

NEGATIVE POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN BATAM COMPANIES' ENGLISH BUSINESS LETTER

Afriana¹

Universitas Putera Batam (UPB), Batam, Indonesia
afriana@puterabatam.ac.id

Ambalegin²

Universitas Putera Batam (UPB), Batam, Indonesia
ambalegin@puterabatam.ac.id

Suhardianto³

Lembaga Pendidikan dan Pengembangan Profesi Indonesia
(LP3I) Jakarta, Indonesia
suhadiantolp3i@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This research aimed to the being pessimistic politeness strategy in the text of business letter from several Companies in Batam, Riau Island, Indonesia. This study includes multiple companies, with three companies chosen at random. Brown and Levinson (1987) define negative politeness methods as displaying restraint, formality, and distance. A descriptive qualitative method was used in analyzing the data because it would be explained by words, phrases, and sentences. The researcher employed the Sudaryanto (2015) observational method to obtain data. Brown and Levinson identified five negative politeness methods; however, in this study, the researchers focused solely on the pessimistic strategy. Pragmatics identity method was applied in analyzing the data. it was found that there were nine strategies of being pessimist politeness in the text of business letters. There are 2 data of being pessimistic in Letter 1 by PT. Vancouver Manufacturing Company, 4 data of being pessimistic in the Letter 2 by ABC Software Company, and 3 data of being pessimistic in Letter 3 by Mass Airlines Company.

Keywords: negative politeness, english business letter

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the many factors that ensures good interpersonal interactions is politeness. However,

being courteous is still very much a matter of who the speaker is speaking to. This definitional issue was

discussed in Watts' (2003) first chapter. One way to describe politeness is to show respect. It can be when they seem to be of assistance. It might also occur when people follow the rules. On the other hand, politeness takes on different forms depending on the situation. People would take the hearer's status into account. People would take into account their connection to the hearer. When defining politeness, a variety of qualities and variables are taken into consideration. However, being polite always serves to either make the listener feel at ease or involve them in the discourse. The phenomenon of negative politeness strategy can be easily found because it cannot be separated from communication. The phenomenon of negative politeness could be seen in the research of Goudarzi, Ghoonsooly, and Taghipour (2015) as below.

It is my pleasure to collaborate with you. (Goudarzi et al., 2015)

This example is a negative politeness strategy in a way that is not imposed a threat to the receiver. The appearance of "pleasure" in the sentence helps minimize the threat to the receiver's face by sending compliment on how joyful it was to collaborate with them. This is surely an interesting and not unusual phenomenon to be examined. It is worth to learn and explore what kind of negative politeness strategies that would help maintaining respect on each other especially in business setting.

In the same setting, negative politeness strategies do appear in

business letters especially complaint letters. It is common to find the bought product not be in the right quantity or even quality.

An enterprising entity that participates in professional, commercial or industrial activities is referred to as a business. Depending on a number of circumstances, there may be many types of businesses. In business, letters are needed as a means of communication between humans. Letters can be industrial, commercial, or something else. besides that, it is important to use good and correct language in writing a letter. One of them is politeness which is very necessary in writing letters. Politeness can not only be seen through the oral aspect but involves the use of written materials. Therefore, the selection and use of the right words and have a subtle sense of value in an official letter is very important because the letter is a reflection of the author. Therefore, in the aspect of writing an official letter, the politeness aspect of language should be emphasized in order to give a good impression to the writer and the recipient.

In conversational conditions there are 2 simple rules of pragmatic competence, namely: being clear, and being polite. Being clear means that the speaker must try to be quite clear in conveying his message. on the other hand, being polite is the most important. In terms of strengthening and human relations in social discourse. As the rules of politeness, according to Lakoff (as cited in Mazid, 2008), the sender use politeness strategy to provide a good image to addresses. There are 3 ways of using

the rules of politeness. The first don't include compulsive words or phrases provide the addresses option and also leave a good impression while writing business letter. It means, showing politeness through correspondence can show someone's identity so as not to embarrass themselves.

