

THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' EXPRESSIONS OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES ON STUDENTS' REQUEST IN CLASSROOM INTERACTION IN INDONESIAN CONTEXT

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Abstract: *This study is aimed at investigating request strategies performed by the students in the university level. In this regard, the theory of Brown and Levinson (1987) was applied as the basic of politeness strategy implementation. The present study, the writer addressed a research question deals with the kinds of politeness strategies performed by the students in requesting by administering Discourse Completion Tests (DCT) to twenty respondents at the third year of One Private University. In analyzing the data, CCSARP coding scheme were applied to classify students' request into nine-point scale. In identifying the kinds of politeness strategies performed by the students, the writer adapted the theories politeness strategies from Brown and Levinson (1987). The results of this present study showed that the students performed four super politeness strategies when requesting. It means that the use of four super politeness strategies were performed by the students in requesting.*

Key words: *Politeness Strategies, Request Strategies, Classroom interaction.*

INTRODUCTION

In interaction process, the students in every learning context learn how to behave politely and linguistically. It was not born as instinctive of human proverty, but it was phenomenon which has been constructed through sociocultural and historical processes (Shahrokhi and Bidabadi, 2013). It is clear that the politeness in interaction should be learnt to develop polite behaviour among the participants.

The term "polite" derives from late medieval latin "politus" meaning "smoothed and accomplished". The synonym of polite is similar with "refined", "polished" when people were concerned. French, Spanish, German, and Dutch, the polite term values as loyalty and reciprocal trust that were used by the upperclass society to distinguish from the rest of the people. The primary purpose of the values above were achieving success, winning honours and behaving appropriately at court. Meanwhile in Persian, the term polite is defined as "adab" in which man can avoid any fault (Shahrokhi and Bidabadi, 2013).

The politeness strategy is divided into three categories, positive, negative and off record politeness. Positive politeness strategy is shown to building solidarity among each others. Yule (1996, p. 64) stated “a positive politeness strategy leads the requester to appeal to a common goal, and event friendship.” The aims are to make the speaker feel good and come closer to the hearer. Brown and Levinson (1987, pp. 103-129) declare politeness strategy into fifteen strategies.

However, negative politeness strategy is the strategy in which the speaker showing face saving act. It means that the speaker conducting an effort to avoid the hearer’s face. According to Marazita (2009, p. 85) and Baresova (2008, p. 49) stated that negative politeness is a strategy in which “the speaker avoids a refusal” to save the hearer’s face, however more emphasize satisfying the hearer’s desire by expressing “apologies, deference, various kinds of hedges, impersonalizing, and other devices”. In short, negative politeness strategy is the speaker’s manner in mitigating the hearer’s face by showing apologize, respect, and deference. Brown and Levinson (1987, pp. 131-211) divided negative politeness strategy into ten strategies.

Beside two categories above, off record politeness strategy is part of the politeness, considering Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 211). This strategy used indirect language in communication which is demanding some comprehension to be interpreted by the hearer. In other words, off record is part of politeness strategy to mitigate the hearer’s face by performing indirect language. But, this strategy requires the hearer inference hidden meaning to recover the speaker’s will to be done. Brown and Levinson (1987, pp. 213-277) classified this strategy into fifteen strategy.

Table 1
Realization of Sub-Politeness Strategies

| Positive politeness strategies | Negative politeness strategies | Off-record politeness strategies |
|--|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. Notice/attend to hearer’s wants | 1. Be conventionally indirect | 1. Give hints/clues |
| 2. Exaggerate interest/approval | 2. Question, hedge | 2. Give association clues |
| 3. Intensify interest | 3. Be pessimistic | 3. Presuppose |
| 4. Use in-group identity markers | 4. Minimize imposition | 4. Understate |
| 5. Seek agreement | 5. Give deference | 5. Overstate |
| 6. Avoid disagreement | 6. Apologize | 6. Use tautologies |
| 7. Presuppose/assert common ground | 7. Impersonalize | 7. Use contradiction |
| 8. Joke | 8. State the imposition as a general rule | 8. Be ironic |
| 9. Assert knowledge of hearer’s wants | 9. Nominalize | 9. Use metaphors |
| 10. Offer, promise | 10. Go on record as incurring a debt | 10. Use rhetorical questions |
| 11. Be optimistic | | 11. Be ambiguous |
| 12. Include both S and H in the activity | | 12. Be vague |
| 13. Give (or ask for) reasons | | 13. Over-generalise |
| 14. Assume/assert reciprocity | | 14. Displace hearer |
| | | 15. Be incomplete, use ellipsis |

(Adopted from: Srisuruk (2011, p.37))

In other sides, in context academic or classroom interaction, two of the many ideas of pragmatic is the used of speech acts and politeness. It related to how polite the students' behavior when they speak with their friend or their lecturer, especially in requesting. Elmianvari and Kheirabadi (2009, p. 377) supported that while the students making request to their professor, they endeavor to choose several variations of politeness (bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record). They conduct those behaviors by the aims to avoid threatening to the professor and to make good relationship among others.

