Bringing out Positive Politeness to Sharpen Students' English Communication Skill in Islamic Boarding School

Farid Noor Romadlon,S.Pd,M.Pd.

Muria Kudus University, English Education Department, Indonesia
ghoy_ix02@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT

Interactions in communication have several purposes, especially English. Those purposes brought for the speakers and hearers so that it can be understood and believed in social life. In communication, people do the exchange of information each other. This information can be idea, feeling of something, or even mood. Whenever a speaker utters something, he or she has an intention to change the statement which results speech act. Speech act is potentially a face threatening act. Thus, it needs politeness strategies to make the communication runs well without any gap or misunderstanding.

Students need a harmonious relationship with other people, especially at school like teachers, students, headmaster, staffs, gardener, and security. Regarding the learning process, they should have a good and harmonious communication and relationship with their teachers without leaving manner in it so the objective of the learning process will be reached because the gap in communication can be eliminated. Seeing this phenomenon, politeness strategies are obviously needed in communication whether it is addressed to higher status, peers, or lower status. Based on the explanation, it can be formulated into problem statements as follows; (1) What are types of positive politeness strategies used by the students of Islamic boarding school in English communication?, and (2) How are the strategies used by the students of Islamic boarding school in English communication?

This study is to find out the type of positive politeness strategies used by the students of Islamic boarding school in English communication and to describe the use of positive politeness strategies used by the students of Islamic boarding school in English communication. It is a descriptive qualitative research which uses Discourse Completion Test (DCT) as the instrument to collect the data.

By identifying the types of positive politeness strategies used by the students of Islamic boarding school in English communication and the use of the strategies, it is found that 'be optimistic' strategy frequently used by the students followed by 'Promising', 'Giving reason', 'Exaggerate', 'Joke', and 'Use in-group Identity Maker'. Students use these identified strategies because they want to ensure the hearer by stating their expectation, not what they want to do. The strategies are succeeded because hearer feels that the speaker is able to predict what he is going to say or do. Besides, have known each other well is also other aspect in using the strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human is social creature that has the need to communicate with others. Communication is defined as a process by which we assign and convey meanings in an attempt to create shared understanding; both the speaker and hearer should hold to general rules or principles and thereby use certain strategies. An often used strategy to achieve this is politeness (Renkema, 1993). In communication, especially English, people do the exchange of information each other. This information can be idea, feeling of something, or even mood. Whenever a speaker utters something, he or she has an intention to change the statement which results speech act. Speech act is potentially a face threatening act. Thus, it needs politeness strategies to make the communication runs well without any gap or misunderstanding. The strategies are described as social norms or set of perspective social "rules". Using the strategies means doing the effort to create and maintain social harmony.

Schools, especially boarding school has students who have the diversity in characteristics since they come from different areas and cultures. This Islamic boarding school, well known as Tahfidz Yanbu'ul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School is one of modern and biggest ones in Indonesia. This boarding school makes English and Arabic as compulsory languages to communicate each other in their daily life. Several areas of Indonesia complete the students' origin in this boarding school and create variant characteristics. The way in communication also becomes so diverse between those who come from Java and Sumatra, or student who is coming from Yogyakarta and Medan. Other situation also seen from students who come from Jakarta, Lombok, and Banjarmasin, have a quite different style in communication compared with their friends from Semarang, Bandung, and Surabaya, or other cities in Java. Particularly in English communication, they have different strategies in delivering their messages to others, especially their friends and teachers.

Since they come from different background of cultures, the way they communicate in English has different strategies in politeness. Frequently, students who are from Jakarta, Medan, Banjarmasin, Lombok, and others should modify their utterances and strategies when they communicate to their friends and teachers who come from Java, because Javanese students more likely use positive politeness strategies when they communicate using English to others.

Based on the elaboration above, the writer formulates the problem statements of this study as follows;
1. What are types of positive politeness strategies used by the students of Islamic boarding school in English communication?
2. How are the strategies used by the students of Islamic boarding school in English communication?

