

PROBLEMS ON IMPLEMENTING THE POLITENESS PRINCIPLE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING SPEAKING

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Abstracts

This study is conducted to investigate the case appears in teaching and learning speaking regarding to problems on implementing the politeness principle faced by students. Recently, phenomenon happen among students in conversation that fail to provide appropriate politeness especially toward elders can be illustrated as the basic assumptions from the way they use utterances and their failure on paying attention of social class, age, sex when they communicate to others. This phenomenon brings questions that become the bases of the aims of this study to find out problem appears on implementing politeness principle in teaching and learning speaking, to find out factors cause the problems appear, and formulate suitable recommendations to provoke students using appropriate utterances and maxim in order to make good relationships and distinguish context toward different age, sex and status of conversation participants who they interact with. This study belongs to the case study research and the data collected from observations and interviews. The findings show that the problems often made by students are they utter wrong expressions for certain situations, they do not greet, thank and ask for sorry to anyone they involved with included the elders. The problems that faced by students in implementing politeness principal in speaking class is influenced by internal and external factors, internal factors come from teaching and learning process, the school environment and the lack of teaching softskills while external factors come from the lack of students' acknowledgment and awareness of family and society values and the last but not least is the influence of the rapidly worldwide technology development.

Keywords: *Politeness, Principle, Teaching, Learning, Speaking*

INTRODUCTION

As human being, people need language to communicate among others. As means of communication, according to Brown (2007: 6) language is a set of arbitrary symbol which are primary vocal, but may also visual and have conventionalized meaning to which they refer. It is also used for communication. Through that definition, language is used to communicate with other by vocal, written or only from the gesture. It is used to keep in touch with other. Therefore, every country around the world has own language with its different characteristics and influenced by its culture as the definite identity of one community or nation.

According to Rahman (2010:3), communication is an exchange of meaning and understanding. People can express an idea, opinion, request, and demand to someone else by oral or written communications furthermore oral communications is part of speaking skill. Fulcer

(2003: 23) states that speaking is the verbal use of language to communicative with others. The word "verbal" means spoken not written. Meanwhile, Celce-Murcia (2001:103) also states that the ability to speak a language is synonymous with knowing that language since speech is the most basic means of human communication. Tarigan (2008:16) states that speaking is the ability to pronounce articulation's of sounds or words to express thought, idea and feels. Therefore, the writers infer that speaking is the ability to communicate with others for expressing their thought, idea and feels. In addition Tarigan (2008:16) states the main purpose of speaking is to communicate with other to be able transfer their mind effectively, comprehend the meaning about something want to communicate. Native speaker must be able to evaluate the effect of this communication to the listener and to know some principle based on the situation in common or individual context. The

ability to speak fluently presupposes not only knowledge of language features but also the ability to process information and language on the spot (Harmer, 2001: 269).

Speaking is one the language skills which must be mastered by the students. According to Hughes (2011:6), Speaking is not a discrete skill. It overlaps with a considerable number of other areas and disciplines. For instance, the one of the disciplines is dealing with pragmatics. From that quotation, speaking is one of the skills which have special characteristic. Hughes still explains that there are some aims when spoken language is the focus of classroom activity. For instance, helping the student gaining awareness of some aspects of linguistic knowledge (whether a grammatical rule, or application of a phonemic regularity to which they have been introduced), or to develop productive skills (for example rhythm, intonation or vowel-to-vowel linking), or to raise awareness of some socio-linguistic or pragmatic point. Therefore, Pragmatics is one of the important aspect which deals with the speaking in order to avoid the communication failure and conflict.

According to Mey (2001: 6), Pragmatics studies the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society. While Yule (1996:3) suggests that pragmatics is the study of expression of relative distance. From the explanation, pragmatics is the study which pays more consideration in language use of human communication based on the condition of society such as the relative distance. The advantage of learning language through pragmatics people can talk agreeing with their assumption, purpose and goal that they are performing when they are speaking (Yule, 1996: 5). In Pragmatics, there are many aspects such as; deixis, reference, presupposition, implicature, speech act, politeness and others. Politeness is one of the important aspects which implemented in speaking. Politeness differs from one to another cultures in every country even region.