Previously, this present study was also supported by some previous studies such as; Alfattah and Ravindranath (2009); Al-Marrani and Sazalie (2010); and Codreanu and Debu (2011). From their research, it can be concluded that the respondents expressed request in polite and preferred to use conventionally indirect strategies, especially in query preparatory strategy. In the present study the writer is interested in carrying out politeness strategy on students' requests. The reason for choosing this topic because requests as one of most frequently speech acts used in communication, meanwhile politeness as social norm which is important in social relationship especially in classroom interaction.

This present study is designed to answer research question of what are the kinds of politeness strategies performed by the students in requesting in classroom interaction. This study is important due to the students behave of using polite strategy in the teaching learning process. It means that in indonesian context of classroom interaction, politeness is one of the way to interact reciprocally to achieve and develop relationship.

METHODOLOGY

In this cross-sectional study, the writer aimed at finding out the individual characteristics of the issue politeness in requesting. A purposive sampling as a sampling technique was applied. In gathering the data, the writer administered Discourse Completion Test (DCT) to twenty respondents at the third year of one private University. In analyzing the data, CCSARP was implemented to cover the various data classification.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of classifying students' respond into nine-point scale request strategies revealed that the students performed query preparatory (69.5%), mood derivable (18.7%), hedged performative (5.1%), suggestory preparatory (3.4%), strong hints (2.5%), and mild hints (0.8%).

The use of query preparatory appeared was performed by the respondent in S2 and S4. In S2 the requester asked to make request in arranging the midterm exam schedule to his/her professor who do not know personally. Meanwhile, in S4 the respondents were required to

perform request to the other students in borrowing a pen. Sociological variable in these situation showed that in S2 $S < H$ (P), +SH (D), and high ranking of imposition, and in S4 $S = H$ (P), +SP (D), and low ranking of imposition. Referred to these situation the result showed that the use of query preparatory more dominant was used by the students in requesting.

Table 2
Query Preparatory Strategy

| <i>Situation two (S2)</i> | <i>Situation four (S4)</i> |
|--|--|
| - Could I change the date of test, Sir? | - Excuse me, would you like to lend me your pen, please? |
| - Can I change the date of test, please? | - I'm sorry, can I borrow your pen? |

According to Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989, p. 18) as cited by Umar (2004, p. 59) stated that hedge performative is the strategy in which contained the utterances of the illocutionary force was modified by hedging expressions (e.g., 'I would like to ...'). The use of this strategy appeared on the three situations, i.e., S1, S2, and S3. But, it was more salient used by the respondents in S1 which is reached 15%. In S1 the requester was required to request to his/her teacher to borrow a book. Sociological variable in these situation showed that in S1 $S < H$ (P), -SH (D), and high ranking of imposition.

Sample responses were given by the students that used hedged performative strategy;

- I would like to ask you to borrow your book for my study. (S1)
- Excuse me, Sir. I would like to exchange the date of midterm test. Because, the date of the test is the same as my brother's wedding. (S2)
- I would like to ask you to borrow your lecture notes for my assignment. (S3)

The sample responses above revealed that in this strategy the students tend to use modal before the performative verb to soften request and to show politeness. In addition, Fraser (2010, pp. 23-24) argued that there are some English hedge to soften request, one of them is 'modal verbs (might, can, would, could, ...)'. It meant that by using modal verb before performative appropriate to minimize FTA in requesting.

In this study, the use of suggestory formulae not quite salient if was compared with the other request strategies. The fact that total of utterances contained this strategy simply 3.4%. The common patterns of this strategy in each situation, such as; S3 (5%), S4 (10%), and S6 (5%).

Sample responses were given by the students that used suggestory formulae strategy;

- Guys, how about lend me your notes? (S3)
- How about lend me a pen? I had lost it. (S4)
- I was learning. I just allow you to turn a little your music. (S6)

From the sample responses above revealed that in suggestory formulae the students used suggestion question, i.e., 'How about...' in the beginning of the utterances. It in line with Blum-Kulka, House and Kaspers (1989, p. 18) as cited by Aribi's (2012, p. 99) and Hong's (1999, p. 80) study in which stated that suggestory formulae strategy is the kind of request strategy in which the utterances contain of suggestion and 'use 'formulae' to turn the request into a suggestion' for the requestee to do something as the requester wish.

