Promoting a balance of harmony and authority in Indonesian research seminars through politeness strategies

by Murni Mahmud

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Abstract

The paper investigates the strategies in expressing politeness in the research seminars. The main focus is to explore the different strategies applied by the speakers in the research seminars. The study is based on the descriptive-qualitative method conducted at one state university in Makassar in 2018. The subject of this research is the speakers of research seminars of the graduate program in the chosen university, which involved the supervisors, examiners, presenters, and audiences. The data were collected by recording the process of discussion in the research seminars and transcribed. Eight sessions of research seminars which lasted for approximately one and a half hour each were obtained and resulted in eight long transcriptions. Findings show that the speakers in the research seminars applied several strategies in expressing politeness such as being attentive, using identity markers, using native speech, reaching agreements, talking humorously, being indirect, asking for clarity, and expressing regrets. Those strategies were intended to promote a balance of harmony and authority among the speakers. Although the exercise of authority among the speakers in the research seminars is potential due to the presence of supervisors and examiners, who have the highest status among other speakers, the need to maintain a good flow of interaction was prioritized which lead to several efforts of creating harmony. These findings show that politeness, as a way to balance harmony and authority is one of the crucial aspects of communication in the research seminars. The context of a research seminar in this Indonesian context provides a fruitful reference for practicing politeness concepts and strategies. Findings from this study also show that the research seminar is an area of communication in an educational setting which needs politeness strategies.

Key words: polite, politeness, politeness strategies, research seminars

Introduction

Politeness issues still become an important area of investigation among scholars of sociolinguistics and anthrolinguistics in today's society. Until now, the ideas of politeness derived from Brown and Levinson's (1987)'s "face-saving view" still dominate the discussions of politeness in many different contexts and languages Studies by Nor, Aziz (2010), Chivarate (2011), Al-Khatib (2012). Izadi (2013), Bouchara (2015). Maros, Rosli (2017) and Sukarno (2018) had discussed politeness as a vital part communication in a particular context of a communicative situation and proved that politeness is an essential aspect of communication. Maintaining politeness in conversation and interaction can lead to fruitful interaction among the interactants.

It cannot be denied that the field of education has also put politeness as a vital issue. Studies of politeness in the field of education had also been conducted recently, which confirmed the crucial functions of politeness as an effective way of building communication and interaction. Payne-Woolridge (2010)'s study had focused on facework in the classroom, which in fact can become an alternative to introduce a new way of considering the way teachers speak to pupils about behavior. Najeeb, Maros, and Nor (2012) studied the politeness used by Arab students in their e-mails and found that politeness strategies help Arab students to avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation in the communication of their emails. Also, Adel, Davoudi, & Ramezanzadeh (2016)'s study had revealed the role of politeness strategies in a

learning atmosphere in constructing and distributing power relations. Findings of these studies confirmed that politeness is a vital strategy to communicate ideas in educational settings, such as in classroom interaction and the language teaching process.

In educational settings, however, there are still plenty of communicative situations which are rarely observed as a context of politeness studies. One of them is research seminars. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, a seminar is defined as a small group of students meeting for study (Deuter, Bradbery, and Turnbull, 2015). In other words, it is a place for presenting, sharing, and discussing ideas and information. A research seminar is frequently held at a meeting room or within an office conference room. There is a speaker who gives lecturer with highlights, scope, importance, benefits, and limitation on the particular topic as the lecturer finish; the audiences ask questions. The research seminar is usually attended by men, and some examiner depends on the policies and rules of each campus. Research seminars are educational events that feature one or more subject matter experts delivering information primarily via lecture and discussion. In this study, research seminars refer to formal discussion which contains a presentation of the research project of the students which is followed by questions and answer sessions, either from the supervisors, examiners, and audience.

Studies in terms of communication in a seminar had also revealed the essential functions of the seminar as a context of communication. A specific study on the use of seminar for research had been investigated by Wallner and Latosi-Sawin (1999) and proved the effectiveness of seminars in building the research ideas. Through research seminar, students select topics, conduct research, report progress, write summaries for technical and nontechnical audiences, prepare abstracts, organize outlines, and present a formal research paper. Basturkmen (2002) observed that negotiation of meaning in a seminar is essential in enabling students to develop their own ideas in discussion. It is suggested that patterns of organization whereby students negotiate meaning and co-construct discourse and the type of interlocutor behavior underlying this can be used to complement conventional language description (discussion for EAP. Aguilar (2004) had also found the vital function of the peer seminar which should be considered as a research process genre in the scientific and academic community playing a role in the informal dissemination of scientific research and knowledge.

Studies in terms of politeness in research seminars, however, have rarely been discussed and explored. In relation to politeness, minimal studies had touched politeness in seminar settings, especially at the university level. O'Keeffe and Walsh (2010) have investigated higher education seminar talk by focusing on the relationship between interaction patterns, language use, and learning, but had not focused precisely on politeness in interaction. A study of politeness had been conducted about silence in university seminars by Nakane (2006) and had reported an analysis of the politeness orientation of participants with Japanese and Australian backgrounds concerning speech and silence. Nevertheless, politeness studies in seminars especially in discussing research projects are still limited, and therefore, an intensive investigation needs to be carried out.

In accordance with the issue and the significance of politeness elaborated in the case above, the study on politeness in research seminars proposed in this study is worthy analyzed as it provides benefits for the educational process, especially in universities. Research seminar setting is one of the places where practical instruction can occur. The display of respect by the presenters to examiners, supervisors, and audiences is one of the examples of awareness of face. Based on the fact, supervisors and examiners automatically have some authorities. The use of politeness strategies by the presenters, supervisors, examiners, audience in the academic seminar setting plays an important role. They should comprehensively explore the use of politeness strategies

including the use of appropriate politeness strategies in order to promote communicative and pragmatic competence in research seminar interaction, and it would be beneficial for them to establish a pleasant atmosphere in the seminar setting interaction. Otherwise, the main focus of the seminar, which is to improve the research ideas, will not be reached.

