Face Threatening Acts of the Main Character in "The Half of it" Movie

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Abstract- This study analyzed face threatening acts (FTAs) used by the main character in the movie titled *The Half of It*, focusing on (i) the types of the FTAs and (ii) how the FTAs are used by the main character. The data came from all utterances (words, phrases, clauses, sentences) produced by the main character. A pragmatic theory of FTAs from Brown and Levinson was applied to analyze the data qualitatively. Four types of FTAs are found in this study. The first type is "threatening the hearer's negative face", which was embedded in specific acts used by the main character, namely Suggestion, Threat, Reminding, Order, Warning, and Compliment. The second type is, "threatening the speaker's negative face", which is followed by such acts as Response to the hearer's faux pas, Excuses, and Acceptance of offers. The third type is, "threatening the hearer's positive face" with the acts of Criticism, Insults, Disagreement, Ridicule, Reprimand, Disapproval, Irreverence, Complaints, and Accusations. The last type of the FTAs is "threatening the speaker's positive face" by using Confession, Emotion leakage, Physical control over the body, Apology, and Acting stupid. Finally, the FTAs enacted in the utterances of the main character are minimized by means of applying the politeness strategies. It has been discovered that the main character used the four types of politeness strategy that were positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on-record, and off-record strategy.

Keywords: Face; Face-Threatening Acts; Politeness; Main Character; The Half of It

I. INTRODUCTION

People need to express what they thought or what they feel when communicating with others. It is necessary because expression helps people deliver the message and convey emotion/feelings to the other well through both verbal and non-verbal communication. According to Krauss (2002), verbal communication is the message expressed through words or spoken language that conveys meaning. By expressing their thoughts, feelings, or ideas, people should be more considerate to maintain their expression.

Therefore, people should try to give a very related expression naturally depending on how weigh the topic is. Moreover, the way we express our expression verbally or non-verbally will give an effect on the interlocutor by saving their face.

Goffman (1967) suggests that the face is described as a self-delineated entity, which is portrayed in the approval or acceptance of social attributes. Thomas (2014) defines face as the individual feeling of people as their self-worth or self-image which the image they are built in the society perhaps can be developed, maintained, or damaged just by communicating with the interlocutor. Therefore, it can be concluded that

the face is usually known as the self-image of a person in the society, the reputation of people in the society, the social dignity of people, or it also can be described as the honor of people. The previous characterization of face indicates that the social reputation of people matters. Saving other's face does not just show how we respect others, but also showing how we behave politely with others.

Politeness becomes central in maintaining or saving other's face, especially when living in a place with many honorific expressions rule. When people understand politeness or the manner, they will demonstrate well-behaved manner when communicating with others. For instance, when talking to elderly, we should not speak loudly or harshly, this example shows that politeness will strongly influence one's conversation with others.

Yule (1983) describes face as a social sense of people or the emotional feeling of people in the society, and politeness take control as the way people show care of consideration to others/the interlocutor. Therefore, the way people demonstrate politeness during communication would be reflected in how people put an expression on their face. Goffman (1967) further states that politeness depends on the concept of face. The statement can be defined that face takes a role as people's image in the society which has the power to describe how the people's characteristics can be approved in society.

The way people give a strong expression or response to others can be called face-threatening acts (hereafter FTAs) in which people threaten others' face. A lowkey fact is that FTAs are a common thing in every conversation or communication. Unfortunately, FTA is rarely discussed or noticed by people. Whether or not people would commit an FTA to others also depends on (i) the relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor, (ii) and how the situation is. But this phenomenon of FTAs can manifest in every kind of conversation and situation.

To investigate the application of FTAs in communication, a movie entitled *The Half of It* was chosen as the data source with the aims of identifying (i) the type of FTAs used by the main character and (ii) how the FTAs are used by the main character in the movie. This movie is a romance-comedy drama about a triangle love story of teenage high school students. This movie is interesting because it is reflecting teenage life which could be experienced in real-life by many

people. Moreover, there are many scene portions of the main character's conversation that can provide the data for investigating the FTAs and the politeness strategies in the movie (Handayani et al., 2022).

