# Negative Politeness Strategies in Collen McGuire's Utterances in the Novel *Savage Land*

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Politeness is a common strategy that is used by most of speakers; even the English native speakers do such thing to their counterparts as well. It is especially appropriate when someone is making a request, talking on the telephone or engaging in a pleasant conversation with someone else. However, there are different opinions about what is and is not considered as polite since there are distinctions in culture from one country to other countries all over the world.

**Purpose:** research aims to find out the negative politeness strategies which is used by Colleen McGuire in her utterances as the main character of the novel *Savage Land*.

**Design and methods:** This research use a qualitative method. The data source that is used in this research is taken from the dialogues uttered by Colleen McGuire as the main female character in the novel *Savage Land*.

**Results:** From the 10 strategies of negative politeness strategy according to Brown & Levinson's theory, the writer found the total of 4 strategies which was used by the main female character, Colleen McGuire, in the novel *Savage Land*. Those 4 strategies are hedge, be pessimistic, minimize the imposition, and impersonalize the speaker to the addressee.

**Keywords:** negative politeness, politeness strategy, sociolinguistics

## Introduction

Manners can be distinguished into two types. There are good manners and bad manners. In society, good manners are considered into humble, modesty, self-disciplined, the ability to control oneself, and carefully and tactfully communicate with other people. Such characteristics are needed in order to maintain a good relation with the surroundings. There might be plenty more of characteristics of good manners, but if someone by any chance has such characteristics, it can be said that she or he already has good manners in communicating to other people and definitely fits to be a part of a society.

Not only good manners that have characteristics, but bad manners also have some characteristics. Those characteristics are considered to be the habit of speaking aloud, without shame in terms of familiarity gestures and behavior, carelessness in dress, rudeness, revealed in a frank malevolence of others, in disregarding of other people interests and needs, to shamelessly impose on other people will and desires, in the inability to control anger with the intention of insulting the dignity of people around, lack of tact, foul language, use of derogatory nicknames.

Talking about manners and etiquette, the next thing that might come to someone's mind will probably be politeness. Politeness is a common strategy that is used by most of speakers;

even the English native speakers do such thing to their counterparts as well. It is especially appropriate when someone is making a request, talking on the telephone or engaging in a pleasant conversation with someone else. However, there are different opinions about what is and is not considered as polite since there are distinctions in culture from one country to other countries all over the world.

Being polite means to be a considerate conversational partner (Sirma Wilamova: 2005). It is highly needed in meeting some new people. As in the first time talking to new people, such formal situation might be needed to show respect to the counterparts. However, there are some people who might be not quite polite when encountering with new people. Such situation might be common since it probably is the real characteristics of them.

A research entitled *Negative Politeness Strategies of Ahok's Statements in Mata Najwa Talk Show* was conducted by Sri Hartati in 2020. She aimed to find out Ahok's negative politeness in Mata Najwa Talk Show. She said that as one of politeness strategies, negative politeness expressed about how the speaker raises the addressee by paying him positive face of a particular kind which satisfies the addressee's want to be treated as superior and also the speaker try humbles and abases himself. The method of her research was qualitative method and the results showed that the strategies are used by Ahok mostly are hedges or hedging, pluralization of you and I pronouns, and question. This negative politeness strategy was used as Ahok tried not to take the responsibility directly and Ahok also maintained to save the addressee face.

Another research was conducted by Adrian Kurniandi Makasiahe and Melly Siska Suryani entitled *Negative Politeness Strategies in "Big Hero 6" Movie* in 2020. Their research describes the study of pragmatics that analyzes about the negative politeness strategies. The aim of the research is to find out the type of negative politeness strategies in movie "Big Hero 6". The theory used in their research is Levinson (2009). In this research, the researchers applied the qualitative descriptive method. The method of collecting data is observation. The researchers found 20 data that contain negative politeness strategies, the using of be indirect is 1 data, the using of question or hedging is 7 data, the using of minimize imposition 4 data, the using apologize 3 data, the using of give deference 1 data, and the using of plural pronoun is 4 data.

