



Politeness strategies in Oprah Winfred’s talk show “Adele one night only “: gender and cultural pragmatics study

Ribut Surjowati¹ ✉, Siti Kusnowati²

^{1,2}English Education Department, Wijaya Kusuma Surabaya University, Indonesia

Article Info	Abstract
<p><i>Article History:</i> Received 12 March 2024 Approved 27 April 2024 Published 30 April 2024</p>	<p>The purpose of this paper is analyzing the types of politeness strategies employed by Oprah Winfred (OW) in her interview with Adel, a famous American singer, in her program called Adele One Night Only. It is descriptive qualitative study within the framework of pragmatic study. 12 data were obtained from YouTube which presented a talk show entitled “Adele One Night Only” hosted by Oprah Winfrey. The data were analysed using Brown’s and Levinson’s (1987) theory of politeness. The analysis started by exploring the forms of negative politeness from the host’s utterances, and continued to the forms of negative politeness. In each of the analysis, the writer explained the host’s hidden purposes and the expectations from the interviewee and the correlation between gender, culture and types of politeness strategies used from the point of communication aims and cultural values. The findings shows that OW used positive politeness with eight different strategies and negative politeness with 4 different strategies. The politeness strategies employed by OW were meant to build friendly and warm communication as if they are intimate friends and these findings support the theory that most women like talking which aims to keep in touch, especially with friends and relatives.</p>
<p>Keywords: FTA, negative politeness, positive politeness, politeness strategies</p>	

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant developments in human socio-cultural evolution has been the systematic, reciprocal use of language in conversation, a type of social interaction (Hossain, 2021). As social being, people use language to build good communication skills to adapt in society or community where they live, hence, they

develop some techniques, skills, and norms to socialize with others. Generally, people will put the hearer’s position above their position to maintain good communication and make the conversation running smoothly that called as politeness strategies. This strategy was implemented to minimize or intensify social distance in relationships (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Thus, politeness strategies (PS) are

✉ Corresponding author:
 Faculty of English Education, Jalan Dukuh Kupang XXV
 Email: ributsurjowati_fbs@uwks.ac.id

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important to maintain a good communication between interactants in a conversation due to show respect and to mitigate face threats while communicating (Mills, 2003). The usage of various PS reveals the speakers' social standing, power, and distance between interactants. Therefore, choosing a suitable tactic in an engagement to avoid losing or embarrassing the other person's face requires understanding the concept of politeness and that person's background. It can also be characterized by deference and respect, and it is typically displayed through friendship, camaraderie, or solidarity and is impacted by age and power (Yule, 1996).

The issues of the use of politeness strategies have attracted some researchers as they can reveal speech behavior of the people in conducting communication (Vinagre: 2008, Ryabova: 2015, Peng, et al: 2014, Furkatovna and Shayxurovna; 2022, Alakrsh and Bustan; 2020, Surjowati, 2021). Those Research focusing on practicing PS in online and offline communication as well as in written discourse enlighten readers that PS can emerge in different type in different media. Peng (2014), Adel, et al (2015) who conducted research of politeness in the classroom reveals that the college teacher conducts his class on term of positive politeness and negative politeness in a practical way and learners frequently used positive strategies. The use of politeness strategies was successful in reducing the teacher-student's social distance, making the class interesting, and creating good communication among the class community. Vinagre (2008) in her research mentions that negative positive politeness were employed among partners in collaborative email exchanges. The choice of strategies is determined by speakers' intention to build closeness, solidarity and cohesion.

To fill the gap in the study of politeness strategies used in talk show conducted by Oprah Winfrey (hereby OW) in the context of communication, it is deemed necessary to conduct more in-depth study. The current research is carried out based on the writer's curiosity with Lakoff's statement that women speak more politely than men. Based on Brown's and Holmes's observation Most women use language to build personal relationships so that women's conversation is characterized by some friendly linguistic features which represent their purposes of maintaining relationships especially with friends and family. Men, on the other hand, consider language as a means of receiving and transmitting information. They do a conversation to achieve a certain result: some information is received or a problem is solved (Holmes, 2013 in Furkatovna, et

al, 2021). Furthermore, the writer's interest also arises in connection with the underlying theories that says politeness is a polite way of social behavior, which differs from culture to culture (Yule, 1996). In other words, culture determines the way people talk such as American culture tend to apply positive politeness strategies while Japanese culture which emphasizes indirectness tends to use negative politeness strategy (Takano, 2005; Fukushima, 2000). The same thing found in Indonesia, some people from non-Javanese students prefer employing more types of positive politeness strategies to Javanese students (Surjowati, 2021). Therefore, the purpose of this research is exploring firstly; types of politeness strategies which lead to the speakers' hidden purposes and viewing the politeness use based on gender and culture, secondly, it explores the factors influencing the choice of those strategies.

