



Politeness Strategies for Managing Conflict in The Beautiful Game

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-07-25 Revised: 2026-09-12 Accepted: 2026-09-12 Keywords: <i>Pragmatics;</i> <i>Politeness Strategies;</i> <i>Conflict Management;</i> <i>Brown and Levinson;</i> <i>The Beautiful Game</i> DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i2.11977 Corresponding Author: Karunia Sanjaya Gotama sanjayakarunia9@gmail.com Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar, Indonesia	<i>Conflict is an inevitable aspect of interpersonal communication that may threaten social relationships if it is not managed appropriately. This study investigates the use of politeness strategies in conflict interactions in The Beautiful Game (2024). Specifically, it aims to identify the types of politeness strategies employed by the characters and explain how these strategies function in managing conflict. While previous studies have primarily classified politeness strategies in film discourse, limited attention has been given to how these strategies function as communicative resources for managing conflict. This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. Seventeen utterances containing conflict interactions were identified in The Beautiful Game (2024) based on the presence of a face-threatening act within a clearly identifiable conflict episode, of which 8 were selected for in-depth analysis as representative instances of each politeness strategy. The data were analyzed using Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. The findings reveal that bald-on-record is employed to manage conflict requiring urgent intervention, positive politeness functions to restore solidarity and group cohesion, negative politeness mitigates the imposition of face-threatening acts, and off-record allows speakers to express criticism indirectly while reducing interpersonal tension. Overall, the findings contribute to pragmatic studies by demonstrating that politeness strategies function not merely as classificatory categories but as context-sensitive communicative resources for managing conflict and negotiating interpersonal relationships in cinematic discourse.</i>

1. Introduction

Communication is a fundamental aspect of human interaction because it enables individuals to exchange ideas, express emotions, negotiate meaning, and maintain interpersonal relationships. In social interaction, however, communication does not always occur harmoniously. Differences in opinions, interests, experiences, and perspectives frequently lead to disagreement and conflict. When conflict arises, speakers are expected not only to convey their intentions effectively but also to preserve interpersonal

relationships and prevent the situation from escalating. Consequently, the way language is used during conflict becomes an important concern in pragmatic studies. According to Yule (2017), pragmatics examines how speakers communicate meaning in context and how hearers interpret utterances based on contextual information rather than linguistic form alone.

One of the most influential frameworks for explaining language use in interpersonal interaction is Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. The theory proposes that every individual possesses two aspects of face: positive face, which refers to the desire to be appreciated, accepted, and approved by others, and negative face, which refers to the desire for freedom of action without unnecessary imposition. During interaction, speakers often perform face-threatening acts (FTAs) such as criticism, disagreement, requests, refusals, accusations, commands, or apologies, all of which may threaten either the hearer's positive face or negative face.

To reduce the potential impact of these threats, Brown and Levinson (1987) propose four politeness strategies: bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record. These four strategies are not fixed labels but reflect calculated choices speakers make in response to shifting situational demands: how urgent the matter is, how socially close the interlocutors are, and how much relative power one holds over the other. Understood this way, politeness becomes less a matter of etiquette and more a strategic resource speakers draw upon to accomplish communicative goals while managing the relational cost of face-threatening acts.

In the present study, managing conflict refers to the use of politeness strategies to respond to disagreements, misunderstandings, criticism, emotional tension, and other face-threatening situations in ways that reduce interpersonal tension while maintaining cooperative relationships.

The Beautiful Game (2024) provides an appropriate source for pragmatic analysis because it portrays homeless football players from diverse social and cultural backgrounds who participate in the Homeless World Cup. Throughout the movie, the characters encounter various face-threatening interactions, making it a rich source of pragmatic data for examining politeness strategies in conflict management.

Previous studies have extensively investigated politeness strategies in movie discourse using Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework. Movies are considered authentic sources of naturally occurring conversations because they portray various interpersonal interactions that reflect everyday language use (Isabella et al., 2022). Therefore, movie dialogues have become an important source of pragmatic research on politeness strategies.

