

POLITENESS STRATEGIES OF THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN *THE FAULT IN OUR STARS* NOVEL

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Abstract

This paper explored politeness strategies and resolved two research questions, namely what politeness strategies were applied by the main characters in *The Fault in Our Stars* novel and what factors influenced the use of politeness strategies by the main characters in the novel. Data, consisting of 263 utterances containing politeness strategies, were collected from *The Fault in Our Stars* novel and were analyzed using a document analysis method. Results showed that the main two characters, namely Augustus and Hazel, applied four politeness strategies, which were distributed as follows: positive politeness, as the most frequently-used strategy with a frequency of 100 utterances (38%), followed by off record, 59 utterances (22.4%), bald on record, 54 utterances (20.6%), and negative politeness, 50 utterances (19%). The strategies that were used by the two main characters were affected by two main factors, namely the payoffs and the circumstances or sociological variables.

Keywords: main character, payoff, politeness strategy, *The Fault in Our Stars*

Introduction

Communication is an essential aspect in every human's life. Miller (1951, p. 1) states that "communication is so pervasively important in all walks of life that every branch of the social sciences is concerned with it, studies it, and adds to the general fund of knowledge about it". Communication cannot be separated from language because language is a means of communication. Sari (2017, p. 15) states that "pragmatics is the study on how the speakers of a language use sentences to produce successful communication". Accordingly, people should have a pragmatic competence. Furthermore, according to Adel, Davoudi and Ramezanzadeh (2016), without the knowledge of pragmatic competence, there are circumstances where the collocutors are unable to understand each other which results in a communication failure. Hence, pragmatic competence is one of the competences that people need to learn in order to deal with the process of socializing in society.

Moreover, according to Sari (2017), learning pragmatics would help English learners to increase their awareness of socio-cultures. Thus, it is more likely for a person to make the communication flow smoothly because he or she learns



pragmatics. According to Adel et al. (2016, p. 48), “one important aspect of pragmatic competence is politeness”. Mahmud (2018) states that effective communication is not merely about being able to deliver the messages but also to make the communication comfortable so that it creates solidarity and intimacy and this can be accomplished using politeness strategies. That is why the researchers would like to investigate politeness and its strategies in this research.

Politeness is a sociocultural phenomenon in which a person shows a consideration to others (Wang 2014) and it is often used to avoid an offense or misunderstanding. According to Herk (2012), politeness is behaving appropriately based on the situation. In addition, according to Rosari (2016), people ought to know who they are speaking to so that they would not be rude. For example, there is a difference on how a professor speaks to his students and how the students speak to the professor in a classroom, for example when the students make a request. To sum up, these days it is important to have pragmatic competence and knowing how to behave politely based on the situation, and thus, to avoid misunderstanding or a failure in communication between the speaker and the interlocutor.

Jiang notes that “in the context of language teaching, politeness is believed to enhance learning by providing a lively and friendly atmosphere in classroom” (as cited in Sülü, 2015, p. 216). Widiadnya, Seken and Santosa (2018) state that a politeness strategy has implications on teaching and learning process efficiency, respectful communication, cooperation interaction, less imposition in the teaching and learning process, and togetherness between the teacher and students. Therefore, the researchers decided to investigate politeness strategies because of their importance for English learners as well as society members. Studying politeness can help English language learners who are studying sociolinguistics as well as learning the culture of the second/foreign language. The novel entitled *The Fault in Our Stars* (2012) was chosen as the object of this study because of its popularity among young people and because of its rich data of politeness phenomena. In the novel, there are also many characters who have different ages, positions, and backgrounds. The researchers explored politeness strategies and their factors in the novel by analysing the utterances of the two main characters using the theory of politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987).

Based on the background of the study, two research questions are formulated as follows: First, what politeness strategies are applied by the main characters in *The Fault in Our Stars* novel? Second, what factors influence the use of politeness strategies by the main characters in *The Fault in Our Stars* novel?

Literature Review

Pragmatics

Stalnaker (1970) defines pragmatics as the study of linguistic acts and the context where they are applied. Furthermore, there are two major problems that can be solved within pragmatics: “defining interesting types of speech acts and speech products” and “characterizing the features of the speech context that help to determine which proposition is expressed” (Stalnaker, 1970). Speech act is included in the scope of pragmatics. Speech act is the production of utterances based on the condition that is faced (Searle, 1974). Speech acts deal with how people use the language. Maskuri, Tarjana, Djatmika and Purnanto (2019, p. 87) conclude “the ultimate idea of speech act is that language not only illustrates phenomena in the

factual world but also does things”. Therefore, the study of politeness is also related to speech acts. According to Austin (1962), three basic senses in which saying something means doing something are as follows: locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act.

