

Investigating EFL Students' Politeness Strategies in Pedagogical WhatsApp Text Conversation

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: ELT, pedagogy, politeness strategies, pragmatics, social media, WhatsApp</p> <p>DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v10i1.1831</p> <p>How to cite: Rowiyah, S., Humaira, N. & Fitriana, L. (2025). Investigating EFL Students' Politeness Strategies in Pedagogical WhatsApp Text Conversation. <i>Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics</i>, 10(1), 21-37</p>	<p>The use of social media in human life recently is such normal direct interaction including in English language teaching. Politeness strategies are essential in social communication to keep convenient connections. This study aims to examine how politeness strategies are used in increasingly complex situations, combining social media and the pedagogical context of multiple members' character, specifically in an EFL class WhatsApp group, and note any effects on students' language acquisition. This research employs a qualitative methodology with a precisely descriptive case study procedure. The data in this study consists of the last two months' WhatsApp group chats centered on English learning, specifically examining the usage of politeness methods as well as the results of a focused group discussion (FGD) involving six English as a Foreign Language (EFL) randomly selected students who are members of the WhatsApp group. The result shows that students use positive and negative politeness strategies during the WhatsApp conversation. It enhances their English language learning motivation, critical thinking skills, vocabulary enrichment, writing improvement, and raising awareness of English grammar skills. Therefore, applying politeness strategies in WhatsApp instructional conversations is advantageous in preventing the failure of effective communication during the learning process.</p>

1. Introduction

Social media has been an inseparable part of humans' daily basis. According to the data from the Hootsuite and We Are Social, social media users reach 5 billion by January 2024 (Hootsuite, 2022; Social, 2024). It proves that people's social media interaction belongs to their normal social life. Meanwhile, it is unavoidable that the younger generations of digital natives will have specific expectations about how learning should be conducted and how social media should become an essential component of the learning process. The teacher is also required to be familiar with the new educational changes, such as in the field of culture, pedagogy, communication technology, and knowledge advancements (Allam & Elyas, 2016). The act of being polite should be maintained whether communication is conducted verbally or written since everyone needs to be considerate of others. Politeness strategies have been a crucial part of maintaining interaction with others, including in social media (Eshghinejad & Moini, 2016). This is because the purpose of good communication is to create a relaxed dialogue between the parties involved, which can foster a feeling of familiarity and connection, in addition to accurately relaying messages to the intended receivers.

To help students manage social interactions and communicate successfully in various circumstances, politeness strategies are essential in language instruction. Teachers can provide students with the pragmatic skills they need to comprehend and utilize language in a variety of cultural contexts by introducing politeness strategies into language instruction (Taguchi, 2019). According to previous research, learners' sociolinguistic awareness and capacity for effective cross-cultural communication can be raised with specific training on politeness techniques (Dyner, 2020). Teaching politeness strategies is also beneficial in improving student attitude, providing a respectful learning atmosphere, and motivating students to participate actively in language learning activities (Fitriyani & Andriyanti, 2020). In this 21st century, it is necessary to integrate technology and online platforms into students' practice to give authentic experience in learning (Kosimov, 2022; M. N. Santoso, 2021). Teachers can assist students in developing critical communication skills and cultural awareness by emphasizing politeness tactics in language instruction. This will ultimately equip students for successful engagement in a globalized environment.

One of the most popular social media platforms for text messaging in Indonesia is WhatsApp, particularly among EFL students (Social, 2024; Syarif & Zaim, 2021). WhatsApp has become an essential component of language instruction and acquisition in recent times. Studies have demonstrated that incorporating WhatsApp into language courses can support genuine communication, foster cooperative learning, and increase students' involvement with the language being studied (Ahmed, 2015; Motteram et al., 2020). WhatsApp, as a medium, encourages learners to focus on the tone of their language, as it can be easily misinterpreted without the visual and vocal cues available in face-to-face communication. The casual and spontaneous nature of WhatsApp discussions offers a distinct chance to examine the utilization of politeness tactics by language learners (Flores-Salgado & Castineira-Benitez, 2018). An analysis activity of how learners handle politeness in their WhatsApp conversations can provide useful information about their pragmatic ability, cultural awareness, and overall communicative abilities (Pasaribu et al., 2021). A study by García-Gómez (2022) investigated the students' perspectives regarding the influence of WhatsApp utilization on their learning process. The result shows that WhatsApp's analysis indicates that non-native language users struggle to generate contextually appropriate utterances when communicating with native

English speakers, and their lack of pragmatic competence hinders their success. Moreover, investigating politeness strategies in language learning activities conducted on WhatsApp helps students to recognize the right etiquette in surfing social media and other internet platforms, which is called netiquette, derived from "internet/net and etiquette" (Hafid et al., 2022). It is characterized as the regulations and standards governing online behavior and conduct (Sabra, 2017).