Several studies have analyzed politeness strategies in different movies. Chaerdiani and Ekawati (2024) examined the politeness strategies employed by the main characters in *Enola Holmes 2* and found that the characters used various politeness strategies to maintain effective interpersonal communication throughout the movie. Likewise, Imama and Shofiyuddin (2024) investigated politeness strategies in *Enola Holmes* and emphasized the dominant role of positive politeness in fostering interpersonal relationships and encouraging cooperative interaction among the characters. Similar findings were also reported by Putri and Fitrawati (2022), who analyzed politeness strategies in *Yes Day* and demonstrated that politeness strategies contributed to maintaining harmonious communication despite conflicts within family interactions.

Notably, despite differing genres, namely a detective narrative, a family drama, and a corporate rivalry, these studies converge on positive politeness as the dominant strategy, suggesting that genre-specific factors are less determinative of strategy choice than previously assumed. More recently, Abdul Aziz and Hashim (2025) analyzed politeness strategies in *The Social Network* and showed that speakers strategically employed politeness to negotiate disagreements and preserve interpersonal relationships during

conflict situations. Across these four studies, a common pattern emerges: positive politeness repeatedly surfaces as the strategy most associated with sustaining cooperative relations, regardless of whether the setting is a detective narrative, a family drama, or a corporate rivalry. What remains underdeveloped, however, is an account of how such strategies operate procedurally, that is, how they unfold and shift as a conflict actually progresses, rather than simply which type appears in a given scene.

Although these previous studies have contributed significantly to the understanding of politeness strategies in movie discourse, they primarily focus on identifying and classifying the types of politeness strategies employed by the characters. Limited attention has been given to explaining how these strategies function as communicative resources for managing conflict during face-threatening interactions. A comparable gap exists in the broader literature on conflict discourse, where conflict resolution is frequently examined as a communicative outcome without close reference to the politeness mechanisms through which that resolution is linguistically negotiated (Lebedeva & Fedorova, 2020).

Furthermore, no previous study has specifically examined the role of politeness strategies in managing conflict in *The Beautiful Game* (2024), a movie that portrays multicultural interaction, emotional tension, social inequality, and interpersonal conflict within the context of the Homeless World Cup. The absence of prior work on this film is, on its own, a minor point of originality; the more substantial contribution this study offers is a functional account linking politeness strategies, face-threatening acts, and the practical work of managing conflict: a connection that film-based politeness research has yet to fully draw out. Therefore, the present study identifies the politeness strategies employed by the characters and explains how these strategies function in managing conflict and maintaining interpersonal relationships. The findings are expected to contribute to pragmatic studies by providing a deeper understanding of the relationship between politeness strategies and conflict management in cinematic discourse.

Therefore, this study aims to (1) identify the types of politeness strategies employed by the characters in conflict interactions in *The Beautiful Game* (2024) based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory and (2) explain how these politeness strategies function in managing conflict throughout the movie.

2. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design as proposed by Creswell and Creswell (2018) because it aimed to describe and interpret the use of politeness strategies in conflict interactions as they naturally occurred in movie dialogue. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate since the data consisted of spoken utterances that required contextual interpretation rather than statistical analysis.

The data source of this study was *The Beautiful Game* (2024), directed by Thea Sharrock. The primary data consisted of utterances produced by characters involved in conflict interactions in the movie. In this study, conflict interactions refer to dialogues containing face-threatening acts (FTAs), such as disagreements, criticism, complaints, accusations, refusals, warnings, apologies, emotional confrontations, or other utterances that potentially threaten the interlocutors' positive or negative face. The official English subtitle was used to facilitate accurate transcription and ensure consistency throughout the processes of data identification and analysis. Because the transcription relies on subtitle text, features such as intonation, hesitation, and emphasis, which subtitles alone cannot capture, were cross-checked against the corresponding visual and situational cues in each scene during repeated viewings.

The characters involved in the analyzed conflict interactions include two main characters, Vinny Walker (protagonist) and Mal Bradley (coach), three major supporting characters (Nathan, Jason, and Cal), and three minor characters (the Referee, the USA Coach, and the Immigration Officer).