According to Lakoff (1990:34) Politeness is as'a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing

the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange'. Through the definition about Politeness above, Politeness principle can be defined as the principle which can minimize the potential for conflict and confrontation in all human interchange when interpersonal relations are interacting. In other words, those reasons could be the benefit of implementing politeness in the way people speak. According to Yule (1996: 60), Politeness means employed to show awareness of another person's face. Meanwhile, Senowarsito (2013:3) Politeness is based on intimacy, closeness, and relationships, as well as the social distance between the speaker and the hearer. Therefore, politeness reflects awareness and close relationship between speaker and hearer. Nowadays, the students do not pay attention much about the politeness. The students do not show any politeness when they have conversation with the older person. In Fact, some of them have very closed relationship with their teachers as its effect they are not able to distinguish whetherteachers or friends they speak to and to behave appropriately. In other word, they have not implemented politeness principle with the older person, teachers, or a new person they met. Therefore, it can be illustrated as the serious problems appear in speaking class. However, three fundamental questions regarding to the facts need to be answered as stated at the following problems of the study, what problems are faced by students of speaking class in implementing politeness principle in their conversation?, what cause those problems appear?, what are the suitable recommendations can be formulated to scope the problems?

Richard (2008: 21) explains an important dimension of conversation is using a style of speaking that is appropriate to the particular circumstances. Different styles of speaking reflect the roles, age, sex, and status of participants in interactions and also reflect the expression of politeness. Consider the various ways in which it is possible to ask someone the time, and the different social meanings that are communicated by these differences:

Got the time?

I guess it must be quite late now?

What's the time?
Do you have the time?
Can I bother you for the time?
You wouldn't have the time, would you?

Lexical, phonological, and grammatical changes may be involved in producing a suitable style of speaking, as the following alternatives illustration:

Have you seen the boss? / Have you seen the manager? (Lexical)
Whachadoin? / What are you doing? (Phonological)
Seen Joe lately? / Have you seen Joe lately? (Grammatical)

Different speech styles reflect perceptions of the social roles of the participants in a speech event. If the speaker and hearer are judged to be of more or less equal status, a casual speech style that stresses affiliation and solidarity is appropriate. If the participants are perceived as being of uneven power or status, a more formal speech style is appropriate, one that marks the dominance of one speaker over the other. Successful management of speech styles creates the sense of politeness that is essential for harmonious social relations (Brown and Levinson, 1978 in Richards, 2008:21).

The actual expression of politeness will depend upon several factors: a) Concerns about face may be over ridden: for instance, in cases of danger of great urgency, speakers may be less inclined to bother about indirect requests. b) Some impositions are regarded as greater than others. A request that is felt to be a considerable imposition may require greater attention to (negative) politeness than a minor favour. c) Relationships between people (or, more precisely, how these are perceived in context) are highly important. In certain contexts, for instance, a speaker in a powerful position may feel able to impose upon others in a less powerful position. d) The kinds of politeness strategies that are felt to be appropriate will also vary in different cultures (Mesthrie R., *et al.* 2000: 189).

Brown and Stephen Levinson terms in Bonvillain (2003:127) politeness is concerned with *face* defined as an "individual's self-

esteem". The notion of face entails different kinds of desire, or *face-want*, that all people have and that all people know others to have. These wants are of two basic types: a) Positive face-want: desire (in some respect) to be approved of. b) Negative want: desire to be unimpeded in one's actions. Positive politeness is solidarity oriented. It emphasises shared attitudes and values. When the boss suggests that a subordinate should use first name (FN) to her, this is a positive politeness move, expressing solidarity and minimising status differences. A shift to a more informal style using slang and swear words will function similarly as an expression of positive politeness. By contrast, negative politeness pays people respect and avoids intruding on them. This is the example of the negative politeness express such as:

- (a) *Could you stay a bit later tonight, do you think, and finish this job.*
- (b) *That job's taking longer than we predicted. I don't know what we'll do if it isn't ready for tomorrow.* (Holmes, 2001: 268).

The distinguish strategies of polite behaviour by differentiating face-want such as: a) Positive Politeness: oriented to the positive image which hearer's desire to have her or his positive face-wants respected. Politeness strategies express solidarity, friendliness, in-group reciprocity. b) Negative Politeness: oriented to hearer's desire not to be impose upon; speaker recognizes hearer's rights autonomy. Negative politeness strategies express speakers' restraint and avoidance of imposing on hearer. c) Off-record politeness: indirect strategies which avoid making any explicit or unequivocal imposition on hearer.

