



Positive Politeness Strategies by Palpatine in Star Wars : Revenge of the Sith

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Abstract. *Revenge of the Sith*, highlighting how these linguistic tools function as instruments of persuasion and manipulation. As the primary antagonist who masterminds the political and military conflict, Palpatine demonstrates an exceptional ability to control and influence other characters through carefully crafted dialogues. His language choices are not merely designed to maintain social harmony or reduce face-threatening acts (FTAs), but also to achieve hidden personal objectives. By building a sense of camaraderie and shared goals, Palpatine subtly manipulates the hearer's emotions and decisions, often leading them toward outcomes that favor his agenda. The study employs a qualitative research method, with data drawn from Palpatine's utterances throughout the film. Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness serves as the primary analytical framework to identify the strategies Palpatine employs. The findings indicate that Palpatine frequently uses positive politeness strategies such as offering praise, emphasizing shared values, and creating misleading "common ground" to establish trust. He also makes promises or assurances that appeal to the hearer's desires, while concealing his manipulative intentions. This research contributes to the broader field of pragmatics and discourse analysis by demonstrating how politeness theory can be applied to fictional narratives, particularly in examining power dynamics and manipulation. Furthermore, the study illustrates how language, when strategically used, can blur the lines between genuine politeness and calculated persuasion. The results highlight the importance of critical awareness in interpreting linguistic strategies in various communication contexts, both fictional and real-world.

Keywords: Palpatine, Politeness, Positive-Politeness Strategies, Pragmatics, Star Wars.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important instruments in our life is language. To communicate with a wide range of people, we need language to help us understand everything, whether it is from the other person in a conversation or from media that is around us. The primary purpose of language, especially in conversation, is to convey the speaker's message to the listener. Language aids in our understanding of speakers who have a wealth of cultural experiences and backstories. Because misinterpretation can happen in every situation, we must avoid it. Thus, it's crucial to learn how to use the language properly.

A branch of linguistics is pragmatics. It is among the disciplines that study the connections between language and situation in order to acquire fundamental knowledge (Levinson, S. 1983). Since every statement has a meaning, pragmatics explains the context's meaning. As a result, the context may affect the meaning. In order to communicate effectively and preserve social harmony, pragmatics also examines politeness techniques.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), pragmatics studies civility as a way to avoid projecting a negative image during a conversation. Positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on-record, and bald off-record are the four categories into which politeness can be categorized. Depending on the subject being discussed, these separate techniques may be

connected to the dialogue between the speaker and the audience. Nonetheless, the subjects can be diverse, unclear, and contingent on the situation, enabling politeness strategies to be tailored to the specific needs of the conversation. Positive politeness's primary objective is to appeal to the listener's need for social acceptance by the speaker, usually through jokes, praise, or encouraging gestures. This type of politeness is commonly used by speakers to show familiarity and friendliness when they wish to maintain or strengthen a social connection.

This special branch of pragmatics, however, was meant to keep the hearer's positive face, there are some events or parts of moments where pragmatics are used for many different intentions. One can be a tool to do something villainous or even a mantra to control some special people. One of them that has the most cases is politeness. Either positive or negative, the speaker's intentions are not aligned with what they used to be (comfort people they talk to). For further understanding, a simple example as such when you became an employee, had been taking the "employee of the month" title for several years, and never missed a single workday to be left with even though you had to do it over time without any break time. One day, your manager suddenly hands you a long-stalled project that he has failed to make progress on for years. Instead of declining, you accept—because he says this:

"You're the person that I think I can count on. That's why I thought of you for this project. You've got potential. It's a great chance to approve yourself."

This statement may seem flattering, but the manager used positive politeness to frame an unfair burden as a compliment or reward. It shares the values and the hearer's desire to be appreciated. However, this could be dangerous to the hearer because there are possibilities, like the big project the manager gave you, which is probably one of the small projects that are unnecessary. Or maybe it could be that the manager is too lazy, so you took the project so that he can do nothing during work hours. In this way, what appears as encouragement is a persuasive tactic or setting up a scam that can cause exploitation. With this example, it proves that a linguistic branch such as politeness can be invented as a tool or a tactic to manipulate someone. No matter the intentions may be, the hearer would be bared the consequences.

In this study, the case is focused on positive politeness strategies. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), there are fifteen distinct methods that are typically used in conversational speech that make up positive politeness. The reason this study was selected above the other three is that it is easy to find strategies to converse politely with persons of all ranks in everyday conversations. As a result, analyzing "Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith" is difficult. A total of nine episodes make up the Star Wars franchise film. Among all the series, "Episode III : Revenge of the Sith" was chosen for the observation of positive politeness strategies.

