

## VARIATION OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES AMONG THE ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDENTS AT ISLAMIC INSTITUTE OF MUHAMMADIYAH SINJAI

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### Abstract

*This study aims to find variations in the use of student politeness strategies in Islamic Institute of Muhammadiyah Sinjai. The researcher applied a descriptive qualitative research method. The participants of this research were 5<sup>th</sup> semester of English Education program consisting 34 students. The observation administered and mainly observed during the teaching and learning process in the classroom. The transcriptions were analyzed and discussed based on the theory of politeness of Brown and Levinson (1987). The findings from this study show that 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, asking permission, rejecting, and fillers. There are also several terms comes from the student's regional language which is used as a form of their politeness. These expressions are categorized as positive and negative politeness.*

**Key words:** Teaching and Learning process, politeness, politeness strategy

### Abstrak

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui variasi penggunaan strategi kesantunan mahasiswa di Institut Agama Islam Muhammadiyah Sinjai. Peneliti menerapkan metode penelitian kualitatif deskriptif. Partisipan dalam penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa program Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris semester 5 yang terdiri dari 34 mahasiswa. Pengamatan dilakukan dan terutama diamati selama proses belajar mengajar di kelas. Transkripsi dianalisis dan dibahas berdasarkan teori kesantunan Brown dan Levinson (1987). Temuan dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa siswa bahasa Inggris menggunakan berbagai jenis ekspresi untuk menunjukkan kesopanan mereka di kelas. Ungkapan tersebut berupa sapaan, ucapan terima kasih, sapaan istilah, minta maaf, minta izin, meoolak, dan filler. Ada juga beberapa istilah yang berasal dari bahasa daerah siswa yang digunakan sebagai bentuk kesantunan mereka. Ekspresi tersebut dikategorikan sebagai kesopanan positif dan negatif.*

**Kata kunci:** Proses belajar mengajar, kesantunan, strategi kesantunan

### 1. Introduction

As creatures that living on this earth, humans live as individual beings and social beings with the meaning that humans depend on and also interact with others. Therefore, humans cannot be separated from the interactions between individual humans, groups, and others. The tools that humans use in the process of interaction as a social being is a language. Language is principally as a tool for communicating and a tool for demonstrating identity of the language user so they can understand each other.

School or university is a social educational environment, in social interactions. Students and teachers use language as a means of communication to convey intentions, emotions, feelings and so

on. The community interaction between the academic communities is always based on campus environmental norms. These norms appear from verbal and nonverbal behavior in communicate activities. Verbal behavior in imperative functions, for example, can be seen in how the speaker expresses orders, necessities, or prohibits doing something to the speech partner, while nonverbal behavior is seen from the physical movements that accompany it. Through language intermediaries one can foster and establish relationships with each other. (Qadrianti, L., & Nirwana. 2019).

Communicating has the aim of equal acceptance of the meaning of language between the speaker and the interlocutor, in this case the teacher and student or student and student. So, they need to use of good language in teaching and learning process.

The process of learning English is still a leading issue in the world of education. Several studies have shown that there are still many problems faced by English practitioners in the learning process. Maros, Hua, and Salehuddin's (2007) study in Malaysia, for example, proved the difficulties faced by the students in using correct English grammar. Another example of study in Columbia (Vasquez, 2007) proved that there are so many types of errors made by the students in their writing composition. Studies had been conducted such as in improving the teaching methods (Hamra & Syatriana, 2010; Mahmud, 2017b; Rachmawaty & Hermagustiana, 2010) and other related issues (Mahmud, 2017a; Mahmud & Nur, 2018; Setiawati, 2012). Findings from these studies confirm that practitioners of English language teaching in Indonesia still face many problems and therefore, they need efforts to improve the quality of English language teaching process.

To improve the results of learning English, effective and efficient class interactions are needed. Studies had found the significant functions of classroom interaction as a strategy to achieve better English language teaching process in Indonesian EFL classroom interaction (Rido, Ibrahim, & Nambiar, 2015; Setiawati, 2012; Sofyan & Mahmud, 2014).

