



The Use of Negative Politeness Strategies in Casual Conversation Among the Graduate Program Students

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Abstract

A conversation is considered as the center of human interaction. People used politeness strategies to minimize and avoid conflict that may occur in conversation. The phenomena showed that the graduate students spontaneously did their conversation with their friends who have different cultures did not realize that they used negative politeness strategies. This study aims to explain the use of negative politeness strategies in casual conversation among the English Education Department's graduate program students. The participants of this study were fourteen students of the graduate program of the English Education Department. Descriptive qualitative research with interpretative data analysis was employed in the present study. The results showed that the students used negative politeness strategy, which consists of; be conventionally indirect, question and hedge, be pessimistic, minimize the imposition, apologize, impersonalize the speaker and the hearer, state the FTA as a general rule, and go on record as incurring debt or as not indebteding the hearer. It can be concluded that the study found eight sub-strategies out of ten sub-strategies of negative politeness. It has benefits for the students to improve their knowledge, especially in using negative politeness strategies.

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INTRODUCTION

A conversation is considered as the center of human interaction. It is an activity of people to deliver a casual talk in everyday settings with spoken interaction in general (Cheng, 2003). It may involve two or more participants using verbal or nonverbal signals to exchange ideas between them. The interlocutor(s) should think about the meaning of what the speaker says to give an appropriate response and make the communication runs smoothly.

Moreover, context plays a significant role in understanding meaning. As a branch of linguistics, pragmatics is a science that studies how context contributes to meaning (Cruse, 2006). Different contexts make one sentence have different meanings. A sentence may have a different meaning when the speaker says it with different intonations, feelings, and situations. The interlocutor(s) cannot see the purpose of the sentence only from the sentence structure. They do not directly express their ideas or say what they want, so they use implicit meaning to say it instead. It stands to be polite for giving respect toward the interlocutor and also making them feel comfortable.

Politeness becomes one of the factors that influence the conversation with others. People use the politeness strategy to get a good response from the hearers in communication (Rauf, 2015). Being polite means that in speaking to others, a speaker should be aware of his/her role in the context which influences his/her use of language (Holmes, 1992). Besides that, politeness plays an essential role in mitigating or reducing conflicts (Pratama, 2019).

The situation of social distance or closeness becomes vital in politeness. Rahayuningsih et al. (2019) argued that "politeness is indicated not only a pragmatic concept but also signifies a lay concept and a sociolinguistics concept" (p.29). Then, someone's social distance and position affect the sentences used and their politeness (Gultom

& Kurniadi, 2017). They have to know with whom they speak and how to speak. In this case, politeness strategies are used by people to save the hearer's "face" (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The speakers try to avoid embarrassing the interlocutor or make him/her feels uncomfortable in that situation. Therefore, politeness is used by people as the means employed to show awareness of another person's face (Yule, 1996). Here, people can use bald on record strategies, positive politeness strategies, negative politeness strategies, or off record strategies.

This study focuses on the negative politeness in casual conversation used by graduate program students of the English Education Department. The researchers concern with analyzing negative politeness because of the phenomena of Indonesian people as eastern cultural stakeholders. People in doing communication concerns with the feelings of others. They have a closed or indirect attitude.

However, the use of politeness strategies is varied in different societies and cultures. As widely known, there are many varieties of cultures from various regions in Indonesia. Here, the researchers used graduate program students as the source of data because they have a different background in societies and cultures. Besides that, based on the interview with the graduate program students, they did not realize if they used negative politeness strategies in their conversation. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory was adopted to analyze the English Education students' negative politeness strategies.

Several studies have been conducted in some fields, such as using politeness strategies in the EFL classroom (Sulu, 2015; Hassan et al., 2017; Peng et al., 2014) and in the movie (Aditiawarman, 2018; Muftiarizqi, 2015). Then, the other previous studies analyzed politeness in conversation (Karim, 2016; Sibarani & Marlina, 2018; Nurrahmah et al., 2020; Kamlasi, 2017; Amir & Azisah, 2017; Gultom & Kurniadi, 2017; Merfeldiene & Vainilaviciute, 2018; Dowlatabadi et al., 2014;

Suwartama & Fitriati, 2017; Magria & Mawarni, 2019; Sukarno, 2015; Trihadmono et al., 2019; Sukarno, 2018).

