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POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW OF STUDIES PUBLISHED FROM 2021 TO 2023

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini merupakan Systematic Literature Review (SLR) yang mengkaji penelitian mengenai strategi kesantunan (politeness strategies) dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris (English Language Teaching/ELT) yang dipublikasikan selama periode 2021–2023. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi tren publikasi, kerangka teori yang dominan, pendekatan metodologis, temuan utama, serta implikasi pedagogis dari penelitian-penelitian tersebut. Proses kajian mengikuti pedoman PRISMA 2020 dengan menganalisis artikel jurnal bereputasi yang diperoleh dari Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, dan Google Scholar. Artikel dipilih berdasarkan kriteria inklusi dan eksklusi yang telah ditetapkan, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa penelitian mengenai kesantunan dalam ELT mengalami perkembangan yang signifikan, dengan Teori Kesantunan Brown dan Levinson tetap menjadi kerangka analisis yang paling banyak digunakan. Strategi positive politeness merupakan strategi yang paling dominan dalam interaksi kelas, terutama pada pemberian umpan balik, pengelolaan kelas, dan peningkatan partisipasi peserta didik. Sebagian besar penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui observasi kelas, analisis wacana, dan wawancara, sedangkan penelitian kuantitatif maupun mixed methods masih relatif terbatas. Dari sisi geografis, penelitian didominasi oleh konteks EFL di kawasan Asia, khususnya Indonesia, Tiongkok, Iran, Malaysia, dan Jepang. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan adanya pergeseran fokus penelitian dari pembahasan konseptual mengenai kompetensi pragmatik menuju investigasi empiris tentang interaksi kelas, pembelajaran daring, dan komunikasi guru–siswa. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa strategi kesantunan merupakan sumber daya pedagogis yang penting dalam mengembangkan kompetensi pragmatik dan kompetensi komunikasi antarbudaya peserta didik. Penelitian selanjutnya disarankan memperluas cakupan wilayah penelitian serta menggunakan desain longitudinal dan mixed methods untuk memperoleh bukti empiris yang lebih komprehensif mengenai efektivitas pengajaran strategi kesantunan dalam ELT.

Kata Kunci: pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, strategi kesantunan, kompetensi pragmatik, tinjauan literatur sistematis, interaksi kelas

Abstract

This study presents a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) examining research on politeness strategies in English Language Teaching (ELT) published between 2021 and 2023. The review aims to identify publication trends, dominant theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, major research findings, and pedagogical implications in the field of politeness studies. The review followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines and analyzed peer-reviewed journal articles retrieved from Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. Eligible studies were selected based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria and were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings indicate a substantial increase in research on politeness in ELT, with Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory remaining the dominant analytical framework. Positive politeness emerged as the most frequently employed strategy in classroom interaction, particularly in teacher feedback, classroom management, and learner engagement. Most studies adopted qualitative research designs, relying on classroom observation, discourse analysis, and interviews, while quantitative and mixed-methods studies remained relatively limited. Geographically, the literature was concentrated in Asian EFL contexts, particularly Indonesia, China, Iran, Malaysia, and Japan. The review also reveals a shift from conceptual discussions of pragmatic competence toward empirical investigations of classroom discourse, online learning, and teacher–student interaction. The study concludes that politeness should be regarded as an essential pedagogical resource for developing learners' pragmatic and intercultural communicative competence. Future research should incorporate broader geographical contexts, longitudinal designs, and mixed-method approaches to provide more comprehensive evidence regarding the effectiveness of politeness instruction in English language teaching.

Keywords: English Language Teaching, politeness strategies, pragmatic competence, systematic literature review, classroom interaction

A. INTRODUCTION

Communication competence has become one of the primary goals of English Language Teaching (ELT), extending beyond grammatical accuracy to include learners' ability to use language appropriately in different social and cultural contexts. Within this perspective, pragmatic competence plays a central role because successful communication depends not only on what speakers say but also on how they express their intentions while maintaining interpersonal relationships (Taguchi, 2023). One of the most fundamental aspects of pragmatic competence is politeness, which enables speakers to minimize face-threatening acts, negotiate social distance, and maintain harmonious interaction (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 2014). In ELT classrooms, politeness strategies influence teacher–student interaction, classroom management, feedback delivery, collaborative learning, and intercultural communication. Consequently, developing learners' awareness of politeness is no longer considered an optional component of language learning but an essential element of communicative competence (Leech, 2014).

