

# THE POLITENESS PRINCIPLES OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM INTERACTION

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## Abstract

This study was conducted to find out the Politeness Principles in EFL classroom interaction. Consisting of six maxims; tact maxim, approbation maxim, generosity maxim, agreement maxim, modesty maxim and sympathy maxim. There were one English teacher and one classroom of eighth grade students of SMP Muhammadiyah 03 Semarang that became the subject of this study. In depth, this study was to explore the use of politeness principles of students and teacher in the EFL classroom interaction. A mix method research with the domination of qualitative research was chosen as the research design. Classroom observation checklist, documentation, library research, were used as the instruments of the data collection. The result of the study shows that violation of politeness principles has the higher position with the percentage 41% rather than fulfillment with the percentage 31.5%, while other utterance becomes the lowest utterance with 27.5%. The highest maxim fulfilled was generosity with the percentage 38%, and the lowest maxim fulfilled was modesty maxim with 1%.

**Keywords:** EFL Classroom Interaction, Politeness Principles, Teacher and Students

## Introduction

The violation of politeness principles often happen in the process of communication both in a formal situation or informal situation. School as formal institution in which students and teachers should use polite conversation in their interaction, usually use impolite language in some situation especially when students talk to their teacher. This is what degree of politeness meant by Leech in scales of authority scales. When people has lower status, he or she will talk more polite to the person who has higher status (Nurdianingsih, 2006, p. 20).

According to 2013 curriculum and also KTSP curriculum which are applied in the educational system in Indonesia right now, character building is the main aim of national education. Moral degradation especially for young generation becomes reason for government to concern more about character building. Marlina (2014, p. 3) stated that curriculum has been centralized and concerned to the character building. In line with Yoyon, Marlina

(2014, p. 9) the law of Republic of Indonesia number 20, 2003 also stated that national education has function to develop capability and build character. It means that politeness becomes one of the factors someone's good manner or character is relevant with curriculum.

Based on the pre-observation in SMP Muhammadiyah 03 Semarang showed that beside the fulfilment of politeness principles, there were also violations in politeness principle in the conversational interaction. Those things happened in the learning process and non learning process.

The example of violation of politeness principle between teacher and a student can be seen as follow:

Teacher : Which group will present their presentation first? No one? Okay, I choose randomly. Maya your group first.

Student : No Mister, No, Annisa first.

The conversation happened when the teacher taught the students and in the very beginning, the teacher asked the students deliver their presentation which



had been assigned the week before. When the teacher asked the students to come forward, there were no students who wanted to come forward. Finally the teacher chose randomly, and he chose Maya as the first presenter, but Maya did not want to be first presenter so she said “no” to her teacher and pointed Annisa as first presenter.

The way the student talked to the teacher by saying “no” directly without any permission could be identified as violated of agreement maxim. Agreement maxim itself has characteristic to the participants to increase agreement and decrease disagreement Leech in Huang (2008, p. 1). Based on the characteristic, Maya which was saying “no” without any permission and clear reason increased disagreement to her teacher and decreased agreement toward the teacher. So, it can be concluded that the utterance violated agreement maxim based on Leech’s maxim. Beside tact maxim, Leech also divided six politeness principles they are agreement maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, Modesty maxim and sympathy maxim (Rahardi, 2010, p. 59).

This research was aimed to find out the violation and fulfillment in the interaction between teacher and students in English as a Foreign Language classroom interaction.

### Methodology

This research used mix method research. Mixed methods research is combining two research method, qualitative and quantitative to collect data. This combination provides more complete understanding. (Creswell, 2013, p. 32).

The subject of the study was the eighth grade students and English teacher of SMP Muhammadiyah 03 Semarang. The eighth grade was chosen as purposive sampling to gain some specific purposes (Sugiono, 2011, pp. 118-119). While classroom observation, documentation, library research were chosen as instrument of data collection.