Based on this fact, this paper is directed to explore the politeness issues in research seminars. The main focus is to investigate the strategies used by participants of the research seminars to encode their politeness in the seminars. The results of this research are expected to give a theoretical and practical contribution. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the pragmatics study about the theory of politeness strategy. In addition, the results of this research are expected to give a significant contribution to the politeness strategies in term of a different context, notably research seminar setting and as a reference for future studies.

Related Literature

The most important idea of politeness comes from Brown and Levinson (1987:58), who say politeness essentially "means satisfying communicative and face-oriented ends, in a strictly formal system of rational, practical reasoning". Central to this theory is the concept of "face" (Goffman 1967:5) in the sense of "reputation" or "good name". In the framework of Brown and Levinson (1987), maintaining politeness is to preserve face, a picture of self-image in the social attributes. Those kinds of actions are called face-threatening acts (FTAs). There are several ways to convey FTAs, whether directly or indirectly. These ways are called politeness strategies, which can be in the form of Bald On-record, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness, and Off-record.

House (2005:13-14) states that politeness is one of the basic socio-psychological guidelines for human behavior. It is an integral part of all human interaction. Holmes (2013) also states that politeness can be regarded as the behavioral norms of speakers. Politeness is an expression of concern for the feelings of others. Apologizing for an intrusion, opening a door for another, inviting a new neighbor in for a cup of tea, using courtesy titles like sir and madam, and avoiding swear words in conversation with grandmother. In other words, politeness may take the form of expression of good-will or camaraderie, as well as the more familiar nonintrusive behavior which is labeled 'polite' in everyday usage (4-5).

Holmes (1995:222) lists the skills that should be possessed by polite, effective communicators as being responsive, active listeners, giving support and encouragement to their conversational partners, agree and confirm points made by their partners, elaborating and developing their partner's points from their own experience, disagree in a non-confrontational manner, using modified rather than direct disagreeing assertions, ask facilitative questions which encourage others to contribute to the discussion, use pragmatic particles which make others feel included, compliment others and express appreciation frequently, and readily apologize for offences, including interruptions and talking too much; they attenuate or mitigate the force of potentially face-threatening acts such as directives, refusals, and criticisms.

Some factors are influencing the level of politeness. According to Holmes (1995), there are three dimensions which have proved useful in analyzing linguistic politeness. They are the "solidarity-social distance dimension", the "power dimension", and the "formality dimension". Brown and Levinson (1987:74) consider several variables which might affect the level of politeness, such as power, distance, and rank of imposition. A study by Sukarno (2018) points out that the choices of the politeness levels among Javanese are strongly influenced by the social contexts (social distance, age, social status or power, and the size of imposition) among the tenors. Therefore, a consideration of power becomes an essential aspect of politeness in a particular context. Power is the general point in that we tend to use a higher degree of

politeness with people who have some power or authority over us than to those who are not. It is based on the asymmetric relation between the speaker and the listener. According to Brown and Levinson (1987:77), power is "the ability of one person to impose their will on another". Brown and Gilman (1972:255) also propose that power is "the ability to control the behavior of others" whereas according to Holmes (1995:17), the power dimension refers to the ability of the participants to influence one another's circumstances". Therefore, one person may be said to have power over another to the degree that he or she is able to control the behavior of the other. This power can be gained through the possession of social status and differences in gender and age

Another aspect is about social distance or the familiarity among speakers. Brown and Levinson (1987:74) called this "social distance" and referred to it as "the degree based on stable social attributes the reflex of social closeness". This suggests that how familiar speakers are with each other will determine how politely they behave. The closer they are, the less polite they need to be.

The aspect of context is also essential in this case. Holmes (1995:17) refers to this as the "formality dimension", which concerns the situational factors that influence people to be polite or not. Holmes further states that "context is a major influence on the expression of politeness…Politeness is always context-dependent" (1995:19, 21). Therefore, in examining politeness in a particular context, situations need to be considered.

Research Method

This study applied a descriptive qualitative design. According to Gay, Mills & Airasian (2012), the qualitative method deals with the collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive, narrative and visual data in order to gain insight into a particular phenomenon of interest. In this research, the qualitative design was employed by the researchers to explore the strategies applied by the speakers in the research seminars in expressing politeness.

This study was conducted at the Graduate Program of one state university in Makassar in 2018. The researchers chose research seminars to be attended during one semester (effectively five months) to collect data. They recorded the research seminars and transcribed the recordings. The seminars lasted for approximately two hours, which was divided into three sections starting from the presentation of the research by the student who is going to conduct his or her research project, question session by the audience, and the last is question session by the supervisors and examiners. The researchers recorded several times until the intended data were obtained and saturated. Overall, the researchers recorded eight sessions of seminars and eight long transcripts of seminar discussions.

The data analysis applied the technique of Discourse Analysis, which is a kind of discipline in a linguistic study which is concerned with is "the study of language-in-use the study of language at use in the world, not just to say things, but to do things" (Gee, 2011:9). It is "the study of what we humans do with language and how we do it" (Gee, 2018: ix). In this study, the discussion process in the research seminars was examined and explored to obtain significant data about the ways the speakers applied politeness strategies in the research seminars. These seminars provided the explorations of language uses in a particular context, which may bring a significant contribution to the process of analyzing the meaning and context as usually examined in doing discourse analysis.

