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Politeness strategies employed by the teacher in the EFL classroom

Diploma thesis

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**Abstract:**

This thesis deals with teacher's linguistic politeness in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. More precisely, its aim is to investigate Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies in four EFL lessons that were held by two Croatian EFL teachers. In the last couple of years, EFL teachers' politeness has been researched in various cultural contexts. Existing studies on the subject have shown that teachers use a variety of politeness strategies throughout their lessons. Furthermore, suggestions have been made that politeness strategies positively influence the overall teaching and learning process and that because of it, teachers should learn about politeness theory and become aware of its usage. Since this particular subject has not yet been explored in the Croatian context, we decided to investigate it and see whether or not Croatian EFL teachers also use politeness strategies and whether or not they are aware of it. This was achieved through classroom observation and audio recording of four EFL lessons, followed by a semi-structured interview with each teacher. The results showed that teachers use a variety of politeness strategies; however, both of them mostly use positive politeness. Furthermore, teachers' interview answers suggest that they are aware of some of the strategies they use. In order to fully benefit from them, teachers should learn about politeness theory and become completely aware of its application in the classroom.

**Keywords:** politeness theory, politeness strategies, EFL, EFL teacher

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# 1. Introduction

As an important part of human communication, politeness has been researched in various disciplines, ranging from pragmatics, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics to language philosophy and discourse analysis in the last four decades (Bargiela-Chiappini and Kádár 2011, 1-2). However, such politeness differs from our everyday understanding of it, which is normally associated with socially appropriate behaviour. Researchers studying politeness consider politeness a pragmatic phenomenon (Dimitrova-Galaczi 2002, 3,1). Within pragmatics, politeness refers to speakers' linguistic choices that "give people space and show a friendly attitude to them" (Cutting 2002, 45). From this pragmatic perspective, numerous theories and approaches to linguistic politeness have been developed. In this thesis, the most influential approach was adopted, that of Brown and Levinson (1987).

Brown and Levinson (1987) interpret politeness with regard to "face" and "face-threatening acts". According to them, all speakers have a public self-image (i.e. face) which can be lost in everyday interaction due to specific face-threatening acts, such as orders, requests, criticism and disapproval. However, since everyone's face may be at risk, people usually cooperate and try to save each other's face. They achieve this through the use of various politeness strategies, i.e. linguistic means which mitigate face-threatening acts (FTAs).

In the context of the EFL classroom, teachers are bound to threaten their learners' faces since teaching normally involves the use of face-threatening acts, such as requesting and ordering the students to do things in class, correcting them and thus disapproving their initial attempts, and offering their help to them, thereby suggesting that they need it (Peng, Xie and Cai 2014, 111). Nevertheless, findings from numerous studies have shown that EFL teachers minimize threats to their learners' faces through the use of various politeness strategies. Furthermore, within these studies, suggestions have been made that teacher's politeness strategies positively influence classroom communication and atmosphere, the teacher-student relationship and the overall teaching and learning process. Because of this, teachers should learn about politeness and become aware of its usage in the classroom. Moreover, since teachers are responsible both for creating learning opportunities for their learners as well as models their learners might imitate, teachers' knowledge and awareness of politeness theory might help them teach politeness to their learners and thus promote their pragmatic competence.

With all of this in mind, the research part of this thesis was constructed. More precisely, since EFL teacher's linguistic politeness has not yet been researched in the Croatian context we decided to investigate it and see whether or not Croatian EFL teachers also use politeness strategies and whether or not they are aware of it.

This paper is organized as follows. The following section first presents Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, followed by an overview of previous research and a subsection on the presence and usefulness of teacher's politeness in the EFL classroom. The third section presents the methodology. In section four, the research results are presented and discussed, whereas the final section is the conclusion.

## **2. Theoretical background**

### **2.1 Brown and Levinson's politeness theory**

Ever since its publication in 1978 (i.e. in 1987<sup>1</sup>) Brown and Levinson's model of linguistic politeness has received great attention, and is considered to be the most influential, thorough and applicable politeness framework to date (Dimitrova-Galaczi 2002, 7; Locher and Watts 2005, 10). Furthermore, it is the most widely used politeness framework in studies on linguistic politeness (Culpeper 2011, 6; Šubertová 2013, 36). Numerous researchers which investigated EFL teacher's politeness also employed Brown and Levinson's model in their studies (Jiang 2010; Monsefi and Hadidi 2015; Peng, Xie and Cai 2014; Senowarsito 2013; Sülü 2015; Šubertová 2013).

Brown and Levinson's politeness theory aims to account for "the extraordinary parallelism" in the way in which people express themselves in "quite unrelated languages and cultures" (1987, 55). Based on the language data they obtained from English, Tzeltal and

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<sup>1</sup> Brown and Levinson's politeness model was first published in 1978 as part of Esther N. Goody's (ed.) collection of papers *Questions and Politeness*. However, in 1987, they published a self-standing volume, *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*, in which they addressed numerous objections to their model. Throughout this paper we will refer to the latter edition.



Tamil<sup>2</sup>, Brown and Levinson developed a model which seeks to explain this incredible similitude. The authors suggest that these parallelisms are all motivated by politeness, and that they all result from certain universal human properties. However, in order to understand this politeness, we need to first explain what these universals are. The following discussion is based on Brown and Levinson's work *Politeness: Some universals in language usage* (1987).

Politeness theory is based on two assumptions. The first is that all competent adults have a "face", a "public self-image" that everyone wants to claim for themselves (Brown and Levinson 1987, 61). Such a face consists of two components: a positive face and a negative face. Positive face refers to the "positive consistent self-image" a person claims for themselves, whereas negative face refers to one's claim to "freedom of action and freedom from imposition" (Brown and Levinson 1987, 61). Face can also be considered as consisting of basic wants, thus, positive face refers to one's want to be approved of, liked and admired, whereas negative face refers to one's want to be unimpeded in one's actions (Brown and Levinson 1987, 62). The second assumption is that all competent adults are rational beings, capable of means-ends reasoning. That is, they are able to deduce from communicative ends to linguistic means which will achieve those ends (Brown 2015, 327). Finally, it is assumed that everyone knows each other to have both face and these rational capacities.

Face is something that can be "lost, maintained or enhanced" in interaction, therefore, interlocutors must constantly pay attention to it (Brown and Levinson 1987, 61). However, since everyone has a face which can be lost, people usually cooperate and maintain one another's face in interaction. How and why they do that is precisely what Brown and Levinson's model deals with. According to them, a person's face can be threatened in interaction by specific acts which go against their face wants. These are so-called "face-threatening acts" (Brown and Levinson 1987, 60). We can distinguish between acts that threaten one's positive face and one's negative face, and between acts that threaten the addressee's face and the speaker's face.

First, let us consider acts that threaten the addressee's negative face, i.e. that go against their negative face wants. Such acts indicate that the speaker will not avoid imposing upon the addressee's freedom of action. Some of them are: orders, requests, advice, reminders, threats,

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<sup>2</sup> Tzeltal is a Mayan language spoken in the community of Tenejapa in Chiapas, Mexico, whereas Tamil is a South Indian language spoken in a village in the Coimbatore District in Tamilnadu (Brown and Levinson 1987, 59)

warnings, compliments, expressions of admiration and expressions of negative emotions, such as anger or hatred.

Secondly, acts that threaten the addressee's positive face are those that go against their want to be liked and approved of, i.e. that imply that the speaker does not care about the addressee and his/her wants. Such acts are: disapproval, criticism, disagreement, expression of violent emotions, irreverence, mention of taboo topics and bald non-cooperation.

Let us now consider acts that threaten the speaker's face. Acts that are threatening to the speaker's negative face include expressing thanks or accepting an apology, excuses (which imply that the speaker had just been criticized), offer acceptances (which constrain the speaker to a debt) and unwilling offers and promises (which may offend the addressee if this unwillingness is too visible).

Acts that threaten the speaker's positive face are apologies (the speaker admits doing a prior FTA), compliment acceptances (which may constrain the speaker to reciprocate), losing physical and emotional control over body (i.e. bodily leakage and emotional leakage), self-humiliation, confessions and admissions of guilt or responsibility.

From this we see that interaction can often be face-threatening, both to the speaker and the addressee. Since it is in the interlocutors' best interest to maintain each other's face during interaction, they need to avoid damaging it. Therefore, unless speaker's want to be efficient is greater than the want to maintain face and unless their want is to deliberately threaten the addressee's face, speakers will minimize threats to the addressee's face (Brown and Levinson 1987, 68). It is precisely with regard to this that Brown and Levinson interpret politeness. According to them, politeness refers to face-saving behaviour, which may be achieved through the use of threat-minimising strategies, i.e. politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson 1987, 68). There are four universally available politeness super-strategies for constructing face-threatening acts: bald on-record, off record, positive politeness and negative politeness. Each super-strategy may be realized linguistically through the use of various output strategies (Brown and Levinson 1987, 92). Furthermore, the authors suggest that the linguistic means necessary for their realization are potentially available to everyone, regardless of their culture or language (Brown and Levinson 1987, 244). It is with such a model of universals in language use that Brown and Levinson seek to explain for the incredible parallelisms across languages and cultures.

The first politeness super-strategy is bald on-record. When the speaker does the FTA baldly on-record, it means that his/her utterance complies with Grice's Maxims (Grice 1975): he/she speaks sincerely, says just enough to convey the message (not more or less) and avoids ambiguity (Brown and Levinson 1987, 94-95). Characterized by no redress and no minimization of the face-threatening act, this strategy is most commonly achieved through the use of direct imperatives. It is used in situations where efficiency is more important than saving the addressee's face, such as cases of great urgency (metaphorical urgency also), entreaties and cases where communication is difficult. It is also used in situations where the FTA is in the addressee's interest, such as advice, warnings, greetings and farewells. However, bald on-record may also be used when speakers do not want to minimize the face threat. This may be because they are so superior in power that they do not fear the addressee's non-cooperation. In the context of this study, it is important to mention that teachers are normally superior in the asymmetrical teacher-student relationship (Monsefi and Hadidi 2015, 2,8). Therefore, they may state their FTAs baldly without fear of the students' non-cooperation. Furthermore, teachers might state their FTAs directly on-record because they face time constraints (Jiang 2010, 653). Since the imposed duration of the lesson is 45 minutes only, teachers might choose to do their FTAs with maximum efficiency, i.e. baldly on-record, in order to attain all of their lesson objectives. The same might hold for lessons at the end of the semester or school year, when teachers are usually in an even greater need for efficiency.

A quite different super-strategy is off record. Contrary to bald on-record, off record is the least direct way of realizing face-threatening acts. When the FTA is constructed off record, more than one interpretation may be attributed to it, leaving it up to the addressee to decide whether or not he/she will interpret it as threatening. That is, by going off record, the speaker avoids being held responsible for doing the act. However, there is always some kind of a hint leading the addressee towards the intended interpretation. Usually, one of Grice's Maxims is violated, making the addressee question the motivation behind it (Brown and Levinson 1987, 211-213). Off record may be realized through the use of 15 different output strategies. Some of them are metaphor, irony, rhetorical questions, understatement, tautologies and all kinds of hints or associations which lead the addressee towards the intended meaning.

