An Analysis of Politeness Strategy
Used by The Actors of *Johnny English* Film and Its Translation

Esriaty S. Kendenan

esriaty.kendenan@uksw.edu

Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana

Abstract

This study aims at examining politeness strategies in the utterances of actors and actresses in the Johnny English film and determine the accuracy of the translation both grammatically and pragmatically using two versions of fansub translations. The data sources of this research are in the form of Source Text (ST) taken from the Johnny English film subtitles as well as its two translated versions (TT) by two fansubs which are downloaded from the subscene. Data analysis was carried out by comparing the two versions of TT with the TS to determine and assess the politeness strategies of the actors, as well as how the fansubs translate speech acts with these politeness strategies descriptively. From the analysis of the data, it was found that in general there is a cross-strategy combination between different types of politeness, not in the same type of politeness, in each speech act. In addition, this study also reveals that the two translated versions of the two fansubs selected in this study can generally produce surface-accurate translations, but do not always produce the same politeness effect.

Keywords: Fansub, *Johnny English*, politeness strategy, speech acts, translation

Introduction

Each culture has its own characteristics in language to keep communication running effectively in various situations, whether in the real world (daily life) or in the media. One of the interesting things to discuss is the politeness strategy in each of these languages and cultures, which is definitely different from one culture to another. What is considered polite in one culture is not necessarily considered polite in another culture. In other words, it may be said that in fact there is no definite and comprehensive rule of politeness that can be universally applicable. Nevertheless, of course there are certain politeness values that are universal in every culture. For that reason, the theory and approach of politeness are still valuable to investigate from various perspective or context because it is a widespread, applicable, and pragmatic phenomenon (Jabur, 2019). The meaning of polite in this study refers to the definition of the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2001), namely "behaving or speaking in a way that is correct for the social situation you are in, and showing that you are careful to consider other people's needs and feelings." The writer of this paper focuses her study on the politeness strategies of actresses and actors in the *Johnny English* film, a comedy film starring English comedy actor, Rowan Atkinson, who is famous for the *Mr. Beans* film. In addition to identifying and reviewing politeness strategies for speakers (film players), this paper also examines the translation of speech acts with these politeness strategies.

With the above background, this study aims to examine the politeness strategy in the utterances of actors and actresses in the *Johnny English* film and to discuss the accuracy, acceptability, and naturalness of the two versions of fansub translations both grammatically and pragmatically.

Theory and Method

In Eelen (2001:2) Robin Lakoff, a pioneer of modern politeness theory, defines politeness as "[...] a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange". Every form of human interaction always has the opportunity to cause conflict due to dissatisfaction or disappointment from one person/party to another for various reasons. One of the possible causes is the way of speaking that is not pleasing to the listener or interlocutor. Therefore, it seems that Brown & Levinson (1987:1) are so aware of it that in the opening of their book, they quote Durkheim's words which say "the human personality is a sacred thing; one dare not violate it nor infringe its bounds, while at the same time the greatest good is in communion with others".

The core of Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness theory lies in the importance of 'face' which has two types of 'face-wants', namely: "the desire to be unimpeded in one's action (negative face), and the desire (in some respects) to be approved of (positive face)" in the interaction of speakers and hearers. The term "face" used by Brown & Levinson draws on the sense given by Goffman (1967) and from a popular English term associated with the idea of being humiliated or 'losing face'. Thus the face is defined as something that is worn emotionally, and which can be lost, maintained, enhanced, and must always be present in the interaction. Brown & Levinson also added that the most prominent aspect of a person's personality in interaction is what the personality demands of the interlocutor, especially regarding the desire to be accepted, understood, liked or desired. In analyzing the politeness strategies used by an actor in *Front of the Class* movie, Susana, et al (2022) found that there are two factors that influence interlocutor in choosing the politeness strategies, i.e. payoff and circumstances includes relative power, distance, age and gender, culture, and the ranking of imposition.

