

Politeness Strategies in “The Patriot” Movie: Facilitating Pragmatics Knowledge for Language Learners

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ABSTRACT

Communication is not just a matter of knowing how to use a certain language. It is about how to deliver the message through that language appropriately in appropriate context and situation. When the language is used in daily communication in which the context and situation exist, pragmatic competence is needed. Therefore, language learners, especially those who learn English as a second or foreign language need to have extra pragmatics knowledge to avoid pragmatics failure since English is not a core language (L1) in their daily communication. This study in fact, takes an opportunity to facilitate the learners to enrich their knowledge through an analysis of politeness strategies of The Patriot movie. The analysis refers to the five theories of politeness strategies; Bald on Record Strategy (BonRS), Positive Politeness Strategy (PPS), Negative Politeness Strategy (NPS), Bald off Record Strategy (BoffRS), and Say nothing. It is found that out of 85 utterances, Bald on Record Strategy is mostly used by the characters (60%). With the use of literature as the subject of analysis, it is hoped that language learners could grab a complete set of knowledge sources that include linguistic aspect, intercultural awareness, most importantly source of pragmatics knowledge which also covers attitude to be followed or avoided in using a language.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This research focuses on the analysis of a movie, in this case The Patriot movie, to give a clear description of the use of pragmatics in real communication, and to show the language learners the clear example of politeness strategies utterances through a movie. The aim of this research is to emphasize that in daily communication, we should consider some contexts and situations, which are involved in pragmatics field. Therefore, to avoid pragmatics failure, the author conducted this research.

As we know, language is very essential in our daily life. Besides being the means of communication, language can also as be used to share opinion, deliver information, or express our emotion. In understanding the language that is uttered by the speaker, the hearer should pay attention to the context of the utterances which I have mentioned before as pragmatics. According to Levinson (1983) pragmatics is the study of those relations between language and context that are grammaticalized, or encoded in the structure of language. Meanwhile, Yule (1996) defined pragmatics as the study of (1) speaker meaning; (2) the study of contextual meaning; (3) study of how more gets communication than is said; and (4) the study of the expression of relative distance.

Based on the definitions of pragmatics above, we can conclude that pragmatics concerns the concept of how to utter, and how the speaker shows his respect and also politeness to other people (hearer) through utterances. In relation to this concept, the concept of politeness strategies which was coined by Steven and Levinson (1987) is the answer in understanding the use of language appropriately, in appropriate context and situation.

In this vein, using a movie as a medium and analyzing it using politeness strategies is the alternative way to show language learners the use of utterances which contain pragmatics. Therefore, it could help them in understanding the language and avoiding pragmatic failure.

1.1 Research Question

The research was conducted to find out the politeness strategies and the reasoning of each politeness strategies of major characters' utterances in *The Patriot* movie.

1.1.1 Limitations of the Study

There are a number of limitations to this study. Firstly, in analyzing the utterances of the major characters, the author focuses on request and command utterances. Neufeld, Victoria, 1995 defines request as the act of asking, or expressing a desire, for something: solicitation or repetition. These include *May I borrow your book?* or *Please forgive me for keeping you waiting*. Meanwhile, command is an order directly with the authority. For example: *Put those things away!*, *you go tell your father, you, don't touch that!*.

Secondly, in the analysis conducted in this research, the author only focuses on analyzing two major characters out of six major characters in *The Patriot* movie. They are Benjamin Martin, and Gabriel Martin. The writer only focuses on those two characters because both of them hold an important role in *The Patriot* movie, and they also represent the title of the movie.

2.0 CONCEPT OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES

There are five politeness strategies that are used in communication to minimize the face threatening acts (FTAs) and to save the hearer's face when FTAs are inevitable. Politeness here can be defined as the means of speaker's purpose to minimize face threats carried by certain face threatening acts. It is supported by Yule's perspective which viewed politeness in interaction as the means employed to show awareness of another person's face.

Brown and Levinson (1987) in their book entitled: *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* classified them into five strategies. They are bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, bald off record, and say nothing.

2.1 Bald on Record Strategy (BonRS)

Bald on record strategy is used where the S (speaker) has a close relationship with the H (hearer), such as close friends or family. Bald on record use imperative forms directly addressed to the H in order to ask something. For example: *Give me your dictionary!* *Lend me your shoes.* *Your wallet felt down!* (where S shows that he cares about H.). *Take care of yourself!* (used as farewell or advice).

