ABSTRACT

YUDANTI, THEODORA PRAMASITHA. (2023). **Otis Milburn's Reason for the Application of Politeness Strategies in *Sex Education* Netflix Series Season 1.** Yogyakarta: Department of English Letters, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Sanata Dharma.

A language is a communication tool that allows people to form positive relationships. A conversation takes place within the context of spoken communication. Communication is related to pragmatics because it deals with context. Pragmatics is the study of meaning in context (Yule, 1996). Contextual meaning influences what is said and how speakers arrange what they want to say based on who, when, where, and under what circumstances. People must think about the language they use to communicate. This can be accomplished by concentrating on politeness strategies. According to the explanation, the *Sex Education* Netflix Series Season 1 contains different politeness strategies and the reason affecting those strategies.

The writer formulates two research objectives. The first research objectives are, the writer would like to find out and identify the types of politeness strategies applied by Otis Milburn in the *Sex Education* Netflix Series. The second research objectives of this study are, to figure out why Otis Milburn chose those strategies.

In this study, the writer uses the utterances of Otis Milburn in the *Sex Education* Netflix Series Season 1. Because of the two research questions, this study used the pragmatic approach. The writer collected only all the utterances of Otis Milburn when he has a conversation with his client as a sex therapist in specific politeness. After that, the data were classified into some categories, namely bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record. The next step was to analyze why Otis Milburn chose those strategies in Sex Education Netflix Series. This was done by combining the types of politeness strategies with reasons affecting Otis Milburn's chose those strategies.

This study shows 94 data in which positive politeness became the highest politeness used by Otis. Thus, it is followed by negative politeness and bald on record and off record. Otis chooses payoffs to get the hearer's trust and avoid ambiguity and the danger of being misunderstood. Using payoffs in positive politeness is used to minimize the debt implications in terms of request, reciprocity, and ongoing relationship. Using payoffs in negative politeness is used to satisfy the hearer's negative face and avoid indicating a future debt as the reason. Payoffs in off record are used to avoid taking responsibility for a possibly damaging interpretation and get credit for being non-coercive and tactful. The reason for relative is used when the power relationship between the participants affects the degree of politeness to avoid taking responsibility for a possibly damaging interpretation. The rank of imposition used to the imposition is significant. The main character prefers to speak more politely and indirectly in conversation. Lastly, the integrating payoffs and sociological variables are the combinations of payoffs in each type of politeness strategy and social distance, relative power, or the rank of impositions. From the analysis, the reasons of payoffs are widely used in positive politeness which shows that he uses politeness according to the relationship he has and also the context of the problems he faces with his hearers.

Keywords: *pragmatics, politeness strategy*, *Sex Education, Netflix*

ABSTRAK

YUDANTI, THEODORA PRAMASTHA. (2023). **Otis Milburn's Reason for the Application of Politeness Strategies in *Sex Education* Netflix Series Season 1.** Yogyakarta: Program Studi Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Sastra, Universitas Sanata Dharma.

Bahasa adalah alat komunikasi yang memungkinkan orang untuk membentuk hubungan positif satu sama lain. Percakapan terjadi dalam konteks. Komunikasi terkait dengan pragmatik karena berhubungan dengan konteks. Pragmatik adalah studi tentang makna dalam konteks (Yule, 1996) Makna kontekstual mempengaruhi apa yang dikatakan dan bagaimana pembicara mengatur apa yang ingin mereka katakan berdasarkan siapa, kapan, di mana, dan dalam keadaan apa. Orang harus memikirkan bahasa yang mereka gunakan untuk berkomunikasi Hal ini dapat dicapai dengan berfokus pada strategi kesantunan. Menurut penjelasan, *Sex Education* Netflix *Series Season* 1 berisi stratei kesantunan dan juga alasan yang mempengaruhi strategi

Penulis memiliki dua tujuan penelitian. Tujuan penelitian yang pertama adalah penulis ingin mengetahui dan mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis strategi kesopanan yang diucapkan oleh Otis Milburn dalam *Sex Education* Netflix *Series Season* 1. Tujuan penelitian kedua dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui mengapa Otis Milburn memilih strategi tersebut.

