

Politeness Strategies in Selected Academic Settings: Insights from Lecturer-Student Interactions in Eastern Indonesia

Nunung Anugrawati* & Ummi Khaerati Syam

Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, Makassar, Indonesia

* nunung.anugrawati@unismuh.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

The study addresses a critical gap in understanding how politeness strategies are navigated within the hierarchical and culturally nuanced academic interactions of Indonesian higher education. By focusing on lecturer-student dynamics at Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, the research explores the types and functions of politeness strategies, providing insights into how cultural and social hierarchies shape communication behaviors. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, seven lecturers and their students were observed across multiple classroom sessions. Data collection involved video recordings and field notes, analyzed through Discourse Analysis (DA). The findings reveal that lecturers predominantly employ positive politeness strategies, such as humor, informal greetings, and in-group markers, fostering a collaborative and approachable atmosphere. Conversely, students exhibit negative politeness strategies, like formal address terms and hedging, reflecting respect for authority and a preference for maintaining hierarchical boundaries. These contrasting strategies underscore a complex interplay of reducing and respecting social distance, influenced by high-context cultural norms. The implications extend beyond academia, emphasizing the need for culturally sensitive communication practices in hierarchical institutions to foster inclusivity and mutual understanding. By bridging theoretical frameworks with real-world classroom dynamics, this study enriches the discourse on politeness and its critical role in educational settings, particularly in Eastern Indonesia contexts where power and cultural norms intersect profoundly.

1. Introduction

The issue of ineffective communication between lecturers and students in academic settings has been a recurring concern, particularly in contexts where cultural norms, power dynamics, and politeness conventions play a significant role. Despite the extensive body of research on communication and politeness strategies, there remains a gap in understanding how these elements function in specific academic contexts, especially in cultures that emphasize hierarchical power structures, such as Indonesia. While existing studies have explored politeness in various intercultural and academic environments, they often fail to address how politeness strategies influence real-time interactions between lecturers and students, particularly when these interactions are shaped by students' perceptions of power and authority (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 2014).

Effective communication in academic settings is essential for fostering a productive learning environment. However, challenges frequently emerge when hierarchical power dynamics influence interpersonal interactions (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 2006; Holmes, 2001). In Indonesia, where high-context communication and cultural norms heavily influence interpersonal exchanges, the interaction between lecturers and students can be particularly complex (Wierzbicka, 2003; Kecskes, 2014; Sundar, 2009). Despite a wealth of research on politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 2014), there remains a significant gap in understanding how these strategies are applied in educational contexts characterized by pronounced power disparities embedded in cultural practices (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). Specifically, few studies have focused on how politeness strategies are manifested in the lecturer-student dynamic within Indonesian higher education (Sundar, 2009).

Moreover, previous studies have primarily focused on politeness strategies in Western contexts (Fraser & Nolen, 1981; Holmes, 1995), where communication norms may differ significantly from those in Southeast Asian cultures such as Indonesia (Scollon & Scollon, 2001; Mahmud, 2018). For example, the hierarchical structure of relationships in Indonesia shapes how students communicate with authority figures, such as lecturers, leading to an increased reliance on negative politeness strategies to maintain distance and show respect (Hofstede, 2011; Morand, 2000). While these insights are useful, limited research exists on how these strategies are negotiated in everyday academic interactions, particularly in face-to-face classroom settings (Kadar & Mills, 2011).

This research seeks to address this gap by investigating the use of politeness strategies in academic communication between lecturers and students at an Indonesian university, with particular emphasis on how cultural expectations and power roles shape these interactions. The novelty of this study lies in its exploration of politeness strategies within the Indonesian academic context, adding a culturally specific dimension to the broader body of politeness research. By focusing on how lecturers and students navigate power dynamics through politeness strategies, this research provides a nuanced understanding of the role of cultural context in shaping academic communication (Kadar & Mills, 2013). Furthermore, while many studies examine politeness in general social interactions or intercultural communication (Kasper, 1990; Kadar & Mills, 2011; Kuchuk, 2012; Song, 2012; Kadar & Mills, 2013), this study's focus on classroom settings, where formal and informal interactions coexist, offers valuable insights into how these strategies function in structured, hierarchical environments such as universities.

This study also connects established theories, including Grice's (1978) cooperative principle, Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, Leech's (2014) politeness principle, and Goffman's (1967) face-saving theory, to the specific sociocultural context of Indonesia. By analyzing how these well-established frameworks apply in a high-context culture where hierarchical relationships dominate communication, this research contributes not only to the understanding of politeness in Indonesia but also to the broader fields of pragmatics and sociolinguistics.

The study aims to explore how politeness strategies are employed by lecturers and students in classroom settings. Specifically, it examines how cultural norms, personal background factors such as age and status, and the hierarchical nature of academic institutions influence the use of positive and negative politeness strategies. By addressing the research gap concerning politeness strategies in academic communication within a Southeast Asian context, this

study offers fresh insights with theoretical and practical implications for improving communication in educational settings.

