

## AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS-EDUCATOR'S POLITENESS STRATEGY TOWARD ONLINE COMMUNICATION IN EFL CONTEXT

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### ABSTRACT

The ease of online communication in the current era seems to still leave issue that really need to be considered. Politeness in communicating between educators and students in carrying out message activities is one of the essential issues to be discussed. The lack of politeness between teachers in communicating, the large possibility of free communication when carrying out online communication, and the low awareness of teachers in emphasizing the importance of politeness in communication are some of the main problems that need to be resolved. This study aims to analyze the use of politeness strategies in communication between educators and students in EFL and try to analyze deeper what types of strategies are used by teachers and students in communicating, the steps they take to online communication, and get to know deeper regarding to the importance of politeness in communication. This research uses library research method and case study method to analyze the data. In addition to obtaining data from previous research sources, the authors also obtained data from ELE Undiksha lecturers and students. The theory expressed by Brown and Levinson in 1987 is the theory that underlies the analysis of this data which is the analysis of politeness strategy in communicating. From the literature study and also the case study method used to analyze the findings, it was found that the politeness strategy was more widely used by students than teachers, this was related to social position and age. The strategies used are positive politeness and bald on-record which are mostly used by students. On the other hand, negative politeness and off-record strategies are mostly used by teachers. It was also found that students used politeness more than their teachers and from a cultural point of view, the social status that separates teachers and students in Indonesia demands being able to give respect to the educators.

**Keywords:** *Politeness strategies, online communication, EFL context*

### INTRODUCTION

Technological developments in the era of the industrial revolution 4.0 brought many major changes in aspects of life, including communication and communication skills, especially in the EFL context. With the ease of technology, communication activities can take place anytime and anywhere in online. From any point of view, communication is a very fundamental aspect of life, especially in this case is

the EFL class. As a country that is not an English-speaking country, EFL is very important to be learnt in order to improve language and communication skills, especially in globally. Without communication, it is impossible for a teacher to convey knowledge, ideas, or important information related to his students. Likewise, with students, without communication it is impossible to capture the meaning conveyed properly. Communication that is needed on various occasions is good

communication and does not cause misunderstandings, but today's digital developments make unexpected possibilities happen. The possibility of misunderstanding without a face-to-face meeting is very likely to occur if the information sender and recipient have different meanings coupled with a stretch of distance that does not directly confirm the meaning.

It should be noted that social media has a very high number of users in Indonesia, reaching 130 million users (Data from 'We are social' & Hootsuite, 2018, as cited in Mulyono et al., 2019). This indicates that everyone, especially students and teachers in Indonesia, should be able to do online interaction indirectly anytime and anywhere by using the social media it-self. Communication activities can be bridged with ease and time efficiency. Yet, on the other hand it turns out that this convenience does not necessarily guarantee a good communication. Almoaily & Riyadh (2018) in a previous study revealed that a communication that is established online is not the same as communication that takes place directly and face to face. In online communication, it is difficult for speakers and interlocutors to determine boundaries due to the absence of prosodic as a sign that is able to emphasize a meaning conveyed in a communication process.

A study conducted by Almoaily & Riyadh (2018) related to "Greeting as a Politeness Strategy in EFL Distance Learning Students's Official Emails" found that students did not comply with the norms of politeness in English in

communicating, marked by the low use of appropriate and polite greetings in initiating online communication (which in this case uses e-mail). The existence of a level of social strata that distinguishes the existence of teachers and students has not been able to create a good polite relationship so that this matter becomes serious to be handled in order to prevent failure in communication. In addition, Mulyono et al. (2019) also participated in conducting research related to "Politeness Strategies in Teacher-Student WhatsApp Communication". This study shows that the level of use of politeness strategies analyzed by Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory is higher for students than teachers. This happens because of the teacher's higher social position and status which indirectly causes a slight imbalance in polite communication. They should be able to use appropriate language in certain situations to avoid misunderstandings in communication.

