An Analysis of the Use of Positive and Negative Politeness in EFL Classroom

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to find out the types of politeness strategies in EFL classroom interactions between teachers and students, and to know the most frequent types of positive and negative politeness used in EFL classroom interactions. This study applied a descriptive qualitative research design to explore the politeness phenomena, especially positive and negative politeness in EFL classroom interaction. The participants of this study were 2 English teachers and 75 students in three classes at SMP Ihsaniyah Tegal; each class consisted of 25 students. The primary sources of data were observation and documentations—field notes and transcription of audio recording. The transcriptions were analyzed and discussed based on the theory of politeness by Brown and Levinson (1987). The data collection was carried out for five meetings in three classes with two different English teachers. The results of this study showed there were a total of 60 utterances containing four politeness strategies; bald on record strategy, positive politeness strategy, negative politeness strategy, and off record strategy. The most frequent of positive and negative politeness strategy employed by teachers and students in five meetings is positive politeness strategy.

Keywords: *politeness, teaching and learning process, EFL classroom.*

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, English is a second language or foreign language (EFL). English is also a subject that is taught at the junior high school, high school, and university level. And teaching-learning process is the most powerful instrument of education to bring about desired changes in the students. Usman (1990) argues that the definition of teaching and learning process is a form of activity carried out between teachers and students with a certain pattern so that they canachieve a learning goal.

There is always classroom interaction between teachers and students in the teaching and learning process, and the classroom interaction has a very important role in managing the class and building a classroom atmosphere during the learning process. Brown, as quoted by Ginting(2017), suggests that classroom interaction is one method of communicating between teachers and students in the teaching and learning process in the classroom, so classroom interaction is the heart of communication competence.

However, in the teaching and learning process, sometimes some students are passive, such as if the teacher asks questions, students do not answer, but if students are given the opportunity to ask questions, they do not ask questions. So, the teacher uses certain language strategies to provoke interaction between teachers and students; one of those particular language strategies is politeness strategy. Language strategies used by theteacher in classroom interaction becomes a model for students to follow the teacher's language; therefore, the teacher must behave and speak with politeness. Politeness is often used by teachers and students in the learning process; teachers use politeness to manage the classes such as building a more pleasant classroom atmosphere, increasing student activity, improving relationships between teachers and students, and others. Students use politeness in order to answer some questions from the lecturer or discuss with study groups about the material learning.

Based on the explanation above, in learning activities in the classroom, there is an interaction between teacher and students that involves the use of politeness. And this study is aimed at investigating politeness strategies, especially positive and negative politeness used between teacher and students as well as to know the most frequent types of positive and negative politeness used in EFL classroom interaction between teacher and student.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Previous Studies

Qualitative study on the use of politeness strategies by lecturer in EFL classroom with multicultural background found that the lecturer mostly applies positive politeness in criticizing the students, to save the students' face, become closer, and provide more positive feedback to assist them to improve their teaching effectiveness (Yuliana et al., 2019). Another study on the realization of politeness strategies in EFL classroom interaction by Rahayuningsih et al. (2020) also showed that English students utilized a variety of phrases in class to express their politeness, and this study might be used as an input for teacher and students as an effort to create effective classroom interaction. The findings showed the use of positive politeness strategies in the form of greetings. These kinds of expressions were used as the ways to be polite in the interaction, and therefore, the class situation became formal.

In addition, a study by Wijayanti et al. (2020) on the politeness realizations in EFL classroom interaction used by native English teacher revealed that all politeness strategies suggested by Brown and Levinson (1986) were applied by the teacher indelivering his speech to the students. These four strategies were mostly employed by the teacher in order to remind

the students, give them commands (task-oriented), praise the students, request the students to do something, make the class more interesting, and motivate the students.

Politeness

Politeness, according to Lakoff (1990), is a system of interpersonal connections aimed to ease interaction by reducing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interactions. Holtgraves (2019) argues that politeness allows people to perform a variety of interpersonally sensitive acts in a non-threatening or less threatening manner. So, politeness strategies are influenced based on the goal of the communicational process because from the above statement, it shows that when a person communicates using politeness strategies, the speaker knows how to convey information according to the same level of speech with the hearer.

