



Vol. 3 No. 1 (January) (2025)

## **Decoding Politeness: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Power and Relationships in Paulo Coelho's Novel "The Alchemist"**

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### **Abstract**

This research delves into the artful interplay between language and civility of main characters from Paulo Coelho's novel 'The Alchemist', uncovering the politeness strategies that breathe life into its characters. Through a detailed examination of these dialogues, the research reveals that interpersonal dynamic and situational settings affect the language strategies. A descriptive qualitative methodology has been adopted, with data collected through careful documentation and meticulous observation of the text. The findings indicate that the characters predominantly use four main types of politeness strategies. Out of all these strategies, positive politeness emerges as the most frequently employed strategy, evident in most of the utterances used by characters of the novel. Following this comes the least common strategy of politeness, negative politeness which emphasizes the respect and acknowledges the social distance. Then off-record and bald-on-record politeness appears, but their usage is mostly context-dependent and creates a sense of urgency and informality. The analysis reveals how the characters' relationships influence their use of these strategies, demonstrating how these strategies align with the main themes of novel's text connection, power dynamics, personal growth and understanding. This study not only contributes to our knowledge of the subtle patterns of interaction in fictional conversation but also gives us understanding of how politeness strategies function in literary context and provides insights into how civility is portrayed in fiction.

Keywords: politeness strategies, bald-on-record, bald-off record, negative politeness, positive politeness

### **Introduction**

Politeness strategies are the intriguing features of language use, and recent years



## Vol. 3 No. 1 (January) (2025)

have seen a rise in interest in how they are used in literature. With an emphasis on how they affect the development of social identity, power dynamics, and character relationships, politeness tactics are examined in this research paper in connection to their application in fiction. We want to shed light on the various kinds of politeness methods used by authors and the consequences they have on the reader's understanding of the text through a close analysis of a few literary works. Our research aims to further the comprehension of the intricate relationships between language and literature and how they affect how we perceive social interactions and cultural norms.

According to Holtgraves (2002: 38), politeness is an abstract concept that helps as a methodological phrase for suggesting the relationship between language practice and social surroundings. Henceforth, it's decisive to recognize how to be civil to maintain people's feelings and treat them with respect. *It takes more than just saying "please" and "thank you" to be courteous* (Holmes, 1995, p. 296). Speaking to individuals correctly in light of their relationships to others is part of being linguistically courteous. The fundamental idea which was created by Brown and Levinson (1987), used in this research is politeness. They presumptively accept as true that each member holds a face, which they split into negative and positive. Face is the promising social cost that a person effectively titles for himself grounded on the stand that others believe he has accepted in a certain situation. Though it is not a specific distinctiveness, one's face might be thought of as their contextual identity (e.g., sophisticated).

According to Brown and Levinson (1987) is the public self-image that each member requirements to establish for themselves. Claims to self-determination of action and individuality from restriction are examples of one's negative face. One's positive face includes the desire to be viewed favorably by at least some others or the need for social acceptance. Politeness is lucid behavior envisioned to strategically lessen face-threatening activities. A face-related threat is known as a face-threatening act (FTA). According to Brown and Levinson (1987), face-threatening behaviors are those that, by their very nature, go against the intentions of the intended listener or speaker.

According to Yule (1996, p. 61), FTAs are actions that compromise the hearer's positive or negative face. The listener's logic of self is in some ways exposed by the speaker. The actions are frequently voiced. For instance, if someone requests to borrow money, he may be overbearing and endangering the person's good face. On the other hand, if someone apologizes to another person, he will be threatening his good face because he is admitting to taking enforced on the individual and requesting acceptance of this. It might be said that civility is important. Politeness strategies Language users attempt to shape politeness methods to reduce face loss since some activities are threatening to face and call for softening. According to Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 92), there are four different types of politeness: off-record, positive, negative, and bald-on record politeness. The presentation of each tactic will go as follows:

### **Bald on Record**

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), bald-on records are applied in a variation of settings because narrators may have various explanations for appealing in face-threatening behavior. Also, they claim that bald on record is the



## Vol. 3 No. 1 (January) (2025)

most actual form of communiqué. This tactic is well-thought-out to be the most forthright one.

