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Politeness Strategies in Lecturer–Student Interaction: A Sociopragmatic Study in Indonesian Higher Education

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Abstract

Although politeness strategies have been widely examined in pragmatic studies, research specifically addressing their sociopragmatic function in managing face-threatening acts within lecturer-student interaction in Indonesian higher education remains limited. This study aimed to examine how politeness strategies operate as sociopragmatic resources in managing face-threatening acts (FTAs) in classroom discourse. Using an interactional pragmatic framework, the study employed a qualitative discourse-analytic design based on naturally occurring classroom interactions. Data were collected through audio recordings of nine lecturers across three foreign-language education programmes, namely German, Arabic, and Mandarin Language Education, at one Indonesian university, totaling approximately 450 minutes of classroom discourse. The recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed sequentially to identify the realization of politeness strategies in institutional interaction. The findings reveal that lecturers deploy politeness strategies dynamically in response to instructional and institutional demands. Positive politeness predominates in instructional and corrective discourse (42%), bald-on-record strategies appear primarily in regulatory contexts (31%), negative politeness minimizes imposition

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in evaluative settings (14%), and off-record strategies indirectly regulate student behavior (13%). These patterns reflect sociopragmatic variation shaped by institutional roles, cultural expectations, and norms of appropriateness. The study concludes that politeness functions not only as an interpersonal strategy but also as a mechanism for negotiating institutional authority and relational alignment in classroom discourse. These findings contribute to sociopragmatic and classroom discourse scholarship by extending classical face-management models to institutional and hierarchical interaction in Indonesian higher education.

Keywords: Politeness Strategies; Lecturer-Student Interaction; Sociopragmatics; Face-Threatening Acts; Classroom Discourse

INTRODUCTION

Research on linguistic politeness has been extensively conducted in the fields of language education and interpersonal communication. In educational contexts, politeness is not static; it develops alongside communicative competence and linguistic awareness across different educational levels (Alaiyed, 2024). Politeness is broadly understood as a context-dependent and socially constructed phenomenon that varies across cultural and institutional settings (Maiklad & Numtong, 2025). Recent developments in politeness research have further emphasised its dynamic and evaluative nature as an interactional phenomenon shaped by participants' interpretations and expectations (Haugh, 2024; Jucker, 2023). Such variation can generate pragmatic failure or miscommunication when speakers express their communicative intentions in divergent ways. Consequently, politeness operates as a regulatory mechanism that governs speaker behaviour and sustains the continuity of social interaction (Nursanti et al., 2023).

Numerous studies demonstrate that politeness strategies play a crucial role in creating supportive learning environments, establishing mutual respect, and facilitating effective classroom communication. In institutional contexts such as universities, politeness is closely tied to power relations because interaction unfolds asymmetrically, shaped by institutional roles and expectations (Breeze, 2022; Lukman et al., 2024). Politeness strategies therefore serve not only interpersonal but also institutional functions, particularly in managing face-threatening acts (FTAs) and maintaining pedagogic order. This position aligns with a

sociopragmatic perspective that views politeness as shaped by contextual norms, role relations, and expectations of appropriateness (van Dorst et al., 2024).

From a communicative standpoint, the appropriate deployment of politeness strategies contributes to respectful and collaborative classroom interaction. In higher education, polite communication between lecturers and students is associated with greater engagement and relational alignment in learning. Politeness in both formal and informal academic interaction reflects the communicative culture that develops within educational institutions (Lukman et al., 2024). Empirical research also shows that student politeness correlates with positive interactional outcomes (Al Rousan et al., 2024). Nonetheless, recent studies indicate shifts in politeness practices, particularly in digitally mediated communication, where conventional politeness forms are being reduced or reconfigured (Doval Suárez & González-Álvarez, 2025).

Despite the growing body of politeness research, most prior studies focus on student-initiated interaction or peer exchanges. These studies typically examine politeness from a learner perspective, identifying and categorising strategies without deeply exploring how such strategies function within institutional power structures. In contrast, research examining lecturer politeness as an institutional practice remains comparatively limited, particularly regarding how lecturers manage authority, evaluation, and classroom interaction (Syting & Gildore, 2022). Furthermore, classroom discourse is inherently structured and goal-oriented, involving systematic interactional patterns such as turn-taking, evaluation, and feedback sequences (Walsh, 2011; Gosen et al., 2024), all of which are directly tied to the enactment of pedagogic authority.

