

Politeness Strategy Analysis of Speech Acts between Lecturer and Students in English Classroom

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ABSTRACT

This research examines linguistic politeness strategies within the context of English language instruction at Universitas Qamarul Huda Badaruddin Bagu. Politeness serves as a central focus within pragmatics, a specialized branch of linguistics. Specifically, this study concentrates on the interactions between students and lecturers during the instructional process. Employing a qualitative ethnographic approach, the study involved one lecturer and 30 students from the Cooperative Economics Department. Data were collected through non-participant classroom observations and semi-structured in-depth interviews. The findings showed that the application of Leech's six maxims within the classroom serves as a vital instrument for academic diplomacy. These include the Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim, and Sympathy Maxim. Each maxim functions complimentary to balance the rights and obligations of both lecturers and students. The implementation of these maxims successfully minimizes the perceived power distance between the lecturer and students, thereby fostering an equitable classroom atmosphere. Ultimately, this practice cultivates an academic culture rooted in mutual respect, productivity, and empathy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As homo socials entities, individuals are inherently required to internalize and apply the principles of communication ethics and mutual respect. Politeness plays a fundamental role in the dynamics of daily social interaction (Ribino, 2023). The explicit manifestation of polite demeanor enables individuals to gain social appreciation and acceptance within their existence as social beings. Based on this premise, the study of linguistic politeness becomes crucial to undertake. This research aims to identify and analyze the frequency and types of linguistic errors or deviations that occur in the process of interpersonal communication.

Within academic discourse, the terminologies English as an International Language (EIL), World Englishes (WE), and English as a Lingua-Franca (ELF) are often employed interchangeably. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize that these three conceptual frameworks are underpinned by distinct theoretical assumptions and possess unique areas of analytical focus (McKay, 2018). In this era, to assist students in developing into global citizens who are linguistically and inter-culturally competent that supported by pragmatics comprehension (Csillik, 2019). Some factors to increase the ability of English have become an essential skill such as linguistics and pedagogic (Haidar & Fang, 2019). Linguistic competence encompasses the ability to utilize both spoken and written language, while demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of structure and semantics (Coseriu, 1985). Pragmatic competence, on the other hand, involves the capacity to employ language appropriately within social contexts and various speaker backgrounds, where linguistic politeness stands as a pivotal aspect. Such politeness plays a crucial role in fostering effective interaction between lecturers and students within the learning environment.

In the context of English discourse, politeness principles are optimally realized when communication participants demonstrate meticulous attention to diction during verbal interactions. Conceptually, politeness is defined as a set of behavioral norms that are collectively and voluntarily internalized by a social group. Furthermore, politeness serves as an essential prerequisite for the implementation of acceptable social behavior (Fuad, 2020).

The theoretical framework of pragmatics as a communicative strategy to build social rapport was pioneered by Brown and Levinson (1987) and further developed by Leech (2014). In English language learning, proficiency in pragmatic principles is essential for maintaining seamless interpersonal interactions between faculty members and students. Schnell (2019) stated that pragmatics studies refer to speech context. Building on this, Ridwan et al. (2023) explained that pragmatic studies encompass various linguistic features bound by contextual elements, which include the speaker's social background, time, place, atmosphere, culture, and educational background.

In addition to achieving English proficiency, both lecturers and students are encouraged to utilize the language in a manner that is sensitive to social contexts. As English serves as a medium for communication, its use should adhere to linguistic accuracy and appropriateness without compromising the core meaning or fundamental principles of language. Consequently, this study emphasizes that English interactions must incorporate politeness principles as defined by pragmatics.

Previous research by Fitriyah et al. (2020) demonstrated that lecturers' politeness strategies can enhance student compliance and maintain a harmonious learning environment in EFL classrooms. However, that study did not fully examine the application of politeness within the student context or their diverse linguistic backgrounds. In contrast, the present research not only emphasizes the application of pragmatic principles but also considers the local values embedded in lecturer-student interactions. In the classroom, students hail from various regions, bringing with them their respective indigenous linguistic influences.

