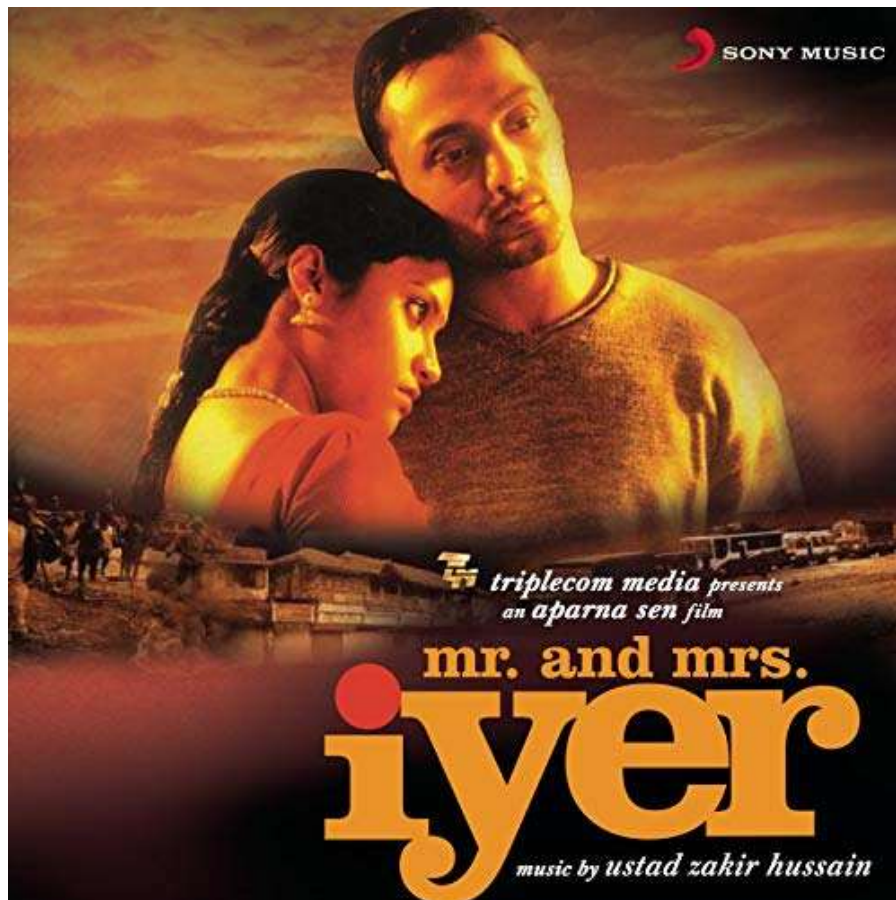


**Politeness Strategies in Conversation: An Analysis of the Film
*Mr. and Mrs. Iyer***

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Abstract

Politeness is one of the most important attributes of conversation that affects interlocutors' interpersonal relations. People, in all societies, employ various strategies of politeness to ensure friendly relation. Different types of strategies employ different types of expressions resulting in different effect on

the hearer. The present paper is an attempt to analyse and understand the implication of Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies—bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness and off-record strategies—in the conversation that takes place in the film *Mr. and Mrs. Iyer*.

Keywords: *Mr. and Mrs. Iyer*, analysis of film, politeness, bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness and off-record strategies.

Politeness Strategies: An Overview

Language is not only a medium of communication but it also carries emotions, styles, moods, intentions, etc. of the conversant. Thus, the choice of factors affecting the relation between the interlocutors plays a crucial role during conversation. One of these factors is politeness strategies which bring the interlocutors close to one another. However, perception of politeness varies from culture to culture, community to community, person to person, gender to gender, etc. That is why it is not easy to predict that a particular expression or use of language will always be regarded as polite.

Politeness can be manifested through verbal (linguistic) and non-verbal (Non-linguistic) expressions as per the demand of situation or goal. The verbal expressions include the use of particular type of linguistic items or constructions and a strategic use of language. Non-verbal expressions entails various types of bodily expressions like, nodding one's head to greet others, extending hands to help others, giving way to others in a queue, a standing ovation to show respect to others, etc. In this way, the interpretation of politeness in a speech event requires to be looked from different angles to reach the most convincing interpretation.

On reviewing literature, we find that the term 'politeness' as a formal discipline, was recognized during the 1970s. Since then, a number of books and articles have been written on the topic. Scholars such as Lakoff (1973), Grice (1975), Brown and Levinson (1978) and Leech (1983) have contributed immensely to the theoretical formulations of politeness phenomenon to be studied as a formal linguistic discipline. Since the publication of Brown and Levinson's seminal article on politeness in 1978, many sociolinguists and anthropologists got interested in the study of this socio-cultural phenomenon especially in exploring how politeness is realized in different linguistic patterns and languages.

