

The use of politeness strategies in the classroom context by English university students

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ABSTRACT

Politeness still becomes a major concern in English language teaching. It is considered as one way to maintain effective classroom interaction. Therefore, as one of the important actors in the class, teachers, and students need to practice politeness as a way to create effective classroom interaction. This study aims to explore the politeness strategies of English students at one of the universities in Makassar. The researcher applied a descriptive qualitative research method to explore the politeness phenomena in EFL classroom interaction. The participants of this research were two classes of English literature program consisting of 50 students. The primary sources of data were the individual student presentations which had been recorded. There were fifty transcriptions of the recording which lasted for five to seven minutes for each presentation. The transcriptions were analyzed and discussed based on the theory of politeness of Brown and Levinson (1987). The findings from this study revealed 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, and fillers. There were also some terms derived from students' vernacular language which were used as a softening mechanism for their presentation. These expressions were categorized as positive and negative politeness. The findings of this study might be used as an input for teachers and students in an effort to create effective classroom interaction.

Keywords: Classroom interaction; English language teaching; politeness; politeness strategies

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INTRODUCTION

The success of English language teaching is still a major issue in educational system in the world. The need to achieve good English proficiency, therefore, becomes a high priority. However, in some countries, studies proved that there are still many problems encountered in the English language teaching 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.

In Indonesia, one of the countries where English is taught as a foreign language, for example, issues on

how to reach an effective English language teaching process also become major concerns. 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.

One of the efforts is to create effective and efficient classroom interaction. 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). These studies show that successful classroom interaction could affect the success of the English language teaching process as a whole.

To create effective classroom interaction, teachers and students will rely much on their communication. Teachers and students in the class will use languages to communicate both in verbal and non-verbal ways. Therefore, they need to apply effective communication strategies in order to transfer their ideas clearly. 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)

Teachers and students as the main actors in the classroom interaction have different styles in communicating to each other. Kingwell stated that to communicate is not only “phrasing interests and arguments or the maximally efficient transfer of information” but also “not hurting other people’s feelings” (1993, p. 401). This means that to communicate, people will not only pay attention to the contents of the information, but also to the ways of transferring it. Effective communication is not only intended to transfer messages successfully, but also to create comfortable communication among the interlocutors, which can create solidarity and intimacy. 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.

Politeness issues do not merely attract attentions of scholars in the field of sociolinguistics and anthropolinguistics as explained above. Other settings of communication, such as education and classroom setting, also highlight the important roles of politeness. Jiang (2010) claims that in the context of language teaching, politeness is believed to enhance learning by providing a lively and friendly atmosphere in the classroom. Payne-Woolridge’s (2010) study had focused on facework in the classroom, which in fact can become an alternative to introduce a fresh way of considering the way teachers speak to pupils about behavior. Findings of these studies confirm that

politeness is important in the classroom interaction. Maintaining politeness in the class is a good strategy to reach effective classroom interaction.

In Indonesia, studies on politeness in classroom interaction had also attracted the attentions of some scholars. Senowarsito (2013) had looked at politeness in EFL teachers and students’ interaction but did not particularly focus deeply on the interactions among the English students themselves. 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. Politeness studies which explore deeply about the English students’ strategies are still limited and therefore, need to be further explored.

Referring to these phenomena, politeness strategies in the class, especially by English students in English language teaching are still important issues to be explored. Still very few studies are focused on the English students’ strategies in expressing politeness, especially in universities. The context of studying politeness proposed in this study brings new phenomena of politeness research. The context of communication, classroom presentations among English university students, becomes a potential area to observe politeness strategies and therefore, brings significant findings in the politeness research, especially politeness studies in EFL classroom interaction.

This study then focuses on the use of politeness strategies by English university students in the classroom context. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the study of politeness pragmatics in EFL classroom interactions. It might also serve as beneficial inputs for practitioners of classroom interaction especially English teachers and students in order to create effective EFL classroom interaction.

