

Face-Threatening Acts in *Never Rarely Sometimes Always* Film

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ABSTRACT

FTAs represent instances where communication potentially threatens one's self-image or social standing. This research analyzes the types of Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) in the film "Never Rarely Sometimes Always," categorizing them according to Brown and Levinson's theory: Threatening Hearer's Negative Face, Threatening Hearer's Positive Face, Threatening Speaker's Negative Face, and Threatening Speaker's Positive Face. This study also examines the politeness strategies used to mitigate FTAs, considering situational context factors outlined by Holmes. This study used qualitative and descriptive methods, and data was collected through documentation and note-taking, classifying utterances based on FTAs and politeness strategies. This study found that the most common FTA in the object of this study is threatening the hearer's negative face by making requests, advice, suggestions, compliments, offers, and orders. The threats to the hearer's positive face included disagreements, insults, ridicule, emotional topics, reprimands, and taboo topics. FTAs towards the speaker's face included expressing thanks, accepting offers, accepting apologies, apologies, and receiving compliments. Characters in the film used Positive Politeness and Negative Politeness strategies to mitigate FTAs.

Keywords: *Face-Threatening Acts, Never Rarely Sometimes Always Film, Politeness Strategies.*

ABSTRAK

FTA (Tindakan Mengancam Wajah) mewakili situasi di mana komunikasi berpotensi mengancam citra diri atau status sosial seseorang. Penelitian ini menganalisis jenis-jenis FTA dalam film "Never Rarely Sometimes Always," dengan mengkategorikannya berdasarkan teori Brown dan Levinson: Mengancam Wajah Negatif Pendengar, Mengancam Wajah Positif Pendengar, Mengancam Wajah Negatif Pembicara, dan Mengancam Wajah Positif Pembicara. Studi ini juga meneliti strategi kesantunan yang digunakan untuk mengurangi FTA, dengan mempertimbangkan faktor konteks situasional yang dikemukakan oleh Holmes. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dan deskriptif, dan data dikumpulkan melalui dokumentasi dan pencatatan, mengklasifikasikan ucapan berdasarkan FTA dan strategi kesantunan. Studi ini menemukan bahwa FTA yang paling umum dalam objek penelitian ini adalah mengancam wajah negatif pendengar dengan membuat permintaan, saran, nasihat, pujian, tawaran, dan perintah. Ancaman terhadap wajah positif pendengar termasuk ketidaksepakatan, penghinaan, ejekan, topik emosional, teguran, dan topik tabu. FTA terhadap wajah pembicara termasuk mengungkapkan terima kasih, menerima tawaran, menerima permintaan maaf, meminta maaf, dan menerima pujian. Karakter dalam film menggunakan strategi Kesantunan Positif dan Kesantunan Negatif untuk memitigasi FTA.

Kata Kunci: *Film Never Rarely Sometimes Always, Strategi Kesantunan, Tindakan Mengancam Wajah.*

INTRODUCTION

Communication constitutes the intricate process of exchanging information, ideas, and thoughts among two or more individuals (Leagans, 1961). Communication serves as a foundational element in human interaction. Its importance lies in its pivotal role in establishing and sustaining interpersonal relationships. This exchange manifests through various channels, encompassing verbal and nonverbal modes and diverse forms such as written, spoken, or visual communication. Effective communication emerged as a linchpin within human social interaction, enabling individuals to clearly articulate their thoughts, comprehend alternative perspectives, and foster trust and rapport.

The multifaceted nature of communication is particularly evident in its versatility across personal and professional contexts. It serves as a linchpin for collaboration, idea-sharing, and collective endeavors toward common objectives in professional settings. Communication and politeness are closely related in social interactions. According to Leech (2014), politeness constitutes selflessly considering the needs and feelings of others during communication to maintain positive social interactions. By incorporating politeness, individuals contribute to an atmosphere of mutual respect, courtesy, and constructive engagement, thereby fortifying the positive outcomes of communicative endeavors.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness is minimizing face loss, which refers to the negative social value that a person may lose in a particular situation. In other words, politeness shows respect and consideration for others' feelings and social status. Effective communication requires individuals to be polite and respectful towards each other, which helps to build trust and rapport.

