Rapport Management Framework in Classroom Interaction: A Socio-pragmatic Analysis of Teachers' Utterances

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative descriptive study employing socio-pragmatic analysis aimed to analyze teachers' utterances using Spencer-Oatey's Rapport Management Framework, essential for improving teacher-student relationships and enhancing classroom dynamics. A 6-hour classroom observation and interview with 10 teachers were conducted to collect the data. The framework includes face and social rights. In terms of face, it involved the quality face, which comprised well-being concern, dialogue encouragement, openness to diverse perspectives, respect for diverse opinions, feedback and encouragement, fairness and humility; social identity face, which comprised of behavioral guidance, authority establishment, group engagement, effort encouragement, participation seeking, attention direction, guidance of understanding, correctness assurance, and support reinforcement; and relational face, which comprised of managing classroom dynamics, gentle correction, commitment to personalized support, promotion of mutual support, validation and clarification strategy. On the other hand, sociality rights involved association and equity rights: the latter consisted of the principles of involvement, empathy, and respect, while the former consisted of cost-benefit consideration, fairness and reciprocity, and autonomy-control. The results imply that both face and sociality rights can be sources of offense. Face is important for maintaining students' personal/relational/social value, while sociality rights help ensure fairness, consideration and behavioral appropriateness. These elements are important for teachers when interacting with students because they promote respectful communication and strengthen teacher-student relationships. The inclusion of these concepts in the curriculum helps create a positive and inclusive classroom environment.

Keywords: *socio-pragmatic analysis; rapport management framework; teachers' utterances; face; sociality rights; Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

Effective communication between teachers and students is essential for successful education and learning. The language choices of teachers significantly influence the organization of the classroom and the effectiveness of student learning. However, teachers occasionally use expressions that threaten both positive and negative face (Aporbo et al., 2024), which can result in an unhealthy learning atmosphere (Sheila Agustina, 2021). Academic performance and overall well-being of students are negatively influenced by such expressions, often causing them to feel uncomfortable, stressed, and anxious (Sapoetra, 2021). To foster a more supportive learning environment, teachers need to employ constructive, inclusive, and uplifting communication methods that address the needs of students (Khoshnaw, 2022).

Studies show that face-threatening actions can adversely impact classroom interactions. Feedback viewed by students as face-threatening instead of face-saving can result in feelings of alienation and a decrease in confidence (Khan et al., 2020). For instance, sarcasm (Decock & Depraetere, 2018) and derogatory remarks (Aporbo et al., 2024) can humiliate and dissuade students from engaging in class. Conversely, employing respectful and optimistic language assists in offering constructive criticism. It demonstrates to students that educators have positive motives, encourage their autonomy, and assist them in maintaining equilibrium when facing criticism (Fong et al., 2018). Moreover, ridicule and belittlement from teachers can further alienate students from the learning process, diminishing their performance and causing reluctance to participate in class activities (Liaquat et al., 2024).

Negative interactions between teachers and students can lead to significant repercussions. Spencer-Oatey (2008) emphasizes that insufficient rapport results in student disengagement from both the teacher and the lesson, reducing their motivation to actively engage. This lack of connection, combined with unfulfilled social needs and a sense of alienation, can result in disruptive behavior (Ibrahim & El Zaatari, 2020). Furthermore, strained teacher-student relationships can increase stress and anxiety (Alnuzaili & Uddin, 2020).

Undoubtedly, addressing these issues necessitates an understanding of the socio-pragmatic aspects of teacher discourse. The capacity of teachers to handle communication proficiently during the delivery of instructional material can improve student engagement and learning results (Ezinwa, 2024). Additionally, creating a collaborative and supportive learning atmosphere that encourages both social and academic development in students relies on proficient rapport management (Li, 2024).

