

Politeness Strategies Used by Emily Cooper to Her Boss and Work Colleagues in *Emily in Paris*

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study was conducted to analyze the politeness strategies used by Emily Cooper to her boss and work colleagues throughout season 3 of the Netflix series *Emily in Paris*, specifically within the business context. The main theory used is Watts' second order politeness strategy (2003) that is elaborated with the politeness strategy theory by Brown and Levinson (1987). The findings indicate that Emily Cooper used more politeness sub strategies to her boss who has a higher social status than hers rather than to her work colleagues who have the same social status as hers. Additionally, the findings revealed that one out of the four politeness strategies Emily Cooper does not use to her boss, whereas she used it to her work colleagues, is the off record politeness strategy. In conclusion, in this study the politeness strategies used by Emily Cooper to both her boss and work colleagues in the series *Emily in Paris* season 3 depended on the social status of the person she talked to during communicating about work.

Keywords: politeness strategies, social status, second order politeness strategy, utterance

INTRODUCTION

According to Watts (2003), people have their own definitions of polite behavior based on their own criteria that may differ from one another. Watts (2003) also explains that the issue about this unmeasurable amount of politeness in order to be considered as polite may be continuous until the future. To understand what behaviors in communication are considered as polite, it is necessary to observe other people when communicating with others (Watts, 2003). According to Watts (2003), politeness strategies are called first order politeness and second order politeness.

As written by Watts (2003), first order politeness is when people judge what is considered to be polite based on their own interpretation and culture. Watts (2003) claims that second order politeness or in other words, the expanded theories by Brown and Levinson (1987, as cited in Watts, 2003) includes: positive politeness (claim common ground, convey that S and H are cooperators, and fulfill H's want for some X), negative politeness (be direct, do not presume/ assume, do not coerce, communicate S's want to not impinge on H, and redress other wants of H's), bald on record politeness, and off-record politeness. The second order politeness theory explains that people use politeness strategies to minimize the FTAs, actions that may potentially violate another person's positive or negative face.

The writer chose to use the second order politeness theory of Watts (2003) instead of the first order politeness to have a deeper understanding into how people are polite to one another and how they react to politeness from others based on their social status as also in the work setting. At work, people differ in age, gender, background, and wealth (Morand, 1996). People's words, grammar, and communication style can reveal their status in society (Sodah, 2019). Chilton (1990) shows how politeness in conversation reflects social status. In a workplace, politeness strategies vary depending on where someone stands in the organizational hierarchy. Superiors usually have more power than subordinates, who use politeness to avoid causing offense (Morand, 2000).

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This leads to the writer's purpose of the study, which is to find the politeness strategies used by Emily Cooper to her boss, Sylvie Grateau and the politeness strategies used to her work colleagues, Julien and Luc especially when they are communicating about work. Emily, who is a subordinate, has to ask her boss for permission to do things at work because of their different positions but when she works with her colleagues, Emily often does whatever she thinks is best.

The writer selected episodes 1, 4, 5, 6, and 7 of *Emily in Paris* season 3, an original Netflix series, for analysis. Netflix, a subscription rental service has achieved significant milestones including 10 million subscribers by 2009. By 2016, Netflix expanded to 130 countries with offline streaming options. *Emily in Paris*, produced by Darren Star, is a romantic comedy series that has earned the Golden Globes awards and other huge awards. The series is about Emily Cooper's journey in Paris where she joins a branding agency called Savoir. During her time in Savoir, Emily interacts with her boss, Sylvie and work colleagues Julien and Luc, as her team and on the other hand also using her Instagram fame to attract clients to Savoir (Malladi, 2022).

The writer also uses strategies to decide that the utterance chosen is polite. Being polite means paying attention to how others feel. For instance, it's important to be careful and open to different viewpoints, try to understand each other, acknowledge what others say, give compliments or show interest, use indirect language for requests, and show appreciation (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

METHOD

This study used the qualitative research method as supported by Ary, et al., (2009) to explore how Emily Cooper's communication strategies in *Emily in Paris* Season 3 reflect the second order politeness strategies theories. The data for this study was taken from Emily Cooper's utterances to her boss and the utterances to her work colleagues when communicating about work written in the transcript. The sources of data were taken in March 2024 from the utterances of Emily Cooper to her boss and to her work colleagues when talking about work containing second order politeness strategies. Due to the analysis that is only based on the transcript, the writer did not analyze the speaker's tone of voice, facial expressions, or gestures.

In doing the research, the writer collected and analyzed the data on her own, so the writer was the main instrument of the research. Furthermore, the researcher used the qualitative research method to prove that second order politeness as written by Brown and Levinson (1987, as cited in Watts,2003) strategies are influenced by social status.