OW is African American who is well known as host of her own talk show, "The OW Show" that broadcast from Chicago, which ran in national syndication for 25 years, from 1986 to 2011 (Britannica.com, 2023). She is also recognized as producer, actress, writer, and entrepreneur. She is also well known as a host that cunning to dig deep information, opinions and emotions from her interviewees (Biography.com, 2023) which essential factor of great host. Her performance in a talk show entitled *Adele One Night Only* attracted the writer which inspired her to explore her politeness strategies in her interactions with the guest star. As quoted in Yule's (1996) statement. that the usage of various politeness strategies reveals the speakers' social standing, power, and distance between interactants, the current research is not only focusing on exploring the different use of strategies but also some implied purposes in using those strategies which indicate the interviewee's wants and strategies in building successful communication without threatening others' face. As the need of speaking politely and paying attention to the social values of society which involves considering the feeling of others (Holmes, 2013), some researches were carried out examining people's communication behaviour.

Brown and Lavinson (1987) mentions four types of PS; negative and positive politeness, bald on and off record. Negative politeness is the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, and rights to non-distraction. This strategy empathizes with the hearer's negative face and emphasizes avoiding imposition on the hearer. It refers to the right to freedom of action and the need not to be free from others. On the other hand, positive politeness has main purpose to show that this wants should be fulfilled, therefore, it is defined as redress directed

to addressee's positive face. It is usually employed among friends or people who know each other quite well. This strategy is expressing friendliness and solid interest in the hearer's need to be respected (minimize the FTA) which is enable to minimize the distance between them. Off-record strategy, it is a communicative act focusing on using indirect utterance to be polite. Bald on record strategy, on the other hand, is a direct way of saying things without any ministration on the imposition in a direct, clear, unambiguous, and concise way of saying things. When using this strategy, a speaker does an act the act directly without any hedging or apology or sweetener. To focus on the common pattern in talk show, the strategies in this research are limited to negative and positive politeness strategies.

This research, therefore, aims at exploring the types of PS, the hidden purposes behind the choice of those strategies in "Adele One Night Only": OW's Talk Show. It is expected that this research will give theoretical benefits on the development of politeness strategies and give a contribution to the knowledge of pragmatics. Moreover, this research provides knowledge about theory of politeness strategies by Brown and Levinson. Furthermore, the research questions is what PS were employed to reveal the hidden purposes of the users.

METHODS

Talk show is one of the special contexts for the implementation of politeness strategies in the host's and guest's language. This interests the writer as she wants to explore the politeness strategies of the female Afro American host; OW who is assumed to have good communication behaviour. This research

This research was descriptive qualitative within the framework of pragmatic study. The data were collected from YouTube social media which presented a talk show program entitled "Adele One Night Only" by Oprah Winfrey on November, 14, 2021.

Each politeness strategies such as bald on record, off record, positive, and negative politeness strategies used during the interview were not all analysed; rather, the ones classified into positive and negative politeness strategies. From the interview, 12 data were obtained and they consisted of 8 data of positive politeness and 4 data of negative politeness. These obtained data were analysed using Brown's and Levinson's (1987) theory of Politeness.

The analysis started by exploring the forms of negative politeness from the host's utterances,

and continued to the forms of negative politeness. In each of the analysis the writer included some information about the host's hidden purposes and the expectations from the interviewee, which can give information about the host's communication skill. The correlation between gender, culture and the types of politeness strategies were explained precisely from the point of communication aims and cultural values.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The 14 positive politeness employed by OW reveal different forms when they were used in OW interviewed the Guest star, Adele. The following finding reveals OW' hidden purposes in employing positive politeness strategies.

Notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods)

This strategy pushes that speaker (S) to consider hearer's (H) condition Datum below indicates how the S tried to show that she and people were interested in the H's physical changes.

