

The Concept of Face of Bilal as the Main Character in the Film Bilal Directed by Ayman Jamal (A Pragmatic Study)

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Abstract

This research is motivated by the fact that Bilal, the animated film, is set around 1,400 years ago. Bilal is the first animated film from the United Arab Emirates, created by 250 animators. This film is based on a true story that showcases the action and adventures of Bilal. It also features highly detailed and imaginative elements. The utterances in the film are formed into face concepts. Therefore, the researcher is interested in examining this film using a pragmatic approach. This study aims to identify and describe positive and negative face concepts in the film Bilal directed by Ayman Jamal. This research employs a descriptive-analytical method by describing the forms of positive and negative faces that appear in the utterances of the main character and analyzing them. Data collection was conducted using observation and note-taking techniques, while the analysis method employed was the extra-lingual matching method. The pragmatic approach was utilized, and the data source was the utterances of the main character Bilal in the film "Bilal". The analysis results show that the data found in the film includes utterances related to face concepts, specifically positive and negative faces. The positive face data of the main character Bilal often appear in the form of representatives functioning to express or state, used by paying attention to the desires or interests of the interlocutor. Meanwhile, the negative face data of the main character Bilal often appear in the form of representatives functioning to acknowledge, used in a pessimistic manner (self-deprecation).

Keywords: Positive Face, Negative Face, Politeness Strategies, Pragmatics, Bilal Film.

INTRODUCTION

Characterization in literary works, including films, plays a pivotal role in shaping characters and conveying profound messages to the audience. In the film Bilal by Ayman Jamal, the protagonist Bilal undergoes a transformation that can be analyzed through a pragmatic approach, particularly in the aspect of facial expressions and body language. According to Leech (1983), meaning in communication is not solely reliant on words but also on situational context and nonverbal expressions. In this regard, Bilal's face reflects a range of emotions, from fear to courage,

depicting his journey from a slave to a figure imbued with valor. Furthermore, pragmatic studies by Yule (1996) also emphasize how facial expressions can contain implicature that enriches meaning within an interaction. Consequently, Bilal's nonverbal expressions in this film become a crucial part of the narrative, reinforcing the themes of struggle and freedom.

Furthermore, the dialogues and interactions of Bilal with other characters demonstrate how communication strategies are utilized to convey character strength and moral values. Research conducted by Nurfitriani (2022) identifies various illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts in Bilal's conversations, which illustrates the dynamics of power and the negotiation of identity within the film. Moreover, pragmatic studies in similar animated films have also been examined by Habibah (2022), who found that conversational implicature plays a role in conveying deeper messages to the audience. Therefore, a pragmatic approach in analyzing the concept of face in Bilal not only aids in understanding the character more profoundly but also provides insights into how this film successfully conveys moral and social messages through verbal and nonverbal communication strategies.

Literary works are created by authors to be enjoyed, appreciated, and utilized by readers. Literature reflects the creativity of authors, emerging directly from human life or through fiction, with language as its medium of expression (Yuliantoro, 2020). Language functions as a communication tool—a system of arbitrary sound symbols used by a group of people for interaction (KBBI, 2001).

Through language, humans can communicate effectively, establishing relationships as language influences the actions of both speakers and interlocutors (Kridalaksana, 1983: 19). Language can take the form of utterances, each bearing a unique meaning for the speaker and interlocutor. Due to its uniqueness, linguistic studies have emerged to explore the functions and uses of language. Therefore, in linguistics studying language as a research object, one way to study language communication is through conversation.

Pragmatics is a branch of macro-linguistics that examines language use in social contexts, including how meaning is interpreted beyond literal expressions. One crucial concept in pragmatics is the concept of "face," developed by Erving Goffman (1967) and further elaborated by Brown and Levinson (1987). Face refers to an individual's social self-image that they seek to maintain in interactions. This concept is divided into two types: positive face and negative face. Positive face reflects an individual's desire to be appreciated and accepted by others, while negative face represents the individual's need for autonomy and freedom from imposition. To maintain face, Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed politeness strategies, which include positive politeness (such

as expressing solidarity and appreciation) and negative politeness (such as avoiding coercion and offering choices).

Film, as a mass media tool, has both visual and auditory elements, reaching a broad audience (Kridalaksana, 1984, p. 32). According to Effendi (1986, p. 239), film is a cultural product and a medium of artistic expression. In literary studies, film is regarded as a development of literary works. Films aim to entertain and provide knowledge, fostering wisdom and humanity in viewers, because films can help raise awareness, mobilize support, and promote action on behalf of humanitarian causes. (Anggyan et al., 2022; Nurgiyantoro, 2018, p. 40).