### Findings and Discussion

Politeness principles which is reputed as the most comprehensive, and most complete is Leech’s politeness principles (Rahardi, 2010, pp. 59-60). It is divided into six maxims. Maxim is linguistic principles in the lingual interaction. Maxim suggests the user to use polite language. In the other hand, maxim is controlling the utterances of the speaker to use polite language. There are six maxims in the politeness principles by Leech (Leech, 2014, p. 79). Tact maxim requires participants to minimize cost to the other and maximize benefits to the other. Generosity maxim requires participants to minimize benefit to self and maximize cost to self, Approbation maxim requires participant to minimize dispraise to the other and maximize praise to other, Modesty maxim requires speaker to minimize praise to self, and maximize dispraise of self, Agreement maxim requires participants to increase agreement and decrease disagreement, Sympathy maxim requires participants to maximize sympathy and minimize antipathy towards the other.

The researcher showed the analysis data of politeness principles violated and fulfilled in the conversation between teacher and students at eighth grade of SMP Muhammadiyah 03 Semarang in an EFL Classroom interaction. All of the data presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The data result of politeness principles

No	Indicators Result	Total	Percentage
1.	Violation	92	41%
2.	Fulfilment	71	31.5%
3.	Other	62	27.5%
<b>Total of utterances</b>		<b>225</b>	<b>100%</b>

The result shows that the violation of politeness principles becomes the most utterances used between teacher and students in classroom interaction with 92 utterances from the total of utterances were 225 utterances or 41%, the fulfillment with the total of 71 utterances or 31.5% and other with 27.5%.



The fulfillment of politeness principles could be seen in table 2.

Table 2. The fulfillment of politeness principle

Stages	Percentage					
	Tact	Generosity	Approbation	Modesty	Agreement	Sympathy
Opening	7%	1%				
Main Activity	16%	37%	25%	1%	10%	3%
Closing						
<b>Total</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>3%</b>

Based on table 2, there are three learning teaching stages, opening, main activity and closing. In the opening stage there are tact maxim with 7% and generosity maxim with 1%. In the main activity stage, all maxims contribute in giving the role. There are tact maxim with 16%, generosity maxim with 37%, approbation maxim with 25%, agreement maxim with 10% and sympathy maxim with 3%. In the closing stage there is no maxim fulfilled.

Meanwhile, the violation of politeness principles could be seen in table 3.

Table 3. The violation of politeness principle

Stages	Percentage					
	Tact	Generosity	Approbation	Modesty	Agreement	Sympathy
Opening						
Main Activity	36%	17%	27%	7%	4%	9%
Closing						
<b>Total</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>9%</b>

Table 3 showed that all of maxim violated in the main activity. The highest maxim violated was tact maxim with 36%, the second was approbation with 27%, generosity maxim become the third rank with 17%, while modesty and sympathy with 7% and 9%, and the lowest maxim violated was agreement maxim with 4%.

To get deep analysis of each maxim, the following is the analysis and the example of maxim fulfilled of politeness principles:

### 1. Tact Maxim

The characteristic of Tact maxim is minimizing cost to the other and maximizing benefits to the other (Leech, 2014, p. 133).

The example of tact maxim could be seen as follows:

Students : Miss, tidak pakai keterangan saja ya miss?  
 Teacher : Yes.  
 Teacher : Only ABC.

In the conversation, the situation happened when the teacher asked to the students to finish the assignment in the workbook. The students did the multiple choice assignment and they must submit to their teacher. In that kind of situation, the students asked to the teacher, that they wanted to submit by writing the letter of only ABC without the information supporting.

The teacher agreed and said only the ABC. The teacher fulfilled the tact maxim because she minimized cost to the other and maximized benefits to the other. She made the students to do the assignment easier. She gave the students benefits on finishing the assignment.

### 2. Generosity Maxim

The characteristic of Generosity maxim is to minimize benefits to self and maximize cost to self (Leech, 2014, p. 133). The example of generosity maxim could be seen as follows:

Student : Miss, more than 10 minutes miss.  
 Teacher : I will try to give you more than ten minutes. Because this is homework, and you do not prepare and ini akan saya nilai, you just do the essay.

