

Politeness Strategies used by the First Semester EFL Students in Online Classroom Interaction at UNISMUH Makassar

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Abstract

This research highlights the politeness strategies used by the first semester EFL students in online classroom interaction at UNISMUH Makassar. The objectives of this research were: (1) find out the types of politeness strategies used by the first semester EFL students in online classroom interaction (2) examine the reasons why the first semester EFL students use politeness strategies in online classroom interaction (3) explore the lecturers' perception about the politeness strategies used by the first semester EFL students in online classroom interaction. This research used descriptive-qualitative method. The subject of the research consisted of three classes in the first semester English Education Department at UNISMUH Makassar. The data were collected by using observation checklist, audio recorder and interview guides. The result of this research revealed that (1) there were four politeness strategies used by the first semester EFL students in online classroom interaction at UNISMUH Makassar, they were bald on record strategy, positive politeness strategy, and negative politeness strategy and off record politeness strategy. From a total of 220 utterances, the most frequently used strategy was bald on record politeness strategy (109 times), positive politeness strategy (43 times), negative politeness strategy (65 times) and off record (3 times), (2) the reasons why students used politeness strategy were to make comfortable communication, create harmony, mutual respect, make the class calm and peaceful, and build intimacy and solidarity to avoid disputes and misunderstandings, (3) In lecturers' perceptions, in order to be polite in online classroom interaction, the first semester EFL students used greeting, saying farewell, apologizing, permission, give deference and good cooperation in class. The lecturers highly appreciate and have a good perspective on the politeness strategies used by the EFL students in online classroom interactions.

Keywords: *Politeness Strategy, EFL classroom interaction, Lecturers' Perception.*

INTRODUCTION

Language is an effective communication tool to deliver ideas, thoughts, intentions and aim to others. In addition, we can use language as direct and indirect communication tool because basically, language is an expression. Everyone can recognize, understand each other, convey the meaning and let others know what the speaker said through communication.

Brown and Levinson (1987) stated that classroom interaction is the communication between teacher and students in the classroom. Students in the class often speak spontaneously using the language they use to their friend. It is also carried over into the learning process.

Along with the times, students consider lecturer as friends, they are free to speak and less of attention in speaking ethic to the lecturer. Some people suppose it is reasonable as long as they know their limits. However, there are also those who prohibit or consider that it is impolite, on the grounds that it can ruin the image of the lecturer. Lecturer and student need strategies that can manage good communication between them to create the effective classroom and studies have found important function of class interaction as strategies to achieve better English teaching in EFL classroom interactions (Mahmud, 2019).

This research will be conducted on students at the university level and focus to find the politeness strategies used by students first semester in learning English as Foreign Language online classroom interaction. Because, according to the researcher students face new things and new environment, they have just been separated from their status as students in school to a higher level or university students. As we know that all learning activities are carried out online, starting from elementary school to university level. Student interaction in online learning may be slightly different from offline learning or face-to-face learning. The researcher will take the topic of politeness strategies that students use at the university level in online class interactions. Therefore, it is important to find politeness strategies, especially for English students in college. So, the researcher is interested in conducting a study on title “Politeness Strategies used by the EFL Students in Online Classroom Interaction at UNISMUH Makassar”.

Based on the background and research question formulation above, the researcher formulated three questions in this study as follows:

1. What types of politeness strategies are used by the first semester EFL students in online classroom interaction at UNISMUH Makassar?
2. Why do the first semester EFL students of UNISMUH Makassar use politeness strategies in online classroom interaction?
3. How do the lecturers perceive on politeness strategies used by the first semester EFL students in online classroom interaction at UNISMUH Makassar?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Politeness is not just saying “please” “sorry” and “thank you”. However, politeness has a broad meaning. Linguistically, politeness means the speech expressed by the speaker in the right place and at the right time to the listener so that there is an effective interaction between them (Rahma, 2020). In carrying out conversations, people are advised to maintain communication with caution in using words, so they must know politeness strategies so that communication can be accepted by others.

Politeness refers to a human's ability in social interactions that are conditioned by the socio-cultural norms of a particular society and expressed through communication. Politeness theory used to save the listener's face from the consequences of face-threatening actions (FTA). FTA is an action that occurs in everyday interactions that makes someone lose face and this action challenges the wishes of the other person's face. In all cultures, people have an awareness of self-image or face when communicating. Protecting the face is important of communicating, even if it is not done consciously by the speaker.