Findings

This part discusses the strategies to be politely applied by the speakers of research seminars. They can be seen in the following extracts:

Being attentive
Extract 1

Presenter: Okay, directly to chapter 4, research findings and discussion. Okay, the rate of students reading comprehension in pre-test and post-test in the experimental group. Okay. In pretest for the experimental group, there are five students, or twenty percent of them include good classification, and there are fifteen students of them.

*Examiner: Jadi kalau presentasi, dimanage waktunya dengan baik. **Nah ini menarik ini…coba jelaskan kepada saya sebagai orang awam***
*(So, if you present, manage your time. **This is interesting…try to explain to me as commoners**)*

In extract 1, the presenter was explaining about her research. It took a long time for her to finish. One of the examiners was asking her to directly go to the main focus of the research that is the findings. From extract 1, the examiner was showing his interest with the works of the presenter's paper. It can be seen in the extract "***Nah ini menarik ini...*" (*This is interesting*)**. The examiner finally found an interesting part from the research. In order to show his interest, he asked the presenter to explain more about that part by saying "***coba jelaskan kepada saya sebagai orang awam***" (*try to explain to me as commoners*)**. This extract shows an example of strategies to be polite in the research seminar. By showing interest, the examiner was trying to pay attention to the discussed topic. It can lead to smooth interaction in the research seminar and therefore create polite interaction. Another example can be seen in the following extract:

Extract 2

*Presenter: Okay, thank you very much. I answer from the first question. First I lived in Monginsidi street number seven in Bantaeng. Okay, the second question, I know, aaa, **we know that** there are some students from senior high school Bantaeng from the village, but I take the sample from the class eleven of science one from the experimental group and class eleven science five from the control group.*

*Examiner: Yes, **we can see**. **She has strategies to improve the students' ability**. Okay, all right. Okay. I think that is all from the students.*

In the extract above, the presenter was answering questions from the examiner. It can be seen that she explained it clearly. In responding the presenter's explanation, the examiner was saying, "***She has the strategies to improve the student's ability***". In this statement, the examiner was confirming the answer of the presenter and stressed the excellent point of her explanation. It can be seen that the examiner was showing his interest in the presenter's ideas. In this way, the examiner was paying attention to the presenter, and therefore it can lead to a good flow of discussion in the seminar. Being attentive in the discussion as seen in extract 2 above contributes to polite interaction in the research seminar.

Using identity markers
Extract 3

Examiner: Did you compare it with other students who do not teach with the previous method?

*Presenter: **Sir, bisa pakai bahasa Indonesia?***
(Sir, can I use Indonesian language?)

In the extract above, the examiner was asking a question to the presenter. The presenter at the time got difficulties in answering using English. Therefore, he asked

permission to use the Indonesian language instead of using English. He said, *"Sir, bisa pakai bahasa Indonesia?" (Sir, can I use the Indonesian Language?).* Here, it can be seen that the presenter was using a kind of identity marker; that is the use of *Sir* to address the examiner. This address term was used correctly based on the identity of the examiner. Since the examiner is his lecturer, higher in status and older, the use of *Sir* indicates that he was using in-group identity marker correctly. The use of this identity marker marked the polite interaction in the research seminar.

Extract 4
Supervisor: *Yeah, okay. Next, one more (raising her finger)*
Examiner: **One more question. Di belakang. Jurusan apa Dek?**
(One more question. At the back. What is your program study, Dek [younger sister/brother])
Audience: *Matematika.*
(Mathematics).

In the extract above, the supervisor was giving the time to one of the audiences to ask questions. One of the examiners noticed one of the audiences who sat in the back row in the room who wanted to ask questions. That examiner said, *"One more question. Di belakang. Jurusan apa dek?" (One more question. At the back. What is your program study, Dek?).* In this sentence, he applied an address term from Indonesian language *"dek"* to address the audience which means younger brother or younger sister. That was meant to acknowledge the junior position of the audience. The participants of the seminar are not of the same age. The examiner used the address term *"dek"* in order to show how the examiner wanted to build a close relationship to the audience who were younger and had lower status than the examiner. The address term *"dek"* could show the intimate relations of the examiner and the audience. The use of this identity marker between the higher status person to lower status person could lead to polite interaction in that research seminar.

Using Native Speech
Extract 5
Examiner: *Is this the first or the second performance?*
Audience: *Kalau dikelas yang pertama, tapi kalau dibahasa inggris yang keempat*
(If in the classroom, I am the first, but if in the English Language program, I am the fourth)
Examiner: **Ini satu kelas ki semua?**
(Are you all classmates)
Audience: *Ndak, ada yang lain.*
(No, there are others)

In the extract above, after the audience answered the examiner's questions, the examiner said, *"ini satu kelas ki semua?" (Are you all from the same class?).* This question was actually to cover all of the audience as participants in the research seminars. The word *"ki"* in the above extract was used as a form of address which was derived from the speakers' native language. The use of *"ki"* here was understood by all of the participants in the research seminars since most of them are from Bugis-Makassar language. This expression was trying to involve all of the audience. The use of *"ki"* also marked the polite terms of address covering all of the audience. The question of the examiner which used native term indicated that the examiner was trying to involve the audience. The use of native language became a way to soften the interaction. Another example can be seen in the following extract:

Extract 6

Examiner: *Okay, one more question. Satu lagi. Sudah aman barangkali di'?*
hahahah [laughing]. Okay, come on! Thanks.
(Okay, one more question. One more. It may be safe, isn't it? Hahahah
[laughing]. Okay, come on! Thanks)
Audience: *Okay, thank you.* **Sebenarnya kita sekampuang** *and I am very surprised*
that you are from Bantaeng. And of course, the first one. Where is your
address in Bantaeng? **Dimanaki tinggal di Bantaeng?** *Itu yang pertama.*
Kemudian yang kedua, the second is...
(Okay, thank you. Actually, we come from the same village, and I am very surprised
that you are from Bantaeng [one region in South Sulawesi]. And of
course, the first one. Where is your address in Bantaeng? Where do you
live in Bantaeng? That was the first. Then, the second is, the second is...