Watts (2003) argues that the concepts of politeness and impoliteness as understood by linguists are not the same as that understood by common man. According to him, there is a great distinction between the 'folk/lay interpretations' of politeness as viewed by the members of a socio-cultural community and the 'technical interpretation' of politeness as used by linguists in pragmatics and sociolinguistics as a theory of (im)politeness. He also refers these as 'first-order (im)politeness' and 'second-order politeness'. Second-order (im)politeness invites an in-depth

study of social behaviour, cultural practices and language usage (Watts, 2003: 4; Watts *et al.* 2005: 3).

Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness is based on the concept of face-management. The term 'face', here, refers to a person's 'social standing or esteem' (Cameron, 2001: 79), 'reputation, prestige and self-esteem' (Culpeper, 2001: 238) or 'public self-image', and, therefore, it is 'something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction' (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61). They believe that people, generally, observe each other's face in interaction and this observance is largely based on the interactants' mutual vulnerability of face. Every individual's face depends upon every other individual's face being enhanced or maintained. Face is regarded as an individual's basic want (desire). Therefore, it is our general expectation that it is in the interest of every individual to maintain one another's face. 'Maintaining one another's face involves protecting a person's honor or self-esteem' and therefore 'one must avoid behavior that may cause shame to another' (Ukosakul, 2005: 120). Realisation and manifestation of politeness is all pervasive in all cultures and people are expected to observe politeness norms in order to show respect to one another's feelings and face wants. In this connection, it would be apt to quote, "it is a universal characteristic across cultures that speakers should respect each other's expectations regarding self-image, take account of their feelings and avoid face threatening acts" (Cutting, 2002: 45).

In our daily life, we see that sometimes interactants fail to satisfy each other's face wants and this leads to 'face threatening acts' (FTAs). Consequently, the one whose face gets threatened tries to defend it and in doing so, he, intentionally or unintentionally, does the same with his counterpart. This face threatening may be directed to any of the two aspects of face, 'positive face' and 'negative face', depending upon the orientation of act. Positive Face is an individual's desire to be approved of or appreciated by at least some others while Negative Face is an individual's desire that his/her actions should not be hindered by others (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 62). Hudson termed them as 'solidarity face' and 'power face' respectively (1996: 114).

According to Brown and Levinson, FTAs are unavoidable as any type of communication between two individuals involves a certain degree of face threat to the speaker's and/or the hearer's face. However, it is generally seen that people, almost in every society, try to avoid or mitigate the effect of potential FTAs by employing certain conversational strategies to achieve their goals. In this regard, Brown and Levinson have proposed four super-strategies namely bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness and off-record strategy that people employ in order to minimize the potential face threat to one's or other's face.

Bald-on-record strategy involves the use of direct, unambiguous, clear and concise expressions without any redressive action. Usually, it is used between close friends or familiar ones. Nevertheless, it can be used by strangers in case of efficiency or urgency, when threats to hearer's face are not so great or when the speaker is superior to the hearer in terms of social status or power.

Positive politeness is oriented towards the hearer's positive face want. In this, the speaker tries to build a friendly relation with the hearer and tries to assure that he respects the hearer's desires, wants, actions, etc. This strategy is used mainly between individuals of similar interest, shared background, shared culture, and intimate relationship. Positive politeness strategy comprises 15 sub-strategies.

- Strategy 1: Notice, attend to H (his interest, wants, needs, goods)
- Strategy 2: Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H)
- Strategy 3: Intensify interest to H
- Strategy 4: Use in-group identity markers
- Strategy 5: Seek agreement
- Strategy 6: Avoid disagreement
- Strategy 7: Presuppose/raise/assert common ground
- Strategy 8: Joke
- Strategy 9: Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants
- Strategy 10: Offer, promise
- Strategy 11: Be optimistic
- Strategy 12: Include both S and H in the activity
- Strategy 13: Give (or ask for) reasons
- Strategy 14: Assume or assert reciprocity
- Strategy 15: Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)

(Brown and Levinson, 1987: 103-129)

Negative politeness is directed towards the addressee's negative face want that is his want to be unimpeded by anyone. Here, the speaker tries to assure that he cares for the hearer's negative-face wants and will not intrude into his personal territory. In this sense, 'negative politeness is characterized by self-effacement, formality and restraint, with attention to very restricted aspects of H's self-image, centring on his want to be unimpeded' (1987: 70). Therefore, negative politeness demands the speaker to redress probable FTAs to addressee's negative-face by making a strategic use of language—such as apology, request, hedges, deference, indirect expressions, leaving options, etc.—in case he intrudes into the addressee's freedom of action. Negative politeness strategies are used mostly when the speaker and the

hearer do not share intimate relationship or are strangers. This super-strategy consists of 10 sub-strategies.