Khusnia (2017) in her journal entitled “Politeness Strategies in EFL Classroom: Building Positive Values in Students”. The purpose of her study is to investigate politeness strategies used by students and teacher in EFL classroom, and good values effect applied in EFL. The findings of her study were the students applied kinds of politeness strategies namely positive politeness, negative politeness and bald on record strategies. Positive politeness strategies bring about positive values in EFL such as the utterances by the students positive in giving opinion, they avoidance of showing disagreement direct expression, students’ new perspective on changing instruction to awareness. Mahmud (2019) this study aims to explore the politeness strategies of English students at one of the universities in Makassar. Her research finding was 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. There were also some terms derived from students’ vernacular language which were used for their presentation and the expressions were categorized as positive and negative politeness. Khaerunnisa (2020) The purpose of her research is to explore the types of politeness strategies used by teachers and how students perceive politeness strategies used by teachers. The results reveal that teachers use four types of politeness strategies where the most frequently used by teachers is positive politeness which includes seven strategies, bald-on-record and off-record includes four strategies and negative politeness one strategy used. While students' perceptions of politeness strategies used by lecturers are to be polite and respectful in class between lecturers and students and avoid disturbing behavior. All previous studies explored the use of politeness strategy in the classroom context. They examined the politeness strategies used by teachers and students based on Brown and Levinson’s theory.

METHOD

This research used descriptive qualitative method. This method intended to describe everything related to the topic of the research. The researcher taken all class first semester in UNISMUH Makassar of English Department 2021/2022. The final subject of this research was the first semester EFL students which consisted three classes. Honestly, the subject design were four classes but due to some problems there were only three classes. From four classes, one class was frequently observed by researchers because several other classes have the same schedule and there were only a few lecturers willing to give permission to the researcher in observed or attended classes. Meanwhile, there were 45 students and 4 EFL lecturers as the subjects of this research. Researcher chose first semester students as samples because students face new things and new environment, they are still not contaminated with the campus world it also called as freshman. Researcher was interviewing students who used politeness strategies in online classroom interaction and lecturer who taught in the class. The researcher used four instruments, including audio recording, observation checklist, documents and interview to collect the data. According to Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) describes the process of analyzing qualitative research data consist of data collection, data condensation, data display, drawing and verifying the conclusion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Politeness strategy based on the theory of Brown and Levinson (1987) and there were four types of politeness strategies found in students' speech. The researcher found four strategies in fifteen meetings used by students in online classroom interactions such in zoom, google meet and WhatsApp group, namely Bald on record, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness and Off record.

Table 1. Politeness Strategy

No	Politeness Strategies	Types Politeness Strategies	Frequency		Total
			Zoom/ google meet	Whats App group	
1.	Bald on record	Welcoming	26	44	70
		Maximum efficiency	6	-	6
		Metaphorical urgency for emphasis	10	2	12
		Power different between speaker and hearer	9	-	9
		Permission that hearer has requested	1	-	1
		Offer	4	4	8
		Farewells	3	-	3
2.	Positive Politeness	Notice or attend to hearer	8	-	8
		Use in-group identity markers	3	-	3
		Seek agreement	19	5	24
		Avoid disagreement	1	-	1
		Joke	1	2	3
		Offer, promise	2	-	2
		Be optimistic	2	-	2
3.	Negative Politeness	Be conventionally indirect	6	-	6
		Be pessimistic	13	-	13
		Give deference	15	5	20
		Apologize	15	11	26
4.	Off record	Use Contradiction	3	-	3
Total			147	73	220

There were 220 utterances used by the students in online classroom interaction. Bald on record strategy used 109 times utterances consisted of 59 from zoom and google meet and 50 from WhatsApp group with seven types strategies. Positive politeness strategy used 43 times consisted of 36 via zoom and google meet and 7 from WhatsApp group with seven types strategies. Negative politeness strategy used 65 times utterances consisted of 49 from zoom and google meet and 16 from WhatsApp group. And the last, off record strategy used 3 times utterances from zoom with one type strategy.

The interaction often occurs between lecturer and students rather than students and students because in online learning, most lecturers talk and interact with students. However, students also

interact with their friends only during presentations and discussions. Politeness strategies used by students to lecturers were not same as those used to other students because, lecturers prefer in positive and negative politeness strategy and students in bald on record strategy and off record is rarely used by students.

The most frequently used politeness strategy by students was the bald on record strategy. According to Brown & Levinson (1987) Bald on-record strategy is used by speakers when they want to convey messages or information to listeners frankly without any effort to reduce the FTA to the interlocutor, the speech is direct, clear and concise. The use of bald on record strategy is reflected when students answer the greeting from the lecturer, they welcome the lecturer well. The findings of this study were in line with the theory expressed by Brown & Levinson. As the researcher wrote in the previous chapter that there are four types of politeness strategies commonly used in classroom interaction: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record. In fact, this study also found these four types of politeness strategies in EFL students' online classroom interactions. In other words, this research strengthens the existing theory, especially the theory proposed by Brown & Levinson. However, this study showed the most often used strategy in online classroom interaction whereas the theory did not mention in detail about it.

