

**A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES
PERFORMED BY OPRAH WINFREY
IN VIEW FROM THE TOP PROGRAM IN 2014**

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Abstract

In this study, politeness strategies performed by Oprah Winfrey in *View From The Top* program in 2014 are the object of the analysis. The purposes of the research are to find the types of politeness strategies often used by Oprah Winfrey in *View From The Top* program in 2014, to identify the realizations of politeness strategies used by Oprah Winfrey in *View From The Top* program in 2014, and to investigate the sociological factors that influence the use of politeness strategies in *View From The Top* program in 2014. The researcher applied descriptive qualitative method to analyze the data based on the politeness theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978). The findings of the research show that positive politeness strategy was a type of politeness strategy which was often used by Oprah Winfrey. Meanwhile, from each type of politeness strategies, seeking agreement realization in positive politeness was often performed by Oprah Winfrey in order to accomplish the agreement ideas from the hearer. The sociological factor that was the main factor influencing the use of politeness strategies employed by Oprah Winfrey was social distance, rather than other factors like power and rank of imposition.

Keywords: pragmatics, politeness strategies, *View From The Top* program in 2014

INTRODUCTION

Communication is the key to socialize with other people in daily life. One of the media of social communication reflects in the conversation such as an interview that can be explained as formal meeting to discuss about a topic. People can share their ideas by showing their speaking. Interview is

an effective medium to create people's understanding regarding the topic in the interview and context. By using interview, it motivates people to do politeness which means the awareness of people's face. Sometimes people do not realize that they do politeness in their communication. It means that there

are politeness in people's conversation. Politeness also connected to the context of society. It can be in the context of political, society, power, and so on. It is related on how society influenced to the interview's nuance. As the object of communication, society is a place that gives many influences in politeness.

Politeness itself is a way or manner to interact with others. The use of politeness triggers the speakers to do a strategy of politeness which means the way on how people say and deliver the ideas. In addition, politeness cannot be separated from face. According to Yule (1998), face means the public self-image of a person. It means that every person has public self image which refers to the emotional and social sense of self that every person has and expects everyone else to recognize. In an interview which applied by conversations, there are many influences of politeness in many ways based on the factors of society.

An interview from Amanda Facelle to Oprah Winfrey in Stanford Graduate School of Business in *View From The Top* program on April 28, 2014 is the object used in the analysis. The interview talks about career, life, and leadership of Oprah Winfrey. In that occasion, Oprah herself speaks on her career, life, and the importance of listening to our instincts. The audiences of the event are the students of Stanford Graduate School of Business.

Oprah Winfrey is a host in Oprah Winfrey Show which is a famous program that has been airing for twenty five years and Amanda Facelle is the candidate of Master Business Administration (MBA) in Stanford Graduate School of Business. In the interview, Oprah Winfrey acts as an interviewee which is different from Oprah's agendas which are usually she is the interviewer. Thus, it can be an interesting case to be analyzed. Based on those explanations, there are some differences on how they deliver their ideas by the word choice in

giving and answering questions according to the sociological factors that the application of politeness which are realized by many sub-strategies of politeness.

The objectives of the research are to find out the types of politeness strategies that are most often used by Oprah Winfrey in *View From The Top* program in 2014, to identify the realizations of politeness strategies used by Oprah Winfrey *View From The Top* program in 2014, and to investigate the sociological factors which influence the use of politeness strategies by Oprah Winfrey in *View From The Top* program in 2014.

RESEARCH METHOD

To answer the problems formulation, this research employed a descriptive qualitative research since it aimed to analyze the phenomenon of linguistics problem. In accordance with the statements, Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009 : 7) state that qualitative research is the study that deals with narrative and textual description of the case under the research. Based on the

definition, the researcher found the phenomenon of politeness strategy that was performed by Oprah Winfrey in *View From The Top* program on April 28, 2014 which was analyzed in a narrative way of the research.

The data were in the form of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences found in the utterances of Oprah Winfrey that contain the types of politeness strategies. The context of the data was the dialogues or conversations. Meanwhile, the source of data was the transcript of the interview in *View From The Top* on April 26, 2014 entitled "Oprah Winfrey on Career, Life, and Leadership" that was taken from a web page <http://www.singjupost.com/>.

Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009 : 188) define that the main instrument of the research is human. Thus, the researcher herself was the primary instrument of the research. In addition, there was the data sheet as the secondary instrument of this research.

The researcher did the following procedures for data

collection: downloading the video of Oprah Winfrey in *View From The Top* program in 2014 from internet media, watching the video of Oprah Winfrey in *View From The Top* program in 2014, searching the transcript of the interview from a web page <http://www.singjupost.com/>, checking and re-checking the truthfulness of the script, taking notes to the data, making and filling the data sheet, and re-reading and re-watching the video as final step.

The steps for analyzing the data are classifying the data and divided into the types and realizations of politeness strategies followed by the sociological factors, identifying the data, analyzing the data based on the research questions, and making the conclusion based on the data and theory of politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on 56 data, the result of the research, types and realizations of politeness strategies, and sociological factors involving the use of politeness strategies used by Oprah Winfrey are explained in this

part. More explanation can be presented as follows.

1. Types of Politeness Strategies Performed by Oprah Winfrey in *View From The Top* Program in 2014

a) Bald on record

Bald on record strategy is performed by Oprah Winfrey in some moments. It can be presented in datum number 19.

Amanda : What are the qualities of your leadership that make you successful at such diverse pursuits? And works in one area that maybe doesn't work in another?

Oprah : Well, I tell you. It works in all areas because I, my life is fueled by my being. (datum number 19)

In the conversation, Amanda asks Oprah questions related to the qualities of leadership and what works in an area that cannot work in another area. Then, Oprah answers the questions by using bald on record politeness strategy because she directly says *I tell you* to the audiences without small chit chat in the beginning of the speaking. In addition, she uses the strategy

because she wants the hearer to be concerned with her ideas.

b) Positive politeness

Positive politeness strategy is defined as a strategy which has a goal to make a cooperation with the hearer and saving the hearer's face. In the analysis, it can be seen in datum number 1.

Oprah : Love, love love. Tweet, tweet. Whoo! You.

Amanda : Hi Oprah. I can't believe I just said that.

(datum number 1)

The dialogue happens in the beginning of the program when Oprah greets the audiences. The utterance performed by Oprah Winfrey that is considered as positive politeness because she needs the audiences to give a feed back to her greetings.

c) Negative politeness

In the program, Oprah Winfrey employs negative politeness in datum number 28.

Amanda : Thank you.

Oprah : Okay, let me think about that for a moment. Very good.

(datum number 28)

Oprah Winfrey asks for time to Amanda to continue their conversation about logical decision.

In addition, Oprah creates a way to be aware with the hearer's face by using the expression *Let me think about that for a moment.*

d) Off record

Off record politeness strategy is presented in datum number 4.

Amanda : Did you know that you wanted to get into TV and media specifically?

Oprah : No, I did not. I thought I was going to be a teacher.

(datum number 4)

This conversation is considered as off record in the statement *No, I did not* because Oprah states more than one answer in the same meaning. It gives the hints to the hearer for what she stated. In that occasion, Amanda as the host asks Oprah about the future that will bring her to TV and media.

2. Realizations of Politeness Strategies Performed by Oprah Winfrey in *View From The Top Program* in 2014

a. Bald on record

According to Brown and Levinson's theory in Goody's book (1978), the realizations of bald on record are divided into eight realizations. In this analysis, the

researcher found three out of eight realizations. Those are metaphorical urgency for emphasis, task-oriented, and FTA-oriented-bald on record-usage. The detailed analysis can be stated as follows.

1) **Metaphorical urgency for emphasis**

Oprah Winfrey applies metaphorical urgency for emphasis in datum number 19.

Amanda : What are the qualities of your leadership that make you successful at such diverse pursuits? And what works in one area that maybe doesn't work in another?

Oprah : Well, I tell you. It works in all areas because I, my life is fueled by my being.

(datum number 19)

In the conversation, it is proven that she emphasizes the word *well* in the beginning of her utterance. She wants the audiences to pay attention to her story on how willingness is very important in her career. The statement happens when Amanda comes with a question which is about what works for in one area and that maybe does not work in another area. Oprah explains that all works can be done in all areas because she believes

her life is filled with the maximum energy and it is purposed to reach her dreams.

