

THE POLITENESS STRATEGIES USED IN ENGLISH IN FOCUS COURSEBOOK FOR THE SEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This research aims to (1) find out the types of politeness strategies and their realization in *English in Focus* dialogues, and (2) reveal the social factors influencing the characters to choose a certain politeness strategy in the book. The research used a descriptive qualitative method with the pragmatic approach. In addition, a quantitative method was used to measure the frequency of the data occurrences. The data were in the forms of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences in the context of the dialogues taken from the coursebook. The main instrument of this research was the researcher himself, with the data sheet as the supporting instrument. The results of the research are as follows. (1) All types of politeness strategies are found in the book. They are bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record, with negative politeness being the most frequently used strategy. Out of 48 realizations, 19 are applied in the coursebook. Four realizations are found in bald on record strategy, namely “metaphorical entreaties”, “task-oriented interaction”, “no fear of retaliation”, and “sympathetic advice or warning”. Five realizations are found in positive politeness strategy, namely “notice and attend to hearer”, “use in-group identity marker”, “seek agreement”, “avoid disagreement”, and “include both speaker and hearer in the activity”. The negative politeness strategy has six realizations, namely “be conventionally indirect”, “question and hedge”, “minimize the imposition”, “give deference”, “apologize”, and “state the FTA as a general rule”. Off record is realized by three sub strategies, namely “give hints”, “use rhetorical questions”, and “be incomplete, use ellipsis”. (2) All three sociological factors, including social distance, relative power and rank of imposition affect the choices of the politeness strategy by the characters in the book, with rank of imposition as the most frequent factor with 15 occurrences.

Keywords: pragmatics, politeness strategy, sociological factors, *English in Focus*

INTRODUCTION

Politeness exists in every language in the world. It is part of the feature that is universally exists in every language (Watts, 2003: 12). However, it does not mean that every language in every culture uses politeness in the same way. Every culture has its own definition of politeness. What is considered polite in one culture may be considered impolite in other cultures.

Politeness is applied in every aspect of life. It is applied in the daily conversation, governmental affair, and educational environment that includes school environment. In school, students have to act politely when talking to the teachers. If there is a case when a student does not act politely in confronting a teacher, he/she can get a social punishment. Because students should act politely in front of the teachers, teachers should also act politely

when interacting with each other to give a proper example to the students.

Politeness is a familiar term in daily life. People often use it to show that they recognize and respect each other by abiding the rules of behavior that exist in their society. However, politeness in the linguistic term is a bit different from politeness in the sociological term. In linguistics, politeness refers to how someone makes a choice over language use, how it affects other people by showing friendly attitude and giving them some space to make them comfortable (Cutting, 2003: 45).

Brown and Levinson (in Mills, 2003: 57) propose a theory of politeness that influences almost all the theoretical and analytical work of politeness in pragmatics. Their theory relies on the notion of face that was proposed by Goffman (in Culpeper & Haugh, 2014: 205) as a positive social value that every person owns as an image

of himself, that the society approves. Further, they theorize two types of face: positive face and negative face.

The first, positive face, is the desire of solidarity and the need to be accepted, recognized, approved and even liked by the member of the group. Second, the negative face, is the need of respect in regards of their autonomy, freedom in action, and not to be imposed by others (Cutting, 2003: 45). From this concept of face, they construct four politeness strategies namely bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record.

Each of the strategy are further divided into 48 realizations in total. Negative politeness strategy, along with off record strategy, are realized with 15 realizations. On the other hand, negative politeness has 10 realizations while bald on record is realized with eight strategies.

Politeness is something that people learn and get socialized into (Watts, 2003: 9). It is taught from generation to generation to ensure that it lasts to the next generation. The teaching of politeness concepts happens in various occasions, including the formal education. In school, students are required to act politely when talking to the teachers. If there is a case when a student does not act politely in confronting a teacher, he/she can get a social punishment. Because of the fact that students should act politely in front of the teachers, teachers should also act politely when talking with each other to give a proper example to the students.

