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The Realization of Politeness Strategies in EFL Teacher-Students Classroom Interaction

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Article Info	Abstract
	Politeness is one of the prominent issues in pragmatics. It becomes a major issue in education due to the implementation of curriculum 2013 which emphasized on character education. This study aimed at analyzing the realization of politeness strategies and sociological factors influencing the choice of politeness strategies in EFL Teacher-students classroom interaction at SMP Semesta Bilingual School. This study used qualitative research in the form of classroom discourse analysis. The participants were an EFL teacher and 30 EFL students in two EFL classrooms. The research instruments were made based on Brown and Levinson (1987) framework of politeness strategies. The findings showed that bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off records were realized in the classroom interaction. The teacher dominantly used positive politeness to show solidarity and to maintain a close relationship with the students, bald on records to give a clear and unambiguous instruction, negative politeness to minimize the coercion to the students, and off record to give hints. In addition, the sociological factors, namely distance, power, and degree of imposition influence the choice of politeness strategies. As the conclusion, politeness is important in maintaining relationship and creating a comfortable environment in EFL classroom.

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INTRODUCTION

Pragmatic knowledge has become a significant aspect in EFL learning in recent years (Shabani, 2015). As Farashaiyan and Hua (2012) stated, in order to interact with speakers of other language and cultures the speaker need to be proficient in both linguistic (grammatical) and pragmatic competences. Thomas (1983) asserted Pragmatic competence as "the ability to use language effectively to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context" (P.93). In Bachman's (1990) model of language competence, pragmatic competence is a central component incorporating the ability to use the language according to the sociocultural context in which they are uttered (Rueda, 2006, p. 173). Speakers who are considered "fluent" due to their grammatical knowledge, in a foreign language, may not be able to produce socially and culturally appropriate language, that is, they may still lack of pragmatic competence. An inadequacy of pragmatic competence could lead to pragmatic failure in which speakers could be appeared to be uncooperative, rude, and insulting. Moreover, Thomas (1983) stated that interlocutors tend to perceive a pragmatic failure as an offence rather than simply a deficiency in language knowledge. Thus, the lack of pragmatic proficiencies could lead to communication breakdown.

Politeness has become a major issue in the study of pragmatics. It deals on how a particular form of language is used strategically in order to achieve the speaker's goal (Thomas, 1995). It is a complex issue which could be approached by many areas, including pragmatics, sociolinguistics, sociology, social anthropology and social psychology (Locher and Watts, 2005). Regarding this, Thomas (1995) stated "politeness in pragmatics are not concerned with whether or not speakers are genuinely motivated by a desire to be nice to one another; instead we observed what is said and the effect of what is said on the hearer" . In the context of language teaching, politeness is believed to enhance learning by providing a lively and friendly atmosphere in classroom and to make a harmonious interaction between teacher and students in teaching and learning process (Jiang, 2010; Zaenul, 2016).

In Indonesia, politeness is an important aspect in education. Politeness is used to make a harmonious interaction between teacher and students in teaching and learning process (Zaenul, 2016). Nuh (cited in Mariani, 2016), the education minister of Indonesia, asserts that politeness of Indonesian students is in a state of decline. Therefore, it is important to implement politeness strategy in education as it in line with curriculum 2013 which emphasize on good character education. In addition, Indonesia's education regulation No 20, Year 2003, Article 3 states that national education functions to develop capacity, character, and a dignified society by enhancing its intellectual capacity (Mariani, 2016). Thus, politeness become one of the crucial issues in education, specifically in a classroom interaction.

One of the most prominent work in the context of interlanguage pragmatic research, which was widely used, was the theory of politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). According to Brown and Levinson (1987) Politeness is defined as redressive action taken to counter-balance the disruptive effect of face-threatening acts (FTA). The theory mainly focused on how politeness is expressed to protect participants' face. According to them, there are four politeness strategies. These are: (1) bald on record, when the FTA is performed 'in the most direct, clear, unambiguous, and concise way possible' (Brown and Levinson, 1987); (2) positive politeness, orients to preserving the positive face of other people; (3) Negative politeness, orients to preserving the negative face of other people; and (4) Off records, a communicative act which is done in such way that it is not possible to attribute one clear communicative intention to the act.