The data were collected using the non-participant observation method. The movie was watched repeatedly to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the storyline, the characters, and the communicative context of each interaction. The official English subtitle was then examined to locate utterances meeting two criteria: (1) the utterance contained an identifiable face-threatening act, and (2) the utterance was situated within a distinct, storyline-relevant conflict episode. Seventeen utterances satisfying both criteria were identified. Of these, eight utterances were selected for detailed analysis based on the following operational criteria: each represents a distinct politeness strategy occurring in a scene with unambiguous contextual cues, allowing clearer FTA and face classification. The remaining nine utterances, which show comparable patterns to those already discussed, are presented in Appendix A for data transparency. Each utterance was assigned a code to facilitate systematic classification, analysis, and discussion.

The data were analyzed using Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. First, each utterance was examined to determine the face-threatening act (FTA) involved, specifically whether it threatened the hearer's positive face or negative face. Second, each utterance was classified into one of the four politeness strategies: bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, or off-record. To support the consistency of this classification, coding was carried out by the first author and cross-checked by the second author, with any discrepancy discussed and resolved jointly. Finally, the classified data were interpreted with attention to the communicative context, the relationship between interlocutors, and the speaker's communicative intent, in order to explain how politeness strategies were used to manage conflict in *The Beautiful Game* (2024).

3. Results

The analysis of conflict interactions in *The Beautiful Game* (2024) identifies the use of all four politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). Tables 1 and 2 summarize the characters analyzed and the politeness strategies identified before the detailed analysis of each selected utterance.

Table 1. Politeness Strategies Identified in Conflict Interactions

Utterance	Face Threatened	Politeness Strategy	Context
"Please leave the pitch."	Mal's negative face freedom of action	Negative Politeness	Mal protests the referee's decision during the match, prompting the referee to restore order.
"Your boy makes his funny joke..."	USA coach's negative face	Off-Record	The USA coach indirectly complains about an offensive joke made by Mal's
"Sorry, I thought he was ready"	Positive face of the USA coach	Negative Politeness	Mal apologizes after the USA coach complains about his player's behaviour.
"It's all of us, or none of us"	Positive face of the teammates	Positive Politeness	The team refuses to be separated by an immigration officer.
"We should play them."	Positive face of the teammates	Positive Politeness	The team discusses whether they should play against South Africa despite different opinions.
"Before you start, stop."/ "That's enough"	Positive face of the teammates	Bald on-Record	After the team's defeat, the players argue and blame one another until Mal intervenes.

Utterance	Face Threatened	Politeness Strategy	Context
"Would you wake up?! The game doesn't wait!"	Positive face of Nathan	Bald on-Record	Nathan loses focus during the match, prompting Vinny to react immediately.
"Jeez, you must really hate us. Sleeping out here when there's a clean bed and hot and cold running water."	Positive face of Vinny	Off-Record	Cal finds Vinny sleeping outside and indirectly questions his decision.

As shown in Table 1, character choices among the four politeness strategies vary systematically with the communicative context and the interpersonal relationship at stake. This distribution is summarized further in Table 1a, which reports the frequency of each strategy across the eight conflict episodes examined.

Table 1a. Frequency

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Bald on-record	2	25%
Positive Politeness	2	25%
Negative Politeness	2	25%
Off-record	2	25%

Table 2. The characters analyzed in this study include

Character	Role in the Movie	Brief Description
Vinny Walker	Main Character (Protagonist)	A new player representing the England team in the HomelessWorld Cup.
Mal Bradley	Main Character (Coach)	The coach of the England team.
Nathan	Major Supporting Character	A member of the England team and Vinny's teammate.
Jason	Major Supporting Character	A member of the England team and Vinny's teammate.
Cal	Major Supporting Character	A member of the England team and Vinny's teammate.
Referee	Minor Character	The match official responsible for enforcing the rules during the tournament.
USA Coach	Minor Character	The coach of the United States team and Mal's opponent during the tournament.
Immigration Officer	Minor Character	The officer who handles Vinny's arrival procedures in Italy.