Research with the same formal and material objects has certainly been conducted extensively before. Within the last five years, several prior studies can be traced, namely: Nurfitriani, V. (2022), “A Study of Speech Acts in the Film Bilal: A New Breed of Hero,” this research analyzes illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts in the dialogue of the film Bilal: A New Breed of Hero. The results indicate various types of speech acts that reflect the dynamics of communication between characters, as well as pragmatic implications that enrich the audience's understanding of the characters and plot. Habibah (2022), “Conversational Implicature in the Animated Film Qishotu Hayati Al-Imam Al-Bukhori,” this research examines conversational implicature in an animated film, focusing on the implied meanings conveyed through dialogue between characters. Although the object of study differs, the methodology and research findings can provide additional insights into the pragmatic analysis of the film Bilal. Sopian and Dahliani (2022), “The Use of Polite Language Analysis in Bilal Movie: Bilal: A New Breed of Hero,” this research discusses the use of polite language in the film Bilal, analyzing the politeness maxims applied by the characters. This study identifies various politeness strategies used, as well as their impact on interaction and audience perception of the character Bilal. Estuningtyas, Erwina, and Ahmad (2022), “Da'wah Messages Through Islamic Films: A Study on the Film Bilal: A New Breed of Hero Semiotics Analysis of Charles Sanders Pierce),” and Fatimah & Syadzali (2022), “Charles Morris Semiotic Analysis of Da'wah Values in the Film Bilal: A New Breed of Hero” this research analyzes the Da'wah messages conveyed through the film Bilal using a semiotic approach. This study elaborates on the symbols and signs used to construct the character of Bilal, as well as how these elements contribute to conveying moral and religious messages to the audience.

The prior research that has been mentioned above serves as a secondary data source for this study. Nevertheless, the research gap in this study lies in the fact that Nurfitriani (2022) investigates speech acts in the dialogues of the film Bilal, while Habibah (2022) examines conversational implicature in another Islamic film. Sopian and Dahliani (2022) discuss language politeness in dialogues between characters. In contrast, Estuningtyas, Erwina & Ahmad (2022) and Fatimah &

Syadzali (2022) employ a semiotic approach to analyze Da'wah messages within this film. While these studies predominantly highlight verbal communication, moral values, and symbolism, the examination of the concept of face in the main character Bilal offers a pragmatic perspective that is more focused on facial expressions and body language as forms of nonverbal communication that construct character and support the film's narrative.

Based on the background above, this research will examine the animated film “Bilal: A New Breed of Hero,” produced by Barajoun Entertainment. The researcher selected the film Bilal as the object of study because it is a cinematic animation that depicts a true story, portraying the journey of a slave who ultimately becomes a significant figure in Islamic history. When analyzed pragmatically, the film's content on life values, history, and morality, particularly through the concept of face, will provide substantial opportunities to understand communication strategies within visual literary works.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative method with a descriptive-analytical approach, aiming to describe and analyze the concept of face within the film Bilal. The data utilized consists of dialogues from the film that encompass the concepts of positive and negative face.

The data analysis in this study refers to Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory on the concept of face and politeness strategies. Positive face is associated with an individual's desire to be accepted and appreciated by others, whereas negative face is related to an individual's freedom to act without imposition. To maintain face, individuals employ politeness strategies, such as positive politeness (showing concern) and negative politeness (avoiding coercion). In the film Bilal, these strategies are observed in various character interactions, particularly in conversations involving differences in social status and power dynamics.

The findings of this research are expected to provide an understanding of how the concept of face is applied in everyday communication, particularly within film media. By employing a pragmatic approach, this study demonstrates that politeness strategies play a significant role in maintaining the equilibrium of social interaction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

“Bilal: A New Breed of Hero” Film Summary

The film Bilal was produced by Barajoun Entertainment and features voice acting by British actor Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje. Directed by Ayman Jamal, who also served as producer and screenwriter, and co-directed by Khurram H. Alavi, Bilal is set approximately 1,400 years ago and

is the first animated film from the United Arab Emirates (Newbould, 2016). This animated film was created by a team of 250 animators. The film premiered in 2016 in the UAE and was released in Indonesia on May 15th in multiple theaters nationwide.

The storyline is based on the true adventures of Bilal and incorporates highly detailed and imaginative elements. The production of the film required extensive time and effort as the creators sought to conduct thorough research on Bilal. This intensive study aimed to pay homage to the historical legacy of Islam through a meticulous and respectful portrayal.