- Strategy 1: Be conventionally indirect
- Strategy 2: Question, hedge
- Strategy 3: Be pessimistic
- Strategy 4: Minimize the imposition, R_x
- Strategy 5: Give deference
- Strategy 6: Apologize
- Strategy 7: Impersonalize S and H
- Strategy 8: State the FTA as a general rule
- Strategy 9: Nominalize
- Strategy 10: Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not incurring H

(Brown and Levinson, 1987: 132-210)

Off-record strategy is used when the speaker wants to perform an FTA but does not wish to take its responsibility. In such a situation, he speaks in such a way that a number of intentions or interpretations can be attributed to his utterance. And thus, the speaker leaves it up to the hearer to interpret the utterance in his own way. Therefore, the speaker 'leaves himself an 'out' by providing himself with a number of defensible interpretations; he cannot be held to have committed himself to just particular interpretation of this act' (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 211). Off-record strategy consists of 15 sub-strategies.

- Strategy 1: Give hints
- Strategy 2: Give association clues
- Strategy 3: Presuppose
- Strategy 4: Understate
- Strategy 5: Overstate
- Strategy 6: Use tautologies
- Strategy 7: Use contradictions
- Strategy 8: Be ironic
- Strategy 10: Use rhetorical questions
- Strategy 11: Be ambiguous
- Strategy 12: Be vague
- Strategy 13: Over-generalize
- Strategy 14: Displace H
- Strategy 15: Be incomplete, use ellipsis

(1987: 213-227)

The current study is an attempt to put these politeness strategies into test of the conversations that take place in the film *Mr. and Mrs. Iyer* considering its characters as portrayal of live conversation and to assess their pros and cons in day-to-day life.

An Outline Summary of the Film *Mr. and Mrs. Iyer*

Mr. and Mrs. Iyer, an Indian film in English released on 19th July 2002 is written and directed by Aparna Sen, a famous actress, screenwriter and filmmaker of Bengali cinema, and produced by N. Venkatesan and Rupali Mehta. The background of the story is based on the aftermath of 9/11 USA attacks, 2001 Indian Parliament attack and the 2002 Gujarat riots. It bagged many national and international awards for best direction, best screenplay, best actress and best feature film on national integration, and also received good reviews from film critics, newspapers and magazines internationally. The stylistics of language employed by Aparna Sen in the dialogues makes the film remarkable for the use of politeness strategies.

The film is based on the backdrop of sectarian riot between Hindus and Muslims. It is woven around two leading characters, Meenakshi Iyer, a Tamil Brahmin housewife and Raja (Jahangir Chaudhary), a wild life photographer, who get to know each other during a short course of journey to Calcutta by bus. Meenakshi is carrying her baby named Santhanam. During journey, Raja helps her feed the baby. The bus is carrying different types of passengers such as a group of jolly youngsters, a married couple, a Muslim couple, a mentally challenged boy with his mother, men and women of different castes and religions. In the middle of the journey, their bus gets stuck in a hues traffic jam caused by a sudden eruption of communal violence. Hours after the sunset, a handful of Hindu extremists barges into the bus and drags the Muslim couple out of the bus. A few passengers try to stop them but they thrash and warn them off serious consequences. Seeing this horrific scene, they lock themselves in to spend their night. In the morning, all the passengers go to a nearby city in search of food and safe place until the situation gets normal. Raja along with Meenakshi and Santhanam too goes there but they don't get any room. While walking down the street, they encounter a police officer named Rajesh who asks them to stay in a forest bungalow for the time being. The deserted look of the bungalow makes Meenakshi unhappy. However, having no choice, they decide to spend the night. The watchman of the bungalow provides them food and rest. Next day, they again go to the city in search of a room but fail. At a restaurant, they encounter the four young girl passengers of their bus who mistake them as husband and wife. The girls ask them to tell their love story. Both Meenakshi and Raja fabricate a story to entertain the girls. Late night, they get back to the bungalow and spend some happy moments talking to each other. On next day, they catch a train to Calcutta. Reaching Calcutta, Meenakshi introduces Raja to her husband, Subramaniam Iyer who thanks him for helping his wife on the way. While departing, Raja gives Meenakshi his camera roll containing the shots taken during their journey, as a token of memory and then they say goodbye to each other.