Negative politeness is the universally preferred approach for doing face work, and it is advocated that additional investigations of (FTAs) and politeness using culturally-sensitive models of interaction be used. Both positive- and negative politeness strategies within the apology acts were noted (as cited in Lisa, 2022). In her research, she discussed about ethnography of apologizing and politeness naturally in Cuernavaca Spanish. The finding of the research, based on Brown and Levinson theory of negative politeness is Face threatening act (FTA) and politeness negative politeness is the universally preferred approach for doing face work, and it is advocated that additional investigations of (FTAs) and politeness using culturally-sensitive models of interaction be used. She used version of Blum Kulka et al.'s (1989) Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project Coding Manual for Apologies and a corpus of (200) naturally occurring apology events, the basic strategies and sub-strategies used by members of the Cuernavaca speech community to apologize for a wide range of offenses.

Talking about ace-threatening action (FTA), the other researchers' expresses regret to the audience for using a face-threatening action (FTA). The technique enables the speaker to

convey their reluctance while keeping a bad impression of the listener. By partially reversing the impingement, this might be accomplished. There are four methods to express regret: by acknowledging the error, by offering strong justifications, by exhibiting hesitation, and by pleading for forgiveness. The following is an example of the use of the word "sorry" as part of an apology:

Mr. Han: "Stop saying "ass"!"

Dre: **"Sorry."** (Julius & Ambalegin, 2021)

Based on the example above, it is clear that this strategy showed be Apologetic for this utterance. **"Sorry"** On modern world, communication is playing a huge impact for humanity. In the business world communication is also necessary and play a huge part in it. In order to create and sustain business relationships within an organization and with outside contacts, written business communication, such as business letters, is extremely important. Letters are essential for person-to-person contact in business. Industrial, commercial, or other types of letters are all possible. In addition, it's critical to write letters using appropriate language. One of them, which is crucial while writing letters, is politeness. Politeness can also exist in written text such as business letter.

Business letters are frequently used as a guide for future interactions between individuals and businesses. Additionally, business letters support and preserve goodwill. Building and

maintaining successful business partnerships requires effective communication. Well-written letters give off a good impression of a person or business. Every business must constantly market and sell its products and services, and one way to do this is through writing to customers and clients. These letters serve as a miniature marketing.

One of the fundamentals of language use in social circumstances is politeness. Applying this tactic will help you respect both you and other people. There are four categories of politeness strategies: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record (Brown & Levinson, 1988). Negative politeness, according to Brown & Levinson (1988) is "more specific and focused" and is "the essence of respect conduct." The example of negative politeness is; be conventionally indirect, question and hedge, being pessimistic, minimize the imposition, show deference, apologize, impersonalize S and H, State the FTA, and nominalize.

In our daily lives, using a negative politeness technique is a common way to engage in social interactions and conduct socially significant activities, such as romance, friendship, family, and job or business. The data the researchers take is an example of apology letter in business where a negative politeness phenomenon can be found in the letter.

The research of politeness was done before by Pratiknyo (2016) with the goals of identifying and describing the many politeness strategies—both positive and negative in *Boyhood*, as well as the driving factors behind people's decisions of politeness

strategy. A *Boyhood* movie and its script were employed as the research's primary source. The result of the research was the characters use both positive and negative politeness tactics, which is the first outcome. Eight positive politeness sub strategies are employed by the characters: spark the listener's interest, use in-group identity signs, keep away of confrontation, laugh, and assume that the listener shares the speaker's goals. Including an activity that involves both the speaker and the listener. Negative politeness techniques include questioning and hedging, lessening the imposition, apologizing, and generally engaging in activity that poses a threat to one's face. The second finding is that all of *Boyhood's* character's view payoff as one of the primary variables affecting their decision to employ a particular tactic.

The research of politeness was done before by Njuki & Ireri (2021) with the aims to identify the positive and unfavorable politeness techniques utilized in the speeches of a sample of members of parliament. The source of the research used from Hansard the modified transcript of the discussions in Parliament. The result of the research was National Assembly members employ both positive and negative etiquette techniques to minimize the risks.