This study explored the socio-pragmatic dimensions of teacher discourse using the Rapport Management Framework developed by Spencer-Oatey (2002, 2007). More specifically, the study classified teachers' utterances based on the types of face and sociality rights. By examining how teachers' utterances exude rapport management, the study may identify effective strategies that can be integrated into teaching practices to improve communication and ameliorate friction in the classroom.

METHOD

This qualitative descriptive study employed socio-pragmatic analysis, a subfield of pragmatics that examines how pragmatic meanings reflect specific local conditions of language use. This approach focuses on context-sensitive aspects of communication, distinguishing itself from the study of more general pragmatic meanings. Using Spencer-Oatey's (2002, 2007) Rapport Management Framework, the research explored types of face and sociality rights evident in teachers' utterances. Face, as defined by Spencer-Oatey and influenced by Goffman, focuses on individuals' desire to be positively perceived based on claimed attributes, influencing interpersonal interactions and relationships. Sociality rights, on the other hand, involve managing social expectations and entitlements, such as dignity and reputation (Spencer-Oatey, 2008).

The data collection involved observations over six hours; three teachers were observed for two hours each, and interviews were conducted with ten teachers. Ethical protocols were observed, including obtaining consent from the Vice President of Academic Affairs and participants, ensuring informed voluntary participation and confidentiality. Data were gathered using discreetly placed voice recorders inspired by prior research methodologies (Dowlatabadi, Mehri, & Tajabadi, 2014) and supplemented with unstructured interviews to capture teachers' perspectives effectively.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis was based on the Rapport Management Framework of Spence-Oatey, which comprises face and social rights. As shown in Table 1, in terms of face, it involved the quality face, which comprised well-being concern, dialogue encouragement, openness to diverse perspectives, respect for diverse opinions, feedback and encouragement, fairness and humility; social identity face, which comprised of behavioral guidance, authority establishment, group engagement, effort encouragement, participation seeking, attention direction, guidance of understanding, correctness assurance, and support reinforcement; and relational face, which comprised of managing classroom dynamics, gentle correction, commitment to personalized support, promotion of mutual support, validation and clarification strategy. On the other hand, sociality rights involved association and equity rights. The latter consisted of the principles of involvement, empathy, and respect, while the former consisted of cost-benefit consideration, fairness and reciprocity, and autonomy-control. They are comprehensively discussed below.

Table 1. Rapport Management Framewok in Teachers' Utterances

Utterances	Manner of Use	Rapport Management
		Face
What happened to you?	Well-being concern	Quality Face
Could you hear me our first Correct me if I'm wrong…	Dialogue encouragement	
I was wondering whether or… but if	Openness to diverse perspectives	

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you're thinking within this range of thinking, then that is the correct answer

I respect your opinion. People are entitled to their opinion	Respect for diverse opinions	
I think you can still elaborate more. That can still be enhanced.	Feedback and Encouragement	
You're almost there to the right answer.		
Give me the source you have read. I guess I will have to try to read to achieve consensus	Fairness and Humility	
Oh! I'm very sorry…		
Please calm down. We shall begin.	Behavioral guidance	Social Identity Face
Quiet! Let's listen to the discussant	Authority establishment	
Let's start, guys.	Group engagement	
Let's just try our best!	Effort encouragement	
Can someone please…?	Participation Seeking	
Please! Listen…	Attention direction	
Dear, please note that this is how you do it…	Guidance of understanding	
The correct answer is this..	Correctness Assurance	
It's fine. It can't fail you. So just see me after class, and let's talk about your reason.	Support Reinforcement	
Please calm down. We shall begin.	Managing classroom dynamics	Relational Face
Let's start guys.		
Dear, it's not done that way..	Gentle correction	
I think you have an idea, but…		
It's fine. It can't fail you. So just see me after class, and let's talk about your reason	Commitment to personalized support	
Let's not make things hard for us.	Promotion of mutual support	
Let's just try our best.		

Rapport Management Framework...

