

# Politeness Strategies Used by the Main Character in Spongebob Squarepants Movie

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## Abstract

*The objective of this research is to analyze the SpongeBob movie with the title SpongeBob Movie Sponge Out of Water Food Fight. It is to identify the politeness strategies applied by the main characters in SpongeBob Square Pants. The researcher uses qualitative research. The data was taken from Video movie in SpongeBob Movie Sponge Out of Water Food Fight. The result showed that Bald on record strategy is the most frequent strategy (14 out of 42 total data). It is followed by positive politeness strategy (12 out of 42), Off-Record strategy (8 out of 42) and Negative politeness (7 out of 42). This film prefers to apply bald-on record in conveying their utterances to the other, especially Mr. Crabs toward SpongeBob and Patrick as employee in his office. It concludes that there is a good relationship between SpongeBob and Patrick, SpongeBob and Mr. Krab, so the conversation used positive politeness.*

**Keywords:** *politeness strategy, movie*

## 1. Introduction

In our daily activity, human can interact with other by using language. Language is a tool for communication which becomes main part in our life. Language makes people enable to transfer the message, ideas, feeling or thought. Delivering the ideas when we communicate to the other must be clear in order to be received well because the good communication happened if the speaker and the listener can get the meaning appropriately. Common people make communication unstructured. This is not become problem because the most important is their speech can be understood and accepted by others.

One of the important thing is politeness when speak to the other. The politeness was not only for one group society, but also it was for everyone in all conditions that using language as their tools in daily conversation in order to make a good social interaction with

other people in their life. According to Thomas in Winerta (2012) stated that “politeness was a real-world goal (politeness interpreted as a real desire to be pleasant to others or as the underlying motivation for an individual’s linguistic behavior.”

Using politeness made listeners could give a good response to speaker’s question or request. According to Yule in Winerta (2012), politeness was showing awareness of another person’s face; it was related to social distance or closeness. Politeness referred to the emotional and social sense of self that everyone else to recognize. In this case, politeness was really needed to build a good relationship and to have a good social interaction with other people. In other word, politeness was the expression of the speakers’ intention to mitigate face threats carried by certain face threatening acts toward another.

Hasmi (2013) stated understanding politeness is very important. People often think that politeness is simply a matter of saying *please, sorry, excuse, and thank you*. Politeness does have its own role. Being linguistically polite means speaking to people appropriately in the right place and the right time. People must be aware of the context of speaking and be able to determine which politeness form is the best to a context.

The phenomenon of politeness features happens in the society, in real conversations. However, to analyze them, it is not a must to observe a real society since this is depicted in many media such as movies. Movie is one among many media which are popular in the society and can be used to investigate politeness. One of the movies which must become the study is *SpongeBob Square Pants* because in Indonesia there has ever been an issue about the controversy to present the *SpongeBob Movie to the Children*

Based on the news from *Tribunnews.com* (2014) informed that KPI (Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia) light up cartoon programs with the violence both verbal and nonverbal including the *spongebob* movie and it makes the limitation for the presenting the movie. For this issue, the researcher is interested to analyze the politeness strategy used by the main character.

Considering the wide range of the approaches of politeness, the researcher limits the problems observed. The researcher only focuses on analyzing conversation among the main characters and the children who

employed politeness strategies and the realization of each strategy proposed by Brown and Levinson. In short, the research problems can be formulated as the two points, (1) What are the types of politeness strategies employed by the main characters in *SpongeBob Square pants* movie?, and (2) How are politeness strategies realized in the utterances employed by the main characters in *SpongeBob Square pants* movie?

## 2. Theoretical Review

Watts (2003) explains politeness as a thing that is not born with people. It is something people have to learn and be socialized into, and no generation has been of short teachers and handbooks on etiquette and “correct behavior” to help people acquire politeness skills. He also describes that Brown and Levinson view politeness as a complex system for softening face-threatening acts. They analyze politeness and say that in order to enter into social relationship, people have to acknowledge and show awareness of the face, the public self-image, the sense of self, and the addressee.

Politeness also means a way to establish and maintain feelings of community within the social group (Leech, 1983). Moreover, According to Foley (1997) in Seyyed (2016) referred to politeness as “a battery of social skills whose goal is to ensure that everyone feels affirmed in a social interaction”. As an important aspect of pragmatic competence and consequently communicative competence,

politeness has been addressed by different researchers applying different approaches.

