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# Speech Act of Advice and Its Social Variables as Acquired by Senior Students of English Department of Andalas University in 2019

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### A B S T R A C T

This research analyzes the form of the speech act of advice acquired by senior students at English Department of Andalas University in 2019. The identified structures of advice were then described about politeness strategy being used and the social factors (Power, Social Distance, and Rate of Imposition) that underlie the selection of the form and strategies. Data were gathered using online DCT that made use of Google Form platform. As many as 32 senior students of the department in 2019 participated in this research and filled in their responses completely to the 12 situations presented in the online DCT. The situations were designed as similar as possible to Indonesian students' daily life situations in West Sumatera and written in Indonesian. However, the responses were required in English. The results of the analyses revealed that most participants tended to use hedging type of advice (57%) with a positive politeness strategy (76%). In addition, social variables such as social distance appeared to play a significant role in the participants' selection of the politeness form and strategy. When the social distance was close between an advisor and an advisee, the advisor tended to switch to the direct mode form and direct politeness strategy. However, when an advisor assumed a far social distance against the listener, s/he tended to advise the listener in a more indirect form and strategy regardless of the listener's power status.

## INTRODUCTION

People or members of a community vary their ways of communicating with each other based on their needs. They may make requests, give commands, make compliments, and give advices.

These actions through verbal action of communication are linguistically called “Speech Acts” [1]. Among various numbers of speech acts, this paper focuses on only one particular speech act, i.e. speech act of advice. Advice can be defined as an utterance that encourages the hearer or advisee to take a particular action [2]. Advice is used in social interaction to solve some problems or prevent some unwanted conditions in the future.

In terms of advice, people in Indonesia tend to give advice only to their close circles, such as between close friends, family members, and academic societies (teacher/lecturer and students). Indonesians do not appear to be interested in advising people who are distant and have positions higher than they do. Social variables such as the closeness between advisors and advisees commonly affect the choice of advice types and strategies. Usually, people advise their close friends differently from how they do to their distant friends. They tend to be direct and convince their close friends to do their advice. They also do the same way to addressees whose power is lower than theirs, such as their juniors in campus or their younger siblings. However, giving advice can be a complicated act because there is no one wants to be told what to do.

In giving advice, there are some strategies employed by an advisor to achieve the goals. One of the important aspects of language use is the degree of politeness. People may know if someone is polite or not through the way they speak. Therefore, to be polite and to be able to maintain a relationship in society, people should know how to use politeness strategies appropriately in accordance with their power, social distance, and the imposition of the utterance.

Advice also commonly found in daily communications among university students. Students at English Department of Andalas University have learned English intensively and been expected to acquire the appropriate use of the foreign language. The more senior a student becomes, the better the degree of acquisition the student should get. Nevertheless, as they are still in the process of acquiring English, students may still make some mistakes in giving advice, even though they have learned English for several years. This paper attempts to identify all forms and strategies of the speech act of advice that the senior students in 2019 had acquired. Now, a brief overview of the theoretical discussion is presented in the following sections.

Politeness is a very important principle in language use, and in communication, it can be defined as a means to show awareness of another person's face [3]. Face refers to the emotional and social sense that everyone has and expects to be recognized by everyone else. Showing awareness to distant people is often called respect, and showing awareness to close people is described as friendliness. Similarly, Holmes proposed that a polite person is able to make other people feel comfortable [4]. Politeness deals with how someone makes others feel more pleasant and do not disturb their face wants. It means that the effort to be polite determines the choice of words in expressing the idea or meaning in a given context. Holmes explains that politeness often matters in selecting linguistics forms.

Furthermore, Brown and Levinson defined politeness as a concept of considering someone's feelings by paying attention to the positive and negative face of the hearer [5]. Positive face is someone's desire to be appreciated, accepted, and approved by others, while negative face deals with the desire to be free from imposition, and people have their own right to choose whether they want to do something or not. In giving advice, a speaker has to make sure that he/she can create polite advice and a safe interlocutor's face. Therefore, a speaker needs to use certain strategies for preventing actions that threaten their faces to reduce the risk of damaging those faces. Brown and Levinson identified four strategies of politeness which can be applied by the speakers, namely bald-on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record [5].

The occurrences of advice cannot be separated from a social variable that the interlocutors, advisor-advisee, are involved in. The social variable, such as the closeness between advisors and advisees, affects the choice of advice strategies employed by the advisor. Also, Holmes states that both power and distance are two major elements that influence the use of politeness strategy [4]. Three social variables can influence conversations, including social distance, relative power, and rank of imposition [5].

Searle defines advice as "telling you what is best for you" [6]. According to this definition, advice belongs to the directive category of speech acts. As a directive act, the speaker wants his/her advisee to do something. The speech act of giving advice is in the same classification as suggestion and recommendation.

