

Local Cultural Politeness in English Language Classrooms

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Abstract—Politeness is an important positive character that students should acquire in learning processes. Having a polite character, the students will be able to respect teachers and fellow students and, in return, obtain respects from them. This mutual respect will in turn create positive learning environments. In Indonesian contexts, the need to bring politeness in learning has been confirmed in policy documents which clearly states that politeness is as one of the characters that teachers should teach in classes. In English language classrooms, it is not only taught directly, but it is also integrated in the teaching and learning processes. The integration can be through teaching language functions (for example, apologizing, greeting, respecting, and thanking) where polite verbal and non-verbal expressions in English are taught. The way to perform politeness, however, could be different between Indonesian and English culture. As students could use local language knowledge to learn English language, they could also be possible to use local culture to learn English culture. This paper explores the way local cultural politeness is incorporated in English language classrooms

Keywords—*politeness, local culture, english culture.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Learning English is basically learning to use English language and this often means learning the grammatical structures, uttering them in good English pronunciation. In Indonesia, English language is a third language or a foreign language learned after Indonesia language studied as a second language and used as a means of communication and a medium of instruction at schools. While the students commonly use the first language or mother tongue out of school contexts, English language is confined only within English classes and it is, thus, seen as foreign language.

English being an international language and the most widely used language in international communication, it is learned in non-English countries for a number of related purposes, but three main modes have been prevalent: acquisition of knowledge, technology and economic development. The introduction of the English language in Indonesia is also associated with the modes above, but the use of English materials in the classes might bring the risk of introducing English cultures that might be unsuitable to the cultures of the students. This is because, as Kramsch suggests that, culture and language are connected in many ways as language is used for interaction in social life [1].

English culture, often associated with Western Culture, comprises the cultures of the communities in Kachru's

Inner Circle (i.e. the UK, the USA, Australia, Canada and New Zealand) [2]. The culture might be different from other cultures including from those of students learning English as a foreign language. As the students themselves might face cultural diversity within their own culture, learning alien English-related cultures might add more complicated and challenging situations in EFL contexts. In Indonesia, for example, the students are faced with numerous cultures within the national sphere apart from the students' own local cultures.

Politeness as one aspect of culture would then be conceptually and used interchangeably in Indonesian context. To Yule, politeness is a social concept reflected in social behavior governed in the form of social etiquette [1]. Thus, politeness concerns with polite verbal and non-verbal conducts.

In Indonesian context, the need to teach politeness is confirmed by government regulation by implementing in this curriculum 2013 (K13) focus on student center. The core competencies (KI) in this curriculum 2013 (K13) consist of four competencies; and one of core competencies (KI) is implementing polite behavior which it is clearly states that politeness is as one of the characters that teachers should teach in their classrooms.

Besides, Politeness is an important positive character for students should acquire in learning process. Having polite character would enable students to respect and get respects from teachers and other students, and this will create positive learning environment.

In English language classrooms this character is not taught directly, but it is integrated in the teaching and learning process. The integration can be through teaching language functions such as apologizing, greeting, respecting, and thanking where the polite verbal and non-verbal expressions are used in the classroom.

The way to perform politeness, however, could be different between Indonesian and English culture. As students could use local language knowledge to learn English language they could also possible to use local culture to learn English culture [3]. This paper explores the role of local cultural politeness on learning English politeness at Mts. Darul Qur'an.

Sapir defines language as "a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols" [4]. Lunenburg states that communication is a complex, give-and-take process, breakdowns anywhere

in the cycle can block the transfer of understanding [5]. These depictions of language shows that the main essence of a language is that it is used as a means of communication for delivering ideas, emotions and desires. Culture and language were manifestations of its distinctive national spirit or mind which language is symbolic presentation of a nation or a specific community, in other word, language is symbolic presentation of culture [6]. Thus, culture and language in social interaction cannot be separated because language is the core element of culture and its use is symbolic to that culture.