Teachers and students are the main actors in the learning process, so they need an effective way of communicating. A number of studies proved that teachers and students need strategies in the class to communicate their ideas (see Aladdin, 2012; Moazen, Kafipour, & Soori, 2016; Mahmud, 2017a; Somsai & Intaraprasert, 2011; Tan, Nor, & Jaradat, 2012). This effective communication can be achieved by applying politeness strategies.

Studies on politeness, as a part of communication, have been recently conducted worldwide especially in the area of sociolinguistics and anthropolinguistics (Basthomi, 2014; Fenclova & Horova, 2017; Izadi, 2013; Maros & Rosli, 2017; Nor & Aziz, 2010; Sukarno, 2018). First illuminated by Brown & Levinson (1987) with the idea of "face-saving view", politeness issues have been further explored in many different languages and contexts. Nor and Azis (2010), for example, studied politeness relation in decision making. In social media, politeness also became a good strategy of communication (Maros & Rosli, 2017; Zena, Maros, & Nor, 2012). Another recent study on this issue is by Sukarno (2018) who studied politeness in relation to the use of requests. All of these studies proved that politeness has important roles in communication.

Research on politeness in the learning process has been widely studied in Indonesia. A study by Syahri (2013) on politeness just focused on learners' request as one way to express politeness but did not specifically explore the potential strategies employed by the students in the class. In addition, Mahmud (2018) had explored the English students' perspectives on politeness; however, the focus was not on the strategies of politeness. It focused only on the English students' perception of how to be polite in the class. Based on these facts, the study of the use of politeness strategies in learning, especially by students, needs to be explore. This study then focuses on Variation Of Politeness Strategies Among The English Education Students At Islamic Institute Of Muhammadiyah Sinjai.

## 2. Method

The method applied in this research was descriptive qualitative method since it analyzes the data in the form of words descriptively, not in the form of percentage or numeral. It is "the collection,

analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual data in order to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest” (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006, p. 399).

This research was conducted at the undergraduate program at Islamic institute of Muhammadiyah Sinjai in 2020. The participants were 34 students of 5<sup>th</sup> semester which selected purposively. They were students of English education program and attend Scientific Writing class where lecturers and students discuss the advanced material of the previous meeting. The discussion were recorded by researchers using mobile phones. In order to analyze the data, there are four steps that were conducted by the researcher. Data identified, data reduction, data description, and data classification.

The data from the observation and video recording firstly was transcribed into the written transcript. Then, the transcript was identified to determine the utterances. By data reduction, the researcher identified and choose the data, i.e. the utterances which are considered as variation of politeness strategies, which is relevant to the research topic, so that the analysis will be focused into the data which is suitable to the research questions which have been formulated.

The data which have been reduced then was described as the research data which contains variation of politeness strategies. These data was analyzed to find out the possible ways to use variation of politeness strategies classroom teaching learning process. The data which have been reduced and described was classified into specific groups based on the research focus. In order to get further information about the variation of politeness strategies.

### 3. Hasil dan Pembahasan

Variations of politeness expressions used by students in the lecture process are described in extract form. Namely in the form of greetings, thank you, terms of greetings, apologies, fillers, and colloquial language.

#### Greetings

Extract 1: Opening the Discussion

- Lecturer : **“Bismillahirrahmanirrahim”**  
“In the name of God”  
**Asssalamu’ Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu**  
“Peace be upon you”
- Students : **Wa’alaikumsalam Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu.**  
“Peace upon you too”

In extract 1, The lecturer start to opening the class discussion, she said **“Bismillahirrahmanirrahim”** (in the name of God), followed by Islamic greeting, **“Asssalamu’ Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu** “ (peace be upon u) then the students replied by saying **“Wa’alaikumsalam Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu”** (peace be upon you too). In Islam, all Muslims are required to say basmalah before starting any kind of activity as respect to god. This is an application of Islamic teachings that every Muslim must apply and it showed respect for God and good relations among humans. Lecturer and Students who are Muslim will showed their religious identity by using expressions according to Islamic teachings in everyday life including during the learning process. So, After that the they continued by express Islamic greeting as a good attitude behavior and it is a positive indicator of politeness.