This study wants to find out types of positive politeness strategies used by the students of Tahfidz Yanbu'ul Qur'an Islamic boarding school when they communicate in English and describe the use of the strategies based on the context when communication occurred.

2. REVIEW TO RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Politeness

Politeness is an aspect of pragmatics in that its use in language is determined by an external context. This external context is the context of communication, which is determined by the social status of the participants: politeness is a system used by the speaker in order to

keep up to the addressee's expectations. According to Grundy, (Grundy 1995: 135) he states that the determiners of the need to use politeness strategies are three: distance, power and imposition. Imposition covers every action (by this we also mean speech acts) which threatens the addressee's autonomy and freedom of action and usually is conveyed in the form of an order; power is evaluated in terms of numerous factors such as position in society and age; distance implies the evaluation of the other's place in the world, degree of familiarity and/or solidarity towards the addressee.

An important source of inspiration in the study of politeness phenomena is the work done by Ervin Goffman (1955). Goffman, a psychologist, wanted social interaction, including verbal communication, to be studied from the perspective that a participant are striving for stability in their relationship with others. He claimed that every participant in the social process has the need to be appreciated by others and the need not to be interfered with. Goffman also introduced the concept of "face", which later became an inspiration for further study by Brown and Levinson.

Still about Brown and Levinson (1987) concept of interaction and politeness, teaching and learning process must be supported by a good relationship and interaction between teacher and students. When the communication occurs, especially in English with some appropriate strategies of politeness, the chemistry interaction between teacher and students will be built and it supports much the teaching and learning process of English.

2.2 Politeness Strategy

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness strategies are developed to save the hearer's face. Face refers to the respect that an individual has for him or herself, and maintaining that "self-esteem" in public or in private situations. Their notions of 'face is derived from that of Goffman (1967, as cited in Brown and Levinson 1987) and from the English folk term, which is related to notions of being embarrassed or humiliated, or 'losing face'. Brown and Levinson stated that there are two types of face in an interaction:
1. Negative face: the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions can be unimpeded by others.
2. Positive face: the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others.

Politeness strategy gives more contribution to teachers in English language teaching. Teachers will have good interaction when the communication runs well. This communication is built from the appropriate strategies in politeness regarding the students' condition, social life surrounding, and culture of students and teachers. As the result, the teaching and learning process will be conducted well and effective and the goal of teaching and learning process will be reached.

2.3 Face Threatening Acts

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), Face Threatening Acts (FTA's) are acts that infringe on the hearers' need to maintain his/her self esteem. If we do or are about threaten someone's positive or negative face, but do not mean it, we need to minimize it by applying politeness strategies that are Bald on Record, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness, and Off-the-Record (as suggested by Brown and Levinson, 1987).

These strategies (Bald on Record, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness, and Off-the-Record) also occur in English teaching and learning process since teacher has verbal and

non-verbal communication with the students inside or outside of classroom. The use of appropriate politeness strategies in teacher-students interaction and vice versa will create a comfortable atmosphere. At the end, the goal of teaching and learning process reached.

2.4 Bald on Record Strategy

In the bald on record strategy, the speaker does nothing to minimize threats to the hearer's face. The prime reason for its usage is that whenever a speaker (S) wants to do the FTA with maximum efficiency *more than he wants* to satisfy the hearer's (H's) face, even to any degree, he will chose bald on record strategy (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 95). There are, however, different kinds of bald on record usage in different circumstances, because S can have different motives for his want to do the FTA with maximum efficiency. It is divided into two classes:

1. Cases of non-minimization of the face threat.
   This is where maximum efficiency is very important, and this is mutually known to both H and S, no face redress necessary. The situations are presented as follows:
   a. In cases of great urgency or desperation.
   b. Cases of channel noise, or where communication difficulties exploit pressure to speak with maximum efficiency such as in calling across a distance.
   c. Task-oriented, in this kind of interaction face redress will be irrelevant.
   d. S's want to satisfy H's face is small, either because S is powerful and does not fear retribution or non-cooperation from H.
   e. S wants to be rude without risk of offending, so S does not care about maintaining face.
   f. Sympathetic advice or warnings.
   g. Granting permission for something that H has requested.
2. Cases of FTA-oriented bald on record usage.
   The use of this strategy is oriented to face. In other words, it is used where face involves mutual orientation, so that each participant attempts to foresee what the other participant is attempting to foresee. For in certain circumstances it is reasonable for S to assume that H will be especially worried with H's potential violation or S's maintaining. There are three functional categories or areas where we expect the pre-emptive invitations to occur in all languages (which are potential to FTA):
   a. Welcoming
   b. Farewell
   c. Offers

This strategy can contribute teachers in the class management. Using Bald on Record strategy is able to make teachers keep the students' focus on him/her so the teaching well run smoothly.

2.5 Off-the-record Strategy

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), a communicative act is done off-record if it is done in such a way that it is not possible to attribute only one clear communicative intention to the act. Thus, if a speaker wants to do an FTA, but wants to avoid the responsibility for doing it, he can do it off-record and leave it up the addressee to decide how

to interpret it. Some sub-strategies of off-record: Give hints, Give association clues, Presuppose, Understate, Overstate, Tautologies, Contradictions, Be ironic, Use metaphors, Use rhetorical questions, Be ambiguous, Be vague, Over-generalize, Displace H, and Be incomplete, use ellipsis.

This strategy is sometimes used by the teachers to motivate students to study more and harder. As the 'ice-breaking', mostly it is quite effective in the apperception or beginning stage of teaching when the teachers scaffold students to the topic and in the evaluation stage when the teachers review the materials for next meeting.

2.6 Negative Politeness Strategy

Negative politeness is defined as "a redressive action addressed to the addressee's negative face: his want to have his freedom of action unobstructed and his attention unrestricted" (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Negative politeness strategy recognizes the hearer's face, but it also recognizes that the speaker is in some way forcing on them. Some of the sub-strategies of negative politeness are:
1. Be conventionally indirect.
2. Question, hedge.
3. Be pessimistic.
4. Minimize imposition
5. Give difference
6. Apologize
7. Impersonalize S and H
8. State the FTA as general rule
9. Nominalize
10. Go on record as incurring debt, or as not indebting H.

In Indonesia, Negative Politeness strategy is naturally formed in the context of communication, especially in teaching and learning process. The social life and culture contributes much in making this condition. In English language learning, this situation creates a very formal setting since both teacher and students use the formal expression. As the result, sometimes it is difficult to get a chemistry or good interaction between teacher and students.

2.7 Positive Politeness Strategy

The positive politeness strategy is usually seen in groups of friends, or where people in the given social situation know each other fairly well. It usually tries to minimize the distance between them by expressing friendliness and solid interest in the hearer's need to be respected (minimize the FTA). The only feature that distinguishes positive politeness compensation from normal everyday intimate language behavior is an element of exaggeration.

Positive Politeness is redress directed to the addressee's positive face, his desire that his wants should be thought of as desirable. Redress consists in partially satisfying that desire by communicating that one's own wants are in some respects similar to the addressee's wants. The linguistic realizations of Positive Politeness are in many respects representative of the normal linguistic behavior between intimates.

This strategy is now trying to be applied by English teachers in Indonesia because casual or relax situation comes in the English teaching and learning process. The 'intimate' communication will be built and it will contribute the better interaction in the classroom.

There are fifteen sub-strategies that are used in positive politeness strategies; Notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods), Exaggerate (interest approval, sympathy with Hearer), Intensify interest to Hearer, Use in-group identity markers, Seek agreement, Avoid disagreement, Presuppose/raise/assert common ground, Jokes, Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants, Offer, promise, Be optimistic, Include both Speaker and Hearer in the activity, Give (or ask for) reasons, Assume or assert reciprocity, Give gifts to Hearer (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)

The categories above can be elaborated as follows;

2.7.1   Claim common ground S (speaker) can claim ´common ground` with H (hearer), by indicating S and H belong to the same set of persons, who share specific wants, including goals and values. Three ways of making this claim:

   a) S may convey that some want (goal) of H´s is admirable or interesting to S too. (strategy 1-3)
   b) S may stress common membership in a group or category. (strategy 4)
   c) S can claim common perspective with H without necessarily referring to in- group membership. (strategy 5-8)

Strategy 1, Notice, attend to H:
Suggests that S should take notice of aspects of H's conditions.