In this film, the narrative of Bilal bin Rabah commences from his early childhood alongside his mother and sister, Ghafira. During Bilal's infancy, his sister was abducted from their village and sold into slavery. This event placed Bilal within a harsh environment. The inception of his sorrow and hardship began with the arrival of a malevolent group, namely Umayyah bin Khalaf.

Umayyah, a renowned merchant, was instrumental in the death of his mother. Bilal and his sister were abducted from their village and subsequently delivered to the Bani Umayyah clan to be enslaved and subjected to repeated atrocities. At that time, Umayyah proclaimed to the surrounding community that salvation and prosperity were contingent upon worshipping the idols they had crafted, a proposition Bilal refused to comply.

One day, Bilal encountered Abu Bakar al-Siddiq and Hamzah bin Abdul Muttalib, who were disseminating the teachings of Islam and professing the equality of humankind before God. The words of Abu Bakar resonated deeply within Bilal's heart, leading him to bravely declare his freedom and parity with Umayyah. He asserted that all humans are born equal, inhale the same air, possess the same blood, and will perish and be interred in the same earth. Despite enduring repeated torment, Bilal remained steadfast in his conviction. Ultimately, Bilal was liberated from servitude and became one of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad, and is recognized as the first *muazzin* (someone who calls to prayer) in Islam.

Analysis of The Concept of “Face”

Positive Face

Excerpt 1



Figure 1. Bilal, Duration 00:06:18-00:06:20

أفضل أن أشتري شيئاً لتأكلين
Afdalu an asytariya shay'an li ta'kulina

It is better for me to buy food for you.

Context

The speaker is Ghufaira (Bilal's younger sister), while the interlocutor is Bilal. They share a sibling relationship as brother and sister. The speaker is showing money she has saved for her brother as an offering to the gods, intended to prevent Bilal from experiencing the same recurring dreams. This utterance takes place in the morning as Bilal wakes from his sleep.

Interpretation

In the dialogue above, Bilal demonstrates the use of "positive face." Ghufaira speaks about making an offering to the gods to prevent Bilal from experiencing recurring nightmares. However, Bilal is skeptical about the efficacy of such offerings in changing circumstances. As a result, he chooses to redirect the conversation to avoid further discussion on the topic of offerings.

Another reason Bilal changes the subject is his disbelief in what his sister has said, "how could a single coin as an offering to a god (a statue) bring about any significant change?" For Bilal, the statue is merely an inanimate object.

While changing the topic of conversation may not always be considered appropriate, it is preferable if it serves to avoid disagreements. For example, Ghufaira's suggestion to use the money as an offering to the gods is intended to prevent Bilal's nightmares. Bilal, however, reflects on his sister's remarks, which he views as influenced by belief in the gods. He questions the utility of offering a single coin and ponders, "If the gods can truly change everything, where were they when our mother needed help?" Thus, Bilal redirects the conversation to propose a more practical use for the money. As in the utterances (أفضل ان) (أشتري شيئاً لتأكلين) "It is better for me to buy food for you," reflecting his care and positive regard for the face of his interlocutor (his sister). Bilal's actions demonstrate his affection for his younger sister, who is still too young to understand the true value of the single coin. His response is an attempt to teach her to discern between actions that are worthwhile and those that are not. This politeness strategy exemplifies respect for the interlocutor's "face" and takes the form of a directive speech act in the form of a suggestion.

In the dialogue, the relationship between Bilal and Ghufaira remains positive. Their bond as siblings, brother and sister, requires mutual respect and affection. As an elder brother, Bilal shows love and care for his younger sister, while Ghufaira respects and values her brother's opinions. Not only is their relationship strengthened, but it also fosters mutual concern and

attention. The conversation itself flows smoothly without interruptions. This positive dynamic ensures that their dialogue continues without conflict or disagreement, highlighting their strong familial bond.

Excerpt 2



Figure 2. Bilal, Duration 00:21, seconds 16-18

بلال: واحميك انت و غفيرة

Bilāl: Wa aḥmika anta wa Ghafīrah.

And I will protect you and Ghafira.

Context

The speaker is Bilal, and the interlocutor is Bilal's mother. This dialogue occurs at night, as Bilal recalls his mother's advice from his childhood.