#### Extract 2: Opening the Discussion

- Lecturer : **“Bismillahirrahmanirrahim”**  
“In the name of God”  
**Assalamu’ Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu**  
“Peace be upon you”
- Students : **Wa’alaikumsalam Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu.**  
“Peace be upon you too”
- Lecturer : **Good morning**, guys!
- Students : **Morning**, Ma’am!
- Lecturer : **How are you today?**
- Students : **“Alhamdulillah” I am fine, thank you! And you?**  
“All praises be to Allah”
- Lasmi : **How are you, Ma’am?**
- Lecturer : **“Alhamdulillah”** all is well.  
“All praises to Allah”

In this extract 2, the continued after they used the Islamic greetings, the lecturer and students greeted each other by using English greetings: **“Good morning, guys!” “Morning, Ma’am!”** and the lecturer continued by asking the students condition by saying **“How are you today?”** and the students gave their feedback by saying **“Alhamdulillah” I am fine, thank you!** (All praises to Allah). The used of Islamic utterance **“Alhamdulillah”** indicated a good condition. This also shows the application of Islamic teachings.

Since the member of discussion were English students and they expected to discuss about their material in Scientific Writing subject in English Language. The used Islamic greetings and English greetings in extract 1 and 2 functioned as a good way to be more polite and show their identity as muslim students. In addition, it indicates that the discussion will have started so as to focus their attention.

#### Extract 3: Opening the Discussion

##### Thanks

- Students : **“Alhamdulillah” I am fine, thank you! And you?**  
“All praises be to Allah”

In extract 3, the students gave their feedback by saying **““Alhamdulillah” I am fine, thank you! And you?”**, this is expression of thanking, it was continued by re-inquire about their teacher’s condition. Both greetings and thanks were used as signals to begin the discussion. These marked the politeness of the students in the formal situation of the class.

#### Extract 4:

- Lecturer : “Dear students, we would like to discuss under the topic using tenses in scientific writing”.
- Nurul : “Tabe’ Ma’am, Is the material divided into groups or individually?”.
- Lecturer : “The material is divided individually and the time to prepare the material is 15 minutes”...
- Nurul : **“Thank you very much**, Ma’am”.

In extract 4, the lecturer delivered the discussion topic, student B asks the lecturer questions about the discussion material distribution system. The lecturer directly explained it and student B responded again by saying “**Thank you very much, Ma’am**”. This extract shows that thanks were used as a way to be responsive and to show appreciation for other people’s conduct.

Extract 5:

- Amar : “I would like to explain again about the using tenses in scientific writing. In Chapter 4 Result, *begini ya* (like this), in this part past tense for result obtained and the used of present tense refers to figures, table, and graphs. For example...”
- Ulfa : “Well, I think that’s all, any question, comment or addition?”
- Ulfa : “I think everything is clear, Lanjutmi...”
- Ulfa : “let’s continue...”
- Amar : “**Baiklah (well), thanks for your nice attention...**”

In extract 5 above shows another function of thanking expression is to showed mutual respect between students in the question and answer session in the discussion. student A provides a re-explanation that is still poorly understood and asked question about her explanation by saying “**Well, I think that’s all, any question, comment or addition?**”, in directly student C responded by saying “**I think everything is clear, Lanjutmi...**”. So, student A expressed thanks by saying “**Baiklah (well), thanks for your nice attention...**” to show her appreciation for student C. these one of polite interaction among students.

#### Address Terms

Extract 6: Address term of *Kak*

- Amar : “**Kak, jadi jelas ya kalau bagian abstract we have to use past tense**”
- Amar : “Older brother/sister, So, it’s clear that in the abstract part we have to use the past tense”.
- Sukma : “**Oh iyya, pahamma’ kak**”
- Sukma : “Oh yes, I already understand, Older brother/sister”.

Extract 7: Address term of *Dek*

- Arsyisyah : “**Tambahkan 1 lagi contoh, Dek!**”
- Arsyisyah : “Give another 1 example, little brother/sister”
- Hesti : “Wait for a moment...”