In addition to stating their FTAs directly, as with bald on-record, or indirectly, as with off record, speakers can also construct their FTAs by orienting themselves towards the addressee's positive face or negative face. This is normally referred to as redressive action. By doing so, speakers convey that they did not intend to threaten the addressee's face, but rather

that they recognize their face wants and want to satisfy them. Based on the two aspects of face, we can distinguish between positive politeness and negative politeness.

The positive politeness super-strategy consists of the speaker communicating that some of his/her wants are similar to that of the addressee, thereby satisfying their positive face wants and minimizing face threat. Its main characteristics are emphasizing common ground and/or shared wants between interlocutors. It can be realized through the use of 15 different output strategies. For the purposes of this paper, we will briefly discuss six of them:

- **Notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods)**

This strategy consists of the speaker noticing the addressee's condition in some way and attending to it, thereby establishing common ground between them. In the classroom, this can be achieved by greeting (Šubertová 2013, 37), answering students' questions (thus satisfying their want for information or confirmation) or simply by enquiring about their feelings and opinions.

- **Use in-group language**

This strategy is realized through the use of address forms such as "buddy", "honey", "sweetheart" and the like, in-group language, dialect, jargon, slang, contraction and ellipsis. Since these are all comprehensible only to group members due to their shared mutual knowledge, this strategy also aims at establishing common ground between interlocutors.

- **Seek agreement**

In this strategy, common ground is established through agreement. This can be achieved by the raising of safe topics (i.e. those with little chance of disagreement), by repeating part (or all) of what the speaker has said (thereby proving that one has heard correctly) and by uttering brief agreements such as "yes" or "uhuh" and positive back channel cues such as "okay" when the speaker is talking (Šubertová 2013, 40).

- **Avoid disagreement**

This strategy aims at establishing common ground by avoiding disagreement rather than seeking agreement. In order to achieve it, the speaker can modify his/her utterance to hide the disagreement or to appear to agree (token agreement), use conclusory markers "then" and "so" to refer to a preceding agreement with the addressee (pseudo-agreement), lie in order to avoid

face threat (“white lies”) or use “sort of”, “kind of”, “like” and “in a way” to avoid direct disagreement (hedging opinion).

- **Include both S and H in the activity**

This strategy consists of the speaker establishing cooperation with the addressee through the use of the inclusive “we” and “let’s”. By doing so, the speaker conveys to the addressee that they share at least this want to do the activity.

- **Give gifts to H**

This strategy aims at satisfying some of the addressee’s wants by actually giving him/her a gift, given that the speaker knows what the addressee wants. Aside from material gifts, this also includes immaterial gifts such as compliments, showing understanding or sympathy.

Other positive output strategies are: Exaggerate (interests, approval, sympathy with H); Intensify interest to H; Presuppose/raise/assert common ground; Joke; Assert S’s knowledge of H’s wants; Offer, promise; Be optimistic; Give (or ask) for reasons and Assume reciprocity.

The negative politeness super-strategy consists of the speaker partially satisfying the addressee’s want for freedom of action and freedom from imposition (i.e. negative face wants) by recognizing and respecting them, and by communicating that he/she will not interfere with them. There are ten different output strategies through which negative politeness may be realized. We will briefly discuss five of them which will be significant for our results.

- **Be conventionally indirect**

This strategy results from the speaker’s contradictory desire to be both direct and indirect in making the FTA. A compromise is reached in sentences which, in specific contexts, have different meanings from their literal ones. The most important means for achieving it are indirect speech acts, such as “Can you pass the salt?” or “Can you shut the door?”.

- **Question, hedge**

This strategy results from the speaker’s effort not to make any assumptions about the addressee and his/her wants. This can be achieved through the use of hedges “sort of”, “kind of”, “perhaps” and “maybe”, expressions “I wonder/think/assume”, “if” clauses and question tags, which lessen the speaker’s commitment to the truthfulness of his/her utterance.

- **Be pessimistic**

This strategy consists of the speaker conveying his/her doubts about the addressee's ability or willingness to do the act. It is achieved through the use of the subjunctive and could/would/might instead of can/will/may, some negative usages, such as "*I don't suppose there'd be any chance of you...*" and remote-possibility markers, "*Perhaps you'd care to help me*".

- **Minimize the imposition**

This particular strategy consists of the speaker explicitly minimizing the seriousness of the FTA by using some of the following adverbs and expressions: just, a tiny little bit, a sip, a taste, a little, a bit.

- **Impersonalize S and H**

Motivated by the speaker's want not to impinge on the addressee, this strategy is achieved through the avoidance of "I" and "you" pronouns. Instead, performatives, imperatives (with "you" omitted), impersonal verbs, passives, indefinites and some address terms are used. This makes it appear as though the FTA is not precisely addressed to the addressee or as though the speaker alone is not responsible for the imposition.

Other negative output strategies are: Give deference, Apologize, State the FTA as a general rule, Nominalize and Go on record as incurring a debt.

Finally, when choosing a politeness strategy, speakers need to consider how threatening their FTA is. The seriousness, or weightiness of a particular FTA ( $W_x$ ) is calculated by a simple addition of three factors: the social distance between interlocutors (D), the relative power of addressee over the speaker (P) and the ranking of imposition of an act X in a specific culture ( $R_x$ ). Social distance refers to the degree of closeness between interlocutors: are they close friends or complete strangers. Relative power refers to the extent to which the addressee can impose his/her plans and face over that of the speaker. Finally, the absolute ranking of imposition refers to the extent to which the FTA interferes with the addressee's positive and negative face wants. It is culturally and situationally dependent (Brown and Levinson 1987, 76-77).

Based on the weightiness of their FTA, rational speakers choose the most appropriate politeness strategy to minimize it (Brown and Levinson 1987, 83). The greater the weightiness

of an FTA, the higher the number of strategy necessary for its mitigation, as can be seen from the following figure:

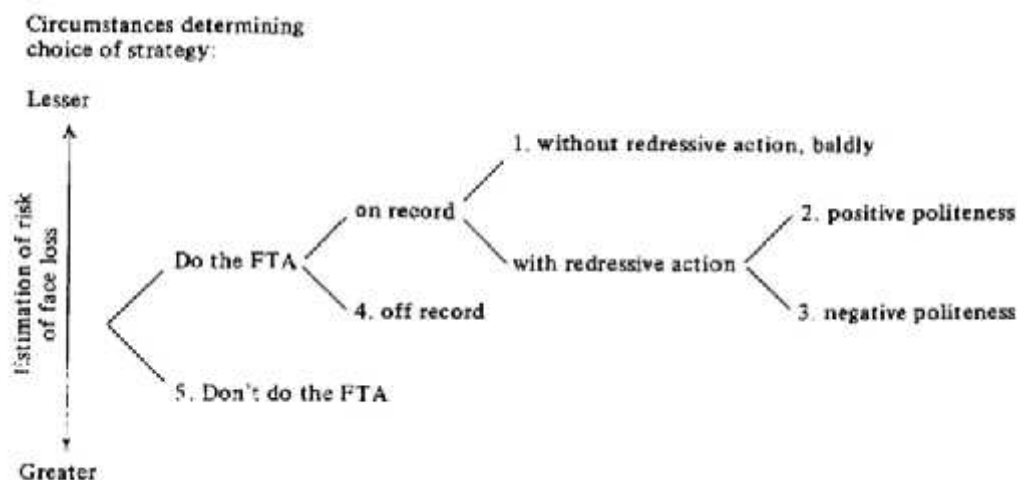


Figure 1. Available strategies for doing FTAs (Brown and Levinson 1987, 60)

## 2.2 Previous research

The popularity of linguistic politeness is best described by the fact that it has been studied in various disciplines such as pragmatics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, anthropology, cultural studies and literary studies (Bargiela-Chiappini and Kádár 2011, 1; Culpeper 2011, 1). Furthermore, the quantity of papers dealing with politeness resulted in the publication of a journal of its own, *Journal of Politeness Research* (Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter; Bargiela-Chiappini and Kádár 2011, 1). In the context of teacher's politeness, there are studies dating back from 1989, such as the one from Jane J. White which investigated primary teachers' use of politeness strategies. However, because of the scope of this thesis, we will briefly review only recent studies on EFL teachers' politeness in this subsection.

In the last couple of years, EFL teachers' usage of politeness strategies has been researched in various cultural contexts, ranging from Chinese and Indonesian to Czech and Turkish. Even though the focus of some of these studies differs from ours, they have all identified EFL teacher's use of various politeness strategies. Chronologically, the first such study was conducted by Jiang in 2010, in the Chinese context. In her study, Jiang identified teacher's usage of all four super-strategies, with positive politeness being the most used (2010, 654). She concluded the study by saying that politeness positively influences classroom

communication and atmosphere, and the teacher-student relationship (655). Jiang's work and method of analysis inspired several other researchers to adopt it in their own studies. One such example is Peng, Xie and Cai's 2014 study, which was also conducted in the Chinese context. In their study, Peng et al. found that the teacher used both positive politeness and negative politeness; however, similarly to Jiang's findings, the teacher preferred using positive politeness (2014, 114). Furthermore, also similarly to Jiang, Peng et al. suggest that the teacher's use of politeness strategies benefits the teacher-student interaction and classroom atmosphere (114). Another study that was inspired by Jiang's is the one from Sülü (2015), which investigated an American EFL teacher's use of politeness strategies in the Turkish context. In her study, Sülü discovered that the teacher used bald on-record, positive politeness and negative politeness (2015, 219). However, instead of positive politeness, the teacher used mostly imperative sentences, i.e. bald on-record (220). Similarly to previous studies, Sülü concluded that politeness "promotes the mutual understanding and harmonious relationship between teacher and students" and "contributes to the effective interaction and friendly, lively atmosphere in an EFL classroom" (220). Even though it is not explicitly stated, there is one more study that analysed their teacher talks in the same way Jiang did in her study. That is Monsefi and Hadidi's 2015 Iranian study. Although the focus of their study was on the differences between male and female teachers' use of politeness strategies, they also found that the teachers used bald on-record, positive politeness and negative politeness in their lessons (Monsefi and Hadidi 2015, 11). Furthermore, similarly to Jiang and Peng et al., Monsefi and Hadidi also found that teachers preferred using positive politeness and that politeness has an overall positive effect on the EFL classroom and the teacher-student relationship (12). Likewise, a study conducted in the Czech context also obtained similar results. In her 2013 study, Šubertová investigated the difference between Czech and American EFL teachers' use of politeness strategies. Even though there were differences in the overall usage of strategies, Šubertová found that both native and non-native teachers used positive politeness and negative politeness, and that they both preferred using positive politeness (2013, 59). In line with all of the previously mentioned studies, Šubertová also suggests that teacher's politeness strategies positively influence classroom atmosphere and the teaching and learning process (60).

Finally, there are two more studies which identified EFL teacher's use of politeness strategies. These are Senowarsito's 2013 study and Agustina and Cahyono's 2016 study, both of which were conducted in the Indonesian context. Although neither of them provides data on the exact usage of each super-strategy, instances of the strategies were found in both studies. In



her study, Senowarsito discovered that teachers employed positive politeness, negative politeness and bald on-record (2013, 94), whereas Agustina and Cahyono found that the teachers involved in their study used both positive politeness and negative politeness (2016, 97).