To conduct the study effectively, the writer began by watching specific episodes 1, 4, 5, 6, and 7 of *Emily in Paris* Season 3. They focused on scenes where Emily and her team were involved in their work. After watching these episodes, the writer downloaded transcripts from the Forever Dreaming Transcripts website (*Emily in Paris* (2020) - transcript, 2022), which contained only the dialogue spoken by Emily Cooper. To ensure the accuracy of these transcripts, the writer double-checked them by rewatching the episodes and comparing the dialogue with what was written.

Emily Cooper's dialogues were then organized into a numbering system. Each number in order represented different things: the episode number, whether Emily was talking to Sylvie Grateau or her colleagues, and the order of her statements. For example, "1.1.1" would mean Emily's first statement to Sylvie Grateau in the first episode, while "4.2.1" would be her first statement to her colleagues, Julien and Luc, in the fourth episode. The study combined Emily's dialogues to Julien and Luc because sometimes she spoke to both at once.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section explains what the writer found in their study. It has three main parts, each with further sections that dive deeper into the analysis: (1) The types of politeness strategies used by the Emily Cooper to her boss, (2) The types of politeness strategies used by the Emily Cooper to her boss, and (3) How the strategies used by Emily to her boss and her work colleagues are different and similar. The overall summary of how Emily uses politeness strategies to her boss and work colleagues when talking about work is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Findings of the Analysis: Differences and Similarities between the Politeness Strategies Used by Emily Cooper to Her Boss and Work Colleagues When Communicating about Their Work

Emily Cooper's utterances	Politeness Strategies									
	PP			NP					ON-R	OFF-R
	CC G	C	F	BD	DPA	DC	C	R		
To Sylvie Grateau	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
To her work colleagues (Julien and Luc)	✓	✓			✓				✓	✓

Notes:

PP: Positive politeness

CCG: Claim common ground

C: Convey that S and H are cooperators

F: Fulfil H's Want For some x

ON-R: Bald on record

OFF-R: OFF record

NP: Negative politeness

BD: Be direct

DPA: Don't presume/ assume

DC: Don't coerce H

C: Communicate S's want to not impinge on H

R: Redress other's wants of H's

The Types of Politeness Strategies Used by Emily Cooper to her Boss, Sylvie Grateau

This section discusses the politeness strategies Emily Cooper used to her boss, Sylvie Grateau, in the scenes when they are talking about work. More explanation is written by the writer in the following sections.

- Positive Politeness

- Claim Common Ground

(Data 1.1.1) Emily Cooper: "What? Of course I'm joining you. I'm so in on team whatever this company's called."

In the first episode of season 3 of *Emily in Paris*, Emily Cooper expresses her excitement to rejoin her boss, Sylvie despite its unnamed company due to the rebranding. Her initial utterance, "What? Of course I'm joining you. I'm so in on team whatever this company's called," demonstrates her eagerness to align herself with Sylvie's goals that is to have Emily back in the team with the use of positive politeness through Claim Common Ground (exaggerate) strategy

- Convey that S and H are Cooperators

(Data 4.1.5) Emily Cooper: "Sylvie, believe it or not, I don't have an ulterior motive. I'm not Madeline. I really want you to succeed. With or without me."

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Emily Cooper employs the Convey that S and H are cooperators (be optimistic) strategy to reassure Sylvie, her boss, of her genuine intentions. Sylvie has accused Emily of potential betrayal due to Emily's individual movement in doing a campaign. Emily counters this perception by saying, "Sylvie, believe it or not, I don't have an ulterior motive. I'm not Madeline. I really want you to succeed. With or without me." This strategy, according to Brown & Levinson (1987), involves assuming shared goals with the listener and emphasizing mutual interests optimistically. Emily wants to align herself with Sylvie's goals, that is to succeed and showing her commitment to the company.

- Fulfill H's Want for Some X

(Data 1.1.6) Emily Cooper: "You want a splashy client to announce your company, think of it as a 'petit plaisir'. A little luxury."

Emily Cooper uses the Fulfill H's Want for Some X (Give Gifts to H) strategy to her boss, Sylvie Grateau since she is aware of Sylvie's desire to secure a huge client to launch her rebranded agency, Emily presents a potential client with the words, "You want a splashy client to announce your company, think of it as a 'petit plaisir'. A little luxury." This approach, as defined by Brown and Levinson (1987), involves satisfying the listener's emotional or material desires. By picturing the client as a huge client, Emily not only acknowledges Sylvie's goals but also positions herself as someone that helps in achieving them.