Politeness

Politeness has been defined by many different scholars. Geertz (1960) in his study on Javanese community, Indonesia referred politeness as a kind of “etiquette”. To be polite for Javanese people is to follow sets of etiquette. Scupin (1988) and Agha (1994) referred politeness as a form “honorification” or “honorific”. This means that to be polite is to honor people. Lakoff (1976) stated that politeness is “forms of behaviour which have been developed in societies in order to reduce friction in personal interaction”, whereas Sifianou (1992, p. 82) formulated politeness as “a means to restrain feelings and emotion to avoid conflicts”. Holmes (1995) viewed politeness as “formal and distancing behaviour, which does not intrude or impose and therefore, to be polite is persistent with respects” (pp. 4-5). Mahmud (2010, p. 369) referred politeness for Bugis people as “mutual understanding”

expressed in the terms of *sipakatau* “to treat each other as humans”, *sipakalebbi* “to treat each other modestly”, and *sipakaraja* “to treat each other as a great person”. In the study of politeness in classroom interaction, Senowarsito (2013) defined that politeness is a tool for character building whereas Mahmud (2018) claimed that politeness is a need in education, a strategy to build character, and as a motivation in the class.

The popular theory of politeness is “the Brown-Levinson face-saving view” (1987). The central idea of this theory is the notion of “face” (Goffman, 1967, p. 5). Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 62) stated that “face” is “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself”. Every person wants to maintain each other’s face, otherwise Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) such as being offended, or annoyed may result. To be polite is to preserve “face” and to avoid acts that threaten each others’ “face”.

Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed five strategies of politeness. The first strategy is “baldly on record without redressive action”, which is to follow what it says. The speakers do the FTA in the most direct, clear and unambiguous way because they believe that there are occasions when some constraints force people to speak very directly. For example, if there is an emergency or if there is a major time constraint in which the speaker saves time in order to be effective. The second strategy is “positive politeness strategy”. It is an appeal to solidarity towards others, that is how to make hearer feel good or to make him feel that his values are shared. Positive politeness utterances are used to extent intimacy, to imply common ground or to share wants. The third strategy is “negative politeness strategy” which refers to an attempt to demonstrate awareness not to be imposed on, that is, to avoid interfering the interlocutor’s freedom of action by using hedges and apologies among others. Brown and Levinson (1987) consider this strategy as the heart of respect behavior because it performs the function of minimizing the imposition over the hearer. The fourth strategy is “off record”. Generally, it is the use of utterances that are not directly addressed to another. It is called indirect speech. In this strategy, the speaker performs the FTA by saying something indirectly (implicative).

METHOD

This study applied a descriptive qualitative design. 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). As a descriptive qualitative research design, this study was intended to collect, analyse, and interpret several data which were related to one particular phenomenon, that is politeness strategies by the students in the classroom interaction.

This research was conducted at the undergraduate program at one public university in Makassar, Indonesia in 2015. The participants were 50 students which were

selected purposively. They were students English Literature program and took Anthropological course where students were assigned to give a presentation on one anthropological case. The presentations were recorded by the students themselves using mobile phones. They lasted for 5-10 minutes for each student. The classroom interactions where politeness can be observed were analyzed.

The data analysis is based on the framework of discourse analysis which relies on data recording, data transcription, data selection, and data interpretation. Discourse analysis is “the study of language-in-use; the study of language at use in the world, not just to say things, but to do things” (Gee, 2011, p. 9). For this study, analysis relied on 50 transcriptions from 50 students (each accounts for 3-4 pages). Since the transcriptions were long and plenty, the data were then selected based on the purposes of the present study, with the content based. The data were then interpreted and analyzed in the forms of conversation extracts. In the extracts, relevant data were identified, discussed, and analyzed to explore the students’ politeness strategies based on the framework of politeness strategies by Brown and Levinson (1987).

FINDINGS

This part provides the politeness expressions used by the students in their presentation. The strategies can be seen in the forms of greetings, thanks, address terms, apologies, fillers, and vernacular language (see table 1). The detail analysis are then explained.

Greetings

Extract 1: Opening the Presentation

Presenter: *Asssalamu’ Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu*

“peace be upon you”

Audience: *Wa’alaikumsalam Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu.*

“peace be upon you too”

Presenter: Today I will [am] going to present my material...

