

THE USE OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN *THE DUFF* MOVIE

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Abstrak

Makalah ini berkaitan dengan pengaplikasian kesantunan dalam berinteraksi seperti dikemukakan oleh Brown dan Levinson (1978, 1987). Fokus penelitian ini membahas mengenai “bagaimana” dan “mengapa” penutur mengaplikasikan teori kesantunan dalam berinteraksi. Sebagaimana setiap tutur kata memiliki perbedaan dampak terhadap wajah setiap penutur dalam suatu interaksi, strategi kesantunan ditentukan oleh ada atau tidaknya tutur kata yang disampaikan. Oleh karena itu ditemukan bahwas penutur dalam film *The Duff* menggunakan startegi politeness “bald on record, positive, negative, off-record and do not perform the FTA.” Jenis-jenis strategi tersebut direalisasikan untuk mengurangi konflik yang hadir dan untuk memelihara interaksi. Selain itu, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa sosial konteks dalam linguistik pragmatik menjadi alasan mengapa Bianca sebagai penutur membedakan penggunaan bahasanya dalam berinteraksi. Sosial faktor yang muncul yaitu meliputi aspek hubungan antar penutur (dari yang paling akrab, akrab, kurang akrab), topik (meliputi isu *The Duff*, penyebab dan dampak yang ditimbulkan), sosial seting yaitu tingkatan seseorang menjadi *The Duff* (penyangkalan, kemarahan, kompromi, depresi, dan penerimaan) dan fungsi interaksi itu sendiri (meliputi tindak tutur deklaratif, representatif, ekspresif, komisif, dan direktif).

Kata Kunci: Kesantunan, strategi, tutur kata, *face threatening act*, sosial faktor.

Abstract

This paper deals with the application of politeness principle by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) in the form of face-to-face interaction. This study focuses on “how” and “why” question about the application of politeness theory used by the speaker. Since an utterance may contain the opposition regarding self imaging of someone, the strategies of politeness is classified from doing the face threatening act or not. Therefore it is found that in *The Duff* movie the politeness strategies of bald on-record, positive, negative, off-record and do not perform the FTA is used by the speaker. Those strategies were realized in order to minimize the conflict and to maintain the interaction. Besides, the reference of social context to be accounting in the linguistic pragmatic of politeness appears as the reason why Bianca as the speaker varies her linguistic choices of politeness in use. The social factors which appear on the film involves the aspects of participant (from the most, the less and the least intimate), topic (the issue of *duff*, the effect and cause of it), social setting of the *duff* stages (denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance) and function of interaction (the performance of speech act via utterances of declarative, representative, expressive, commissive, and directive).

Keywords: Politeness, strategy, utterance, face threatening act, social factor.

INTRODUCTION

In everyday life, politeness means consideration for others or having good manners in every act. Based on the study of language, politeness is one of the important principles in language use specifically in the form of verbal interaction. People avoid to say certain things, like taboo words, or to talk something in an implicit way.

In addition, whenever people communicate, what they utter is not only the content of message but also the

image of themselves and of their interlocutors. The issue of politeness is raised in a condition that the speaker commits some act that threatening the hearer's face; negative face, the need of not be imposed or positive face, the need of being admired, liked or understood. Politeness thus represents the formula of strategies in minimizing conflict or maintaining cooperation in social interaction (cf. Eelen, 2001, p. 21; Watts, 2003, p. 47).

Within the pragmatic concept, politeness is closely related to indirectness (Leech, 1983 and Brown and

Levinson, 1987). It means that the more indirect the utterances the more polite the speaker will be. It is shown in the following utterances.

- (1) Get the note for me.
- (2) Will you lend me your note?
- (3) Would it be okay if I borrowed your note?

It can be seen that from the three acts of requesting above, the (2) utterance is considered to be more polite than (1) as the speaker is being formally considerate with other's feeling, for not imposing his or her act. In further, between the (2) and (3), the third utterance is considered to be the most polite which explains that the hearer is provided to reject the speaker's want. Moreover, the utterance can be interpreted in many ways because the speaker does not make explicit request is a request.

In further, Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) attest the rationality of their politeness strategies based on the weightiness of potential risk of face loss. It can be seen in the figure 1 below that at least two wants are considered to be the want to communicate the FTA or not at all.

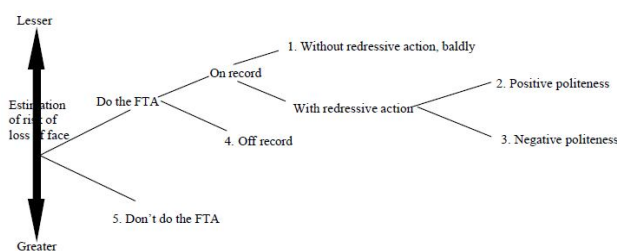


Figure 1. Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies.