2) **Task-oriented**

An example of how Oprah uses bald on record which is task oriented as follows.

Amanda : Is there anything left that you're scared to try?

Oprah : Whoa, Amanda. You must have been up all night long.

(datum number 35)

In the expression, she asks for Amanda to do the task that she has to be up for all night long for something that makes her afraid and it is shown in the statements *You must have been up all night long*. This utterance happens between Amanda and Oprah where Amanda asks a question about something that makes Oprah scared to try.

3) **FTA-oriented-bald on record-usage**

FTA-oriented-bald on record-usage is presented in datum number 54.

Oprah : Stand up Shenay, so everybody can see you.

(inviting one of the audiences to stand up)

(datum number 54)

In the utterance, Oprah asks to Shenay to stand up, in the statement

Stand up Shenay. Shenay is one of the audiences of the program and she is a student of *Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy*. It is followed by the words *so everybody can see you* that implies Oprah do the FTA to Shenay with an aim that Shenay as the hearer will accept and do what Oprah asks for. Oprah states the statement because she wants to encourage the audiences that woman must work to the greatest energy and do the best for achieving their dreams.

b. Positive politeness

Twelve out of fifteen realizations are applied by Oprah Winfrey to deliver her ideas in *View From The Top* program in 2014. For further description, it can be presented as follows.

1) Notice and attend to hearer

Datum number 36 in the following conversation shows how Oprah notices and attends to hearer.

Amanda : I've prepared a little bit.
Just a little.

Oprah : Oh. My Goodness. Anything left that I'm scared to try? No. No, and I'm just trying to think what --- I'm just trying to think, well, is there something that I

haven't thought of.

(datum number 36)

Oprah employs the expression *Oh. My Goodness* in order to catch the attention from the audiences, then they pay attention to her. The context of the expression is on how Oprah explains that even though anything has gone, she is not scared to try and try again.

2) Exaggerate

Oprah states the expression that is categorized as positive politeness strategy through exaggeration in datum number 1.

Oprah : Love, love love. Tweet, tweet. Whoo! You.

Amanda : Hi Oprah. I can't believe I just said that.

(datum number 1)

The utterance is called exaggerate because Oprah states *Love, love, love* and *Tweet tweet*, and those are being stressed. It proves that exaggerate strategy happens by using exaggerate intonation or stress.

3) Intensify interest to hearer

Intensify interest to hearer is performed by Oprah can be presented as follows.

Amanda : You know, you have your own network, you had this amazingly successful show for 25 years.
You've been in movies.

You are one of the most important philanthropists of our time. So, what are the qualities?

Oprah : I love hanging around you what else are you going to say? I'm just taking it all in.

(datum number 16)

The strategy occurs when Oprah makes a question on *what else are you going to say* and then she answers it by herself using the statement *I'm just taking it all in*.

4) Use in group identity markers

The example of use in group identity markers realization can be shown in datum number 10.

Amanda : I figured I had you here, I was going to – I was going to ask as much as I can.

Oprah : Oh, Amanda went deep on me for a minute there. Whoa. Back up sister girl, c'mon, back up.

(datum number 10)

She addresses Amanda by using *sister girl*. In that context, Oprah applies the strategy to make the show not very serious and of course it is kind of an entertaining act to the audiences.

5) Seek agreement

An example of seeking agreement is in the conversation

between Oprah and Amanda about Ku Klux Kan who ever been interviewed by Oprah Winfrey.

Amanda : He was thinking.

Oprah : He was thinking. So, he comes on with the wife and the girlfriend. This is life changing moment for me.

(datum number 15)

In the middle of Oprah's story, Amanda interrupts what Oprah said by using *he was thinking*. Then, in the program, Oprah repeats Amanda's statements that is *he was thinking*. It proves that seek agreement exists in the strategy. By doing the repetition, Oprah emphasizes Amanda's statement in a purpose that Oprah agrees with Amanda's idea.