The previous studies conducted by Merfeldiene & Vainilaviciute (2018) analyzed positive and negative politeness in Lithuanian villagers' conversation. The result of their studies showed that different politeness strategies were employed in different spoken language registers. It was different from this study because this study focuses on identifying negative politeness strategies. Besides that, the sociocultural background among the subjects of the studies are also different. In addition, Dowlatabadi et al. (2014) analyzed politeness strategies in conversation exchanges in the Council for dispute settlement in Esfahan, Iran. However, they only focused on exploring positive politeness strategies. The result of their studies showed that notice, attend to H, seek agreement, and avoid disagreement strategies were most frequently used by Iranians.

Based on the gap explained above, the researchers intended to deal with the research problem: How is the use of negative politeness strategies in casual conversation among graduate program students of the English Education Department?

METHODS

The present study adopted a descriptive qualitative research. It aims to explain the use of negative politeness strategies in casual conversation among the English Education Department's graduate program students. The data of this research were written texts in the form of negative politeness strategies. Based on Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness strategies consist of be conventionally indirect, question and hedge, be pessimistic, minimize the imposition, give deference, apologize, impersonalize speaker and hearer, state the face threatening acts as a general rule, nominalize, and the last go on record as incurring debt or as not indebting H strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The data were presented in the transcription of casual conversation among

graduate program students of English Education Department students. So, this study's data were in the form of words rather than numbers; Therefore, they could be included in qualitative data type. Then, the collected data were interpretatively analysed.

This study's participants were the fourth-semester students of graduate program of the English department in Universitas Negeri Semarang in the academic year of 2019/2020. Random sampling technique was taken to select the research samples. The data of this study were the transcriptions of the casual conversation recording among the students. This study's objects were all utterances in casual conversation among graduate program students of the English Education Department in Universitas Negeri Semarang.

There were several steps in collecting the data; first, the researchers recorded the students' casual conversation. The duration of the recording was more or less than fifteen minutes for every conversation. Then, they made the transcription of the data based on the conversation. In making the transcription, the students' names were replaced by using codes such as the student S1, S2, S3, S4, and so on to protect the students' privacy. Next, the interviews were delivered to confirm the data analysis results.

The steps in analyzing the data were; first, the researchers transcribed the audio recording of the conversation. Then, they identified the data by classifying them into Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies. They were categorized into be conventionally indirect, question and hedge, be pessimistic, minimize the imposition, give deference, apologize, impersonalize S and H, state the FTA as a general rule, nominalize, and go on record as incurring debt or as not indebting H as the last strategies. The last step, she interpreted and explained the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis revealed that there were eight sub-strategies out of ten sub-

strategies. The researcher found 74 statements included in negative politeness. The most frequent sub-strategies used by students were question and hedge strategy. While the most

rarely sub-strategies were to state the FTA as a general rule strategy. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Negative politeness strategies used by graduate program students of the English Education Department

Type of sub-strategies	Frequency	Percentage
	<i>n</i>	%
Be conventionally indirect	10	13.51
Question, hedge	33	44.59
Being pessimistic	3	4.05
Minimize the imposition	8	10.81
Give deference	0	0
Apologize	7	9.45
Impersonalize the speaker and the hearer	5	6.75
State the FTA as a general rule	2	2.70
Nominalize	0	0
Go on record as incurring debt, or as not indebting the hearer	6	8.10
Total	74	100

From Table 1, it can be seen that there were eight sub-strategies of negative politeness used by students. They were the strategy of; be conventionally indirect (10 occurrences or 13.51%), question and hedge (33 occurrences or 44.59%), be pessimistic (3 occurrences or 4.05%), minimize the imposition (8 occurrences or 10.81%), apologize (7 occurrences or 9.45%), impersonalize the speaker and the hearer (2 occurrences or 2.70%). The last go on record as incurring debt or as not indebting the hearer (6 occurrences or 8.10%). While the use of give deference and nominalize strategy did not occur in the casual conversation of the students. Then, the explanation of each sub-strategies is presented below.