Brown and Levinson see the use of language and culture in social interaction with their concept of "face" where the concept of politeness is also enacted [7]. The notion of 'face' is derived from that of Goffman (1967) and from the English folk term, which ties face up with notions of being embarrassed or humiliated or 'losing face'. Thus face is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction. Brown and Levinson Some acts intrinsically threaten face; these 'face-threatening acts' will be referred to hence forth as FTA [7]. The components of face deal more with negative face rather than positive face. But, Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies show that both are considered when the following strategies are considered [7].

Firstly, there is a baldly on record strategy 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.

Secondly, there is also a 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.

Thirdly, there is a negative politeness strategy referring 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 consider this strategy as the heart of respect behaviour because it performs the function of minimizing the imposition over the hearer [7].

Finally, there is an off-record strategy. 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).

Based on the strategy of Brown and Levinson, the politeness strategies divide into four strategies, such as; Baldly on record strategy, Positive politeness strategy, Negative politeness strategy, Off record strategy

II. METHODS

This study applied qualitative approach with descriptive qualitative design because this design use to describe the expression in learning English process, based

on Arikunto descriptive qualitative is the simple research than another research because in this research is not action to the object or district [8]. The aims to analyse the use of politeness strategy in local culturale politeness on learning English politeness by using the theory of Brown and Levinson. The object in this study was local culturale politeness of the teacher and students at second grade, with source of data was students and the teacher interaction in the classroom at Mts. Darul Qur'an. There was a number of step to collect the data as Interview to the teacher English in the school. And observation to collecting the data at Mts. Darul Qur'an to explore the local culturale politeness on learning English process in the class. To analysis the data use Brown and Levinson politeness strategy [7]. The result of this research could be interpreted with drawing conclusion after all of data was collected.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.

The object in this study is politeness enacted by English teachers and students in classroom interaction. Politeness is confirmed by government regulation (Kemendiknas,) clearly stating that it is as one of the characters that students should experience and teachers should facilitate in classes [9]. Recordings of interactions were analysed and samples of them are presented below

• Greeting

When the teacher arrive in the classroom the leader ask all of student to stand up.

A: Stand up please

All of students stand up

A: greeting please!

All of students : "Assalamualaikum Warahmatullohi Wabarokatuh (peace be once you)"

Teacher : " waalaikumussala wr.wb."

Teacher : " good morning students "

Students : " good morning teacher "

Teacher " how are you today "

Students "we are fine thank you and you "

Teacher " I'm great "

In this conversation, the students received the teacher coming with student stand up from their chair to greeting the teacher as respecting form by students to their teacher. The greeting of "Assalamualaikum Warahmatullohi Wabarokatuh (peace be upon you)" is used by community of Islam religion as greeting when meet the teacher, friends, parents and so on. The majority in the class is islam religion, therefore the in the classroom use Islamic greeting in the class. And then The teacher replied by saying "Walaikumussalam Warohmatullahi Wabarokatuh (peace be upon you too)". The Islamic greeting teaches the students in politeness communicating.

The other kinds of greeting the classroom in learning English are expressions of "Good Morning and how are you". These English greetings, which also show politeness, were used after the Islamic greeting. Therefore the Islamic

greeting and the English greeting are compared by the teacher in learning English in positive politeness.

- *Apologize*

Extract 1:

Teacher: "do you remember about our lesson yesterday"

(Not at all students answer "yes or no" and there is a student said "I am sorry sir, I think I forgot about it")

This conversation was talking about the lesson learned yesterday. The students responses showed negative politeness. This is because there are some the student who could be answering "yes or no". The student's negative response "I am sorry" also shows negative politeness

Extract 2:

Student : "Excuse me Miss, I ask permission to go to toilet"

Teacher : "yes please"

Extract 2 showed the student wanted to go to the toilet, and required teacher's permission and the teacher gave permission. The student's asking for the permission is negative politeness because the student distracted the learning process.

Extract 3:

Teacher "Why you came late"

Student : "I'm sorry, I came late because I woke up late"

Teacher : "Do you know the consequence when you came late?"