Aside from politeness strategies, Brown and Levinson (1987) explained the factors influencing the choice of politeness strategies. According to them, there are two factors that influence the choice of politeness strategies. These are the payoffs of politeness and

sociological factors (Brown and Levinson,1987, p.71). It is important to know the factors of politeness strategies in order to assess the appropriacy of politeness strategies in relation with the context and circumstances. The sociological factors are distance (D), power (P), and rank of imposition (R). These three aspects will influence the weight of Face Threatening Acts (W) which can be used by the speaker in deciding on what politeness strategies that will be employed. Furthermore, payoffs of politeness strategies and sociological factors will be important in order to reveal why a certain politeness strategy is frequently used in communication

Several studies have been conducted on politeness strategies in EFL classroom. Some of those studies focused on teachers' politeness strategies (Jiang, 2010; Senowarsito, 2013, Peng et al., 2014; Zaenul, 2014; Sulu, 2015; Draginic, 2017; Arief et al., 2018), students' politeness principle (Huang, 2008), students' politeness strategies (Benham and Niroomand, 2011; Wijayanto et al., 2013; Mahmud, 2018), and politeness in classroom interaction (Manik & Hutagaol, 2015; Mariani, 2015; Suwartama & Fitriati, 2017; Haryanto, Weda, & Nashruddin, 2018).

A study conducted by Peng et al. (2014) investigated how teacher applies politeness strategies in the language use. The study was conducted in one of universities in china. The participants were an English teacher and 30 college students. The finding showed, that the teacher conducts his class on term of positive politeness and negative politeness in a practical way. In addition, the adoption of politeness strategies shortens the teacher-student social distance, makes the class interesting, and in turn facilitates English teaching and learning. This study has similar framework with other studies (Jiang, 2010; Senowarsito, 2013, Sulu, 2015, and Zaenul 2016) in which it investigated politeness by using Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies. Moreover, they also analysed it by the method proposed by Jiang (2010) to analysed teacher's politeness in academic instructions, motivation, evaluation, and classroom

management. The difference was, while Jiang (2010) and Sulu (2015) investigated both positive and negative politeness, Senorwarsito (2013) and Zaenul (2016) also investigated bald on record and off record strategies.

Those studies highlighted the important of conducting politeness studies in EFL classroom. Some of the studies focused on sociolinguistics aspects (Arif et al., 2018; Suwartama and Fitriati, 2017), while the others are focused on identifying the types of politeness strategies used in the classroom. Most of those studies are conducted at university level. Only few studies are conducted at junior high schools. Those studies are similar with my research, in which it investigated politeness in the classroom setting, however, rather than sociolinguistics, this study focuses on the realization of politeness strategies in relation with pragmatics to which it focuses on directive, expressive, and commisive speech acts at junior high school. Moreover, the sociological factors that influence the choices of politeness strategies will be explained.

METHOD

The study used qualitative case study research in investigating politeness strategies in EFL classroom. Qualitative research was chosen because it allows researchers to identify issues from the perspective of participants and understand the meanings and interpretations that they give to behavior. Since this study focused on the realization politeness strategies in EFL classroom interaction, classroom discourse analysis was employed. Further, pragmatic approach was used to analyzed students and teachers' utterances during classroom interaction, particularly focus on the realization of politeness strategies.

This study analysed the realization of politeness strategies in EFL teacher and students classroom interaction in SMP Semesta Semarang. 4x40 minutes lessons in two EFL classes held by an EFL teacher were observed and recorded. The researcher chose junior high school as the research setting in order to explain the EFL teacher and student's classroom

interaction in relation with the 2013 curriculum's implementation which emphasize on character education, specifically on politeness. The teachers involved in this study were chosen based on several criteria: (1) Availability and flexibility; (2) Having good English proficiency; (2) Having enough experience in teaching English. Moreover, junior high school was chosen due to an assumption that both the teacher and the students have a good English proficiency level.

The data in this research were collected through observation, video recording, audio recording, and interview. The researcher used data observation sheets to note the data which are related to the objectives of the study. In analysing the data, the researcher employed a referential method in which the data were analysed based on the theory explored. Furthermore, the data analysis in this research consisted of several steps: (1) Trancribing; (2) Identifying; (3) Classifying; and (4) Interpreting.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Realization of Bald On- Record

Bald on record is one of the strategies used when the speaker made no attempt to minimize the threat to the other person's face. This strategy could be used when the speaker had more power that the listener (Brown &Levinson, 1987). This strategy was found approximately 25% among other strategies during classroom interaction. The realization of this strategy can be seen in the excerpt 1 below.

Excerpt 1

T: Ok. So, if you can edit your own video, t**hen make a channel on YouTube and be a singer.**

S: **But my mom doesn't like it**. Especially if I active on a social media. My Mom prefer me to be a doctor.