Strategy 2, Exaggerate:
This often done with exaggerated intonation, stress, and other aspects of prosodic.

Strategy 3, Intensify interest to H:
S intensify the interest of his own contribution, by "making a good story" and draw H as a participant into the conversation with direct questions and expressions like *you know, see what*

Strategy 4, Use in- group identity makers:
Using any of the innumerable ways to convey in- group membership: address forms, language or dialect, jargon or slang and ellipses

Strategy 5, Seek agreement:
S seeks ways in which it is possible to agree with H.

Strategy 6, Avoid disagreement:
The desire to agree or appear to agree with H leads also to mechanisms for pretending to agree: white lies and hedges.

Strategy 7, Presuppose/ raise/ assert common ground:
The value of S's spending time and effort on being with H, as a mark of friendship or interest in him, by talking for a while about unrelated topics.

Strategy 8, Joke:
Jokes are based on mutual shared background and values and putting H "at ease".

2.7.2   Convey that S and H are cooperators
This category derives from the want to convey that S and H are cooperatively involved in the relevant activity. Three ways of convey cooperation:

a) S's may indicate his knowledge of and sensitivity to H's wants. (strategy 9)
b) S and H can claim some kind of reflexivity between their wants. (strategy 10-13)
c) S may indicate, that he believes reciprocity to be   prevailed between H and himself, thus that they are somehow locked into a state of mutual helping. (strategy 14)

Strategy 9, Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants:
Assert or imply knowledge of H's wants and willingness to fit one's own wants in with them.

Strategy10, Offer and Promise:
S provides something to H in the form of good or service.
S gives expectation to H about something as the topic by promising him/her.

Strategy 11, Be optimistic:
S assumes that H wants for S or for H and S, and will help him to obtain them.

Strategy 12, Include both S and H in the activity:
S invites H to do the same activity together.

Strategy 13, Give (or ask) reasons:
S offers an idea or seek information to/from H

Strategy14, Assume or assert reciprocity:
S and H may claimed or urged by giving evidence of reciprocal rights or obligations obtaining between S and H.

2.7.3   Fulfill H's wants some x
S decide to redress H's face directly by fulfilling some of H's wants , thereby indicates that he (S) wants H's wants for H, in some particular aspects.

Strategy 15, Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation):
S may satisfy H's positive-face want by actually satisfying some of H's wants (action of gift-giving, not only tangible). As in the context of English teaching and learning process, students are trying to be focused on the teacher, not to have chat or noisy since the teacher stop his/her explanation about the material and look at them.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design of this study was descriptive qualitative. The researcher tried to report and describe the data or the information as the way the things are; therefore the researcher did not change any content of the information for the sake of the ingenuity of the data required. The technique used was questionnaire technique, where DCT (Discourse Completion Test) was administered as the instrument to get the data for the research. It was the most appropriate instrument because the area of research is linguistics.

4. DATA COLLECTION

After administering the questionnaire, the researcher met students in class XI (2nd grade of senior high school) consists of twenty (20) male students to distribute the questionnaire. Class XI students have been able to improve their style in communication rather than those in the lower class. A clear instruction was informed to the students before they did the test. The answers from the students will be the data of the research.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

Since the data is in written form and in the area of linguistics, the researcher analyzed and interpreted it based on the types of politeness strategies. The followings are the steps in analyzing the data;

a. making an analysis table for the transcript and the types of positive politeness strategies.
b. identifying and classifying the utterances based on the types of positive politeness strategies.
c. analyzing the positive politeness utterances based on the context (the speaker, the hearer, and the situation when the communication occurred).
d. interpreting the positive politeness utterances.