In Sadeghohli & Niroomand (2016) stated most of the studies, the politeness has been conceptualized especially as strategic conflict-avoidance or as strategic construction of cooperative social interaction (Watts, 2003). Watts (2003) suggests the term politic behavior (i.e., second-order politeness), which he contrasts with polite behavior (i.e., first-order politeness). He defines politic behavior as socio-culturally determined behavior with the aim of establishing and/or maintaining the personal relationships between the interlocutors.

Brown and Levinson in Watts (2003:86) state that there are two kinds of face, negative and positive face. Negative face refers to the individual's desire for freedom of action and freedom from imposition. Positive face refers to the individual's desire that his wants be appreciated and approved of in social interaction. For example, when someone asks to get a book from someone else, he can use two ways. Firstly, if he wants to apply negative face, he can say '*could you lend me a pen?*'. In this case, the speaker prefers to give a freedom action to the hearer by using the word *could you*. Secondly, if he applies positive face, he can say '*How about letting me use your book?*' In this case, the speaker wants be approved by using the word *letting* to the hearer.

The utterances or actions to lessen the threat of another's face are called face saving act, while the threat is given to another individual's self-image is called face

threatening act or FTA (Yule, 1996:61). According to Black (2006) in Hasmi (2013), Brown and Levinson consider that 'face' has two aspects, (a) Negative face: the right to get freedom of action and freedom from imposition, and (b) Positive face: the need to be appreciated by others, and to maintain a positive self-image.

The theory used in the present study is the *model of politeness strategy* offered by Brown and Levinson (1987). Most of the research into politeness may be characterized as somehow related to Brown and Levinson's theory (Watts, 2003). Brown and Levinson (1987) in Seyyed (2016:50-51) stated outline four main types of politeness strategies including bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record (indirect). The main idea is realizing various strategies used by various people in their interactional behavior to satisfy specific wants of face.

#### a. *Bald on-record*

The aim of bald on-record strategies is not minimizing the threat to the hearer's face and they are used to directly address the other person to express his/her needs. Using imperative forms is an example of bald on-record as it can be seen in the phrase *gives me the pen*. Using mitigating devices such as 'please' in the phrase *please give me the pen* can soften the command. It should also be added that in an emergency situation, for instance, a command such as *don't touch the bottle* has no politeness function.

#### b. *Positive Politeness*

Positive politeness strategies are used to reduce the threat to the hearer's positive face (Brown Levinson, 1987). Fifteen strategies can be used to indicate positive politeness as is expressed by the theory of Brown and Levinson (1987). These strategies include the following ones:

1. Noticing and attending to the hearer,
2. Exaggerating by giving different intonation, tone and other prosodic features or exaggerating by using intensifying modifiers
3. Intensifying interest to hearer
4. Using in-group identity markers,
5. Seeking agreement by the addressee's statements through using specific statements or repetition,
6. Avoiding disagreement by using false agreement, by expressing pseudo-agreement, by using hedge or by making white lies,
7. Showing common ground,
8. Joking,
9. Showing the speaker's concern for the hearer's wants,
10. Offering and promising,
11. Being optimistic,
12. Including both the speaker and the hearer in the activity,
13. Telling or asking the reason,
14. Assuming reciprocity,
15. Giving gift to the hearer in the form of sympathy, understanding and cooperation in the conversation,

16. Disagreement (criticism), giving suggestion/advice, requesting, warning; threatening,

17. Using imperative form.

*c. Negative Politeness*

Negative politeness strategies refer to the avoidance of imposition on the hearer and can be considered as is the desire to remain autonomous using distancing styles like using modal verbs or hesitation, apologizing for imposition, asking questions or asking for permission to ask a question. Koike (1992) defined negative politeness as "consideration of the listener's wished to be unimpeded in taking action and having attention."

Based on the theory of politeness by Brown and Levinson (1987), ten strategies can be used to show negative politeness including the following ones:

1. Being indirect,
2. Using questions and hedges,
3. Being pessimistic (i.e. being pessimistic whether the hearer wants to do what we ask or not),
4. Minimizing the imposition,
5. Giving deference and being deferent to the hearer,
6. Apologizing,
7. Impersonalizing speaker and hearer by making your addressee unmentioned
8. Generalizing expression rather than mentioning addressee directly,
9. Nominalizing,
10. Going on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting the hearer

d. *Off-record (indirect)*

Off-record strategy was explained by Brown and Levinson (1987) as the use of indirect language to remove the speaker from the potential to be imposing. There are fifteen strategies indicating off-record politeness as is expressed in Brown and Levinson's theory (1987). These strategies are the following:

1. Giving hints,
2. Giving association clues,
3. Presupposing
4. Understating or saying less than is required,
5. Overstating or giving information more than what is needed,
6. Using tautologies (uttering patent and necessary truth),
7. Using contradictions,
8. Being ironic,
9. Using metaphor,
10. Using rhetorical questions that do not require any answer,
11. Being ambiguous,
12. Being vague,
13. Overgeneralizing and not naming the hearer or addressing him directly,
14. Displacing,
15. Being incomplete by using ellipsis.