II. METHODS

This study adopts a descriptive research which, according to Suryana (2010: 10), aims to create a systematic and accurate description based on facts about a certain object. Descriptive research is part of the qualitative research method. Creswell (2012) states that the qualitative method has a meaning for exploring and understanding the meaning of the individuals or groups ascribed a social human problem.

This study uses a movie entitled "The Half of It" as the data source. This movie, which was directed and written by Alice Wu, was released on Netflix on the 1st of Mei 2020. It is chosen as the data source because it is quite famous movie that has already earned three rewards in 2021, namely (i) Top 100 Most Popular Narrative & Animated Feature, (ii) Best Actress for Leah Lewis who plays a role as Ellie Chu (the man character), and (iii) Best Narrative Feature. Furthermore, the main character in this movie has a unique way to react to the interlocutor's utterances which means this movie provides adequate data to analyze the use of face-threatening acts (FTAs). The FTAs data were taken from the dialogue utterances of the main character (i.e., Ellie Chu) throughout the movie script, which was downloaded from The Half of It Script PDF (Web Page) https://scriptpdf.com/the-half-of-it-script-pdf/.

Ary et al. (2002) declare that the researcher acts as the instrument of collecting all the data in a qualitative study such as this one. This can be done via talking to the people in the setting, observing people's activity, reciting people's documents, and a record which already written, also taking notes of the information in the fields records and a journal. In this study, the writer acquires and note down the data. The data in this study are all utterances of the main character on every scene in the movie which reveal the Face Threatening Act (FTA) application and politeness strategy. The researcher firstly watched the movie "The Half of It" on Netflix to understand the context, the storyline, and seeing the character's facial expression. After watching the movie, the researcher started to find and download the movie script to help the researcher collect the data. The script would then be read

thoroughly to check if the script and the movie itself are a match. All the utterances of the main character containing FTA and politeness strategies were coded. Note-taking is also used to avoid missing important information of the data.

To analyze the data, the researcher adopts Miles & Huberman's (1994) approach consisting of three aspects: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. According to Miles & Huberman (1994), data reduction means selecting the relevant data, focusing, simplifying, and transforming the collected data. One application of data reduction in this study is highlighting/coding only the main character's utterances containing the FTA and politeness strategy. The highlighted data would be classified into a table of the types of FTAs and politeness strategy as proposed by Brown & Levinson (1987). The last step was checking the validity of the data and providing a deep explanation and interpretation on the data according to the theory by Brown & Levinson (1987).

A table is used to organize the analysis, showing all the utterances reflecting the face-threatening acts (FTAs) and the politeness strategy by the main character. According to Miles & Huberman (1994), the analyzed data should be displayed well organized and compressed before drawing conclusion.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION
3.1. Types of Face Threatening Acts

According to Brown & Levinson (1987), there are four types of face-threatening acts: (i) threatening the hearer's negative face (§3.1.1), (ii) threatening the speaker's negative face (§3.1.2), (iii) threatening the hearer's positive face (§3.1.3), and (iv) threatening the speaker's positive face (§3.1.4). In the "The Half of It" movie, these four types are found.

3.1.1. Threatening Hearer's Negative Face (Suggestion and Threat)

According to Brown & Levinson (1987), threatening hearer's negative face is an FTA that threatens the negative side of face of the hearer. The following data reflect the threatening hearer's negative face type.

Data 1

Paul needs Ellie's genius to help him make a love letter and Paul thinks that if Ellie can help him to make an authentic love letter, then it would be awesome. But Ellie does not want to help him be authentic, because it should be honest from his heart. Therefore, instead of

helping him with the letter and getting paid by making him authentic, Ellie suggests that Paul uses a thesaurus and spell-check to help him make a good love letter.

