

## Conference Paper

# Teachers' Politeness Strategies in Motivating Students to Learn English

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## Abstract

Many students are faced problems when they learn English language as a foreign language. It is part of English teachers' job to solve the problems in teaching learning process directly by motivating students. Though in the fact, teachers may not always be possible to motivate all students. But however, this should never discourage teachers from trying to motivate their students. This study explores politeness strategies used by the teachers in motivating students to learn English in the classrooms, based on Brown and Levinson's Politeness Strategies. The purpose of this study is to find out what types of politeness strategies that are used by the teachers and how the teachers' politeness strategies realized in motivating students to learn English. The action was applied at Junior High School. The respondents are three non-native English teachers of SMPN 4 Langa, and 80 students in three classes. The research conducted in duration 2x80 minutes English lessons in each of classes. The data is collected through descriptive qualitative data, and used instrument observation, video-recorded, and interview. The result showed that the teachers employed positive politeness, negative politeness, and bald on-record strategies as well. They used positive politeness especially to make good interaction between teacher and students while teaching learning process in order to encourage students motivation, they used negative politeness to avoid imposition to the students in learning, and they used Bald on-record when efficiency is necessary and task-oriented.

**Keywords:** Intrinsic versus Extrinsic Motivation, Face Threatening Act, Politeness Strategies.

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## 1. Introduction

Motivation is one of the most factors for learning a foreign/second language (L2). Crookes and Schmits (in Norris, 2001: 2) stated, "Motivation has been identified as the learners' orientation with the regard to the goal of learning a second language". Ihsan (2016: 32) motivation is a concept without physical reality, we cannot see motivation; we see behaviour. Thus, the measurement of motivation is indirect, just as measurement of psychological construct such as attitudes, interest and value or desire. English, as a second and foreign language, has a great importance to be taught and learned. And the language teacher can be an influential source of motivator for the students. In Thanasoulas (2002: 3) whatever is done by a teacher has motivational, formative and influence on students. In other words, teacher behavior is powerful "motivational tool".

But students' motivation is not a static quality. It varies from person to person, from situation to situation, and within the individual from time to time. In the fact, most of the English teachers in the classroom can see some of the students are very motivated, motivated or even feeling ignored in studying English. It means that teachers may not always be possible to motivate all students. But however, this should never discourage teachers from trying to motivate their students. Based on the writer's observation at SMPN 4 Langsa, most of the students said that the problems that make they are not interest to learn English if there is no good interaction between teacher and students while teaching learning process, and then, the teacher no awareness in motivating them to learn English. In order to make a good interaction in giving motivation to students while teaching learning process in the classroom, teachers should avoid saying something that will threaten student's face. As Yule (1996: 61) mentions "if speaker says something that represents a threat to another individual regarding self image, it is a face threatening act".

The teachers also need to employ strategies to minimize the threat. The strategies to minimize the threat of the students' face or the hearer's face are called Politeness strategies. In addition, Yule (1996: 60) also mentions that, "Politeness, in an interaction, can be defined as the means employed to show awareness of another person's face". It can be concluded that politeness strategies could be the best way to build good interaction between teacher and students in the classroom while teaching learning process and encourage students' motivation directly. By doing this research the writer intends to find out what types of politeness strategies that are used by the teachers and how the teachers' politeness strategies realized in motivating students to learn English.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation

In self-determination theory (SDT) Deci and Ryan (2000, as cited in Phillip et al., 2008: 26) define intrinsically motivated behaviours as those behaviours performed out of interest and requiring no external prods, promises, or threats. These behaviours are experienced as wholly self-determined, with no external pressure, as representative of and emanating from one's sense of self. On the contrary, extrinsically motivated behaviours are performed instrumentally to attain some other goals (e.g., studying with an aim to get a school certificate in order to get a job). These behaviours would typically not occur spontaneously and therefore must be prompted by incentives or other external pressures.

The distinction between the two types of motivation is worth keeping in mind for two reasons. First, most theories of motivation tend to rely on one or the other or a combination of the two attempting to explain the why of human behaviour. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are essential to a complete understanding of why we do the things we do. Second, when studying how to influence human behaviour we should recognize that neither an intrinsic nor an extrinsic strategy is better than the other, but both have their uses and limitations. Although intrinsic methods might work well with some students, extrinsic techniques might be more productive with others. Moreover, intrinsic and extrinsic strategies might differ widely in their effects. For example, while extrinsic motivation might seem to be more useful in coming up with immediate observable outcomes, intrinsic strategies bring benefits in the long terms that might be far more desirable (Kolesnik, 1978: 7).

