

## THE ANALYSIS OF RICHARD A VIAS NEVER ON WEDNESDAY BASED ON BROWN AND LEVINSON'S POLITENESS STRATEGIES

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### ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this study was to identify politeness strategies found in the script of a play, *Never On Wednesday*, written by Richard A. Via. This analysis was based on Brown and Levinson's theory about politeness strategies. The subject of this study was the exchange between the character Fred, Father, and Mother. Based on the findings, it was found that there are four politeness strategies in this play, namely bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategy. There is no don't-do-the-act strategy in this play because each character keeps talking and not being silent. Further research about politeness strategies in drama needs elaborating more.

**KEYWORD:** analysis, politeness strategies, drama scripts

### INTRODUCTION:

In a comedy drama entitled *Never On Wednesday* written by Richard A. Via, there is a character named Fred who makes a request to his father by saying Dad, can I use the car tonight?. However, instead of replying this question, the father, correcting Fred's English, apparently suggests by saying May I ... (use the car tonight?).

What is wrong with Fred's line when he is talking to his father? Is what Fred is talking to his father not sufficiently polite that it needs correcting? And could the way the father

corrects Fred's English threaten his positive or negative face? How are we supposed to use redressive language in order to compensate for face-threatening acts?

The purpose of this research was to identify politeness strategies found in the script of *Never On Wednesday*. This analysis was based on Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies.

Politeness has been seen as the exercise of language choice to create a context intended to match the addressee's notion of how he or she should be addressed (Grundy, 2008: 187). In other words, it can be considered that politeness phenomena are an example of language in use.

The drama itself tells about a family in which Fred wants to use the car in one night to pick up his grandmother at the station. As a surprise for the family, Fred does not tell Father why he wants to use the car. But, the problem is that Father has made the rule that, on *Wednesday*, the children are not allowed to use the car. So, Fred asks Mother to consult Father in order to make an exception only for that night. It is based on this dialogues between the three of them that this research was conducted in order to analyse politeness strategies.

Politeness has usually been applied in social interaction in which one of its goals, as Grice stated, is cooperation (Grice, 1975). That is why, Grice proposed the concept of Cooperative Principle and maxim of conversation. According to Cooperative Principle, people operate on the assumption that ordinary conversation is

characterized by no deviation from rational efficiency without a reason (Dinu, 2012).

In daily life, as part of society members where courtesy is the norm, we are demanded to communicate with other people by using a number of considerate and tact language in order to show our deference and solidarity so as not to harm the personal pride, dignity, and honor of others (Goffmann, 1983 in Rogers & Lee-Wong, 2003). In the meantime, Takahara (1986: 181) also stated that politeness aims at facilitating interpersonal communication and, at the same time, deleting conflicts of interest between the speakers and hearers.

At the heart of interpersonal politeness is the notion of 'face' or the social self. Goffman (1967) explained it as an image of the self-delineated in terms of approved social attributes. Brown and Levinson, then, borrowed the notion of face from Goffman and reformulated it as the public self-image that every member (of society) wants to claim for himself. Influenced by Brown and Levinson, Grundy (2008: 195) also stated that face is property that all human beings have and that is broadly comparable to self-esteem. In other words, if someone's face is being threatened, so is his or her self-esteem because in social interaction our face is put at risk.

In Grundy (2008: 197), Brown and Levinson proposed five superordinate strategies.

The first is bald on record. In this strategy, the speaker does not attempt to reduce the impact of FTAs and it looks like that the speaker wants to shock the addressee or make him or her feel inconvenience. This strategy is commonly found with people who know each other very well and are at ease in their environment, such as close friends, relatives, and family. Thus, we can make a request ('put it here'), task-oriented command ('give it to me!'), and alerting ('turn off the light!').

The second is positive politeness. In this strategy, politeness is designed to redress the addressee's positive face. This strategy is frequently used in groups of friends or where people in the given social situation know each other well enough. The speaker usually tries to minimize the distance between interlocutors by stating friendship and solid interest in the addressee's needs to be respected. In other words, the speaker attempts to minimize FTA. So, we can attend the addressee ('You must be hungry, since you are here for long. How about lunch?'), assume agreement ('When are coming to my home?'), and avoid disagreement (A='What is it, a book?' and B='Yes, a book, um, not really a book but certainly not a computer').

The third is negative politeness. This strategy is designed to redress the addressee's negative face. The speaker gives respect to the addressee's face wants and the desire not to be impeded the addressee's freedom of action. We can see that there is a social distance in this situation caused by the imposition on the addressee. So, we can be indirect ('I'm looking for a book'), ask for forgiveness ('You must forgive me'), minimize imposition ('I was wondering if you could tell me what time it is'), and use passive voice ('I'm afraid your car had to be sold yesterday').

The next is off-record strategy. In this strategy, the utterance possesses implicature which avoids clarity and can be immediately dismissed because the speaker does not direct him or her to a specific intent. So, we can make a hint ('It's too quiet down here'), be vague ('Perhaps someone should have worked on it'), and be sarcastic ('Yeah, he's a real rocker!').

The final is don't-do-the-act strategy. In this strategy, the speaker chooses not to make an utterance at all when he or she feels that the utterance risks being face threatening. In other

words, the speaker just keeps silent. This is applied when considering all other options inefficient.

The subject of this research is a work of drama, *Never On Wednesday*, written by Richard A. Via. What was analyzed of this work is its lines or dialogues between Fred, Father, and Mother in negotiating a rule. The rule is that, on *Wednesday*, the children are not allowed to use the car for any reasons.

The design of this research is qualitative. According to Croker (in Heigham and Croker, 2009: 5), qualitative research is an umbrella of research that refers to the complexity of research methodology.

