
Polite Questioning in Students' WhatsApp Group Discussion (A Research on Discourse and Communication)

Herman Resyadi¹, Ainun Suraidah²

^{1,2}Institut Agama Islam Negeri Bone / Faculty of Tarbiyah

hermanresyadi24@gmail.com, ainunsuraidah3@gmail.com

Abstract

This research is under the discipline of Discourse Analysis. It focused to investigate the politeness used by students in social media, especially WhatsApp application. This research was consist of 20 students in one class at the Graduate Program of State University of Makassar. To collect the data, the researchers transcribed students' chat and discussion from the students' WhatsApp group discussion. This researcher was analyzed by using discourse analysis approach based on the politeness theory by Brown and Levinson (1987). The result of this research showed that students only use positive politeness in questioning to show closeness and respect to the other students in the WhatsApp group discussion.

Keywords: *Politeness Strategies; WhatsApp group discussion; Positive Politeness.*

INTRODUCTION

In the society the interaction is one of important aspect that cannot be separated in everyday life. It is called as communication. Generally, communication refers to the contact among people using word or written form. Wood (2004) defines communication as a systemic process in which individuals interact with and through symbols to create and interpret meanings. Hence it can be defined as a system through which people share ideas, feelings, thoughts, facts, opinion, values and emotions with each other. It acts as a bridge of meaning among people.

All the people communicate every day in various ways. Some people communicate directly and some people communicate indirectly. The direct communication can be done the oral interaction between two people or more and the indirect communication using a media to communicate which nowadays people use social media as the tool of communication.

In communicating to the other people, some aspect must be considered. One of important aspect is the politeness. Politeness is the heart of behaving in society. It is very important to be applied everywhere especially in the society because politeness is very close to the society. Watt (2003) defines politeness as the ability to please other through external actions. Foley (1997) refers politeness as "a battery of social skills whose goal is to ensure that

everyone feels affirmed in a social interaction”Someone who possess good politeness will be respected in a society rather than who don't. In the society, politeness has been taught since childhood to create a respectful life.

Some issues related to politeness have been researched by some searcher. (Adel, 2016; Shirazi, 2016; Wijayanto, 2013; Senowasisto, 2013). There are some issues regarding to the politeness in the society. The research of politeness have proved that it is useful in communication. The politeness have been placed in all the places and situations. In the classroom, the students as part of the society interact using some kinds of politeness to ask something or request to the other students or to the teacher. The interaction among the students can be direct or indirect interaction. Nowadays, students are more interact using the social media because to them social media are more interesting to do the discussion about all thing that happened in the classroom.

This research attempts to explore the use of politeness among the university students, especially in the social media field. This research focused on the politeness used by the students in questioning in the WhatsApp class group discussion. The findings of this research are important to understand how the students interact using politeness in the social media.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is based on discourse analysis approach. The analysis of this research is based on the framework of discourse analysis which relies on data recording, data transcription, data selection, and data interpretation. (Hingham, 2009) defines Discourse analysis as a domain of research traces which roots to various disciplines – anthropology, linguistics, philosophy, psychology, and sociology.

Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) point out, competence in the production and interpretation of discourse is crucial for language learners; by extension, language teachers must understand how discourse is structured and how it can be analyzed so that they are better equipped to teach effectively, and also so that they can foster their own professional development by using discourse analysis to analyze the nature of language use for themselves. (Van Dijk, 2006) stated that discourse are useful understand the structures of text and talk and how people indicate their semantic intentions and interpretations and the cognitive abilities that underlie the human use of language.

The participants of this research are students of graduate program at State University of Makassar consist of 20 students in only one class. This research used purposive sampling

technique. In this research, the data were from students' chat in WhatsApp group discussion from April 2017 to May 2017. The researchers transcribed the chat into text and then did coding and extracting the data from the transcription into the conversational form. After that the researchers analyzed and interpreted the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In analyzing the data from the extracted data in conversational form the researchers identified politeness form in the student' question in the WhatsApp group discussion. The politeness are described as follows:

Extract 1 : Asking about time

The following conversation was taken in the students' WhatsApp group discussion on April 1st 2017. In the conversation SF was asking about time to go. Then, SF gave a suggestion to meet on the place they talked because he also lives in Gowa. After that, EK replied that she would leave Minasaupa at 7 and meet him in front of the path. After that, SF agreed with EK.

