Analyzing Dr. Faustus' Character in Christopher Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus" Through the Lens of Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory

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Abstract

This paper examines Dr. Faustus in Christopher Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus" through Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, focusing on how his use of politeness strategies reflects his personality, social interactions, and eventual downfall. Utilizing a qualitative methodology, the study analyzes Faustus's dialogues, highlighting the complexity of his character and shifting social dynamics. The findings reveal Faustus's frequent switches between politeness strategies, correlating with his internal conflicts and evolving relationships. This research offers a novel perspective on Marlowe's character, contributing to the broader understanding of politeness theory in literary analysis and emphasizing the role of linguistic strategies in character development.

Keywords: Pragmatics, politeness theory, Brown and Levinson, Dr. Faustus, Christopher Marlowe

INTRODUCTION

Politeness strategies are tools to carry the speech acts as suitable as conceivable. (Manik & Hutagaol, 2015). Politeness is usually a culturally diverse social behaviour. This means that what is polite in one culture may be disrespectful in another. The word (Im)politeness is valued in the present, and past and may struggled over in the future. (Watts ,2003; Aydınoğlu, 2013). This contradicts Brown and Levinson's belief that civility is universal. They generalized after trying politeness tactics on a group. The individuals are required to engage in verbal communication with one another. Individuals must possess the ability to select diverse communicative methods to foster a positive relationship between interlocutors. (Wang, 2010). Politeness aims to behave accurately in shared communication and treat the speakers well. (Simaremare, et al, 2021). Additionally, they must employ tactics to effectively establish a meaningful discourse. These tactics are sometimes referred to as politeness strategies in academic literature. Text of Fictional literature has complex communicative acts between writer and reader, and they frequently portray communicational codes among characters. Both are liable to an inquiry of politeness. (Jucker, 2016).

The model proposed by Brown and Levinson comprises two distinct components: The initial segment pertains to the foundational theory concerning the essence of politeness and its operational dynamics within interpersonal communication. Politeness strategies are used to make smooth communication and harmonious social bonds in communication. Politeness methods are devised to preserve the hearers' "face". People utilise politeness strategies to facilitate communication and maintain happy interpersonal relationships. (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Brown and Levinson, (1987) employ the concept of "Face," which they draw from Goffman's, (1967) work and the English colloquial expression associated with feelings of embarrassment, humiliation, or loss of social standing. The "positive face," and the "negative face. The term "face" refers to a person's public image. (Nihayati, 2018). Politeness theory gives us a sketch of how politeness strategies made individuals able to manage face-saving and face-threatening acts. (Battezzato, 2020; Shen, 2023). Furthermore, it serves to illustrate commonalities between the speaker and the listener. Politeness is skillfully considerate to overcome the intricacies of other individuals in any communication. (Hammond, 2017).

The relevancy of Brown and Levinson's, (1987) politeness theory extends to both oral and written forms of communication. This study endeavours to employ theoretical analysis in examining the character of Dr. Faustus in Christopher Marlowe's play, "Doctor Faustus." In this qualitative study, the researchers investigated politeness techniques in selected excerpts from Dr. Faustus. The researcher employed Brown and Levinson's politeness theory to scrutinize the dialogues of Dr. Faustus throughout the play.

Through this analysis, the researchers uncovered the range of strategies, both constructive and detrimental, that he employs in his relentless pursuit of personal desires and power.

Statement of the Problem

Recent researches prove that the evaluation of (im)politeness in literature has dig out by statisticians. (McIntyre and Bousfield, 2017). The application of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987) to "Dr. Faustus" serves as a strategic approach to delve deeper into the complex interplay of politeness, power, and the tactics used for face-saving within the narrative framework of the play. This research aims to dissect how characters in the drama navigate social interactions through various politeness strategies, whether to assert dominance, maintain their dignity, or protect the dignity of others. This study seeks to illuminate the role of characters' politeness strategies in the unfolding of the plot, the evolution of their relationships, and their individual character development. It further endeavours to identify the cultural or situational elements that might affect their decisions in adhering to or deviating from established norms of politeness. By applying Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework to "Dr Faustus," the intention is to deepen our grasp of the socio-linguistic forces at work within the play, thereby providing a more layered understanding of the characters' drives and the overarching themes of power, morality, and temptation that permeate the narrative. This analytical perspective not only sheds light on the playwright's creative vision but also enriches the interpretation of the play, offering a comprehensive view of its socio-linguistic intricacies.