Face threatening acts

According to Goffman (1967, p. 5), face is “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact”. While making an interaction, people usually collaborate with each other in preserving face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Furthermore, Amadi and Ken-Maduako (2019, p. 32) assert that “everyone has a face to save in daily interactions; it is therefore generally expected that people would not only provide interactional support to one another, but would also provide the expected affirmation”. It means that the speaker avoids making the addressee feel unpleasant. While the phrase “face wants” is defined as the desire to protect someone’s face (Herk, 2012), which is also known as “face needs”.

Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 62) propose two types of face: the first type is negative face or “the want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others” and the second type is “positive face or the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others”. Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 65) also note that the meaning of face threatening acts (FTAs) is “those acts that by nature is the contrary to the face wants of the addressee or of the speaker”. In addition, FTAs can be distinguished into two types, namely face threatened and threats to hearer’s face and face threatened and threats to speaker’s face (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Positive FTAs threaten the hearer when the speaker expresses negative appraisal on positive face of hearer’s face and when the speaker expresses insufficient care to the positive face of the hearer (Kedves, 2013). Meanwhile, the negative FTA can be threatening to the hearer when it gives a pressure on the hearer to do or not to do an action, conveys an intense negative opinion to hearer’s possession, and points out speaker’s positive future actions which force the hearer to decline or approve it (Kedves, 2013). Kedves (2013) notes that politeness is related to face and face work ideas for many scholars. A means is needed to reduce the cost of FTA. FTA menaces the stability of communication’s intensity, and in this case politeness can be regarded as a way to restore or prevent the damage of the FTA (Elisdawati, Husein & Setia, 2018).

Politeness strategies

Politeness is one of the restriction means for human behavior in order to help us in accomplishing an effective social living (Watts, Ide & Ehlich, 1992). Humans are social beings because they interact with each other to make a social living. A limitation or constraint is needed in communication to make an effective social life since humans also have a sense of feeling. Sometimes, people feel threatened by what others are saying.

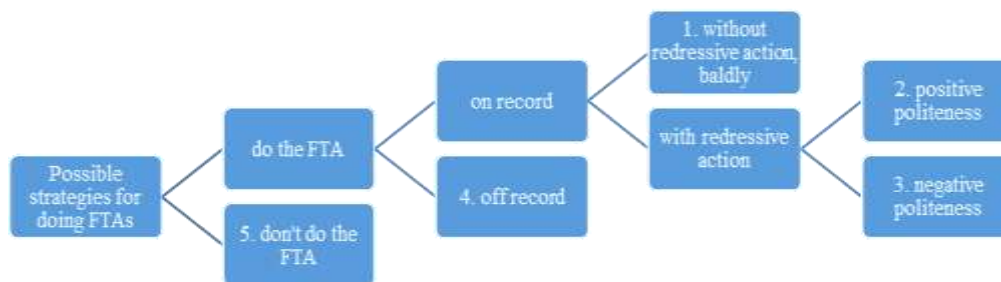


Figure 1. Possible strategies for doing FTAs (Brown & Levinson 1987)

Mills (2003) explains that politeness is an action to show respect toward the other person and to avoid offenses to the hearer. Therefore, politeness is one of the means in communication that can be used to avoid such an undesirable situation. Politeness helps us in controlling our manner and words. Thus, politeness is a means to keep people’s interaction effective without hurting others by considering the situation.

In everyday communication, FTAs cannot be separated. There are several ways of doing the FTAs. Brown and Levinson (1987) propose four possible strategies for doing FTAs, namely: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record. Each of the four politeness strategies is presented below.

Bald on record

Bald-on-record strategies can be used to get a maximally efficient communication (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In addition, Sülü (2015, p. 217) points out that “bald on-record strategies focus on clarity and efficiency, and they do nothing to minimize threats to the hearer’s face”. Performing a bald action (without redress) means that it includes direct, clear, and brief words. Bald on record strategies are differentiated into two types depending on the motives, namely cases of “non-minimization of the face threat” and cases of “FTA-oriented bald-on-record usage” (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The speaker (S) can decide to do a bald on record strategy without minimizing the FTAs in several cases, such as when maximum efficiency is very significant, where the speaker’s desire to please hearer’s face is small or because he wants to be rude, and where the FTA is mainly on hearer (H)’s stake like in advice or warnings (Brown & Levinson, 1987). According to Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 99), three areas where bald on record strategies are applied by focusing on the FTAs are: “1) welcoming, where the speaker insists that hearer may impose on his negative face; 2) farewells, where the speaker insists the hearer may overstep on his positive face; 3) offers, where speaker insists that the hearer may impose on speaker’s negative face”.