This gap becomes particularly salient given the limited number of studies that analyse lecturer politeness from a pragmatic perspective integrating contextual meaning, illocutionary force, and interactional function. Most existing research remains descriptive, classifying politeness strategies without linking them to their strategic role as pedagogic devices or FTA-management mechanisms (Al Rousan et al., 2024). Yet lecturers routinely perform FTAs when delivering feedback, issuing instructions, or responding to misconduct. How those FTAs are realised—whether through positive politeness to build solidarity or negative politeness to respect student autonomy— substantially shapes student responses and participation in classroom interaction (Terkourafi, 2023; Doval Suárez & González-Álvarez, 2025).

Against this background, this study analyses the politeness strategies employed by lecturers in classroom interaction at an Indonesian university from a sociopragmatic perspective. The study focuses on three foreign-language education programmes— German, Arabic, and Mandarin Language Education—which, by virtue of their heightened linguistic and cultural sensitivity, provide a rich discursive context for pragmatic analysis. The study proceeds from the assumption that politeness functions not merely as a social norm but as an interactional resource through which participants negotiate meaning, authority, and relational alignment (House & Kádár, 2023).

Although Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework positions politeness as a face-management mechanism, this study extends that perspective by situating politeness within institutional discourse, where it additionally serves as a vehicle for negotiating pedagogic authority. In lecturer–student interaction, politeness operates simultaneously to mitigate face threats and to sustain instructional control. By analysing naturally occurring classroom discourse, this study contributes to ongoing debates in pragmatics regarding the role of politeness in hierarchical and contextually embedded social interaction.

The novelty of this study lies in three interconnected contributions. First, it integrates sequential discourse analysis with sociopragmatic theory to examine how politeness strategies are dynamically deployed across different instructional contexts—a dimension underexplored in existing literature focused predominantly on taxonomic classification. Second, it locates politeness within the institutional logic of Indonesian higher education, providing empirical evidence from a non-Western, multilingual setting that enriches cross-cultural pragmatic theory. Third, it demonstrates that within a single classroom, lecturers fluidly shift across all four Brown and Levinson strategy types—positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, and bald-on-record—in response to real-time interactional contingencies, thereby establishing politeness as a dynamic, context-sensitive resource rather than a stable stylistic choice. By placing politeness within this broader sociopragmatic and institutional framework, the study shows that linguistic choices not only reflect interpersonal intent but also enact processes of power negotiation and participatory governance in classroom interaction.

Theoretical Foundation

Classical Approaches to Politeness

Politeness has traditionally been conceptualised within the framework proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), who regard politeness as a set of strategies for mitigating face-threatening acts (FTAs). In this model, speakers are assumed to orient toward two dimensions of face: positive face—the desire to be accepted and approved of—and negative face—the desire to act without imposition or interference from others. Politeness strategies are thus employed to reduce the potential threat to either dimension, particularly in situations involving requests, criticism, or directives.

Although highly influential in pragmatic research, this model has attracted sustained criticism for treating politeness as a relatively stable and universal system of strategic choices, thereby underestimating the role of context, culture, and interaction in the constitution of meaning (Locher & Watts, 2005; Watts, 2003).

Discursive and Relational Approaches to Politeness

More recent developments in pragmatics reflect a shift from strategy-based models toward discursive and relational approaches to politeness. Watts (2003) argues that politeness should not be understood as an inherent property of linguistic forms but as an evaluative judgement that emerges through interaction. Mills (2003) similarly emphasises the role of social norms and contextual interpretation in shaping perceptions of politeness.

The concept of relational work, as introduced by Locher and Watts (2005), further extends this perspective by positioning politeness as part of a continuum of interpersonal behaviour through which participants negotiate social relationships. From this standpoint, politeness encompasses not only face-mitigation practices but a wider range of behaviours that construct, maintain, or challenge social relations in interaction.

Contemporary research reinforces this shift, demonstrating that politeness is dynamically constructed through participants' evaluations and interactional expectations rather than fixed by particular linguistic forms (Haugh, 2024; Jucker, 2023).

Institutional Discourse and Classroom Interaction

Politeness in institutional contexts differs from everyday interaction by virtue of pre-assigned roles, asymmetric power relations, and goal-oriented communication. In classroom discourse, lecturers occupy positions of authority, while students are expected to conform to

instructional norms. This institutional structure shapes the production and interpretation of utterances, particularly with respect to instruction, evaluation, and feedback.