Table 2 presents the characters analyzed in this study, including the main, major supporting, and minor characters involved in the selected conflict interactions. These characters provide the primary source of the pragmatic data analyzed in this research.

4. Discussion

The discussion examines how the identified politeness strategies function to manage conflict in *The Beautiful Game* (2024). Each finding is interpreted based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, with consideration of the face-threatening act (FTA), the politeness strategy employed, and the communicative context, supported by Yule's (2017) pragmatic perspective.

Data 1

Scene (00:37:31 – 00:37:34)

Referee: *"Please leave the pitch."*

Analysis

The utterance "Please leave the pitch" is classified as a Negative Politeness Strategy because the referee softens the directive through the use of the politeness marker *please*. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), negative politeness is employed to minimize the imposition on the hearer's Negative Face, which refers to an individual's desire to maintain freedom of action and autonomy. Although the referee has the institutional authority to issue such an instruction, the inclusion of *please* reduces the directness of the command and demonstrates consideration for Mal's autonomy.

The face-threatening act (FTA) in this interaction targets Mal's negative face, as the referee restricts his freedom of action by ordering him to leave the pitch. However, instead of delivering the command in a completely direct manner, the referee mitigates the force of the directive by using polite language. This linguistic choice allows the referee to maintain authority while reducing the potential for interpersonal tension. In the context of the conflict, the strategy functions to control the situation without provoking further confrontation. Therefore, this finding demonstrates that negative politeness functions to mitigate the imposition on the hearer's negative face while allowing institutional authority to be exercised without escalating the disagreement.

This finding is consistent with the study of Aspitasari et al. (2022), which reported that negative politeness enables speakers to reduce imposition while maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationships. Likewise, Chaerdiani and Ekawati (2024) found that negative politeness helps speakers perform face-threatening acts more appropriately by respecting the hearer's autonomy. These findings reinforce Brown and Levinson's (1987) argument that negative politeness enables speakers to maintain effective communication while minimizing the potential threat to the hearer's negative face during conflict situations.

Data 2

Scene (01:28:33 – 01:28:41)

Mal: *"Before you start, stop." "That's enough."*

Analysis

The utterances "Before you start, stop" and "That's enough" are classified as Bald on-Record strategies because Mal issues direct commands without using any mitigating expressions or politeness markers. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), bald on-record strategies are employed when speakers prioritize efficiency and clarity over face-saving, particularly in situations that require an immediate response. In this interaction, Mal uses clear and straightforward language to interrupt the ongoing argument and regain control of the situation. The absence of indirectness reflects his intention to stop the conflict as quickly as possible.

The face-threatening act (FTA) is directed toward the Positive Face of the teammates, as Mal interrupts their interaction and prevents them from continuing to express their opinions. This action may threaten their desire to have their views acknowledged and respected by other group members. However, the urgency of the situation justifies the use of a bald on-record strategy because immediate intervention is necessary to prevent the conflict from escalating further. In this context, restoring team order becomes more

important than minimizing the threat to the hearers' positive face. By ending the argument promptly, Mal redirects the players' attention from blaming one another toward maintaining cooperation within the team. Therefore, this finding demonstrates that bald-on-record is employed to restore group order when immediate intervention is required to prevent further escalation.

This finding is consistent with the studies of Hakim and Novitasari (2022) and Basyar (2022), which reported that bald-on-record strategies are frequently employed in situations requiring immediate action, where speakers prioritize efficiency and clarity over politeness. In emotionally intense interactions, direct communication enables speakers to respond quickly, prevent misunderstandings, and restore order. These findings reinforce Brown and Levinson's (1987) argument that bald-on-record strategies are appropriate in urgent situations where the need for effective communication outweighs the need to minimize face-threatening acts.