This subject has been investigated by several previous studies, such as a study by Santoso and Indriani (2021), which explores positive politeness strategies in teacher-student WhatsApp conversations while learning English. The study identified 15 types of politeness techniques employed in the interaction, with the predominant forms utilized by the students are greetings, gratitude, asking questions, and expressing opinion. The second study is by Khusnia (2017) that investigated the application of politeness tactics in EFL classrooms and their impact on the promotion of positive values in EFL education. Positive politeness tactics are shown to be more prevalent than negative politeness and are expressed directly. The activities that demonstrate positive utterances include positive academic instruction, incentives, classroom management, and evaluation. Those previous studies may focus on identifying the forms of politeness strategies in teacher-student conversations, yet do not involve discussion of its impact on English language learning. To fill this gap, this study is going to investigate politeness strategy use in more complex conditions, specifically in a WhatsApp group of EFL class, and identify the impact on the language learning process. The originality of the present study resides in both the platform and the nature of the interaction. The interface utilized is online, specifically WhatsApp, facilitating interactions not only between the teacher and individual students but also encompassing discussions among multiple students and their lecturer. Conversely, prior research exclusively examines one of these two components. The language used during the WhatsApp chat may refer to English. The language used during the WhatsApp chat may refer to English. This matter may help EFL teachers and learners better analyze and contrast politeness strategies in both first and target languages. This result of research is significant since it can enhance EFL teachers' communication, student-teacher interactions, and language learning. Understanding these strategies can foster stronger relationships, improve engagement, and guide future studies on digital platforms and student motivation.

Research Questions:

1. How do EFL students use politeness strategies in the context of pedagogical text-based conversation with their teachers using WhatsApp?
2. To what extent do politeness strategies of WhatsApp text-based conversation impact English language learning?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Politeness Strategies in Pedagogical Context

The study of politeness strategies has been a topic of interest in the science of linguistics. There are some experts proposing this politeness strategies theory. Brown and Levinson, (1987) centers on the notion of "face," initiating the notion of "face" as an image in expressing politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987). They categorized faces into two distinct types: positive and negative faces. The first pertains to the inclination to seek recognition and

acceptance from others, whereas the latter concerns the desire of every "competent adult member" to have their actions unimpeded by others. The authors Brown and Levinson (1987) put several techniques for carrying out face-threatening acts (FTAs): bald-on-record without redressive action, positive politeness strategy, negative politeness, and off-record.

The initial strategy, refers to the way of doing FTA clearly, unambiguously, and in the most concise way possible. For instance, a request is uttered by "Do X!". Secondly, positive politeness statements are used to encourage unity and support, elicit positive emotions, and suggest shared interests or desires, enhancing familiarity and fostering a sense of alignment. The third is negative politeness, pertaining to the fundamental need to uphold one's claims of territory and determination. The last is off record generally using utterances that are indirectly addressed to another (Brown & Levinson, 1987). By conveying empathy, thankfulness, and common ground, positive politeness practices aim to enhance the addressee's pleasant demeanor. Fifteen forms of positive politeness strategies demonstrated by Brown and Levinson consist of *noticing, exaggerating, intensifying interest in the hearer, using group identity markers, seeking agreement, avoiding disagreement, presupposing or asserting the common ground, joking, asserting or presupposing the speaker's knowledge of and concern for hearer's wants, offer, be optimistic, include both speaker and hearer in the activity, give reasons, assume or assert reciprocity, and give gifts to hearers* whether it is goods, sympathy, understanding, or cooperation. Moreover, ten forms of negative politeness consist of *being direct or conventionally indirect, questioning or hedging, being pessimistic, minimizing the size of imposition on the hearer, giving deference, apologizing, impersonalizing, stating the FTA as a general rule, normalizing, and going on record as incurring debt*. Some people disagree with Brown and Levinson's idea, despite the fact it has been largely accepted. Ide (1989) contended that because their theory is founded on Western ideas of individualism, it might not be applicable to societies that place a higher priority on harmony within the group.