The model of politeness act is not limited in the teachers' behavior. The teaching and learning media also have the role to give the students examples of politeness behavior, including the coursebook. In teaching and learning activities, the presence of a coursebook as one of the teaching and learning media is essential. Without it, the teachers have to burden themselves by making their own authentic teaching materials and activities for the teaching and learning process.

English in Focus for grade VII of junior high school students was selected as the object of the research. It is a series of English coursebook written by Wardiman, Jahur, and Djusma for students of junior high school. It was published by the ministry of Indonesian Education Department in 2008. Since the books are targeted for junior high school students or beginners, the materials are mainly relatable to daily life.

This research has two objectives. They are (1) to find out the types of politeness strategies and their realization that appeared in English in Focus dialogues, and (2) to reveal the social factors influencing the characters to choose a certain politeness strategy in English in Focus dialogues.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses qualitative method. The descriptive characteristics of qualitative research enable the researcher to conduct an in-depth study of the topics (Yin, 2011: 6). Hence, the research report contained brief description and examples of the data analysis to give a clear understanding of the report. Besides the qualitative method, this research also used the quantitative method to measure the frequency of data occurrences in the coursebook.

The object of this research is an English coursebook entitled *English in Focus* for grade VII students of junior high school. The data were in the form of phrases, clauses, and sentences presented in the coursebook. Meanwhile, the context of the data was the dialogues and the narrations that came with it. Further, the source of the data was *English in Focus* coursebook for VII grade students of junior high school.

In collecting the data, the field researcher serves as the main research instrument (Yin 2011: 13). Thus, the main instrument of this research was the researcher himself. As the main instrument, the researcher played the role of planning, collecting, analyzing, and presenting

the findings of this research. In order to improve the accuracy of the data collection, the researcher used a supporting instrument in the form of data sheet.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research finds 35 data based on the dialogues of the coursebook. In relation with the first objective, all types of politeness strategies are found in the coursebook. However, out of 48 realizations, only 17 are applied in the coursebook. Negative politeness strategy, being the most frequently used strategy with 15 occurrences, has 6 out of 10 realizations which are found in the coursebook. Positive politeness strategy has 9 occurrences with 5 out of 15 realizations used, bald on record has 7 occurrences with 4 out of 8 realizations used, and off record has 3 occurrences with 3 out of 15 realizations used.

a. Bald on Record

According to Brown and Levinson (1987: 95), bald on record is a strategy that prioritizes maximum efficiency in communication over the need to satisfy the hearer's face wants. There are 8 realizations in which this strategy may occur. Out of 8 realizations, 4 are performed in the book.

1) Metaphorical entreaties

Metaphorical entreaty is used to show one's valuation of his/her friendship to the hearer. This strategy is usually used between friends, like the exchange between Adrian and Airien, below.

Adrian : **Slow down, please!**

Airien : Relax, I am a good driver.

(Datum number 15)

On their way to the theatre, Airien drives the car beyond the speed limit. Adrian has asked her to slow down by saying "You are driving too fast!" However, Airien argues that they are in a hurry and what she did is necessary. To make the request come clear and urgent, Adrian baldly beg

for Airien to slow down. This entreaty indicates that Adrian asks Airien to consider their friendship in responding to his request. If done otherwise, the urgency of his entreaty would not come clear to Airien and the risk of refusal will be higher.

2) Task-oriented interaction

In a task-oriented interaction, maximum communication efficiency is more important than saving face.

Mrs Anwar : **Luki, come here.**

Luki : Yes, Mom. What's the matter?

(Datum number 29)

Mrs. Anwar is cooking for the dinner. She needs chilies in her cooking, but she is already occupied with another task. Therefore, she calls for Luki to help her take it from the fridge. Mrs. Anwar asks for Luki's help without redressing the FTA. She does it because she cannot leave her cooking while she needs the chilies immediately. Thus, maximum communication efficiency is more important in the context. Since Luki knows the situation his mother is in, Luki choose to be cooperative with his mom despite of the FTA done to him.

