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## THE ANALYSIS OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES ON EFL STUDENTS' CHATTING GROUP INTERACTIONS

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### Abstract

This paper reported the analysis of the practice of politeness strategies used in WhatsApp group chatting interactions among EFL students. Intermediate level of English Education Program in one of private universities in West Java was employed because they are assumed to interact in WhatsApp group chatting. Furthermore, two research questions were formulated such as follows: 1) what kinds of politeness strategies do EFL students apply in WhatsApp chatting group interactions? and 2) what is the most dominant politeness strategy realized in EFL students' chatting group interactions? This study utilized descriptive qualitative study to analyze and interpret the realization of politeness strategy used by the EFL students in WhatsApp chatting group interactions. The results revealed that the students used four politeness strategy types. They were bald on-record, positive politeness strategy, negative politeness strategy, and bald off-record. Then, the most dominant type of politeness strategy in WhatsApp chatting group interactions was positive politeness strategy (47.1%). Based on the results, it was concluded that the EFL students used the entire types of the politeness strategy in the interactions of group chatting in which positive politeness strategy were used the most frequently by the students.

**Keywords:** *Teaching speaking, Team Game Tourna*

## INTRODUCTION

As the communication platform, WhatsApp chatting group may also be the language learning media. Ta'amneh (2017, p. 149) confirms that the application of WhatsApp in teaching English contribute the positive effect that may help learners as well as instructors to learn on their own line. WhatsApp group chatting can be practiced in English learning activity because it can encourage EFL students to analyze every topic given. However, its use in social media may generate any misunderstanding. Chovanec and Dynel (2015, p.7) claim that interactions in social media are identified by speakers' and hearers' spatial separation and indeterminate hearership. In this regard, politeness takes dominant part in communication.

Yule (2010, pp. 135) claims that politeness can mean as expressing awareness and consideration of another person's face. The application of politeness means the representation of speaker's utterance to threat hearer's face. Furthermore, LoCastro (2012, p. 156) states that politeness is only a type of social action that people want to enact in interactions to reach commitment. In the interaction, the use of politeness can avoid misunderstanding in reaching the purposes. Culpeper et al., (2017, p. 2) say that politeness is firstly influenced serious academic in the 1970s with the work of Lakoff (1973), Leech (1977), and Brown and Levinson (1987). In addition, LoCastro (2012, p. 137) assumes that the most influential work in politeness theory is Brown and Levinson's (1987) model.

Brown and Levinson (1987) recommend the concept of face. The concept is divided into two concepts, positive face and negative face. According to LoCastro (2012, p. 137), positive face requires the demand to be liked, involved, and included in the category of being the "right" kind of person. The theory from Brown and Levinson (1987) also present the use of politeness in face-to-face interactions. Besides, the use of politeness in language begins when a speaker takes time to produce a face threatening act (FTA), an utterance declines the tacit comprehending all languages should keep the face preservation (Alan and Meyer, 2009). To save the hearer's face and to show respect to the hearer, the speaker should minimize his/her FTA.

Concerning FTA, LoCastro (2012, p.141) underlines further that speakers decides on how to pass a FTA by bearing in mind three variables that put forward by Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 1), namely; 1) the social distance between the speaker and addressee;

2) the power difference between the speaker and addressee; and 3) the weight of imposition. In line with LoCastro's explanation, Brown and Levinson (1987, pp. 69-70) elaborates that four strategies for politeness in relation to FTAs are: bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and bald off-record.

This study is underpinned by three previous studies. The first one was carried out by Monsefi & Hadidi (2015) that applied mix method design. The purpose was finding out the effect of gender and teachers' use of politeness strategies on the patterns of classroom interaction. The results of this study found out that there was a difference between male and female teachers regarding conversational behaviors; and direct connection among the use of more polite strategies, and learning process, and teacher student interaction. This previous study analyzed on how EFL students use politeness strategies in the classroom interaction. Meanwhile, the present study investigates how EFL students use politeness strategies within online group interaction.

The second previous study was conducted by Etae, Krish & Hussin (2016) which explored the practice of cultural politeness between Thai students and an expatriate lecturer and its features of Thai and Western speech acts in an online forum. The study was a qualitative study that adopted case study as the research design. The results revealed that the student had an inclination to utilize Positive politeness, followed by Bald-On-Record politeness, Negative politeness and Off-Record politeness strategy when posting online contents to their lecturer. This second previous study reported the politeness strategies that Thai EFL tertiary learners used in online forum and that previous study employed case study as the research design. To overcome the gap, the present study found out the use of politeness strategies that EFL students used in online chatting group interactions.