In extract 1, the presenter wanted to start the presentation. Before explaining his topic, he said, “*Asssalamu’ Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu*” (peace be upon you). The audience then replied by saying “*Wa’alaikumsalam Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu*” (peace be upon you too). These ways of greetings are kinds of Islamic greetings which are usually uttered in Muslim community to spread the blessings to other people. The students who are mostly Muslim are affected by the Islamic teaching and therefore, they apply several utterances from their Islamic teaching in their conversation in order to be polite. When greeting people, for example, they are expected to use Islamic greeting, although they can also use other kinds of greeting from different language such as “Good Morning” and “*Selamat Pagi*”. Using Islamic utterances signals their Islamic belief which emphasized on good human relations besides good relation to God. The use of Islamic greetings in this extract showed the

students' good manner as indicator of politeness. In this extract, the greetings were used to acquire attentions from the audience and make the presentation more formal. In addition, the greetings signaled their Islamic and polite interaction. These sorts of greetings can also be observed in the following extract:

Extract 2: Opening the Presentation
 Presenter: *Assalamu' Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu*
 "peace be upon you"
 Audience: *Walaikumsalam Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu*
 "peace be upon you too"
 Presenter: **Good morning**, guys!
 Audience: Morning!
 Presenter: **How are you today?**
 Audience: Fine, thank you!

Table 1: Politeness Strategies of the Students

| Features | Expressions | Frequencies of Utterances | |
|---------------------|---|---------------------------|-----|
| Greetings | <i>Assalamu' Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu.</i> | 80 | |
| | <i>Wa'alaikumsalam Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu</i> | 77 | |
| | Good morning | 11 | |
| | How are you today? | 4 | |
| | <i>Bismillahirrahmanirrahim</i> | 6 | |
| | Thanks | Thank you | 108 |
| | Address | <i>Saudari/Saudari</i> | 5 |
| Terms | Names | 146 | |
| | Pronoun | 21 | |
| | <i>Ma'am</i> | 23 | |
| | <i>Kak</i> | 6 | |
| | Apologies | Excuse me? | 7 |
| | | I am so sorry | 5 |
| | | <i>Tabé'</i> | 6 |
| Fillers | Well | 79 | |
| | I mean | 11 | |
| | <i>aaa</i> | 130 | |
| | yeah | 16 | |
| | <i>hmm</i> | 120 | |
| | <i>ee</i> | 280 | |
| | <i>so</i> | 189 | |
| Vernacular Language | As we know | 9 | |
| | <i>di'</i> | 7 | |
| | <i>mi</i> | 11 | |

In extract 2, the presenter also used the Islamic greetings such as in extract 1 previously. After that, she greeted the audience by using English greetings: "**Good Morning**" and "**How are you today?**". Since the participants were English students and they were expected to present their topics by using English language, English greetings were also applied to start the presentation. These greetings also functioned as a good way to be polite and therefore, made their presentation became formal. Another example can be seen in extract 3 below:

Extract 3: Questions and Answer
 Fahri: *Bismillahirrahmanirrahim. Assalamu' Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu*

"in the name of God, peace be upon you"

Audience: *Walaikumsalam Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu*
 "peace be upon you too"

Fahri: Thank you very much for the chance. The first one is ...

In extract 3, Fahri wanted to ask questions. He first recited *Basmalah* by saying "*Bismillahirrahmanirrahim*" (in the name of God) followed by Islamic greeting. In Islam, all Moeslims are obliged to express *Basmalah* before starting an activity. Reciting *Basmalah* indicates that people respect to God, The Human's Creator. Reciting *Basmalah* shows that all of the activities are on behalf of God. Since the students are all Moeslims, their attitude is also affected by Islamic teachings. Being polite for them can be seen by the application of Islamic teachings by expressing good and polite utterances. One of the examples is by reciting *Basmalah* in their whole activities, including in the class when they want to study. As a Muslim, it shows the respect to religion and good manner as Muslim. In the Islamic teachings, people are recommended to show good relation to humans as well as to God.

Thanks

Extract 4: Opening and Presenting the topic

Presenter: *Assalamu' Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu.*

"peace be upon you"

Thank you very much. Ee.. ee.. I would like to explain about my material. It's about code-switching...

In extract 4, the presenter used the Islamic greeting in the first time of the presentation. After that, she expressed her thanks by saying "**Thank you very much**". It was continued by introducing the topic she wanted to present. In this extract, both greetings and thanks were used as signals to begin the presentation and to acknowledge the presence of the participants. These marked the politeness of the students in the formal situation of the class. The same case can also be seen in extract 5 below:

Extract 5: Opening the Presentation

Presenter: *Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarokatuh*
 "peace be upon you"

Audience: *Walaikumsalam Warahmatullahi Wabarokatuh*
 "peace be upon you too"

Presenter: *di ulangi salamnya! Okay, sekali lagi Bismilahirrohmannirrohlim, Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarokatuh*

"the greeting is repeated! Okay, once more, In the name of God, peace be upon you"

Audience: *Walaikumsalam Warahmatullahi Wabarokatuh*
 "peace be upon you all too"

Presenter: **Okay, thanks for the chance that has given to me.** Today I'm going to ee.. explain about my material...

