

A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF POLITENESS FEATURES OF CRITICISM IN JOSEPH MCGINTY'S THIS MEANS WAR

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Abstract

This research aims to (1) identify the politeness strategies of criticism employed by the characters in *This Means War* movie, (2) find out the politeness principles underlying the use of politeness strategies of criticism by the characters in *This Means War* movie, and (3) investigate the factors influencing the choice of politeness strategies of criticism in *This Means War* movie. This research used qualitative approach. However, quantitative method was also employed to support the qualitative interpretation. The data were in the form of utterances. The context of the data was the dialogues. The primary source of the data was *This Means War* movie. The secondary source of the data was the dialogue transcript. The researcher herself was the main instrument of this research, and she was supported by the data sheet as the secondary instrument. The data were collected and analyzed by categorizing the utterances containing criticism into the data sheet. The trustworthiness of the data was gained through triangulation. The results of the research show three points. First, there are only three types of politeness strategies of criticism that occur in the movie. They are bald on record, positive politeness, and off record. Second, there are five types of politeness principles which underlie the characters' preference to use a certain politeness strategy. They are tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, and agreement maxim. Third, two factors are influencing the choice of politeness strategy; they are payoff and circumstances: relative power, social distance and rank of imposition.

Keywords: pragmatics, politeness features, criticism, *This Means War*

INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the important elements in the society as it is intentionally used by human beings to get in touch with each other. Through language, people try to maintain a good relationship by communicating and sharing their ideas, views and feelings. By this way, using language, people are performing communication.

In communication, in order to achieve their goals without hurting others, people tend to structure their language politely. They need to make the others feel comfortable along the interaction by minimizing any kinds of threat to others' feeling. By this way, they are doing politeness. Politeness according to Yule (1996:60) is showing awareness of other's face.

Politeness involves the speaker's efforts to save face of one another. One of the efforts needed in conversation is that people have to employ strategies to keep the conversation

running well and going smoothly without threatening other's face.

Unfortunately, some actions in daily interaction are highly potential to threaten other's face which certainly need appropriate politeness strategy. One kind of these acts is criticizing. In everyday life, people sometimes have to criticize others in order to evaluate some aspects. The criticism itself can then be delivered in a nice or mean way.

According to Tsui (1994:143) criticism is a type of appraisal which contains negative judgment or evaluation of certain people, events, or objects. It is usually addressed to their negative conditions or bad qualities. Hence, this kind of act is sensitive since it is highly potential to threaten other's face and may become personal harassment of others. By this regard, people need to lessen the threat of criticism by employing

appropriate politeness strategy to make the other accepts the criticism.

The acts of criticizing do not only occur in everyday human life but also in a movie since movie is believed to be a reflection of the real life. Thus, the researcher is interested in analyzing one of fiction movies, which is a romantic comedy movie directed by McG entitled *This Means War*. The researcher chose *This Means War* movie because the story of this movie is possible to represent things that may also happen in real life as the characters are supposed to act on their social roles as if they are in the society. In addition, the main story line is about a battle or a competition, thus it has a big possibility that the characters in this movie will employ many criticisms. Furthermore, in the story, the characters also come from various social statuses, so it is possible to find characters who employ different politeness strategies in criticizing other characters.

This research has three objectives: (1) to identify the politeness strategies of criticism employed by the characters in *This Means War* movie, (2) to find out the politeness principles underlying the use of politeness strategies of criticism by the characters in *This Means War* movie, and (3) to investigate the factors influencing the choice of politeness strategies of criticism in *This Means War* movie.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Type

This research used qualitative approach. However, quantitative method was also employed in this research to obtain the frequency of the data occurrences in order to support the qualitative interpretation.

Forms, Contexts, and Source of Data

The data were in the form of utterances containing criticism uttered by the characters in *This Means War* movie. The context of the data was the dialogues between the characters in *This Means War* movie. The source of the data was divided into two, i.e. primary and secondary sources. The primary source of the data was a movie entitled *This Means War*. The secondary

source of the data was the dialogue transcript of *This Means War* movie downloaded from http://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/movie_script.php?movie=this-means-war.