Consequently, interaction in educational settings cannot be fully understood through general conversational models alone but must be analysed in terms of the institutional constraints and communicative goals that underpin it. Classroom discourse is characterised by systematic interactional patterns—including turn-taking, evaluation sequences, and feedback routines—that are tightly linked to pedagogic purposes (Walsh, 2011; Gosen et al., 2024).

Recent research further confirms that classroom discourse is shaped by sociopragmatic norms and institutional roles, with language use reflecting interpersonal relations as well as instructional goals (van Dorst et al., 2024). In this context, politeness strategies serve not only face-maintenance functions but also support interactional clarity, student participation, and learning engagement.

Politeness and Power Negotiation in Academic Contexts

The relationship between politeness and power is particularly salient in academic interaction. Although lecturers hold institutional authority, they must simultaneously manage interpersonal relationships to sustain student engagement and participation. This creates a dynamic tension between control and cooperation, in which politeness functions as a primary resource for negotiating authority.

From a critical discourse analysis perspective, language use in institutional settings reflects broader structures of power and control, where politeness serves as a mechanism for legitimising authority and regulating interaction (Breeze, 2022). Accordingly, politeness strategies are deployed not only to reduce face threats but also to align participants, sustain instructional order, and manage participation in hierarchical contexts.

Nonetheless, comparatively few studies have investigated how politeness is realised interactionally in naturally occurring classroom discourse, particularly within non-Western higher education settings. Existing research has tended to focus on identifying politeness strategies without examining how those strategies function sequentially in interaction or how they relate to institutional roles and pedagogic goals. This study addresses that gap by analysing lecturer–student interaction through an interactional pragmatic lens.

Politeness, Normativity, and Institutional Interaction

Contemporary approaches in pragmatics emphasise that politeness should be understood as a situationally governed practice regulated by social norms, rather than a fixed set of strategies. From a sociopragmatic perspective, language use reflects collectively constructed social expectations regarding appropriateness, authority, and relational alignment (Terkourafi, 2023). In institutional contexts such as classrooms, these norms become especially consequential because participants operate within asymmetric relations that constrain communicative choices and shape the interpretation of utterances. Interactional pragmatics further affirms that meaning is jointly constructed through ongoing interaction and participants' orientation to the interactional context (House & Kádár, 2023).

METHODS

The analysis in this study is grounded in naturally occurring classroom interaction and employs discourse analytic procedures with a focus on sequential interpretation, thereby enabling examination of how meaning is constructed within its interactional context.

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative interpretive design drawing on Pragmatic Discourse Analysis. This design was selected because the study aims to uncover how meaning, communicative intent, and interactional purposes are realised through lecturer utterances in authentic classroom contexts. The analysis is grounded in Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, with a specific focus on how lecturers mitigate face-threatening acts (FTAs) in pedagogic interaction.

The qualitative approach enables in-depth interpretation of linguistic choices in relation to contextual variables such as power relations, pedagogic goals, and classroom norms that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative methods alone. The use of naturally occurring data is consistent with discourse-based research that emphasises authentic interaction in the analysis of communicative practices (Walsh, 2011).

Research Context and Participants

The study was conducted within foreign-language education programmes at one Indonesian university. The primary participants were active lecturers teaching at the undergraduate level across three programmes:

1. German Language Education
2. Arabic Language Education
3. Mandarin Language Education

Purposive sampling was employed to ensure disciplinary and contextual diversity. Nine lecturers—three from each programme—were selected based on teaching experience and classroom accessibility. Students enrolled in the recorded sessions participated as secondary participants, primarily to support triangulation through student perception data.

Data Sources

The primary data consisted of naturally occurring spoken interaction between lecturers and students in the classroom. Data were generated through audio recordings of at least one complete instructional session per lecturer participant. Recordings captured instructional discourse including explanations, directives, feedback, corrections, and reprimands in contexts that elicited face-threatening acts (FTAs).

Secondary data comprised field notes documenting situational context, interactional dynamics, and relevant non-verbal cues. The study also drew on student perception data obtained through a Likert-scale questionnaire designed to measure student comfort levels and participation in classroom interaction.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected from the foreign-language education programmes at one Indonesian university. Collection was conducted through non-participant classroom observation to preserve the naturalness of interaction. Audio recording was carried out using digital recording devices to ensure data clarity and accuracy. Each recording session was transcribed verbatim, with timestamps included to link analytical units to the original audio.