Data 3

Scene (00:49:20 – 00:49:23)

USA Coach: *"Your boy makes his funny joke..."*

Analysis

The utterance "Your boy makes his funny joke..." is classified as an Off-Record strategy because the USA coach expresses criticism indirectly rather than making an explicit accusation. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), off-record strategies allow speakers to communicate their intended meaning implicitly, giving the hearer the opportunity to interpret the message without being directly confronted. In this interaction, the USA coach does not explicitly state that Mal's player has behaved offensively or disrespectfully. Instead, he refers to the incident through an indirect remark, allowing Mal to infer the intended criticism from the context. This indirectness may also reflect the cross-national dynamic between the two coaches, where explicit confrontation could carry greater relational risk given the absence of a shared cultural frame of reference.

The face-threatening act (FTA) is directed toward the Positive Face of Mal and his player, as the utterance implies that the player's behavior is inappropriate and reflects poorly on both the player and the coach. However, by expressing the complaint indirectly, the USA coach reduces the potential threat to their positive face and avoids intensifying the confrontation. This indirect approach allows him to communicate his dissatisfaction while still providing space for Mal to acknowledge the problem without feeling openly attacked. Therefore, this finding demonstrates that the off-record strategy functions to express criticism indirectly, thereby reducing the possibility of further interpersonal tension while encouraging the hearer to recognize and address the issue voluntarily.

This finding is consistent with the study of Fatkhurozi (2022), which reported that off-record strategies enable speakers to express criticism and disagreement indirectly while minimizing the risk of interpersonal conflict. Likewise, Melati and Sabaruddin (2022) found that indirect expressions provide hearers with greater interpretative freedom, allowing them to recognize the speaker's intended meaning without feeling directly threatened. These findings reinforce Brown and Levinson's (1987) argument that off-record strategies reduce the impact of face-threatening acts by conveying meaning implicitly, thereby helping speakers maintain interpersonal harmony during conflict situations.

Data 4

Scene (00:49:36 – 00:49:38)

Mal: *"Sorry, I thought he was ready."*

Analysis

The utterance "Sorry, I thought he was ready" is classified as a Negative Politeness strategy because Mal apologizes before explaining his player's behavior. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), apologizing is one of the strategies of negative politeness that acknowledges the imposition caused by a face-threatening act and demonstrates respect for the hearer's feelings. By beginning his response with "Sorry," Mal recognizes the USA coach's dissatisfaction and attempts to reduce the interpersonal tension created by the incident.

More precisely, the original face-threatening act (the joke referred to in Data 3) threatened the positive face of the player being mocked, while Mal's apology is directed at redressing the negative face of the USA coach, whose autonomy as a coach responsible for his team's treatment was imposed upon by having to raise the complaint at all. Through the apology, Mal accepts responsibility for the situation without denying the coach's complaint. His explanation, "I thought he was ready," is not intended to reject the criticism but to clarify the circumstances surrounding the incident. This combination of an apology and a brief explanation helps preserve mutual respect while preventing the disagreement from escalating into a more serious conflict. Therefore, this finding demonstrates that negative politeness functions to acknowledge the hearer's concerns and reduce interpersonal tension, facilitating a more constructive response to the complaint.

This finding is consistent with the study of Aspitari et al. (2022), which emphasized that apologizing is an important negative politeness strategy for minimizing the impact of face-threatening acts and restoring harmonious interpersonal relationships. By acknowledging responsibility before providing an explanation, speakers demonstrate respect for the hearer's autonomy and reduce the potential for further conflict. These findings reinforce Brown and Levinson's (1987) argument that negative politeness enables speakers to address conflict respectfully while minimizing the imposition on the hearer's negative face.

Data 5

Scene (00:35:00 – 00:35:03)

Team: *"It's all of us, or none of us."*

Analysis

The utterance "It's all of us, or none of us" is classified as a Positive Politeness strategy because it emphasizes solidarity and a shared group identity. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), positive politeness is employed to satisfy the hearer's positive face by expressing approval, cooperation, and a sense of belonging. In this interaction, the inclusive pronouns "us" and "all" reinforce the idea that every team member is equally valued and should be treated as part of the same group. Rather than focusing on individual interests, the speakers highlight their collective identity to strengthen interpersonal relationships.