*SF : Jam brp **tmn**" mau ksana?*

(What time you guys want to go there?)

Atau ktmu dsana mki nh krn d gowa k sy tggal

(Or we will meet in there because I also live in Gowa)

EK : Jam 7 Start dri minasaupa kak SF

(Starting at 7 o'clock from Minasaupa SF)

Ketemu dpan lorongnya maki

(We meet in front of the path)

Gmn?

(So?)

SF :Okokokok

Extract 1 above expresses that SF asked to EK about time to go. In the conversation it can be seen that SF use word “**tmn**” the word here stands for “**teman-teman**” which means “**guys**” or “**friends**”. The use of word “guys” is almost find everywhere in the world, in almost every culture and society in a conversation among friends or mates. According to the Politeness theory by Brown and Levinson, the use word “guy” is indicate the closeness among students it is categorized as positive politeness.

Extract 2 : Asking about Discourse assignment

The following conversation was taken in the students' WhatsApp group discussion on April 3rd 2017. In the conversation SR was asking to FR about Discourse assignment. Then FR asked back to SR about the Discourse assignment. After that, SL confirmed that the assignment from the lecturer, then FR admitted SL's answer and give more statement.

0144 SL: *Tabe, itu Discourse chapter 2 sj toh. Baru sy kerja ini malam/*

(Pardon me, the Discourse is only chapter 2 [[to work out]]. I'm just working it out tonight)

0145 Hujan... hujan.... Datang lagi....

(Raining ... Raining... Drop again...)

0146 FR: *Discourse apa lagi kak ?*

(What discourse is, again?)

0147 SL: *itu tugas final prof.B.*

(It is final assingment, isn't it?)

0148 FR: *Ouwhhh hehhhe iyyek kak. Intinya review literature.*

(Oh Hehe Yes. The point is just review literature)

The extract above implies that FR responses to SL's question. The word “**kak**” used by FR here implies a different age, which means that FR is younger than SL. In Indonesia, the word “**kak**” is addressed to the older person. Based on the politeness theory by Brown and Levinson, both of the expression were categorized as positive politeness. The greeting is used to create the good atmosphere of conversation.

Extract 3 : Asking about Pulse

The following conversation was taken in the students' WhatsApp group discussion on April 28th 2017. In the conversation SR was asking to SF about pulse. Whether he has pulse or not. SR wanted to buy 20.000 pulse to SF and SR gave his number to SF. Then, SF asked about the amount of pulse that SR wanted. Later, SR confirmed.

- SR : *asslm. Mas SF, masih jual pulsa? Kalau masih, kirimkan dlu pulsa 20 ke no.q:
085299863909
(greeting, Safar. Are you still selling pulse?. If yes, sent me pulse 20K to my number 085299863909)*
- SF : *mauki pls kak? (how much pulse do you want?)
Bru k liat (I just seen it)*
- SR : *iyee. (yes)*

Extract 3 above shows that SR used greeting to begin the request to SF. In the Indonesian culture when we want to start conversation or request we often give greeting first to show our respect to other people. The greeting “*Asslm*” stands for “*Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh*” it is an Islamic greeting which is mean “Peace be upon you” but SR abbreviated the word. Then, SF replied “*Mauki pls kak*”. The word “*kak*” here shows a different age, in Indonesia, the word “*kak*” is addressed to the older person. Based on the politeness theory by Brown and Levinson, both of the expression were categorized as positive politeness. The greeting is used to create the good atmosphere of conversation.

Extract 4 : Asking about partner in SLA presentation

The following conversation was taken in the students' WhatsApp group discussion on April 27th 2017. In the conversation SF was asking to AN about her partner in SLA presentation, then AN confirmed that she was with FR in the SLA presentation.