### **Positive Politeness**

Holtgrave (2002) states that positive politeness is an approach-based strategy. Positive politeness settles that the relationship between both speaker and hearer is welcoming and couriers group exchange to minimize the coldness among them. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), this strategy attempts to attend the hearers' interests, needs, wants, and goods. Positive politeness addresses the positive face wants of the interaction ants or desire of connection. In Brown and Levinson's view, positive politeness is assumed to be less polite than negative politeness. The important function of positive politeness is to share some degrees of familiarity with the hearer.

### **Negative Politeness**

Negative politeness is "more specific and intensive," and is "the crux of respect behavior," according to Brown and Levinson (1987: 131). The goal of this approach is to place as little burden as possible on the listeners. It seeks to make unity a reality. As a result, it believes without query that there may be some social distances or clumsiness present.

### **Off record**

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), off-record or indirect method is used to allow speakers to decipher the ambiguous communicative aim. It implies that the speakers can use this method and let the listeners choose the intended message if they want to evade their responsibilities to carry out threatening acts. Off-record simply refers to a comment made when neither party is explicitly addressed or to "hints."

### **Significance of Study**

Comprehending the politeness strategies in literature enhances the appreciation of how language reflects the social norms and interpersonal dynamics of relationships. Analyzing the strategies stated by Brown and Levinson in their Politeness Theory (1987) provides insights into how the authors create the characters and portray their personalities. This study also contributes to the subject of sociolinguistics by demonstrating the role of languages in fictional narratives. Furthermore, findings might enlighten educators, linguists, and writers about the significance of politeness strategies in efficient communication, and narrative construction.

This research aims to reconcile linguistic theory with literary analysis, providing a thorough comprehension of the interaction among language, culture, and literature by finding answers to these **research questions:**

**RQ1:** What main politeness strategies are often used in literary work of "The Alchemist"?

**RQ2:** How do social and contextual elements effect the language in selection of politeness strategies?

### **Literature Review**

Studies have looked at how civility is used in English the novels. For instance,



## Vol. 3 No. 1 (January) (2025)

scholars have examined how characters use language to convey politeness or impoliteness in various social contexts using Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, which has been applied to literature. Shen (2014) used Brown and Levinson's theory to examine politeness tactics in Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice" in one research. According to the study, characters in the book employ various forms of politeness depending on their social standing and interpersonal connections.

Ide and McGloin (2010) studied politeness techniques in "Oliver Twist," a book by Charles Dickens. According to the study, the novel's characters employ various politeness techniques according on their social standing and power dynamics. Powerful characters, like Mr. Bumble, for instance, speak in a more indirect and formal manner to demonstrate their dominance, whereas weaker ones, like Oliver Twist, speak in a more courteous and submissive manner to express respect.

Culpeper (1996) examined how politeness techniques were used in Shakespeare's plays. He asserted that Shakespeare's characters employ a variety of tactics, such as flattery, humour, and irony, to accomplish a variety of societal objectives. Shakespeare's plays, according to Culpeper, portray a conflict between the impulse to criticise authority and the duty to uphold it.

Huang (2010) examined how politeness techniques were used in the Harry Potter books. She discovered that Rowling displayed the power relations between the characters by employing several politeness techniques. When characters of differing social standing interacted, honorifics, titles, and indirectness were used more frequently.

Archer and Aijmer (2008) examined the application of politeness techniques in contemporary British fiction. They discovered that modern writers employed a range of politeness techniques, such as euphemisms, indirectness, and moderation, to demonstrate civility and sustain interpersonal connections.

Watts (2003) looked at how politeness techniques were used in Jane Austen's books. According to Watts, Austen's books expose a sophisticated system of politeness that includes both positive and negative tactics. She demonstrated how Austen's characters demonstrate respect for their social superiors and work to avoid offending them by employing indirectness, euphemisms, and mitigating language. Additionally, Watts noted that the conflict between the need to uphold societal structures and the yearning for individual freedom and self-expression is evident throughout Austen's writings.

