

## Politeness in the EFL Classroom Interaction: Strategies in Avoiding Face Threatening Act (FTA)

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to look into how lecturers from Methodist University's Letters Faculty express politeness in their words and actions during the learning process in classroom interaction. Observing lecturers and students of various ethnicities, religions, and cultures, one must be understanding and well-managed in order to avoid the face threatening act and retain the diversity among them. The study was conducted at the Letters Faculty's classes at The Methodist University of Indonesia. The researchers took a qualitative approach to the study, monitoring lecturers' activities with students in classroom interaction and recording their communication during the process of learning. The lecturers used the three types of politeness strategies to respond to the context of avoiding conflict and maintaining harmony, as evidenced by the results. Bald On-record politeness strategy, positive politeness strategy, and negative politeness strategy are the three types of the strategies. The bald on record strategy is the most commonly employed of the three types of politeness strategies used by the lecturers. It's because the lecturers are having more power in the class. Lecturers have right to ask students without asking the students first. Surprisingly, lecturers are not shy to say sorry and thank you even they have more power in the class. In short, lecturers try to avoid the face threatening acts by this way of communication. Unluckly, the result of the study also presents the act of some lecturers who were sitting in student's table during the learning process. Thus, it creates discomfort for students.

**Keywords:** politeness, politeness strategies, classroom interaction, face threatening act

### INTRODUCTION

Every country has its own culture, and everyone has their own distinct culture. The way its people speak is influenced by their culture. It is determined by the culture. "Culture is a result of a language, and language is the tool of conveying culture, Mazari and Derraz, 2015. It indicates that when someone studies culture, he or she uses language. Language and culture are inextricably linked. Culture is a part of language, and language is a component of culture. They are so intimately intertwined that it is impossible to separate them without losing the meaning of either language or culture.

The current study looks into how politeness and impoliteness can be separated from aspects of perception and judgment, such as diversity and irregularity, Sharifian 2011, 2015. Culture is based on (im)polite behavior. As a result, not everyone has the same level of culture. It is based on

his or her cultural background. In politeness, culture has a vital role. In one culture, polite behavior and words might be perceived as disrespectful in another, Ealen 2001; Mills & Kadar 2011; He 2012; Garfinkel, cited in Haugh 2013, and Sharifian 2017, proposed the analytical tools of Cultural Linguistics to avoid over generalizations towards culture that are of limited utility and to avoid treating culture as a normative construct.

Individuals' politeness and impoliteness emerge in interactional contexts. (Im) politeness varies by individual, as each person has a unique perception of the situation based on their knowledge and experience, Fukushima & Haugh 2014, Kadar & Haugh 2013, Haugh 2013. Teacher and students get benefit from classroom interaction because it encourages them to participate in dialogue. It is thought to help students strengthen their linguistic skills [11]. Some scholars have also looked into the EFL learner interactional setting. [12] investigates the usage of positive politeness strategies by students and teachers in the classroom. The choice of politeness strategies is influenced by social distance, age, student power, and linguistic competence limitations. In their utterances, students and teachers have demonstrated civility." It helps to sustain the teacher-student interaction in the classroom by ensuring that both students and teachers are familiar with each other. Because of the disparities between students and teachers, numerous approaches to employing the politeness technique were developed.

The EFL learners of Iranian who employed positive politeness methods as the dominantly used by students and teachers in communication, similar to politeness tactics used by Iranian EFL Learner, Consolo 2006. Furthermore, Senowarsito (2013) identified 60 emails written by 25 male and female Iranian speakers with a cordial relationship, and the results revealed that positive politeness strategies are the most common.

