TEACHING POLITENESS NORMS IN ENGLISH CLASSES
AT A TOURISM COLLEGE

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Abstract: This research aims at answering problems: “How to teach politeness norms in English classes at a tourism college?” and “Will the students’ knowledge of politeness norms improve their English speaking skills and hospitality skills in relating to and serving tourists during their duties of internship in tourism industries?” This study is an experimental research based. It uses three techniques for collecting data: observation and field notes, questionnaire, and in-depth interviewing. The 1st stage of research was undertaken at Travel Department of Sahid Tourism Institute of Surakarta from March to September 2013. The 2nd stage was undertaken within tourism industries in Central Java and Yogyakarta Special Province from October 2013 to March 2014. In 1st stage, the research group is made up of 20 students forming an experimental group and another 20 forming a control group. A lecturer of English for Tourism joins both groups. In the second stage, the research subjects are made up of the 40 students, 10 senior staffs of tourism industries and 50 English speaking guests as research subject. The lecturer taught English for Tourism to both student groups with these materials: (1) meeting tourists at the airport/railway station; (2) providing information upon arrival on how to get to hotel; (3) giving directions; (4) giving information about art performances and entertainment; (5) beginning a tour and describing the itinerary; (6) describing points of interest on the tour route; (7) describing process in making art objects; (8) bargaining for souvenirs; (9) handling guest complaints and (10) providing information upon departure with the way to the airport/railway station. Unlike to the control group, the lecturer also teaches politeness norms to the experimental group by inserting them in the pre-teaching activity, while-teaching activity and post-teaching activity. The research findings show that: (1) teaching politeness norms is appropriate at introduction part of each topic; by giving conversational model and practice of polite and impolite expressions in the main activity and evaluating them at the end of teaching activities and (2) the students’ knowledge of politeness norms which come from well known noble Javanese nuanced culture namely unggah-ungguh improves their behavior towards guests during their duties of internship in tourism industries. The norms include: (a) sumanak ‘friendly’, (b) andhap asor ‘giving high respect and appropriate appreciation’, (c) sabar lan sareh ‘patient and with ease, calm’, (d) empan papan ‘matches with the setting and occasion’, (e) tepa slira ‘showing a feeling of sympathy or solidarity’ and (f) nuju prana ‘pleasing, satisfying’. The findings indicate strongly that the materials of politeness norms should be best inserted in teaching English for Specific Purposes, especially English for Tourism. Moreover, not only do the teaching of politeness norms develop the students’ polite English speaking skills, but also increase their hospitality skills.

Keywords: politeness norms, English for tourism, a tourism college

Introduction

To realize the civilization that upholds noble values of humanity, it needs efforts to build the nation's good mental by forming good attitudes, personality and character. The efforts to build such character could be done by the activities of teaching and learning politeness norms at schools in Indonesia that are expressed into polite languages in verbal and nonverbal communication.

Some researchers have revealed that there are many moral values in Javanese culture which are useful to support character education and building. Ngadiso (2013) found that the Javanese culture should be maintained because there are many moral values in it, politeness is maintained in Javanese culture and politeness can create harmonious communication and relationship. Kuntarto (1999) revealed that the Javanese politeness principles is done to maintain the harmonious situation and to avoid conflicts. Moreover, Purnomo (2014) found that the polite and impolite behavior of tourism service providers in Central Java is affected by (in)formality, (in)directness, modesty, emotional control, goal orientation, im-/explicitness, spontaneity and egoism.

Since the teaching and learning English for Tourism at tourism colleges in Indonesia should follow the national curriculum which also includes character buildings, inserting politeness norms in the teaching and learning activities could be the alternative solution. In order to produce graduates who have good charachers expressed in the use of polite verbal and nonverbal communication, the local values can be taught in English classes. Especially at tourism colleges in Central Java, experimenting unggah-ungguh ‘Javanese politeness
norms’ in teaching and learning English for Tourism is challenging.

Considering the important role of politeness norms in character education and building, the objectives of this study are: (1) How to teach politeness norms in English classes at a tourism college? and (2) Will the students’ knowledge of politeness norms improve their English speaking skills and hospitality skills in relating to and serving tourists during their duties of internship in tourism industries?

**Theoretical Framework**

**Politeness Norms**

Poedjosoedarmo in Purnomo (2013: 9-10) states that Javanese politeness norms are implemented into six kinds of attitudes which should be practiced by a speaker in communication: (1) *sumanak*, (2) *andhap asor*, (3) *sabar lan sareh*, (4) *empan papan*, (5) *tepa slira* and (6) *nuju prana*.

In a host-guest conversation, a host has to be *sumanak* ‘friendly’. The host should try to treat his guest as *sanak* ‘relative, family’, so the communication can be very smooth. With this friendly acceptance of friendship, an acquaintance will feel at ease, and a good social relation will prevail.