The last request strategies were performed by the students are strong hints and mild hints that fall under non-conventionally indirect strategies. The common patterns of the use these strategies are: strong hints (2.5%) and mild hints (0.8%). Both of strong hints and mild hints appeared in S5.

Sample responses were given by the students in performing request which is using the Strong hints (08) and Mild hints (09) strategies in the situation five;

- Please, your phone to be silent. Don't be noise! (08) (S5)
- Be quite, please! (09) (S5)

Based on the sample of the respondents' responses in DCT, the use of strong hints was performed by the respondents to show more polite behavior. However, to be understood by the addressee the respondents conveyed request by using reference. Meanwhile, in mild hints the respondents showed the response (e.g. 'Be quite, please!'). From the sample response mentioned can be seen that there was no reference accompanied this utterance, but this utterance could be understood by the addressee as a request to turn of the mobile phone which was ringing.

Politeness Strategies Expression as Performed by Students' Respond in Requesting

Based on the students' request strategies that were performed when requesting, the writer found out that the students performed four kinds of politeness strategies. It can be seen from the result of categorizing students' request strategies into the kinds of politeness strategies based on the theories of Brown and Levinson (1987) and the use of some sub-strategies politeness that fall under four super politeness strategies.

Table 3
Percentage of Politeness Strategies and Sub-Politeness Strategies
were given by the Students in Requesting

| No. | Politeness Strategy | Total | |
|------|-------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| | | F | % |
| 1 | Bald on record | 22 | 18.7 |
| | Total | 22 | 18.7 |
| 2 | Positive Politeness | | |
| 2.13 | Give (or ask for) reasons) | 8 | 6.8 |
| 2.14 | Assume or assert reciprocity) | 1 | 0.8 |
| | Total | 9 | 7.6 |
| 3 | Negative Politeness | | |
| 3.1 | Be conventionally | 55 | 46.6 |
| 3.4 | Minimize the imposition | 4 | 3.4 |
| 3.6 | Apology | 24 | 20.3 |
| | Total | 83 | 70.3 |
| 4 | Off-record | | |
| 4.1 | Give hints | 4 | 3.4 |
| | Total | 4 | 3.4 |

The findings in table 3 revealed that negative politeness laid on higher level than the other strategies. The data showed that negative politeness (70.3%), bald-on record (18.7%), positive politeness (7.6%), and off-record (3.4%).

Bald on-record politeness strategy

Bald-on record strategy clarified that the speaker conveyed the utterances directly, and then the speaker does not endeavor to minimize threats to the hearer's face. On direct strategies Blum-Kulka and Olshain (1984, p. 201) argued that direct strategies consist of requests strategies in which the speaker conveying a request clearly, directly and meaningful. The both of bald-on record and direct strategies emphasize on direct utterances and imperative formulae. In this study, the used of bald-on record could be seen on the use of mood derivable of request strategy. It showed on S3, S5, and S6.

Sample responses given by the respondents of bald-on record strategy in mood derivable request strategy.

S3: Guys, please lend me your lecture notes! (01)

S5: For the freshness during the class, please turn off your mobile phone! (01)

From the example responses were given by the respondents above showed that the used of imperative formulae accompanied mood derivable strategies. However, as can be seen in sample responses give by the respondents, they use 'please' formula as polite mark. It supported by Alfattah and Revindranath, (2009, p. 260), to soften the threats in requesting the respondents used the formula 'please' either at the beginning or at the end of utterances. The aim was making the utterances more polite and maintaining good relationship between the interlocutors.

Positive politeness strategy

Positive politeness strategy is the strategy in which the speaker satisfied the hearer's face. Based on the theory of Brown and Levinson (1987, pp. 103-129), positive politeness strategy is classified into fifteen sub-category. Two sub-politeness strategies; (13) *give (or ask for) reasons*, and (14) *assume or assert reciprocity*. were found in students' respond. In request strategies, those sub-politeness strategies relevant with the use of hedged performative and suggestory formulae of request strategies.

Sample the students' respond of the used (13) *give (or ask for) reasons*; and (14) *assume or assert reciprocity* in performing requesting.