Advice might be defined as an opinion regarding a decision, and the advisee is required to consider the advice seriously. Advice is considered to benefit the hearer rather than the speaker. It is about what is the best for the advisee [6]. Advice is not a part of the request because advising does not mean trying to get someone to do something for the speaker. In fact, it is a choice for advice seekers toward some problems for an action. Advice offers one of the possible solutions for the hearer's problems.

On the other side, there is a speech act of suggestion, which also in the same group as advice. Suggestion as a request to the hearer to take some actions which, as the speaker believes, will benefit the hearer. On the other side, there is also a recommendation, defined as an opinion about someone or something. For example, "I recommend a hotel near the beach. The view is fantastic." [7].

Speech act of advice is potentially a face-threatening act because it places the hearer into the position that he/she is asked to do something and limits the hearer's freedom of action [5]. This puts the speaker or advisor into a position of authority and power, which may lead them into impoliteness. When a speaker says something that threatens another individual expectation, it is described as face-threatening act [3].

To lessen the face threat, the act of politeness exists. Politeness requires appropriate techniques or strategies such as indirectness, hedging, and other forms of politeness to take account of the both interlocutor's faces and maintain good social interactions [5]. In addition, the degree to which advice is face-threatening varies among cultures and depends on the social distance between the advisor and the advisee. It also depends on the power which the advisee has over the advisor and the politeness strategies considered in a particular culture.

Advice in social interaction can be delivered in several ways and determine a person's level of politeness. They can be examined for their degree of directness. Hinkel mentions three types of advice: direct, hedge, and indirect advice [8].

It is surprising to see that few studies had been done on the speech act of advice, especially by linguistic students in West Sumatera or probably Indonesia [9], [10]. This is an interlanguage pragmatic study that focused on analyzing speech acts of advice as acquired by EFL learners who were senior students at English Department, Andalas University, Padang, Indonesia in 2019. The research focuses on the following issues:

- 1) What types of advice do the senior students of English Department in 2019 mostly

use when responding to DCT situations?

- 2) To what extent do social distance, power, and imposition affect the students' production of advice in association with politeness?

## METHOD

### Participants

In conducting this research, senior students of English Department of Andalas University (class 2015) were chosen. There are some reasons why students of class 2015 were chosen. Firstly, they were considered to have already acquired the use of speech acts. Secondly, as seniors, they were expected to have the ability to produce advice in appropriate manners. Thirdly, they were presumed to have experienced almost all situations given in the DCT. Therefore, as many as 67 students were invited to participate in this research, but only 32 students agreed to take part.

### Data Elicitation Instrument: Online Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT)

A written version of Discourse Completion Test (DCT), which was originally created by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain [11], was used for testing the participants' pragmalinguistic competence [12] in using speech act of advice. The questionnaire was put on a google form whose link was shared to the participants so that they could easily fill it in at their own convenience. This instrument consisted of a written questionnaire with as many as 12 situations that were designed to test different combinations of the social variables (Table 1). Each situation was created based on presumably familiar occasions to the students, and it was mostly related to students' habits or daily activities. The descriptions of situations were sufficiently detailed so that participants could easily imagine themselves to be involved in those situations. The situations were written in Indonesian but the participants were required to respond to them in English. *Bahasa Indonesia* was used to provide clarity and ease for the participants because there are a lot of situations to read in one time. Additionally, it may help reduce the fatigue effect that participants may undertake. The following table shows the scheme of different degrees of power (P), distance (D), and rank of imposition (I) that motivated the DCT design of each situation.

**Table 1: Scheme of DCT Questionnaire**

No	Situation	P	D	I
1	Giving advice to a close senior about shopping online.	-	-	-
2	Giving advice to a close senior about buying new laptop.	-	-	+
3	Giving advice to a senior you do not know well about making assignment.	-	+	-
4	Giving advice to a senior you do not know well to stop smoking.	-	+	+
5	Giving advice to a junior you do not know well about his/her work in an event.	+	+	-
6	Giving advice to your new student during KKN about learn English.	+	+	+
7	Giving advice to a junior who you know well about getting a better score.	+	-	-
8	Giving advice to your student during KKN to be active in class.	+	-	+
9	Giving advice to your friend to stop playing gadget.	=	-	-
10	Giving advice to your friend to eat more fruit for her /his diet.	=	-	+
11	Giving advice to a friend who does not really close to you to stop eating noodle.	=	+	+
12	Giving advice to a friend who does not really close to you to prepare his/ her own stationary.	=	+	-

(-): low power, close distance, low imposition

(+): high power, far distance, high imposition

(=): equal power

### Data Collection Procedure

The targeted participants were firstly invited personally to join this research through WhatsApp messenger. After getting their approval, the DCT's google form link was sent to the confirmed

participants who could fill in the questionnaire at their convenience. All data were conveniently and automatically calculated from google form platform in form of MS Excel file. As a result, the quantitative pattern of the use of advice could be identified. However, for the qualitative analysis, individual responses were captured and printed out from the google form so that they could be presented to provide qualitative analysis and descriptions.