The Use of Be Conventionally Indirect

This sub-strategy is used when the speaker did not say what their purpose exactly but made the hearer interpret the speaker's utterances' implied meaning. The researcher found 10 data using be

conventionally indirect strategies in the students' casual conversation. For example:

Subject 13: So, curly *cabai* hahaha I love *rempeyek*, maybe when you come to Semarang you can give me some or you can bring some *rempeyek* for me. **Is that for free? Hahaha**

Subject 14: Yeah, of course, for the tester is free.
Subject 13: So, the tester is only in a piece hahaha do you enjoy your life when staying at home and being a businesswoman? (C7/S13/7.53-7.55)

This conversation happened between subject 13 (S13) and subject 14 (S14). The context of the situation was about the activity of the subject during this pandemic. At the beginning of the conversation, S13 asked about the activity and something new about S14. S14 told about her environment and her plan to do a new business. Because she was a productive woman, so she felt so bored if she did not do anything. S14 wanted to make her hobby becomes her business. She liked cooking, so she tried to do a new food business. Then, S13 wanted to try the product and ask S14 to take it when she comes to Semarang. At this point, the researcher interpreted that S14 wanted to get

the product free by requesting S13 by asking a question to S13. She did not directly command S13 to bring her snack for free, but she used a question to tell her ideas. It is because she respected subject 13 or the hearer. So, the exact meaning of that sentence was for requesting something. The other example of this strategy also showed that they had context meaning for confirming and commanding.

The use of Question, Hedge

This sub-strategy was used by the speaker when the speaker used questions with individual particles to express what the speaker's mean. The researcher found 33 data. For example:

Subject 4: I'm watching a Korean drama. Actually, it's not a new Korean drama.

Subject 3: Korean drama? What's that?

Subject 4: Yeah, mmm... Vagabond. Did you ever watch it? Ehmm... what do you think about that drama?

Subject 3: Ehmmm..... I think the drama is good. Ehmm, **the plot is so interesting and hmmm unpredictable, right?**(C2/S3/0.52-0.57)

This conversation happened between subject 3 (S3) and subject 4 (S4). The context of the situation of this conversation was about K-drama. In the beginning, both of them talked about their activity during this pandemic, then S4 said that one of her activities was watching K-drama. At this point, S3 asked about K-drama watched by S4. She answered, "Vagabond". Then, S4 asked S3's opinion about that drama. S3 answered that the plot of that drama was exciting and unpredictable. From that statement, the researcher interpreted that her statement's meaning was for confirming that her opinion was correct. She wanted to make sure that S4 also has the same idea as her. The other example of this strategy also showed that they had context meaning for giving a command, remembering something, and defying something. It was to make a communicative intention to the interlocutor. They can deliver an idea or express their purpose through those sentences without making offense to the interlocutor.

The Use of Be Pessimistic

Being pessimistic was used by the speaker when the speaker is making indirect requests with assertions of felicity condition. The researcher found 3 data using be pessimistic strategies in students' casual conversation. For example:

Subject 7: Yeah, haha, ok. Ehmmm... so.. do you want to go with me this afternoon?

Subject 8: Ehmmmm, I'm sorry, I've eaten

Subject 7: Oh, you've already eaten. **I think that you care to go with me to that place, what? Aldan.** But, then how about dinner? You will go to it for dinner, right? (C4/S7/02.57-03.00)

This conversation happened between subject 7 (S7) and subject 8 (S8). This conversation's situation was when S7 asked about the recommended places for having lunch to S8. Then S8 gave some recommended sites. After that, S7 asked S8 to have lunch together with him, but unfortunately, subject 8 rejected it. Then, S7 still expressed his feeling through making assertions indirect requests to S8 for accompanying S7 to have dinner. The researcher interpreted that S7's statement meant that S7 always wanted to hang-out with S8, although S8 had rejected his request at the beginning. So, he was pessimistic about inviting S7 again to have dinner. The context meaning of that sentence was for inviting S8 to have dinner. The other example of this strategy also showed that they had context meaning for asking something to the hearer.