Oftentimes an online communication does not pay attention to the values of politeness as in traditional communication. Sometimes there is no meaningful social distance between students and educators. Whereas this is very important to pay attention to this case in order to create politeness-based communication, especially in the EFL context (Almoaily & Riyadh, 2018). The sociolinguistic ability of most students is very lacking which results in the impoliteness of a student's communication with the teacher. In carrying out online communication the required politeness norm is not much different from the politeness act when

carrying out direct communication. Between the sender of the message and the responder should be able to use the right opener when starting communication and pay attention to time and privacy. Meanwhile, modernization and egalitarianism tend to encourage students to use slang and are unable to distinguish social strata between students and teachers themselves (Oktaviani & Laturrakhmi, 2013, as cited in Mulyono et al., 2019).

In line with aforementioned studies, there are several issues found tower the politeness in online communication. Those are students are lack in politeness in communication with other, especially teacher, online communication give bigger opportunity for students to guide the communication more freely, students have less knowledge on how to make polite conversation in online context (there are no gestures, body languages, and other aspects that can limit students as it is conducted in face to face), there are still many of teachers who are careless on how important to lead students on building polite communication.

In line with Etae (2017), there are several things that must be considered in order to avoid violations of politeness in establishing communication in English. This is as a result of the differences in Asian and Western cultures because Asia highly upholds the values of politeness norms, such as kinship and social position between educators and students, age, and position. Considering that being able to carry out communication correctly and well is one of the goals of the EFL learning process and seeing the

fairly complex problems in this EFL class communication, a solution is needed. In order to create a good and guided communication process with the right norms, one that can play a role in it is a politeness. Politeness has a very important role in terms of communication, but to implement it requires an appropriate strategy in order to produce good communication. Proper politeness strategy will be able to direct a communication process more politely and be able to focus on how to overcome a communication disorder that arises in the interpersonal and social environment.

Talking about politeness strategies, in general according to Almoaily & Riyadh (2018), there are two kinds of politeness strategies, namely positive and negative ones. A positive politeness strategy is an instinctive action that every human being uses to protect his or her inner desire to be respected. On the other hand, a negative politeness strategy is an action taken to protect a desire for freedom and coercion. A form of misunderstanding can occur if we cannot understand it well in terms of language and communication. Politeness strategy is needed to maintain the harmony of social and kinship relationships in a communication. Without this strategy, communication failure is very likely to occur. With the application of a good politeness strategy will be able to give birth to a good interaction pattern as well.

Based on what delivered by Brown and Levinson theory (1987, as cited in Pratiwi et al., 2018), politeness in the EFL communication process has a close

relationship with sociolinguistic behavior and pragmatic knowledge. When a person is able to communicate well by applying the values and norms of social beliefs, it means that he or she has been able to communicate with language knowledge in the higher level. In which it is a level of knowledge that related with pragmatic ability. A self-rescue action related to saving face when communicating with other people can be done with politeness and the right strategy. Although in some conditions an act of politeness cannot always be viewed politely from different perspectives, it can lead to a directed communication where the speaker speaks with the right portion and positions the listener to be stronger (Pratiwi et al., 2018)

In an EFL class, students must be able to be led to have interactional, socio-cultural, and socio-cultural strategic competencies not only about speaking and writing. The linguistic behavior of students in the EFL class is also a very elemental thing to pay attention to, especially in the online communication process. With the existence of a social stratum that separates the position of educators from their students, educators should be able to guide their students in building a positive communicative relationship. Students should not only be educated to be proficient in receiving and transferring an academic ability, but they are expected to be able to develop good moral values and of course closely related to politeness in non-academic fields. The position of the teacher's power in the classroom should be able to direct students to positive things.

Educators must be able to generate interactions that take place well online with one of the goals to lead students towards communication that applies politeness. Through this teacher position, it is hoped that there will be no detrimental gap and of course all EFL learning processes must run with good communication.

