Negotiating Social Identity Through Politeness Strategies in the Film Basma: A Brown and Levinson Perspective

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Abstract

Language politeness is a sociopragmatic phenomenon representing speakers' social identity construction in interaction. This research analyzes the language politeness of the main character in the film "*Basma*" by Fatima Al-Banawi, aiming to describe politeness strategies and analyze their function in constructing and negotiating the character's social identity. Unlike previous research that only identified and classified types of politeness strategies, this study finds that language politeness in social practice can shape speaker positions, relationships, and identities. The methodology is qualitative descriptive, applying Brown and Levinson's theory, *including bald on record, positive politeness, and off record* strategies. Data consist of dialogues collected through observation, verbatim transcription, and documentation, analyzed using Miles and Huberman's model through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Results show the three strategies realize different identities: *bald on record* represents a firm, assertive individual identity amid relational pressure; *positive politeness* represents a relational identity oriented toward strengthening affective bonds and family solidarity; while *off record* represents social identity negotiation within an unbalanced power relationship. These findings indicate that politeness strategy selection is influenced not only by social distance and relative power, but also functions as a discursive mechanism for speakers to negotiate their identity.

Keywords

Linguistic Politeness, Social Identity, Brown & Levinson's Politeness Strategies, Identity Negotiation, Basma the Movie

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Introduction

Language is a medium used for communication, and therefore, language is considered an important part for humans to convey opinions so that ideas or messages can be communicated to others (Mailani et al., 2022). According to Pasaribu (2020), language has several systems that can be used by humans, including writing and speech. Spoken language is commonly found in film dialogues or songs. In communication, there are several things to pay attention to, not just using language but also related to linguistic politeness in every utterance spoken. According to Pardede (2021), politeness in speech usually occurs during social interaction, status, or distance, hence the language used, whether polite or not, can be influenced by several factors. It can be said that politeness is not just about adding words like "please," "sorry," or "thank you," but politeness in speech has its own specific rules.

Language appropriateness is an ethics and regulation in language use, involving considerations of our situation and condition when speaking (Amaliavanti & Wulandari, 2023). Thus, ethics in speech are highly regarded starting from who we speak to, where to how we speak and communicate, so that communication can run smoothly and not cause friction in a social relationship. This is because the essence of language appropriateness is a manifestation of refinement in interacting within a community environment, obtained from the reflection of an individual's social identity (J. Bahasa et al., 2022).

An individual's social identity cannot be separated from the patterns of interaction and communication with their environment. According to Mutmaina (2022), the environment has a strong influence in shaping an individual's identity. With continuous interaction processes, an individual can construct their identity and can experience the formation of identity from the social environment around them. Ojukwu (2023) also states that social interaction can enable an individual to identify their social status. Therefore, based on pragmatic studies, the use of language in communication is a social practice that is not freeThis means that language use is influenced by existing social rules.

The relationship between language, interaction, and identity can be explored in greater depth using identity theory in sociolinguistics. According to Bucholtz and Hall (2005), identity is not an innate trait inherent in a person from the outset, but rather something that is formed and emerges through the process of interaction. This perspective emphasizes that identity is constructed through language and semiotic practices and is influenced by the relationship between the speaker and the addressee. On the other hand, Tajfel and Turner (1986) define social identity as an individual's perception of their membership in a social group, where that membership helps shape the way the individual views both themselves and others.

This is further reinforced by Goffman's (1959) concept of the "presentation of self," which explains that individuals actively manage the impression they wish to project and adapt their self-image to the social situations they face. In terms of language use, the choice of words and the way a person speaks serve as a means of presenting themselves to their conversation partner. These three perspectives are important for this study because the characters'

identities in the film are not viewed as static personal traits, but rather as identities formed through interaction, interpersonal relationships, social position, and ties to specific groups