### **2.3 Teacher's politeness in the EFL classroom**

In the context of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, politeness refers to various ways in which speakers redress their face-threatening acts in order to minimize threats to their addressee's face. Because certain FTAs (such as requests, warnings, orders and criticism) are frequently employed by all teachers in all classrooms, not just in language ones, teachers must surely redress them in order to save their learners' faces. Findings from studies on EFL teacher's politeness confirm this assumption: EFL teachers use a variety of politeness strategies to minimize threats to their learners' faces. However, no such study was conducted in the Croatian context, therefore, we can only assume Croatian EFL teachers also use politeness strategies.

Furthermore, findings from studies on EFL teacher's politeness suggest that teacher's application of politeness strategies has many additional positive effects. According to Šubertová (2013), through the use of positive politeness, teachers can establish a respectful teacher-student relationship and a pleasant and unthreatening classroom atmosphere, which motivates students to participate in classroom activities without the fear of embarrassment for his/her own mistakes. Through the use of negative politeness, teachers maintain students' freedom of action and thus give them a certain autonomy in managing their own learning process (56-57). Similar suggestions were made by Jiang (2010), Sülü (2015) and Peng, Xie and Cai (2014), which also found that teacher's politeness positively influences classroom communication and atmosphere, the teacher-student relationship and the overall teaching and learning process. Because of this, Šubertová (2013) argues that teachers should learn about politeness theory and become aware of its usage in the classroom. Furthermore, by doing so, teachers could not only positively influence various aspects of their classroom, but they could also teach politeness to their learners, both explicitly and implicitly. Since teachers are normally responsible for creating learning opportunities for their learners, their theoretical knowledge of politeness could help them decide on the best way to teach it to their learners directly, i.e. explicitly (56-57). Moreover, since learners also learn implicitly, they might adopt various

politeness strategies their teacher is using (27). That is, teachers' knowledge and awareness of the strategies they use could help them regulate the input which their learners might acquire.

Finally, by mastering the theory of politeness, teachers can help their learners understand linguistic politeness, and thus promote their pragmatic competence. Pragmatic competence, one of the three major components of communicative language competence<sup>3</sup>, is believed to be "the most difficult aspect of language to master in learning a second language" (Blum-Kulka and Sheffer 1993, quoted in Bou-Franch and Garcés-Conejos 2003, 1). Nevertheless, it needs to be attended to in the language classroom for at least two reasons. Firstly, according to Thomas (1983, quoted in Bou-Franch and Garcés-Conejos 2003, 2-3), pragmatic failure may reflect badly on the speaker as a person since native-speakers often fail to recognize it as such, but rather attribute it to "boorishness or ill-will". Secondly, Kasper (1997) argues that "without some form of instruction, many aspects of pragmatic competence do not develop sufficiently" (3). Because of this, various approaches and suggestions to teaching pragmatics have been developed in the last two decades. According to some, linguistic politeness is one aspect of pragmatics that is both easily applied in the classroom and extremely important for language teaching (Milano-Schepers 2014, 24; Bou-Franch and Garcés-Conejos 2003, 8). Moreover, according to Bou-Franch and Garcés-Conejos (2003) and Milano-Schepers (2014), Brown and Levinson's model offers an excellent tool for the teaching and learning of linguistic politeness, and thus for the promoting of learners' pragmatic competence. In their 2003 article, Bou-Franch and Garcés-Conejos propose a model which consists of relating Brown and Levinson's politeness theory to genre analysis and politeness systems. Such a model would not only help learners understand social interaction and appropriate linguistic behaviour across genres and cultures, but it would also help them "make informed choices in producing language and arriving at intended inferences in comprehension" (18-19). A simpler proposal was made by Milano-Schepers in her 2014 article. The author suggests that analysing authentic material in light of politeness theory can help learners learn about various aspects of politeness, such as direct and indirect speech, hedging, greetings and farewells (24).

With all of this in mind, the research part of this thesis was constructed. More precisely, we decided to investigate Croatian EFL teachers' politeness because it has not yet been researched in the Croatian context. Furthermore, since teachers' knowledge of politeness theory

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<sup>3</sup> According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, in order to be able to communicate in a foreign language, learners need to develop a communicative language competence, which consists of linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences (2001, 108).

and awareness of its usage could help teachers positively influence various aspects of their classroom and teach politeness to their learners, we wanted to see whether teachers are aware of the strategies they use (if they use any) and the effects these strategies have on their learners.

### **3. Research design**

#### **3.1 Research questions and hypotheses**

The research part of this study aims at investigating Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies in four EFL lessons, that were held by two Croatian EFL teachers in a high-school in Zagreb, Croatia. Furthermore, its aim is to investigate teachers' awareness of politeness, its place and realization in the EFL classroom.

The research part was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there linguistic politeness in the observed EFL lessons?
2. What, if any, are the politeness strategies employed by the teachers?
3. Are teachers aware of the politeness strategies they employ, if they employ any?

As answers to these questions, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. Linguistic politeness exists in the observed EFL lessons.
2. Both teachers employ various politeness strategies; however, the bald on-record politeness strategy is most frequently used.
3. Teachers are aware of the politeness strategies they employ.

#### **3.2 Methodology and data collection**

In this research, the “naturalistic enquiry” approach was adopted. Characterized by no or minimum intervention from the researcher, this approach is a great way for describing and understanding naturally occurring events such as regular language lessons, which were the research setting of this research (Allwright and Bailey 1991, 40-42).

Qualitative instruments were used for data collection. More precisely, non-interventionist classroom observation and audio recording of four English lessons, held by two teachers, were the main methods for data collection (Allwright and Bailey 1991, 65). By non-intervening in the research setting, we tried to obtain naturally occurring classroom interaction as our material for transcription and analysis. This was then followed by a semi-structured interview with each teacher. Such an interview helped us better understand and interpret the results gained from the analysis of the recordings.

### **3.2.1 Participants**

The research part consisted of classroom observation and audio recording of four 45-minute lessons in two EFL classes (i.e. group of students), in the same high-school in Zagreb, Croatia. The four lessons were held by two female EFL teachers, working in the same high-school in Zagreb. Both teachers and students are non-native speakers of English. They are all Croatian, and their L1 is Croatian. One of the teachers is in her early 40s, and the other is in her early 50s. They both obtained their Master’s degree in English language and literature (teaching stream) from the Department of English, at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. One of the teachers also obtained a postgraduate degree in general linguistics. Based on their educational background, both teachers ought to be similarly proficient in English. Also, they have both been teaching at that particular high school for over 20 years.

In Croatia, high-school education lasts four years. The first two lessons were observed in a class of third year students, most of whom were 17-year-olds that fall within the middle adolescence/teens age group. The last two lessons were observed in a class of fourth year students, most of whom were 18-year-olds that fall within the late adolescence/young adults age group. Both of the observed classes were mixed, comprised of both boys and girls. There were 26 students (three boys and 23 girls) in the first class, and 25 students (three boys and 22

girls) in the second class. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, the level of language proficiency of all students is B2 (Upper-Intermediate).

### **3.2.2 Procedure**

The first part of the research consisted of classroom observation and audio-recording. All of the participants, both the teachers and the students were informed about the research in accordance with the Croatian Code of Ethics for Research involving Children<sup>4</sup>. All participants knew that classroom interaction was being researched and recorded. In order to avoid discomfort due to audio-recording, students were informed that the focus of the research is on the teacher, and not on them. Also, teachers knew that they were being recorded. So as not to influence their behaviour, the details of the actual phenomena being researched - linguistic politeness, were not revealed to them until after the research had been conducted. At that point, neither of the teachers decided to withdraw from the study.

Once everyone agreed to participate in the research, dates for classroom observation were set. The four observed lessons were chosen by the teachers. In accordance with the non-interventionist naturalistic approach, teachers were given no instructions regarding the content of the lessons. In that way, we hoped to record natural classroom interaction in regularly prepared lessons. Two 45-minute lessons from each teacher were observed and recorded. In all of the four lessons, the researcher sat at the back of the classroom and took notes of the interaction, classroom atmosphere and student participation. Two small gadgets were used for audio-recording. One was placed underneath the teacher's desk, and the other was placed underneath the researcher's desk, at the back of the classroom. Both gadgets were strategically placed to avoid distraction.

The second part of the research consisted of a semi-structured interview with each teacher after classroom observation. The interview comprised 15 questions (some included sub questions). Their purpose was to further our interpretation of the results gained from the analysis of the recorded material. With the teachers' permission, the interviews were also audio-recorded. Once both parts of the research were finished, transcripts were produced and analysed.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ufzg.unizg.hr/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Eticki-kodeks-istrasivanja-s-djecom.pdf>

### 3.3 Transcription and analysis

The recorded classroom observation was transcribed using the following conventions. Firstly, the utterance was used as the unit of transcription and analysis.<sup>5</sup> Short pauses for breath were neither indicated nor counted as the ending of utterances. Only longer pauses were identified as the ending of an utterance. Secondly, standard orthography was used in the transcription. Thirdly, our point of interest being teacher talk, only teacher utterances and student-teacher utterances were transcribed in order to supply sufficient context. Student-student utterances were deliberately left out. Also, overlapping and simultaneous utterances were omitted since speaker turn-taking was not part of the researched phenomena. Croatian utterances were transcribed for the sake of the context. However, they were not analysed because the study focuses on linguistic realizations of politeness in English, not in Croatian. Punctuation marks were placed where they would naturally occur in written form. In other words, an attempt to convey oral discourse into written discourse as truthfully as possible was made. Throughout the transcript, the letter T was used to refer to the teacher and S to refer to the student. Also, students' names were changed to numbers. Finally, some other classroom interaction and management phenomena were indicated in brackets (laughter, chatting, joking, writing on the board). Such transcribing aided both reading and analysis of the obtained data.

In the analysis, both qualitative and quantitative analysis was used (Allwright and Bailey 1991, 65-67). First, all lesson transcripts were analysed according to the 41 politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson. Once identified, their occurrence was quantified in several ways: the type and percentage of strategies used in each lesson, by each teacher, in total, and the number of strategies used per utterance per teacher, since more than one strategy may be employed in one utterance (Brown and Levinson 1987, 93). After the analysis, the results were interpreted together with that of the interviews. The findings and discussion of the results are presented in the following section.

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<sup>5</sup> According to A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics, an utterance is defined as: "A term used in linguistics and phonetics to refer to a stretch of speech about which no assumptions have been made in terms of linguistic theory...One commonly used definition refers to a "stretch of speech preceded and followed by silence or a change of speaker" (Crystal 2008, 505). In accordance with this definition, transcripts were produced.

## 4. Results and discussion

This section starts with quantitative results and examples of use by both teachers (for a complete list see appendix A). Subsection 4.2 deals with the research findings in more detail. First, the occurrence of the four super-strategies per lesson is indicated. Then, the total occurrence of the super-strategies per teacher is presented. Finally, the total number of strategies per utterance is indicated, since more than one strategy was used in the majority of utterances. Subsection 4.3 consists of the interview findings. Significant findings will be commented on immediately after their presentation throughout the section, whereas a recapitulation of the most important ones will be made in section 5.