Positive politeness

Positive politeness strategies focus on the H’s positive face and the potential face threatening act is minimized because commonly S wants some of the wants of

H. The aim is to make the addressee feel good. Besides being used for redressing FTAs, this technique can also be a social accelerator means which shows the intention of the addresser to be closer to the addressee (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Positive politeness strategies are meant to hinder offence by emphasizing the friendliness (Kamlasi, 2017, p. 70). According to Brown and Levinson (1987), there are three mechanisms in positive politeness strategies and each mechanisms has its own sub- strategies. First, speakers claim “common ground and it can be done by noticing the hearer (his/her interests, wants, needs, goods), exaggerating (interest, approval, sympathy with the hearer), intensifying interest to hearer, using in-group identity markers, seeking agreement, avoid disagreement, presupposing/raising/asserting common ground, and joking” (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Second, speakers “convey that the speaker and hearer are co-operators which can be done by asserting or presupposing speaker’s knowledge of and concern for hearer’s wants, offering and promising, being optimistic, include both speaker and hearer in the activity, giving (or asking for) reasons, assuming or asserting reciprocity” (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Last, speakers “fulfill hearer’s want for some X by giving gifts to a hearer” (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Negative politeness

In contrast, negative politeness strategies primarily focus on satisfying partly the negative face of the hearer (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This strategy expects that the speaker will impress the hearer. Moreover, Febiyani and Fitriana (2019: 8) state that “negative politeness strategy deals with respect behavior”. There is a social distance and awkwardness between S and H. Brown and Levinson (1987) note that negative politeness strategies are differentiated into five types, namely: 1) “be direct”, 2) “don’t presume/assume”, 3) “don’t coerce H”, 4) “communicate S’s want to not impinge on H”, and 5) “redress other wants of H’s derivative from negative face”. Then, there are 10 sub-strategies of negative politeness. The 10 sub-strategies are as follows: be conventionally indirect, question & hedge, be pessimistic, minimize the size of imposition on hearer, give deference, apologize, impersonalize speaker and hearer, state the FTA as a general rule, nominalize, and go on record as incurring a debt or as not indebteding hearer.

Off record

In the off-record strategies, what the speaker says may have more than single clear attributable intention (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This strategy is also called an indirect strategy. Yasmeeen, Jabeen and Akram (2014, p. 250) state that an off record strategy “takes some of the pressure off and tries to avoid the direct FTA”. Therefore, by applying off record strategies, the speaker can avoid doing face threatening acts by letting the hearer interpret the message by himself. There are two mechanisms in this type. The first is “inviting conversational implicatures” and the second is “being vague or ambiguous”. Inviting conversational implicatures means that a speaker must give clues and hope that the hearer will realize and therefore can understand what the speaker intended to say (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In addition, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), S also can do the off record strategy by being vague/ambiguous.

Furthermore, based on Brown and Levinson (1987), there are four ways of doing off record politeness strategies. First is by violating maxim of relevance

(making hints/clues, making association clues, and presupposing). Second is by violating quantity maxim (understating, overstating, and using tautologies). Third is by violating quality maxim (using contradiction, being ironic, using metaphors, and using rhetorical questions), and last is by violating manner maxim, by being ambiguous and vague, for example.

Factors influencing the use of politeness strategies

Using politeness strategies is not without any reasons. Some factors may influence the politeness strategies' choice. Basically, Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 68) claim that there are two main factors influencing the choice of politeness strategies and people or "any rational agent will tend to choose the same strategy if they face the same condition or situation". The first factor is intrinsic payoffs and the second one is circumstances or sociological variables.

The payoffs: A priori considerations

By performing on record strategies, S can enlist public pressure, get credit for honesty, get credit for being straightforward, avoid the probability of misunderstanding, and pay back in face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Meanwhile, by performing the politeness strategies off record, the speaker can get honor for being thoughtful, smaller risk of entering the gossip biography act, avoid the possibility of face-damaging interpretation, and testing the hearer's feeling toward him (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Brown and Levinson (1987) state that by performing on record positive politeness strategies, the speaker can reduce the FTA by ensuring the hearer that they are the same kind, and have the same wants. Meanwhile, by performing on record negative politeness strategies, the speaker can show respect, avoid future debt, preserving social distance, and prevent the threat (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Finally, the fifth strategy choice is "don't do the FTA" which means that S avoids making an offence at all. However, the speaker cannot get the communication that he hoped for (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The circumstances: Sociological variables

According to Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 244), "the seriousness of an FTA is assessed as a complex function of three variables, 'distance', 'power', and 'rating of imposition'". In short, there are two major factors that affect the use of politeness strategies, namely payoffs and circumstances. The speaker in the conversation may want to achieve some kind of result or effect by doing a certain strategy as what has been stated before. A speaker can also choose which politeness strategy to use if the hearer is someone who is closely related, or has a higher position. For example, someone can use a bald on record strategy to his little sister because they are closely related. There is more likely no hurt feeling between them.