PAUL : That would be awesome!
ELLIE : No, I can't be you being authent-- **Get a thesaurus. Use spell-check. Good luck, Romeo.**
PAUL : I can pay more for authentic!

In this action, by giving Paul a suggestion, Ellie threatens the negative face of Paul as the hearer in the conversation because of his incompetence and less effort in trying to be authentic by himself without paying someone to write a good love letter.

Data 2

Paul and Aster are finally dating. The next day, Ellie and Paul talk about how the date was going. Paul says that the date was going well, and it was not that bad. But Ellie thinks that the date was not going well because she saw that Paul and Aster do not have something in common which makes them look hard to connect to each other as Ellie saw them from the truck parked in front of the cafe where Paul and Aster have a date.

ELLIE : Game over.
PAUL : We can't give up-
ELLIE : **Look. You and Aster Flores? NOT GONNA HAPPEN.**

Paul realizes that he and Aster do not have something in common yet as he admits it when responding to Ellie's thoughts. Even though Paul and Aster still do not have something that can connect them, Paul does not want to give up and still want to fight for the relationship with Aster to the next step. Ellie refuses to believe that Paul can succeed in his fight to have Aster as his girlfriend. Ellie throws a threat to Paul that he and Aster will not be going to happen because they have nothing in common. This action of Ellie threatens Paul's negative face as the hearer in the conversation by giving a threat.

3.1.2. Threatening Speaker's Negative Face (Response to the H's faux pas and Excuses)

This type of face-threatening act happens when the speaker is succumbing to the power of the hearer. The following data illustrate situations that threaten the negative face of the speaker.

Data 3

Paul gets screwy when he is falling in love with someone and he thoughts that all people

must be feeling the same as him, but Ellie does not. Therefore, he doubts Ellie because she never gets screwy when falling in love with someone. Therefore, Paul assumes that Ellie has never been in love with anyone which must be a reason why she never gets screwy when love someone.

PAUL　: Oh. I get it.
ELLIE : Get what?
PAUL　: You've never been in love. Ow!
ELLIE : **You want a letter about love? I'll write you a letter about love.**

Paul shows his doubts towards Ellie, and it offends her. For that reason, Ellie responds to his faux pas by proving herself that she can feel love, she understands the feeling of having a crush on someone and the feeling of loving someone. She has a desire to show Paul that she can write a love letter better than him which will make Paul think that Ellie knows the feeling of falling in love. Ellie says that she will write a letter about love as proof that she is not like Paul's thoughts about her. Ellie's action threatens her own negative face for responding to the hearer's faux pas.

Data 4

The situation takes when Ellie writes a love letter for Paul's crush as Paul orders to Ellie. In the letter she wrote, Ellie puts Wim Wenders' words without using any quotation of a name as the respect. But the girl who received the letter recognized that Ellie uses a quote from Wim Wenders. It is stated by the girl through the letter which she wrote back to Paul which she says that she also likes Wim Wenders, but she would not plagiarize him. Ellie does not have any idea that the girl knows and like Wim Wenders. It turns out that the girl caught Ellie red-handedly cheating on Wim Wenders by plagiarizing him. Therefore, Paul feels embarrassed and panicked because the letter that Ellie wrote is under Paul's name and it can drag Paul's face down.

PAUL　: Who's Wim Wenders? And why'd you cheat off him?!
ELLIE : I didn't cheat off him-
PAUL　: I looked up "plagiarize"-!
ELLIE : I kinda cheated off him-
PAUL　: I PAID you-!
ELLIE : **But this is good!**
PAUL　: How?
ELLIE : **It's like... a game. She's challenging us. In a good way.**
PAUL　: So we're still in... the game...

The action of Ellie can be categorized as threatening speaker's negative face because Ellie caught up that she plagiarized someone's words,

but she still acts that she has a good reason to plagiarize someone. Her excuse is that the letter she wrote to Paul's crush gives good response and Ellie thinks that the girl is challenging them in a good way. That is an excuse for her mistakes by plagiarizing someone.

