

The Students' Strategies in Online Learning Interaction: Exploring Politeness in Zoom Class during Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Studies of teacher-students politeness are presented mostly in direct communication or face-to-face communication. Filling the gap of politeness between teacher and students in online learning is the aim of this study, specifically in one of the very popular educational platforms applied during the Covid-19 pandemic. The platform is Zoom Class. This study applies qualitative research method to describe the phenomenon of the language. This study observed the interaction of 7 Zoom classes of English Department students from September to November 2021. The researchers did the analysis on students' interaction with their lecturer based on the theory of politeness stated by Brown and Levinson. It is found that there are five strategies which 3 of them belong to positive politeness strategies, namely greeting, gratitude, and address term, then negative politeness strategies namely apology and mixing language. Gratitude is dominantly applied by students with the utterances "thank you" to minimize the threat and maintain the relationship between them. These politeness strategies also used to ensure the effectiveness of online learning interaction as it increases students' language competence. However, the problem also faced by students and lecturer during the learning process by online learning. Fortunately, the problem could be solved. Thus, this finding contributes to enrich the aspects of politeness interaction in Zoom class and provide future researchers to explore politeness in other context.

Keywords: Politeness strategies, Online learning, Zoom class, Positive politeness, Negative politeness

INTRODUCTION

People are interacting one another. It shows that people can not live alone. As Aristoteles in Astuti (2017:1) proposed that as human being called as social being, he needs other to interact to fulfil his needs. Interaction means connecting people. People share ideas, feelings and desires by language. Language plays the significant role in interaction. To use language politely means to

help interaction running well. In short, politeness is necessary for social purposes to help people to interact well (Sapitri et al., 2020).

Social interactions can be seen in classroom interaction where teacher and students interact each other to run the process of teaching and learning. By classroom interaction, students are involved to help them to improve their language ability (Consolo, 2006). Teacher guides students to complete the tasks especially in linguistic problems. Thus, students are helped to increase their competence in language, (Thoms, 2012). This is supported by Seedhouse & Jenks (2015) that proposed in language classroom, the aspects of language are learnt and taught.

As the language uses in interaction among people generally and between teacher and students in the class specifically, the language use should be used politely. Brown and Levinson (1987) stated that politeness is used to save the face. Face is the image that should be maintained both speaker and hearer. For the reason, speaker and hearer must formulate the words as polite as possible. Formulating words politely is called politeness strategies. Politeness can also be seen through the way of behaving and clothing, stated by Sibarani in Elita & Srisofian (2019). It is useless to formulate words as polite as possible if your behaving and clothing created the Face Threatening Acts (FTA). An FTA is the act that can damage the relationship between speaker and hearer.

Study of politeness strategies have been proposed by some researchers. Yassi in Novalia et al., (2020) stated politeness strategies are used to avoid conflicts between among people. It means, politeness strategies are powerful to maintain the harmonious relationship. Power (P) which refers to social status, Distance (D) which refers to the level of closeness of the speech participants, and Kinship (K) which refers to the level of kinship. Those are the three social variables that influence the use of politeness strategies presented in this study.

In addition, the use of softening words could save the face both speaker and hearer. The softening words apply the honorifics such Mr, Mrs, Miss, Sir, Dr., etc. The use of these honorific is believed softening your words that can maintain the hearer's face.

Politeness as one such ideology is seen as such a fixed and shared system. Furthermore, as both politeness and ideologies are associated with cultures. Cultures become groups of basically like-minded people (The ideology of culture). Politeness is the term used to describe the extent to which actions, such the way we say something. According to Brown and Levinson (1987 : 1) politeness means acting so as to take account of the feelings of others and includes both with positive face (the wish to be approved) and negative face (the wish to be unimpeded, free from imposition of left alone. A further assumption, Brown and Levinson's theory (1987) is that face is constantly at risk, since any kind of linguistic action termed a face threatening acts need to be counterbalanced by appropriate doses of politeness. In this case politeness can be understood as a basis to the production of social order and recondition of interaction. And it is the most influential theory of linguistics politeness "face saving theory".

Furthermore, Brown and Levinson (1987) identifies the three elements to be considered in doing this face threatening acts, the social distance (D) of the speaker and addressee, the relative power (P) between them and the absolute ranking of imposition (R) in particular culture.

As politeness strategy is a way to convey the utterances as polite as possible, Brown and Levinson (1987) formulates strategies of politeness which can be realized into 25 politeness strategies. The strategies are classified into two categories. They are positive and negative politeness. Positive politeness strategy is a strategy of speaking which is used a kind of

metaphorical extension of intimacy to imply common ground or sharing of wants to a limited extent even between strangers who perceive themselves: for the purpose of interaction. Negative Politeness Strategy is a kind of strategy which redressive action addressed to the addressee's negative face: his want to have his freedom of action unobstructed and his attention unrestricted".

