

## THE REALIZATION OF POLITENESS IN “A DOLL’S HOUSE” SCRIPT

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### ABSTRACT

*Politeness is considered to be important in the communication. When the people are communicating to one another, they are expected to keep the social relationship and do not violate another face or called as face threatening acts (FTAs). This research investigated the realization of politeness in a drama script entitled “A Doll’s House” by Henrik Ibsen. It aims to classify the drama conversation parts into some categorizations of politeness and to analyze why they differ in the context. In its nature, the research applied qualitative concepts. Two conversation parts in the first act of the script were chosen to be the objects of the research. These qualitative data were then analyzed and categorized using Goffman’s categorizations of Face Threatening Act (FTA): FTA off record and FTA on record (with sub-classes: FTA on-baldly, FTA on record-with negative politeness, and FTA on record-with positive politeness). From the analyses, it was concluded that there were some parts belonging to FTA off record and some belonging to the FTA on record with positive politeness. The first data analysis explained much about FTA off record. On the contrary, FTA on record with positive politeness was portrayed in the second analysis. It shows that people tend to save their inter-interlocutors’ face by using indirect request, off record, as far as they understand what the speakers want to. The on record will work if only the first one does not work.*

**Keywords:** *Politeness, FTA off-record, FTA-on record*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Politeness is considered to be one of the cores in the communication, especially the verbal one. One reason behind it is that there are many ways and rules starting from the awareness of the face until the public self-image which can help the speaker in modifying and delivering his or her proposition well, based on the context. When the people want to ask for the other help, they tend to use; direct and indirect ways. Both of the ways have their own terms and conditions which are interesting to analyze.

In fact, there are some researches which have concern on politeness. To start with, Kevdeš (2013) provides the readers with fruitful information related

to her research about face threatening acts and politeness strategies in 60 summer school application calls. Furthermore, there is Amundrud (2012) who has concern with the same topic but analyses different objects: advanced Non-Native English Speaker (NNES) emails. Posed in this research, there are three questions: whether the participant would show more Negative Politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987) than the NS control; whether the participant would show greater politeness overall than the control; and whether the participant can be said to conform to English-language pragmatic norms for each of the three illocutionary acts performed. In addition, Zhao (2008) also supports the research on politeness with her journal article entitled “Analyzing the Meaning in Interaction in Politeness Strategies in *Scent of a Woman*”. The politeness analysis of the film uncovers both the informational and affecting dimensions of language use in structuring human relationship and friendship.

In English literature, there is a well known drama script which is entitled *A Doll’s House* by Henrik Ibsen. This drama consists of three acts with Torvald Helmer and his wife Nora as the major characters. It portrays this spouse’s life with some problems around them. At the end of this drama, the peak emerges as Nora says that she is treated like a doll by her husband. From that section, the readers can get justification for the title given.

Seeing the interesting points and previous researches above, the researcher then analyzed some parts regarding politeness. The research focuses on some questions below:

1. How are the parts classified based on politeness categorizations?
2. Why does the speaker use certain categorizations of politeness?

Politeness is considered as one of the keys to strengthen the social relationships. However, sometimes people are confused to explain what politeness actually means. Thus, some definitions of politeness are provided. Yule (2010: 135); Farhat (2013: 52) define it as what the people have to do such as being tactful, modest and nice to the other people. Furthermore, “in most of the studies, the politeness has been conceptualized especially as strategic conflict-avoidance or as strategic construction of cooperative social interaction” (Eelen, 2001: 21, Watts, 2003: 47 in Vilkki, 2006: 323). In

summary, it is strategy of being tactful, modest, and nice to other people in order to avoid conflict and to maintain the social interaction.

In relation to its implementation, politeness is germane to the notion of 'face'. Yule (2010: 135) asserts that 'face' is about public self-image. Brown & Levinson in Kitamura (2000: 1) and Hobbs (2003: 244) state that there are two types of *face*: positive and negative. The positive *face* can be defined as the people's desire to be appreciated in social relationship, and negative *face* as the individual's desire for freedom of action and freedom from imposition.

Besides the types, there are some rules people should follow in the society related to *face*. Brown and Levinson in Cutting (2002: 45) explain that when the people join the social relationships, besides politeness, they need also to show an awareness of the *face*, the public self-image, the sense of self, of the people that we address. Moreover, Goffman in Renkema (2004: 25) adds that participants in the conversations should not violate one another *face* or called as Face Threatening Acts (FTAs). Amundrud (2012: 184) includes requests, apologies, and complaints as some of the acts. Nevertheless, as the aforementioned acts are inevitable in daily life, people could do FTAs off record or on record.

Doing the FTA off record happens when the people indirectly ask for the other help. It means that they tend to tell the intentions to the listeners indirectly. Renkema (2004: 27) adds that off record means FTA is not recognizable. It needs much sensitivity of the listeners, because the speakers would not say directly what they want. Rather, they tend to judge something related to their wants or tend to speak without appointing anyone. In addition, Cutting (2002: 45) explains further that the off-record communicative act uses declarative representative functioning as a question 'to yourself' that functions implicitly as a directive. This act also flouts the Gricean maxims of communication (Ogiermann, 2009: 191), one of which is the maxim quantity. This means that the speakers tend to say not as informative as expected. They usually prolong their statements to make their 'indirect requests' are clear enough to be understood by the listeners. In addition, the indirectness, stated by Leech in Codreanu and Debu (2011: 128), shows also the politeness by

giving the listeners tentative options to choose whether they want to respond the speaker's utterance or not.

To do this FTA, Brown and Levinson (1987: 211-227) explain about the strategies that can be used in the off-record communicative act. There are fifteen stated: give hints, give association clues, presuppose, understate, overstate, use tautologies, use contradictions, be ironic, use metaphors, use rhetorical questions, be ambiguous, be vague, over-generalize, displace H, and be incomplete or use ellipsis.

Besides off record, the people can also do the FTA on record. This act consists of three kinds which are the strategy without redressive action that **is on record-baldly** which is considered as the request for help, suggestion, or invitation delivered directly by the speakers. The on record-baldly communicative act gives little option to the listeners regarding the way the speakers choose in requesting. Based on Brown and Levinson in Ogiermann (2009: 191), the focus of the act is on clarity and efficiency. Thus, it is normal if Cutting (2002: 46) categorizes this act as the most face-threatening mode of action. The other is the strategies with redressive action that are **on record-with negative politeness**, which can be characterized by demonstrating the distance between both the speakers and the listeners and avoiding intruding on each other territory (Cutting, 2002: 46), and **on record-with positive politeness**, in which Cutting (2002: 48) explains that this act aims to save positive face by showing the closeness solidarity and friendship, making the others feel good, and focusing on both speakers having common goal. Cutting (2004: 27) also defines *redressive action* as an action to improve the stability between conversational partners which lead to the minimization or the prevention of losing face. Ogiermann (2009: 12) adds that redressive is, on one hand, violating maxim of quantity, and on the other hand constituting a conventional rather than conversational implicature.

Several research results regarding politeness have also been published. The first example is by Kevdeš (2013). She analyzed face threatening acts and politeness strategies in 60 summer school application calls. The content of the calls was analyzed by gauging the frequency and quality of positive and negative face-threatening acts, as well as the deployment of various politeness

strategies. Amundrud (2012), in his research, requested the participants to respond by email to three freelance translation-related vignettes. Through the response emails, he then found the answers to the three questions posed: whether the participant would show more Negative Politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987) than the NS control; whether the participant would show greater politeness overall than the control; and whether the participant can be said to conform to English-language pragmatic norms for each of the three illocutionary acts performed. In addition, Zhao (2008) also supported the research on politeness with her journal article entitled "Analyzing the Meaning in Interaction in Politeness Strategies in *Scents of a Woman*". Discourse analysis was conducted to analyze the "face-threatening acts" (FTA) in some conversations of that film. The analysis then uncovered both the informational and affecting dimensions of language use in structuring human relationship and friendship.

## **II. METHODS**

The research was qualitative in nature. Lichtman (2013: 7) explains that, in social sciences, qualitative research is about the analysis of phenomenon which is not based on counting. Merriam (2009: 14) gives four characteristics of qualitative research: "the focus is on process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive." Furthermore, the information collected and analyzed, as stated by Saldaña (2011: 3) comprises textual materials such as documents or visual materials. Following the concepts, the researcher collected the qualitative data from the script of the drama. After that, the data were analyzed descriptively using Goffman's analysis in Renkema (2004: 25) to classify the politeness points found.

The objects of the research were two conversation parts in a drama script. The script is entitled *A Doll's House* which was written by Henrik Ibsen. Explained by Cody and Sprinchorn (2007: 353), the play is considered as a

realistic problem one. Its script, which is commented by Moliken (2005: 6) to float the public debate on women rights, consists of three acts with the conversations analyzed were in the first act. The characters captured in the parts analyzed are Torvald Helmer, his wife Nora, and Mrs. Linde as Nora's old friend. The reason why the researcher chose this drama was because it had complicated problems with much indirectness that existed in the whole story.

The data were analyzed with Goffman's analysis. Goffman in Renkema (2004: 25) explains that participants in the conversations should not violate one another face or called as face threatening acts (FTAs). Considering the points of awareness, if the people cannot avoid FTA, they could do the FTA off record or on record. FTA on record also has some sub-classes like on record-baldly, on record-with negative politeness, and on record-with positive politeness. From the classes of FTA, the researcher analyzed the data and classified them into the most appropriate class.

### III. DISCUSSIONS

The two parts of the script are presented below in Data I and Data II with the analysis of FTA.

#### Data I

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Mrs Linde. Well, I had to turn my hand to anything I could find--first a small shop, then a small school, and so on. The last three years have seemed like one long working-day, with no rest. Now it is at an end, Nora. My poor mother needs me no more, for she is gone; and the boys do not need me either; they have got situations and can shift for themselves.

Nora. What a relief you must feel if--

Mrs Linde. No, indeed; I only feel my life unspeakably empty. No one to live for anymore. [Gets up restlessly.] That was why I could not stand the life in my little backwater any longer. I hope it may be easier here to find something which will busy me and occupy my thoughts. If only I could have the good luck to get some regular work--office work of some kind--

Nora. But, Christine, that is so frightfully tiring, and you look tired out now. You had far better go away to some watering-place.

*Tur, The Realization Of Politeness in "A Doll's House" Script*

Mrs Linde [walking to the window]. I have no father to give me money for a journey, Nora.

Nora [rising]. Oh, don't be angry with me!

Mrs Linde [going up to her]. It is you that must not be angry with me, dear. The worst of a position like mine is that it makes one so bitter. No one to work for, and yet obliged to be always on the lookout for chances. One must live, and so one becomes selfish. When you told me of the happy turn your fortunes have taken--you will hardly believe it--I was delighted not so much on your account as on my own.

Nora. How do you mean?--Oh, I understand. You mean that perhaps Helmer could get you something to do.

Mrs Linde. Yes, that was what I was thinking of.

Nora. He must, Christine. Just leave it to me; I will broach the subject very cleverly--I will think of something that will please him very much. It will make me so happy to be of some use to you.

.....

### **Analysis of Data I**

Firstly, it is important to inform that Mrs. Linde is Nora's old friend who comes to Nora's house after not meeting for eight years. They did not meet since they had their own families who got own problems, especially related to money. At last, Nora could survive until her family could become the rich one, even her husband, Helmer was promoted to be the manager of the bank in which he works. On the contrary, Mrs. Linde's husband had passed away without leaving any inheritance. In her troubled life, Mrs. Linde comes to Nora to ask for her help.

There is one type of FTA (Face Threatening Act) in the first part that is **off-record**. Mrs. Linde is asked by Nora about her recent life before. Then, she tells everything she feels. But, the story is made by Mrs. Linde as the background or the reason why she should be helped by Nora and Nora's husband, Helmer. She tells all her piteous conditions until she eventually says,

"I hope it may be easier here to find something which will busy me and occupy my thoughts. **If only I could have the good luck to get some regular work--office work of some kind--**"

These statements represent her request for Nora to help her by giving her some job. But, this is done indirectly, without focusing on certain person. The speaker tends to show a great awareness of face and not to impose much at all. This characteristic is in accord with Renkema's statement of off-record FTA (2004: 27) which is not recognizable. Mrs. Linde, in this case, is just complaining and wishing that she could get a job to make her life better. Her statements are uttered in a voice loud enough for Nora to hear. Mrs. Linde is trying to make sure that Nora is listening to her. They fit some strategies in the off-record communicative act such giving hints, clues and presupposing. Before Mrs. Linde gives such clues, she previously uses contradictions about her life compared with Nora's recent life.

The statements are in the form of declarative sentences. These are quite difficult to interpret because the listener is expected to be sensitive to the implied meaning being conveyed. The listener is expected to interpret the statements as directive, a request for help. As the listener could not get what the speaker wants, the intention could not be conveyed well. Moreover, this would lead to the break of communication.

This act is also flouting the maxim of quantity. Mrs. Linde is trying to convince Nora that she has to be helped by telling all the problems she has. Instead of saying the problem as informative as possible, she says it not openly. She prolongs her utterances until coming to the unclear message. This could be changed to the more appropriate one. But, Mrs. Linde prefers saying the intention in indirectly because of her politeness to her friend. In addition, she has just come to see her old friend after not meeting her for several years. It could be impolite if she directly asks her friend to help her by asking Helmer to give Mrs. Linde a job in a bank.

However, Nora has not understood yet what Mrs. Linde wants. Rather, she keeps being sympathetic to Mrs. Linde. The first way done by Mrs. Linde is not successful yet. It may be caused by Nora who could not catch the intention yet. Thus, she keeps listening to her friend and understanding Mrs. Linde to seek the core problem. This may also be caused by Mrs. Linde who tells Nora



the problem she gets unclearly. She does not make her statements strong enough to understand.

As Mrs. Linde tells Nora about her intention to get a job, Nora responds to the other way. Instead of understanding that her friend asks her for help, she responds her by saying,

"But, Christine, that is so frightfully tiring, and you look tired out now. You had far better go away to some watering-place."

These answers are actually not wanted by Mrs. Linde. Thus, she responds her friend's statement by saying,

**"I have no father to give me money for a journey, Nora."**

This functions to lead the conversation to the goal. By saying that, she also makes her background to ask Nora's help stronger. The statement is uttered to make Nora more sympathetic to Mrs. Linde and finally could help her. This, again, also gives Nora a clue or hint. As the final point, after Nora responds her, Mrs. Linde retells the intention indirectly by saying

**"I was delighted not so much on your account as on my own."**

Mrs. Linde makes her statement stronger. This statement literally means that she is not delighted much on Nora's recent living. Compared with her condition of life, Nora's one is much better. The statement has double functions. The first function is literally as her feeling to her friend's condition. Mrs. Linde feels poor to herself after seeing the fact of her friend. Jealousy to Nora is conveyed literally in Mrs. Linde's statement. The second function is indirectly as her request for Nora to be helped. This is also called as off-record politeness. She retells her intention for the second time and it works. In this effort, Nora can understand what her friend wants by uttering the implied meaning of Mrs. Linde's statement that she tries to catch. Nora then says,

"How do you mean?--Oh, I understand. You mean that perhaps Helmer could get you something to do."

Mrs. Linde agrees what Nora has said by emphasizing her intention by saying so. The goal can eventually be attained well. Nora also responds

positively by saying that she will try best to ask for Helmer's help. It is actually a freedom for Nora to respond the literal or even the implied meaning. But, as Mrs. Linde's friend, she knows a lot about her friend's intention. After hearing the positive respond from Nora, Mrs. Linde adds the politeness by thanking her so much, also praising her. That would be a custom: when someone is helped, he would thank the helper. In addition, it is as the continued politeness that is shown before.

## Data II

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Nora. Let me introduce you--this is Christine, who has come to town.

Helmer. Christine--? Excuse me, but I don't know--

Nora. Mrs Linde, dear; Christine Linde.

Helmer. Of course. A school friend of my wife's, I presume?

Mrs Linde. Yes, we have known each other since then.

Nora. And just think, she has taken a long journey in order to see you.

Helmer. What do you mean?

Mrs Linde. No, really, I--

Nora. Christine is tremendously clever at book-keeping, and she is frightfully anxious to work under some clever man, so as to perfect herself--

Helmer. Very sensible, Mrs Linde.

Nora. And when she heard you had been appointed manager of the Bank--the news was telegraphed, you know--she travelled here as quick as she could. Helmer, I am sure you will be able to do something for Christine, for my sake, won't you?

Helmer. Well, it is not altogether impossible. I presume you are a widow, Mrs Linde?

Mrs Linde. Yes.

Helmer. And have had some experience of book-keeping?

Mrs Linde. Yes, a fair amount.

Helmer. Ah! well, it's very likely I may be able to find something for you--

Nora [clapping her hands]. What did I tell you? What did I tell you?

Helmer. You have just come at a fortunate moment, Mrs Linde.

Mrs Linde. How am I to thank you?

.....

### **Analysis of Data II**

Contrast with the previous analyses, this kind of conversation shows positive politeness. It is done by Nora as she introduces Mrs. Linde to his husband and tells what her friends expect from him. Before she asks for Helmer's help, Nora tries to tell him about Mrs. Linde's competence and effort to see Helmer:

- "And just think, **she has taken a long journey in order to see you.**"
- "**Christine is tremendously clever at book-keeping, and she is frightfully anxious to work under some clever man, so as to perfect herself—**"

Those statements are used to make Helmer feel good, especially in the first statement, and finally Nora could easily ask for her husband's help to recruit her friend in his company. Furthermore, Nora tells lots about Mrs. Linde's competence at book-keeping. This would give some consideration for Helmer to recruit Mrs. Linde. In other words, Nora is trying to give reason for asking her husband's help. When Nora says that Mrs. Linde is eager to work under some clever man, it again aims to make Helmer feel good, or praised. This is one characteristic from **on record-with positive politeness**. It confirms Cutting's comment (2002: 48) explaining that this act executed by showing the closeness solidarity and friendship, making the others feel good, and focusing on both speakers having common goal.

Moreover, Nora adds by saying,

"And when she heard you had been appointed manager of the Bank--the news was telegraphed, you know--she traveled here as quick as she could. Helmer, **I am sure you will be able to do something for Christine, for my sake, won't you?**"

The words in bold is called as **on record-with positive politeness**. Nora tells Helmer that she believes her husband can afford some job for her friend. By showing closeness and solidarity, and emphasizing that both Helmer and her have the common goal, Nora tries to ask for Helmer's help. Nora also looks optimistic that Helmer would accept Mrs. Linde as his worker in the bank.

This is also the characteristic of on record-with positive politeness. The general strategies of this are finding agreement and avoiding disagreement.

As a result, the act works. The goal could be reached by Helmer's understanding of what Nora asks for and he easily accepts Mrs. Linde to be his worker by saying

“Ah! well, it's very likely I may be able to find something for you—“

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

Politeness is considered to be important in the communication. When the people are communicating to one another, they are expected to keep the social relationship and do not violate one another face or called as face threatening acts (FTAs). People tend to save their interlocutors' face by using indirect request, off record, as far as they understand what the speakers want to. The on record will be used if only the other one does not work. Considering the points of awareness, they could do the FTA on record by cogitating two ways that the people can do. They are with positive or negative politeness.

In the case of A Doll's House script, there are some conversations that lead to the FTA off record and the FTA on record with positive politeness. Regarding doing FTA off record, that is in the first analysis, Mrs. Linde tells Nora about her life which is troubled and needs help. But, she does not tell directly whom she wants to ask for help. In addition, when she prolongs her statements, she makes her statement clearer by asking Nora for help, added by some praises for Nora, trying hard to make Nora feel good. This is then called as doing FTA on record with positive politeness.

Then, related to the suggestions, it is expected that the full script analysis can be conducted by other researchers. This is because the readers can get the understanding completely by grasping all the politeness points in the whole script. Moreover, it is also suggested that there will be more researches about politeness, covering not only drama scripts, but also poets,

recorded conversations, etc. Through rich sources of politeness, the readers can be masters of politeness anywhere.

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