Research Questions
- What politeness strategies are identified in the character "Dr. Faustus" in Christopher Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus"?
- How far does Brown and Levinson's theory (1987) apply to politeness strategies used in Dr. Faustus' character in Christopher Marlow's Dr. Faustus?

Objectives of the Research
- To identify the politeness strategies in the character "Dr. Faustus" in Christopher Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus"
- To know how far Brown and Levinson's theory (1987) applies to politeness strategies used in Dr. Faustus' character in Christopher Marlow's Dr. Faustus.

Literature Review

2.1 Dr. Faustus
In Christopher Marlowe's play "Dr. Faustus," the character of Faustus embodies the exemplary tragic hero, driven by insatiable ambition and intellectual curiosity. Faustus, a highly learned scholar, becomes disillusioned with traditional fields of study and turns to necromancy in a desperate quest for ultimate knowledge and power. His fatal flaw lies in his hubristic desire to transcend human limitations, leading him to strike a pact with the devil, Mephistopheles. Despite moments of remorse and self-awareness, Faustus ultimately succumbs to temptation, sealing his own tragic fate. Through Faustus, Marlowe explores timeless themes of morality, free will, and the consequences of unchecked ambition.

Drama
Drama, originating from the Greek word "drama," which signifies acting, doing, or reacting, is intrinsically an act or action. This literary form not only engages audiences through expressive dialogues and performances but also offers a profound exploration of human experiences and societal dynamics. Through its staged representation, drama serves as a powerful medium for reflecting on human nature and the complexities of life. (Hasan, et al.2021).

Pragmatics
Levinson (1983) defines that pragmatics is the study of language use, that is the study of relation between language and context which is basic to an account of language understanding which involves the making of inferences which will connect what is said to what is mutually assumed or what has been said before. it is a branch of linguistics which is focuses how utterances communicate meaning in context.

Politeness
Politeness is one of the most important aspects of human communication which arise from social interaction. Politeness theory is firstly systematized by Brown and Levinson in 1987. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness theories are developed to account for face-to-face interaction. Definition of Politeness According to Lakoff as cited in Leech (2014) stated that politeness as "a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange".

Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987) (Main approach of this study)
Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987) serves as a cornerstone in the analysis of social interactions, particularly in understanding the dynamics of politeness in communication. Their theory revolves around the concept of 'face,' which they define as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself". It consists of three core concepts: face, face-threatening acts (FTAs), and politeness strategies. Face represents individuals' public self-image while every utterance in a dialogue is

potentially a face-threatening act (FTA), challenging either the positive or negative face of the interlocutors. Politeness strategies identify four main politeness strategies i-e bald-on-record strategies, positive politeness, negative politeness and Off-record. Bald-on-record strategies are direct and unambiguous, often used when the face threat is minimal or irrelevant. Positive politeness strategies aim to build rapport and express friendliness, thereby reducing social distance. Negative politeness strategies show respect and deference, mitigating imposition and acknowledging the interlocutor's right to autonomy. Off-record strategies are indirect, leaving room for multiple interpretations and thus minimizing the speaker's responsibility for any potential face threat (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Empirical Studies

Sari (2023) conducted a study to describe the types and functions of politeness strategies in Lorraine Hansberry's play "A Raisin in the Sun." Utilizing discourse analysis and applying Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, Sari identified several instances of politeness strategies within the play. These strategies were employed to maintain relationships, whether with familiar or unfamiliar individuals, highlighting the play's nuanced approach to social interactions and communication (Sari, 2023).

Lamanda (2023) examined the politeness strategies in the movie "Aladdin," which narrates the story of a commoner named Aladdin who falls in love with a princess named Jasmine. The study aimed to identify the types of politeness strategies used by the two main characters and the factors influencing their use of these strategies. Employing the pragmatic approach theory from Leech (1993) and the politeness theory from Brown and Levinson (1987), this qualitative study used descriptive methods to analyze the data. The findings revealed that the two main characters utilized politeness strategies in their dialogues to foster close relationships and resolve misunderstandings.

Damara and Romala (2022) conducted a pragmatic study of the script of the short film "Two Distant Strangers" on Netflix using Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987). The film features three key characters: Carter, Merk, and Perri. This research explored the various politeness strategies employed by these characters and the sociological factors influencing their use in the film. The analysis demonstrated a relationship between the characters' use of politeness strategies and relevant sociological factors.