The last research is entitled *The Strategy of Negative Politeness in Visual Information Media on Sea Transportation* which was conducted by Nuz Chairul Mugrib, Sumarlam, and Dwi Purnanto in 2019. The research dealt with the realization of the use of negative politeness in visual information media on sea transportation. The purpose of this research is to explain the negative politeness strategies used in the visual information media. The approach applied in this study is a qualitative descriptive method. The data source utilized in this research is in the form of visual information media such as placards, banners and leaflets installed in a number of locations related to sea transportation, namely ticket sales agents, ports and ships. The data examined is written discourse from the media of visual information containing politeness in language. The methods used in gathering the research data were seeing, documenting, and noting. Brown and Levinson's language politeness analysis methods are included in the paper. According to the findings of this research, there are seven strategies of negative politeness in visual media information on sea transportation including conventionally indirect strategy, hedges, minimizing the imposition, giving deference, impersonalize S and H, stating the FTA as a general rule and nominalize.

Referring to those three researches which have been mentioned above, this research aims to find out the negative politeness strategies which is used by Colleen McGuire in her utterances as the main character of the novel *Savage Land*. This research is expected to give

more knowledge about one of politeness strategies, which is negative politeness strategy, according to Brown & Levinson's theory.

## Methods

This research uses a qualitative method because this method has a quality of analytic-descriptive. According to Bogdan and Taylor (1975), qualitative method is a research procedure that produces descriptive data such as written words or verbal expression from the people and their behavior that have been observed.

The data source that is used in this research is taken from the dialogues uttered by Colleen McGuire as the main female character in the novel *Savage Land*. The novel was written by Janet Dailey and was published by Mills and Boon Limited in London in 1974. This novel consists of 186 pages.

In collecting the data, the writer took several steps as below:
1. Reading the novel Savage Land to comprehend the story.
2. Recognizing the data and highlighting the dialogues of Colleen McGuire as the main character in the novel when she is encountering with the other characters.
3. Identifying the technique of politeness strategy in Colleen McGuire's utterances.

While, the procedures in analyzing the data are:
1. Classifying the data into each technique of politeness strategy based on Anthony Brown & Levinson's theory.
2. Analyzing the data according to Brown & Levinson's theory.
3. Drawing a conclusion.