This study uses Brown and Levinson's theory as guidance in analyzing data with some considerations. Brown and Levinson (1987) stated that politeness strategy is divided into four strategies; bald-on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record.

Bald-on Record (Direct)

Brown and Levinson (1987) define bald on record as an FTA strategy that states something clearly and directly. The use of bald on record often shocks or embarrasses the hearer. It is most commonly used in contexts when the speaker has a close relationship with the audience, such as with family or close friends. Using a record form has also been linked to control over others, such as in the military, when a commander issues orders to soldiers, a teacher to children, a parent to their kid, or friends.

According to Yule (1996), directly approaching the other as a means of expressing the demands is bald on record. Imperative forms are used in the most direct speech demonstrating bald record approach, for examples, *"Give me a pen", "Lend me your pen".* Bald on record strategy is explicitly stating something to the point and regarding the hearer's want. Emergency situations also occasion the use of direct commands, regardless of who is being addressed. For examples, *"Don't touch that!", "Get out of her!".*

Based on the study of the realization of politeness strategies in EFL classroom interaction at SMP Semesta (Rahayuningsih et al. 2020), the findings showed that bald on record strategies are found in the data. These strategies include showing disagreement, giving suggestion, requesting, and warning. Bald on records are employed by the teacher to give a clear and efficient instruction, classroom management, and motivation.

Positive Politeness

Positive politeness demonstrates that you value someone so minimizing the threat to the positive face. Brown and Levinson (1987) defined to be positively polite is to be inclusive of the other person, to make them feel as if their viewpoint and companionship are both desired and valued. It means that positive politeness is the speaker kindly shows his appreciation, approval, interest, and also familiarity with the hearer. For example, *"You look in a bad situation. Is there anything I can do for you?"*. Positive politeness indicates closeness and solidarity, appeals to friendship, makes other people feel good, and emphasizes that both speakers have a common goal.

According Brown and Levinson (1987:101), there are 15 sub-strategies indicating positive politeness strategy: 1) noticing and attending to the hearer, 2) exaggerating (interest, approval, sympathy with hearer), 3) intensifying interest to the hearer, 4) using in-group identity markers, 5) seeking agreement, 6) avoiding disagreement, 7) showing common ground, 8) joking, 9) assert or presuppose speaker's knowledge of and concern for hearer's wants, 10) using offer and promise, 11) being optimistic, 12) including both the speaker and the hearer in the activity, 13) giving or asking the reason, 14) assuming reciprocity, and 15) giving a gift to the hearer (goods, sympathy, understanding, and cooperation).

In Zastika's article (2020), the results of her study showed that there were seven strategies of positive politeness used by students in the learning process; exaggerate, intensify, presuppose common ground, joke, assert speaker's knowledge and concern for hearer's want, offer and promise, and optimistic. Of these 15 sub-strategies indicating positive politeness strategy, some of them can be found in the EFL classroom learning activities. This study proves that learning English can be collaborated with the internalization of pragmatic values in the form of language politeness. Students are not only given learning material but also linguistic values that can build a positive character for themselves in communicating.

Negative Politeness

Negative politeness is not impeding on someone so minimizing the threat to the negative face. Respecting someone's personal space and not intruding on them is what negative politeness is all about. For example, being negatively polite may be to ask someone if you may open a window, so as not to infringe on their desire to have it shut or to ask *"It is not too much*

trouble, could you please open the window?". The most common form used is a question

containing modal verbs, for example, *"Could you lend me a pen?"* or *"I'm sorry to bother you, but can I ask you for a pen or something?"*. According Mahmud (2019), negative politeness strategy refers to an attempt to demonstrate awareness not to be imposed on, that is, to avoid interfering with the interlocutor's freedom of action by using hedges and apologies among others.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987:129), there are 10 sub-strategies indicating negative politeness strategy: 1) being conventionally indirect, 2) using questions or hedges, 3) being pessimistic, 4) minimizing the imposition, 5) giving deference, 6) apologizing, 7) impersonalizing speaker and hearer, 8) stating the FTA as a general rule, 9) nominalizing, 10) going on record as incurring debt, or as not indebting the hearer.