Interpretation

In this dialogue, Bilal exhibits positive face as he values his mother's happiness. The relationship between Bilal and his mother is depicted as a loving mother-son dynamic. One of Bilal's significant aspirations for the future, which he articulates, is, "I will protect you and Ghafira." This statement indicates Bilal's desire to safeguard and protect his mother and Ghafira. However, beyond his prayers, not many of Bilal's hopes are explicitly mentioned in this dialogue. Consequently, the strategy employed in this conversation is a positive politeness strategy, which emphasizes harmony and togetherness.

Furthermore, valuing another's requests or happiness can fortify the relationship between individuals. Should a participant in dialogue demonstrate consideration and appreciation towards their interlocutor, their relationship will be enhanced. Paramount in this interaction is the presence of care and attention from one character to another.

Excerpt 3



Figure 3. Bilal, Duration 00:32, seconds 10-13

بلال: لا سيدي، أنا لست خائف

Bilal: Lā sayyidi, anā lastu kbā'if.

Bilal: No, my lord. I am not afraid.

Context

The speaker is Bilal, and the interlocutor is Abu Bakar. This conversation takes place during the daytime.

Interpretation

In the preceding dialogue, “positive face” is attributed to Bilal. He demonstrates “positive face” because, at that moment, Abu Bakar, who is the target of the conversation, articulates statements that captured his attention. The interest exhibited by Bilal towards Abu Bakar is a reiteration of what Abu Bakar had previously stated.

Abu Bakar assumes a crucial role in this dialogue by employing "positive face," specifically by attending to the desires or demonstrating consideration for what Bilal expresses. Abu Bakar is instrumental in eliciting Bilal's “positive face.” If Abu Bakar had not conveyed anything that piqued Bilal's interest, his positive face would not have been manifested.

Regarding the aspect of politeness in the utterance, "No, my lord, I am not afraid," this statement constitutes an expression from Bilal to Abu Bakar affirming his lack of fear. Consequently, the negative politeness strategy utilized here is to communicate in a subtle manner as a form of reminder.

By showing a "positive face," the conversation proceeds smoothly. This is because the conversation continues uninterrupted until its conclusion. Bilal's attentiveness to his interlocutor also ensures the continuity of the conversation. Furthermore, the utilization of "positive face" also reinforces the relationship between them. If Abu Bakar were to speak in a harsh tone to Bilal, it would trigger a conflict between them.

The positive face in the Bilal film shows how Bilal's character uses positive politeness strategies to build harmonious relationships with the people around him. Through his expressions to Ghufaira, his mother, and Abu Bakar, Bilal displays concern, respect, and

courage that strengthen social and emotional bonds with his interlocutors. Bilal shows affection for his sister by directing the use of money to something more useful, affirming his determination to protect his family, and showing steadfastness in front of Abu Bakar. This positive face strategy maintains smooth interactions and avoids conflict, while reflecting a relationship full of respect and support among the characters in the Bilal film.

Negative Face

Excerpt 1



Figure 4. Bilal, Duration 00:06, seconds 04-06

ماذا سأشتري بدرهم؟

Māzhā sa-asytārī bi dirham?

What can I buy with 1 dirham ?

Context

The speaker is Bilal, while the interlocutor is Ghufaira. This exchange takes place in the morning when Bilal wakes up from his sleep. At that moment, Ghufaira approaches Bilal and gives him one dirham. Bilal, with a hint of sarcasm, responds, "What can I buy with just one dirham?" Ghufaira then explains the purpose of the one dirham: it is to be offered to the gods as a sacrifice, intended to prevent Bilal's recurring nightmares.

Interpretation

The character who demonstrates the use of "negative face" is Bilal. This is evident in his interaction with Ghufaira, where he tactfully inquires about the purpose of the money she has given him. Bilal chooses his words carefully to ensure that Ghufaira does not feel hurt. For instance, he asks, "What can I buy with one dirham?" (ماذا سأشتري بدرهم؟). This utterance indirectly conveys politeness by framing the question as a request for advice on what should be purchased with the single dirham. Hence, the politeness strategy employed here can be classified as an assertive act in the form of seeking advice.

Excerpt 2



Figure 5. Bilal, Duration 00:22, Seconds 38-40

بلال : أنا عبد.

Bilal: Anā 'abd.

I am a slave.

Context

Bilal's mother delivers the utterance, while Bilal is the interlocutor. The utterance is delivered at night when Bilal recalls his mother's message from his childhood.

Interpretation

In this dialogue, the character who demonstrates the use of "negative face" is Bilal. The pessimistic statement, "I am a slave," shows a negative face. Bilal's mother provides a message for Bilal's future, encouraging him to be independent. However, Bilal's pessimistic outlook reflects his belief in being perpetually enslaved without status or wealth, unlike his master. This attitude showcases his lack of confidence in his mother's aspirations for him.