The utterances need to be analyzed and interpreted deeper based on the context so people know factors which make the speaker/s use the strategy in certain situation. It is because every expression uttered is tied up with the context.

6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From the 10 situations of DCT given to the 20 students of class XI, the result shows that there are some positive politeness strategies which frequently used by the students. They are *Use in- group identity makers*, *Include both S and H in the activity*, *Be optimistic*, *Give (or ask) reasons*, *Promising*, *Notice attend to H*, *Exaggerate,* and *a Joke.*

Be optimistic positive politeness strategy is mostly used in the communication and followed by *Use in- group identity makers, Notice attend to H, Exaggerate, Promising, Give (or ask) reasons,* and *Include both S and H in the activity.*

The utterances which will be discussed are expressed originally by the students in English and the DCT is also set in English. The following is the analysis of utterances expressed by the students based on situation given:

1. You are studying in your room and you hear loud voice coming from a room next to you. You do not know the students who lives there, but you want ask him to turn the music down. What do you say?

One of students answers shortly;   "bro, can you be silent?"

In this case, the utterance belongs to the *Use in- group identity makers* strategy. This strategy occurs because student feels that all students in the boarding school have become a family. They have been close each other so they do not feel reluctant to say this utterance. Other students have different utterances in this situation:

"Let's go studying! Don't be noisy!" (*Include both S and H in the activity*)

"Why don't you study rather than have a chat?" (*Give (or ask) reasons*)

2. You are talking to your friend after class. You miss the last class and you want to borrow your friend's notes. What will you say in this case?

Students have some answers which belong to some strategies for this situation:

"I hope you can lend me your note" (*Be optimistic*)

"I believe, you will help me to lend me your note" (*Be optimistic*)

"You lend me your note and I will give it back tomorrow. Don't worry" (*Promising*)

In this situation, students mostly use two strategies of positive politeness strategy. They are *Be optimistic* and *Promising*. They occur because students are in the position of expecting something from others, their friends to lend them the note. It is used to persuade the hearer to lend his note to the speaker, not by using request.

3. There is a test in class in two weeks, but you will miss class that day because you have to go to join a competition. Class has just ended, and you want to ask your teacher whether you can take the exam on another day. How do you go about doing so?

The situation above results an utterance;

"Sir, I hope I can do the test on the other day because I must join Arabic speech competition." This utterance occurs because students need the test since he cannot join on the day when the test is administered. He confirms to the teacher with his believe that the teacher will understand his situation and allows him to do the test the other day. The interesting thing, student is quite smart in finding the reason to answer the situation.

4. A friend from out of town is visiting you at school and you are showing your friend around the boarding school. He visits you by bringing the new limited edition of smart phone and he shows to you. What do you say?

The students have some utterances for situation number 4;

"Wow., that's a great phone!" (***Notice, attend to H***, ***Exaggerate***)

The utterance above is expressed because the S is quite surprised when H uses the newest smart phone. He (S) is eager to know it more by giving compliment since he knows that it is the new limited smart phone. Knowing the new cell phone of his friend, actually he (S) wants to try the internet feature for searching Analytical Exposition text as the assignment of English subject.

5. Next week there is a test that is difficult for you. The students you usually sit next to is new student – seems to understand the course material better than you. You want to see this student outside of class a week before the test, and you want to ask him to help you get ready for the test. How do you go about doing this?

"*kawan*, you should explain about this material. I do not understand at all."

The strategy used in the above utterance is ***Use in- group identity makers.*** The context shows that the speaker has intention to the hearer to tell more about the material since the H knows more than him and S is quite optimistic in asking to the H. S feels okay even H is new student. He (S) uses the word "kawan" as intimate calling to friend the same as "dude" to eliminate the sense of new friends and new environment, so H will feel that S as his old friend.

6. In the Idul Fitri holidays, you and friends go to your friend's house. You are having dinner together. The food is delicious, and you want to ask for more. What do you say?

