THE REALIZATION OF LINGUISTIC POLITENESS IN LECTURERS’ FEEDBACK

Sri Minda Murni, Nena Syahrani Syahaf Nst
State University of Medan (UNIMED)
Srimindamurni25@gmail.com; syahranisyahafnstoff@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
Previous researches on feedback have not yet sufficiently covered the involvement of linguistic politeness. This research deals with the realization of linguistic politeness in lecturers’ feedback. Feedback plays a vital role in classroom interaction. It can be motivating as well as discouraging. It is common that lecturers used feedback strategically to meet various purposes mostly to ensure the quality of students’ performance and presentation as well as to monitor, evaluate, and regulate the classroom interaction. Feedback involves linguistic politeness in the area that what the lecturers need to say - to meet the purposes of giving feedback – they should also less (if possible) zero face-threatening. The objective of the research is to describe different strategies used by lecturers in giving feedback on students’ presentations. The data were collected through non-participant observation and documentation through recording technique. Two English Department lecturers at State University of Medan were recorded during their students’ presentations, three times each. The utterances then identified and classified into: open to politeness interpretation and close to politeness interpretation. In the first category are the utterances interpreted as showing lecturers’ efforts to minimize face threatening effect on the students. The second categories are interpreted as not showing such effort, and then ignored. The data on the first category then analyzed to find out different ways of politeness realization. The findings show that various politeness strategies are used by the two lecturers, such as politeness markers, cajolers, appeasers, hedges, committers, and downtowners. The dominant type of realization is appeasers such as the use of right, oke? Which means that the lecturers use feedback to create democratic atmosphere? Referring to all types of realization, it implies that the lectures not only put themselves as good models for their students in speaking politely in English, they also enhance the importance of motivating rather than discouraging the students in classroom interaction.

Keywords: politeness, feedback, teachers’ feedback

INTRODUCTION
Communication deals with the process of exchanging ideas, feelings, thoughts, emotions, and information through conversation. In classroom, communication process also occurs; which includes verbal, non-verbal, and para-verbal. One way to exchange ideas in classroom is through feedback, it refers to the reaction or response of hearer (teacher) to the speaker’s (students) message; it is the core of communication and the final step of communication. Feedback is information given by teacher to the learner regarding their performances which are related to the learning goals and outcomes. Feedback plays a vital role in classroom interaction. It can be motivating as well as discouraging. It is common that lecturers used feedback strategically to meet various purposes mostly to ensure the quality of students’ performance and presentation as well as to monitor, evaluate, and regulate the classroom interaction. This feedback can be verbal, written, or be given through a test.

Feedback involves linguistic politeness in the area that what the lecturers need to say - to meet the purposes of giving feedback – they should also less (if possible) zero face-threatening. Politeness is a redressive action which ‘give face’ to the addressee, that is an action that attempts to counteract the potential face damage of the FTA. By doing it in such a way, or with such modifications or additions, that indicate clearly that no such face threat is intended or desired, and that S (Speaker) in general recognizes H’s (Hearer) face wants and Himself wants them to be achieved.

House and Kasper in Watts (2003) provide an interesting typology of linguistic expressions that are frequently used to signal politeness (or impoliteness) such as: a) Politeness markers, by which they mean expressions added to the utterances such as please, if you wouldn’t and if you don’t mind. b) Playdowns, by which they understand syntactic devices which ‘tone down the perlocutionary effect an utterance is likely to have on the addressee’. These are then subdivided into five subcategories which in fact boil down to the following four: use of the past tense (I wondered if . . . . I thought you might . . .), progressive aspect together with past tense (I was wondering whether . . . . I was thinking you might . . .), an interrogative containing a modal verb (would it be a good idea . . . . could we . . . .), a negative interrogative containing a modal verb (wouldn’t it be a good idea if . . . . , couldn’t you . . . .). c) Consultative devices, a structure that involve the addressee and bid for her/his cooperation, e.g. would you mind..., could you...d) Hedges, the avoidance of giving a precise propositional content and leaving an option open to the addressee to impose her/his own intent, e.g. kind of, sort of, somehow, and etc. e)
Understaters, underrepresenting a propositional content of the utterance by a phrase functioning as an adverbal modifier or also by an adverb itself, e.g. a bit, a little, etc. f) Committers, lower the degree to which the speaker commit him/herself to the propositional content of the utterance, e.g. I think, I believe, etc. g) Forewarning, a strategy that could be realized by a wide range of different structures in which the speaker makes some kind of meta-comment (compliment) on an FTA, or invokes a generally accepted principle which s/he is about to flout, etc. (e.g. far be it from me to criticise, but . . ., you may find this a bit boring, but . . ., you’re good at solving computer problems). h) Hesitators, a pauses filled with non-lexical phonetic material, e.g. er, uhh, or an instant of stuttering. i) Scope-staters, express a subjective opinion about the affairs referred in to the preposition, e.g. I’m afraid you’re in my seat, I’m disappointed that you couldn’t . . .j) Agent avoiders, propositional utterance in which the agent is suppressed or impersonalized there by deflecting the criticism from the addressee to some generalized agent, e.g. passive structures or utterances such as people don’t do X.