The students still did the assignment but the time was almost over, so they had to submit in ten minutes. The students negotiated with their teacher to give them additional time more than ten minutes, and the teacher gave them more time to work. Even though the assignment was homework and they should do the assignment at home, but the fact was the students did not do the homework. The teacher was not angry and still asked the students to do the assignment and gave the additional time. The teacher minimized the benefits to herself and maximized cost to herself with sacrificing her time to re-asking the students in doing

their homework in the school and giving more times.

### 3. Approbation Maxim

Approbation maxim requires participant to minimize dispraise to the other and maximize praise to other is the characteristic of approbation maxim (Leech, 2014, p. 133). The example of fulfillment of approbation could be seen as follows:

Teacher : What is the answer?  
Student : B! B!  
Teacher : Oke, good.

The situation happened when the teacher and students were correcting the assignment together. The teacher chose one of the students to read the question and answered it. After that, the teacher involved all of the students to answer the question. The students answered the question, and when the students answered the question correctly, the teacher gave the compliment to the students with saying “good”. The teacher’s compliment given could be categorized as the fulfillment of Approbation maxim with maximizing praise to the other.

### 4. Modesty Maxim

Modesty maxim has the characteristic of participants to minimize praise to self, and maximize dispraise of self (Leech, 2014, p. 133). The example of modesty maxim could be seen as follows:

Student : Pura is Candi miss. Temple!  
Temple.  
Teacher : yes. Where is it located? Miss, don’t know.

The teacher asked the students to answer the question. In the process of asking, the teacher tried to make herself in the position of people who did not know even though she had known the answer of the question. The sentence of “Miss, don’t know” could be indicated as the fulfillment of modesty maxim. The teacher maximized dispraise to herself by saying that she did

not know the answer even though she had been already known.

### 5. Agreement Maxim

The characteristic of agreement maxim is increasing agreement and decreasing disagreement (Leech, 2014, p. 133). The example of agreement maxim is below:

Teacher : Page twenty five! he! listen! page twenty five. Keep silent.  
Students : Yess, miss.

The teacher asked the students to do the assignment page twenty five and also asked the students to be quite. In the conversation, we could see that the students agreed and said “yess”. It could be categorized as the fulfillment of agreement maxim.

### 6. Sympathy Maxim

The characteristic of sympathy maxim is to maximize sympathy and minimize antipathy towards the other (Leech, 2014, p. 133). The example of sympathy maxim could be seen below:

Teacher : How are you today?  
Students : I am fine, thank you and you?

Even though the conversation was only the formality in the very first learning, but actually, the conversation has already fulfilled the maxim of sympathy. This could be indicated that the habitually from formal and continuously conversation like asking and greeting somebody in the very first beginning was the best strategy to introduce them with politeness. In the conversation above, the teacher asked the condition of the students, and students answered the question with asking back the condition of their students. The way the teacher and students asked each other’s condition, could be categorized as the fulfillment of Sympathy maxim.

While the example of violation of politeness principles happened in the classroom interaction as follows:

## 7. Tact Maxim

The characteristic of tact maxim violated is minimizing benefits to the other and maximizing cost to the other (Leech, 2014, p. 133). The example of tact maxim could be seen as follows:

- Teacher : what is the meaning of dusk ?  
          dusk is senja. Sunset is?  
Students : matahari terbenam !  
Teacher : Good! What about matahari terbit?  
Students : Sunbit. Sun terbit ! hahaha

The teacher asked the students about the meaning of “sunset” in Indonesian and “matahari terbit” (sunrise). Firstly, the students answered quite well by saying “matahari terbenam”. After that, the teacher asked the English of “matahari terbit”, and one of students came up with the idea of “sunbit or sun terbit”. Eventhough the purpose of the student was only for joking, but he had already violated the Tact maxim because he could not put himself in the proper situation. The situation was quite serious and he had already maximized cost to the other.