"What a very delicious food!" (***Exaggerate***)

In this situation, speaker is very enthusiasm for eating the food since it is delicious. Student utters an expression or compliment to express his intention in order to get an offer from his friend to eat more food.

7. You go to the library to return a lot of books, and your hands are full. But one book is left at home. The librarian asks you when it will be returned. What will you say?

"I'll return it tomorrow"

The utterances belong to the ***promising*** strategy.
The speaker uses promising strategy because Hearer asks him about one book which cannot be found with other books when S returns some books. Then H asks to return the book.

8. At lunch time, you are late to take the food because you have to clean the class since it is your cleaning-day. No more seats in the canteen. There is one seat available for you to sit, but someone put his bag on it. What will you say?

"Why don't you take your bag? I want to have lunch with you."

In this situation, the student uses ***giving reason*** positive politeness strategy to ask a seat for him to have lunch. This strategy occurs because in this context S has been a bit annoyed since he is late to have lunch. He has to clean up the class before leaving it.

9. You will join English speech contest. The day is getting closer and your teacher asks you to practice intensively, but you are quite busy during the week. You tell to your teacher you will practice next week.

"Ok,sir. I'll practice again next week."

The utterances above belong to ***promising*** strategy. S uses this strategy because he is still poor in the preparation for the contest and the teacher has reminded him several times.

10. In student meeting, you and friends are confused finding a solution about budget for the next school event held by students. Then, you propose an idea which can be as the solution. What will you say?

"Let's propose our event to some companies!"

This last situation produces ***Include both S and H in the activity strategy*** uttered by the student. S tries to give solution about situation which they have problem in fund for their event.

7. **CONCLUSION**

Based on the discussion above, it can be arose a conclusion that the ***be optimistic*** positive politeness strategy is mostly chosen by the students to express their intention. It is because they want to ensure the hearer by stating his expectation, not what he wants to do. This strategy is tens to be succeeded because hearer feels that the speaker is able to predict what he is going to say or do. Besides, the hearer is also much more influenced by the context or condition of speaker at the time they communicate.
In the context of English language teaching, teachers can use this strategy to encourage the students without questioning them. The sense will be different because by using this strategy, students will feel being involved in the topic which the teacher delivers. When students have been encouraged to learn more about English, the activities in the classroom will run smoothly.

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APPENDIX

The followings are the list of situations as the content of Discourse Completion Test (DCT).

1. You are studying in your room and you hear loud voice coming from a room next to you. You do not know the students who lives there, but you want ask him to turn the music down. What do you say?
2. You are talking to your friend after class. You miss the last class and you want to borrow your friend's notes. How do you ask for help in this case?
3. There is a test in class in two weeks, but you will miss class that day because you have to go to join a competition. Class has just ended, and you want to ask your teacher whether you can take the exam on another day. How do you go about doing so?
4. A friend from out of town is visiting you at school and you are showing your friend around the boarding school. He visits you by bringing the new limited edition of smart phone and he shows to you. What do you say?
5. Next week there is a test that is difficult for you. The students you usually sit next to is new student – seems to understand the course material better than you. You want to see this student outside of class a week before the test, and you want to ask him to help you get ready for the test. How do you go about doing this?
6. In the Idul Fitri holidays, you go to your friend's house. You are having dinner with your friend's family. The food is delicious, and you want to ask your friend's mother/father for more. What do you say?
7. You go to the library to return a lot of books, but one book is left at home. The librarian asks you when it will be returned. What will you say?
8. At lunch time, you are late to take the food because you have to clean the class since it is your cleaning-day. No more seats in the canteen. There is one seat available for you to sit, but someone put his bag on it. What will you say?
9. You will join English speech contest. The day is getting closer and your teacher asks you to practice intensively, but you are quite busy during the week. You tell to your teacher you will practice next week.
10. In student meeting, you and friends are confused finding a solution about budget for the next school event held by students. Then, one of your friends proposes an idea which can be as the solution. What do you say to him?