Another theory of politeness strategies was proposed by (Lakoff, 1977). According to him, it focuses on the social elements that control interlocutors' communication in a specific setting. Lakoff distinguished it clearly by stating that the second rule of politeness was broken down into smaller rules, whereas the first rule deals with Grice's maxims such as *"don't impose, give options, and make a feel good and be friendly"* (Lakoff, 1977). She also clarified that the first sub-rule relates to the formality and distance that unite members of various societies, in particular, the act of communication. She also adds a set of norms of politeness by proposing two main principles of pragmatic competence: the first one is "be clear," and the second is "be polite. "Be clear" means our conversations don't usually consist of a series of unrelated statements when we speak. They are collaborative endeavors. Every participant understands the shared goal at every layer of communication. The figure 1 below indicates theories by Brown and Levinson (1987) and Robin Lakoff (2003) that are applied as the theoretical framework of this study.

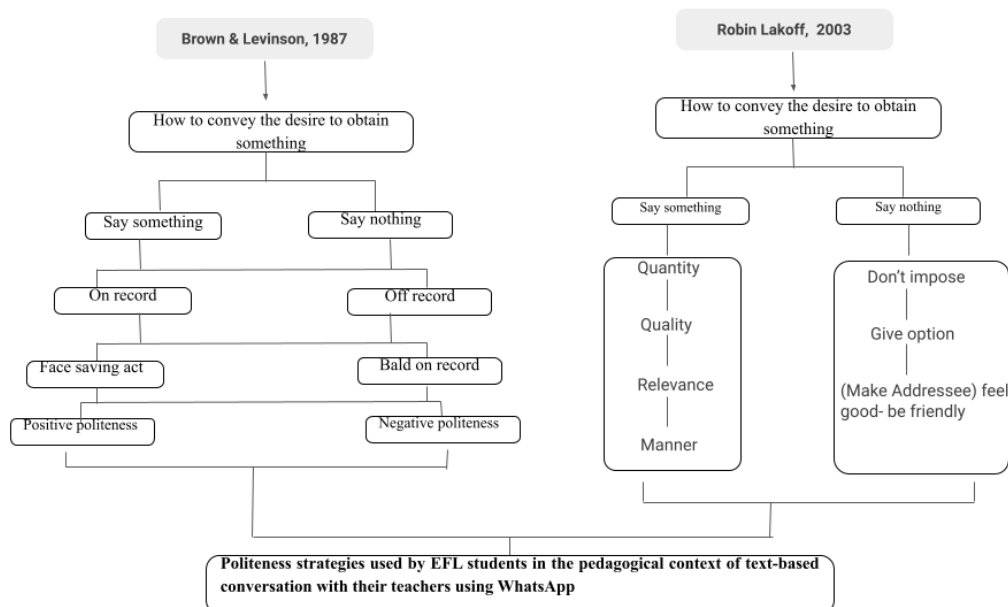


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

Politeness strategies are often implemented in pedagogical conversations, both direct and indirect, such as in online platforms. Prior research has examined the prevalence of positive politeness tactics over negative politeness strategies in EFL courses (Eshghinejad & Moini, 2016). An association exists between gender and text messaging regarding the use of positive and negative politeness strategies, although the difference is not significant. Furthermore, the implementation of politeness strategies is crucial in order to prevent the classroom from experiencing pragmatic failure. In contemporary times, the concept of face holds significant recognition and reverence in many EFL classrooms, be it in schools, colleges, or professional development centers (Latrech & Alazzawie, 2023). Teachers make a conscious effort to avoid causing harm or embarrassment to students and if they unintentionally do so, they promptly take actions to preserve the students' dignity.

2.2. WhatsApp in ELT Classroom

WhatsApp is one of the learning resources that every teacher should have when conducting instruction. In Indonesia, WhatsApp has been widely used as a communication tool in the education field. Urien et al. (2019) discovered that WhatsApp was one of the most favored social media platforms among college students, while Ahad and Lim (2014) found that undergraduate students frequently use WhatsApp. They credited WhatsApp's affordability, speed, real-time texting, and ease of use for their heavy usage.

