FACE-THREATENING ACTS: CONFLICTS BETWEEN PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IN EFL CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

Education is not only teaching and learning but also maintaining relationship between teachers and students. This issue is important issue since the relationship influences the teachers' teaching effectiveness and the students' learning outcomes. This kind of relationship can be observed on how the teachers interact with the students in the classroom. In this research we would like to see whether teachers' attitude affects students' perception on such a behavior. This behavior was seen through the language that teachers use in the classroom. In some schools, teachers tend to minimize the effectiveness of teaching and learning process by doing face threatening acts (FTA), which causes the students feel uncomfortable, tense, and anxious (Pomerantz 1984, Beebe & Cummings 1985, Chen, 2006). As a result, the students' learning outcomes might be deteriorated. In some cultures, doing such a thing would be considered impolite not to mention rude. Therefore, the need of highlighting the delicate issue of FTA to the pre-service teachers should be raised as early as possible during their teaching practicum.
The research was conducted in one of the private senior high schools in Jakarta with a sample of two teachers and 60 students of Grades 11 & 12 from two classrooms of English. The research method was using qualitative and quantitative approach with descriptive statistics to analyze the findings. A list of questionnaires was used along with an interview with the two teachers to clarify the results. The discussion covered several aspects regarding the existence of FTA in EFL classrooms : the threatening acts used by EFL teachers in class, the patterns of pre-service teachers' use of the threatening acts, the factors affecting EFL teachers' use of threatening acts, and the students' responses and their perceptions of the pre-service teachers' use of threatening acts in EFL classrooms. The investigation was expected to give insights for the pre-service teachers and also for the teacher training program to anticipate the use of FTA in the classroom.

Keywords: *Face Threatening Acts, EFL Students, Indirect Threats, Indirect Accusation*

INTRODUCTION

Face threatening acts is something which is not really taken into consideration seriously by both teachers and students. The speech acts might be considered as normal behavior teachers must do in order to maintain the classroom atmosphere as well as the students' discipline. However, serious pedagogical implications might happen if this behavior is not corrected not to mention avoided. The study is trying to show the serious effect of the acts as well as how to improve the learning process especially in EFL classroom settings.

1.1. Background of the Study
This study was done as a final project of the Language and Culture class of Applied English Linguistics program at Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia.

1.2. Objective of the Study
This study is trying to investigate the following:
- whether or not teachers ought to use threatening acts in the class.
- students' perceptions of the use of threatening acts by teachers are determined.

1.3. Research Questions
The study wants to answer the following research questions:
1. What are the threatening acts used by EFL teachers in class?
2. What are the patterns of the teacher's use of threatening acts?
3. What are the factors affecting EFL teachers' use of threatening acts?
4. What are the students' responses and their perceptions of the teachers' use of threatening acts in EFL classrooms?

LITERATURE REVIEW

There were 2 (two) previous studies regarding the impoliteness in EFL classroom. One was done by Abbas "Linguistic Impoliteness and Social Disruption in Literary Discourse" and the other one was "Impoliteness in interlanguage requests of EFL learners in Poland" carried out by Kozak. The literary

review was used here as a comparative study and additional materials for the literature background. However, the main reference for the study was taken from Chen, I. J. (2017). *Face-Threatening Acts: Conflict between a Teacher and Students in EFL Classroom.* Open Journal of Modern Linguistics, 7, 151-166.

2.1. Impoliteness in language classroom
Communicative strategies that are employed to promote and maintain social harmony have always been the focus of politeness theories or politeness phenomenon (Culpeper, 1996:349). Little research has been done in the area of impoliteness in language classroom.

2.2. What is Impoliteness?
It is well-known that people usually use linguistic strategies to maintain or promote harmonious social relations. Brown and Levinson (1987:1) claim that politeness "makes possible communication between potentially aggressive parties

2.3. Face Threatening Acts in EFL classroom
The classroom environment is one of the most suitable examples, where the speaker (the teacher) may use a bald-on-record utterance. Such a relationship might be that of masters and servants, or more commonly, of employers and employees. Threatening is a speech act that has received the least attention in the field of pragmatics. Chen (2006) indicated that research examining impoliteness has been scant. However, the dynamics of impoliteness in interaction may expand our knowledge regarding the complexities of this phenomenon.