Based on the perspectives outlined above, this study breaks down identity into three dimensions of analysis: individual identity, which relates to how a character presents or positions themselves as a specific person through the expression of their traits, beliefs, choices, goals, and personal will; relational identity, which relates to how a character constructs or positions themselves based on their relationships with others—for example, as a parent, child, sibling, friend, or figure of authority. Social identity, meanwhile, relates to how a character positions themselves as part of, or connected to, a particular group, status, role, or social community. These three dimensions serve as analytical categories grounded in the interactional approach to identity according to Bucholtz and Hall (2005), the social identity perspective of Tajfel and Turner (1986), and Goffman's (1959) concept of the "presentation of self." Therefore, these three categories are not interpreted as completely separate and permanent types of identity, but rather as analytical dimensions that can coexist and be interrelated within an interaction.

In pragmatic studies, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory is often used as a reference or foundation for analyzing linguistic politeness. Brown and Levinson (1988) state that the theory of linguistic politeness is based on the concept of face, which can be distinguished into positive face and negative face. Positive face indicates a person's desire to maintain a good self-image, with the hope that the individual can be accepted, appreciated, and worthy of respect by others. On the other hand, negative face refers to a person's desire to retain their rights and freedom in performing an action. Thus, Brown and Levinson classify politeness strategies into four categories, including *bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record* (Mutmainnah et al., 2022). Thus, politeness strategies can be understood not only as linguistic forms but also as interactional means for speakers to construct and negotiate identity.

In this study, identity negotiation is understood as the process by which characters construct, maintain, affirm, or alter their positions in relation to themselves, their interlocutors, or their social groups. This process is identified through linguistic evidence observable in the data. Individual identity negotiation is characterized when a character displays personal characteristics, beliefs, desires, goals, choices, or intentions, either explicitly or implicitly. Relational identity negotiation is characterized when a character positions themselves based on relationships or roles in relation to other characters, such as a parent, child, sibling, friend, or authority figure. Social identity negotiation, on the other hand, is characterized when a character demonstrates, accepts, rejects, or reposition themselves in relation to a specific group, status, role, or community. Furthermore, these identity indicators are analyzed alongside the politeness strategies used in the discourse to examine how politeness plays a role in constructing or negotiating identity

The use of politeness strategies is often found in film dialogue because films contain various utterances that reflect politeness in interactions. Films are not only a form of entertainment but also represent social life through dialogue, visuals, and audio, including identity and communication values within society. (Amaliavanti & Wulandari, 2023). In this research, the researcher uses the film *Basma* by Fatima Al-Banawi, released in 2024. Research on drama films like *Basma* (2024) focuses on the narration of the main character in the film, who often uses *implicit* or *explicit* expressions in dialogue that can threaten or even save someone's

face, based on the factor of a family experiencing conflict. In the dialogue, the film can be analyzed and identified using the theory of Brown and Levinson (Raswati & Ramdhani, 2023).

Previous studies conducted by several researchers on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory have been published in various media, including dialogues in a film. Some researchers have focused solely on the identification and classification of politeness strategies, concluding that one particular strategy is dominant, and treating politeness as a descriptive object rather than as a social practice reflecting an individual's position, relationship, and identity. This is because linguistic politeness is always related to one's social position built within an interaction, allowing an individual to position themselves in relation to the interlocutor.

As in the research examined by Amaliavanti (2023), which analyzes the forms of dialogue between characters in the comedy film *Gara-Gara Warisan*, Isabella (2022) who explores the dialogue of the main character in the animated film *Tinkerbell* to identify the types of politeness that frequently appear, which are influenced by social factors, Fridolini (2021) who studies all the characters in the drama film *Little Women*, considering the social distance and power between characters, up to Mubarok (2025) who investigates how the personality and relationships between characters in the animated film *The Garfield Movie* can influence the choice of speech strategies used. Cahyaningrum (2022) expands the scope of the study by including the analysis *of face-threatening acts* (FTA) in the dialogue of the main character in the film *The Half Of It*. However, researchers still focus on identifying politeness strategies without examining the underlying social factors.