## 8. Generosity Maxim

The characteristic of violated maxim is to minimize cost to self and maximize benefits to self (Leech, 2014, p. 133). The example of violation generosity maxim could be seen as follows:

- Teacher : oke, everyone, finish to make the  
          correction ? bring here !  
Student : sek miss, sek, wait, wait.

From the conversation above, it could be seen that the situation happened when the time for submitting the assignment was over. The teacher asked the students to submit the assignment but the students answered by using half of Javanese language, and asked the teacher impolitely to be waited. The request from the students to the teacher could be indicated as the violation of politeness principles of Generosity maxim, because the students wanted to maximize the benefits of themselves.

## 9. Approbation Maxim

Minimizing praise to the other and maximizing dispraise to other is the characteristic of violation of approbation maxim (Leech, 2014, p. 133). The example of Approbation maxim violated could be seen as follows:

- Student : You have to be carefully with the  
          monkeys.  
Student : Hahaha. Monkey ! you, monkey!

One of the student was reading the question, while the other student who was hearing the word “monkey”, directly yelled and mocked to the reader with saying that “he is monkey”. The way the student mocked to his friend as “monkey”, could be indicated as violation of approbation maxim.

## 10. Modesty Maxim

The characteristic of violation of modesty maxim is maximizing praise to self and minimizing dispraise of self (Leech, 2014, p. 133). The example of violation of modesty maxim could be seen as follows:

- Student : Miss, miss, if we done miss,  
          hihihi.  
Teacher : If you done, please you submit on  
          my table.

The situation in the conversation was when the teacher asked the students to do the assignment in the very first time. Suddenly, the students asked the question to the teacher. The purpose of the question was only to make a joke, and not to be serious. The students had already known that they had to submit the assignment on the table. They just wanted to show up. So, based on the situation, the student was maximizing praise of himself, and could be indicated as the violation of Modesty maxim.

## 11. Agreement Maxim

The characteristic of agreement maxim is increasing agreement and decreasing disagreement (Leech, 2014, p. 133). The example of agreement maxim violation could be seen below:



Student : Dimana..  
Teacher : Mana ada kata dimana ? there is  
no dimana. Hayooo..

The student translated the meaning into Indonesian. In the way translating, the teacher did not agree with the student's answer, so she said "mana ada kata dimana?" and "hayoo..". The way the teacher disagreed by saying it could be indicated as the violation of Agreement maxim.

## 12. Sympathy Maxim

The characteristic of violation of sympathy maxim is minimizing sympathy and maximizing antipati towards the other (Leech, 2014, p. 133). The example of violation of sympathy maxim could be seen as follows:

Teacher : Uluwatu is the name of city. Yo,  
submit it. I count, one! Two!  
Three!  
Student : Four! five!

The teacher gave the limitation to submit the assignment with counting one, two, three, to make the students hurry to submit it. But, in the other side, they did not submit in hurry, but they followed the teacher's counting. The way students followed counting, could be indicated as the antipati that was given to the teacher, and it could be categorized as the violation of sympathy maxim.

## Conclusion

The violation of politeness principles becomes the highest conversation used in the classroom interaction with the percentage of 41%, and the second place is the fulfillment with the percentage of 31.5%, and the last is the other utterances with the percentage of 27.5%. Generosity maxim became the highest maxim

fulfilled with the percentage of 38%, and the lowest maxim fulfilled is modesty maxim with 1%. Tact maxim 23%, approbation maxim 25%, agreement maxim 10%, modesty maxim 3%, and sympathy maxim got the percentages of 3%. The highest violation maxim with 36%. The second is approbation maxim with 27%. The next maxim violated was generosity maxim with 17%, sympathy maxim becomes the fourth position with 9%, modesty maxim became the fifth position 7%, and the lowest maxim is agreement maxim with 4%.

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