When the guest is from the same higher social status than the host, the host should be *andhap asor* ‘giving high respect and appropriate appreciation’. This latterly means ‘low and humble’. The host should give the guest a high respect. The host may speak to the guest in a respectful code. If the guest speaks to the host in English, s/he can respond accordingly, using polite English.

*Sabar* ‘patient’ and *sareh* ‘calm and easy’ are attributes that are good to be observed in many occasions, especially when talking with guests. During a conversation, one must not *gampang nesu* ‘get easily angry’, *gampang muntab* ‘get hot temper’ and *mutungan* ‘easily feeling broken, frustrated’. Central Javanese often says *aja ladak* ‘don’t be quarrelsome’, *aja nyenyengit* ‘don’t be hateful’, *aja gaiak* ‘don’t be vicious’ and *aja kumaki* ‘don’t be cocky, don’t be a brag’.

When the host wants to initiate a conversation, s/he must see to it that his/her topic and objective agree with the principle of *empan papan* ‘matches with the setting and occasion’. It must suit the speech event and agree with the mood of the guest. When the host is asking something that is not considered proper in relation to the speech event, s/he may be said to be *benyunyak-benyunyuk* ‘improper and unwelcome speech initiator’. It would be better if the host just continue talking about the topic that has just been talked about. This can be relevant, because the topic connects with the current discussion. People will say that the host is *nyambung* ‘relates to or connects with’ the interlocutor.

When the host wants to speak, there is a principle s/he should observe, viz. *nuju prana* ‘pleasing, satisfying’. It literally means ‘pleasing the heart’ of the addressee. It includes the way s/he enunciates the words, the sequence of the sentences in the discourse and the content of the message. The speech must be delivered with good enunciation, pleasing intonation and nice tempo. Everything must *resep* ‘pleasing’ or *ngresepake* ‘causing pleasant feeling’. The speech must be delivered in a *sareh* ‘easy, calm’ and *cetha* ‘clear, distinct’ way.

**Teaching Politeness Norms in English for Tourism Classes**

The learning materials of English for Tourism are developed with the following topics: (1) meeting tourists at the airport/railway station; (2) providing information upon arrival on how to get to hotel; (3) giving directions; (4) giving information about art performances and entertainment; (5) beginning a tour and describing the itinerary; (6) describing points of interest on the tour route; (7) describing process in making art objects; (8) bargaining for souvenirs; (9) handling guest complaints and (10) providing information upon departure with the way to the airport/railway station. The learning materials are taken from a coursebook entitled *English for Tourism Based on Local Needs* written by Sri Samiati, Joko Nurkamto and Budi Purnomo (2010). Unlike to the control group, the lecturer also teaches politeness norms to the experimental group by inserting them in the pre-teaching activity, while-teaching activity and post-teaching activity. The following is an example of dialog with the topic namely meeting guests at the airport/railway station: a conversation between a tour guide (T) and a guest (G).

**Dialog 1**

T: Are you Mr. Brown?
G: Yes, that’s right.
T: I’m Kris from Nusantara Tour.
G: Oh, good. It’s nice to meet you.
T: Ready to go to your hotel?
G: Yes.
T: Come this way. The car is there.

Since the above dialog does not use proper politeness norms, it is also compared with a modified similar dialog to show the students that a dialog is acceptable and showing appropriate politeness norms as in the example below.
Dialog 2
T: Excuse me, sir. Are you Mr. Brown?
G: Yes, that’s right.
T: Welcome to Solo. I’m Kris, your tour guide from Nusantara Tour.
G: Oh, good. It’s nice to meet you.
T: It’s nice to meet you too, sir. Are you ready to go to your hotel?
G: Yes.
T: May I bring your bags? And could you come this way, please? The car is just over there.

In the expressions, G begins his communication with respectful and uses address form Mr. as a friendly typical of sumanak. Then in the next expressions, G welcomes T and introduces himself with polite expressions. After that he expresses happiness to meet his guest to respond the T’s expressions with nuju prana and asking the readiness to go to hotel politely. Finally he is tanggap ‘responsive’ by offering a help to bring the tourist’s bags towards the car.

Research Method
This study is an experimental research based. According to Lee (2012), experimental methods have played a significant role in the growth of English teaching and learning (ETL) studies. Experimental design is used in ETL research to assess the effects of new teaching innovations, and that randomised controlled trials (RCTs) are significant vehicles for empowering researchers to ensure that the independent variable is the most likely one to affect the dependent variable, by ruling out alternative explanations regarding the connection between them.