Correct me if I'm wrong…   Validation and Clarification Strategy

What you're saying is this…

Utterances	Manner of Use	Rapport Management Sociality Rights
Let's start guys	Principle of Involvement	Association Rights
Can someone please?		
Altight. What is it about so?		
What you're saying is this?		
What happened to you?	Principle of Empathy	
Let's just try out best		
Oh, I see I didn't think of that..	Principle of Respect	
Dear, please do note that this is how you do it.		
Dear, it's not done that way		
I think you can still elaborate it more. That can still be enhanced		
Your answer is interesting, but let's put it this way		
I respect your opinion. People are entitled to their opinion		
Please calm down. We shall begin		
Please! Listen....		
It's fine. It can't fail you. So just see me after the class, and let's talk about your reason	Cost-Benefit Consideration	Equity Rights
Oh! I'm very sorry..		
We've already had that question earlier but the answer for that is this Give me the source you have read. I guess I will have to try to read to achieve consensus	Fairness and Reciprocity	
Give me the article you believe in and I will read it, and then let's decide		
Correct me if I'm wrong…		
I think, in my opinion, this is how we		

should do it

Could you hear me out first?	Autonomy-Control
That's not our concern now but we could discuss that next time	
You can't expect me to answer all the time all your questions, especially when it's not relevant to our concern.	
Quiet! Let's listen to the discussant	
Do you really have to be so noisy? Is it always like this? I have observed that…	

Face. Spencer-Oatey (2007) builds on Goffman's (1967) definition of face, which refers to the positive social image people try to maintain through their roles and behaviors. It emphasizes how individuals control their actions and exchanges to safeguard their social identity in diverse contexts. In a classroom, a teacher's language can significantly affect a student's face, either protecting or threatening their self-image. Educators can steer clear of non-threatening expressions by employing various types of faces, including the quality face, social identity face, and relational face, as explained below.

Quality Face. According to Spencer-Oatey (2005), this refers to the desire for positive judgments based on personal qualities and values. Perils to quality face usually evoke sadness, anger, or irritation (Culpeper, 2011). Teachers protect students' quality face by cultivating self-esteem and respect via understanding and inclusive expressions. Expressions such as "What happened to you?" show regard for students' well-being, while "Could you hear me out?" and "I respect your opinion," convey recognition of their contributions, promoting mutual respect and self-assurance. Also, expressions like "I was wondering whether or…" foster amenableness to various views, which affirms students' intellectual worth and fosters inclusivity.

In addition, expressions like "I think you can still elaborate more" function as constructive feedback that motivates students to improve their ideas while acknowledging their potential to evolve. A growth-oriented atmosphere is felt where students feel motivated and appreciated in their academic voyage. Likewise, "Give me the source you have read" demonstrates fairness and humility. When asking about the students' sources, the teacher respects their intellectual input and acknowledges that their viewpoints are worth considering. This humility makes a room where students' views are regarded with pride, and fairness is kept by providing all students an equal opportunity or chance to contribute. Without a doubt, these expressions mitigate the threat of negative emotions like embarrassment, contributing to a classroom environment that is both supportive and empowering. In so doing, they conform with

the precepts of the quality face by emphasizing students' positive self-worth based on their personal qualities.

Social Identity Face. This refers to the human need for acknowledgment and respect based on one's roles within a social or group context (Spencer-Oatey, 2002). Teachers protect students' social identity face by recognizing their positions as learners and contributors within the classroom. The expressions used include "Please calm down. We shall begin" and "Quiet! Let's listen to the discussant," which show behavioral guidance and authority, supporting students' roles in keeping order and engaging in discussions. Expressions such as "Let's start, guys" and "Let's just try our best!" encourage group engagement and motivate students to contribute, affirming their roles as community participants. Similarly, "Can someone please...?" and "Please! Listen..." help guide participation and direct attention, further affirming students' importance in the teaching and learning process.