Analysis and Interpretation of Politeness Strategies in the Film *Mr. and Mrs. Iyer*

Raja and Mrs. Iyer (Meenakshi Iyer) are going to Calcutta by bus. During journey, Mrs. Iyer feels thirsty. She searches for the water bottle in her bag but to her surprise she finds her baby's bottle. Sensing something unusual, Raja asks her the reason. Below is an excerpt of the conversation between them:

1. Raja: What happened?
2. Mrs. Iyer: I forgot my water bottle.
3. Raja: What is that there?
4. Mrs. Iyer: (Shows the baby's bottle)
5. Raja: I will get it. (turns and addresses a fellow passenger) Excuse me, may I have that bottle of water, please.

Since Mrs. Iyer's parents had already introduced her to Raja at the bus stop and requested him to help her daughter during the course of journey as she was carrying her baby. Being aware of the situation, Raja asks her, 'What happened?' when he notices her fidgeting with the bag. Although the given expression is a bald-on-record statement which puts pressure on Mrs. Iyer to respond to the Raja's question, it does not prove to be face threatening to her as Raja is pretty sure that his goodwill gesture of help would not be considered wrong. This is primarily because of the little familiarity shared by them during their brief course of the journey.

Mrs. Iyer's quick reply 'I forgot my water bottle' is an indication that she no longer considers Raja a complete stranger and is willing to lower guard of inhibitions for a stranger and ask her for his help. Her reply is straight, brief and unambiguous, which indicates that she employs bald-on-record strategy. Raja and Mrs. Iyer have developed a bond that is socially viable by all means—need and provision. Mrs. Iyer is the needy woman who is travelling alone with her newborn baby and Raja is a photographer whose attitude towards Mrs. Iyer holds a gentleman's consideration.

Noticing Mrs. Iyer fidgeting with a bottle, Raja asks, 'What is that there?' which is a bald-on-record expression since it is straightforward and directed to her negative face. His query gets a non-verbal response from Mrs. Iyer who shows him the baby's bottle. The gesture of showing the baby's bottle has an implication that she could not drink water from it. Having understood her gesture, Raja issues an expression, 'I will get it' which is a promise or an offer to find water for his friend. His statement undoubtedly sounds good to Mrs. Iyer who really needs water to quench her thirst. Thus, Raja employs positive politeness (Offer, promise) to enhance her positive face wants.

Then, he turns towards a lady passenger and says, ‘Excuse me, may I have that bottle of water, please.’ From the expression, it seems that Raja is aware of the potential face threat to his passenger’s negative face as both being unfamiliar to each other. And any infringement into his passenger’s freedom of action will certainly cause threat to her negative face. Therefore, he uses the expression ‘excuse me’ to mitigate potential FTAs caused to her negative face in case she responds to his indirect request ‘May ... please.’ He uses indirect request to give the passenger freedom to accept or decline his request. In this way, Raja employs negative politeness (Apologises) to show respect to the hearer’s negative face.

Raja’s uninvited request to the lady passenger irritates her brother who is already fumed at frequent commotion caused by baby’s unusual behaviour. And in a fit of anger, he counters Raja with a question, perhaps misunderstanding his intention. Below is an excerpt of the same.

6. Passenger: Now what?
7. Raja: This water.
8. Passenger: OK.
9. Raja: Here (to Mrs. Iyer).
10. Mrs. Iyer: Oh! Thank you. (She drinks water.) Thank you. You are being so kind.
11. Raja: No problem. How did you imagine, you would manage all by yourself?

Noticing commotion, the passenger expresses his feeling of disgust using the expression, ‘Now what?’ This statement is potentially argument triggering in nature and it is most likely as if he is geared up for a face off. Thus, it threatens Raja’s positive face. However, sensing confrontation, Raja responds precisely ‘This water’ also showing the water bottle. He makes a dismissive statement directed at the disgusted old man to quash his fury for confrontation. Raja’s smart gesture of politeness can be understood as a strategy not to confront for his focus is to help Mrs. Iyer. He successfully convinces the old man of the necessity of water for them at the moment. Here, Raja’s implication of politeness strategy with the old man cools down his temper and he turns to be polite and he closes off the conversation using bald-on-record expression ‘OK’.