Javanese culture, which is known for its politeness, according to Martin's research in Wardaugh & Fuller (2015: 259) has special language characteristics to show politeness, including:

- Honorific forms incorporating negative ... are more polite than those without negatives;
- The longer the utterance the more polite it is felt to be;
- Utterances with local dialect in them are less polite and those with a few Chinese loanwords in them are more polite;
- You are more polite to strangers than to acquaintances;
- Your gender determines your use of honorifics, with men differentiating more than women among the available honorifics;
- Whereas knowledge of honorifics is associated with education, attitudes toward using them vary with age;
- Politeness is most expected when women address men, the young address the old, and members of the lower classes address members of the upper classes, with the last, ie, class differences, overriding the first two;
- Although people may say that it is inappropriate to use honorifics with your relatives, they still use them.

In summary, Martin said that there are four basic factors in the politeness, namely in greeting others Javanese people will first consider outgroupness, then social status, age difference, and finally gender difference. According to Holmes (2013:308) the politeness strategies practiced by men and women in speaking are different from men. According to her, women tend to use positive politeness devices to express their solidarity with the other person.

Brown & Levinson's positive face politeness strategies are summarized by Djatmika (2016) into: 1) noticing to the needs of the Hearer; 2) exaggerating interest, approval, sympathy with the Hearer; 3) intensifying interest to Hearer; 4) using markers of solidarity with the other person; 5) seek agreement with the Hearer; 6) avoiding disagreement with the Hearer; 7) asserting common ground; 8) using jokes; 9) asserting Speaker's knowledge of and concern for the Hearer's wants; 10) giving offers or promises to the Hearer; 11) be optimistic; 12) embracing both Speaker and Hearer in the activity; 13) giving or asking for reasons; 14) stating reciprocity; 15) giving gifts to Hearer can be in the form of goods, sympathy or cooperation.

Meanwhile, 10 forms of negative face politeness strategies are summarized from Brown & Levinson into: 1) indirect strategy; 2) question, hedge; 3) be pessimistic; 4) minimize the size of imposition on H; 5) giving deference; 6) apologize; 7) impersonalize Speakers and Hearer; 8) state the FTA as a general rule; 9) nominalize; 10) go on record as incurring a debt, or as bot indebting Hearer.

Newmark (1988:5) defined translation as "rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text." From this definition, it can be briefly said that the meaning is transferred to the target language as intended by the source text writer. In translating utterances for a film script, the translator should maintain certain politeness strategies expressed by the actor or actress in the film using certain politeness strategies according to the scriptwriter's intention as the one who produce the source text.

Findings and Discussion

As previously mentioned, the data of this research were taken from several speech acts in the *Johnny English* film to examine the politeness strategies used by speakers (actors and actresses) in the film. The translations selected to analyze in comparison with the source text are taken from the two fansub translations in the subscene.

The conversation in Table 0.1 is uttered by Agent Tucker and Agent English as they are about to fly a helicopter from the Zulu-Zulu hotel where they are playing golf when Karlenko is shot and they must quickly save his life by taking him by helicopter. This conversation took place just as they were sitting at the helm of the helicopter.

Table 0.1. Extract 1

Speaker	Source Text (ST)	Target Text (TT1)	Target Text (TT2)
Agent Tucker	You do know how to fly these, sir? 00:42:06,724 - 00:42:08,362	Anda tahu bagaimana menerbangkan ini, pak? 00:42:07,005 - 00:42:08,630	Kau tahu cara menerbangkannya kan, Pak? 00:42:06,924 - 00:42:08,562
Agent English	It was part of basic training. 00:42:08,459 - 00:42:10,700	Ini bagian dari pelatihan dasar. 00:42:08,713 - 00:42:10,963	Itu bagian dari latihan dasar. 00:42:08,659 - 00:42:10,900
Agent Tucker	Good. 00:42:10,750 - 00:42:10,780	Bagus. 00:42:11,015 - 00:42:11,045	Bagus. 00:42:10,950 - 00:42:10,980
Agent English	It's just like riding a bike. 00:42:10,795 - 00:42:12,638	Seperti mengendarai sepeda. 00:42:11,047 - 00:42:12,880	Sama seperti mengendarai sepeda. 00:42:10,995 - 00:42:12,838

Agent Tucker and Agent English speak twice each in extract 1 above. The politeness strategy applied by Agent Tucker in the first speech is a negative face politeness strategy by asking questions that seem to doubt the ability of Agent English, even though using a solidarity marker by using honorific address *sir* at the end of his speech as a positive face politeness strategy. Agent Tucker's question was then answered by Agent English with a positive face politeness strategy, namely by showing an optimistic nature, which was then responded by Agent Tucker by giving a compliment using expression "good" to Agent English. Furthermore, Agent English demonstrates positive politeness strategies making jokes by equating the difficulty/ease of flying an airplane with riding a bicycle.