The study by Rahayuningsih et al. (2020) aimed at analyzing the realization of politeness strategies in EFL teacher-students classroom interaction at SMP Semesta Bilingual School. The findings showed only four of the ten sub-strategies of negative politeness were found in the data; being conventionally indirect; question, hedge; being pessimistic, and minimize the imposition. By employing negative politeness, teacher allows students to act freely, giving them some authority over how they manage their own learning.

Off Record (Indirect)

The other politeness strategy outlined by Brown and Levinson (1987) is the indirect strategy. Off record is avoiding responsibility for the FTA often by being indirect. This strategy uses indirect language and removes the speaker from the potential to be imposing. It might be referred to as "hints". For example, *"Uh, I forgot my pen"* or *"Hmm, I wonder where I put my pen"*. It implies that the speaker wants someone to lend her/him a pen. In using off record, the success of the purpose could not be guaranteed because it is only a hint, as long as the hearer understands with the giving hint, the purpose could be achieved, but if the hearer does not aware of the given hint, the strategy would be failed.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987:211), there are 15 sub-strategies indicating off- record strategy: 1) giving hints, 2) giving association clues, 3) presupposing, 4) understating or saying less than is required, 5) overstating or giving information more than what is needed, 6) using tautologies (uttering patent and necessary truth), 7) using contradictions, 8) being ironic, 9) using metaphor, 10) using rhetorical questions that do not require any answer, 11) being ambiguous, 12) being vague, 13) overgeneralizing and not naming the hearer or addressing him directly, 14) displacing, 15) being incomplete by using ellipsis.

In Rahayuningsih's article (2020), the finding showed the use of sub-strategies

indicating off records strategy. When the teacher said *"I am standing here"*, she hinted that she did not want to assess the student's answer individually, rather, asked the student to write the answer on the board, so it could be discussed together. The teacher did not necessarily inform her position to the student, but there was another meaning implied when she said *"I am standing here"* means that she was far away, so better just to write the answer on the board. This, according to Brown and Levinson, is an example of off record strategy, giving hints.

Teaching and Learning Process

The teaching-learning process is the most powerful instrument of education to bring about desired changes in the students. Usman (2006) argues that the definition of teaching and learning process is a form of activity carried out between teachers and students with a certain pattern so that they can achieve a learning goal. So, teaching and learning process is one of the most important educational instruments which are carried out by teachers and students who are trying to achieve the same learning goals with certain patterns. Teaching-learning is a process of interaction between the student as learner and teacher as an educator in order to create responsible and democratic human.

EFL Classroom

In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language. Foreign languages are studied in areas where they are not commonly spoken as a first language. And in this study, an EFL classroom is a classroom where English as a foreign language is taught and learned. Furthermore, according to Uygun (2013), since English has been recognized as a lingua franca, there has been a wonderful trend in learning English all over the world.

METHOD

The design of the study is descriptive qualitative. Walliman (2011) stated that descriptive research is research that relies on observation as a means of collecting data. This study focused on the use of politeness strategies, especially positive and negative politeness strategies used by teachers and students English in three classes of VIII class at SMP Ihsaniyah Tegal which is English as an EFL Classroom. Every class consisted of 25 to 28 students.

This study used direct observation and documentation, in form of field notes and transcription of audio recording as data collecting technique. This research applies Miles et al.'s (1994) theory to analyze the data. According to Miles and Huberman (1994:10), analysis can be defined as consisting as three current flows of activity that is data reduction, data

display, and conclusion drawing/verification. (1) Data reduction; the data of this study are notes and transcription of audio recording. First, make a transcription of audio recording. Second, the data transcription and notes will be identified by separating the data to determine which data are needed and which data are not. The next step is selecting the politeness strategies used by teacher and students. (2) Data display; in this step, kinds of politeness strategies will be identified and analyzed by using Brown and Levinson's politeness theory to find out the use of politeness strategy by teacher and students in EFL classroom. (3) Conclusion drawing; concludes the result based on the problems and politeness strategies theory that is used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study deals with the analysis of politeness strategies, especially with positive and negative politeness strategies realized by teachers and students in teaching learning EFL based on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987). According to the theory, there are four types of politeness strategies; bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record. Here are the results of the study showing the frequency of politeness strategy conveyed by teachers and students in EFL classroom at five meetings of three classes:

Table 1. The frequency of politeness strategy usage by the teachers and students

Politeness Strategies	Frequency
Bald on Record	23 utterances
Positive Politeness	28 utterances
Negative Politeness	7 utterances
Off-Record	2 utterances
Total	60 utterances

Table 1 reports that there were totally 60 utterances containing politeness strategies applied by teachers and students in teaching and learning process of three classes at EFL Classroom. The table also indicates that all politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) were realized by the teachers and students in delivering their utterances. And the most frequent between positive and negative politeness used by teachers and students in EFL classroom is positive politeness.

