Face Observance in Twitter Conversations

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This research entitled *Face Observance in Twitter Conversations*is aimed at investigating the politeness strategies used by the speakers in observing and non-observing their hearers' face in *Twitter* conversations, the response given by the hearers, and the effects which may be resulted from (non) observance. This study employs a descriptive qualitative study. The data were taken from conversations made in *Twitter*.This study showed that the four types of politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) namely, bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record are used by the speakers in observing and non-observing their hearers' negative and positive face. The hearers' response to the (non) observance done by the speakers by using different strategies may produce some effects to the conversation itself. The result shows that there are two kinds of effects resulted from (non) observance done by the speakers. The first effect is that the conversation goes well without any distraction while the second one is that the conversation is distracted or even stopped. It is suggested that positive politeness strategy seems to be the preferred choice taken by the participants in maintaining a conversation.

Keywords: *Face, Observance,Politeness, Face Threatening Acts, Politeness Strategies.*

INTRODUCTION

As social beings, humans are able to communicate and make a conversation with others. Within the rapid development of social media, *Twitter* has become one of leading social media which facilitates people, hereafter called the speakers and the hearers, to communicate with other people by using electronic gadgets such as hand phones or personal computer in a form of written conversation called *tweets*.

In dealing with others in terms of communicating or delivering messages, the speakers may or may not observe their hearers' face.

Brown and Levinson (1987) derive the concept of face from Goffman, they define it as something that is invested, that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in an interaction. They also propose two types of face; they are *positive face* and *negative face*. *Positive face* is defined as the want of people to be liked or to be appreciated by others, while *negative* face is the want of

people to have freedom or not to be disturbed by others. Meanwhile, the term *Observe* is defined as, to be or become aware of, especially through careful and directed attention or to notice (freeonlinedictionary.com).

Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that when the speakers make a conversation with their hearers, the speakers may damage the hearers' face by using the so called 'face-threatening acts' (FTAs). In a conversation made in *Twitter,* a comment to a *tweet* may become an FTA. When a person is commenting on one's opinion about an issue, the hearers' face will be harmed by the speakers; either it is negative face or positive face. When the speakers decide to perform an FTA, they will use some strategies to observe their hearers' face.

The politeness strategies do not only appear in a conversation of daily interaction. Sari (2011) and Yeni (2010) investigated the politeness strategies appeared in a conversation made in TV programs. However, the previous studies only reveal the

politeness strategies used in the conversations which mostly do not take place in a social media such as *Twitter,* and they also do not concern on observing the face of the hearers.

The observance of face is an interesting and challenging part of communication that happens especially in social media, *Twitter.* The study focuses on the observing and non-observing of the hearers' face; either it is negative face or positive face. Since the speakers will likely perform an FTA in the conversations, face of the hearers will be affected by the speakers. The study also investigates the strategies used by the speakers in observing and non-observing their hearers' face, and further the important thing to be analyzed in this study is the responses from the hearers as the realization of the observance and non-observance done by the speakers and the effects which may be resulted.

METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on (1) investigating what strategies the speakers use to observe hearers' face, (2) investigating how the hearer responds to the speaker's observing, (3) revealing the effects resulted from (non) observing.

The study applied a descriptive method in describing the data. The study mainly employed a qualitative approach to analyze the data since the study primarily aims to investigate the human behavior in this case the way they communicate to each other. The study involved 21 Indonesian *Twitter* users who were purposively chosen. The participants may get involved in 6 different sets of conversations where they may be both the speaker and the hearer.

The data were collected from the *timeline* of the 6 participants of which the first tweet or the first topic of the conversation initially came from. There were 6 sets of conversation with different topics of which each conversation was made by at least 3 participants. The data were taken only in the first two days from the first *tweet* was posted.