This research uses three techniques for collecting data: observation and field notes, questionnaire, and in-depth interviewing. The 1st stage of research was undertaken at Travel Department of Sahid Tourism Institute of Surakarta from March to September 2013. The 2nd stage was undertaken within tourism industries in Central Java and Yogyakarta Special Province from October 2013 to March 2014. In 1st stage, the research group is made up of 20 students forming an experimental group and another 20 forming a control group. A lecturer of English for Tourism joins both groups. In the second stage, the research subjects are made up of the 40 students, 10 senior staffs of tourism industries and 50 English speaking guests as research subject.

The observation and field notes were done to the process of teaching and learning English for Tourism which was managed by a lecturer. The researcher used observation technique namely passive observation as explained by Spradley (1980: 88). In the 1st stage of research, the researcher presented in class and sat down at the back of the class to observe the teaching and learning process and wrote important notes. In the 2nd stage, the researcher monitored both the experimental and the control group to observe how their behavior towards guests during their duties of internship in tourism industries in Central Java and Yogyakarta Special Province.

The questionnaire was distributed to the 20 students of experimental group at the end of class to know the effectiveness of teaching politeness norms in their English class. In the 2nd stage, the questionnaire was distributed to the 50 English speaking tourists to know the students’ behavior towards them, especially the students’ polite English speaking skills and hospitality skills.

The in-depth interviewing was done by the researcher to the lecturer and the 10 senior staffs of tourism industries to know if the students of experimental group’s knowledge of politeness norms improve their English speaking skills and hospitality skills in relating to and serving tourists during their duties of internship in tourism industries.

Research Findings and Discussion
The research findings show that: (1) teaching politeness norms is appropriate at introduction part of each topic; by giving conversational model and practice of polite and impolite expressions in the main activity and evaluating them at the end of teaching activities and (2) the students’ knowledge of politeness norms which come from well known noble Javanese nuanced culture improves their behavior towards guests during their duties of internship in tourism industries. The norms include: (a) sumanak ‘friendly’, (b) anidhap asor ‘giving high respect and appropriate appreciation’, (c) sabar lan sareh ‘patient and with ease, calm’, (d) empan papan ‘matches with the setting and occasion’, (e) tepa stira ‘showing a feeling of sympathy or solidarity’ and (f) nuju prana ‘pleasing, satisfying’. The findings indicate strongly that the materials of politeness norms should be best inserted in teaching English for Specific Purposes, especially English for Tourism. Moreover, not only do the teaching of politeness norms develop the students’ polite English speaking skills, but also increase their hospitality skills.

From the interviews with the lecturer, it is found that inserting politeness norms in English teaching and learning activities is interesting and enjoyable for both the lecturer and the students. The most interesting and enjoyable methods for them are watching movies and role playing that distinguish polite and impolite
conversations either in verbal and nonverbal communication.

From the questionnaires filled out by the students, it is found that 62.5% of students coming from Javanese ethnic answered that the terms in politeness norms are familiar for them and easy to find at their families and societies. This leads them to practice in classrooms and implement in tourism industries easily. The rest 37.5% of them coming from outside Java Island find hard to familiarize the terms but claim that politeness norms are universal and applicable at their hometowns.

From the interviews with the senior staffs of tourism industries, they found that 100% of the students listed in experimental group showed the best performance and behavior in the internship program and becomes figure models among apprentices from other tourism colleges.

From the questionnaires filled out by the English speaking tourists, it is found that 100% of the tourists felt satisfied with the service of the students of experimental group during their visit to Central Java and Yogyakarta Special Province.

Conclusion

This research has been able to answer the two research questions mentioned in the Introduction. The analysis has indicated that teaching politeness norms is appropriate at introduction part of each topic; by giving conversational model and practice of polite and impolite expressions in the main activity and evaluating them at the end of teaching activities. Moreover, the experimental method of teaching politeness norms in English classes has proven successful to improve the students’ knowledge of politeness norms which come from well known noble Javanese nuanced culture applied into their behavior towards guests during their duties of internship in tourism industries.

Referring to the results of this research, the researcher recommends the English lecturers of tourism colleges in Indonesia to explore local values such as politeness norms and undertake action based researches for both objectives: to develop students’ polite English speaking skills and to increase their hospitality skills.

Bibliography


Biodata

Budi Purnomo holds PhD in Cultural Sciences from Gadjah Mada University and parts of his dissertation research project entitled “Politeness in Tourism-Service Register in Central Java: A Sociopragmatic Study” were undertaken in School of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics, Monash University through Overseas Sandwich Program funded by the Directorate General of Higher Education. His studies have covered the areas of language teaching, tourism and intercultural communication. He was awarded as the best paper presenter at the 10th Asia Tourism Forum 2012. He is currently faculty member and President at Sahid Tourism Institute of Surakarta, Indonesia.