

**POLITENESS STRATEGIES USED IN COMPLAINT
BY INDONESIAN EFL LEARNERS
IN MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA**



PUBLICATION ARTICLE

**Submitted as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for Getting Bachelor Degree of Education
in English Department**

Proposed by

ENDAH HANA PRATIWI

A 320 090 260

**SCHOOL OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION
MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA**

2013



UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH SURAKARTA
FAKULTAS KEGURUAN DAN ILMU PENDIDIKAN

Sekretariat: J.A.Yani Tromol Pos I, Pabelan, Kartasura, Surakarta 57102
Telp. (0271) 717417, 719483 (Hunting), Fax. (0271) 715448
Website: <http://www.ums.ac.id>, E-mail: ums@ums.ac.id

Surat Persetujuan Artikel Publikasi Ilmiah

Yang bertanda tangan di bawah ini pembimbing skripsi/tugas akhir:

Nama : Agus Wijayanto, Ph.D (Pembimbing I)

NIP/NIK : 978

Nama : Dra. Malikatul Laila, M.Hum (Pembimbing II)

NIP/NIK : 409

Telah membaca dan mencermati naskah artikel publikasi ilmiah, yang merupakan ringkasan skripsi (tugas akhir) dari mahasiswa:

Nama : Endah Hana Pratiwi

NIM : A320090260

Judul Skripsi : Politeness Strategies Used in Complaint by Indonesian EFL learners
in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta

Naskah artikel tersebut, layak dan dapat disetujui untuk dipublikasikan.

Demikian persetujuan ini dibuat, semoga dapat dipergunakan seperlunya.

Pembimbing II

Dra. Malikatul Laila, M.Hum
NIK.409

Surakarta, Maret 2013
Pembimbing I

Agus Wijayanto
NIK.978

**POLITENESS STRATEGIES USED IN COMPLAINT
BY INDONESIAN EFL LEARNERS**

Endah Hana Pratiwi

(A320090260)

Agus Wijayanto, Ph.D

Dra. Malikatul Laila, M.Hum

*Department of English Education, School of Teacher Training and Education
Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta
e-mail: Hannalinecofa@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

This research describes the use of politeness strategies in complaint in relation to relative power (P) and distance (D) by Indonesian EFL learners in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta. This involved descriptive qualitative research in which the research participants were thirty Indonesian EFL learners at first semester at English department, Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta. The data were spoken utterances of complaint strategies elicited through oral DCT (Discourse Completion Tasks) scenarios. The subjects were taken using the technique of proporsional random sampling comprising fifteen female and fifteen male participants. The data of compliant strategies were analyzed based on Trosborg (1995), whilst that of politeness were analyzed based on Brown and Levinson (1987). The research findings showed that Indonesian EFL learners tended to express annoyance when they made complaints. As for politeness, they mostly used bald on record and positive politeness. Social distance (D), rather than relative power (P), tended to influence the strategies of complaint and politeness.

Keywords: Complaint, Interlanguage pragmatics, Politeness

A. Introduction

Speech act of complaint is interesting as it is included as an act that threatens both positive and negative face want. It threatens positive face of the complainees as the complainers do not care about the complainees's feelings, wants, etc. It puts threats on addressee's positive face as it shows that speaker has a negative evaluation on the hearer. Thus a complaint is intrinsically a non-polite act (Trosborg, 1995:312).

Interlanguage pragmatic research on complaint by EFL learners has been limited. For example Park (2001) reported politeness strategies used in complaint by Korean EFL Learners. Abdolrezapour (2012) showed how Iranian EFL learners used politeness in complaint. He reported that more indirect complaints were perceived as more polite by EFL learners. In Indonesian context, a study by Sukyadi (2011) reported that gender influenced the choice of complaint strategies. Wijayanto, et al. (2012) showed that Indonesian EFL learners had difficulties to express complaint in English. Although some studies reported that politeness was used in complain strategies by second/foreign language learners (e.g. Abdolrezapour, 2012; Park, 2001), in Indonesian EFL learning context, it is very rare. This study is intended to fill the gap. Thus this study is to extend an interlanguage pragmatic research in Indonesian context, particularly focusing on politeness strategies used in complaints by Indonesia EFL learners.

Politeness in an interaction can be defined as the means to show awareness of another person's face (Yule, 1998:60). Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness is claimed to be universal which has been used by many linguists to study politeness in many different languages. In interlanguage pragmatic research, politeness used by foreign language learners has become new interest of study (e.g. Cheung, 2009; Alfattah, 2009; Aridah, 2010; Sukarno, 2010; Wijayanto, 2012).

