A SOCIO-PRAGMATIC STUDY OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS IN JOKER MOVIE

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

This research targets a holistic investigation of the types of politeness strategies performed by the characters in Joker movie along with their social contexts. It further aims to find the influences of movie stages (orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution) and social factors (power, social distance) to the use of politeness strategies by the characters of the movie. This study utilized a socio-pragmatics approach to investigate the social contexts and a theoretical framework proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978) to identify politeness strategies in the movie. This research was upheld using descriptive qualitative research which is underpinned by four major stages of analysis by Santosa's (2021) model, in combination with Spreadly (1980), and Miles and Huberman (1996) ranging from domain, taxonomy, componential, and cultural theme analyses. The data of this research are taken from the dialogues that contain politeness strategies performed by the characters. The data sources come from the stages of Joker movie ranging from the orientation, complication, evaluation, and resolution. The results show that the pattern of politeness strategies verbalized by the characters in Joker movie tends to fluctuate along the stages of the movie; orientation, complication, evaluation, and resolution. Besides, the context of situation (power-distance relationship) is arguably influential toward the use of politeness strategies by the characters.

1. INTRODUCTION

Brown and Levinson (1978) have defined politeness as a product of social order and is one of the human prerequisites to get known one another. It explains how politeness becomes one of the most vital aspects in a well-maintained communication and interaction among people and based on that reason, politeness has massively applied and considered. In short, politeness guides people to respect someone whoever we are speaking to at the moment. In any situation of communication people are faced with the chance of having misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and miscommunication. In attempt to avoid such failures, Brown and Levinson (1978) manifested three aspects to consider during conversation: social distance, power relation, and rank of imposition. Those social contexts can be influential toward the use of politeness strategies.

The previous studies that utilizes pragmatic approach (Astia, 2020; Dridi, 2021; Culpeper & Tantucci, 2021; Fitria, Ningrum, & Suhandoko, 2020; Mahmud, 2019; Pratiwi & Anindyarini, 2021; Ruytenbeek, 2019; Surjowati, 2021; Trihadmo, Djatmika, Sumarlam, & Nurkamto, 2019) exclude the analysis of social context in which it can be the important factor that can influence the use of strategies in the theory of politeness strategies. Moreoever, those studies are yet to classify and group the data based on movie staging. This can be so vital to seek the pattern of behavior of the characters in performing politeness strategies.

1.1. Pragmatics

According to Levinson (1983), Pragmatics is the study of the relationship between language and context that provides the foundation for understanding the language which is entailed by a particular context. In contrast, Verschueren (as cited in Culpeper & Haugh, 2014) has declared that Pragmatics does strongly involve a general

cognitive, social, and cultural view regarding linguistic phenomena regarding their usage in terms of behavior. Levinson's overview somehow proves that one of the pragmatic notions has not clearly magnified the scope of Pragmatics. Moreover, Pragmatics is often seen as a narrow discipline that could only accommodate language and its contextual dimension.

In summary, Pragmatics is an exploration beyond language and its context. Pragmatics can cover various fields, which will unveil the undiscovers within a contextual dimension. In search of holistic analysis of the linguistics objects, this broader perspective about Pragmatics could also be integrated into several subbranches of Pragmatics, including conversational analysis, speech act, politeness, deixis, etc.

1.2. Politeness

In this case, politeness does not deal with the social rules of behavior, for example, waiting patiently in a long-lined queue in a supermarket. Cutting (2008) notices a warning that politeness in Pragmatics accommodates language choices, the linguistic expressions that allow people to perform a friendly attitude to their hearer. In addition, Brown and Levinson (1978) have defined politeness as a product of social order and is one of the human prerequisites to getting to know one another.

The concept of face is then magnified into two notions: positive face and negative face. Brown and Levinson (1987) have conceptualized positive face as the urge to possess a positive self-image whereas negative face is the urge to be freed from action and imposition. Besides, Yule (1996) has proposed that positive face leads people to be in need of connection, recognition, and possession in the group. Meanwhile, negative face directs people to be self-reliant and freed from imposition. Further, Brown and Levinson (1987) have claimed that there are four strategies of politeness. Those strategies are:

• Bald on record
• Positive Politeness
• Negative Politeness
• Off record

1.3. Social Context

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), request is described as face-threatening acts where both the face of the speaker and the face of the hearer are threatened, since the request creates imposition on the entitlement of the hearer to freedom of action and freedom of imposition. In choosing the specific types and strategies of request, social context becomes an option which can determine what types and strategies of request used by the speaker. Therefore, Brown and Levinson (1987) have stated that social context contains three factors that affect the speaker in applying the types and the strategies of request. The three factors are power (P), social distance (D), and rank of imposition (R).