### Data Analysis

In order to analyze and interpret the data, there are some steps applied. First of all, the responses were grouped into Hinkel's proposition of types of advice [8]. Second of all, politeness strategies applied along with its relation to the social variables were identified and categorized base on Brown and Levinson's classification [5]. Then, the dominant types of advice and their politeness strategies were detected. After identifying politeness strategies, the role of social variables toward the chosen politeness strategy in giving advice was elaborated.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the analysis as seen in the Table 3 reveal the type and strategy of advice used by the students.

**Table 2: Number of Occurrence of Advice Type and Politeness Strategy**

Realization of Advice Type and Politeness Strategy		Total	%
Type	Direct Advice	111	29
	Hedge Advice	220	57
	Indirect Advice	53	14
Total		384	100
Politeness Strategy	Bald On Record	44	11
	Positive Politeness	291	76
	Negative Politeness	49	13
	Off Record	0	0

In general, the most dominant type used by the participants in giving advice is hedge advice. It appears as many as 220 (57%) answers of the twelve situations in DCT questionnaire using hedge type of advice. Hedge is considered to be a polite statement in giving advice. Most students tended to impose their advice on the advisee. It was proven by the dominant use of positive politeness strategy, which was as many as 291 times (76%) in all situations by all participants.

However, there were over 111 (29%) direct advice detected. It indicates that some participants tended to use direct statements in order to force the advisee to do what was being advised. The last type which was least familiar among the participants was indirect advice. It was only produced in as many as 49 (13%) responses. Although this type was considered to be the most polite type of speech act (Leech, 1983), only few participants had the capability in applying this type. This may also indicate that majority of participants did not have a strong pragmalinguistic competence to produce the highest form politeness tool in giving advice.

Responses from the participants show that the production of advice and the degree of politeness mostly determines by the social distance. The social distance seemed to have a strong effect on the production of advice. The advisor who was close to the advisee might force the advisee to do the advice. Then, this close distance seemed to overpower the rank of the imposition.

Although the imposition was high, the advisor appeared to act like there was no imposition for the advisee to do.

It becomes worse when the advisor can directly deliver the advice to the person who has higher power than them. The advisor does not consider the face of the advisee and tends to act like they are in a close relationship or they act to be friendly. It can be seen that people in the close distance can express their messages directly and without any guilt even though they deliver the advice to the people who have a higher authority than them. The following datum on Figure 1 provides an example of this phenomenon.

1. Di kampus ataupun di kosan, kamu berteman dengan seorang senior. Ia ingin menghadiri wisuda teman dekatnya, namun ia tidak memiliki pakaian yang cukup bagus. Ia berencana untuk belanja online dikarenakan harga di online shop jauh lebih murah. Tetapi, kamu tidak percaya dengan online shop, apalagi harganya murah, pasti kualitasnya akan sangat mengecewakan. Bagaimana kamu menasehati seniormu tsb agar tidak belanja di online shop? Silakan jawab dengan BAHASA INGGRIS. \*

I don't think online shop is a good option. You should think about it.

**Figure 1. Speech Act of Direct Advice**

As seen in Figure 1, the advisor, a female junior, had a lower power than the advisee (P; S<H), the distance between them is close (D-Close) and the imposition of the advice is low (R-Low). The type used by the participant in delivering advice is direct advice. It becomes direct because the advisor uses modal verb 'should' in the advice sentence, which can be assumed that the advisor demands the advisee executes her advice. She was not aware to whom she gave the advice and did not seem to reduce the risk of the face-threatening act. No statement indicates any reverence to the advisee, such as address form. The low imposition about canceling her plan to shop online did not really affect the advice. Not only the imposition, the close distance between both the advisor and the advisee seems to have also determined the selection of direct speech acts of advice. It is because the advisor (junior) could propose her advice directly and freely without any barrier since they were close enough.

On the other hand, if the advisors are distant to the advisee, they will give authority to the advisee to accept or ignore the advice. In this situation, the hedge type of advice was mostly chosen regardless of the power the advisee has over the advisor. The advisor tended to respect the advisee and considers the imposition in making advice. Figure 2 presents the example in this case.