Furthermore, a study by Trang (2019) focused on analyzing politeness strategies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) email correspondence in Vietnam. The results indicated that local cultural values play a significant role in influencing the interpretation and implementation of politeness concepts within the realm of English language learning. These findings hold contextual relevance for Indonesia, given that both nations share fundamental similarities in their collectivist cultural paradigms. Subsequently, Mahmud (2018) conducted an empirical study on linguistic politeness applied within an EFL classroom setting at a higher education institution in Makassar. The study successfully identified a spectrum of politeness strategies employed by lecturers and analyzed their implications for student learning motivation. Specifically, the key findings revealed a significant

positive correlation between the adoption of politeness strategies by lecturers and a substantial increase in student participation in learning activities. Therefore, it is imperative to apply pragmatic politeness principles to ensure that standards of decorum for both lecturers and students are maintained (Sudrajat et al., 2022).

According to Alifa and Ramdhani (2023), lecturers employ a range of speech acts, specifically encompassing locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary dimensions. Regarding diverse conversational approaches, Kravchenko et al. (2022) posit that speakers may strategically employ indirect discourse, articulating utterances that deviate from their literal intent to convey implicit meanings and achieve specific communicative goals.

The implementation of polite speech acts within the context of classroom interaction is a fundamental aspect of the academic realm. Consequently, both educators and learners are required to internalize and uphold the principles of linguistic politeness when interacting in a classroom environment. Adherence to these principles serves as a prerequisite that ensures the fluidity, effectiveness, and continuity of academic communication, free from significant impediments. Given that communicative effectiveness in an academic setting is significantly influenced by the degree of compliance with politeness principles, this study aims to examine the manifestations of these principles in the interactions between lecturers and students within the classroom. Pragmatics investigations into classroom interaction analyze the diverse communication strategic linguistic nuances used by lecture and learner alike. The primary objective is to evaluate how meaning is co-constructed and how language is functionally adapted to meet the social and instructional demands of the educational setting, (Irawan et al., 2020). Effective second-language communication involves more than just linguistic accuracy; it demands the ability to navigate diverse social contexts. Consequently, pragmatic competence defined by the alignment of language use with social and cultural norms is essential for achieving communicative efficacy (Mansurovna, 2024). Beside that, Salih (2022) posits that pragmatic analysis is intrinsically linked to the situational context of an utterance. Given that language serves as a multifaceted communicative tool for conveying specific intent across diverse social spheres, Fitriya et al. (2021) further argue that communication extends beyond the mere fulfillment of the speaker's tasks or informational needs; it is fundamentally concerned with the preservation of social rapport between interlocutors. Consequently, effective communication strategies transcend the pursuit of absolute pragmatic clarity. Rather than strictly adhering to Grice's Cooperative Principle which mandates that utterances be exclusively informative, truthful, relevant, and perspicuous speakers must often balance these maxims with social considerations to maintain interpersonal harmony.

To comprehend the dynamics of communication between students and lecturers within the classroom, this research employs the politeness principles established by prominent linguistic scholars. The study of these principles provides comprehensive documentation regarding linguistic variations and language development. Furthermore, the successful interpretation of such interactions is inextricably linked to the context in which they occur, ensuring that the intended meaning and objectives are achieved.

One of the foundational theories utilized as an analytical framework in this study is the Politeness Principle proposed by Leech. According to Leech (1993), this principle is categorized into six interpersonal maxims: (1) the tact maxim, (2) the generosity maxim, (3) the approbation maxim, (4) the modesty maxim, (5) the agreement maxim, and (6) the sympathy maxim. Tarigan (1990) further contextualizes Leech's (1983) framework by translating these into specific Indonesian linguistic terms: *Maksim Kebijaksanaan* (Tact), *Maksim Kederawanan* (Generosity), *Maksim Penghargaan* (Approbation), *Maksim Kesederhanaan* (Modesty), *Maksim Pemufakatan* (Agreement), and *Maksim Simpati* (Sympathy). Despite these various approaches, a definitive consensus among linguists regarding the precise

definition of "politeness" remains elusive. Nevertheless, Leech's theory is regarded as a comprehensive lens through which to examine linguistic phenomena in social discourse.