The previous studies present the strategies employed by students in classroom interaction during the learning process. In contrast to the previous study, the writer here discusses the politeness strategies applied by lecturers when communicate to their students in classroom interaction during the learning process with the goal of avoiding face threatening act. Thus, the problem of the studied is formulated as (1) what types of politeness strategies are applied by the lecturers during the learning process in classroom interaction?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Politeness**

Different languages and cultures will have different ways of expressing politeness in their actions and words, Brown and Levinson (1987). Being polite has the goal of preserving the image of both the listener and the speaker. In addition, the harmonious relationships are preserved by retaining the image of both the hearer and the speaker. The face is linked to both the hearer's and speaker's desire to be liberated and desirable. The face was divided in two. The positive face (the desire to be free) and the negative face (the desire to be useful and desired). To avoid the threat, both faces must be maintained during dialogue.

Furthermore, the use of politeness in social interactions is determined by the positive or negative face. The way we communicate with someone we know well differs from how we speak with someone we don't know well. We all have different ways of being nice in the world since we are all different, Meyerhoff (2011). Furthermore, the concept of face is the most significant aspect in social contact, Spencer-Qatey 2008; Culpeper 2011. It has a significant part in societal norms. Politeness is expected, Kadar & Haught 2013. Politeness is linked to a set of morals or rules that are followed in society. It instructs people on how to act in social situations.

In addition, politeness is a social code that is established and agreed upon by a society and then implemented in people's interactions. Manner is the term for politeness. When people

communicate, there are certain norms or etiquette that must be followed. People will be labeled arrogant, egotistical, and even uncivilized if these are neglected Sibarani, 2004.

## Politeness Strategies

Politeness strategy is a means to express the utterances in the most courteous way feasible. The concept of face is central to their idea. As a result, during contact, all participants are expected to maintain two sorts of faces: a 'positive' face (paying attention to others' face demands) and a 'negative' face (ensuring that the other is not imposed on). Thus, interactions are expected to limit Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) such as criticisms, arguments, and embarrassment during their engagement in the spirit of maintaining face. It also indicates that humans use a variety of linguistic politeness, or 'politeness behaviors,' to moderate or defuse interpersonal tension during these FTA situations.

Politeness strategies can be broken down into 25 different politeness strategies that are divided into two categories: positive and negative politeness. Positive politeness is a speaking approach that is employed as a metaphorical extension of closeness to convey common ground or limited sharing of desires even between strangers who perceive themselves: for engagement. The Negative Politeness Strategy is one in which both the hearer and the speaker wish to be free. He/she is unaffected by anything. He requires total commitment without any refusal.

The fifteen positive politeness are practiced by individuals all across the world. The following are the strategies: (1) with relation to the hearer's situation. It is impossible to deny that people desire to be noticed. As a result, the speaker should be conscious of the listener's presence. (2) Exaggerating the listener's feelings. When considering the feelings of the listener, the speaker should be sympathetic. It is important to understand how to put oneself in the shoes of the listener. The proper amount of exaggeration at the right time makes the listener feel understood. (3) Paying more attention to the listener. In communication, it is necessary to pique the listener's interest and improve their attention. One technique is to tell her or him a fantastic story. Speech that is delivered directly is more effective than speech that is delivered indirectly. Using the identity marker is step four. The speaker is implying that the listener and the speaker are similar. It can be determined by looking at how people utilize address forms, vocabulary, and dialect in groups. (5) I'm waiting for permission. The methods indicating this strategy include saving the subjects and doing repetition. It strengthens the agreement and gives the listener satisfaction. (6) Keeping the conflict from escalating. This method aims to save the listener's face. (7) Improving the listener's resemblance. Speaker tries to pique the listener's interest for a brief moment by introducing an unrelated issue and demonstrating that the speaker does not intend to harm the listener's face. (8) Making a joke at the listener's expense. (9) Emphasizing the speaker's awareness and assuming the desire of the listener. This method is used to interpret the listener's wish awareness. (10) Assisting and assisting the listener. The strategy's outcomes include devoting and contributing. It can sometimes deceive the listener. Even if the hearers are deceived, the speaker exhibits his or her good desires, which satisfies the listener. (11) Being upbeat in front of the listener. This method demonstrates the speaker's confidence in his or her ability to ask the listener to do something. (12) This includes the actions of both the speakers and the listeners. This method is indicated by involving the listener in the speaker's behavior. The speaker, for example, frequently uses the word "we" to allude to "me and you, or she/he in conversation." It is done in order to reduce the threat, and both the speaker and the listener are respected. (13) Providing a counter-argument Providing an argument for the hearer is utilized to determine whether or not the hearer agrees. The speaker has a purpose for doing something, and the hearer is taught to understand it rationally. (14) In terms of remuneration. This method is characterized by cooperation between the speaker and the listener. To have

