

# Politeness and Impoliteness in Directives: *A Study on the Students-Lecturers Interaction*

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**Abstract**— *Today student-lecturer interaction for supervising and consultancy has been shift from a minimum face-to-face interaction to a maximum distance one. It is due to the fast growth and development of cell-phone technology. Such way of interaction requires the students to keep performing politeness and to keep away from impoliteness for a better interpersonal contact. In fact, they frequently perform impolite speech acts, especially in directives which require the lecturers to do something. The study is aimed at investigating the politeness strategies performed by the students in realizing directive speech acts. The impoliteness factors of the directive are also investigated. The sources of data are the students who have thesis consultancy at the Universitas Nusantara PGRI Kediri. The analysis technique of pragmatics consisting of 'means-end' and 'heuristic' analysis are used in the study. Such technique is employed on the steps of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. The results reveal that the politeness strategies performed are much more negative politeness rather than positive politeness and the impoliteness or types of face threat are accidental threat to face mostly happened rather than incidental and/or intentional face threat. The study brings fort some implications for the students, such as it shows them how to speak appropriately to their lecturers or supervisors, it tells them how to ask and/or have them as the senior to do something in appropriate manner, and it encourages them to maintain a good sound relation with them anyway.*

**Keywords**— *politeness, impoliteness, directives speech acts, verbal interaction*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal interaction is part of social interaction in which the speaker is not only required to construct and deliver a linguistic matter but also to maintain a social relation with the hearer. A good sound relation among social members may be built on the base of appropriate language use appreciating the politeness values. It is obvious that language in use is really bound with the contextual clues as the surroundings of speech including the social contexts (Mey, 2001, Leech, 1983, Brown & Levinson, 1987, dan Gunarwan, 2007).

The fast growth and development of cellular phone technology brings forth a particular social interaction including the students-lecturers interaction. In other words, there has been a shift of interaction, i.e. from a minimum face-to-face interaction to a maximum distance one. The advanced technology provides high-tech-features for both oral and written communication and interaction. In fact, such way of communication, however, is also merely risky with offenses and misinterpretation due to the absence of the real face expression, body movement, the limited space and time of writing or speaking, and the personal, social, and cultural aspects of the hearer's as well. Thus, the hearer's face is threatened and it surely makes the personal and/or social frictions.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are some primary concepts related to the focus of the study, i.e. speech acts, politeness and impoliteness, implicature, and students-lecturers interaction.

### A. Speech Acts

Talking about speech acts surely reminds the author on the scholar, Austin (1962) who proposes his statement of the art that speaking something means doing something. Words and acts occur at the same time on a particular context. His mind is stated in his book, *How to Do Things with Words*, and the essential contents are made up by his student, Searle (1975). Lately, the Searlean is also influencing thoughts along with his teacher's, the Austinian. Searle (1975) calls his make-up thoughts 'the New Austinian', especially those related with typology of speech acts. Thus, he defines speech act as *the basic or minimal units of linguistic communication*. It is really obvious that his thought is distinctive with the formalism claiming that a word is the minimal unit of language rather than speech act.

Speech acts contains three acts inherent with a particular utterance and they are not separated each other in the normal occasion (Austin, 1962). The acts are locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary. The previous is saying something with words, the middle is doing something with words, and the latter is affecting someone (the hearer) with words. Regarding with the typology, Searle (1975) classifies it into five types, i.e. representative or assertive, the act that commits the speaker to the truth; directives, the act that represents attempts to have the hearer do something; commissive, the act that commits the speaker to do something in the future; expressive, the act that expresses a psychological attitude or state in the speaker; and declarative, the act that changes the effects immediately in a particular state of affairs. It is the speech act typology proposed based on what Austin accounts.