WhatsApp chat groups can function as a medium for language learning in addition to serving as a communication platform. According to Mabaso et al. (2023), using WhatsApp to teach English has a favorable impact that could support both teachers and students in continuing their education independently. WhatsApp group chats can be used as an English learning exercise since they help EFL students think critically about every subject that is covered. But using it on social media could lead to misunderstandings. According to Dynel (2020), interactions in social media can be distinguished by the spatial separation and ambiguous hearership of speakers and hearers. In this sense, communication is dominated by civility (Afsyah, 2019). Additionally, in an academic setting, students must take into account the

language they use in interactions since it might influence the listener or hearer in a way that is related to politeness. Additionally, since the teacher and other students often communicate by written messages in the class WhatsApp group, students must think about being courteous when interacting with others in that group. Conversely, language is a necessary instrument for people to interact with each other (Asoulin, 2016).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

In completing the present research, researchers used a qualitative design, especially a descriptive case study approach to answer research questions explicitly. A case study is a method of investigation that is commonly used in several fields, such as evaluation. Using this approach, a researcher conducts a comprehensive analysis of a particular instance, which can involve an activity, program, event, process, or one or more people (Creswell & Creswell, 2021). The procedure is implemented by delineating the data and scrutinizing it in a manner closely aligned with focus analysis. This study examines the politeness strategies employed between students and teachers in a WhatsApp group and EFL students of the group member. The data in this study are the WhatsApp group conversations of English learning containing the politeness strategies, and the result of focused group discussion (FGD) participated by EFL students of the WhatsApp group.

3.2 Participants

In order to gather information on how politeness strategies of WhatsApp text-based conversation impact EFL language learning, this research employed Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving six students experienced in online class communication through WhatsApp social media. The participants were selected randomly from the total students in the WhatsApp group. According to Deliens et al. (2014), focus groups are particularly beneficial when a researcher seeks to understand individuals' perceptions on a topic, their experiences with it, and the rationale for their unique thought patterns. The language used during the FGD is Indonesian since it is not intended to measure their English proficiency, yet to gain a clear explanation of the impact of the use of politeness strategies in WhatsApp conversation on their English learning. A focus group is an intimate gathering of six to nine people of EFL university students aged 20-30 years old with B1 CEFR level or intermediate English proficiency. They represent male and female students in the WhatsApp group. The FGD was conducted by a qualified moderator (the researchers) to explore attitudes, perceptions, emotions, and ideas surrounding a certain issue (O.Nyumba et al., 2018). In addition, gathering information by FGD will enrich the data and help the researcher to be more varied rather than conducting individual interviews.

3.3 Instruments

The research utilized two kinds of instruments to get the data. Initially, the document analysis involves gathering screenshots of WhatsApp dialogues from the intended English learning classroom. The chat occurred during two active learning months due to the numerous discussions in the WhatsApp group. Several key aspects were considered in selecting the conversations to be analyzed, including the conversations with linguistic features and politeness strategies employed by the students, such as the use of hedges, honorifics, and directness or indirectness and can provide insights into the students' communicative norms

and cultural influences. Secondly, the researchers developed a collective interview guide to facilitate structured focus group discussions and gather crucial data from the participants. The interview inquiries about students' experiences regarding the politeness strategies employed in text-based interactions with their teachers via WhatsApp, as well as the influence of these strategies on their English language learning advancement and efficacy.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

Qualitative data studies involve examining data collected from diverse sources such as conversational data, pictures, observations, and structured, semi-structured, or unstructured interviews (Lester et al., 2020). This analysis helps to provide a deeper comprehension of the data by considering the surrounding circumstances and context. The data will be evaluated using the following activities: reducing the unnecessary data, displaying the data, and conclusion drawing or verification. The data obtained from the WhatsApp group conversation and FGD are chosen according to the specific requirements of the study question. Subsequently, the researcher validates the data through the implementation of research and triangulation techniques. The research process comprises three essential stages: planning, application (which includes data collection, data analysis, drawing conclusions, and providing suggestions), and systematically publishing the study findings.

4. Results

4.1. EFL Students' Politeness Strategies in the Context of Pedagogic on WhatsApp Conversation

The data analysis of an EFL WhatsApp conversation between EFL students and their lecturers during English language instruction and learning activities revealed certain politeness strategies based on the theories of Robin Lakoff and Brown and Levinson. Among many messages, twenty WhatsApp messages indicate the application of politeness strategies. The researcher writes the term "datum" for each chat analyzed to make analysis display easier.

Datum 1 specifically demonstrates negative politeness strategies by using hedging while posing queries. The speaker requested the hearer to provide further clarification on the topic that had been previously addressed. However, before beginning the questioning, the speaker expressed enthusiasm for the hearer's earlier accomplishments. This method falls under the second category of Lakoff's thesis, which is relevant because the response given by the speaker is in line with the material shared by the interlocutor.