Method

This study was qualitative research. Creswell (2014) notes that "qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problem". Furthermore, Mohajan (2018, p. 7) points out that "the qualitative research data are descriptive, in the form of interview notes, observation records, and data are analysed inductively". The primary data of the research, consisting of utterances, were collected from a novel. The researchers

focused on the utterances said by the two main characters of *The Fault in Our Stars* novel, namely Augustus and Hazel. The utterances that were analysed were those related to Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness strategies.

The novel *The Fault in Our Stars* was the primary data source for this document analysis or content analysis, which concentrates on analysing and construing a material that has been recorded in order to learn about human behaviour (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Razavieh, 2010). The technical processes were reading and analysing the utterances in the novel, categorizing the utterances, and then writing the report based on the gathered data.

The subject of this research was the novel *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green. There were 14 characters, but the researchers only focused on the two main characters of the novel because of big roles in the story. Moreover, the two main characters often used the politeness strategies in the conversations whether to a friend, parents, or other people. The first character was Hazel Grace Lancaster and she was the protagonist of this novel as well as the one who told the story. The second main character was Augustus Waters. He met Hazel from the Support Group. Just like Hazel, Augustus was a survivor of cancer but his case was an osteosarcoma.

There were two instruments in this research, namely human instruments and a document. According to Ary et al. (2010), in qualitative research, the people who investigate are the main instrument for collecting and analysing the data. Therefore, in this research, the researchers were the human instruments. Meanwhile, the document of this study was the novel *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green. The novel consisted of 313 pages and was published in 2012. The researchers analysed the collected utterances and then categorized the utterances based on the types of politeness strategies and identified the factors influencing the application of the politeness strategies to answer the two research questions.

All of the utterances were collected from *The Fault in Our Stars* novel. The utterances were spoken by the two main characters, namely Hazel Lancaster and Augustus Waters. The researchers analysed the utterances that they said in the novel in order to find out the politeness strategies and what factors influence them in choosing the politeness strategies. The utterances were classified into four politeness strategies types according to Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory, namely bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record.

Then the factors were analysed based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory as well. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), there are two main factors of using the politeness strategies: payoffs and sociological variables. Furthermore, the sociological variables consist of 'social distance', 'relative power', and 'rating of imposition' (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Results and Discussion

Politeness strategies applied in The Fault in Our Stars novel

It was found that the two main characters in this novel, namely Hazel Grace Lancaster and Augustus Waters applied all four types of politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). The politeness strategies types were bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record. There were a total of 263 utterances of politeness strategies. The researchers found that the most commonly-used politeness strategies by the two main characters of *The Fault in*

Our Stars were positive politeness strategies. Then, the positive politeness strategies were followed by off record strategies, bald on record strategies, and last negative politeness ones. The summary of the findings could be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Politeness strategies of the main characters of *The Fault in Our Stars*

No.	Types of Politeness Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1	Bald on record	54	20.6%
2	Positive Politeness	100	38%
3	Negative Politeness	50	19%
4	Off record	59	22.4%
Total		263	100%

Bald on record politeness strategies found in The Fault in Our Stars novel

In this strategy, the speaker’s wants to do the FTA in a maximum efficiency was greater than pleasing the hearer and there were two cases in this context, namely “non-minimization of face threat” and “face threatening act oriented bald on record usage” (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Referring to Table 1, there were a total of 54 utterances (20.6%) of bald on record politeness strategies used by the main characters. Both main characters in *The Fault in Our Stars* novel applied bald on record politeness strategies based on two cases. The following excerpts were the examples:

Excerpt 1

- Isaac : “If the bastards can’t take the hostages, they just kill them and claim we did it”.
- Augustus : “**Cover me!** *jumped out from behind the wall and raced toward the school*”

The **excerpt 1** above exemplified a bald on record politeness strategy where the face threat was not minimized. Brown and Levinson (1987: 95) state “if a maximum efficiency is very important and both of the speaker and hearer knew about this, the speaker can speak with no face redress to the hearer”. In this dialogue, Augustus applied a bald on record politeness strategy towards his best friend (Isaac). This strategy was applied because at that time, there was a great urgency. Augustus felt the desperation of saving the kids in the game. In this case, the face threat was irrelevant. Furthermore, Isaac as Augustus’s co-operator in the game also had the same intention. Hence, he could demand Isaac to act quickly without minimizing the face threat toward him.