## Findings & Discussion

### Findings
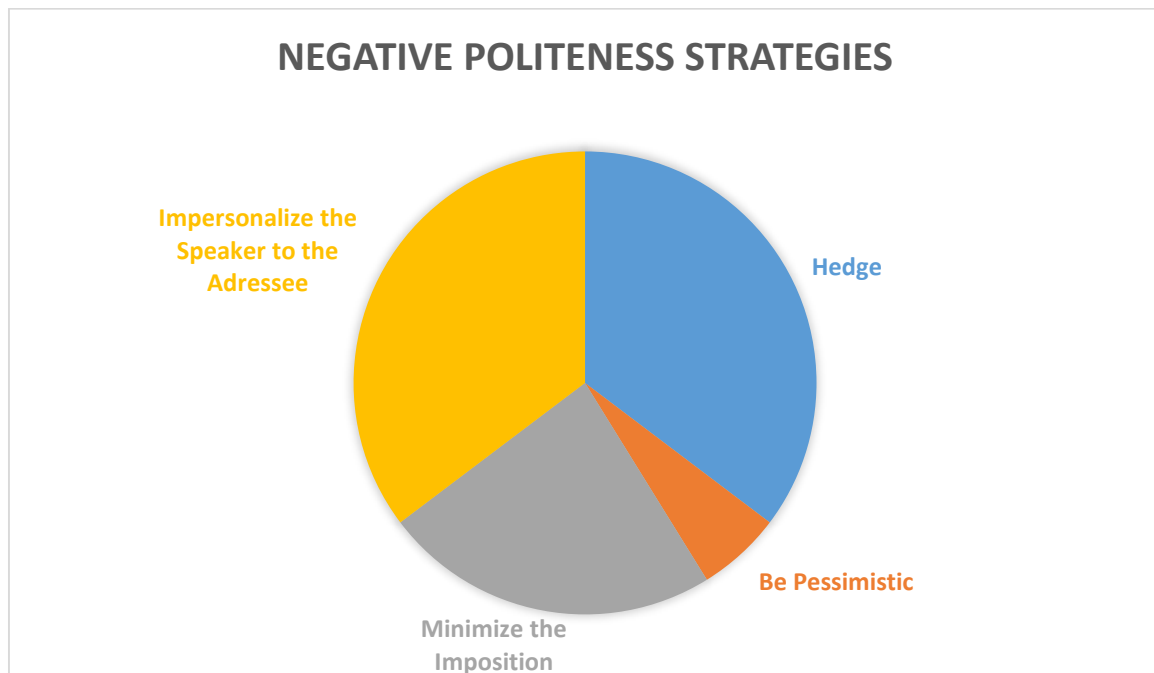


### Discussion

Negative politeness is about paying respect to other people, but avoiding intruding them. It is redressive action addressed to the addressee's negative face in which his want to have

his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded (Brown and Levinson: 1987). Negative politeness has a kernel of respect action, while positive politeness has a kernel of teasing and familiarity.

The outputs of negative politeness are generally social distancing. It does not minimize the social distance like positive politeness. Negative politeness is rather expanding the social distance yet still showing respect behavior towards the addressee. The strategies in negative politeness seem to be used whenever a speaker wants to put a social brake on to the course of his interaction.

1. Be conventionally indirect

The speaker is faced with opposing tensions that are the desire to give the addressee an 'out' by being indirect and the desire to go on record. When a speaker conveys information using phrases and sentences that have clear meaning in context, the speaker is said to be on record. However, if the speaker conveys something indirectly, it means that the speaker indicates his desire to go off record.

a. *Politeness and the universality of indirect speech acts*. A systematic way of making indirect speech acts in English is by stating or questioning a felicity condition (Gordon and Lakoff: 1971 in Brown and Levinson: 1987). Felicity condition in this case means that both of the speaker and the addressee must meet the aspects of the communication so that such particular speech acts will come off as intended. When requesting a favor, the speaker must consider if the addressee is capable to do the favor.

b. *Degrees of politeness in the expression of indirect speech acts*. The relative politeness of speech is increased by some easy compounding of hedges and indirectness. Intimacy plays a distinct role in determining the degree of politeness. Generally, the closer the relationship between the speaker and the addressee is, the more impolite expression will be used between both of them.

2. Question, Hedge

This strategy derives from the want not to presume and the want not to coerce the addressee. Such hedges may be analyzed as adverbs on performative verbs, such as *may*, *perhaps*, and *maybe*. 'If' clauses are often used in indicating hedges as well. Heringer in Brown and Levinson (1987) stated that felicity conditions may be suspended by putting such expressions in 'if' clauses.

Another characteristic in indicating hedges is by addressing it to Grice Maxims. This may suggest that the speaker is not taking full responsibility for the truth of his utterance. Such hedges can be stressed by using *I think..*, *I assume..*, *As I remember..*, *As you know..*, and so on.

3. Be Pessimistic

This strategy gives redress to the addressee's negative face by explicitly expressing doubt that the conditions for the appropriateness of the speaker's speech act obtain. Three important realizations of this strategy are the use of the negative (with a tag), the use of the subjunctive, and the use of remote-possibility markers. The intonation plays an important role in indicating pessimistic. The examples are:

a. I don't suppose there'd be any chance of you to help me fix my car.
b. Could you give me a ride to home?
c. Perhaps you'd care to help me.
4. Minimize the imposition

This strategy is focusing on minimizing the relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Indirectly, this strategy pays deference to the addressee. Power is something left as a possible weighty factor. For example, an expression *"I just want to ask you if you can lend me your car for a couple of hours."*. The word *just* and *a couple of hours* there are an expression to minimize the relationship. The need to clarify the main determinant of seriousness on occasion explains why such language is respectful, even though it seems impolite at first because it requests a favor.

5. Give deference

There are two sides in the realization of deference. The first is the speaker humbles and abases himself. The second is where the speaker raises the addressee by paying him positive face of a particular kind which satisfies the addressee's want to be treated as superior. In both cases, what is conveyed is that the addressee is in higher status social than the speaker. One simple expression for this strategy is, *"I look forward very much to having a dinner with you."*.