The research conducted by Khan and Aadil (2022) aimed to investigate the utilization of various politeness strategies in Pakistani morning shows, focusing on "The Morning Show" and "Ek Nayee Subah with Farah." Employing Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies framework, the study sought to identify the most frequently employed strategies and explore the factors influencing their usage. The findings revealed that hosts and guests frequently utilized all fifteen sub-strategies of positive politeness to maintain close relationships.

Research Methodology

The research focuses on investigating the politeness strategies used by Dr Faustus in Christopher Marlowe's "Dr Faustus" through the lens of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987). The researcher uses purposive sampling which is a non-probability sampling method where the researcher selects specific subjects or units based on their relevance to the research question, ensuring that the sample effectively addresses the research objectives and provides rich, pertinent data. The data for this study is collected from the text book of Dr. Faustus by Christopher Marlowe. The data is then analyzed using politeness theory of Brown and Levinson. The script is evaluated qualitatively.

Results and Discussion

I. Bald-on-Record

This strategy involves a direct and clear manner of communication without any attempt to minimize the imposition. It is typically used in situations where there is a high level of urgency or when the speaker's social power justifies such directness (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Extract 1:

"Bid Oncaymaeon farewell, Galen come"

Dr. Faustus bluntly rejects his current studies of philosophy and welcomes a shift to medicine. This is a clear example of "bald-on-record" politeness strategy, where Faustus uses direct and unambiguous language without any mitigating devices. His straightforward command to "bid Oncaymaeon farewell" indicates a decisive break from one field of study and an enthusiastic embrace of another. This blunt transition highlights Faustus' restless nature and his dissatisfaction with traditional fields of knowledge. By directly commanding the farewell to one discipline and the acceptance of another, Faustus illustrates his desire for immediate and profound changes in his quest for ultimate knowledge and power. This helps to establish the theme of the play: the relentless and often reckless pursuit of knowledge and power without regard to consequences.

Extract 2:

"Physic, farewell!—Where is Justinian?"

Faustus directly dismisses the study of medicine ("physic") and turns to the study of law with the abrupt question "Where is Justinian?" This bald-on-record statement is another example of Faustus' direct approach. By using "farewell," he again clearly and concisely ends his engagement with one field, demonstrating his impatience and ambition. Faustus' abrupt dismissal of medicine in favor of law underlines his capricious nature and his perpetual quest for something greater. This clear-cut rejection of one field for

another without any hedging or polite phrasing underscores his disdain for traditional limits of human knowledge and his hunger for omnipotence. This contributes to the play's theme by showing Faustus' constant dissatisfaction and his impulsive decisions in the pursuit of limitless power.

Extract 3:

"Then fear not, Faustus, but be resolute, And try the uttermost magic can perform."

Faustus uses a direct motivational statement to encourage himself. The imperative "fear not" and the clear directive "be resolute" highlight his determination. The bald-on-record strategy here reflects his firm resolve and fearless pursuit of magical knowledge, reinforcing his ambitious and daring character.

In Christopher Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus," Faustus's use of bald-on-record politeness strategies reveals much about his character. This linguistic approach highlights his confidence, authority, and impatience with social niceties, emphasizing his intellectual arrogance and control over supernatural forces.

2. Positive politeness

This strategy seeks to minimize the distance between interlocutors by expressing friendliness and showing interest in the listener's well-being. It often includes compliments, expressions of solidarity, and attempts to establish common ground (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Extract 1:

FAUSTUS.

Settle thy studies, Faustus, and begin

To sound the depth of that thou wilt profess;

Having commenced, be a divine in show,

Yet level at the end of every art,

And live and die in Aristotle's works.

Faustus employs positive politeness towards himself, which is a unique application of this strategy. He uses imperative forms ("Settle thy studies," "begin") and declarative statements ("Having commenced, be a divine in show") to provide self-encouragement and motivation. The use of imperatives here functions to minimize any self-doubt by framing his academic pursuit as a settled decision, thus enhancing his positive face. The reference to "Aristotle's works" invokes a sense of intellectual solidarity with esteemed scholarship, further bolstering his self-image. By speaking to himself in a friendly, motivational manner, Faustus reduces the internal threat to his positive face, maintaining his self-esteem and commitment to his goals.

Extract 2:

FAUSTUS. Nay, sweet Mephistophilis, fetch me one, for I will have one.