T : Yeah, that's like a dream of every parent (laughs). If I can say this, you still have a long way to go. Right now, you maybe you want it, next time maybe you don't want it**. But make sure you know what you want**. Then, you can talk with your parent, with a cup of tea, a good

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place. **And share your dream,** what you love to your parent. **Make sure they know your passion**. **Share it nicely.**

From the excerpt above, it can be seen that there were 6 bald on record strategies realized in that exchange. This conversation happened when the teacher and students had a discussion on hobbies and talents. A student said that she was good at editing, therefore, the teacher gave a suggestion to *"make a channel on YouTube and be a singer"*. The teacher said it with no redressive action, that is why it was bald on record (strategy no 2. giving suggestion/advice). Then, the student replied *"But my mom doesn't like it"* which is an example of bald on record (strategy 1. showing disagreement). Further, the teacher said *"Make sure you know what you want"* *"share your dream"*, *"make sure you know your passion",* and *"share it nicely"* which are some examples of bald on record (strategy 2. giving advice/suggestion). By going on record, it can be assumed that there is an asymmetrical power relationship between students and teacher (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Another example of bald on record can be seen in the excerpt 2 below.

Excerpt 2

T: I would like to play a video. Then we have some questions that we need to answer. **You will work together with your friends. Don't forget to write your names.** You ready? Here I will play the video; you may read the questions first. **Focus on the part 2 first, so skip part 1.**

S: Okay, Miss.

In the excerpt above, the teacher gave some instructions to the students. It consists of bald on record, positive politeness and negative politeness. It indicated that the teacher was able to use the three kind of politeness strategies in a single turn. In relation with bald on record, the teacher said *"you will work together with your friends"* which was a bald on record (strategy number 7. task oriented). She also said *"don't forget to write your name"* which was an example of bald on record (strategy number 4. warning). And lastly, she said *"focus on the part 2 first, so skip part 1"* which belonged to bald on record in imperative form (strategy 5). Here, the teacher

used bald on record in order to give a clear and effective direction on what the students need to be done.

Realization of Positive Politeness

In this strategy, the speaker recognized the friendliness in the relationship with the listeners and their desire to be respected. In addition, this strategy functions to flow the social relationship smoothly with others. It can be seen from the conversation below.

Excerpt 3

S: **Before we start the lesson, let's pray together.** Aamiin. Greeting.
Assalamu'alaikum warrohmatulahi wabarokatuh.
T: **Wa'alaikumsalam warohmatullahi wabarokatuh. Ya Allah, that's very nice, thank you very much. Have a seat everyone**

From the excerpt above, there were 5 politeness strategies realized. First, the students started the lesson by asking the other students to pray together, *"before we start the lesson, let's pray together"*. This was an example of positive politeness (strategy 12. including Speaker and Hearer in one activity) by using the word *"we"* and *"lets"* show that they are engage in one activity. It showed that they are cooperators and claim reflexivity. Later on, the student and teacher greet each other. Brown and Levinson (1987) argued that most of the greetings are bald on record. However, in this act, the greeting was carried out in Arabic in order to address the Muslim. Therefore, *"Assalamu'alaikum"* is an example of positive politeness (strategy 4 use in group identity markers: address term). Further, the teacher showed more positive politeness by complementing the students *"that's very nice of you. Thank you very much"* (Strategy 2. Exaggerate approval). Finally, the teacher said *"have a seat everyone"* which was an example of positive politeness (strategy 10. Offer). Another example of positive politeness are as follows.

Excerpt 4
T: Ahh… What do you think? **Why do celebrities, like, you know… do nasty thing to their fans?**
S: Maybe they are annoying?
T: **Very good. Nice**

From the short excerpt above, the speech act *"why do celebrities, like, you know… do nasty thing to their fans?"* was an example of positive politeness (strategy 3. Intensify interest to H) it can be seen from the linguistic marker *"you know"* that can be used to intensify the interest to H. further, the act *"very good. Nice"* with an exaggerate intonation was another example of positive politeness (strategy 2. Exaggerate approval).

Realization of Negative Politeness

Negative politeness orients to preserving the negative face of other people. This is much more likely if there is a social distance between speaker and hearer. Negative politeness strategies are also intended to avoid giving offense by showing deference. These strategies include questioning, hedging, and presenting disagreements as opinions (Brown and Levinson, 1987). The examples of negative politeness are presented on excerpt 5 and 6 below.

Excerpt 5
S: Miss, break time
T: Break time? Really? Not yet. You still have a long way to go. **Okay, two students please come here. One student please erase the blackboard. One student please rewrite this on the board**

From the excerpt above, there were 2 kinds of negative politeness employed by the teacher. First, the teacher used the word *"please"* to soften the instruction. The use of word *"please",* according to Brown and Levinson, is an example of negative politeness to indicate a conventionally indirect instruction (Strategy 1). Being indirect can be realized by including the insertion of sentence internal "please" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.133). Moreover, the use of pronoun *"one"* instead of *"you"* is an example

of negative politeness (Strategy 7. Impersonalize S and H).