3) No fear of retaliation

When a speaker has relatively higher power than the hearer, he/she will not fear of any retaliation when doing an FTA to the hearer. This strategy is displayed in the dialogue between Nesya and her handmaid, Tukirah, below.

Nesya : **Tukirah, take this glass to the kitchen.** It's dirty.

Tukirah : Yes, Miss Nesya.

(Datum number 30)

Nesya baldly commands Tukirah, her handmaid to take her dirty glass to the kitchen. This act of command is done because Nesya has higher relative power and thus, does not fear of any retaliation from Tukirah. Tukirah, whom belong to lesser social status, would not feel the necessity to retaliate Nesya's act although Nesya

is younger. This is because one's social status contains higher power than age.

4) Sympathetic advice or warning

Advice and warnings are commonly okay to deliver them baldly on record, as the impact of the words would lessen if delivered politely. The example can be seen in the dialogue below.

Airien : Do not talk too much, do not worry, we are OK.

Adrian : **Yes, but I am warning you, someday a cop is going to stop you.**

(Datum number 17)

Airien and Adrian are friends. They are on their way to the theatre when they are caught in an argument. Airien, who drives the car, goes past the regulated speed limit. Adrian, who sits in the passenger seat, tells Airien to slow down. Adrian finally gives up his argument, but as a closing statement, he warns Airien of the consequences in violating the rules.

b. Positive Politeness

Positive politeness is performed by making the hearer feels good about what is said (Culpeper and Haugh, 2014: 210). Out of 15 realizations constructed by Brown and Levinson (1987: 101-129), 5 realizations occur in the coursebook.

1) Notice and attend to hearer

In this realization, the speaker has to be more sensitive of the hearer's behavior and presuppose the hearer's need. An example can be seen in the exchange below.

A : An earthquake shook my hometown last night.

B : **Really? I didn't hear the news yet. Tell me more about it.**

(Datum number 34)

B's reaction to A is an act of sympathy. B knows that A is feeling down about the tragedy that befell his hometown last night. To lift A's mood, B attends A's need of sympathy by asking

about the detail of the incident. What B does is the application of notice and attend to hearer realization strategy. By doing so, B hopes that he can lift A's positive face so that A does not feel down for too long.

2) Use in-group identity marker

Identity marker can be used to show one's closeness to another. The exchange between Rudi and her mother can be an example of this strategy.

Mother: Rudi, can you help me with the groceries?

Rudi : Of course, Mom.

Mother: Thank you, **Dear.**

(Datum number 8)

Mother just came home from the market. She has a difficulty with the grocery, so she asks Rudi to help her. Rudi agreed to help, thus Mother thanks him. She uses dear as an identity marker after saying thank you. This identity marker is generally regarded to someone that has very close relationships and not just regular friend, such as lover or between parents and their children. Thus, the word dear is used to show how Mother is for Rudi's help and that she loves him so much for doing so.

3) Seek agreement

With mutual agreement, one can share common ground with another and enhance one's positive face by making their partner feel that someone shares his/her feeling and condition. An example can be seen in the dialogue below.

Tiara : Yes, I am. I'm in 1C, and you?

Heru : I'm in 1C, too. **Then we are classmates.**

Tiara : Yes, we are. Sorry, I have to go now. Nice to meet you, Heru.

(Datum number 1)

Tiara, who is a new student, introduced herself to Heru. Her asks her if she is a new student and she tells him so. When Heru knows that they are classmates, he raises a safe topic to

seek agreement from Tiara. The statement is to say that since they are classmates, they will have more free time to talk later. This is because the place they are having a conversation in is in the library which usually permit talking only as necessary. Thus, to obey the rules as well as both positive faces, Heru uses the strategy to tell Tiara that they may talk later.

4) Avoid disagreement

Avoiding disagreement will save both the speaker and the hearer's face even if they do have something they disagreed upon. The example is displayed in the dialogue below.

Seller : No, Sir. These are very good apples.