B. Literature Review

1. Politeness

Politeness is the means employed to show awareness of another person's face (Yule, 1996 : 60). In politeness, speaker must aware to hearer face. There are two faces known, positive face and negative face. Positive face is the need to be respected and appreciated, thus a person's positive face is the need to be accepted, even liked, by others, to be treated as a member of the same group,

and to know that his or her wants are shared by others. But, negative face is the need to be independent, to have freedom of action, and not to be imposed on by others.

There are four politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), that is bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record politeness. Bald on record is politeness strategies that can directly address others as a means of expressing your needs (Yule, 1996:63). Strategies in bald on record are cases of non-minimization of the face threat and cases of FTA-oriented bald-on-record usage. Positive politeness is about politeness redressed to positive face. There are fifteen strategies included in positive politeness 1) notice, attend to H; 2) exaggerate; 3) intensify interest to H; 4) used in-group identity markers; 5) seek agreement; 6) avoid disagreement; 7) presuppose; 8) joke; 9) assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants; 10) offer, promise; 11) be optimistic; 12) include both S and H in the activity; 13) give or ask for reasons; 14) assume or assert reciprocity; 15) give gift to H. Negative politeness is the opposite of positive politeness. It has ten strategies, that is 1) be conventionally indirect; 2) question and hedge; 3) be pessimistic; 4) minimize the imposition; 5) give deference; 6) apologize; 7) impersonalize S and H; 8) state the FTA as general rule; 9) nominalize; 10) go on record as incurring a debt, or as not in debting H. The last politeness strategy is off record. It is essentially indirect uses of language which purposes to avoid responsibility to hearer. There are fifteen strategies involved, those are 1) give hints; 2) give association clue; 3) presuppose; 4) understate; 5) overstate; 6) use tautology; 7) use contradictions; 8) be ironic; 9) use metaphors; 10) use rhetorical questions; 11) be ambiguous; 12) be vague; 13) over generalize; 14) displace H; 15) be incomplete, use ellipsis.

In doing politeness, people are influenced by some sociological factors, P (relative power) and D (social distance). P (H,S) is the degree to which H

can impose his own plans and his own self-evaluation (face) at the expense of S's plan's and self evaluation. D is based on an assessment of the frequency of interaction and the kinds of material or non-material goods (including face) exchanged between S and H

2. Complaint strategies

Complaint is defined here as an illocutionary act in which the speaker (the complainer) expresses his/her disapproval, negative feelings etc (Trosborg, 1995:311). A complaint is a "face-threatening act" (Brown and Levinson, 1978:19 in Trosborg 1995:312). "The act of moral censure or blame is an act of social rejection-an act whereby the accuser breaks ties of affection, mutual support and co-operation" (Place, 1968:28 in Trosborg, 1995:312). Category of complaint is divided into four, those are: 1) no explicit reproach; 2) expression of annoyance or disapproval; 3) accusation; and 4) no explicit reproach.

C. Research Methods

This is descriptive research which investigated the use of politeness in the speech act of complaint used by Indonesian EFL learners studying at English department, in a university in Central Java. Proportional random sampling was involved. The data were spoken utterances of complaint strategies elicited through nine of DCT (Discourse Completion Tasks) scenarios (see appendix). The data of politeness strategies were analyzed based on Brown and Levinson (1987).

D. Result and Discussion

1. Result

Politeness strategies used by participants are bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record politeness. Bald on record was the most diverse politeness strategy used by participants. The use of bald on record was more frequently to close distance (close – equal, close – lower, and

close – higher). Participants used BOR in accusation, blaming, annoyance, and negative consequence as Trosborg's complaint taxonomy., for example:

- a. You-you-you broke my camera! (Blaming)
- b. Hai Siti., **tomorrow you borrow my camera-my new camera and I think I have-I have a many problem about this camera, and maybe you-you (tidak menggunakannya dengan baik-baik?) you did not use it well**, I want complaint about this camera and you must understand about this, I want to meet you now. Thank you. (Accusation)
- c. **I am late!** ... You said that you will go home at 1 o'clock but this is more than two o'clock. Don't you know? I am late now. (Consequence)
- d. Hai brother! **You are deaf?** I will use it now (Annoyed)

Other the use of BOR are in requesting, ordering, warning, anger, and etc. Some participants used harsh language in complaint, such as:

- a. Please mam, **help me, help me.** I very need. (Requesting)
- b. You're fired! (Anger)
- c. **Don't repeat!** And you must finish today because important by people. (Warning)
- d. Work quickly! (ordering)

But, some participants used forgiving and acceptance to use BOR, as follows:

- a. Ya... **it's oke no problem!** (Acceptance)
- b. **It's ok**, boy, it's ok, it's ok (Forgiving)