The film's dramatic narrative, which employs the word "betrayal" and intensifies character tension as personal and political issues emerge, provides multiple opportunities to observe positive politeness strategies in action and may influence the plot as a whole. Palpatine, one of the antagonists in this movie, will be the subject of this study. This study not only helps people grasp the character's past but also piques their interest in the strategic use of language in media by demonstrating how politeness methods transcend informal conversations and are crucial to narrative storytelling.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The qualitative approach was used in this study, and the data is derived from the character's dialogue and a few explanations expressed in words or sentences. Because it could explain the majority of the usage of positive politeness methods, this approach was appropriate for the study (Creswell, 2014). This approach makes it possible to examine the various facets of the social environment and dive straight into its analyses, which can explain how it was applied to explain how things function in a given situation.

The data used in this study came from "*Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith*," the sixth movie in the Star Wars film series and a follow-up to *Attack of the Clones* (2002) and *The Phantom Menace* (1999). George Lucas is the writer and director of this American space opera film, which was released in 2005.

The researcher followed several steps to collect the data. First, the researcher used documentation and note-taking techniques to gather the data, finishing with note-taking techniques. The process involved downloading the movie through the Internet and watching it repeatedly to understand the context of the data. Then, the data was collected with its subtitle and dialogue in order to comprehend the utterances that contained positive politeness strategies. Then, transcribe the utterances that might be suitable for which positive politeness strategies. Finally, the utterances were noted and further explained along with the scene when the strategies were implemented. When analysing the data, the researcher analyzes based on Brown and Levinson's Positive Politeness Strategies (1987), then examines further, and having a deep cross-check of each dialogue so that no crucial information has been overlooked.

The informal method was used to present the results and explore the issues of the studies by providing the interpretation by paragraph in order to provide a more thorough explanation. This approach was used because it can offer a thorough explanation of the positive politeness tactics that were used in *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith*. The background or context

of an utterance concerning the positive politeness phenomena and the methods employed by the key characters can be easily understood by providing a more extensive study of a conversation between the characters and clarifying the scenario of the conversation. The analysis used to determine the methods also takes into account other elements.

3. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The analysis of Positive Politeness Strategies in *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* unveils many diverse ways not only to make the hearer's desire to be fulfilled, but there are possible outcomes that has to do with the usage of Positive Politeness Strategies. Positive Politeness is the proper linguistic to make people know that the speaker understands what they feel, a tool for comforting someone, or even to secure the image of a positive face of the hearer.

The movie tells the story of the intergalactic war between the Galactic Republic and the Separatists, which had almost concluded due to the Republic's domination. While a space war, there is also a faction between good and bad where people are taught to be armed laser sword warriors, the Jedi and the Sith. The Jedi helped the Republic, and the Sith allied with the Separatists. These warriors were taught not only the ways of the blade but also other connections to nature, which gave them various powers.

The results of this research indicate that there are many Positive Politeness Strategies that Palpatine implemented. He is the main villain of the movie. Palpatine intended to convince Anakin to join on his side due to Anakin's big potential of power that Palpatine could use. The effectiveness of Positive Politeness is demonstrated right here. Palpatine was able to control Anakin's ideas and emotions by asserting points of agreement, assuming that they shared ideals, and projecting an image of himself as a reliable confidant. The information examined in this study shows how these tactics were well-planned actions that eventually worked rather than being merely token acts of solidarity. Palpatine's use of Positive Politeness worked well to erode Anakin's faith in the Jedi, skew his moral compass, and pull him further under the Chancellor's sway, paving the way for his tragic transformation into Darth Vader.

Before the tragedy, Palpatine was the Chancellor, the head Senate that organized his Republic, where the Jedi Order took orders from. Palpatine was seen as a respected leader, a diplomatic figure who intended to bring peace and stability across the galaxy. His authoritative position allowed him to build trust and credibility among the Senate, the Republic, and also the Jedi themselves. Palpatine also had a personal relationship with Anakin as a mentor-apprentice and a father figure, which enabled him to use Positive Politeness Strategies effectively. This

position brought Palpatine to the upper hand he just need to execute his plans to convince Anakin to join his side.

From the first part of the film, there was a scene where Anakin was rescuing Palpatine and finally defeating Count Dooku.

14:37

ANAKIN: "Yes, but he was an unarmed prisoner. I shouldn't have done that, Chancellor. It's not the Jedi way."