There was similarity between the present study and the previous studies; they focus on investigating of politeness strategies. The most similar one is the third previous study which explored the politeness strategies in Twitter updates, a social media platform (Maros & Rosli, 2017). The result revealed that the participants utilized four politeness strategies with positive politeness employed the most, followed by bald-on record, off-record with the least employed being negative politeness. Meanwhile, the current study investigates politeness strategies on EFL students' chatting group interactions in the other social media; the group chatting interactions in WhatsApp, which is still rare.

Based on the aforementioned previous studies, this current study proposed research questions as follows; 1) What kinds of politeness strategies do EFL students apply in WhatsApp chatting group interactions? 2) What is the dominant politeness strategy realized in EFL students' group chatting interactions? To gain the answer, the writers are going to discuss them in the forthcoming discussion session of this study.

## **METHOD**

The major problem of this study is the use of politeness strategies implemented within EFL students' interactions. Related to the research questions, the design of the study was qualitative study. Cresswell (2012, pp. 16) defines that qualitative research means revealing and building a specific understanding of a main phenomenon. From the case of this study, descriptive method was employed as the design of this study. Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012, pp. 21) confirm that descriptive study needs a comprehensive analysis of the various aspects of phenomena as well as their interconnection.

Based on the data, this study inclined to obtain them from WhatsApp chatting group. Intermediate level of English Education Program in one of private universities in Ciamis was selected as they are considered to have an interaction in WhatsApp group chatting. This group was Learning Community 3A. The group consisted of 19 members and 18 of them were the junior students and another one was the lecturer of Language Assessment. The data were gained from members' daily conversations. There were several steps in collecting the data such as follows:

First, the writer asked for permission to the lecturer of Language Assessment to join WhatsApp chatting group. That class was Learning Community 3A. After the writer joined WhatsApp chatting group, she inclined to screenshot all the data of the interactions and analyzed those data. Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun Fraenkel et al., (2012, pp. 21) describe that data analysis means any statistical techniques, both descriptive and inferential, so those should be described in order to be used. In current study, the writer carried out several steps to analyze the data. The steps were designed as follow:

In the first step, the writer learned the interactions from Learning Community 3A WhatsApp chatting group interactions. In the second step, the writer sorted the parts from the interactions. There were six sections of interaction to be analyzed. In the third step, the sorted data were analyzed by means of the theory of Brown and Levinson

(1987). In the fourth step, number of data were proceeded into calculation in the form of percentage to display the politeness strategies used by EFL students in WhatsApp chatting group interactions. The data were calculated by using formula as suggested by Hatch and Larazaton (1991). In the fifth step, the data were interpreted qualitatively. The calculated data were interpreted to answer research questions. Finally, the conclusion was withdrawn and related to the data elaborated in the previous analysis.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study presents the research findings based on the data obtained from the EFL students' interaction in WhatsApp chatting group. The writer joined the group to screenshot the data. Then, the selected data consisted of seven sessions of chatting interactions. The sessions consisted of four sessions of interactions among students and three sessions of student-to-lecturer interactions. The findings inclined to answer the research questions of the present study. The first research question is "What kinds of politeness strategies do EFL students apply in WhatsApp chatting group interactions?"

### *Kinds of Politeness Strategies Applied by EFL Students in Whatsapp Chatting Group Interactions*

Based on the data, it was found that the EFL students used all the types of politeness strategies in WhatsApp chatting group interactions as can be seen in Table 1.

**Table. 1 EFL students' politeness strategies in WhatsApp chatting group Interactions**

<b>Politeness Strategies</b>	<b>Student – to – Student Interactions</b>	<b>Students- to - Lecturer Interactions</b>	<b>Total</b>
Bald on-record	7	-	7
Positive Politeness	35	7	42
Negative Politeness	23	9	32
Bald off-record	8	-	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>89</b>

Based on Table 1, it can be concluded that the four types of Brown and Levinson' (1987) politeness strategies theory were practiced by EFL students in WhatsApp chatting group interactions. However, bald on-record politeness strategy and bald off-record politeness strategy were not practiced in the interactions between students and lecturer. The kinds of politeness strategy applied by EFL students in WhatsApp chatting group interactions is given in the following organizations:

### ***Bald on-record***

The data showed that the EFL students practiced bald on-record politeness strategy in WhatsApp chatting group interactions. However, bald on-record strategy was only practiced in the interactions of among students. Adel, Davoudi, and Ramenzanzadeh (2016, pp. 49) claim that the purpose of bald on-record strategies is not lowering the threat to the hearer's face, rather than they are utilized to directly address the other person to say what she/ he wants. The practice of this strategy can be seen from the criteria spoken by the students in their utterances.