Field notes were compiled immediately following each session to contextualise utterances in terms of instructional goals, classroom atmosphere, and directly observable student responses.

Unit of Analysis

The primary unit of analysis was lecturer utterances containing face-threatening acts (FTAs). FTAs were operationally defined as utterances with the potential to threaten students' autonomy or positive face, including:

• criticisms;

• corrections;

• reprimands;

• instructions; or

• evaluative feedback.

Each identified FTA was treated as a discrete unit of analysis.

Data Analysis Technique

The analysis drew on principles from conversation analysis, particularly with regard to the sequential organisation of turns and the relationships between adjacent interactional moves (Gosen et al., 2024). Utterances were not analysed in isolation; rather, sequential interpretation was applied to examine how each turn responds to the preceding one and shapes subsequent interaction.

Data analysis proceeded through the following stages:

• **FTA Identification.** All lecturer utterances in the transcripts were examined to identify potential FTAs based on illocutionary force and contextual indicators.

• **Politeness Strategy Categorisation.** Each identified FTA was categorised according to Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies: Bald-on-Record, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness, and Off-Record.

• **Contextual Pragmatic Interpretation.** Strategies were then interpreted in terms of situational factors including power asymmetry, social distance, instructional goals, and classroom norms.

• **Pattern and Distribution Analysis.** The frequency and variation of politeness strategies were analysed to identify dominant patterns across individual lecturers and programmes.

• **Triangulation with Student Perceptions.** Pragmatic findings were triangulated with student questionnaire data to identify associations between dominant politeness strategies and student comfort and participation levels.

These interpretations reflect a sociopragmatic perspective that views meaning as shaped by contextual norms, role relations, and expectations of appropriateness (van Dorst et al., 2024).

Trustworthiness

To ensure the credibility and dependability of the study, methodological triangulation was employed through the integration of discourse analysis, field observation, and student perception data. Peer debriefing was conducted with fellow linguistics researchers to refine the coding process. An audit trail comprising transcripts, coding sheets, and analytical memos was maintained to enhance transparency.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection. All participants provided informed consent, and participant identities were protected through pseudonyms and identification codes. Audio recordings and transcripts were stored securely and used exclusively for academic purposes.

RESULTS

Recording Summary and FTA Distribution

A total of nine classroom sessions were recorded across the three foreign-language education programmes, yielding approximately 450 minutes of naturally occurring instructional discourse. Table 1 presents a summary of data by lecturer, including session duration, number of FTAs identified, and the dominant politeness strategy observed per participant.

Table 1. Recording Summary and FTA Distribution per Lecturer

Programme	Lecturer Code	Session Duration (min)	FTAs Identified	Dominant Strategy
German	L-G1	52	12	Positive
German	L-G2	48	11	Positive
German	L-G3	50	10	Bald-on-Record
Arabic	L-A1	55	12	Off-Record
Arabic	L-A2	47	11	Positive
Arabic	L-A3	50	11	Positive
Mandarin	L-M1	53	12	Positive
Mandarin	L-M2	46	11	Negative
Mandarin	L-M3	49	10	Bald-on-Record
Total	9 lecturers	450	100	-

Across all nine sessions, 100 FTAs were identified in total: 33 from German Language Education (L-G1: 12, L-G2: 11, L-G3: 10), 34 from Arabic Language Education (L-A1: 12, L-A2: 11, L-A3: 11), and 33 from Mandarin Language Education (L-M1: 12, L-M2: 11, L-M3: 10). The distribution indicates broadly comparable rates of FTA production across programmes, suggesting that the institutional demands of foreign-language education consistently generate conditions conducive to face-threatening interactional moves.

Face-Threatening Acts as Institutional Actions

Analysis of naturally occurring classroom interaction demonstrates that lecturer utterances systematically orient toward the production of face-threatening acts (FTAs), particularly those targeting students' negative face. This reflects the institutional character of classroom discourse, wherein lecturers bear responsibility for regulating participation, enforcing academic norms, and sustaining the instructional process.

Nonetheless, FTAs are not realised uniformly through direct or unmitigated utterances. Rather, they are managed interactionally through context-sensitive politeness strategies, indicating that lecturers continuously balance institutional authority against relational considerations. The following analysis illustrates how this balance is constructed through sequential interaction.