Dealing with the related previous studies, this research reveals similar findings. Research conducted by Rahma (2021) found four types of strategies used by teachers and students, where bald on record became the most dominant used strategy. Meanwhile, research conducted by Khaerunnisa (2020) found four types of strategies used by teacher, and the most dominant was positive politeness. However, there were variations when compared to research conducted by Khusnia (2017) and Fitriani & Anriyanti (2020) which found three types of politeness strategies, namely Bald on record, Positive and Negative Politeness. These two studies did not find off record strategy. The difference between the results of the research above and this study in terms of samples and the frequency of meetings, the average sample used by other researchers was students and teachers, while this study used a sample of university students in a higher education. In terms of the frequency of meetings, the previous study only had four meetings while in this study it had fifteen meetings although all the four types of politeness strategies did not always occur in every meeting. The most visible difference took place in classroom interaction mode. This study was conducted in online classroom interactions while previous researchers conducted research in offline classroom interactions, where the interactions usually occur more in offline classes than online classes. Thus, this study showed similarities with previous studies in terms of the types of politeness used by students and teachers in classroom interactions, there were four politeness strategies found. However, this study also showed a novelty that was not found in previous studies.

The study also revealed a number of reasons why the university students used politeness strategies in online classroom interaction. First, the students stated that good speech will make good communication and effective interaction. Good speech means the delivery of expressions is stated clearly but not frankly without exaggerating or reducing the meaning. This is in line with Brown and Levison's (1987) that the purpose of bald on record strategy is to convey the intention openly and not to exaggerate or reduce what is to be conveyed. Second, by using a politeness strategy, students can respect each other's opinions both to lecturers and friends, that they should apologize to the lecturer when they make a mistake or want to convey something to

the lecturer because it is ethics and courtesy, the lecturer will feel appreciated. This finding is also in line with Brown and Levinson's (1987) that the aim of negative politeness strategies is to show respects, apologize and minimize interference with each other. Third, the interactions should be well maintained. Since the classroom is occupied by different kinds of characters, then everyone is necessary to act wisely by using good language and polite expression. Fourth, politeness strategies used in the classroom can make people build intimacy and solidarity to avoid disputes and misunderstandings. This is in line with Brown and Levinson's (1987) that the purpose of positive politeness strategies is to save the listener's positive face by expressing intimacy and establishing friendship. Fifth, politeness in classroom interaction is an attitude that must be possessed by someone in order to establish good cooperation with others. Sixth, politeness strategies are used to make students respect each other's opinions and avoid understatement. This is in line with Brown and Levinson (1987) who states that off record uses indirect language and involves violating conversational norms to imply certain actions such as when someone doesn't really like his friend's work and he says "good enough" instead of saying "I don't like it". This reflects that he appreciates his friend and does not understate his friend. The last, the use of politeness strategies in the classroom is important to maintain unity, create harmony, and make the class comfortable, calm and peaceful. This idea is related to Brown and Levinson's (1987) that politeness strategy functions to ensure smooth and harmonious communication and effective interaction.

Based on the findings of the research, the researcher explained the lecturers' perceptions about the politeness strategies used by the first semester EFL students in online classroom interaction. First, students used type of bald on record strategy, namely welcoming. This can be seen when students answer the lecturer's greeting politely. Second, when asking questions to the lecturer, students will say excuse me and ask permission first before asking and they use negative politeness strategies, namely apologize and give deference. Third, students used positive politeness strategies when they show good cooperation in class and avoid conflict. Fourth, the student used off record strategy used contradictions when the students answered the lecturer's question by saying two words that contradict each other and made it appear that he cannot tell the truth. There were four types of strategies used by students based on the opinion of the lecturer, namely bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness and off record. This was in line with Brown and Levinson (1987) theory about there are four types of politeness strategies they are; bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness and off record.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings and discussion of the findings in the previous chapter, the researcher concluded that (1) the EFL students used four politeness strategies in online classroom interaction. They were bald on record strategy, positive politeness strategy, negative politeness strategy and off record politeness strategy. Among the four strategies, bald on record was the most frequently used strategy whereas off record was the most rarely used one. (2) The EFL students argued that they used politeness strategies in online classroom interaction because the strategies can make comfortable communication, mutual respect and effective interactions between lecturer and friends. Besides, using politeness strategies in the classroom made them build intimacy and solidarity with lecturer and friends to avoid disputes and misunderstandings, create harmony, make the class comfortable, calm and peaceful. (3) The lecturers positively

perceived and highly appreciated the politeness strategies used by the EFL students in online classroom interaction. To their lecturers, they applied politeness strategies which consist of greeting, farewell expression, apologizing, permission, giving deference, using contradiction and good cooperation in the class.

From the analysis about the politeness strategies, the researcher proposed some suggestions. First, the lecturers are expected to be able to motivate and make students more active to build more effective interactions. In addition, lecturers are expected to apply politeness strategies in the classroom as the model for students. Second, the students are necessary to be able apply politeness strategies anywhere, anytime and with everyone, especially in online classroom interactions. Besides having the ability to distinguish the types of politeness strategies, they are also expected to be active and work together in class, build mutual respect and solidarity and keep their words when talking to their lecturers and friends. Third, the next researchers interested to conduct similar research may focus their study on the use of politeness strategies in other forms of literature such as poetry, drama and talk shows in order to enrich discourse studies.

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