1. OW: "let's go to the question everybody wants to know oh one of the questions certainly is this whole weight thing and you lost 100 pounds in two years"

Ad: yeah

OW: "around that around 100 pounds in two years and then you said it wasn't even really about the weight. So, what was it about?"

The datum tells the way S tried to attract the H's notices by opening a question which she said as everybody's question. This may not be true that the question belongs to everybody, the S chose that diction to convey the H as an important person which everybody loves even to her performance. This strategy of notice to H's interest can also be identified by saying a direct statement "you lost 100 pounds in two years". This strategy reveals a OW purpose to be close to her guest. satisfy the positive's face of the hearers which are to be respected and their wants is her wants.

Use in-group identity markers

It is the strategy in which other address such as generic names and terms of address forms are employed as member identity markers. In this research, the writer only finds the use of ellipses to express the H's want to be liked.

In English speaking country, this strategy can be applied by simply contracted forms of the

full name. for example: Liz, Jenny, Joe, Tom, Sam, etc. Eshghinejad and Moini (2016) found in their research that females tend to use polite language and apply contraction and ellipsis more than males. It can be seen in the data as follow:

2. OW: “here are some of the lyrics: “Love is a game for fools to play and and I wanted to know are you *Adele*, getting better at this game of love?”

The datum shows the S addressed the H by using her nick name nicknames *Adele*. What the S wanted to build in the communication is casual nature of the host and guest star relationship. Therefore, OW call the guest star by using her first name; *Adele*. she wanted to build friendly atmosphere so that the H could be comfortable in the whole program.

Seek agreement

The S forces her agreement with the H to satisfy the H to agree or to confirm her opinion (Aprianti et. al, 2022). The specific sub strategy can be applied by stressing or by repeating part or all of the S’s statement in a conversation. It also used to emphasize emotional agreement and show interest and surprise.

3. Ad: “and yeah *he’s just hilarious*”

OW: “*he’s also hilarious*”

The strategy of seeing agreement was employed by the repeating part of H’s sentence “*he’s also hilarious*”. That sentence shows how the S agrees with the H’s statement by repeating Adele’s sentence and adding the word *also*, therefore, it indicates how the S’s efforts to minimize the distance with the H. The S intends to put herself in a friendly position and her respects to what the H has done

Avoid disagreement

This strategy prioritizes the intimacy between the S and H. Speaker is enable to redress FTA by informing his willingness to approve the H or avoid conflict with him, although he has a different perspective about something implicitly. It can be applied with three different specific sub strategies namely token agreement, hedging opinions that explained as follow:

Token agreement

This strategy is applied because the S’s goal is to hide her disagreement by twisting her utterances. In other words, the S employed the ‘Token’ agreement (Yes, but, then and so) to show her disagreement. The S’s response shows that she has willingness satisfy the H by hiding her

disagreement. her intention to please the H is implemented by showing that she pretends to agree with the H. The interlocutor can respond to preceding utterance with ‘yes, but ...’ in effect, rather than a blatant ‘no’, as seen below:

4. OW: “you know, one of the things I think is so valuable in knowing

Ad: “*and what you like*”

OW: “*yes and what you like but mostly knowing in the spirit and soul of yourself what is it you really*”

OW: “*yeah, okay*”

The S told the H how to move forward in the H’s life is by determining and convincing what she really wanted in life. Token yes reveals Ss’ agreement towards H’s statement as she continued S by saying and what you like. This part reveals their agreement how to handle life. However, the token *but*, confirms H’s view related to her problems and this seemed successful to minimize the H’s FTA or to satisfy the H’s positive face as he said *yeah okay*. Implementing this strategy, the S confirm H that both of them have same concept of how to handle problem in life and the S confirmed her intention to build good friendly dialogue and relationship (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

Hedging agreement

Hedges are used to increase the appeal of utterance, to make it more acceptable to the interlocutor and thus increase the probability of acceptance and reduce the chance of negation as seen in datum below:

5. OW: “*well, it feels like that I’m 30 you have literally opened up your soul in a way that even though we have heard your pain before it feels like pain was almost like a muse for you,*

Ad: “*yeah*”