- Negative Politeness

- Don't Presume/ Assume

(Data 7.1.8) Emily Cooper: "Well, I was trying not to say anything, but..."

Emily Cooper employs the Don't Presume/Assume (Hedges Addressed to Politeness Strategies)" strategy to manage the situation with her boss, Sylvie Grateau, after securing a major client for their agency. Sylvie, at first was skeptical about the possibility of working with the client, but is surprised when the client is interested in hiring her company. During their conversation following the client's call, Emily carefully responds to Sylvie's inquiry with, "Well, I was trying not to say anything, but..." This strategy, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), involves using phrases like "frankly," "to be honest," or "I must say" to soften potential face threats. Emily uses "but" to hint that she needs to say something to the client by also waiting for Sylvie's approval for her to say it, in terms of removing any perception that she acted independently without Sylvie's approval.

- Don't Coerce H

(Data 7.1.6) Emily Cooper: "Can we do that? We don't represent him anymore."

Emily Cooper employs the Don't Coerce H (Be Pessimistic) strategy when questioning Sylvie's instruction to meet with a client who no longer works with their agency. Emily asks, "Can we do that? We don't represent him anymore." This strategy involves expressing doubt or uncertainty about whether it's appropriate to carry out a certain action, in this case, Emily raises concerns about the situation without directly refusing Sylvie's instructions. This helps maintain a respectful dialogue and allows Emily to seek clarification or reconsideration from Sylvie.

- Communicate S's Want to Not Impinge on H

(Data 4.1.7) Emily Cooper: "Oh. Sorry. Well..."

Emily Cooper uses the Communicate S's Want to Not Impinge on H (Apologize: Admit the Impingement) strategy when she interrupts Sylvie in her excitement and immediately apologizes. Sylvie points out the interruption when she is trying to say something that leads to Emily's response with, "Oh. Sorry. Well..." This strategy involves acknowledging and apologizing for potentially disrupting the listener. Emily's immediate apology and self-effacing remark while using "Well..." demonstrate her awareness of Sylvie's reaction and her effort to maintain respectful communication despite her initial interruption.

- Bald On Record

(Data 1.1.3) Emily Cooper: "Sylvie, I think that you should reconsider. They're a major client and it's a huge fee."

Emily Cooper employs the Bald On Record strategy when urging Sylvie to reconsider accepting a major client. Emily directly says, "Sylvie, I think that you should reconsider. They're a major client and it's a huge fee." This strategy involves directly conveying the message that is meant to be delivered. Emily's use of direct language leaves no ambiguity about her intent to persuade Sylvie to change her decision for the benefit of the company.

The Types of Politeness Strategies Used by Emily Cooper to her Work Colleagues, Julien and Luc

This section discusses the politeness strategies Emily Cooper used to her work colleagues, Julien and Luc, in the scenes when they are talking about work. More explanation is written by the writer in the following sections.

- Positive Politeness

- Claim Common Ground

(Data 1.2.1) Emily Cooper: "Hi guys, What've I missed?"

Emily Cooper employs the Claim Common Ground (Use in Group Identity Markers: Address Forms) strategy when communicating with her colleagues Julien and Luc after a long time. She initiates the conversation with, "Hi guys, what've I missed?" By addressing them as "guys," Emily establishes a sense of shared identity within their work team. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), using such terms or nicknames helps to show that they share common social status among work colleagues.

- Convey that S and H are Cooperators

(Data 1.2.2) Emily Cooper: "I might be able to help you with that."

Emily Cooper employs the Convey that S and H are Cooperators (Offer or Promise)" strategy when she reassures her colleagues after hearing about the challenges facing their company: they have no office, company name, and few clients. Emily then responds with, "I might be able to help you with that." This strategy, as described by Brown and Levinson (1987), involves offering help or making promises to reach the listener's goals, indicating shared desires and the need of mutual cooperation. Emily's statement directly addresses the issues Luc mentioned, showing her willingness to contribute positively to resolving their team's current challenges.

- Negative Politeness

- Don't Presume/ Assume

(Data 4.2.4) Emily Cooper: "Is that an option?"

Emily Cooper employs the don't presume/assume (question, hedge: hedges encoded in particles) strategy when responding to her work colleague's question about returning to work. When asked if she's open to coming back, Emily replies with, "Is that an option?" This strategy involves using words that convey uncertainty or seek clarification, as explained by Brown and Levinson (1987). Emily's question indicates making assumptions, allowing her colleagues to provide necessary information before making a decision about returning to work.

- Bald On Record

(Data 4.2.7) Emily Cooper: "I just told you. I am not good at that."