Excerpt 6
T: Let see. Number 1, she speaks same... what?
S: Not yet miss.
T: Oh yeah, alright. Very good. **Yeah, everybody you may tried. Just write the answer in the board, actually.** Okay. The answer would be a bit longer

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Excerpt 6 above showed two negative politeness strategies. The teacher tried to encourage the students to answer the question and write the answer on the board. First, she said *"everybody you may tried"* which showed that the speaker did not coerce H and give H option not to do act. It was marked by the word *"may"* which is a hedge in the form of modal auxiliary (Strategy 2). The second one, *"just write the answer in the board, actually"* is an example of negative politeness strategy, minimizing the imposition (Strategy 4). Here, the speaker minimizes the imposition by saying that that the students need to *"just write"* the answer. The speaker tried to save the hearer's negative face and reduce the threat of imposition.

Realization of Off-Record

Off Record can be recognized in situations where the speaker, for example, poses an indirect utterance. Off record strategy is consider the most polite strategies among all (Brown & Levinson, 1978) because it allows a speaker to avoid the responsibility for the potentially face-damaging interpretations. The example of off record can be seen in excerpt 7 and 8 below.

Excerpt 7
T: We will continue listening part 1 and part 2, then we will check it together.
S: Miss, **the speaker is broken**
T: **(**laughs) No, it's working properly. Especially, now

From the excerpt above, the teacher informed the students that they would continue the listening section. However, one student went off record and by saying *"Miss, the speaker is broken"*. It was off record, because, from the

previous section the student's complaint about the listening section. Moreover, it carried illocutionary meaning that they did not want listening activities. Moreover, the utterance violated maxim of relevance from the previous utterance. This, according to Brown and Levinson is an example of off record strategy, giving hints (Strategy 1). The speaker avoids the responsibility for the potential face threatening acts.

Excerpt 8
S: Miss, is this right?
T: Can you just write it on the board?
S: But I want to check it first
T: Why?
S: Because I'm not sure if it is right
T: Okay, that's alright.
S: Thank you
NV: (More students coming for her)
T: No, just write it there. **I am standing here** (move on to the back)

From the excerpt above, the teacher said "I am standing here" hinting that she did not want to assess the student answer individually, rather, asked the student to write the answer on the board, so it could be discussed together. The teacher did not necessarily inform her position to the student, but there was another meaning implied when she said "I am standing here" means that she was far away, so better just to write the answer on the board. This, according to Brown Levinson is an example of off record strategy, giving hints (Strategy 1).

Factors Influencing Politeness Strategies

There are three factors that influence the choice of politeness strategies, namely: distance, power, and rank of imposition. Relative social distance between the speaker and the addressee is one of the most fundamental factors determining the appropriate level of politeness behavior aside from power and formality dimensions (Arif et al., 2018). This study presented some examples on how social distance influence the choice of politeness strategies. Both students and teacher have a close social distance relationship. It can be seen from the frequent used of positive politeness and

bald on record. As suggested by Peng et al (2014), by adopting more positive strategy, the teacher means to reduce the threat of FTAs and shorten the distance between them. In the data, it can be seen that the teacher was commonly addressed the students by their nickname, as in *"Seven, Tia please?"* (54). It showed that the teacher has a solid interest to the students. In exchange 118, the student employed bald on record to show her disagreement, as in *"No, I don't want to be a singer"* (419).

In terms of power, the finding showed that there is an asymmetrical power relationship between students and teacher. In the classroom context, teachers are supposed to have much knowledge and experience. They are the guiders in the classroom learning activities, and therefore they have more authority over students and have more power than students (Peng at al., 2014). A teacher was in the position of institutional power and it could be argued that this gets partly expressed through the use of direct strategies (Senowarsito, 2013). In this study, the teacher frequently used bald on record strategies to manage the classroom learning activities. As in *"Now, look at the picture"* (248) and *"Now you are going to work with your friend"* (425). Regarding this, it can be assumed that the teacher has more power than students.

In some cases, the teacher attempted to decrease her power by using positive and negative politeness strategies. In terms of positive politeness, the teacher tends to include herself in the students' activities, as in *"then, we have some questions that we need to answer"* (139). Whereas, in terms of negative politeness the teacher did not coerce the students to do something by using hedges, as in *"You may come forward and write down the answer please, from number 1 up to 8"* (103). Further, to reduce power, the teacher tries to give weight to the students' participation on giving opinion, feeling, and ideas.