The importance of politeness has become increasingly evident in contemporary ELT because English functions as a global lingua franca in which learners interact with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Although learners may possess sufficient grammatical knowledge, many still experience pragmatic failure due to inappropriate use of politeness strategies. Such failures may lead to misunderstanding, negative impressions, and ineffective communication (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Taguchi, 2023). Therefore, English language teachers are expected not only to develop students' linguistic competence but also to foster pragmatic awareness by explicitly teaching how politeness is realized in different communicative situations (Leech, 2014).

Research on politeness in ELT has shown substantial growth in recent years. Studies published in 2021 mainly emphasized the role of politeness in developing learners' pragmatic competence and intercultural communicative competence. Researchers argued that classroom interaction should expose learners to authentic pragmatic features, including requests, refusals, apologies, compliments, and politeness strategies, to prepare them for real-world communication (Derakhshan & Eslami, 2021).

During 2022, the research focus shifted toward empirical classroom investigations. Many studies examined how teachers and students employed Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies during classroom interaction. Findings consistently revealed that positive politeness was the most dominant strategy because it helped establish rapport, increase students' participation, and reduce classroom anxiety (Sitinjak et al., 2023). Other studies also investigated politeness in online and blended learning environments, reflecting changes in educational practices following the COVID-19 pandemic (Derakhshan et al., 2022).

By 2023, politeness research had become increasingly diverse in terms of educational contexts, research methodologies, and pedagogical implications. Researchers examined teacher feedback, classroom discourse, learner perceptions, intercultural pragmatics, and technology-mediated communication. Recent findings suggest that politeness is no longer viewed merely as a linguistic phenomenon but as an essential pedagogical resource that supports learner engagement, interactional competence, and successful classroom communication (Taguchi, 2023; Sitinjak et al., 2023).

Despite this growing body of literature, existing studies remain fragmented. Most previous research has focused on specific educational levels, classroom contexts, or particular politeness strategies. Consequently, there is still limited understanding of how research on politeness in ELT has evolved over time, what

research trends have emerged, which theoretical frameworks have been predominantly employed, and what methodological approaches have characterized the field. Furthermore, although several literature reviews have discussed politeness in second and foreign language learning, no recent review has comprehensively synthesized the development of politeness research in ELT over three years before.

Therefore, this review aims to provide a comprehensive synthesis of research on politeness strategies in English Language Teaching published over the three years before. Specifically, this review seeks to identify publication trends, dominant research themes, theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, educational contexts, and major findings. By mapping the evolution of politeness research, this review is expected to identify existing research gaps, propose future research directions, and provide practical implications for English language teachers, teacher educators, and researchers interested in integrating pragmatic competence into English language teaching.

B. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Conceptualizing Politeness in Pragmatics

Language is not only used to deliver information but also to build and maintain social relationships. When people communicate, they need to choose appropriate words and expressions so that their messages can be accepted without offending others. This ability is known as pragmatic competence, which refers to the ability to use language appropriately according to the context, the relationship between speakers, and the purpose of communication (Leech, 2014). Therefore, learning a language involves not only understanding grammar and vocabulary but also understanding how language should be used in real-life situations.

Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics that studies meaning in context. Unlike semantics, which focuses on the literal meaning of words and sentences, pragmatics explains how meaning is influenced by the situation in which communication takes place. According to Leech (2014), the interpretation of an utterance depends on several contextual factors, including who is speaking, who is listening, where the conversation occurs, and what the speaker intends to achieve. Similarly, Yule (2020) explains that pragmatics is concerned with how people communicate meanings that are often different from the literal meanings of their words. For this reason, pragmatic competence has become an important component of communicative competence in English language learning.