### B. Politeness and Impoliteness

Anyone says something surely has a purpose (end) and to achieve it, he/she needs a way or a strategy (means). In a pragmatic perspective, the utterance delivered to the hearer does not only function as communicating something but also maintaining a personal contact. To make the functions effective, the speaker usually chooses politeness strategies as verbal strategies in pragmatics sense. Utterances may be said to be polite or impolite whether they threat the hearer's face or not or how high they potentially threat the hearer's face, both positive face and negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Basically, all utterances have potential to threat faces, the hearer's face and the speaker's face as well. In other words, any utterances have probability to make hearer offended, angry, disappointed, or dissatisfied. If so, they are said to be impolite. The impolite utterance, in turn, causes interpersonal and social frictions. Thus, the impoliteness is not preferred because it certainly makes bad sound of social life. It is obvious that a good speaker always tries to choose the politeness strategies based on the hearer's stereotypes and the context of situation.

Regarding with politeness as the verbal strategies, Brown & Levinson (1987) propose a notion of politeness derived from the notion of face. They urge that there are two faces should be taken into account, such as a positive face referring to positive politeness and a negative face referring to negative politeness.

Positive politeness strategy tries to minimize the threat of the hearer's positive face. It is used to make the hearer feel good about themselves, their interests or possessions, and are most usually used in situations in which the audience knows each other quite well (Foley, 1997). In addition to hedging and attempts to avoid conflict, some strategies of positive politeness include statements of friendship, solidarity, compliments. Negative politeness strategy is oriented towards the hearer's negative face and emphasize avoidance of imposition on the hearer. By avoiding imposition from the speaker, the risk of face-threat to the hearer is decreased (William, 2014). Negative politeness strategy assumes that the speaker will be imposing on the listener.

The previous orients to speaker's tendency to choose the verbal strategies that drum in his/her solidarity with the hearer. The strategies involve claiming common ground with the hearer, stating that the speaker and the hearer are co-operators, and satisfying the hearer's wants. The latter orients to opt for the verbal strategies that focus on the speaker's deference to the hearer. The speaker who uses such strategy usually performs the indirectness, hedges, and apologies (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Impoliteness is also necessary to be understood as the broad opposite of politeness. Impolite is also can be interpreted as rudeness. (Wicaksono, 2015). It constitutes the communication of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive verbal face-threatening acts (Bousfield, 2008). In the case of actions potentially damage the face, Goffman (1967) as cited by Bousfield (2008) divides them into three parts, e.g. intentional, those with the intention of causing open insult; incidental, those arising as an unplanned but sometimes anticipated by product of action; and accidental, those may appear to have acted innocently, his/her offence seems to be unintended and unwitting (Bousfield, 2008).

*Impoliteness* impoliteness comes about when the speaker communicates face attack intentionally or the hearer perceives and/ or construct behaviour as intentionally face-attacking or a combination of both ideas (Culpaper in Jamet and Jobert, 2013). It is also a negative attitude toward specific behaviours occurring in specific context which is sustained by expectations, desires and beliefs about social organisation in which how someone's or communities' identities mediated by others in interaction.

Culpaper (2011) mentioned that situated behaviours are viewed negatively and considered impolite when the conflict with how one expects them to be, how one wants them to be and /or how one thinks they ought to be. Those behaviours mostly bring consequences emotionally or are presumed to cause offence for others, or atleast for one participant.

### *C. Implicature*

Pragmatics is study of meaning bound to contexts (Mey, 2001 and Grundy, 2008). The meaning of utterance may be stated or spoken and implied. The spoken meaning of utterance is called explicature and the implied meaning of utterance is named implicature (Huang, 2007). The notion of implicature firstly proposed based on Grice's theory of conversational implicature. According to Grice (1975, cited by Huang, 2007), the speaker should performs a co-operation with the hearer to establish effective and efficient conversation. Realising such co-operation, the speaker should take into account the co-operative principle consisting of four maxims as dealt with below.

- Maxim of Quality. It requires two conditions, i.e. not to say what is believed to be false and not to say that for which adequate evidence is not met.
- Maxim of Quantity. It requires two conditions, i.e. to make the contribution as informative as is required and not to make the contribution more informative than is required.
- Maxim of Relation. It requires relevance.
- Maxim of Manner. It requires four conditions, i.e., avoid obscurity of expression, avoid ambiguity, be brief, and be orderly.