In extract 5 above, the presenter opened the presentation by using Islamic greetings. However, it seemed that the audience did not pay attention to it. She tried to repeat her greeting loudly for the second time.

The audience finally responded quickly and loudly. Seeing that situation, she expressed her gratitude by saying “*thanks for the chance that has given to me*”. She then continued to introduce her topic. This extract shows that thanks were used as a way to be responsive and to show appreciation for other people’s conduct. Therefore, this created polite situation in the interaction. Another function of thanking expression can be seen in the following extract:

Extract 6: Ending the presentation and inviting questions.

Presenter: I think **that’s all from my topic today** ee **thank you for your attention** and...do you guys have any questions?

Audience: [Silence]

Presenter: Any questions?

Audience: [Silence]

Presenter: Okay. That’s all. **Thank you and Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu (peace be upon you)**

In extract 6, the presenter said “*I think that’s all from my topic today*”. She signaled the audience that it was the end of her presentation. She expressed thanks to the audience by saying, “*thank you for your attention*” to show her appreciation for those who had listened to her presentation. Next, she invited questions. However, after waiting for a minute, no one asked questions. To make sure that there were no more questions, she asked again, “*Any questions?*” Finally, she said “*Okay. That’s all. Thank you and Assalamu’ Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu*” to end her presentation. The use of thanks in this extract functioned well to acknowledge the ideas and the activities that had been conducted. Thanking expressions and greetings in this extract also function to maintain the flow of the interaction between the presentation and in the question and answer session. These led to polite interaction among the students.

Address Terms

Extract 7: Address term of *Saudari*

Presenter: Any questions? *Iye, terima kasih Saudari Tuti.*

“Any questions? Yes, thank you, **Sister Tuti**”

Tuti: Could you explain what are the differences between sign of language and body language?

Extract 8: Address term of *Saudara*

Ratna: *Mungkin Saudara Andi Emy bisa memperjelas tadi ada eksplisit dan implisit dalam melakukan komunikasi dengan interlocutor*

“Maybe **Sister Andi Emy** could explain explicitly and implicitly about the ways to communicate with the interlocutors”

Extracts 7 and 8 demonstrate the use of address terms “*Saudara*” and “*Saudari*” (sister or brother) which were attached to the names of the other students in the class. In extract 7, the term of *Saudara* was used to offer the time to ask question. This was meant to be polite although Tuti was one of their classmates. The

same case can be seen in extract 8 where Ratna wanted Emy to explain more clearly about one of her statements. This use of *Saudara* was also meant to be polite in her request. These extracts show that the students still applied polite address terms in the class, although they were addressing their fellow friends. These address terms made their communication more polite such as in asking questions and in requesting during the presentation. Using address terms reduce the possibility of face threatening caused by activities like asking questions and requesting. Compare with extract 9 below:

Extract 9: Addressing by personal name and pronoun

Audience: *Oh iya, any questions? Aahh me?*

“oh yes, any questions? Aahh Me?”

Audience: *Wee! Imran mau bertanya, Wee!*

“Hello! **Imran** wants to ask questions, hello!”

Audience: *Siapa duluan?*

“who is the first? [to ask questions]”

Presenter: *Kamu. Iya kamu.*

“you! yes, you!”

The students used personal names and direct pronouns to address their fellow friends in the class. This can be seen in extract 9 where one of the students pronounced his friend’s name “**Imran**”. The presenter also used direct pronoun “*kamu*” (you). 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. Since the audience is mostly their friends, they could use personal names and direct pronoun (although it was rather less polite). Their familiarity as friends could minimize the situation. It is advisable to compare the following two extracts.

Extract 10: Address term of *Ma’am*

Lecturer: Anyone from you can ask a question, you are still recording? you are still recording?

Ririn: *Iye, Ma’am*

“Yes, **Ma’am**”

Extract 11: Address term of *Kak*

Audience: *Oh iye bisa ji bertanya?*

“Oh yes, can [we] ask questions?”