The payoffs of each strategy may be simplified into the following summary:

- (1) On record payoffs: clarity, perspicuousness, and demonstrable non-manipulativeness.
- (2) Bald on record (non redress payoff): efficiency (in which other things are more important than face).
- (3) Plus redress payoff (positive and negative politeness): to satisfy H's positive face in some respect and to satisfy H's negative face to some degree.
- (4) Off record payoffs: satisfy negative face to a greater degree than which can be afforded by negative politeness and avoid the inescapable accountability, the responsibility for his action that on record strategies can entail.

As politeness is expressed everywhere (the younger address to the older, a woman talks to a man, or the subordinate to the super ordinate or vica versa), the importance of social life stage that everyone is going through plays an important role based on the development and performance of language use.

Therefore, linguistic politeness is frequently seen as a cultural bounded. Mills also claims that politeness should be seen within the scope of community of practice (where the members share the same endeavor) which every member continually develop, affirm and contest (2003, p. 9).

Furthermore, Janet Holmes attests that one will decide to what language used in certain context and what language will represent their personalities (1969, p. 43). The consideration of social factors in particular social context of conversation has explained why the speaker may choose particular linguistic choices like by being indirect within the utterance. Those aspects consist of participants, topic, social setting, and function of interaction. Those aspects are described as follow (Holmes, 2001, p. 9):

- (1) Participant, who is speaking and who are they speaking to?
- (2) The setting or social context of interaction, where are they speaking?
- (3) The topic, what is being talk about?
- (4) The function, why are they speaking?

METHOD

This study inherently uses qualitative research in order to analyze the data that are the utterances. Qualitative research design is chosen in order to analyze specific information of cultural values, behavior, social context, phenomenon, and relationship of individuals of particular communities, how people experience such given social issue (Natasha Mack, 2005). The data includes on the utterances produced by the main character in *The Duff* movie, Bianca Piper. Her character is chosen as she is in the stage of reinventing herself because of the ruthless label of *Duff* which stands for "Designated Ugly Fat Friend." This movie is chosen as it depicts the issue of politeness among certain group of community that is in high school, which deals such typical conflict of cyber bullying surrounding someone's body image among the high schooler.

In collecting the data, the study uses non-observation techniques. Non-observation technique typically presents the social phenomena in particular social context and not to influence the subjects itself. The steps are used by the researcher to obtain the data collection for the next stage of analysis. The researcher transcribed the data need with the timing of the scene, the participants involved, situational context, and the conversation. Second, after collecting and transcribing the data necessary, the researcher classified the data that included on the types

of strategies of politeness based on Brown and Levinson theory of Universal Politeness (1987). To answer the research questions, the findings are analyzed with related theories and previous studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This paper finds that the reference of social context to be accounting in the linguistic pragmatic of politeness appear as the reason why Bianca varies her linguistic choices of politeness in use. It is then relevantly applicable with this research's case as Bianca is struggling with cyber bullying surrounding her body image. The language varieties include on the relationship with her interlocutors, the topic being talked about, the social stages Bianca has gone through for being somebody's *duff* (from the stage of denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance), and the characteristic of function of utterances.

For example, when Bianca is exposed to the terms of *duff* for the first time by Wesley, Bianca wants to deny Wesley's judgment about her being somebody's *duff* and the consideration of topic, the change of relationship from childhood friend to be callous acquaintance in the crowd and the assessment of the Bianca's FTA itself influence how she would preserve each other face. It can be seen through the decision to do the FTA or not at all.

Moreover, when Bianca has recognized herself as *duff*, she defends herself through the stage of her anger and views her previous relationship with her friends, Wesley, Jess and Casey differently from the intimate friends to be the least intimate one. Indeed, the change of the relationship is indicated by the performance of bald on-record, negative politeness and off-record politeness strategy. In other words, it explains while bald on-record strategy may be appreciated in Bianca's interaction with Wesley, the application of this strategy with reference to *duff's* conflict may complicate Bianca's bond with her best-friends. In addition, when Bianca is in the stage of depression after acknowledging that any of her plans is worthless, she lengthens herself from Wesley and particularly employs the type of indirectness to exclude him in the interaction and to convey her message directly.

Meanwhile, when Bianca is in the stage of bargaining and acceptance of *duff* Bianca's politeness is mostly influenced by her consideration about her relationship with others. It can be seen for instance in Bianca's interaction with Madison in which they have the least relationship than other that makes Bianca modify her utterance to be compatible with Madison's

need and interest. When Bianca intends to maximize her effort in preserving Madison's face, Bianca employs feature of indirectness or off-record feature within her utterance. Meanwhile, if Bianca wants to assert things clearly, she delivers her utterance in a direct way with some modification and addition along it.

