

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Study

Politeness is an important aspect of human behavior for communication, especially in an educational context between teachers and students in classroom interactions. Teachers serve as a role model for students in terms of language as an authority figure, and as facilitators. The quality of the classroom interactions is greatly influenced by the way the teacher communicates, teaches, corrects mistakes, and inspires students. The language the teacher uses creates the emotional environment of the classroom. A student's attitude might become distant, anxious, or passive as a result of inappropriate interactions, but kind and encouraging interactions can foster self-assurance and active participation. The interactions between students and an English teacher at SMP Negeri 13 Medan are the focus of this study.

During the preliminary observation, teacher frequently faced a variety of communicative scenarios in the classroom that forced them to modify their approach to speaking with students. Depending on the circumstances, the teacher may need to provide specific instructions to keep control and get the students' attention, while in other cases, the teacher may need to speak more calmly to foster participation, alleviate students' concerns, or create a positive classroom environment. These diverse classroom settings demonstrated the dynamic nature of classroom interaction, which necessitated ongoing changes in the teacher's language usage in response to the students' reactions, the classroom environment, and the pedagogical requirements.

Teachers changed their communication approach to increase student participation while ensuring the classroom atmosphere remains orderly. The various politeness strategies chosen, including bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record, appeared to be influenced by the teacher's teaching objectives, the need to organize the class, the nature of the students, and the state of learning activities.

The researcher saw a number of classroom interactions between students and the teacher throughout the initial observation at SMP Negeri 13 Medan. Some students were chatting during the course of the lesson at one point. At that point, the teacher said,

T: "Be quiet and listen to your friend!"

And the students paid attention to the lesson as soon as they heard the command. In another situation, the teacher asked a question, but the students looked hesitant to answer. The teacher then responded,

T: "It's all right, don't be scared to make mistakes".

After this encouragement, several students began to raise their hands and attempted to answer the question.

According to these classroom exchanges, the teacher employed a variety of speaking strategies depending on the circumstances. The second statement was more encouraging of student participation, while the first statement was more instructional in terms of classroom management. This suggested that a teacher's linguistic decisions during classroom interaction could change depending on the pedagogical requirements

and environment. This is in line with the view of teacher cognition put forward by Simon Borg (2003), which states that teachers' practices are influenced by their knowledge, beliefs, and thoughts, as well as the context in which they teach.

The importance of knowing how changes in teachers' classroom language influenced the teaching and learning process, particularly in promoting student participation and maintaining a positive learning environment, is what makes this study so urgent. Because classroom environments are constantly changing, teachers needed be adaptable in choosing the best communication methods.

Moreover, the use of politeness techniques such as bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record had an impact on students' motivation, readiness to participate, and the overall quality of classroom interaction. Therefore, this research is essential in empirically describing teachers' communication practices in English language teaching by examining how these strategies were used in actual classroom settings.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness involved showing awareness of other people's face and wants. Face referred to a person's public self-image. Teachers often commit Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) in their interactions, such as lecturing, correcting errors, or scolding students. To reduce the threat to students' face teachers used politeness strategies such as bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off the record, to reduce the threat to students' faces.

Numerous studies had examined methods of politeness in EFL classroom conversation. Haera et al., (2025) found that teachers and students at high schools employed three main strategies, positive politeness, negative politeness, and bald on record. Positive politeness being the most popular. The data indicated that teacher attempted to establish a close relationship with their students by using encouraging language. The effects of teacher politeness strategies on the learning process were studied by Mujiati, (2024). According to the findings, there was a correlation between the use of positive politeness by teacher and improved student motivation and engagement. A teacher who used praise, attention, and kind words were able to foster a positive classroom environment. These findings suggested that politeness strategies were crucial in influencing the dynamics of the classroom and the emotional well-being of the students.

Previous research had mostly concentrated on determining the kinds of methods used, without fully examining the reasons that influence teachers' decisions. The factors behind teacher's choices of particular methods in different classroom contexts were still poorly understood.

This study addressed this gap by examining not only the realization of politeness strategies but also the factors influencing teacher decisions, drawing on Simon Borg's teacher cognition framework. A theoretical framework for comprehending decision-making in instructional settings provided by Borg (2003), who highlighted that teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and thoughts that had a direct influence on classroom activities, providing a theoretical lens to understand decision-making in pedagogical contexts. Using this framework, the research aimed to explore how a teacher's use of

politeness techniques was influenced by their instructional objectives, classroom management, student traits, and the activities in which they were engaged.

SMP N 13 Medan had not previously been studied at the junior high school level with this specific analytical focus. Therefore, this research offered novelty both in terms of setting and in examining the pedagogical considerations behind strategy selection, bridging the gap between theoretical understanding and practical classroom application.

This study aimed to identify the politeness strategies used by English teachers during classroom teaching and to analyze the factors that influence their strategy selections during classroom interactions at SMPN 13 Medan, taking into account the arguments mentioned above. This study shed light on how politeness served as an instructional tool for classroom management and learning facilitation, which advanced both theory and practical teaching methods in EFL instruction.

1.2 The Problems of the Study

Based on the background, the researcher formulated the problems of the study as below:

1. What types of politeness strategies were used by the teacher in classroom interactions at SMPN 13 Medan?
2. What factors influenced the teacher's choice of politeness strategies in classroom interactions at SMPN 13 Medan?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

Based on the problem of research, the researcher formulated the objectives of the study as below:

1. To identify the types of politeness strategies were used by the English teacher in classroom interactions at SMPN 13 Medan.
2. To analyze the factors that influenced the teacher's choice of politeness strategies in classroom interactions at SMPN 13 Medan.

1.4 The Scopes of the Study

In collecting the data for this research, the researcher limited this research to the types of politeness strategies and the factors influencing the teacher's choice of politeness strategies used by the English teacher in classroom interactions at SMP Negeri 13 Medan. The researcher also restricted this research to the politeness strategies by Brown & Levinson (1987), namely Bald on Record, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness and Off Record, the suitable strategies used by the English teacher in classroom interactions as well as teacher cognition by Simon Borg (2003), they were Knowledge, Beliefs, and Thought.

1.5 The Significance of the Study

Theoretically the finding of this research was expected to help identify the types and to analyze the factors of teacher choices on politeness strategies used by the English teacher in classroom interactions.

Practically, this research was expected to provide benefits for teachers, students, and future researchers. For teachers, the findings were expected to serve as a reference in understanding the types of politeness strategies used in the teaching and learning process and to raise awareness of the importance of selecting appropriate ways of communicating with students. By applying suitable politeness strategies, teachers could create a more respectful, comfortable, and motivating learning atmosphere, considering that teachers serve as role models for their students. For students, this research was expected to help them understand the four types of politeness strategies, thereby increasing their confidence and motivation to participate actively in classroom interactions. Furthermore, for future researchers, this study was expected to provide useful references and insights for further studies related to politeness strategies, teacher cognition, and classroom interaction in educational contexts.