As the instrument of this research, the qualitative researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Creswell, 1994: 145). In this situation, data are mediated through human instrument, rather than inventories, questionnaires, or machines.

The last but not least is about the framework of data analysis. This study employs textual analysis, using Brown and Levinson's theory on politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 91). Textual analysis is used because the phenomenon we are trying to describe is text found in daily life. We cannot get it from certain field or site and it happens occasionally.

As previously mentioned, the subject of this research is a work of drama, *Never On Wednesday*, written by Richard A. Via. This work was analyzed based on its lines or dialogues between Fred, Father, and Mother in negotiating a rule. The analysis used Brown and Levinson's politeness strategy and strategies for saving face. In this strategy, the speaker uses the most direct and clear way. It means, this strategy is used by people who know each other very well and are at ease in the environment, such as family. The

following example was taken from one of lines in *Never On Wednesday* when Fred asked his father who was reading a newspaper:

Example 1.1:

Fred (standing in the doorway): 'Dad, can I use the car tonight?'

Dad (correcting Fred's English): 'May I ... '

In this example, Fred needed to use the car to pick up his grandmother who was waiting at the station. However, instead of saying Dad I need the car tonight, Fred uttered Dad can I use the car tonight? because there is power relationship between Fred and Dad. Based on this example, it can be said that Fred's utterance is not included into this strategy.

But, if we take a look at Fred's utterance to his mother, then, we can say that it is included into this strategy. Here is the utterance.

Example 1.2:

Fred: 'Look, Mom (goes back to the sofa, sits down). I really need the car. Honest.'

Mother: 'Don't you think you ought to tell us where you're going?'

Fred: 'Can you trust me? It's a surprise.'

In this example, Fred uses the most direct and clear way. But, the imposition clearly increases since he uses the adverb 'really.'

#### **POSITIVE POLITENESS:**

Now, let us take a look again at the example 1.1 based on the second strategy. In this strategy, there is still power relationship between Fred and Dad.

Example 1.1:

Fred (standing in the doorway): 'Dad, can I use the car tonight?'

Dad (correcting Fred's English): 'May I ... '

The kinship claiming 'Dad' and the use of modality 'can' show that the utterance is oriented to the positive face of Dad. However, due to power relationship between them, Fred uttered Dad, can I use the car tonight? as an

attempt to seek agreement. Even though, Dad feels that this utterance still attacks his positive face. So, in order to save his face, Dad's next utterance to Fred is May I.

#### **NEGATIVE POLITENESS:**

This strategy is designed to redress the addressee's negative face. The speaker still has respect for the addressee's face wants and the desire not to interfere with the addressee's freedom of action, thus redressing and mitigating for potential interfering or transgressing the addressee's personal space. Here is the example.

Example 1.3:

Fred (standing in the doorway): 'Dad, can I use the car tonight?'

Dad (correcting Fred's English): 'May I ... '

Fred: 'Okay, May I?'

Dad: 'May you what?'

Fred (really annoyed with the older generation – perhaps throws his arms up in disgust): 'You mean you really didn't hear anything I said except "can I"?''

In this exchange, being ignored by his father, Fred decides to appeal to his father's negative face. So, he uses the utterance that shows negative politeness. 'You mean' indicates that Fred is impeding his father's right to go about daily activity uninterrupted, 'you really didn't hear anything I said' shows the pessimistic declaration, and 'except can I?' encodes that Fred does not necessarily expect his father to satisfy his face wants.

The focus for using this strategy is that Fred assumes that there are some imposition or intrusion on his father. Furthermore, Fred has the assumption of social distance in this situation.

#### **OFF-RECORD STRATEGY:**

Like previously described that in this strategy, the utterance possesses implicated

which avoids clarity and can be immediately dismissed because the speaker does not direct him or her to a specific intent. Here is the excerpt:

Example 1.4:

Fred: 'Dad?' (Trying to make Dad listen, he stretches the word, Da-a-ad – perhaps almost sings it. Then, as if trying to contact a spirit): 'Dad, give us a sign you're listening: one rap for Yes (raps on table once). Two for No (raps twice).

Dad: (putting the paper down) 'Okay, you got through. What is it?'

Fred: 'Whew! (a sound like letting off the steam, indicating relief and he goes to Dad's right). Dad, may I use the car tonight?'

Dad: 'No.' (goes back to paper).

Fred: 'Wait!! Dont hang up! (as if Dad were on the phones). I'm not finished.'

Because of his father's 'No', Fred gives hint to him by uttering Wait!! Dont hang up! I'm not finished.

#### **DON'T-DO-ACT STRATEGY:**

In this strategy, the speaker chooses not to make an utterance at all when he or she feels that the utterance risks being face threatening. In other words, the speaker just keeps silent. This is applied when considering all other options inefficient. However, in Never On Wednesday, there is no strategy of this kind because the exchange keeps running without being silent from each character.

Based on the findings of this research, it can be said that the exchange between Fred, Father, and Mother indicates the lifestyle of a typical American family who is quite democratic and gives respect for the openness.

Although the Father does not permit Fred to use car but he lets Fred to keep talking as an indication of his character as a wise father. On the contrary, no matter how urgent it is, Fred

also does not forget to use politeness statement to his Father since he realizes his position as a son. In the meantime, Mother comes to be a mediator between Fred and Father so the exchange and the environment are still to have a democratic way.

In *Never On Wednesday*, based on the exchange between Fred, Father, and Mother, there are four politeness strategies employed, namely, bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategy. There is no don't-do-the-act strategy in this drama script because the exchange keeps running without being silent from each character. Further research about politeness in drama still needs elaborating more.

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