

## Male and Female Linguistic Politeness in Speaking Classroom

Nurjanah, O. W.<sup>1</sup>, Santosa, R.<sup>1</sup>, Rochsantiningsih, D.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Sebelas Maret University, Ir Sutami No.36A Jebres, Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia

Corresponding email: [miss\\_oktanika@yahoo.com](mailto:miss_oktanika@yahoo.com)

### ABSTRACT

Communicative competence emphasizes that the knowledge of grammatical rules is not sufficient to communicate comprehensively, therefore it needs pragmatic knowledge. Without pragmatic understanding, there will be many failures in communication for example is misunderstanding. Besides, one important aspect of pragmatic competence is politeness. Many researches have been conducted in this field, however only few that specifically revealed the differences between male and female linguistic politeness in speaking classroom, whereas its primary data are utterances. It becomes a consideration of this research to be conducted in the speaking classroom of university student, especially international relations major students. The observation is conducted based on the adaptation from DCT by Bacha, Bahous & Diab (2012). Furthermore, the data are analyzed using some politeness theories. The result showed that in general, female students are more polite compared to male students. At last, teachers should understand this fact by do not expecting male students to be as polite as female, basically they are unique their way.

**Keywords:** language education; linguistic politeness; male and female politeness; speaking classroom

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## INTRODUCTION

The ability of student to reach their goals in schools depends to a large extent on their communicative competence which emphasizes that the knowledge of grammatical rules is not sufficient for speaking and for communicating using a certain language. Therefore, to be able to comprehensively communicate there is another knowledge needed, namely pragmatic. Pragmatic is “the knowledge of how an addressee determines what a speaker is saying and recognizes intended illocutionary force conveyed through subtle attitudes”. Without this competence, there are cases where speaker and interlocutor(s) cannot understand each other which cause miscommunication, even failure in the communication. In more specific scope, one important aspect of pragmatic competence is politeness, meaning “the expression of the speakers’ intention to mitigate face threats carried by certain face threatening acts toward another”.

Additionally, as an important aspect of pragmatic competence and consequently communicative competence, politeness has been investigated for decades. A number of researchers have investigated about politeness, especially the correlation between politeness and gender. Those research were taken places in academic setting and non-academic setting. However, after carefully examine the findings of the academic setting researches, the researcher notes some same points from them. First point, most of them were done in a general English classroom, not in speaking classroom where there are abundant utterances that can be observed. Therefore, this gap will be answered in this research by conducting the research in speaking classroom.

Second point, the findings of those researches revealed that female language is more standard than male. This fact causes female are categorized as more polite than male (Tannen, 1990; Climate, 1997, Brown, 1980; Lorenzo-Dus & Bou-Franch, 2003; Bacha, Bahous, & Diab, 2012; Alavi, Moradi, & Taggaddomi, 2013) On the contrary, researchers also found different findings that actually there is no significant different between male and females linguistic politeness. Consequently the researcher is very curious about the level of politeness between male and female in classroom, especially in international program student who are commonly speak using English although they are not native speakers. At last, to the researcher best knowledge, few research has examined the issue of linguistic politeness across gender in speaking classroom deeply. For this reason, this research aims at bringing this research gap by conducting a research under the title “Male & Female Linguistic Politeness in Speaking Classroom”, and answering the question “who is more polite between male and female?”

### *Linguistic Politeness*

Politeness, in an interaction, can be defined as persons’ behavior in showing awareness of others person’s face. Meanwhile, linguistic politeness is this kind of attitude that is done through the verbal communication. For instance when someone speaks, her utterances will give various effects to the interlocutor’s face. For example the effect can be positive or negative effect. Therefore, to avoid

communication problems, linguistic politeness need to be understood by speakers. In other words, linguistic politeness is a pragmatic strategy as “linguistic politeness is meant as an attempt to set up a model of general pragmatic, an account of how language is used in communication” (Fauziati, 2016).

