

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN JANE AUSTEN'S “EMMA”

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Abstract. This study examines the use of positive and negative politeness strategies in Jane Austen's *Emma* from the perspective of pragmatic linguistics. Based on Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory, the research investigates how the novel's characters employ different politeness strategies to maintain interpersonal relationships, express respect, and negotiate social hierarchy. The analysis focuses on selected dialogues involving Emma Woodhouse, Mr. Knightley, Harriet Smith, and Mr. Elton, illustrating how politeness contributes to characterization and narrative development. The findings reveal that positive politeness strategies strengthen solidarity and mutual understanding, whereas negative politeness strategies help preserve personal autonomy and minimize face-threatening acts. The study concludes that Austen deliberately employs politeness strategies to portray the social values, gender roles, and cultural conventions of Regency England while enriching the communicative depth of her characters.

Key words: *Emma*, Jane Austen, politeness strategies, positive politeness, negative politeness, pragmatics, literary discourse.

Introduction. Politeness plays a significant role in human communication because it helps speakers establish harmonious relationships and avoid conflict during interaction. In pragmatics, politeness is regarded as a communicative strategy that enables individuals to protect both their own and others' social identity. Literary works provide valuable material for pragmatic research since fictional dialogues often reflect authentic patterns of communication and social behavior.

Jane Austen's *Emma* is one of the most remarkable English novels in which conversation serves as the primary means of developing characters and advancing the plot. The novel portrays a society where communication is strongly influenced by social status, etiquette, and interpersonal relationships. Through carefully constructed dialogues, Austen demonstrates how linguistic choices reveal emotions, intentions, authority, and respect.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory provides an appropriate framework for examining these communicative behaviors. According to their theory, speakers employ positive politeness strategies to express friendliness, approval, and solidarity, while negative politeness strategies are used to show respect, reduce imposition, and preserve the interlocutor's freedom.

These strategies are frequently observed in the interactions between Emma Woodhouse, Mr. Knightley, Harriet Smith, and other characters.

This study aims to analyse the use of positive and negative politeness strategies in selected dialogues from *Emma*. It also investigates how these strategies contribute to characterization, social hierarchy, and the representation of interpersonal relationships. By combining pragmatic theory with literary analysis, the research highlights the important role of politeness in Austen's artistic style.

Research Methods and Materials. This study aims to analyze the use of speech acts and politeness strategies in the novel *Emma*, with the primary objective of identifying interpersonal intentions and social expectations through linguistic behavior. The following methods were employed in the research:

Theoretical Analysis Methods

- Analysis of characters' communicative behavior based on Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1975) and Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987).
- Identification of social hierarchies, personal traits, and politeness norms within the literary work.

Pragmatic Analysis

- Examination of illocutionary acts (directives, representatives, expressive, commissive, and declaratives through dialogues and conversations in the novel.
- Distinction between positive and negative politeness strategies according to the context.

Textual Analysis

- Identification of characters' speech acts and politeness strategies in selected text samples, and analysis of their impact on narrative development and interpersonal relationships.
- Consideration of the context of dialogues and monologues.

Research Materials. The primary research material is Jane Austen's novel *Emma* (1815). Selected dialogues involving Emma Woodhouse, Mr. Knightley, Harriet Smith, Mr. Elton, Mrs. Weston, and Frank Churchill were analyzed. Academic books and journal articles on pragmatics, politeness theory, and literary discourse were also used to support the theoretical and analytical framework of the study.

Discussion. The analysis demonstrates that positive and negative politeness strategies play a crucial role in shaping interpersonal communication throughout *Emma*. Austen carefully constructs conversations that reflect the characters' personalities, emotional attitudes, and social positions. Rather than communicating information directly, the characters frequently employ indirect expressions, compliments, apologies, and respectful forms of address to achieve their communicative goals. Harriet Smith's speech is characterized by frequent expressions of gratitude, hesitation, and agreement. Her use of negative politeness reflects her lower social position and limited self-confidence. Harriet often minimizes her own opinions and shows deference to those whom she considers socially superior. These linguistic choices demonstrate the influence of social hierarchy on communicative behavior.

Mr. Elton presents another interesting example of politeness strategies. During the early stages of the novel, he employs excessive compliments and formal expressions of respect toward Emma. However, closer analysis reveals that many of these expressions serve strategic rather than sincere purposes. Austen uses these conversations to illustrate how politeness may function as a means of achieving personal ambitions rather than expressing genuine respect.

Conclusion. The analysis indicates that positive politeness strategies strengthen solidarity and emotional closeness, whereas negative politeness strategies help preserve individual autonomy and reduce communicative tension. The linguistic behavior of Emma Woodhouse, Mr. Knightley, Harriet Smith, and Mr. Elton reflects both their personal characteristics and the cultural values of Regency society.

Overall, the findings confirm that politeness strategies perform significant pragmatic and literary functions within the novel. They contribute to character development, reveal social relationships, and enhance the artistic representation of communication. Therefore, the study supports the view that pragmatic analysis provides valuable insights into the interpretation of literary discourse and further enriches research on Jane Austen's works.

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