Gender and Politeness of Request Expression on Whatsapp

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ABSTRACT

The research discussed about politeness strategy used by male and female students in requesting on WhatsApp message. The aims of this study were: to find out the types of politeness strategy used by male and female students by using Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness theory, to find out the differences and reason of politeness strategy used by male and female students in requesting on WhatsApp. The descriptive qualitative method were used in this research, and the data were derived from the WhatsApp message script. The findings of the study showed that male students applied 3 politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987): bald-on record (21 sentences), positive politeness (8 sentences), negative politeness (3 sentences). The researcher also found that female students applied 4 politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987): bald-on record strategy (5 sentences), positive politeness (7 sentences), negative politeness (17 sentences), and off record (5 sentences). The significant difference in politeness strategies used by male and female students are that there is no off record strategy used by male students, they apply the bald-on record strategy more often, while female students are more varied in using of politeness strategies and mostly applied the negative politeness. The difference of male and female students politeness strategy in requesting on WhatsApp because each gender has own way in conveying their want. Male students were more direct when requesting to others, while female students were more indirect when requesting to others.

Keywords:
Politeness, Gender, Request.

INTRODUCTION

In order for an interaction or communication properly, one must pay attention to politeness in communicating so as not to offend and or hurt the feelings of others.

Politeness in language can prevent a bad impression on others. Holmes & Wilson (2017, p. 304) state that politeness contributes to social harmony and avoids social conflict. Therefore, politeness is needed to avoid misunderstandings and to build good relationships and social interactions with other people.

In everyday life, sometimes a person needs the help of others to do or ask something. When someone decides to make a request, it means they are asking the person to perform an action. Trosborg (1995, p. 187) identifies request is an illocutionary act in which the speaker (the requester) conveys to the listener (the requestee) that he or she wants the person being asked to perform an action that is for the benefit of the speaker. Nowadays, when people make requests, they do not consider the situation and conditions and does not consider who they are talking to, and it makes listeners feel uncomfortable because they feel the way the speaker is making requests is impolite.

In the communication itself, language is a media to provide information, asking information, express feeling and etc. Language is also used to distinguish one person from others in society based on gender, age, profession and so on. Fromkin, Rodman, &Hyams (2003, p. 482) states that "Language reflects sexism in society". This means that communication diction and intonation are reflected and differ for each individual, exactly male and female students.

The interaction nowadays not only happened in real life, it also happened in cyber life. WhatsApp is one of the application that is widely used today. WhatsApp used to send messages, pictures, audio, or video to speak with others. As the new era nowadays, WhatsApp has been constructed of educational environments in Indonesia like share everything of campus activity, research collaboration, and detailed information.

In recent decades, Gender, and politeness research has developed rapidly as an interdisciplinary field. Based on the phenomenon above, this study focused on gender and politeness of request expression on WhatsApp text of Medan State University students by using Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness theory. The data taken from WhatsApp text/chats of 20 students (10 males, 10 females) majoring in English. The problems of the study were formulated as the following: (1) What types of politeness strategies are used by the male and female students in expressing request on WhatsApp? (2) What is the difference of male and female students of politeness strategy in expressing request on WhatsApp? (3) Why do male and female students differ in using politeness strategies in the expressing of request on WhatsApp?

According to Lakoff, women's speech is more indirect, while men's speech is more direct. According to Lakoff (1973) in Wardhaugh & Fuller(2015, p. 324), women prefer to use colorful words while men prefer to use adjectives that are rarely used by women. Men are more likely to use swear words and to take controlof the conversation.

Language and Gender

In discussing the relationship between language and gender, it's important to distinguish between the terms 'sex' and 'gender'. The term 'sex' is from a biological and physiological perspective while 'gender' is in the context of social and cultural aspects. Ercket and Ginet (2013, p. 2) state that "sex is a biological categorization based primarily on reproductive potential, whereas gender is the social elaboration of biological sex", it means that the term of sex and gender differentiate in aspect of biological and social.

Language is one of the social characteristics that distinguishes men and women. In intonation, phonology, syntax, and lexicon, each gender has its own characteristics. According to Lakoff, women's speech is more indirect, while men's speech is more direct. According to Lakoff (1973) in Wardhaugh & Fuller(2015, p. 324), women prefer to use colorful words while men prefer to use adjectives that are rarely used by women. Men are more likely to use swear words and to take control of the conversation.

Request

Request is one of the classifications of speech acts related to asking forsomething or telling someone to do something. A request is an illocutionary act in which a speaker (the requester) conveys to the listener (the requestee) that he or she wants the requested person to do action or to gain the benefit of the requested (Trosborg, 1995: 187).

Request can be carried out in several used, for example in dialogue routine. Trosborg classified request strategies into four main categories:Indirect Request, Conventionally Indirect or known as hearer-oriented conditions, Conventionally Indirect (speaker-based on conditions), and Direct Request.

Politeness

According to Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 2), politeness is defined as the ability to convey an utterance in the most polite manner possible, which is necessary in this case to avoid conflict with others.

According to Brown and Levinson's Politeness Strategies in any society there are several rules and principles governing the way people talk and behave, but Brown and Levinson offer a descriptive analysis of the strategies speakers can use to maintain their

face in social interactions. Brown and Levinson divide human politeness behavior into four strategies: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record.