2.4. Summary
Speech act studies have been flourishing in the field of pragmatics. However, research on FTAs in classroom settings, particularly the highly face-threatening speech act behavior, remains insufficient. Furthermore, studies on FTAs have included discourse analysis or have analyzed the effects of social status on strategies used within the face and politeness framework. Thus, additional studies investigating FTAs in EFL teaching environments and students' responses to such acts are required.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study investigated the types, the patterns, and the factors of threatening acts of pre-service senior high school EFL teachers as well as students' responses and perceptions of such acts. By using research methods derived from classroom observation, a face-to-face interview, and an open-ended questionnaire, the questions of what, how, and why regarding this pre-service senior high school EFL teacher's use of threatening acts in class can be addressed. Also the senior high school EFL students' responses and perceptions of these acts can be studied.
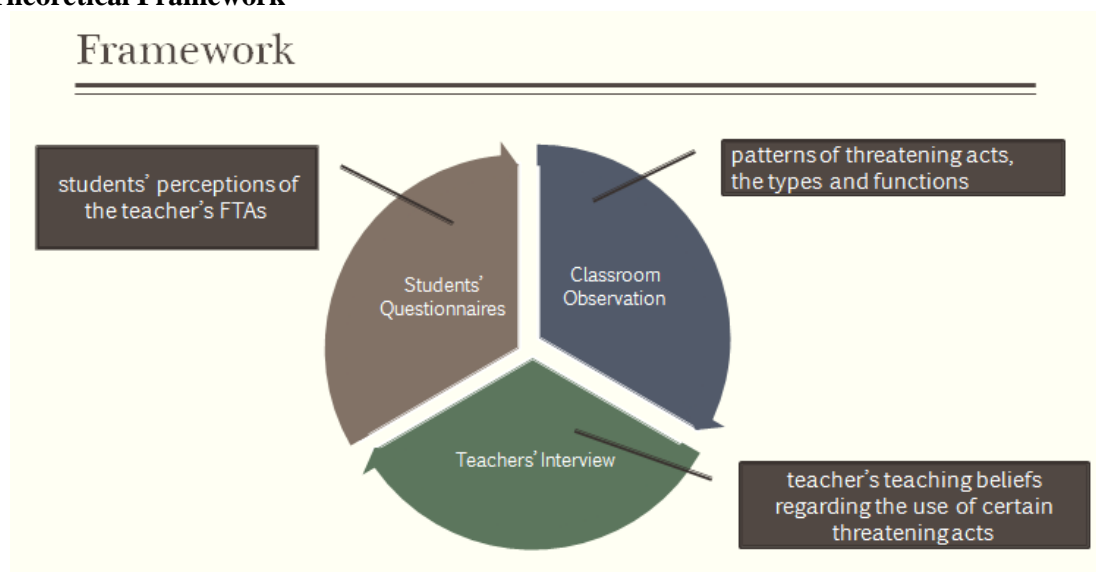
3.1. Theoretical Framework

Figure 3.1 Theoretical framework

3.2. Research Settings

A private senior high school is located in Central Jakarta, with a total of approximately 350 students of senior high school division, respectively. A total of 9 EFL teachers are responsible for English teaching in both high school divisions. The school follows the Curriculum Standards proposed by the Ministry of Education.

3.3. Data Collection Technique

The students were recorded during the classroom activities and later were asked to fill out a questionnaire describing their data as well as their perception on the teachers' behavior regarding the face threatening acts in the classroom.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data then were analyzed to find out whether there were face threatening acts happened.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After observing the classes and any potential Face Threatening Acts (FTA) occurred in the classrooms, a process of interviewing the pre-service teachers was followed up for a clarification. The findings covered both data from the female and male teachers. However, the discussions sometimes might refer to both of them or it would be specifically highlighted individually for a gender perspective purpose. Throughout the discussion, if there was no information given regarding the teachers mentioned, then it would refer to the pre-service teachers involved in this study. Tabel 1 showed the data containing the occurrences of FTA in the pre-service teachers' EFL classrooms.

From this table the first two questions of this study would be answered. The first question was regarding the types of threatening acts used by EFL teachers in the classroom.

A total of 12 threatening acts were observed. There were four main types of threat proposed by Chen (2017), 1) indirect threats (avoiding explicit mention of the students), 2) indirect accusations (involving questions to students about their unfavorable behavior), 3) direct threats with modified blame (with softer expression), and 4) direct threats with explicit blame. Interestingly,11 FTAs found were classified only as indirect threats where teachers avoided to mention the students and 1 FTA was classified as an indirect accusation (involving questions to students about their unfavorable behavior).

In general, the situations of the classroom showed a very dynamic activities. There were a variety of classrooms activities contained presentation, practice and production stages. However, if an in-depth look at Table 1 was given, questions regarding how the teacher perceived the students' activities and how the teacher interpreted the relation between herself and the class were worth exploring during the interview with the teachers later on.

The second question was regarding the patterns of the teacher's use of threatening acts. The data from the video showed that in most occurrences, the FTAs happened during the practice stage. It could be assumed that students were enthusiastically discussed the materials or deliberately took their freedom in expressing themselves during the lesson.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This present study investigated the pre-service teachers' use of FTAs in EFL classrooms. In particular, it explores the types, patterns of the FTAs occurred during the teaching process, and also the students' perception of the teachers' use of FTAs. The results from the classroom observations, the teachers' interviews, and the students' questionnaires showed several conclusions.

First, there were 12 occurrences of FTAs that could be observed during four-times teaching done by both pre-service teachers. 11 FTAs were categorized as indirect threats where teachers avoided to mention the students and 1 FTA was categorized as an indirect accusation. (involving questions to students about their unfavorable behavior). Second, the patterns showed that in most occurrences, the FTAs happened during the practice stage. Third, there were at least three reasons why they both decided to employ such FTAs. The first reason came from the belief that their first impressions upon the students during their preliminary observation prior to the teaching practice were all positive. The second reason came from their mentors' direction which reminded them not to get too emotional or angry for any reason. The third reason derived from their belief that for most of the cases where students tended to cry out for attention were resulted from their needs to be acknowledged.

Lastly, according to the students' perceptions, both pre-service teachers already performed well. However, it was believed that there were always be room for improvement. Between 26.3%-29% of the students suggested that the pre-service teachers could increase their qualities in giving motivation and giving individual attention. Furthermore, after listening to the teachers and looking at how students perceived their teachers, both parties believed that there were things to improve or could be made better. The fact that teachers restrained themselves for being more confirmed towards classroom management or discipline was also felt by some students in the class.

A suggestion could be made as a pedagogical implication, if only more classroom management techniques trained and practiced by the pre-service teachers, and the experience of real classroom exposure be given earlier, the pre-service teachers could be more confident in utilizing their classroom interaction and classroom management where FTAs could be used for serving good purposes.

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