Exploration of Politeness Strategies Between Main Characters in the *Green Book* Movie

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze Brown and Levinson's language politeness strategies in the conversation between Dr. Shirley and Tony Lip in the film Green Book. The approach used in this research is descriptive qualitative, using document analysis as the method of analysis. The data analysis process was conducted through four stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of the data analysis revealed some significant findings. First, Dr. Shirley tends to use politeness strategies more frequently than Tony Lip, comparing 43 uses by Dr. Shirley and 25 by Tony Lip. Second, the positive face politeness strategy is the dominant strategy both main characters use. Third, several factors influence politeness strategies, including power, social distance, personality differences, and social culture.

INTRODUCTION

Green Book is a film based on a true story about the journey of a famous African-American pianist, Dr. Shirley, and his driver, Tony Lip. The setting of this movie takes place in the United States in the 1960s. The two characters in this movie come from different backgrounds and face different social challenges. Dr. Shirley, an outstanding pianist from the upper class, has to deal with the racial discrimination that occurred during her time. On the other hand,

Tony Lip, an Italian-American personal driver who works for a mafia family, often faces conflicts with other Italian-American families. The discrimination theme of this film has attracted several scholars to analyze it using critical discourse analysis or socio-psychological perspectives (Nurwahyuni & Samelia, 2021; Sari & Fauzi, 2022). Their research found that white people practice discrimination because of the prejudice and power of white people over black people. The tendency of discrimination occurs individually and institutionally. On the other hand, some scholars also use a literature perspective (Rani & Wijaya, 2019; Sanimawati, Rahayuni, & Netra, 2022). Their research describes the characters of the two main characters in the movie. They can identify this depiction from the language style used. Dr. Shirley uses a formal language style, while Tony Lip uses a more casual language style in his conversations. The factors that cause the use of different language styles of the two characters are social context and setting. From this, scholars' attention to the study of politeness strategies in the movie Green Book has yet to receive attention.

The study of politeness in the film Green Book is fascinating because, in the long journey taken by Dr. Shirley and Tony Lip across the southern United States, they meet different types of people and face different situations that require them to adapt and interact in different ways. The interactions between these two characters feature different language use and politeness strategies. Moreover, a black boss, Dr. Shirley, will remain polite to his white subordinate, Tony Lip and what politeness strategies tend to emerge from their interactions.

The concept of politeness in this study is a theory proposed by several linguists. According to Lakoff (1977), politeness is used by people to reduce friction in personal interactions. Sifianou (1992) defines politeness as controlling emotions to avoid conflict in personal interactions. Yule (1996) argues that politeness is an action that shows awareness and consideration of one's face. Brown and Levinson's (1987) research presents face theory, which focuses on how people maintain and gain social respectability through interactions. According to this theory, a face is a social image and reputation a person must emotionally maintain. Everyone tries to maintain the face of his or her speech partner. Otherwise, threatening acts such as irritation or annoyance cannot be avoided. Brown and Levinson (1987) propose

four politeness strategies. They are positive politeness (positive politeness), negative politeness (negative politeness), straightforward politeness (bald on), and pseudo politeness (off record). Based on the opinions of some experts, politeness is a way or strategy of expressing respect, courtesy, and compliance with social norms in daily interactions. The concept of politeness is considered an essential factor in understanding social interaction and is a topic of concern in various research fields, including linguistics and pragmatics.

Previous research on politeness has been widely discussed in various contexts of interaction between language speakers, such as interactions between teachers and students (Hassan et al., 2017; Megaiab et al., 2019; Mulyono et al., 2019; Alakrash & Bustan, 2020; Ningsih et al., 2020; Algiovan, 2022), reality shows (Ruansyah & Rukmini, 2018; Pardede, Herman, & Manurung, 2021), politeness in Javanese cultural settings (Prayitno et al., 2018; Mojo et al., 2021), and the study of politeness strategies through social media (Ambarwati, Nurkamto, & Santosa, 2019; Palupi & Endahati, 2019; Prayitno et al., 2019; Putri and Sakti, 2019; Junita, 2021; Silitonga & Pasaribu, 2021; Utomo, Sembada, & Muharam, 2021).