Datum 2 indicates a positive politeness strategy, which is exactly an offer. In this chat, the student sent his material for the next day's presentation, and then he welcomed the audience to ask some questions about the topic. It is appropriate with Lakoff's strategy of being polite, rule 1, not to impose the hearer since the speaker does not impose their ideas or opinions on others, as how a question is asked does not involve coercion.

Datum 3 contains the negative politeness strategy of being direct. In this situation, the speaker directly asks the hearer a question to follow up on the content of the material shared without involving any hedging or preface. This strategy belongs to be clear according to Lakoff's hypothesis, which is exactly on rule 4 of manner, be succinct. The purpose of this rule is to convey the information explicitly.

Datum 4 specifies the negative politeness strategy, exactly impersonalizing the speaker and listener by abandoning the pronouns "I" and "You." In this chat, the lecturer first thanked particular students whose names were mentioned and said that they had sent questions to the group responding to the presenting students. In the following line, he also instructed other students who were not involved to ask questions. The lecturer did not point them directly to avoid being intimidated. Therefore, according to Lakoff's theory, this strategy is categorized into "be polite", rule 1 of not imposing the hearer.

Datum 5 shows a negative politeness strategy in the apology form. In this chat, the student sent the presentation material exceeding the due time given by the lecturer, whereas the lecturer instructed her to send it a day before the presentation so that the other students can learn it well and ask appropriate questions. Therefore, the speaker apologized for her mistakes. On the other hand, the next statement of the chat belongs to Lakoffs' strategy of being polite and not to impose since the speaker did not instruct the audience to ask questions, yet she will be fine for the questions given.

Datum 6 reflects the existence of baldness on the record, as seen from Brown and Levinson's theory and belongs to be clear, exactly be perspicuous seen from Lakoff's theory. In this message, a student requests the hearer to explain more detail of what has been shared. The request stated explicitly, without redressive action to avoid the hearer being offended.

Datum 7 displays both positive and negative politeness strategies. In this conversation, a student uses the words "my honorable lecturer" and "my beloved friends" at the beginning of the text. This falls under the category of using in-group marker of identity and an action to make the addressee feel good or friendly, based on Lakoff's hypothesis. Meanwhile, at the end of the message, she directly asks her friends to ask some questions or convey advice for her. This way of speaking is categorized as negative politeness, a direct strategy.

Datum 8 shows negative politeness of be direct. It reflects on how the student directly asked a question to the presenting group without any complex introduction. She opened her message with an Islamic greeting and then stated some information about her, like her name and student number. She also specified what group the question refers to. By doing this, it also relates to Lakoff's strategy of being clear, rule 4 be succinct. The student made herself as concise as possible by only stating the question.

Datum 9 refers to his friends as "mates", he exhibited positive politeness in the use of in-group identity markers. This strategy is quite unusual since the atmosphere of the WhatsApp group is very formal and academic. However, the researcher managed to identify this particular positive politeness that happened in this WhatsApp group conversation. This also can be added to Lakoff's strategy of be polite, rule 3 makes an addressee feel good-be friendly. The student used greetings that show togetherness and seem friendly for his classmates.

Datum 10 indicates positive politeness of seeking agreement because the student asked for the presenting group's approval before he raised a question intended for them. This strategy is also quite unusual to happen along the WhatsApp group conversation when the presenting groups sent their PPT slides in the group. Commonly, other students ask questions directly without seeking approval or agreement from the presenting group. In addition to this, the student also shows Lakoff's strategy of be polite, rule 1 do not impose. The student firstly

asked approval and showed attitudes of not imposing the presenting group to answer his question.

Datum 11 reveals negative politeness of be direct. It reflects on how the student directly asked a question to the presenting group without any complex introduction. However, he neither opened his message with greetings nor stated some information about him, like his name and student number. He also did not specify what group the question refers to. Fortunately, there was only one presenting group that day, so there was no misunderstanding regarding the question. By doing this, it also relates to Lakoff's strategy of being clear, rule 4 be succinct. The student made himself as concise as possible by only stating the question.

Datum 12 provides an example of positive politeness of give or ask for reason by politely asked how the presenting group can be sure about their statement written in their PPT slides material given to the group. This strategy is unlikely to happen in this WhatsApp group conversation. Most of the time, the students asked questions that are not implicitly stated in the presenting group's PPT slides. This example also falls under Lakoff's strategy of be clear, rule 3 be relevant. The student asked something which is relevant to the topic that will be delivered by the presenting group.