From the statement above, it can be concluded that for learners, Intrinsic motivation is characterized as that which comes from within the individual. It inspires action even when there is no perceived external stimulus or reward. Extrinsic motivation, in contrast, provides incentive to engage in action which may not be inherently pleasing or engaging, but which may offer benefits in terms of perceived potential outcomes. For example, intrinsic motivation is affected by the reason for preferring the school, the probability of finding a job after graduation, the future expectation, the distinctiveness of testing and measuring activities at the school, and desire to complete a Masters' degree. In the simplest terms, it is necessary to be motivated and to make an effort. Extrinsic motivation is significantly affected by the probability of finding a job, the attitude towards the teacher, the peer group, the level of income, the appropriateness

of the classrooms, and the adequacy of teaching materials. The most effective extrinsic motivation is the probability of finding a job.

In order to offer a clear image of the intrinsic-extrinsic dichotomy, Spolsky (1989: 124) borrows Harter’s model (1982) and represents it in the following way:

| Intrinsic                     | vs | Extrinsic                                       |
|-------------------------------|----|---|
| Preference for challenge      | vs | Preference for easy work                        |
| Curiosity/interest            | vs | Pleasing a teacher/getting grades               |
| Independent mastery           | vs | Dependence on teacher in figuring out problems  |
| Independent judgement         | vs | Reliance on teacher’s judgment about what to do |
| Internal criteria for success | vs | External criteria for success                   |

Following this model, it comes out clearly that the greater the value the individuals attach to the accomplishment of an activity, the more highly motivated they will be to engage in it and later to put sustained effort until they achieve their goal. This distinction, both internal and external factors have an important role to play in motivating learners.

Further, Marsh (1986, 1990, as cited in Philip et al., 2008: 37) wrote; Motivation, including motivation to teach may be externally or internally referenced. Externally referenced motivation (extrinsic motivations) are those motivation that primarily involve people or condition external to individuals. For example, individuals motivated to enter teaching because of extrinsic motivation may be attached by a teacher’s pay, working conditions or because others think it would be good for them to become teachers. On the other hand, internally referenced motivation (intrinsic motivation) are those motivations where the impetus to initiate, persist, and engage deeply in an activity is primarily attributed to the beliefs, values and perceptions of the individual. These individuals would be motivated by reasons of personal interest, satisfaction or a desire to help others.

Thus, from the quotation above, it can be said that the orientation of motivation is not only for learners but also for teachers, which it has related to this research about how teacher motivates his/her students in teaching learning process in the classroom. It means that the teachers who have motivation to teach could be better in motivating their students to learn. They inspire their students by their acts, character and Morality. Hence to convey their message in a good way and also to be more effective, teachers should be polite and friendly.

## 2.2. Politeness strategies

The phenomenon of politeness has been defined and interpreted from various perspectives. Politeness theory accounts for the redressing of affronts to a person's 'face' by face-threatening acts. The concept of face was derived from Chinese into English in the 19th century, and a sociologist; Erving Goffman would then go on to introduce the concept into academia through his theories of 'face' and 'facework'. According to Goffman (1955), Face is a picture of self-image in the social attributes, and the face could mean honor, self-esteem, and public self-image, and each participant has two needs in every social process: namely the need to be appreciated and need to be free (not bothered). The first need is called positive face, while the latter is negative face.

Face Threatening Act (FTA) intensity is expressed by weight (W), which includes three social parameters – first, the degree of disturbance or rate of imposition (R), in terms of absolute weight of a particular action in a particular culture. For example, the request "May I borrow your car?" has different weights from the request "May I borrow your pen?" The second and third social parameters include the social distance (D) between the speaker and the hearer, and authority or power (P) owned by interlocutors (Renkema, 1993: 14). FTA threatens the stability of the intensity of communication; politeness in this case can be understood as an effort to prevent and or repair damage(s) caused by the FTA. The greater the threat to stability, the more politeness, face work technique, is necessary. Face work which aims at positive face is called 'solidarity politeness', while face work that deals with negative face is known as 'respect politeness' (Renkema 1993: 13).

Although politeness has been studied in a variety of cultures for many years, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory has become very influential. Brown and Levinson (1987: 61) proposed, 'Face', the public self image that every member want to claim for himself, consisting in two related aspects: a). Negative face: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction, i.e., to freedom of action and freedom from imposition. b). positive face: the positive consistent self-image or personality (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants.

The second assumption is that the interactants have the rational abilities to achieve certain goals. Face is socio-culturally dynamic property changeable thorough interaction with others. To maintain their face, speakers, as rational agents, accept its vulnerability and are prepared to cooperate with others.