Bilal's pessimistic demeanor in this dialogue can be categorized as a litotes (expressing modesty, humility, or lack of confidence). Litotes is a language style that contains statements that diminish or downplay reality, often to exhibit humility.

By demonstrating the utilization of negative face, no adverse effects arise between the two characters, as no conflict occurs during the conversation between Bilal and his mother. This situation arises because, within the dialogue, one of the characters exhibits the use of negative face in a pessimistic manner. Consequently, Bilal, who engages in this behavior, tends to yield more when conflict arises. Furthermore, the conversational mechanism proceeds smoothly. It is described as smooth because no disputes take place between the two parties. Additionally, the conversational framework adheres to the appropriate norms, as Bilal is aware of his current status. This awareness leads him to choose more polite language when discussing his future with his mother. Therefore, the researcher is intrigued to further investigate the application of the concept of face in the portrayal of the main character, Bilal, in the film *Bilal*. The study aims to provide readers with an understanding of the pragmatic

parameters of the concept of face in the film Bilal and to describe how face-saving strategies are implemented.

Excerpt 3



Figure 6. Bilal, duration 00:22 seconds 10-33

بلال: لا أستطيع رؤية ما بداخلي

Bilāl: Lā astatīʿu ruʾyata mā bidākhlī

Bilal: "I cannot see what is within me."

Context

The speaker in this conversation is Bilal and the interlocuter is his mother. This conversation occurs at night as Bilal reminisces about his childhood beliefs and his mother.

Interpretation

In the preceding dialogue, Bilal exhibits "negative face," specifically the disbelief he experiences. This is evident in his statement: "I cannot see what is within me." The interlocuter in this instance is his mother, who attempts to reassure Bilal. This conversation portrays Bilal's position as expressing self-doubt, something that can be categorized linguistically as "litotes," a form of expression that conveys information indirectly by understating reality, akin to an example of humility. Bilal, in this dialogue, demonstrates simplicity and openness.

When Bilal says, "I cannot see what is within me," he expresses that he feels a lack of self-confidence and as if he lacks clarity regarding himself. However, his mother endeavors to assist him in understanding his self-identity and to fortify him. The negative politeness strategy employed in this dialogue is the use of language that incorporates acknowledgment. Bilal acknowledges to his mother that he cannot perceive the potential within himself.

Through "negative face," the conversation continues smoothly without any conflict between Bilal and his mother. Negative politeness here plays a role in mitigating tension and providing space for Bilal to comprehend himself better. Furthermore, this strategy also becomes a gentler method of conflict resolution, one that avoids violence and aggression in their communication.

Negative face in Bilal's dialogue demonstrates how the character Bilal utilizes negative politeness strategies to convey self-doubt, uncertainty, and powerlessness without instigating conflict with his interlocutor. Across these three excerpts, it is observed that Bilal employs expressions indicative of uncertainty or pessimism, such as the rhetorical question about a dirham, statements about his status as a slave, and his admission that he cannot perceive his own potential. This strategy enables the conversation to proceed smoothly and reflects how Bilal avoids direct confrontation, thereby exhibiting compliance with social norms.

CONCLUSION

First, positive face is formed through illocutionary acts. The positive face of the main character is realized through various illocutionary acts, including expressive acts (expressing gratitude, giving compliments), representative acts (stating, mentioning), directive acts (suggesting, requesting, instructing), and assertive acts (reporting). The communication process between the main character (Bilal) and his interlocutor is closely tied to the use of positive face. This indicates that when the main character (Bilal) demonstrates positive face towards his interlocutor, it helps to avoid conflict or disputes, reflects attention to the interlocutor, and acknowledges shared backgrounds. The resulting impact on the conversational mechanism is that it becomes smooth and seamless, as the dialogue progresses to completion without interruptions or disruptions.

Second, negative face is also formed through illocutionary acts. Negative face is realized through acts such as representative acts (acknowledging, stating), expressive acts (apologizing), assertive acts (seeking advice, complaining), and directive acts (advising). The communication process between the main character (Bilal) and his interlocutor also involves the use of negative face. This suggests that when the main character (Bilal) demonstrates negative face towards his interlocutor, it helps to avoid conflict or disputes, shows consideration for the interlocutor, and recognizes shared backgrounds. The impact on the conversational mechanism is similarly smooth and seamless, as the dialogue progresses to its conclusion without interruptions or disagreements.

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