Bald on Record

The use of bald on record strategy in this study was mainly realized by teachers and students in teaching learning process of EFL classroom, in order to the teacher to remind the

students and also give commander or instructions. Bald on record strategy is usually characterized by state directly, some examples are:

a. *"Azmi, ngga nyatet mi?"*

(Azmi, you didn't write this material Mi?)

b. *"Oke Dafa, read and answer question number 1!"*

(Okay Dafa, read and answer question number 1!)

c. *"Tidak ada suaranya, nanti maju satu-satu yang tidak ada suaranya!"*

(There is no sound, then you will come forward one by one to answer the questions for those who have no voice!)

The situation in sentence (a) occurred when the teacher wants to explain the comparative and superlative degree subject matter, where the material has actually been discussed at the previous meeting. However, some students answered that the material had never been discussed before, then the teacher asked one of the students the question "*Azmi, ngga nyatet mi?"* (Azmi, you didn't write this material Mi?), and apparently the student did not write the material. The questions spoken by the teacher are included in direct questions and it has clear meaning, so the students would be easy to understand what the teacher said to them. So, in this case, the speaker's speech is included in the bald on record.

Positive politeness

Positive politeness strategy in this study was frequently conveyed by teachers and students to make the class more interesting. This strategy could be used to create a good relationship between the teacher and the students through the expressions. In this study, the sub- strategies used in positive politeness include; Noticing and attending to the hearer (strategy 1), exaggerating (strategy 2), using in-group identity markers (strategy 4), seeking agreement/repetition (strategy 5), joke (strategy 8), using offer/promise (strategy 10), being optimistic (strategy 11), and assume or assert reciprocity (strategy 14), some examples are:

a. *"Nah, perhatikan! Fatter, fattest betul ya?"*

(Well, pay attention! Fatter, fattest right?)

b. *"Easy question, keren."*

(Easy question, cool)

c. *"Your book!"*

(Your book!)

The context of the utterance (a) is when all the questions written on the blackboard have been answered and the teacher wants to check and discussed which answers are correct, but the class atmosphere looks very crowded because students are talking to each other. Then the

teacher gives an urgency to the students to pay attention to the answers that will be discussed with the sentence *"Perhatikan!"* (Pay attention!). The word is included in assume or assert reciprocity (Strategy 14) because there is pressure between the speaker and the hearer.

In the situation of sentence (c), the teacher asked with the sentence *"Your book?"* which is the meaning of the real teacher's question is *"Where is your book?"*. However, here the speaker/teacher only said with these words and the speaker was confident that the hearer would understand the meaning of the question given without using a complete question sentence. And in fact, the hearer responds in accordance with the speaker's wishes by being able to understand and answer the speaker's question. Seeing this context, the speaker used positive politeness utterance which belongs to the type of being optimistic (strategy 11).

Negative Politeness

According Mahmud (2019), negative politeness strategy refers to an attempt to demonstrate awareness not to be imposed on, that is, to avoid interfering with the interlocutor's freedom of action by using hedges and apologies among others. Negative politeness strategy was applied by teachers and students in order to giving deference (strategy 5) and apologizing (strategy 6). Whereas giving deference divided into two sides: one in which S is humbles and abases himself/herself, and another in which the speaker raises the hearer (pays him positive face of a particular kind, namely that which satisfies hearer's need to be treated as superior) such as:

a.   *"Maaf Mrs, mau izin buang sampah"*

(I'm sorry Mrs. Excuse me to take out the trash)

b.   *"Speak English please!"*

c.   *"I'm so sorry, your check of assignment will be delivered tomorrow"*

In the context of the utterance (a), the student is asking permission from the teacher with additional polite words such as *"Maaf Mrs"* (I'm sorry, Mam). In which case the teacher/hearer has higher power than the student/speaker, so this is included in the give deference in which the speaker raises the hearer (pays him positive face of a particular kind, namely that which satisfies hearer's need to be treated as superior) (strategy 5). And the context of second utterance (b), the teacher lowers herself by using the word *"please"* which is actually addressed to her students, which in a position, the teacher has more power than the student. So, some of the words above are included in the type of give deference which belongs to the first side, which is the speaker humbles and abases himself/herself (strategy 5). The third utterance (c) showed that the teacher/speaker apologized for one thing by using