The dialogue was about the H’s song which was so impressive that S still remembers how the H’s pain becomes an inspiration for her song. Hedges “*it feels*” restrict the extent of FTA, it was used to avoid vagueness as the S wanted to show that she was part of the pain and feel sorry about that at the same time impressed by her strength to pass this unfortunate condition. Furthermore, the S also gave her opinion about the H’s album ‘30’ by using hedges ‘*in a way*’ that make her opinion safely vague and reduce the FTA to the interlocutor. From the data above, it can be concluded that the reason to use this specific sub strategy is to satisfy the hearer’s positive face. This means that the speaker’s intention to maintain and respect hearer’s positive face during interaction

Personal-centre switch: speaker to hearer

The goal of implementing this strategy is to soften requests and favours that commonly marked in speaker's effort to talk about general topics so the S has sufficient chance to highlight the similarity he/she shares with H such as common concerns and attitudes towards interesting events

This strategy is applied in a condition where S speaks as if H is the S, or when the S's knowledge is equal to the H's. 'You know' in English is another form of this point-of-view 'flip' where hearer couldn't possibly 'know' what the speaker knows.

6. OW: "in with the divorce from Simon like because I, I *you know* over the years have interviewed so many people who stayed when miserable,

Oprah applies this specific sub strategy by saying "*you know*" to make her knowledge seems parallel with hearer's knowledge. In the above datum, she realises that she does an FTA by asking Adele's reasons to get divorce from her former husband. In order to minimise the FTA (asking about divorce which is a sensitive matter), she shares her knowledge about her experience to interview many people and they have many reasons for doing that. Therefore, the reason to choose this strategy is the payoffs to satisfy hearer's positive face because in order to do that the speaker must share same knowledge with the hearer that indicates mutual friendship, solidarity, and equal participants.

Include both speaker and hearer in the activity

An inclusive 'we' form above strategy is applied in this strategy, when S really means 'you' or 'me' so it can infer as cooperative assumptions and thereby redress FTA, as the main goal of positive politeness to express solidarity, respect and wants to be respected. Datum below identifies the use of term "we" as the S wants to show her cooperative with the Hs and thereby redress FTAs.

7. OW: "in with the divorce from Simon like because I, I *you know* over the years have interviewed so many people who stayed when miserable, *we're* miserable and years before they actually made the move"

8. OW: "you know it's interesting because *we* don't have permission to be promiscuous"

The lexical choice of "*we're*" in the first datum reveals the S's intention to equalize herself with the H who are both miserable and the use *our*

in "*our neighbourhood in our culture*" also put the S in the same position as the H. Both are from the same place and country and it is an indication that they have the know each other quite well. This interview is expected to have good and friendly atmosphere as they have similarity in some aspects. Therefore, this strategy is used by OW to show her mutual friendship, solidarity, and equal participants in the conversation.

Give (or ask for) reasons

In order her wish to be understood, the S implemented the one of strategy which is giving reason. This strategy is applied to include hearer in the activity in practical reasoning and assuming reflexivity that makes hearer see the reasonableness of speaker's face threatening acts.

9. OW: "..... and you've opened up your soul and shared it with the world here on '30', *why do you think is the real reason Simon came into your life?*"

Ad: "... I've ever had in my life up until that point even you know even now, I trust them with my life really oh my gosh like beyond like yeah"

After hearing Adele's explanations *why* she ended her marriage to her former husband Simon, OW curiously asked what Adele's thought why Simon came into her life even though it was quickly. Due to the fact that this is very private matter, in expressing her question in order not to offend Adele about that, the use of "why" to ask reasons which give an assumption of is to assume reflexivity that makes Adele see how OW redress her FTA. The S's question is meant to show her attention to the H's life story especially her happy moment to meet her former husband. It also means that the S wants what H's wants and by using this strategy the speaker can minimise the degree of FTA.

Give gifts to hearer (goods, sympathy, understanding, and cooperation)

The strategy implemented is the form of classic positive politeness action of gift giving that can be done by giving goods, sympathy, understanding, and cooperation utterances that satisfied the wants to be liked, admired, cared about, understood, listened to, and so on.

10. Ad: "I was and I was body positive then and I'm body positive now but it's not my job to validate how people feel about their bodies and I feel bad that you know it's made

anyone feel horrible about themselves
.....”