The following data will provide the insight of the applications of politeness strategies by Bianca which are proved to be her way of speaking as somebody's *duff*. The data are organized as Bianca considers choosing particular strategy based on the rank of imposition of her acts. There are bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record strategies, and "don't do the FTA" strategies.

(1) The bald on-record strategy which offers the reference of direct statement transmitted to the interlocutors conveys the desire of the speaker to speak their FTA directly so that the hearer can understand without any misinterpretation and right away do as she is told.

Data 1

<p>Bianca : You call me fat and ugly, Wesley. Wesley : What? No, I didn't. I called you the <i>duff</i>. Bianca : Yeah, excuse me. It's just that "designated ugly fat friend" dick face! (Fragment 10)</p>
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The exchange of the talk above is figured out to be the choice of bald on-record strategy (case 1 of non-minimization of the face threat) by Bianca. In using this strategy, Bianca wants to conclude her thoughts of *duff's* term to Wesley. She wants to mark on her recognition of *duff* as "Designated Ugly Fat Friend" and "*duff*" as fat and ugly and it is equal to the abbreviations of the word itself that is "designated ugly fat friend." She then performs her utterance with high intonation and stress on every word of "designated-ugly-fat-friend". Moreover, her utterance is closed by calling Wesley with the vernacular form of man's sexual organ to become his nickname to make him aware on her imperative sentence of expression of strong emotion of hatred. In this case, she also already knows that Wesley will not offend to that call, but mitigated it with the word of "excuse me" earlier as she knows that the word itself conveys so much offensive meaning. The choice of such strategy conveys that Bianca as the speaker has made significant choice to deliver her intention in a clear and unambiguous way.

The circumstance of the talk shows the conversation between Bianca and Wesley talking about the term of *duff* and the effect of it in her social life. Bianca attends to this conversation to be negotiating the meaning of

duff to Wesley and conveys that she does not want to talk to Wesley because she is fat and ugly. She asserts such facts directly to expose her disapproval. Besides Bianca also recognizes that no offense to Wesley's self imaging as they known each other since little.

(2) The positive politeness strategy is recognized by the presence of group identity marker showing that the speaker shares friendship to her close friends or indicates familiarity for the people she wants to include to the same wants, desires, and expectations.

Data 2

Madison	: Wow, that's an interesting dress. Who makes that? Since you see my boyfriend from alone I cannot wait to release your video tomorrow.
Bianca	: Good. I'm just glad you are excited about it. Go and right ahead.
Madison	: Fine I will. (Fragment 36)

Based on the extract of conversation above, Bianca responds to Madison's utterance with the positive politeness strategy 1 (Notice or attend H's interest or wants) for her initial responses in particular context of situation. Bianca expresses her attention toward the condition of Madison concerning on her positive face. She is much aware of Madison positive face in which her desire and expectation should be satisfied and therefore goes on by attending to her interest and need. Bianca notices such remarkable possession on Madison's that is the video and lets Madison do whatever she wants.

The situation of this talk conveys Madison's disapproval over Bianca's presence at the homecoming party. It can be seen that Madison feels disturbed after seeing Bianca talks to Wesley like happily. She just comes over their spot and threats to Bianca that she still has another video that will embarrass Bianca to the whole school. In this case, Bianca already knows what disturbs Madison though and decides to respond it genuinely. Based on the social setting Bianca participates in, that is in her stage of acceptance of *duff* label on her, she can consider Madison's wants to be hers as well.

(3) The strategy of negative politeness implies to the effort of the speaker to minimize face threat which will impose or bother the hearer's right to claim or to act and to respond her or his territory and self determination to act or respond.

Data 3

Bianca	: Yah, okay. (Raise from her chair). How you guys couldn't tell me this whole time that I was your duff? (Fragment 13)
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Jessie : A what?

Based on the fragment of the conversation and with regard to the sequence of acts being transmitted in particular context of conversation, Bianca decides to speak her message via the negative politeness strategy (question feature). Such strategy is initially chosen to fulfill her desire in respecting her friends' negative face by asking question to the exposure of certain fact. It means that Bianca wants to show her true feeling without being risky about the responsibility of her act. In addition, she recognizes it well that by asking questions she can be considered as negatively polite rather than by asserting her problems in the form of statement.