Excerpt 1 is categorized as bald on- record strategy. In excerpt 1, GG said "Woy My name is GG." for self-introduction. The word "woy" was classified as bald on-record politeness strategy spoken by speaker that functions to satisfy hearer with small strategy. Brown and Levinson (1987, pp. 97) state that speaker demands to satisfy hearer's small face because speaker has power and does not fear reprisal or non-cooperation from listener.

### ***Excerpt 1***

*GG : Woy My name is GG. I'd like to ask your group. What is the combination of learning in linguistic competence? Thank you*

*SF : Ok, thanks. Give us time to discuss the answer.*

*(Source: Student-to-Student interaction)*

In the Excerpt 1, there was also the utterance that is identified as bald or-record politeness strategy that was used in cases of urgency and desperation as the strategy. Brown and Levinson (1987, pp. 95-96) assert that no face redress is necessary where maximum efficiency is very important. It means that in the case of urgency the speaker may use the efficiency way to communicate.

### ***Positive politeness strategy***

After the data analysis was complete, it was found that the EFL students utilized positive politeness strategy in WhatsApp chatting group interactions. Positive politeness strategy was used in the interactions among students and the interactions of student-to-lecturer. The students used this strategy to show their closed relationship and to stay away from misunderstanding and conflict. The realization of this strategy can be seen from the criteria spoken in students' utterances as given in Excerpt 2:

#### ***Excerpt 2***

*SH : Ass. Guys. Good evening? How are you this evening? Firstly, I'm sorry guys for disturbing your time, but here we would like to start the Learning Community.*

*WL : Waalaikumsalam. I'm great. How about u?*

*RS : Wlaikumslam*

*SH : I'm great sista*

*AS : Waalaikumsalam I am sorry I am late*

*SH : Yups*

*(Source: Student-to-Student interaction)*

In the Excerpt 2, it can be seen that the students practiced positive politeness strategy which was used in-group identity markers. It also means that the students used different techniques to express emotional bond. Brown and Levinson (1987, pp. 107) say that speaker implements many ways to deliver membership in groups including in-group usages of address forms, language or dialect, jargon or slang, and ellipsis.

SH used "guys" as the in-group identity markers strategy in order to call the other members in the discussion. Moreover, SH said "I'm great sista", "sista" means sister which was addressed to call WL. The students used address forms that include generic names and terms in order to build their emotional bond.

### ***Negative politeness strategy***

Related to the data, the writer found that the EFL students used negative politeness strategy in WhatsApp chatting group interactions. Adel, Davoudi, and Ramenzanzadeh (2016, pp. 50) state that negative politeness strategies perils to keep away from the hearer imposition and it can be defined as an interest to remain authority

using distancing mode, such as the practice of modal verbs or hesitation, apologize for imposition, questioning or permission for asking a question. The students chose this strategy to differentiate their utterances to their relatives and the lecturer. The implementation of this strategy was presented from the criteria on students' utterances as described in Excerpt 3.

***Excerpt 3***

*TM : Haloo I'm TM. Ohyaaa SF as you told in your presentation last week in the test design cycle. If I'm not wrong there is a criterion of the test development cycle and my question is "what are the criteria of the test development cycle?"*

*SF : Oke thanks for giving us the time to discuss the answer.*

*(Source: Student-to-Student interaction)*

Based on the Excerpt 3, the student TM was identified using question and hedge negative politeness strategy in delivering utterance. A hedge refers to a particle, word, or phrase modifying "the degree of membership of a predicate or noun phrase in a set" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, pp.145). From TM's utterance, "If I'm not wrong" is classified as hedge. The use of hedge in the utterance was used by TM with the purpose of communicating that TM's utterance is true than it perhaps might be expected.

***Bald off-record***

Based on the data, it was found that the EFL students used bald off-record politeness strategy in WhatsApp chatting group interactions. Bald off-record politeness strategy used was in the form of interactions among students. Brown and Levinson (1987, pp. 211) claim that the speaker wants to deal with FTA, but in fact he/she wants to get away from FTA. So, the speaker conveys his/her utterance and transfer it to the hearer's way how to interpret it. The students utilized this strategy to convey their intentions by using defensible interpretation. The realization of this strategy was presented from the criteria spoken in the students' utterances. Excerpt 4 is categorized as bald off-record politeness strategy.