OW: “*I got that, I love that I love that*”

The gift that the S addressed to the S’s expression of admiration after Hearing the H’s story. She said “...*I love that I love that*”. She repeated this expression twice which indicates how she liked the H’s story. This strategy will be able to pleasure the H’s positive face as the S satisfied her wants to be liked.

Negative Politeness

This strategy is redressive action that addressed to the hearer’s negative face: his want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded (Brown & Levinson, 1987). It also a symbol of formality and social distance that increasing social distance between the interlocutors. Furthermore, negative politeness is mentioned as the most elaborated and the most conventionalised set of linguistic strategies for FTA redress

Be conventionally indirect (BCI)

This sub strategy can be applied by stating or asking a question in a felicity condition. For doing that, the speaker must know that the hearer can comply with the request that the speaker asked.

11. OW: *can you just give us an idea of what happened with this all-consuming it feels like an all-consuming pain and I’m like what the hell happened?*”

OW as the S applied this specific sub strategy by asking such question to Adele’s new sad song titled “Easy on Me” and what the inspiration of this song. This strategy of BCI gives an idea that the S did not want to impose the H about her pain, the S, on the other time, give freedom to the H in redressing her FTA. Therefore, in spite of saying *tell me about, the S started the question by saying can you give us an idea, as it sounds more tolerate than asking directly to the H.*

Question, Hedge (QH)

This specific sub strategy can be applied by using hedges whose job is to make things more or less fuzzy. Furthermore, Hubler in Zakia (2018) states that hedges are used to make the utterance more interesting and acceptable to the speakers, automatically, reduce being rejected and increase being accepted.

12. OW: “so many women Adele are going to be liberated I think and I’ve read where you said you weren’t miserable, miserable but you also knew you weren’t happy”

Ad: “yeah”

There are two signals which indicates that OW applies this strategy by saying “I think” and “I’ve read” to make her statement more acceptable to the hearer because her statement sounds subjective and it is believed to minimize her giving offence to the H. therefore, the reason to choose this strategy is the payoffs to satisfy hearer’s negative face. It shows the intention of the speaker that doesn’t want to do the FTA such as criticism to the hearer. Moreover, this strategy minimises particular impositions to the hearer.

Be pessimistic (BP)

This sub strategy is applied to redress the hearer’s negative face by expressing doubt explicitly that the condition for the appropriateness of speaker’s speech act obtain. This strategy can be done by using negative tag question, using the subjunctive and using remote-possibility markers (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

13. Ad: “I think I’m divorcing myself on it”

OW: “yeah, yeah how does one do that?”

The above data shows that OW applies the strategy of BP by saying “how does one do that?” to Adele’s statement. Instead of mentioning “you”, she says “one” to safe the hearer’s face not to be embarrassed. The lexical expression one was used to represent such a problem will generally affect one’s enthusiasm and desire. Furthermore, the S thought that it was impossible to finish an album in such a broken heart but the H could do that.

Minimize the imposition (MI)

This strategy is applied by using words that can minimise the imposition to the hearer. The words such as: a tiny, a little bit, just, only, a smidgen, a sip, a taste, etc which can delimit the extent of the FTA.

14. Adele: “peace of mind”

OW: “*just* peace of mind”

OW applies this strategy by saying “*just*” to the Adele’s statement that she wishes “peace of mind”. “Just” in this case means “merely” that she says to minimise the possibility of imposition to Adele’s utterance

Discussion

One of the important aspects of communication especially across cultural, is politeness. It is important as it can avoid misunderstanding which results on negative relational consequences (Haugh and Chang, 2015). Therefore, raising awareness about im/politeness across languages and cultures is important as it enables learners to analyze differences between the politeness systems of different languages.