The data were gathered and analyzed by collecting the

conversation made by the participants in *Twitter* website, classifying the data which are related to the topic of the research, categorizing, analyzing and interpreting the data then presenting the resultby using a descriptive method to describe how the speakers observe the hearers' face in the interaction in *Twitter* and the strategies that they use, further how the speakers respond to it and what the effects resulted.The data were served as below,

Example [A]

14. WidyaNovianti @weadblade @widyaway@sabaistyributajad eh..weekend2masihribut. hih!

15. Isti @sabaisty @weadblade@widyawayiyama apyatantewaaaay

16. WidyaNovianti @weadblade @sabaisty@widyawayketemua n dong brantemnya.Hha

Each set of conversations in *Twitter* was analyzed descriptively by using politeness theory (Brown and Levinson, 1987). The theory was aimed at investigating the politeness strategies used by the speakers in

observing their hearers' face and how the hearers respond to the observance.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Initiation And Response Phenomena

The data showed initiation and response phenomena. Initiation is every initial tweet posted by whom we call as an initiator to start or to create a conversation or it can also be a tweet posted in order to enter or to get involved in an ongoing conversation between other participants. An initiation can be in the forms of *salutation, greeting, answer, giving reason.* Meanwhile, response refers to the replies as a follow up to the initial tweet posted by the initiator which then builds a conversation.

When the participants, speakers and hearers make a conversation, in this case in *Twitter,* they will decide whether they will perform Face Threatening Acts or not (Brown and Levinson, 1987 cited in Thomas, 1995). However, the data shows that the participants use FTAs in the conversations. The speakers observe their hearers' face by using four strategies, namely performing an

FTA without any redress (bald-on record strategy), performing an FTA with redress (positive politeness strategy), performing an FTA with redress (negative politeness strategy), and performing an FTA using off-record politeness strategy.

Further, the hearers' response to the speakers' observance may be done in different ways and different strategies. When a speaker observed their hearer's positive face, the speaker might respond to the observance by observing back the speaker's face whether it is their negative or positive face with some politeness strategies.Meanwhile, the hearer could also give different response by not observing back the speaker's facealso with different politeness strategies.

Moreover, the (non) observance done by the speakers to their hearers' face produce two kinds of effects. The first effect is that a conversation will go smoothly or be well maintained because of the observance where another one is that a conversation may be distracted or even stopped because of the non-observance.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This paper has examined the politeness strategies used in *Twitter* conversations. It has revealed politeness strategies used by the speakers in observing and non-observing their hearers' face, the responses given by the hearers towards the observance, and the effects resulted by the observance and non-observance.

It is revealed that the speakers do face observance and non-observance. In observing and non-observing the hearers' face, the speakers use four kinds of politeness strategies: bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness and off-record strategy. It is also found that positive politeness strategy arises as the preferred strategy in observing the hearers' face. Meanwhile, in non-observing the hearers' face, the speakers use bald-on-strategy and off-record strategy.

A tweet posted by a speaker may consist of more than one strategy. A speaker may use different strategy to observe or non-observe their hearers' face. The combination of the strategy is used in order to get a certain result. Each strategy used by the speakers is employed in different kinds of forms or types.

However, the hearers' responses to the observance and non-observance done by the speakers are not the same. An observance or non-observance done by a speaker may cause a different response from the hearers. The hearers may employ different politeness strategies as a response to the observance or non-observance done by the speakers.

Moreover, the observance and non-observance done by the speakers produce two different effects to the conversation. The first effect is that the observance or non-observance done by the speakers makes the conversations go well or in other words there is a good coordination between the speakers and the hearers. The second effect is that, the observance or non-observance done by the speakers makes the conversations do not go well or it is distracted and even stopped. There is no good coordination between the speakers and their hearers.

The study has presented the answers to the formulation of the problems. It has revealed how the speakers use politeness strategies in observing and non-observing their hearers' face, the response of the hearers, and the effects which were resulted in*Twitter* conversations.

There are some suggestions for this study. In relation to the research method of this study, other researchers should try to find more data by adding more participants who involve in *Twitter*conversations.In line with face observance, other researchers should attempt to compare the case of face observance in some media social, for example, they can compare how face observance happens in *Twitter* and how face observance happens in *Facebook,* so that the difference between how face observance done can be seen from some perspectives.

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