This study is aimed to find out problem appears on implementing politeness principle in speaking class, to find out factors cause the problems appear, and formulate suitable recommendations to provoke students using appropriate utterances and maxim in order to make good relationships and distinguish context toward different age, sex and status of conversation participants who they interact with.

METHOD

This study conducted is based on the case happens in speaking class at Junior High Schools. Since this study attempts to investigate a case, it belongs to qualitative research as it is classified as case study. According to Gall *et.al* (2003: 435), qualitative research is also called case study research. Case study research evolved as a distinctive approach to scientific inquiry, partly as a reaction to perceived limitations of qualitative research.

The data collected from observations and interviews and conducted at three Junior High Schools both in urban and rural areas that provide three different class levels for each school. Observations were done in speaking classes and interviews were taken from students and teachers as the participants. According to Emzir (2011) interview, observational, documentation, photo, recording and formal conversation are the source of qualitative data. The source of observation, interview and documentation are commonly used.

The data taken in both urban and rural school is aimed to find out are there any external/ beyond of the school area factors that cause the problems in implementing politeness principle in speaking class realizing that students come from different family and social class background.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Problems Identified

Findings illustrate students expressing idea using inappropriate expression seen from the following utterances:

1. Students greet their teacher or older person are as follows:
 - (a) *Hi, how are you, sir?*
 - (b) *Morning, sir!*
2. When students say good bye to the teacher, they say:
 - (c) *Bye, Madam!*
 - (d) *See you later.*
3. When the students request something, they say:
 - (e) *Can I borrow your book, Sir?*
 - (f) *Can I ask something, Ma'am?*
4. When the student express disagree in the presentation or discussing:

(g) *I don't agree with you.*

(h) *Hey you, I really don't agree with you?*

5. Some students request the other to do something:

(i) *Bella, clean the whiteboard!*

In Example 1 (a) (b), it depicts impolite expression. The students should greet “*good morning/good afternoon/good night*” because the greeting “*Hi*” should be used to greet friends. Meanwhile in example 2 (c) (d), the expressing “*Bye, Madam*” and “*See you later*” is impolite. It is usually used in informal situation. They should be “*Goodbye, Ma'am*” and “*It was a pleasure to see you*”. Example 3 (e) (f) and 4 (g) (h) are the same cases as the cases of number 1 and 2. They are impolite when students express some requests in English if the students use word “*may*”. It will be more polite if the students say “*Would you mind if I borrowed your book, Sir?*”. Example 4 (g) (h) should be “*I am sorry, I don't agree*”. That expression will be preceded by expression “*I am sorry, pardon me or excuse me*”. Then, example 5 (i) it should be “*Bella, please clean the whiteboard!*”. When someone wants to instruct someone else, it must be more polite if they use word “*please*”.

Students are also not eager to excuse, greet, ask for sorry and thank whenever they have to state it. The data of observation show that most of them are not excusing when they want anything from friends and grabs others belonging without any permission and putting them back rudely by throwing them down. They seems to be convenient over that circumstances even with the teachers around them, for those who their belonging are taken and given back rudely do not irritated and insulted for being impolitely treated and without any hesitation on doing so. It is assumed that their impoliteness habitual are not warned by teachers and are compromised among students.

People utter the words “*please*” when asking other to give something or to do anything and “*thank*” for praising one's help and gift, the expression make utterances become polite.

Factors

Based on interviews with participants,

the problems appear on implementing the politeness principle in teaching and learning speaking influenced by internal and external factors. Internal factors refer to the school environment while external refer to the family and society values, and the technology development. Students admit that they learn school materials for every subjects taught focus on the substance of material, they are not asked to implement those learning materials substance. For instance, students are taught religion and moral subjects, the only concern attended by teachers is how students understand learning materials and are able to answer evaluation tests to measure their understanding without evaluating whether they are able to implement their understanding toward learning material taught in their real life that can be reflected on their manner and behaviour when they interact one with another in the classroom.