Extract 6 and 7 Address term of *Kak/Dek*, it means “**older brother/sister/ little brother/sister**” was used. This term is often used by students to call him classmates who are senior or junior and this is also meant to be polite when discussing.

Extract 8: address term *Saudara/Saudari*

- Zahra : “**Sekarang Saudara Syahrul akan menjelaskan Tense apa yang digunakan kalau bagian Discussion!**”
- Zahra : “Now, Brother Syahrul will explain what tense is used in the Discussion section”
- Syahrul : “**Thank you Saudari Zahra (Sister Zahra). Present tense to explain significance of results and past tense to summaries findings**”.

Extract 8 practiced the use of address term *Saudara/Saudari* (Brother/Sister) where attached the name of students in the class. Zahra has provided the opportunity to explain the material using

polite expressions although He was one of their classmates by saying “*Sekarang Saudara Syahrul akan menjelaskan Tense apa yang digunakan kalau bagian Discussion!*” and the same way expressed by Syahrul when gave his response by saying *Thank you Saudari Zahra (Sister Zahra)*. They have demonstrated expressions of politeness especially in formal situations. The use of this address of term is more polite than mentioned the name of student directly.

Extract 9: address term *Kawan*

Adzra : “ **I think it would be great if accompanied by examples, supaya cepat dipahami Kawan**”.

“I think it would be great if accompanied by examples, so that it is quickly understood, Guys/Friend!”

Extract 9 demonstrated the use of address term of *kawan (Guys/Friend)*. This expression aims to make the discussion atmosphere more relaxed and friendly but still in a formal situation. This strategy also showed that they are close friend.

Extract 10: address term *Personal name and Pronoun*

Amar : “*Masih bisa bertanya Zahra?*”

“Can i still ask?”

Zahra : “*Ee..ee Silahkan, Time is yours, satuma saja nah!*”

“Please, Time is yours, just one question!”

Karina : “I have a question too”

Zahra : “**Kamu the second nah**”

“You are the second questioner”

Extract 10 above Amar mentioned the personal names to address his question by saying “*Zahra*” and there were other students who wanted to ask too so Zahra used direct pronoun “*Kamu*” (You) to express her response. In this extract, the use of personal name and direct pronoun as address terms was prompted by the familiarity of the interlocutors in the class. Because they are classmates, they could use personal names and direct pronoun although it was rather less polite.

Extract 11: address term of *Ma’am*

Karina : “**Ma’am, masih ada belum saya pahami...**”.

“Ma’am, I still don’t understand”

Extract 11 shows the use of “Ma’am” to address term of her female lecturer. This utterance indicated that she had good emotional relationship, and felt close to her lecturer.

### Apologies

Extract 12: Ordering to pay attention

Lecturer : “**Pay attention, Please! Listen carefully your friend’s explanation!**”

students : “Yes, Ma’am”...

In extract 12, the lecturer ordered the students to pay attention to their friend explanation by saying “**Pay attention, Please! Listen carefully your friend’s explanation**” because the atmosphere of the class began to get out of control because of the debate in the question and answer session so that there was a lack of attention to students who would explain the material. This expression was meant to be polite and The use of this kind of apology was able to minimize the impoliteness.

Extract 13: Using apologetic term of *tabe'*

Rahmi : "Okay, thanks for the chance that has given to me. My question is... "

Karina : "**Tabe' louder your voice, Please**".

"**sorry, louder your voice, Please**"

In extract 13, a student began to ask her question but his voice was not clear so that Karina asked that her voice be raised by saying "**Tabe' louder your voice, Please**". The expression "tabe" means "sorry" but it was derived from students' vernacular language, that is Bugis-Makassar language. This apologetic expression could soften the flow of the interaction and maintain the good communication in the class.

Extract 14: asking permission

Lasmi : "**I'm sorry**, saya hanya mau menambahkan informasi tentang mengenai using tenses in scientific writing, it's about citations, ...".