The extract above is the conversation between the examiner and the audience. After the presentation, the audience was invited to ask questions or comments. The audience in the above extract thanked the chance being given to him to ask a question to the examiner. In his question, "**Dimanaki tinggal di Bantaeng?**" (**Where do you live in Bantaeng?).** He was using a native term derived from Bugis-Makassar language. Like extract 5, the use of "**ki**" which was used to address the presenter was understood by all of the participants in the research seminars. The word "**ki**" in the above extract was used as a form of address which was derived from the speakers' native language, which was mostly Bugis-Makassar. The use of native language, in this case, can become a way to involve all of the participants, which can also become a way to be polite in the interactions among the speakers in the research seminars.

Reaching Agreement

Extract 7

Examiner 3: *Okay, what is actually...* **do you believe that the method is effective to**
improve the students' reading skill?
Examiner 1: **Yakin? Yakin bisa meningkatkan?**
(Sure? Are you sure [it] can improve?)
Presenter: *Yes*
Examiner 3: *Ha? (asking for sure)*
Presenter; **Insya Allah**
(Hopefully, God permits)

In the extract above, the examiner was asking a question to the presenter whether the method he was using could improve the students' reading skills that became a major concern in his research. The examiner asked, "**do you believe that the method is effective to improve the students' reading skill?**". This question was to invite agreement to the discussed subject. Another examiner also asked using the Indonesian language, "**Yakin? Yakin bisa meningkatkan?**" (**Sure? Are you sure [it]can improve?).** This question was also addressed to invite agreements from the presenter and expected that the presenter would do his best in his project. Finally, the presenter said, "**Insya Allah**" (**Hopefully, God permits).** This expression was usually expressed by Muslim people when expecting something good to happen. It can be seen in the conversation above that the examiner and the presenter were seeking a way to agree with each other. The conversation between the two examiners and the presenter was an effort to reach an agreement among them. It can become a way to minimize conflict and to reduce the unpleasant condition in the research seminars. By doing so, polite interaction can be maintained. Another extract below is an example of the speakers' effort to reach a consensus or agreement as a way to be polite in the research seminar interactions:

Extract 8

Examiner 2: *Haa, itu bisa jadi perdebatan itu*
  (Ouch, that can become a source of debate)

Examiner 1: *Kalau saya janganmi pakai itu, dihilangkan saja, coret! Supaya tidak menimbulkan masalah.*
  (If I were you, do not need to use that. Omit it. Cross it so it will not cause problems.

In the extract above, the examiner said, "*bisa jadi perdebatan itu*" *(that can become a source of debate)*. The examiner stated that what is said by the presenter could lead to a source of debate or conflict. In this case, it can be implied that he was suggesting to avoid those things. In responding to this statement, another examiner was saying his suggestion: "*Kalau saya jangan mi pakai itu, dihilangkan saja, coret! Supaya tidak menimbulkan masalah*" *(If I were you, do not need to use that. Omit it. Cross it so it will not cause problems).* In these expressions, he was directly suggesting what to do to avoid the conflicting problems in the presenter' research. He then gave a suggestion. The ways the two examiners in this extract were to avoid disagreement. Their expressions were to reach a consensus or an agreement among the speakers so that the communication can run well.

Talking humorously

Extract 9

Supervisor: *Today, Ibu Nurhaerati from Bantaeng will present the result findings. The title is the implementation of Reciprocal teaching method sometimes we call it RPM reading comprehension of the second-grade students of SMA 2 Bantaeng. So, please present the points of your result findings no more than 15 minutes.*

Presenter: *Yes, Sir*

Supervisor: *Jadi jangan lebih dari 15 menit. Kalau perlu 10 minutes. Okey, enough. Times yours. Silakan. **diambil dimana itu menara mesjid? hahahaha** [laughing while pointing to the slide]*
  (So, do not be over 15 minutes. If it is necessary, just use 10 minutes. Okay, enough. Time is yours. Please. Where did you get the mosque tower hahahaha [laughing while pointing to the slide])

In extract 9, the examiner opened the seminar by giving a brief introduction about the presenter. Before giving the time to the presenter, he was commenting on the picture in the power point presentation of the presenter. At the slide, there was also a picture of the mosque. The examiner asked, "*diambil dimana itu menara mesjid?*" *(where did you get the mosque tower?).* That question was not related to the topic of the presentation. It was only a way of joking by the examiner to minimize the tension in the opening of the seminar. Usually, the seminar tends to be very stressful for the presenter and the audience. However, the joke expressed by the examiner was used to cheer up the situation. It can be deduced that by talking humorously can cause laughter among the participants and it is a way to maintain a harmonious atmosphere, therefore can become a polite interaction.

Extract 10

Examiner 3: *Okay, thank you. So far. You have answered the personal questions. Mungkin pak… mau cari tahu apakah ibu sudah punya anak? Anaknya sudah gadis memang yaa? sudah kuliah disini? S2? Laki-*

laki S1? Perempuan S2? Ada disini barangkali ya? Di bahasa Inggris?
(Okay, thank you, So far. You have answered the personal questions. Maybe Sir... [I] wanted to find out if she already had children? Has your daughter already been studying here? S2? Your Son is in undergraduate? Your daughter is in the graduate program? Are they in English Department?)

Audience: *hahaha [laughing]*

The same case can be seen in extract 10, where the examiner also asked questions to the presenter which caused laughter from other participants. The questions were not related to the topic. Those were expressed only to cheer up the situation and to avoid the stressful condition of the seminar. Hearing those questions, most of the audience laughed at the time. The way the examiner asked those questions functioned as the way to maintain good communication in the class, and therefore, created polite situation and interaction in the research seminar.