Datum 13 shows positive politeness of be optimistic. The student showed how optimistic he is about his opinion because of his past teaching experience. He opened his message by stating his name then proceeded to tell the class about his past teaching experience in teaching grammar. This can also be added to Lakoff's strategy of be clear, rule 1 be as informative as required. The student explained his past teaching experience briefly to strengthen his opinion.

Datum 14 demonstrates positive politeness of assert reciprocity by the lecturer. He referred to a particular group to add some material to be presented later on as a part of students' responsibility in following his class. By doing this, the lecturer also reflects Lakoff's strategy of be clear, rule 4 be perspicuous because the instruction given by him is clear and does not need any further explanation from himself.

Datum 15 shows positive politeness in avoiding disagreement. In this chat, the student intends to ask for permission from the lecturer because he has a sore throat and cold. Therefore, he cannot attend the class. However, he continued the chat by saying, "Thank you for your permission," without waiting for the lecturer to answer his chat. In Lakoff's strategy, it can be categorized be clear, rule 2 Quality, only articulate what you ascertain to be factual. It can be analyzed when the student is sure that the lecturer is willing to give him permission.

Datum 16 indicates the example of positive politeness of giving sympathy to the interlocutor. In this case, the lecturer showed his empathy to the students by wishing the students to get better soon. This is also categorized in Lakoff's strategy as being Polite by making the addressee feel good.

Datum 17 demonstrates positive politeness of notice the hearer wants. It can be found when the students correct the other student by mistyping the word "pronunciation." It is also reflected in Lakoff's strategy, which is to Be clear in rule 4 Manner and not be ambiguous. The student hopes the other student to be clear in typing or naming a file.

Datum 18 shows positive politeness in the category of jokes. It can be found when a student states, "I am happy to have a chance to ask," as a response to the previous chat, "Feel happy

to ask questions.” This is also categorized in Lakoff’s strategy: Be polite in rule 3 to make the addressee feel good. As it can be identified when the student said that he is happy it did not represent what he really meant.

Datum 19 reveals positive politeness in using group identity markers. In this chat, the student addressed a question followed by a sentence that triggered the hearer to stand in his position as a teacher. Lakoff’s strategy can be classified as Being clear in rule 3, which is Relevance.

Datum 20 demonstrated positive politeness in seeking agreement. This can be found in the phrase, “I believe it is one of ASR-based CALL systems.” The students emphasize their thoughts and try to send messages to another hearer. Lakoff’s strategy can be classified as Being polite in Rule 2, which is to give an opinion. Table 1 below summarizes the distribution of Brown & Levinson’s politeness strategies employed by students in the WhatsApp group chat interactions. Meanwhile, Table 2 presents a summary of Lakoff’s rule distribution.

Table 1. Brown & Levinson’s Strategy Distribution

No.	Politeness Strategy Type	Sub-Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Positive Politeness	In-group markers, seeking agreement, jokes, giving sympathy, avoiding disagreement	13	65%
2.	Negative Politeness	Being direct, hedging, impersonalizing, apologizing	6	30%
3.	Bald on Record	Direct strategy	1	5%
Total			20	100%

Table 2. Lakoff’s Rules Distribution

No.	Rule Category	Sub-Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Be Clear	Be succinct, be perspicuous, be relevant, be as informative as required	8	40%
2.	Be Polite	Don’t impose, make others feel good, give option	12	60%
Total			20	100%

To sum up, the analysis of the EFL group chat in WhatsApp among the learners and their teacher demonstrates a variety of politeness strategies drawn from the Brown and Levinson model and Lakoff, respectively. The positive and the negative politeness strategies used by the participants consisted of visual social communication behavior such as hedging, offering, in-group identity markers, apologizing, bride-seeking agreement, and being direct. Furthermore, they followed Lakoff’s guidelines to be nice, accurate, and constructive when

interacting. The results underline the nuanced bunch of positive politeness strategies in the EFL students' instructional practice in WhatsApp conversations through substantiating their learning space respect among achieving communicative clarity.

4.2. The Impact of Politeness Strategies of WhatsApp Text-Based Conversation on English Language Learning

Based on the data gathered from focus group discussions, we have analyzed the results and revealed that politeness strategies mostly used in academic and formal settings can positively affect students' motivation to learn the English language if they are often used in communication.