### 4.1 Identified politeness strategies

Within the 631 analysed teacher utterances, a total of 1.542 politeness strategies was identified, enabling us to conclude that linguistic politeness does exist in the observed EFL lessons. Furthermore, all four politeness super-strategies were found. The number and occurrence of each of the super-strategies is indicated in Figure 2.

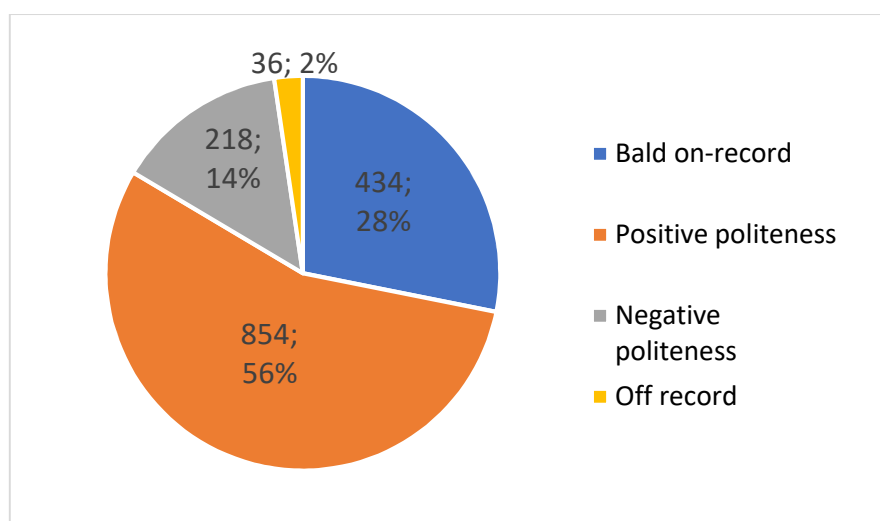


Figure 2. Number and occurrence of super-strategies

Figure 2 shows that positive politeness super-strategy was used the most, whereas the off record super-strategy was used the least. This means that teachers mostly chose to redress their face-threatening acts by orienting themselves towards the learners' positive face (i.e. their want to be liked and approved of), whereas they made least attempts to do their FTAs indirectly, off record. Moreover, since we hypothesized that bald on-record will be used the most, this means that the second hypothesis can be rejected. Instead of being the most used super-strategy, bald on-record was found to be the second most used super-strategy. In comparison to positive politeness and bald on-record, teachers only sometimes redressed their FTAs to satisfy their learners' negative face, causing negative politeness to be the third most used super-strategy. Let us now take a closer look at the strategies used within the most used super-strategy: positive politeness.

#### 4.1.1 Positive politeness strategies

Out of the 15 positive politeness output strategies, 11 were identified in the teacher talks:

Table 1. Occurrence of positive politeness strategies

	Number of occurrences	Occurrence %
Strategy 5: Seek agreement	413	48.36%
Strategy 1: Notice, attend to H	120	14.05%
Strategy 6: Avoid disagreement	89	10.43%
Strategy 12: Include both S and H in the activity	78	9.14%
Strategy 4: Use in-group language	71	8.31%
Strategy 15: Give gifts to H	53	6.20%
Strategy 7: Presuppose/raise common ground	13	1.52%



Strategy 8: Joke	13	1.52%
Strategy 2: Exaggerate	2	0.23%
Strategy 3: Intensify interest to H	1	0.12%
Strategy 10: Offer, promise	1	0.12%
Total:	854	100%

#### • Strategy 5: Seek agreement

The most frequently used positive politeness strategy in the study was Seek Agreement (Table 1). Here are two examples:

(1) T: Improving what?

S14: Improving international relations.

T: *International relations, okay.* (lines 297-299)

The final line in (1) shows that the teacher achieved agreement by repeating part of the student's answer, thereby proving that she has heard correctly, and by using the positive back channel cue "okay".

(2) T: Is it timetabled?

Ss: Yes.

T: *Aha.* It takes place on the first of June. That's good. Okay, student 9. (lines 506-508)

The final line in (2) shows that the teacher achieved agreement by using a brief agreement utterance. Instances of repetition, "okay" and brief agreement utterances (examples 1 and 2) were frequently encountered in both teachers' feedbacks. By achieving agreement, teachers established common ground with their learners. Furthermore, the fact that this was by far the most used positive output strategy means that teachers made most effort in establishing and maintaining common ground with their learners.

#### • Strategy 1: Notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods)

The second most frequently used output strategy was Notice, attend to Addressee (Table 1). Frequently encountered instances of this strategy were the discourse markers “okay” (example 3 below) and “yes” (example 4 below). They were used in the interrogative form by both teachers to check the students’ understanding during the lesson. By attending to their students’ want and need to understand, teachers conveyed that they share the same want – to understand what is being said. Another example of this strategy were greetings and farewells (examples 5 and 6 below), which show that the teacher noticed her students. By noticing and attending to their students, teachers established common ground with them. Here are the examples:

- (3) T: What you should do is choose the right phrase and actually combine it in a sentence. *Okay?* Student 3. (line 664)
- (4) S: Profesrice?  
T: *Yes?* (lines 2-3)
- (5) T: *Hello!* Do we have some extra chairs? (line 206)
- (6) T: Okay, *goodbye*. (line 763)

#### • Strategy 6: Avoid disagreement

The third most used positive strategy was Avoid disagreement (Table 1). To achieve it, teachers used conclusory markers “then” and “so” the most:

- (7) T: *So*, how many points can you get all together?  
S4: Twenty.  
T: Twenty. That’s the maximum. Okay, *so* what are the criteria that are graded?  
(lines 29-31)
- (8) T: Aha, useless. I mate tamo. Okay. Useless, *then*, verb would be? (line 833)

Since these markers are used to refer to preceding discussions, they were mostly employed during revision (examples 7 and 8). Aside from that, teachers also hedged their opinions to avoid disagreement. Here are two examples:

- (9) T: Okay, that's good. Although, I'm not *very satisfied* with the other support.

The other support is *a little bit shaky*, let's say... (line 201)

- (10) T: Okay. Can we first check the one piece of paper I gave you, I handed out  
ages ago? And *I don't even know* if we went through all the exercises. (line 462)

By avoiding disagreement, teachers maintained common ground with their students.

#### • Strategy 12: Include both S and H in the activity

Including both the speaker and the addressee in the activity was found to be the fourth most used positive politeness strategy (Table 1). Here is an example:

- (11) T: Okay. So *we* got as far as Use of English, exercise 5.

T: *Let's* go on. Okay. (lines 468-469)

In the classroom, teachers often include themselves when giving instructions to the students. By this, they are conveying to the students that they are co-operators which share the same goal – to do a particular task.

#### • Strategy 4: Use in-group language

The fifth most used strategy was using in-group language (Table 1). Since all research participants were Croatian whose first language was also Croatian, instances of it in the analysis were not unexpected. From time to time, both teachers switched to Croatian in order to provide some additional explanation to the students, or to comment something unrelated to the lesson. All Croatian utterances were analysed as in-group language. However, their contents were not further analysed because the focus of this research is on English realizations of politeness, not Croatian. Here is an example:

- (12) T: I can see that! But you don't care!

(some Ss are playing with their phones)

T: Okay, so. *Dobro. Mislila sam da je poruka. Jel vi još šaljete uop e poruke?*

Ss: *Neeee! Preko moba jedino!*

T: *To više nitko ne radi! To je obsolete. Znamo što je obsolete?*

T: S7, what does obsolete mean?

S7: *Nešto suvišno?*

T: *Suvišno u smislu nepotrebno, ali i zastarjelo. Obsolete. (lines 39-45)*

In this example, the teacher first commented on a classroom situation (students playing with their phones) in Croatian, then quickly switched back to English making the most of it by introducing and explaining the word “obsolete” to the students. Through the use of Croatian, teachers conveyed to the students that they are members of the same group, co-operators, which share the knowledge of Croatian.

#### • Strategy 15: Give gifts to H

The sixth most used strategy was Give gifts to the addressee (Table 1). Instances of it were frequently found in the teachers’ feedback as both teachers often complimented their students after a correct answer or a successfully completed task. Here are two examples:

(13) T: Okay, *that’s very good! Your sentences, I mean, you have everything. You have linking words, you have main ideas, you have arguments, you have support, and it actually makes sense. So, it’s very nice...* (line 161)

(14) T: *Good. Excellent.* Go on (at student 10). (line 598)

By complimenting their answers, teachers conveyed to the students that they like and approve of them. That is, teachers satisfied their positive face wants.

#### • Other positive strategies

Although not as frequently, teachers also used strategies Presuppose/raise/assert common ground and Joke (Table 1). They achieved them by explicitly raising common ground between themselves and the students through small talk, and by joking, thereby emphasizing their shared background knowledge. Finally, one or two instances of strategies Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with Addressee), Intensify interest to Addressee and Offer, promise were found (Table 1). By exaggerating and intensifying their interest in the students, teachers

conveyed that they share the same want, and thus claimed common ground between them. By making a promise, teachers conveyed to the students that they are co-operators who also want their wants satisfied and are willing to help them.

#### 4.1.2 Bald on-record strategy

The second most often used super-strategy was bald on-record (Figure 2). Both teachers stated their FTAs baldly when giving instructions and restoring classroom order:

- (15) T: *Keep quiet!* (line 197)
- (16) T: *Sssh! Go on!* (line 440)
- (17) T: Good. Okay. British public education, okay. *Now, turn the page.* (line 606)
- (18) T: Okay? *Go on, student 1.* (line 656)
- (19) T: Okay. *Student 6.* (line 670)

The above examples are frequently encountered in all classrooms, not just in language ones. Even though some of them are not direct imperatives, they are still instances of the bald on-record strategy. Examples (16) and (19) are shortened versions of the examples preceding them (15, 18). What makes these acts bald on-record is the fact that they are uttered in specific classroom contexts which provide them with only one possible meaning. That is, when the teacher utters “Sssh” in the classroom, this can only mean “Keep quiet those of you who are talking”. In the same manner, when the teacher calls out a student by his first name when doing exercises, that can only mean “Go on. Do the following exercise.” According to Brown and Levinson, an FTA may be identified as bald on-record if it has only one possible meaning in a specific context, leaving aside all ambiguity (1987, 212).

We hypothesized that bald on-record will be the most used super-strategy. The reasons for this were the following. Firstly, according to Brown and Levinson, speakers who are so superior in power that they do not fear the addressee’s non-cooperation may state their FTAs baldly, without redress (1987, 97). Since in the asymmetrical teacher-student relationship, teachers are normally superior in power and authority (Monsefi and Hadidi 2015, 2, 8), they may state their FTAs baldly on record without fear of the students’ non-cooperation. Secondly,

given the 45-minute imposed duration of the lesson, teachers sometimes need to be maximally efficient in order to attain all of their objectives. Because of this, they might choose to do their FTAs with maximum efficiency, i.e. baldly on record. Moreover, since at the time of the research, the end of the school year was approaching, we supposed teachers will be in need of maximum efficiency more than ever so that they could finish everything on time. Finally, bald on-record is normally employed among people who know each other well (Jiang 2010, 653). Since both teachers have been teaching in the observed classes for several years, they must be quite familiar with their students. Because of this, they might choose to be more direct with their students. However, based on the results, the hypothesis can be rejected. Even though teachers had reason and possibility to state their FTAs baldly the most, they mostly employed positive politeness (Figure 2).