The research of politeness was done before by Ambalegin & Sijabat (2020) with the aims to finding out the positive and negative politeness strategy in *The Last Song* novel by Nicholas Sparks (2009). The Nicholas Sparks book *The Last Song* (2009) served as the research's primary source. The result of the research was

The Last Song novel's characters used both positive and negative politeness methods, with the exception of the eighth tactic—stating a face-threatening act—because it was a love fiction and there were no laws, obligations, or social rules from the nation. In a language, politeness can be used as to measure how polite a person is towards the interlocutor and the messages contained in the language should be used as a source of thoughts about the interlocutor's approval and rejection (Afriana & Mandala, 2018).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Politeness strategy is one way to convey the message as politely as possible. Based on Brown & Levinson (1987) Politeness is one of the fundamentals in the use of language in social contexts. This strategy is applied to respect yourself and the other people. There are four types of politeness strategies proposed by Brown & Levinson (1987), They are bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record. According to Brown & Levinson (1987), Negative politeness, is "more particular and focused" and is "the essence of respect conduct." be conventionally indirect; question, hedge; being pessimistic; minimize the imposition; give deference; apologize; are all examples of negative politeness. The FTAs are cited by the speaker and the hearer as an example of a general rule. They nominalize and declare the hearer to be debt-free or not indebted. Being pessimistic is a strategy used by speakers to convey uncertainty to listeners when they use words like

"can," "could," "would," "could," "would," and "may."

The example of being pessimistic:

A: Would you believe my mom?
She didn't actually let me get these.

P: Well, she's buying you something, right? (Suyono & Andriyanti, 2021)

Politeness Strategy analyses have been done by some people. Suyono and Andriyanti (2021) from English Education Department of Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta discussed negative politeness strategies in what would you do? TV show. On the research, there were 106 data collected from 39 videos in the show's YouTube channel. The descriptive qualitative methodology used in this study was supported by the frequency of data occurrences. The research used theory that proposed by Brown & Levinson (1987).

The second study was conducted by Supriyanto (2017). This study was at discovering the types and function of politeness strategy in The Boy Next Door movie used by Claire Peterson. This research utilizes the discourse analysis method. The research used Brown & Levinson (1987). At the end of this research there are 37 utterances involved politeness in her words. The most frequent politeness strategy is "offer and promise" with 7 times or 18.9% which included in positive politeness strategy to strengthen and build a good relationship with people around her.

The previous study and the current study both utilized Brown & Levinson (1987). The prior study and this one used various data source in terms of their data sources. The business letter in company served as

the researcher's main source of data. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the negative politeness at business letter in company.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The researchers of this study were employed qualitative method. Where the data and the result were oriented in words and sentence. According to Miles et al., (2014), qualitative method is the method that the object is formed with words, sentence, or phrase. The researchers collected the data by following the step from Sudaryanto (2015), namely observational method. At the beginning the researchers read the data source which is a letter from the companies. Then, the researchers wrote down the sentences from the letter. The next step, the researchers highlighted the data that contains the negative politeness that included to be pessimist. Therefore, this research was applied descriptive qualitative method because the data was analyzed the words. The data source was analyzed by researchers utilized pragmatic identity from Sudaryanto (2015). The researchers used equalizing method intended to equalize the data with the theory of Brown and Levinson (1987). The first step, the researchers read the data source because the data source was contained in a letter. Afterwards, the researchers write down the sentences from the letter. The next move, the researchers marked the word loaded by the negative politeness that contain be pessimist and examined the data source using Brown and Levinson's theory. At the end, the researchers presented the result of this study descriptively.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The result and discussion of this research as follow: There are three letters from three companies in this business letter analyzed.