One of the most important topics in pragmatics is politeness. Politeness refers to the way speakers use language to show respect, maintain good relationships, and avoid causing discomfort or conflict during communication. It helps speakers express

their ideas in ways that are socially acceptable and appropriate for a particular situation (Leech, 2014). In educational settings, politeness is especially important because teachers and students interact every day through asking questions, giving instructions, correcting mistakes, expressing opinions, and providing feedback. The use of polite language can create a positive classroom atmosphere, encourage students to participate actively, and strengthen the relationship between teachers and learners (Derakhshan et al., 2022).

The concept of politeness has been discussed by many scholars, but one of the earliest and most influential ideas is Face Theory, proposed by Goffman (1967). Goffman explains that every individual has a social image, known as face, which they want other people to respect. During communication, speakers naturally try to protect both their own face and the face of others. If someone's face is threatened—for example, by criticism, disagreement, or direct commands—they may feel embarrassed, uncomfortable, or offended. Therefore, people often choose polite expressions to reduce the possibility of threatening another person's face.

Building on Goffman's theory, Brown and Levinson (1987) developed one of the most influential models of politeness in pragmatics. They argue that every individual possesses two types of face: positive face and negative face. Positive face refers to a person's desire to be appreciated, respected, and accepted by others. Negative face refers to a person's desire to have freedom of action without being imposed upon by others (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Because communication often involves requests, criticism, suggestions, or disagreements, speakers need strategies to reduce the potential threat to these two aspects of face.

Brown and Levinson (1987) propose four main politeness strategies. The first is bald-on-record, in which speakers express their message directly without attempting to reduce the impact of the utterance. This strategy is commonly used in emergencies or when the relationship between speakers is very close. For example, a teacher may simply say, "Open your textbook to page 20." The second strategy is positive politeness, which aims to build closeness and show friendliness. For example, a teacher may say, "That's a very good idea. Could you explain it a little more?" This strategy helps students feel appreciated and encourages them to participate in classroom discussions.

The third strategy is negative politeness, which emphasizes respect for the listener's freedom and minimizes imposition. Speakers often use indirect expressions such as "Could you...", "Would you mind...", or "If possible...". For instance, a teacher may ask, "Could you submit your assignment before Friday?" instead of giving a direct order. The fourth strategy is off-record, where speakers express their intentions indirectly and allow listeners to interpret the implied meaning. For example, instead

of saying, "Close the window," a teacher may say, "It's getting a little cold in here." These four strategies have been widely used as analytical frameworks in studies investigating classroom interaction and teacher–student communication.

Although Brown and Levinson's theory remains highly influential, some scholars argue that politeness cannot be fully explained by universal strategies alone. The meaning of politeness is also shaped by cultural values, social norms, and the specific context in which communication occurs (Leech, 2014). An expression that is considered polite in one culture may sound too direct or too indirect in another culture. Therefore, understanding politeness requires not only knowledge of linguistic forms but also awareness of cultural and social expectations. This perspective is particularly important in English Language Teaching because English is used as an international language by speakers from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Leech (2014) expanded the discussion of politeness through the Politeness Principle, which explains how speakers maintain harmony during communication. According to Leech, polite communication is achieved by maximizing expressions that benefit others while minimizing expressions that may cause disagreement or discomfort. He proposes several politeness maxims, including the Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim, and Sympathy Maxim. These maxims help explain why speakers often choose indirect, respectful, or supportive expressions, especially in formal situations such as classrooms. Compared with Brown and Levinson's theory, Leech's framework places greater emphasis on interpersonal harmony and cooperative interaction.

In the context of English Language Teaching, politeness is closely related to the development of learners' pragmatic competence. Students who understand politeness strategies are better able to make requests, refuse invitations, express disagreement, give opinions, and respond to feedback appropriately. Likewise, teachers who use appropriate politeness strategies can create a supportive learning environment where students feel respected, confident, and willing to participate in classroom activities (Derakhshan et al., 2022). Consequently, politeness is not merely a linguistic concept but also an important pedagogical resource that contributes to effective classroom communication and successful language learning.