"I'm sorry, I just want to add information about using tenses in scientific writing it's about citations, ...".

Lecturer : Yes, Please!

In extract 14, a student will give an additional explanation based on the previous explanation but he starts with an apologetic expression by saying "**I'm sorry**" as a kind of apology which was meant to be polite.

Extract 15: Rejecting

Sainal : "**Tabe', e..e.. bukan itu maksud pertanyaanku tapi** what is the different between the use of past tense and present tense in citations?".

"**Tabe', e.. e.. that's not the point of my question but** what is the different between the use of past tense and present tense in citations?"

Nur : "Ohh begitu..."

"Ohh like that..."

In extract 15, Sainal refused Nur's answer because it did not match his question, he refused it with an expression of apologetic term by saying "*tabe'*" meant "sorry", This is one strategy to use politeness by politely refusing something, in addition, Nur would not be offended because of the rejection and it can be keep their relationship as classmates.

### Fillers

Extract 16: filler in presentation and in answering the question.

Nur : *e..e..* the different between the use of past tense and present tense in citations, the present tense is used *e..e..* when the information you are citing is generally *anu'* accepted as a scientific fact, **I mean** reporting facts.

Sainal : **Well, a..a..** what about past tense?

Nur : **Yeah**, it will be different, *e..e..* the past tense is used *e..* finding from specific studies.

In extract 16, Nur answered the question and used some expressions such as "*e..e..*", "**I mean**" and "**Yeah**". Meanwhile Sainal used two expressions "**Well**" and "*a..a..*". These expressions are categorized as fillers. In this case, Nur got stuck in the middle of speech. In order to maintain the flow of the conversations, they used those fillers to build the gaps in his explanation and reduce her nervousness. The use of those expressions could also function as polite markers under his hesitations.

Extract 17: Fillers in asking a question

Karina : “*a..a..* do you understand? May I continue...”

Lasmi : “Yes I do, **it mean** past tense to describe what was done, **well** let’s continue!”

In extract 17, Karina wanted to make sure that her explanation is understood but previously he had forgotten what he was going to say, so He said “*a..a..*” to bridge the ideas before asking the question. Lasmi responds to questions and expressed what she has understood again, after that she expressed her agreement to continue the discussion by using some fillers such as “**it mean**” and “**well**”. The presentation became more polite and therefore, it created polite situation.

### **Vernacular language**

Extract 18: asking questions

Lecturer : “We have discussed in detail about the types of tenses used in scientific writing, I think everything is clear or there are still questions?”.

Nur : “What about you guys? *Masih ada pertanyaanta?*” *atau jelas semuami?*”  
“What about you guys? Are there any questions or everything is clear?”.

Zahra :”*Cepatki’ bae lo*”  
“hurry up”

In extract 18, the lecturer asked a question to confirm if there were no more questions by saying “I think everything is clear or there are still questions?” and one of student re stated it to get answer directly by using vernacular language. Nur said “what about you guys? *Masih ada pertanyaanta?*” *atau jelas semuami?* (Are there any questions or everything is clear?)” The use of *ta’* and *mi* was derived from Bugis-Makassar language which means “**You**” and “**already**”. In the end of the dialogue Zahra ordered his friend to respond immediately to the lecturer by saying “**Cepatki’ bae lo**” These word was sometimes used by Bugis-Makassar speakers to soften their expressions and made them indirect. The expression “tidak ada” (no more) was more polite when it was attached to the word “mi” (Mahmud, M. (2018).

## **4. Conclusion**

All of the twenty extracts above show the variation of politeness strategies in the students’ discussion in the class. From Brown and Levinson’s framework of politeness, two important strategies emerged, namely positive politeness and negative politeness. It can be concluded that several strategies of politeness of Brown and Levinson (1987) were used by the English students in their presentation both positive politeness and negative politeness.

The use of some politeness strategies can be used by the English students in order to contribute to effective EFL classroom interaction especially in Islamic Institute of Muhammadiyah Sinjai. However, further studies need to be conducted in terms of the use of politeness in the e-learning process during a pandemic.

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