2. METHODS

This study adopts an interpretive paradigm and employs a qualitative-ethnographic approach to examine linguistic politeness manifestations within the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom context in Lombok, Indonesia (Creswell, 2012). This methodological choice is justified by the need to explore how local cultural values shape the interpretation and implementation of linguistic politeness strategies in cross-cultural communication. The ethnographic approach is particularly appropriate as it enables in-depth exploration of the reciprocal influence between Lombok's Sasak cultural values and politeness practices in EFL instruction. This design allows for holistic understanding of how cultural context influences language use in educational settings, acknowledging that EFL instruction inevitably occurs at the intersection of target language norms and indigenous cultural frameworks.

Data were collected through non-participant classroom observations, allowing the researcher to capture naturally occurring interactions between lecturers and students without influencing the communication dynamics. This observation method was chosen to ensure the authenticity of the observed politeness phenomena while minimizing potential effects of observer presence on participant communication patterns. The non-participant stance enables objective documentation of linguistic behaviors as they unfold in real classroom contexts, providing access to genuine politeness strategies employed by both lecturers and students during instructional interactions.

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic approach, systematically organized according to the study's research questions. The analytical framework is structured around specific focal areas, each addressing distinct dimensions of linguistic politeness. The primary analytical focus (Focal Area 1) encompasses the analysis of politeness strategies, which involves three interrelated dimensions. First, systematic identification of politeness strategy patterns as manifested in classroom interactional discourse. Second, classification of identified strategies according to Leech's (2014) Politeness Maxims framework, which provides a theoretical lens for understanding politeness as a pragmatic phenomenon. Third, examination of face management practices employed by participants during verbal interactions, focusing on how lecturers and students navigate face-threatening acts and maintain social harmony in the classroom context.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The application of politeness principles within the context of English language pedagogy demonstrates a systematic and structured implementation pattern. An analysis of indirectness strategies reveals that a lecturer consistently adopt the following approaches:

- a. The utilization of implicit request forms in managing classroom dynamics.
- b. The provision of constructive feedback while maintaining student anonymity to avoid individual identification.
- c. The adoption of illustrative approaches as a mechanism for linguistic error correction.

Furthermore, the management of Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) is executed with a high degree of pragmatic awareness. This is reflected in strategic efforts to eliminate explicit criticism, replacing it with a supportive tutorial approach. This policy also encompasses the provision of a conducive and safe space for discussion, facilitating students in articulating their views without the fear of compromising their face.

Regarding the empowerment of student participants, the lecturers demonstrate systematic efforts to enhance academic engagement. This empowerment is manifested through the provision of equitable opportunities for all students to contribute actively to English conversations. Students are equipped with the necessary linguistic capital and capacity-building measures beforehand. Moreover, explicit appreciation is given for every contribution, complemented by the creation of a supportive and non-threatening learning environment.

The aspect of cultural adaptation within the pedagogical process is evident through the integration of local cultural values, guided by a high level of lecturer sensitivity. Specifically, this adaptation includes the use of address forms tailored to the Sasak cultural context (as the local framework) and the alignment of learning materials to ensure relevance to the students' contextual backgrounds. Furthermore, the management of cross-cultural communication challenges is implemented structurally, involving adjustments in communication styles that account for the students' diverse cultural heritages.

In addition to the aforementioned pedagogical patterns, instructional effectiveness is achieved by maintaining an optimal balance between the application of politeness principles and academic achievement targets. Politeness principles are integrated without compromising the quality or substance of the instruction. Consequently, this requires the modeling of polite language usage by the lecturers, the provision of opportunities for language practice within authentic contexts, and the reinforcement of students' pragmatic awareness. Thus, the English language learning process appears integrated with local culture and the students' backgrounds (Arisandi, 2024).