6) Presuppose/raise/assert a common ground

An example of presuppose/raise/assert a common ground is in the conversation between Oprah and Amanda in datum number 40.

Oprah : Are we going take some questions?

Amanda : Well, yeah, so that's what I wanted to say. I'd love to put it up.

(datum number 40)

The context of the expression is between Oprah as the guest star and

Amanda as the host. Oprah thinks that she equals to Amanda's knowledge regarding Oprah's idea. Oprah asks the question in order to convince Amanda that there is another question or not, even Oprah knows that there is more questions.

7) Joke

Joke is performed by Oprah in the conversation that is presented in datum number 52.

Amanda : We got one.

Oprah : I came here to get stumped, yeah.

(datum number 52)

In the program, Amanda tells that there is a student who will ask Oprah Winfrey. Then, Oprah answers Amanda's statements by using positive politeness focused on joke in the utterance *I came here to get stumped*. She is not really get stumped, she just shows the strategy to create an enjoying conversation and also it is not to be a serious moment.

8) Assert or presuppose speaker's knowledge and concern for hearer's wants

Oprah Winfrey presuppose her knowledge and concern for the

hearer's wants that is reflected in the utterance in datum number 2.

Amanda : This campus has been buzzing since the announcement was made last week that you'd be coming here. And I received.

Oprah : Thank for the buzz. I'm so glad you know I still have the buzz. So good.
(datum number 2)

Oprah as the speaker wants the hearer to feel what she feels in the beginning of the program that is the nuance of happiness. It is proven in the expression *I'm so glad you know*. It indicates that she needs the cooperation from the hearer in the communication.

9) Offer and promise

An example of offer and promise realization used by Oprah Winfrey is in the dialogue as follows.

Amanda : And I was wondering if you were to write a book on women in career, what would your title be?

Oprah : Mine would be, actually.
(datum number 14)

Oprah answers Amanda's question regarding the title that would be named if Oprah writes a book about women in career. She promises that "Mine" would be a title of her book, later. Based on the explanation,

Oprah employs positive politeness strategy that is focused on giving promise in the statement *Mine would be*.

10) Be optimistic

In the program, Oprah applies be optimistic realization that can be seen in the dialogue as follows.

Amanda : So you used that as momentum just to leave, cut your losses and go.

Oprah : No, I just said, I filed it away. There will come a time.

(datum number 12)

She states *No* that means she does not cut her losses but she still works to reach her future. She uses the optimistic realization in the statement *There will come a time*. It can be seen that she is an optimistic person to the hearer so the hearer will cooperate with Oprah's statement.

11) Tell or ask for reason

In the show, Oprah asks for reason to the audience of the program, Melissa, that is shown in datum number 53.

Oprah : Selflessness with selfishness. Why are you asking me that question?

Melissa : It's kind of the tension between putting yourself first and also, taking care

of others.

(datum number 53)

In the context of the conversation, Oprah asks to someone who asks her about selflessness with selfishness. The strategy that Oprah employs in the utterance means she wants the hearer who is one of the audiences to give response about what she thought, although the audiences do not say anything.

c. Negative politeness

Negative politeness strategy has ten realizations. In this study, the researcher acquired three out of ten realizations on negative politeness. The explanation can be stated as follows.

1) Question, hedge

Oprah Winfrey uses hedge that is presented in datum number 9.

Amanda : I'm sorry, all right let's –
Oprah : Let me put my glasses on.

(datum number 9)

In the conversation, Oprah uses the statement in the form of indirect which has an aim to make a polite way even though she can put her glasses without asking permission to Amanda. It is reflected in the words *Let me* as the hedge to show negative

politeness and to make the statement are true.

2) Be pessimistic

In the program, Oprah Winfrey uses negative politeness strategy specifically be pessimistic. It is proved in the utterance in datum number 24.

Amanda : Thank you. I want to switch gears and focus a bit on philanthropy.

Oprah : Are you worried about getting all of your stuff in?

(datum number 24)

She has pessimistic expression to Amanda regarding that a job as a host is not only just to talk but also to connect people to ideas and make the audiences have a better life.

d. Off record

Off record strategy is divided into fifteen realizations. Based on the analysis, the researcher only found three out of fifteen realizations. The detailed analysis can be shown as follows.