It can be assumed that teachers tend to develop students' *hardskills* (academic) achievement rather than *softskills* (character/personality). Meanwhile, the external factors is the lack of family and society values which can be described from students information, by increasing the family needs of social recognitions in high-tech and sophisticated era, the whole family members are challenged to have better educations and jobs. In addition, the easy access to the global information and facilitation decreasing human interaction and communication even among the family members. They do not need to meet each other and have conversation on maintaining their relationships. Parents are not necessarily educate their children for the moral values and they lost their sense of belonging among family members because of they do not have to meet each other and expressing their feeling in appropriate way every time they need to. They count on technology as major life problems solution and unconsciously building up their individual idealism as well.

Based on the data collected by interviewing students, the phenomenon spread widely to societies, they are recently difficult to find formal situations involving formal conversation which politeness is fully required among society as well. What they learned from

school are beyond the expectation. It indicates that the higher education degree does not guarantee the awareness of moral value and politeness.

Recommendations

Based on the problems and factors appear on implementing politeness principle in teaching and learning speaking, this study provides some recommendations formulated to scope the problems, they are as follows:

1. Surely, teachers must pay attention more in teaching speaking by provoking and acknowledging students to implement six maxims of politeness principle more often. It will be better if they implement those maxims in their conversation in order to showing the politeness in their spoken.
2. Acquiring the communicative competence for students. Communicative competence is the learner's ability to use language to communicate successfully. This competence includes knowledge of how to express intentions in various linguistic form provided by one's language. For example: one needs to learn appropriate means for issuing commands in different social contexts, whether with bald imperatives, mitigated or embedded directives or hints. In addition, competence includes knowledge of how to assert one's rights and to respond the rights of others. Finally, people become sensitive to social distinctions in their community and apply this awareness by choosing among style of communication. (Bonvillain: 2003, 274)
3. Providing teaching material or topic regarding on leaning Politeness. Learning politeness in very important part in order the people know how they speak in every culture. Every country has the own culture, thus the students and teacher also must learn how they can speak politely in intercultural communication.
4. Providing teaching material or topic regarding on leaning socio class related to status and role. Status is a concept to relations in society, but it is manifested within families as well. It is in familial interactions that

children first become aware to different categories of people based on characteristic such as age and gender (Bonvillain, 2003: 279).

In terms to help teachers acknowledging their students on implementing maxims of principle politeness, it will be provided theories and its examples as follow: In showing the politeness in conversation, speakers have to acknowledge six maxims of politeness. According to Leech (1983: 132), there are six maxims in politeness principle. They are tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim and agreement maxim, and sympathy maxim.

1. The Tact Maxim

The tact maxim is minimizing the expression of beliefs which imply cost to other and maximizing the expression of beliefs which imply benefit to other. The keywords of the tact maxim are: a) minimizing cost to other and b) maximizing benefit to other. e.g:

Host : Let's eat these cakes.

Guest : These cakes are very delicious. Who does make these cakes?

In the above conversation between host and guest, it can be seen clearly that the host maximizes benefit to the guest by offering the cakes and the guest wants to maximize benefit to the host by praising that the cakes are very delicious and asking who does make the cakes. The speaker and the hearer try to give benefit to each other. By doing so, the relationship between the speaker and listener which is shown in their conversation is very polite (Haryono & Rusitaningsih, 2013: 13).

2. The Generosity Maxim

Leech still explain that generosity maxim is less powerful than the tact maxim. The example of generosity maxim will be explained as follows:

(2a) I can lend you my car.

(2b) You must come and have dinner with us.

The offer (2a) and invitation (2b) are presumed to be polite for two reasons: firstly, because they imply benefit to *h* (other-centered), and secondly and less crucially, because they imply cost to *s* (self-centered).

3. The Approbation Maxim

In its more important negative aspect, this maxim says 'avoid saying unpleasant things about others, and more particularly, about *h*'. Hence, whereas a compliment like *What a marvellous meal you cooked! (masakanmu enak sekali!)* is highly valued according to the approbation maxim, *What an awful meal you cooked (masakanmu sama sekali tidak enak!)* is impolite.

4. The Modesty Maxim

Haryono & Rusitaningsih (2013: 14) in this maxim participant (a speaker and a listener) are expected to be humble by reducing his own praise. People will be said to be arrogant when in the activity they always speak their own pride. To create modesty maxim, the following keywords are of favor.

a. Minimizing speaker's praise,

b. Maximizing speaker's dispraise.

Examples:

(4a) Please accept this small gift as a token of our esteem.