The face-threatening act (FTA) is directed toward the Positive Face of the teammates, as separating one member from the group threatens their sense of unity and mutual acceptance. By responding with "It's all of us, or none of us," the team rejects the separation and demonstrates mutual support for one another. This response strengthens group cohesion while communicating their position in a respectful but firm manner. Instead of

creating further confrontation, the utterance encourages cooperation and reinforces trust among the teammates. Therefore, this finding demonstrates that positive politeness serves to reinforce group solidarity and preserve interpersonal relationships during situations that threaten the unity of the team.

This finding is consistent with the studies of Musyafa'ah et al. (2022) and Putri and Fitrawati (2022), which found that positive politeness strengthens solidarity and encourages cooperation among interlocutors. By emphasizing shared identity and mutual support, speakers are able to reduce interpersonal tension while maintaining harmonious relationships. These findings reinforce Brown and Levinson's (1987) argument that positive politeness satisfies the hearer's positive face by promoting a sense of belonging, mutual respect, and cooperation during conflict situations.

Data 6

Scene (01:03:30 – 01:03:31)

Vinny: *"We should play them."*

Analysis

The utterance "We should play them" is classified as a Positive Politeness strategy because Vinny uses the inclusive pronoun "we" to emphasize shared responsibility and group involvement. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), positive politeness is employed to satisfy the hearer's positive face by expressing solidarity, cooperation, and a sense of shared identity. Rather than presenting the decision as his personal preference, Vinny frames it as a collective action, encouraging the teammates to participate in reaching a common goal.

The face-threatening act (FTA) is directed toward the Positive Face of the teammates, as the disagreement over whether to play the match may create division within the group and threaten their sense of unity. This is corroborated by the preceding exchange in the scene, in which individual teammates raise separate concerns about playing; Vinny's shift to the collective pronoun "we" reframes what began as an individually contested decision into a shared undertaking, which suggests a deliberate strategic move rather than an incidental grammatical choice. By using the inclusive expression "we," Vinny reduces the potential for interpersonal conflict and encourages the team to make the decision collectively. His utterance promotes cooperation instead of disagreement and reinforces the idea that every member shares equal responsibility for the team's decision. Therefore, this finding demonstrates that positive politeness is used to encourage collective participation and maintain harmonious relationships among team members during decision-making.

This finding is consistent with the studies of Fitri (2022) and Chaerdiani and Ekawati (2024), which reported that positive politeness encourages cooperation and strengthens interpersonal relationships through the use of inclusive and supportive expressions. By emphasizing shared responsibility, speakers foster a sense of belonging and reduce the potential for disagreement during interaction. These findings reinforce Brown and Levinson's (1987) argument that positive politeness satisfies the hearer's positive face by promoting solidarity, cooperation, and mutual respect, thereby contributing to effective conflict management.

Data 7

Scene (01:10:50 – 01:10:52)

Vinny: "Would you wake up?! The game doesn't wait!"

Analysis

The utterance "Would you wake up?! The game doesn't wait!" is classified as a Bald on-Record strategy because Vinny expresses his message through direct commands without using mitigating expressions or politeness markers. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), bald on-record strategies are employed when speakers prioritize efficiency and clarity over face-saving, particularly in situations that require an immediate response. In this interaction, Vinny uses explicit language to regain Nathan's attention because any delay in communication could negatively affect the team's performance during the match.

The face-threatening act (FTA) is directed toward Nathan's Positive Face, as the utterance openly criticizes his lack of concentration in front of his teammates. This may threaten Nathan's desire to be viewed as a competent and reliable team member. However, the urgency of the match justifies the use of a bald on-record strategy because immediate communication is necessary to prevent further mistakes and maintain the team's coordination. Rather than intending to insult Nathan personally, Vinny's direct command is aimed at restoring his focus and ensuring effective cooperation during the game. Therefore, this finding demonstrates that bald-on-record is employed to redirect attention under time pressure when rapid and unambiguous communication is required to prevent negative effects on team performance.