1.4. Background of the Joker Movie.

A movie entitled Joker (2019), directed by Todd Phillips, is a psychological thriller movie that also displays a criminal drama of a mentally troubled comedian that goes by the name of Arthur Fleck. Arthur Fleck is an aspiring stand-up comedian that also works as a clown in Gotham City. He is diagnosed of suffering a mental health problem which leads him to a condition involving uncontrollable laughter. His issue evokes society's mistreatment in which he is considered unacceptable and disregarded. Times goes even worse, despite his job meant to bring joy and laugh, the entire society is rather tearing him down into an unbearable desperate of living. He then undertakes a chaotic revolution to remark his existence in the bloody Gotham City.

2. METHOD

This study focuses on the application of four types of politeness strategies: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record in the movie entitled Joker. This research relies on a combination of Sociolinguistics and Pragmatics which is then called socio-pragmatic approach. The pragmatic approach that is widely demonstrated by Brown and Levinson (1978) is majorly utilized to analyze four types of politeness strategies based on the social contexts which encompass from the social distance, power relation, and rank of imposition. In addition, sociolinguistic approach is utilized to reveal the effects of the staging of the movie in the use of politeness strategies.

This study belongs to descriptive qualitative research in which it describes the use of politeness strategies and the influence of social contexts in a movie entitled Joker. The location of the research is one of the media

productions which in this case is a movie. Additionally, the supporting data of this research are taken from the dialogues that contain politeness strategies performed by the characters. This research employs total sampling. The obtained sample in this study is in the form of conversations uttered by the characters.

Furthermore, the triangulation employed in this study is the triangulation of data source, combining several data sources containing information related to the object of research. The data sources used in this triangulation are the stages of Joker (orientation, complication, evaluation, and resolution). In analyzing the data, the researcher uses Spradely's analysis method consisting of domain, taxonomy, componential, and cultural themes analyses

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researcher further analyzed and investigated the data in domain analysis and taxonomy analysis. Then the whole data are combined in the componential analysis table (Table 1). The function of componential analysis is finding the pattern of politeness strategies performed by the characters along with the influence of the social factors in every stage of the movie. At the last stage, the identified patterns are explained and interpreted in cultural theme analysis that links the theory and previous research.

Table 1 The Relation between Politeness Strategies and Social Contexts in the Stages of *Joker* Movie

Movie Structure	Context of Situation	Bald on Record					Positive						Negative			Off Record					Σ
		Dis	Sug	Req	War	Imp	GAr	So	SAgr	Ex	Inc	Not	Qu	Ind	Ap	Con	Rhe	Iro	OvS	Hint	
Orientation	+P+D				1									1							2
	+P-D	1		1	2			2													6
	-P+D																				0
	-P-D												2								2
Complication	+P+D	2			4	4	1	3				1	1	1	1		2		1	1	22
	+P-D	2		1	1	3	2	2	1								1				13
	-P+D						1	1						1	1						4
	-P-D							4			1	2	1								8
Evaluation	+P+D		1							3			1	1	2						8
	+P-D																				0
	-P+D														1						1
	-P-D																				0
Resolution	+P+D	4		1	3				1				1	1			1	1			13
	+P-D				1	1		2								1					5

	Dis	Sug	Req	War	Imp	Gar	So	SAgr	Ex	Inc	Not	Qu	Ind	Ap	Con	Rhe	Iro	OvS	Hints	Σ
-P+D							1				1									2
-P-D	1										1	2	1							5
Σ	10	1	3	11	9	4	14	2	4	1	4	8	8	4	1	4	1	1	1	91

Notes: Disagreement [Dis], Suggestion [Sug], Request [Req], Warning [War], Imperative [Imp], Give/ask reasons [Gar], Solidarity/in-group identity [So], Seek agreement [SAgr], Exaggerating [Ex], Include both speaker and addrsee [Inc], Notice to Adressee [Not], Question, hedges [Qu], Indirect strategies [Ind], Apologize [Ap], Contradictions [Con], Rhetorical question [Rhe], Being Ironic [Iro], Overstating [OvS], Giving Hints [Hints]

Additionally, the patterns of behavior identified in the componential analysis are:

1) The stage of complication produces more politeness strategies.
2) Based on the movie structures which encompass orientation, complication, evaluation, and resolution, the use of politeness strategies increases from orientation (9) to complication (47) and decreases in evaluation (9) before finally increasing again in resolution (25).
3) Based on the context of situation, the situation of +P+D has the most occurrences (46), and is followed by the other three situations: +P-D (23), -P+D (7), and –P-D (15).
4) The strategies increase along the continuum of type of politeness strategies from off record, negative politeness, positive politeness, to bald on record.