PALPATINE: "**It is only natural. He cut off your arm, and you wanted revenge. It wasn't the first time, Anakin. Remember what you told me about your mother and the Sand People.** Now, we must leave before more security droids arrive."

When Anakin apologized for killing Dooku without a weapon, he retorted that his belief in the Jedi code prevented him from doing so. When Anakin apologizes for killing Dooku without a weapon, he responds that he should not have done so since he believes in the Jedi code, to which Palpatine responds.

This statement is rich in manipulative politeness strategies. By portraying Anakin's violent deed as a normal human reaction to provocation and attributing it to the primal human impulse of retaliation, Palpatine sought to normalize it from the very first claim that "*it is only natural.*" Palpatine responds to such provocation if the desire for vengeance is widely recognized and understood. One important example of assuming common ground is this statement. Palpatine attempted to assume that he and Anakin had a same knowledge of human drive by putting it in this manner. He creates a feeling of a common understanding of the events by acting as though this is a self-evident truth that doesn't require an explanation. The idea that it is a predicted and "natural" emotional response is then further reinforced by his statement, "*you wanted revenge.*" Palpatine portrays it as a response that any sane person would have in those circumstance rather than as Anakin's personal weakness. This contributes to the part of the technique when the speaker expresses that they understand or even share the hearer's desire (in this example, the desire for vengeance). Palpatine makes it clear that he understands and accepts this desire as a "natural" reaction, even though he doesn't state it directly.

Palpatine shares Anakin's past with him after establishing his neutral point in order to establish common ground. Palpatine's statement, "*Remember what you told me,*" alludes directly to an earlier exchange in which Anakin admitted to doing a similar violent deed motivated by intense emotions. This assumed a certain amount of familiarity as well as a common history of disclosure and trust. Palpatine used a common past and experience to contextualize or defend Anakin's current behavior. This statement used the Strategy 7 (Brown & Levinson, 1987), which involves asserting shared background, shared experiences, or mutual

knowledge to establish common ground. It can also involve claiming the hearer's wants, attitudes, or experiences are known and shared. He makes use of the technique that entails assuming the hearer's knowledge and providing familiarity with the S-H relationship.

Palpatine was able to influence Anakin by using their mutual understandings and experiences, as well as the close knowledge and trust they had painstakingly built. This represents yet another use of Strategy 7 of Positive Politeness, where Palpatine skillfully built common ground to influence Anakin's perceptions. There is another example of Palpatine using this tactic.

1:02:46

ANAKIN: "I wish I knew. More and more I get the feeling that I am being excluded from the Council. I know there are things about the Force that they are not telling me."

PALPATINE: "**They don't trust you, Anakin.** They see your future. They know your power will be too strong to control. **You must break through the fog of lies the Jedi have created around you.** Let me help you to know the subtleties of the Force."

At minute 1:02:46, Anakin arrived at Palpatine to inform him that Obi-Wan had confronted General Grievous. Anakin abruptly started to question whether he should accompany Obi-Wan on the assignment. Palpatine grew upset that the Jedi Council did not recognize Anakin's full potential after observing his unhappiness. Anakin also told him that he felt left out of the Council and that he was keeping things from him that he shouldn't have known. Before offering him the knowledge of the force that seemed so strange to him, Palpatine attempted to persuade him that the Jedi did not believe in his powers and had purposefully limited him by telling him half-truths and warping reality.

By declaring that Anakin was not trusted by the Jedi Council, Palpatine attempted to assert the common ground directly. This line would convey an unfavorable assessment of the Jedi's treatment of Anakin. The main goal is to acknowledge Anakin's hesitancy and reassure him that Palpatine is sympathetic to his predicament.

Palpatine then backed up the statement by granting him the ability to use Anakin's power, which the Jedi Council may have known about. Lastly, Palpatine attempted to reclaim the common ground by telling Anakin that he needed to break the "fog of lies," a metaphor that denigrates the Jedi and implies that they are hiding the truth from Anakin. This gave Palpatine the appearance of providing clarity. His goal was to influence Anakin's doubts that had been bothering him following the confrontation.

Palpatine's use of Positive Politeness Strategy 7 goes far beyond simply mentioning prior encounters or expressing sympathy for Anakin's struggles. By making references to broader ideas like accountability, authority, and the distinction between good and evil, he deftly

broadens this tactic as his manipulation gets even more intricate, forcing Anakin to reconsider the very principles he was brought up to uphold. Instead than just comforting Anakin or bringing up previous attempts to influence him, Palpatine also makes use of cultural ideas and shared ideals that have shaped his Jedi worldview. In doing so, he transforms popular concepts into subtle ways to raise questions and change Anakin's perspective.