Based on the above discussion, the gap in this study lies in the effort to link politeness strategies to the construction and negotiation of identity through an interactional perspective. While previous studies have generally focused on the forms, types, and frequency of politeness strategies, this study examines how the politeness strategies employed by the characters in the film *Basma* contribute to the construction and negotiation of individual, relational, and social identities, with an analysis grounded in Brown and Levinson's (1988) theory of politeness and supported by Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) interactional approach to identity, Tajfel and Turner's (1986) perspective on social identity, and Goffman's (1959) "presentation of self"; by combining these perspectives, identity is not viewed as a fixed characteristic of a character but rather as something that emerges and is negotiated through interaction.

Therefore, this study aims to identify the politeness strategies used by characters in the film *"Basma"* and to explain their contribution to the construction and negotiation of identity, which, at the data level, is analyzed through observed linguistic evidence, including how characters position themselves, position themselves in relation to other characters, demonstrate roles or membership in social groups, and maintain, reject, or alter these positions during the course of the interaction.

Thus, this study not only identifies politeness strategies but also explains their social functions in identity construction. The findings are expected to contribute to pragmatic studies by demonstrating the interrelationship between linguistic politeness, interpersonal interaction, and identity construction, while also offering a more systematic framework for understanding the function of politeness as an interactional resource in film discourse.

Method

In this research, the author uses a qualitative descriptive method to analyze language politeness strategies and their role in social identity negotiation in the film *Basma*. The primary data collected are dialogue exchanges between characters containing politeness strategies, both explicit and implicit. Secondary data were obtained from literature such as books and scientific journals related to the research topic. The theoretical framework used in this research is Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, which includes three strategies: bald on record, positive politeness, and off record. This theory was chosen because there are politeness strategies that are considered to reflect and shape an individual's social position through the three main variables of Brown and Levinson: social distance, relative power, and the degree of imposition (Johnson et al., 1988). The data collection system is conducted through observation, recording, and documentation.

This is followed by watching the *Basma* film eight times to ensure data consistency, and then transcribing the dialogue verbatim along with appropriate nonverbal notes such as intonation, facial expressions, and gestures as supporting context for pragmatic analysis. Data analysis refers to the Miles and Huberman model, which includes three stages: first, data reduction, involving the selection and coding of utterances using three categories of politeness strategies while considering the social factors that influence them. Second, data presentation in the form of thematic tables containing utterances, conversational context, and politeness strategy categories. Third, drawing conclusions through the interpretation of recurring politeness strategy patterns to reveal the relationship between freedom choices, identity construction, and social dynamic relationships represented in the *Basma* film.

Results

Based on the findings of the use of communication strategies in the film *Basma*, the author discovered that three strategies are used in interaction. The use of each strategy can indicate certain tendencies in constructing meaning in interaction or the status of an individual's identity in the film's characters. Below are the data findings based on the grouping of *Basma's* communication strategies.

Table 1. Findings regarding Brown and Levinson's communication strategies

Data	Dialog	Patterns of findings	Time
	"انا ناقلة اعيش عنده" (Anā nāqilah, aʿīsh ʿindahu.) (I am moving to live with him.)	*Basma* directly spoke to her mother in the room while *Basma* was packing, putting her belongings into the suitcase, in an emotional state, because she felt heartbroken when she learned her family had abandoned her father. With a resentful expression, *Basma* decided to stay with her father.	(T/BORP/00:19:47)
	"بتعا قبيتي لمن تقرحي بالعيد" (itaʿā qabītī liman taqraḥī bi-l-ʿīd.)	A direct *Basma* expression of disappointment to her mother when her mother tries to convince	(T/BORP/00:21:20)