Bald on record is also used in emergency situations. The S usually uses direct command towards the H (Brown and Levinson, 1987), i.e. *Put those things away!* *Don't touch that!*, *Help!* *Watch out!*, *Go away!*, and etc. Another reason of using bald on record is, when S speaks with maximum efficiency where the channel noise is difficult to reach, such as: *Come here right now!* (S is calling across a distance) and *Pick me up now* (S is talking on the phone with a bad connection).

2.2 Positive Politeness

In this theory, the speaker uses positive politeness strategy in order to appeal to a common goal, and even friendship. For example, *Hey buddy, I'd appreciate it if you'd let me use your pen* (Yule, 1996). In this positive politeness, there were fifteen strategies. They are, (1) notice; attend to H (his interests, wants, needs goods); (2) exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H); (3) intensify interest to H; (4) use in group identity markers, this strategy consists of (i) address forms; (ii) use of in group language or dialect; (iii) use jargon or slang; (5) seek agreement; (6) avoid disagreement, which consists of (i) token agreement; (pseudo-agreement; (iii) hedging opinions; (7) presuppose or raise/assert common ground; (8) joke; (9) assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concerns for H's wants; (10) offer, promise; (11) be optimistic; (12) include both S and H in activity; (13) give (or ask for); (14) assert reciprocity; and the last, (15) give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation).