(13) Give (or ask for) reasons

S1 Excuse me, Sir. I would like to borrow your book. *I need it for do my assignment.*(03), 2.13 (Give (or ask for) reasons)

S2 Excuse me, Sir. I would like to exchange the date of midterm test. *Because, the date of the test is the same as my brother's wedding.* (03), 2.13 (Give (or ask for) reasons)

(14) Assume or assert reciprocity

S3 Guys, how about lend me your notes? For the retribution **I'll** treat you a bowl of meatball **if** you lend me your notes. 06, 2.14 (Assume or assert reciprocity)

The interpretation of the data above was explained that based on the similarity of the use sub-category positive politeness. First, the used of (13) *give (or ask for) reasons*. In this strategy the speaker hopefully to be helped by the hearer, thus the speaker accompanied reasonable utterances to get the hearer's respect in conveying requesting. Second, the used of (14) *assume or assert reciprocity*. This strategy is marked by obligations obtaining between the speaker and the hearer. For instance, 'I'll do X for you if you do Y for me' (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 129). In this study, the equal formula was showed of the students' respond in S3, i.e., '*I'll* treat you a bowl of meatball *if* you lend me your notes'. In this students' respond, the speaker attempt to redress the threats of the hearer's face by using obligations obtaining.

Negative politeness strategy

Negative politeness strategy is the strategy in which the speaker attempts to save the hearer face. Brown and Levinson (1987, pp. 129-211) divided politeness strategy into ten sub-category. In this study, the researcher found three sub-category used by the students' in performing request to soften their utterances, i.e., (1) *be conventionally*, (3) *apologize*, and (4) *minimize the imposition*. In request strategy, negative politeness strategy tends to conventionally indirect request strategy. It was proved by the result of students' respond that in expressing query preparatory, the respondents performed negative politeness including the three sub-categories negative politeness strategy.

In negative politeness strategy most familiar used was conventionally type. In this strategy the utterances be an indirect request in which a question accord to the hearer's ability in applying speaker's request (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 133). In addition, followed by apologize sub-category usage in requesting. In this study was found out that apologize sub-category in requesting was marked by the formula expression apologizing. For instance, by using formula '*sorry, I'm sorry, pardon me, and sorry to bother you*'. These formula have similarity with the formula which is used by Brown and Levinson (1987, pp. 188-189) in expressing unwillingness to do the threats in requesting. The last sub-category was used by the respondents in requesting is minimizing the imposition. According to Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 177) this strategy use expression like '*a little, a bit, a tiny little bit*'. In this study the researcher found out the respondents' respond use those expressions in their request.

Off-record politeness strategy

Off-record politeness strategy clarified that utterances are performed more indirectly. The fact showed that simply 3.4% of utterances used this strategy. In line with the result study of Alfattah and Revindranath (2009, 261), the researchers found out that off record strategy is rarely employed by the respondents in requesting, and they found out simply two subjects used this strategy. The use of hint is one of the sub-categories in off-record strategy. In request strategy, hints fall under non-conventionally indirect request including strong hints and mild hints.

In this study, give hints was found out as one sub-category of off-record politeness strategy performed by the respondents in requesting. In this type, the utterances said not explicitly relevant from what was the speaker's wish. The speaker tends to invite the hearer to search the interpretations of the possible relevant (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 213).

Sample the students' respond of the used (1) *give hints* in performing requesting of off-record politeness strategy.

- Please, your phone to be silent. Don't be noise! (08) (S5)
- Be quite, please! (09) (S5)

From the sample responses above revealed that the speaker conveyed the utterances not explicitly relevant with the context situation. In this situation, the speaker talked indirect speech and intended to be understood by the hearer (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 211). The result of off-record strategy in this study in contrast with the study of Blum-Kulka (1987) as cited by Reiter (2000, p. 29), in which off-record politeness strategy reached superior level of politeness in Israeli society, since off-record strategy is claimed more polite than negative politeness strategy. Thus, this strategy could be applied to decrease the imposition in requesting.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The overall results and discussions revealed that the four super politeness strategies – bald-on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record- are performed by the students when requesting. The most frequently of politeness strategies are performed by the students is negative politeness strategies. It is because the students attempt to be polite and to interlace good relationship among the interlocutor, particularly in classroom interaction. Generally, the results of this presents study in line with some previous studies were conducted by several researchers. The use of negative politeness strategy preferred was performed by the students in requesting. It meant that the students endeavor to minimize the imposition to the interlocutors, particularly in requesting. This performance most frequently appeared when the requester in lower status than the requestee.

Implications for Language Teaching

The results of this study will give some implications for English language teaching. It can be useful either for the teachers in teaching expression requesting or the sociolinguistic lecturers in teaching politeness in speech act of request. The teachers/lecturers can use the example of the students' request and how to express request in polite and not polite ways. From the findings students' request, the teacher could adapt how to perform variation requests based on nine-point scale request strategies in teaching expression request. Furthermore, it also useful as resources in teaching sociolinguistic to comprehend polite speech acts. In addition, the results of this study useful for the students' communicative competence.

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