Furthermore, several studies have examined politeness strategies in various movie genres. Hartoyo, Mansyur, and Listiani (2019) examined positive face politeness strategies in romance films. Imanila, Hendra, and Saputri (2019) found that politeness is usually used in conversation when greeting in fantasy genre films. In an investigation conducted by Wati and Puspani (2019) in action movies, they found that female characters consistently used neutral politeness, while male characters used varying politeness. Leihitu & Triprihatmini (2021) investigated politeness strategies in action crime films. Mujiono and Ula (2020) analyzed the function of politeness strategies in the children's film Tinker Bell in Secret of the Wings. From this, the discussion of politeness strategies in a film that raises issues of racism and discrimination is still limited.

According to Neubeck (2001), one form of racism is racism perpetrated by individuals, known as personal racism. Personal racism occurs when individuals exhibit suspicious attitudes and discriminatory behavior. This is reflected in views based on stereotypes, insults to references and names, discriminatory treatment in interactions, acts of violence, and threats against minorities perceived as inferior in race. This concept can provide exciting insights into inter-character communication and interaction dynamics.

This study will analyze politeness strategies embodied in the interaction between Dr. Don Shirley and Tony Lip in the film Green Book. The primary purpose of this research is to contribute to the study of politeness in the context of film, especially films that raise issues of racism and discrimination. Through an in-depth analysis of the film Green Book, this study aims to identify and analyze the

politeness strategies used by the two film characters and investigate what factors influence politeness strategies. It is hoped that the results of this study can provide a deeper understanding of how politeness is manifested in the context of films, as well as how politeness strategies can be used to ease tensions and create harmonious relationships in social situations that are thick with racist environments.

METHODS

This descriptive study aims to explain linguistic phenomena that occur in specific situations (Santosa, 2021). This research focuses on the subtitles of the movie Green Book, paying attention to the politeness strategies used by the two main characters in each utterance spoken in various contexts. As document analysis research, the data in this study is in the form of character speech in the form of English subtitles taken from the Netflix application. Researchers used the live transcript and notification application to get the original subtitle data. Pragmatic theory, especially politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987), explains all utterances that contain politeness strategies, including positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on and off the record.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study investigates the use of four politeness strategies in the conversation between the two main characters in the movie Green Book, with the perspective taken from Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. The four politeness strategies are positive face politeness, negative face politeness, straightforward speech strategy, and pseudo speech strategy. Each is applied in different conversational contexts. The results of this study are presented in detail in Table 1, which provides an overview of the frequency of the use of politeness strategies in the movie.

Table 1. Data description of politeness strategies in the Green Book

No.	Politeness Strategy	Dr. Shirley		Tony Lip	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Positive face politeness	24	55,8%	17	68%
2	Negative face politeness	12	28%	4	16%
3	Straightforward storytelling strategy	6	14%	4	16%
4	Pseudo-storytelling strategy	1	2,2%	-	-
	Total	43	100%	25	100%

Based on the data in Table 1, positive face politeness strategies tend to be used by the two main characters in the movie compared to other politeness strategies. Dr. Shirley used the positive face politeness strategy 24 times (55.8%), while Tony Lip used the strategy 17 times (68%). The negative face politeness strategy was used by Dr Shirley 12 times (28%) and 4 times (16%) by Tony Lip. The straightforward speech strategy appeared 6 times (14%) in Dr. Shirley's speech and 4 times (16%) in Tony Lip's speech. The last is the pseudo-statement strategy, which is only used by Dr. Shirley for 1 time (2.2%). Furthermore, to answer the research objectives, the data regarding the politeness strategies used in the conversation between Dr. Shirley and Tony Lip are presented and described clearly in the following sub-discussion.

Politeness strategy with a positive face (positive politeness)

Positive face politeness is a politeness strategy that aims to maintain and improve self-esteem or a good image of oneself or others in social interactions. This strategy is usually done by intensifying interest, paying attention to needs, or giving gifts to improve one's good image within social interaction. The positive face politeness strategy is expected to create a harmonious atmosphere of social interaction and maintain inter-individual relationships. Table 2 presents the realization of the positive face politeness strategies used in the conversation between Dr. Shirley and Tony Lip.