Bald on record Politeness	(My mother punished me while I was celebrating.)	and make *Basma* realize the actual facts that happened with her father, but *Basma* is still under the control of her disappointment	
	وبتعاقبيني أكثر لمن بتدخلي الدواء على غرفتي"ده (Wa-btiʿāqibīnī akthar lammā btudkhulī da al-dawāʾ ʿalā ghurfatī.) (My mother punished me when I brought that medicine to my room.)	A direct statement spoken by *Basma* to her mother, intended as a reinforcement and continuation of the earlier emotional outpouring of speech and an answer to her mother's question, "Why are you punishing yourself?"	(T/BORP/00:21:25)
	"شوفت بابا؟ ايش تبغوا" (Shuft bābā? Īsh tabghū?) (Did you see father? What do you want?)	Direct statement from *Basma* to her family who are visiting her father at the hospital, while she had been thinking that her family hated her father and had isolated the sick father alone in the old house.	(T/BORP/1:28:53)
Positive politeness	". اخيرا صار شكلك اب خلاص" (Akhīran ṣār shakluk ab, khalāṣ.) (Finally, you seem like a real father now.)	In this situation, *Basma* speaks to her brother at the airport when seeing the change in her brother (Waleed) after a long time not meeting, so *Basma* praises her brother as an expression of longing when meeting and appreciation for her brother.	(T/PP/00:01:45)
	"قصيته,موحلو?" (Mū ḥilw? Qaṣṣaytuh) (Isn't it nice? I cut it myself)	This speech was delivered by *Basma* to her aunt upon arriving at home and was warmly welcomed by her aunt. When meeting her aunt, *Basma* proudly showed her aunt the change in her hair, with this *Basma* expressed her enthusiasm about her appearance change to her aunt upon arriving at home.	(T/PP/00:03:25)
	" تعالى، ابغى اخد معاكي سيلفي" (aʿālī, abghā ākhudh maʿāki selfie) (Let's take a photo together.)	This speech was delivered by *Basma* to her cousins when they gathered in the living room during a large family get-together, when suddenly one of *Basma's* siblings approached *Basma*. *Basma* expressed her desire to involve the other speaker in her activity (*include both speaker and hearer*	(T/PP/00:10:20)

		in the activity) by taking a group photo together.	
	"أميري نايم" (Amīrī nāyim.) (My little prince is sleeping.)	The words *Basma* said to her baby niece during their meeting. With a happy and loving expression on her face, *Basma* kissed her niece's forehead.	(T/PP/00:55:50)
	انا هادية وبسمعكم، بس ما حد منكم بيتكلم" "في (Anā hādiyah wa-basmaʿkum, bas mā fī ḥadd minhum b-yitkallim) (I'm calm, but no one's talking.)	The indirect speech spoken by *Basma* to her mother and sister when *Basma* could not find her father in every corner of the house, so *Basma* felt that her mother and sister were hiding something from her while she was not at home, and this speech emerged when her sister told her to calm down after seeing *Basma* frantically searching for her father.	(T/ORP/00:05:45)
Off record politeness	" في ناس عندها حساسة نن الفول السوداني، انا عندي حساسية من العيلة" (Fī nās ʿandahā ḥasāsiyyah min al-fūl al-sūdānī, anā ʿandī ḥasāsiyyah min al-ʿīlah.) (Some people are allergic to peanuts, and I'm allergic to family.)	This expression appears after the aunt sees *Basma* who is treating a rash on her arm, her aunt says, "You're just like before, your allergy appears when you're angry," and *Basma* answers her aunt with sarcasm.	(T/ORP/00:09:24)
	"? عندي حيكون كويس لوتمت" (ʿIndī ḥaykūn kuways law nimt?) (Everything will be fine when I'm asleep.)	The words spoken by *Basma* to her mother when her mother tried to open communication with *Basma*, and attempted to explain what was actually happening, but *Basma* refused to open communication, so *Basma* tried to avoid the conversation by speaking to her mother through indirect statements	(T/ORP/00:18:40)
	" ليا شهر قاعدة مع بابا لو حدنا بس مافي مخلوق منكم جه وعبرنا " (Līya shahr ʿāʿdah maʿa bābā li-waḥdinā, bas māfī makhlūq	Basma conveys this statement as a hint rather than an explicit accusation. On its surface, the utterance is simply a report of fact—that she had stayed with her father for a month and that no one from her family had come to visit—with no direct mention of blame,	(T/ORP/1:28:18)

	minkum gih wa-ʿabbarna.) (I stayed with my father for a month, and no one came to visit at all.)	request, or criticism. Because this factual report appears, on the surface, unconnected to the decision her family had just made about her father, it flouts the maxim of relevance and triggers a conversational implicature: the hearer must infer the intended meaning, namely "You have no right to suddenly get involved in making decisions now." Since Basma never states this criticism directly and instead relies on her family's inferential work to recover it, the utterance exemplifies Brown and Levinson's (1988) off-record sub-strategy of giving hints rather than a bald, on-record complaint.

Discussion

Bald on Record Strategy as a Tool for Building Individual Identity

The analysis results indicate that the individual character of *Basma* is formed through the use of the *bald on record* strategy, according to Brown and Levinson (1988), this strategy is a statement conveyed directly and firmly without any consideration, making it very likely to threaten the face of the addressee. In line with the research studied by Mubarok (2025) in the film *The Garfield Movie* which states that the *bald on record* strategy can reflect self-confidence and dominate the speaker, this is often found and appears when the situation demands urgency or when the speaker has a certain closeness or authority in their social relationship. Now, in this research, the speech pattern is also used by *Basma* in dealing with several situations when facing family conflict.

Data (1)

"انا ناقلة اعيش عنده"
Anā nāqilah, aʿīsh ʿindahu.
(I am moving to live with him.)
(T/BORP/00:19:47)

Context: *Basma* directly spoke to her mother in the room while *Basma* was packing, putting her belongings into the suitcase, in an emotional state, because she felt heartbroken when she learned her family had abandoned her father. With a resentful expression, *Basma* decided to stay with her father.

Findings from data (1) show how *Basma* demonstrates her declaration as a strong identity marker. This aligns with Asbon (2026) in his study of the film *"Bolehkah Sekali Saja Ku Menangis?"*, where he found that the same strategy is used during family conflict by the character to express emotions directly without using *implicit* expressions. With this, *Basma's* statement shows her identity as an individual who is assertive and daring to determine her stance despite family pressure.

Data (2)

"بتعا قبيتي لمن تقرحي بالعيد"
itaʿā qabītī liman taqraḥī bi-l-ʿīd.
(My mother punished me during the celebration.)
(T/BORP/00:21:20)

Context: A direct *Basma* expression of disappointment to her mother when her mother tries to convince and make *Basma* realize the actual facts that happened with her father, but *Basma* is still under the control of her disappointment.

In the data finding (2) by *Basma*, it is shown that the *bald on record* strategy functions as a means of constructing individual identity. This is also discussed by Brown and Levinson (1988) in their research, where they state that direct expression without any redress becomes one of the main strategies in handling *face-threatening acts*. Although in this situation her mother tries to calm her, *Basma* still chooses direct speech as a form of self-assertion *(self assertion)* over her frustration towards her mother. In this regard, Brown and Levinson (1988) reinforce with their findings that *bald on record* is still very commonly used in the context of family relationships, where the speaker feels entitled to speak directly without apologizing to maintain the feelings of the listener.

Similar findings are also found in Cahyaningrum's (2022) research that the main character in the film uses the *bald on record* strategy as a response to *face-threatening acts* in dealing with interpersonal situations full of pressure. By this, the use of the *bald on record* strategy employed by *Basma* is an action that claims her identity as someone who has authority over her own feelings.

Data (3)

”وبتعاقبيني أكثر لمن بتدخلي ده “الدواء على غرفتي
Wa-btiʿāqibīnī akthar lammā btudkhulī da al-dawāʾ ʿalā ghurfatī.
(Mother punished me when I took that medicine to my room)
(T/BORP/00:21:25)

Context: A direct statement spoken by *Basma* to her mother, intended as a reinforcement and continuation of the earlier emotional outpouring of speech and an answer to her mother's question, "Why are you punishing yourself?"