Research Instrument

The researcher was the main instrument of this research, and she was supported by the data sheet as the secondary instrument.

Data Collection Techniques

In this research, in collecting the data, the researcher used note-taking technique.

Data Analysis Techniques

The steps of data analysis technique are illustrated as follows.

First, the data were categorized into the data sheet after the researcher had found the utterances containing criticism. Second, the researcher classified the data into data sheet based on the classification of the three objectives of the study through the characters dialogues in the transcript of the movie. Third, the data were interpreted in order to answer the objectives of the research. Fourth, the trustworthiness of the data was applied during the process of data analysis. Last, the conclusion of the research was made based on the result of the research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Table 1. Findings of Politeness Features of Criticism in *This Means War*

		Frequency	Total	
Politeness Strategies	Bald On-Record strategy	2	22	
	Positive Politeness Strategy	9		
	Negative Politeness Strategy	-		
	Off-Record Strategy	11		
Politeness Principles	Tact Maxim	6	22	
	Generosity Maxim	4		
	Approbation Maxim	2		
	Modesty Maxim	3		
	Agreement Maxim	7		
	Sympathy Maxim	-		
Factors	Payoff	22	22	
	Circumstances	Relative Power	1	22
		Social Distance	11	
		Rank of Imposition	10	

Discussion

Politeness Strategies of Criticism Employed by the Characters in This Means War Movie

The findings of the research show that only three types of politeness strategy found in This Means War movie. They are bald on record, positive politeness, and off record.

Bald On Record

Tuck : You have absolutely no self-control.

FDR : Tuck, look, I didn't plan on this happening, okay?

(Datum 16/TMW/BR/TM/PO/SD)

The above conversation takes place in CIA office when FDR and Tuck are walking the corridor. The day before, FDR dated Lauren and they ended up in bed. Tuck spies their date and knows the thing. He wants to criticize FDR who seems lack of self-control. As they met, Tuck blatantly criticizes FDR who broke the rule they had by sleeping with Lauren. In criticizing him, he applies bald on record strategy. By directly and unambiguously judging FDR that he has no self-control, he does not attempt to soften the threat towards FDR's face.

Positive Politeness Strategy

In the following example, the strategy is applied by FDR in criticizing Tuck as presented in the following dialogue. The conversation itself happens in CIA office.

FDR : We had a deal.

Tuck : I know. Sorry, I started thinking...

(Datum 14/TMW/PP/Ag.M/PO/SD)

FDR knows the fact that Tuck spies his date. Whereas, they already had unwritten rule of dating Lauren that they should not interfere each other's date. Therefore, as he knows the fact that Tuck spied his previous date, he intends to criticize Tuck's uncooperative action using positive politeness strategy. It is shown by the use of pronoun "we" which approves that they share

common goal of which the goal is for both of them. Hence, Tuck's positive face is fulfilled.

Off Record Strategy

Collins : Six men in the morgue. A body in the middle of the street.

Tuck : Yes, but to be fair, we did manage to...

(Datum 01/TMW/OR/AM/PO/RI)

The above dialogue takes place in CIA office after Tuck and FDR finished the mission in Hong Kong. Collins gets angry because Tuck and FDR screwed up the previous mission. As they arrived in CIA office, she immediately invites them to her office. Collins then starts the conversation. She reports the detail of the mission's output. She indirectly criticizes FDR and Tuck's careless action using off record strategy. She applies the strategy by giving association clue of what happened after their mission's done. She actually wants to criticize their carelessness which fail the mission and make the covert mission being exposed by the media. However, she lets them interpret her implied meaning of which a criticism by themselves.

Politeness Principles Underlying the Use of Politeness Strategy in This Means War Movie

The findings of the research show that only five types of politeness principles found in This Means War movie. They are tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, and agreement maxim.

Tact maxim

FDR : You put your personal, private details on a very public website?

Tuck : Yes

(Datum 09/TMW/OR/TM/PO/RI)

The above dialogue takes place in a billiard bar. FDR is shocked knowing Tuck registers himself on online dating website. He is aware that Tuck is already divorced, but FDR does not expect that Tuck will do such risky action to date a woman. Considering the situation, he then applies tact maxim under off record strategy to criticize Tuck's shameless and reckless action. He tries to maximize benefit to

Tuck by indicating that Tuck should not join online dating website since it will approve that he is bad and even lack of ability to develop a relationship in real life. In addition, by asking you put your personal, private details on a very public website?, it also confirms that the goal of the conversation is on Tuck.