reimbursement or exchange between speaker and hearer, the speaker and hearer should be in the contract. (15) Giving the listener presents. Providing the hearer with gifts such as sympathy, understanding, and collaboration results in the hearer's satisfaction. Human relationships desire to be admired, understood, and listened to. As a result, by giving the presents, the hearer will feel understood, and the damage to the hearer's face will be overlooked.

In addition, negative politeness strategies are practiced into ten strategies. (1) Speaking indirectly to the listener is one of the strategies. The speaker uses direct address to the listener to avoid misconstruction or misinterpretation of what he or she meant. (2) Using of a question hedge. This is utilized to alter the enforce of the spoken acts. (3) Having a negative outlook. This method is used to convey apprehension. This method aims to reject people in a roundabout way. (4) Reducing the burden. This method is used to reduce the hearer's coercion. It demonstrates the speaker's respect for the listener. (5) Expressing gratitude to the recipient. This method is employed in order to embarrass and insult himself in order to achieve respect. It satisfies the need of the listener to be treated as superior. (6) Expressing regret. The speaker can convey his reluctance to encroach on H's unfavorable face by apologizing for doing an FTA, therefore partially redressing that impingement. (7) Removing the speaker's and listener's identities. This method implies that the speaker does not wish to intrude on the identity of the listener. This technique is identified by avoiding the pronouns "I and You're." It implies that both the speaker and the listener are not alone. (8) As a general guideline, state the FTA. Speaker does not want to intrude, but is compelled to do so due to circumstances. This technique does not compel the hearer to act, but rather causes the hearer to act as a result of the case. It is up to the listener to do so in this case. The social rule, regulation, or obligation are the events. Due to the circumstances, the speaker forces the listener to act in an indirect manner. (9) Nominalizing is a nine-letter word that means "to give a name to anything It demonstrates formality, which is connected with the continuum's noun end. (10) Declaring yourself a debtor or a non-indebted hearer on the record. An FTA can be redressed by the speaker declaring his indebtedness to the hearer or by the hearer disclaiming any duty.

Varied cultures have different ideas on what it means to be polite since politeness strategies are linked to culture. The goal is to keep the listener's and speaker's faces the same. Faces are maintained in a different way in Karonese and Toba Batak cultures, for example. For Karonese, politeness is a manner of expressing respect. Karonese people demonstrate their admiration by speaking indirectly in a traditional celebration called "Cabur Bulung", Sembiring 2012. This result backed with proposal that "being polite in Karonese language is represented through the use of various strategies" (pronouns, greetings, and indirect speech). The karonese people employ these techniques to show their respect. Karonese people are referred to as polite since they display deference. Because politeness differs according to culture, politeness methods varies as well. When speaking to someone who is highly respected in Karonese culture, for example, indirect communication is used. Because it is not a diplomatic strategy, Karonese people rarely talk directly. Then, using pronouns like "we" is quite courteous. The utilization of these aspects in communication reflects the closeness of their relationship, Ginting 2007.

In contrast, Sianturi 2012 found that Toba Batak teenagers communicate directly and to the point. This is an example of their politeness strategies in action. Saying something directly and to the point will help the listener understand more clearly than presuming anything.

## METHOD

By describing the phenomena of language in society, this study used a qualitative research design. The researcher is the primary instrument in qualitative research, which uses a natural context as a direct source of data. The researcher entered the area and stayed for quite some time. The information was gathered on-site and enhanced by the knowledge obtained from being there.