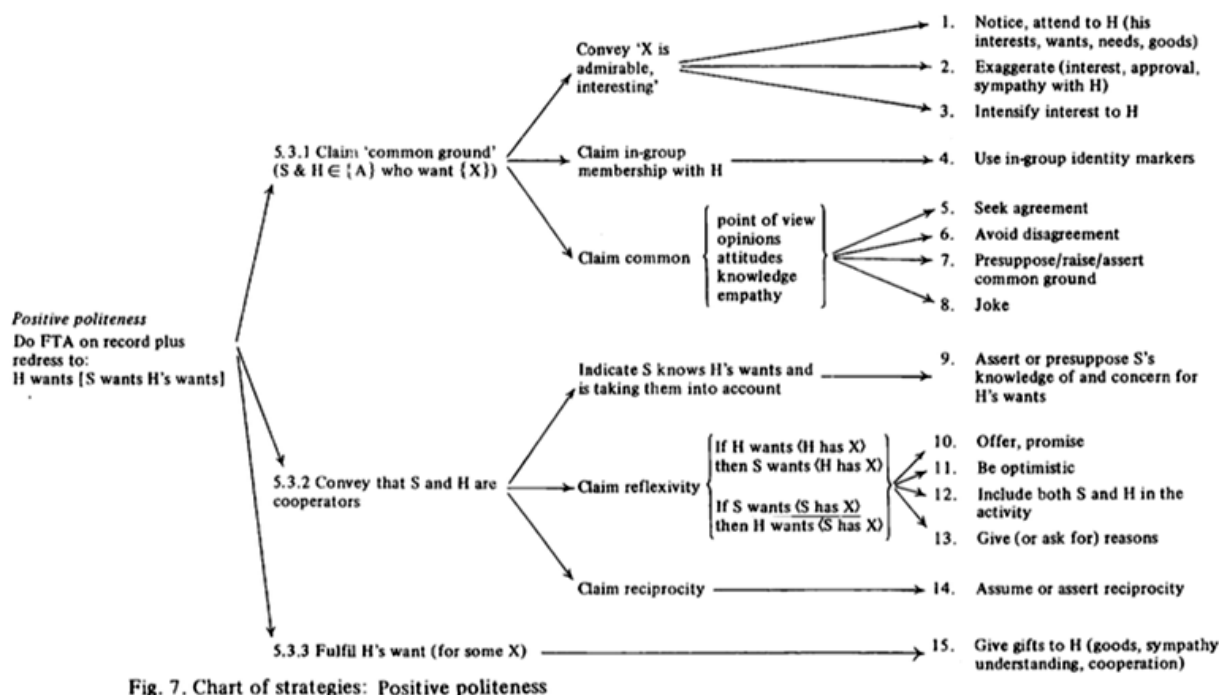


Fig. 7. Chart of strategies: Positive politeness

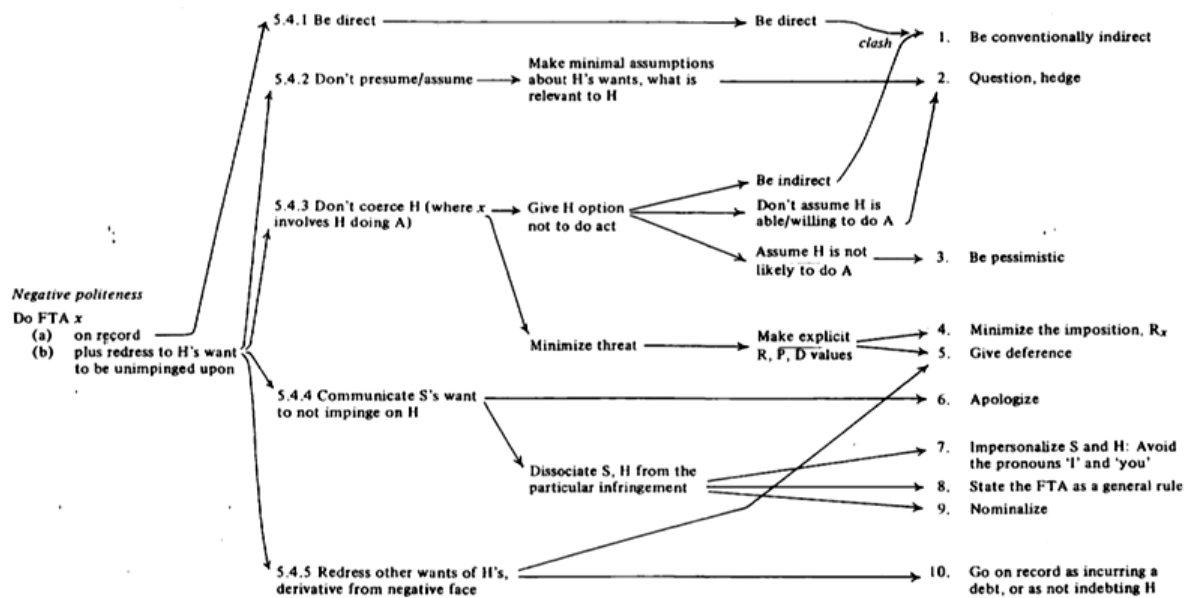
(Brown and Levinson 1987: 102)

Figure 1. Chart of Strategies: Positive Politeness

2.3 Negative Politeness Strategy

The next strategy is the negative politeness strategy. Here, the speaker uses it towards the hearer's negative face in order to emphasize avoidance of imposition on the hearer. A linguist defined negative politeness as an attempt of speaker to show awareness of another's right not to be imposed on (Yule, 1996). Brown and Levinson have different perspectives about negative politeness. They argued that negative politeness is repressive action to the addressee's negative face; his wants to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded (1987).

There are some strategies that fall into negative politeness strategy. They are: (1) be conventionality indirect; or expressing request or appealing in form of questions; (2) use hedge; (3) be pessimistic; (4) minimize the imposition; (5) give deference/respect; (6) apologize; (7) impersonalize S and H (*I tell you that it is so*) replace of pronoun (*one should not do things like that*); (8) state the FTA (Face Threatening Act) as general rule; (9) nominalise; (10) go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting.



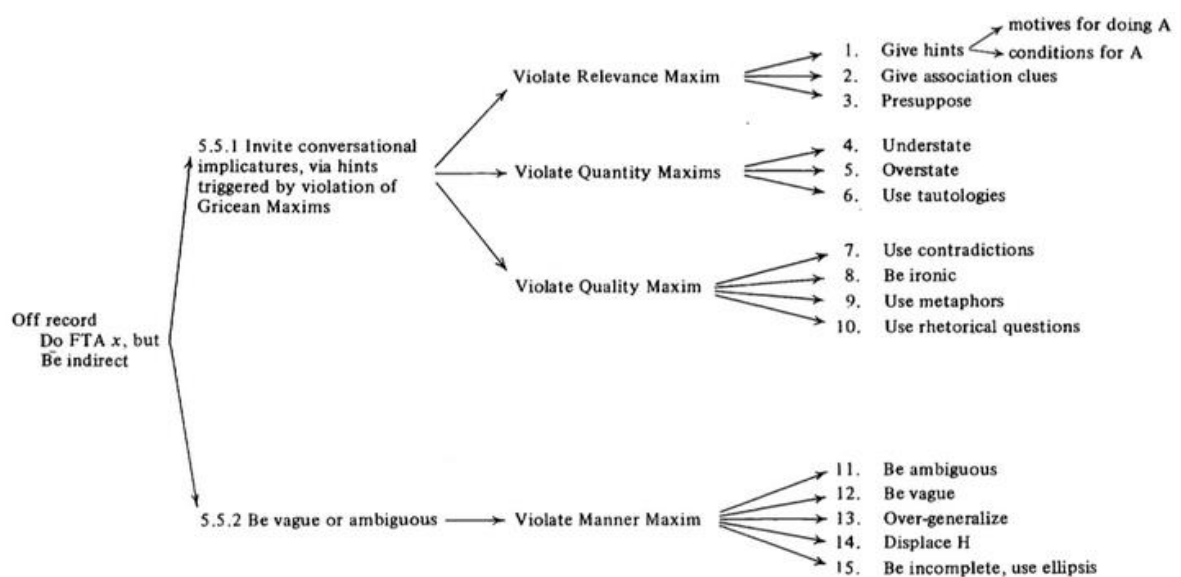
(Brown and Levinson 1987: 102)