The basic difference of ST and TT1 as well as TT2 is only seen in the first utterance of Agent Tucker and the second utterance of Agent English. TT1 appears to be more accurate than TT2 from a politeness perspective because TT1 uses a more formal sentence formulation, which is more acceptable in the context of the target culture when speaking to superiors, than TT2. This can be seen from the use of personal pronoun "Anda" in TT1 and "Kau" in TT2. Meanwhile, the discrepancy of meaning in the second utterance of Agen English appears in the omission of the translation "just" in the two existing translations.

The conversation between Agent Tucker and Agent English in Table 0.2 takes place on the plane while Agent English is looking for directions to the nearest hospital.

Table 0.2. Extract 2

Speaker	Source Text (ST)	Target Text (TT1)	Target Text (TT2)
Agent Tucker	Look, sir! Follow that ambulance! 00:44:50,154 - 00:44:53,192	Dengar, pak! Ikuti ambulans itu! 00:44:50,422 - 00:44:53,463	Lihat, Pak! Ikuti ambulans itu! 00:44:50,354 - 00:44:53,392
Agent English	Good idea. 00:44:53,291 - 00:44:54,793	Ide bagus. 00:44:53,588 - 00:44:55,047	Ide bagus. 00:44:53,491 - 00:44:54,993
Agent Tucker	Sir. Sir, quickly. 00:45:05,403 - 00:45:07,178	Pak. Pak, cepat. 00:45:05,630 - 00:45:07,463	Pak. Pak, cepat. 00:45:05,603 - 00:45:07,378

From the construction of the sentence, it can be said that Agent Tucker uses an indirect negative face politeness strategy by giving orders or perhaps more precisely an appeal or suggestion to Agent English to pay attention to and follow an ambulance that is seen crossing the road. The strategy is also used in Agent Tucker's second utterance. However, the strategy became quite neutral with the use of the solidarity marker "sir" along with the positive face politeness strategy by Agent Tucker. In these emergency conditions, speakers cannot avoid using imperative sentences so that with a combination of existing strategies, the burden on the Hearer becomes lighter. To respond Agent Tucker's speech, Agent English used positive face politeness strategies, namely responding to signs of understanding or cooperation by saying "good idea" to show that he is not offended with Agent Tucker's instruction.

From the perspective of translation accuracy and naturalness, TT2 is more accurate and natural than TT1 in Agent Tucker's first utterance by choosing the word "lihat" rather than "dengar" as the Indonesian equivalent of "look" in ST. In terms of the acceptability of the TT, TT2 is more acceptable than TT1, although it seems that it would be more acceptable (more polite) in the target culture if Agent Tucker uses "Pak" in prior to the verb "lihat" to reduce the burdens of face threatening acts on the Hearer.

The conversation between Agent Tucker and Agent English in Table 0.3 occurs after they failed to save Karlenko.

Table 0.3. Extract 3

Speaker	Source Text (ST)	Target Text (TT1)	Target Text (TT2)
Agent Tucker	There's a mole in MI7. 00:46:04,295 - 00:46:06,468	Ada mata-mata di MI7. 00:46:04,547 - 00:46:06,713	Ada pengkhianat di MI7. 00:46:04,495 - 00:46:06,668
Agent English	There's a mole and a vole? 00:46:07,632 - 00:46:09,703	Ada seorang mata-mata dan seekor tikus? 00:46:07,880 - 00:46:09,963	Ada pengkhianat dan tikus? 00:46:07,832 - 00:46:09,903
Agent Tucker	No, sir. There's a mole, not a vole. 00:46:10,301 - 00:46:13,748	Tidak, pak. Ada seorang mata-mata, bukan seekor tikus. 00:46:10,588 - 00:46:14,047	Tidak, Pak. Ada pengkhianat, bukan tikus. 00:46:10,501 - 00:46:13,948
Agent English	Well, I disagree. There's certainly a vole. 00:46:14,472 - 00:46:16,918	Begini, aku tidak setuju. Disana pasti ada seekor tikus. 00:46:14,713 - 00:46:17,213	Yah, aku tidak setuju. Pasti ada tikus. 00:46:14,672 - 00:46:17,118
Agent Tucker	I mean, we know that much. 00:46:16,974 - 00:46:18,749	Maksudku, kita mengetahui hal itu. 00:46:17,255 - 00:46:19,005	Maksudku, kita tahu betul. 00:46:17,174 - 00:46:18,949