Another author whose use of politeness techniques in his the novel s has been analysed is Henry James. His books, like "The Portrait of a Woman" and "The Ambassadors," are set in the late 19th and early 20th century, when social customs and manners were still held in high regard. James employs diplomatic techniques in his books to portray the social and cultural backgrounds of his characters. For instance, Isabel Archer's use of indirect speech acts in "The Portrait of a Lady" reflects her upbringing in America and her lack of acquaintance with European social customs.

Charles Dickens' use of politeness techniques in his books has been studied. His books, including "Great Expectations" and "Oliver Twist," are set in the Victorian era, a period marked by a high level of social inequality and classism. Dickens reflects the social level and class of the characters in his books through politeness



## Vol. 3 No. 1 (January) (2025)

techniques. For instance, Estella's use of indirect speech acts in the book "Great Expectations" indicates her upper-class upbringing and education.

Some academics have concentrated on how indirectness is utilised in English the novel s as a tactic for politeness. For instance, Lakoff (1973) discovered that women in literature frequently soften their words and steer clear of conflict by using indirect language. According to Tannen (1990), men and women employ indirectness differently, with males typically utilizing it to express their dominance and women typically using it to establish rapport.

A research by Mirhosseini and Dastjerdi (2012) examined politeness tactics used in the novel "The Old Man and the Sea" by Ernest Hemingway. According to the study, characters in the book employ various politeness techniques to ask for things based on their social standing, their connection to the addressee, and the nature of the request.

### Research gap

Existing literature on politeness strategies in English novels mostly examines the classical work by writers, such as Jane Austen and Charles Dickens. The limited attention has been given to the contemporary literature, especially philosophical and categorical works like *The Alchemist*. Additionally the impact of control and contextual factors on politeness tactics is still inadequately examined.

### Methodology

This research uses a descriptive qualitative methodology to analyze the politeness strategies in the dialogues off the novel the alchemist by Paulo Coelho. The technique facilitates a comprehensive analysis of characters using politeness strategies in their language within their narrative and contextual framework. The basic data consists of selected dialogues analyzing using *Brown and Levinson's 1987 Theory of Politeness Strategies*: positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on record, and off record. Data collection necessitates the comprehensive analysis of the novel to identify the relevant dialogues. These elements are categorized and analyzed for politeness strategies taking into account their social and situational settings. This approach provided and illustrates the determinants influencing the use of politeness strategies in the novel.

### Results and Discussion

Here is the analysis of dialogues with frequency and percentages, being analysis in the novel "The Alchemist"

Politeness Strategy	Strategy Subtype	Frequency	Percentage	Example Dialogue
Positive Politeness	Notice	3	15%	Dialogue 1: "How did you learn to read?"
	Intensify to Hearer	1	5%	Dialogue 2: "Where are you from?"
	Sympathy, Approvals	1	5%	Dialogue 3: "Don't think about what you've left behind."
Bald-on-Record	Task-oriented	4	20%	Dialogue 6: "Tell me more about your dream."



	Sympathetic Warning	4	20%	Dialogue 10: "Take these, they will help you to read the omens."
	Urgency	1	5%	Dialogue 12: "Go back to watching the caravan."
<b>Off-Record</b>	Give hints	2	10%	Dialogue 16: "It's not what enters men's mouths that's evil; it's what comes out of their mouths."
	Use of many contradictions	1	5%	Dialogue 17: "I know that there is life here, but I don't know where to look."
	Presupposition	1	5%	Dialogue 18: "Naturally, it's afraid that, in pursuing your dream, you might lose everything you've won."
	Association	1	5%	Dialogue 20: "Somewhere you are holding the person I love."
<b>Negative Politeness</b>	Limits Imposition	2	5%	Dialogue 21: "Do you want to go to work for me?"

## Frequency and Percentage Summary

Politeness Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Positive Politeness	5	25%
Negative Politeness	1	5%
Off-record	5	25%
Bald-on-Record	9	45%

**Total Dialogues: 20**

**Percentage: 100%**

This table presents the detailed breakdown of the politeness strategies analyzed from the text chosen from novel, categorized into strategies and their subtypes, along their percentage and frequencies distribution.