Table 2. Data realization of positive face politeness strategies

Positive face politeness	Dr. Shirley		Tony Lip	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Expression of gratitude	11	45,8%	3	17,7%
Intensifying attraction	6	25%	6	35,3%
Paying attention to needs	3	12,5%	7	41,1%
Showing optimism	1	4,2%	-	-
Seeking approval	-	-	1	5,9%
Exaggerating attraction	1	4,2%	-	-
Provide reasons	1	4,2%	-	-
Showing similarities	1	4,2%	-	-
Total	24	100%	17	100%

Based on Table 2 above, Dr. Shirley frequently uses positive face politeness strategies compared to Tony Lip. This is evidenced by the total percentage of 58.5% (24 times) versus 41.5% (17 times), which is realized in the form of expressing gratitude, intensifying interest, paying attention to needs, showing optimism, seeking approval, false approval, exaggerating interest, giving reasons, and showing similarity. The following describes the realization of positive face politeness strategies in *Green Book*.

Context: Dr. Shirley thanked Tony Lip for his presence in an attempt to apply as Dr. Shirley's travel assistant.

Data	Time	Dialogue fragment
8	00:18:12	S: Well, Mr. Vallelonga… thank you for stopping by.

The phrase "thank you for stopping by" in data 8 shows gratitude and appreciation for Tony Lip's visit. Thus, the speech reflects positive face politeness strategies in welcoming someone's arrival and showing friendliness and appreciation towards them.

Context: Tony Lip is enthusiastic and curious about the origins of Dr. Shirley's expertise in playing the piano

Data	Time	Dialogue fragment
53	01:20:26	T: So, where'd you learn how to play like that?

In data 53, Tony Lip expresses interest and admiration for Dr. Shirley's playing ability. By asking about the origins of her learning or practice, he shows positive interest and wants to know more about her piano skills. This strategy reflects an attitude of appreciation and admiration, which can build a more intimate and positive relationship between the speaker and his/her counterpart.

Context: Tony Lip has returned the stone he stole, making Dr. Shirley happy to repurchase it.

Data	Time	Dialogue fragment
30	00:46:35	S: If you'd like, Tony, I'd be happy to buy you the stone.

In the utterance, Dr. Shirley offers to buy Tony a rock with a friendly tone and apparent willingness. The phrase "If you'd like" shows that the speaker respects Tony's wishes and allows him to accept the offer. In addition, using the word "happily" shows Dr. Shirley's excitement and willingness to fulfill Tony's wish. Thus, the speech reflects positive face politeness by paying attention to needs.

Context: Dr. Shirley shows her confidence that Tony Lip can improve his language style.

Data	Time	Dialogue fragment
21	00:36:37	S: Because you can do better, Mr. Vallelonga.

In this speech, Dr. Shirley motivates and encourages Tony to improve his language. The phrase "you can do better" shows the belief that Tony has the potential to achieve better results. In other words, the speech reflects positive politeness through optimism.

Context: Tony Lip asked about the last schedule of Dr. Shirley's concert so that they could celebrate Christmas at home.

Data	Time	Dialogue fragment
		T: So, anyway we could, uh, maybe hit the road early next morning. So we'd be home in time for Christmas Eve?
11	00:29:44	S: We'll see.

In data 11, Tony makes a subtle and indirect request or suggestion by using the phrases "any way we could" and "maybe". He also includes a reason that could encourage Dr. Shirley to agree to the request so they can get home in time for Christmas Eve. This strategy reflects the politeness of respecting the interlocutor's decision and availability and giving them space to determine their answer. Thus, Tony uses the positive face politeness strategy in this speech by seeking approval.

Context: Dr. Shirley complimented Tony Lip on his description of their meal.

Data	Time	Dialogue fragment
15	00:32:35	S: I'm just saying you have a marvelous way with words when describing food.

In the utterance, Dr. Shirley admires Tony's ability to describe food with marvelous words. The phrase "marvelous way with words" shows appreciation for Tony's language skills or delivery style. Thus, the speech reflects positive politeness in the form of exaggerating interest.