1) Understate

The first realization of off record by Oprah is understate. It is presented in datum number 25.

Amanda : No, we're doing great. We're just going to keep going. I think everyone

likes this, right? We're good?

Oprah : Okay.

(datum number 25)

The statement stated by Oprah is categorized as understate because she just says *Okay* to answer Amanda's question and also to convince her that they are good in doing what they have done.

2) Overstate

The next realization is overstate. An example of overstatement is in the conversation as follows.

Amanda : Did you know that you wanted to get into TV and media specifically?

Oprah : No, I did not. I thought I was going to be teacher.

(datum number 4)

In the occasion, Amanda as the host asks Oprah about the future that will bring her to TV and media. She says more statements than are needed as required, because she can answer the question just only by using *no*.

3) Be ironic

In the show, Oprah uses an ironic statement in the conversation between Oprah and Amanda as follows.

Amanda : But you made him cry Amanda.

Oprah : I didn't make him cry. I didn't make him cry,

Amanda.**(datum number 44)**

The dialogue is categorized as be ironic realization because Oprah Winfrey states something contradictive to what happened in the program. She states that *I didn't make him cry*, yet in the occasion one of the audiences is crying.

3. Sociological Factors Applied by Oprah Winfrey in View From The Top Program in 2014

a) The social distance (D) / a symmetric relation

The first sociological factor influencing the use of politeness strategy is distance. The distance is usually found between two interlocutors which is focused on the closeness relation. Related to the explanation, the analysis explains the detail factor about it.

An example of how Oprah employs social distance factor is in datum number 2.

Amanda : This campus has been buzzing since the announcement was made last week that you'd be coming here. And I received.

Oprah : **Thank for the buzz. I'm so glad you know I still have the buzz. So good.**
(datum number 2)

It is proved that there is a social attribute between Oprah as the speaker and Amanda as the hearer. In addition, based on the utterance, Oprah applies positive politeness in the realization which is presuppose what the speaker wants. She states the statement because she has an aim that she wants the hearer to feel what she feels that is about creating the happy nuance to join and follow the program which is started in the beginning of the program.

According to the social attributes between Oprah Winfrey and Amanda Facelle, it indicates a social distance in the communication of the program. The existence of social distance in the beginning of the program is Oprah tries to be closer to Amanda as the host and also the audiences.

b) The relative power (P) / an asymmetric relation

In the show, Oprah Winfrey as a speaker employs power as sociological factor that is presented in the following conversation.

Amanda : And I thought some of these quotes, I mean you share so much wisdom but these really spoke to me, and

thought it would be a great way to frame our discussion.

Oprah : Okay.

(datum number 3)

Power exists between two persons who have different level in a strata. It is based on the description shown in datum number 3 that is in utterance *Okay*. Also, the factor influencing Oprah in doing the strategy is power because Oprah as the speaker has the authority to respond Amanda's statement in short.

c) The absolute ranking of imposition (R)

Related to the sociological factor improving the use of politeness strategy is rank of imposition. It usually happens in order to ask for something to the hearer. It can be reflected in datum number 13.

Amanda : Huh, it's going to come back. Yeah, you were right. I think you were right.

Oprah : **When I will be sitting in the same room. And it happened, like, in the late 90s. I had the Oprah show and I ran into that guy. Lord, Jesus, thank you. Oh my God, oh one of the sweetest moments that ever happened. Oh, go ahead.**

(datum number 13)

Oprah Winfrey employs bald on record in the task-oriented realization. It can be explained that Oprah states directly to Amanda to give the task in continuing her question in the expression *Oh, go ahead*. A factor that motivates Oprah to show the strategy is rank of imposition because Oprah needs Amanda to forward her question then.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of the research show that positive politeness strategy which focuses on seeking agreement is a strategy often performed by Oprah Winfrey. It is because Oprah as a speaker needs the solidarity and cooperation from the audiences as the hearer.

The main sociological factor that is used by Oprah Winfrey is social distance rather than power and rank of imposition. It is marked by the social attribute between Oprah Winfrey as a speaker and Amanda Facelle as a host.

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