#### 4.1.3 Negative politeness strategies

In the study, six out of ten negative politeness output strategies were identified in the analysis:

Table 2. Occurrence of negative politeness strategies

	Number of occurrences	Occurrence %
Strategy 1: Be conventionally indirect	68	31.20%
Strategy 7: Impersonalize S and H	55	25.23%
Strategy 2: Question, hedge	38	17.43%
Strategy 3: Be pessimistic	33	15.14%
Strategy 4: Minimize the imposition	22	10.09%
Strategy 9: Nominalize	2	0.91%
Total:	218	100%

### • Strategy 1: Be conventionally indirect

The most frequently used negative output strategy was Be conventionally indirect (Table 2). Teachers employed it the most when giving instructions. Instead of directly ordering the students to do things in class, teachers chose to maintain their negative faces through the use of modals (example 20 below) and indirect speech acts (example 21 below):

(20) T: Okay, so *will you* (at student 10) *read yours please*? Listen everyone! (line 269)

(21) T: ...Okay, *student 1 can you read it, please*? In Britain...? (line 477)

### • Strategy 7: Impersonalize S and H

The second most used output strategy was Impersonalize Speaker and Addressee (Table 2). Teachers used it the most when giving instructions and asking questions. In order not to threaten the students' faces by specifically naming them when commanding (examples 22 and 24 below) or asking (example 23 below), teachers employed indefinites and imperatives with omitted pronouns:

(22) T: *Everyone*, please listen! (line 174)

(23) T: Script three! *Any volunteers*? *Anyone* who could read it? (line 395)

(24) T: Number eight...City of angels. *Try to find out* what is missing and provide the right word. Okay. (line 1036)

### • Strategy 2: Question, hedge

The third most frequently used output strategy was Question, hedge (Table 2). Teachers mostly achieved it by using if-clauses (example 25 below), particles "maybe" (example 26 below) and "perhaps" (example 27 below), adverbs "actually" and "basically" (example 28 below) and question tags (example 29 below):

(25) T: Okay, that's it! So, last time, yesterday, *if I remember correctly*. (line 11)

(26) T: I know it's *baklja*, but it is not called torches, it's something else. Flares *maybe*? (line 194)

(27) T: Okay. And now this is the next. You were supposed to convert each sentence in the correct order. *Perhaps* the easiest way of doing this is by assigning numbers, *no*? ... (line 693)

(28) T: *Actually*, all the blank spaces should be filled. *Basically*, there's only one that is non-existent. (line 823)

(29) T: Okay, very easy, *aren't they*? Most of them are. Student 10. (line 681)

Through the use of hedges and questions tags, teachers lessened their commitment to the truthfulness of their utterances and avoided making any assumptions about their students.

### • Strategy 3: Be pessimistic

Be pessimistic was the fourth most used negative output strategy (Table 2). Teachers mostly conveyed their doubts about the students' willingness and ability to do the FTA by using "could" (example 30 below) and "would" (example 31 below):

(30) T: Okay. *Could* you repeat, please? (line 724)

(31) T: ...So, *would* you please put everything away that's not English? So, no physics, no Croatian, nothing! (line 209)

By doing so, teachers satisfied their students' want for freedom of action. That is, they maintained their negative faces.

### • Strategy 4: Minimize the imposition

The fifth most used negative politeness strategy was Minimize the imposition (Table 2). Instances of it were most frequently found in teachers' instructions. Here are three examples:

(32) T: So, you remember what I told you yesterday? ...*Just* write as much as you can. So, write whatever you like just to support your argument... (line 151)

(33) T: Okay! This can be done in *a jiffy*! Do it quickly! (line 938)

(34) T: ...Now, number ten! *Just* provide the right adjective. Can you do it *just* now?



(line 959)

Both teachers mostly employed “just” for its realization (examples 32 and 34). In example (33) the teacher used the expression “a jiffy”. By minimizing the imposition of the FTA, teachers tried to get the students to cooperate without directly forcing them.

#### 4.1.4 Off record strategies

Off record was found to be the least used super-strategy (Figure 2). In the study, only three out of ten off record output strategies were identified:

Table 3. Occurrence of off record strategies

	Number of occurrences	Occurrence %
Strategy 1: Give hints	32	88.88%
Strategy 8: Be ironic	2	5.56%
Strategy 10: Use rhetorical questions	2	5.56%
Total:	36	100%

##### • Strategy 1: Give hints

Table 3 shows that almost all of the identified off record strategies were instances of Give hints strategy. Teachers mostly used this strategy in classroom management. In order not to threaten their students’ faces by directly commanding them, teachers chose to do the acts off record. More precisely, they employed it throughout the lessons to avoid the direct instructions “go on” or “answer”:

(35) T: *I’m here!* If you can’t see me, *I’m here!* (line 6)

(36) T: *I can see that!* But you don’t care! (line 39)

(some Ss are playing with their phones)

(37) T: Okay. Excellent. *There has also been...?*

Ss: answer

T: Every four years since 1984. Okay. Student 19.

T: *Before?* Peto, peto! (lines 715-718)

(38) T: Ssshh! *Nine. Nine is the code number. Nine.* (line 755)

Examples (35) and (36) hint at orders “keep quiet” and “stop doing what you are doing”, whereas examples (37) and (38) show how teachers hint at the next exercise that the students need to do.

## 4.2 Teachers' usage of politeness strategies

Let us now turn to presenting the occurrence of politeness strategies in each lesson. The four recorded EFL lessons were transcribed chronologically, in the order in which they were observed. The first two lessons from the transcript were held by Teacher 1, and the last two by Teacher 2. Figure 3 presents the occurrence of the four politeness super-strategies in each of the four lessons:

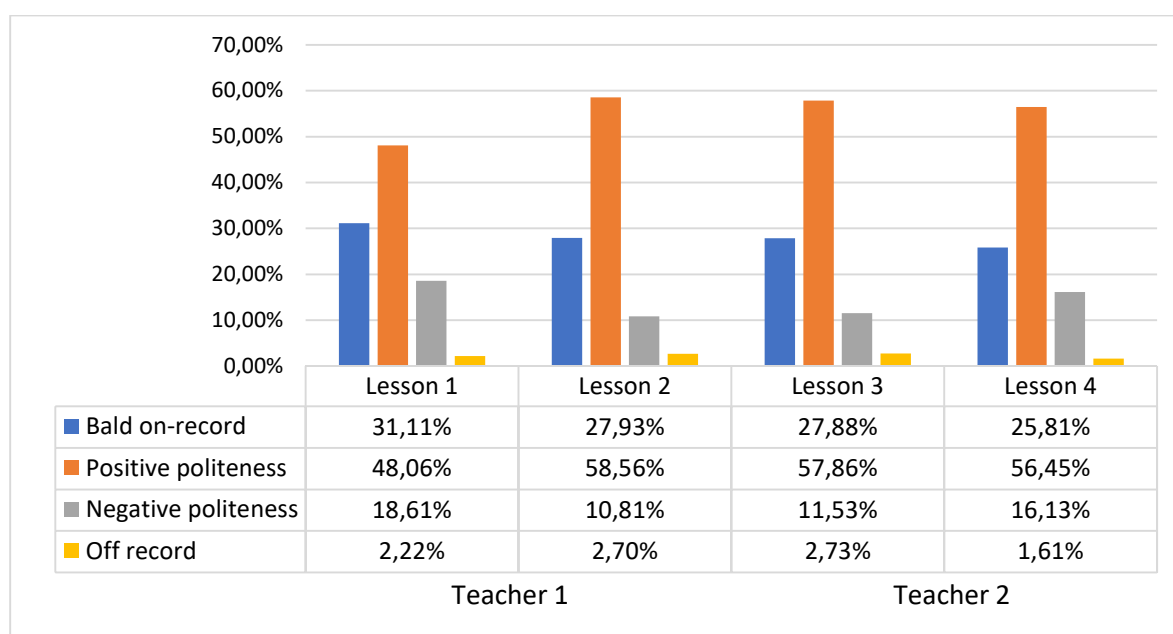


Figure 3. Occurrence of super-strategies per lesson

Figure 3 shows that teachers employed a different number of each super-strategy in each lesson. This is understandable because there are no two identical lessons. Each lesson presents a unique context with a unique number and combination of situations. In their theory, Brown and Levinson argue that politeness is situational. That is, they claim that the factors power (P), social distance (D) and ranking of imposition (R), which determine the weightiness of a particular face-threatening act ( $W_x$ ) and therefore the choice of politeness strategy, depend on the situation and are valid only in that particular situation and for that particular FTA (Brown and Levinson 1987, 79). Since there were no two identical situations in the four lessons, we see why there was a different occurrence of each super-strategy in each lesson. Furthermore, Figure 3 also shows that positive politeness super-strategy was used the most in all four lessons, whereas off record was used the least. This means that teachers primarily chose to redress their FTAs and minimize threats to their learners' faces by orienting themselves towards their positive face. In the context of the weightiness of teachers' FTAs, this would mean that the majority of their FTAs were too threatening to be done baldly on-record, but not so threatening as to be redressed with a higher-numbered strategy. If we assume our teachers are rational agents who chose the most appropriate strategy to minimize threats to the learner's face, then the fact that they employed positive politeness the most, as opposed to a higher-numbered strategy, enables us to conclude that most of their FTAs were not very face-threatening to their learners.

There are several possible explanations for this. First of all, the reason behind positive politeness occurring the most could lie in the content of the observed lessons. Because the end of the semester was approaching, all four of the observed lessons revolved around exercises for the upcoming exams. All learners' answers were checked and commented on by the teacher, making teacher's feedback an important part of both teacher talks. Since all exercises served for revising previously learned content, teachers' feedback was mostly positive feedback. That is, teachers mostly expressed their approval and agreement or complimented on learners' answers. By doing so, teachers employed positive politeness (output strategies Seek agreement and Give gifts to H) and maintained the learners' positive face. In other words, positive politeness might have been used the most because positive feedback made up the majority of both teacher talks. Our explanation is further supported by the fact that Seek agreement output strategy, which was frequently found in both teachers' feedbacks, was by far the most used positive output strategy (see Table 1).

Furthermore, the fact that bald on-record was the second most used super-strategy (Figure 3) fits in with our explanation. Since teachers mostly employed bald on-record when giving instructions, i.e. calling out students to do the following task or give an answer (see 4.1.2), and since all four lessons revolved around exercises (which require teachers to call out the students), the fact that bald on-record was the second most employed super-strategy may also be because of the content of the lessons.