4. Di jurusan atau organisasi, kamu mempunyai senior yang suka merokok. Kamu tidak terlalu akrab dengannya. Setiap kali dia merokok, kamu dan teman-temanmu merasa terganggu. Kali ini, kamu mempunyai kesempatan untuk berbicara dengannya. Kamu ingin dia berhenti merokok, karena hal itu sangat mengganggu. Selain itu, merokok juga tidak sehat. Bagaimana caramu menasehatinya agar berhenti merokok? Silakan jawab dengan BAHASA INGGRIS \*

Bg, how many cigarette that you have in a day bg? I'm sorry for saying this to you bg. I think it's better for you to stop smoking bg because that is not good for your health and many people will not like it bg. I think it's better to buy a candy instead of a cigarette bg. Hehe 😊

**Figure 2. Speech Act of Hedge Advice**

Datum 4 illustrates that the advisor had lower power than the advisee (P; S<H), the distance between them was far (D-Far), and the imposition of the advice was high (R-High). The participant used hedge advice in delivering advice as seen from the utterance 'I think it's better...'. The advisor, who was a junior in college, respects her senior. She used an apology statement to soften her words to be polite and avoid interfering advisee's face. The social distance between them also appeared to influence the production of the advice. Since they did not know well (D-far), the act of giving advice was expected to be more indirect and showed a good manner. In this case, the advisor showed the manner by stating an apology. On the other hand, the imposition about stop smoking (R-High) seemed to influence the production of advice. Since the advisee had been addicted to cigarettes, it would have been hard for him to accept the advice, or perhaps he would have ignored it. In this situation, the advisor had to consider the imposition and made the advice possible to be applied. Based on the figure above, the advisor related to the case of smoking and healthiness. She did not explain a lot, but it hopefully could open advisee's mind to accept the advice and begin to stop this bad habit.

Finally, in the interaction between friends, there is a tendency to save advisee's face. Although they are friends, the advisors still consider the imposition, which may hurt their friend's feelings. The advisors prefer to be polite rather than direct in advising their friends. This is exemplified in Figure 3.

9. Kamu dan teman sejurusanmu mempunyai tugas kelompok yang harus dikirim sebelum jam 23.59 malam ini. Sekarang sudah menunjukkan pukul 22.15. Namun, dia masih sibuk dengan handphonenya. Jika kalian tidak menyelesaikan tugas tersebut, kalian tidak akan mendapatkan final score yang bagus dari Pak Edria. Pada situasi ini, apa yang akan kamu katakan kepada temanmu tsb agar dia segera menyelesaikan tugas? Silakan jawab dengan BAHASA INGGRIS. \*

Bro, i think you have to make your assignment now, please do not wait until 23.59 to send your assignment, that is the bad habit. If you make it now, you can recheck your assignment and make it as perfect as you can and you can get better grade.

**Figure 3. Speech Act of Advice with Positive Politeness Strategy**

The figure above depicts the situation between female friends. However, the advisor had an equal degree of power (P; S=H), the distance between them is close (D-Close), and the imposition of the advice is low (R-Low). As a close friend, the advisor could deliver the advice directly, but in this situation, the advisor appeared to use positive politeness. This reveals that close friends who are equally powerful may use polite advice in their interaction. Such a positive politeness strategy was also used because the advisor may have wanted her advice to be accepted. It was proven by the advisor showing the advisee the reciprocal action (as mentioned in the second sentence) if the assignment was finished earlier. In delivering the advice, the advisor did not seem to be influenced by the imposition. She strongly forced her friend to finish the assignment soon without questioning her interests in using her gadget. It shows that low imposition here did not influence the selection of advice and its strategy.

## CONCLUSION

In this research, the relationship between speech act of advice and the social variables acquired by senior students of the English Department of Andalas University in 2019 has been analyzed. The results show that the most dominant type of advice used by the participants was hedge, and a positive politeness strategy was the dominant strategy. Then three social variables were proven to influence the selection of speech acts of advice. The most dominantly influential variable is social distance and then followed by the relative power. The social distance has a strong effect on the production of advice. The advisor who was close to the advisee may force her/him to do the advice. Then, this close distance will overpower the importance of imposition. Nonetheless, the condition will be different when speakers and hearer are socially distant. The advisor will give authority to the advisee in giving advice.

Despite the findings, this research still suffers from some limitations. The online data collection method appeared to be effective and manageable, but there was no assurance that it is the participants who filled in the questionnaire. Then, another limitation is the proficiency level of the students. The level of students' proficiency must be related to the production of advice in order to validate the students' level of acquisition. Therefore, it is suggested that the next researcher may attempt to use oral DCT in collecting the data so that the researcher will be able to validate the participants' response authenticity. Then, the next studies can also observe the correlation between the informant's proficiency level and their speech act of advice.

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