Context: Dr. Shirley orders Tony Lip to pay for his stolen stone.

Data	Time	Dialogue fragment
29	00:45:54	S: Pay for the stone, Tony. You'll feel better.

When someone gives a reason in their speech to others, it can reduce face threat. In other words, using this strategy by including a reason can make the speaker who delivers the command look more polite in a cheerful face. This politeness strategy can be seen in the example of data 29, Dr Shirley, who utters

the directive action "Pay for the stone" and includes the reason "You will feel better" which seems more polite and reduces Tony Lip's face threat.

Context: Tony Lip expressed his fondness for a dish Dr. Shirley's people also liked.

Data	Time	Dialogue fragment
34	00:51:35	T: You people love the fried chicken, the grits, and the collard greens. I love it, too.

In data 34, it can be seen that Tony Lip expresses similarities with Dr. Shirley and her people regarding food tastes, which can be observed from his utterance, "I love it, too". Tony Lip indirectly creates a bond between himself and Dr. Shirley by expressing the same fondness for the dish. Through this strategy, Tony Lip avoids potential face threats, as he does not make a statement that belittles or distances himself from the food tastes that are popular or identified with the community. Instead, he shows understanding and appreciation of what Dr. Shirley and her community like, creating a more harmonious interaction.

Negative politeness strategy

The negative face politeness strategy is used to avoid threats to one's face politeness. In this strategy, the speaker tends to be more careful in choosing words and expressions to avoid confrontation or conflict with the interlocutor. Usually, this strategy is indicated by indirect language, questions to provide opportunities or choices to the interlocutor, or apologies expressed to the interlocutor. This strategy is usually used in tense or controversial situations involving different interests or values. Table 3 presents the realization of the negative face politeness strategies used in the conversation between Dr. Shirley and Tony Lip.

Table 3. Data realization of negative face politeness strategies

Negative face politeness	Dr. Shirley		Tony Lip	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Ask	7	58,3%	-	-
Indirect speech	3	25%	1	25%
Apologize	2	16,67%	2	50%
Minimizing load	-	-	1	25%
Total	12	100%	4	100%

Based on Table 3 above, Dr. Shirley uses negative face politeness strategies more often than Tony Lip. This is evidenced by the total percentage of 75% (12 times) versus 25% (4 times), which is realized by asking questions, indirect speech, apologizing, and minimizing burden. The following describes negative face politeness strategies in the movie Green Book.

Context: During the interview, Dr. Shirley asked Tony about his experience in professional driving.

Data	Time	Dialogue fragment
3	00:15:22	Dr. Shirley: Have you ever driven professionally before?

In data 3, Dr. Shirley uses a negative face politeness strategy with the expression asking. This strategy avoids interference or involvement in personal affairs or interlocutors. In this case, as the speaker, Dr. Shirley uses a question that can be said to be less polite or assertive to ask if the interlocutor has ever driven professionally. Even though Dr. Shirley did not say an apology or use an expression that explicitly showed honor, she used a less assertive question to avoid the impression of being too intrusive or imposing herself on Tony Lip as her interlocutor. Therefore, the speaker uses negative face politeness in the speech.

Context: Dr. Shirley offered Tony Lip a promotion.

Data	Time	Dialogue fragment
51	01:19:11	S: I'd like to formally offer you the position of my road manager. With the title also comes more responsibility, but... that also means a raise in pay.

Dr. Shirley states the utterance in data 51 to prevent Tony Lip from leaving his job as Dr. Shirley's travel assistant. Indeed, if the utterance is removed from the context of the situation in the movie, it looks like an utterance using a positive politeness strategy. However, the utterance in data 51 has an implied meaning that tends to differ from what is said. This strategy is used to reduce the discomfort the second person feels because he gets the burden in the interaction.

Context: Tony Lip apologized for his tardiness that made Dr. Shirley look for him.

Data	Time	Dialogue fragment
24	00:40:30	S: I've been looking for you. T: Yeah, sorry. The guys were having a little game.