Our proposed explanation may also account for why negative politeness was the third most used super-strategy (Figure 3). Similar to bald on-record usage, teachers mostly employed negative politeness when giving instructions (see 4.1.3), i.e. making requests to students (to do a task, give an answer or read). However, its usage was only half of that of bald on-record. The reason for this could lie in the fact that teachers mostly used negative politeness when either assigning a new task (see examples 23, 33-34) or choosing someone to give the first out of many answers in an exercise (see examples 20-21), whereas they employed bald on-record in all following requests. That is, these situations were more face-threatening to learners, causing teachers to use a higher-numbered strategy, than those in which they simply had to continue after someone had already given the first answer. Once the ice was broken with the first answer, teachers had neither the time nor need to redress all of the following requests in the same manner, therefore all subsequent requests (for clarification, repetition, continuation etc.) were stated baldly on-record (see examples 16, 18-19). Due to the fact that all exercises required more than just one answer, bald on-record instances outnumbered the negative politeness ones causing negative politeness to be the third most used super-strategy instead of the second most used.

The fact that the off record super-strategy was used the least may also be because of the content of the lessons. Although it is the least threatening way of doing an FTA, its indirectness may lead to misunderstanding since more than one interpretation may be attributed to it. By stating their FTAs off-record, teachers risk spending more time on clarification in an already short lesson (45 minutes) than they would had they stated them directly. In other words, teachers might have employed off record the least because they had activity-filled lessons where clarity and time economy were essential. A similar assumption was made by Jiang, in her 2010 study (655).

Secondly, another possible explanation for why positive politeness was used the most may be teachers' gender. In their 2015 research, Monsefi and Hadidi investigated the effect of

teacher's gender and use of politeness strategies on classroom interaction and learning process in the Iranian EFL context. They found that male and female teachers employ different politeness strategies and that female teachers favour employing positive politeness (2015, 12). In their seminal work, Brown and Levinson mention similar findings, but from a study done in another cultural and situational context. They refer to one of Brown's previous studies (1979, 1980) on interactional styles of men and women in Tenejapa which found that there are differences between the two, and that overall, women are "more polite" in that society (Brown and Levinson 1987, 251-252). Even though these studies were carried out in culturally (and situationally) different contexts from ours, their findings may nevertheless also explain why both of our female teachers employed positive politeness the most.

Thirdly, our findings may have resulted from the characteristics of learners involved in the research. According to Monsefi and Hadidi (2015), teacher's politeness may be influenced by three factors: learners' age, because younger learners will have more difficulty in understanding teachers' realizations of politeness than older ones; ratio of learners' gender, because the more females there are in a class, the more higher-numbered politeness strategies ought to be used<sup>6</sup>; and learners' level of English proficiency, the more proficient they are, the better they will understand teachers' realizations of politeness (2). Since the learners involved in our research were mostly 17 and 18-year-olds whose proficiency level was B2, it could be that our teachers employed a variety of politeness strategies because their learners were mature and proficient enough to understand them. Furthermore, since the majority of learners were girls<sup>7</sup>, it could be that teachers employed positive politeness the most because of the learners' gender ratio.

Fourthly, we propose that our findings result from the fact that the teachers and learners involved in this research were Croatian. In their theory, Brown and Levinson primarily focus on describing universals in linguistic politeness. According to them, politeness strategies are potentially available to anyone, regardless of their culture. However, that does not mean that culture does not influence linguistic politeness. Within their model, the authors enumerate and describe five more culturally dependent factors, which allow their model to be used for cross-cultural comparison as well. These factors are:

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<sup>6</sup> The authors' conclusion derives from Lakoff's (1975) proposition that "women's language represents an overall conventional politeness" (as cited in Monsefi and Hadidi 2015, 2).

<sup>7</sup> There were 23 girls, out of 26 students, in the first class and 22 girls, out of 25 students, in the second class.

the general level of weightiness ( $W_x$ ) in a culture; the extent to which all acts are FTAs, and the particular kinds of acts that are FTAs in a culture; the cultural composition of  $W_x$ ; the varying values (and importance) attached to P, D, and R; the different ways in which positive face wants are distributed over an ego's social network; and finally, the distribution of politeness strategies across 'the typical social dyad' of a particular society. (Brown and Levinson 1987, 244-249)

Since there is yet no research on linguistic politeness in the Croatian context, our findings enable us to make some generalizations regarding these factors and the culture of our teachers. If we consider our teachers as typical Croatian EFL teachers, or as representatives of the typical social dyad in Croatia, then their usage of linguistic politeness could be indicative of all Croatian EFL teachers' politeness. It could be that all Croatian EFL teachers employ positive politeness the most because the general weightiness of teachers' FTAs (orders, requests, criticism etc.) is not that great in Croatia. More precisely, the general values D, P and R (which regulate the use of politeness strategies) in all Croatian EFL teacher-student relationships may be relatively low so that teachers need not use a higher-numbered strategy than positive politeness. In a similar manner, we may generalize even further and suggest that our findings represent the linguistic politeness of all Croatian teachers, or perhaps of all Croatians. However, since there is no such research in the Croatian context to confirm our suggestions and compare our findings to, we will turn to others done in different cultural contexts.

Finally, we propose that our findings result from the similarities between the cultural factors influencing linguistic politeness and their values in countries like Croatia, China, Iran and the Czech Republic where researchers obtained similar results to ours (see 2.2). In her Chinese study of an EFL teacher's politeness, Jiang found that the teacher employed positive politeness the most, followed by negative politeness, bald on-record and off-record (2010, 654). Another study done in the Chinese context also found that the teacher preferred employing positive politeness (Peng, Xie and Cai 2014, 114). Furthermore, a study conducted in the Czech context discovered that EFL teachers employed positive politeness more often than negative politeness (Šubertová 2013, 52-55). Finally, Monsefi and Hadidi's Iranian study also determined teacher's preference for positive politeness (2015, 10). If we consider Brown and Levinson's idea that their model may also be used for describing cross-cultural variations, then the fact that our results are similar to those of studies done in different cultural contexts could mean that we have more in common with these cultures than we thought. That is, it could be

that the culturally dependent factors which influence politeness have similar values in Croatia, China, Iran and the Czech Republic.

Having discussed the occurrence of each super-strategy in each lesson, and the possible explanations behind it, we may now turn to discussing their employment by each teacher:

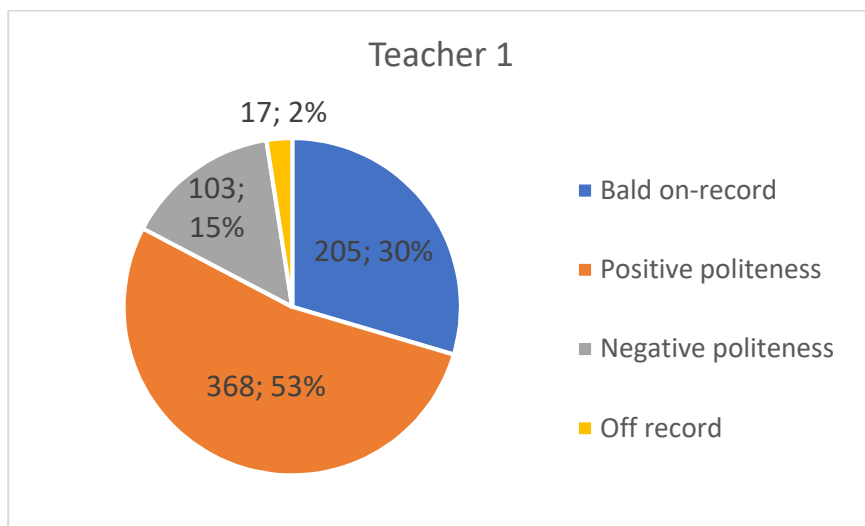


Figure 4. Super-strategies usage – Teacher 1

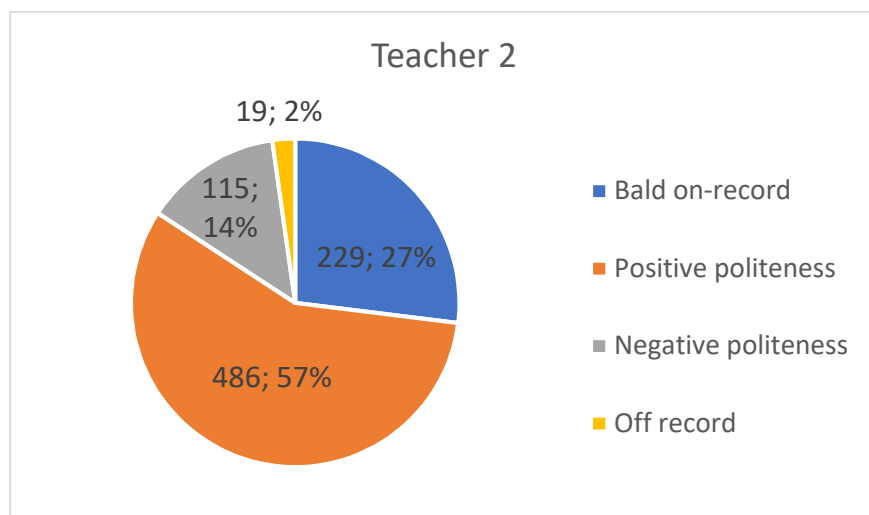


Figure 5. Super-strategies usage – Teacher 2

From Figures 4 and 5, we can see that both teachers employed a similar number of all four super-strategies with slight differences. Both of them employed positive politeness the most, followed by bald on-record and negative politeness, whereas off record was used the least

by both teachers. In order to better understand our findings, chi square tests were performed. By doing so, we were able to see whether there were any statistically significant differences between teachers and between lessons.

First of all, we tested the number of strategies each teacher employed. It was found that there was no significant difference between the number of strategies each teacher used,  $\chi^2(3, N = 1542) = 2.65, p = .45$ . This might be due to the fact that both teachers had almost the same talking time in their lessons (Teacher 1: 61.22%; Teacher 2: 61.01%)<sup>8</sup>, enabling them to use a similar number of strategies in total. Another reason for this might be the fact that teachers had similar lessons content-wise. As we have explained above, the fact that all four lessons revolved around exercises for upcoming exams might account for why positive politeness was the most used super-strategy in both teacher talks, followed by bald on-record, negative politeness and off record.

Nevertheless, a significant difference was found between the number of strategies Teacher 1 used in Lesson 1 and Lesson 2,  $\chi^2(3, N = 693) = 11.43, p = .0096$ . From Figure 3 we can see that Teacher 1 employed more positive politeness in Lesson 2 than in Lesson 1; however, she employed less bald on-record and less negative politeness. Although both lessons revolved around essay writing exercises, the difference could nevertheless have resulted from the content of the lessons. After reviewing the lesson transcripts, we have found that the revision part at the beginning of Lesson 1, in which Teacher 1 mostly employed bald on-record, was longer than in Lesson 2. That is, bald on-record may have been used more in Lesson 1 because its revision was longer. Furthermore, the majority of Lesson 2 consisted of learners' analysing and commenting on old essays, whereas in Lesson 1, a third of the lesson was spent on writing the con part of an essay. In other words, teachers had more time and opportunity to give feedback in Lesson 2 than in Lesson 1. Since learners were revising previously learned content, the majority of teacher's feedback was positive feedback. Therefore, positive politeness might have occurred more often in Lesson 2 because positive feedback made up the majority of Teacher 1's teacher talk. Moreover, the fact that there were 72 instances of the Seek Agreement positive output strategy in Lesson 2, and 58 instances of it in Lesson 1 further supports our explanation.