Mr Imron : **I see. But can I have them for Rp12,000?**

(Datum number 24)

Mr Imron is going to buy some apples. He approaches a seller and ask him about the price. Mr Imron does not feel contended with the price that the seller offers and tries to make a bargain. However, the seller refuses his demand and says that his apples are of good qualities as a defense. Thereupon, Mr Imron avoids disagreeing by saying "I see".

5) Include both speaker and hearer in the activity

By including both the speaker and the hearer in the conversation, the speaker implicitly states that they are in a common ground. This strategy is applied by Airien in the coursebook, when she is having an argumentation with her friend, Adrian, over the speed limit.

Adrian : Hey, Airien, you are driving too fast!

Airien : **Well, we are in a hurry.** The movie starts in a few minutes.

(Datum number 14)

Adrian knows that Airien drives too fast and tells her to slow down. In her defense, Airien tells him that they are in a hurry because the movie that they are going to watch will start soon. Airien uses the word we to express that

both of them are in the same boat and what she is doing is nothing but for the sake of both of them. If she fails to do so, both of them will suffer the consequences and so does if she succeeded.

c. Negative Politeness

Negative politeness strategy avoids imposing the hearer's negative face, the wants to be respected regarding their autonomy, territory and freedom. In the coursebook, 4 realizations are performed out of the 10 that has been proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987: 129-211).

1) Be conventionally indirect

With indirectness, people can express themselves more freely, even as far as criticizing another by the means of satire or quips. The coursebook have an example of this occurrence.

Airien : Relax, I am a good driver.

Adrian : **Good drivers don't speed the way you do.**

(Datum number 16)

Being told that he is in the car of a good driver, Adrian does no feel appeased since Airien drives too fast. Thus, in his defiance, he says that good driver does not drive like Airien. What Adrian actually meant to say is that Airien is a bad driver. Since he says so in satirical way, the chance than Airien's face is threatened is smaller than if he says it bluntly. Adrian dares to say so since he believes that what he stands for is right, putting him in subjectively higher power even if Airien does believe what she is doing is right either. Besides, both of them have been friends and between friends, there are times that blunt words are uttered. Therefore, the satire that Adrian utters would not disturb Airien's negative face as much as if spoken by a stranger.

2) Question, hedge

This strategy utilizes questions and hedges to soften an FTA done to the hearer. This realization can be applied in some ways, one of

which is to soften bad news as in the dialogue between Citra and Sigit.

Citra : Is Ari at home?

Sigit : **I'm sorry, Citra. Ari is not at home.**

(Datum number 4)

Citra wants to meet Ari, but when she arrived at his home, it is Sigit, Ari's brother who she gets to meet instead of Ari himself. Citra asks Sigit if Ari is home, but unfortunately, he is not. In delivering the bad news, Sigit says sorry to soften the FTA he is going to do. He avoids disturbing Citra's negative face since Citra has come all the way to his home to see Ari, but Ari currently is not home. Moreover, Citra comes at night, which is unusual for girls to go to a boy's place at such hour if not for something important. Thus, Sigit deliver the message without disrupting Citra's negative face as best as he could.

3) Minimize the imposition

This strategy utilizes euphemism to lessen an FTA done to the hearer. A brief example can be seen in the conversation between Father and Mother.

Mother: What do you think about our new sofa?

Father : I don't know. **Maybe it's good.**

(Datum number 25)

Father's answer about the new sofa may not fulfill Mother's expectation since he seems to be hesitating. First, he said "I don't know," but then immediately adds "Maybe it's good." However, his compliment on the new sofa might be just to satisfy Mother's face. The indication is the word maybe that makes the utterance vague whether it is true or not. It is used to soften the FTA of Father's absence in opinion about the new sofa. With the mitigating word, Father can save his own face by avoiding lying as well as avoiding disturbing Mother's face because he does not truly think that the sofa is that good.

4) Give deference

Showing deference can lessen the FTA given to the hearer. The example can be seen in the dialogue below.

Police officer : Good afternoon, Miss. I believe that you're driving too fast. May I see your driving license, please?