Therefore, this study focuses on the aim to analyze the use of politeness strategy between students and teachers in the online communication process, especially in the context of EFL. Specifically, this study aimed to understand sociolinguistic behavior and pragmatic competency between students and educators in doing a good online communication process itself.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The research design used in this study is qualitative research design. Qualitative research design is a design used to conduct research in order to gain an understanding of a research topic in more detail. This design is designed to answer every question related to a phenomenon, how and why it occurs. The data obtained later with this research design was not analyzed statistically. Certainly, Library research is the type of research used in this study. Which is in line with what was conveyed by Mirzaqon and Purwoko (2017, as cited in Sari & Asmendri, 2018) where all data and information can be collected by researchers with this study through various online or printed library media. Researchers in this case can also take advantage of research that has been carried out previously by other

researchers and experts to find a theoretical basis similar to the research being carried out now. The researcher conducts the activity of reviewing literature sources and a related report that develops a value and reference related to a research that is being carried out in a current social situation. The stages of research using this design are selecting the topic to be studied, after finding the topic the researcher must explore related information, then the researcher is asked to determine the focus of his research, after that the data sources can be collected, then prepare the data presentation, and finally prepare the completed report.

The study took place in ELE department in Ganesha University of Education in which students and educator were the participant in this study. Besides that, the researcher used the setting and participant that found in the library research sources.

In carrying out this research through library research method, content analysis is the method that used in analyzing the data by the author. Appropriate and valid inference along with having the accuracy to be investigated is the desired goal in data analysis, so this method is the right step for that. conducting the data selection process, then comparing the data obtained, as well as merging the data obtained in order to produce appropriate and relevant data are several stages that involve data analysis with this method. Accuracy and re-checking of library data sources is needed in conducting this data analysis in order to avoid errors or inaccuracies in the information obtained. With this method

the author can search and collect various data related to the research topics sourced from articles and online journals. Through this method, various information related to politeness, politeness strategy used in the context of EFL, how online communication is implemented, and other related data can be collected by researchers. Besides that, the researcher also used case study approach method to find the data. The researcher did the observation and interview to the lecturer and students in ELE department in Ganesha University of Education to find the data. Here, the researcher focuses on the strategies used by students and educators in sending messages for online communication matters. The data meant here are messages that have been sent by students and have been replied to by the educator and then analyzed. Analysis is carried out to group messages into each type of appropriate politeness strategy. The next process is the process of elaborating the information and arguments that have been obtained as a step to analyze the data that has been obtained.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Online Communication Conducted by Educators and Students***

According to Alawamleh et al. (2020), communication is a process of exchanging views and knowledge carried out by at least two people. Speaking of online communication can aim to convey information, convey intentions or ideas, as well as other matters with an interest in education, especially in the EFL context. There is no difference between the purpose of

online communication and direct face-to-face communication, the only difference being the media and space. Online communication helps students and educators to keep in touch remotely to ask questions and offer knowledge and exchange certain information. In addition, the unavailability of gestures and facial expressions is a differentiator for other versions of online distance communication from face-to-face communication (Alawamleh et al., 2020). A good understanding is needed in every communication that exists in order to avoid being misleading. Several previous studies have mentioned how a communication is conducted by educators and students in the EFL context. Almoaily & Riyadh (2018) focused on online communication between educators and students using email media in implementing distance learning.

Researchers analyzed messages that became a medium of communication between students and educators. On the other hand, (Mulyono et al., 2019), focused on politeness in student and educator communication using WhatsApp media, where communication is established by sending and responding to messages between teachers and students themselves. Third, online communication between students and educators is established by using google classroom as a virtual class, this research was conducted by Sembiring et al. (2021).

Overall, we can say that there are various steps to establish virtual communication between teachers and educators, especially those related to the

EFL context, namely social media itself. In the process of online communication, it is hoped that an educator will be able to direct communication in an effective direction in order to generate motivation to learn in the EFL class, of course with the norms of politeness that cannot be abandoned.

### ***Politeness and the Aspects in Communication***

A social skill in an interaction between humans and culture in an act of communication with the aim of confirming interactions with others is called politeness (Umayah et al., 2018). Politeness is referred to as an action that takes place externally to give a sense of happiness and respect to the interlocutor in an environment. Politeness has a very big role in a communication process. Politeness is able to lead to directed approaches between the speaker and the interlocutor. In addition, an action that is constructive can be well maintained with a politeness. Politeness has several strategies contained in it. Broadly speaking, it can be divided into four based on what was conveyed in the theory of Brown and Levinson (1987, as cited in Umayah et al., 2018), including:

- a. Positive politeness, in an effort to degrade the possibility of a threat in the listener's situation, especially the positive face, the strategy in question is positive politeness. In an effort to run or implement this strategy, there are several derived strategies that must be understood and then used. Several derived strategies are to express an expression that

exaggerates something with prosodic, tone, and intonation periodically and consistently, able to pay close attention to the actors. listeners and their respective interests intensively, able to repeat in a communication to give and seek an action to agree on what the other person said, able to give false promises to avoid disputes over disagreements about something, able to provide jokes, care, and a similarity to listeners, able to provide feedback to produce two-way communication with an optimistic and firm attitude, able to pay attention by showing a caring attitude to ask something of course with group identity as a marker of someone's existence.

- b. Negative politeness, in an effort to provide autonomous freedom to the listener and prevent coercion of the statement conveyed, is a form of negative politeness strategy. This negative politeness strategy works by relying on an attitude of hesitation with the aim of creating a distance between the listener and the speaker. A speaker can also take the action of asking permission or apologizing for a statement that will or has been conveyed to the listener. Actually, this can be said as a step or strategy used by the listener in an attempt to ask for freedom to take an action after hearing the speaker's statement. In an effort to implement and demonstrate this strategy. There are several derivative strategies that must be understood and applied, including trying to reduce direct and compelling questions, when asking a question

must be able to protect a value, try to be a pessimistic speaker and not impose the listener's will, be able to respect the listener's attitude and want to apologize for something that is said, and be able to make the other person not mentioned with the aim of im-personalization.

- c. The off-record strategy, in an effort to prevent coercion from the speaker using indirect language, the off-record strategy is the most appropriate. In an effort to implement this strategy, there are several derivative strategies that must be understood and implemented, including providing an association of assumptions and instructions, not magnifying something that is conveyed by simply conveying it, being able to provide more additional information, saying something based on a the truth, saying something ironically and full of contradictions, can convey something metaphorically or by asking a rhetorical question and being ambiguous, and not mentioning the other person directly.
- d. Bald on-record, this strategy is used in an effort to communicate directly with other people, not to minimize threats that may occur to the face of a listener. This can be done to express a need by using an imperative or mitigating form, such as "get me water" or "please" which is gentler, or a less polite "don't" in certain situations, for example "don't". sit next to my boyfriend." Regarding when this strategy can be used or carried out, it is when a threat that approaches the listener's face is

smaller and vice versa when the speaker's position is stronger. For example, when a lecturer says "don't cheat" to his students.

### ***Politeness Strategies Used in The Communication Between Educators and Students***

From the results of the analysis carried out with a case study approach to analyze messages in learning communication in the EFL context, researchers collect and analyze messages conveyed by giving categories to messages conveyed related to greetings in communication messages and strategies if used. In terms of the greetings used, the author refers to the research conducted by (Almoaily & Riyadh, 2018), which is to see whether there are polite greetings conveyed in teacher and student messages or not and how formal the language is used. Then examine one by one what strategy should be used. Here is a more complete discovery:

#### ***Messages conveyed by college students:***

*"Om swastyastu Ma'am, I am Metri the coordinator of this class, I do apologize for texting you at this time 🙏 Ma'am, I would like to remind you that tomorrow we will have EF periode for Qualitative Research Method Class, is there any link we need to prepare for the conference ma'am? 🙏"*

*"Thank you, I hope you are willing to guide us 🙏"*

*"Good afternoon Ma'am, we are from 1st group would like to send our Peer Assessment for group 8th, we do apologize we are able to send it now 🙏"*

*"Thank you for the information, Ma'am 🙏🙏"*

*"Good evening everyone. I am representative of group 8 would attach link of our presentation about the concept and analysis of foreshadowing, suspense and surprise, and irony and symbol related to the Diamond Necklace Story"*

*"Selamat malam bapak, mohon maaf saya mengganggu 🙏 Terkait pembelajaran besok apakah belajar mandiri utk menyelesaikan tugas final atau meeting dan wawancara nggih bapak. Mohon arahannya bapak, matur suksma 🙏"*

Those messages above use positive politeness to degrade the possibility of a threat in the listener's situation, especially the positive face, the strategy in question is positive politeness and negative politeness to provide autonomous freedom to the listener and prevent coercion of the statement conveyed.

