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How Speech Acts Construct Polite Communication in Lecture Class Activities

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Abstract
This study examines how politeness is constructed and maintained through verbal communication between lecturers and students during classroom activities. Drawing on pragmatic theory, specifically politeness and speech act theory, this study aims to understand how language functions socially in the context of classroom interactions. The analysis of classroom discourse identifies linguistic strategies that encourage mutual respect, cooperation and understanding. Data were obtained through classroom observations and recorded interactions, which were analyzed qualitatively to reveal patterns of polite language use. The results demonstrate that polite communication is manifested through indirect expressions, mitigation strategies, positive feedback and respectful forms of address. Lecturers predominantly use positive politeness strategies to manage authority while encouraging student participation. The study concludes that polite communication in classroom learning activities supports effective teaching and learning processes, strengthens interpersonal relationships, and creates an inclusive educational environment.
Keywords: Polite communication, speech acts, classroom activities, mitigation strategies, inclusive

INTRODUCTION

The use of impolite language can lead to misunderstandings in interaction or communication with others. A person may misinterpret the intended meaning of expressions or utterances, which can ultimately result in conflict or miscommunication. For instance, using demeaning words, belittling others' opinions, speaking in a raised tone, interrupting others while they are speaking, using inappropriate body language, and other negative behaviors can create an unconducive and uncomfortable atmosphere and even potentially lead to conflict.

Among linguistic scholars, the term *politeness* began to gain recognition with the emergence of pragmatic studies around the 1940s, led by figures such as Charles Morris, and later developed in the United States in the 1970s with figures such as Austin, Searle, and others. With regard to politeness, speakers and interlocutors are expected to cooperate with one another to achieve effective communication. This cooperative principle involves four conversational maxims: quantity, quality, relevance, and manner (H. Paul Grice). Grice's theory also discusses conversational implicature, namely meanings that are not explicitly stated in words or utterances but are implied or assumed by speakers based on context and the cooperative principle. Essentially, Grice's theory emphasizes the importance of cooperation, honesty, relevance, and clarity in conveying information.

In Indonesia, however, the term *pragmatics* only became known around the 1980s. Meanwhile, within the Islamic community, linguistic politeness has long been taught by Alloh as part of Islam, a religion that perfected previous religions, more than fourteen (14) centuries ago. Consequently, Muslims throughout the world have practiced linguistic politeness for a very long time. It is hoped that this topic will become a distinct field of study, both for the present researcher and for other scholars in the fields of pragmatics and linguistic politeness in Islam, whether in articles, journals, or other forms of research in the future. Linguistic politeness according to the Qur'an and Hadith is far more comprehensive than pragmatic-based linguistic politeness. Politeness in language use in Islam applies to all nations and language users. Individuals of high social status must remain polite toward those of lower status; leaders must speak politely to those they lead; responding to poor treatment must not be done in a worse manner, and so forth (Suara Muhammadiyah, August 4, 2020).

Linguistic politeness reflects good manners and ethical behavior in language use, particularly in communication. The determining factors of linguistic politeness include all aspects that influence language use toward being polite and civilized. Linguistic politeness reflects a person's attitude or way of respecting others in interaction or communication through the use of courteous language, appropriate word choice, friendly intonation, and avoidance of harsh or offensive expressions. In this regard, Sapir and Whorf (in Wahab, 1995) argue that language determines the attitudes and behaviors of its speakers. Individuals who are accustomed to speaking well—using appropriate diction, polite and courteous expressions, well-structured sentences, maintaining gentle vocal intonation, avoiding belittlement or insult, showing respect, reverence, and proper conduct toward others—will exhibit distinctive characteristics that indicate a good personality. Conversely, individuals with poor character tend to use harsh language, speak in high tones, shout, belittle, insult, and show disrespect or impoliteness in communication with others or their interlocutors.

Linguistic politeness in speech acts is one of the parameters of a nation's linguistic civilization. Politeness in speech acts refers to how speakers and interlocutors use language in a polite, respectful, and non-offensive manner. Its purpose is to maintain good relationships and create a comfortable communicative atmosphere. Linguistic politeness also serves as a medium for fostering peaceful education in shaping civilized and socially beneficial individuals across various communities, and it is one dimension of education that deserves attention in efforts to achieve sustainable educational development. Furthermore, the correlation between linguistic politeness employed by lecturers, teachers, and educators in classroom interaction and discourse can be measured through linguistic unit analysis of spoken and written language involving message senders and receivers in communicative acts (Slembrouck, 2003: 1).