Presenter: *Oh iye Kak.*

“Yes, older brother/sister”

Extract 10 shows the use of “*Ma’am*” as an address term. Ririn, one of the students, used “*Ma’am*” to address her female lecturer, a female who was considered as a respectable person. She positioned herself as a child. This utterance indicated that she had good emotional relationship, and felt close to her lecturer. In extract 11, the address term “*Kak*” which means “*older brother/sister*” was used. That address term was employed by the presenter to address her classmates who were senior in the class. The use of address terms in these two extracts were also intended to be polite in the presentation. This was influenced by the presence of different interlocutors in the class.

Apologies

Extract 12: Ordering to pay attention

Presenter: The method that [is] used in school is ethnography and the method...the method... **Excuse me? Excuse me?**

Audience: yes... yes

In this extract, the presenter ordered the audience to pay attention to his presentation. It was such a noisy condition and no students in the class paid attention to his presentation. The audience was very busy talking to each other. He said, "**Excuse me? Excuse me?**". This expression was meant to be polite in his presentation. He could be less polite if he directly asked the audience to stop talking to each other. The use of this kind of apology was able to minimize the impoliteness of the presenter in the class caused by noisy class. The same case can be seen in the following extract:

Extract 13: Asking to stop talking

Audience: Ainun!..

Presenter: [shouting] Hijra and Ainun! Okay **I am so sorry...**

In this extract, the presenter ordered the audience to stop talking while she was presenting. The presenter mentioned the name of audience, Hijrah and Ainum, who were busy talking to each other. She ordered Hijrah and Ainun to stop talking and pay attention to the presentation. She shouted "**Hijra and Ainun!**". However, after that she said "**I am so sorry**" as a kind of apology which was meant to be polite after shouting her friends. The same case can be seen in the following extract:

Extract 14: Using apologetic term of *tabe'*

Presenter: I think that's all for my material. So far, any questions? Yes. **Tabe' Tuti** [offering Tuti to ask questions]

Tuti: Thanks for the chance.

Extract 14 above also shows the use of apology in the class by the presenter. After finishing the presentation, she asked for questions from the audience. One of them raised her hand, named Tuti. Before giving the chance to Tuti to deliver her question, she said an apology "**tabe'**". The expression "**tabe'**" means "**sorry**" but it was derived from students' vernacular language, that is Bugis-Makassar language. In this extract, apology was used not only to order or instruct such as in extract 12 and 13 but also to give a chance to the students to speak. This apologetic expression could soften the flow of the interaction and maintain the good communication in the class.

Fillers

Extract 15: Fillers in presentation

Presenter: **Well**, guys, **as we know** that conversation is really important in our life, **I mean** we cannot live without conversation. **I mean** we interact **hmm ...** we interact to each other by using conversation like when we greet, when we complain something,

when we fight or.. **eee**, something like that (clearing throat sounds)."

In extract 15, the presenter used some expressions such as "**well**", "**as we know**", "**I mean**" "**hmm**" and "**eee**". These expressions are categorized as fillers. At the time, the presenter was explaining the materials but he found some difficulties in explaining the topic. In order to maintain the flow of the conversations, he used those fillers to build the gaps in his explanation. The use of those expressions could also function as polite markers under his hesitations. Another example can be seen in extract 16 below:

Extract 16: Fillers in answering the question

Aulia: Thank you, thank you so much. **Well, aaa** I think **aaa** the..the lecture Anthropology is about culture right? Right?

Audience: **Yeah!**

Presenter: anthropology is about culture and every culture have their own perspective about poetry.

In extract 16, the presenter was about to start the presentation. At the first time, she said "**Well, aaa**". At the time, she intended to give emphasis that everyone in the class really knew the topic. The expressions "**well**", "**aaa**" "**yeah**" are also categorized as fillers in order to maintain the flow of the ideas. By the use of those expressions, the presenter could manage her nervousness and therefore, she could communicate her ideas.

Extract 17: Fillers in explanation

Presenter: **I mean** here, we have to understand what does a speech mean and **ee**..community itself. **So**, speech here means..**ee**..**hmm**..oral representation of our thoughts, our feelings **hmm**..and while community here is a group of people who share the same knowledge, beliefs and social structure.

In extract 17, the expression of "**I mean**" was used by the presenter to show that she was going to rephrase as well as to repeat her explanation to mark the prior utterance or information given by her. Next she said "**so**" to give conclusion about the definition of speech community she had explained previously. Furthermore, the expression of **ee** and **hmm** were used as pause fillers in order to continue the ideas and the information she wanted to give to audiences. These pause fillers could help the presenter to be polite during the presentation. She could be very nervous at the time, but those fillers helped her to minimize her hesitance and therefore she managed to transfer her ideas to the audience.