- SF : *oh iyo tawwa (that's right)
AN sama **sypko** SLA? (AN with whom you partnered in SLA)*
- AN : *sama FR (with FR)*

Extract 4 above implies that SF was asking to AN about her partner in SLA presentation. The word “*sypko*” refers to Indonesian word “*siapa ko*” means “with whom” the suffix “*-ko*” is used in Buinese society to show the closeness between two people. It could be as friend, colleague, brother/sister, neighbor, or classmate. From the politeness

theory by Brown and Levinson positive this conversation is categorized as positive politeness. How they chat showed that they are close friend.

Extract 5 : Asking about article

The following conversation was taken in the students' WhatsApp group discussion on April 27th 2017. In the conversation HR asked IK to find an article. Next, RY interrupted with a question to IK and SR. after that, HR deliver a question to RY and then IK replied HR's request with a question then IK answered to HR that he had the article but he haven't understood all the article. The last, HR confirmed that the article that talked was SLA article.

HR : Mas IK tolong cari article dulu (IK please find articles)

RY : kalo siap ko @IK ayo maju..Kak @SL gimana ? (if you are ready @s2

IK go..

@SL, how about u ?)

HR : sy kira samako SF, RY? (I thought you are with SF, RY)

IK : what article mas HR..?? (what article brother HR)

Klo article SLA admi pi blum sa pahami smw bela...(if about SLA I already have, but I haven't understood it all)

HR : Iyaaa article SLA (yes, SLA article)

Extract 5 above explains that HR asked to IK to find article and then HR deliver a question to RY and then IK asked HR about the article. First *“sy kira samako SF, RY?”* this expression is totally same with the previous explanation in the extract 2. The suffix *“-ko”* in Buginese society states a close relationship between friends, colleagues, neighbor, classmates, etc. Second, IK asked HR *“what article mas HR..?”.* focusing on the word *“mas”* in Javanese society it used to respect people either older or younger person but it is only for men. So, related to the theory of politeness by Brown and Levinson, both of the expression are used to create a good conversation atmosphere and it used to show the closeness between the speaker and the listener. Categorized as Positive politeness.

Extract 6 : Asking about thesis title

The following conversation was taken in the students' WhatsApp group discussion on April 27th 2017. In the conversation IM was asking to all group about submission of

thesis title. Then, SF asked about the possibility of the submission and add a statement about the course that haven't done.

IM :Assalamualaikum teman2 ada yang ma ikut ajukan judul har selasa depan?

Kelas A sdh masukkan judul syp tahu ada yg mau sm2??

Assalamualaikum, guys anyone want to join to submit title on next Tuesday? Class A have submitted their title, anyone want to go together?

IM :(jpeg) #thesis title form

SF :bisa kah?

Is it possible?

Blum kursus jg

We are not having any course anyway

Yayayaya

Extract 6 above shows that IM used greeting to begin the question to all members of WhatsApp. In the Indonesian culture when we want to start conversation or request we often give greeting first to show our respect to other people. "*Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh*" it is an Islamic greeting which is mean "Peace be upon you". The use of word "guys" indicated the closeness among students it is categorized as positive politeness according to the politeness theory by Brown and Levinson.

Six extracts of written conversations about student politeness in questioning in WhatsApp chat have been detected. As showed in finding above, all the students use positive politeness in questioning (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Similar to Ide (1989) and Blum-Kulka (1992), politeness is based on status and social level, power and structures of kinship, situation (formal or informal), and considers that the concept of desire (face wants) is tied to a particular culture.

The question that delivered by the students are highly varied, the types of questions using politeness are commonly the questions about assignment. Some of questions are categorized as asking about something and requesting. From the extracts above all the questions are used positive politeness. There were no polite questioning that categorized as Bald on-record, Negative Politeness, or Off-record used by the students in questioning.