Therefore, this research not only addresses a gap in the literature on politeness in academic settings in Indonesia but also builds on and expands existing politeness theories by applying them to a high-context, hierarchical culture. This provides a more comprehensive understanding of how power dynamics and cultural expectations influence communication in universities, contributing valuable knowledge to both the fields of education and sociolinguistics.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Politeness Strategies: Theoretical Foundations

Theories of politeness highlight its role in managing social interactions, particularly in maintaining harmony and preventing conflict. Sifianou (1992) defines politeness as a means of "restraining feelings and emotions to avoid conflict," while also serving as a tool for expressing emotions. Kasper (1990) emphasizes politeness as a set of strategies designed "to defuse the danger and minimize antagonism." Hill et al. (1986) further describe politeness as a constraint on interaction, aimed at "considering others' feelings, establishing mutual comfort, and promoting rapport." These definitions establish politeness as a mechanism that maintains positive interpersonal relations while simultaneously exerting power dynamics.

However, politeness may also be used strategically to exert control over the interlocutor. Fraser and Nolen (1981) conceptualize politeness as a "property associated with a voluntary action," suggesting that politeness is not inherently about deference but can be wielded to establish dominance or manage impressions. Thus, politeness functions both as a social tool for avoiding conflict and as a tactic for managing hierarchical relationships. Building on Grice's (1978) Cooperative Principle, Brown and Levinson (1987) introduced the concepts of positive and negative politeness as strategies to navigate face-threatening acts (FTA). Positive politeness seeks to minimize social distance and foster a sense of camaraderie, often by noticing or attending to the hearer's needs, using in-group markers, or making jokes. Conversely, negative politeness aims to respect the hearer's autonomy by avoiding imposition, being conventionally indirect, or giving deference. These strategies are particularly important in maintaining harmony in interactions with authority figures (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory distinguishes between positive and negative politeness, outlining strategies that address the need to either minimize social distance or maintain autonomy.

Positive politeness aims to reduce social distance by fostering camaraderie through strategies such as noticing or attending to the hearer, using in-group identity markers, joking, and expressing concern for the hearer's wants. These strategies often signal familiarity and closeness, which is why lecturers may use them to create an inclusive and engaging classroom environment.

Negative politeness, on the other hand, seeks to respect the hearer's autonomy and minimize imposition. Strategies include being conventionally indirect, questioning, minimizing the imposition, giving deference, and apologizing. In hierarchical contexts, such as teacher-student interactions, students are more likely to employ negative politeness strategies to avoid challenging the authority of their lecturers. For instance, using formal address terms like "Sir" or "Ma'am" is a way of showing respect and maintaining distance.

The duality of politeness strategies is especially relevant in hierarchical contexts like the Indonesian academic setting. Students often adopt negative politeness strategies when addressing lecturers, using formal greetings or avoiding direct challenges to the lecturer's authority. On the other hand, lecturers may employ positive politeness strategies, such as using humor or in-group markers, to create a less formal and more inclusive classroom atmosphere (Mahmud, 2018).

2.2 Politeness as a Cultural and Contextual Phenomenon

Politeness varies significantly between cultures and is dependent on situational factors. Leech (2014) defines politeness as a value transaction between interlocutors, which can either minimize offense or supply positive value to the recipient. This transactional view is echoed by Lakoff (1973), who describes politeness as behavior developed by societies to reduce friction in personal interaction. Similarly, Holmes (1995) and Yule (1996) emphasize that politeness functions as a way to avoid interpersonal conflict by expressing respect and consideration for others. These definitions align with the cultural perspective of politeness, particularly in high-context societies such as Indonesia, where hierarchical power relations shape communication patterns (Hofstede, 1991).

In educational settings, the interaction between lecturers and students is often marked by a balance between maintaining respect and encouraging open communication. Mahmud (2018) explored politeness in the classroom and found that lecturers often employ positive politeness strategies such as humor and informal greetings to create a less intimidating learning environment. Students, conversely, tend to use negative politeness strategies to avoid imposing on the lecturer's authority, especially in formal academic settings.

This divergence in politeness strategies reflects the power imbalance inherent in lecturer-student relationships. The lecturer, as the authority figure, can afford to use positive politeness to engage students, while students must navigate the constraints of hierarchy and respect. The combination of these strategies fosters a communicative environment where power is acknowledged but not always overtly asserted, allowing for a balance of authority and approachability.

In these contexts, the power differential between lecturers and students is a key determinant of politeness strategies. Students are often expected to show deference, leading them to use more negative politeness strategies, such as avoiding imposition or employing indirectness (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This dynamic is especially prevalent in educational settings, where social distance and authority roles are reinforced by cultural norms (Mahmud, 2018).

2.3 Hierarchical Power and Face-Saving in Communication

In hierarchical societies, the preservation of face—both one's own and the interlocutor's—is central to communication. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the concept of face refers to an individual's self-esteem or image that they want to maintain during interactions. Politeness strategies, therefore, function as a way to mitigate face-threatening acts that might challenge the authority of the speaker or hearer. This is particularly pertinent in educational settings, where the power imbalance between students and lecturers necessitates the careful use of language to maintain respect and avoid confrontation.

Lim and Han (2016) further refine this understanding by viewing politeness as tactical behavior aimed at addressing face wants. In this view, politeness becomes a tool for managing hierarchical relationships, particularly in contexts where students must navigate the authority of lecturers while maintaining their own face. The study of politeness within these contexts can provide deeper insights into how power dynamics shape communication behaviors, especially when face-threatening acts occur (Norquist, 2017).

3. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to systematically describe and interpret the phenomena of politeness strategies in an academic environment. The qualitative approach was chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of the nuances and dynamics of politeness strategies in real-life classroom interactions.

A purposive sampling method was used to select the study's participants, ensuring that those chosen would provide rich and relevant data. The participants

comprised both lecturers and students from the English Department of Muhammadiyah University of Makassar.

- a) Lecturers: Seven lecturers were selected based on predefined criteria, including:
- b) Educational Background: Lecturers were either master's (M.Ed.) or doctoral (Ph.D.) graduates.
- c) Personal Characteristics: Age, gender, and cultural background were considered to ensure diversity. The lecturers represented different Buginese and Makassar tribes, the two dominant ethnic groups in the region.

The detail of the seven lecturers background was presented in the following table:

Table 3.1 Participants' profile

Educational Degree	Personal Background			Number
	age	gender	tribe	
Master	Male	Junior	Buginese	1
Master	Female	Senior	Buginese	1
Master	Male	Junior	Makassar	1
Doctor	Male	Senior	Buginese	1
Doctor	Female	Senior	Makassar	1
Doctor	Male	Junior	Buginese	1
Doctor	Female	Junior	Makassar	1
Total				7

- Students: The student participants were chosen from the English Department classes taught or supervised by the selected lecturers. These students had recent or ongoing interactions with the lecturers in the classroom, making their input particularly valuable for analyzing politeness strategies.

The study utilized multiple data collection methods to ensure a thorough examination of politeness strategies in practice. The first is classroom observation where the primary data were collected through non-participant classroom observations. An observation sheet served as the primary tool for documenting the interaction between lecturers and students, focusing on the application of politeness strategies. Each lecturer was observed five times while they were teaching or supervising to capture consistent patterns in behavior. When doing the observation, a video camera was employed to supplement the observation notes. Throughout the observation sessions, field notes were used as a secondary instrument to record the overall classroom atmosphere, social dynamics, and contextual factors influencing communication. These notes captured spontaneous moments of humor, informal greetings, and the use of deference or in-group identity markers.

The collected data were analyzed using Discourse Analysis (DA). This method allowed for an in-depth exploration of the language used in the classroom to uncover how politeness strategies contributed to managing social relationships, power dynamics, and the maintenance of respect and authority between lecturers and students. The process of analysis included:

- 1) Contextualizing interactions by identifying the broader social and cultural contexts in which communication took place.
- 2) Categorizing politeness strategies as either positive (aimed at fostering social cohesion) or negative (designed to maintain social distance and minimize face-threatening acts).
- 3) Comparing patterns of interaction between different lecturers and students to determine how variables such as age, gender, and ethnicity influenced communication styles.
- 4) Cross-referencing data sources, including observation sheets, video recordings, and field notes, to ensure the reliability and consistency of findings.

4. Result

This section presents the key findings obtained from the analysis of the collected data. The results are organized according to the research objectives, highlighting patterns, relationships, and statistical significance where applicable. Descriptive statistics, inferential analyses, and graphical representations are used to summarize the data and provide a clear understanding of the outcomes. Key trends and deviations observed in the data are discussed in detail below.

Communication between lecturers and students in academic settings, particularly within the classroom, is shaped by a complex interplay of cultural norms, social dynamics, and linguistic strategies. This study's findings reveal a nuanced use of politeness strategies, primarily driven by the goal of fostering a supportive and engaging educational environment. The use of these strategies is aligned with various linguistic and sociolinguistic theories, highlighting their role in maintaining the hierarchical yet cooperative nature of the student-lecturer relationship.

4.1 Lecturers' politeness strategy

After collecting and analyzing data on how the lecturers and students' communication in classroom interaction, I found that the lecturers used several kinds of politeness strategies. Table 1 provides the results from lecturers and students communication separated by whether they include positive or negative politeness features.

Table 1. Lecturers' Politeness Strategies

No.	Positive Politeness		Negative Politeness	
	Strategies	F/P	Strategies	F/P
1.	Joke	20	Impersonate Speaker and Hearer - Imperatives - You avoidance - address form using deference choice	30 5 20
2.	Give gifts to hearer	4	Be officially indirect	1
3.	Presuppose manipulations	4	Apologize - Give overwhelming reason - Beg forgiveness	1 1
4.	Ask for reason	5	Formal Greeting	36
5.	In-group identity markers - Address form	5		
6.	Greeting	2		
Total/percentage		40/30%	Total/percentage	94/70%

Table 1 indicates that lecturers applied four types out of ten negative politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) in their direct communication, and six of the fifteen identified as positive politeness strategies. These data showed that teachers were trying to balance politeness strategies they applied in communication. In some cases, the lecturers preferred being respectful and distant when communicating with their students, but in the same time, they were also trying to be friendly and involved. It could be seen from the result of analysis where the lecturers inserted jokes in their classroom interaction as shown in the following extract:

Extract 1: Jokes

- 1.1 FL₃ : “*Hi hallo, jangan berselingkuh*” (Hi, hello, don't cheat)
- 1.2 Ss : (laughter)
- 1.3 FL₃ : “*Bangkunya jangan terlalu dekat, itu org kalau anu, sama pasangan ta tong mo. Akrab dong dengan pasangan seperti yang didepan ini. Kalau pasangan itu baku sayang-sayang*” (don't sit too close, except with your own pair. Be intimate with your pair just like the ones who sit in front seat. You should love your pair)
- 1.4 Ss : (laughter)

The extract showed that lecturer is trying to make joke when saying “don't cheat” as presented in extract 1.1 when she saw that one of her students was having a

chat with another student who was not his pair. The lecturer chose to use the word ‘*berselingkuh*’ since she wanted students to work in pair and they should not cooperate with another student but their own pair. Therefore, the word ‘*berselingkuh*’ was considered funny in this context since it is actually a word used to show a love affair done by a spouse or couple.

It could be seen that students respond the lecturer's utterance with laughter which indicated that students understood their lecturer's jokes. Then, the lecturer continued her joke in extract 1.3 by saying “don't sit too close, except with your own pair. Be intimate with your pair just like the ones who sit in front seat. You should love your pair” which was responded with laughter by her students again.

In the second utterance, the lecturer followed her joke with another joke, still related to the first utterance, and again it was responded with laughter by the students. It also showed that students understood the lecturer's joke.

Another lecturer who also inserted joke in her classroom interaction admitted that jokes could make the students felt relax and not feeling under pressure. It would also help them to love the subject and lecturer which may result to having good comprehension and achievement on the material taught by the lecturers. The lecturer's joke could be seen in the following extract:

Extract 2: Jokes

- 2.1 FL₁ : “Come on...*jangan di tahan di leher yaaaa, di jawab saja karena tidak akan*”

di penjara kalau dijawab salah” (Come on. Don’t swallow in your throat. Just answer it because you are not going to be imprisoned if you answer wrongly)

2.2 Ss : (laughter)

2.3 FL₁ : “What is pedagogy? **In Chinese we can say *pedagogi***. Kemampuan *pedagogi harus dimiliki oleh seorang guru. Yang mana sih yang di sebut pedagogy?*” (What is pedagogy? In Chinese we can say pedagogy. Pedagogical competence must be owned by a teacher. So, what is pedagogy?)

The above extract indicates that lecturer was trying to be friendly and persuade her students to answer her question by making jokes as shown in the sentence of extract 2.1 “come on, don’t swallow in your throat. Just answer it because you are not going to be imprisoned if you answer wrongly”. She expected that by making jokes, the students would bravely try to answer the question without being afraid of making mistakes. This sentence was responded by the students with laughter. In the next utterance presented in extract 2.3, she tried to persuade the students to answer her question by continuing her joke by saying that the word “*pedagogi*” is Chinese, whereas it was actually Indonesian. The lecturer tried to make joke by deviating the language of the word. It was also responded with laughter by some students while some other students did not aware of the jokes and were busy thinking about the answer of the lecturer’s questions.

The next types of positive politeness strategies performed by the lecturers in the classroom through direct communication are ‘presupposing manipulations’ and also ‘ask for reason’ as shown in the extract below:

Extract 3: presupposing manipulations and asking for reason

3.1 FL₃ : (reading book) “*berdua sekarang, jadi qt bekerja dengan pasangan, work in pair, kemudian yang sendiri, sendiri saja, no problem, dari pada bertiga lebih baik satu orang. Saya ingin kalian menentukan main idea tiap paragraf. Ngeri ya*” (Now, work in pair. No problem if any student does not have pair, it’s better than work in three. I want you to determine main idea of each paragraph. You understand, right?)

3.2 S : *Disini saja ditulis mam?* (We write it here, Ma’am?)

3.3 FL₃ : **Kenapa Hendra?** (What’s wrong, Hendra?)

3.4 S : Mau **bertanya**, *mam* (I want to ask some questions, Ma’am)

The first bolded sentence in extract 3.1 indicates that the lecturer was being optimistic that her students had already understood what they were going to do relate to the material. It was because the lecturer had told them the today’s activity in the previous meeting, so that the lecturer was optimistic that the students had got what she wanted. In the second bolded sentence, in extract 3.3, the lecturer saw that one student looked uneasy, and tried to having chat with his friend. As a result, the lecturer asked for his reason of doing that, and evidently the student wanted to ask questions since he did not understand about something related to the given material and task. In the sentence, the lecturer also mentioned the student’s name which was categorized as address form in positive politeness strategies. This address form expressed familiarity where the lecturer tried to show that she knew all her students and their names. It could also give positive faces to the students since they would feel being important and considered exist in the classroom.

The next type of positive politeness is ‘give gifts to hearer’. Giving gifts to hearer is not only in the form of tangible things, but also in the form of praise as performed by the lecturers in the following extract:

Extract 4: Give gifts to hearer

4.1 S : “The **teacher** mmm must be good to know the method of teacher.”

4.2 FL₁ : “**Very good**. Okay so, one of characteristic a good teacher in terms of pedagogy competence is of course you have to know how to teach your students.”