Generosity maxim

Lauren :I'm gonna kill you, Trish.
Trish :Uh, how about thank you?
(Datum 07/TMW/OR/GM/PO/RI)

Trish indirectly criticizes Lauren's thankless attitude which seems ungrateful in facing what she has done for her. She applies generosity maxim under off record strategy. By employing a rhetorical question how about thank you , she puts the cost on herself as it indicates that she wants Lauren to thank her instead of mad at her. It makes Trish effectually looks bad since she seems to be unwise for asking Lauren to thank her as the compensation after she did something terrible to help Lauren.

Approbation maxim

FDR : I love you? Pretty fancy word to get the girl in bed. Bravo. Well done. Good performance.
Tuck : I don't expect you to understand.
(Datum 18/TMW/OR/AM/PO/RI)

The above dialogue happens in CIA office. Tuck is criticized by FDR as in the previous date with Lauren, Tuck kisses Lauren and tries to do further than that. They actually already had a deal not to sleep with Lauren in any under circumstances. However, in his date, Tuck confesses his feeling by saying that he loves Lauren in order to get Lauren in bed. FDR is disappointed and intends to criticize Tuck's aggressive action. He employs approbation maxim under off record strategy. Even though his main intention is to criticize Tuck's aggressiveness, but he tries to maximize the praise on Tuck by commending Tuck that he already did something very well to get a girl in bed.

Modesty maxim

FDR : She fell for me. It's not my fault you're always a step behind.

Tuck : If I'm only a step behind, it's because I'm cleaning up after you.
(Datum 20/TMW/PP/MM/PO/SD)

The above dialogue happens in CIA office when Tuck and FDR are busy packing their stuff. FDR substantively wants Tuck to give up on Lauren as FDR already knew that Lauren falls for him. He also frankly states that it's not his fault because in any case, according to his opinion, Tuck is always a step behind. Responding to FDR's statement, Tuck criticizes FDR's immature and overconfident attitude using modesty maxim under positive politeness strategy. He maximizes dispraise of self by stating If I'm only a step behind, it's because I'm cleaning up after you. It effectually confirms that he is one step behind FDR because he is cleaning up after him, thus, it shows the dispraise of himself.

Agreement maxim

Tuck : To be fair, I have already provided you with a wonderful great-grandchild.
Nana : Yeah, but that doesn't count because you screwed it all up.
(Datum 06/TMW/PP/Ag.M/PO/SD)

The above dialogue takes place in a garden where family gathering party is held. Nana is annoyed by Tuck and FDR who are only sitting in the party. She wants them to give her grandbabies. Tuck defends himself by saying that he already gave her a great grandchild. However, Nana then takes the chance to criticize Tuck who was immature in his previous marriage by screwing it up. She uses agreement maxim under positive politeness strategy. In order to minimize the disagreement between her and Tuck, she chooses to say 'yeah, but...' rather than blatantly says 'no'. It confirms that in the first part of the turn, she tries to maximize agreement between her and Tuck by agreeing that Tuck had given her grandbaby.

Factors Influencing the Use of Politeness Strategies

Payoff

The following example is a conversation that happens in CIA office. The criticism itself is employed by Tuck.

Tuck : You broke the rule, man.
 FDR : Forget the rules. Not a game anymore.

(Datum 17/TMW/PP/GM/PO/SD/RI)

Tuck is angry with FDR who cannot comply with the rule of dating Lauren. He then criticizes FDR using positive politeness strategy. He employs identity marker man in addressing FDR. By doing this, he can fulfill FDR's positive face since it confirms that he appreciates him and treats him as the same member of group. It either shows his solidarity or approves their closeness. Therefore, he can minimize the face threatening aspect of criticism by assuring FDR that he considers FDR as a friend and they share common goal.