Excerpt 2

- Augustus : “**Don’t you worry about me, Hazel Grace**”.
- Hazel : “I’m sorry. You’ll be okay. It’ll be okay. I promise”.

On the other hand, **excerpt 2** was a bald on record politeness strategy which oriented on FTA. Excerpt 2 was a case where the imperative addressed to H’s hesitancy to exceed on the positive face of S. In the example above, Augustus told Hazel about the truth of his condition. It was actually bad but he kept it as secret

until they were already in Amsterdam. Augustus uttered “don’t you worry about me, Hazel Grace” which allowed Hazel to transgress on his positive face.

Positive politeness strategies found in The Fault in Our Stars novel

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), a positive politeness strategy happens when the redress is directed to H’s positive face. Therefore, it could make the hearer feel good. In the novel, positive politeness strategies were the most frequently used by the main characters with a total of 100 utterances or 38% of the total (263 utterances). The positive politeness strategies were applied through various ways. The following were some examples of the sub-strategies of positive politeness applied by the main characters:

Excerpt 3

Augustus : “Hold on, **to Hazel**”

Augustus : “**Dude, pillows don’t break. Try something that breaks**”.

Excerpt 3 was an example in which the speaker claimed in group membership by using an identity marker. It was indicated by the use of word “*dude*” by Augustus to call Isaac. At that time, Isaac was seeking something to release his anger. Augustus allowed him to release his anger in the room. Augustus suggested that Isaac “try something that breaks” instead of just pillows. He made an imperative utterance which was “softened by in-group address form”. Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 108) claim “using in-group kinds of address forms with imperatives indicates that S considers the relative power and status to be small and indicating that it isn’t power-backed command”. Thus, it softened the imperative that Augustus made.

Excerpt 4

Augustus : “**Let’s go back**”.

Hazel : “I’m okay”.

Excerpt 4 was another example of positive politeness strategy. However, it was a different case and different sub-strategy. In **excerpt 4**, Augustus conveyed that he and the hearer were co-operators by including himself and Hazel in the activity. According to Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 127), “by using an inclusive ‘we’ form, when S really means you or me, he can call upon the cooperative assumptions and thereby redress FTAs”. Hazel was having a difficulty to keep going upstairs because of her breathing problems. However, she kept convincing herself that she could do it. Augustus noticed this and felt bad about it. Thus, he stressed his cooperativeness by implying that he was willing to go back for their benefit.

Negative politeness strategies found in The Fault in Our Stars novel

Negative politeness is about S’s desire to be free in action and get an unimpeded intention (Brown & Levinson 1987). Out of all the politeness strategies utterances by Augustus and Hazel, there were a total of 50 utterances or 19% of negative politeness strategies. Both main characters applied these politeness strategies when they might transgress on someone’s negative face. The following

were some examples of negative politeness strategies performed in different mechanisms:

Excerpt 5

Hazel : MOM! MOM!
Hazel's mom : "What's wrong?"
Hazel : "Nothing. Sorry, I didn't know you were in the shower",
Hazel's mom : "Bathh, I was just . . . Just trying to take a bath for five seconds. Sorry. What's going on?"
Hazel : "**Can you call the Genies and tell them the trip is off?** I just got an email from Peter Van Houten's assistant. She thinks we're coming".

Excerpt 5 showed an example of one of the negative politeness strategy mechanisms in which Hazel as the speaker did not coerce the hearer to do the act. Hazel just received an email from Peter van Houten's assistant and she thought that they would not be going to Amsterdam because of her health condition. So, she wanted her mom to call The Genies (an organization who grants wishes for cancer survivors). The utterance "*Can you call the Genies and tell them the trip is off?*" was not really a question but a request. Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 173) state that "by being pessimistic, it gives redress to hearer's negative face by explicitly expressing doubt that the conditions for the appropriateness of speaker's speech act obtain".

Excerpt 6

Hazel : "Where were you?"
Augustus : "**Line got super long, sorry**".