In this speech, Tony Lip uses the expression of apology "yeah, sorry" to show regret for the disturbance or inconvenience that may be caused to Dr. Shirley as his speech partner. In addition, the speaker also uses the term "a little game" to denigrate something done to minimize discomfort or displeasure to the interlocutor. Thus, in the speech in data 24, Tony Lip uses two negative face politeness strategies: ' apologizing and minimizing the burden'.

Bald-on strategy.

The bald-on politeness strategy refers to politeness in which the speaker assumes a stronger and more authoritative position than his/her counterpart. This strategy involves using direct speech that does not indicate a harsh or pressing order. Speakers are more likely to say what they want politely and respectfully. Table 4 presents the realization of the frank politeness strategy used in the conversation between Dr. Shirley and Tony Lip.

Table 4. Data of the politeness strategy of straightforward speech

Storytelling strategy to put it bluntly	Dr. Shirley		Tony Lip	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	**Percentage**
Imperative	6	100%	-	-
Advice	-	-	3	**75%**
Greetings	-	-	1	**25%**
Total	**6**	**100%**	**4**	**100%**

Based on Table 4 above, Dr. Shirley uses the straightforward speech strategy more often than Tony Lip. This is evidenced by the total percentage of 60% (6 times) versus 40% (4 times), which is realized in the form of imperatives, suggestions, and greetings. Based on the data findings, it can be assumed that Dr. Shirley has more substantial power because she is the boss in the film. The following describes blunt speech strategies in the movie Green Book.

Context: Dr. Shirley invited Tony Lip to sit down during the interview.

Data	Time	Dialogue fragment
2	00:14:42	Dr. Shirley: Yes. Please sit down.

In data 2, Dr. Shirley uses a straightforward speech strategy indicated by using the imperative word "please," which functions to be polite and show a friendly attitude and respect for Tony Lip as her speech partner. This shows that Dr. Shirley wants to maintain Tony Lip's face and self-esteem so that she responds positively to her interlocutor's request.

Context: Tony Lip protests Dr. Shirley because he feels unappreciated for freeing the maestro from prison.

Data	Time	Dialogue fragment
45	01:15:49	T: So show a little appreciation maybe.

In data 45, "maybe" in the utterance "So show a little appreciation maybe" shows a softer politeness strategy. By adding "maybe", the speaker expresses a suggestion or expectation indirectly, giving the interlocutor a choice without

demanding or forcing. In this context, the word "maybe" is used to ease the assertiveness of the request and give a more relaxed or flexible impression. Therefore, this speech can be categorized as a politeness strategy of frank speech with a form of suggestion.

Context: Tony Lip welcomes Dr. Shirley to his house to celebrate Christmas together.

Data	Time	Dialogue fragment
69	02:01:24	T: Doc. Ah. Welcome.

The utterance in data 69 shows Tony Lip's attempt to greet Dr. Shirley respectfully and kindly with "Doc". Then, the word "Welcome" expresses willingness and warmth in welcoming the interlocutor. Thus, the speech reflects the politeness strategy of assertive speech with the form of greeting to create a friendly atmosphere in communication interactions.

Off-record strategy.

Off-record politeness strategy is used to express intentions or messages indirectly or implicitly. A speaker uses this strategy considering the psychological discomfort that can threaten the face of the interlocutor. In other words, the speaker intentionally uses unclear or ambiguous speech so that the listener/speech partner can interpret it with various meanings. Table 5 presents the realization of the pseudo-speech politeness strategies used in the conversation between Dr. Shirley and Tony Lip.

Table 5. Data realization of the pseudo-speech politeness strategy

Pseudo-storytelling strategy	Dr. Shirley		Tony Lip	
	Frequency	**Percentage**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Satire	1	100%	-	-
Total	**1**	**100%**	**-**	**-**

Table 5 above shows that the realization of the pseudo-speech politeness strategy in Green Book is only found once in the speech by Dr. Shirley in the form of sarcasm. The following is an explanation of the use of the strategy.

Context: Dr. Shirley advises Tony Lip to change his language style, which tends to be rude and arrogant, to improve.

Data	Time	Dialogue fragment
19	00:35:47	S: It is my feeling that your diction, however charming it may be in the tri-state area, could use some... finessing.