3.1. The types of politeness strategies performed by the characters in the Joker movie

According to the theoretical framework by Brown and Levinson (1978), the researcher discusses the data found in the dialogues throughout the movie. The data are further classified into four categories of politeness strategies. The final analysis focuses on the investigation of the influence of social contexts and move staging.

a) **Bald on record**

Disagreement/criticism

Hoyt: Kenny's Music. The guy said you disappeared. Never even returned his sign.
Arthur: No. I got jumped. Did not you hear?

Hoyt finally calls Arthur to attend his office to make things clear. However, before asking Arthur to explain in the first place, Arthur cannot hold himself to counter Hoyt's statement by stating the true fact and also disagreement**" No. I got jumped. Did not you hear**?'"

b) **Positive Politeness**

Give/ask reasons

Arthurt:Hoyt, please. I love this job.
Hoyt: Arthur, I need to know why you brought a gun into a kid's hospital?

Arthur's first disaster starts from this occurrence. His anxiety toward Randall's behavior lending his gun really happens not so long after his last encounter with Randall. Hoyt just cannot hold his anger this time since it becomes the second mistake made by Arthur that could endanger Hoyt's company. However, before blasting his rants in the next scene, Randall still tries to listen to Arthur's pleading. Therefore, he can still perform positive politeness through his question that is aimed to ask a reason.

c) **Negative Politeness**

Being indirect

Woman on Bus: Can you stop bothering my kid?
Arthur: I wasn't bothering him, I was…

Based on the conversation above, Arthur tries to entertain the woman's child. However, she does not see it the same way Arthur does. She then delivers a question that implicitly performs an order. In her question, she does not actually ask about Arthur's ability to stop bothering her kid but rather she orders him to stop bothering her kid. In addition, this utterance is considered a form of negative politeness as she does not directly order Arthur using a strong imperative e.g "Stop bothering my kid!" which performs as a bald on record strategy.

d) Off record

Contradiction

Randall: Yeah. What's with the make-up then?
Arthur: My mom died. I am celebrating

The only existing sub-strategy of using contradiction in this movie can be seen in the bold and italic statement above. In accordance with the politeness theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), it is confirmed that the consequence of performing off record strategy is to leave any interpretation to the hearer itself. Arthur's contradictory statement, "My mom died. I am celebrating." proves that he fully hands over the obligation to interpret his statement to Randall as Arthur does not assert any explanation following his contradiction.

3.2. The effect of social factors (power, social distance) and movie stages (orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution) on the use of politeness strategies by characters in Joker movie.

Martin (1992) has formulated a division of four sequences to construct a story genre namely narrative. Those sequences are orientation, complication, evaluation, and resolution. In this study, a movie is examined as a narrative with a social context theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987).

a. Orientation
The very first movie staging always starts with an orientation which functions to introduce characters, settings, and daily activities in the movie (Anderson & Anderson; Martin 1992; Rose, 2010). In accordance with the movie, the very first scene displays the occupation of Arthur Fleck which will also be the place where the other characters are introduced before long. Afterwards, the movie continues with the interview of Arthur Fleck with a female health consultant discussing his medication progress which begins with Arthur's uncontrollable laughter. This scene displays a situation of (-P-D) as Arthur, who has lower power than his consultant, performs a question strategy that belongs to negative politeness to ask the situation of the city that is currently in a chaotic situation. In this scene, Arthur's characterization is also introduced. He is polite to a person that has more power than him. Moreover, Arthur politely asks the social worker for the second time by performing negative politeness with question strategy in order to get what he wants which is increasing his meditation. This finding summaries O'keffee's et al (2011) statement that Brown and Levinson place negative politeneess as an external respect.

Another utterance that employs bald on record is shown by Randall. He is Arthur's working companion. Randall is older than Arthur yet he is more experienced too with the job they are working. Following the situation, he is able to perform bald on record with disagreement strategy toward Arthur's opinion regarding a bunch of kids that disturbs him beforehand. This strategy functions to introduce the character of Randall. Moreover, it also reveals the setting of the film as the conversation takes place in Ha-Ha's talent. This result confirms the statement of Fitriyani and Andriyanti (2020) that the speaker accentuates face threatening acts to the hearer as he owns more power.

b. Complication
The subsequent stage of the movie is called the compilation stage. This stage entails the chain of events that start arising along with the conflicts within the storyline (Anderson & Anderson, 2003; Martin, 1992, Rose 2010). The first conflict in this stage arises when Randall asks Arthur to bring a gun as his self-defense in which it truly does not make sense because it is unnecessary for a clown to bring a gun to protect himself while he will work in a kid hospital. Yet, Arthur does not really notice that it is only a prank for him. Randall arguably has his own motive to do it. The second conflict comes up from Arthur's dissatisfaction with Hoyt's decision regarding Arthur's latest accident. The third conflict happens within Arthur's family. Penny's obsession with Thomas Wayne has led Arthur

to really look for something that is genuinely imaginary. He is desperately looking for an answer to Penny's unstoppable delusion which finally leads him to taste a bitter truth.