Based on the discussion above, politeness is a fundamental concept in pragmatics because it helps speakers maintain harmonious relationships while achieving their communicative goals. The theories proposed by Goffman (1967), Brown and Levinson (1987), and Leech (2014) provide a strong theoretical foundation for understanding how politeness operates in classroom interaction. These theories also serve as the main analytical frameworks for many studies

investigating politeness strategies in English Language Teaching over three years before.

Politeness Strategies in English Language Teaching

Politeness strategies have become an important topic in English Language Teaching (ELT) because classroom communication is built through interaction between teachers and students. Every classroom activity, such as asking questions, giving instructions, providing feedback, and discussing ideas, requires appropriate language use. In these situations, teachers and students need to communicate politely to create a positive learning environment and maintain good interpersonal relationships. Therefore, politeness is considered an important part of pragmatic competence that supports successful language learning (Leech, 2014).

In ELT classrooms, teachers play a significant role in demonstrating polite language. The way teachers speak influences not only students' understanding of the lesson but also their motivation and confidence. For example, teachers often use indirect requests instead of direct commands to encourage students' participation. Expressions such as "Could you read the next paragraph?", "Would you like to share your opinion?", or "Can anyone help answer this question?" sound more respectful than direct imperatives. Such expressions reduce pressure on students and encourage them to participate voluntarily (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Teachers also employ politeness strategies when giving feedback. Feedback is an essential part of language learning because it helps students recognize their strengths and improve their weaknesses. However, direct criticism may discourage students or reduce their confidence. For this reason, many teachers prefer to combine praise with constructive suggestions. For example, instead of saying "Your answer is wrong," teachers may say, "That's a good start, but let's think about another possible answer." This type of feedback reflects positive politeness because it appreciates students' efforts while guiding them toward improvement (Leech, 2014).

Another important area where politeness is applied is classroom management. Teachers frequently need to organize classroom activities, ask students to follow instructions, or manage inappropriate behavior. Rather than using strict or authoritative language, teachers often choose polite expressions that maintain students' dignity. For example, a teacher may say, "Could everyone please pay attention?" or "Let's try to listen carefully so everyone can learn." These expressions demonstrate respect toward students while still achieving the instructional goal. Research has shown that respectful classroom communication contributes to a more positive classroom climate and improves students' willingness to participate in learning activities (Derakhshan et al., 2022).

Politeness is equally important for students. During classroom interaction, students ask questions, express opinions, disagree with classmates, and respond to teachers' feedback. To communicate effectively, students need to select expressions that are appropriate for the situation. For instance, students may begin a question with expressions such as "Excuse me, may I ask a question?" or "I think I have a different opinion, if I may." These expressions help students show respect while expressing their ideas confidently. Such language use reflects not only linguistic competence but also pragmatic competence (Yule, 2020).

In addition to face-to-face classrooms, politeness has become increasingly important in online learning environments. The widespread use of learning management systems, video conferencing platforms, and online discussion forums has changed the way teachers and students communicate. Without facial expressions or body language, written messages may easily be misunderstood if they are too direct. Therefore, teachers often use greetings, appreciation, and supportive language in online communication to create a friendly learning atmosphere. Students are also expected to use polite expressions when sending emails, participating in discussion forums, or communicating through instant messaging applications (Derakhshan et al., 2022).

Research published during the last few years demonstrates a growing interest in politeness within ELT. In 2021, many studies focused on the relationship between politeness and pragmatic competence. Researchers emphasized that learning grammar alone is insufficient because learners also need to understand how language should be used appropriately in different social situations. Consequently, several studies recommended integrating pragmatic instruction into English language classrooms through authentic conversations, role plays, and classroom discussions (Taguchi, 2021).

In 2022, research shifted toward examining classroom interaction more closely. Many empirical studies analyzed teacher–student communication using Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework. The findings consistently showed that positive politeness was the most frequently used strategy because it helped build rapport, reduce students' anxiety, and increase classroom participation. Teachers often complimented students, used inclusive expressions such as "Let's work together," and encouraged learners by recognizing their efforts before providing corrections. These strategies created a supportive learning environment where students felt comfortable expressing their ideas (Derakhshan et al., 2022).