Addressing Mephistophilis as "sweet" is a clear example of positive politeness. It softens the command by creating a veneer of friendliness. Linguistically, the endearment "sweet" diminishes the imposition, making the request seem less demanding. This aligns with Brown and Levinson's positive politeness strategy by emphasizing friendliness and mutual respect, which makes the request more palatable and reduces the potential threat to Mephistophilis' face.

Extract 3:

FAUSTUS.

Now would I have a book where I might see all

characters and planets of the heavens, that I might know

their motions and dispositions.

In this extract, Faustus uses a respectful tone and indirectness in his request. The phrase "Now would I have" is deferential and mitigates the imposition. Linguistically, this indirect phrasing aligns with positive politeness strategies by showing consideration for the other's position. According to Brown and Levinson, such strategies minimize the threat to the listener's face by presenting the request in a less direct manner, thereby fostering a respectful interaction.

Marlowe uses Faustus' application of positive politeness strategies to reveal his character's ambitions, insecurities, and self-perception. By expressing friendliness and solidarity towards himself and others, Faustus aims to minimize threats to his positive face, thereby maintaining his self-esteem and reinforcing his grandiose self-image.

Negative politeness

This strategy is more cautious, aiming to respect the listener's desire not to be imposed upon. It often involves formal language, hedging, and indirect requests, thus maintaining the listener's negative face by showing deference and respect (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Extract 1:

"Wagner, commend me to my dearest friends,
The German Valdes and Cornelius;
Request them earnestly to visit me."

In this extract, Faustus uses negative politeness to mitigate the imposition of his request. He uses indirect speech acts by saying "commend me" instead of directly telling Wagner to call his friends. The use of "earnestly request" further softens the imposition, indicating that Faustus is aware of the social boundaries and is attempting to respect them. This strategy aligns with Brown and Levinson's concept of negative politeness, which involves deference and indirectness to mitigate face-threatening acts (FTAs).

Extract 2:

"Their conference will be a greater help to me
Than all my labours, plod I ne'er so fast."

Faustus employs negative politeness by acknowledging the superiority of Valdes and Cornelius's assistance over his own efforts. By stating "a greater help to me," he minimizes the potential threat to their negative face by indirectly complimenting their abilities. This deference serves to elevate their status, thus reducing the imposition of asking for their help and maintaining social harmony.

Extract 3:

"Know that your words have won me at the last
To practice magic and concealed arts:
Yet not your words only, but mine own fantasy
That will receive no object, for my head
But ruminates on necromantic skill."

Faustus's speech here demonstrates negative politeness through the indirect acknowledgment of influence. By attributing his decision partly to Valdes and Cornelius's persuasion ("your words have won me") and partly to his own inclination ("mine own fantasy"), he shows deference to their persuasive power while maintaining his own autonomy. This balancing act reduces the imposition on his friends by sharing the responsibility for his decision.

Extract 4:

FAUSTUS. But may I raise up spirits when I please?

The use of "may I" instead of a direct imperative softens the request, showing deference to Mephistophilis's authority. This is a classic negative politeness strategy, as it frames the question in a way that seeks permission, thus acknowledging Mephistophilis's power and reducing the imposition on him. By being indirect, Faustus respects the listener's negative face.

Faustus consistently utilizes negative politeness strategies to minimize imposition, show deference, and maintain a respectful tone. His indirect language, respectful addresses, and polite requests demonstrate an awareness of social hierarchies and a desire to navigate them gracefully.

Off-Record (Indirect) Politeness Strategies

A Strategies that remove the speaker from imposing directly, often using hints or ambiguous statements.

Extract 1:

> A sound magician is a mighty god: Here, Faustus, tire thy brains to gain a deity. Wagner!

Faustus indirectly expresses his ambition to become a powerful magician by equating a magician to a god. This off-record strategy involves the use of metaphor and indirect encouragement. By stating that a sound magician is akin to a deity, Faustus subtly reveals his grand aspirations without a direct declaration. The linguistic impact is that it emphasizes his desire for transcendence and ultimate control, framing his pursuit of magic as a noble and divine quest, thus maintaining a polite tone while conveying his lofty ambitions.

Extract 2:

> Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please, Resolve me of all ambiguities, Perform what desperate enterprise I will?

Faustus hints at his intention to use spirits for his gain by posing rhetorical questions. This off-record strategy involves using hypotheticals to explore his ambitions indirectly. By framing his desires as questions, Faustus avoids making explicit statements, allowing him to ponder the possibilities of magic subtly. The linguistic effect is that it conveys his excitement and curiosity about the potential of magic, showcasing his imaginative and daring nature without direct imposition.

