

## Politeness strategies and power relations in Zendaya and Nicole Kidman Youtube Channel Interviews

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**Abstract** - This study aims to examine the politeness strategies and power dynamics in the “Actors on Actors” interview between Zendaya and Nicole Kidman on the Variety YouTube channel. The objectives are: (1) to identify the politeness strategies used by the speakers, and (2) to analyse how power relations influenced these strategies. A qualitative approach was used, with data gathered through purposive sampling. The interview was analysed for politeness strategies, and a total of forty-seven (47) instances were identified. Positive politeness occurred most frequently (34 times), followed by negative politeness (7), bald on-record (4), and off-record strategies (2). No instances of don’t do the FTA were observed. The findings indicate that positive politeness was dominant, signifying a primary focus on solidarity, mutual respect, and warmth. Despite differences in age and experience, Zendaya and Nicole Kidman maintained an equal and friendly atmosphere. Their shared identity as professional actors allowed them to connect through a mutual understanding of the industry and the emotional demands of their work. This shared understanding contributed to the supportive and friendly tone of the interview, reinforcing the solidarity between them. In conclusion, the study demonstrates that power relations did not significantly disrupt the politeness strategies used by the speakers, and the interview was characterized by cooperation and mutual respect. The findings highlight how shared professional identity and mutual respect can shape conversational dynamics in high-profile interviews.

**Keywords:** Face Threatening Act (FTA), politeness strategies, power relation, power and solidarity

### 1. Introduction

Pragmatics, a subfield of linguistics, focuses on the study of how language users convey and interpret meaning in social interactions. Unlike semantics, which deals with the inherent meaning of words, pragmatics emphasizes the context-dependent nature of language, exploring how utterances function in specific situations (Yule, 1996). It seeks to uncover how speakers and listeners communicate beyond the literal meaning of words, considering factors such as shared knowledge, intentions, social roles, and relationships. In this respect, pragmatics is concerned with how language helps individuals perform social actions, shape identities, and maintain relationships within their communicative environments (Levinson, 1983). Central to this understanding is the concept of politeness, which plays a crucial role in facilitating smooth communication by mitigating the potential for face-threatening acts (FTAs).

This study aims to analyse the politeness strategies used by Zendaya and Nicole Kidman in their *Actors on Actors* interview featured on the Variety YouTube channel. The conversation between these two Hollywood actresses presents a unique opportunity to examine the interplay between power dynamics and politeness in a semi-formal, public discourse. The relationship between power and politeness is integral to understanding how individuals use language to

navigate their social identities, manage interpersonal relationships, and project specific self-images. By exploring the strategic use of politeness in an interview, this research seeks to contribute to the broader field of pragmatics, offering insights into the social and linguistic functions of politeness strategies in high-profile, professional contexts.

The urgency of studying politeness strategies, particularly in the context of celebrity interviews, arises from the increasing significance of media as a platform for shaping public perceptions and social norms. Interviews, especially those between well-known figures like Zendaya and Nicole Kidman, not only reveal personal narratives but also demonstrate how social hierarchies and power relations manifest in language use. As public figures, these actresses are expected to balance personal authenticity with professional decorum, making their communication choices particularly interesting for pragmatic analysis. Their interactions reflect broader societal trends, including the negotiation of power, respect, and social alignment.

Celebrity interviews have become crucial sites for studying language use because they are highly stylized forms of communication where participants are simultaneously negotiating their public personas and personal identities. In this context, the use of politeness strategies becomes essential in maintaining a favourable image, preserving one's reputation, and fostering connection with both the interviewer and the audience (Goffman, 1959). Power dynamics, which are inherent in such high-status interactions, also shape how politeness is deployed, either to strengthen solidarity or to respect social hierarchies. This study, therefore, is timely in exploring how the two dimensions—power and solidarity—play out through language in interviews.

Additionally, the rise of social media platforms, such as YouTube, has intensified the scrutiny on public figures' language choices. Interviews on platforms like the Variety YouTube channel are accessible to a broad audience, including fans, critics, and academics, all of whom engage with the content through various interpretive lenses. Understanding how celebrities use language to navigate these public settings is essential for examining how social expectations and power relations are communicated through language. As such, this study addresses a gap in the literature by providing a nuanced analysis of how politeness strategies operate in a high-stakes media environment.

The study of politeness is grounded in two primary theoretical frameworks: Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness strategies and (R. Brown & Gilman, 1960) theory of power and solidarity. Together, these theories provide a robust foundation for understanding how language functions to manage social relationships in communication.

Brown and Levinson (1987) developed a widely accepted model of politeness strategies based on the concept of "face," which refers to an individual's public self-image or the desire to maintain respect and dignity in social interactions. According to Brown and Levinson, every communication act involves a potential threat to face, especially when it infringes on the addressee's social identity, autonomy, or expectations. In such instances, politeness strategies are employed to mitigate the impact of face-threatening acts (FTAs) and maintain social harmony.

Brown and Levinson classify politeness strategies into five categories: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, and the choice not to perform an FTA. **Bald on record** involves direct, unambiguous statements, often used in situations where speakers share close relationships or have an equal social standing. **Positive politeness** seeks to enhance the hearer's self-image by highlighting mutual interests or offering compliments, fostering solidarity and rapport. **Negative politeness** involves strategies aimed at preserving the hearer's autonomy and avoiding imposition, typically used when there is a social distance between the interlocutors. **Off-record** strategies involve indirectness or ambiguity, where the speaker suggests, hints, or implies something rather than stating it directly. Finally, **the choice not to perform an FTA** refers to refraining from making an imposition or performing a potentially face-threatening act altogether (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

This theory has been widely applied to various communicative contexts, including political discourse, business negotiations, and everyday conversations. However, its application to celebrity interviews, particularly in media settings like YouTube, offers new insights into how

public figures balance the demands of politeness and the negotiation of power dynamics in public discourse.

Brown and Gilman (1960) theory of power and solidarity offers a sociolinguistic lens for analysing the interpersonal dynamics in communication. The theory distinguishes between two types of relationships: power and solidarity. **Power** refers to asymmetrical relationships where one party holds authority over the other, often grounded in social hierarchies such as age, social status, or professional position. **Solidarity**, on the other hand, refers to symmetrical relationships characterized by mutual respect, equality, and shared experiences. Brown and Gilman's theory underscores the importance of these two dimensions in shaping how individuals choose their communication strategies.

In the context of celebrity interviews, power and solidarity are often negotiated through language. Celebrities like Zendaya and Nicole Kidman occupy different positions in the social hierarchy, with Nicole Kidman having more years of experience and a more established reputation. However, the use of solidarity-based strategies in such interactions helps mitigate the power imbalance, allowing for a more egalitarian and respectful exchange. By examining these power relations through the lens of politeness strategies, the study aims to uncover how celebrities use language to manage their social positioning and engage with each other on a more equal footing, despite their different levels of professional standing.

Several studies have examined politeness strategies in various contexts, from casual conversations to formal interviews. A notable study by Holmes (1995) explored the role of politeness in professional settings, emphasizing how language is used to negotiate power and solidarity in workplace communication. Holmes identified that in hierarchical work environments, individuals often employ negative politeness to maintain professional distance and avoid imposition. Similarly, in informal settings, positive politeness strategies are more commonly used to establish rapport and create a sense of camaraderie.

In the realm of celebrity discourse, studies by Goffman (1959) and Tannen (1990) have examined how public figures navigate the tension between projecting authority and maintaining personal connections with others. Goffman's concept of "face" is particularly relevant in understanding how celebrities manage their public self-image. Tannen (1990) further argued that celebrity interviews are shaped by the need to balance power dynamics and solidarity, as public figures often seek to appear both relatable and authoritative.

A study by O'Keeffe et al. (O'Keeffe et al., 2011) examined the use of politeness strategies in media interviews, highlighting the importance of managing face-threatening acts in public discourse. O'Keeffe et al found that negative politeness strategies, such as hedging and indirectness, were frequently employed in interviews where power imbalances existed. The use of these strategies helped mitigate the impact of FTAs, ensuring that the interview remained respectful and cordial.

More recently, research on social media and YouTube interviews has explored how public figures manage their communication strategies in the digital age. According to Cutting (Cutting & Joan, 2002), interviews in the digital realm often involve a heightened focus on both power and solidarity, as celebrities are conscious of their public image and the potential for widespread scrutiny. Celebrity interviews on platforms like YouTube are particularly unique because they offer a more intimate, unscripted setting for showcasing interpersonal dynamics. This context makes the study of politeness strategies in such interactions all the more relevant.

The collection of studies goes into the nuanced and varied ways that politeness is strategically employed in communication across different contexts, ranging from education to film. In examining politeness strategies, the works collectively highlight how culture, context, and media shape the realization of politeness in communication.

For instance, Afriyanti et al. (2023) provide a comprehensive analysis of how generations X and Y in an Islamic education classroom employ politeness strategies, emphasizing the influence of cultural and generational perspectives on communication styles. This is complemented by Mulyati et al. (2023), who explore politeness in online educational settings, focusing on turn-taking and relational dynamics between lecturers and students. Both studies

underscore the shift in politeness strategies in contemporary settings, particularly within digital platforms and generational divides.

In contrast, Safitri (2015) focuses on the portrayal of politeness strategies in fictional contexts, particularly through the characters in the film *The Big Wedding*. By analysing how politeness is used to negotiate power and relationships within a movie setting, Safitri demonstrates how the medium of film influences the application of these strategies. This aligns with Wijana (2020), who examines politeness in fiction through the lens of character development, where social relationships and hierarchical structures are often embodied through language use.

Additionally, Fraser (1990) offers a theoretical foundation on politeness, emphasizing its social and psychological functions in communication. This work provides a critical backdrop for the more context-specific studies like those (Shen et al., 2023), who focus on naturally occurring conversations and the role of authenticity in politeness strategies. They argue that genuine conversational contexts reveal deeper insights into how politeness operates in everyday communication, a theme also explored in Purnomo (Purnomo, 2011), who addresses politeness from a cross-cultural perspective in the tourism industry. One study explores the concept of code-crossing in Javanese, where hierarchical politeness plays a key role in shaping social interactions. This research underscores how language reflects and enforces societal hierarchies, showing that politeness strategies are intricately tied to cultural norms and power relations (Wajdi et al., 2013; Wajdi, 2018; Wajdi, 2021).

In a more contemporary context, another study investigates the intersection of affect and digital literacies in academic feedback. It offers a timely examination of how emotions and critical thinking intersect in online academic environments, emphasizing the importance of multimodal approaches to feedback in the digital age (de Groot, 2025).

A Foucauldian discourse analysis is applied to examine how primary care providers communicate risk, particularly regarding type 2 diabetes. This research highlights the role of language in shaping healthcare practices, showing how discourse can influence patient perceptions of risk and guide medical decisions (Blunt et al., 2025)

A critical discourse analysis of identity in Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* is also presented, highlighting the protagonist's struggle as a metaphor for broader existential themes of alienation and self-perception. This study illustrates the power of discourse analysis in literary interpretation, linking psychological and philosophical insights to linguistic strategies (Elbah, 2025).

The role of creativity and resilience in crisis situations is explored through the use of art-making as a therapeutic tool during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study focuses on an international collaboration among art therapy students, illustrating how creativity can foster collective healing across borders during a global crisis (Metzl et al., 2024).

The evolving understanding of culture in language pedagogy, particularly in the teaching of Chinese, is examined. The research calls for a dynamic, evolving approach to teaching culture, stressing the need for educational practices that adapt to the changing cultural and linguistic landscapes (Liu & Blachford, 2024).

The concept of "culture machines" is introduced in an analysis of language and culture. This novel perspective shows how cultural forces shape communication practices, particularly in globalized contexts, contributing to a deeper understanding of the intersection between language, culture, and societal change (Jones, 2024).

Another study explores the practical and theoretical aspects of politeness, especially in the context of linguistic discrimination against LGBTQ+ people. It argues that politeness strategies are not only tools of social negotiation but also carry significant implications for social inclusion and economic performance (Agovino et al., 2023)

Politeness strategies used in *The America-to-Korea (A2K) survival show* are analysed, illustrating how media shapes intercultural communication. The study demonstrates how strategic use of politeness can influence the relationships between participants and audiences, shedding light on media's role in intercultural discourse (Putri & Fitriyah, 2024).

The volume *Driving and Embracing Change: Learning and Teaching Languages and Communication in Higher Education* addresses the evolving challenges of language teaching and communication in higher education. It provides educators with key insights into adapting their practices to meet the demands of contemporary academic discourse (JYU Studies, 2024).

Finally, a study examines how compliments are used in YouTube comments, drawing on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. The research highlights how digital interactions mirror traditional politeness strategies and how these strategies are deployed in the public sphere of social media (Pramujiono et al., 2024).

Together, these references offer a broad spectrum of research that contributes to our understanding of language, communication, and culture. From examining the nuances of politeness strategies in everyday life to exploring their role in healthcare, education, and digital environments, these studies underscore the importance of discourse in shaping social practices and individual identities (Wajdi et al., 2013; de Groot, 2025; Blunt et al., 2025; Elbah, 2025; Metzl et al., 2024; Liu & Blachford, 2024; Jones, 2024; Agovino et al., 2024; Putri & Fitriyah, 2024; JYU Studies, 2024; Pramujiono et al., 2024).

The analysis of negative and positive politeness, as discussed by Susana et al. (2022) (Susana et al., n.d.) (Susana et al., n.d.), adds another layer by illustrating the dual role of politeness strategies in managing both social harmony and individual autonomy in various communication contexts. These studies collectively demonstrate the multifaceted nature of politeness, where the strategies employed are deeply influenced by the cultural, social, and situational contexts in which communication takes place.

One study examines politeness strategies through the lens of gender, focusing on university students in Aceh. The research explores how politeness is differently manifested across gender categories, providing insights into the intersection of language and social roles within specific cultural contexts (Akmal et al., 2022).

Another socio-pragmatic study investigates politeness strategies and their contextual variation in the movie *Joker*. It highlights how language reflects social dynamics and power structures, offering a perspective on how discourse in cinematic texts mirrors real-world social interactions (Asheva, 2022).

Brown and Levinson's foundational work on politeness theory examines universal aspects of politeness across languages. Their framework remains a cornerstone in pragmatic studies, emphasizing the relational dimensions of politeness strategies in everyday communication (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Brown and Gilman's classic study on the pronouns of power and solidarity investigates how pronouns and address forms are strategically used to express power dynamics and social solidarity. This work is key to understanding how language reflects status and intimacy (Brown & Gilman, 1960). (*Brown-Gilman-Pronouns*, n.d.)

Creswell's comprehensive guide to research design presents essential frameworks for both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. His systematic approach is widely used by researchers to structure and carry out robust studies across disciplines (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Cutting's *Pragmatics and Discourse* serves as a resource book, offering a detailed exploration of key theories and practical applications in discourse analysis. It is an accessible guide for students and anyone new to the field of pragmatics (Cutting, 2002).

An analysis of politeness strategies in *Mulan* provides a pragmatic approach to understanding how characters navigate social roles and relationships through language. The study explores how gendered communication is portrayed in the film (Fitri, 2022). Fraser's article provides a detailed examination of the theoretical underpinnings of politeness, offering an important perspective on various approaches to politeness across different languages and contexts (Fraser, 1990).

Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* explores self-presentation and face-work in social interactions. His seminal work emphasizes how individuals manage their identities in various social settings, shaping the study of face in communication (Goffman, 1959).

Levinson's textbook on pragmatics is an essential read for understanding the theoretical underpinnings of speech acts, politeness, and conversational implicatures. His work remains a key text in the study of pragmatics and discourse analysis (Levinson, 1983).

An analyse of politeness in online class discussions, focusing on turn-taking and relational work strategies between lecturers and students. Their study highlights the importance of maintaining politeness in virtual classroom environments, particularly in online education settings (Mulyati et al., 2023). O'Keeffe et al. (2011) introduce pragmatics in a comprehensive yet accessible manner. Their work examines how language functions in context, revealing underlying social norms and behaviours that shape communication (O'Keeffe et al., 2011).

Purnomo's study takes a cross-cultural approach to tourism-service language, emphasizing politeness strategies in hospitality interactions. His research sheds light on how language functions in international service encounters (Purnomo, 2012). Putri and Sayogie (Sayogie, 2024) examine impoliteness strategies and gender differences in *The Whatever Podcast*. This research explores how impoliteness serves as a form of social commentary and impacts interpersonal dynamics in modern media (Putri & Sayogie, 2024).

An analyse of the politeness strategies used by Anies Baswedan during an interview on *Humanities in Southeast Asia*. The study demonstrates how public figures employ politeness to manage their public image and convey authority (Rahman et al., 2022). Sayogie investigates face-saving behaviour on Facebook, focusing on how individuals manage their online identities and navigate social expectations. This study highlights the role of social media in shaping digital self-presentation (Sayogie, 2022).

The other analyse of the politeness strategies in the American movie *Me Before You*. Their study illustrates how politeness is portrayed in film, offering insights into the social and cultural values that influence communication (Tetenaung & Heryono, 2022a). Wang provides an in-depth examination of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and its applications, emphasizing its role in analysing power dynamics embedded in language. His work is vital to understanding the relevance of CDA in contemporary discourse studies (Wang, 2021).

Waring goes into the questions that discourse analysts ask and the methods they use to answer them. This work is crucial for discourse analysts seeking clarity on the methods and approaches in their field (Waring, 2018). Xiaopei explores the cultural implications behind power and solidarity in Chinese and British English address forms. The study offers a valuable perspective on how language reflects relationships of power and solidarity across cultures (Xiaopei, 2011).

These references collectively contribute to our understanding of pragmatics, politeness, and discourse analysis, shedding light on how language functions in different social contexts, across cultures, and in various forms of media. Each study provides valuable insights into the ways language shapes relationships, identities, and social dynamics (Akmal et al., 2022; Asheva & Santosa, 2022; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Brown & Gilman, 1960; Creswell, 2014; Cutting, 2002; Fitri, 2022; Fraser, 1990; Goffman, 1959; Levinson, 1983; (Mulyati et al., 2023); O'Keeffe, Clancy, & Adolphs, 2011; Purnomo, 2012; Putri & Sayogie, 2024; Rahman, Rangkuti, & Mono, 2022; Sayogie, 2022; Tetenaung & Heryono, 2022a; Wang, 2021; Waring, 2018; Xiaopei, 2011 (Dovhan, 2024); Chen, 2023).

Each study contributes to the broader understanding of politeness in communication by emphasizing the strategic nature of politeness, whether in educational settings, fictional representations, or real-life interactions. While they each examine different areas of discourse, they collectively underscore the importance of context and the dynamic use of language in maintaining social relationships, making these works indispensable in understanding the role of politeness in communication.

This study aims to contribute to the field of pragmatics by providing a detailed analysis of politeness strategies in a high-profile celebrity interview. The findings will offer new insights into how public figures manage face, negotiate power, and project solidarity in a semi-formal, media-driven context. Furthermore, the study will explore how power and solidarity, as outlined by Brown and Gilman (1960), influence the linguistic choices made by Zendaya and Nicole

Kidman. By examining how these actresses navigate the intersection of politeness and power in their conversation, this research will deepen our understanding of how language functions in shaping social identities and relationships in media discourse.

## **2. Method**

The present study employed a qualitative research design to analyze the politeness strategies and power relations present in the interview between Zendaya and Nicole Kidman on the Actors on Actors segment of the Variety YouTube channel. A qualitative approach is particularly suitable for this type of study, as it allows for an in-depth examination of social interactions, focusing on the underlying dynamics of power and politeness strategies in communication (Dörnyei, 2007).

### **2.1 Method of Providing Data**

Data for this study was gathered through purposive sampling, a technique that allows for the intentional selection of data sources that meet specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Creswell, 2014). The primary data source for this study was the video of the Actors on Actors interview between Zendaya and Nicole Kidman, which was publicly available on the Variety YouTube channel. The decision to focus on this particular interview was motivated by its unique context, where two high-profile actors from different generations and backgrounds engage in a professional yet personal conversation.

The data collection process involved the transcription of the entire interview, which allowed for a detailed textual analysis. The transcribed text was then subjected to a thorough review to identify instances of politeness strategies, focusing on verbal and non-verbal cues that align with the theoretical frameworks of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies and Brown and Gilman's (1960) power and solidarity theory. The transcriptions were carefully checked to ensure accuracy, and each instance of politeness strategy was systematically coded according to its category, such as positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on-record, and off-record strategies.

The interview was selected based on its rich conversational content, wherein both actors exhibit a clear use of language to manage their social relationship and display mutual respect and solidarity. By choosing this interaction, the research sought to understand how politeness strategies manifest in high-profile professional settings, where power dynamics are subtle yet significant. The data collection strategy aligns with the qualitative methodological emphasis on capturing the nuances of human interaction in specific contexts (Silverman, 2013).

### **2.2 Technique of Analysis**

The analysis was based on the theoretical frameworks proposed by (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and (Brown & Gilman, 1960). Brown and Levinson's politeness theory provides a robust tool for categorizing various strategies speakers use to mitigate face-threatening acts (FTAs) and maintain social harmony (Brown & Levinson, 1987). These strategies are divided into positive politeness (used to express solidarity and affection), negative politeness (used to respect the interlocutor's autonomy), bald on-record (direct, unambiguous speech), and off-record (indirect speech).

The technique of analysis followed a systematic coding approach, where each instance of politeness strategy was identified in the interview and categorized according to the theory's categories. The analysis also considered the context of the interaction, focusing on how the use of these strategies reflected the power dynamics between the two speakers. According to Brown and Gilman (1960), power relations in communication are influenced by factors such as social status, age, and professional identity. Thus, the study also examined how Zendaya and Nicole Kidman, as professional actors in the entertainment industry, employed politeness strategies to navigate the power balance between them.

The analysis was carried out in several steps: (a) Identification of politeness strategies: The first step was to extract instances where politeness strategies were clearly articulated by the speakers. (b) Categorization: Once identified, each instance was categorized according to Brown and Levinson's framework (positive, negative, bald on-record, or off-record). (c) Power

dynamics: The second layer of analysis explored how these strategies were shaped by the power dynamics between Zendaya and Nicole Kidman. This analysis used Brown and Gilman's (1960) framework of power and solidarity, considering factors such as their professional status, the nature of the interview, and their shared identity as actors. (d) Contextual interpretation: Finally, the findings were interpreted within the broader context of actor interviews and celebrity culture, which often involves a blending of professional discourse with personal interaction (Goffman, 1959).

This technique allowed the research to systematically explore both the linguistic and social aspects of the interview, highlighting how politeness strategies are employed in a professional and friendly setting where both speakers maintain a sense of equality and mutual respect.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Results

In this study, selected utterances from the interviews with Zendaya and Nicole Kidman on the *Variety* YouTube channel will be analysed to identify politeness strategies based on Brown and Levinson's theory. This The 20 selected data points for analysis consist of 4 bald-on-record, 10 positive politeness, 4 negative politeness, 2 off-record. The analysis will focus on how Zendaya and Nicole Kidman use these strategies and how power relations influence the use of politeness strategies. The findings will be examined in relation to the concept of power, exploring how authority and status influence the choice of politeness strategies between Zendaya and Nicole Kidman.

##### 3.1.1 Bald On Record

###### Data 17

Zendaya : "Because I was wondering how much you guys rehearsed and how much you guys just finding it?"

Nicole Kidman : "Both."

In this context, Zendaya is curious whether Nicole and her team practiced extensively before filming or whether they improvised and found moments naturally on set. The way Zendaya phrases the question suggests that she sees both approaches as possible, but she wants to know how Nicole's experience played out. Nicole answer's "Both." is straight to the point, showing certainty and confidence in her experience.

Nicole used bald on-record strategy. She gives a direct, unmitigated answer without hedging or softening her statement. Nicole's one-word response, "Both," conveys conciseness and control over the conversation. Since Nicole is the more experienced actor, this brief answer could reflect confidence as she does not feel the need to over explain and could threat to Zendaya's positive face as it doesn't fully meet the social expectation of elaborating in a friendly way.

Nicole's answer "both" which a bald on record strategy is simple and could be seen as a subtle assertion of power due to her status in the industry. Power is nonreciprocal and "may be based on such things as age, sex, institutional role, wealth, physical strength, or force" (Brown and Gilman, 1960:255). By not elaborating or providing an overly detailed explanation, Nicole may be signalling that she does not feel the need to justify herself or provide a long-winded answer, even if Zendaya is asking a question. This kind of response can be a sign of confidence and a commanding presence, something that comes with being a well-established figure in Hollywood.

###### Data 26

Zendaya : "My favorite about Luca is that he will give you like, these random ideas to do that almost feel like"

Nicole Kidman : "Like what?"

In this moment, Zendaya is starting to share something she appreciates about director Luca Guadagnino, specifically how he gives spontaneous or unusual acting directions. However, before she can elaborate, Nicole Kidman jumps in with "Like what?" This quick interruption shows Nicole's genuine curiosity, but also momentarily cuts Zendaya off, urging her to clarify or give a concrete example right away.

Nicole used bald on-record strategy here. The form is brief, direct, and without any softening. There is no mitigating device used. The intention is expressed clearly and openly with no effort is made to lessen the impact of the utterance on the listener's face. In this case, pressure is placed on Zendaya to respond quickly, possibly while she is still formulating her thoughts. Zendaya's negative face is affected. Her ability to construct her response freely is reduced. Nicole, as a senior actor, is symbolically attributed greater authority in the conversation. Her act of overtaking the speaking turn reflects an asymmetrical power relation, even if done unintentionally. According to Brown and Gilman (1960), "power may be based on such things as age, sex, institutional role, wealth, physical strength, or force." In this context, Nicole's higher social and professional status shaped by her age and experience, grants her implicit conversational dominance. As a result, the interaction is influenced by the perceived hierarchy between her and Zendaya, with Nicole positioned as the more authoritative figure.

### 3.1.2 Positive Politeness

#### Data 4

Nicole Kidman : "I went with my husband and I was like riveted taken. I'm a dunie."

Zendaya : "You're a dunie."

Nicole Kidman is talking about going to see *Dune* with her husband. When she says, "I was like riveted, taken. I'm a Dunie," she means she was completely captivated by the film that she loved it so much that she now considers herself a fan of the *Dune* universe, playfully calling herself a "Dunie." Zendaya responds with a big smile, repeating, "You're a Dunie," kind of like welcoming her into the fandom. It's a sweet and bonding moment between them.

Zendaya used positive politeness in *strategy 4; Use in-group identity markers*. The phrase "You're a dunie" is playful and personal, and uses a kind of insider language "dunie" refers to fans of *Dune*, something that both Zendaya (actor of the movie) and Nicole now share. By calling Nicole a "dunie," Zendaya pulls her into the fandom, creating a shared identity and mutual belonging. By mirroring the term with a light tone, Zendaya creates a sense of connection, shared humor, and mutual enthusiasm.

Zendaya's positive response creates a moment of solidarity in the conversation. Her playful remark, "You're a Dunie," echoes Nicole Kidman's self-description as a fan of *Dune*, reinforcing mutual understanding and emotional connection. By mirroring Nicole's words in an affirming tone, Zendaya fosters a sense of closeness and shared enthusiasm. This reflects what Brown and Gilman (1960) define as a solidarity relationship, one that is symmetrical and reciprocal, often based on shared interests, emotional intimacy, or common experiences. In this exchange, Zendaya positions herself as an equal participant, temporarily setting aside status differences to emphasize familiarity and connection.

#### Data 11

Nicole Kidman : "I'm never gonna use this mime for work" and now i think particularly in those films that are dealing with science fiction and you're trying to create other worlds, that's when you use those skills."

Zendaya : “**Yeah, absolutely. But I also feel like** what’s so great about Denis is he is big on trying to make things more practical as possible.”

In this exchange, Nicole Kidman is reflecting on her past training, specifically learning mime or physical movement and how she once thought she'd never actually use it in her acting career. But now she realizes that in genres like science fiction, where actors often have to imagine and physically interact with things that don't exist, those mime skills actually become really useful. Zendaya agrees but also brings up her experience working with director Denis Villeneuve in *Dune*, saying what makes him so great is that he tries to make things as practical as possible, meaning, he builds real sets and uses real environments instead of relying too much on CGI or green screen.

Zendaya used positive politeness in *strategy 6; Avoid disagreement*. The way Zendaya first agrees by saying “Yeah, absolutely”, Zendaya acknowledges the point first and then introduces her own perspective with “But I also feel like...” that acts as a softening device, presenting her viewpoint as an addition rather than opposition. This indirect approach helps maintain a cooperative tone, which is characteristic of positive politeness strategies. Zendaya uses hedging language “I feel like”, which makes her point sound less assertive or confrontational.

In this exchange, a clear power imbalance exists between Nicole Kidman and Zendaya, with Nicole occupying the higher-status position due to her seniority and experience. However, Zendaya negotiates this asymmetry through the use of positive politeness. Instead of directly contradicting Nicole’s opinion, Zendaya first aligns with her view and then gently introduces her own perspective using hedging language such as “but I also feel like.” This mitigated transition helps maintain conversational harmony and expresses respect, signaling Zendaya’s awareness of the power dynamic. As Brown and Gilman (1960) explain, power is nonreciprocal and often based on social variables like age or institutional status. Yet, by employing politeness strategies that emphasize agreement and connection, Zendaya temporarily reconfigures the interaction into a more symmetrical exchange, thus fostering solidarity despite the underlying hierarchy.

### Data 13

Nicole Kidman : “Because are you in, you’re not in Petra or any of those places in Jordan?”

Zendaya : “**No, we didn’t shoot in Petra, but we were close.**”

This part of the conversation appears to be about the filming locations of a project that Zendaya worked on. Nicole seems to be clarifying whether a certain scene or part of the film was shot in Petra or in other locations within Jordan. Zendaya directly negates Nicole’s assumption by confirming that Petra was not a filming location but does so indirectly by adding “but we were close”.

Zendaya used positive politeness in *strategy 6; Avoid disagreement*. Instead of simply answering “No” briefly, however, she adds “but we were close”, which serves as a softener to maintain a conversational and friendly tone while still giving additional information. She balances giving the correct information while preserving Nicole’s face. By providing additional clarification, Zendaya shows politeness and avoids the possibility of an answer that sounds too short or stiff. This reflects a form of politeness that seeks to maintain social engagement and build closeness with the person being spoken to.

In this conversation, Zendaya use a positive politeness to maintain solidarity not to manage power imbalance. Zendaya’s response “No, we didn't shoot in Petra, but we were close,” is a friendly manner without harshly correcting or showing excessive disagreement. Even though she’s correcting Nicole’s assumption, she does it in a way that maintains rapport and avoids tension. So, their relationship is remains symmetrical here. Zendaya helps maintain a symmetrical relationship, reinforcing what Brown and Gilman (1960) define as solidarity, a reciprocal and balanced social relation grounded in mutual understanding and shared experience.

### 3.1.3 Negative Politeness

## Data 8

Zendaya : "I remember on the first one it was like only a week of work, because it was just like dream sequence."

Nicole Kidman : "Well, the whole thing feels like dream. It's crazy because you go in and out of this, it's like, as though it's in different, it's different worlds, different realms. But it's funny. it's terrifying, **but sorry to cut you off, keep talking.**"

Zendaya : "No no, go ahead."

In this part of the conversation, Zendaya is talking about her role in the first Dune movie. She says she only worked on it for about a week because her scenes were part of a dream sequence, so her role was short. Nicole responds by saying that the whole film feels like a dream. She describes Dune as something that shifts between different worlds, making it feel surreal and strange. As she's talking, she realizes she interrupted Zendaya and quickly apologizes by saying, "Sorry to cut you off, keep talking." Zendaya kindly tells her, "No no, go ahead," showing she doesn't mind being interrupted.

Nicole's utterance, "Sorry to cut you off. Keep talking," is a clear example of negative politeness, specifically *strategy 6: Apologize*, as outlined by Brown and Levinson (1987). In this instance, Nicole acknowledges that she has performed a face-threatening act (FTA) by interrupting Zendaya while she was speaking. By apologizing, she attempts to reduce the potential offense and show that the interruption was unintentional or necessary. This kind of politeness is aimed at respecting someone's negative face, which means their personal space or freedom to speak without being interrupted. Nicole's quick apology helps take the edge off the interruption and shows she's trying to be respectful. It shows her awareness of social norms and her effort to preserve harmony and mutual respect during their interaction.

The power difference in this moment is subtle, but still present. Nicole, being the more experienced or senior figure, takes control of the conversation by interrupting Zendaya, show a small sign of authority. However, she quickly softens the interruption by apologizing with a polite phrase, "Sorry to cut you off." This shows that she's aware her action could seem rude, and she's trying to be respectful and keep a friendly, equal tone between them. Her apology helps ease the situation and makes it clear that she respects Zendaya's right to speak. It's a gesture that maintains politeness and mutual respect, softening the power dynamic and reinforcing solidarity between them. In this way, the interaction aligns with Brown and Gilman's (1960) concept of solidarity, where language is used to affirm shared respect and relational symmetry despite underlying status differences.

## Data 27

Zendaya : "My favorite about Luca is that he will give you like, these random ideas to do that almost feel like"

Nicole Kidman : "Like what?"

Zendaya : "Like, I'm tryna think right now."

Nicole Kidman : "**Okay I don't mean to put you on the spot**"

In this exchange, Zendaya is sharing her appreciation for director Luca's spontaneous and imaginative direction style, saying that he often gives unexpected ideas during filming. She starts to describe how these ideas almost feel random but creatively inspired. Nicole, showing genuine interest, interjects with a direct question: "Like what?" prompting Zendaya to pause and think. At that moment, Zendaya is clearly caught off guard and struggles to recall a specific example. Noticing that her question may have unintentionally put Zendaya under pressure, Nicole quickly responds with, "Okay, I don't mean to put you on the spot."

The politeness strategy used by Nicole demonstrates a form of negative politeness, specifically *sub-strategy 6: Apologize*. This strategy appears after Nicole directly asks, "Like what?", which seems to put Zendaya in a position where she struggles to respond spontaneously. The phrase functions as a form of mitigation or buffer against a potential face-threatening act, as Nicole realizes that her question might make Zendaya feel pressured or uncomfortable. By implying that she did not intend to corner Zendaya, Nicole shows respect for her conversational partner's freedom and comfort.

As a senior actress, Nicole was positioned in a more dominant role in terms of both experience and industry status. However, through the use of negative politeness, the power imbalance was subtly neutralized. A more equal and supportive conversational atmosphere was created by Nicole, allowing Zendaya to express herself freely without feeling pressured. This reflects an effort to reduce hierarchical distance and aligns with Brown and Gilman's (1960) notion that language can be used not only to reflect power but also to promote solidarity through mutual respect.

### 3.1.4 Off-Record Strategy

#### Data 24

Nicole Kidman : "Because so much of acting is energy and the passing of energies and how does that get captured. And when you can capture energies amidst the choreography or the technique, that's really, that to me is what I'm always seeking. **Other wise everyone would be doing it. Like stand there, do this, do that.** You've gotta had that other, the sixth sense, the other thing that comes in and you can't really. I don't think it's teachable I think it's more discoverable."

Zendaya : "Instinctual."

Nicole Kidman : "Yeah."

In this context, Nicole Kidman talked about what makes great acting so special. She says that acting is just about following directions or learning techniques, it's really about energy, the emotion and connection between people that you can feel, even if you can't see it. She says when an actor can bring that energy while also doing all the technical stuff (like movement or timing). Then she adds, "Otherwise everyone would be doing it." She means that if acting were only about memorizing lines or following instructions, then anyone could do it. But the truth is, there's something more, almost like a sixth sense that not everyone has. That's what separates great actors from the others.

Nicole Kidman used off-record in *sub-strategy 8; Be ironic*. In her statement, "Otherwise everyone would be doing it. Like stand there, do this, do that," Nicole seems to simplify acting, as if acting is just about standing and following instructions. However, that is precisely the form of irony: she does not really mean what she says literally. The sentence contains a tone of sarcasm or non-seriousness, because she wants to show that acting is actually much more complex and contains elements that cannot be taught such as energy and intuition, involving elements like emotional energy and presence that cannot simply be taught. By using irony, Nicole delivers critique indirectly, avoiding a face-threatening act. Rather than stating outright opinions such as "Acting at that level is really difficult" or "Not everyone can convey that emotional depth," she chose an indirect expression.

Nicole's statement shows her position as an experienced actress with a deep understanding of the art of acting. That's where her power or authority lies because she's speaking from a position of artistic authority. However, despite the power, Nicole conveys it in a relaxed and casual manner, as in the sentence "like stand there, do this." According to Brown and Gilman (1960), power can be based on expertise or experience, yet solidarity is maintained when such power is expressed in an inclusive and non-threatening manner. Nicole's phrasing avoids sounding judgmental, instead using humor and informality to highlight a deeper truth about acting. This helps maintain solidarity because she does not sound off or judge anyone

directly. Nicole uses this sentence to emphasize that great acting involves more than just following directions, but she conveys it in a way that remains inclusive and friendly, so that the solidarity relationship is maintained.

#### 4. Conclusion

The “Actors on Actors” interview on Variety’s Youtube channel features Zendaya and Nicole Kidman engaging in a conversation where they exchange personal experiences and insights about their careers in the acting industry. While there is no explicitly stated hierarchy between the two, it is generally recognized that Nicole Kidman is the more experienced actress, having had a longer and more established career than Zendaya. This research focuses on the politeness strategies used by both actresses during their interaction and explores how their power relative status shaped by experience and perceived authority influences the way they communicate. Based on Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory, the analysis identified 47 instances of politeness strategies throughout the interview, with positive politeness being the most dominant, 34 occurrences, 7 negative politeness, 4 bald on record, 2 off-record, and there is no don’t do the fa.

Additionally, the study applies Brown and Gilman’s (1960) theory of power and solidarity to understand how dynamics shape their use of politeness strategy. The dominance of positive politeness strategies in the interview between Nicole Kidman and Zendaya reflects a communication pattern grounded in solidarity, warmth, and mutual respect. This strategy indicates that both speakers aimed to create a friendly and balanced interaction, despite their differences in age and professional experience. The power relation between them is negotiated through their shared profession as actors, mutual understanding of industry experiences, and a commitment to respectful dialogue, without placing emphasis on status hierarchy. As they both work in the same industry, they share common experiences such as creative processes, public pressure, and collaboration with directors, which serve as strong points of connection. Any potential power imbalance due to age or experience is softened through the use of casual tone, supportive language choices, and open, inclusive communication. Therefore, their relationship is built in a collaborative spirit, rather than a competitive one.

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