Bald on Record

This strategy involved expressing the action in the most direct manner possible. Because this strategy can surprise listeners, it is common among people who know each other well and are at ease in their surroundings, such asclose friends and family members.

Positive Politeness

According to Brown & Levinson (1987, p. 101), this strategy aims to pay attention to the listener's interests, needs, wants, and goods

Negative politeness

The goal of this strategy is to reduce the burden on listeners while also creating a sense of community. As a result, it automatically assumes that the situation involves social distancing or awkwardness.

Off-record

The indirect strategy to avoid the responsibility of engaging in face- threatening actions by letting the listener interpret the message.

METHOD

This research used the qualitative research design that contains of descriptive analysis which the data collected from the form of sentences in text messages of WhatsApp. This research conducted virtually by asking for WhatsApp chat screenshots of 20 English Literature students from the 2017 class consisting of 10 male and 10 female. The subjects were chosen because they were the students who often asking or requesting in campus life through WhatsApp message in everyday conversation.

Table 1. Respondent Demographics

No.	Name	Gender	Age	Major
1	ARN	Male	22	English literature 17
2	PM	Male	23	English literature 17
3	PAZ	Male	22	English literature 17
4	THF	Male	22	English literature 17
5	YRS	Male	22	English literature 17
6	NAT	Male	22	English literature 17
7	ST	Male	22	English literature 17

8	RR	Male	22	English literature 17
9	YA	Male	22	English literature 17
10	HP	Male	22	English literature 17
11	UJP	Female	23	English literature 17
12	WFL	Female	23	English literature 17
13	RFM	Female	22	English literature 17
14	AA	Female	22	English literature 17
15	YZS	Female	22	English literature 17
16	RN	Female	22	English literature 17
17	RDP	Female	22	English literature 17
18	WRS	Female	22	English literature 17
19	DP	Female	22	English literature 17
20	ZN	Female	22	English literature 17

RESULTS

In this research, researcher found 3 types of politeness strategies applied by male students in requesting on WhatssApp message based on Brown and Levinson (1987) theory, namely bald on record (21 sentences), positive politeness (8 sentences), negative politeness (3 sentences). While there are 4 types of politeness strategies applied by female students in requesting on WhatssApp message based on Brown and Levinson (1987) theory, namely bald on record (5 sentences), positive politeness (7 sentences), negative politeness (17 sentences), and, off-record (5 sentences). The finding of this research is displayed through thetable below.

Table 2. Distribution of politeness strategies of request Used by male students on WhatsApp messages

No	Type of PolitenessStrategy	Gender Interlocutor		Total
		male students	Female students	
1.	Bald-on Record	11 Sentences	10 Sentences	21
2.	Positive Politeness	3 Sentence	5 sentences	8
3.	Negative Politeness	0 Sentence	3 Sentences	3
4.	Off-record	0	0	0
Total				32

Table 3. Distribution of politeness strategies of request Used by female students on WhatsApp messages

No	Type of Politeness Strategy	Gender Interlocutor		Total
		male students	Female students	
1.	Bald-on Record	2 sentences	3 Sentences	5
2.	Positive Politeness	2 sentences	5 Sentences	7
3.	Negative Politeness	8 Sentences	9 Sentences	17
4.	Off-record	5 Sentences	0	5
Total				34

Based on the finding, both male and female students applied different strategies in requesting to others. The result showed that male students mostly used bald on record strategy when they requested to others male or female friends and there's no data that categorized as off record strategy. It's totally different to the female students that they mostly used negative politeness when they requestedto others male or female friends. The bald on record strategy that applied by male students contain the direct expression of request, while the negative politeness strategy that applied by female students contain the indirect expression of request.

In this research, researcher found that male students more applied direct request expression that categorized into bald-on record strategy. While the female students more applied more indirect request expression that categorized into negative politeness strategy. It is in accordance with Lakoff (1975) theory that male more direct than female. The direct expression appear as the male need to efficient the interaction, while female students more indirect as they need to be polite to another.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and discussion above, the study's findings can besummarized that male students used 3 politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987): bald-on record (6 sentences), positive politeness (5 sentences), and negative politeness (2 sentences) (2 sentences). Female students also used 4 politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987): bald- on-record strategy (2 sentences), positive politeness (1 sentence), negative politeness (6 sentences), and off-record politeness (4 sentences). Both male and female students applied different politeness strategies when they requesting to

other. The strategy frequently employed by male students was **bald on record,** while the strategy frequently employed by female students was **negative politeness.** The reason for the differences in male and female students politeness strategies in requesting to other because gender had its own strategy to politeness. Male students used direct expression because they wanted the interlocutor to know exactly what they needed, whereas female students used more indirect expression in order to maintain solidarity and politeness in their requests. So, even though male and female students request in different ways, they both consider thepoliteness of the person they are speaking with.

In reality, politeness strategies are used in response to a need. Although the study's findings show that male and female students use different politeness strategies, no conclusion can be drawn about which gender is more polite. As a result, students must learn about politeness in practical courses in order to be able to interact with others in a positive and polite manner.

This study still has many weaknesses, hopefully the future researchers would conduct this research deeply and better in investigate the students' politeness strategies and the reasons why they use those strategies so that it can give more contributions to the topic research of politeness.

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