Obtaining the bottle, he, further, offers it to Mrs. Iyer, using expression ‘Here’ which enhances her positive face. This expression is an example of bald-on-record strategy. Raja’s prompt help proves him to be a useful, resourceful and dependable man in crisis. Raja’s implication of the strategy not only quenches Mrs. Iyer’s thirst but also invokes in her positive politeness in the form of gratitude, ‘Oh! Thank you...You are being so kind.’ that she expresses to Raja. Raja’s initiative of positive politeness (Notice, attend interest to H) encourages in Mrs. Iyer too. Her implication of positive politeness shrugs off the little pain that Raja took for her. That is why he uses the expression ‘No problem.’ to maintain the balance of politeness and fulfil her face wants. These exchanges of strategies of politeness between the two develop an intimacy

as a result Raja dares to ask her a personal question, ‘How did...by yourself?’ It is the impact of intimacy that he notices Mrs. Iyer in a state of quite a mess in managing her baby all alone. The intimacy developed due to exchange of positive politeness makes the people take care of each other which allow them to employ bald-on-record strategy for human concern.

In response to Raja’s question challenging her ability to carry her baby all alone, Mrs. Iyer gives her own explanation. Below is the excerpt of the talk between them.

12. Mrs. Iyer: Actually, he is never like this. You know. He usually goes to sleep in the bus. We have brought him twice before.
13. Raja: Must have been a lot younger then. He is probably a lot more excitable now.
14. Mrs. Iyer: That’s true. Please go back to your paper. I didn’t mean to disturb you.
15. Raja: No. Same old stuff. Jews and Arabs clashing in Palestine. Catholics and Protestants clashing in Belfast. What time does this bus reach the city?
16. Mrs. Iyer: Around five. It usually stops on the way around four. That is when I had thought, I will feed Santhanam, you know.

Further to cooperate with Raja, Mrs. Iyer gives the reason of travelling all by herself. She holds the child’s unusual behaviour responsible for her incompetence to handle the situation. Using the expression ‘You know’, she presumes Raja to be already experienced of the whole situation. And her strategy becomes successful in bringing out a favourable response from Raja, ‘...a lot younger then...probably a lot more excitable now.’ He uses the word ‘probably’ to convey that whatever he has said is just his conjecture. Thus, he lets Mrs. Iyer agree or disagree with his view and thereby he employs positive politeness strategy (Be optimistic) by becoming optimistic and using hedge.

Raja’s strategic use of hedge impresses Mrs. Iyer. As a result, she immediately approves of Raja’s presumption by saying ‘That’s true.’ She, in fact, tries to avoid any unnecessary conflict between her and Raja which is also the reflection of the implication of the positive politeness (Avoid disagreement) that has increased solidarity between the two. She not only tries to avoid conflict in talk but also makes an effort to give Raja freedom of action in the expression ‘Please go back to your paper. I didn’t mean to disturb you.’ She makes it clear that her idea isn’t to disturb him which could be an indirect indication of her being sorry for untoward disturbance and concern for each other’s space. In this way, she enhances Raja’s negative face by employing apologies, a tool of Negative Politeness.

Raja notices that Mrs. Iyer must have received FTA to her negative face while apologising for the little pain he took for her, so to make a balance of the degree of face wants, Raja denies the fact of having got disturb by saying ‘No’ just to minimise the perceived FTA to

her face. Then, with the expression ‘Same old stuff. Jews and Arabs clashing in Palestine ...’ he presupposes her knowledge about news to convince that nothing is new in the newspaper. Thus, Raja shares common ground which is an example of positive politeness. And further to engage her in conversation, Raja asks, ‘What time does this bus reach the city?’ which is a bald-on-record expression. Raja’s strategy succeeds in bringing Mrs. Iyer back to conversation. Consequently, she not only responds to his question but tells him her future course of action to feed her baby Santhanam, which is added information. It is the impact of Raja’s strategy that enhances closeness of relation as result she reveals the name her baby. In this way, she employs bald-on-record strategy in the expression ‘Around five.’ and positive politeness (Presuppose/raise/assert common ground) in the expression ‘It usually ... you know.’ Both Raja and Mrs. Iyer go on length talking about several things. Below is the conversation between them.

17. Raja: Santhanam! Is that his name? Rather formal for a baby of his age. Don’t you think?
18. Mrs. Iyer: Why? It is another name for the god Kartikeyan. It’s a common Tamil name actually.
19. Raja: And is that common too?
20. Mrs. Iyer: What?
21. Raja: To name your children after gods and goddesses. I mean every second boy is called Rahul, Rohit, or Joy these days. (Drinks water)

Raja gets surprised to hear the baby’s name as Santhanam, which is clear from his rhetorical question, ‘Is that his name?’ His comment, ‘Rather formal for a baby of his age.’ indicates that he is a bit critical of the name for the baby of such a tender age, however, he tries to soften his imposition by using the expression ‘rather’. To make his point stronger, he affirms it by a rhetorical question ‘Don’t you think?’ Thus, he employs bald-on-record and negative politeness strategy (Question, hedge) respectively. But, contrary to his expectation, she also responds with a rhetorical question ‘Why?’ followed by an explanation ‘... name of the god Kartikeyan...’ of her implicit disagreement. Giving the reference of god Kartikeyan and Tamil culture, she presupposes Raja’s awareness about her culture and practices and thereby she observes positive politeness strategy (Presuppose/raise/assert common ground).