6. Apologize

The speaker indicates his reluctance to impinge on the addressee's negative face and thereby partially redress that impingement. There are four ways to communicate regret or reluctance to do a face threatening act. The first is to admit the impingement. The speaker can simply admit that he is impinging on the addressee's face. The second is to indicate reluctance. The speaker can attempt to show that he is reluctant to impinge on the addressee with the usage of hedges. The third is to give overwhelming reasons. The speaker can argue that he has valid reasons for performing the face-threatening actions, meaning that he would never dream of infringing on the addressee's negative face in the first place. The last is to beg forgiveness. The speaker may beg forgiveness from the addressee, or at the very least request that the addressee be acquitted of the debt owed in the face of threatening actions.

Here are the examples for each way of this strategy:
a. I know I'm being a bother, but I really need you to assist me fix this thing.
b. I don't want to be a bother to you, but you're the only person who can help me fix this thing.
c. I can't think of somebody else who could help me fix this thing.
d. Excuse me, but could you help me fix this thing?

7. Impersonalize the speaker and the addressee

It is phrasing the face threatening acts as if the agent were other than the speaker, or at least possibly not the speaker or not the speaker alone, and the addressee were other than the addressee, or only inclusive of the addressee. This results in variety ways of avoiding the pronouns "I" and "you". Three ways of those ways are performatives, imperatives, and impersonal verbs.

Performatives may be such a basic desire that helps to explain the very general loss of overt reference to the subject and indirect object of the highest performative verbs. The general forms are like, rather than saying *"I want you to buy this for me"*, it should be *"Buy it for me"*. Alternatively, instead of saying "*I told you to bring an umbrella,*" say "*Told you so*".

Imperatives mean to omit the 'you' from the subject of the complement of the performatives. For example, rather than saying *"You go pick your sister up at school at 2"*, it should be *"Pick your sister up at school as 2"*.

Impersonal verbs show that agent deletion is allowed not only in imperatives but also in other verb forms that encode acts which are intrinsically face threatening acts. For example, *"It looks (to me) like you've been skinnier"*.

8.  State the face threatening acts as a general rule

One way of dissociating the speaker and the addressee from the particular imposition of the face threatening acts, and hence a way of communicating that the speaker does not want to impinge but is merely forced by circumstances, is to state the face threatening acts as an instance of some general social rule, regulation, or obligation. The example is *"We don't sit on the table, Mike. We sit on chairs"*.

9.  Nominalize

The more nouny an expression, the more removed an actor is from doing or feeling or being something. Instead of the predicate being something attributed to an actor, the actor becomes an attribute of the action. As the subject is being nominalized, the sentence gets more formal. The example is:

a.  You performed well on the stage and that impressed us favorably.
b.  Your good performance on the stage was impressive to us.
c.  Your good performance on the stage made a favorable impression on us.

10. Go on record as not incurring a debt or as not indebting the addressee

By expressly claiming his indebtedness to the addressee, or by disclaiming any indebtedness of the addressee, the speaker may redress a face-threatening act. For example:

a.  I'd be eternally grateful if you would take me to this place for my job interview.
b.  It wouldn't be any trouble since I'm on my way to go to a place nearby.

From the 10 strategies of negative politeness strategy according to Brown & Levinson's theory, the writer found the total of 4 strategies which was used by the main female character, Colleen McGuire, in the novel *Savage Land*. Those 4 strategies are hedge, be pessimistic, minimize the imposition, and impersonalize the speaker to the addressee.