These patterns reflect the structured nature of classroom discourse, in which interaction is shaped by institutional roles and pedagogic goals that position lecturers as authority figures responsible for regulating student participation (Walsh, 2011; Breeze, 2022). Table 2 presents representative examples of FTAs and the politeness strategies through which they are realised.

Table 2. Face-Threatening Acts and Politeness Strategies in Classroom Interaction

Study Programme	Lecturer Utterance	FTA Type	Politeness Strategy
German Language Education	"If possible, please turn your cameras on so I can see who is present."	Instruction	Positive Politeness
German Language Education	"This is actually already good, but the final section needs to be clarified a little."	Correction	Positive + Negative Politeness
Arabic Language Education	"Those who have already submitted the assignment - only twenty students."	Evaluation	Off-Record
Mandarin Language Education	"Please pay attention first; I will explain everything one by one."	Instruction	Negative Politeness

Study Programme	Lecturer Utterance	FTA Type	Politeness Strategy
Mandarin Language Education	"The video must be a maximum of five minutes, in accordance with faculty regulations."	Regulation	Bald-on-Record

Table 2 shows that face-threatening acts in lecturer–student interaction are realised through a range of politeness strategies calibrated to their instructional context and pedagogic purpose. The variation demonstrates that politeness strategies are not applied uniformly but are shaped by interactional function and institutional demands.

Positive Politeness in Instructional Alignment

Excerpt 1: Lecturer L-G1 (German Language Education), Session Duration: 52 minutes, Timestamp: 00:04:17

"If possible, please turn your cameras on so I can see who is present."

This utterance appeared at the opening of an online instructional session in which the lecturer sought to establish visual engagement with students. Although the utterance functions as a directive and thus constitutes a threat to students' negative face, the threat is mitigated through the conditional marker if possible.

From a sequential perspective, this mitigation positions the directive as a request rather than an imposition. Rather than demanding compliance outright, the lecturer frames the action as negotiable, thereby creating space for student co-operation. The deployment of positive politeness in this context serves to align participants around a shared instructional goal, maintaining relational harmony without relinquishing pedagogic control.

This use of positive politeness is consistent with an interactional view of politeness as a resource for building alignment and shared orientation in discourse (Haugh, 2024).

Negative Politeness in Directive Management

Excerpt 2: Lecturer L-M2 (Mandarin Language Education), Session Duration: 46 minutes, Timestamp: 00:22:35

"Please pay attention first; I will explain everything one by one."

This utterance occurred during a moment of classroom distraction. The lecturer redirected students' attention through a directive softened by the politeness marker please.

Sequentially, the utterance performs two simultaneous functions: it constrains student behaviour in a manner that potentially threatens negative face while simultaneously providing a justification through the promise I will explain everything one by one. This combination reduces the degree of imposition and signals respect for student autonomy.

The use of negative politeness in this context reflects an orientation toward minimising imposition while retaining control over the course of classroom interaction. The mitigation employed demonstrates speaker sensitivity to the potential coerciveness of the directive and reflects an effort to maintain interpersonal balance consistent with norms of appropriateness in institutional interaction (van Dorst et al., 2024).

Politeness in Corrective Feedback

Excerpt 3: Lecturer L-G2 (German Language Education), Session Duration: 48 minutes, Timestamp: 00:31:08

"This is actually already good, but the final section needs to be clarified a little."

This utterance appeared in an evaluative context in which the lecturer provided feedback on student work. The utterance constitutes a threat to students' positive face by drawing attention to a deficiency in the work under evaluation.

However, the positive evaluation in the initial clause (already good) functions as a buffer that mitigates the subsequent criticism. Sequentially, the lecturer first constructs agreement and alignment before delivering corrective feedback. This sequencing reduces the face threat while preserving student motivation.

The pattern illustrates a combination of positive and negative politeness, indicating that the lecturer orients simultaneously toward maintaining interpersonal rapport and pedagogic effectiveness in delivering evaluation. The sequential organisation of praise followed by criticism reflects the interactional management of evaluative feedback to mitigate face threat without compromising its pedagogic function (Sert et al., 2024).

Off-Record Strategies in Evaluative Contexts

Excerpt 4: Lecturer L-A1 (Arabic Language Education), Session Duration: 55 minutes, Timestamp: 00:38:44

"Those who have already submitted the assignment — only twenty students."