Figure 2. Chart of Strategies: Negative Politeness

2.4 Bald off Record

Bald off record is also known as indirect strategy. In this strategy, the speaker uses indirect language toward the hearer in order to deliver his primary message (ask for/to do something) and without asking the hearer directly, so the hearer will interpret the speaker's message by himself.

There are fifteen strategies in bald off record. They are: (1) give hints. Speaker says something that is not relevant and he invites H (hearer) to look for an interpretation of possible relevance; (2) give association clue; (3) presuppose; (4) understate; (5) overstate; (6) use tautologies (repetition of words); (7) use contradictions; (8) be ironic; (9) use metaphorical questions; (10) use rhetorical questions; (11) ambiguous; (12) be vague; (13) over generalize; (displace H; and the last (15) be incomplete, use ellipsis.



(Brown and Levinson 1987: 214)

Figure 3: Chart of Strategies: Positive Politeness

2.5 Saying Nothing

Saying nothing is a strategy that is communicated than is said, i.e. (in the classroom): you are going to take notes, but you forget to bring a pen. And you think/wish that person who sits next to you will give the solution (lend his pen). In this situation, you will be 'self' and the other person who sits next to you will be 'other'. Another example, *self (look in bag), other (offers pen) 'Here, use this'* (Yule, 1996).

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN

This research is conducted to facilitate the learners to enrich knowledge through an analysis of politeness strategies in *The Patriot* movie.

3.1 Type of Study

This research uses a qualitative research with descriptive approach. Qualitative research is a research that stress meaning in the context, and the result is in word than in numerical (Anderson and Millicent, 2001). Therefore, this method is used to describe the data (utterances) as they are and interpret the data based on the writer's competence.

4.0 FINDINGS

The results of this research were analyzed based on the five politeness strategies by Brown and Levinson (1987). They are: (1) bald on record; (2) positive politeness; (3) negative politeness; (4) bald off record; (5) say nothing. The findings are shown in graph 1 below:

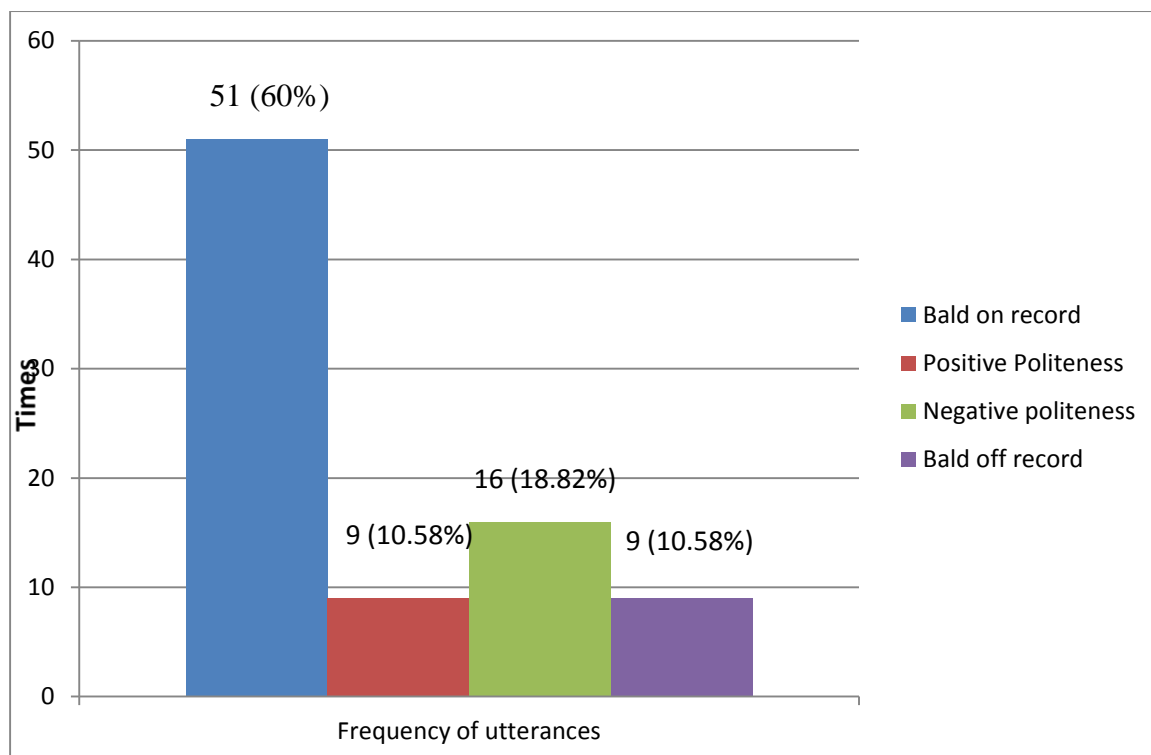


Figure 4. Results and findings

The graph above shows that major characters used bald on record 51 times (60%), positive politeness 9 times (10,58%), negative politeness 16 times (18,82%), and bald off record 9 times (10,58%). It can be concluded that major characters in the movie mostly used Bald on Record Strategy (BonRS) rather than other strategies. Bald on Record Strategy is used where the S (speaker) has a close relationship with the H (hearer), such as close friends or family, since, Bald on Record Strategy does not try to minimize the threat to the hearer's face. Face here means self esteem of the H. Bald on record can also be used in some situations. First, where the maximum efficiency is very important, and no face redress are necessary. In cases of great urgency or desperation, redress would actually decrease the communicated urgency (Brown and Levinson, 1987). It is found in the movie, for example:

- (1) *Thomas...wait for father!*
- (2) *Abigale!..water and bandages, fast!*
- (3) *Put it away.*
- (4) *Put those in the house*

The example (1), (2), (3), and (4) show the use of bald on record strategy, which has the function as command. As the speaker in example (1) use his utterance as imperatives in formulaic entreaties.

Second, bald on record sometimes uses imperatives including offers, for example:

- (5) *leave it to me*
- (6) *Be quiet...I'll take care of you*

In other word, no redressive action is needed in implementing Bald on Record Strategy, it differs from other strategies which emphasise the redressive action in order to minimize the face threatening act.

Another strategy that is commonly used by the major characters in the movie is Negative Politeness Strategy. As the writer has already explained in the concept of politeness strategies, Negative Politeness Strategy (NPS) has fifteen sub-strategies. Among those strategies, the writer found that the utterances in the movie (The Patriot) only fulfil some sub strategies, i.e. being pessimistic; and giving defence/respect (honorific). Such as:

- (7) *Would you tell me please Howard...why should I trade one tyrant....*
- (8) *Might I request sir, that you transfer my son under my command?*
- (9) *Mr. Howard, I've come to call on Anne.*
- (10) *Colonel, I beg you please consider by the rules of war*
- (11) *Prisoner exchange Sir...you have 18 of my men. I want them back*

The example of utterances (7) and (8) use negative politeness, sub strategy number 3, that is to be pessimistic. It can be seen by the use of the modal, *would* in both examples. Meanwhile, example numbers (9) until (11), use negative strategy, sub strategy number 5, give deference. In this strategy, the H (hearer) has the higher social status than S (speaker), it can be seen by the use of honorific words in the example (9), (10), and (11). They are: *Mr.*, *Colonel*, and *Sir*.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Based on the graph above, it shows that there are 85 (eighty-five) utterances used by major characters which contain politeness strategies. They are: (1) 51 utterances used Bald on Record Strategy (BonRS); (2) 9 utterances used Positive Politeness Strategy (PPS); (3) 16 Utterances used

Negative Politeness Strategy (NPS); and 9 utterances that used Bald off Record Strategy (BoffRS). Based on the result of the analysis above, it can be concluded that major characters in *The Patriot* movie (Benjamin and Gabriel) mostly used Bald on Record Strategy (BonRS), from 85 utterances that indicated the politeness strategy; there were 51 (60%) utterances that used Bald on Record Strategy. The reasoning of Bald on Record Strategy was mostly used by Major Characters in *The Patriot* movie because they use utterances directly without redressive action. The situation of this movie (war) also forced the major characters used Bald on Record Strategy (BonRD) than other strategies.

As a result, by using the movie (*The Patriot*), it could help language learners in understanding the language dealing with the pragmatics field, as the writer gave some examples in his findings, which was taken from the movie. Therefore, it is hoped that it can facilitate the language learners in avoiding pragmatics failure since English is not a core language (L1) in their daily communication.

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