This finding is consistent with the studies of Hakim and Novitasari (2022) and Basyar (2022), which showed that bald-on-record strategies are frequently employed in high-pressure situations where speakers need to convey instructions clearly and immediately. In such contexts, direct communication helps prevent misunderstandings and enables interlocutors to respond more effectively to urgent circumstances. These findings reinforce Brown and Levinson's (1987) argument that bald-on-record strategies are appropriate when efficiency and clarity are prioritized over face-saving to achieve immediate communicative goals.

Data 8

Scene (00:59:54–01:00:00)

Cal: "Jeez, you must really hate us. Sleeping out here when there's a clean bed and hot and cold running water."

Analysis

The utterance "Jeez, you must really hate us. Sleeping out here when there's a clean bed and hot and cold running water" is classified as an Off-Record strategy because Cal conveys his dissatisfaction indirectly through an implied meaning rather than making a direct accusation. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), off-record strategies enable speakers to express their intentions implicitly, allowing the hearer to infer the intended meaning from the context. In this interaction, Cal does not explicitly accuse Vinny of rejecting or disrespecting the team. Instead, he uses the ironic remark "You must really hate us" to imply that Vinny's decision to sleep outside suggests that he is distancing himself from the group.

The face-threatening act (FTA) is directed toward Vinny's Positive Face, as the utterance implies that his behavior is inconsistent with the values of teamwork and may be perceived negatively by his teammates. Rather than confronting Vinny directly, Cal expresses his concern through an indirect statement, giving Vinny the opportunity to recognize the implied criticism and explain his actions without feeling openly attacked. This indirect approach helps reduce the risk of escalating interpersonal tension while still communicating the speaker's dissatisfaction. Therefore, this finding demonstrates that the off-record strategy functions to soften criticism and invite self-reflection, allowing the hearer to respond voluntarily without intensifying the disagreement.

This finding is consistent with the studies of Fatkhurozi (2022) and Melati and Sabaruddin (2022), which found that off-record strategies enable speakers to convey criticism and dissatisfaction indirectly while preserving interpersonal harmony. By allowing hearers to infer the intended meaning rather than confronting them explicitly, speakers reduce the potential impact of face-threatening acts and create opportunities for constructive dialogue. These findings reinforce Brown and Levinson's (1987) argument that off-record strategies help speakers manage conflict by expressing sensitive messages indirectly, thereby minimizing confrontation and maintaining interpersonal relationships.

Across the eight cases, conflict management does not correlate simply with greater indirectness. Bald-on-record proves useful precisely when urgency overrides face concerns (Data 2, 7), positive politeness restores solidarity when group unity is threatened (Data 5, 6), negative politeness mitigates imposition when institutional authority is at stake (Data 1), and off-record softens criticism when direct confrontation risks escalation (Data 3, 8). This pattern suggests that strategy selection is governed less by a general preference for indirectness than by the interplay of urgency, social distance, and power in each conflict episode.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the use of politeness strategies in conflict interactions in *The Beautiful Game* (2024) based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. The results reveal that all four politeness strategies, namely bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record, are employed by the characters in different communicative contexts. The selection of each strategy depends on the communicative context, the urgency of the situation, and the interpersonal relationship between the interlocutors.

The study further demonstrates that politeness strategies play an important role in managing conflict by reducing interpersonal tension, maintaining cooperation, and preserving interpersonal relationships. Bald-on-record is primarily employed in urgent situations requiring immediate responses, whereas positive politeness promotes solidarity, negative politeness minimizes the imposition of face-threatening acts, and off-record enables speakers to express criticism or disagreement indirectly. These findings contribute to pragmatic studies by highlighting the role of politeness strategies as effective communicative resources for managing conflict in cinematic discourse. Overall, the study shows that politeness strategies function not only as expressions of politeness but also as practical means of fostering cooperation and maintaining interpersonal relationships in *The Beautiful Game* (2024).

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