45:30

PALPATINE: "Good is a point of view, Anakin. **The Sith and the Jedi are similar in almost every way, including their quest for greater power.**"

ANAKIN: "The Sith rely on their passion for their strength. They think inward, only about themselves."

PALPATINE: "**And the Jedi don't?**"

The exchange took place around minute 45:30 of the crucial opera scene, in which Chancellor Palpatine is still deceiving Anakin Skywalker. As part of his larger rhetorical and manipulative strategy, this is one of Palpatine's subsequent series of emotionally calculated exchanges before he presents a philosophical viewpoint intended to obfuscate the moral distinctions between the Jedi and the Sith, which would culminate in a pivotal moment in the telling of the "Tragedy of Darth Plagueis the Wise."

Palpatine used Strategy 7 of Positive Politeness in this somber exchange. Palpatine claimed that the two parties had something in common that Anakin perceives as being in opposition to one another: the desire for more power. Palpatine gradually invited Anakin to challenge the Jedi's black-and-white moral precepts by redefining morality as subjective rather than absolute in the first sentence, "*Good is a point of view, Anakin.*" "*The Sith and the Jedi are similar in almost every way, including their quest for greater power,*" he added, implying that the Sith and the Jedi have a similar goal, which fosters a common ideal between the two orders. This application of the tactic is manipulative. Palpatine portrayed Jedi and Sith as equals, which is typically used to establish a sincere relationship. By placing both Sith and Jedi under a universal power-seeking goal, Palpatine made the Sith appear less wicked and the Jedi less pure.

Palpatine was forced to ask the crucial question, "And the Jedi don't?" in response to Anakin's formulation of this tactic, which pushed him to pass judgment by emphasizing the Sith's ideal—their dependence on emotion and selfishness. This straightforward query is persuasive and deceptive. In addition to directly refuting Anakin's claim, Palpatine also challenges Anakin to defend it by implying that it might be the other way around. This makes Anakin wonder inwardly about the Jedi's intentions. Additionally, this question created a mirror

effect. The Sith had just been portrayed by Anakin as self-centered and introspective. Palpatine's query effectively acts as a mirror, implying that the Jedi may also exhibit these characteristics. It casts doubt on the Jedi and makes them appear less unique and more like the Sith, a group Anakin naturally distrusts.

Furthermore, Palpatine delivered deep FTAs and implanted knockback viewpoints using the Positive Politeness Strategy—not for a real connection. By implying dishonesty or faulty motive among the Jedi themselves, he takes advantage of Anakin's internal strife and dedication to the Jedi ideal by presenting it as a reinterpretation of Anakin's research or a universal truth about power. This approach plays directly on Anakin's emotions and quiet insecurities, making it far more powerful than a blunt argument ever could be. Instead of openly attacking Anakin's loyalty, Palpatine gently reshapes the idea or a notion Anakin holds dear, which makes him imply that the Jedi and the Sith might not be so different after all. By doing this, he avoids outright confrontation and instead invites Anakin to draw his own unsettling conclusions. This tactic becomes especially clear in the opera scene that follows, where Palpatine deepens his hold by discussing lofty philosophical ideas that sound strikingly similar to what Anakin learned as a Jedi—carefully disguising his manipulation as thoughtful, even compassionate, counsel.

Palpatine uses well-crafted promises to persuade in addition to subtly instilling ideals in the hearer's head which is also related to Strategy 10 of Positive Politeness Strategies. Perceiving Anakin's increasing skepticism regarding the Jedi teachings, Palpatine takes use of this weakness to reaffirm his own principles, progressively allowing Anakin to contemplate the viewpoint of the dark side. His strategy is even more pernicious because it specifically targets Anakin's deepest worries, issues that Anakin has found difficult to overcome. Anakin's assurance is dealt a severe blow by Palpatine, who recognizes and takes use of these suppressed anxieties, further causing him to become confused and emotionally unstable. Palpatine skillfully uses this trick in the example that follows.

1:02:48

PALPATINE: “Only through me can you achieve a power greater than any Jedi. Learn to know the dark side of the Force, Anakin, and you will be able to save your wife from certain death...”

This incident occurred at 1:02:48, when Anakin informed Palpatine of Obi-Wan's mission, sparking a conversation between the two of them. Palpatine attempted to convince Anakin in this scenario by sharing his understanding of the dark side. It occurred as a result of Palpatine's prior disclosure about the Force's evil side knowledge that he had acquired from his

mentor. Palpatine's desire to give something more that could be detrimental to him was immediately apparent to Anakin.