Airien : Oh, yeah...**I mean yes, certainly, Sir.** All right, here you are.

(Datum number 18)

Airien, who just broke a rule is in a relatively lower position than the officer who stops her out of duty. She has no other choice than to be obedient to him. When the officer asks for her driving license, she agreed to give it by saying "Oh, yeah." However, as she feels that it is not polite to say so, she corrects her sentence by saying "I mean yes, certainly, Sir," right away.

5) Apologize

Apologizing is a way to show that the speaker feels rather guilty of imposing the hearer's negative face. The example of this realization can be seen in the exchange between Santo and his mother.

Mother: Santo, have you bought me some sugar?

Santo : I am sorry, Mom. I forgot.

(Datum number 10)

Santo just came home when her mother asks about the sugar she has asked before. Unfortunately, Santo does not have the sugar that his mother has asked. Therefore, he apologizes to his mother and tell her that he forgot about it. His action of apologizing shows that he is sorry about his mistake. Further, it might indicate his willingness to repent the mistake he has committed.

6) State the FTA as general rule

This strategy allows the speaker to take cover to the regulations in conducting an FTA. The example is displayed in the dialogue below.

Security : **Sorry Sir, don't bring any animals to the hospital.**

Mr Pinem : Why not?
 Security : It is dangerous for the people around here, especially for the patients.
 (Datum number 20)

Mr Pinem is on his way to the hospital with his pet when the security officer stops him. The security states that animals are not allowed because it is dangerous to the people, especially patient. The security only does as he is bid as a security officer; to enforce the rules to the people around hospital. Thus, in his FTA, he has the rules to back him up in case Mr Pinem feels that his negative face is being threatened.

d. Off Record

Off record strategy is performed by generating utterances that contain multiple interpretation possibility, thus giving the speaker an ability to defend himself of committing an FTA (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 211. Out of 15 realizations, 4 are performed in the coursebook.

1) Give hints

Hints can be used in various occasions. It utilizes speech acts to leave the hearer to interpret the speaker's purpose behind the lines he uttered. An example is presented in the form of dialogue between Mr Imron and an apple seller.

Seller : It's Rp15,000.
 Mr Imron : **Oh, ... it's too expensive.**
 (Datum number 23)

Prior to the exchange above, Mr Imron asks the seller about the price of the apple. The seller tells him the price but Mr Imron does not feel contended with it. He wants the price to be reduced but refrain to ask directly. Instead, he uses a speech act to give a hint to the seller to lower the price. Mr Imron enforces the seller to interpret the meaning behind his words. The utterance also gives an impression that the seller sets his price too high. However, since Mr Imron uses off record strategy, he can avoid the

responsibility of the FTA done to the apple seller.

2) Use rhetorical questions

Rhetorical question is basically an implicature. It works by imparting a question that demands no answer to make the hearer infer the meaning behind it. Since this question demands no answer, it is generally used to give information instead of asking for one. An example taken from the coursebook can be seen as follows.

Chica : Why? Horror movie is very entertaining.

Damar : In my opinion, **why do we pay just to be frightened?**

(Datum number 26)

Chica and Damar, schoolmates, are talking about movies. Chica asked Damar's opinion about horror movies whereas Damar give negative comment. When chica asks for the reason, Damar gives her a rhetorical question as an answer. The meaning of the utterance is deeper than what is said. With those lines, Damar implicitly state that it is stupid to see horror movies just to be frightened. Getting frightened is bad, and there is no benefit in paying to be so.

3) Be incomplete, use ellipsis

By leaving an utterance half undone, a speaker can leave an open interpretation to the hearer of what he/she might want to say. As a result, the hearer is expected to act accordingly to what he/she thinks the speaker wants to say. A good example of this realization can be seen in the dialogue taken from the coursebook.

Ranti : Good afternoon, Sir.
 Mr Bakri : Good afternoon. **You are ...**
 Ranti : Ranti, Sir. My name is Ranti.
 How are you?