In data (3), the speech is delivered directly without using softeners or hedging, which is characteristic of the *bald on record* strategy prioritizing clarity and urgency over maintaining face for the opponent (Johnson et al., 1988). The direct speech used serves to reinforce the individual *Basma's* identity, with this strategy allowing *Basma* to openly maintain her emotional truth, though it risks threatening her mother's face as the opponent. Consistent with Jeffrey's (2025) findings in his research, which discovered that the *bald on record* strategy in public figures' speeches is used as a booster to assert their stance and identity and to demonstrate their personal position firmly.

Data (4)

"شوفت بابا؟ ايش تبغوا"
Shuft bābā? Īsh tabghū?
(Did you see Dad? What do you want?)
(T/BORP/1:28:53)

Context: Direct statement from *Basma* to her family who are visiting her father at the hospital, while she had been thinking that her family hated her father and had isolated the sick father alone in the old house.

The findings (4) indicate that *Basma's* confrontational speech is not merely an outpouring of emotion but also an intentional assertion of identity. Similar to Fridolini's (2021) research, which states that the *bald on record* strategy is often used by individuals when the speaker in question has greater power or a sufficiently close social distance from their interlocutor, making the speaker feel authorized to make direct statements without mitigation. This is reinforced by Isabella (2022), who asserts that factors of *relative power* and *social distance* significantly influence the selection of the *bald on record* strategy, where the speaker possesses full authority or a certain closeness that will be used in direct speech with greater politeness toward the interlocutor. Thus, *Basma* consistently constructs her identity as an individual who is not easily swayed, which can be seen when she is not willing to compromise based on her loyalty to her father.

Positive politeness strategies as a representation of relational identity:

Basma's relational identity is formed through the use of *positive politeness* strategies, which according to Brown and Levinson (1988), function to fulfill the positive face of the speaker, namely the need to be acknowledged, valued, and even involved in the interaction. In Amaliavanti's (2023) research, it is stated that the positive politeness strategy found in the film is most often manifested through the use of group identity markers, giving attention, and even created jokes. This aligns with the speech patterns used by *Basma* when interacting with her family.

Data (1):

"أخيرا صار شكلك أب خلاص"
Akhīran ṣār shakluk ab, khalāṣ.
(Finally, you now look like a real father.)
(T/PP/00:01:45)

Context: In this situation, *Basma* gives a statement to her brother at the airport when seeing the change in her brother (Waleed) after a long time not meeting, so *Basma* praises her brother as an expression of longing when meeting and appreciation for her brother.

Finding from data (1) describe the *complimenting* strategy as an expression of strengthening affective bonds between interlocutors within the family context. In Asbon's (2026) research, it was found that positive politeness strategies play an important role in managing conflicts and maintaining social harmony. The lexical choice of "أخيرا" used by *Basma* contains a double meaning: acknowledging positive change while also implicitly pressuring delayed expectations, thus representing *Basma's* identity as a figure who is attentive to the role and status of family members.

Data (2):

"موحلو قصيته؟"
Mū ḥilw? Qaṣṣaytuh
(Isn't it nice? I cut it myself)
(T/PP/00:03:25)

Context: This speech was delivered by *Basma* to her aunt upon arriving at home and was warmly welcomed by her aunt. When meeting her aunt, *Basma* proudly showed her aunt the change in her hair, with this *Basma* expressed her enthusiasm about her appearance change to her aunt upon arriving at home.

In the (2) speaker data, *Basma* represents *the seeking approval* strategy, which is asking for the approval of the speaker as a form of acknowledgment. As has been stated by Alawiyah (2022) in her research where the positive politeness strategy can function to strengthen relationships and assert a sense of belonging in the family, this shows that *Basma's* relational identity is formed through emotional validation in the family space.

Data (3):

"تعالى، ابغى اخد معاكي سيلفي"
aʿālī, abghā ākhudh maʿāki selfie
(Come on, let's take a selfie together.)
(T/PP/00:10:20)

Context: This speech was delivered by *Basma* to her cousins when they gathered in the living room during a large family get-together, when suddenly one of *Basma's* siblings approached *Basma*. *Basma* expressed her desire to involve the other speaker in her activity (include both speaker and hearer in the activity) by taking a group photo together.