The bolded sentence in extract 4.2 indicates that lecturers gave gifts to the student in the form of praise as she had given a correct answer or opinion on the lecturer’s question. The last type of positive politeness performed by the lecturers is ‘informal greeting’. The example of informal greeting can be identified in the following extract:

Extract 5: informal greeting

5.1 FL₃ : “**Hi semua**” (Hi all)

5.2 Ss : “Hi **ma’am**”

Extract 5 above shows that lecturer was trying to be friendly to her students by giving an informal greeting as soon as she entered the classroom. This kind of greeting is different from formal greeting which is used in opening an activity or a meeting. Every lecturer always started their meeting by giving formal greeting which is coming from Islamic teaching, ‘*Assalamualaikum*’. This greeting is commonly preceded by ‘*basmalah*’. Unlike informal greeting which is categorized as positive politeness strategy, this formal greeting is included in negative politeness strategy. Since Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar

is one of Islamic private University in South Sulawesi, greeting students using Islamic greeting is always performed, as shown in the following extract:

Extract 6: formal greeting

6.1 FL₃ : Ok. **Bismillahirrahmanirrahim. Assalamualaikum** Wr. Wb. Nice to **meet** you. *Saya agak lama karena cari tempat shalat, biasanya shalat itu di pasca, diruangannya Bu Ratna Dewi, tapi dia lagi sakit jadi ya kemana-mana cari tempat shalat.*

6.2 Ss : **Waalikumsalam**

The extract 6.1 above shows that lecturer started her class by reciting ‘*basmalah*’, a specific expression of starting every activity, and greeted students using Islamic greeting. Those Islamic greetings were used as opening and closing. Students would respond to the greeting using specific expression which also the answer of the greeting.

In the negative politeness category, the lecturer many times commanded the students to do something which was categorized as ‘impersonate speaker and hearer’ with the type of ‘imperatives’ as the following extract:

Extract 7: imperatives

7.1 FL₂ : “**You need to state the scientific approach you need to apply. You need to revise TP, karena harus rinci.** What is IPK *lagi?*” (You need to state the scientific approach you need to apply. You need to revise TP (stands for Tujuan Pembelajaran or Learning Objectives), because it should be detail. What is IPK?)

7.2 Ss : “**Indikator Pencapaian Kompetensi**” (Indicators of Competence Achievement)

In the extract 7.1 above, the lecturer asked the students to do two things, stating specific approach applied in the lesson plan, and revising the learning objective. It is a common thing for lecturer to give command or ask the students to do something in classroom communication since lecturers considered superior in this context. Another example of imperative done by another lecturer can be seen in the extract below:

Extract 8: Imperatives

8.1 FL₃ : “... **Ok, open your copy, imperial English.** The first page. So what is imperial **English** form the first think, imperial **English**. What is imperial **English** according to you, according to your thinking...”

8.2 S : Kingdom of English

8.3 S : The importance of English

The bolded expression in extract 8.1 indicates that the lecturer asked the students to open their copy of material that had been given previously. Asking the students to do something such as opening book, writing materials, closing or opening the door or window, cleaning the whiteboard, etc. were very common commands found in classroom interactions. In addition, these kinds of imperatives were normally performed by the lecturers rather than students. The next type of ‘impersonate speaker and hearer’ is ‘you avoidance’ as found in the following extract:

Extract 9: your avoidance

9.1 FL₃ : “**kalau dihubungkan dengan ini, kamu jawab apa? Jawaban kalian apa?** What is your name?” (If it is related to this, what is your answer? What is your name?)

9.2 S : “**Ranti**” (Ranti)

9.3 FL₃ : “**what is Ranti say, in scientific words**” (What does Ranti say? In scientific word)

9.4 Ss : “**rrggghhhhh**” (crowded voices from students)

9.5 FL₃ : “**rrrrggggggghhhhh**” (murmured) (laughter)

9.6 Ss : (**laughter**)

The bolded sentence in extract 9.3 indicates that the lecturer avoided using ‘you’ pronoun to refer to student when having the student answer her question. Despite saying “what do **you** say”, lecturer preferred to mention the student’s name to replace the pronoun ‘you’ in the sentence. The last example of ‘impersonate speaker and hearer’ in negative politeness strategies is the use of ‘address form using deference choice’ as shown in the extract that follows:

Extract 10: address form using deference choice

10.1 FL₂ : “**disintax pembelajaran anda menggunakan....** So far so good, we need to give applause. Well done! You run the lesson plan in such a way” (in learning activity you used.... So far so good, we need to give applause. Well done! You run the lesson plan well)

10.2 Ss : (Applauded)

The bolded word in Extract 10.1 represents the formal second-person pronoun in Indonesian, commonly used to convey respect when addressing strangers or acquaintances. It is also the preferred term for broadcasters speaking to their audience or teachers

addressing students in academic settings. Interestingly, the lecturer deliberately avoided using the informal pronoun 'kamu,' which is typically used in interactions between elders and younger individuals or superiors and subordinates. Despite holding authority in the classroom, the lecturer opted for the formal pronoun as a way to demonstrate respect towards the students during face-to-face communication, emphasizing mutual regard and professionalism.

Another negative politeness strategy employed by the lecturer is 'being conventionally indirect,' where the lecturer avoids direct statements to mitigate potential imposition. This approach is illustrated in the following extract, highlighting how indirect communication is used to maintain politeness while conveying the intended message effectively.