Extract 18: Fillers in asking a question

Presenter: **So, you know** what is sign language?

Audience: [silence]

Presenter: **Well**, Sign Language. Do you ever hear what a sign language is...?

In extract 18, the presenter wanted to make sure that everybody understood what he had explained in his

presentation. He said “*so you know*” to bridge the ideas before asking the question. After getting the sign that the audience understood the ideas, he continued by saying “*well*”. This also helped him to communicate his ideas before continuing his presentation. These fillers were meant to bridge what the presenter said in order that he did not show his hesitation in speaking. In this kind of situation, the presentation became more polite and therefore, it created polite situation between the presenter and the audience.

Vernacular language

Extract 19: Explaining about the topic

Presenter: About language, language is a medium to express our emotional and identity is ee.. display how display you are, ee..*apalagi di*? [what is again, *anyway?*].

Extract 19 is the example of using students' vernacular language in the presentation. When the presenter explained his materials, he was thinking about what he should explain next. Then he asked a question, “*apalagi di*?” (what is again, *anyway?*). The use of “*di*” was derived from Bugis-Makassar language, which means “*anyway*” in Indonesian language. The use of “*di*” could soften his question during the presentation and could help him to be indirect in his conversation. Another example was seen in the following extract:

Extract 20: Asking questions

Presenter: Any question?

Audience: [silent]

Presenter: *Tidak adami?*

“no more *already*.”

Extract 20 is also the example of using students' vernacular language in the presentation. When the presenter finished her presentation and asked the other students for questions, no more audience seemed to have questions. She then asked a question to confirm if there were no more questions by saying, “*Tidak adami?*” (no more *already?*). The use of *mi* was derived from Bugis-Makassar language which means “*already*”. This 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*”.

DISCUSSIONS

All of the twenty extracts above demonstrate the application of politeness strategies in the students' presentations in the class. From Brown and Levinson's framework of politeness, two important strategies emerged, namely positive politeness and negative politeness.

Findings show the use of positive politeness strategies in the form of greetings (extract 1, 2, and 3). These kinds of expressions were used as the ways to be polite in the interaction and therefore, the situation of the class became formal. Brown and Levinson (1987)

stated that positive politeness was intended to “minimize the distance between speaker and hearer and to reduce the hearer's disappointment by expressing friendliness”. Another study by Tan, Teoh, and Tan (2016) also found the important functions of greetings, such as to acknowledge the interlocutors. In addition, studies proved that greetings are a feature of good social manner (Soo, David, Kia, & Pei, 2011; Hei, David, & Kia, 2013). In this study, greetings were used by the students to be close and friendly to their fellow friends. This shows that although the activities in the presentations tended to be rather formal, the use of greetings made the presentations more friendly.

Another important finding is about the use of Islamic greetings such as *Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh* and other Islamic utterances such as *Basmalah*. These expressions can become a symbol of obedience as Muslim people. It had been known that Islamic teachings mostly focus not only on good relation to God, but also to other humans. Maintaining good communication influenced by Islamic teachings will become a way to show good human relations, in which being polite is one of the important aspects of those good relations. This finding is also in line with Al-Khatib's study (2012) who had found some strategies of politeness in the Holy-Quran which contributed to God-man communication and man-man communication, the important principles Islamic teachings. Another study by Bouchara (2015) also showed that politeness can be expressed when greeting one another by using religious vocabulary and giving religious praises. Bouchara (2015) furthermore stated that “the use of religion as a politeness strategy appears to function as a way of protecting the self-image of both the speaker and the hearer” (p. 71).

The use of thanking expressions (extract 4, 5, and 6) was also a category of positive politeness. These thanking expression functioned well as a polite expression to start the presentation and to acknowledge the presence of the audience. These strategies are also in line with Brown and Levinson's (1987) idea which states that expressing thanks/gratitude is considered a polite or courteous device which avoids face threatening acts and therefore it can also be used to express solidarity above the power. Several studies in terms of using thanks also proved the crucial functions of thanks as one way to be polite in the interaction (Özdemir & Rezvani, 2010; Tan, Teoh, & Tan, 2016; Yusefi, Gowhary, Azizifar, & Esmaeili, 2015). The use of thanks in this study also functioned as polite strategies among the students during the presentation.

