots.

Based on the videos and Table 3, the students deliver their politeness strategies successfully. Building a free conversation with a native speaker becomes an obstacle in which the speaker does not know the understanding of linguistic politeness strategies. The students implement their linguistic politeness strategies through greetings and introducing their names. It means that before building a conversation, they understand how to make a good impression to the native speaker as the interlocutors. This result is in line with Fauziati (2016) who has stated that in English utterances, polite language might be characterized by the use of indirect speech, the use of respectful forms of address systems (Sir or Madam), or the use of formulaic utterances (please, excuse me, sorry, thank you, and others), as shown.

NN: Okay, Let me introduce myself first, my name is Noni

NN: Hi Megan. Where do you come from?

MD: My name's Meida. I am student from Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta University and this is my friend.

DP: Thank you. (trying to hold her) Oh, we would to record it in around 5-7 minutes. Sorry, are you in a hurry?

AG: So, that is all from us. Thank you for your time.

In the first utterances, the students show their linguistic strategies by introducing their names. It emphasizes on building an intimate relationship between the speakers and the interlocutors. Moreover, the speakers explain their identity as a student of the private university in Yogyakarta, and it makes the speaker feel recognized easily by the hearer. In the second utterances, it shows respectful forms for the hearer. It indicates that the speaker respects the hearer and they appreciate it by giving gratitude. The fourth utterance represents the student's politeness to request realization. The speaker intends to emphasize polite manners to attract the interlocutor's attention.

Another sample, the speaker tends to use a little chit chat by asking the interlocutor's schedule. This strategy aims to build a positive relationship between them. Then, the speaker emphasizes where she comes from and offers new solutions. She wants to be admitted as a UMY student

and gives permission to the hearer to visit her college, as seen.

MD: What is your schedule today Megan?

MD: Yes, we are from UMY. Maybe you could go to our University.

In Table 4, 22 negative politeness strategies are found with being conventionally indirect becoming the

most frequent ones. It happens because the speakers and the hearers meet for the first time. Moreover, they have not had a close relationship yet.

The applications of off-record strategies also occur in the participants' conversation with the interlocutors. There are 32 strategies found during the conversation. Off-record is defined as an indirect politeness strategy that can have some interpretations depending on the hearers' view. From Table 5, it can be seen that off-record strategies appear

Table 1 Sample of the Research

No. of the Participant	Participant	Video	Participant's Gender	Length of the conversation	Number of Interlocutors	Interlocutor's background	Interlocutor's Gender
1.	DL	1	F	11:37'	1	Italy	M
2.	VT		F				
3.	GL	2	M	4:44'	2	Holland	M; F
4.	AF	3	F	6:52'	1	England	F
5.	BG		F				
6.	AG	4	F	7:37'	1	Germany	F
7.	MD		F				
8.	NN	5	F	6:50'	1	Australia	F
9.	PD		F				

Table 2 The Frequency of Politeness Strategies Used by the Students

No	Politeness strategies	Frequency
1.	bald on record	-
2.	off record	32
3.	positive	67
4.	negative	22

Table 3 Positive Politeness Performed by the Students

No	Description	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
1.	Notice (attend to H)	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√
2.	Exaggerate	√	√	√	X	√	√	X	X	√
3.	Intensify interest to H	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√
4.	Use in-group identity markers	√	X	X	X	√	X	√	√	√
5.	Seek agreement	√	X	X	X	√	√	√	√	√
6.	Avoid disagreement	X	X	X	X	√	√	√	X	X
7.	Presuppose/raise/assert common ground	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
8.	Joke	√	X	√	X	X	X	X	√	√
9.	Assert or presuppose S's knowledge and concern for H's wants	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
10.	Offer, promise	√	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	X
11.	Be optimistic	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	X
12.	Include both S and H in the activity	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√
13.	Give (or ask for) reasons	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√
14.	Assume or assert reciprocity	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
15.	Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)	√	√	√	X	√	√	X	√	√

Table 4 Negative Politeness Performed by the Students

No	Description	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
1.	Be conventionally indirect	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√
2.	Question and hedge	√	X	√	X	√	X	X	X	X
3.	Be pessimistic	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.	Minimize the imposition	√	X	√	X	X	X	X	√	√
5.	Give deference	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6.	Apologize	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
7.	Impersonalize S and H by avoiding “I” and “you”	X	X	X	X	X	√	√	√	√
8.	State the FTA as a general rule	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
9.	Nominalize	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
10.	Go on record as	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Table 5 Off-Record Politeness Performed by the Participants

No	Description	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
1.	Give hints	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2.	Give association clues	√	√	X	X	√	X	X	√	√
3.	Presuppose	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.	Understate	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5.	Overstate	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	X
6.	Use tautologies	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	X
7.	Use contradictions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	√
8.	Be ironic	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	X
9.	Use metaphors	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
10.	Use rhetorical questions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
11.	Be ambiguous	√	√	X	X	√	√	√	√	√
12.	Be vague	X	X	X	X	X	√	√	X	√
13.	Over-generalize	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
14.	Displace H	√	√	√	X	X	√	√	X	X
15.	Be incomplete and use ellipsis	√	√	X	X	√	√	√	√	√

most frequently by using ellipsis and being incomplete. It can be caused by the ability of linguistic competences of the students in creating complete sentences.

CONCLUSIONS

Being polite is important to make social relation and build meaningful conversation. Politeness occurs both in an academic setting and nonacademic setting whereas the students have to deal with how they deliver their opinions in various forms either in questioning, asking or giving information. Politeness strategies are used by speakers to perform their concern on the topic of the conversation that they involve in. The first year of Indonesian medical students also perform some politeness strategies when they communicate with native speakers.

Indonesian learners of English use the politeness strategies of Brown and Levinson (1987) in communicating with English native speakers. The results reveal that the participants who are the Indonesian learners of English

use three among four strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson. Those are positive, negative, and off-record strategies. From the three strategies, positive strategies are the most common strategies used by the participants. The result of the research also implies that learning a language is more than just learning the grammar or the structure of the language. The learners should also be introduced with politeness strategies as these strategies are important especially when they use the language in the real world. This research can be developed more in the aspects of pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics failure by involving interlocutors as the data source to increase mutual understanding between Indonesian learners and English native speakers.

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