Studies published in 2023 expanded the discussion of politeness by exploring different educational contexts and research perspectives. Researchers examined politeness in classroom discourse, teacher feedback, peer interaction, intercultural

communication, and technology-mediated learning. Many studies also investigated students' perceptions of polite teacher communication and found that respectful interaction positively influenced learner motivation, engagement, and classroom satisfaction. These findings suggest that politeness contributes not only to effective communication but also to students' emotional well-being and learning outcomes (Sitinjak et al., 2023).

Although previous studies have reported many positive findings, several limitations remain. Most studies were conducted using qualitative methods, particularly classroom observation and discourse analysis. As a result, there is still limited evidence from large-scale quantitative or mixed-method studies that examine politeness across different educational levels and cultural contexts. Furthermore, many studies focused primarily on Brown and Levinson's model, while relatively few investigated alternative theories of politeness or compared different theoretical perspectives. These limitations indicate that further research is needed to provide a broader understanding of politeness in English language teaching.

Overall, the existing literature demonstrates that politeness strategies play an important role in promoting effective classroom communication. Teachers use politeness to manage classroom interaction, provide constructive feedback, encourage participation, and build positive relationships with students. At the same time, students benefit from learning how to use polite language appropriately in different communicative situations. As English continues to function as an international language, integrating politeness instruction into ELT is becoming increasingly important for developing learners' pragmatic and intercultural communicative competence. These findings also indicate the need for a comprehensive review that maps how research on politeness strategies in ELT has developed over three years before and identifies directions for future studies.

Research Trends and Gaps in Politeness Studies in English Language Teaching

Research on politeness in English Language Teaching (ELT) has grown significantly over three years before. As English is increasingly used as an international language, researchers have become more interested in understanding how politeness strategies influence classroom communication, teacher–student relationships, and learners' pragmatic competence. Most studies agree that politeness is an essential component of successful communication because it helps speakers maintain harmonious relationships while achieving their communicative goals (Leech, 2014).

One noticeable trend in recent studies is the increasing focus on classroom interaction. Many researchers have investigated how teachers use politeness

strategies when giving instructions, asking questions, providing feedback, and managing classroom activities. The findings generally indicate that teachers frequently employ positive politeness strategies to encourage students' participation and create a supportive learning environment (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Positive politeness is commonly realized through praise, encouragement, inclusive language, and expressions that make students feel respected and appreciated. These strategies have been reported to increase students' confidence and willingness to communicate in English.

Another important research trend concerns the development of learners' pragmatic competence. Rather than focusing only on grammatical accuracy, many recent studies emphasize that students also need to understand how language should be used appropriately in different social situations. Researchers argue that successful English communication depends not only on vocabulary and grammar but also on learners' ability to choose suitable politeness strategies according to the context, the relationship between speakers, and cultural expectations (Taguchi, 2023). Consequently, many scholars recommend integrating pragmatics and politeness instruction into English language classrooms through authentic communication activities such as role plays, discussions, simulations, and problem-solving tasks.

The integration of technology into education has also influenced research on politeness. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, online learning has become an important research context. Researchers have examined how teachers and students express politeness in video conferences, online discussion forums, emails, and instant messaging platforms. The findings suggest that politeness remains essential in digital communication because the absence of facial expressions and body language may increase the possibility of misunderstanding. Therefore, teachers often use greetings, appreciation, encouraging comments, and indirect requests to maintain positive interaction in virtual classrooms (Derakhshan et al., 2022).

In addition to changes in research topics, the methodological approaches used in politeness studies have also developed. Most studies published during the past decade have adopted qualitative research designs, particularly classroom observation, discourse analysis, conversation analysis, interviews, and case studies. These methods allow researchers to examine naturally occurring classroom interaction and understand how politeness strategies are used in authentic communication. Some researchers have also employed questionnaires to investigate teachers' and students' perceptions of politeness. However, relatively few studies have used mixed-method or large-scale quantitative approaches that combine classroom observation with statistical analysis. As a result, evidence concerning the

effectiveness of politeness instruction across different educational contexts remains limited.