"For me, it depends on the intensity. If it is high, then it is significant." (Student 2)

Participants also explain why they think it can positively affect their motivation for learning English language learning. The reason is that politeness strategies enable students to look for polite and suitable English words when communicating with lecturers. Therefore, it can enrich their vocabulary unconsciously. Additionally, politeness strategies also raise students' awareness of English grammar,

"This politeness strategy forced us to use appropriate vocabulary, appropriate grammar and non-offensive sentences." (Student 4)

"Grammar is a must when in written communication because it helps both parties involved in a conversation and understanding each other. Grammar is part of politeness strategies, and it will improve English learning motivation. I agree." (Student 1)

"Direct (spoken) and indirect (written) communication is very different in terms of absorbing information." (Student 2)

However, participants also stated that they feel more comfortable when communicating without politeness strategies with their friends, and they expanded their vocabulary knowledge from English slang,

"I rarely use politeness strategies with my friends. Because I use English slang with them." (Student 3)

"In academic settings, we have learned the formal language. When communicating with friends overseas, they often use informal language and slang. I tailored my English skills to them. I learned various new vocabulary in informal and impolite language." (Student 1)

One student shared his idea about how politeness strategies affected his speed in a conversation.

"If using politeness strategies, I feel delayed somehow. The language is delayed a little because we should think carefully first." (Student 2)

The application of politeness strategies is also conditional upon students' intrinsic motivation. Some students are willingly communicating with the lecturers using politeness strategies because they see it as a potential to develop their skills, while some students hindered by it,

"It motivates me a lot if I use politeness strategies when I contact my lecturer because If I don't dare to do it, when will I be? I need to search for relevant sources about politeness and polite language first, and it motivates me to learn English." (Student 1)

"I don't like beating around the bush. Therefore, if there is a friend who wants to contact the lecturer, then I will not do it. But, if it is a must, then I will do it, using politeness strategies, of course." (Student 3)

Interestingly, a student shared her opinion about how politeness strategies are deeply rooted with the culture of a country. She said politeness strategies in languages are different based on the culture of the language where it is spoken and the politeness strategies can help language learners to learn the language better.

"I personally like direct communication better because we don't need to talk much.

However, politeness strategies are part of Indonesian culture regardless of what language we use. Whether it is Bahasa Indonesia, English or Local language." (Student 4)

The participant added,

"In my opinion, politeness strategies in every country are different and it can motivate us to learn about the target language." (Student 4)

In summary, the politeness strategies employed in WhatsApp text-based conversations for English language learning affect students' writing proficiency by enhancing their ability to produce coherent and polite messages, particularly in Indonesia, a country with a high-context culture. Although these strategies can prove effective for the motivation, vocabulary, and grammar benefits students receive in formal academic settings, effectiveness is contingent upon personal preferences and contexts. The students appreciate having politeness strategies in class so that they can go through their lectures and formal situations better. Yet they also value the colloquialisms of conversational, informal language between peers as an expanding element of their lexical repertoire. This study underscores the importance of cultural variables with respect to politeness strategies and demonstrates the role that language learning plays in shedding light on target-language culture use.

5. Discussion

The analysis of the WhatsApp group conversation reveals that Brown and Levinson's hypothesis is supported since the usage of positive politeness techniques exceeds that of negative politeness strategies. Specifically, there were 13 instances of positive politeness strategies and 6 instances of negative politeness strategies. There is only one piece of information that is recorded as bald. When the study is applied to Lakoff's theory, the usage of "be clear" techniques is more prevalent than "be polite" methods. 11 data points demonstrate the application of "be clear," and 9 data points illustrate the usage of "be polite." This is supported by Eshghinejad and Moini (2016), most students preferred to utilize certain positive and negative politeness strategies when during communicating with their lecturer than just stating their opinions baldly. This confirms the current literature by Savić (2018), who observed that politeness strategies are used in several different ways in computer media communication, whereby EFL learners incorporate various politeness strategies in computer media culture but do not compromise the cultural norms of politeness. Meanwhile, politeness

strategies are also beneficial to avoid failure in understanding and maintaining language classroom communication (Latrech & Alazzawie, 2023).