"I'm so sorry", and the reason is that the speaker forgot not to bring the student/hearer's assignment book that had been corrected and scored. Therefore, the speaker's utterance is included in negative politeness with apologizing sub-strategy 6.

Off record

According Brown and Levinson (1987), off record is the indirect strategy. This strategy uses indirect language and removes the speaker from the potential to be imposing. Off-record strategy was rarely used by teachers and students in teaching learning process at EFL classroom. In this study, there were only two utterances expressed by using off-record strategy; overstating or giving information more than what is needed (sub-strategy 5) and being ironic (sub-strategy 8). For examples:

a. *"Chemistry kita udah kebentuk Pak."*

(Our chemistry has been established, sir)

b. *"Ah Pak Dedy sekarang ga asik"*

(Mr. Dedy is no longer fun now)

The situation of first sentence (a) occurred when the teacher wanted the class students to be more serious in learning English, but one of the students answered by saying "*Chemistry kita udah kebentuk Pak."* (Our chemistry has been established, sir). And the teacher answered that the class atmosphere was crowded when learning was not a problem, the most important thing was to understand the lesson and can get good grades in the final exam. The student said that the chemistry between the teacher and students had already been formed, and this is a bit of an exaggeration in his words so that it is classified as an off record in the form of an overstating (strategy 5). In second sentence (b), the student's words of "*Ah Pak Dedy sekarang ga asik"* (Mr. Dedy is no longer fun now) has a meaning, that is the student wanted her teacher to have the same character as before because the student felt that the current teacher was not being fun. It shows that the utterance's speaker is not the actual meaning, but there is an implied meaning or the opposite meaning of what the speaker says. What the speaker wants is for the teacher to be a fun person as before. As a result, the utterance is included in the off-record strategy, especially in being ironic (strategy 8).

In this study, there were totally 60 utterances containing politeness strategies applied by teachers and students in teaching and learning process of three classes at EFL Classroom; 23 utterances of bald on record strategy, 28 utterances of positive politeness strategy, 7 utterances of negative politeness strategy, and 2 utterances of off record strategy.
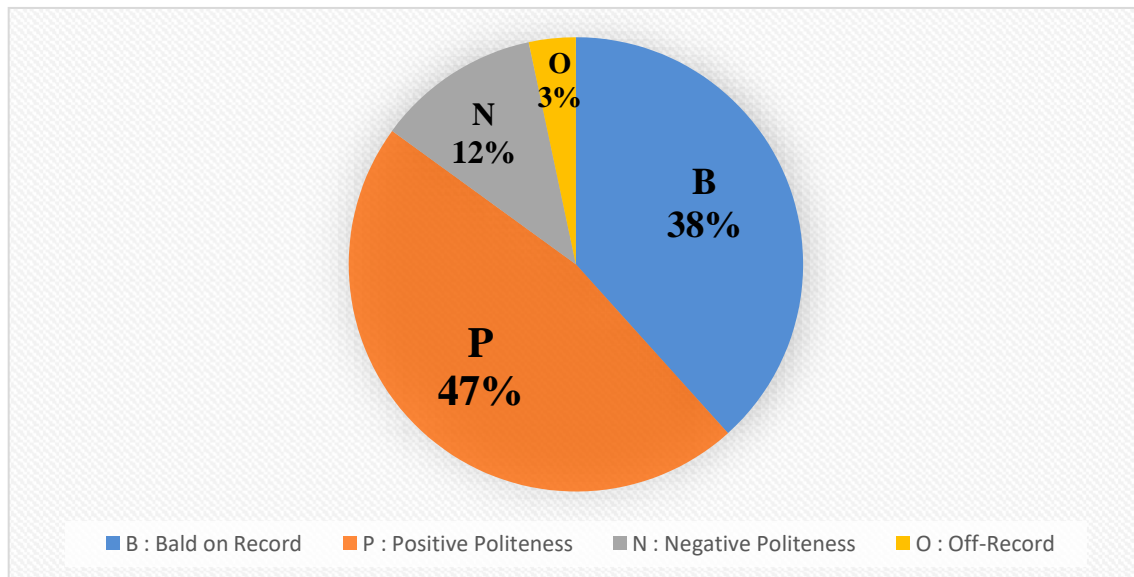
oliteness Strategies Used by Teachers and Students in EFL Classroom Interaction