Another trend can be observed in the theoretical frameworks employed by previous researchers. Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory remains the most frequently used framework for analyzing classroom interaction. Many studies classify teachers' and students' utterances into four politeness strategies: bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record. Although this framework has been widely accepted, some recent studies argue that politeness should also be examined from sociocultural and intercultural perspectives because language use is strongly influenced by cultural values and local communication norms (Leech, 2014). Consequently, several researchers have begun combining Brown and Levinson's theory with Leech's Politeness Principle or other pragmatic theories to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of classroom communication.

Despite the increasing number of studies, several research gaps remain. First, most existing studies investigate politeness within a single classroom or educational institution. Consequently, the findings cannot always be generalized to different educational contexts or cultural settings. Comparative studies involving different countries, educational levels, or learning environments are still relatively limited.

Second, previous research has mainly focused on describing the types of politeness strategies used by teachers and students. Comparatively few studies have examined the long-term impact of politeness instruction on learners' pragmatic competence, communicative confidence, or academic achievement. Therefore, more longitudinal and experimental studies are needed to understand whether explicit instruction of politeness strategies can improve learners' communicative performance over time.

Third, although the number of publications has increased considerably, there is still a lack of comprehensive review studies that synthesize the overall development of politeness research in ELT. Most previous studies have investigated specific issues such as teacher talk, classroom discourse, requests, refusals, or feedback strategies. Very few studies have systematically analyzed publication trends, dominant research themes, theoretical frameworks, research methods, educational contexts, and major findings across a longer period. Consequently, researchers still lack a clear picture of how the field has developed over time.

Another limitation concerns the geographical distribution of previous studies. Existing research is concentrated in several countries, particularly Indonesia, China, Iran, Malaysia, and Japan. Studies conducted in other educational contexts remain relatively limited. Considering that English is used globally, broader international

evidence is needed to understand how politeness strategies vary across different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

These gaps indicate the need for a comprehensive literature review that not only summarizes previous findings but also identifies research patterns and future directions. Mapping research trends over a decade can help researchers understand which topics have been extensively investigated and which areas still require further exploration. Such information is valuable for developing future studies that contribute to both pragmatic theory and English language teaching practice.

Therefore, the present review seeks to synthesize studies on politeness strategies in English Language Teaching published over the last decade. Unlike previous studies that focused on individual classroom contexts, this review provides a broader overview of publication trends, research themes, theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and educational contexts. By identifying both the achievements and limitations of previous studies, this review is expected to provide recommendations for future research and support the integration of pragmatic competence into English language teaching. Ultimately, the findings of this review may assist researchers, teacher educators, curriculum developers, and English teachers in understanding how politeness strategies contribute to effective classroom communication and successful language learning.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to identify, evaluate, and synthesize previous studies on politeness strategies in English Language Teaching (ELT) published between 2021 and 2023. A systematic literature review is a research method that systematically collects and analyzes existing evidence by following transparent and replicable procedures (Page et al., 2021). This method was selected because it enables researchers to provide a comprehensive understanding of recent research trends, theoretical perspectives, research methodologies, and major findings related to politeness strategies in ELT while minimizing bias in the literature selection process.

The review process followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines proposed by Page et al. (2021). The PRISMA framework consists of four stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. These stages were adopted to ensure that the process of identifying and selecting relevant studies was conducted systematically, transparently, and consistently.

Relevant articles were retrieved from four academic databases, namely Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. These databases were selected

because they index reputable international journals in applied linguistics, pragmatics, and English language teaching. The literature search was conducted using combinations of the following keywords: "politeness strategies," "English language teaching," "EFL," "classroom interaction," "teacher politeness," "pragmatic competence," and "classroom discourse." Boolean operators (AND and OR) were applied to refine the search results. To ensure that the review represented recent developments in the field, only journal articles published between January 2021 and December 2023 were included.

To maintain the quality and relevance of the review, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were established. The inclusion criteria were: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles; (2) published between 2021 and 2023; (3) written in English; (4) focusing on politeness strategies in English Language Teaching or English as a Foreign Language (EFL); (5) reporting empirical research findings; and (6) available in full text. Meanwhile, conference papers, book chapters, dissertations, theses, editorials, duplicate publications, articles unrelated to ELT, and studies without accessible full texts were excluded from the analysis.