There are fifteen strategies of positive politeness by Brown and Levinson, such as: (1) Notice, attend to hearer (his interests, wants, needs, goods). Speaker should take notice of aspects of hearer's condition (noticeable changes, remarkable possessions, anything which looks as though hearer would want S notice and approve of it). (2) Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with hearer). This is often done with exaggerate intonation, stress, and other aspects of prosodic, as well as with intensifying modifiers. (3) Intensify, interest to hearer. Another way for speaker to communicate with hearer that speaker wants to intensify his/her interest to the conversation by 'making a good story'. The use of directly quoted speech rather than indirect reported speech is another feature of this strategy, as the use of tag questions or expressions that draw hearer as a participant into the conversation. (4) Use in-group identity markers. Speaker can implicitly claim the common ground with hearer that is carried by that definition of the group, including in group usages of address of address forms, of language or dialect, jargon, slang, and ellipsis. (5) Seek agreement. In this strategy, there are two ways to seek agreement, such as safe topics and repetition. "Safe topics" are used when speaker stresses his agreement with hearer and therefore to satisfy hearer's desire to be right", or to be corroborated in his opinions, for example talking about the weather, or the beauty of a garden. Besides, agreement may also be stressed by repeating part of what proceedings speaker has said, in a conversation and by using particles that function to indicate emphatic agreement. (6) Avoid disagreement. Speaker may do a white lie in order to hide disagreement, by doing this, speaker will not damage hearer's positive face. (7) Presuppose/ raise/ assert common ground. Speaker talks with hearer for awhile about unrelated topic to show that speaker is interested in hearer and indicate that speaker has not come to see hearer imply to do the FTA). This strategy is used for softening request. (8) Joke. Joking is a basic positive politeness technique, for putting hearer 'at ease' or it may minimize an FTA of requesting. (9) Assert or presuppose speaker's knowledge of and concern for hearer's wants. It is used to imply knowledge of hearer's wants and willingness to fit one's own in with them. (10) Offer, promise. Offer and promises are the natural outcome of choosing this strategy; even if they are false, they demonstrate speaker's good intentions in satisfying hearer's positive face wants. (11) Be optimistic. The speaker is very optimistic that the hearer will not mind to do the dishes that tonight. (12) Include both speaker and hearer in the activity. Speaker tends to use 'we' form when speaker really means 'you' or 'me', s/he can call upon the cooperative assumptions and thereby redress FTAs. (13) Give (or ask for) reason. In this strategy, speaker gives reasons as to why s/he wants. Hearer is led to see the reasonableness of speaker's FTA (or so speaker hopes). (14) Assume or assert reciprocity. Speaker asks cooperate with him/her by giving evidence of reciprocal rights or obligations between speaker and hearer. Thus, speaker may say, "I'll do X if you do Y for me" or "I did X for you last week, so you do Y for me this week" (vice versa). By pointing to the reciprocal right (or habit) of doing FTAs to each other, speaker may

soften his/her FTA by negating the debt aspect and/or the face-threatening aspect acts such as criticisms and complaints. (15) Give gifts to hearer (goods' sympathy, understanding, cooperation). May satisfy hearer's positive-face want (that speaker wants hearer's wants, to some degree) by actually satisfying some of hearer's wants by some actions like gift-giving not only tangible gift, but human-relations wants such as the wants to be liked, admired, cared about, understood, listened to, and so on.

While negative politeness consists of ten strategies, such as: (1) Be conventionally indirect. The speaker tries to be indirect so there can be no misinterpretation of what he means. In this case, the speaker uses understandable indirect speech acts. (2) Question hedge. It is used to modify the force of speech acts. (3) Be pessimistic. It gives redress to hearer's negative face by explicitly expressing doubt that the conditions for the appropriateness of speaker's speech act to obtain. It may be realized by doing indirect requests with assertions of felicity conditions which have had a negated probability operator inserted. (4) Minimize the imposition. Speaker redresses the seriousness of the FTA to pay hearer deference. (5) Give deference. There are two sides to the coin in the realization of the deference: one in which speaker humbles and abases himself and another where speaker raises hearer (pays him positive face of a particular kind, namely that which satisfies hearer's want to be treated as superior). (6) Apologize. By apologizing for doing an FTA, the speaker can indicate his reluctance to impinge of H's negative face and thereby partially redress that impingement. (7) Impersonalize speaker and hearer. Speaker doesn't want to impinge on hearer is to phrase the FTA as if the agent were other than speaker, or at least possibly not speaker or not speaker alone, and the redressee were other than hearer, or only inclusively of hearer. This result is in a variety of ways of avoiding the pronouns 'I' and 'you'. (8) State the FTA as a general rule. Speaker doesn't want to impinge but is merely forced to by circumstances, is to state the FTA as an instance of some general social rule, regulation, or obligation. So, we get pronoun avoidance. (9) Nominalize. It shows formality which is associated with the noun end of the continuum. (10) Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebted hearer. Speaker can redress an FTA by explicitly claiming his indebtedness to hearer, or by disclaiming any indebtedness of hearer.