Everyday communication involves the use of face-threatening acts (FTA). "that by their nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker"

(Brown and Levinson, 1987: 65). FTAs can threaten both the speaker's and the hearer's face. Also, they can obstruct both positive and negative aspect of one's face. Negative FTAs obstruct the speaker's or the hearer's freedom of action and freedom from imposition. These can be threatening to the hearer when they: a) place pressure on the hearer to perform or not to perform a particular action; e.g. advice, suggestions, requests, orders, reminders, warning, threats. b) express the speaker's strong negative feelings or opinions of the hearer or hearer's belongings; e.g. hatred, anger, lust, compliments, expressions of envy, admiration c) indicate some positive future actions of the speaker towards the hearer, which compel the hearer to either reject or accept it; e.g. promises, offers. FTAs which threaten the speaker's negative face are those that pose an offence to one's face, e.g. expressing thanks, accepting the hearer's thanks/apology/offers, excuses, responses to hearer's faux pas, unwilling promises and offers. Positive FTAs inflict damage to one's face by denoting the interlocutor's lack of appreciation and/or approval for one's feelings, wants, desires, etc. These threaten the hearer's face by: i. expressing the speaker's negative evaluation of the hearer's positive face, e.g., disapproval, criticism, insults, accusations, complaints, reprimands, contradictions, disagreements; ii. expressing lack of care for the hearer's positive face, e.g. excessive emotionality, irreverence, misuse of honorifics, mention of taboo topics, belittling, boasting, non-sequiturs, interruptions. The speaker's positive face is threatened by acts which indicate that one has made a transgression or lost control over the situation, e.g. apologies, confessions, admissions of guilt or responsibility, acceptance of compliments, self-humiliation, self contradiction, emotion leakage, etc.

Brown and Levinson (1987: 68), interpret politeness precisely in relation to FTAs – they define it as face-saving behaviour, i.e. the employment of threat minimising strategies. When discussing politeness strategies, they differentiate between several categories. Bald-on record strategy does not involve any redressive actions, but it is nevertheless acceptable in situations where the speaker and the hearer “both tacitly agree that the relevance of face demands may be suspended in the interests of urgency or efficiency”, or “where the danger to the hearer's face is very small”.

(Brown and Levinson 1987: 69), Positive politeness strategy is employed to minimise the threat to hearer's positive face and entails utterance which express interest for the hearer's needs and wants, contain in-group identity markers, optimism, humour and avoidance of disagreement. Negative politeness strategies are deployed to avoid or decrease potential damage to the hearer's negative face and include utterances containing hedges or question, pessimism, indirectness, obviating structures, apologies, etc. Finally, off-record or indirect politeness strategy turns to completely indirect utterances, which avert the potential threat from the speaker.

### 3. Research Method

This study deals with describing politeness strategies used by three teachers in motivating students to learn English in teaching learning process in three classrooms, based on Brown and Levinson Politeness Strategies; Positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on-record and off record. The research conducted in duration 2x80 minutes English lessons in Junior high school in natural contexts. The data were collected through descriptive qualitative data, and used instrument observation, video-recorded, and interview, as according to Bogdan and Biklen (1982), they are some ways in collecting the data, the ways are observation, interviews, and tape-recording. The object of this study was the teachers' utterances when motivate their students while teaching learning process in the classrooms. The respondents were three non-native English teachers (42-year-old female, 38 year-old female, and 36 year-old female) of SMPN 4 Langsa and 80 students in three different classes. The writer randomly chose one class in each of the 7th grade, 8th grade, and 9th grade. The data were analyzed based on descriptive analysis by using some steps. According to Miles and Huberman (1984), they are some steps done (1) data reduction, (2) data display, and (3) conclusion and verification. Data reduction is the process of selecting the data to identify types of politeness strategies used by the teachers, data display is show the data that the teachers' utterances that was selected based on politeness strategies, conclusion and verification is the final analytical for the qualitative research, which the researcher begins to decide what things mean.

### 4. Discussion

In this research, as the object of the study was the teachers' utterances when motivate their students while teaching learning process in the classrooms, based on Brown and Levinson (1987) Politeness Strategies; Positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on-record and off record. According to Palmer (2007), Student motivation is an essential element that is necessary for quality education. How do we know when students are motivated? They pay attention, they begin working on tasks immediately, they ask questions and volunteer answers, and they appear to be happy and eager.

In this research, the orientation of motivation is not only for learners but also for teachers, which it has related to this research about how teacher motivates his/her students in teaching learning process in the classroom, based on Brown and Levinson (1987) Politeness Strategies; Positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on-record and off record. It means that the teachers who have motivation to teach could be

better in motivating their students to learn, and politeness strategies could be the best way to build good interaction between teacher and students in the classroom while teaching learning process, and encourage students' motivation directly.

#### 4.1. Positive politeness strategies

Excerpt (1) is an example of a teacher's language use in greeting to motivates students to learn English in the classroom.

- (1) Teacher: Good morning, students...!  
students: Good morning, ma'am..!  
Teacher: How are you today?  
students: I am fine, and you?  
Teacher: I am fine, too..thank you..hmm so, are you ready to learn?  
students: yes ma'am..  
Teacher: oh, good!..let's start now...