Extract 3:

> I see there's virtue in my heavenly words; Who would not be proficient in this art?

Faustus indirectly expresses his desire to master the art of magic by marveling at its power. This off-record strategy employs rhetorical questioning and positive assessment to convey his ambition subtly. By framing his desire as a logical admiration for the art, Faustus avoids making an explicit declaration of intent. The linguistic effect is that it reveals his admiration for magic and his aspiration to excel, showcasing his pursuit of knowledge and power through subtlety and intellectual curiosity.

Extract 4:

> FAUSTUS. I cannot sell him so: if thou likest him for fifty, take him.

Faustus indirectly negotiates the price of the horse by using a conditional statement ("if thou likest him for fifty, take him"). This Off-Record strategy allows him to set terms without making a direct demand or refusal. By framing the negotiation conditionally, Faustus reduces the confrontational aspect of the transaction, making it more polite and flexible.

Dr. Faustus utilizes off-record politeness strategies to navigate his complex internal dialogues and express his ambitions, doubts, and frustrations indirectly. This linguistic approach, rooted in Brown and Levinson's (1978) framework of politeness strategies, allows him to maintain a sense of humility, avoid direct confrontation, and subtly convey his intellectual superiority and dissatisfaction with conventional fields of study.

Findings

In Christopher Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus," the protagonist Dr. Faustus employs a range of linguistic strategies based on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, which deeply enhances the understanding of his character and motivations within the play. The theory outlines how individuals manage social relationships and face threats through various politeness strategies: bald-on-record, positive, negative, and off-record. Faustus's use of "bald-on-record" politeness, characterized by direct and unequivocal language, reflects his assertive nature and high ambitions. This approach is evident in his outright rejections of conventional knowledge and divine salvation, and his stark commands to Mephistophilis and others. Such directness not only highlights his desire for power but also foreshadows his tragic downfall, linking his communication style to his fate. Conversely, Faustus also utilizes "positive politeness" strategies to enhance his social bonds and self-image. Through friendly imperatives, terms of endearment, and expressions of gratitude, he maintains his dignity and forges connections, especially in interactions with peers and in the master-servant dynamic with Mephistophilis. These methods soften his transitions, such as from philosophy to medicine, bolstering his confidence and fortifying his self-esteem amidst his grandiose visions. Moreover, "negative politeness" strategies are prominently featured in Faustus's deferential and indirect speech, where he uses respectful terms and frames his requests as questions to

minimize impositions and show consideration. This tactful language enables him to maintain respectability and navigate complex social interactions, despite his darker ambitions. Lastly, Faustus's use of "off-record" politeness through ambiguous and metaphorical language allows him to subtly convey his intellectual superiority and disdain for traditional disciplines. By framing his criticisms through philosophical quotes and employing rhetorical questions, he subtly critiques established fields while elevating his pursuits in magic and necromancy. Together, these linguistic strategies not only reveal the complexities of Faustus's character but also emphasize the pragmatic aspects of his actions and decisions. Marlowe crafts these interactions to reflect Faustus's manipulation of language to navigate social dynamics, pursue his ambitions, and manage his tragic trajectory, enriching the play's exploration of human ambition, power, and the consequences of overreaching. This nuanced appreciation of Faustus through the lens of politeness theory underscores its utility in literary studies, offering profound insights into character psychology and thematic development within the narrative.

Conclusion

The detailed analysis of Dr. Faustus' character through the application of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory in Christopher Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus" profoundly enriches our understanding of the play's central figure. Faustus' utilization of various politeness strategies—bald-on-record, positive, negative, and off-record—reveals the complexity of his character and the intricate dynamics of his social interactions. His bold, direct communication and occasional deference illustrate his strategic manipulation of language to assert dominance, build social bonds, or mitigate threats to his own dignity and the dignity of others. These linguistic tactics not only showcase his ambitious, authoritative nature but also foreshadow his tragic downfall, drawing a thematic link between his communicative style and his ultimate fate. Moreover, this linguistic perspective highlights the richness of Marlowe's text, demonstrating how the nuanced use of politeness strategies can reflect broader themes of ambition, power, and the perils of overreaching in Renaissance humanism. Ultimately, this analysis not only deepens our appreciation of Faustus as a multifaceted character but also underscores the value of politeness theory in uncovering layers of meaning within literary texts, enhancing both our literary and psychological understanding of complex dramatic figures.

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