This utterance occurred in a context where assignment submission was incomplete. Rather than explicitly reprimanding non-compliant students, the lecturer delivered a factual statement.

From a pragmatic perspective, this utterance constitutes an off-record strategy: the underlying directive—that students should submit their assignments promptly—is conveyed implicitly and left unspoken. Sequentially, the utterance creates an interactional inference space through which students can interpret the lecturer's expectation without being subjected to an explicit reprimand.

This indirectness minimises potential face damage while still achieving the pedagogic goal of promoting compliance. The off-record strategy illustrates how meaning is jointly constructed through inferential processes, enabling participants to understand the intended action without the imposition of explicit directives (House & Kádár, 2023).

Bald-on-Record Strategies and Institutional Authority

Excerpt 5: Lecturer L-M3 (Mandarin Language Education), Session Duration: 49 minutes, Timestamp: 00:44:22

"The video must be a maximum of five minutes, in accordance with faculty regulations."

This utterance appeared in a regulatory context in which institutional rules were being enforced. Unlike the preceding examples, no mitigation strategy was employed in the delivery of this directive.

The directive is presented as non-negotiable, directly supported by reference to institutional authority through the phrase in accordance with faculty regulations. Sequentially, this move eliminates the need for relational negotiation, foregrounding rule-compliance over interpersonal considerations.

In this context, the bald-on-record strategy is not experienced as impolite but as the appropriate communicative form for fulfilling institutional obligations to maintain academic standards. This finding corroborates the view that the appropriateness of a strategy is determined by contextual and normative factors rather than by the strategy type itself.

Distribution of FTAs and Politeness Strategies

Quantitative analysis supports the qualitative findings of this study. Across all observed interactions, FTAs targeting negative face—instructions, directives, and regulatory

moves—appeared more frequently than FTAs targeting positive face. This indicates that classroom discourse is structurally oriented toward regulating student behaviour.

The distribution of politeness strategies reflects the following functional differentiation:

• Positive politeness predominates in instructional and corrective contexts requiring relational alignment.

• Negative politeness is used to soften directives and preserve student autonomy.

• Off-record strategies are primarily deployed in evaluative contexts to reduce explicit face threat.

• Bald-on-record strategies appear more frequently in regulatory contexts where institutional clarity takes precedence over relational considerations.

Table 3. Distribution of Politeness Strategies in Lecturer-Student Interaction

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Positive Politeness	42	42%
Bald-on-Record	31	31%
Negative Politeness	14	14%
Off-Record	13	13%
Total	100	100%

Table 3 shows that positive politeness is the most dominant strategy employed by lecturers in classroom interaction. This indicates that lecturers tend to build relational alignment and a supportive learning environment while simultaneously exercising institutional authority.

These patterns demonstrate that politeness strategies are not deployed randomly but are calibrated to interactional goals and institutional constraints. This supports the view that politeness is not a fixed strategy system but a context-sensitive practice shaped by institutional roles, interactional goals, and normative expectations (Terkourafi, 2023; van Dorst et al., 2024).

DISCUSSION

This study analyses the deployment of politeness strategies in lecturer–student interaction in higher education as a manifestation of institutional discourse. Employing an interactional pragmatic framework, the findings show that politeness cannot be reduced to a

fixed set of linguistic strategies for mitigating face-threatening acts; rather, it functions as a contextually situated and interactionally negotiated resource serving multiple communicative purposes (Haugh, 2024; Jucker, 2023).

The findings demonstrate that institutional responsibilities, instructional goals, and the sequential organisation of interaction consistently shape the selection of politeness strategies. Positive politeness is primarily used to build alignment and encourage student participation; negative politeness mitigates imposition in evaluative contexts; off-record strategies allow lecturers to regulate student behaviour indirectly; and bald-on-record strategies emerge in contexts that require clarity and institutional regulation. These patterns confirm that politeness is tightly coupled with the interactional demands of classroom discourse and does not operate as a universal, fixed face-management system. These findings support the discursive view of politeness as a dynamically emerging interactional phenomenon shaped by contextual and institutional factors (Terkourafi, 2023; van Dorst et al., 2024).