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<sup>8</sup> Teacher 1 had 281 utterances out of the 459 total utterances in both of her lessons (281/459=61.22% of talking time), whereas Teacher 2 had 379 utterances out of the 620 total utterances in her lessons (379/620=61.01%)



Finally, no significant difference was found between the number of strategies Teacher 2 employed in Lesson 3 and Lesson 4,  $\chi^2(3, N = 849) = 14.83, p = .1847$ . This is probably because the lessons were basically the same content-wise. Both lessons consisted of grammar exercises, whose purpose was preparation for the final exam. Even though some exercises were shorter than others, all of them required short, one or two sentences answers. That is, regardless of how many answers each exercise needed, the teacher had to utter a similar number of requests and feedback in both lessons. Because of this, there was no significant difference in the number of politeness strategies Teacher 2 employed in her lessons.

Finally, let us turn to how much effort each teacher put into minimizing their face-threatening acts. According to Brown and Levinson, more than one strategy may be used simultaneously for the mitigation of just one FTA (1987, 93). Because of this, we supposed that the number of strategies each teacher used per utterance will indicate how much effort they put into the minimization of their FTAs. The following table shows the number of strategies each teacher employed per utterance:

Table 4. Number of strategies per utterance

	<b>1</b>	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	total
Teacher 1	<b>115</b>	69	37	12	11	9	6	3	3	2	3	1	1	<b>157</b>
Teacher 2	<b>118</b>	126	59	27	12	5	3	4	2	1	1	1	0	<b>241</b>

From Table 4, we can see that both teachers used a similar number of single strategy utterances (the first bolded figures). However, when we take a look at multiple strategy utterances, we see that Teacher 2 employed almost twice as many “two strategies per utterance” than Teacher 1. Furthermore, Teacher 2 used multiple strategies per utterance overall more often than Teacher 1 (the bolded figures in the “total” column). Even though this could mean that Teacher 2 made more effort in mitigating her face-threatening acts, we suggest that this results from the fact that Teacher 2 had to generate more FTAs than Teacher 1. Because of it, she combined more FTAs into one utterance, as opposed to using more strategies to soften just one FTA. Since Teacher 2 had grammar exercises which required many shorter answers,

whereas Teacher 1, had longer writing exercises which required both time and longer answers, Teacher 2 managed to do more exercises per lesson than Teacher 1. That is, since all exercises require the uttering of two face-threatening acts (a request to the learner to do the exercise, and a feedback following the learner's answer), Teacher 2 had to utter more requests and give more feedback than Teacher 1 within the same 45 minutes. In order to manage everything, Teacher 2 combined her feedback and requests into one utterance. Here is a typical example from the transcript:

- (39) T: Now. Okay, let's do the pictures and the discussion, the last exercise on this page...Read the sentence and choose the correct word, okay? Have you done that?
- Ss: Yes.
- T: *Okay! Student 14, please.*
- S14: reads
- T: *Okay. Student 15, please.*
- S15: reads
- T: *Okay. Student 16.*
- S16: reads
- T: *Okay. Student 17. (lines 538-546)*

From this we see how Teacher 2, by uttering the positive back channel cue "okay" after each student read the answer, first expressed her agreement and approval of it (thereby using Seek agreement), and then baldly requested the next student to do the following exercise. All in only one utterance. Because she used this pattern throughout her lessons, she employed almost twice as many "two strategies per utterance" than Teacher 1.

### 4.3 Interview Findings

In order to see whether teachers are aware of how they deal with face-threatening acts and whether or not they are aware of the effects of their conduct, we conducted a semi-structured interview with each of them. The interview consisted of 15 open-ended questions

which were formulated around specific face-threatening acts commonly found in all teacher talks (requests, orders, compliments, criticisms). The last three questions revolved around the notion of politeness. By conducting such an interview, we hoped to answer our third research question and gain insight into teachers' opinion and attitude towards politeness, its place and realization in the classroom. Interview transcripts were worked out and analysed. The analysis consisted of a thematic analysis of teachers' answers in light of the politeness strategies. In the analysis, three larger themes were identified: positive politeness, negative politeness and bald on-record.

The first major theme, positive politeness, refers to the ways in which teachers adapt to their students' need to maintain their positive faces and want to be approved of, liked or admired, i.e. positive face wants. This appears in the way in which they address the students, the way they plan and develop their lessons and the way they provide feedback. Both teachers put effort into addressing the students with their first names and/or class nicknames and using the correct pronunciation. By doing so, they are not only noticing their students and approving their positive self-image, but they are also conveying that they belong to the same group, thereby reducing the distance between them and establishing a close relationship. Furthermore, since Teacher 2 directly explained that she believes this to be very important for a good relationship with her learners, we may assume that she is aware of the positive effects the use of first names and nicknames has on their relationship.

Teacher 2 also believes in adapting the curriculum to the students' interests and explicitly states that she does not insist on following the textbook if her students are bored, but rather cuts it short and moves on to something that interests them. She says that she likes to please them if she can. "Now I have a class of students that told me that they find documentaries interesting. So, I work more on that...Similarly with reading; they always tell me that they love to read Edgar Allan Poe, so I always work on that," Teacher 2 explains. By adapting her lessons to the students' interests and wants, Teacher 2 is not only noticing them and conveying that she approves of them, but she is also establishing common ground between them. In contrast, Teacher 1 does not report making such changes.

Finally, with regard to giving feedback, Teacher 1 mentioned that she accepts all of her students' efforts, as long as they make sense. Similarly, Teacher 2 said, "When the students' answers aren't correct, I always praise what was good first and then give them the right answer." By accepting their students' answers and praising what was good, teachers are satisfying their

students' want to be liked and approved of. By avoiding direct criticism, teachers are avoiding face threat and maintaining the students' positive faces. Finally, when asked about how they instruct their students to move on to the next activity, Teacher 1 said that she usually tells them, "Okay, thank you. Let's move on to this and this," or "Let's go on. Let's do something else." In a similar manner, Teacher 2 said, "I tell them, "Now, let's do this and this," or "Let's move on to this and this."" Through the use of the inclusive "let's", teachers are including themselves in the activity and reducing the distance between themselves and the students, thereby conveying that they are co-operators.

Overall, teachers' answers regarding terms of address, lesson planning, development and feedback show evidence of positive politeness. Therefore, the first theme is called positive politeness.

Evidence of negative politeness strategies are found in teachers' answers about making requests to students. "In class, I try to make sure that everyone says at least something each lesson. This is why when I want them to say something I say, "Who hasn't said anything today?" Teacher 1 explained. To the same question, Teacher 2 gave the following examples: "Would you possibly know? Would anyone know? Could you please do this and this?" She explained her conduct by saying, "But I don't force them, those that don't want to do it, don't have to." From this, we assume that Teacher 2 is aware of her learners' want for freedom of action (i.e. their negative face wants), and her power to coerce them and take away this freedom of action. Through the use of indefinites and modals "would" and "can", teachers avoid directly ordering the students to do things in class, thereby satisfying their want for freedom of action.

Teachers' answers regarding requests show evidence of negative politeness. Because of this, the second theme is negative politeness.

The last identified theme, bald on-record, is related to teachers' classroom management and superiority in the teacher-student relationship. When discussing student cooperation, Teacher 1 said that her students cooperate the most when something interests them: "If something interests them, all hands are raised. However, if it does not interest them, if they are bored or if something is hard, they do it anyway. But they do it because they have to." From this we see that Teacher 1 is aware that she will establish great cooperation if she attends to her learners' interests. However, we also see that both she and her students are aware of her superiority in that relationship, and that in the end, learners need to do as she says. In a similar manner, Teacher 2 referred to her power when talking about restoring classroom order. She said

that sometimes, open discussions in class may turn into actual arguments. “In such cases I tell them directly, “That’s enough!”” Teacher 2 recalled. She explained her conduct by saying that in such situations, the teacher is the responsible one, the sole adult in charge who needs to get things under control. From this, we see that Teacher 2 is also aware of her power and responsibility to restore and maintain classroom order.

In the above examples, Teacher 1 maintained classroom order by employing her superiority in power, whereas Teacher 2 restored it by directly ordering her students to “Stop that!” Although her exact utterance was “That’s enough!”, in that specific context, its meaning can only be “Stop doing what you are doing!” However, teachers’ superiority and directness may change as they become closer with their students through time. Teacher 1 first referred to this when asked about students’ willingness to express themselves in class. She said that how much they (she and the students) know each other plays a huge role in how much they’re willing to express themselves: “The older ones are always much more relaxed and open...It’s not the same when you have a student whom you met a month ago and a student whom you’ve known for more than three years.” From this we see that Teacher 1 is aware that their relationship becomes closer with time, causing her students to feel more relaxed in class. Furthermore, when asked how she motivates those who struggle with it, she answered, “I must see how far I can go, because if you have a child who’s extremely embarrassed, or stutters or is introverted, you’ll cause him more damage by calling him out than by leaving him alone.” This shows that Teacher 1 is also aware of her learners having a face, which can be threatened if she does not adapt her level of directness according to their personalities. Teacher 2 also referred to this when asked about requesting her students to read or give an answer: “Only those that want to do it, do it. Because there are very good, but very shy students. But then I don’t insist, because reading aloud would be too traumatic for them.” From this we see that Teacher 2 is also aware of her learners having a face, which can be threatened by her acts if they are not adjusted accordingly. A bit further on, she added, “There is one such student who just came back from a competition. He’s fantastic! But you need to discover such things. Luckily, we have enough time. Four lessons per week is enough time.” This shows that Teacher 2 is also aware that her knowledge of students and their personalities deepens through time.

Since unambiguous orders, speaker superiority and speaker-addressee closeness are all characteristic for bald on-record usage, this last identified theme is bald on-record.

Finally, when asked about the notion of politeness, its place and realization in the classroom, Teacher 1 said that politeness is very important to her and that communication in the classroom is, and must be, polite. She further exemplified her understanding of politeness by saying, “Children need to know their boundaries. They mustn’t be impolite or interrupt others. They need to raise their hand if they want to say something. Also, they need to use proper language. They mustn’t be vulgar.” From this we see that Teacher 1 is aware of politeness in the common sense<sup>9</sup>, and its presence in the classroom. To the same question, Teacher 2 also answered that classroom communication is polite and that her students are polite. By providing examples of impolite student behavior in the classroom, such as inappropriate language or shouting, we see that Teacher 2 also perceives politeness in a way which is characteristic for politeness in the common sense.

Furthermore, when asked about politeness and its relation to culture, Teacher 1 said that politeness originally stems from one’s culture and home, and that it absolutely differs across cultures. However, when asked to exemplify this, she only referred to behavior normally associated with politeness in the common sense. In a similar manner, Teacher 2 also said that she thinks politeness differs across cultures. However, unlike Teacher 1, she gave examples which indicate that she is, to a certain degree, aware of the existence of linguistic politeness and the differences in its usage across cultures: “Here (in Croatia), people come into the store and say, “You’ll give me four ounces of cheese.” Then I tell my students, “You cannot say “you’ll give me” in England!”” She continued by saying that in comparison to an average Englishman, Croatians are extremely vulgar. “Not necessarily because of our word choice, but because we are too personal, and that is impolite in their view because for them, politeness is all about keeping distance,” Teacher 2 explained. Finally, she concluded, “And you must be polite. How are you going to do that? You’re going to learn. Learn what is polite in this language, and what is polite in this one.” Teacher 2’s awareness of linguistic politeness may result from her educational background and the fact that after obtaining her Master’s degree, she also obtained a postgraduate degree in general linguistics.