Linguistic politeness is the use of language to communicate by showing the desired feeling and expectations of the speaker in order to build successful personal relationship, as politeness itself is aimed to comfort and relax all the parties with one another in common social situation (Torress, 2020). Besides culture, gender is also considered as an important aspect of politeness which have been the main interest of many research. Lakoff (1973) in Keikhaie & Mozaffari (2013) found out the differences between the men and women speech and found women tend to use politer structures than men. However, regarding to gender and the use of positive politeness strategies, a research found that there was common interest in using this strategy between male and female. Meanwhile female coaches prefer using Off-record and negative politeness, on the other hand male coaches more used bald on-record strategies

The finding of the current study reveals that OW used more positive politeness strategies than negative politeness strategies. In her interview with Adele, a distinguished American singer, for example, OW implemented the sub strategy of *notice* as she wanted to give a good impression about Adel's attractive performance by showing that she was attractive with her weight. OW's strategy is in line with what Mills (2003) says that Women and Men have different aims in conversation since women are concerned mainly to establish rapport between members of a group and to ensure that conversation goes smoothly (rapport talk). Women tends to want a close and harmonious relationship with her partner in which this expectation is expressed through the way they communicate. On the other hand, men have different purposes in communication. They use the production of information as a way of establishing a position in the hierarchy (report talk.). Furthermore, Holmes (2013) says that women are more polite than men. female discourse is politer than male discourse (Barbora, 2013). Most women like talking and regarding talking as an important means of keeping in touch, especially with friends and relatives. Their language is used to build, foster and develop a personal relationship. Such purpose is found is a situation when OW used sub strategy

of *gift giving*. Her good response such as *I got that, I love that I love* that shows her admiration towards Adel's ways to value other people.

Research did by Jakučionytė (2020), however, uncovered an interesting finding that mostly American either men or women used negative politeness and surely, this finding countered the result of this current research. OW, an American host seemed to enjoy using positive politeness strategies during her interview with an American famous singer, Adel. On the other hand, in different situation, it is found in these two research that Americans (both genders) tend to communicate their wish directly, they do not imply the feeling of gratitude or apology. It means that Americans also in certain case prefer expressing something directly. For example: when OW said that Adel lost 100 pounds in 2 years. This sub strategy was implemented on purpose as OW was sure that her statement could satisfy Adel's positive face.

Linguistic politeness increases good interaction among members of the society. During social interactions, speakers always try to protect their positive public self-image and want to look as valuable members of the society. Another strategy of politeness which analyze in this research is negative politeness. This research found only 4 strategies used by OW. This kind of politeness deals with the S's effort to avoid offence to the addressee's face so the addressee can choose whether to agree or disagree with what the S asks or say. For example; the use of hedging *I think, I've read*. These hedging indicates OW's purpose the speaker not to impose on Adel but only giving their genuine opinions. The expected answer can be an dis/agreement statement. The strategy of minimizing the imposition also employed aby OW. As it is informed that this strategy is intended to lessen the seriousness of the FTA towards the H. The S implemented this to express that it was not that serious and neglect by everyone. Thus, OW suggested that Adel should be relax. OW's lexical choice *just piece of mind* convinced Adel for ignoring the personal problems. OW used the word just to give an impression that she understood what Adel really wanted and she did not want to impose her with another questions which reveals her other wants.

Those two strategies reveal the finding that there is a correlation between gender and politeness (Agis, 2012). Besides, cultures also determine what politeness strategies the S wants to employ, as Brown and Levinson (1987) stated, though politeness is controversially universal, it is defined and implicated differently from one culture and another. Politeness system is exercised in

every language community, however the details which are correlated to that system can be various as the face is concerned with the most important cultural values such as the social persona, failure, improvement, and spiritual concepts (Brown and Levinson; 1987 and Saeed; 2009). Though in previous study found that most American used negative politeness, they also respect directness which represents positive politeness, instead of indirectness especially while they want to build good communication and relationship

CONCLUSION

Research about politeness is always interesting as one of the important aspects in communication is politeness, without which interaction and communication is impossible to carry out. (Huang, 2008), especially those related to culture and gender. Considering those two aspects play crucial roles in determining the practice of politeness strategies, this research was carried out. The finding shows that Oprah Winfred, a popular female American host, employed positive politeness with eight different strategies of noticing, attending to H's interest, showing sympathy, using in group identity markers, seeking agreement, avoiding agreement which is sub categorized as token agreement, hedging agreement, presupposing common ground, including both speaker and hearer in the activity, giving reason, and gift to H. this popular host also employed only 4 negative politeness with the strategies of being conventionally indirect, questioning and hedging, being pessimistic and minimizing the imposition.

The different use of politeness is not related to linguistic etiquette but it is more about the purposes the S wants to address to the H. Oprah Winfred wanted to build good and friendly communication with Adel so that the talk show she handled is not too stiff and it does not represent power relation

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