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A Discourse Analysis of the Politeness framework in Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker* by 1. Nabamita Das and 2. Anindya Syam Choudhury

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Abstract:

Diverse areas of linguistic study, such as, Discourse Analysis, Conversation Analysis and Pragmatics, have equipped the researchers with different tools and techniques to analyse dramatic dialogues since the late 1970s and early 1980s. The introduction of various theories and frameworks of these disciplines have greatly impacted the analysis of dramatic situations and characters in a dramatic text. One such framework that has equipped the stylisticians in analyzing the meaning of utterances in dramatic texts is Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson's notion of 'Politeness Phenomena' which they developed in their book titled *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (1987). This research paper aims at the application of Brown and Levinson's Politeness theory to some selected dramatic extracts from Harold Pinter's absurd play *The Caretaker* (1960). The study is an attempt to throw light on the study of dramatic dialogue in literature from a new perspective through the application of Brown and Levinson's interpretative model in order to explore the different linguistic strategies of politeness used by the characters in their conversational exchanges in Pinter's *The Caretaker*.

Key Words: Face Threatening Acts, Negative face, Positive face, Absurdity, Politeness phenomena



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The analysis of dramatic dialogue as discourse has caught the attention of linguists and stylisticians since the late 1970s and early 1980s with the developments in different methods of analysis like Discourse Analysis, Conversation Analysis and Pragmatics. These areas of linguistic study have equipped the researchers with different tools and techniques to analyse dramatic dialogue as discourse. Compared to other genres of literature, drama has often been regarded as the 'neglected child' in the area of stylistic analysis (Culpeper *et al.* 3). Spoken conversation was considered as an unstable form of language, hence, the analysis of dramatic texts was relatively given less attention. Early stylistic study primarily concentrated on the analysis of poetry texts foregrounding the figures of speech at different levels of linguistic analysis. Much importance was not paid to the dynamics of spoken utterances or interaction in dramatic texts. However, this gap was later on filled with the proliferation of sub-disciplines like Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics during late 1970s and early 1980s. The introduction of various theories and frameworks of Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics have greatly impacted the analysis of dramatic situations and characters in a dramatic text. One such framework or tool that has equipped the stylisticians in analyzing the meaning of utterances in dramatic texts is Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson's notion of 'Politeness Phenomena' which they developed in their book titled *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (1987). This research paper chapter outlines the theoretical framework of Brown and Levinson's 'Politeness Phenomena' and then goes on to analyse some selected dramatic extracts from Harold Pinter's absurd play *The Caretaker* (1960) by using the theoretical insights from Brown and Levinson's framework of politeness phenomena. This paper aims at exploring how the linguistic strategies of politeness are used by the different characters in their conversational exchanges in Pinter's *The Caretaker* by adopting Brown and Levinson's interpretative model of 'Politeness Phenomena.'



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Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson mentions in their book titled *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (1987) that conversation is one of the key means through which social relationships are expressed. Brown and Levinson elaborate about the different politeness strategies that are basically used in conversation. Their notion of politeness phenomenon in conversational exchanges is based on the concept of 'face'. 'Face' is the public self-image that every member claims for himself. It basically consists of two related aspects – negative face and positive face (Brown & Levinson 311). Negative face is the desire of every speaker that his or her actions should be unimpeded by others; whereas positive face is the desire of every speaker that his or her wants should be desirable to at least some others (Simpson 171). “We treat the aspects of face as basic wants, which every member knows, every other member desires, and which in general it is in the interests of every member to partially satisfy” (Brown & Levinson 311).

Speakers often perform acts during conversation that threaten the face of the addressee. For instance, insulting a person by using abusive terms means an unfavorable evaluation of the addressee's public self-image by the speaker. Hence, it is a threat to the addressee's positive face. According to Brown and Levinson, the most salient aspect of a person's personality in interaction is what the personality requires of other interactants – in particular, it includes the desire to be ratified, understood, approved of, liked or admired (Brown & Levinson 312). On the other hand, requesting a person for any product or service is an impingement on that person. Hence, requests usually threaten the negative face of the addressee. Thus, it may be mentioned that acts which either threaten the positive or negative face of the addressee are known as 'face threatening acts' (FTAs).

A speaker may choose to adopt different ways or strategies for performing FTAs. For instance, a speaker may adopt a direct form or an indirect form. A speaker may choose a strategy depending on various aspects like, social relationship with the addressee, context, etc. FTAs can be



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performed baldly, without redress. The use of such a strategy makes the act clear, unambiguous and concise (Simpson 171). Such kind of bald, non-redressive acts adheres to Grice's four conversational maxims – maxim of quantity, quality, relation and manner. Such kind of acts normally occurs where the speaker is relatively in a higher social position or powerful. An FTA may also be performed off-record using an indirect strategy. "In general, linguistic realizations of off-record strategies include metaphor and irony, rhetorical questions, understatement, tautologies and all kinds of indirect hints as to what a speaker wants or means to communicate" (Simpson 172). If a speaker chooses to perform an FTA on record, he or she has a further option of performing the act baldly, without redress or performing it with redressive action – an action that gives face to the addressee. FTAs which redresses the negative face of the hearer realizes negative politeness; whereas, acts which redresses the positive face of the hearer realizes the phenomenon of positive politeness.

There are several strategies of negative politeness and positive politeness. The different strategies of negative strategies are hedges, indicating pessimism, minimizing the imposition, indicating deference, apologizing, impersonalizing and acknowledging debt. Hedges are items which soften the impact of an FTA. Examples of hedges include use of phrases like 'sort of', 'as it were', etc. during interaction. Other mitigation markers include the use of hypothetical modal verbs like 'could', 'would', 'should', 'might', etc. Some other instances of hedges include use of particles such as 'ahh', 'umm', etc. as fillers or hesitations during conversation. Indicating polite pessimism is another negative politeness strategy used in conversation. Polite pessimism is encoded indirectly through requests like 'I don't suppose I could accomplish the task by this weekend'. The strategy of minimizing the imposition is often adopted in order to reduce the threat to the negative face of the hearer by using expressions like 'just', 'couple of days', etc. An example of this strategy could be a statement like 'Could you just extend the deadline for a couple of days'. Deference means behaviour that shows respect to something or somebody. Deference can be indicated through various means in conversational exchanges. It is often



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communicated by honorifics, that is, terms of address which reflect the social status of the interactants. For example terms like 'Sir' and 'Madam' used in interaction. Deference could also be indicated by humbling one's self, humbling one's capacities and humbling one's possessions in conversation. Apologizing is another strategy through which the impingement on the hearer's negative face can be partially minimized. The impersonalize strategy primarily involves the omission of pronouns like 'I' and 'you' in utterances. By adopting this strategy, the speaker does not impose personally on the hearer, thereby dissociating himself or herself from the FTA. An FTA can also be mitigated by acknowledging debt to the hearer. An example of this strategy is expressions such as, 'I would remain ever grateful to you if you could help me solve this problem'. There are also several strategies of positive politeness. Positive politeness redresses the positive face of the hearer. It will include, amongst other things, offers, compliments, claims to common ground and displays of interest and approval of each other's personality. Where negative politeness is 'avoidance-based', positive politeness is 'approach-based', extending more widely to generally 'polite' behaviour (Simpson 186). For example, 'That was a wonderful get-together!' is an instance of positive politeness. According to Paul Simpson, a 'hybrid' FTA is an act which is a combination of positive politeness strategy and negative politeness strategy. An example of hybrid FTA is 'How beautiful is your dress!...By the way, could you lend me your English book for a couple of days? In this example, positive politeness in a form of a compliment is used as a pre-sequence to a negative politeness strategy. Positive politeness can be realized through the use of terms of address such as, 'mate', 'honey', 'dear', etc. These terms are normally used in order to express approval of the addressee's personality or positive self-image.

The Caretaker (1960) is Harold Pinter's one of the most successful and oft-performed plays. The play *The Caretaker* is divided into three acts with a minimum of plot. The action takes place in a single room over a period of two weeks. Harold Pinter has created a tense dramatic situation in this play where three working-class individuals are seen confronting each other. Mick and his brother Aston live in a derelict building in West London, until one night Aston brings home



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Davies, an old tramp, who just left his job as a kitchen helper at a restaurant. Aston, a former factory worker, rescues Davies from a fight and brings him to his own flat. He offers the old tramp a bed, tobacco for his pipe, a pair of shoes, and eventually a job of caretaker of the derelict building. This old tramp proves to be ungrateful and selfish. Davies exploits the kind gestures of Aston. He tries to dissociate himself from Aston and seek allegiance with Mick. This absurd play is about innocence, corruption, power and allegiance. Initially Mick is friendly with Davies but, when Davies speaks unkind words for his brother, he becomes angry. Eventually both the brothers – Aston and Mick – order Davies to leave their room. The relationship of the three characters in the play *The Caretaker* – Aston, Mick and Davies – are determined through a complex series of linguistic abnormalities. The discrepancy between locutionary and illocutionary force is well pronounced in the uncooperative and impolite discourse of this absurd play. The utterances of the characters imply sinister meanings usually through apparently banal and meaningless dramatic dialogues. In the last scene of the play Davies desperately pleads Aston and promises to be better, but Aston turns a deaf ear to all his protestations. The play *The Caretaker* ends with Davies standing silent and forlorn, and Aston having turned his back on him, refusing to talk.

Analysts have described plot development in terms of a movement from a situation of equilibrium, through a situation of disequilibrium, to the re-establishment of equilibrium (Culpeper 87). In the play *The Caretaker* (1960) the plot moves from a state of equilibrium (two brothers – Aston and Mick – living in a derelict building in West London), through a state of disequilibrium (the intrusion of an old tramp, Davies, in the household), and finally to the re-establishment of the earlier state of equilibrium (both the brothers exchanging faint smile and ordering the tramp to leave their room). The loud and arrogant old tramp, Davies, declines into passivity, as he stands silent and forlorn in the last scene of the play *The Caretaker*. Whereas, apparently shy and reserved character, Aston dominates towards the end of the play, as he pays no heed to Davies protestations and pleadings. This transition from diffidence to dominance and



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the juxtaposition of innocence and corruption in the play are reflected in the linguistic behaviour of the three characters in this play. To discuss these aspects in detail, selected dramatic extracts have been taken from key stages in the play's plot development. This research paper is an attempt to explore how the linguistic strategies of politeness are used by the characters in Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker* using the theoretical framework of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory.

The first extract is taken from conversational exchanges between Aston, one of the brothers, and Davies, the old tramp, from Act I of the play *The Caretaker*:

The Extract:

1. DAVIES: This your house then, is it?

Pause.

2. ASTON: I'm in charge. . . . Family of Indians live there.

3. DAVIES: Blacks? . . . I'll tell you what, mate, you haven't got a spare pair of shoes?
 . . . You got any more Blacks around here?

4. ASTON (*holding out the shoes*): See if these are any good.

5. DAVIES: . . . I think those'd be a bit small.

6. ASTON: Would they?

. . .

7. ASTON: Try these.

DAVIES *takes the shoes, takes off his sandals and tries them on.*

8. DAVIES: Not a bad pair of shoes. (*He trudges around the room.*). . . Don't fit though.

9. ASTON: Oh?

. . .

10. DAVIES: . . . Thanks anyway, mister.



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. . .

11. ASTON (*attending to the toaster*): Would . . . would you like to sleep here?

(Pinter, *The Caretaker* 12-16)

The above dialogue extracts from the play *The Caretaker* are the initial conversational exchanges between Aston and Davies. Aston, the apparently shy and reserved character in the play, appears to be very accommodating by nature. On the other hand, Davies, the old tramp, seems to be demanding and complaining. It has already been mentioned that there is a juxtaposition of innocence and corruption in the play. Davies exploits the kindness of Aston. On mentioning about 'Indians' in the second turn in the above extract by Aston, Davies uses the derogatory term 'black' for Indians. By using such a term of racial discrimination twice in the third turn, Davies threatens the 'positive face' of the hearer by indicating potentially that he does not care about Aston's feelings or wants. Brown and Levinson mentions that raising of dangerously emotional or divisive topics, e.g. political, racial or religious, indicates that the speaker doesn't care about or is indifferent to the hearer's positive face (Brown & Levinson 314).

In the third turn Davies threatens the negative face of Aston by mentioning that he is in need of a pair of shoes. Aston offers Davies an old pair of shoes. Aston uses a negative politeness strategy in the fourth turn by indicating deference. Aston humbles his possession by saying 'See if these are any good'. In the fifth turn, Davies replies by mentioning 'I think those'd be a bit small', thereby using another negative politeness strategy of minimizing the imposition. By adopting this strategy, speakers suggest that the intrinsic seriousness of the imposition is not great (Simpson 175). By using the expression 'a bit small', Davies attempts to minimize the potential threat to the addressee.



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In the sixth and eleventh turn Aston uses the hypothetical modal verb 'would' in order to weaken the impact of FTA. "Hedges are items which soften or weaken the impact of an FTA ... Hedges are also achieved through the use of hypothetical modal verbs such as 'could', 'would', 'might' and 'should'." (Simpson 174). Thus, Aston adopts a negative politeness strategy in the sixth and eleventh turn by using hedges in conversation. Davies is not satisfied with the old pair of shoes given by Aston. He says, 'Thanks anyway, mister' to Aston in the tenth turn, thereby threatening the negative face of the addressee. In this turn Davies indicates deference in his interaction with Aston. Deference is often communicated by 'honorifics', i.e. terms of address which reflect the relative social status of the participants in interaction (Simpson 175). Davies adopts another negative politeness strategy by using the term 'mister' in his dramatic dialogue. Aston appears to be a very helpful and accommodating character in the seventh and eleventh turn of the dramatic extract. He offers Davies an old pair of shoes and also does a favour by asking him to stay with him in his room, thereby threatening the negative face of Davies. The repetition of the modal verb 'would' in the eleventh turn of the abstract indicates that Aston is being very polite with the stranger. The hedge 'would' is used by Aston as a mitigation marker while adopting this negative politeness strategy in his conversational exchange with Davies.

The next extract is taken from Act II of the play *The Caretaker* and comprises a conversational exchange between Mick and Davies:

The Extract:

1. MICK: I'm afraid you're a born fibber, en't you? You're speaking to the owner. This is my room. You're standing in my house.
 ...
 I think I'm coming to the conclusion that you're an old rogue. You're nothing but an old scoundrel.



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2. DAVIES: Now wait –
3. MICK: Listen, son. Listen, sonny. You stink.
4. DAVIES: You ain't got no right to –
5. MICK: You're stinking the place out. You're an old robber, there's no getting away from it. You're an old skate . . . You're an old barbarian . . . I've got the van outside, I can run you to the police station in five minutes, have you in for trespassing, loitering with intent, daylight robbery, filching, thieving and stinking the place out . . .
6. DAVIES: You thieving bastard . . . you thieving skate . . .

(Pinter, *The Caretaker* 34-39)

In the beginning of Act II of the play *The Caretaker*, Mick aggressively interrogates Davies by posing a series of questions to him. Mick tries to confuse the old tramp by undercutting his confidence level and critiquing his absurd motives. He finally accuses the old man of being 'a born fibber', 'an old rogue' and 'an old scoundrel' as mentioned in the first turn of the extract, thereby threatening the positive face of Davies. In the fourth turn, Davies tries to protest by stating 'You ain't got no right to', thus, threatens the negative face of Mick by impeding the hearer's freedom of action in his own house. In the fifth turn, Mick accuses Davies by saying 'You're stinking the place out.' He also uses terms of abuse such as, 'old robber', 'old skate', and 'old barbarian'. This kind of unfavourable or negative evaluation of the addressee's public self-image is definitely a threat to his positive face. This kind of name-calling by Mick damages the positive face of Davies. Further, in the same turn, Mick threatens Davies by mentioning 'I've got the van outside, I can run you to the police station in five minutes, have you in for trespassing, loitering with intent, daylight robbery, filching, thieving and stinking the place out...', thereby damaging the negative face of the intruder. In response to such insults and threats, Davies retaliates by insulting Mick by using abusive terms like 'you thieving bastard' and 'you thieving skate', thereby posing a threat to the addressee's positive face in return.



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In Act II of the play *The Caretaker*, both Aston and Mick offer Davies the job of a caretaker of their building at two different dramatic situations. The below cited dialogue extract comprises a conversational exchange between Aston and Davies:

The Extract:

1. ASTON: You could be . . . caretaker here, if you liked.
2. DAVIES: What?
3. ASTON: You could . . . look after the place, if you liked . . . you know, the stairs and the landing, the front steps, keep an eye on it. Polish the bells.
4. DAVIES: Bells?
- ...
 ASTON *takes a white overall from a nail over his bed, and shows it to DAVIES.*
5. ASTON: You could wear this, if you liked.
- ...
 6. DAVIES (*putting it on*): Yes, this'd keep the dust off, all right. Well off. Thanks very much, mister.

(Pinter, *The Caretaker* 42-43)

In the very first turn of the above extract, Aston offers the old tramp the job of a caretaker of the building. Aston threatens the negative face of the old tramp by doing this favour. He adopts negative politeness strategies in his conversational exchange with the tramp. In the first turn, Aston uses the hypothetical modal verb 'could' and the phrase 'if you liked' as mitigation markers in order to weaken the impact of the FTA in his utterance. In the third turn, Aston again uses the hedge 'could' and repeats the phrase 'if you liked' in order to soften the impact of FTA. In the same turn, Aston uses a bald, non-redressive FTA by mentioning the statement 'Polish the



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bells'. Aston again does another favour to the old tramp by offering a white overall. He repeats the same politeness strategies in the fifth turn too. The use of hedges achieved through hypothetical modal verb 'could' and the same phrase 'if you liked', as used in his earlier turns, are again repeated in the fifth turn as mitigation markers in FTAs. In the sixth turn of the extract, Davies expresses his gratitude to Aston for all his kind words and gestures by saying, 'Thanks very much, mister', thereby adopting a negative politeness strategy. Davies indicates deference by the honorific term 'mister' in the last turn as a negative politeness strategy in the conversational exchange.

In the same Act of the play, Mick also offers the old tramp the job of a caretaker. The below cited long dialogue extract from the play *The Caretaker* displays different politeness strategies adopted by Mick and Davies:

The Extract:

1. MICK: Don't get too glib.
2. DAVIES: Look, all I meant was –
3. MICK: Cut it! (*Briskly.*) Look! I got a proposition to make to you. I'm thinking of taking over the running of this place, you see? I think it could be run a bit more efficiently. . . How would you like to stay on here, as caretaker?
4. DAVIES: What?
5. MICK: I'll be quite open with you. I could rely on a man like you around the place, keeping an eye on things.
6. DAVIES: Well now . . . wait a minute . . . I . . . I ain't never done no caretaking before, you know
- . . .
7. MICK: That's it. You're just the man I been looking for.



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8. DAVIES: What for?
9. MICK: Caretaker.
- ...
10. DAVIES: Ah . . . (*Decisively.*) Well listen, I don't mind doing a bit of caretaking, I wouldn't mind looking after the place for you.