## Discussion

The examination of politeness strategies uncovers important insights into their sociolinguistic implications, frequency, proportion, and function in influencing communication within various texts. By integrating findings from both general and particular settings, this discussion synthesizes major discoveries about politeness strategies, emphasizing their implications for power dynamics, cultural values, and narrative advancement.

Prevalence of **Bald-on-record politeness strategies (45%; Frequency: 18)** is the most often used, prioritizing directness and task oriented communication. This approach is evident in utterances where urgency and authority override politeness such as shown by the phrase "*Tell me more about your dream*". The old characters of the novel "The Alchemist", old Woman and Melchizedek used this strategy many a time for transactional exchanges to emphasize efficiency. The predominance of this strategy 45% underscores hierarchical connections and the practical emphasis on communication in these



## Vol. 3 No. 1 (January) (2025)

scenarios. It embodies the cultural norms that value straightforwardness in authoritative relationships.

Significant use of **positive politeness 25%; Frequency: 10**, it emphasizes the cultivation of rapport, demonstrates efforts, and fosters camaraderie. They occur in 25% of interactions and are defined by efforts to reduce social distances. In this novel, the characters of Melchizedek use positive politeness strategies to interact with the character, Santiago, demonstrating interest and support. These interactions are pivotal in advancing narratives and festering emotional ties. Positive reinforcement aligns with the cultural standards emphasizing interpersonal relationships and cooperation.

The prevalence of **Off-record strategies is 25%; the Frequency: is 10**, characterized by indirectness and nuances. These characteristics maintain the hearer's autonomy and avoid explicit imposition. In introspective circumstances, such as in *The Alchemist*, hints like "*Fear hinders your journey*", promote Santiago's self-reflection. This aligns with the metaphorical significance of the text and invites both the protagonist and readers to contemplate universal themes. Minimal use of **negative politeness which is 5%; with a Frequency of 2**, seeks to reduce the imposition and respects autonomy in the least utilized manner. For example, "*Do you want to go to work for me?*" exemplifies the efforts to articulate the demands with deference. The frequent use of this strategy implies the preference for either directness or relational approaches, reflecting a cultural inclination towards assertiveness and solidarity rather than undue deference.

The prevalence of bald-on-record underscores the role of power dynamics in communication. Directness is often favored in hierarchical connections, signifying power and control. The 50% frequency of positive politeness and off-record underscores the equilibrium between maintaining authority and fostering interpersonal relationships. The minimal reliance on negative politeness strategies signifies a reduced focus on formality and social distance, favoring the clear and relationally attuned interactions instead.

The choice of using the politeness strategies is deeply impacted by the cultural norms and contextual situations. The regular use of bald-on-record methods indicated the clarity and authority especially in hierarchical connections. Positive and off-record strategies underscores the importance of relationship cultivation and self-disclosure, typical in collectivist and philosophical contexts such as the narrative of "*The Alchemist*". The rare use of negative codes corresponds with cultural inclinations favoring the direct engagement rather than superfluous formality.

### Conclusion

The research indicated that the politeness strategies are contextually tailored to correspond with the social relationships and cultural values and narrative requirements. **Bald-on-record 45%** prevail in authoritative and task oriented communication environments. While **25% positive politeness and 25% off-record strategies** promote the emotional and philosophical connections. **Negative politeness strategies 5%**, are employed sparingly, underscoring a desire for directness or unity. Collectively, these strategies provide the comprehensive perspective of how communication mirrors societal norms and



## Vol. 3 No. 1 (January) (2025)

interpersonal dynamics, making them central and essential for comprehending both general interactions and intricate talks in 'The Alchemist'. Social and contextual factors in the novel "The Alchemist" affects the politeness methods or strategies by determining the interactions based on hierarchical connections, interpersonal relationships, and cultural norms. Direct strategies such as bald-on-record, dominate in authoritative or task based circumstances while others promote connections and reflection in philosophical situations. These choices reflect the characters' functions in propelling the narrative perspective.

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