3.1.3. Threatening Hearer's Positive Face (Criticism and Insult)

Threatening the positive face of the hearer can be marked with an action that expresses the speaker's indifference toward the addressee's positive face. The relevant utterance data are presented below.

Data 5

Ellie is a good and smart student. She can write a good essay, but she is not the type of wealthy student, unfortunately. Therefore, she makes some money by writing an essay for her friends or whoever in the school needed her great brain. Of course, that is not a good idea to take a job which can be said as illegal, because an essay is supposed to be done from one's own thoughts and perspective. Mrs. G figures this out and lets what Ellie did because she knows that Ellie is a good student, and she quite likes her. It proves by the conversation above when Mrs. G said how impressive Ellie was because she could write six different essays about Plato for her classmate who paid her for it. But, instead of taking an action about what Ellie has already done, Mrs. G just let it away. It proves that Ellie was even curious and asked Mrs. G why was she just staying still and did not turn Ellie in.

MRS. G : Six different takes on Plato. Impressive.
ELLIE　 : (innocent) Just the one.
MRS. G : Sure, sure, that's what I tell the bartender.
ELLIE　 : **How come you've never turned me in?**

Ellie as the speaker in the conversation above asks her teacher, Mrs. G about the reason she must not report Ellie for the illegal work Ellie did at school which is to write an essay for students and get paid for it. Looking at the way Ellie asks her teacher, it seems that in her question, there is a criticism to Mrs. G. It looks like, Ellie could not believe that Mrs. G has never turned her in even already knew everything. It leads Ellie to ask a 'how come' question instead of a 'why' question to show that Ellie did not understand Mrs. G's behavior. Therefore, this action can be categorized as threatening Mrs. G positive face.

Data 6

The case of the conversation below, Mrs. G shows the application letter for Grinnell college to Ellie. Instead of saying a candid rejection to Mrs. G, Ellie says that she wants to continue her study at E-Dub. Mrs. G offers her the Grinnell College application letter because she knows that Ellie has a potential brain. But Mrs. G is quite disappointed with Ellie's decision: why would Ellie not want to continue to a better study place? That was what Mrs. G thought, as what she named Squahamish city as Hell-quamish.

> ELLIE : You know I'm going to "E-Dub."
> MRS. G : Damn shame.
> ELLIE : Damn "full-ride." I can live at home. Plus, I get to stay in lovely Squahamish.
> MRS. G : Hell-quamish.
> ELLIE : It's not that bad. It's not that good either. But it's what's happening.
> MRS. G : I spent four of the best years of my life at Grinnell.
> ELLIE : **And look at you, back home in Hellquamish.**

In the conversation above, Ellie as the speaker utters an inconvenient fact to Mrs. G as her teacher who wants to motivate her. Mrs. G says that she spent the best four years in Grinnell and she thinks Ellie may feel the same as her if Ellie continues her study at Grinnell. But, instead of getting motivated by what Mrs. G said, Ellie flips the utterance of Mrs. G by saying an ironic fact (see the boldfaced utterances), implicates that even though Mrs. G spent the best four years at Grinnell, she comes back to Squahamish eventually. Ellie's utterance shows the act of insult by saying an ironic fact and does not respect the value of Mrs. G's utterance that she is trying to give to Ellie. The word 'Helquamish' has a meaning of Squahamish is not a good city. It shows that Ellie is threatening the positive face of Mrs. G as the hearer in that conversation.

3.1.4. Threatening Speaker's Positive Face (Confession and Apology)

An action that shows the speaker is in some sense wrong and could not be able to control himself can be marked as the use of face-threatening acts that threaten the positive face of the speaker. Here are some data that represent an act performed by the speaker that shows the use of face-threatening acts that threaten the speaker's positive face.

Data 7

Ellie and Paul have a conversation about their effort in approaching Aster, the girl whom Paul loves. Ellie worries that when Aster figures out who sent her a letter all these days is not Paul, but Ellie. What Aster thinks for all these days about Paul will not resonate with the exact Paul. Ellie thinks that she and Paul mess with Aster Flores.