Having understood the mythological and cultural connection of the name, Raja asks Mrs. Iyer whether it is a common practice. She, however, doesn’t get what he has asked that is why she raises a question ‘What?’ expecting him clear his words. This is an example of bald-on-record strategy. At this, Raja completes his previous question by adding an infinitive clause as a supplement ‘To name your children after gods and goddesses’. To make his point clearer, he tells about the current trend of naming babies as an afterthought ‘I mean ... Rahul, Rohit, or Joy these days.’ However, he uses hedge ‘I mean’ to give her freedom to agree or disagree with his belief. In this way, Raja employs two strategies, the first, bald-on-record strategy to be direct and

precise and the second, negative politeness strategy (Hedge) to minimise face threatening. Mrs. Iyer extends the conversation further by tell Raja the reason behind the naming of her baby. The following is the conversation between her and Raja.

22. Mrs. Iyer: Ah! That's true. Actually, I wanted to call him Suresh you know. But...but we come from a very orthodox family and my in-laws are more conservative than my family. They named him.
23. Raja: Does he have a pet name or something? I mean what do you call him at home? Santa?
24. Mrs. Iyer: Santa?
25. Raja: Aye. I mean, I used to have a friend in college and his name is Murugan. Do you know what we used to call him?

Raja's indirect way of seeking Mrs. Iyer's approval to his personal opinion gets a big thumb up with her expression 'Ah! That's true' which is an example of positive politeness strategy (Avoid disagreement). She tries to keep the honesty in the conversation intact by using the expression 'actually' followed by whole story of the baby having been named as Santhanam, in view to satisfy Raja's positive face. The expression 'you know' is used to get Raja's attention for a greater explanation in this regard. Thus, she employs positive politeness strategy (Presuppose/ raise/ assert common ground).

Mrs. Iyer's favourable response encourages Raja's inquisitiveness to ask 'Does he have a pet name or something?' In order to make his point obvious, he rephrases the given question using the hedge 'I mean ...' that can be seen as either his curiosity to know the baby's pet name or a strategy to just stay engaged in the conversation. In a nutshell, the meaning is two-fold in nature. The topic is definitely a common ground to bring them back to the conversation. Mrs. Iyer gets surprised to hear her baby's pet name as 'Santa'. She repeats the same to confirm whether he is serious or just kidding. She is also surprised at his frivolity for coining the informal identity for such a religious name for her son. This sudden deviation amuses her to the point of surprise. Thus, we see that both Raja and Mrs. Iyer employ bald-on-record strategy.

In order to clear Mrs. Iyer's doubt, Raja uses an affirmative expression 'Aye' followed by an example of his college friend Murugan 'I mean ... name is Murugan'. First, the expression 'Aye' is an example of bald-on-record strategy as it is the most precise response to her question. Second, mentioning his friend, Raja tries to convince Mrs. Iyer that he is not kidding. Rather, he tries to intensify her interest by introducing a real life example. And for that, he also asks her, 'Do you know what we used to call him?' which is a strategy to increase her curiosity about the person. In this way, Raja uses bald-on-record strategy along with positive politeness strategy

(Intensify interest to H).Mrs. Iyer got interested in Murugan's pet name. As a result, she enquires about the same in the following conversation.

26. Mrs. Iyer: What?

27. Raja: Murgi! (Chicken)

28. Mrs. Iyer: (Laughs) Murgi! No, he is just Santhanam!

29. Raja: It's quarter-past three. He seems to be asleep. You want to get some rest while we can.

30. Mrs. Iyer: Aye.

Raja succeeds in evoking Mrs. Iyer's interest on the topic when she enquires about the same just using the question word 'What' which an example of bald-on-record expression. She uses bald-on-record strategy because she is sure that her direct and brief expression will have little face threatening to Raja's positive face the given action is demanded by him; rather it would be a welcome. In a similar way, Raja tells her his friend's pet name as 'Murgi'. Apparently, his utterance is very short but complete in itself as it communicates the message clearly in a discreet manner. Thus, Raja also involves bald-on-record strategy to satisfy Mrs. Iyer's excitement.