Next politeness strategy was positive politeness (PP). It was usually used by participants in close and familiar distance. Participants used PP (positive politeness) in several strategies, that was PP 11 (be optimistic) and PP 13 (using rhetorical questions). PP 13 was the most frequently used by participants in in form of annoyance. It was form of questions which demands for answer, for example:

a. Hei, **why the lens camera is broken?** What happen? (PP 13 Annoyance)

b. Hey, **why you get in front of the line?** (PP 13 Annoyance)

Other uses of PP 13 were in rebuking, requesting, dissatisfaction, and disappointment, as follows:

a. I am sorry miss, **why I am got ... score D?** I am not satisfied (Dissatisfaction)

b. Mrs, **why do you finish your report?** (Rebuking)

c. Father, **why did not you-why did not I get fr-I get money from you** or I chance-I can borrow money from other family (Disappointment)

d. Woy! **Why is your cut stand in line?** (Requesting)

Then, PP 11 was used hadly by participants, as follows:

Oh dad, you know you are supposed to be giving that money to me today. (Annoyance)

Off record politeness strategies used by participants mostly in OR 10 (using rhetorical questions) which the question did not need an answer. The use of off record mostly in form of annoyance which used some harsh language, but some OR 10 did not, for example:

a. **What the fuck! Is my camera is:** oh no: This camera broke? Oh my God, you must to changes the (what?) change my lens-new my lens-new-in new.

b. Oh: dude **why are you turning the music very loud:** you know I cannot study for the test tomorrow

Other OR used by participants were OR 3 and OR 8. OR 3 (presuppose) which violated relevance maxim was only used in one strategy. OR 8 (be ironic) which meant speaker said the opposite of what he/she means (Brown and Levinson, 1987:221), as follows:

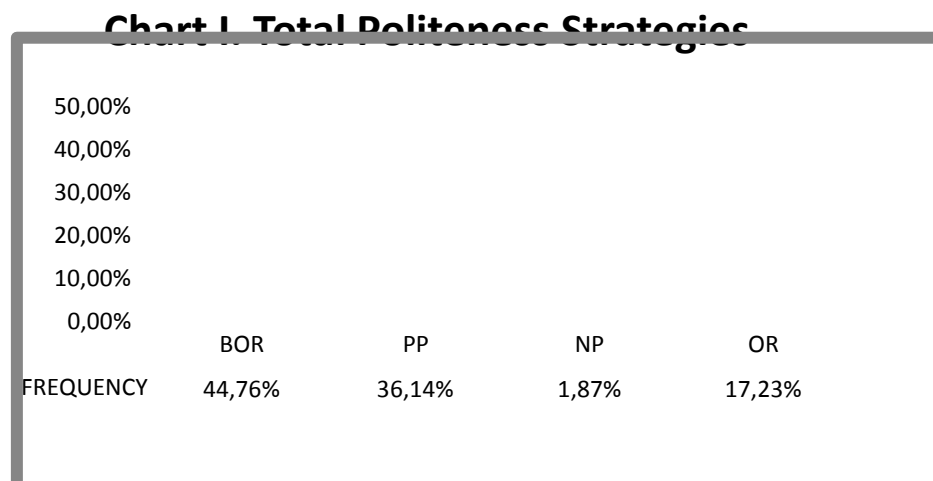
a. Hello! **It's noisy** hello! (OR 3/Expressing Inconvenience)

- b. **It's very nice my friend!** Can you turn off of your music! I am very uncomfortable for it. (OR 8/Expressing Inconvenience)

Negative politeness was the least politeness strategy used by participants. It mostly used in unfamiliar, but some data found in close – higher and familiar equal. Participants only used three negative politeness strategies, which are NP 2 (question, hedge), NP 3 (be pessimistic), and NP 7 (impersonalize speaker and hearer: point-of-view distancing).

- a. Hai bro, **I think you must (mengantri?) I think you must take a line with all friends in here** because I am here almost (hampir?) 15 minutes like all my friend in here and you must (mengantri?) take a line. Please brother. (NP 3/Requesting)
- b. Boy, **if you-if you singing-if you singing it can you do-do it with calm because I am very very an-an-annoyed.** (NP 2/Requesting)
- c. I am sorry sir, I would ask for you about my score in my study ... in this campus. Why you didn't hear me? (Requesting)

Summary



The chart above showed that BOR was the highest politeness strategy used by participants. PP was more frequently used by participants than OR.

Finally, strategy OR was the least politeness strategy used by participants. The researcher provided more detail chart below to explain further.