Moreover, statements like "Dear, please note that this is how you do it..." and "The correct answer is this..." clarify students' understanding without undermining their confidence. Further, "It's fine. It can't fail you. So just see me after class, and let's talk about your reason" exudes personalized support, reinforcing students' self-worth and demonstrating respect for their individual growth. These expressions align with the social identity face by recognizing students as active and valued classroom members, upholding their need for acknowledgment and respect in their role as learners.

Relational Face. Maintaining connections through balanced views of intimacy, equality, and role obligations is what Spencer-Oatey (2007) refers to as relational face. Teachers maintain a relational face in the classroom by carefully choosing language that honors students' social roles and beliefs. For example, expressions like "Please calm down. We shall begin" express authority while fostering community harmony, thereby maintaining relational balance. Corrective statements like "Dear, it's not done that way" guide without undermining dignity, keeping respect within teacher-student interactions. Teachers emphasize accessibility and intimacy, mutual trust, and acknowledgment of individual needs when they provide individualized support, as in "It's fine. It can't fail you. So just see me after class, and let's talk about your reason".

Relational face may also be violated if communication implies inequality or undermines mutual respect. Encouraging phrases like "Let's not make things hard for us" or "Let's just try our best" promote shared goals and reinforce communal effort, preventing relational strain. Validating student input with expressions such as "Correct me if I'm wrong…" or "What you're saying is this…" highlights openness and equality, safeguarding relational face. Teachers who manage authority and respect while fostering collaboration ensure students feel valued in their relationships with both peers and instructors, mitigating potential face threats and nurturing a positive, inclusive learning atmosphere.

Sociality Rights. In social interaction, managing sociality rights and obligations implicates individuals proclaiming essential entitlements such as worth, dignity, honor, reputation, and competence (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). These rights and obligations are based on expectations of fairness, consideration, and appropriate conduct within

societal norms and roles (Spencer-Oatey, 2005, 2007). They are shaped by legal frameworks, role responsibilities, and established social conventions grounded in common practices (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). Unlike concerns related to face, breaches of sociality rights tend to cause nuisance rather than directly risk personal dignity (Spencer-Oatey, 2002). Hence, when assessing if sociality rights are concerned in a potentially discourteous interaction, it is vital to evaluate whether the interaction contests a participant's perception of what comprises mannerly and fair behavior. In this study, both association and equity rights were considered.

Association Rights. The idea that people have a basic belief in their right to associate with others, influenced by the nature of their interactions, is reflected in the association right (Culpeper, 2011). When this right is infringed, it frequently causes emotional reactions, with sadness being the most typical reaction. It is rooted in societal standards that regulate interpersonal relationships. It consists of three parts: respect, empathy, and involvement. Firstly, involvement refers to engaging others in appropriate types and levels of activities. Secondly, empathy entails sharing concerns, feelings, and interests with others. Lastly, respect involves demonstrating the proper degree of respectfulness. Teachers use specific utterances in classroom interactions to uphold students' association rights by fostering inclusive, supportive, and respectful relationships. For instance, utterances like "Let's start, guys" and "Can someone please…?" invite participation and create a collaborative environment. Similarly, statements such as "Alright. What is it about so?" and "What you're saying is this…" reflect the teacher's genuine interest in students' ideas, promoting active involvement in learning.

Moreover, teachers additionally protect students' association rights by exuding empathy and respect. Expressions like "What happened to you?" or "Let's just try our best," show concern for their students' welfare and foster a positive learning environment. "Oh, I see, I didn't think of that…" also demonstrate empathy by allowing pupils to express their viewpoints without worrying about criticism. "Dear, please do note that this is how you do it…" and "Your answer is interesting, but let's put it this way," provide constructive criticism while appreciating students' efforts. Also, the use of "I respect your opinion. People are entitled to their opinion" encourages tolerance for opposing viewpoints and cultivate a respectful environment. By all odds, employing such language makes teachers align their behavior with the principles of association rights, ensuring students feel valued, supported, and included in the teaching and learning process.