From a theoretical standpoint, this study reinforces the shift in pragmatics from strategy-based models toward discursive and relational approaches. The findings affirm that politeness is not an inherent property of linguistic forms but emerges through participants' evaluations and interactional expectations (Locher & Watts, 2005; Watts, 2003). The results are also consistent with contemporary perspectives that conceptualise politeness as jointly constructed within social norms and institutional practices (Haugh, 2024). This study extends politeness theory by demonstrating how linguistic choices function as resources for negotiating authority and sustaining interactional order in hierarchical contexts, as foregrounded in critical discourse analytic perspectives on institutional communication (Breeze, 2022).

Methodologically, the use of naturally occurring classroom interaction data and sequential analysis affirms the importance of studying politeness in authentic interactional contexts. This approach aligns with discourse-based research that foregrounds interactional organisation in meaning-making (Walsh, 2011; Gosen et al., 2024) and strengthens the relevance of interactional pragmatics for understanding how meaning is dynamically constructed in real communicative exchanges (House & Kádár, 2023).

This study also expands the geographical scope of pragmatic research by focusing on higher education in Indonesia. It provides empirical evidence of contextual variation in

politeness practices across a distinct cultural and institutional environment, thereby supporting the view that politeness is shaped by sociopragmatic norms rather than universal principles (van Dorst et al., 2024).

The findings establish that politeness strategies function as sociopragmatic resources through which institutional authority and relational alignment are dynamically negotiated. Strategies are not applied as fixed linguistic forms but emerge in response to interactional contingencies and the normative expectations governing classroom behaviour. In this sense, politeness reflects broader processes of social normativity, wherein appropriateness, respect, and interactional effectiveness are shaped by institutional roles and cultural context (Terkourafi, 2023).

Lecturer–student interaction also demonstrates that power is not simply imposed but is interactionally managed through language. The deployment of politeness strategies allows lecturers to perform FTAs while sustaining relational equilibrium and instructional order. This supports a discursive understanding of politeness as a dynamic, contextual, and continuously negotiated phenomenon mediating between authority and solidarity in interaction (Breeze, 2022; Haugh, 2024).

By situating politeness within an institutional discourse framework, this study extends traditional face-management models—which have focused primarily on interpersonal dimensions—toward a broader sociopragmatic perspective. It shows that communicative practices not only reflect but actively reproduce social structures, thereby deepening our understanding of the role of pragmatics in contextually and institutionally situated social interaction (House & Kádár, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that politeness in classroom interaction functions as a sociopragmatic mechanism bridging interpersonal relations and institutional authority. The findings show that lecturers deploy politeness strategies deliberately to manage face-threatening acts while sustaining instructional order and relational balance. By foregrounding the relationship between language use, social normativity, and institutional context, this study contributes to an understanding of pragmatics as a phenomenon embedded in social practice and affirms the importance of studying authentic interaction to understand how meaning, power, and appropriateness are negotiated in real communicative contexts.

The findings show that institutional roles, pedagogic goals, and the sequential organisation of interaction systematically shape the realisation of politeness strategies. Positive politeness is primarily deployed to build alignment and encourage student participation; negative politeness minimises imposition in evaluative contexts; off-record strategies enable indirect management of student behaviour; and bald-on-record strategies emerge in contexts requiring institutional clarity and regulation. These patterns demonstrate that politeness operates in accordance with the functional demands of classroom interaction rather than as a universal and static face-management system.

Theoretically, this study supports the shift from strategy-based toward discursive and relational approaches by showing that politeness is an emergent property of interaction jointly constructed by participants and interpreted in relation to specific institutional contexts. It further illustrates how linguistic choices serve as mechanisms for negotiating authority and sustaining interactional order in hierarchical contexts.

Methodologically, the use of naturally occurring classroom interaction data and sequential analysis provides deeper insight into how meaning is dynamically constructed in real communicative contexts, while reinforcing the relevance of interactional analysis in the study of institutional discourse.

Finally, by focusing on higher education in Indonesia, this study extends the geographical scope of pragmatic research. It offers empirical evidence of variation in politeness practices across a distinct cultural and institutional environment, thereby enriching our understanding of pragmatic phenomena beyond the Western-dominated contexts that have historically prevailed in the field.

The study affirms the importance of politeness strategies in shaping effective classroom interaction. The findings suggest that awareness of pragmatic choices can assist lecturers in managing communication more effectively, thereby enhancing student engagement and participation in learning. This has implications for the development of discourse-based language teaching approaches and for professional development initiatives in higher education.

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