Politeness strategies used by communicative english teachers

ABSTRACT
Recent years have witnessed the rise in the number of English learners with the sole aim of communicative English, which led to the bloom of English communicative programs and communicative English centers in Hanoi. Since there are many centers, the quality of teachers in the centers is questioned. In particular, incidents about teachers’ manners and attitude in the classroom has been a widely discussed topic, ever since the news about a teacher calling her students names. To give an insight into teachers’ language in the classroom, specifically politeness, this research particularly focuses on the use of politeness strategies by teachers in a communicative English center. This aims to look at whether the teachers are aware of pragmatics knowledge of politeness, and the actual use of politeness strategies they used in the classroom, which shows the quality of English education in the center. The study used a mix of qualitative and quantitative approach, in which semi-constructed interviews and frequency count methods were used. Five teachers from an English communicative center were interviewed about their perceptions and understanding of pragmatic politeness. Then, an analysis of their real instructions was conducted under the framework of politeness request strategies proposed by Blum-Kulka (1987). The findings showed that most teachers placed a high importance on the use of politeness strategies, yet in reality, according to the frequency count, they could not manifest the politeness in their own instructions in the classroom. One teacher did not consider being totally polite as important. Most teachers used imperatives and hints, which are on the less polite spectrum. This exploratory study adds to the literature on teachers’ manners. It is vital that while teaching a language, teachers give a model of how the language is actually used, hence would affect students’ input and output later on. Other teachers who might come across this study would see a framework for critical reflection of their own language use in the classroom.

REFERENCES