Circumstances: Sociological Variables

Relative Power

Max : You're not listening to me.
 Boy : (walking away)
 (Datum 22/TMW/BR/MM/PO/RP)

The criticism in the above dialogue is employed by Max, a karate teacher. He tries to talk to his student, but the student ignores him. He then criticizes his student's impolite attitude using bald on record strategy. By strictly saying that his student is not listening to him, he does not attempt to lessen the threat towards his student's face. It can be seen that in delivering his criticism, Max considers that he has power over his student, thus he chooses the most direct and clear strategy to criticize him.

Social Distance

Lauren : This is my job...
 FDR : Eight p.m. tomorrow.
 (Datum 12/TMW/OR/GM/PO/SD)

The above dialogue takes place in Lauren's office. FDR gets curious about Lauren and wants to take Lauren on a date. FDR then comes to Lauren's office. He joins and actually bothers Lauren's job. He keeps on interfering her along her presentation. Lauren feels annoyed by FDR's disruptive action. She then criticizes his action which she thinks bothersome. She applies off record strategy to criticize him. By stating this is my job, she is being incomplete by leaving the utterance half undone. She indirectly lets FDR recognize what she really means. She definitely

has to either stop giving unreliable evaluations about the product of which interfere her job or leave the room. In criticizing him, she is aware that their social distance is not close, thus she applies the most indirect strategy to redress the imposition towards FDR's face.

Rank of Imposition

FDR : Some people think grills just burst into flames at the slightest touch.

Lauren : It doesn't work like that. Does anybody have any useful opinion?

(Datum 11/TMW/OR/GM/PO/RI)

The above conversation happens in Lauren's office. FDR keeps on giving subjective and even childish opinions about the grill along Lauren's presentation. Lauren then uses off record strategy to criticize FDR's disruptive action of which gives unreliable evaluations about the product. By employing the word "anybody", Lauren is either displacing the subject or being vague of whom s/he really addressed. It is done to save FDR's face. She is definitely aware that the rank of the imposition is high as she rejects FDR's evaluation which is unreliable and useless. Hence, she wants to minimize the imposition by removing FDR from the potential of being imposed.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Politeness strategies and politeness principles are applied by the characters in This Means War movie. Both politeness strategies and politeness principles are conducted by the characters in the movie to either minimize the FTA or reduce the imposition which is embedded in every criticism they employed.

For the first objective of the research, the findings show that there are only three types of politeness strategies of criticism that occur in This Means War movie. The strategies are bald on record strategy, positive politeness strategy, and off record strategy. The characters in This Means War movie frequently employ off record strategy in performing a criticism as the strategy helps them to deliver the criticism safely. By applying the strategy, they can remove the hearer from the potential of being imposed as the interpretation of

their criticism is given to the hearer. Therefore, even though their main intention is to criticize, they still can avoid the responsibility of doing it.

In relation to the second objective, there are five types of politeness principles which underlie the characters' preference to use a certain politeness strategy. They are tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, and agreement maxim. The type of politeness principles which frequently used as the characters' preference to use a certain politeness strategy is agreement maxim. The characters put efforts at either maximizing the agreement or minimizing the disagreement between themselves and the hearer in order to make the hearer agree and accept the criticism they said.

Meanwhile, the employment of a certain type of politeness strategies of criticism is influenced by some factors. Payoff always becomes a factor which influences the employment of a certain type of politeness strategy. This happens because the characters usually consider the advantages they will get in every strategy they employed. They clearly notice one of the advantages of employing a certain type of politeness strategy that is to repress the imposition of the negative judgment embedded in their criticism.

Suggestion

Based on the conclusion of the research, then there are some points that can be suggested for some parties. First, to linguistics students, they should pay more attention to the concept of pragmatics especially politeness because it

requires a really deep understanding. There are strategies of politeness which helps people conduct a harmonious communication. The appropriate use of correct strategies can maintain or even develop a good relationship. Thus, it is expected that Linguistics students be more sensitive toward this phenomenon, so they can dig more information related to this problem. Second, to other researchers, there are still many problems related to this study. This research does not cover all of the aspects of politeness strategy and politeness principle. It only focuses on the types of politeness strategy and politeness principle of criticism. Other researchers may conduct deeper investigations, especially on the concept of politeness strategies and politeness principles

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