The context of situation displays that the topic of *duff* appears nowhere in the middle of Bianca, Jess and Casey discussion when Bianca initiates to talk outside their discussion room. It is shown that Bianca for the first time initiates the label of *duff* to her best-friends. By doing the act in that way, she lengthens herself relating to such topic in which she finds it discomfort to tell the fact that she is her friends' *duff*.

(4) The off record strategy manifests two different interpretations of an utterance or act which is left to the hearer to interpret the speaker's intention, gives the hearer an out not to choose one of them or event not to recognize it, and makes the speaker for being responsible of the face threat.

Data 4

Wesley	: What are you talking about? B, this isn't you.
Bianca	: Please, Wes. You're embarrassed to be seen with me at school, okay? It's just an experiment and it works for you and do not work for me. So, let's just forget it okay? (Fragment 33)

The strategy applied in the fragment of conversation above has described the choice of Bianca in performing the off-record politeness strategy 3 (Presupposition) within her utterance. The reason for going through this strategy is presuming something to the way Bianca delivers her intentions indirectly. She uses such contradictive words of "It works for you and do not work for me" to emphasize the message of her utterance. In order to mark on her statement, Bianca also exemplifies their plan as "an experiment" of their plan in reinventing her as a *duff* that can have the possibility of being un/successful. And the unsuccessfulness comes to her.

The situational context illustrates how Wesley does not understand what Bianca disappoints to. Wesley's

reply makes Bianca cannot do more direct than she could possibly do and goes with the repetition of the off strategy. In other words, Bianca is well aware that the greater the imposition of the FTA the more polite the act should be.

(5) The “Do not perform the FTA” politeness strategy is applied when the face threatening act towards the hearer’ self-image is too great. When the strategy of saying nothing is recognized, it clearly shows that more has been communicated or not.

Data 5

Wesley	: Watch-watch. See, she got her info, he got to talk to a hot girl, and his friends didn’t have to do anything. It is like us right now.
Bianca	: Excuse me, that’s not like us right now. (<i>Fragment 5</i>)
Wesley	: B, on hour’s day how many guys ask you question about Jessie and Casey.
Bianca	: I don’t know it’s a fair amount. (<i>Fragment 6</i>)
Wesley	: Okay. And hour’s day how many guys ask a question about you?
Bianca	: (Silence) (<i>Fragment 7</i>)
Wesley	: See! You fake it up, okay. Good for you. Good talk you know, get back out there, how...

Based on this fragment, it can be seen that Bianca comes to use the strategy of “do not perform the FTA” in which there are too much clash between Bianca’s and Wesley’s expectation over the topic of conversation. By using this strategy, Bianca expects that Wesley should infer to her disappointment to the exposure of *duff* on her by saying nothing. In this case, she wants to save her face particularly and let her non-apparent speech act achieved. It is not to say that say nothing means to expect nothing as well.

Based on the exchange of talk above, the topic in this data is about the *duff*’s label. The situation of this fragment displays when Wesley explains clearly that a *duff* is someone whose appearance considers not better than the others in a friendship and refers to Bianca in this case. This data conveys how Bianca attempts to respond Wesley’s judgment. She disapproves to Wesley by stating her view directly like “Excuse me, that’s not like us right now,” by telling him indirectly about her opinions like “She is like super cute; Oh, god! That is such a guy thing to say; I don’t know it’s a fair amount,” and even by silencing like in this fragment of conversation. Silence performed by Bianca is used to convey that none of act should have been recognized by Wesley in which it demonstrates even the FTA between equal may be not desired by another participant.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that one or more of social factors may favorably contribute to Bianca’s consideration as the speaker to. Those factors include on the relationship between participants (based on the person and personalities), the topic being talked about, the setting or social context of the interaction and the function of the interaction itself. Variety form of politeness strategy from bald on-record without minimization of face threat to off-record strategy is therefore performed to accommodate Bianca’s message to her interlocutors.

Firstly, the aspect of participant is considered from the scale of intimacy, starting from the most intimate, the less intimate until the least intimate relationship. Secondly, the topic being talked about is kept to be the negotiation between the participants that is around *duff*’s conflict; the effect and the cause of it. Thirdly, the social settings of the interaction of Bianca and her friends based on each of the stage of *duff* (denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance) she is going through determines how she constructs politeness in use in interacting with their friends. Lastly, the function of the conversation in which Bianca uses significant choice of the speech function of acts (declarative, representative, expressive, commissive, and directive) presents the variety of language choice by Bianca to her interlocutors in particular social context.

At last, this study can conclude that there is a tight relation between the type of politeness strategy and the social context the speaker attends to. In particular, the context of five stages of *duff*’s conflict, that is denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance has made Bianca concerns between the social factors and the choice of politeness strategies. And indeed, one social factor is supported to the presence of the other ones.

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