In data (3) there is this inclusive appeal, which is the realization of a *strategy that includes both the speaker and the hearer in the activity*, placing *Basma* and the speaker in an equal position. In line with Piani's (2024) statement in his analysis, which says that the strategy is manifested through offers or promises and the active involvement of the hearer. Through this statement, *Basma's* relational identity is built as an active person in creating moments of togetherness and strengthening emotional bonds through collaborative communicative actions. In line with Mubarok's (2025) findings, which reveal that politeness strategies are often found in close relationship contexts such as friendship. As an expression to strengthen social solidarity. The participatory and praising forms in *Basma's* film aim to strengthen social relationships and this can reflect *Basma* as an identity that is friendly and has high authority, as stated in Purba's research (2023) which emphasizes that in *positive politeness*, it can create good communication bonds between speakers and hearers, thus creating a pleasant and comfortable atmosphere.

Data (4):

"أميري نايم"
Amīrī nāyim.
(My little prince is asleep right now.)
(T/PP/00:55:50)

Context: The words *Basma* said to her baby niece during their meeting. With a happy and loving expression on her face, *Basma* kissed her niece's forehead.

In the findings data (4), there is the use of affectionate address such as "أميري," which means (my little prince), in the expression "ku" it is a realization of *group identity marker*, namely fulfilling the positive face law of the speaker to be liked and acknowledged (Johnson et al., 1988). It can not only maintain the face of the interlocutor but also serves as informative in constructing the speaker's identity, through this speech *Basma* positions herself as a figure with a warm character in the family, consistent with Zhang (2022) who states that positive politeness strategy is a form of *relational work* that can form *emergent* and relational identity through interaction until oriented towards broader relational goals, not just mitigation against face threat.

The Off-Record Strategy as a Construction of Social Identity

Basma's social identity is constructed through *off-record politeness* strategies, where indirect speech can open interpretive space. Mutmainnah (2022) in her research reveals that an individual's social identity is created when they interact with their social environment, and the construction of identity can always occur as long as one interacts. In a hierarchical family environment, indirect strategies become a sociolinguistic mechanism that reflects *Basma's* sensitivity to context and power relations. Asbon (2026) also reinforces this research by stating that the tendency to use certain strategies can occur when a person experiences pressing self-demand such as family conflict, emotional pressure, or power imbalance among figures. In *Basma's* film, there is speech data that shows how indirect learning can be used as a tool for negotiating social identity, followed by the data:

Data (1)

"انا هادية وبسمعكم، بس ما في حد منكم بيتكلم"
Anā hādiyah wa-basmaʿkum, bas mā fī ḥadd minhum b-yitkallim
(I'm peaceful, but no one wants to speak.)
(T/ORP/00:05:45)

Context: The indirect speech spoken by *Basma* to her mother and sister when *Basma* could not find her father in every corner of the house, so *Basma* felt that her mother and sister were hiding something from her while she was not at home, and this speech emerged when her sister told her to calm down after seeing *Basma* frantically searching for her father.

Based on the context (1), the speech act performed by *Basma* functions as an *indirect speech act* that indicates a calm atmosphere indirectly, but pragmatically implies protest and demands. Sukrin (2025) argues that language is an arena of meaning contestation that will continue to unfold. In the speech, *Basma* represents her social identity as an individual who understands family norms as well as an individual who is not fully compliant with that structure.

Data (2)

"في ناس عندها حساسة نن الفول السوداني، انا عندي حساسية من العيلة"
Fī nās ʿandahā ḥasāsiyyah min al-fūl al-sūdānī, anā ʿandī ḥasāsiyyah min al-ʿīlah.
(Some people are allergic to peanuts, and I'm allergic to family.)
(T/ORP/00:09:24)

Context: This expression appears after the aunt sees *Basma* who is treating a rash on her arm, her aunt says, "You're just like before, your allergy appears when you're angry," and *Basma* answers her aunt with sarcasm.