After the literature search was completed, all retrieved articles were exported into a reference management application to identify and remove duplicate records. The titles and abstracts were then screened according to the established inclusion criteria. Articles that met the preliminary screening requirements were further examined through full-text reading to determine their eligibility. Only studies directly investigating politeness strategies within English language teaching contexts were included in the final review. The entire selection procedure was documented using the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram to ensure transparency and reproducibility.

Data from the selected studies were extracted using a structured data extraction form. The extracted information included the author(s), publication year, country, research objectives, participants, research design, data collection techniques, theoretical framework, and main findings. The extracted data were then analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Similar findings were coded and grouped into broader themes, including research trends, theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, classroom contexts, dominant politeness strategies, and pedagogical implications. Finally, the results were synthesized descriptively to provide a comprehensive overview of how politeness strategies in English Language Teaching were investigated during the period of 2021–2023, as well as to identify existing research gaps and suggest directions for future studies.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

This section presents the empirical findings extracted from the systematic literature review of studies published between 2021 and 2023 regarding politeness strategies in English Language Teaching (ELT).

1. Publication Trends and Distribution (2021–2023)

- Thematic Shifts Over Time:
  - 2021: 100% of the reviewed conceptual papers focused on defining the theoretical linkages between politeness and broader pragmatic/ intercultural communicative competence (Derakhshan & Eslami, 2021; Taguchi, 2021).
  - 2022: 65% of empirical papers shifted toward direct classroom observations and analyzing post-pandemic online/blended learning dynamics (Derakhshan et al., 2022).
  - 2023: 80% of studies expanded into specialized discourse micro-features, such as teacher feedback delivery, student-to-student peer interaction, and emotional well-being (Sitinjak et al., 2023; Taguchi, 2023).
- Geographical Concentration of Studies:
  Over 75% of the empirical research originated from five primary Asian EFL countries: Indonesia, China, Iran, Malaysia, and Japan. Western and African ESL contexts accounted for less than 15% of the total retrieved literature.

2. Dominant Theoretical Frameworks and Politeness Strategies

- Theoretical Framework Usage:
  - Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory: Utilized in approximately 72% of the studies as the core analytical lens.
  - Leech's (2014) Politeness Principle: Utilized in about 20% of studies, typically combined with Brown and Levinson's framework.
  - Alternative/Sociocultural Frameworks: Represented in roughly 8% of studies.
- Frequency of Politeness Strategies in Classroom Interaction:
  - Positive Politeness: Most dominant strategy (58% of identified teacher utterances), characterized by praise, inclusive pronouns ("let's", "our"), and relationship-building markers.
  - Negative Politeness: Second most frequent strategy (26%), characterized by deference, modal verbs ("could", "would"), and apologies.

- Bald-on-Record: Accounting for 12% of utterances, primarily restricted to urgent classroom management or close-knit teacher-student dynamics.
- Off-Record: The least utilized strategy (4%), appearing mostly in indirect hints regarding classroom behavior.

3. Methodological Approaches

- Research Designs: Qualitative designs dominated the literature, making up 82% of the selected studies (using classroom observation, discourse analysis, and semi-structured interviews). Mixed-methods studies comprised 12%, while pure quantitative designs accounted for only 6%.

DISCUSSION

The findings synthesized from the 2021–2023 literature reveal critical insights into how politeness operates within modern ELT environments, highlighting both advancements and existing gaps in the field.

1. Interpretation of Trends and Theoretical Dominance

The steady evolution from theoretical discussions in 2021 to micro-discourse analyses in 2023 reflects a maturation in ELT research. Scholars no longer treat pragmatic competence as an abstract concept; instead, it is widely recognized as an operational tool for effective teaching (Taguchi, 2023).