Agent Tucker's first assertive utterance was responded to with a negative face politeness strategy by Agent English by asking questions to confirm and rectify what Agent Tucker said. Agent Tucker responds to these responses and questions using a negative politeness strategy by minimizing the imposition on the Hearer by adding a solidarity marker "sir" in his speech. Agent English seeks Agent Tucker's approval by starting his response with the phrase "well" to minimize Agent Tucker's burden. Agent English's strategy was successful because Agent Tucker then responded by asserting a common ground on the problem in the utterance "I mean, we know that much."

Both TTs seem to be quite successful in rendering ST's politeness strategies so that they can be accepted in the target language culture. Although both TT1 and TT2 have managed to transfer the message accurately, TT2 seems more natural than TT1 in some parts especially in the last two utterances. It can be seen in the Agent English's second utterance above, in which the expression "well" is translated into "begini" in TT1 and "yah" in TT2. The exclamation "well" is used by Agent English not only to introduce his idea but also to show his disagreement to Agent Tucker's idea. The expression "begini" in the target language (TL) is usually used to introduce something to others, while "yah" can be used to introduce idea as well as to show surprise, disagreement, or anger. Moreover, the word "begini" sounds more formal and less natural than "yah" in such tense moments where the interlocutors are trying to survive while solving the problem. The second utterance from Agent Tucker "I mean, we know that much" is translated in TT1 as "Maksudku, kita mengetahui hal itu" and "Maksudku, kita tahu betul"

in TT2. The TT1 seems more formal and appropriate for written language while the TT2 seems more casual and appropriate for daily conversation.

Table 0.4 were a piece of conversation made during a meeting held by the Prime Minister with agents and staff in preparation for the meeting with the Chinese Premier.

Table 0.4 Extract 4

Speaker	Source Text (ST)	Target Text (TT1)	Target Text (TT2)
Prime Minister	Pamela, I hope you've brushed up on your Mandarin. 00:48:22,900 - 00:48:24,880	Pamela, kuharap kau memperlancar bahasa Mandarinmu. 00:48:23,130 - 00:48:25,088	Pamela, kuharap kau sudah mengasah kemampuan bahasa Mandarinmu. 00:48:23,100 - 00:48:25,080
Prime Minister	I'd like you in the room with me, and your best man on security. 00:48:25,002 - 00:48:28,779	Aku ingin kau berada di ruangan bersamaku, Dan orang terbaikmu untuk memberi pengamanan. 00:48:25,213 - 00:48:29,047	Aku ingin kau di ruangan bersamaku, dan orang terbaikmu yang menangani keamanan. 00:48:25,202 - 00:48:28,979
Pamela	Yes, Prime Minister. 00:48:28,873 - 00:48:30,716	Ya, Perdana Menteri. 00:48:29,130 - 00:48:31,005	Ya, Perdana Menteri. 00:48:29,073 - 00:48:30,916

The Prime Minister practiced positive face politeness strategies by showing concern for the Hearer, Pamela, who had improved her Mandarin language skills. Furthermore, the Prime Minister uses a negative face politeness strategy by giving indirect orders with declarative sentences. Pamela responded to the request (order) with a positive face politeness strategy, namely by showing an optimistic nature.

The translation of the first Prime Minister's speech shows a significant difference. TT1 seems like a subtle command to improve Pamela's mandarin skills with negative face politeness strategies. Meanwhile, TT2 prefers to maintain positive face politeness strategies as used in ST. Both translations of Pamela's response are accurate but not natural in the target language, especially the translation of the word "yes" into "ya" which should be more accurately translated "baik", which is an expression that is more commonly used when responding to superior's command.

The conversation in Table 0.5 takes place at a restaurant where Simon and Agent English have a meeting to discuss the existence of Vortex members in MI7 and about the existence of one of the three secret keys in Agent English's hands.