Politeness is essential in social interactions as it helps to maintain social harmony and avoid conflict. Politeness in pragmatics explores the relationship between politeness and other aspects of communication, such as power, social distance, and context. Understanding the correlation between communication and politeness is essential for navigating situations and building positive relationships.

In pragmatics, the study of politeness is closely linked to Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs), contributing to our understanding of how individuals manage interpersonal relationships through language use. A face-threatening act (FTA) constitutes an interpersonal behavior that carries the potential to compromise an individual's positive or negative face. A positive face encompasses the aspiration to garner others' affection, appreciation, and approval. In contrast, the negative face pertains to the yearning for autonomy and freedom from external imposition and constraints. Individuals value their negative face when they seek to act independently and without interference. Brown and Levinson (1987) present a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals manage and minimizing the use of Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs). The strategies are called Politeness strategies and are organized into four distinct types, each varying in the degree of directness and potential face-threatening impact: bald-on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record.

Building on the theoretical foundations, this study is complemented by a review of relevant literature that discusses Face Threatening-Acts in different contexts. Previous studies by Aporbo (2022), Adistana et al. (2021), Slman and Betti (2020), Cahyaningrum (2022), Thoilah (2021), and Cahyadi (2023) have all utilized Brown and Levinson's theoretical

framework to understand and categorize FTAs. While these studies offered insights into various contexts, the current study focuses on analyzing the strategies of Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) in the film entitled “Never Rarely Sometimes Always,” which was released in 2020. The analysis explores how the strategies of face-threatening acts performed by the characters in the film, along with the context of the situation, affected their self-image and social values. This scholarly approach ensures a comprehensive examination of face-threatening acts, offering valuable insights into the complexities of communication within the film.

METHOD

The data in this study was obtained from a film entitled Never Rarely Sometimes Always (2020). This film was written and directed by Eliza Hittman. Specifically, the data was obtained from the film character's utterances, including Autumn, Skylar, Jasper, Mother, Ted, the Centre Director, the Financial Counselor, the Ticket Officer, Kelly, and the Male Student.

The author used the documentation method and note-taking technique to gather the necessary data. In analyzing the collected data, the author employed the descriptive qualitative method. The study used the theory of Face-Threatening Acts from Brown and Levison (1987). From the transcribed dialogue, the author highlighted and grouped the data collected into

Threatening Hearer Negative Face,
Threatening Hearer Positive Face,
Threatening Speaker Negative Face,

Threatening Speaker Positive Face, and Politeness strategies. The method and technique of presenting the data analysis were informal, giving descriptive explanations of the collected data.

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

According to Brown & Levinson (1987), face-threatening acts (FTAs) are communicative actions that infringe upon the self-esteem or autonomy of either the speaker or the listener. There are four primary types of FTAs, each posing a distinct threat to the interlocutors’ „face“: Threatening Hearer’s Negative Face, Threatening Hearer’s Positive Face, Threatening Speaker’s Negative Face, and Threatening Speaker’s Positive Face. In the film “Never Rarely Sometimes Always” these FTAs are exemplified through the characters’ utterances from their interactions. In mitigating the use of FTAs this study also analyzed several utterances that have the correlation from the FTAs data which are including Positive Politeness and Negative Politeness strategies.

Types of Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) performed by the characters

Data 1 Threatening Hearer’s Negative Face



Picture 1 Suggestion in Never Rarely Sometimes Always Film 00:54:31 – 00:54:54
AUTUMN : “Oh, wait. Um, if I do this, would my parents get some kind of bill?” FINANCIAL COUNSELOR : “They'd get a statement. That's correct.” AUTUMN : “Um, is there anything else I can do?” FINANCIAL COUNSELOR : “**Well, why** don't we just figure out what you can pay, and then the rest, we

can... figure out a way to supplement with private funds. All right?"