The degree of imposition is one of the factors that influence the choice of politeness strategies. When a speaker shows great FTAs in the utterances, the imposition of the act is also getting greater. Thus, the speaker will use highly standard politeness strategies in speaking if the speaker wants to minimize the imposition in the utterances. On the other hand, when the imposition in the utterance is not great, the speaker will use less polite strategy. Besides, imposition is still situationally varied in value.

The findings of the study provide examples on how imposition would affect the choice of politeness strategies. In one occasion, the teacher said *"Dinda you may move for example, or chacha move please"* (209). In that utterance, the degree of imposition is great, therefore the teacher used a highly standard politeness strategies, which is negative politeness. The teacher used modal auxiliary hedge *"may"* and politeness marker *"please"* to minimize the effect of FTA. In a less degree of imposition, the teacher used bald on record, as in *"open your book"* (5) and *"Now, look at these pictures"* (248). However, in this study, the researcher assumed that rank of imposition has less influence on the choice of politeness strategies due to the degree of imposition that occurred are, overall, similar.

CONCLUSION

This research is a study of the realization of Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies in EFL teacher-students classroom interaction. It aimed at explaining the realization of politeness strategies, namely bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record. In addition, this study aimed at analyzing the sociological factors influencing the use of politeness studies in the classroom (power, distance, rank of imposition). The research can be summarized as follows:

First, in relation with the realization of bald on record strategies in EFL teacher-students classroom interaction at SMP Semesta, the findings showed that bald on record strategies are found in the data. These strategies are included showing disagreement; giving suggestion; requesting; warning; using imperative form; offering; and task oriented. Bald on records are employed by the teacher to give a clear and efficient instruction, classroom management, and motivation.

Second, in relation with the realization of positive politeness in EFL teacher- student classroom interaction at SMP Semesta, the findings showed that out of 15 sub-strategies of positive politeness, 11 strategies are found in the data. These are: Notice, attend to H; Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy; intensify interest to H; Use in group language identity markers; seek agreement; avoid disagreement;presuppose/raise common ground; joke, asset or presupposes; offer, promise; be optimistic; and include both S and H in the activity. The use of positive politeness in the classroom is important in order to maintain the positive relationship between the speaker and the hearer. In addition, through the use of positive politeness, teachers can establish a respectful teacher-students relationship and comfortable classroom atmosphere, which motivates the students to engage in the classroom activities without the fear of embarrassment for their mistakes.

Third, in relation with the realization of negative politeness in EFL teacher- student classroom interaction at SMP Semesta. The findings showed that out of 10 sub strategies of negative politeness, only 4 of them appeared in the data. They are: Be conventionally indirect; Question, hedge; Be pessimistic, and minimize the imposition. Through the use of negative politeness, teacher maintain students' freedom of action and thus given them a certain autonomy in managing their own learning process.

Fourth, in relation with the realization of off record strategies in EFL teacher-student classroom interaction at SMP Semesta. The findings showed that off records realized in the data, even though it has the least occurrence compared to other strategies. It realized through giving hints; and overgeneralizing. Off records are considered as the politest strategies among the other strategies. Through off record, the speaker could avoid the effect of face threatening acts.

Finally, the sociological factors (power, distance, rank of imposition) that influence the use of politeness strategies in EFL teacher- student classroom interaction at SMP Semesta. In term of power, the interaction between students and teacher show an asymmetrical power relation. The teacher tends to use bald on record strategies in managing classroom activities. In term of distance, the interaction shows that both students and teacher tend to show that they have a close relationship. In term of rank of imposition, since almost all impositions are not heavy, the writer assumed that rank of imposition has less influence to the choice of politeness strategies.

Based on the conclusion above, there are some suggestions related to further research on politeness strategies. First, to other researchers, since this study has its weakness as it only focused on the realization of politeness strategies in the classroom interaction, it is expected that further research can analyze the use of politeness in many cultures. It is possible for them to compare politeness between cultures as politeness in one culture can differ greatly in other cultures. In addition, they can also analyze non-linguistics aspects of politeness since most politeness studies discuss the linguistics aspect only. It is hoped that research in second language strategies, will enable us to incorporate effective methods of teaching politeness strategies in the EFL classroom. Second, for English teachers and EFL learners. In order to acquire the proper use of English in their utterances, both English teachers and learners need to be aware of pragmatic competence, especially politeness strategies to maintain a positive relationship and establish a comfortable learning atmosphere in the classroom. Therefore, the process of learning can go smoothly, and the learning objectives can be achieved. This study, however, is subject to a weakness, in which the researcher did not use member checking technique to verify the accuracy of data to the participants, therefore the interpretation might be biased.

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