Tabel 1. tact maxim

Lecturer	:	I really know you're busy, but could you please revise this section by tomorrow if possible?
Student	:	My pleasure, Sir. I will prioritize it.

The speech acts between the lecturer and students occurred within the classroom setting during a lecture. The data indicates that the lecturer sought to minimize the imposition on the students. By employing the phrase 'if possible,' the lecturer provided a sense of optionality, ensuring the students did not feel unduly burdened.

Tabel 2. Generosity Maxim

Student	:	I'm struggling with the statistics software, Sir.
Lecturer	:	Don't worry. You can come to my desk, and I'll walk you through it myself.

The dialogue above occurs between a student and a lecturer within a classroom setting. The student informs the lecturer of the difficulties they are encountering, prompted by which the lecturer offers their own time and effort to provide direct assistance. This speech event illustrates the principle of minimizing benefit to oneself

Table 3. Approbation Maxim

Student	:	Here is my final project draft, Sir.
Lecturer	:	This is an outstanding analysis! You've captured the core arguments very well.

Similar speech events are observable in classroom interactions. When a student submits their final assignment in response to a lecturer's inquiry, it is followed by positive reinforcement from the instructor. Such speech acts serve as a strategy to mitigate face-threatening acts by minimizing dispraise

and maximizing praise. The lecturer accords high value to the student's performance remarking, 'You've captured the core arguments very well' as a means of sustaining student motivation.

Table 4. Modesty Maxim

Student	:	Your lecture today was brilliant, Sir!
Lecturer	:	That's kind of you, but I'm just sharing what I've learned from others. It was the great questions from the class that made it good.

This speech act occurs following the conclusion of a lecture. Before exiting the classroom, a student offers a compliment to the lecturer. In response, the lecturer reciprocates the appreciation by attributing the success of the session to the students' collective cooperation. This interaction exemplifies the strategy of minimizing self-praise. By downplaying their individual role, the lecturer suggests that the quality of the lecture was not solely a personal achievement but rather a result of the collaborative contribution and engagement of all students.

Table 5. Agreement Maxim

Lecturer	:	I think we should move the presentation to Friday to give everyone more time."
Student	:	I completely agree, Sir. That would be much more helpful for the whole group.

The speech act occurred following a class session during a negotiation process between the lecturer and the students. This interaction exemplifies a strategy to minimize disagreement, wherein the students immediately acceded to the lecturer's suggestion. Such a response was intended to maintain harmony and avert potential ideological conflict.

Table 6. Sympathy Maxim

Student	:	My apologize, Sir. I missed the exam. My father passed away yesterday.
Lecturer	:	I am so sorry to hear about your loss. Please take the time you need; we can reschedule later.

This speech act occurs when a student informs a lecturer that an assignment cannot be completed due to the passing of a father. In response, the lecturer expresses condolences and grants an extension for the submission. This strategy serves to minimize antipathy and maximize sympathy. Furthermore, the lecturer demonstrates genuine empathy regarding the student's bereavement.

Discussion

The analysis of politeness in academic interactions between lecturers and students is crucial, as it involves inherent differences in social status and power dynamics. According to Leech's (2014) theory, politeness is not merely a social formality but a conscious effort to maintain the "face" of the interlocutor to ensure harmonious communication. Brown and Levinson (1987) further emphasize that face management is central to understanding how speakers navigate social relationships through strategic language use. In the context of higher education, the application of these maxims helps foster a conducive learning environment where students feel valued while lecturers maintain their authority through persuasive and humanistic means (Mahmud, 2018).

In the first data set regarding the Tact Maxim, it is evident how lecturers strive to minimize the "cost" to the student. Although lecturers possess the authority to assign tasks, the use of the phrase "if possible" demonstrates a respect for the student's personal time. This strategy transforms a coercive

command into a polite request, reducing psychological pressure and motivating students to complete revisions promptly out of a sense of being respected as individuals. According to Leech (2014), the Tact Maxim operates on the principle of minimizing cost to others and maximizing benefit to others, thereby creating more cooperative interpersonal relations. Similar findings were reported by Arisandi et al. (2024), who observed that Indonesian EFL lecturers frequently employ indirect request forms to manage classroom dynamics while maintaining student dignity.