Furthermore, the politeness strategies employed in WhatsApp text-based conversations for English language learning affect students' writing proficiency by enhancing their ability to produce coherent and polite messages, particularly in Indonesia, a country with a high-context culture. It is in line with the study by García-Fuentes and McDonough (2018) that procedure repetition may be crucial in assisting students in gaining proficiency in their second language, particularly in using a politeness strategy when they disagree. The findings indicated that procedural repetition, rather than mere content repetition or explicit teaching, may enhance the application of preferred politeness strategies during disagreements. Additionally, after being exposed to slang and idioms more frequently in informal communication, students might get more structurally and methodically accustomed to formal style communication with the help of politeness methods employed during the WhatsApp conversation. Their motivation and eagerness to interact on all available occasions gradually develop as a result. Monsefi & Hadidi (2015) contend that positive politeness can augment teachers' capacity to fulfill students' positive identities while safeguarding their negative identities through the provision of support, demonstrating an understanding of students' needs, and expressing empathy when students encounter difficulties or experience embarrassment. It promotes student engagement and encourages more active and interactive participation to enhance the learning experience.

Based on the findings above, the influence of politeness strategies on the process of learning English is of great interest. Students also claimed to develop better word bank utilization, better understanding of grammar as well as its application, and increased motivation when using politeness strategies in formal academic contexts. Similar to Ren & Han (2016), who found that a focus on pragmatic competence and politeness strategies, in particular, can enhance EFL learners' performance and the current study also sampled EFL learners. Nevertheless, the present study also recognizes the opposition of two important aspects of language use: the student can benefit from both politically correct academic language and the informal language of the streets, synonymous with slang. This division corresponds to the conclusions made by Taguchi (2019), which stresses the need to acquire various communicative competencies in different forms of language use in second language acquisition. Another example of grammar acquisition through the implementation of politeness strategies is when the students employ hedging devices like "Would it be possible to...", they naturally practice and internalize the needed grammar construction. It aligns with the study by Tajeddin and Pezeshki (2014) that investigated the efficacy of instructing EFL learners in politeness markers and analyzed the influence of several instructional approaches (input improvement and output tasks) on the learners' understanding and usage of these markers. The findings indicate that instructing politeness signals benefits EFL learners, as evidenced by the input-enhancement group outperforming the output group in both understanding and production, although they frequently overemphasize the use of markers.

Concerning the vocabulary aspect, the consistent use of politeness strategies has triggered the students' word acquisition. When the students regularly practice academic discussion and try to find suitable words in the WhatsApp group, they show improved capability in lexical bundle use, such as "I concur with your point about.". Furthermore, the diversity of students' backgrounds in the WhatsApp group enhances their cultural and contextual vocabulary

comprehension. The study by Adel et al. (2016) examined politeness tactics to improve intercultural computer-mediated communication in posts authored by Iranian EFL learners on a class blog, facilitating asynchronous interaction with their teachers and classmates. The outcome indicates that it serves as a means for intercultural computer-mediated communication. Finally, politeness strategies usage in pedagogical WhatsApp group conversations significantly impacts students' pragmatic competence since they were engaged with various politeness forms, which leads to the nuanced relationship between language selection and social context. According to Culpeper et al. (2017), politeness entails discerning a certain implicature of the speaker's courteous intentions. This enhances students' knowledge of interlocutor receptiveness and modifies the appropriate language to employ.

6. Conclusion

This study aims to examine the civility methods employed by EFL postgraduate students in text-based interactions with their instructors via WhatsApp. Analysis of the data, grounded in Brown Levinson's and Lakoff's theories about two study topics, reveals that the majority of students predominantly employ positive politeness methods, followed by negative politeness strategies, meanwhile, in Lakoff's theory, the students typically employ "be clear" strategy followed by "be polite" in WhatsApp group class conversation.

Employing politeness strategies in WhatsApp text-based conversation is believed to enhance students' English language learning motivation. It unconsciously navigates their critical thinking skills for choosing the polite and appropriate language to convey the message. Hence, their vocabulary enrichment is positively influenced. Some of them even revealed that using politeness strategies in WhatsApp conversations can improve their writing. Furthermore, utilizing these strategies has raised students' awareness of their English grammar skills. They began to pay more attention to details and the structure of their sentences. However, some participants viewed politeness strategies as something that can hinder their willingness to communicate due to the tendency to pause. In essence, politeness strategies' positive impact on English language learning is highly dependent on students' self-motivation and self-efficacy. Further research regarding politeness strategies in text-based conversation should look into any other social media except WhatsApp to find a clearer view regarding the effectiveness of politeness strategies in EFL classrooms. Furthermore, it is recommended to look deeper into the differences between using politeness strategies online and face-to-face, which students can benefit from.

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