Extract 11: being conventionally indirect

11.1 FL₃ : “yang pasangan berdekatan, jangan berjauhan. yang tidak ada copyannya saya hadirkan saja, tunggu absen baru keluar, (checking attendance) **Saya ingatkan lagi N nah, sudah 2 alfanya, jangan ditambah lagi**” (Be close to your pair. The ones who do not have material will be marked as attended, after that you may get out (checking attendance). I remind you again, N, that you are already absent twice, do not do that again)

11.2 S : “*ye mam*” (Yes, Ma'am)

In the bolded expression from Extract 11.1, the lecturer reminded the student that she had already accumulated two absences. Indirectly, this served as a warning that further absences could negatively impact the student's grade. In this context, the lecturer was asserting her authority and emphasizing her position to maintain discipline and accountability among the students.

The final negative politeness strategy observed in the lecturer's behavior is the act of seeking forgiveness. Based on the observation, the lecturers employed two specific types of forgiveness strategies: "begging forgiveness" and "giving overwhelming reasons." Examples of these strategies are illustrated in the following extracts, highlighting how these approaches were used to manage interactions and maintain a respectful classroom environment.

Extract 12: beg forgiveness and give overwhelming reason

12.1 FL₃ : “*kasih naik semua copyannya. Ada yang tidak bawa? Saya minta maaf,*

tidak bisa masuk.” (Show the copy of your material. Anyone does not bring it? I am sorry but you cannot join the class)

12.2 S : “*boleh disini saja mam?*” (Could I just stay here, Ma'am?)

...

12.3 FL₃ : “Ok. Bismillahirrahmanirrahim. Assalamualaikum wr. Wb. Nice to meet you. **Maaf, saya agak lama karena cari tempat shalat, biasanya shalat itu di pasca, diruangannya bu ratna dewi, tapi dia lagi sakit jadi ya kemana-mana cari tempat shalat. ...**”

(Ok. Bismillahirrahmaanirrahiim. Assalamualaikum Wr. Wb. Nice to meet you. I was a bit late since I looked for prayer room. I usually take pray in graduate building, in Ma'am RD's room, but she is sick so I was looking prayer room around...)

In the bolded sentence from Extract 12.1, the lecturer apologized as a way to express her reluctance. She conveyed regret for having to ask the student to leave the classroom because he did not bring a copy of the required material. This action was based on an agreement between the students and the lecturer, establishing that any student who failed to bring the necessary material would not be allowed to join the class.

In the second instance, shown in Extract 12.2, the lecturer appeared to provide an explanation for her tardiness. This approach reflects a specific apologizing strategy known as "giving an overwhelming reason." By offering a detailed explanation for her late arrival, the lecturer aimed to ensure that the students would understand and accept her reasons, fostering a sense of empathy and mutual respect.

4.2 Students' politeness strategies

After gathering and analyzing data on the communication dynamics between lecturers and students during direct classroom interactions, it was evident that students employed various types of politeness strategies in their responses. These strategies reflect both positive and negative politeness elements used to navigate social interactions. Table 4.2 presents a detailed breakdown of the findings, categorizing the communication features observed from both lecturers and students based on whether they align with positive or negative politeness strategies.

Table 4.2. Students' preferences of politeness strategies

No.	Positive Politeness		Negative Politeness	
	Strategies	F/P	Strategies	F/P
1.	Give reason	1	- Question, hedges	2
2.	Repetition	1	Be conventionally indirect - Degrees of politeness in the expression of indirect speech acts	1
3.			Give deference	11
4.			Formal Greeting (responding)	36
Total/percentage		38/80%	Total/percentage	14/20%

Table 4.2 indicates that students applied two types out of ten negative politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) in their direct communication, and four of the fifteen identified as positive politeness strategies. The highest frequency of strategies applied by the students was greeting. However, it is understandable that greeting in terms of responding to greeting should become the highest one since the students should always respond to the lecturers' greeting, both as opening and closing.

The second highest strategy used by the students was giving deference. Students most frequently deployed giving deference as a kind of negative politeness strategy as evidenced in the following excerpt which shows deference through the use of the formal address term, *ma'am*:

Extract 13: giving deference using formal address term

- 13.1 FL₂ : "... What is the material that you have today?" (What is your material today?)
- 13.2 S : "understanding *mam*" (checking understanding, **Ma'am**)
- 13.3 FL₃ : "*Saya ingatkan lagi Nisa nah, sudah 2 alfanya, jangan ditambah lagi*" (I remind you again, N, you already have two absences, do not add it any more)
- 13.4 S : "*iyee mam*" (Yes, **Ma'am**)
- 13.5 FL₃ : "*kasih naik semua copyannya. Ada yang tidak bawa? Saya minta maaf, tidak bisa masuk*" (Show the copy of your material. Anyone who do not bring it? I am sorry, but you could not join the class)
- 13.6 S : "*boleh disini saja mam?*" (May I just stay here (in the classroom), **Ma'am**?)

13.7 FL₃ : "*Boleh disitu saja tapi tidak ikut kegiatan, tidak ada nilai ya. Ada lagi? H ada?*" (You may stay there, but cannot join in any activity, no score, ok. Any else? H, do you have?)