It can be seen from extract one to extract five the use of positive politeness always appear from the conversation. Only positive politeness used by the students in questioning. Extract 1 to 6 showed a polite questioning to the group of people or to an individual which contained cultural and regional terms. In the findings the cultural and regional terms were the important points in this research. The use of cultural communication were cannot be separated from the students conversation including in questioning.

In the extract 2 the cultural terms are detected the use of language choices are appear in the extract 2. The extract 2 indicated showing respect in asking to the other student. The politeness used in the extract 2 can be useful and respectful in socializing with the older person (Hua Zhu, 2010).

In the extract 3 and 6 the Islamic cultural term are detected. It can be seen when the participants using an Islamic greeting to begin the question and then it followed by the question. In the question the participants using a particular addresses term to all members of WhatsApp group which considered as positive politeness by the theory of Brown and Levinson.

In the extract 4 and extract 5 the students are used regional terms from their first language. The suffix and prefix are used in their daily speech. The suffix and prefix in the extract 4 and 5 were indicated closeness to the other people. The first language used by the students in the extract 4 and 5 is to make the topic clear (Parker and Karaagaç's, 2015). In the WhatsApp group discussion the students are mainly used their mother tongue because it will be make them easier in sharing the ideas regarding to the problems or issues in the class.

In this research, the politeness theory by Brown and Levinson (1987) only suitable for some particular person. The positive politeness used in extract 4 and 5 do not fit to the parents, teacher, and people who are older than the speaker even though it shows closeness between the speaker and listener. The regional term that used in the extract 4 and 5 is the reason why the politeness theory by Brown and Levinson (1987) do not fit to some particular people.

CONCLUSION

As was explained in the previous chapter about the politeness theory by Brown and Levinson. The result of this research reveals that the students in WhatsApp group discussion only used positive politeness in questioning to show the closeness and respect among the students in WhatsApp group discussion. In this research, the positive politeness strategy by Brown and Levinson is not suitable for all students. The positive politeness with regional term only suitable to the same age student.

The findings of this research contributed in to deeper understanding of the role of politeness used by students in social media context. This research also can make the teacher or researcher know the characteristic of the students in interacting and questioning in social media using politeness. Also this research reveals the students interpersonal relationship in the WhatsApp group discussion.

REFERENCES

- Adel, S.M. (2016). *A Qualitative Research of Politeness Strategies Used by Iranian EFL Learners in a Class Blog*. Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Blum-Kulka, S. (1992). The Metapragmatics of Politeness in Israeli Society. *Politeness in language: Studies its history, theory and practice*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Celce-Murcia, M., & Olshtain, E. (2000). *Discourse and context in language teaching: A guide for language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Foley, W. (1997). *Anthropological linguistics: An introduction*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Heigham, J. (2009). *Qualitative Research in Applied Linguistics- A Practical Introduction*. Macmillan: Palgrave.
- Hua, Zhu. (2010). Language Socialization and Interculturality: Address Terms in Intergenerational Talk in Chinese Diasporic Families. *Language and Intercultural Communication*. 10(3), 189-205.
- Ide, S. (1989). Formal forms and discernment: Two neglected aspects of universals of linguistic politeness. *Multilingua*, 8(2-3), 223-248.
- Paker, T. & Karaagaç, Ö. (2015). The Use and Functions of Mother Tongue in EFL Classes. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 199(2015), 111-119.
- Senowarsito. (2013). *Politeness Strategies in Teacher-Student Interaction in an EFL Classroom Context*. TEFLIN Journal volume 24.

- Shirazi, M.A (2016). Emotional Intelligence as the Predictor of Pragmatic Competence: A Closer Look at Iranian EFL Learners' Politeness Strategies. *The Reading Matrix: An International Online Journal* Volume 16, Number 12
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2006). Ideology and discourse analysis. *Journal of political ideologies*, 11(2), 115-140.
- Watts, R. J. (2003). *Politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wijayanto, A. (2013). *Politeness in Interlanguage Pragmatics of Complaints by Indonesian Learners of English*. Canadian Centre of Science and Education.
- Wood, Julia T.(2004) *Communication Theories in Action: An Introduction*. 3rd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.