Emily Cooper employs the bald on record strategy when responding to her work colleagues' suggestion that she remain silent and inactive in the meantime. After they advise her to do nothing for the second time, Emily reasserts herself with, "I just told you. I am not good at that." This

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strategy involves being direct and clear about one's intentions or feelings, as defined by Brown and Levinson (1987). Emily's statement directly communicates her difficulty with staying quiet, emphasizing her desire to actively contribute to the team.

- Off Record

(Data 1.2.3) Emily Cooper: "I'm fine. Everything's fine. Um... Time to turn on that Chicago charm."

Emily Cooper employs the off record strategy when responding to her work colleague's concern about her sudden sadness. After her colleague questions Sylvie about Emily's situation, assuming Sylvie knows, Emily replies with, "I'm fine. Everything's fine. Um... Time to turn on that Chicago charm." This strategy involves being indirect about one's true feelings or intentions, as described by Brown and Levinson (1987). Emily chooses not to openly express her sadness or struggle but instead deflects with a reassurance that everything is okay and shifts the focus to performing well professionally. By saying "Time to turn on that Chicago charm," Emily implies that she's ready to show her usual enthusiasm and professionalism despite any personal challenges she may be facing.

The Difference and Similarities of Politeness Strategies Used by Emily Cooper to her Boss and Work Colleagues

Emily Cooper uses more politeness strategies when communicating with her boss compared to her work colleagues. To her boss, Emily uses all three sub strategies of positive politeness (claim common ground, convey that speaker S and hearer H are cooperators, and fulfill H's want for some X). However, with her work colleagues, she uses only two of these strategies (claim common ground and convey that speaker S and hearer H are cooperators). In terms of negative politeness, Emily employs three strategies with her boss (don't presume/ assume, don't coerce H, and communicate S's want to not impinge on H), whereas she uses only one negative politeness strategy (don't presume/ assume) with her work colleagues.

The differences of politeness strategies used in relation with the power dynamics and workplace relationships is that Emily prioritizes fulfilling her boss's expectations and maintaining professionalism, which influences her use of specific strategies like indirect communication and acknowledging her boss's authority. While, with her work colleagues of similar status, she tends to be more casual and less cautious in her interactions.

Despite these differences, Emily uses certain politeness strategies to both her boss and her work colleagues. She uses the claim common ground and conveys that speaker S and listener H are cooperator strategies to emphasize cooperation, aiming to minimize conflict and promote teamwork. Additionally, she also uses the don't presume/ assume strategy to both her boss and work colleagues to avoid making presumptions for showing respect and minimize misunderstandings. Emily also uses bald on record strategy with both her boss and work colleagues to ensure clarity in her communication.

CONCLUSION

This study explains how Emily Cooper uses politeness strategies when she interacts with her boss Sylvie Grateau and her work colleagues Julien and Luc in Season 3 of the Netflix series *Emily in Paris*. It uses Watts' (2003) concept of second-order politeness strategies to analyse Emily's conversations based on the social status of the listeners. The study focuses on verbal interactions from episodes 1, 4, 5, 6, and 7, without considering nonverbal cues.

When Emily speaks with Sylvie Grateau, she typically employs three positive politeness strategies (claim common ground, convey that S and H are cooperators, and fulfill H's want for some X), three negative politeness strategies (don't presume/ assume, don't coerce H, and communicate S's want to not impinge on H), and bald on record strategy. On the other hand, her interactions with Julien and Luc involve two positive politeness strategies (claim common ground and convey that S and H are cooperators), one negative politeness strategy (don't presume/ assume), bald on record strategy, and off record strategy. Emily uses more politeness strategies with Sylvie, acknowledging Sylvie's higher social status as her boss, while she communicates more casually with Julien and Luc due to their similar roles as Sylvie's subordinates.

Emily demonstrates deference and respect towards Sylvie by using more positive and negative politeness strategies, maintaining professionalism and clarity in her communication. In contrast, interactions with colleagues are characterized by fewer politeness strategies, focusing on creating a relaxed atmosphere through indirect communication. Commonly used strategies include finding common ground, emphasizing cooperation, avoiding assumptions, and using direct communication, illustrating Emily's commitment to collaboration and clear communication within her team. In summary, this study illustrates how Emily adjusts her communication style based on the social dynamics with her boss and colleagues. It emphasizes the importance of considering social status in communication while promoting clarity and teamwork in professional relationships. This research provides a foundation for future studies to explore the role of nonverbal communication in politeness strategies, cultural comparisons within the series' context, and longitudinal studies of Emily's communication progress across different seasons, including the upcoming Season 4 that is about to release in August 2024.

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