13.8 S : "*ada mam*" (I have, **Ma'am**)

13.9 FL₃ : "*acungkan dulu*" (Raise it up)

13.10 S : "*ini mam*" (This is it, **Ma'am**)

The above extract indicates that students used formal address form most of the time. Every time they speak, it was always followed by formal address form which was 'Ma'am' for female lecturers and 'Sir' for male lecturers. It was applied by the students to show respect and distance. It also shows that the students were trying to give deference when communicating with lecturers inside the classroom.

4. Discussion

One of the key observations is that lecturers predominantly employ positive politeness strategies, aiming to create a friendly atmosphere that reduces the perceived social distance between them and their students. Positive politeness involves strategies that emphasize solidarity, camaraderie, and mutual respect, as defined by Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory. These strategies include acts like making jokes, using in-group identity markers, and asking for and giving reasons, all of which help to build rapport and encourage open communication.

Communication between lecturers and students within the classroom environment reveals distinct patterns that are crucial for understanding the dynamics of politeness strategies in academic interactions. The findings indicate that lecturers predominantly utilize positive politeness strategies, aimed at fostering a friendly and supportive atmosphere. This approach contrasts with Sapitri et al.'s (2020) assertion that

positive politeness is inherently less polite than negative politeness. In the context of classroom interactions, the use of positive politeness by lecturers is not merely about being less formal but rather about creating a welcoming environment that alleviates students' anxiety and encourages active participation.

Sapitri et al. (2020) suggest that the use of politeness strategies by lecturers is often a conscious decision, influenced by their awareness of the potential impact of their language on students' perceptions and learning experiences. Karimnia and Khodashenas (2018) emphasize that certain expressions used by instructors can sometimes act as face-threatening acts, which may harm students' self-esteem. Thus, it is essential for educators to be mindful of their language choices, opting for more supportive and respectful expressions to foster a positive classroom climate. This not only enhances student comfort but also contributes to a stronger and more constructive relationship between students and lecturers.

The following are the most frequent and common occurrence of politeness strategies in direct communication between lecturers and students:

5.1 Positive politeness strategies and the role of humor

Humor emerges as a significant aspect of positive politeness strategies used by lecturers. Jokes are utilized not only to ease tension but also to humanize the lecturer, making them appear more approachable and less authoritarian. This aligns with Goffman's (1967) concept of "face-work," where humor acts as a tool to manage the social face of both the speaker and the listener, reducing the threat to the listener's face and fostering a more relaxed interaction.

Miranda (2013) highlights the importance of context in interpreting humor, noting that a shared understanding between interlocutors is crucial for humor to be effective. In this study, it was observed that while lecturers were initiating humor frequently, students were more likely to respond with laughter rather than reciprocating with their own jokes. This behavior indicates a level of deference that students maintain towards their lecturers, consistent with the hierarchical norms prevalent in high-context cultures like Indonesia's, where age and authority play significant roles in social interactions.

In this context, lecturers seemed to apply humor as one of positive strategies to maintain students' attention and develop good relationship with the students. Similar to Karimnia's (2018) suggested in his study that the instructors used various strategies to make students feel more comfortable in the classroom. It was also suggested that applying politeness strategies in the classroom could lead to a better relationship between students and instructors.

Positive politeness strategies are commonly employed to reduce social distance and create a sense of solidarity. In this study, lecturers frequently used humor as a means to ease tension and make the classroom environment more welcoming for students. Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework of politeness provides a foundation for understanding these strategies as efforts to emphasize shared values and in-group relationships.

Lakoff's (1973) politeness principle further supports this behavior, suggesting that the use of humor and informal language helps regulate social distance and prevents conflict. This aligns with the idea that lecturers' jokes and in-group identity markers are not just about creating a light-hearted atmosphere but also serve as a deliberate strategy to foster a sense of belonging among students.

Watts (2003) adds that politeness is a discursive strategy reflecting an individual's social identity and cultural understanding. The use of humor in this study can be seen as a cultural practice that aligns with local norms, reinforcing the idea that lecturers are approachable and supportive figures, thereby reducing the hierarchical gap in the classroom.

5.2 In-group identity markers and communication accommodation

Lecturers also frequently employ in-group identity markers as a means to create a sense of belonging and solidarity within the classroom. By using local dialect particles and culturally specific pronouns, such as "mi," "ji," "ta," and "ki," lecturers signal their alignment with the students' cultural background, thereby reducing social distance. This practice is closely related to Giles' (1973) Communication Accommodation Theory, which posits that speakers adjust their language to either converge or diverge from their interlocutor's speech patterns in order to gain social approval or emphasize distinctiveness.

The use of these markers also aligns with Mahmud's (2010) findings on Bugis politeness strategies, where the choice of pronouns and address terms reflects respect and social status. The strategic use of these linguistic forms by lecturers not only acknowledges the students' cultural identity but also serves as a subtle way to build trust and promote inclusivity within the academic setting.