In a particular occasion, the maxims of co-operative principle are not met by the speaker due to a particular consideration. In other words, the speaker decides to break the maxims because he prefers maintaining the personal contact or a good sound of social interaction which is commonly called a convivial gregariousness. Such theory of co-operative drives the concept of implicature focusing the inferred meaning or the meaning of utterance that are not said by the speaker but it is intended. The implicature is grasped or understood only by identifying the contexts of utterance, both linguistic context and situation context.

### *D. Students-Lecturers Interaction*

Human beings are social creatures who must undertake to do interaction each other. It is commonly known as the verbal and non-verbal interaction. The scope in which they perform an interaction may be a society, a community, and a group. For example, students-lecturer interaction occurs in a school or university as a particular community assigned by the members. Their interaction takes place not only in a classroom but also out-side the classroom both the face-to-face and the distance one. The out-side interaction is usually performed for paper or thesis consultancy.

In now-days era, along with the advancement of communication technology, they prefer communicating in a long way distance to face-to-face using a hand-phone, both the written and the spoken. Such way of communication is also inevitable from the face threat especially in the speech acts of directives performed by the students. Their personal relation is junior-superior (some are close and some are not close). The speech acts of directives are mostly performed by the speakers in such speech event.

## III. METHOD

The data of the study are utterances on speech act of directives collected using the instrumnts of documentation. Under the agreement, the lecturers/supervisors share the written dialogues of the students-lecturers to the researcher. The sources of data are those who have thesis consultancy at the Universitas Nusantara PGRI Kediri. The analysis technique of pragmatics consisting of 'means-end' and 'heuristic' analysis are used in the study (Leech, 1983). Such technique is employed on the steps of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding (Yin, 2011).

## IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The speech act of directive performed by the students in the speech event of students-lecturers interaction contains three paradigmatic cases as the part of directives. They are requests (40%) and questions (60%), see table 1. While politeness strategy employed by the students indicates that negative politeness is employed greater than positive politeness by the comparison 1: 3 (see table 2). Then, the face threat received by the lectures are dominantly categorized as incidental (70%) and accidental (30) as it is shown in table 3.

Table 1: The Speech Act of Directive

No.	Speech act of directive	Percentage
1.	Requests	30 (40%)
2.	Questions	50 (60%)
	Total	80 (100%)

Table 2: Politeness Strategy Employed by the Students

No.	Politeness Strategy	Percentage
1.	Negative Politeness	60 (75%)
2.	Positive Politeness	20 (25%)
	Total	80 (100%)

Table 3: Types of Face Threat Received by the Lecturers

No.	Types	Percent
1.	Intentional	0 (0%)
2.	Incidental	56 (70%)
3.	Accidental	24 (30%)
	Total	80 (100%)

#### A. Politeness Markers and Strategies

There were some words as the markers of politeness used by the speaker in performing directives, categorized into four terms, such as greeting, gratitude, apologise, and approximation. Some greetings used in the students-lecturers interaction were 'assalamualaikum', *selamat sore* (good afternoon), *selamat malam* (good evening), and *selamat pagi* (good morning) and they are spoken to open the conversation. The gratitude frequently said at the end of conversation includes *terima kasih* (thank you) and *matur suwun* (thank you) which were written in various forms, such as *trm ksh*, *trm kasih*, *terima ksh*, *makasih*, *mksh*. The short forms of writing were due to the limited space available in the media of communication (cell-phone).

The apologized words commonly used by the speaker were *maaf* (sorry) and *saya mohon maaf* (I apologise).and they were occasionally written in the short forms, *mf*. The approximation used as the politeness marker was *kira-kira* (approximately). It implied the fuzziness indicating that the spekaer tends to soften his/her utterance and avoid the offense or face damage.