Additionally, the situation of (-P+D) is briefly portrayed by Arthur to his boss, Hoyt just before the bigger conflict starts confronting their relationship. Arthur, however, accentuates his power to change the situation to become (+P+D) when he thinks that Hoyt's decision is somehow unfair. Hoyt's gesture that seemingly does not believe what Arthur has said to him lights Arthur's agony. He, therefore, performs bald on record with disagreement strategy in his first conflict with Hoyt. Arthur continues trying to be brave in this case by showing his power and performing off record rhetorical question strategy in attempt to counter Hoyt's accusation. The occurrence above functions to show the conflict which will be pivotal to the whole storyline of the movie.

c. Evaluation

Anderson & Anderson (2003) have declared that the evaluation stage comes right after the complication stage. This stage is the part of the movie staging where the characters are trying to cope with the conflicts they encounter. Based on the movie, Arthur has a chance to finally build his career which comes from Murray's show booker. The show booker invites Arthur to come to the show to conduct a talk show with a well-known host that goes by the name of Murray Franklin. Moreover, before coming to the show, Arthur encourages himself to dig out the true truth about anything that is hidden behind Penny's delusive thoughts. By taking this step, he is ready to bitter his bitter life.

The situation of (+P+D) dominates this stage as Arthur encounters the show booker and administrative officer for the first time. This obviously leads to the presence of power and distance since they are officers that work under an institution. Further, the situation of (+P+D) has generated (8) occurrences that result in the use of (1) bald on record, (3) positive politeness, and (4) negative politeness. Arthur and the administrative officer's conversation (+P+D) exploits negative politeness strategies to show their distance. The situation of (+P+D) remains the same until the end of their conversation due to the absolute power that the officer owns. On the contrary, Arthur is reluctant to outpower the officer because he needs to execute his plan as smooth as possible. Therefore, he applies negative politeness being indirect strategy to hide his true intention and look for more information about Penny Fleck.

d. Resolution

Subsequently, after the characters plan to cope with the problems in the evaluation stage, they finally execute their plans to resolve the conflict in the resolution stage (Anderson & Anderson, 2003). Throughout this stage, Arthur unleashes all his concealed agony, thoughts, and rant to evoke his stance on the devastating social construct that is massively preserved in Gotham city. Arthur's plan goes brutal as he revenges anyone that does not deserve his forgiveness. During those series of acts, Arthur possesses more power than everyone he speaks to. During the scene which displays the talk show, neither Arthur nor Murray is willing to lose their power. Thus, the presence of power in their conversation is simply inevitable.

Furthermore, his long debate with Murray Franklin results in the situation of (+P+D). It generates (13) utterances which are majorly derived from bald on record (8), following the other strategies that are positive politeness (1), negative politeness (2), and off record (2). The display of relentless agony by Arthur and Murray sets the occurrence to be certainly tense. Their utterance thereby will never lack of power. The use of bald on record, therefore, represents their pure agony leaked through their conversation. However, before Murray really employs bald on record due to the tense situation, he also employs negative politeness twice to Arthur. It proves that the conversation (+P+D) can lead to the use of negative politeness as it lacks of distance (+D). Murray performs negative politeness being indirect strategy to offer Arthur to deliver his newest joke as a stand-up comedian. Moreover, Murray employs negative politeness question strategy to really make sure what he has heard from Arthur so that he can avoid a wrong accusation regarding the subway killing case.

In the next scene, Murray consecutively performs bald on record with disagreement/criticism strategy to criticize what Arthur has spoken in his stand-up performance. Within their debate (+P+D) regarding the subway killing, Murray also blames Arthur with the disagreement/criticism strategy. On the contrary, Arthur is being vague when he tries to evoke his point of view regarding the system that runs poorly in the city. He thereby manifests an off record politeness by performing rhetorical question strategy. Arthur's vagueness maintains the statement of (Al-Shobul & Huwari, 2016 in Trihadmo et al., 2019) that off record strategy tends to avoid direct face threatening acts by showing the speaker's indirectness in conveying the message.

4. CONCLUSION

In summary, the use of politeness strategies by the characters in Joker movie fluctuates based on the context of the situation that underpins each movie staging. The use of politeness strategies increases from the orientation to the complication stage and starts decreasing throughout the evaluation stage before finally escalating again in the resolution stage. The most employed politeness strategy, bald on record, is massively performed to argue opinions intensively not to scorn each other. It verifies the finding in Trihadmo et al., (2019) that bald on record needs cooperation from both speaker and hearer so that they are open to express their wants.

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