As it is said before, that politeness is clearly seen in interaction, especially the interaction between teacher and student in the classroom. Classroom interaction shows the use of politeness as it helps students to increase their language ability. All the time, teacher and students are interacting face to face. It lets and guides students to improve the language competence. Some studies proved the use of politeness in teacher and students' interaction could maintain the harmonious relationship. Communication between teacher and students in the class not only for transferring knowledge but also for creating a comfortable atmosphere that can create solidarity and cooperation. Thus, the expression such as greetings, gratitude and apology are the politeness strategies used in communication between teacher and students (Astuti 2017; Andi, 2018; Widana, 2018; Mahmud, 2019). More, the existing of applying the four types of politeness strategies which is positive politeness strategies dominantly used could create the effective interaction between teacher and students (Nurmawati, Atmowardono & Weda (2019); Nugrahanto & Hartono (2019); Rahayuningsih (2019), Heriyawati, Siba & Sulistyoyo (2019);

Fitryani (2020), and Wijayanti, Wijayanto & Marmanto (2020). In addition, vernacular language applied by students to soften their language during class presentations' discussion (Yusuf & Anwar, 2019).

However, these last two years, due to the covid-19 pandemic, it has been changed the way of teacher and students interaction. The pandemic limits humans's face to face interaction. For the reason, online communication is preferred. Thus, interaction through online class which uses the tools are common in education today.

One of the tool or platform in online learning is zoom class. This platform is set up as the class itself even interaction between teacher and students done virtually. This tool lets teacher and students can see their face one another. It seems that thwy are in the class, but the different is they can not touch one another.

Studies related to the use of online learning platsforms such as Zoom Class has produced the effectiveness, even the ineffectiveness was also reported. The effectiveness of using the zoom class seems to the efficiency in material delivery between teacher and students (Chakraborty, Nandy, & Bhowmick, 2020; Shokarova, 2020; Paudel, 2020; Yasin, Maulida & Budiningsih, 2021; Kurnia, 2021). At the same time, the number studies of ineffectiveness of using zoom class was also proved. Dissatisfaction arised from students. lacking of internet data connction and network disconnection were being problems by teacher and students during the class created in zoom. For the reason, zoom class seems to create ineffectiveness in learning (Wasehudin & Anshori, 2021).

Zoom class as one of widely platforms used during the online learning creates different ways of interaction. As far as the researcher knows that studies about politeness strategies employed by students in Zoom Class interaction is still very limited studies. For the reason, the researcher tries to investigae the politeness in online learning context. Thus, significantly this study contributes to the field of politeness studies.

METHOD

The desciptive qualitative research is the method applied in this study as it can adequately describes the phenomena of the language in society. Having the natural setting as a direct source of data, and the researcher is the principal instrument are the characteristics of this qualitative research.

The data of this study is gained from transcription of recorded communication of 7 zoom classes which consisted of 137 students of English Department at Methodist University of Indonesia. The researcher used observing, recording and transcribing directly methods. First, researcher observed the activities of the students during learning process in zoom class interaction. Then, recorded the activities in zoom class interaction. At last, transcribed all those activities and words/sentences when students used politeness strategies during the classroom interaction in zoom class.

After taking all the data, then researcher identified the types of politeness strategies employed based on the theory of politeness by Brown and Levinson (1987).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The objectives of the study is to find out the politeness strategies by students during online learning activities in google classroom interaction. From the analysis of data taken from 7 zoom classes, utterances from 137 students are dominated by the positive politeness strategy to response their lecturer. The following table is describing the classroom interaction, utterances, and the politeness strategy portrayed by students during learning process in zoom class interaction.

Lecturer. “**Hi** everyone, how are you this beautiful morning?”

Student. “**Hi Mam**”, **Good Morning** Mam, Hello Mam.

Student. “**Good morning** Mam.

Student. “**Good morning** mam.

Student. “**Good morning** Mam, fine Mam, how about you Mam?”