While in **excerpt 6**, Augustus performed another mechanism of negative politeness strategies by imparting that he did not want to impinge the hearer. According to Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 187), "by apologizing for doing an FTA, the speaker can indicate his reluctance to impinge on H's negative face and thereby partially redress that impingement". Tavuchis noted that "when someone apologizes, he or she is in the position of seeking unconditional pardon in the context of being unworthy of an act that can be neither forgotten nor forsaken" (as cited in Regehr & Gutheil, 2002, p. 425). At that time, they were about to board on an airplane. Hazel was waiting for Augustus because he had not come back for over 20 minutes. He said that he wanted to get a hamburger before they flew. When he came back, Hazel asked him where he was. Augustus immediately apologized by saying sorry for what he did and provided his reason. He said that the line was super long, so it took a long time to come back.

Off record politeness strategies found in The Fault in Our Stars novel

The speaker could use nondirect language and the hearer can interpret by themselves by applying off record strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Furthermore, Brown and Levinson (1987) note that there are two mechanisms in off record, namely "inviting the conversational implicatures via hints triggered by violation of Gricean Maxim" and "being vague or ambiguous". These two

mechanisms were applied by the main characters of the novel *The Fault in Our Stars*. In total, 59 (22.6%) off record politeness strategies were used by the two main characters in the novel.

There were some ways of inviting conversational implications. The researchers found out that those ways were by understating, overstating, using contradiction, being ironic, and using metaphors. The following dialogue was one of the examples of this mechanism:

Excerpt 7

Hazel : “You **nearly charmed the pants off** my mom”.
Augustus : “Yeah, and your dad is a Smits fan, which helps. You think they liked me?”
Hazel : “Sure, they did. Who cares, though? They’re just parents”.
Augustus : “They’re *your* parents”.

Excerpt 7 was an example of understate. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), to understate is to say less than what the speaker actually intends to convey. In excerpt 7, Hazel noticed that her mom liked Augustus. Augustus’s sweet actions to her mom made her (mom) smile. He was not only sweet to her mom but also to Hazel. Hazel conveyed a compliment by saying that Augustus nearly charmed her mom’s pants off. The meaning of that sentence was Augustus succeeded in making an impressive first impression. Although Hazel was sure that her mom liked him, she said the word “nearly” to understate her compliment to Augustus.

Excerpt 8

Augustus : “Sandwich?”
Hazel : “Let me guess”,
Augustus : “Dutch cheese. And tomato. The tomatoes are from Mexico. Sorry”.
Hazel : “**You’re always such a *disappointment*, Augustus**”.

Meanwhile, **excerpt 8** exemplified an off record politeness strategy by mechanism of “being vague or ambiguous”. Being vague or ambiguous could make the speaker’s communicated purpose stay unclear (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In excerpt 8, Augustus and Hazel went to a park together. Augustus wanted to give clues to Hazel that it was possible for them to go to Amsterdam. The Genies granted Augustus’s wish. He mentioned several Dutch names. He also brought orange juices. Hazel caught what was on Augustus’s mind. When he said that he packed sandwiches but the tomatoes were from Mexico, he said sorry. As a response, Hazel said that he was such a *disappointment*. However, the writing itself was in italics, which means that what she said could mean the other way around.

Factors influencing the main characters of The Fault in Our Stars to use politeness strategies

Brown and Levinson (1987) say that the factors that might influence the use of politeness strategies are the payoffs and the sociological variables. Both factors were found in the politeness utterances by the main characters of the novel. The payoffs consist of four types, namely “bald on record payoffs”, “on record positive

politeness payoffs”, “on record negative politeness payoffs”, and “off record payoffs” (Brown & Levinson, 1987). All of the payoffs were received by the main characters. Payoffs could also be interpreted as the effect or advantage.

By performing bald on record strategies, the speaker could secure public pressure, get respect for being honest, get credit for being straightforward, and avoid the probability of misunderstanding (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Below are examples.

Excerpt 9

- Augustus : “It’s above my knee and it just tapers a little and then it’s just skin. There’s a nasty car, but it just looks like” –
Hazel : What?
Augustus : “My leg, just so you’re prepared in case, I mean, in case you see it or what”--
Hazel : **“Oh, get over yourself”.**

In **excerpt 9**, Hazel performed a bald on record politeness strategy without minimizing the FTA but primarily on Augustus’s interest. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), performing this strategy can indicate that the speaker trusts the hearer and also avoids misunderstanding. Augustus and Hazel were about to hook up. However, Augustus worried that Hazel might hate him if she found out about his leg's condition. He tried to explain that he had a nasty car that she might dislike later. Hazel did not want Augustus to think about that. She did not want Augustus to lose his confidence over that problem. Hazel indicated that she trusted him. She did not want to be misunderstood. So, she encouraged him to be confident and assured him not to worry about that.