Datum 1

"We would appreciate it if you bring this announcement to the attention of your accounts payable department and direct them accordingly"

Analysis:

"we" refer to group Vanoouver Manufacturing as the sender of the letter to Mr. John Taylor director of operation of ABC cooperation. According to Brown & Levinson (1987) the statement above defined as be pessimist in negative politeness strategy. It can be assumed by the sender showing humble sentence **"We would appreciate"** to convey the sender's purpose. So, the receiver receives additional threat positive face. The sentence was used to ensure the sender's company.

Datum 2

"We appreciate your cooperation in this matter"

Analysis:

"we" refer to group Vanoouver Manufacturing as the sender of the letter to Mr. John Taylor director of operation of ABC cooperation. According to Brown & Levinson (1987) the statement above defined as be pessimist in negative politeness strategy. It can be assumed by the sender showing humble sentence **"We appreciate your cooperation in this matter"** to convey the sender's

purpose. So, the receiver receives additional threat positive face. The sentence was used to ensure the sender's company.

Datum 3

"I would like to request you for a business loan of \$45,000. Our organization "ABC Software Limited" has an experience in the software industry since 15 years and has a good reputation in the industry."

Analysis:

"I" refer to Marc Jacob as the sender of the letter to Mr. Alex Martin director of operation of ABC cooperation. According to Brown & Levinson (1987) the statement above defined as be pessimist in negative politeness strategy. It can be assumed by the sender showing humble sentence **"I would like to request you for a business loan of \$45,000"** to convey the sender's purpose. So, the receiver receives additional threat positive face. The sentence was used to ensure the sender's company.

Datum 4

"If you grant us this loan, it will help us in executing our plan and meeting our set targets."

Analysis:

"us" refer to Marc Jacob as the sender of the letter to Mr. Alex Martin director of operation of ABC cooperation. According to Brown & Levinson (1987) the statement above defined as be pessimist in negative politeness strategy. It can be assumed by the sender showing humble sentence **"it will help us in executing our plan and meeting our set targets."** to convey the sender's request. So, the receiver receives additional threat

positive face. The sentence was used to ensure the sender's company.

Datum 5

"We are attaching a report that consist of details about our plans for the business development for your reference."

Analysis:

"we" refer to Marc Jacob as the sender of the letter to Mr. Alex Martin director of operation of ABC cooperation. According to Brown & Levinson (1987) the statement above defined as be pessimist in negative politeness strategy. It can be assumed by the sender showing humble sentence **"We are attaching a report that consist of details about our plans for the business development for your reference."** to convey the sender's purpose. So, the receiver receives additional threat positive face. The sentence was used to ensure the sender's company.

Datum 6

" We will wait for a positive response from your side"

Analysis:

"we" refer to Marc Jacob as the sender of the letter to Mr. Alex Martin director of operation of ABC cooperation. According to Brown & Levinson (1987) the statement above defined as be pessimist in negative politeness strategy. It can be assumed by the sender showing humble sentence **"We will wait for a positive response from your side"** to convey the sender's hope for waiting the response. So, the receiver receives additional threat positive face. The sentence was used to ensure the sender's company.

Datum 7

"We'd be happy to promote the overwatch Villa in our in-flight magazine at a significant discount"

Analysis:

"we" refer to Miranda Lawson as the sender of the letter to Ms. Ginny Clark overwatch Villa. According to Brown & Levinson (1987) the statement above defined as be pessimist in negative politeness strategy. It can be assumed by the sender showing humble sentence **"We'd be happy to promote the overwatch Villa in our in-flight magazine at a significant discount"** to convey the sender's purpose. So, the receiver receives additional threat positive face. The sentence was used to ensure the sender's company.

Datum 8

"If you'd like to discuss this in further detail, I can be reached at 575-555-9255, or at mlawson@massairlines.com"

Analysis:

"I" refer to Miranda Lawson as the sender of the letter to Ms. Ginny Clark overwatch Villa. According to Brown & Levinson (1987) the statement above defined as be pessimist in negative politeness strategy. It can be assumed by the sender showing humble sentence **"If you'd like to discuss this in further detail, I can be reached at 575-555-9255, or at mlawson@massairlines.com"** to convey the sender's purpose. So, the receiver receives additional threat positive face. The sentence was used to ensure the sender's company.