Lecturer. “ I am fine, thank you dear. Last week...”

Extract 1

In transcription of responding to the class greeting can be identified that students responded their lecturer dominantly by saying “*Hi Mam, Good morning Mam*”. This way of greeting is commonly applied to great people. It shows that students respect their lecturer by replying their lecturer politely even by zoom class interaction.

Lecturer. “ I am happy to see you, I hope you are healthy dear. **Juan, Juan**...are you listening?”

Juan. “Yes Mam, sorry Mam, *tadi suara Mam gak dengar jelas mam. Sekarang sudah jelas mam.* (Yes mam, sorry mam, I could not hear your voice clearly Mam, sorry Mam.

Lecturer. “Yes ok dear, just want to tell you Juan, you are handsome, more handsome now, **rambutnya udah panjang, kayak cewek lah Juan ini.**

Student. “**cie.... Juan makin ganteng, makin jaya dia mam.**

Student. “**Naik kupingnya itu woi.**

Extract 2

In transcription extract 2, it can be found an obstacle related to the internet connection. By calling the student’s name Juan, Juan for twice and asking the student’s existence, then the student namely Juan answers his lecturer’s question by saying sorry for could not hear his lecturer’s voice due to the internet connection.

In addition, this extract also identifies the use mixing language. They use both English and Indonesia. Both lecturer and students use mixing language in their communication. This class is actually expected to use English as this is English Department students, but it can not be denied that mixing language is used to create good atmosphere between them. So, this is also a strategy not only by students but also but their lecturer to maintain their good relationship.

Lecturer. “Ok class, you were informed laste week that you have to divided into some devisions based on the era, 1970an, 1980an, 1990an, and 2020an. Aditia, have done it, did you do this instruction, anyway?”

Aditia. “ Yes Mam, I have done it”.

Lecturer. “ So, who are the lucky presenters, I mean who will be the first for presenting it, we are waiting for it.

Aditia. “ Wait ya Mam.....They are Liasna, Silvia, Ribka and Leony Mam.

Lecturer. “ Ok, Liasna, time is yours dear, are you listening?

Liasna. “ Yes Mam, **thank you** Mam, Good morning Mam, good morning friend...

Lecturer. “ great, good job dear Liasna....next, Silvia, are you ready dear? Time is yours. Lets unmute our voice.

Silvia. “ Yes Mam, I am listening, **thank you** Mam. Good morning Mam, good morning my friends....

Lecturer. “ Ok, nice, this is what I am waiting for. Thank you dear Silvia, you have brilliant idea, I think. Thank you some much.

Silvia. “ **Thank you** Mam, **thank you** some much mam.

Extract 3

The use of gratitude is frequently used by students to respond the class instruction given by their lecturer. It is expressed by saying “Thank you”, “Thank you very much” to respond their lecturer’s instruction. In addition, this extract shows the power had by lecturer in the class. students really believe that their lecturer has the very big power and right to determine everything in the class. Whatever the instruction is, students are ready to do it. It shows that lecturer has an authority to do responsibility as lecturer.

Lecturer. “ I have sent the quiz by WA group. I am waiting for your answer until 3 this afternoon. What do you think dear?

Student. “Ok **Mam**, thank you **Mam**

Student. “Sure **Mam**, thank you **Mam**

Student. “ Baik **Mam**, thank you **Mam**

Extract 4

This extract presents the use of address terms “Mam” which is frequently used by students in every response. This address term ‘Mam’ refers to female lecturer. It is faced to respected person. This way of communication automatically creates harmonious relationship between lecturer and students as students are saving their lecturer’s face in interaction.

Lecturer. “Shuba, Shuba, do you belong to this class?

Shuba. “ Yes Mam,

Lecturer. “ What happened to you dear? You havent score for TPMI class, but you have for literary research method?

Shuba. “ **I am sorry** mam, my connection was not stable, thats why I could not follow the mid test, but I texted you from WA Mam, **may I have additional class for mid Mam?**

Lecturer. “ O I see, we really not that. Yes ok, later by wa group you may text me again for having mid test. Ok

Shuba. Ok Mam, thank you some much Mam and **I am so sorry** for taking your time mam.

Extract 5

This extract can be identified the use of polite ways of communicating with her lecturer. Student namely Shuba realizes his mistake then she say sorry and so sorry for being mistake and for disturbing and taking her lecturer's time. It show the respect that can minimize the threat between them. Actually, lecturer is dissapointed by the student who had no score for the TPMI class, it can increase the threat, but the way of students to communicate it used politely. This shows the negative politeness strategies where students respect their lecturer by asking the permission first, " May I have additional class for mid test mam?". Thus, it succesfully minimizes the threat and maintains the relationship.