Equity Rights. Spencer-Oatey (2002; 2005) describes equity rights as centered on the belief that individuals are entitled to fair treatment and personal consideration. These rights guarantee protection from exploitation, unjust imposition, and unfair treatment. Culpeper (2011) further notes that breaches of equity rights frequently lead to sensations of injustice, including anger and frusration, since the violations usually stem from unfair treatment by others instead of personal attacks. It includes three main elements: cost and benefit consideration, fairness and reciprocity, and autonomy-control. Teachers' statements in the classroom frequently reflect these principles, fostering fair interactions that match students' ideals of equity and respect.

Firstly, the cost-benefit considerations component emphasizes evading exploitation or undue disadvantage. For instance, the expression, "It's fine. It can't fail

you. So just see me after the class, and let's talk about your reason," shows the teacher's attempt to assist students and alleviate possible challenges. In the same way, "Oh! "I'm truly sorry…" expresses understanding for any disturbance caused, while "We've encountered that question before, but the response is this" values students' time and promote effectiveness in the conversation. Secondly, fairness and reciprocity are evident in statements like "Give me the article you believe in, and I will read it , and then let's decide," which respects students' viewpoints and engages them in decision making. Also, "Correct me if I'm wrong…" and "I respect your idea, but…" promote conversation, ensuring that every opinion is regarded while upholding impartiality. Lastly, autonomy-control is reflected in the expression, "Could you hear me out first?", which seeks students' attention while respecting their autonomy, and "That's not our concern now, but we could discuss that next time", which establishes limits without ignoring students' contributions. These instances illustrate how teachers use the equity rights to promote fairness, mutual respect, and equitable interactions in the classroom.

CONCLUSION

The Rapport Management Model shows helpful insights into how teachers' language influences students' motivation and engagement in the classroom. The results underscore that when teachers manage students' face conditions, for example, by exhibiting respect, fairness, encouragement, and fostering an open dialogue, they create a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Also, teachers get to keep such an environment by using relational techniques, and they help guide students' behavior, maintain authority, and foster collaboration. However, it is quite important to realize that not all communications marked as polite or impolite revolve around face needs. Instead, the extent to which social norms or expectations are met matters. While it is true that identity is more often than not tied to internal and respective self-perception, the face appears from relational and interactive dynamics.

The study also emphasizes the importance of social rights, particularly in creating very meaningful teacher-student interactions and, more importantly, relationships. Teachers offset their authority with collaboration, fostering fairness and encouraging active participation when they show empathy, reciprocity, and respect for students' autonomy. These techniques accentuate the necessity to fete students' individualism while elevating shared accountability in the teaching and learning process. It is also within the reach of sociality rights that show students' expectations that their teachers will align with social norms, for example, by providing equal opportunities or maintaining fairness in disciplinary actions. When these expectations are disregarded, such as when a teacher unfairly singles out a student, it may provoke sensations of unjustness or mere irritation. Sometimes, a teacher's dismissive tendency or excessively manipulating demeanor can usher irritants and deem students undervalued, demonstrating how social rights and face needs are profoundly entwined in classroom interactions.

Without a doubt, while this framework has been recognized as an essential tool in social psychology research and successfully applied to the study of impoliteness, it also extends its relevance to classroom communication. Aside from identifying strategies

within the framework that may shed light on the practical guidance teachers provide to build trust and enrich classroom communication, it also highlights teachers' politeness strategies in the classroom. Teachers' politeness strategies are shaped by their efforts to address students' face needs while upholding social norms. For example, teachers use strategies like praising to support students' positive face, offering choices to respect their autonomy, and using inclusive language to foster a sense of belonging. Simultaneously, they address sociality rights by ensuring fair treatment, creating opportunities for dialogue, and maintaining an empathetic tone. In this light, the Rapport Management Model shows teachers' use of politeness strategies, thereby building trust and creating a positive and inclusive classroom environment.

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