It can be identified that both students and teacher in opening session employed positive politeness strategies; Use in-group identity markers [2]. It was done by using group identity marker "students" for calling students, and the students use "ma'am" to call a female teacher who was considered as a respectable person. Calling "students" instead of "children" or "class" could be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, that is, teacher did not position herself as the more powerful or keep a distance from students. The strategy was to reduce the threat of face (of dignity) of students. Similarly, referring to "ma'am" for female teacher, the students gave respect and feel close to the teacher as well. This set of data indicates that there is good interaction between teacher and students. This was further demonstrated in the utterance 'I'm fine, and you?' 'I am fine, too..thank you..hmm so, are you ready to learn?'; the teacher expressed politeness non-verbally, by showed her smile as facial expression to her students. Then, the utterance 'oh, good!..let's start now...the teacher gave praise to make the students feel good with their interests to encourages their motivation.

- (2) Teacher: have you read the text number two?  
Students: yes ma'am..  
Teacher: so far...any question?  
Student 1: I have a question ma'am..  
Teacher: Yes.. Almira, what is your question?



Student 1: *di teks ini ada kalimat* (this text has the sentences)..it is a great body of water, and it surround the land masses of the earth,..is it mean to ocean?

Teacher: it's good question Almira, thank you...now, I want to answer your question...

Excerpt (2) shows that the social distance and the power inequality of the students and the teacher were small. It can be seen from the students' response on the teacher's directing student's attention 'so far...any question?', one of student responded by answering and giving a question. Then, before answer the question of the student, the teacher gave praise to make the student feel good about her interests, 'it's good question Almira, thank you...now, I want to answer your question...'. It means that the teacher has awareness in motivating students to learn, and there is good interaction between the teacher and the students while teaching learning process, which the students felt close to the teacher but still gave respect to her.

## 4.2. Negative politeness strategies

Negative politeness strategies are intended to avoid giving offense by showing deference. These strategies include questioning, hedging, and presenting disagreements as opinions [2].

Excerpt (3) was an example of one of the occasions where the teacher softened his direct expression with the conventionally polite expression 'please'.

(3) Teacher: Pay attention, please...

In Excerpt (4), teacher tried to modify direct expression with polite expression in order to attempt to avoid a great deal of imposition on the students. She used expression 'a little' to lessen the imposition by implying that the students were not asked to do very much.

(4) Teacher: Before we start our class today, I would like to review a little about err..err..err.. the materials we have discussed together. Hmm.. do you still remember the...our last discussion?

Students: Yes...!!!

Teacher: oke, now...could you tell me what is the topic about at our last discussion?...if you want to answer it, please, raise your hand...

Another strategy that was often used as a negative politeness strategy to emphasize both the speaker's and the addressee's personal involvement in the matter was

creating imperative expression. The teacher used modifying elements and politeness markers in her talk. She expressed her request to the student in a polite way by using the word 'please'.

### 4.3. Bald on-record strategies

The teacher's authoritative role in the class was reflected when she gave commands and instructions, and made requests. Through the choice of direct strategies for giving instruction (excerpt 5 and 6), the teacher imposed and created pressure on the students.

(5) Teacher: Bring your note to me!., Come on...!. The time is not enough.  
Second, Maya!, come here!. Angga! ...come here!

(6) Teacher: Ok, time is over!..now, collect your paper!...

In the classroom context with its asymmetrical power relationship, teachers were in the position of institutional power and it could be argued that this gets partly expressed through the use of direct strategies. The expression 'bring your note to me!' and 'now, collect your paper' indicated that the teacher did not try to minimize the threat to the students' face. These strategies were common and acceptable as the reasons of teachers to encourage their students motivation in fulfillment of the limitation time of teaching learning process in the classrooms, and also, as the reasons of teacher and students felt that they had a close relationship.

## 5. Conclusions

The types of the teachers' politeness strategies in motivating students to learn English in teaching learning process in the classrooms that employed are positive politeness, negative politeness, and bald on-record strategies. The result of this research showed that the teachers employed positive politeness, negative politeness, and bald on-record strategies as well. They used positive politeness especially to make the students feel good about themselves, their interests or possessions and also to make good interaction between teacher and students while teaching learning process in order to encourage students motivation to learn, they used negative politeness to avoid imposition to the students in learning, and they used Bald on-record when efficiency is necessary, task-oriented, and when information needs to be shared quickly, as the reasons of the teacher and the students felt that they had a close relationship. The results of this study should be an indispensable tool to examine politeness, which is an

important aspect for English teachers to encourage their students motivation to learn English in the classroom through good interaction in grammatical aspect, using language appropriately and avoid misunderstanding. Further, teachers' politeness strategies will motivate the students to learn and practice how the language is used not only grammatically correct, but also appropriately and politely according to the context and the situation, which it is very important pattern for students of Junior High School as the beginning learners who start to learn English formally.

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