Excerpt 10

- Hazel : “Hello?”
Augustus : “Hazel Grace”
Hazel : “Oh, thank God it’s you. Hi. Hi, I love you”.
Augustus : “Hazel Grace, I’m at the gas station. Something’s wrong”.
“You gotta help me”.

In **excerpt 10**, what Augustus said was bald on record without minimization and it was task oriented. Augustus was alone at the gas station when he suddenly felt a great pain on his leg. He could not endure it and decided to call Hazel for help. Augustus asked Hazel to come to the gas station. Based on Brown and Levinson (1987), a “bald on record politeness strategy” can be used to avoid misunderstanding. Although what Augustus said was an imperative sentence, at that time performing a bald on record politeness strategy would be easier to be understood.

Meanwhile by doing an on record positive politeness strategy, the speaker could please the positive face of the hearer in some respect (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Furthermore, a positive politeness strategy could minimize FTA by making sure the addressee that the speaker considers her/himself to be the same kinds and avoids or minimizes debt implication of FTA (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The

following were some examples of the payoffs factor that affected the main characters of *The Fault in Our Stars* in performing positive politeness strategies:

Excerpt 11

Augustus : “You should see it, *V for Vendetta*, I mean”.
Hazel : “**Okay, I’ll look it up**”.

Excerpt 11 above showed a positive politeness strategy that was performed by Hazel. Hazel performed one of the sub-strategies of positive politeness by making a promise. She tried to say that she and Augustus were co-operators. When they were about to part ways, Augustus suggested that Hazel watch *V for Vendetta* because he thought that there was a character that looked like Hazel in that movie. In response, Hazel made a promise although it might be a fake promise. The main payoff of performing on record positive politeness strategy was to please the positive face of the hearer in some respect (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Hazel achieved the payoff. It was because she already demonstrated that she had good intention in satisfying Augustus’s positive face by making her promise.

Excerpt 12

Augustus : Hi,
Hazel : “Oh, God, Augustus, **we have to get you to a hospital**”.

Excerpt 12 showed another payoff of performing on record positive politeness strategy. Positive politeness strategies can avoid or minimize debt implication of FTA by referring roundabout to the reciprocal relationship “between the speaker and the hearer” (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Knowing that she could not handle Augustus’s condition by herself, Hazel suggested that he go to the hospital. Hazel used the word “we” to include both of herself and Augustus in the request. Therefore, she could minimize the debt implication for asking Augustus to be co-operator of her want.

Performing on record negative politeness strategies could benefit the speaker in the following ways: 1) pay respect to pay back the FTA, 2) maintaining social distance, 3) giving real “out” for the hearer, and 4) giving conventional “outs” (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The excerpts below were some examples of the negative politeness payoff factors that influenced Augustus and Hazel:

Excerpt 13

Augustus : “I lit up like a Christmas tree, Hazel Grace. The lining of my chest, my hip, my liver, everywhere”.
Hazel : “I’m so sorry”,
Augustus : “**I’m sorry I didn’t tell you**”.

Augustus performed one of negative politeness’s sub-strategies by apologizing in **excerpt 13**. By apologizing for the FTA, S may show her or his hesitancy to afflict the negative face of the hearer so the impingement becomes partially redressed (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Before they went to Amsterdam, actually Augustus got a PET scan because his ached hip. However, he kept that as a secret from Hazel. When he was about to speak the truth, he apologized and

admitted that he did the impingement. By apologizing, he satisfied Hazel's negative face to some degree.

Excerpt 14

Hazel : Hi
Augustus : "Good evening, Hazel Grace. **Do you suppose you could find your way to the Literal Heart of Jesus around eight p.m.?**"

Augustus performed negative politeness strategies by being conventionally indirect in **excerpt 14**. Furthermore, he used higher degrees of politeness and tried to be maximally negatively polite in the expression of his indirect speech acts. Brown and Levinson (1987) state that if the speaker tried to show bigger effort in face-preserving, he would be seen more hard working in trying to please hearer's face wants. Augustus did not want to seem forcing Hazel to say yes to his request. Instead, he paid respect to her.

Based on Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 71), the off record politeness strategy can give payoffs, such as "credit for being tactful, non-coercive; run less risk of his act entering the 'gossip biography' that others keep of him, and he can avoid for the responsibility for the potentially face-damaging interpretation". Besides, S can test the feeling of the hearer (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The followings were examples of off record strategies' payoffs utterances which influence the main characters in using these strategies. One was by inviting conversational implicatures via hints and the other was by being vague or ambiguous.