Furthermore, the researcher analyzed all mechanically recorded materials in their entirety, with the researcher's insight serving as the most important tool for analysis. The research data was collected in the form of words. It was transcribed from the lecturers' utterances. It was done in a classroom interaction during the learning process for one semester or six months (February to July 2019). After gathering data, it must be examined. Brown and Levinson proposed the core concept of politeness theory, which is used to analyze the data. It discusses four different politeness strategies: bald on record strategy, positive politeness strategy, negative politeness strategy, and off record politeness strategy.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The objects of this study are the lecturers' utterances in asking and giving response during the learning process in classroom interaction. According to the findings of the study, lecturers employ some politeness strategies while reacting to the student's asking. From four types of politeness strategies stated by theory, there are only three types of politeness strategies applied by lecturers during the learning process in classroom interaction. It can be seen clearly the way of being polite is influenced by the status and power. Someone who has more power is being honored. Thus, lecturers who have more power in the classroom interaction seem to be more straight to the point to their students.

### Bald On Record Strategy

- (1) *Lecturer: Last week, I have asked you to create a short conversation, so today, in front of the class, practice your conversation. Come on, be hurry!*

It is identified that lecturer used **bald on record strategy** in asking students to practice the conversation. This research was done in the classroom. The lecturer has power or authority in the class. It can be reflected by giving commands and instructions and making requests. The teacher's official role in the level was revealed when he/she gave commands and instructions and made requests. By this position, a lecturer is a respectable person for the students. All the activities of the students in the class need the agreement of their lecturer. This strategy seems to make students feel uncomfortable. As lecturer has more power and a figure who is honored very much by students. Thus, the lecturer spoke directly and to the point.

Different from the strategy of being polite detected by Sembiring (2012) that Karonese people show their respect by speaking indirectly in one of the traditional party "*Cabur Bulung*" and Ginting (2007) in research entitled "*Kesantunan dalam Acara Perkawinan 'Angantin Manuk'*" stated that being polite in Karo language can be expressed through the use of pronouns, greetings, and indirect speech. The use of these elements in communication shows the relationship between the speaker and the listener. From the expression above, it can be seen that this result supports these two findings previously. It strengthens that Karonese uses indirect language, pronoun, and greeting in communication. It is shown by the expression "The people in Parang ras, all of the people are Karonese. Then, when I buy something, I say "*buk*," but they say, "don't say "*buk*" but "*bik*." Then they say "*kam*" not "*kau*," for the "*kam*" is polite and "*kau*" is not polite. "*Bik*" and "*kam*" are the example of expressing politeness by Karonese that use the pronoun in communication. Karonese tends to use "*kam*" which has a similar meaning to "*kau*" in Indonesia and "you" in English. The result supports Sembiring (2012) and Ginting (2007).

The lecturers and students have different social status. Thus, the politeness strategies used by them are different. From the result, it supports Meyerhoff (2011).

Different from Senowarsito (2013) and Adel(2016) that proposed teachers and students dominantly use the positive politeness strategy, this study identified that lecturers dominantly use bald on record strategy in asking and giving command. Lecturers dominantly did the interaction in asking and giving command in the classroom interaction. In short, the relationship between the lecturers who have the authority in the classroom and students are not similar. Thus, lecturers spoke directly to students, this strategy is called bald on record strategy.

### Positive Politeness Strategies

- (2) *Lecturer: Ok **guys**, can we start the class? you are still busy there, aren't you? Again and again, studying about language you are studying about culture. I ll never start the class if you are still busy there. So, let me ask you, are you ready to start the class today?*

It is identified that lecturer used the **positive politeness strategies** by using the **Jargon** and **Slank**. It was shown by the jargon and slang language “**guys**.” The expression “guys” reveals how close the lecturer to the students. The lecturer knows his/her students. He/she uses this strategy to call all the students in that class. This strategy seeks to minimize the threat to the hearer’s positive face. It is used to make the hearer (students) feel good about himself, his interests or possessions. It shows that lecturer knows students very well. It attempts to minimize the distance between the lecturer as the speaker and the students as the hearers.