> PAUL : Isn't that what love is? The effort you put into loving someone?
> ELLIE : **Well, whatever love is... we just blew it with Aster Flores.**

In the conversation above, Ellie confesses that she and Paul blew it with Aster Flores and is worried about her behavior in fooling Aster by writing a love letter under Paul's name and making Aster thinks that Paul is a guy who is into abstract art and British literature. In this case, by confessing her anxious, it can threaten Ellie's positive face as the speaker in the conversation.

Data 8

Ellie comes to Aster for asking forgiveness because of what Ellie did to her which already made Aster confused and feel played by Ellie and Paul. Ellie explains that in the first plan, Ellie was only supposed to write one love letter to help Paul approach Aster and did not involve again in the next progression.

> ELLIE : **Aster. I'm sorry. It was just supposed to be one letter. I never meant to hurt you.**

This action of apology to Ellie can be categorized as threatening her positive face. It is because she realized what she did to Aster and asks for forgiveness, it can be included as threatening the positive side of the face of the speaker which Ellie in the conversation has a role as the speaker.

3.2. Strategy in Mitigating the Face Threatening Acts

The second aim of this study is to explore how the face-threatening acts (FTAs) are mitigated by the main character in the movie. There are several strategies that can be used to minimize the FTAs. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness strategy can be used to minimize the performance of FTA. There are four types of politeness strategies: (i) positive politeness, (ii) negative politeness, (iii) bald on-record, and (iv) off record. Those four types of strategy are used by the main character in performing the FTA.

3.2.1. Positive Politeness (In-group identity markers and Be optimistic)

This strategy is applied to minimize the threat to the interlocutor's positive face. Several data reflecting this strategy will be presented and discussed below.

Data 9

>PAUL : That would be awesome!
>ELLIE : No, I can't be you being authent-- Get a thesaurus. Use spell-check. Good luck, **Romeo**.
>PAUL : I can pay more for authentic!

Ellie uses an address form of positive politeness to minimize the performing FTA. Address form "Romeo" is used by Ellie in a purpose to give a little support to Paul who does not have any idea about his love letter.

Data 10

>PAUL : This is such a downer!
>ELLIE : **It's not a downer!**
>PAUL : Major downer! Ask her to hang out!

The strategy that Ellie uses in the conversation is being optimistic because she believes the process of approaching the girl whom Paul loves is still ongoing and their process is not a downer. So, Ellie shows her disagreement with Paul by being optimistic.

3.2.2. Negative Politeness (Use question and Be pessimistic)

This strategy has a direction to refer to the attempted movement which purposely for reducing any imposition on the hearer. The following is the data that are covered under this strategy.

Data 11

>MRS. G : Six different takes on Plato. Impressive.
>ELLIE : (innocent) Just the one.
>MRS. G : Sure, sure, that's what I tell the bartender.
>ELLIE : **How come you've never turned me in?**

The kind of strategy used by Ellie is using a question. Ellie as the speaker did something illegal which is selling an essay she made for some students. But, despite knowing all the illegal work Ellie did, Mrs. G has never once reported her. Therefore, Ellie asks a question to critic Mrs. G's attitude.

Data 12

>PAUL : Isn't that what love is? The effort you put into loving someone?
>ELLIE : **Well, whatever love is... we just blew it with Aster Flores.**

Ellie makes a confession that she and Paul are messed up with Aster because they make it hard for Aster. Ellie writes a love letter and communicates with Aster by phone but under Paul's name because she wants to help Paul to be together with Aster. Therefore, Ellie is using a strategy of being pessimistic in uttering her confession that she is being not sure can succeed in helping Paul.

3.2.3. Bald On-Record (Metaphorical urgency and Teasing)

The strategy is applied when the FTA is produced openly by the speaker if the speaker makes a suggestion, order, offer, or something like an open and direct invitation. Some data that are categorized in this strategy will be discussed in the following.