Excerpt 15

Hazel : "**This is what it feels like to drive in a car with you**".
 "**Augustus smiled but kept his jaw clenched tight**"
Hazel : Okay?
 "**Gus's hand grabbed the armrest, his eyes widen**"

Excerpt 15 took place in an airplane. It was the first time for Augustus to fly on airplane. In the example above, Hazel performed her off record politeness strategy by giving hints. Hazel invited Augustus to think what the meaning of her sentence was. She said that what Augustus was feeling at that moment was like how she felt when she was driving in a car with him. Off record politeness strategies could be used to test hearer's feeling (Brown & Levinson, 1987). That was what Hazel tried to do when she gave hints to Augustus

Excerpt 16

Hazel's dad : "Emily, this risotto . . ."
Hazel's mom : "It's just delicious".
Gus's mom : "Oh, thanks. I'd be happy to give you the recipe".
Augustus : "You know, the primary taste I'm getting is not-Oranje".
Hazel : "Good observation, Gus. This food, while delicious, does not taste like Oranje".
Hazel's mom : Hazel.

Augustus : “It tastes like . . .”

Augustus performed an off record politeness strategy in **excerpt 16** by using ellipsis (being incomplete). Chen (2016, p. 2134) defines ellipsis as “the omission of information in the discourse of language communication”. Augustus, Hazel, and both of their parents were having dinner that was cooked by Augustus’s mom. While they were eating, they began to comment on the dish. Augustus left his sentence hanging when he wanted to describe the tastes. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), by applying off record politeness strategies, the speaker could hinder from the responsibility for acts which on record strategies entails. By leaving his sentence hanging, Augustus could “get credit for being tactful” and “avoid potentially face-damaging interpretation” as well.

Excerpts 17 and **18** below were examples of politeness strategies utterances affected by the factor sociological variables. There were three variables, namely “social distance”, “relative power”, and “rating of imposition” (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In performing politeness strategies, actually the payoffs and sociological variables factor were connected to each other. The main characters of *The Fault in Our Stars* also considered the sociological variables in performing the politeness strategies utterances.

Excerpt 17

Hazel : “*heard sobbing sound* Are you okay?”
Augustus : “I’m grand. I am, however, with Isaac, who seems to be decompensating”.
Augustus : “*turned his attention to Isaac* **Dude. Dude.** Does Support Group Hazel make this better or worse?”

In **excerpt 17**, Augustus performed his politeness strategy utterance by paying attention to the sociological variables. Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that social distance influences the choice of politeness strategy. The word “dude” that Augustus used to Isaac was an indication that they were close in social distance. Augustus considered Isaac as the same kind as him which was included a positive politeness strategy. The word “dude” was an in group identity marker to claim common ground.

Excerpt 18

Flight attendant: “Drinks? Drinks? Drinks? Drinks?”
Augustus : “**Could we have some champagne, please?**”

In **excerpt 18**, Augustus and the flight attendant were strangers, which meant they had relatively great social distance. The source of power can be over material and physical or control over action of others (Brown & Levinson, 1987). When he asked for champagne, it was the flight attendant who had the power to give or not to and asking for something means imposing someone, too. So, Augustus used a negative politeness strategy to show his consideration over the social distance, power, and the imposition. Negative politeness strategy was considered more polite in that situation. It was supported by research conducted by Alsulami (2015), who

revealed that when the social distance is high, a speaker tends to use a more polite strategy.

Conclusion

To sum up, Augustus and Hazel as the two main characters in the novel used all four types of politeness strategies. The most frequently-used type was positive politeness strategies followed by off record strategies, bald on record, and negative politeness strategies. By applying positive politeness strategies, the speaker could show that she or he likes the addressee and wants the addressee's wants. Therefore, it could assert the sense of mutual friendship between the speaker and the hearer. Furthermore, by doing so, the risk of clash in communication could be minimized. The main characters were mainly affected by two factors. The first factor was the payoffs of politeness strategies and the second was circumstances which consisted of social distance, power, and rating of imposition. Then, in a similar circumstance or condition, the main characters tended to choose the same type of politeness strategy.

The findings of this research contribute to the process of teaching and learning language, especially the English language. Being able to communicate effectively is important. However, it is also important to save each other's face. Moreover, in a certain situation like in the teaching and learning process, teachers should be able to show good examples on how to speak well and appropriately. Also, the language learners ought to learn how to speak appropriately based on the conditions and whom they talk to as well. It is clear that learning language structure also means that we need to learn about face redress and politeness.

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