Student : "yes, miss"

Teacher : "stand up in front of white board for 30 minutes!"

Student: (the students came to the front and stood up)

As the student said sorry for coming late and obeying the teacher's command to stand up in the front of whiteboard, it shows that the student realized the mistake. Meanwhile, the teacher using face threatening act (FTA) strategy, reminded the late comer students of the consequence of coming late. The use such FTA strategy by the teacher implied the teaching of politeness while learning English.

- *.Respecting*

Extract 1:

Teacher: Ok! I will start the study about simple continuous tense (the teacher teach the student about the English lesson, and every student listen to the explanation of the teacher in the classroom)

The process of learning English here required the students to listen to the teacher's explanation and not to make noise in the classroom. This showed the

students respected of the teacher indicating polite behaviour in learning process.

Extract 2

Teacher : JU , read the text in the book

JU : Nggih miss

Using the word "Nggih" is a respecting mark in Sasak culture which, in this context, to show the student polite attitude to the teacher. Responding "nggih (yes) to the teacher's instructions means that the students obey the teacher's instruction showing positive politeness.

- *Thanking*

Teacher : LA, please close the door

LA : Yes , miss (go to close the door)

Teacher : Thank you

Saying "thank you to the student for closing the door can be seen as teaching politeness to the students. It also the strategy of thanking is positive politeness because it could build harmonious relationship between the teacher and the students.

All of the expressions above demonstrate the application local cultural politeness in English language classroom. Politeness is not taught directly but is integrated in the teaching and learning process. The integration can be through teaching language functions such as apologizing, greeting, respecting, and thanking where the polite verbal and non-verbal expressions are used. The strategy of politeness include bold on-record, positive politeness, and negative politeness.

The findings showed the use the politeness strategy such as, bold on-record in apologize (extract 3), positive politeness in greeting, respecting, and thanking, while negative politeness in the apologize expression (extract 1, and 2). Islamic greetings "Assalamualaikum Warahmatullohi Wabarokatuh (peace be upon you) and "Waalaiikumussala Warohmatullahi Wabarokatuh (peace be upon you too)" are used by the teacher and the students in the English language classroom. These are polite greeting used by Muslim community when meeting teachers, friends, parents and others. The other kinds of greeting the classroom found in the English classrooms were "Good Morning and how are you today" are which are positive politeness used for interacting purpose in the classroom.

In apologizing, an expression of "excuse me" and "I am sorry" are negative politeness as it is a mark of a distraction in the learning process. And when the teacher said "you know the consequence of it" is bold on record in politeness because the students got consequences of the mistake in which the teacher used the face threatening Act (FTA) in learning English politeness.

Respecting expression "nggih" (yes) and thanking expression "thank you" were also used in the classrooms. The expressions are categorised as positive politeness classroom because by respecting each other, comfortable situation would be created. This situation would in turn make students focus on and listen attentively to teachers'

instructions and explanations. Besides, making noise could be avoided. Having this conducive teaching and learning atmosphere, students' difficulties in understanding the lessons could be reduced. Indeed, the use of local cultural politeness in the English language classrooms is suggested as students could use local language knowledge to learn English language [9].

IV. CONCLUSION

Politeness is an important positive character that students should acquire in learning process. In English language classrooms this character of politeness is not taught directly, but it is integrated in the teaching and learning process. The integration can be through teaching language functions such as apologizing, greeting, respecting, and thanking where the polite verbal and non-verbal expressions are used. The way to perform politeness, however, could be different between Indonesian and English culture. As students could use local language knowledge to learn English language, they could also possible use local culture while learning English. Politeness strategies as proposed by Brown and Levinson were used such as, bold on-record in apologize, positive politeness in greeting, respecting, and thanking as well as negative politeness in apologizing. Incorporating politeness in English language classroom is recommended as it would create positive, non-threatening and comfortable language classroom atmosphere which facilitate students' learning.

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