Further, Edmonson in Watts (2003) suggests two types of downgraders such as: 1) Cajolers, linguistic expressions which ‘help to increase, establish or restore harmony between the interlocutors’, and are represented by I mean, you see, you know, etc. 2) Appealers, to elicit some hearer confirmation and are characterized by rising intonation patterns, e.g. ok‘ay, ’right, ’yeah. To downgrade the force of an utterance, a supportive move can be made. It categorized into: a) Steers, utterance which try to steer the addressee towards fulfilling the interests of the speaker, e.g. would you mind making a pot of tea? b) Grounders, utterances which give reasons for the FTA, e.g. I’m thirsty. Get me a coca cola, will you? c) Preparators, a meta-statement expressing what the speaker wants the hearer to do, e.g. I’m going to test your knowledge now. What is . . .?

Previous researches on feedback have not yet sufficiently covered the involvement of linguistic politeness, especially in the field of feedback given by teachers to students in higher education level such as college student. So that the researcher decided to do this research which deals with the realization of linguistic politeness in lecturers’ feedback.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive qualitative is used in this research which examines the way people make sense out of their own concrete real-life experiences in their own minds and in their own words. It is usually expressed in everyday language using every day concepts. The data were collected through non-participant observation and documentation through recording technique. Two English Department lecturers at State University of Medan were recorded during their students’ presentations, three times each. The utterances then identified and classified into: open to politeness interpretation and close to politeness interpretation. In the first category are the utterances interpreted as showing lecturers’ efforts to minimize face threatening effect on the students. The second categories are interpreted as not showing such effort, and then ignored. The data on the first category then analyzed to find out different ways of politeness realization exert from House and Kasper typology in Watts (2003).

ANALYSIS

After the data were collected and selected, they were analyzed using the realization of politeness by House and Kasper in Watts (2003). The analysis started with classifying the data into its categories, then defining the strategies used by teachers in giving feedback to the students. And the last step, the researchers described and interpreted the data to reach this research aims and draw the conclusion.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Seventy-seven out of two hundred twenty-six data collected by the researchers belong to the category of appealers; it shows that the dominant realization of politeness used by teachers to the students is appealers, followed by cajoler in the second place with the total number of 51. Both appealers and cajolers make up more than half of the strategies used (57.5%). Politeness markers and downtowners cover 26.1% of the strategies used. The least used of realization by the teacher is understaters.

Appealers
Appealer is one of two type downgraders introduced by Edmonson in Watts (2003). It is used to try to elicit some hearer confirmation and is characterized by rising intonation patterns e.g. ok’ay, ‘right, ‘yeah. In Bahasa Indonesia, appealers are Ya kan?, kan?

Data 1

(There is an opening in presentation, isn’t it? What is missing? What is it? What is missing? Its just a greeting just now. What’s next after greetings? addressing, right? Addressing people, right? Isn’t it?)

Data 2
T : okay you have to be able to make the students communicate, right?

Data 3
T : that there will be various kind of texts, right?

Data 4
T : they don’t acknowledge their weaknesses, right?

Example above is a feedback given by teacher to the students, talking about the opening of students’ presentation. The data shows that the teacher use appealers as its realization of politeness. By rising the intonation of kan? and ya kan? it means that the teacher seeking confirmation from the hearer related to the feedback given, to make sure they have a mutual understanding.

Cajolers
Cajoler is linguistic expression used to increase, establish and restore harmony between the interlocutors and represented such as I mean, you see, you know, actually, basically, really.

Data 1
T : I would like to comment on you, wait first okay. Could you please show your fist slide? Yes... I mean comparing you doesn’t mean to blaming you, No. This is for the sake of for your improvement.

Data 2
T : this is a good presentation; I mean for the planning...

Data 3
T : I mean...you realize that Sondang in this case help your group to understand better.

Data 4
T : Not just sharpen your communication skill but also we can see individual attitude which you can imitate. See?