Listening to such a funny name 'Murgi', Mrs. Iyer couldn't control her laughter. Her sudden spurt of laughter makes Raja laugh too. Laughing is a symbol of increasing solidarity and friendliness between them. The exchange of laughter certainly enhances both the interactants' positive face. Mrs. Iyer is so amazed that she repeats the given name with rising tone as if she wants to know whether Raja is sincere in what he has said or is merely pulling off a joke for the sake of humour. However, without waiting for an answer, she clarifies that her baby is called just Santhanam. Using the expressions 'no' and 'just', she rebuffs all the possibilities of the baby being called by other name. Thus, the expression goes very precise and plain which is an example of bald-on-record strategy.

Noticing the topic of conversation nearing the end or no further scope for development, Raja shifts Mrs. Iyer's attention towards the fact that it's late enough while talking and the baby seems be asleep. Therefore, out of concern, he asks Mrs. Iyer to take some rest. The expression 'It's quarter-past three ... rest while we can.' is a clear indication of the fact that Raja is really concerned about his friend and her baby's comfort. Raja's act of catching her attention towards the time and asking her to take some rest is certainly a good gesture of his amicable behaviour. Raja uses an off-record strategy (Gives hint) in the expression 'It's quarter-past...be asleep.' to communicate that it has been late enough, and they should let the baby sleep. The use of inclusive pronoun 'we' indicates that the speaker and the hearer are the members of same group which is an example of positive politeness strategy (In-group-identity). Mrs. Iyer welcomes his

idea of having rest by saying 'Aye'. Her precise reply is an example of positive politeness strategy (Avoid disagreement) as well as bald-on-record strategy because it is a direct expression.

The outcome of observance of politeness strategies develops intimacy between Raja and Mrs. Iyer. In the film, there is another scene that suffices a good contrast of non-observance of politeness strategies that results in disturbing the developed intimacy.

Below is the conversation between Raja and Mrs. Iyer takes place in a dilapidated forest bungalow wherein they stop for a while as they failed to find out any unoccupied hotel after a communal riot broke in the city. Seeing the uninhabitable condition of the bungalow, Mrs. Iyer gets frustrated and decides to leave the place. However, she quits her idea after Raja's intervention. Raja requests the watchman to clean the room and make hot water ready for baby's bath. After some time, the watchman reports to them.

1. Watchman: Hot water ready for baby's bath, room is clean.
2. Mrs. Iyer: Thank you. (addressing to baby) Santhanam! Come.
3. Watchman: *Mem sahab!* What you taking for lunch? Chicken curry or egg curry?
4. Raja: Chicken.
5. Mrs. Iyer: Strictly vegetarian.
6. Raja: Well, I'm not. *Mere liye chicken curry banaao.* (Make chicken curry for me.)

Being aware of his guests' needs, the watchman reports them after finishing his task. His expression 'Hot water ready for baby's bath, room is clean.' serves like a balm to them who badly need some rest after a long tedious journey. The statement enhances Mrs. Iyer's positive face wants by offering her hot water and clean room. Though, it is an example of positive politeness (Offer, promise), it can also be seen as an off-record statement (Give hints) as it involves no specific addressee. In her response Mrs Iyer too enhances the watchman's positive face by expressing thanks which is an example of positive politeness (Give gifts to H – goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation).

With the expression '*Mem sahab*', the watchman asserts difference in power, ranking and distance between him and Mrs. Iyer, which is a strategy to give respect to her negative face and thereby he employs negative politeness (Give deference). The expression 'What you ... egg curry?' is a bald-on-record question as it puts some pressure on Mrs. Iyer to respond, however it doesn't pose face threatening as it is deemed to act in her favour. Surprisingly, Raja interrupts between the two by ordering 'Chicken', which is unwelcome because he hadn't been asked to table his choice. In this way, Raja causes face threatening to both the interactants.

Raja's interruption infuriates Mrs. Iyer. So, as a damage control and to restore her negative face, she turns down both the choices by using the implicature, 'Strictly vegetarian.' The utterance goes contrary to Raja's expectation, which certainly causes an FTA to his negative face. In turn, Raja too defends his face by stating 'Well, I'm not. *Mere liye chicken curry banaao.*' to sound his point clearer or an indirect implication of counter argument for what Mrs. Iyer has said and thereby causing an FTA to her negative face. However, the given bald-on-record expression doesn't pose any threat to the watchman's face as Raja is deemed to enjoy greater social status and power which authorises him to ignore the watchman's face wants. Once again, the watchman makes an attempt to get Mrs. Iyer's order. Below is the conversation.