Meanwhile, it is important for educators and lecturers to understand that language instruction in higher education aims to improve students' ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, in accordance with established standards. In addition, language learning plays a crucial role in developing students' critical, creative, and communicative thinking skills. Language courses are compulsory subjects in higher education institutions, whether Indonesian or English, and aim to equip students with adequate language competence in accordance with the National Standards for Higher Education. Language learning at universities also includes appreciation of literary works, which can enrich students'

understanding of culture and the values embedded in language. Indonesian and English function as the languages of instruction in teaching and research at universities, as well as the languages used in scientific publications. In a geopolitical context, Indonesian serves as the unifying language of the Indonesian nation, and language learning in higher education aims to strengthen students' understanding of national identity.

Both lecturers and teachers have a primary role and responsibility toward their students, namely serving as role models in instructional interactions at school and within the social environment. Lecturers are required to create a conducive learning atmosphere so that students can participate in lectures comfortably, safely, and with supportive psychological conditions. Such a conducive learning environment can only be achieved when lecturers are polite, friendly, and approachable toward their students, and vice versa. Lecturers' politeness in speech and language use in the classroom is essential for creating a comfortable, conducive, respectful, and effective learning environment, as well as for training students to communicate properly and ethically. Polite language facilitates both interpersonal and intrapersonal interaction and enhances effectiveness and productivity in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, lecturers and educators must have a clear vision of instructional objectives and adhere to principles of linguistic politeness in communicative interaction. Lecturers' linguistic politeness positively influences learning and classroom activities by increasing students' motivation, improving communication flow, and enhancing the overall quality of instruction. Teachers, lecturers, and educators should consistently apply strategies of linguistic politeness in communication and in delivering instructional materials. In addition to serving as examples or role models, the use of polite language demonstrates respect, empathy, message audibility, clarity, and humility as a communicator, thereby producing positive, safe, and effective communication.

Several other studies related to the principles of linguistic politeness in teaching and learning processes have focused on speech acts in academic interaction in general, while some have specifically examined students' polite language use in communication with their lecturers. For example, Adrienne Lo and Kathryn Howard, in *Mobilizing Respect and Politeness in the Classroom*, applied polite acts and respect to classroom management and to understanding student behavior during instructional activities. Michaela Beschieru (2021), in *Changes in Classroom Discourse*, focused on classroom discourse in relation to lecturer–student relationships and the dominant authority of lecturers in classroom activities. More uniquely, recent research by Moch. Mahzari (2025), *The Speech Act of Requests in Arabic Used by Saudi Facebook Users*, investigated online academic activities, specifically analyzing direct and indirect language used by male and female students to determine levels of politeness and respect in speech acts. According to Muh. Saleh et al. (2020) in their book *Politeness-Based Speaking Skills*, the concept of linguistic politeness is equivalent to terms such as courtesy, etiquette, or linguistic decorum, which relate to the rules, customs, or habitual language practices within a society.

In relation to this concept, politeness can be observed in various aspects of life: first, politeness reflects attitudes containing values of courtesy and ethics in daily social interaction; second, politeness is highly contextual, applying to particular communities, places, or situations; third, politeness is always bipolar, involving relationships between two poles, such

as young and old, parents and children, teachers and students, or students and lecturers; fourth, politeness is reflected in ways of dressing, acting, behaving, and speaking (Muslich, 2006).

Lecturers' linguistic politeness in speech, actions, and attitudes in the classroom plays a crucial role in creating a comfortable, conducive, respectful, and effective learning environment, as well as in training students to communicate properly and ethically. Polite language facilitates interaction, both interpersonal and intrapersonal, and increases effectiveness and productivity in the teaching and learning process. Essentially, lecturers must be able to maintain proper attitudes and speaking etiquette, especially toward their students. Speaking etiquette refers to the manners and ethics that must always be observed during interaction and communication with others. The role of lecturers is not limited to delivering course material in front of students, but also includes serving as good examples and role models. Lecturers' linguistic politeness positively affects learning and classroom activities by increasing students' motivation, improving communication, and enhancing instructional quality. Teachers, lecturers, and educators should consistently implement strategies of linguistic politeness in communication and instructional delivery. In addition to serving as models and exemplary figures, the application of polite language demonstrates respect, empathy, message audibility, clarity, and humility as a communicator, thereby resulting in positive, safe, and effective communication.