Based on data result of teachers and student's politeness strategy as seen in figure 1, there are 23 (38%) utterances of bald on record strategy in EFL classroom interaction. These strategies are included showing requesting, warning, and commands. Bald on records are used by the speaker to show a high level than hearer, so bald on record employed by the teachers was aimed to give a clear and efficient instruction, classroom management, and motivation.

Figure 1 showed that positive politeness strategy is found in the data with 28 (47%) utterances by teachers and students during teaching learning process in EFL classroom. The use of positive politeness in the classroom is important in order to maintain the positive relationship between the speaker and the hearer. In addition, through the use of positive politeness, teachers can establish a respectful teacher-students relationship and students are encouraged to participate in class activities without worrying about making a fool of themselves by feeling at ease in the environment.

There are 7 (12%) utterances of negative politeness found in EFL classroom interaction between teachers and students. Through the use of negative politeness, teacher maintains students' freedom of action and thus given them a certain autonomy in managing their own learning process and also the students employed the polite utterances to the teacher where the teacher has a higher power and must be respected, and in the use of this negative politeness, the teacher can lower his/her power to respect the student.

There are 2 (3%) utterances of off-record used by teachers and students in EFL classroom interaction. Off records are regarded as the most politically correct strategy out of all the others. The speaker could avoid the impact of face-threatening actions by speaking off the record.

The second purpose of this study is to find out the most frequent between positive and negative politeness strategies in EFL classroom. There are 31 utterances of positive and negative politeness used by teachers and students during five meetings in EFL classroom. There are 28 utterances included in the use of positive politeness strategies used by teachers and students in five meetings in three class VIII at SMP Ihsaniyah Tegal, and there are 7 utterances of negative politeness strategies used by teachers and students. The result of data from positive politeness strategy is 47% and the result of negative politeness strategy is 11%, so between positive and negative politeness that is often used by teachers and students is positive politeness strategy with 28 utterances or 47% of its used. Positive politeness occupiedthe highest proportion to be applied by the participants.

CONCLUSION

This study is conducted to identify politeness strategies used by teachers and students in EFL classroom interaction, and to find out the most frequent types of positive and negative politeness used in EFL classroom interaction between teachers and students. The results show that four types of politeness strategies used by teacher and students during teaching and learning process in EFL classroom. There are 23 utterances of bald on record strategy, 28 utterances of positive politeness strategy, 7 utterances of negative politeness strategy, and 2 utterances of off record strategy. And the most frequent of positive and negative politeness strategy employed by teacher and students in five meetings is positive politeness strategy. There are 28 (46%) utterances of positive politeness strategy used by teacher and students, while the negative politeness strategy was only found 7 (11%) utterances used by teacher and students during teaching and learning process in EFL classroom.

Based on the conclusion above, there are some suggestions related to further research on politeness strategies. First, for EFL teachers and students. Teachers are expected to be more active in applying politeness strategies in the teaching and learning process, because the use of politeness strategies in the teaching and learning process is believed to trigger student learning motivation or student activity in learning English, and can make students easier to understand the material lesson. Therefore, the process of learning can go smoothly, and the learning objectives can be achieved. In addition, the students are expected to be more active in applyingthe strategy of using politeness in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. In this study, it can be seen that students are still limited in using politeness strategies, both to communicate with teachers and other students. Therefore, politeness strategies need to be applied by students in the learning process because the strategies can be used to convey

an idea in a discussion forum with better words and easier to understand by others, and also can be the way to be polite to the teacher. The researcher hopes that more research into this issue will be conducted in other learning environments and forums due to the shortcomings of this research.

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