Softening Request

Extract 11

Supervisor: Okay, the third question, sebutkan namanya ya. Saya hafal nama tapi tidak wajahnya, tapi. You say your name, please?
(Okay, the third question, mention your name yah. I memorize the name but not the face, but. Say your name, please?)

Hardianti: Assalamu Alaikum wr.wb. thanks for the opportunity, my name is Yanti. ***How could one be a little bit curious about your research because the title shows and tells? So, could you tell me or all of us here****, what do you do or did during your research? What the students do, so because of the questionnaire, the unmotivated students become motivated. So, 1 am curious about the process of collecting the data.*

In extract 11, the chair of the seminar, in this case, the supervisor, asked the audience to ask questions. In asking the audience to ask, he said, "*Ya say your name, please?*. The use of "*please*" at the end marked the indirect way of asking the audience to mention her name. in the next turn when Yanti was given a chance to ask a question, she also said, "***How could be, I little bit curious about your research because of the tittle show and tell. So, could you tell me or all of us here***". In these comments, Yanti was asking a question to her fellow friends. However, she was trying to be indirect by using "*could*", "*a little bit*" which marked her indirectness. Therefore, from the above extract, it can be identified that both speakers, the chair and the audience, employed an indirect way in asking questions. Another extract below is an example of the ways to soften their requests.

Extract 12

Supervisor: Okay, Wahidah. ***Well, now I would like to invite for comment and question from participants first. Please*** *(looking at the audiences), who wants to say something or ask questions to Wahidah?*

In extract 12 above, the chair gave a chance to the audience to ask questions. Instead of pointing the audience directly, he used indirect way by saying, "***I would like to invite for comment and question from participants first.***" which is an indirect way of asking the audience to do something in the research seminar. He also said "*please*" while looking at the audience. It can be seen that the way the chair was trying to indicate his politeness to the audience and also to reduce the stressful feelings for the

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presenter due to the question-session in the research seminar, one of the parts of the seminar which was something frightening for the presenter.

Applying small talks
Extract 13

Examiner: *Wah, ini temannya semua ini?*
(Ouch, are you all friends of the presenter?)
Audience: *Yes, Sir!*
Examiner: *Okay now, who is the next (inviting more questions from the audience)?.*
Silahkan bertanya. Okay, come on!. **Biasanya Ibu Yati itu semakin sulit pertanyaanx semakin disenangi. Ahhahahah** *Okay, silahkan!....*
(Please ask. Okay, come on! Usually, Ibu Yati likes the questions which are more difficult. Hahaha [laughing]. Okay, please!

In extract 13, the chair was also giving a chance to ask questions to the audience. Before giving the time to ask, the chair said, "***Wah, ini temannya semua ini?***" *(Ouch, are you all friends of the presenter?).* This question implied that questions to the presenter might be minimized since all of the audience is the presenter's friends. The chair also said, "*silakan*" (please). It also indicated the indirectness of the chair. He also said, "***Biasanya ibu nurhaerati itu semakin sulit pertanyaanx semakin disenangi***" *(Usually Ibu Yati likes the questions which are more difficult).* It can be seen that the way the chair was to reduce the stressing condition caused by the question-session in the seminar. Those expressions by the examiner were to create small talk, in order to build up a polite condition before asking questions. Another example can be seen in the following extract:

Extract 14

Supervisor: Oh, Ya. Silakan! Okay, come on, Silakan! Arif? [looking to Arif who was raising his hand to ask a question]
(Oh yes, Please. Okay, come on. Please. Pak Arifin?)
Arif: ***I do not have a question. I just need advice from her.*** *How are you Mrs. aaa, ibu Nur? It is not a question. I just need advice from you, I know you are not only full-time students, but you are also working as a mother and also take care of a husband. I just need your advice, about your planning management. How you can arrange to do school, do your thesis, and you are the first one in the class can you now. You can beat the younger students who just studied and full-time students, but most of them even do the profession, they have not done yet. I just need aa. How do you manage, handle your study management? Thank you.*
Examiner: *It is not a question, it is comment. Ya silakan!. Ini menarik ini, apalagi kan Pak Arifin butuh nasehat.*
(It was not a question. It was a comment. Yes, please! This is interesting. Especially because Arif needs advice
Presenter: *Advice for you or for me?*
Audience: *Hahaha [laughing]*

In the extract above, one of the audiences was given a chance to ask questions. However, Arif did not want to ask questions. He said, "***I do not have a question. I just need advice from her***". In this way, Arif was trying to build up a topic for communication to the presenter. It was not related to the topics since the aim is to create interaction. Those kinds of interaction were only a small talk in the research seminar as a way to smooth the interaction, and therefore it can minimize the stressful condition among the participants. In the seminar, usually, the presenter was so

frightened at questions. However, by asking for advice instead of asking questions, Arif had made such a way to reduce the hard condition of the research seminar. It can be seen from this extract that the speaker, as well as the presenter, was trying to maintain the flow of the conversation in the research seminar by applying a small talk.

Asking for Clarity
Extract 15

Examiner: *Anda penelitian apa itu? Discussion? Itu ada teacher-students interaction..itu apa/ practice, production atau presentation?*
(What kind of your research? In the discussion, there was a teacher and student interaction. What is that? What is practice, production, or presentation?)

Presenter: *Kalau saya amati ini,--Kalau saya amati ini masih- masih tahap presentasi, Prof.*
(If I examined this, this is still in the phase of presentation, Prof)

Examiner: *Apa itu definisi presentasi?*
(What is the definition of presentation?)