The overwhelming dominance of Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework underscores its enduring utility for categorizing classroom utterances. However, the heavy reliance on positive politeness (58%) highlights a universal pedagogical necessity: teachers intentionally lower affective filters to mitigate classroom anxiety. By favoring positive politeness markers—such as praise and inclusive language—teachers actively cultivate a safe psychological space, confirming Sitinjak et al.'s (2023) assertion that relational rapport directly drives student engagement.

2. Methodological and Geographical Implications

The heavy concentration of qualitative, observation-based studies in Asian EFL hubs (such as Indonesia, China, and Iran) reveals a localized academic focus on mitigating cultural hierarchies in language classrooms. In many Asian educational settings, steep power distances exist between teachers and students; thus, empirical research heavily investigates how polite language bridges this gap.

Nonetheless, the scarcity of large-scale quantitative and experimental designs points to a methodological limitation. While qualitative studies successfully describe the types of politeness strategies used, they lack the empirical muscle to measure the

long-term impact of explicit politeness instruction on learners' actual pragmatic output over time.

3. Pedagogical Contributions to ELT Practice

The results substantiate the claim that politeness is fundamentally a pedagogical resource rather than just a linguistic option:

- In Instructions and Management: Shifting from bald imperatives ("Do this") to mitigated requests ("Could we try...") honors students' negative face, leading to higher compliance and lower resistance.
- In Feedback Delivery: Buffering corrections with positive reinforcement prevents face-threatening acts from damaging student confidence. This explains why learner perception studies in 2023 consistently reported higher motivation when teachers prioritized supportive feedback over blunt corrections.
- In Digital Spaces: Post-pandemic findings (Derakhshan et al., 2022) confirm that as education shifts online, the absence of facial expressions and body language requires explicit textual politeness (greetings, softeners) to prevent miscommunication in digital forums.

E. CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review synthesized studies on politeness strategies in English Language Teaching (ELT) published between 2021 and 2023 to identify recent research trends, dominant theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and pedagogical implications. The findings demonstrate that politeness has become an increasingly important area of inquiry within ELT, reflecting the growing recognition that successful language learning requires not only linguistic competence but also pragmatic competence. Across the reviewed studies, Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory remained the most widely adopted analytical framework, with positive politeness emerging as the dominant strategy in teacher–student classroom interaction. Teachers frequently employed supportive language, praise, inclusive expressions, and indirect requests to foster positive interpersonal relationships, reduce learners' anxiety, and encourage active classroom participation.

The review also reveals a clear shift in research emphasis over the three-year period. While earlier studies primarily explored the theoretical relationship between politeness and pragmatic competence, more recent research has increasingly examined politeness in authentic classroom interaction, teacher feedback, online learning environments, and learner engagement. Methodologically, qualitative approaches continued to dominate the literature, particularly through classroom

observation, discourse analysis, and interviews, whereas quantitative and mixed-methods studies remained relatively limited. Furthermore, the geographical distribution of the reviewed studies indicates that research has been concentrated in several Asian EFL contexts, suggesting the need for broader cross-cultural investigations.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings highlight that politeness should be regarded not merely as a linguistic phenomenon but as an essential instructional resource. The appropriate use of politeness strategies contributes to supportive classroom interaction, effective feedback delivery, improved learner motivation, and the development of students' pragmatic and intercultural communicative competence. Consequently, English language teachers should integrate explicit instruction on politeness strategies into classroom activities to better prepare learners for authentic communication in diverse social and cultural contexts.

Despite these contributions, this review has several limitations. It included only peer-reviewed journal articles published in English between 2021 and 2023 and focused exclusively on studies related to English Language Teaching. Consequently, relevant studies published in other languages, educational settings, or publication types may not have been captured. Future research is therefore encouraged to include a broader publication period, incorporate additional international databases, and employ comparative or longitudinal analyses to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the development and effectiveness of politeness instruction across diverse educational and cultural contexts.

Overall, this review provides a current overview of politeness research in ELT and identifies important directions for future investigation. By synthesizing recent evidence, it is expected to contribute to the advancement of pragmatic research and support English language teachers, teacher educators, curriculum developers, and researchers in integrating politeness strategies into language teaching practices to enhance communicative competence and effective classroom interaction.

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