In more specific explanation, linguistically polite is not only being aware to others face in speaking, but also considering it (Yule, 2006). It means, in practice the speaker will really implement her knowledge about linguistic politeness because she understands that every single word she says will effect to others. In other words it also means “establish, maintain, and save face during the conversation” (Richards, 2013). Being polite in communication is essential because by considering others’ feeling will establish levels of mutual comfort and promote rapport among the speakers (Keikhaie & Mozaffari, 2013).

### *The Importance of Linguistic Politeness in Classroom*

In general, linguistic politeness has a central place in foreign language teaching (Abertova, 2012) . This is logical because language classroom is a place to learn about language and of course communication. Meanwhile, the aspects of communication have been empirically proven to be evident not only interactional, but also transactional discourse (Garces-Conejos & Sanchez-Macarro, 1998; Garces-Conejos & Torbelanca-Lopez, 1997). Interactional talk functions to lubricate the social wheels in order to establish roles and relationship, confirming and consolidating relationship, expressing solidarity or showing empathy. Then, transactional talk has the role of engaging others to do something or influencing others’ behavior to suit the expectation of the speakers (Kristina, 2014). In addition, both of them are important to be understood by second language learners. Therefore they must understand the linguistic choices speakers make under particular context in order to promote sociopragmatic awareness and improve production and comprehension of pragmalinguistic (Bou-Franch & Garces-Conejos, 2003; Garces-Conejos & Sanchez-Macarro, 1998).

Learners frequently perform speech acts such as apologies, refusal and requests in accordance with the sociolinguistic norms of their native language as a product of pragmatic transfer. For example in the researcher classroom, students often ask apology in the end of their speech which is not suggested for English speech. This phenomenon is influenced by Indonesian norm which common to ask apology after giving a speech. Thus foreign language teaching must be accustomed to integrate a pragmatic perspective. Foreign language teachers must be taken to go beyond the mere presentation about grammar and tenses only. Linguistic models must be contextualized and related to the real condition of use in order to adapt them to the sociological frame of relations among the interlocutors of the target language. Linguistic politeness theory offers adequate apparatus to teach linguistic forms in context. Second language learners must be able to not only express the propositional content of their messages, but also to meet the requirements of social interaction, since failing to meet social parameters can lead to pragmatic failure (Thomas, 1995) or even to communication breakdown. Linguistic politeness are seen as part of system of pragmatic rules which prevent

interaction from breaking down. Then it is also developed in order to reduce friction in personal interaction (Fauziati, 2016).

### *Gender and Linguistic Politeness*

Many researches in the field of gender and linguistic politeness find the same fact that actually man and woman have different linguistic politeness. The linguistic forms male can be recognized as male than female as female. Besides, from the aspect of conversational norms, male and female are different (Coulmas, 2005). In addition, Holmes in Lorenzo-Dus characterized female 's speech as more polite than male's (Lorenzo-Dus & Bou-Franch, 2003). This finding is also supported by Labov and Trudgill in Brown who said that female are more polite because female are typically hypercorrect in use grammar when they speak (Brown, 1980). Therefore female speech are recognized as more formal by using high proportion of standard forms than male do in comparable situation. This phenomenon is also researched by Brown in 1980 who revealed that intuitively, it seems reasonable to predict that woman in general will speak more formally and politely, since female are culturally relegated to a secondary status relative to male and since a higher level of politeness is expected from inferiors to superiors (Brown, 1980). The example of the differences between male and female are clearly seen in the use of participle suffix in words like walking, running, and jogging is variably pronounced –in , in contras based on many surveys –ing is considered as more standard and more prestigious (Coulmas, 2005).

However, it is also important to remember the preferred use of the standards or prestige variants by female is a tendency typical of group of speakers, not individuals. Female and male do not speak as female and male only, but as teacher and students, friends and strangers, clerks and customers, employers and employees, as member of ethnic group, religious community and soon, in many other more individualized capacities.

At last, compared to male, female are more likely than male to express positive politeness and to use mitigating strategies to avoid or minimize threatening their interlocutor face (Lorenzo-Dus & Bou-Franch, 2003). In other words, in communicating female are considering the feeling of their interlocutor, they will try not to make the interlocutor lose their face.

### **MATERIALS AND METHOD**

The small investigation took place in speaking class of language training center of UMY (Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta) especially IPIREL (International Program of Public Relations) major. The respondents were 16 third semester students consist of 9 females and 7 males. IPIREL students are chosen because they are considered as more fluent English speaker compared to others public relation classes, therefore the researcher expects to minimize the code switching. The research was done for 45 minutes on Saturday, March 25 at 07.11- 07.56.

This research is a single case study. The researcher obtained the data through observation. Observation is used if the research is touch with human behavior, process, and natural phenomenon in small respondent. The observation type of this research is non participative observation. Non participative observation means the researcher will come to the class and do the observation without making any action. The observation sheet is adapted from Bacha, Bahous & Diab (2012) that focus on three situation to be observed. Those three situations are : (1) student coming late to class and what ensued in the classroom as a result, (2) turn taking in answering questions in the classroom given by teacher and (3) students who are not paying attention to the class lecture due to talking among themselves. Furthermore, from those three situations the data will be analyzed using the politeness theories from Brown & Lavinson, and Lakoff. Moreover, the analyses are also strengthen by some previous researchers. In addition, the researcher also recorded it using handy cam.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The class starts at 07.11 which means this class late for 11 minutes.

### *Focuses on a student coming late to class*

There are six students coming late to the class, 4 female students and 2 male students. All of them do not knock the door, do not ask permission to come in or apologize. The teacher confirms that the culture of this class is no need to knock the door, and no need to apologize as long as they come before 15 minutes since the class is started. When this research is implemented, the class starts at 07.11, it means the late comer are tolerated until 07.26.

- At 2'44" two female students came late, both of them do not greet the teacher but directly sit to their chair and follow the class. They are not talking to each other or 'say hi' to friends next to them.
- At 4'6" male student comes and directly sit to his chair, then during 5'3" to 5'43" he talks with his friend.
- At 7'6" male student comes and directly sit to his chair, then at 7'35" to 8'54" he talks with friend next to him, even his body language is looked trying to ignore the teacher
- At 12'6" female student comes, before sit she shakes teacher's hand.
- At 13'12" female student comes late and directly sit to her chair. At 13'19" she responds to the teacher utterance.

From the observation, it can be concluded that in lateness situation female are considered more polite then male. It can be seen when one of female student greets the teacher by shaking teacher's hand which is culturally polite in Indonesia. This is in line with Brown & Lavinson (1987) who revealed that politeness strategies are influenced by cultural practices. Secondly, others two female students directly follow the class, even one of them directly follow

teachers activity by responding to her utterances. Differently, two male students talk with friends next to them before follow the class activities, moreover one of them is looked ignoring the teacher from his body language. What males do are not only disrespect the teacher but also distract friends' concentration.

### ***Focuses on Turn Taking in Answering Question in the Classroom Given by Teacher***

- At 13'28" the teacher tries to recall the material from the previous meeting, there are four students respond to her. Two males and two females. One male student cuts the teacher's speech and directly answers the question while others tree still raise their hand.
- At 20'34" the teacher asks a recommendation from the class dealing with how to divide the group members, the only student who answers her is female student although she does not raise her hand first.
- At 34' 29" female student answers the question given by the teacher by raising her hand first. She says "In my opinion, I will do what Anitasari did. I think if I were the parent, I will let my children owned phone and let them know how to use the newest technology"
- At 42'13" female student tries to answers teacher's question, however at 44'6" male student cut her by saying 'what is that'. The female stops awhile and she is looked trying hard to ignore him by continuing her statement. Unfortunately the male student cuts again at 44'26" by saying 'Yes... yes.., but what is that?'
- At 47'23" male student answers teacher's question. In the beginning, he speaks fluently, however he often does code switching to Bahasa Indonesia like *Pelaku* (doer), *hukum* (law), *putus asa* (give up), etc.