*SpongeBob Square Pants movie* is a cartoon film which becomes popular in Nickelodeon. This cartoon has been watched in 1999. *SpongeBob Square Pants* is an American animated television series created by marine biologist and animator Stephen Hillenburg for Nickelodeon. The series chronicles the adventures and endeavors of the

title character and his various friends in the fictional underwater city of Bikini Bottom. The series' popularity has made it a media franchise, as well as the highest rated series to ever air on Nickelodeon, and the most distributed property of MTV Networks.

The series revolves around its title character and his various friends. SpongeBob SquarePants is an energetic and optimistic sea sponge (although his appearance more closely resembles a kitchen sponge) who lives in a sea pineapple and loves his job as a fry cook at the Krusty Krab.

The study will analyze the *SpongeBob* movie with the title *SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out of Water* Food Fight. The synopsis of the film tells that SpongeBob is a cook. He makes Krabby Patties and uses a top-secret recipe. Mr. Krabs locks the Krabby Patty recipe in a safe. Plankton is planning to steal the recipe. Plankton files over the Krusty Krab. He drops a giant jar of tartar sauce. It's a food fight. SpongeBob and Patrick must defend the Krusty Krab! SpongeBob tells Patrick to load the raw potatoes. The potatoes hit Plankton's plane. The plane slices them into french fries! Fries rain down and the crowd cheers. SpongeBob and Patrick do a happy dance. But the fight is not over. Plankton has a tank. Plankton launches pickles. A pickle blows the roof of the Krusty Krab. SpongeBob and Patrick fire ketchup, mustard, and mayo at the tank. The tank explodes. Plankton will not give up. He is wearing a giant robot suit. Plankton breaks a wall in the Krusty Krab. Plankton reaches for the secret recipe! SpongeBob gasps

and Mr. Krabs groans. The robot stops! The robot is out of gas and cannot reach the recipe.

### 3. Method

This research used qualitative method. Primary data in qualitative research have form as words and acts. Moreover of that is an addition data such as document and the others (Moleong, 2009). The data was taken from Video movie in Spongebob Movie Sponge Out of Water Food Fight.

The data collected through a movie in Spongebob Movie Sponge Out of Water Food Fight. The data will be analyzed and classified into the category of each types of politeness strategy based on Brown and Levinson's theory. The data classified into four categories.

According to Arikunto (2006:231) documentation method is a method used to collect data based on transcript, book, newspaper, magazine, epigraphy, meeting notes, and agenda. So, when the researcher collects the data though analysis books, magazines or document is called documentation method.

According to Moleong (2001), data analysis is a process of organizing and classifying data into a certain pattern, category, and basic unit of analysis so that the theme can be found. The data analyzed using some steps as follows:

#### 1. Classifying

The researcher will seek relevant data, which will be taken from the character's utterances, and categorized them by using

one table. The table is made to classify the utterances into types of politeness strategies and politeness principles,

#### 2. Interpreting

When the classification is finished, the researcher starts to analyze the data. The researcher analyze by interpreting each datum to answer the research questions.

#### 3. Reporting

In reporting data, the researcher will present the data in the discussion. She will take some examples from the findings and elaborated further explanation of the interpretation.

### 4. Result

In this research, the researcher applies her own perspective and basic knowledge about the politeness strategies employed by the characters of sponges bob movie part 5 when having conversation with other characters. This research attempts to describe those strategies and in the finding section, and shows the results of data analysis. Then the frequency of occurrence of those strategies is described as follows.

**Table 1.** Politeness Strategy

Politeness Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Bold	14	33,3%
Positive Politeness	12	28,6%
Negative Politeness	7	16,7%
Off-Record	8	19%
Total	42	

The table presents the occurrences of politeness strategies in Spongebob movie in the first session in 6th until 12th minutes from 1hour 18minutes. There are 42 occurrences of politeness in the conversation among the main characters, Spongebob, Patrick, Plankton, Mr. Crab and Sandy. Among the four strategies, positive strategy has the most occurrences. It shows the main character prefer employing Bald-on-record strategy to other strategies in the utterances although in their conversation, the expression is not positive for example they are shouted, so it means they used Negative FTA. As it is seen, Bald-on-record is applied in as many as 14 times (33.3%) by the main characters. At is followed by positive politeness strategy which is applied as many 12 (28.6%) times and off-record strategy is applied as many as 9 times out of 42 (19%). On the other hand, Negative politeness strategy is the least strategy applied by the main characters, It occurs 7 times out of 42 (16.7%).