Presener: *Guru memberikan materi baru kepada peserta didik… memperkenalkan materi baru kepada peserta didik*
(The teacher gives new materials to students, introducing new materials to students)

Examiner: *Jadi apa metode guru mengajar yang kamu teliti? Apa kesimpulannya*
(So, what kinds of methods are you investigating? What is the conclusion?)

Presenter: *Belum terlalu maksimal dalam pengaplikasian pengajaran*
(It is not too maximal in teaching)

Examiner: *Belum maksimal?*
(not maxminal?)

Presenter: *Iye, kalau untuk*
(yes, if it is…)

Examiner: *[Apa ukurannya maksimal?*
(What is the measurement of being maxmimal?)

Presenter: *Iye?*
(Yes?)

Examiner: *Yang maksimal itu seperti apa?*
(The maximal one is like what?)

In the extract above, one of the examiners was communicating with the presenter about the implementation of the method which becomes the focus of the research. The examiner was asking several questions which aim to lead the presenter in finding the good focus of the research. The questions like "***Anda penelitian apa itu?***", "***Apa itu definisi presentasi***", "***Jadi apa metode guru mengajar yang kamu teliti? Apa kesimpulannya?***" aimed to help the presenter to gain the focus of the research. These questions were not trying to embarrass the presenter, instead, help the presenter in order that he could explain his main research focus. These kinds of questions were categorized as negative politeness. The same case can also be seen in the following extract:

Extract 16

Examiner: *Tadi dia tanya naturalness itu dilihat dari mananya*
(Just now, he asked about naturalness. Where can it be seen?)

Presenter: *Hmm..*

Examiner 1: *Ya, ini kan 'dia bilang tidak cantik', apakah harus diterjemahkan menjadi 'she is not beautiful'.*

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> (Yes, here he said "she is not beautiful", should be translated like that?)

Presenter: Is included ee [accuracy]
> Is [it] included inaccuracy?

Examiner 1:   [Kan banyak bahasa lain], ya ada bahasa lain.
> ([There is another language, isn't it?] there is another language for that)

Presenter: ee kalo naturalness ee differs from the culture may be
> (Naturalness may be different from culture to culture

Examiner 1:   Dia dari aspek budaya..apakah orang Indonesia dalam menyatakan sesuatu itu harus selalu berterus terang atau toh,
> From the cultural aspect, are Indonesian always saying directly?)

Examiner 2:   Tadi saya mau ingatkan kalo naturalness nya tadi itu..yang apa tadi?
> (Just now I reminded that naturalness is …what is it again?)

Examiner 1:   [Harus ada konteks budaya]
> (There should be cultural context)

Examiner 3:   [Ya harus ada konteks budaya disitu]
> (Yes, there is a cultural context there)

In the extract above, the examiner also asked several questions to the presenter. It can be seen that the questions addressed to the presenter were used by the examiner to elicit the information in order to help the presenter. When the examiner was asking about being natural as the requirement of the qualitative research process in collecting data, in fact, the examiner was also explaining and exemplifying by some other facts such as comparing it to the culture. Other examiners were also giving comments to give a clear explanation to help the presenter. Therefore, it can be seen that questioning strategies applied by the examiners in this extract were kinds of negative politeness which aimed to maintain the flow of the conversation. In fact, the questions were not to impose the presenter but to help the presenter gain a clearer insight into his research project.

Another type of negative politeness applied in the research seminar is apologizing. One of the examples is seen in the following extract:

Expressing Regret
Extract 17
Audience: How about the questionnaire? I want to ask about the resource?
Presenter: Resource?
Audience: Iya
> (yes)

Presenter: I got from Alrabai in 2014 .. I do not put here, **Sorry** ..This one is Alrabain 2014

In the extract above, the presenter was saying "*sorry*" when she realized the mistakes she made when answering the question from one of the audiences. It indicated that the presenter was trying to maintain the flow of the discussion by apologizing. In the seminar, the presenter needs to be well-prepared, and therefore, he was responsible for maintaining the flow of communication. Expressing regrets by apologizing in this extract was used by the presenter in order to be polite and to reduce the negative impact of her mistakes. Another example can be seen in the following extract:

Extract 18
Examiner: Begitukan? Karena kalau guru atau dosen diwawancara apakah bapak ini, ya ya, apakah? Oh oh sure so itu mau dibuktikan di classroom

apakah benar apa yang di katakan itu dia lakukan because teachers,
sorry *teacher not only do what they say kalau kita diwawancara itu*
semua jawaban bagus, pasti hebat tapi kalau sudah dipraktek belum
tentu ya sudah cocok itu saya setuju kamu harus pake apa namanya dua
itu untuk e: membuktikan kemudian dilengkapi lagi dengan e: apa ini
(questionnaire yah?)

(Like that? if teachers or lecturers are interviewed, is this? Yes, yes?
Oh, sure, that must be proved in the classroom, whether what he said [is
true or not], because [I am] ***sorry****, teachers sometimes did not do what*
they said, if they are interviewed, all of the answers are good, always
good, but in practice, not always good, yes, it is right. I agree you need
to use, [those two instruments] to complete it again with, what is it, a
questionnaire.

Presenter: Yes sir

In this extract, expressing regret was done by the examiner. At the time, he was explaining about the possibility of differences between what teachers usually do in the class and what teachers usually say. He said, "***apakah benar apa yang di katakan itu dia lakukan because teachers, sorry teachers not only do what they say kalau kita diwawancara itu semua jawaban bagus, pasti hebat tapi kalau sudah dipraktek belum tentu…***" (*Whether what he said [is true or not] because I am sorry, teachers sometimes did not do what they said, if they are interviewed, all of the answers are good, always good, but in practice, not always good*). These expressions were negative comments about the facts about the teachers in the class. When the presenter said that he had interviewed, the examiner was suggesting the presenter observe too in order to get accurate data because sometimes what teachers said in the interview was not always true. However, in saying the reasons, the examiner used the word "sorry" in order to minimize his negative response. This apologetic term was used to create polite interaction over his critics.

Discussion

Eighteen extracts had been discussed above showing the politeness strategies applied by speakers in research seminars. Speakers in this research seminar include the examiners and supervisors, in which one of them acted as moderator, the presenter, and the number of students who become the audience of the seminars. Findings show that the speakers in the research seminars applied several strategies in expressing politeness such as being attentive, using identity markers, using native speech, reaching consensus, talking humorously, being indirect, asking for clarity, and expressing regrets.

The first strategy was by being attentive. The speakers, especially the supervisors and the examiners, were trying to show their interest in the presenters' topics. In the two extracts (extract 1 and 2), the examiners positioned themselves as persons who were interested in the topics of the presenters. Although the topics of the presenters, which mostly tended to repeat the previous studies that had been conducted by other students before, the examiners were trying to show their interest in the topics of the research. Showing interest is a strategy to enforce politeness. As stated by Holmes (1995), being polite can be by being responsive, active listeners, giving support and encouragement to their conversational partners. In the study conducted by Jung (2005), showing interest can become one of the solidarity enforcement. This strategy functioned a lot like the way to maintain politeness in the interaction.

As the second strategy, this study found the use of identity markers in the forms of address forms (extract 3-4). The address form of ***Sir*** by the presenter to the examiner marked the notice of the social status of the examiner by the presenter. Here the presenter was showing high respect to social status. Conversely, one of the examiners

used an address term of *dek* to address the audience. Here the examiner, regardless of high status, he used a very intimate address term to the audience. By referring to Brown and Levinson (1987), these address terms were known as "in-group identity markers" which aim to minimize the distance between speaker and hearer and to reduce the hearer's disappointment by expressing friendliness. In his study in Javanese society, Susanto (2014) also found that address term is used "to designate the person they are talking to or to show the possession of formal and informal manners" (p. 140). Salifu study (2010) also confirmed that appropriate address terms would function to build and maintain valued social relations including power and solidarity among in face-to-face interactions in Dagbanli, Ghana. The students in this study used these address terms to show their politeness to the different interlocutors during the presentation.

The third strategy, using native speech, was also able to create polite interaction in the research seminar. As observed in extract 5 and 6, the use of "ki" derived from the speakers' native language which was also understood by other participants could become a symbol of claims for similarities of identity. A study by Jung (2005) also pointed out that using terms of own language can become an important strategy to enforce solidarity among the speakers. The use of this native language as a polite marker was also noted in the study of Yannuar, Iragilianti, and Zen (2017) who studied the use of Bòsò Walikan Malang which was used to demonstrate the speakers' linguistic politeness. This study had also proved that using expressions derived from native language can be used to encode politeness.

Findings also show the tendency of the speakers to reach a consensus as can be seen in extract 7 and 8. This fourth strategy helped the focus of the seminar whose aim is to present arguments for the research project; there is a big potential to have a disagreement. However, findings in this study show that the speakers tried to encourage agreements. Holmes (1995) had noted that being polite can be by agreeing and confirming points made by their partners, elaborating and developing their partner's points from their own experience, disagreeing in a non-confrontational manner. Azis (2017)'s study supported this act of being polite. It was found that agreements are used to support the hearer's positive face, by directly agreeing with the previous speaker, building upon the previous speaker's turn, completing and repeating part of the previous speaker's utterance and giving positive feedback. By those ways of agreeing, students can show their politeness. The speakers in this study also used several ways of agreeing in order to minimize conflicts in the research seminars which can lead to polite interaction in the research seminars.

The fifth strategy was by talking humorously. The examples can be seen in extract 9 and 10 upon comments which were mostly serious due to the discussed topics. The speakers, especially the examiners, were trying to invite jokes in order to minimize the critical tension among the participants. As seen in those two extracts, jokes were made by the examiners. These functioned well to minimize conflicts during the teaching process and thus create smooth interaction. Humor in the form of jokes primarily acts as a channel of solidarity when it functions through friendly teasing and boundary marking, highlighting similarities or shared knowledge and disclosing of personal stories to the team members (Omar, Jan, 2013). It is also related to what Baldwin (2007) said that humor is a social tool that provides an effective way to reduce psychological distress, communicate a range of feelings and ideas, and increase relationship. Minimizing conflict by using humor for the sake of solidarity will lead the speakers in the research seminar to promote the smooth flow of the interaction, which leads to politeness.

The sixth strategy was by applying softened requests. These can be seen in extract 11 and 12. One of the strategies was by using "please". According to Achiba (2003:133) by adding a politeness marker *"please"* to a request, a speaker can signal politeness

and elicit cooperative behavior from his or her addressee. Using "please" in interaction can also signal indirectness which is a part of being polite, according to Brown and Levinson (1987). A study by Sattar, Lah, and Suleiman (2011) had also proved the importance of being indirect in their refusals especially in the way they acted toward the requests.

The seventh strategy is by applying small talk. It was found that conversation in research seminars applied small talk as a way to encode politeness (extract 13 and 14). Several studies had observed the function of small talk in communication. Many (2006), for example, had found that small talk is a strategy to create solidarity/collegiality, as an in-group identity marker, and also as a device to place social distance, especially by women. In the same vein, Pullin (2010) found that small talk may be of particular value to speakers of business English as a lingua franca (BELF) in allowing them to develop solidarity, despite linguistic and cultural differences, and thus increase the likelihood of avoiding or successfully overcoming communication problems. This shows that small talk can become a potential strategy to promote harmony in conversation, which can lead to polite interaction.

The eighth strategy was dealing with the use of questions. Questioning will potentially lead to face threatening acts. Athanasiadou (1991:119) had also confirmed that in asking a question, a speaker intends not only to get information or to communicate an experience or an event but also to impose his influence or his hearer or to undergo the hearer's influence. Questions carry messages about relationships (about status, i.e., assertions of status and challenges to status. Questions, according to Brown and Levinson (1987) can be face-threatening acts; however, questions asked for reasons lead to negative politeness. As seen in extract 15 and 16, these questioning strategies were used by the audience and the examiners. However, the ways of addressing questions were aimed to help the presenter to focus on their research. Therefore, those questionings were able to maintain the flow of communication and create polite interactions in the research seminar.

The last strategy, the eighth, found in this research seminar, was the use of apologetic terms to express regrets (extract 17 and 18). As a place of communication to argue, research seminars are potential in making conflicts among the speakers. Studies by Bataineh, Bataineh (2006), Nureddeen (2008), Shariati, Chamani, (2010), and Banikalef, Maros, Aladdin, Al-Natour (2015) had also observed the crucial functions of apologies, in which one of them is to maintain the flow of the conversation in order to create polite interaction. In this study, apologies were used by the presenter to correct their mistakes. Apologies were also used by the examiner to minimize their arguments which might be impolite.

All of those strategies applied in this research seminar settings show that speakers are willing to maintain politeness in the interaction. The application of those polite strategies was triggered by the significant functions of the seminar as a place to build good ideas. These functions, as observed previously by Wallner and Latosi-Sawin (1999), Basturkmen (2002), and Aguilar (2004) can be fulfilled by applying politeness strategies.

The important finding in this study is about the challenges of social status especially the examiners. It is in accordance with the power relation defined by Brown and Levinson (1987), in which power is an asymmetric social dimension of relative power. In the view of politeness and face discussed above, power challenge is very influential. As examined in the research seminar context in this study, the supervisors and the examiners had a prominent authority upon the presenters, and the audiences since most of them are the lecturers of the audience and the presenters. Due to the high social status of the examiner, asymmetrical expressions might be overused. There is also a high tendency to use of politeness strategies because the speaker is aware of and respects the social distance between him/her and the hearer.

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In this study, several strategies were applied by the speakers with different social status in order to create mutual respects among the speakers in the research seminars. Presenters employed a high degree of politeness strategy with great respect when they had conversation or interaction with both supervisors or examiners in research seminar settings. The speakers also applied several strategies to be indirect and to minimize the imposition upon the hearers. They were also apologizing. Besides, their questions were addressed to help the hearers. All of those strategies were applied in order to satisfy the hearer's negative face, which according to Brown and Levinson (1987), the basic want to claim territory and self-determination. These negative politeness strategies might cause some social distance or awareness in the interaction. This is because, in the research seminar context, speakers have different social status. A study by Kousar (2015) also shows that the speakers might prefer using negative politeness in the interaction due to the unequal social status of the addressee.

Regardless of this fact, as can be seen in several extracts, intimate address form was used (extract 4), agreements were provoked (extract 7 and 8), and some were trying to trigger jokes to minimize the stressful condition in the seminar. All of these strategies aimed to promote harmony among the speakers in the research seminars. It is in line with Brown and Levinson (1987) who stated that the positive politeness is oriented to satisfy hearer's positive face. It means that speakers kindly show his appreciation, approval, interest and also familiarity with hearers. The ten extracts analyzed in this study show that speakers in the research seminars are willing to satisfy the hearers' positive face by showing interest, using in-group identity markers, promote agreement, and invite jokes in order to build a good flow of communication.

Therefore, there is a big potential of the supervisors and the examiners to influence other interlocutors, especially the presenters and the audiences. Findings from this study, however, show that in Indonesian research seminar context, the need to promote a balance between harmony and authority is a precedent choice. Building harmony in the sense of solidarity proposed by Brown and Gilman (1972) is regarded as a reciprocal relationship characterized by similarities "that make for like-mindedness or similar behavior dispositions". People who are in a solidarity relationship can be expected "to share a similar worldview, to feel comfortable with each other, to find social interaction mutually enjoyable, and to be inclined towards friendship" (Brown and Gilman, 1972, p. 258). In this study, the speakers, especially the supervisors and examiners, have potentials to exploit their authority since they are supervisor and examiners. However, as seen in the extracts, their expressions, either positive or negative politeness tend to prioritize salutations and mutual sympathetic understanding which lead to solidarity or harmony among them. Vinagre (2008), for example, stated that "fostering closeness, solidarity, and cohesion becomes the priority to be achieved". Another study by Ade, Davoudi, & Ramezanzadeh (2016) found that positive strategies were employed as signs of a psychologically close relationship, reciprocity, and friendship in a group.

Conclusion

This study has examined the potentials of balancing harmony and authority in the research seminars context. It was found that several strategies were applied in order to maintain the flow of communication and to create polite interaction. The main purpose was to promote a balance between authority and the harmony among the speakers in the research seminars. In this study, it was observed that the speakers especially the supervisors and examiners were trying to minimize conflicts during the interaction. Most of their expressions were trying to give valuable input for the presenters and the audience. Therefore, it can be concluded that regardless of the social status differences among the speakers, interactions in the research seminars will

tend to promote a balance of harmony over the authority in the forms of politeness strategies.

These findings provide valuable input in terms of communication studies in educational settings. The findings of this study are also expected to contribute significantly to the literature of politeness research in the Asian context, particularly in Indonesia. However, further studies need to be conducted in terms of politeness practices in other settings in Indonesian contexts.

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Promoting a balance of harmony and authority in Indonesian research seminars through politeness strategies

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