*Table 1 the data of hedge strategy*

| No | Data | Page |
|----|------|------|
| 1. | "I'm sorry, Tony. I didn't mean to... ***I guess I'm still uptight***," The words came slowly through the invisible stranglehold of fear and tension around her throat. | 104 |
| 2. | "...But you haven't done either one. ***So I think you're just too proud.*** Too proud to go to your grandfather and tell him how you grieve for your brother and how you wish you could have got there sooner, and... and..." | 111 |
| 3. | "...And you're still busy extracting another pound of flesh. ***I think you're despicable and hateful, and I don't see how anyone, least of all Jase, could care what you think.*** If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't stay another minute in this house!" | 149 |
| 4. | "I really don't know," Coley answered sarcastically before turning away from him. "***It was probably a figment of his imagination.***" | 151 |
| 5. | "As you put it so aptly before, they were experiments, lessons in human nature. ***If a person is going to learn, he might as well go to someone who has some experience, and you do have that***," Coley replied coolly. | 171 |
| 6. | "***Maybe I was hoping the rain would wash some of this Savage dirt off of me***," she said sarcastically. | 178 |

According to Brown & Levinson's theory, hedges may be analyzed as adverbs on performative verbs, such as *may*, *perhaps*, and *maybe*. This strategy derives from the want not to presume and the want not to coerce the addressee.

As it can be seen on the data above, Coleen McGuire used the words *probably*, *might*, and *maybe* in her dialogues. Those three words are in line with Brown & Levinson's theory. When uttering her opinion, it can be seen that Coleen McGuire does not want to coerce the addressee in her sentences. For example is in her utterance which says "*It was probably a figment of his imagination*". In that sentence, Collen was delivering her own opinion, despite she did not know that truly happened. She used the word *probably* as the way to show that it was only her own opinion and not being supported by any solid proof. Her opinion can be right, but also can be wrong. The word *probably* in her sentence showed that she was not sure either about her opinion, but still, she did not coerce the counterpart to believe in her opinion.

Brown & Levinson also add that hedges can also be stressed by using *I think...*, *I assume...*, *As I remember...*, *As you know...*, and so on in the utterances. They say that such stress may suggest that the speaker is not taking full responsibility for the truth of his utterance. There are some data where Colleen McGuire used the stress stated by the experts.

One example when Coleen McGuire used such stress is in her utterance which says "*I think you're despicable and hateful, and I don't see how anyone, least of all Jase, could care what you think.*". From her dialogue, it can be seen that Collen was not in such a good emotional state. She was rather in rage when saying her opinion. She just blurted out what was in her mind. The things she said at that time might be right since that was what she felt about the counterpart. However, she used the stress "*I think*" in her sentence that can indicate that she was not taking full responsibility in her words.

*Table 2 Pessimistic Strategy.*

| No | Data | Page |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | "***No, I don't suppose there's any reason to hang around here, is there?***" Coley agreed bitterly, with the barest hint of pleading hope in the last two words. | 141 |

From the data on the table above, it can be seen that Collen used the expression "*I don't suppose..*" in her sentence. According to Brown & Levinson's theory, this strategy gives redress to the addressee's negative face by explicitly expressing doubt that the conditions for the appropriateness of the speaker's speech act obtain. In Collen's case, she said that sentence "*No, I don't suppose there's any reason to hang around here, is there?*" when someone else asked her to go to another place instead of accompanying the counterpart. She did not really want to go as she liked being with the counterpart, but she did not bluntly say it. She had hoped that the counterpart would also like her to stay and one of the ways to make it sure is to give such question to the counterpart.

Brown & Levinson state that this strategy is focusing on minimizing the relationship between the speaker and the addressee (see table 3). Indirectly, this strategy pays deference to the addressee. They also add that the word *just* is an example of an expression to minimize the relationship.

One example of this strategy is from the last data on the table when Colleen said "*I just wanted you to know I was sorry, that's all...*". from the dialogue, it can be concluded that Collen was apologizing to the counterpart. Apologizing is clearly a polite thing to do when someone makes a mistake. In Colleen's case, she wanted to apologize to the counterpart, but she used the word *just* in her sentence. As it has been stated in the paragraph above, the word

*just* is an expression which indicates that Colleen wants to minimize the relationship with the counterpart. The sentence she said becomes ambiguous because she was being polite by apologizing, but it becomes less polite because she used the word *just* in her sentence.