(Datum number 3)

Ranti, a student, stumbled upon her teacher, Mr Bakri at the post office. As a student, it is customary to greet her teacher first, so does

Ranti. However, Mr Bakri does not seem to recall Ranti's name. In order to know it, Mr Bakri leave his utterance half undone so that Ranti can grasp his meaning.

In relation to the second objective, all the sociological factors affect the choice of the characters' politeness strategy. Based on the data, the most frequent factor of the characters' politeness strategies is rank of imposition, followed by social distance and relative power as the least frequent factor.

a. Social Distance

People with closer social distance would usually act less politely to each other compared to those with distant relation, much less a stranger. In the example below, the characters take their distant relationship as a consideration in choosing their politeness strategy.

Lira : Hi. My name is Lira.

Tony : **You are the new neighbour, right?**

Lira : Yes, I am. I just moved in yesterday.

(Datum number 5)

Lira just recently moved into the neighbourhood and does not know the surroundings well. Tony knows about that and makes friend with Lira. After their introduction, Tony asks Lira if she is the new neighbour. His question is an act of caring and attending Lira's positive face by implicitly showing her that Tony cares about her even though they just know each other. Since they just introduced themselves, they have not known each other very well. Tony's act would likely get them closer to each other. Thus, the distance between them affects Tony's choice of politeness strategy.

b. Relative Power

Power is an abstract concept in the society. People with lower social status, even though having a stronger body, are less powerful to those with higher social status. In the coursebook, this sociological factor becomes the

least frequent strategy used, with only 7 occurrences out of the 35 data.

Nesya : **Tukirah, take this glass to the kitchen.** It's dirty.

Tukirah : Yes, Miss Nesya.

(Datum number 30)

The social power that Nesya has is higher than that of Tukirah's. This is because even though Tukirah is older, Nesya's position of the daughter of Tukirah's employer gives her higher social standing despite her age. A person who has higher power does not need to act politely to those who have the lower one. Nesya's act of commanding Tukirah is in line with this social rule. She does not use any mitigating device to lessen her FTA to Tukirah. Tukirah, who is currently in a lower social status, choose to be cooperative since her position as a handmaid does not give her any rights to go against Nesya's order.

c. Rank of Imposition

Basically, people do politeness act because there is a certain degree of imposition to do it. The higher the imposition is, the higher it is to be a burden for the imposed to do the act. In the coursebook, rank of imposition becomes the most frequent factor that affects the choice of the characters' politeness strategy with 15 occurrences.

The man : **Excuse me.** Do you know where Mr Marwan's house is?

Father : Of course. It is in front of the fruit stall.

(Datum number 11)

Father was on his way to a stall when a man approached him to ask the direction to Mr Marwan's house. As a stranger who approaches another stranger, the man has disturbed Father's negative face, a face not to be imposed by another. Thus, the imposition is high on the man to do a politeness strategy. To lessen the FTA he does to Father, the man uses "excuse me," a

hedge to redress the FTA of disturbing Father's negative face.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In reference with the research objectives, this research finds that all types of the politeness strategies are used in *English in Focus* coursebook for grade VII students of junior high school, with negative politeness strategy being the most frequently used strategy. However, although all the strategies are used in the coursebook, only 29 out of 48 are used. The occurrences of the realization are arguably equal, with the most frequent ones being question, hedge, and apologize, both of which have 5 data.

In relation to the second objective, All three sociological factors appear as the factors influencing the choice of the characters' politeness strategy. Relative power comes as the least frequent out of all the three. Social distance and rank of imposition comes almost equal in frequency, with only 2 points of difference; social distance occurs 13 times while rank of imposition occurs 15 times.

Based on the conclusion of the research, there are some suggestions that the researcher can give to the following parties. First, to the users of the coursebook, the book can be used to get better understanding of how politeness is used in other cultures. Second, to future researchers, there are other problems and phenomena that concern on and correlate with the politeness strategy as well as other sources that can be analyzed under the issue of politeness such as novels and movies. Third, To English Education Department students, the researcher suggests that the students majoring in linguistics conduct more research on pragmatics, especially politeness strategy in educational context.

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