Based on the context in the film, Tony Lip has a language style that is slightly unacceptable and tends to be rude to Dr. Shirley, so she advises Tony Lip to change the diction in each of his conversations. He packaged the suggestion using a pseudo-speech politeness strategy in the form of innuendo, as seen in data 19 above.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that Dr. Shirley and Tony Lip tend to apply positive politeness strategies in their conversations. This finding differs from the results of research conducted by Rajagukguk, Sinambela, and Pasaribu (2021), who found the dominance of negative politeness strategies by the characters in the movie Green Book. Furthermore, using positive politeness strategies aims to make the speaker acceptable and liked by others, thus becoming part of the community (Rajagukguk et al., 2021).

The use of politeness strategies in the conversation between Dr. Shirley and Tony Lip is influenced by at least four factors: power, social distance, personality, and social culture. In the context of the film Green Book, Dr. Shirley acts as Tony Lip's superior, which shows Dr. Shirley has power over Tony Lip as his travel assistant. One example of politeness strategies related to this power factor is when Dr. Shirley uses a direct speech strategy (bald on) by saying, "Yes. Please sit down" to Tony Lip. In this strategy, Dr. Shirley shows her position of power by using speech that does not threaten her interlocutor's face. This finding is slightly different from the research conducted by Fitria, Ningrum, and Suhandoko (2020), where direct speech strategies are more common when someone has a personal closeness with the interlocutor. In addition, negative politeness strategies tend to be used by someone who has power over the interlocutor to avoid potential threats to the interlocutor's face (Jeanyfer & Tanti, 2018).

The second factor that influences the use of politeness strategies is social distance. In addition to the power dimension, social distance between speakers and their speech partners is an essential factor affecting politeness in conversation (Arif et al., 2018). In the film Green Book context, Dr. Shirley and Tony Lip use positive face politeness strategies. This strategy effectively minimizes the social distance between speakers and their speech partners (Aditiawarman & Elba, 2018). In other words, the two main characters in this film often use positive face politeness strategies to strengthen relationships and create closeness to each other.

Another factor that influences the selection of politeness strategies is personality. This study found that Dr. Shirley uses politeness strategies more often than Tony Lip. The researcher considered that this could be due to the personality difference between the two. In the movie Green Book, Tony Lip's character is

portrayed as rude and outspoken due to his limited educational background (Rani & Winaya, 2020). In contrast, Dr. Shirley uses a more formal and polite language style (Sanimawati et al., 2022). This striking difference reflects how personality can influence how a person communicates and chooses appropriate politeness strategies.

The last potential factor in Dr. Shirley's tendency to use polite speech more often than Tony Lip is social culture. The social culture of the movie setting in the 1960s, which is thick with racism and discrimination, is a relevant factor. In the context of the film, Dr. Shirley uses politeness strategies to maintain harmony, avoid conflict, and overcome the tension in the relationship between herself and Tony Lip. For example, when she applies the negative face politeness strategy in the utterance in data 5, "Do you foresee any issues in working for a black man?". Prejudice and stereotypes are one of the factors white people commit acts of discrimination (Sari & Fauzi, 2022). By considering this, Dr. Shirley prefers to use the questioning form of speech rather than directly ordering Tony Lip to protect herself from any problems that might arise on the trip, even though she has power over Tony.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study reveal that in the conversation between Dr. Shirley and Tony Lip, the two main characters use four politeness strategies: positive face politeness, negative face politeness, straightforward speech, and pseudo speech. In this context, the positive face politeness strategy tends to be used by the two main characters, which aims to create harmonious social interactions and strengthen their relationship. The analysis also revealed that Dr Shirley applied negative face politeness strategies more frequently, signaling her desire to reduce the power differential. The study also identified four factors that influence the use of politeness strategies in this movie's context: power, social distance, personality differences, and social culture.

In addition, based on the data obtained in this study, it is still limited to the analysis that has been done, and there is still room for further exploration. In future research, researchers can focus on various speech acts, including locution, illocution, and perlocution, and investigate their relationship with politeness strategies. In addition, future research can involve the appraisal approach in its analysis. Specifically, researchers can examine aspects such as affect, judgment, and appreciation.

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