The primary reason for its usage is that whenever a speaker wants to do FTA with maximum efficiency more than he wants to satisfy the hearer's face, even to any degree, he will chose bald on record strategy (Brown and Levinson, 1978:95). In the conversation in this film, there are some utterance for Bald-on the record, this is one of the example:

Plankton : take Extra ketchup! Extra mustard! Hold the mayo!  
 SpongeBob : Yes, sir!

The situation happens in the crabby patty shop, when there is a consumer who will buy something. Mr. Crab asked SpongeBob

prepares the order. Mr Crab uses an imperative form to directly ask to Sponge Bob without attempting to minimize the treat.

Positive politeness is also usually seen in the groups of people in which they, in social situation, know each other fairly well. It tends to show solidarity between the speaker and the hearer. Spongebob and Petrik is a close friend, so Spongebob prefer to apply positive politeness when having communication. The preference in applying this strategy is closely related to the relationship among them. Here are some excerpts of the movie script which content positive politeness strategy.

Patrick : Good morning, SpongeBob!  
 SpongeBob : Morning, Patrick! You here for your pre-lunch Krabby Patty?  
 Patrick : I'm getting two today. One for me and one for my friend.  
 SpongeBob : Oh. Have I met this friend?  
 (Patrick used both hands to squish his belly to look like a big mouth. He moved his hands to make the "mouth" talk)  
 Patrick : "You know me, SpongeBob."  
 (The two pals laughed)

SpongeBob : Enjoy, Patrick's tummy.  
 The situation happened when Spongebob meets his friend and gets a conversation and makes the conversation friendlier. Positive Politeness is used for make a situation better, to show solidarity between speaker and hearer, besides the greeting, joking is one of the way to create positive strategy between speaker and

hearer. There is an example of joking in this film, when Petrik is asked about the pre-lunch Krabby Patty, he said that *One for me and one for my friend (using both hands to squish his belly)*. This shows that Petrik tries to make a joke with his friend, and it is positive strategy in the conversation.

Negative politeness focuses on minimizing the imposition to the hearer. Someone may use several ways in applying negative politeness to the other, such as being pessimistic and apologizing.

Sandy : I'll have two Krabby Patties-  
extra ketchup, extra mustard,  
and hold the mayo.

SpongeBob : I am sorry, Wrong channel!  
(He cranked a field radio  
again)

SpongeBob recognizes that Sandy try to ask her let to give her needs. But the SpongeBob felt that it is not his task to make an order, so he ask an apology of her imposition. He is sorry to refuse the order and forward to Mr. Crab.

Off-record strategy was explained by Brown and Levinson (1987) as the use of indirect language to remove the speaker from the potential to be imposing. Off-record strategy employs indirect uses of language which has more than one interpretation. It signifies that when the speaker tends to use this type of strategy, he/she can do it indirectly and leaves up his/her utterance to how the hearer decided to interpret it.

SpongeBob : Robot! Robot!

(SpongeBob burst into the office and slammed the door shut behind him)

SpongeBob : Mr. Krabs, Plankton's here and he's got a giant robot!

Krabs : Quick, boy, bar the door!

This situation happened when SpongeBob see the plankton come to the Krabby Patty Shop, he run to the Mr. Crabs office to give information but SpongeBob is still shocked so SpongeBob only say *Robot! Robot!*. Actually it is still ambiguous whether robot is coming or who he is. After he slammed the door, he can say that Plankton is coming to get the secret formulation.

## 5. Conclusion

There are four types of politeness strategies employed by the characters in SpongeBob Movie when having conversation. They are bald-on record, Positive politeness, negative politeness and off-record strategy. Among the four strategies, Bald on record strategy is the most frequent strategy (14 out of 42 total data). It is followed by positive politeness strategy (12 out of 42), Off-Record strategy (8 out of 42) and Negative politeness (7 out of 42). This film prefers to apply bald-on record in conveying their utterances to the other, especially Mr. Crabs toward SpongeBob and Patrick as a employee in his office. Besides, because there is a good relationship between SpongeBob and Patrick, SpongeBob and Mr. Krab, so the conversation used positive politeness.



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