Table 0.5 Extract 5

Speaker	Source Text (ST)	Target Text (TT1)	Target Text (TT2)
Waiter	Another bottle of Romaine-Conti? 00:49:16,787 - 00:49:18,130	Masih mau minum Romaine-Conti lagi? 00:49:17,047 - 00:49:18,338	Satu botol Romaine-Conti lagi? 00:49:16,987 - 00:49:18,330
Simon	of course. 00:49:19,056 - 00:49:19,200	Tentu saja. 00:49:19,255 - 00:49:19,400	Tentu. 00:49:19,256 - 00:49:19,401

Waiter	And would you like to choose dessert? 00:49:19,350 - 00:49:20,967	Dan maukah anda mencicipi makanan pencuci mulut? 00:49:19,650 - 00:49:21,213	Dan kau mau memesan hidangan penutup? 00:49:19,657 - 00:49:21,167
Simon	Yes. you. 00:49:21,058 - 00:49:23,095	Ya. Kau. 00:49:21,297 - 00:49:23,380	Ya. Kau. 00:49:21,258 - 00:49:23,295
Agent English	And bring two spoons. 00:49:24,929 - 00:49:27,102	Dan membawa dua buah sendok. 00:49:25,172 - 00:49:27,338	Dan bawakan dua sendok. 00:49:25,129 - 00:49:27,302

The waiter who approached Simon and Agent English used a positive face politeness strategy by noticing to the needs of the Hearers, namely Agent English and Simon, for additional drinks. Simon responded to this question using a positive face politeness strategy by showing similarities or agreement with the idea of the other person, namely the waiter. Next, the waiter offers dessert using a negative face politeness strategy by asking questions to give choices to both customers. Simon and Agent English responded to the offer using positive face politeness strategies with jokes. The conversation between the waiter and Simon and Agent English also reveals that the waiter tends to use longer utterances than both Simon and Agent as the customers as well as strangers.

In general, from the perspective of translation accuracy, TT2 appears to be more accurate than TT1 especially in Agent English's utterances which are directive speech acts, but are translated with assertive speech acts by the translator of TT1. However, from the perspective of politeness strategy translation, TT1 seems more acceptable and natural considering the position of the customer who must be respected by using the appropriate language according to Martin's findings in Wardhaugh (2015) regarding the Javanese language politeness.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the data above, it can be concluded that in every speech act, there is generally a cross-strategy combination of different types of politeness and not in the same type of politeness, as stated by Djatmika (2016). It is also found that the two translation versions of the two fansubs selected in this study were generally able to produce surface-accurate translations, but did not always produce translations with the same politeness effect. In general, this study shows that the language of the TT2 tends to be more formal (polite) than TT1. It can be seen from the frequently use of a more casual style in TT2 either in the grammatical structure or the choice of word compare to TT1. Consequently, the TT2 sounds more natural than TT1. There are still many politeness strategies in this *Johnny English* film that are worth to consider for further research in order to reveal the importance of both the translation accuracy and the pragmatic function of language in the society.

References

Brown, P. & Levinson, S.C. 1987. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Djatmika. 2016. *Mengenal Pragmatik Yuk!?* Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.

Eelen, G. 2001. *A Critique of Politeness Theories*. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing.

Holmes, J. 2013. *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Fourth Edition. London & New York: Routledge.

https://subscene.com/subtitles/johnny-english-reborn/english/956654

https://subscene.com/subtitles/johnny-english-reborn/indonesian/527532

https://subscene.com/subtitles/johnny-english-reborn/indonesian/761401

Jabur, E. 2019. *Politeness: Strategies, Principles and Theories: Theoretical Perspective*. Retrieved June 30, 2023 from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334760396_Politeness_ Strategies_Principles_and_TheoriesTheoretical_Perspective. DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.26208.84484

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. 2001. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Newmark, P. 1988. *A Textbook of Translation*. New York: Prentice Hall.

Susana, A., Arifin, M.B., & Setyowati, R. 2022. The strategies of negative and positive politeness used by brad's utterances in *Front of the Class* movie. *Ilmu Budaya: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Seni, dan Budaya, 6*(1), 196-204. e-ISSN 2549-7715. Retrieved June 29, 2023 from https://e-journals.unmul.ac.id/index.php/JBSSB/article/download/5254/pdf.

Wardhaugh, R. & Fuller, J. 2015. *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Seventh Edition. West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell.