Pragmatic Analysis on Positive vs. Negative Politeness in *Coco* (2017) through The Lens of Brown–Levinson's Politeness Strategy

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Pragmatic Analysis, Politeness Strategy, Face-Threatening Acts, Movie Analysis.	Animated movies use language not only to tell stories but also to express culture, emotion, and values. While many studies have examined moral and cultural aspects in animation, few have focused on how characters use politeness strategies to manage relationships and express emotions. Previous research on *Coco* mainly discussed family and tradition without linking them to the pragmatic function of language and Face Threatening Acts (FTAs). *Coco* (2017) offers a new perspective as its dialogues show how politeness and emotional expression shape identity and harmony in family communication. This study aims to identify and analyze the types of politeness strategies used in *Coco* based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory and to explain their functions in maintaining relationships between the two characters Miguel and Hector. The research used a qualitative descriptive method and applied content analysis to the movie's dialogues, focusing on interactions between Miguel and Héctor. The findings showed that positive politeness was the most dominant strategy, while negative politeness appeared less frequently in moments of disagreement or emotional tension. This suggests that Miguel and Héctor's interactions emphasize solidarity and emotional closeness, reflecting their growing bond and mutual respect throughout the film. These results indicate that the use of politeness strategies in *Coco* reflects not only linguistic politeness but also the film's broader themes of empathy, respect, and family connection. *Coco* demonstrates that language in animated films functions as both a communicative and cultural tool for expressing emotion and maintaining social harmony.

INTRODUCTION

The movie *Coco* (2017), produced by Pixar Animation Studios, is one of the most successful animated films of the last decade. It grossed more than $800 million worldwide and received widespread critical acclaim, holding a 97% approval rating on Rotten Tomatoes and an 8.4/10 score on IMDb. The film won numerous awards, including two Academy Awards for Best Animated Feature and Best Original Song, as well as a Golden Globe Award and a BAFTA Award in the same categories. Beyond commercial and critical success, *Coco* became a cultural phenomenon, praised for its authentic representation of Mexican traditions and family values, and was recognized by UNESCO for its contribution to promoting intangible cultural heritage.

According to Sifianou and Tzanne (2021), language is not only a tool for communication but also a form of social practice that reflects power, identity, and emotion. Similarly, Ranti and Mubarak (2025) argue that linguistic choices always carry pragmatic functions that may threaten or maintain social relationships. In Coco, these ideas are evident in several language phenomena. The Rivera family uses prohibitions, such as forbidding Miguel to play music, to impose authority and restrict his freedom. When

Miguel disobeys, the elders express criticism, which evaluates his actions negatively and reinforces family ideology. At times, sarcasm is employed in moments of conflict, ridiculing Miguel's aspirations and undermining his self-esteem. As recent studies on film discourse have shown, prohibitions, criticisms, and irony often operate as strategies that endanger an interlocutor's "face" (Cahyaningrum, 2022). Therefore, while the film presents diverse linguistic forms, these speech patterns can be most effectively understood as Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) that reveal cultural values and intergenerational tensions within the Rivera family.

One key concept for this study is the Face-Threatening Act (FTA)**.** Brown and Levinson (1987) define an FTA as a speech act that inherently conflicts with the listener's or speaker's desire to maintain their self-image, or *face*. In other words, when someone says or does something that pressures another person to accept, reject, or respond in a way that may damage their sense of dignity or autonomy, that is a Face Threatening Act. FTAs include direct orders or prohibitions (e.g. "You must stop doing that"), criticisms or insults (e.g."That was stupid"), reminders or warnings that imply blame, or sarcastic remarks that highlight failure or disobedience. In *Coco*, we see many of these FTAs especially in family scenes where elders forbid Miguel from playing music, or express disappointment or frustration with his choices. These acts create tension in the conversation, showing how language can challenge a person's face in interaction.

In *Coco*, we can see two main kinds of Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs). Positive FTAs are when someone's need to be liked or respected is attacked. For example, when the family says *"Musicians always abandon their families"*, it hurts Miguel's image and makes him feel less accepted. This matches Brown and Levinson's (1987) idea that positive FTAs damage a person's social identity or the wish to be appreciated. Negative FTAs, on the other hand, happen when someone's freedom is limited. A clear example is when Miguel's grandmother says *"You must stop playing the guitar"*, which takes away his choice to follow his dream. This reflects what Locher and Watts (2005) describe as speech acts that restrict autonomy and create strong social pressure. Both kinds of FTAs create conflict in the story and show why people need politeness strategies to keep communication respectful.

Research on politeness strategies in movies has been done in many contexts. Gangga Swari et al. (2024) found that negative politeness strategies are often used to respect the hearer's negative face in Disney's *Frozen*. Putri & Fitrawati (2022) identified all five types of politeness strategies in *Yes Day*, while Ananda, Rosnija, and Wardah (2023) revealed that positive politeness was dominant in *Onward*, reflecting close social relationships among characters. However, pragmatic studies focusing on *Coco* remain limited. Previous research has mainly highlighted its cultural, identity, and moral aspects. This study addresses that gap by analyzing Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) as part of the politeness strategies in *Coco*, offering a pragmatic perspective on how language functions to negotiate relationships and identity in the film.

Based on the aforementioned explanation, this study aims to identify and analyze the politeness strategies used by the characters in Coco based on Brown and Levinson's framework. Theoretically, this research is expected to add to the study of pragmatics, especially in politeness analysis. Practically, the findings can help us reflect on the importance of politeness in everyday communication. They can also improve our understanding of how popular media represents social and cultural values that are still relevant today.

Politeness Strategy

Politeness strategies are ways to make communication softer and reduce face-threatening acts (FTAs). Brown and Levinson (1987) said that politeness is important to keep good social relations and protect both the speaker's and the listener's "face." For example, instead of saying *"Close the door,"* a speaker may use *"Could you please close the door?"* to avoid sounding too direct. In many cultures, politeness is also used to avoid conflict, such as not speaking too directly or trying to calm situations (Lakoff & Ide, 2005). Peng, Xie, and Cai (2014) explain that politeness helps when someone does an FTA without meaning to, while Fukada and Asato (2004) mention that it reduces risks in interaction. The researcher argues that Brown and Levinson's explanation illustrates the crucial role of politeness in balancing the speaker's intentions and the listener's comfort. Furthermore, their theory emphasizes that politeness is a universal phenomenon, but its strategies may vary across cultures, reflecting different values and norms in communication.

Brown and Levinson (1987) divided politeness into five types: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, and don't do the FTA. Bald on record is very direct, usually between close friends, but it can sound rude to strangers. For example, saying *"Give me the book!"* without any softening. Positive politeness shows friendliness and makes people feel accepted, such as *"Let's study together, it will be fun."* Negative politeness is used to respect someone's freedom and avoid pressure (Watts, 2003), for example *"Could you please open the window, if it's not too much trouble?"* Off-record is when the speaker speaks indirectly so the listener can guess the meaning, such as *"It's really hot in here,"* implying that someone should open the window. Don't do the FTA means avoiding the threat completely, for example choosing to stay silent instead of criticizing someone. These strategies show that politeness is not only about language but also about culture and social harmony.

Face-Threatening Act (FTA)

Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) are actions in communication that can hurt someone's "face" or public self-image (Brown & Levinson, 1987). FTAs often happen in daily talk, for example when people make requests, give criticism, or disagree. These acts may threaten a person's positive face (the wish to be liked and respected) or negative face (the wish to have freedom and not be disturbed) (Yule, 1996). For instance, when a teacher says to a student *"Your answer is wrong,"* it can threaten the student's positive face because it damages their need for approval. Similarly, a command like *"Do this right now"* can threaten negative face since it limits the listener's freedom of action. Because of this, speakers usually try to use politeness strategies to reduce the threat, such as softening criticism with *"I see your point, but maybe another way is…"* or turning a command into a polite request like *"Could you finish this task by today?"* This shows that FTAs are common in interaction, but politeness helps maintain respect and harmony.

FTAs can take different forms depending on the situation. Positive Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) occur when a speaker rejects, criticizes, or disagrees directly, which threatens the hearer's need to be valued and respected. For example, when someone says, *"Your answer is wrong,"* the statement challenges the listener's positive self-image and may cause embarrassment or hurt feelings. Such threats are common in classrooms, workplaces, and everyday conversations. Aliakbari and Moalemi (2015) explain that remarks like *"That presentation was terrible"* are clear cases of positive FTAs because they directly damage the addressee's desire for approval. If expressed without any softening, positive FTAs can create tension, lower self-confidence, or even lead to conflict. That is why politeness strategies are often used to turn criticism into constructive feedback, for instance by saying *"Your presentation was good, but you could make the explanation clearer."* The researcher believes that understanding positive FTAs is important because they are very sensitive in nature and can strongly affect social relationships, especially in contexts where evaluation or judgment takes place.

Negative Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs), on the other hand, threaten the hearer's wish to have freedom of action and not feel imposed upon. This type of FTA occurs when the speaker gives orders, requests, or suggestions that limit the hearer's independence. For instance, a teacher's command *"You must submit your homework today"* restricts the student's freedom to decide when to complete the task. Similarly, everyday directives like *"Do this for me"* or *"Close the door"* are common examples of negative FTAs (Watts, 2003). The degree of threat often depends on the relationship between speaker and hearer; a request from a superior tends to feel more imposing than one from a close friend. To reduce the threat, speakers usually make requests more politely, such as *"Could you please close the door?"* or by giving reasons, like *"Please finish the task today so we can prepare for tomorrow."* These strategies help maintain harmony and minimize resistance in interaction (Peng, Xie, & Cai, 2014). The researcher argues that negative FTAs can have a wide impact because they directly affect the hearer's sense of freedom, which makes it necessary to use them carefully to avoid rejection or conflict.

Language in animation film

Language in animated films is more than just a way to tell the story; it also reflects culture, values, and social life. The dialogues are usually made to sound natural and relatable, so they often include politeness, humor, or even conflict that resemble real-life situations Artha, Udayana, & Sedeng (2022). For example, in *Coco*, Miguel's grandmother uses strict language to forbid him from playing music, which shows how dialogue can reflect cultural traditions and family authority. In addition, animated films

carefully adjust the language to match each character's personality, age, and background. A child character may use simple and playful words, while an older or more authoritative character may speak in a formal and commanding way. These language choices not only make the characters feel alive but also help the audience connect emotionally with them and better understand the values or messages conveyed in the film (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2014). This shows that face-threatening acts (FTAs), like prohibitions, criticisms, or conflicts, often appear naturally in animated films. However, these acts are usually balanced with politeness strategies, which help keep the interaction respectful and maintain harmony between the characters.

METHOD

In this study, the researcher applied a descriptive qualitative approach. As Kothari (2004) explains, the qualitative method is designed to explore underlying motives and intentions in depth for a particular purpose. Similarly, Creswell (2014) states that descriptive data analysis involves systematically collecting, organizing, examining, and interpreting data before drawing meaningful conclusions. By using this approach, the findings can be presented in a clear and comprehensive manner, making it easier to identify recurring patterns and insights. The descriptive qualitative method emphasizes the analysis of words and meanings rather than focusing on numerical data Furthermore, this study uses document or content analysis because the data come from the dialogues in the animated film *Coco*. Content analysis is a method that helps researchers study texts, images, or media in a systematic way to find patterns, themes, and meanings (Krippendorff, 2018). This method is suitable for this study because it looks at pragmatic aspects in the film script, which need to be carefully grouped and interpreted. By using content analysis, the researcher can see how the characters use language to perform speech acts, show politeness strategies, and express face-threatening acts, giving a deeper understanding of the language phenomena in the film.

The data for this research are taken from two sources. The primary source is the animated film *Coco* (2017), which provides rich dialogues reflecting cultural values, family traditions, and interpersonal relationships, making it highly suitable for analyzing politeness strategies and face threatening acts (FTAs). To maintain analytical focus, only dialogues that explicitly contain politeness strategies are included, while background conversations or irrelevant utterances are excluded to ensure the findings directly address the research objectives. The secondary sources consist of books, journal articles, and other scholarly materials related to pragmatics, politeness strategies, and FTAs, which support the theoretical foundation of the study. Specifically, the researcher focuses on the dialogues of two main characters, Miguel and Héctor, as they most frequently employ politeness strategies throughout the film. Their utterances involving requests, prohibitions, disagreements, criticisms, and other forms of FTAs are analyzed in detail. Dialogues from minor characters, background conversations, and non-verbal interactions are omitted to maintain coherence and relevance. Following Creswell's (2014) recommendation, setting clear boundaries for data sources in qualitative research ensures that the analysis remains manageable, focused, and aligned with the study's objectives. The data were collected through documentation and note-taking techniques. The researcher repeatedly watched the film and carefully examined the transcript to ensure accuracy. Utterances containing FTAs and politeness strategies were identified, highlighted, and coded according to their types and functions. This systematic process of coding and categorization made it possible to organize the data effectively. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) emphasize that structured data collection is essential in qualitative studies, as it ensures the validity and reliability of the findings while keeping the analysis focused.

The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. According to Elo and Kyngäs (2008), this method is used to describe and interpret text data through systematic categorization. The analysis process in this study followed three main phases: preparation, organizing, and reporting. In the preparation phase, the researcher determined the unit of analysis, which consisted of dialogues from the animated film *Coco* (2017). The film was watched several times, and the transcript was examined carefully to identify utterances containing politeness strategies and Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs). Dialogues unrelated to these aspects were excluded to maintain focus. During the organizing phase, the study applied a deductive content analysis approach because the categories were predefined based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness. The selected utterances were coded into two types of politeness strategies positive and negative politeness and two types of FTAs positive and negative

face-threatening acts based on Yule (1996) and Watts (2003). This process helped reveal patterns in how characters expressed requests, prohibitions, or criticisms that could threaten the hearer's face. In the reporting phase, the researcher presented the results by describing the types and functions of politeness strategies and FTAs found in the dialogues. Each finding was explained with examples to show how communication strategies reflected the characters' relationships and social interactions. The analysis concluded by identifying the most dominant strategies and explaining their role in shaping politeness and conflict in the film.

FINDINGS

The analysis of the data is presented in the form of quoted dialogues from *Coco* where politeness strategies occur based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness. The researcher found data containing two types of politeness strategies (positive and negative politeness) in the interactions between the main characters, Miguel and Héctor.

Positive Politeness

Positive politeness strategies in *Coco (2017)* are mainly used to maintain closeness and strengthen the relationship between Miguel and Héctor. These strategies appear when both characters try to show friendliness, express empathy, or build solidarity during their conversations. Positive politeness is often expressed through inclusive terms, jokes, emotional appeals, and supportive responses that reduce social distance. The following table presents several examples of positive politeness strategies used by Miguel and Héctor.

Table 1. Positive Politeness

No	Dialogue	Minute	Kind of Politeness	Explanation
1	*MIGUEL: These people are all your family?* *HÉCTOR: Eh, in a way… We're all the ones with no photos or ofrendas… so, we all call each other cousin, or tío.*	00:45:30	Positive Politeness	Héctor uses inclusive terms ("cousin", "tío") to build solidarity instead of answering briefly.
2	*MIGUEL: No manches! You played with Ernesto de la Cruz?* *HÉCTOR: Greatest eyebrows of all time maybe, but his music, eh, not so much.*	00:47:10	Positive Politeness	Héctor jokes to reduce social distance and create friendliness.
3	*HÉCTOR: Who wants to—Ah! You're alive!*	00:40:50	Positive Politeness	Héctor diverts with surprise and warmth, acknowledging Miguel's presence to reduce tension.
4	*MIGUEL: You don't get to cross over.* *HÉCTOR: No one's ever put up my picture… But you can change that!*	01:15:35	Positive Politeness	Héctor appeals to Miguel emotionally, seeking empathy and cooperation.
5	*MIGUEL: You know where I can get a guitar?* *HÉCTOR: I know a guy…*	00:51:20	Positive Politeness	Héctor uses vague but friendly phrasing to imply shared understanding and support.
6	*MIGUEL: Héctor! The photo, I lost it…* *HÉCTOR: It's okay, mijo. It's—*	01:35:40	Positive Politeness	Héctor uses the affectionate term "mijo" (my son) to comfort Miguel, showing warmth and solidarity.
7	*MIGUEL: He tried to go home to you and Coco… but de la Cruz murdered him!* *HÉCTOR: It's true, Imelda* *MIGUEL: (to Héctor) I wasn't in there 'cause of Héctor. He was in there 'cause of me.*	01:25:00	Positive Politeness	Miguel uses indirect apology and acknowledgment to rebuild harmony.
8	*MIGUEL: You really think you can get me to him?* *HÉCTOR: I know I can, chamaco. You just gotta trust me.*	00:53:00	Positive Politeness	Héctor uses inclusive and reassuring language ("trust me") to gain cooperation and closeness.
9	*MIGUEL: Héctor, I didn't mean to get you in trouble.*	01:10:30	Positive Politeness	Héctor minimizes Miguel's guilt and comforts him to maintain rapport.

	HÉCTOR: Hey, it's not your fault, kid. You were just trying to help me.			
10	*MIGUEL: You're not going to disappear, Héctor. You can't!* *HÉCTOR: It's okay, mijo. I just wanted Coco to know that I loved her.*	01:36:00	Positive Politeness	Héctor expresses affection and reassurance using endearment, strengthening emotional connection.

From the table above, it can be seen that positive politeness strategies are frequently used when Miguel and Héctor try to build or maintain emotional closeness throughout the film. Héctor often performs positive FTAs by using humour, affection, and inclusive expressions to reduce social distance and express empathy. These linguistic choices transform potentially face-threatening acts such as giving advice, correcting, or asking personal questions into moments of warmth and solidarity. For instance, in Data 6 (***It's okay, mijo. It's-***), Héctor comforts Miguel after he loses the photo, using the affectionate Spanish term *mijo* (my son). This endearment not only conveys care and understanding but also softens Miguel's guilt and anxiety. The term creates intimacy and signals a fatherly role, reflecting Héctor's emotional attachment and desire to protect Miguel. Through this strategy, Héctor mitigates the threat to Miguel's negative face (his sense of freedom and self-image) by prioritizing emotional reassurance over reprimand. As Brown and Levinson (1987) emphasize, positive politeness functions to emphasize mutual belonging and shared identity. In this context, Héctor's utterance reinforces their bond, turning a potentially tense or disappointing interaction into a compassionate exchange. Thus, the use of positive FTAs in *Coco* serves not only to maintain harmony but also to deepen the characters' relationship, embodying the film's broader themes of love, family, and remembrance.

Negative Politeness

Negative politeness strategies, on the other hand, are used when the speaker wants to avoid imposition or conflict. In the interaction between Miguel and Héctor, these strategies often occur when one of them disagrees, refuses, or corrects the other. Negative politeness in the film appears through hedging, indirect responses, or avoidance of direct confrontation. The following table shows examples of negative politeness and bald-on-record strategies found in their dialogues.

Table 1. Negative Politeness

No	Dialogue	Minute	Kind of Politeness	Explanation
1	*HÉCTOR: So what's the plan? What are you gonna play?* *MIGUEL: Definitely "Remember Me".*	01:03:05	Negative Politeness	Miguel's short response shows minimal imposition, avoiding unnecessary elaboration.
2	*HÉCTOR: What?! You said you were a musician!'* *MIGUEL: I am! I mean, I will be. Once I win.*	01:04:15	Negative Politeness	Miguel hedges and corrects himself to soften his claim and show modesty.
3	*MIGUEL: You really did play together?* *HÉCTOR: Look, I don't want to fight about it… I just want you to make it right.*	01:10:20	Negative Politeness	Héctor avoids confrontation by softening his disagreement and showing deference.
4	*MIGUEL: If you're such good friends, how come he didn't invite you?* *HÉCTOR: He's your great-great grandpa. How come he didn't invite you?*	00:48:25	Negative Politeness	Héctor avoids a direct answer by shifting the question back, reducing self-exposure.
5	*MIGUEL: ONLY de la Cruz. If you can't help me, I'll find him myself.*	01:00:40	Negative Politeness	Miguel asserts independence indirectly, avoiding direct confrontation or demand.
6	*MIGUEL: My great-great grandpa was a musician.* *HÉCTOR: Who spent his life performing like a monkey for complete strangers. Blech, no, thank you!*	00:44:00	Negative Politeness	Héctor expresses strong disapproval directly without mitigation.
7	*MIGUEL: You said you'd take me to my great-great-grandfather!* *HÉCTOR: I did, but you're gonna have to help me first, chamaco.*	00:49:00	Negative Politeness	Héctor mitigates refusal by giving a reason and softening it with "chamaco."

8	**MIGUEL:** *Why didn't you tell me you knew Ernesto de la Cruz?* **HÉCTOR:** *'Cause I don't wanna talk about him, okay?*	00:51:10	Negative Politeness	Héctor shows irritation directly without politeness markers for emotional honesty.

From the table above, it can be seen that negative politeness strategies frequently occur when Miguel and Héctor experience disagreement, correction, or emotional tension. Both characters attempt to minimize threats to each other's negative face the desire to be free from imposition, by using indirect expressions, hedging, and justification. For example, in Data 4, Héctor responds to Miguel's direct statement with an indirect appeal. Instead of confronting Miguel's utterance or rejecting it outright, Héctor softens his response by providing a justification and shifting the focus to Miguel's ability to help him. This utterance lessens the potential imposition by appealing to empathy and offering Miguel a sense of agency, thereby preserving both characters' dignity and emotional balance. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), such strategies acknowledge the hearer's autonomy while maintaining social harmony in interaction. In *Coco*, negative politeness serves to prevent emotional escalation and sustain mutual respect, even amid conflict or disappointment. Although moments of frustration sometimes result in more direct or bald-on-record expressions, these are often followed by mitigating strategies (such as humor or reassurance) that restore equilibrium. Overall, the use of negative politeness between Miguel and Héctor demonstrates how disagreement and correction are managed with empathy and tact, reinforcing the film's broader themes of respect, understanding, and reconciliation within family relationships.

FTA and Politeness Strategy in *Coco* Movie

The analysis of positive and negative Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) in *Coco* (2017) reveals how politeness strategies are used to balance emotional closeness and social distance between the characters, particularly Miguel and Héctor. Both types of FTAs appear frequently, but they serve different communicative functions within their relationship. Positive FTAs, supported by positive politeness strategies, are dominant throughout the movie. They occur when the characters attempt to create or maintain closeness, express affection, or strengthen their bond. For example, in Data 6 (It's okay, *mijo*. It's"), Héctor comforts Miguel after losing the photo by using the affectionate term *mijo* (my son), which conveys warmth and reassurance. Similarly, in Data 2 (Greatest eyebrows of all time maybe, but his music, eh, not so much), Héctor uses humor to reduce social distance and establish camaraderie. Héctor often uses terms such as jokes and emotional reassurance to reduce distance and emphasize solidarity. These strategies highlight the warmth and empathy that characterize his relationship with Miguel. Positive FTAs in this context function not as threats, but as expressions of intimacy and support that align with the film's theme of family love and understanding. In contrast, negative FTAs emerge when the interaction involves disagreement, correction, or refusal. For instance, in Data 4 (You don't get to cross over / No one's ever put up my picture… But you can change that!), Héctor mitigates disagreement through an indirect appeal, providing justification instead of confrontation. These moments show the characters' efforts to maintain respect and avoid direct confrontation. Miguel and Héctor use negative politeness strategies such as hedging, indirect responses, or explanations to soften their statements and minimize imposition. From both patterns, it can be concluded that *Coco* portrays politeness as a dynamic balance between emotional expression and social appropriateness. Positive FTAs express closeness and affection, while negative FTAs maintain mutual respect and boundaries. Together, these strategies illustrate how communication in the film mirrors real-life relationships, where people navigate both warmth and disagreement while still preserving empathy and connection.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study show that both positive and negative Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) appear frequently in the conversations between Miguel and Héctor in *Coco* (2017). According to Brown and Levinson (1987), an FTA occurs when a speaker's utterance potentially damages the hearer's "face," either by limiting their freedom (negative face) or by challenging their need for approval (positive face). In *Coco*, positive FTAs are dominant because most interactions emphasize emotional connection, empathy, and solidarity. Héctor often uses positive politeness strategies such as humor, and reassurance to reduce distance and build trust. These strategies reveal that his communicative purpose is not to threaten, but to strengthen the relationship with Miguel. As Brown and Levinson explain, positive politeness functions to "minimize the distance between speaker and hearer" and highlight shared identity Brown and Levinson (1987). Thus, Héctor's utterances perform positive FTAs that express care and

belonging, supporting the film's central theme of family unity. Negative FTAs, on the other hand, occur in scenes involving disagreement, correction, or refusal.

Miguel and Héctor use negative politeness strategies such as hedging, indirectness, and justification to avoid imposing on each other's freedom. This aligns with Brown and Levinson's (1987) view that negative politeness aims to respect the hearer's autonomy while still accomplishing communicative goals. For example, when Héctor refuses or corrects Miguel, he often softens his words with reasons or endearments to reduce confrontation. These linguistic choices show that even when conflicts arise, both characters remain mindful of preserving mutual respect. The purpose of using negative FTAs in *Coco* is therefore to negotiate differences without damaging the emotional bond. The alternation between positive and negative politeness strategies reflects the dynamic nature of their relationship balancing closeness and independence throughout the narrative. The implications of these findings demonstrate that FTAs in *Coco* are not purely threats, but meaningful tools for expressing emotion and maintaining relationships. The characters' use of FTAs illustrates how language operates as an instrument of empathy and identity construction. Positive FTAs build intimacy and emotional warmth, while negative FTAs manage tension and prevent conflict escalation. Together, they show that politeness is contextually shaped by emotional goals and situational demands. As supported by Yule (2020) and, politeness in discourse is a strategic process that reflects both personal intention and cultural values. Therefore, in *Coco*, the interaction between Miguel and Héctor embodies Brown and Levinson's theory by demonstrating that speakers can threaten face not to harm, but to connect using politeness as a bridge between honesty, affection, and respect.

This study shares several similarities with previous research on politeness strategies in film. As found by Swari (2024) in *Mean Girls,* positive politeness and bald on record strategies were dominant, reflecting friendly yet direct teenage interactions. A similar tendency is seen in *Coco*, where positive politeness also dominates as Héctor frequently uses humor and emotional reassurance to maintain closeness with Miguel. Likewise, Putri and Fitrawati (2022) discovered that *Yes Day* applied all five types of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies, showing the complexity of family communication a finding that resonates with *Coco*, which also portrays politeness as context-dependent and emotionally driven. Meanwhile, Gangga Swari et al. (2024) noted that *Frozen* relied more on negative politeness in family interactions, which partially aligns with this study's finding that *Coco* also uses negative politeness to express respect and soften disagreement. These similarities show that positive and negative FTAs commonly coexist in family or emotionally oriented narratives, reflecting characters' need to balance warmth and autonomy.

However, this study also provides a new insight compared to earlier works. While previous research, such as Dewi and Ayomi (2023), mainly discussed *Coco* in terms of cultural or moral messages, this study takes a pragmatic perspective by analyzing how FTAs function as tools to negotiate relationships. The finding that positive politeness dominates while negative politeness appears in moments of emotional tension shows that politeness in *Coco* is not merely a social formality but a reflection of emotional depth and identity. This expands the scope of politeness research in film by showing that animated movies like *Coco* integrate politeness strategies not only to maintain harmony but also to express empathy, vulnerability, and growth. Therefore, this study contributes new understanding by connecting linguistic politeness to emotional storytelling, demonstrating that pragmatic choices can reinforce the film's broader themes of love, remembrance, and family connection.

This study has several limitations. First, the data were limited to selected dialogues from *Coco* (2017), focusing mainly on interactions between Miguel and Héctor. Therefore, the results may not fully represent all Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) and politeness strategies used throughout the film or by other characters. Second, the analysis was based only on Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework, which might overlook other pragmatic or cultural factors that influence language use. Third, the study focused only on verbal interactions and did not consider non-verbal cues, intonation, or body language, which can also carry important pragmatic meanings. Considering these limitations, future research is suggested to include more dialogues, involve all characters, and integrate other pragmatic or cultural frameworks. In addition, future studies could combine qualitative analysis with contextual observation or audiovisual discourse analysis to better understand how FTAs and politeness strategies work in building relationships between characters, including their social and cultural implications.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions, it can be concluded that the use of Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) and politeness strategies in *Coco* (2017) reflects how language functions as a tool to express emotion, build relationships, and maintain social harmony. The data from the dialogues between Miguel

and Héctor show that both positive and negative politeness strategies play significant roles in shaping their interactions. Positive politeness appeared most frequently, as Héctor often used humour, inclusive expressions (*mijo*, *chamaco*), and emotional reassurance to reduce distance and strengthen his bond with Miguel. This strategy reflects Brown and Levinson's (1987) notion that positive politeness aims to minimize distance and highlight shared identity. Negative politeness, on the other hand, was used in moments of disagreement or tension, where both characters softened refusals, used indirectness, and offered justifications to avoid imposing on each other's freedom. These findings indicate that *Coco* uses politeness not merely as a social convention but as a narrative device that mirrors the characters' emotional growth and moral values. The balance between positive and negative FTAs shows how Miguel and Héctor navigate honesty, respect, and affection turning potential conflicts into opportunities for understanding. The use of politeness strategies thus supports the film's central themes of family, remembrance, and reconciliation. This research also contributes a new perspective to pragmatic studies by showing that animated films, often viewed as entertainment for children, can portray complex interpersonal dynamics through language. In conclusion, politeness and FTAs in *Coco* demonstrate that speech acts are not only about communication but also about empathy, identity, and human connection. Future studies are encouraged to analyze a wider range of characters or films to further explore how politeness strategies reflect cultural and emotional dimensions in cinematic discourse.

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The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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