2. Discussion

Politeness strategy found in complaint mostly use in bald on record. As what Brown and Levinson (1978:19) said in Trosborg (1995:312) that a complaint is a “face threatening act”. Politeness strategy which tended to use FTA is bald on record, because when a speaker wanted to make FTA, he/she needed maximum efficiency which only suitable in bald on record. The motive of doing FTA was not minimized, but face was ignored or was irrelevant (Brown and Levinson, 1997:95). Some complaint strategy involved were annoyance, criticizing, anger, blaming, showing fault, disappointed, etc. But, bald on record was not always characterized to face threatening act. Complainer used forgiving in approximately high frequency.

BOR was mostly politeness strategy used by participants in familiar-equal. Participants in P equal (close-familiar-unfamiliar) used BOR in high frequency, but in P higher (close-familiar-unfamiliar) used BOR more frequently than P lower (close-familiar-unfamiliar).

There was a javanese presumption that is called “tata krama”. Collocutors in P equal would be reasonable if they carried on conversation directly or used BOR, but speaker would give different treatment to the hearer in higher or lower power. Those difference were shown in the use of PP and NP. PP and NP were influenced by social distance neither relative power. PP was mostly used by participants in D close (equal-lower-higher), but NP was mostly used by participants in D unfamiliar (equal-lower-higher). OR was used by participants in all situations but it was most frequently used in unfamiliar – lower and unfamiliar – higher. However, participants was mostly used strategy OR 10. According to the participants assumptions that questioning is better than directly blaming.

Other interesting finding in data was the grammar used by participants. The researcher analyzed that participants used disordered grammar, but their complaint were understandable, for example:

- a. *Why-why you-why you the broken is my camera?* (10/MM/CE)
- b. *Hey mom, I want-I want to ask the money to bay (membayar?) to pay SPP now, because day tomorrow a promise with me.* (06/MF/CH)
- c. *Mrs. My mark is back.* (13/MF/FH)

This problem occurred because it might be the first time they were interviewed. On this research, participants must response spontaneously. Hopefully, in next research they would be better.

E. Conclusion

There were four politeness strategies used by Indonesian EFL learners. Bald on record was the most frequently used by the participants. Then, positive politeness was more frequently used by participants than off record politeness strategy. Finally, negative politeness was the hardly politeness strategy used by participants. Participants used BOR, PP, and NP influenced by javanese rules (*tata krama*). The use of bald on record was influenced by P (relative power) of interlocutors. Participants mostly used bald on record in P equal because collocutors would be easier having conversation directly to P equal than using other strategies. Positive politeness and negative politeness was influenced by social distance among interlocutors. Participants used positive politeness mostly in D close, but participants in D unfamiliar used negative politeness more frequently. Off record politeness used by all participants but in low frequency. Power and distance did not influenced the use of off record. It might be participants could not arrange indirect language well.

Bibliography

- Abdolrezapour, Parisa, et al. 2012. Iranian EFL Learner's Realization of Complaints in American English. *Journal of Language Studies*, 12(2) : 711-725.
- Alfattah, Mohammed, H.A, and Ravindranath, B.K. 2009. Politeness strategies in the English interlanguage requests of Yemeni. *Iranian Journal of Language Studies (IJLS)*, Vol. 3(3) : 249-266.
- Aridah, Aridah. 2010. Politeness Phenomena as A Source of Pragmatic Failure in English as A Second Language. *Journal TEFLIN*.
- Ayu, Dyah, T. And Sukyadi, Didi. 2011. Complaining in EFL Learners: Difference of Realizations Between Men and Women. *Parole*, 2 (1) : 1-25.
- Brown and Levinson. 1987. *Politeness : Some Universals in Language Usage*. New York : Cambridge University Press.
- Cheung, Carmen Sin Ting. 2009. Korean Politeness Strategies of Chinese and American Speakers. *LCOM Papers*, page: 45-54
- Hassal, Tim. 1999. Request Strategies in Indonesian. *International Pragmatics Association*, 9(4) : 585-606.
- Heinemann, Trine. 2008. Participant and Exclusion in Third Party Complaints. *Journal of Pragmatic*, :10.1016/j.pragma.2008.09.044.
- Moloeng, Lexy, J. 1995. *Metodology Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: PT Remaja Rosda Karya
- Park, Jihyon. 2001. Korean EFL Learners' Politeness Strategies in Their Complaints. *The Linguistic Association of Korea. Journal*, 9(1) : 185-209.
- Sukarno, Sukarno. 2010. The Reflection of The Javanese Cultural Concepts in the Politeness of Javanese". *Kata*, 2(1) : 59-71.
- Trosborg, Anna. 1995. *Interlanguage Pragmatics : Request, Complaints, and Apologies*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Wijayanto, Agus et al. 2012. *Complaint by Indonesian Learners of English : Interlanguage Pragmatics: Pilot study*, Surakarta: Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta.

Yule, George. 1996.*Pragmatics*.New York : Oxford University Press