Datum 9

"I look forward to hearing from you"

Analysis:

"I" refer to Miranda Lawson as the sender of the letter to Ms. Ginny Clark overwatch Villa. According to Brown & Levinson (1987) the statement above defined as be pessimist in negative politeness strategy. It can be assumed by the sender showing humble sentence **"I look forward to hearing from you"** to convey the sender's hope. So, the receiver receives additional threat positive face. The sentence was used to ensure the sender's company.

Negative Politeness Strategy (Being pessimist)

Letter 1: by PT. Vancouver Manufacturing Company

Being Pessimistic

1. We would appreciate it if you bring this announcement to the attention of your accounts payable department and direct them accordingly
2. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter

Letter 2: by ABC Software Company

1. I would like to request you for a business loan of \$45,000. Our organization "ABC Software Limited" has an experience in the software industry since 15 years and has a good reputation in the industry.
2. If you grant us this loan, it will help us in executing our plan and meeting our set targets.
3. We are attaching a report that consist of details about our plans for the business development for your reference.

4. We will wait for a positive response from your side

Letter 3: by Mass Airlines Company

1. We'd be happy to promote the over watch Villa in our in-flight magazine at a significant discount
2. If you'd like to discuss this in further detail, I can be reached at 575-555-9255, or at mlawson@massairlines.com.
3. I look forward to hearing from you

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded negative politeness strategy (being pessimist) of these business letters in the table as follow:

Table 1. Frequency of Being Pessimistic

Negative politeness strategy (being pessimistic)	Frequency
Letter 1 by PT. Vancouver Manufacturing Company	2
Letter 2 by ABC Software Company	4
Letter 3 by Mass Airlines Company	3
Total	9

5. Conclusion

Based on the analysis, there are 9 sentences containing negative politeness strategies used by company while writing business letter. In detail, it uses be pessimist negative politeness. by applying politeness in the letter, it makes the reader additionally receive treat positive face while read the letter. it satisfies someone else. In other words, the sender uses negative politeness

strategies using humble sentence to maintain good relationship with others in daily life. Also, the researchers of this research suggest the reader to utilize humble sentence since it is a bare minimum of necessity when interact with someone else especially require some help.

REFERENCES

- Afiana, A., & Mandala, R. S. (2018). Analisis Kesantunan Berbahasa Sebagai Dampak Dari Penerapan Pendidikan Karakter Pada Siswa. *Snistek*, 1, 1–6.
- Ambalegin, A., & Sijabat, M. (2020). the Strategies of Positive and Negative Politeness Reflected in "the Last Song" Novel by Nicholas Sparks. *eScience Humanity Journal*, 1(1), 23–36. <https://doi.org/10.37296/esci.v1i1.4>
- Afiana, & Mandala, R. S. (2018). Analisis Kesantunan Berbahasa Sebagai Dampak Dari Penerapan Pendidikan Karakter Pada Siswa. *Snistek: Seminar Nasional Ilmu Sosial Dan Teknologi*, 1, 1–6.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage (Studies in Interactional Sociolinguistics 4). In *TESOL Quarterly* (Reissue, Vol. 22, Issue 4). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587263>
- Mazid, B. E. M. (2008). *The politeness principle (chapter 7.5)*.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. Mi., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis* (4th editio).

SAGE Publications.

- Sudaryanto, sudaryanto. (2015).
Metode dan aneka teknik analisis bahasa. Sanata Dharma University Press.
- Supriyanto, I. G. (2017). an Analysis of Politeness Strategies Used By Claire Peterson in the Boy Next Door Movie. *Journal of English Language and Language Teaching*, 1(1), 5.
- Suyono, M., & Andriyanti, E. (2021). Negative Politeness Strategies in What Would You Do? TV Show. *Journal of Language and Literature*, 21(2), 439–452.
<https://doi.org/10.24071/joll.v21i2.3430>