Data 13

>ELLIE : Game over.
>PAUL : We can't give up-
>ELLIE : **Look.** You and Aster Flores? NOT GONNA HAPPEN.

When Paul tries to convey to Ellie that his relationship with Aster can happen, Ellie cuts his words and interrupts him by giving a threat by saying 'look' as the emphasis for her statement. This strategy is classified as metaphorical urgency and Ellie uses this to stand in her opinion that Paul and Aster's relationship will not happen.

Data 14

>PAUL : The caterpillar does look smart.
>ELLIE : Too smart to be crying on a platform, like a wussy.
>PAUL : I'm not crying!
>ELLIE : **(mouthing) Wussy... Wussy...**

Ellie is going to Grinnell to continue her college, whereas Paul stays in Squahamish. So, they could not see each other very often as before. In the conversation, Ellie uses a strategy of teasing because her wants to satisfy Paul's face is small and she does not fear retaliation. She teases Paul who is about to cry because they will be separated by thousand miles.

3.2.4. Off-record (Rhetorical question and Be ironic)

This strategy is applied when the speaker performs an action in a vague way which can be interpreted by the hearer as some other action. Below are data that evoke this strategy.

Data 15

>ELLIE : What's this?
>PAUL : A letter.
>ELLIE : **Who writes letters these days?**

Ellie uses a rhetorical question of off-record strategy because Ellie as the speaker in that conversation supplies indicated information which is a purpose to leave the answer hanging in the air. The boldfaced utterance by Ellie means that no one in this modern life writes a letter again

except you (Paul).
Data 16

>   MRS. G : I spent four of the best years of my life at Grinnell.
>   ELLIE : **And look at you, back home in Hellquamish.**

By doing an FTA, Ellie as the speaker uses a strategy of being ironic of off-record strategy. It is because instead of valuing what Mrs. G said to her which tries to motivate her student, Ellie says an ironic fact of Mrs. G that even though she spent the best four years at Grinnel, at the end of the day she comes back again to Squahamish. Mrs. G thought that Squahamish is worse than Grinnel and the ironic thing is that she comes back to Squahamish eventually.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study discovered that four types of FTAs with specific actions are used by the main character in *The Half of It* movie. The first type was threatening the hearer's negative face (§3.1.1) which the main character performs with the following specific acts: Suggestion, Threat, Reminding, Order, Warning, and Compliment. The second type of the FTA is, threatening the speaker's negative face (§3.1.2) which co-occurs with the specific acts of Response to the hearer's faux pas, Excuses, and Acceptance of offers. Moving on to the third type, it is threatening the hearer's positive face (§3.1.3) with the specific acts of Criticism, Insults, Disagreement, Ridicule, Reprimand, Disapproval, Irreverence, Complaints, and Accusations. The last type used by the main character was threatening the speaker's positive face (§3.1.4) by using Confession, Emotion leakage, Physical control over the body, Apology, and Acting stupid.

In mitigating the effect of performing the four types of FTAs, the main character used four types of politeness strategies: (i) positive politeness (§3.2.1), (ii) negative politeness (§3.2.2), (iii) bald on-record (§3.2.3), and (iv) off record (§3.2.4). The positive politeness data further reveals, nine specific actions performed by the main character, namely In-group identity markers, Be optimistic, Avoid disagreement, Notice attend to H, Include both S and H in the activity, Exaggerate, Give gift to H, Seek of Agreement, and Joke. For the negative politeness, the specific acts used by the main character are Use question, Be pessimistic, Hedge, and Apologize. Then, the bald on-record strategy consists of these specific acts: Metaphorical urgency, S cares about H (sympathetic), and Teasing. Finally, for the off-record strategy, the main character used specific acts, such as Rhetorical question, Overstate, Be ironic, Understatement, Over-generalize, Be vague, Ambiguous, and Give hints.

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