AUTUMN : “Okay.”

At that situation, what Autumn decided to do with the baby in her womb was completely unknown to her family members, except for her cousin, Skylar. Meanwhile, the medical procedures she would undergo were certainly not free and would require payment. In the conversation, Autumn is discussing financial matters related to her situation. She is concerned about potential bills her parents might receive. The Financial Counselor acknowledges that Autumn's parents would receive a statement if she proceeds with a certain action. However, the counselor doesn't stop there. She propose an alternative approach that can threaten Autumn's negative face called suggestion. The suggestion demonstrates the Financial Counselor's problem-solving mindset. Instead of dismissing Autumn's concern, they offer a solution: figure out what Autumn can pay. By suggesting a collaborative approach, the counselor aims to alleviate financial burden. The mention of supplementing with private funds shows flexibility and a willingness to explore options.

Data 2 Threatening Hearer's Positive Face



Picture 2 Emotional topic in Never Rarely Sometimes Always Film 00:20:32 – 00:20:51

CENTER DIRECTOR : “Are you okay?” AUTUMN : “Yeah, I'm fine.”

CENTER DIRECTOR : “**I know this is a lot to take in**, but I'm sure once you have that beautiful baby in your arms, you'll forget you ever had any doubts. **I know these things. I'm a mother.**”

AUTUMN : “**I just can't imagine that for myself.**”

At that moment, Autumn had just finished her ultrasound test, where it was confirmed that she was about ten weeks pregnant. Feelings of worry and confusion still lingered with Autumn at that time, and her pregnancy became a highly sensitive topic of discussion that can threaten her positive face. In facing an unexpected pregnancy, the Center Director acknowledges the emotional weight of the situation. The Center Director reassures Autumn that her doubts are normal. By mentioning the prospect of holding a beautiful baby, they evoke positive emotions. The statement “**I know these things. I'm a mother**” emphasizes their personal experience. Autumn expresses her inability to imagine that scenario for herself by saying “**I just can't imagine that for myself.**” But, the Center Director balances optimism with realism, acknowledging doubts while emphasizing the joy of motherhood.

Data 3 Threatening Speaker's Negative Face



Picture 3.15 Accepting of apology in Never Rarely Sometimes Always Film

01:20:49 – 01:21:08

SKYLAR : “Can we ask you something?”

JASPER : “Yeah, sure.”

SKYLAR : “We lost our bus tickets, and it got super late, and we don't have anyone to call.

Could we borrow a few bucks? Sorry.”

JASPER : **“Sure. No, no problem. I mean, yeah. Sure.”**

They had just finished having fun at the game center, but after they were done playing and karaoke, Jasper inquired about when their bus was scheduled to depart. Skylar chose to be honest, she felt extremely awkward and confessed that they had lost their tickets and needed extra money to purchase new ones. Skylar acknowledges the inconvenience and apologizes for the situation. Jasper’s initial **“Sure”** indicates his willingness to listen. When Skylar apologizes, Jasper’s follow-up statements, **“No problem”** and **“I mean, yeah. Sure,”** convey acceptance of Skylar’s request and apology which threaten his negative face. Jasper’s acceptance shows kindness and empathy which limited the way he could respond to what Skylar said to him.

Data 4 Threatening Speaker’s Positive Face



Picture 3.16 Apology in Never Rarely Sometimes Always Film

00:15:35 – 00:15:42

SKYLAR & AUTUMN : “Ten, 20, 30...” SKYLAR : “40, 50, 60...”

AUTUMN : “Wait, not at the same time. You'll mess me up.”