(4b) How stupid of me!

In utterance 4a), the speaker minimizes his own praise by saying "the small gift" instead of "a precious gift, or a fantastic gift" to the listener. In utterance 4b), the speaker maximizes his self-dispraise by saying that he is stupid instead of saying an expression saying that he is smart. In fact, he is so smart only because of a certain context he thinks of himself as a stupid person.

5. The Agreement Maxim

There is a tendency to exaggerate agreement with other people and to mitigate disagreement by expressing regret, partial agreement, etc. It will be explained in the example below:

A: English is a difficult language to learn.

B: True the grammar is quite easy.

6. The Sympathy Maxim

Maxim of sympathy explains why congratulation and condolences are courteous speech acts, even though condolence expression beliefs which are negative with regard to the hearer:

(6a) I'm terribly sorry to hear that your cat died.

(6b) *I'm terribly sorry to hear about your cat.*

(6c) *I'm delighted to hear your cat.*

Example (6a) is polite, in contrast, for example, with *I'm terribly pleased to hear that you cat died*. Meanwhile, example (6b) is more polite than example (6a). Example (6c) is fortunate condition (such as the winning of a prize in the cat-show).

In order to avoid ambiguity the cooperative principle includes four maxims which should not be flouted. However, the flouting of these maxims allows the speaker to use different figures of speech and enrich the conversation, be more polite or less aggressive (Barbe 1995: 57, Korosiova 2013: 26). The cooperative principle sometimes interferes with other principles of pragmatics, such as the politeness principle. The four maxims are the following:

1. Maxim of quality

"If Comrade Napoleon says it, it must be right." (Orwell, 1957: 80; Korosiova, 2013: 27). The maxim of quality instructs that the speaker that they should not say what he believes is not true. In the above example the speaker goes against this maxim as he exactly states what he believes is not at all true.

2. Maxim of quantity

"This meat is black."

The maxim of quantity states that the speaker should make themselves clear by providing the hearer with enough information, so that the speaker's opinion and point is clear, and the speaker should not say neither less nor more than needed. The sentence meaning states only that the colour of the meat is black, and does not state anything about the speaker's opinion.

3. Maxim of relation

The maxim of relation advises the speaker to be relevant and to form his/her reply in a way that it is directly relevant to the topic of the conversation. For example if someone asks "How did you like the soup?" and the answer is "The noodles were perfectly prepared". The reply does not answer the question directly, so it flouts the maxim of relation. The speaker meaning is criticism, so irony can be found in the remark.

4. Maxim of manner

The maxim of manner states that the speaker has to be as direct and clear as possible. If there is any ambiguity in the utterance the maxim of manner is not fulfilled. For example speaker A and B would like to go to the cinema, and speaker A makes a suggestion:

A: *I've heard that they play the new James Bond movie downtown.*

B: *I've heard it too.*

The reply of speaker B is ambiguous, as it is not clear from the reply only if he means that he heard that information too and would like to go, or that he heard it too but has no intention to watch that movie. If the cooperative principle is fully observed, there is no difference between the sentence and the speaker meaning. However, it is not possible to go by this principle in every situation (Korosiova, 2013: 28).

There are also some ways to make request become softer by using any sentence as exemplified by Sholichah (2012: 37-38) to express politeness, as follows:

1. Past and continuous (e.g., *I was hoping that/for...*)

2. Modals

e.g., *Could I (please) ... ?*

Would you (please) ... ?

Would you mind (V+ing) ... ? - Would you mind helping me?

Could you possibly ... ? - Could you possibly help me out here?

Would you be so kind as to ... ? (very polite) - Would you be so kind as to help me (with this)?

3. Embedding (e.g., *I was wondering if ... Would it be all right if ... ?*)

4. Please + verb (more polite) - *Please help me.*

CONCLUSION

Speaking is one of the subjects which taught in Junior High School. Speaking is the ability to communicate with other to convey some thought, idea and feels. Speaking also reflect roles, age, sex, and status of participants in interactions and also reflect the expression of politeness. The politeness principle is one of the

aspects which is often forgotten, thus there are some problem in implementing politeness principle in teaching and learning speaking. Those problems can be solved by identifying crucial factors and recommending some solution such as learning politeness, paying attention and learnings maxims of politeness principle, acquiring communicative competence, and learning status and role in the societies.

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