The Use of Minimize the Imposition

This sub-strategy was used when the speaker tries to save the hearer's face by lessening or softening the imposition. The speaker did not want to force the hearer by decreasing the imposition to the hearer, and it meant that the speaker gave a chance to the hearer whether to accept or reject the speaker's ideas. The researcher found 8 data. For example:

Subject 1: Ok, thank youy hmm, and do you want to be my reseller *Dhe?*

Subject 2: Ehmmmm, what's your product *Mbak?*

Subject 1: Batik from Pekalongan, So if your family or your friend needs batik as a dress code, in any event, you can contact me.

Subject 2: Oh, ok, *Mbak*, I get it. **But, is it ok if I take time more to think again about that? Because I should know first the market Batik itself here and also the budget for transport from Java to Lampung.** (C1/S2/12.10-12.20)

This conversation happened between subject 1 (S1) and subject 2 (S2). The context of the situation in this conversation was when S1 offered S2 to become a reseller. Before S2 answered it, she asked about the product of S1's product. Then, S1 explained that her product was Batik. Then, S2 said that she asked that is it ok to give her time more because she needed more time to think again about being S1's reseller because she should know about the market of Batik itself in S2's hometown, Lampung. She needed to think about the market and the budget for transporting that batik itself. The context meaning of that statement was for requesting more time. She used that statement to respect S1. So, she did not want to hurt S1's heart by rejecting it. The other example of this strategy also showed that they had context meaning for asking the hearer information.

The Use of Apologize

This sub-strategy was used by the speaker when the speaker does face-threatening acts. So, automatically the speaker asked to apologize to the hearer. The researcher found 7 data. For example:

Subject 3: Hmmm, Korean drama? Have you watched "The World of Marriage"?

Subject 4: Oh, that's drama, I know.

Subject 3: You have to watch it? Or you haven't?

Subject 4: Ehmm, I've watched it. There are some memes related about that drama.

Hmmm, I'm sorry, but I don't really interest with that drama. (C2/S4/2.06-2.11)

This conversation happened between subject 3 (S3) and subject 4 (S4). The context of the situation in this conversation was when S3 recommended an upcoming drama to S4. Then, S4 answered that she knew about that

drama and ever watched that drama. Unfortunately, S4 was not interested in that drama. The researcher interpreted that S4's statement made face-threatening acts to S3 as the hearer. It hurt the hearer's heart because, in the beginning, the hearer recommended that drama.

Moreover, the speaker was not interested in the hearer's recommendation. Thus, the speaker said sorry to the hearer before she told the real feeling about that drama. The researcher interpreted the context meaning of the sentence as giving information. The other example of this strategy also showed that they had context meaning for asking information.

The use of Impersonalize S and H

This sub-strategy was used by the speaker when he/she tried to avoid the pronouns "I" and "You" in their utterances. The researcher found 5 data used in students' causal conversation. For example:

Subject 5: Ehmmmm, what do you want to cook now?

Subject 6: I just want to make a soup Ping hmmmI'd be very happy if you would like to tell me how to make soup hmmm actually, I have been read the recipe on the internet but I am still confused.

Subject 5: Hahaha, **close your internet, please.** It's so simple, Mbul. Just cut the vegetables and boiled then give the seasoning. (C3/S5/1.46-1.49)

This conversation happened between subject 5 (S5) and subject 6 (S6). The context of the situation in this conversation was when they talked about their activities. S6 wanted to cook soup and she had read the recipe from the internet, but she was still confused. Then, S5 asked her to close the internet and told S6 the way to make soup. The researcher interpreted that the meaning of her statement was she suggested S6 close her internet. The speaker did not want to give offense to the hearer. It was to soften the S6 statement. The researcher interpreted the context meaning of the sentence was giving a suggestion. The other datum of this strategy showed that they had context meaning for giving a command.

The use of State the FTA as a general rule

This sub-strategy was used by the speaker to minimize the imposition from a certain person by generalizing the subject because it was considered to be more polite. This strategy was to state the FTA as an instance of some general social rule, regulation, or obligation. The researcher found 2 data using this strategy in the students' casual conversation. For example:

Subject 3: Ehmm, I'm ok, but I still have to do social distancing. How about you?