Dalam penelitian ini, penulis menggunakan ucapan Otis Milburn dalam *Sex Education Netflix Series Season* 1 sebagai data. Karena kedua pertanyaan penelitian tersebut, penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan pragmatis. Penulis mengumpulkan semua ucapan Otis Milburn yang mengandung strategi kesopanan ketika dia berbicara dengan kliennya sebagai terapis seks. Setelah itu, data diklasifikasikan ke dalam beberapa kategori, yaitu *bald on record*, kesopanan positif, negatif, dan kesopanan *off record*. Selanjutnya penulis menganalisis mengapa Otis Milburn memilih strategi tersebut. Hal ini dilakukan dengan menggabungkan jenis strategi kesopanan dengan alasan yang mempengaruhi pemilihan strategi tersebut oleh Otis Milburn.

Penelitian ini memiliki 94 data. Data yang paling banyak muncul adalah *positive politeness*. Diikuti oleh *negative politeness*, *bald on record*, *dan off record*. Otis memilih payoffs agar mendapatkan kepercayaan dari pendengar, menghindari ambiguitas dan kesalah pahaman. Pada *positive payoffs* digunakan untuk meminimalkan implikasi hutang dalam permintaan istilah, timbal balik, dan hubungan yang berkelanjutan. sedangkan *negative payoffs* digunakan untuk memenuhi kemauan *negative face* pendengar dan menghindari indikasi hutang. *bald on record* digunakan untuk menghindari tanggung jawab. Ia juga mendapatkan pujian karena tidak memaksa. *Payoffs off record* digunakan ketika hubungan para karakter memengaruhi tingkat kesopanan agar terhindar dari tanggung jawab yang mungkin merusak. *Payoffs* ini digunakan untuk hal signifikan, ia lebih suka berbicara dengan cara sopan dan tidak langsung. Terakhir, mengintegrasikan payoffs dan variabel sosiologis. Dari hasil analisis, *payoffs* yang banyak digunakan dalam *positive politeness* menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan kesantunan sesuai dengan relasi yang dimilikinya dan konteks permasalahan yang ia hadapi dengan para pendengarnya.

Kata kunci: *pragmatics, politeness strategy*, *Sex Education, Netflix*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A.   Background of the Study

Communication is an instrument used by individuals in everyday life to establish good relations with others. People can build good relationships with one another through communication. It refers to Wardhaugh & Fuller (2015) that it is a code when two or more people communicate with each other (p. 3). They need language as a tool in order to achieve their goal. Language is an essential means of communication. Individuals communicate with one another through language to express their feelings, ideas, and thoughts. It is followed by Hubley in Natanael and Putranti (2019, p. 101), who state communication affects the flow of information, including knowledge, ideas, skills, and emotions between individuals.

Not only is written communication important, but so is oral communication. There is a conversation in the context of oral communication. Conversations between two or more people might show an idea and a specific goal. It follows Wardhaugh & Fuller (2015), who says that conversation shows how individuals achieve common purposes by saying certain things (p. 241). A conversation follows the context of communication. It is related to pragmatic since communication deals with context.

"Pragmatics is a study of contextual meaning" (Yule, 1996, p.3). Contextual meaning influences what is said and considers how speakers arrange what they wish to express depending on who they speak with, when, where, and under what circumstances. People have to be careful with using language in communication. This can be accomplished by focusing on politeness strategies. The politeness strategy is frequently

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used in communication (Rahayuningsih *et al.,* 2020, p. 87). The politeness strategy discusses taking care of other people's feelings and understanding the situation when communicating. People must pay attention to a conversation with other people in terms of language and facial expressions. In politeness strategies, the writer will find out how people use language when communicating with another person. As stated by Thomas (1995), "politeness in pragmatics is not concerned with whether or not speakers are genuinely motivated by a desire to be nice to one another; all we can do is observe what is said and the effect of what is said on the hearer" (p. 157).

Politeness is also essential to education (Rahayuningsih *et al.*, 2020, p. 86). Since politeness strategies are an essential aspect of education and are commonly used in communication, they can be classified as pragmatic. This pragmatic phenomenon can be found in a series on the Netflix platform entitled *Sex Education*. According to the explanation, the writer decides to use the *Sex Education* Netflix series as an object to analyze the applications of politeness strategies. In this series, it can be found sexual orientation, safe sex, and the harmful consequences of free sex. It is followed by the review from Cumming in Aruah (2021, p.49). The *Sex Education* Series addresses the point of view on sexual identity, which offers openness and diversity.

Sex Education Series is a British comedy-drama that aired on Netflix. This series is a story of the teen life of Otis Milburn (Asa Butterfield), who is not popular at his school and has a lateness problem with sexual matters. He also has a social issue in his life. Otis Milburn is a teen who understands sex education because his mother is a sex therapist. His knowledge about sex is utilized by his friend to get sex education. Otis believes he is as skilled as his mother in diagnosing and treating sexual issues in people (Aruah, 2021, p. 48).

This object is the most challenging study for the writer to do for various reasons. The writer chooses this object because the politeness strategy can be shown in a communication made by the main character, Otis Milburn, to his schoolmates regarding sex education. The second reason is this series shows many shreds of evidence in each episode employed by Otis Milburn using politeness strategies. This object also describes the application of politeness strategies within the context of sex education in the conversation when Otis Milburn opens a sex advice clinic with his classmate (Maeve). For example, 'Sex and relationship therapist, thank you very much. This example represents the politeness when Otis Milburn talks with Eric Effiong. The language employed in the *Sex Education* Netflix series is both formal and informal. The main character's conversation when he became an illegal sex therapist in the series is interesting to be explored and analyzed, especially about politeness strategies. The last reason is that this research is worth analyzing because research on politeness strategies in *Sex Education* Netflix Series is not discussed yet. Moreover, it is different from the previous thesis or journal articles.

B.   Problem Formulation

Based on the previous background, this study has two research questions. The following research questions are:

1. What types of politeness strategies are applied by Otis Milburn in the *Sex Education* Netflix Series Season 1?

2. What are the reasons for politeness strategies applied by Otis Milburn in *Sex Education* Netflix Series Season 1?

C.   Objectives of The Study

The objectives of the study define based on problem formulation. Two objectives of the study will be discussed. The first is to ascertain and identify the types of politeness strategies applied by Otis Milburn in the *Sex Education* Netflix series season 1. The second objective is to figure out why Otis Milburn chooses those strategies in *Sex Education* Netflix Series Season 1.

D.   Definition of Terms

This study examines the types of politeness strategies applied by Otis Milburn in the *Sex Education* Netflix Series Season 1, and the reason did Otis Milburn choose those strategies**.** There are some terms that the writer will be used in analyzing the problem formulation to avoid any misunderstandings.

According to Yule (1996), **politeness** is how one communicates an awareness of another person's face. It shows awareness of another person's face in terms of respect. Frequently, terms such as friendliness, friendship, and solidarity describe respect for social closeness (p.60). The writer would like to figure out what politeness is that applied by one of the main characters in the *Sex Education* Netflix series season 1.

Politeness strategy can be defined as a strategy to soften a face-threatening act. There are four politeness strategies, according to Yule (1996), which are the bald on-record strategy, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategy (pp. 63-66). This study employs a politeness strategy in dealing with the language usage of Otis Milburn in the *Sex Education* Netflix Series Season 1.

Sex education provides knowledge on sex's genital-centered. In addition, it involves balanced attitudes, transferring correct values, and good perspective (Bhonsle &

Bhonsle, 2016, p.13). Sex education is important when children grow into adults who will use sexuality maturely and responsibly. It shows in the character of Otis Milburn when he is growing into an adult and faces maturity in sex education at his age.

Netflix is a streaming video service that serves over two hundred million internet-connected devices with access to various award-winning television shows, films, anime, and documentaries (Netflix, 2021). The viewer can watch as much as they want on their own devices. This is the platform on which *Sex Education* is aired. Not everyone can access this platform because Netflix is a paid platform. The access to the series is limited to the people who are subscribing to Netflix. However, the content of the series is not censored.
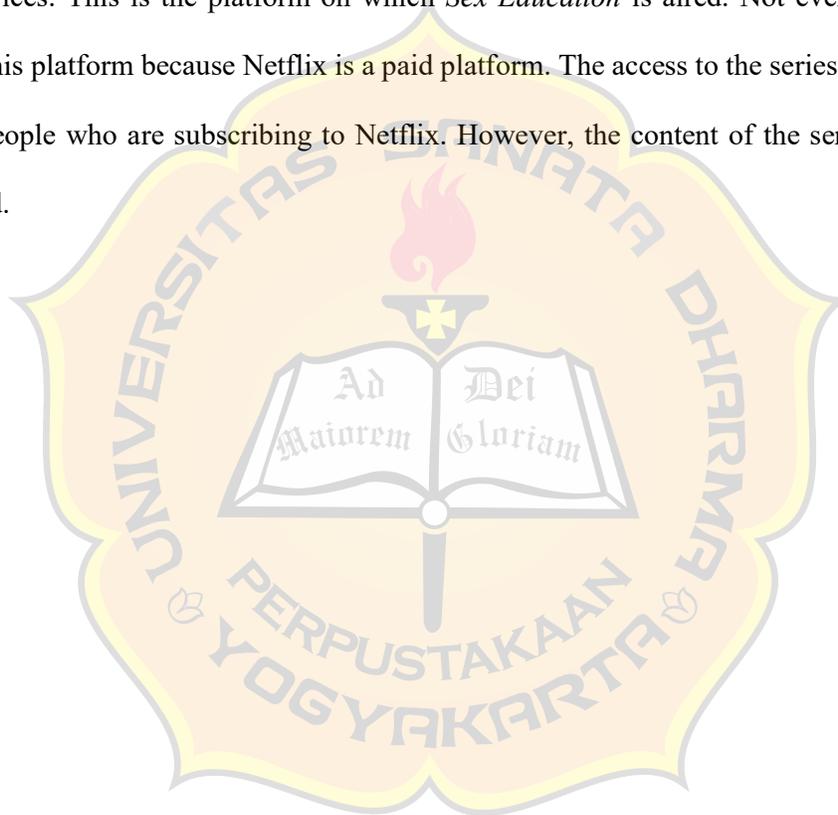
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter provides a review of studies related to the present research. The writer explains the review of related studies, the review of related theories, and the theoretical framework. The writer will use pragmatics, politeness strategies, the types of politeness, and the reasons for the use of the types of politeness strategies to figure out the answer to the problem that has been formulated in the problem formulation.

A.   Review of Related Studies

Some researchers have discussed a study of politeness. In this section, the writer finds two journal articles and two undergraduate theses about politeness strategies in a movie and series related to this study. The first is a journal article from LLT Journal (A Journal on Language and Language Teaching) written by Miwita Rosari (2016). This journal discusses the types of politeness strategies in *The Great Debaters* movie using the theory of Brown and Levinson (1987) and the factors that affect the characters' politeness in speaking using the theory of Bernard Spolsky (1998). The result of this journal article is the characters in the movie used off-record, bald on record, positive politeness, and negative politeness, the factors that affect the politeness of the characters; there is language style which contains a formal and informal expression. Then register and domain is a debate topic in college. Lastly, the character represents slang and solidarity to build community identity.

The writer found the gap that the study examines in all the characters in the movie in terms of social behavior affecting language. In contrast, this study focuses on the main

character. Also, the theories for the second aim are different. The theory used in the second aim of the first journal article by Bernard Spolsky (1998), meanwhile this study used Brown & Levinson (1987) for the second aim. The similarities between the journal article and this study discuss the type of politeness strategies using the theory from Brown & Levinson. This journal helps the writer to give other theories related to the reason that affect the characters' politeness, especially the theory of solidarity which also appears in this study.

E.S Pratiwi, Asih Santihastuti, and I Putu Summantara write the journal article from *Jurnal Edukasi*. This study discourses the politeness strategy applied by characters when making an apology. This journal used Brown & Levinson's theory (1987) to ascertain politeness strategies. The research findings of this journal are fifteen data from the movie; those are eleven data employing positive politeness and four data using negative politeness.

The writer found the gap in that the study focuses only on the positive and the negative politeness strategy applied by all movie characters only in terms of expressing an apology. In contrast, this study focuses on the series' main character in all types of politeness strategies. The similarities between the journal article and this study discuss the types of politeness strategies using the theory from Brown & Levinson (1987). This journal helps the writer to give another perspective to this study regarding the theory related to the apology expression applied by the main character.

Another related study is the undergraduate thesis written by Angela Theresa. The purpose of the thesis is to examine the application of politeness strategies in a talk show and ascertain the sociological variables in each strategy. The study's findings are six data of positive politeness, four data of bald on record, and two data of negative politeness

uttered by Oprah Winfrey. Meanwhile, Michelle Obama used eight positive politeness and one bald on record. The sociological variables showed in communicating with a hearer with a higher power, and the speaker used negative politeness. When the hearer and the speaker were familiar with each other, they preferred to use bald on record and positive politeness.

The writer found a gap in the study that the undergraduate thesis used talk shows as the object, while this study used series as the object. Also, the second aim of the undergraduate thesis only used the factor of sociological variables, while this study used all of the factors discussed by Brown & Levinson (1987). The similarities between the undergraduate thesis and this study are using the theory of Brown & Levinson (1987) to conduct the study's aims. This undergraduate thesis helps the writer to give a polite perspective on another object.

B.   Review of Related Theories

This section presents Brown & Levinson's (1987) theory as the primary theory. In analyzing the problem formulation and the other theories from George Yule (1996), Stephen Levinson (1983), and Joan Cutting (2002) that will be used in this study. The writer will discuss pragmatics, the theory of context, face, face-threatening acts, politeness strategies, and the reasons for employing the various types of politeness strategies.

1.   Pragmatics

 "Pragmatics is the study of meaning" (Yule, 1996, p.3). The meaning is conveyed by a speaker and interpreted by a listener. Instead of phrases or words, pragmatics examines what individuals mean by the language they use. Levinson (1983) states that

"pragmatics is the study of the ability of language users to pair sentences with contexts in which they would be appropriate" (p.7). Pragmatics focuses on how humans use language to communicate in certain circumstances or contexts. Similar to the theory discussed by Akmajian *et al.* (2001), context can extend beyond the immediate physical and social context to include generic information (p.394). Each of these concentric context circles can influence the understanding of communication. The application of the theory of pragmatics is important. This strengthens the social bond between the speaker and the listener.

As stated by Yule (1996), it also can define as the study of the relation between the speakers and linguistic forms (p.4). The writer concludes that pragmatics is important in communicating between the speaker and the listener to escape misunderstandings that might happen when the speaker and the listener or receiver communicate.

2.   Face

Yule (2017, p. 148) states that the most relevant concept of politeness is faced. Everyone possesses and expects others to acknowledge this emotional and social self-awareness. Brown & Levinson (1987) "face is something in which one has an emotional investment, which may be lost, preserved, or increased, and which requires ongoing attention in social interactions" (p.61). The face is divided into a negative face and a positive face. A negative face is a formal politeness and the desire for others to leave one's actions unimpeded. A positive face is a desire for a relationship with at least some others.

3.   **Face-Threatening Act**

Face-threatening acts show communicative acts that threaten another person's 'face' or self-image. It is followed by the states from Yule (1996, p. 61) when "a speaker speaks it represents a threat to another individual's expectation concerning self-image". Speakers and hearers tend to maintain one another's self-image during the communication process.

4.   **Politeness Strategy**

In an interaction, it is described as the act of acknowledging another person's face (Yule, 1996, p.60). It can be identified regardless of social closeness or distance. Politeness shows the closeness of the speaker and the hearer. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness is making a statement as polite as possible. It is also understood as an expression. When someone speaks with close friends, it is not considered politeness. However, when someone speaks to older people that might be respected, the concern is elevated to politeness.

Politeness strategy is the act of showing or expressing politeness. "It is a method of saving the hearer's face by creating a less threatening expression for the hearer's face" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.61). Brown & Levinson (1987) classify four politeness strategies as follows:

a.   **Bald on Record**

This strategy expresses needs by directly addressing the other person. Bald on record is used when the speaker does the FTA more than satisfy the hearer. This strategy is the most effective form of communication. The primary reason for the speaker's use of

this method is that they prefer to complete the FTA efficiently rather than by pleasing the listener's face. Brown & Levinson (1987, p.95) give an example, "Give me just one more week!". The speaker uses the direct utterance "give" to get the goal of the speaker's utterance directly.

b.   Positive Politeness

Positive politeness shows when the speaker expresses solidarity and underlines that both the speaker and the listener want the same thing. According to Spolsky (1998), solidarity significantly affects language. People frequently show solidarity through language use (p.35). For example, "Hey, buddy, I'd appreciate it if you'd let me use your pen" (Yule, 1996, p.64). It is followed by the statement of Brown & Levinson (1987, p.101) that positive politeness is "a redress directed to the hearer positive face to get desired, accepted, and approved."

Brown & Levinson (1987) classify positive politeness as fourteen positive politeness strategies. First is to notice and attend to the hearer, his interests, wants, needs, and goods. The second is an exaggeration of interest, approval, and sympathy with the hearer. The next strategy is intensifying interest in the hearer, the use of in-group identification markers, seeking agreement, and avoiding disagreement. Then, there is a strategy to presuppose/raise/assert common ground, to joke, and to assert or presuppose the speaker's knowledge of and concern for the hearer's wants. There is an offer, a promise, to be optimistic, to include both the speaker and the hearer in the activity, and to give or ask for reasons in the theory. The last is assuming or asserting reciprocity and giving gifts to the hearer, which include goods, sympathy, understanding, and cooperation)

c.   **Negative Politeness**

It is different from positive politeness. "When positive politeness is free-ranging, negative politeness is definite and focused" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 129). Negative politeness accomplishes the goal of minimizing the specific imposition. In this strategy, people tend to express respect, including an apology, interruption, or imposition. Speakers can avoid imposing by highlighting the value of the listener's attention and interest. For example, "Sorry to bother you. I couldn't borrow $30, could I, if you don't need it right now?" (Cutting, 2002, p.47). This example shows the speaker provides the audience with the option to reject the request for money.

Brown & Levinson (1987) mention ten strategies of negative politeness. The first is to be conventionally indirect. Next, there are a question, hedges, and to be pessimistic. Brown & Levinson also mention minimizing imposition and giving deference. Then, apologize and impersonalize the speaker and hearer. Additionally, Brown & Levinson state the FTA as a general rule and to nominalize. The last is to go on record as incurring debt or as a not indebting hearer.

d.   **Off Record**

Off the record strategy can be considered that opponent of bald on record. It requires an indirect strategy. When a speaker employs off-the-record, they do not convey their meaning explicitly. Brown & Levinson (1987) state that "an off-record strategy is a communicative act that not only intention but also clues and hints" (p.211). For example, "Are you going to market tomorrow? … There's a market tomorrow, I suppose" (p. 216). The example shows a request to give a ride to the market.

Brown & Levinson (1987) classify fifteen strategies in off record, such as giving hints, giving association clues, and presupposing. Then, understate and overstate. There are tautologies, contradictions, irony, and the use of metaphors. Brown & Levinson (1987) also state using rhetorical questions is ambiguous. Next is vague, over-generalized, and displacing the hearer. The last is to be incomplete; use ellipsis.

5.   Politeness and Context

In conducting the study's second objective, the writer will integrate the theory with the context of Otis Milburn's utterances to show the reasons affecting his choice of politeness strategy by Otis Milburn. Context is one of the variables that influence how individuals use language. The context can affect how a speaker employs language. According to Cutting (2002), if speakers employ more polite forms than the context requires, listeners may believe that the purpose is not to correct an FTA (p.52). Cutting (2002) defines three contexts, those are:

a.   Situational Context

This context is influenced by parts of the context. Cutting (2002) defines that two situational context factors influence the context. First is the size of imposition. Cutting states that "the greater the imposition, the more indirect the language is" (p. 52). It means that if the situation is a complicated request, the language used will employ more hedges. Cutting (2002) gives an example of this context to borrowing a significant amount of money. One may use a succession of hedges and other negative politeness phenomena, such as, "I couldn't borrow $30, could I, if you don't need it right now?" and to borrow a tiny amount, one's request may be bald on record, as in "Give me 5 cents".

Second is the formality of the context. Cutting (2002) states that "the greater the formality, the more indirect the language is" (p.52). If the situation is formal, the language used would be negative politeness. Cutting (2002) gives an example while a student sitting informally in the common room may prevent a colleague from interrupting her with a direct bald on record, a lecturer would be unable to do so (e.g., "Hang on – I haven't finished!"), in the context of a formal seminar, she would say to the colleague, "I wonder if I might just finish what I'm trying to say," with negative politeness.

b. **Social Context**

The use of polite language depends on the social distance and power relationship between speakers. When social distance exists, politeness is transmitted and more indirectness. "Social distance is determined by knowledge and variations in position, roles, age, gender, education, social status, occupation, and race" (Cutting, 2002, p. 53). Differences in position, roles, age, gender, education, social status, occupation, and race may provide power and authority to speakers. Cutting (2002) shows an example of this context when a wife asks her husband to hurry up and uses formal language in negative politeness (e.g., "Will you be kind enough to tell me what time it is?").

c. **Cultural Context**

Politeness and language have a close relationship with culture. It refers to the theory from Cutting (2002, p. 53), who states that the topic of politeness and language is highly culture-bound. Cutting (2002, p. 53) illustrates that a lecturer advising a student would do so directly, baldly, and on the record due to their position. This explains why some international students regard British professors' indirect advice, negative politeness hedges, and mitigation as literal choices. (e.g., "I think this part of your essay could possibly come a little bit nearer the beginning if you like.")

6. **The Reasons for the Choice of the Politeness Strategies**

The study's second objective elaborates on why Otis Milburn chose the politeness strategies. Brown & Levinson (1987, p. 71) says there are five reasons for dealing with FTAs: payoffs, sociological variables (social distance, relative power, rank of imposition), and integrating payoffs and sociological variables.

a. **The Payoffs**

The payoffs are the expected consequences of politeness strategies derived on a priori ground. The speaker expects a fair result from specific strategies. Brown & Levinson (1987) classify four payoffs connected with each politeness strategy.

i. **Payoffs in On Record Strategy**

A speaker can enlist public pressure to show that the speaker accepts the hearer, get credit for outspokenness, avoid the danger of being viewed as a manipulator, avoid the chance of being misunderstood, and have the option to make up for any potential loss of face caused by the FTA. (Brown Levinson, 1987, p. 71).

ii. **Payoffs in Off Record Strategy**

"A speaker can gain in the following ways. The speaker can receive credit for being tactful and non-coercive; the speaker can reduce the likelihood that the act will be included in the gossip biography that others maintain about him, and the speaker can avoid taking responsibility for a potentially damaging interpretation" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.71). If the listener chooses to respond to the potentially threatening interpretation of the act, he or she will be in danger. For example, if the speaker says, "It's hot in here," the hearer responds, "Oh, I'll open the window then!". You may receive credit for your generosity and cooperation, and the speaker avoids the risk of commanding the listener (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.71).