#### 1. Questions

Questions were dominantly used by the students as part of directives to ask the lecturers on something related to the consultancy. The followings are the examples indicating the politeness strategy used by the students as performing a directive question. In the dialogues, the letter S refers to student and L refers to lecturer.

Context: a student who has just registered for thesis program contacts her lecturer as the supervisor for consultancy that she has not done yet before. The assigned supervisor is also her lecturer. Their relation is junior-superior; they know each other but not close.

[1] S : *Assalamualaikum wr wb. Pak, Sy Nina, Mf, mengganggu, kira2 kpn sy bs bimbingan?*

(Assalamualaikum wr wb. Sir, I'm Nina, sorry to disturb you, when could I have your time for consultancy?)

L : *Besok bs, skitar jm 10 d ruang dosen.* (Tomorrow is ok. At 10, in the lecturer-room)

S : *Ok, pak. Trm kasih...* (Ok, sir, thank you)

The speaker uses some politeness markers to soften her utterance, such as the words *Ass wr wb*, *pak*, *mf*, *mengganggu*, and *kira2*. All of them is used to make her utterance of '*kpn sy bs bimbingan?*' not offend the hearer. It is successful because the hearer is not threatened of such utterance or his face is not damaged. It is common for a particular culture like Javanese using more than one politeness markers. The other questions delivered using other markers stated in example [2].

Context: The student contacts his supervisor one day before for consultancy. They know each other very well.

- [2] S : *Selamat sore, bapak.*  
*Pak, besok 'njenengan' di kmpus, 'nopo'?* Sy mau bimbingan.  
 (Good afternoon, sir.  
 Sir, You would be in campus tomorrow, wouldn't you?  
 I will see you for consultancy).  
 L : *Sy msh luar kota, senin dpn sj.*  
 (I've been out of town. Next Monday, pls).  
 S : *iya bpk, trm kasih.* (Yes, sir. Thank you).

The utterance [2] is realised using some politeness markers, such as *selamat sore, bapak, pak, 'njenengan', and 'nopo'*. The other two words '*njenengan*' (you) and '*nopo*' (wouldn't you) are Javanese indicating that the speaker appreciates the hearer. The use of *bapak* means that the speaker really honors the hearer and it indicates that their relation is not close.

## 2. Requests

Requests, as one of directive speech-act, were used frequently used by the students ask the lecturers on something related to the consultancy. The following are the examples indicating the politeness strategy used by the students as performing a directive question. In the dialogues, the letter S refers to student and L refers to lecturer.

Context: a student who has just finished doing consultancy. He is eager to finish his *skripsi* immediately. The assigned supervisor is also her lecturer. Their relation is junior-superior; they know each other but not close.

- S : *Selamat sore. Pak, Sy Irfan, Jika bapak ada waktu luang besok, saya hendak menemui bapak untuk bimbingan skripsi.*  
*Terimakasih.* (Good evening, sir. I wonder if you have spare time tomorrow, I would like to meet you to discuss my skripsi. Thank you)  
 L : *Baik. Temui saya jam 7 di ruang Dosen.*  
 (Tomorrow is ok. At 10, in the lecturer-room)  
 S : *Ok, pak. Terima kasih...* (Ok, sir, thank you)

In this situation, The speaker used some politeness markers to soften her utterance, such as the words *selamat sore, Pak, Jika bapak ada waktu luang*. All of them are used to make her utterance of '*saya hendak menemui bapak untuk bimbingan skripsi*' not offend the hearer. It was very successful because the hearer was not threatened of such utterance or his face was not damaged. It was common for a particular culture like Javanese using more than one politeness markers and switching the languages.