7. Watchman: *Sahab ke liye chicken curry aur mem sahib ke liye...?* (Chicken curry for sir and for Madam...?)
8. Mrs. Iyer: Nothing.
9. Watchman: *Kuchh nahin* (Nothing)?
10. Raja: *Haan, kuchh nahin. Aur please jaldi karo mujhe bhookh lagi hai.* (That's right. Nothing, And please hurry up. I'm hungry.)
11. Watchman: *Ji sir.* (Yes, sir)

Perceiving tension between Raja and Mrs. Iyer, the watchman employs an indirect and elliptical question, '*Sahab ke liye chicken curry aur mem sahib ke liye...?*' to give Mrs. Iyer a choice. It is an example of off-record strategy (Be incomplete, use ellipsis). Raja's indifferent behaviour hurts Mrs. Iyer so badly that she angrily refuses to take anything, despite the watchman's best effort. The expression 'Nothing' is an example of bald-on-record strategy. At this, the watchman gets surprised and confirms the same through a rhetorical expression, '*Kuchh nahin?*' which is an example of positive politeness strategy (Seek agreement). Hearing Mrs. Iyer's inappropriate response, Raja again interrupts her by saying '*Haan, kuchh nahin ... bhookh lagi hai.*' in raised voice. The expression sounds a threat to Mrs. Iyer's positive face if she expects Raja to respect her interests and wants. Then, the watchman says, '*Ji sir.*' which is an example of positive politeness strategy (Offer, promise). No sooner has the watchman left than Mrs. Iyer starts complaining Raja for indifferent attitude. Below is the conversation between the two.

12. Mrs. Iyer: Exactly what do you think you are doing? Iyers are Tamil Brahmins and very strict vegetarians. We never eat food cooked by strangers. (Speaks in her vernacular about caste) (God knows what caste he belongs to!)
13. Raja: What?
14. Mrs. Iyer: You want everyone to find out the truth?

15. Raja: Meenakshi we are in the 3rd millennium. This is 2001 and please don't give me all that Tamil Brahmin bullshit okay. I have loads of Tamil friends. None of them hang up about caste as you.
16. Mrs. Iyer: You won't understand.
17. Raja: (INDISTINCT) Right. I won't understand. Thank God for that. And please, you can please relax about that room. It is all yours.

Noticing Raja's uncooperative behaviour, Mrs. Iyer complains him of his stubborn attitude in the expression 'Exactly what do you think you are doing?' and further she tries to justify her decision of not taking food cooked by strangers referring to Tamil Brahmins' high morals and practices. Her expression, undoubtedly, causes an FTA to Raja's negative face as she puts herself above Raja in terms of caste hierarchy and morals. However, Raja fails to make out what she means. Then, she says, 'You want ... find out the truth?' in rising tone to show her resentment which is also a strategy to cause FTA.

Addressing Mrs. Iyer by her first name 'Meenakshi' and using an inclusive marker 'we', Raja tries to establish rapport with her and make her understand that she is overpowered by the old conservative beliefs and practices which have no value in modern times. Thus, he, on the one hand, employs positive politeness strategy (Use in-group identity marker) to treat her as a member of his group and on the other hand, uses the expression 'bullshit' and criticises her for believing in casteism that clearly indicates that her face is threatened.

With expression, 'You won't understand.' Mrs. Iyer tries to prove that she has better knowledge and understanding of her culture than Raja and thereby she damages his positive face. In reaction, Raja asserts his inability to understand those beliefs and thanks God for the same. The expression 'Thank God for that' is an implication to the fact that it is good not to understand those outdated beliefs, which certainly make a mockery of her cultural beliefs and high morals. However, in the next expression 'And please...all yours.' he observes positive politeness (Give gifts) by offering her to enjoy the bedroom independently.

Outcome and Scope

The analysis of the first scene from the film, *Mr. and Mrs. Iyer*, shows that both Raja and Mrs. Iyer consistently observe a range of politeness strategies in conversation to bring each other close, create a comfortable environment and keep each other in good humour. Among them the most frequent are bald-on-record and positive politeness strategies. They use positive politeness to share common ground, show concern and develop friendly relation, and bald-on-record strategy to convey that they are friends and their acts are for the benefit or in the interest of other. They also use negative politeness and off record politeness strategies either to give the hearer freedom of action or to avoid conflict. While in the second scene, both Raja and Mrs. Iyer

constantly ignore each other's face wants, though they are expected to observe. And this non-observance of politeness strategies results in spoiling their relations.

Thus, it becomes obvious that politeness serves a crucial role in conversation. It keeps interlocutors in good humour and they enjoy one another's company. Absence or non-observance of politeness strategies may cause conflict or disharmony in relation. So, to avoid conflict in interaction, we must observe politeness strategies which help us to sustain relationship and achieve intended goal.

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Film Selected:

Mr. and Mrs. Iyer (2002) Aparna Sen (Director) and N. Venkateshan and Rupali Mehta (Producer).