Data 2 is teacher utterances in giving feedback to the students, focusing on the differences between current presenters with the previous presenters. Cajolers chose by the teacher to downgrade the impact of her utterances, and also to establish the harmony in her classroom. It is also used to persuade or ensure the hearer’s perception is in parallel with the speaker’s’ intentions. It is common for teacher to compare their students’ performance in order to point out both weaknesses and strengths yet teacher chose to downgrade the impact of her utterance by applying cajolers. The use of cajolers help the teacher soften her utterance.

Politeness Marker
Politeness marker is an expression added to show deference to the addressee and to bid for cooperative behavior. The most obvious example of a politeness marker in English is please, but there are others, e.g.
if you wouldn’t mind, tag questions with the modal verb will/would following an imperative structure (Close the door, will you/would you?), etc.

Data 1

T : Could you please show directly to the result? How many...how many points that you have in your observation? Can I see now the observation sheet?

Data 2

T : so...please, you have to be able to get all information.

Data 3

T : So please be focus on your work.

Data 4

T : Sorry, could you please...aaa...repeat it again?

In this utterance, the teacher commands the student to directly show her the result of their presentation. In order to soften the impact of her utterance, the teacher chose the word please. Even though it is a common thing for a teacher to give command to students and it won’t be said as an impoliteness, yet this teacher still considered the face of her students and decided to use such realization of politeness in her utterances.

Downtoner

Downtoner is a politeness realization which modulates the impact of speakers’ utterances. This realization represented in e.g. just, simply, possibly, perhaps, really, sorry and probably. Such realization of politeness can be seen in the data 4 below.

Data 1

T : Okay, probably later, you could make the presentation by showing each aspect that was done by the... or done by the teacher and which are not.

Data 2

T : So I'm sorry to say that for the next person...

Data 3

T : Probably can see, I don’t know.. you can observe how Grab and Gojek compete or how Indomaret and Alfamart compete.

Data 4

T : Sorry ya, what group is this?

Committers

Committers used to lower the degree to which speaker commits her/himself to the propositional content of the utterance, e.g. I think, I believe, I guess, in my opinion. Committers were found on the teacher’s feedback as shows below.

Data 1

T : Okay, I think because you are the starter, I think we should appreciate what they have done. Give applause for them.

Data 2

T : I believe that you are still wandering what actually they were just presented.

Data 3

T : And I believe you are going to the same for the next group.

Data 4

T : But I believe because you have a very good and solid group ya...

Hedges

Hedges is an avoidance of giving a precise propositional content and leaving an option open to the addressee to impose her/his own intent, e.g. kind of, sort of, somehow, more or less, rather, what have you, and something like that. As we can see from the example below that the teacher used something like that to leaving an option open to the addressee.
Understaters

Understaters means underrepresenting the propositional content of the utterance by a phrase functioning as an adverbial modifier or also by an adverb itself, e.g. a bit, a little bit, a second, a moment, briefly. Understaters is the least politeness realization that used by teacher when giving feedback to the students. From both teachers’ feedback only one understaters that can be found. Teacher put these understaters as the last option in giving feedback. From example below we can see that the teacher wanted to comment on the problem of their power point, but she underrepresenting the problem with ‘a little bit’.

Data 1

\[ T \quad : \quad I \ like \ it, \ although \ you... \ there's \ a \ little \ bit \ problem \ with \ your \ power \ point, \ but \ the \ way \ you \ respond \ to \ the \ question \ is \ really \ good. \]

Data 2

\[ T \quad : \quad Nah \ tampilan \ you \ yang \ agak \ masih \ kayak \ emak-emak \ mau \ kepasar \ gitu \ (Nah... \ appearance \ a \ little \ bit \ like \ a \ mother \ that \ want \ to \ go \ the \ market.) \]

CONCLUSION

From the discussion and analysis of the data, it shows that various politeness strategies are used by the two lecturers, such as politeness markers, cajolers, appealers, preparators, hedges, committers, and downtoner. The dominant type of realization is appealers such as the use of right, oke? Which means that the lecturers use feedback to create democratic atmosphere? Referring to all types of realization, it implies that the lectures not only put themselves as good models for their students in speaking politely in English, they also enhance the importance of motivating rather than discouraging the students in classroom interaction.

REFERENCES


Irawan, E., & Salija, K. 2017. Teachers’ Oral Feedback in EFL Classroom Interaction (A Descriptive Study of Senior High School in Indonesia). ELT Worldwide. Volume 4 Number 2 P-ISSN 2203-3037; E-ISSN 2503-2291