RESEARCH METHOD

A qualitative research design is a flexible and open framework used to explore social phenomena or human experiences in depth. Unlike quantitative research, which focuses on numbers and statistics, qualitative research emphasizes understanding meaning, interpretation, and context from the perspective of the research subjects. This study aims to describe, explain, and interpret data collected from speech, utterances, and interactional activities that occur in classroom practices between lecturers and students. Therefore, this research employs a descriptive qualitative method. The use of this research method is also based on the assumption that qualitative research is an approach used to investigate social problems of a humanistic nature (Berg, 2001: 3). In this study, the qualitative method is applied through the theoretical framework of speech act theory and linguistic politeness. The research method applied in this case study is qualitative research, as the research problem relates to human behavior, which fundamentally depends on observation. Furthermore, Kriyantono (2013) states that qualitative research aims to explain phenomena as deeply as possible. Qualitative research emphasizes the depth of the data obtained by the researcher. The objects of qualitative research are generally limited in number, and researchers are directly involved in the research setting, requiring in-depth analysis. In general, qualitative research is conducted using interview and observation methods. Through these methods, researchers analyze data collected from the field. Data analysis is inductive or qualitative in nature, and the research findings emphasize meaning rather than generalization.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that a qualitative approach is a holistic approach applied to research subjects in which an event occurs. In this approach, the researcher serves as the key instrument of the study, and the results of the approach are presented in written, descriptive Data sources are places or entities from which data are

obtained. Data sources may include people, documents, locations, or physical objects that serve as the origin or source of information. In the context of research, data sources can be divided into two main categories, namely primary data and secondary data. The following is a detailed explanation of data sources:

a) Primary Data Sources

Primary data are data collected directly by the researcher for the purposes of their own study. Examples of primary data sources include:

- **Interviews**: obtaining information directly from individuals through interviews or question-and-answer sessions.
- **Surveys**: collecting data from a group of people using questionnaires.
- **Observation**: observing and recording specific phenomena or behaviors.
- **Experiments**: conducting experiments to collect specific data.

b) Secondary Data Sources

Secondary data are data that are already available and have been collected by other parties, not by the researcher themselves. Examples of secondary data sources include:

- **Reports**: financial reports, research reports, annual reports, and others.
- **Publications**: scientific articles, journal articles, books, news reports, and others.
- **Databases**: statistical databases, linguistic databases, health databases, and others.
- **Social Media**: data available on social media platforms.

Selecting appropriate data sources is crucial to the quality of research. Valid and relevant data obtained from suitable sources will result in accurate and reliable conclusions. Therefore, researchers need to consider the research topic, research objectives, and data collection methods in order to select the most appropriate data sources.form, based on empirical data that have been obtained.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In principle, the representation of lecturers' polite speech acts in academic interaction serves the function of creating a harmonious communicative atmosphere and fostering good interpersonal relationships within the classroom setting. This aligns with Lakoff's politeness principles, namely formality, hesitancy (non-imposition), and equality. More importantly, as classroom leaders, lecturers are expected to prioritize the cooperative principle as proposed by Grice, which consists of the maxims of quantity, quality, relevance, and manner. Furthermore, in the context of lecturer–student interaction, this study incorporates Leech's six politeness maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. Therefore, in this section, the analysis of interactional data from instructional practices (i.e., classroom lectures) revisits the research questions of this dissertation in order to provide information as well as answers to the formulated research questions.

The primary objective of politeness in Lakoff's theory is to facilitate social interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation. By applying politeness principles, it is expected that a harmonious communicative atmosphere and positive interpersonal relationships will be established. This area of study is part of a linguistic sub-discipline that examines the relationship between language and society. It focuses on language users and language use, the contexts in which language is used, levels or registers of language, the effects

of contact between two or more languages, variations in language use over time, and language varieties themselves.

This principle reflects a friendly and amicable attitude and treats the interlocutor as a companion. Its purpose is to create a warm and pleasant atmosphere in interaction. Below is a sample table illustrating Lakoff's politeness principles.

Table 1.1 Lakoff's Politeness Principles

No.	Lakoff's Principle	Explanation	Example
1.	**Do Not Impose**	Avoid making requests or statements that are too direct or forceful. Give the interlocutor space to make a choice.	Saying, *"Perhaps you could help me for a moment?"* rather than *"Help me now!"*
2.	**Give Options**	Offer choices so that the interlocutor feels they have agency and does not feel compelled.	*"Would you prefer to eat at this restaurant or another one?"* rather than *"We are going to eat at this restaurant."*
3.	**Make Your Speech Partner Feel Comfortable**	Pay attention to the interlocutor's feelings. Show empathy and use polite and courteous language.	Saying, *"I hope you don't mind,"* before continuing the conversation.