*Table 3 Minimze Imposition*

| No | Data | Page |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | *"...And you seemed so angry* that I was a little scared of you, too. ***I guess seeing the scar just took me by surprise***." His face had become a mask, with blank blue eyes. | 23 |
| 2. | "...But you haven't done either one*. So I think **you're just too proud.** Too proud to go to your grandfather and tell him how you grieve for your brother and how you wish you could have got there sooner, and... and..." | 111 |
| 3. | "No, Aunt Willy," she answered quickly. "***I was just thinking maybe I'd go up to my room, take a quiet bath and get an early night***. My nerves are a little on edge – from the storm, I suppose." | 120 |
| 4. | "Well, I'm not asking you to now." Her pride reasserted itself as the tears threatened to fall. "***I just wanted you to know I was sorry, that's all.*** You can go back to your Tanya." She turned and fumbled with the door latch, the hurt, anger and humiliation trustrating her attempt to open it. | 184 |

The last strategies found is impersonalize the speaker to the addressee. There are 6 data found in the novel for this strategy as shown on the table below.

*Table 4 Impersonalize the Speaker to the Addressee*

| No | Data | Page |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | ...she continued, "I'm sorry about the way I looked when I saw your scar. You see," she hurried as his taciturn expression stiffened, "I was already frightened by the thunder and lightning when you found me. ***And you seemed so angry*** that I was a little scared of you, too..." | 23 |
| 2. | His face had become a mask, with blank blue eyes. "***It really doesn't look that bad, sort of like a dueller's scar, a badge of courage***," Coley suggested, trying desperately to undo the damage she was doing by bringing the subject up. | 23 |
| 3. | "Of course not," Coley replied indinantly, now that she had recovered some of her composure. "***I don't see why you all seem to want to wrap me up in a package marked 'Fragile'***. I am almost twenty." Quickly the picture flashed in her mind of the night when she had asserted her womanhood to Jase and met his indifferent glance. | 89 |
| 4. | Coley studied the foals as they peeped around their mothers' sides while the bolder ones skirmished playfully with each other. Each one seemed a replica of the other, from their red-gold coats to their flaxen mane and tails down to the white stockings on their feet and the blaze on their faces.<br>    "***They all look alike***." | 94 |
| 5. | "***That's rather like the pot calling the kettle black, isn't it?***" Coley said bitterly, sitting her cup rather abruptly on the flat surface of the magazine table. | 148 |
| 6. | "Yes, it does, doesn't it?" she agreed, looking up into the darkening heavens at the pale moon. "***It looks rather sickly.*** It hardly makes one feel romantic." The light edge or sarcasm in her voice penetrated her airy words as he seized her arm roughly and pulled her around to face him. | 168 |

Impersonalize the speaker to the addressee, according to Brown & Levinson, has 3 ways, which are performatives, imperatives, and impersonal verbs. All 6 data on the table use the third way, which is impersonal verbs. Brown & Levinson explain that impersonal verbs show that agent deletion is allowed not only in imperatives but also in other verb forms that encode acts which are intrinsically face threatening acts.

It can be seen from her utterances that Collen was delivering her opinions to the counterparts, but she deleted the agent in her sentences. For example, in the sentence "...*And you seemed so angry...*", it can be seen that Colleen thought the counterpart was angry to her because of the expression he showed her. However, as it was the first time Colleen met the counterpart, she did not accuse that the counterpart was angry to her. She had rather suggested that in her point of view, the expression of the counterpart looked like he was angry to her.

Another example can be taken from the sentence "*That's rather like the pot calling the kettle black, isn't it?*". When saying the sentence, Collen was in an argument with a counterpart. After listening to the arguments said by the counterpart, Colleen delivering her opinion that the counterpart was like the pot calling the kettle black. She omitted the agent in her sentence even though she meant to say that the counterpart was also in the wrong side.

## Conclusion

From the 10 strategies of Brown & Levinson's negative politeness strategies, the writer found 4 strategies used by the main female character, Colleen McGuire, in the novel *Savage Land*. The 4 strategies found are hedge, be pessimistic, minimize the imposition, and impersonalize the speaker to the addressee. The total data found in the novel are 17, which are 6 data for hedge strategy, 1 data for be pessimistic strategy, 4 data for minimize the imposition strategy, and 6 data for impersonalize the speaker to the addressee strategy.

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