Address terms were also a positive politeness strategy of the students (extract 7-11). They used “*saudara/saudari*” (brother/sister), “*kak*” (older brother/sister), “*ma'am*”, the personal name, and the pronoun “*kamu*” (you). With reference to Brown and Levinson (1987), these address terms were known as “in-group identity markers” which aim to minimize the distance between speaker and hearer and to reduce the hearer's disappointment by expressing friendliness. In

his study in Javanese society, Susanto (2014) also found that address term is used “to designate the person they are talking to or to show the possession of formal and informal manners” (p. 140). The students in this study used these address terms to show their politeness to the different interlocutors during the presentation.

The negative politeness can be seen in the use of apologizing (extract 12-14). According to Brown and Levinson (1987), apologies function mostly to express respect rather than friendliness, solidarity, or intimacy. Apologies indeed hold crucial functions as politeness strategies (Al-Sobh, 2013; Banikalef, Maros, Aladdin, & Al-Natour, 2015). In this study, apologies were used by the students to minimize the impolite situation caused by their expressions (such as shouting and asking questions).

Using fillers in their presentation helped the students to be formal and therefore can show their politeness (extract 15-18). Since the presentations were conducted in the class, the students were expected to maintain the formality of the situation. The use of these fillers could be categorized as hedges which according to Fraser (2010) are “words and expressions in the forms of modals, fillers, tag questions, that can attenuate the force of the speech acts and to express the levels of uncertainty towards the propositions in the utterances”. These fillers could also be categorized as discourse markers or discourse particles which serve important functions as communicative tools (Ahmed & Maros, 2017; Don & Sim, 2016; Nor, 2012). In terms of Brown and Levinson’s politeness strategies (1987), using these fillers can become ways to be conventionally indirect which may create politeness.

The findings also show that students adopted some terms from their vernacular language to communicate such as *tabe’*, *di’*, *mi*. (extract 19-20). This contributes to the new strategy of politeness. These expressions softened their expressions, and made them indirect. The idea of indirectness is also a way to be polite (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The findings also show that politeness will have different linguistic realizations in different cultures and different circumstances. One culture may regard one behaviour as polite while others may not. What is polite in one situation may not be regarded as polite in another situation. Therefore, people in different society will perceive and practice politeness differently. These finding supports the idea of Kadar and Mills (2011, p. 21) which emphasized that no culture will have “a set of norms for what counts as polite or impolite behaviours”. Previous studies on politeness in different languages and contexts had also proved the different practices and perceptions of politeness expressions and behaviors. Geerts (1960) with his “etiquette”, Scupin (1988) and Agha (1994) with their “honorification” or “honorific”, and Mahmud (2010) with her “mutual understanding” remark that politeness is expressed differently in different context of society.

Different expressions of politeness are also found in English classroom context as can be seen in this

study, such as the use of terms influenced by Islamic teachings and the use of vernacular language influenced by the cultural context of the students. Other previous studies on politeness also show the different strategies employed to show politeness. Senowarsito (2013), for example, found some positive and negative politeness strategies in the class, and all function as a tool for character building. Zander (2013) also found some politeness and impoliteness behaviours in the class. Paying attention to the lesson in the class is considered polite whereas coming late to the class is considered impolite behaviour. All of the findings of these studies confirm that politeness is important in the EFL classroom interaction and therefore, there are some strategies that can be used by the English students in order to contribute to effective EFL classroom interaction.

CONCLUSION

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. This finding shows that the idea of politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987) is applicable in Indonesian EFL classroom context, especially in Makassar. The findings from this study also show that a cross-cultural context study of politeness is required in order to examine the cultural influence in practicing politeness in the class. Practices of politeness by English university students in Makassar are proved to be influenced by religious and cultural aspects of the interlocutors.

Findings from this study have contributed significantly to the process of English language teaching in universities in Makassar. The findings can also become input to other universities in Indonesia, especially for practitioners of the EFL classroom interaction (e.g. teachers and students) about how they should behave in the classroom in order to reach effective ways of interaction in the English language teaching. The findings of this study are also expected to contribute to the literature of politeness research in classroom context in particular and in Asian context, in general. However, further studies need to be conducted in terms of politeness practices of teachers and students which are influenced by factors such as age and gender, especially through the language choices they will use to communicate.

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