The main purpose of data analysis is to process a body of data into information that can be understood. In this research theme, the researcher focuses on descriptive qualitative data analysis in order to observe, interpret, process, and analyze data in the form of textual descriptions, interactive dialogues, interviews, and observations to understand the phenomenon under investigation. The aim is to identify meanings, patterns, and relationships within the data in order to provide in-depth explanations and draw conclusions related to the research questions. Before proceeding further with the discussion of this theme, it is important to revisit the definition of data analysis, namely a method used to process a collection of data or a set of data derived from research objects in order to obtain clear information. All data are then categorized and processed further so that conclusions can be drawn, which in turn provide the information needed for the study. From this explanation, it can be understood that qualitative data analysis is a method used to process or analyze non-numerical data, which are referred to as qualitative research data. And below term is just the sample of it, the research questions, data sources, and data analysis techniques:

Table 1.2 Data Principle

No.	Research Questions	Data Sources	Data Analysis Techniques
1.	What types of speech acts most frequently occur in classroom interaction, and how do their variations influence perceptions of politeness?	Speech Act Theory and Politeness Principles	Speech act and politeness analysis

No.	Research Questions	Data Sources	Data Analysis Techniques
2.	How do lecturers realize directive speech acts (commands, instructions, requests) in a polite manner that is acceptable to students?	Speech Act Theory and Politeness Principles	Analysis of positive and negative politeness strategies
3.	How do students negotiate politeness when responding to, questioning, or criticizing lecturers through their speech acts?	Classroom interaction data	Observation of classroom situations and atmospheres constructed by lecturers
4.	How does multimodality (intonation, gestures, facial expressions) strengthen or weaken politeness in the realization of speech acts in the classroom?	Observation of non-verbal communication (multimodality)	Observation and analysis of non-verbal communication

Content data analysis in this research focuses on describing speech acts and lecturers' linguistic politeness in academic interaction, particularly interactions occurring during teaching and learning activities in the classroom. It also involves identifying lecturers' and students' use of positive and negative language during dialogue, discussion, or the expression of opinions in classroom settings. The purpose is to determine how lecturers' linguistic politeness is realized through spoken, written, and gestural representations. Communication competence is also noted by the researcher, whether lecturers employ one-way, two-way, or multi-directional communication. This data analysis aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomena present in lecturer–student interactions during classroom instruction, including the behaviors of each party in gaining teaching–learning experiences. Most importantly, it assists the researcher in identifying problems, developing theory, and providing recommendations based on the research findings.

Table 1.3 Research Data Collection Procedures

No.	Steps	Description
1.	Sit-in: participating in classroom lecture activities in predetermined classes	Observing, recording, and taking notes on phenomena, behaviors, and speech acts occurring in the lecture classroom
2.	Obtaining direct information from individuals and groups through interviews or question-and-answer sessions	Collecting research data from sit-in activities based on the research theme, including speech acts, utterances, and communication processes between lecturers and students
3.	Classifying data according to the characteristics and needs of the research	Lecturer speech acts in the classroom, including language use during one-way, two-way, and multi-directional communication
4.	Categorizing lecturers' speech acts and linguistic politeness based on Lakoff's politeness principles and Grice's Cooperative Principle	Categorizing data into phrases, clauses, and sentences representing lecturers' speech acts during teaching and learning activities
5.	Identifying types and forms of utterances at the levels of phrases, clauses, and sentences	Outcomes of speech acts and manifestations of polite linguistic behavior by both lecturers and students

In this study, data collection was carried out through direct involvement in classroom activities by means of observation, audio/video recording, and note-taking, while documentation was obtained from written notes and archival records. The following are the stages of the research data collection process.

CONCLUSION

The main focus of the research is the communication patterns of lecturers in applying linguistic politeness toward their students in the classroom, as well as documenting and recording lecturers' speech acts in communicative contexts, both monologic and dialogic, during classroom instruction. This is conducted to identify communication patterns and the ways lecturers use language in academic contexts to motivate students, deliver course material, engage in discussions with students, and initiate statements or questions to obtain feedback from students, thereby enabling reciprocal interaction as part of two-way communication. For this reason, lecturers are also required to understand the dimensions of communication, as participant involvement is present here, namely the students. In addition, lecturers must be able to understand how communication takes place, whether it is one-way communication, two-way communication, or multi-directional communication.

Essentially, this concerns interaction and communication in classroom teaching practices between lecturers and students. This interaction is typically related to verbal interaction, including lecturers' speech acts, students' speech acts, and the media or tools used to support learning activities in the classroom. The results of this study are expected to provide significant benefits and contributions, both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to the development of pragmatic linguistics theory, particularly in the areas of linguistic politeness, classroom discourse analysis, speech acts, and the development of related theories. Practically, this research is expected to provide insights and serve as a source of information for the public, enabling them to understand and apply models of linguistic politeness in various social contexts, everyday conversations, and other forms of interaction.

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