Furthermore, the Generosity Maxim is exemplified by a lecturer's willingness to dedicate extra time to students facing difficulties. This maxim focuses on minimizing benefit to oneself and maximizing self-sacrifice (Leech, 2014). By offering direct assistance in the office, the lecturer subordinates personal interests such as rest or administrative duties to prioritize the student's academic success. Such behavior builds a supportive image and signals that the transfer of knowledge takes precedence over mere classroom formalities. Research by Fitriyah et al. (2020) demonstrates that teachers' use of politeness strategies, including acts of generosity, can enhance students' learning motivation and foster positive teacher-student relationships.

The Approbation Maxim highlights the importance of providing concrete appreciation for student work. When a lecturer describes a project draft as "outstanding," they are performing a "positive face" saving act (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In educational psychology, this praise serves as effective reinforcement; by minimizing dispraise and maximizing praise, the lecturer not only evaluates the work but also bolsters the student's confidence to pursue further excellence (Leech, 2014). Sudrajat et al. (2022) found that lecturers' use of appreciative language in Indonesian higher education contexts significantly contributes to maintaining harmonious classroom interactions and enhancing student motivation.

Conversely, the Modesty Maxim is employed by lecturers when receiving praise from students. Despite their expertise, the lecturer chooses to deflect self-aggrandizement, instead attributing the success of a session to the students' active participation. This serves to minimize self-praise and prevent an excessive social distance (Leech, 2014). Such humility often garners more respect from students, as it reflects intellectual integrity and an openness to the contributions of others. As noted by Ridwan et al. (2023), politeness strategies that emphasize modesty help reduce power asymmetry in lecturer-student interactions, creating a more collaborative learning atmosphere.

In terms of consensus, the Agreement Maxim plays a vital role in circumventing classroom conflict. When students promptly agree to a lecturer's proposal to reschedule a presentation, a communicative synergy is created. This maxim emphasizes minimizing disagreement between parties (Leech, 2014). In an academic context, genuine agreement regarding rules or schedules streamlines administrative processes and mitigates potential future tensions. Trang (2019) observed that Vietnamese students similarly employ agreement strategies in their communication with lecturers to maintain social harmony and avoid face-threatening situations.

Finally, the Sympathy Maxim illustrates the humanitarian dimension of professional campus relationships. A lecturer's expression of condolences toward a student experiencing a misfortune is a tangible effort to maximize sympathy and minimize antipathy (Leech, 2014). In pragmatic linguistics, this is essential for rapport building (Brown & Levinson, 1987). By granting exam flexibility due to bereavement, the lecturer demonstrates that educational institutions can uphold values of empathy above rigid bureaucratic regulations. This finding aligns with research by Fitriyah et al. (2020), which emphasizes that lecturers' empathetic politeness strategies significantly enhance student compliance and create a supportive learning environment. Moreover, McKay (2018) argues that in international English language contexts, culturally sensitive communication practices, including the expression of

sympathy, are crucial for effective pedagogy and maintaining positive interpersonal relationships in multicultural classrooms.

4. CONCLUSION

The application of Leech's six maxims in this study demonstrates that linguistic politeness serves as a vital instrument in academic diplomacy. These principles comprising the Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim, and Sympathy Maxim function complementarily to balance the rights and obligations between lecturers and students. By implementing these maxims, the perceived power imbalance between faculty and students is effectively mitigated, fostering an English classroom environment characterized by egalitarianism, mutual agreement, and empathetic understanding. Consistent adherence to these principles can minimize communication barriers typically arising from hierarchical differences. Ultimately, the strategic use of polite language cultivates an academic culture that is mutually respectful, productive, and deeply rooted in empathy.

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