In the findings data from (2), the use of comparative metaphors and irony in this discourse is the most complex form of *off record*. Amaliavanti (2023) also states in his research that he found that *off record* strategies in films are often found in the dialogue of characters to convey social criticism without causing open disputes or conflicts. As for the researcher who says that social identity is part of a person's self-concept, which comes from their knowledge of their membership in a social group. In this case, *Basma's* discourse shows her resistance to the family group identity that she feels as pressure, but it is still conveyed indirectly with the aim of maintaining relational order.

Data (3)

"عندي حيكون كويس لو تمت"
ʿIndī ḥaykūn kuways law nimt?
(everything will be fine when I sleep)
(T/ORP/00:18:40)

Context: The words spoken by *Basma* to her mother when her mother tried to open communication with *Basma*, and attempted to explain what was actually happening, but *Basma* refused to open communication, so *Basma* tried to avoid the conversation by speaking to her mother through indirect statements.

In finding (3), this narrative represents an *off-the-record* strategy, where instead of directly stating her refusal, *Basma* responds with a conditional statement that implicitly places the responsibility for interpretation on her mother while avoiding direct discourse that could provoke new conflict. Cases like this often occur when the speaker occupies an asymmetrical power relationship but still controls the boundaries of their openness. This is reinforced by Gabriel (2023) in his research on the negotiation of belis speech events, where they argue that speakers often use *off-the-record* as a sociocultural response when in situations perceived as potentially conflictual, thus considering its use as a suitable choice for interacting without damaging relationships.

Data (4)

"ليا شهر قاعدة مع بابا لو حدنا بس مافي مخلوق منكم جه وعبرنا"
Līya shahr ʿāʿdah maʿa bābā li-waḥdinā, bas māfī makhlūq minkum gih wa-ʿabbarna.
(I lived with my father for a month, and no one came.)
(T/ORP/1:28:18)

Context: Basma conveys this statement as a hint rather than an explicit accusation. On its surface, the utterance is simply a report of fact that she had stayed with her father for a month and that no one from her family had come to visit with no direct mention of blame, request, or criticism. Because this factual report appears, on the surface, unconnected to the decision her family had just made about her father, it flouts the maxim of relevance and triggers a conversational implicature: the hearer must infer the intended meaning, namely "You have no right to suddenly get involved in making decisions now." Since Basma never states this criticism directly and instead relies on her family's inferential work to recover it, the utterance

exemplifies Brown and Levinson's (1988) off-record sub-strategy of giving hints rather than a bald, on-record complaint.

In data (4), there is strong use of *off-record* strategies specifically Brown and Levinson's (1988) sub strategy of giving hints: by reporting events as a seemingly neutral statement of fact rather than a direct accusation, Basma flouts the Gricean maxim of relevance and allows the implied meaning to speak more clearly than the words themselves, so *that face-threatening acts* are conveyed without having to state them explicitly (Johnson et al., 1988). The phrase "a creature from among you" indicates the emotional effect intended to be conveyed, not just a complaint but also as an affirmation of identity which discursively positions itself as the party with power or the most entitled to be heard and to express its views in that situation. This is supported by Ojukwu (2023) in his research, he states that strategies like this are often found in an unequal social relationship, where the weaker party often uses indirect politeness to maintain and reinforce its identity in the presence of the party it considers inferior.

Conclusion

This study shows that linguistic politeness strategies play a quite important role in shaping the identity of *Basma*. Clarity through *bald on record* asserts the individual identity that is visible when *Basma* expresses her stance directly without mitigation, warmth through *positive politeness* can strengthen relational identity within the family, while tactfulness through *off record* becomes *Basma's* medium in negotiating her position amid fluctuating power relationships. Thus, linguistic politeness in this film is not just a communication strategy but also as a tool for speakers to build and maintain their identity.

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