Subject 4: Yeah, I'm well. **The government gives a regulation to do social distancing to minimize the case of Covid 19.** So, we must follow it. (C2/S4/0.12-0.20)

This conversation happened between subject 3 (S3) and subject 4 (S4). In this conversation, the context of the situation was when S3 and S4 started the conversation by greeting each other and asking the condition. Then, S3 said that she must do social distancing with complaint intonation, and it looked like she was unhappy in that situation. Then, S4 said that the government gave regulation to do social distancing to minimize the case of Covid 19. From that statement, the researcher interpreted the speaker's sentence's meaning as the speaker tried to tell that it was a general social rule in this current time. The regulation was not only for her but also for other citizens in Indonesia. She minimized the imposition by generalizing the subject because it was considered being more polite. She said that statement to heal the condition of S3 because S3 felt bored with this condition for doing a social distancing. The context of the meaning of other data was for giving information and remembering.

The use of go on record as incurring debt, or as not indebting H

This sub-strategy was used by the speaker when the speaker wanted to redress a face-threatening act by his indebtedness to the hearer, or it can be by disclaiming any indebtedness of the hearer. The researcher found 6 data using this strategy in the students' casual conversation. For example:

Subject 6: All right, I want to cook some food.

Subject 5: Hahahaha, can you?

Subject 6: Yeah, I can, Ping. But, I still learn how to cook delicious food for my family.

Subject 5: Hmmm..... what do you want to cook now?

Subject 6: I just want to make a soup Ping hmmm...**I'd be very happy if you would like to tell me how to make soup** hmmm actually I have been read the recipe from the internet, but I am still confused.(C3/S6/1.33-1.37)

This conversation happened between subject 5 (S5) and subject 6 (S6). The context of the situation in this conversation was when they talked about their activity during the pandemic. Then, S6 told her that she wanted to make soup for her family. She had read the recipe from the internet, but she was still confused. Then, she said she would be pleased if S5 wanted to tell her how to make soup. The researcher interpreted that the speaker wanted to be indebted to the hearer because she wanted the hearer or S5 to help her tell how to make soup for her family. If S5 did it, the speaker would be pleased because it was beneficial for subject 5. The context meaning of the sentence was for asking for information. The other context meaning of the data was for requesting something.

The result of this study showed not all of the sub-strategies but only eight sub-strategies found by the researcher in casual conversation among graduate program students of the English Education Department. It consisted of; be conventionally indirect (13.51%), question and hedge (44.59%), be pessimistic (4.05%), minimize the imposition (10.81%), apologize (9.45%), impersonalize the speaker and the hearer (6.75%), state the FTA as a general rule (2.70%), go on record as incurring debt, or as not indebting the hearer (8.10%). It was similar to previous studies that not all of the sub-strategies found in their studies, and those studies conducted by Magria and Mawarni (2019) and Merfeldiene and Vainilaviciute (2018). Magria and Mawarni's studies revealed that only seven sub-strategies were found in Rimbo Ulu's villager conversation. In comparison, Merfeldiene and Vainilaviciute's studies revealed that only four

sub-strategies were found in conversation among the villager in Lithuania. It contradicted previous studies conducted by Suwartama and Fitriati (2017). Their studies revealed that they found all of the sub-strategies in the conversation among the students.

The explanation above showed the differences in the research results because of the background of the subject's culture, power relation, and education background among each study's subject. Besides that, the use of negative politeness in casual conversation among graduate program students of the English Education Department was in line with Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. They used negative politeness to redressive action addressee's negative face. The speaker used to avoid and minimize the threat to the hearer's negative face when the speaker wants something from the hearer.

CONCLUSIONS

The researchers concluded that there were eight sub-strategies out of ten sub-strategies of negative politeness strategies in casual conversation among the English Education Department's graduate program students. The first strategy was be conventionally indirect strategies that have context meaning for requesting, confirming, and commanding the hearer. The second strategy was question and hedge strategies that have context meaning for commanding, confirming, remembering, and defying. The third strategy was; be pessimistic with context meaning for asking information and inviting the hearer. The fourth strategy was minimize imposition that has context meaning for requesting something and asking for information. The next strategy was apologize that has context meaning for asking and giving information. The sixth strategy was impersonalize the speaker and the hearer that has meaning for giving a command. The seventh strategy was state the FTA as a general rule that has context meaning for giving information and remembering something. The

last strategy was go on record as incurring debt, or as not indebting the hearer that has context meaning for requesting something and asking information.

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