Discussions

From the extracts presented previously, it is identified the students applied **positive politeness strategy** by the utterance "**Thank you Mam**" in every comment to their lecturer's intruction. This is an appreciation of the students to their lecturer. From 7 zoom classes consists 137 students dominated positive politeness strategy. Compared to learning process in face to face interaction, this study supports the previous presented studies by (Nurmawati, Atmowardono & Weda (2019); Nugrahanto & Hartono (2019); Rahayuningsih (2019), Heriyawati, Siba & Sulisty (2019); Fitryani (2020), and Wijayanti, Wijayanto & Marmanto (2020) which proved the existing of applying the four types of politeness strategies which is positive politeness strategies dominantly used could create the effective interaction between teacher and students

In addition, in formal contexts apply the three variables of politeness, namely : Power (P) which refers to social status, Distance (D) which refers to the level of closeness of the speech participants, and Kinship (K) which refers to the level of kinship as stated by Yassi in Novalia et al., (2020). In the comments above, students used only two varibales, namely: Power (P) and Kinship (K). Students believed that their lecturer has a power to give any instruction to them. For every instruction given by lecturer is responded by agreeing and appreciating. Students believed lecturer's instruction must be followed. Here, the variable **Power (P)** is portrayed. While, the variable **Kinship (K)** is portrayed by the use of "**Mam**" to respect someone. Students respected their lecturer by saying Mam to call their lecturer.

More, the previous variable **Kinship (K)** supports the 'softening words' stated by J. Holmes in Olha & Nataliya (2020). By using honorifics, students save face and maintain the social distance between lecturer and students. The honorifics are such as Mr, Mrs, Miss, Sir, etc. From the comments above, it can be identified the softening word by the **honorific "Mam"** is similar to the variable **Kinship (K)**. Both **honorific** and **Kinship** maintained the face of both lecturer and students.

Negative politeness was also applied by student. The question arised to make sure to answer the lecturer's question related to the score of student who no score for the TPMI class. By the utterance "**Mam, May I have additional class for mid Mam?**" This strategy saves the face

threat as student asked the permission, want, and the ability of the lecturer first before rising the question. It proved that student really honored the lecturer.

The last but not the least, classroom interaction is believed helping students to develop their language ability. By classroom interaction, students are active asking and giving questions, comments, tasks or anything related to their learning. Those are helping students to improve their knowledge, (Consolo 2006). This study proves that students are helped to improve their language ability. As this study examines to students in classroom interaction during online learning, students are active to develop their language in zoom class interaction. The platform (zoom class) helps students to exercise themselves. It can be seen by the utterances uttered by all students in the class. They free to express themselves. In short, classroom interaction in zoom class during pandemic covid-19 increases the student's language development.

From the result presented previously, we come to the conclusion that online learning process during the pandemic covid-19 creates students with progress in developing language. Students applied the positive politeness strategy in the saving the face of lecturer, they increase their ability to be active in communication. In short, this tool of online learning creates the learning improvement on student's competence. Here, is language competence.

Lecturer and students communicate to develop their language competence. So, both learning processes, communicating directly (face to face communication) and communicating virtually (online learning process) are necessary to apply the politeness strategies. As the goal of learning process is to create the harmonious relationship between lecturer and students for achieving learning objectives.

Finding out the gap of effectiveness and ineffeciveness of using online learning platforms such as zoom class, this study presents the effectiveness of using online learning platforms such as zoom class. However, during he process of zoom class learning interaction, problem arised to stuck the learning process. Students faced the internet connection that sometimes obstructed the interaction. Unluckly, both lecturer and students really understand the situation of online learning process then tried to overcome it together. Thus, the effectiveness of using zoom class interaction during the covid-19 is really achieved.

In the lecturer—student interactions both face to face classroom interaction and online learning interaction in zoom class interaction present the exist of positive politeness strategies (i.e., greeting, gratitude, address term) and negative politeness strategies (i.e., apology and mixing language). The findings indicate the politeness strategies are necessary to increase the language development of students both in interactions (face to face and online learning interaction).

This study is presence to contribute to the field by filling the research gap how politeness strategies is employed in zoom class interaction since the research on politeness is still more room to explore after theory of politeness stated by Brown and Levinson (1987).

CONCLUSION

In the lecturer-student interactions both face to face classroom interaction and online learning interaction in zoom class interaction present the exist of positive politeness strategies (i.e., greeting, gratitude, address term) and negative politeness strategies (i.e.,apology and mixing language). The findings indicate the politeness strategies are necessary to increase the language development of students both in interactions (face to face and online learning interaction).

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