*"selamat pagi ibu, mohon maaf saya mengganggu, saya bermaksud untuk mengumpulkan tugas yang telah diberikan tempo hari, terimakasih ibu"*

*"Morning Miss, I want to ask about our home-work, I am bit confuse about number 1, can you explain it to me? Thank you."*

Those messages conveyed by using off-record strategy in which to prevent coercion from the speaker using indirect language, the off-record strategy is the most appropriate

*"Ya bu"*

*"Ya"*

Both messages, above if analyzed according to the source of information obtained, these are a bald on-record which uses a language directly with the choice of words that are not polite and seem rude.

From those messages above we can see that almost students deliver the message in class communication started with polite greeting and all are in almost delivered in the formal context for the college student, we can also see that the senior high school students less often to deliver the greeting in formal or informal form.

Message conveyed by Educators:

*“Yes, I will be listening to your background. Everybody should be ready for this. Can you provide link for tomorrow?”*

*“Nak, ibu menguji S3 di audit. Coba sempurnakan proposal kalian dulu ya. Maaf”*

*“Dear all I dont know how to ask for an apology to you all, I have to attend the workshop because this is series, for tomorrow can you make a presentation on the whole proposal that your proposal and then make the recording?”*  
*Those messages above analyzed as using negative politeness*

*“Hasil asesmen grup 8 oleh grup 1 gmn ya? N1 dan N2?”*

According to the source of information obtained, this is a bald on-record which uses a language directly with the choice of words that are not polite and seem rude. This can be done to express a need by using an imperative or mitigating form.

From those sample of message sent by teacher, we can see that teacher more often to start the conversation with

more informal greeting and sometime started with no opening and the message directed to demand or order to do something. Those indicate that both students and educators have used a politeness strategy in an online communication with various types of social media.

All of them have their own intentions and desires which are conveyed through communication. All of them are cooperators to listen to each other and answer the information conveyed. This is in line with the results of research found by Umayah et al. (2018), teachers also use negative and positive politeness in the EFL class. Positive politeness is only used when the teacher gives praise in the classroom to student learning outcomes. In the other hand, research conducted by Sembiring et al. (2021) also shows that students have a higher dominant response rate than educators, this is as a result of social position. Students have good respect for responding to instructions and greetings given by the teacher.

## CONCLUSION

The study which aims to analyze the politeness strategies used in educator and student communication in the context of EFL has found that there are several strategies used by students and teachers, both positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record that are widely used by students as well as bald on-record strategies that are used by teacher. The communication process that takes place online and is said to facilitate the communication process itself is not

always able to guarantee a good communication network. From the results of the analysis conducted with the case study method on various online media or learning social media, messages related to EFL both in Indonesian and English can be concluded that students use more politeness strategies than their educators. Yet, for the college students have the higher intensity to deliver the polite strategy than the high school students. The possible thing that makes it happens is because of the maturity and the knowledge that still lower to understand, master, and convey the politeness well. Opening greetings as markers of politeness are often only displayed more often by students than by educators. This, according to the theory in previous research (the theory presented by Brown and Levinson in 1987) occurs because of the difference in social status that exists between students and teachers, where teachers have a higher position than students so they often do not have kinship and provide politeness strategy to students. On the other hand, the students in terms of age are almost younger than the educators, so that based on Indonesian culture and social conditions, students must pay respect to those who are older. Between educators and learners, of course, they both get the influence of these findings, this will be very beneficial for the life of communicating in the EFL class. Through what has been obtained here, the selection of the use of the right words and language can be done better in the future by learners and educators, especially if it is carried out in the online

realm which is very much needed to avoid misunderstandings. Through this analysis, all aspects that affect a communication and the politeness strategy used in it can be studied better and, in the future, so that the analysis process can be carried out in a more complex scope of research and the wider communication are can ran better.

In the future, we must be able to better prepare library sources as a source of literature in doing similar research and be able to prepare themselves well. In the future, it is hoped that there will be a better and fundamental follow-up of this study, because at this time it is only a study as a result of an initial study of similar research.

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