According to previous scenes, Anakin developed a new fear after seeing his wife, Padme, die after childbirth and the Jedi Council inadvertently turn against him. These anxieties, which initially caused Anakin to doubt himself, later caused him to become confused about which side to support. However, Palpatine was well aware of his issues. By strategically offering to teach Anakin the dark side's power, which may be sufficient to revive anyone, Palpatine had the opportunity to control him rather than asking him directly. This tactic may be highly cunning because, in addition to sharing his expertise, Palpatine highlighted how it would completely solve Anakin's issues, which made it consistent with the hearer's needs plan. Palpatine used this incident as encouragement and assistance during the decision-making process, which rocked Anakin's doubts. In addition to not knowing how to put things right, Anakin is powerless to get assistance from any of his people, including the Jedi Council, Obi-Wan, and Palpatine; the only thing he can do is accept Palpatine's offer.

This utterance has a profound impact on Anakin. Not only does it deepen his confusion, but it also presents him with a tempting opportunity. These subtle thoughts continue to linger in his mind until a rapid turn of events ultimately forces him to make a decisive choice.

1:13:35

MACE WINDU: "He's the traitor!"

PALPATINE: "**I have the power to save the one you love.** You must choose."

Palpatine, the Sith Lord the Jedi had been looking for after being accosted by Mace Windu, was completely exposed in this dialogue at minute 1:13:35. Palpatine and he struggled until Mace Windu knocked him down and accused him with his lightsaber. Anakin finally showed there as the combat was coming to an end. Palpatine attempted to convince Anakin that the Jedi had taken control while he was around, similar to his own experience when Mace Windu shocked him. But Anakin didn't understand what had transpired between them.

While arguing with Mace Windu about which Anakin should believe, Palpatine brought up the offer he had made in the earlier scenes. He recognized right away that "save the one you love" was Anakin's top priority. And positions himself as the means to achieve it ("*I have the power to save...*"). In this grave circumstance, the most direct method to confront Anakin's good face is to offer to satisfy this crucial demand, so reestablishing himself as a viable collaborator in Anakin's most desperate endeavor.

This line is particularly powerful because it reinterprets the fight as one of emotional rescue and personal survival rather than allegiance to the Jedi or the Sith. Palpatine effectively raises the scene's stakes using this strategy. This tactic transforms a moral conundrum into a personal command, when collaboration with Palpatine seems to be the sole means of achieving salvation. Under the guise of affection and protection, Palpatine's strategy drives Anakin into treachery while simultaneously upholding Anakin's favourable reputation and using it as a means of control.

Ultimately, Palpatine had planned this from the start. Even the slack of the hearer's desire can be a device to control him, which may lead to something terrible. Palpatine crafted the use of Positive Politeness as a tool to manipulate Anakin to make him blind to his ideal of a Jedi and also play a part in a promise to solve Anakin's biggest problem. From these utterances, Positive Politeness is not always about comforting the hearer's face; it can be used as a joystick to control the hearer. Additionally, give a little thing that is important to the hearer, if in the context of the hearer went out of his mind, for example, it could potentially lead to the hearer's emotional control, and the speaker holds the advantage of it.

4. CONCLUSION

This article was to analyze the use of Positive Politeness Strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987) implemented by Palpatine in Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith. The research conducted examines the interaction between Palpatine and Anakin by how close they are and how the use of positive politeness is a tool to manipulate to achieve the speaker's intentions.

The findings showed that Palpatine indeed employed positive politeness strategies, as outlined in Brown & Levinson's theory (1987). Palpatine was the antagonist of the story, wanting to manipulate Anakin to be on his side. He demonstrated his use of politeness by employing Strategy 7 (presuppose/raise/assert common ground), which involves creating a false fact or seeking common ground to create a sense of shared understanding or even fostering a bond, as seen in the following story. Palpatine also used Strategy 10 (Offer, Promise) to make Anakin an offer that could fulfill the resolve of his problems, which turned out to be a false promise that Palpatine made.

These findings are presented with the hope of showing readers that a branch of linguistics is not limited to what is written in textbooks, but can also serve as a versatile tool that shapes many aspects of communication and storytelling. This study highlights how linguistics plays a crucial role in narrative literature, regardless of whether the story is considered flawless or flawed. Additionally, this research can serve as a reference for

developing character behavior and crafting narrative bridges, ultimately making stories more engaging and enjoyable.

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