In excerpt 4, it can be seen AS's utterance "Halo. My question. I am sorry", AS used to give hints as the strategy in the utterance. Brown and Levinson (1987, pp.213) argue that giving hints means if speaker talks irrelevant thing explicitly, he/she wants to get understanding of the hearer. Here, AS tried to get compliance from SF to notice



AS's question as if the question and answer session was still going on.

***Excerpt 4***

AS : My name is AS. I want to ask to your group. When will you tell me about that material? How is the best way to decide the test?

SF : Oke guys sorry time is up. Thanks for your best question and your attention. Wassalamualaikum.

AS : Halo. My question. I am sorry. How is the best way to give a test?

SM : Thank you for your attention and your time

SF : Sorry AS time is up. insyaAllah we would like to answer your question next time ok. Byeeee

(Source: Student-to-Student interaction)

Further, the realization of overstating can be seen in the Excerpt 4. Brown and Levinson (1987, pp. 219) declares that overstating means the speaker says more than necessary. In Excerpt 4, SF tried to get AS's compliance by exaggerating the statement. SF said "Sorry AS time is up. InsyaAllah we would like to answer your question next time ok. Byeeee" to indirectly avoid to answer AS's question. Nevertheless, bald secret politeness strategy was not applied by students in the interaction with the lecturer. Here, some students as the speaker used bald off-record politeness strategy in order to make the hearer deciding how to interpret statements.

***The Dominant Politeness Strategy Realized in EFL Students' Group Chatting Interactions***

Student's tendency to use politeness strategy type in WhatsApp group interactions was positive politeness strategy. Out of 100%, positive politeness strategy was 47.1% which was followed by negative politeness strategy (36%) and bald off-record politeness strategy (9%). Then, politeness strategy types less applied by the students was bald on-record politeness strategy (7.9%).

Regarding to the data analysis result previously discussed, the most dominant politeness strategy in EFL students' chatting group interactions was positive politeness strategy. Furthermore, those displayed data indicated that the 47.1% applied politeness strategy was positive politeness strategy.

According to the findings of the present study, the writer revealed that the practice of positive politeness strategy by students was related to building the emotional bond between the speaker and the hearer. Furthermore, the speakers tended to avoid misfire in the communication and tried to be in line in lexical meaning and context meaning.

Overall, the present study is also in line with some previous studies conducted by Monsefi & Hadidi (2015), Etaa, Krish, & Hussin (2016), and Marlos & Rosli (2017). The results revealed that the student had an inclination to use positive politeness, followed by bald on-record politeness, negative politeness and off-record politeness strategy for their online posting contents to the lecturer. The results of the present study referred to the theory of politeness strategy. In brief, politeness strategy can be presented as the interpretation of the awareness that speaker has in delivering their statements. Politeness is the interpretation of how speaker build communication.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Regarding to the two research questions proposed in study, there were two conclusions which should be highlighted. The first research question referred to the kinds of politeness strategies that EFL students used in WhatsApp group interactions. Besides, the second research question showed the most dominant politeness strategy implemented in EFL students' WhatsApp chatting group interactions. Then, the conclusions were withdrawn as follows;

First, in students' WhatsApp group chatting interactions, the students used four politeness strategy types. Those types were bald on-record politeness strategy, positive politeness strategy, negative politeness strategy, and bald off-record politeness strategy. Meanwhile, the students used all types of strategy in student-to-student interactions and they only practiced positive and negative politeness strategy within student - to - lecturer interactions. The total of calculated strategy applied by the students were 89 strategies. They consisted of 7 times of bald on-record politeness strategy, 42 times of positive politeness strategy, 32 times of negative politeness strategy, and 8 times of bald off-record strategy.

The second, student's tendency to use politeness strategy type in WhatsApp group interactions was positive politeness strategy. Out of 100%, positive politeness

strategy was 47.1% which was followed by negative politeness strategy (36%) and bald off-record politeness strategy (9%). Then, politeness strategy types less applied by the students was bald on-record politeness strategy (7.9%).

The forthcoming researchers are suggested to explore and update the topic of the study that focuses on politeness strategy. The forthcoming researchers can use the other media to be analyzed by the theory of politeness strategy. Finally, they can give more beneficial and convincing results specifically for English education.

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