Mahmud (2018) concluded that the lower the status of the speaker is, the greater their tendency is to use very formal and polite pronouns, and vice versa. In this context, students are on the position of inferior so that they tend to use formal and polite pronouns in communicating with lecturers. Meanwhile, the use of in-group identity marker inside the classroom is more likely the use of address form. Yang (2010) promotes the important social functions of address form, such as

to show respect, intimacy, or even to humiliate others. However, in academic context, the function of address form found is more likely to show respect and intimacy. Yang (2010) added that address form is very important to understand social concepts and human relationship in a society since it has different emotional implications and varied rules of usage based on social class, age group, sex or racial discrimination, and regional differences. In English teaching, the teacher should be aware of the importance of the choosing of proper address forms. The misuse of a title can sometimes put other people in an awkward situation and even create offense.

In-group identity markers are linguistic devices that signal membership in a particular social or cultural group. Giles' (1973) Communication Accommodation Theory further explains that individuals adjust their language and behavior to either converge or diverge from their interlocutor's speech patterns based on the desire for social approval or distinctiveness. The use of local dialects and pronouns in academic settings, as observed in this study, exemplifies linguistic convergence aimed at reducing social distance and reinforcing group cohesion.

Additionally, Holmes (1995) emphasizes the role of language as a social tool that not only reflects social norms but also actively constructs group identity. The lecturers' use of local expressions serves not just as a means of facilitating understanding but as a deliberate act of cultural solidarity. This approach aligns with the broader sociolinguistic perspective that language is a marker of social belonging and a vehicle for transmitting cultural values.

5.3 Asking for and giving reasons

Lecturers frequently ask students to provide reasons for their actions or responses, a strategy that fosters critical thinking and engagement. This behavior aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in cognitive development. By prompting students to articulate their reasoning, lecturers engage them in higher-order thinking processes, encouraging a deeper understanding of the subject matter (Mercer 1995). As emphasized by Holmes (1995) that asking for reasons and giving reasons function as positive politeness strategies that strengthen interpersonal relationships. By asking for reasons, the speaker demonstrates interest in the listener's perspective, which enhances a sense of appreciation and engagement (Kasper, 1990; Zhu and Bao, 2020; Spencer-Oatley, 2000).

However, the study also noted a lack of reciprocal questioning from students towards lecturers, highlighting a cultural norm of respect and non-confrontation. This finding is consistent with Hofstede's (1980) Power Distance Index, which measures how cultures perceive and accept power

inequalities within institutions. In high power distance cultures like Indonesia, individuals are less likely to challenge authority figures openly, which explains the students' reluctance to question their lecturers.

5.4 Greetings

Both formal and informal greetings are used as a means of establishing politeness within the academic setting. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), greetings are part of the ritualistic acts of politeness that serve to affirm social relationships. In the Bugis and Makassar traditions, as noted by Mahmud (2011), greetings are essential in demonstrating humility and respect, signifying an acknowledgment of the other person's presence and status.

This dual usage of greetings aligns with the concept of ritualized politeness, where the act of greeting serves not just as a linguistic function but as a cultural signal of one's social intentions and attitudes. The use of formal greetings, in particular, underscores the hierarchical nature of the student-lecturer relationship, while informal greetings are used to bridge social gaps in less structured settings.

5.5 Giving deference using formal address term

The consistent use of formal address terms such as "Ma'am" or "Sir" by students is indicative of negative politeness strategies aimed at maintaining distance and showing respect. This is consistent with Nkwain's (2015) observations that formal address terms help in navigating power dynamics, reinforcing the hierarchical positions within interactions.

According to Scollon and Scollon's (2001) Politeness Systems Theory, hierarchical relationships require an asymmetrical approach to politeness. In such interactions, those in subordinate positions (students) are expected to use more deferential language when addressing their superiors (lecturers). This approach to communication is prevalent in educational contexts where respect for authority is a fundamental value.

The application of politeness strategies in the classroom is not merely a linguistic choice but is deeply rooted in cultural and social norms. Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory suggests that politeness is a universal concept shaped by factors like power, distance, and the severity of the imposition. In this study, it is evident that these factors are further influenced by the high-context communication style typical of Indonesian culture, where indirectness and respect for hierarchy are valued.

Additionally, Locher's (2004) perspective on the context-specific nature of politeness highlights that the strategies employed are not static but evolve depending on the situational demands, the relationship between interlocutors, and the cultural expectations surrounding the interaction. This aligns with the findings that

students adapt their politeness strategies based on the setting (classroom versus informal contexts), the perceived social distance, and the authority of the lecturer.

6. Conclusions

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore politeness strategies in classroom interactions, focusing on seven lecturers and their students at an Indonesian university. Data were collected through classroom observations, video recordings, and field notes, which were analyzed using discourse analysis to identify patterns of positive and negative politeness strategies. The key findings indicate that lecturers predominantly used positive politeness strategies, such as humor, informal greetings, and in-group markers, to create a relaxed and engaging classroom atmosphere that encouraged student participation. Conversely, students relied on negative politeness strategies, including formal address terms and hedging, to maintain respect and navigate hierarchical power dynamics. The study also highlighted the students' situational adaptability in selecting appropriate strategies based on their perceptions of the lecturers' moods and personalities, reflecting a nuanced understanding of the hierarchical and culturally embedded communication norms within the academic context. These findings underscore the intricate balance between authority and inclusivity in educational interactions.

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