SKYLAR : **“Sorry.”**

Skylar and Autumn had just finished their shift at work. It was mandatory for them to count and deposit the cash register money at the end of their shift. While counting, they unintentionally counted simultaneously. Autumn requested that they count silently but separately, as counting together could lead to mistakes. Skylar’s immediate response, **“Sorry”** demonstrates her acknowledgment of the mistake and willingness to correct it which can threaten her positive face as a speaker. The act of apologizing reflects Skylar’s consideration for Autumn’s experience and her commitment to maintaining a Types of Politeness Strategies performed by the characters to mitigate the use of Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs)

Data 5 Positive Politeness



Picture 5 Be optimistic in Never Rarely Sometimes Always Film

00:20:32 – 00:20:53

CENTER DIRECTOR : “Are you okay?” AUTUMN : “Yeah, I'm fine.” CENTER

DIRECTOR : **“I know this is a lot to take in, but I'm sure once you have that beautiful baby in your arms, you'll forget you ever had any doubts. I know these things. I'm a mother.”**

AUTUMN : “I just can't imagine that for myself.”

After Autumn's ultrasound test, the Woman Center Director and Autumn are having a conversation. From the conversation show Autumn's feelings and doubts related to her unexpected pregnancy. The Center Director uses optimism to provide emotional support and encouragement to Autumn since what they discussed was an emotional topic that threatened Autumn's positive face. By expressing confidence that Autumn will forget her doubts once she holds her beautiful baby, the Center Director aims to alleviate any anxiety or uncertainty Autumn may be feeling. The optimistic statement acknowledges Autumn's emotional state while emphasizing a positive outcome that might mitigate the face-threatening acts (FTAs). harmonious interaction.

Data 6 Negative Politeness



Picture 6 Apologize in Never Rarely Sometimes Always Film

01:20:49 – 01:21:08

SKYLAR : **"I'm sorry, this is really awkward, but, um, Can we ask you something?"**

JASPER : "Yeah, sure."

SKYLAR : **"We lost our bus tickets, and it got super late, and we don't have anyone to call. Could we borrow a few bucks? Sorry."**

JASPER : "Sure. No, no problem. I mean, yeah. Sure."

Skylar's use of the apology strategy demonstrates her consideration for Jasper's feelings and her awareness of the potential imposition. In the conversations show that Jasper accepting Skylar apology that might threaten his negative face. The context in their conversation involves a practical need, and Skylar's approach aims to mitigate any potential face-threatening acts (FTAs) by being polite and respectful. By saying **"I'm sorry"** and **"sorry"** Skylar acknowledges the potential imposition of asking for money and shows respect for Jasper's time and willingness to help. Jasper responds positively, assuring Skylar that it's not a problem and offering assistance.

CONCLUSION

Face-threatening acts (FTAs) in social interactions refer to communicative actions that can undermine an individual's self-esteem or autonomy. Brown and Levinson (1987) identify four primary types of FTAs: Threatening Hearer's Negative Face, Threatening Hearer's Positive Face, Threatening Speaker's Negative Face, and Threatening Speaker's Positive Face. In the film "Never Rarely Sometimes Always," characters exemplify these FTAs through various forms of communication. The act of Threatening Hearer's Negative Face found in the movie consists of making request, advice, suggestion, compliment, offer, and order. In Threatening Hearer's Positive Face, the characters show acts of disagreement, insult, ridicule, emotional topic, reprimand, and taboo topics. The Threatening Speaker's Negative Face consists of expressing thanks, accepting an offer, and accepting an apology. In Threatening Speaker's Positive Face, the characters through the act of making an apology and accepting a compliment. To mitigate the FTAs, the characters employ politeness strategies, categorized as Positive Politeness and Negative Politeness. These strategies utilized by the characters to navigate social interactions and maintain face while performing FTAs, with the context of the situation playing a crucial role in determining the appropriateness and effectiveness of the employed politeness strategies. The act done by the characters in mitigating the use of FTAs using the Politeness Strategies are shown in their utterances, including joke, be optimistic, assert reciprocity, include S and H in the activity, give gift to H, be pessimistic and apologize. The study identified two types of politeness strategies: Bald-on Record and Off-Record. However, the data found from the film in these strategies did not correlate with the conversation data used to analyze face-threatening acts (FTAs) in the film. Therefore, it cannot be analyzed further in this study.

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