More than that, as it is in the classroom research and it was done when lecturer gives the command and asks the question, the formal situation is happening. Not only students are there but also the lecturer as the person who has authority in the teaching and learning process. By using the expression “guys,” it seems that lecturers treat his/her students as their friend. Thus, there is a small distance between them, but it is acceptable as long as they have a good relationship.

- (3) *Lecturer: Hi, yeah **ladies** over there. Please stand up. Let me see your wajah syanikkkk, syantik, syantik, ala syahrini, you know. (smiling)*

This utterances can be identified the use of **positive politeness strategy**, i.e., **The Use in-Group Identity Markers**. It is shown by group identity marker “ladies.” to call female students. Calling “ladies” for female students indicates the lecturer gives respect and feels close to the students as well. This set of data suggests that the two parties have a good emotional relationship.

More identification, lecturer used **joke** to respond to the question. It is shown by the expression “*let me see your wajah syantik, syantik, syantik (let me see your beautiful, beautiful, beautiful face)*”. Joking is one of the positive politeness strategies indicating that the interlocutors are close enough. They mutually shared background knowledge and values. The code switching engaged by lecturer noted that she was joking. The lecturer tried to minimize the student’s positive face. He/She wanted to make the students feel comfortable and feel that they were close to each other.

In addition, it can be identified the strategy used by the lecturers in asking and giving command is by repetition. The lecturers repeated the word ‘syantik’ (beautiful) for three times. It shows the lecturers tried make a joke and mixed language. The repition of ‘syantik, syantik, and syantik’ for three times indicated the lecturers tried to comfort students as the lecturer was smiling and practising one of the most popular actress (famous star) in Indonesia who uses this jargon ‘syantik, syantik, syantik’.

## Negative Politeness Strategies

- (4) Lecturer: I have informed you last week that today you have to present the group presentation, haven't you?  
Student: No, Mam. You just informed us our project for final test.  
Lecturer: ups, sorry. You know, getting older makes you easy to forget..he he he. Thanks Linda for helping me.

It can be identified that lecturers use Apologize. It is shown by the expression "sorry," in this expression speaker (lecturer) tried to indicate his reluctance to impinge on hearer's negative face (ensuring that the other is not imposed on). By saying "sorry" lecturer shows that he/she has a very kind heart to say sorry if you have something wrong. He/she did not pretend himself/herself as the superior one in the classroom interaction. The lecturer used negative politeness strategy in different ways. It used to emphasize both the speaker's and the addressee's involvement in the matter was creating imperative expression. The lecturer used modifying elements and politeness markers in his asking.

In addition, saying 'thank you' shows that lecturer honored his students very much. He/she appreciates what was done by his student. By helping lecturer to do something, lecturer felt good and was not shy to give thanks to his students even he has an authority in the class. Thus, lecturer treats his student without seeing their status and power.

## CONCLUSION

The study's findings lead us to the conclusion that lecturers used the three of four different types of politeness strategies while asking and giving command to students during the learning process in classroom interaction. They are the bald on record strategy, positive politeness strategy, and negative politeness strategy. The bald on record method is the most frequently employed of the three politeness strategies by lecturers when asking and giving command to students during the learning process in classroom interaction. It is because the lecturers are not in a similar position and appear to be inseparable communication. They frequently used straight and direct communication for a cause.

When chatting to their students, lecturers have a particular strategy of being polite. In short, different social status will necessitate various politeness strategies. Lecturer is a respected and powerful figure in the eyes of the students. Surprisingly, the lecturers pretend their students as their friends. These strategies of communication comfort the students, even some actions of lecturers sitting in the table also create discomfortable to students.

Conflict arises during social interactions, such as those in the classroom, when we are unaware of others' standards of decency. For a reason, it is advised that colleges and universities instruct lecturers and students to use politeness during the classroom interaction.

Finally, it's important to be polite in both words and actions. Making prepared statements does not ensure effective communication. Our actions must adhere to them. Thus. All readers are advised to practice good manners in both words and actions.

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