## B. Impoliteness and Face Threat

Impoliteness and/or face threat employed was not something that was a given. They emphasised the role of intentional aspect. It was possible that impoliteness and face threat happens due to misunderstanding in early communication. It occurred incidentally and accidentally (unintentionally). Incidental impoliteness or face threat means that language which is produced can cause face damage but not intended i.e the utterance which is not spoken and written appropriately by abbreviating the utterances such as *ass wr wb. slmt pg, btw, thx* and so on. The speaker or writers mainly did this incidentally because they were in hurry. While accidental (unintentional) impoliteness or face threat occurred when the speakers or writers produced impolite utterances without any intention to offend the hearer. It might happen due to their background knowledge about politeness and impoliteness. In other words, they did not know that their utterances were impolite for others.

### 1. Incidental Impoliteness and face threat

Incidental impoliteness was the most frequent impoliteness used by the students when they were texting or communicating with their lecturer related to consultancy or advisory program. It occurred incidentally for various purposes such as time efficiency and simplicity.

The followings are the examples indicating the impoliteness utterances used by the students as performing in the dialogue, the letter S refers to student and L refers to lecturer.

Context: a late senior student who is asking his supervisor about the continuity of his *skripsi* advisory. The assigned supervisor is also his lecturer. Their relation is junior-superior; however they know each other very well.

- S : *Ass wr. wb. Sir, kapan sy bs bimbingan lagi?*  
*Kalo bapak ada waktu longgar, let me know.*  
 (Ass wr. wb. Sir, When can I have consultation again?  
 If you have spare time, let me know)  
 L : *meet me at 12 AM tomorrow.*

S : Ok sir. Thx

In this situation, the speaker mostly used abbreviated utterances such as *Ass. wr. wb, Kpan, sy, bs, bmbingan, bpak, thx*. All those utterances actually made the hearer felt offended since they seemed impolite if they were spoken or written to someone in higher position. In this situation, however, the lecturer tried to reply formally since he still tolerated the students.

## 2. Accidental Impolitenes

Impolite utterances which were addressed accidentally (unintentionally) used by several students when they were texting or communicating with their lecturer related to consultancy or advisory program. They used the utterances without any intention to offend the hearer. It mainly occurred due to the habit of language use. Even though the use of this kind of impoliteness was not as many as incidental politeness, the accidental impoliteness cannot be ignored.

The following is an example indicating the accidental impoliteness which occurs when a student is communicating with his skripsi advisor.

Context: a student who is going to have skripsi consultancy with his advisor. Their relation is junior-superior; they know each other and close enough.

S : Good, I wanna tell you  
that I can't meet you for having skripsi consultation  
coz I gonna go to Bali.  
L : Okay  
S : Thank you, Sir

In this situation, The speaker used some utterances which indicate impoliteness such as *wanna, coz and gonna*. These utterances were categorized as accidental impoliteness since they belong to "slang" language which is not appropriate to use for communication of student to lecturer.

## 3. Implications

This study found that there were some implications of using politeness strategies in teaching and learning process. First implication is efficient communication interaction in the process of consultancy or advisory. The efficient communication was shown by the utterances used by both lecturer and student which were mostly using short and abbreviated utterances but still understandable.

The second implication was respect communication between lecturer and student. It was shown by the usage of the word *Assalamualaikum* (greeting), *Bapak* (sir), *napa* (wouldn't you), thank you and other honour utterances to show respects to the elder.

## V. CONCLUSION

The fast growth and development of cellular phone technology brings forth a particular social interaction including the students-lecturers interaction. In other words, there has been a shift of interaction, i.e. from a minimum face-to-face interaction to a maximum distance one. The speech act of directive performed by the students in the speech event of students-lecturers interaction contains three paradigmatic cases as the part of directives. They are requests (40%) and questions (60%). While politeness strategy employed by the students indicates that negative politeness is employed greater than positive politeness by the comparison 1: 3. The face threat received by the lectures are dominantly categorized as incidental (70%) and accidental (30%). There are some words as the markers of politeness used by the speaker, categorized into four terms: greeting, gratitude, apologize, and approximation. occur incidentally and accidentally (unintentionally).

Mostly two implications appears: (1) efficient communication interaction in the process of consultancy or advisory and (2) respect communication between lecturer and student.

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