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<sup>9</sup> Within politeness research, a distinction is often made between politeness in the common sense and politeness as a theoretical construct, i.e. first- and second-order politeness. First-order politeness refers to politeness as it is understood by “members of different sociocultural groups” (i.e. laymen), whereas second-order politeness refers to politeness as a term used within theories, a scientific concept (Watts 2003, as cited in *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Second Language Acquisition* 2013, 494).

In conclusion, teachers' answers showed that teachers are consistent with what they say they do and what they actually do. That is, their answers and examples regarding their FTAs are in accordance with our analysis findings. As to their awareness of the politeness strategies they employ, their answers allow us to conclude that they are aware of using quite a few of them. Both teachers appear to be aware of their superiority in the teacher-student relationship and the fact that their learners have a face (i.e. a public self-image), which can be threatened by their conduct. Furthermore, they both seem to be aware that their relationship with the students evolves through time, causing them to adjust their conduct accordingly. Also, both of them seem to be aware that noticing the students and attending to their needs has positive effects on their relationship and cooperation. In the context of politeness, both teachers are aware of politeness in the common sense, and its presence in the classroom. Finally, both of them are aware that such politeness differs across cultures, whereas Teacher 2 appears to also be aware of the existence of linguistic politeness, and its cultural differences.

## **5. Conclusion**

The aim of this thesis was to investigate the linguistic politeness of two Croatian EFL teachers in four EFL lessons. Findings from existing studies on the subject have shown that EFL teachers use a variety of politeness strategies. Furthermore, suggestions have been made that their usage positively influences the overall teaching and learning process, and that teachers should learn about politeness theory and become aware of its usage in the classroom. Since this particular subject has not yet been explored in the Croatian context, we decided to investigate it. The research part of this thesis was designed to verify the following hypotheses:

1. Linguistic politeness exists in the observed EFL lessons.

Even though teacher's politeness strategies have not yet been researched in the Croatian context, findings from studies done in other cultures allowed us to hypothesize that teachers involved in this study will also employ politeness strategies. The research analysis confirmed our hypothesis. More than 1.500 politeness strategies were identified, enabling us to conclude

that linguistic politeness does exist in the observed EFL lessons and that our teachers also use politeness strategies to minimize their face-threatening acts (Figure 2).

2. Both teachers employ various politeness strategies; however, the bald on-record politeness strategy is most frequently used.

Due to the fact that all four politeness super-strategies, together with 21 output strategies, were identified in both teacher talks, we may conclude that both teachers employed various politeness strategies (Figures 4 and 5). That is, our findings support the first half of our hypothesis. This was to be expected because of other similar studies which also discovered teacher's usage of more than just one super-strategy. However, our finding on the most used super-strategy does not support the rest of our hypothesis. Instead of being the most used super-strategy, bald on-record was found to be the second most used. We supposed teachers will use bald on-record the most because they are more powerful in the teacher-student relationship, because they face time constraints and need to be maximally efficient, and because they are well acquainted with their learners, enabling them to be more direct with them (see 4.2). However, we were wrong. Both of our teachers used positive politeness the most, followed by bald on-record, negative politeness and off-record (Figure 3). There are several possible explanations for this. Firstly, positive politeness might have occurred the most because the majority of both teacher talks consisted of positive feedback and Seek agreement output strategy. Secondly, teachers might have used positive politeness the most because of their gender. Findings from some studies suggest that women use more positive politeness than men, and that overall, they are more polite than men (Monsefi and Hadidi 2015; Brown 1979, 1980 as cited in Brown and Levinson 1987, 251). Thirdly, our findings may have resulted from the characteristics of our learners. That is, teachers might have used a variety of politeness strategies because their learners were mature enough and proficient enough to understand them. Furthermore, they might have used positive politeness the most because the majority of learners were girls, causing them to use a higher-numbered strategy more often than bald on-record. Fourthly, our findings could have resulted from the culture of our participants. That is, the general weightiness of teachers' FTAs in Croatia may be such that they cannot state them baldly, but they also need not use a higher-numbered strategy for them. Finally, our results may be a consequence of the similarities between Croatia, China, Iran and the Czech Republic. Because the findings of our study are similar to those found in these cultural context, it could



be that culturally dependant factors which influence politeness have similar values in all of them.

### 3. Teachers are aware of the politeness strategies they employ.

In the context of previous research on EFL teacher's politeness, suggestions have been made that teachers should learn about politeness theory and become aware of its usage. By doing so, teachers could not only positively influence various aspects of their classrooms, but they could also teach politeness to their learners (both explicitly and implicitly), and thus promote their pragmatic competence (Šubertová 2013, 56-57). Because of this, we wanted to see whether teachers are aware of the strategies they use and its effects. From the interview, we found that teachers are consistent with what they say they do, and what they actually do. That is, their interview examples of specific face-threatening acts were also identified in their teacher talks. As to their awareness, it appears that teachers are aware of their superiority in the teacher-student relationship and of their learners' having a face, which can be threatened by their conduct. Moreover, they seem to be aware that their relationship with the students evolves through time, and that attending to students' needs has positive effects on their relationship and cooperation. Finally, teachers are aware of politeness in the classroom in the common sense, and of the fact that such politeness differs across cultures. In conclusion, it appears that teachers are aware of some of the strategies they use and their effects. In order to fully benefit from their positive effects, teachers should learn about politeness theory and become fully aware of its application in the classroom.

Through this research, we hoped to raise EFL teachers' (both experienced and trainee) awareness of politeness strategies in the classroom, and the importance of mastering the theory behind it. Furthermore, as the first such research in the Croatian context, our study offers numerous opportunities for future research. Those interested in pursuing the issue may want to include more teachers and more diverse lessons content-wise in their study. Another possible way of proceeding is conducting a study with younger and less-proficient learners. Either way, this study enables us to conclude that Croatian EFL teachers also use various politeness strategies and that they are partially aware of it.

## **Abbreviations and Transcription Symbols**

D	Social distance
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
FTA	Face-threatening act
H	Addressee
P	Power
R <sub>x</sub>	Ranking of imposition
S	Speaker, Student
Ss	Students
T	Teacher
W <sub>x</sub>	Weightiness (seriousness) of an FTA

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## Appendix: Examples

- (1) T: Improving what?

S14: Improving international relations.

T: *International relations, okay.* (lines 297-299)

- (2) T: Is it timetabled?

Ss: Yes.

T: *Aha.* It takes place on the first of June. That's good. Okay, student 9. (lines 506-508)

- (3) T: What you should do is choose the right phrase and actually combine it in a sentence. *Okay?* Student 3. (line 664)

- (4) S: Profesrice?

T: *Yes?* (lines 2-3)

- (5) T: *Hello!* Do we have some extra chairs? (line 206)

- (6) T: Okay, *goodbye.* (line 763)

- (7) T: *So,* how many points can you get all together?

S4: Twenty.

T: Twenty. That's the maximum. Okay, *so* what are the criteria that are graded?  
(lines 29-31)

- (8) T: Aha, useless. I mate tamo. Okay. Useless, *then*, verb would be? (line 833)

- (9) T: Okay, that's good. Although, I'm not *very satisfied* with the other support.

The other support is *a little bit shaky*, let's say... (line 201)

- (10) T: Okay. Can we first check the one piece of paper I gave you, I handed out ages ago? And *I don't even know* if we went through all the exercises. (line 462)

- (11) T: Okay. So *we* got as far as Use of English, exercise 5.

- T: *Let's go on. Okay.* (lines 468-469)
- (12) T: I can see that! But you don't care!
- (some Ss are playing with their phones)
- T: Okay, so. *Dobro. Mislila sam da je poruka. Jel vi još šaljete uop e poruke?*
- Ss: *Neeee! Preko moba jedino!*
- T: *To više nitko ne radi! To je obsolete. Znamo što je obsolete?*
- T: S7, what does obsolete mean?
- S7: *Nešto suvišno?*
- T: *Suvišno u smislu nepotrebno, ali i zastarjelo. Obsolete.* (lines 39-45)
- (13) T: Okay, *that's very good! Your sentences, I mean, you have everything. You have linking words, you have main ideas, you have arguments, you have support, and it actually makes sense. So, it's very nice...* (line 161)
- (14) T: *Good. Excellent.* Go on (at student 10). (line 598)
- (15) T: *Keep quiet!* (line 197)
- (16) T: *Sssh! Go on!* (line 440)
- (17) T: Good. Okay. British public education, okay. *Now, turn the page.* (line 606)
- (18) T: Okay? *Go on, student 1.* (line 656)
- (19) T: Okay. *Student 6.* (line 670)
- (20) T: Okay, so *will you* (at student 10) *read yours please?* Listen everyone! (line 269)
- (21) T: ...Okay, *student 1 can you read it, please?* In Britain...? (line 477)
- (22) T: *Everyone,* please listen! (line 174)
- (23) T: Script three! *Any volunteers? Anyone* who could read it? (line 395)
- (24) T: Number eight...City of angels. *Try to find out* what is missing and provide the right word. Okay. (line 1036)



- (25) T: Okay, that's it! So, last time, yesterday, *if I remember correctly*. (line 11)
- (26) T: I know it's *baklja*, but it is not called torches, it's something else. Flares *maybe?* (line 194)
- (27) T: Okay. And now this is the next. You were supposed to convert each sentence in the correct order. *Perhaps* the easiest way of doing this is by assigning numbers, *no?* ... (line 693)
- (28) T: *Actually*, all the blank spaces should be filled. *Basically*, there's only one that is non-existent. (line 823)
- (29) T: Okay, very easy, *aren't they?* Most of them are. Student 10. (line 681)
- (30) T: Okay. *Could* you repeat, please? (line 724)
- (31) T: ...So, *would* you please put everything away that's not English? So, no physics, no Croatian, nothing! (line 209)
- (32) T: So, you remember what I told you yesterday? ...*Just* write as much as you can. So, write whatever you like just to support your argument... (line 151)
- (33) T: Okay! This can be done in *a jiffy*! Do it quickly! (line 938)
- (34) T: ...Now, number ten! *Just* provide the right adjective. Can you do it *just* now? (line 959)
- (35) T: *I'm here*! If you can't see me, *I'm here*! (line 6)
- (36) T: *I can see that*! But you don't care! (line 39)
- (some Ss are playing with their phones)
- (37) T: Okay. Excellent. *There has also been...*?
- Ss: answer
- T: Every four years since 1984. Okay. Student 19.
- T: *Before?* Peto, peto! (lines 715-718)

(38) T: Ssshh! *Nine. Nine is the code number. Nine.* (line 755)

(39) T: Now. Okay, let's do the pictures and the discussion, the last exercise on this page...Read the sentence and choose the correct word, okay? Have you done that?

Ss: Yes.

T: *Okay! Student 14, please.*

S14: reads

T: *Okay. Student 15, please.*

S15: reads

T: *Okay. Student 16.*

S16: reads

T: *Okay. Student 17.* (lines 538-546)