From the observation, it can be concluded turn taking and answering question, generally female student are more polite than male students. First, dealing with raising hand, two females raise their hand, and only one male raises his hand. Raising hand before speak is a sign of asking permission in Indonesian culture, which in this case is often done by female. This is supported by Bacha, Bahous & Diab (2012) who said that females are politer then male related to cultural factor. Secondly, at 34'29" the female students said '... I will do what Anitasari did...' the way she says Anitasari (friend's name) is showing what Lakoff theory named as be friendly (Fauziati, 2016).. Lakoff also revealed that in the second rule of pragmatic competence namely be polite, there are three points that are do not impose, give option and be friendly. Furthermore, one indicator of being friendly is calling friend using their name. Third, based on the observation there are two male students that cut others speech, such as in 13'28" when male student cuts teacher's speech and when the female student shares her opinion, she is distracted twice by the male student at 44'6" and 44'26". Moreover, in sharing his opinion, male student switches the code to Bahasa Indonesia, when he switches the code, the formality of his speech is decreased. Meanwhile speech is recognized as polite if it is more formal by using high proportion of standard forms (Brown, 1980).

### *Focuses on Students Who are Not Paying Attention to the Class Lecture due to Talking Among Themselves*

Based on the observation, there is no significant different between male and female students in the case of not paying attention to the class lecture due to talking among themselves. Mostly the students who sit near the teacher will give more attention compared to those who sit far from the teacher. After the teacher divides class into some groups, the sitting arrangement is changed becomes:

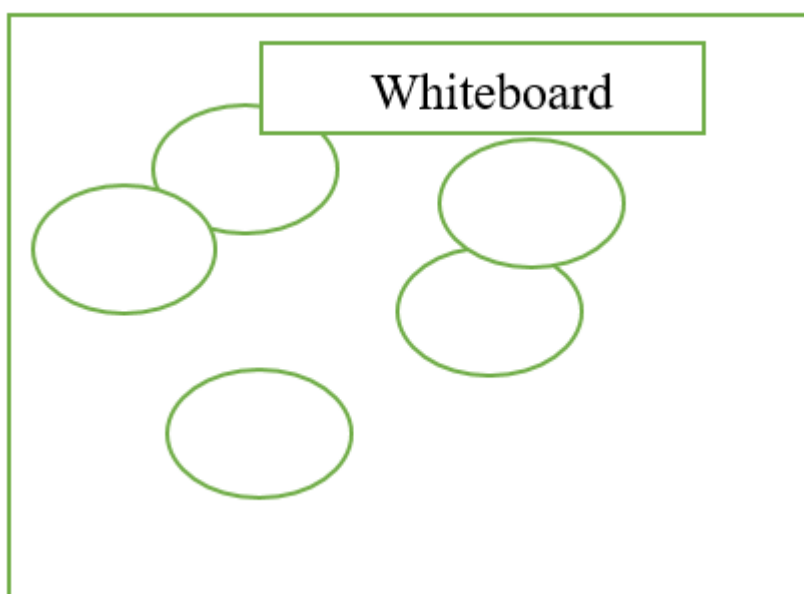


Fig. 1: Teacher divide class into some groups

For example when teacher is in group 1, students who focus in paying attention to her is only students of group 1, students of group 2 is looked preparing their project more serious compare to group 4 and 5, then students of group 3 do not start their project yet but talking among themselves even giggle.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the research, there are three situations observed by the researcher. From those three situations, two situations show that there are significant differences between male and female linguistic politeness while the last situation shows that actually there is no significant difference between them. The differences between male and female linguistic politeness is supported by Cameron and Coulmas (2005), both of them mentions the differences is placed in the conversational norms. In conclusion, female are more polite than male. This is in line with Holmes in Lorenzo-Dus (2003) and Labov and Trudgill in Brown (1980). However since the politeness and impoliteness is highly related with culture, thus the result of this research might not suitable with some places that has different culture. Moreover, the result cannot be generalized to all utterances between male

and female, because male and female not only communicate as male and female, but also as student and teacher, shopkeeper and customer, doctor and patient and etc.

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