(Pinter, *The Caretaker* 50-51)

Mick initiates the conversation by threatening the negative face of Davies in the first turn. He adopts the impersonalize strategy by stating 'Don't get too glib'. By using this strategy, speakers can indicate their desire not to impose personally on the addressee, by dissociating themselves from the FTA (Simpson 176). In the third turn, Mick performs the FTA on-record by briskly mentioning 'Cut it! Look!' Mick performs the FTA baldly, without redress. In the same turn, Mick offers the old tramp the job of a caretaker of the building by mentioning 'How would you like to stay on here, as caretaker?' Mick uses hypothetical modal verbs like 'could' and 'would' while making this offer to the tramp. Thus, Mick uses hedges as negative politeness strategy in order to weaken the impact of FTA in his utterance. Davies is almost at a loss for words on hearing this. The hedge 'could' is repeated by Mick in the fifth turn as a negative politeness strategy in his interaction with Davies. In the sixth turn Davies responds to Mick's offer by adopting the strategy of polite pessimism. He threatens the negative face of Mick by politely saying 'I ain't never done no caretaking before, you know'. In the seventh turn, Mick responds by adopting another negative politeness strategy of minimizing the imposition while mentioning 'You're just the man I been looking for.' He uses the expression 'just' in order to minimize the potential threat to the addressee. In the last turn of the extract, Davies also adopts the same strategy of minimizing the imposition through the expression 'a bit of caretaking'. By using this negative politeness strategy, the intrinsic seriousness of the imposition is minimized. He also



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uses the hypothetical modal verb 'would' in the same turn in order to pose a threat to the hearer's negative face.

The final extract chosen for analysis is taken from near the end of the play *The Caretaker*. It comprises a conversational exchange which occurs between Davies and Aston projecting their relationship in a new light:

The Extract:

1. DAVIES: . . . You didn't mean that, did you, about me stinking, did you?

Pause.

Did you? You been a good friend to me. You took me in. You took me in, you didn't ask me no questions, you give me a bed, you been a mate to me. . . . so I reckon that'd be the best way out of it, we swap beds, and then we could get down to what we was saying, I'd look after the place for you, for you, like, not for the other . . . not for . . . for your brother, you see, not for him, for you, I'll be your man, you say the word, just say the word. . . .

2. ASTON: No, I like sleeping in this bed.
3. DAVIES: But you don't understand my meaning!
4. ASTON: Anyway, that one's my brother's bed.
5. DAVIES: Your brother?
6. ASTON: Any time he stays here. This is my bed. It's the only bed I can sleep in.
7. DAVIES: But your brother's gone! He's gone!

Pause.

8. ASTON: No. I couldn't change beds.

. . .

9. DAVIES: I'll give you a hand to put up your shed, that's what I'll do!



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Pause.

I'll give you a hand! We'll both put up that shed together! See? Get it done in next to no time! Do you see what I'm saying?

Pause.

10. ASTON: No. I can get it up myself.

11. DAVIES: But listen. I'm with you, I'll be here, I'll do it for you!

Pause.

We'll do it together!

Pause.

Christ, we'll change beds!

ASTON *moves to the window and stands with his back to* DAVIES.

You mean you're throwing me out? You can't do that. Listen man, listen man, I don't mind, you see, I don't mind, I'll stay, I don't mind, I'll tell you what, if you don't want to change beds, we'll keep it as it is, I'll stay in the same bed, maybe if I can get a stronger piece of sacking, like, to go over the window, keep out the draught, that'll do it, what do you say, we'll keep it as it is?

Pause.

12. ASTON: No.

13. DAVIES: Why . . . not?

ASTON *turns to look at him.*

14. ASTON: You make too much noise.

15. DAVIES: But . . . but . . . look . . . listen . . . listen here . . . I mean

ASTON *turns back to the window.*

What am I going to do?

Pause.

What shall I do?



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Pause.

Where am I going to go?

Pause.

If you want me to go . . . I'll go. You just say the word.

Pause.

I'll tell you what though . . . them shoes . . . them shoes you give me . . . they're working out all right . . . they're all right. Maybe I could . . . get down

ASTON remains still, his back to him, at the window.

Listen . . . if I . . . got down . . . if I was to . . . get my papers . . . would you . . . would you let . . . would you . . . if I got down . . . and got my

Long silence.

(Pinter, *The Caretaker* 75-78)

This long dialogue extract reveals a marked difference in the attitude and behaviour of both the characters – Aston and Davies. In the very first turn, Davies mentions that Aston has been a very good friend of him. He praises Aston and recollects how he was helped by Aston, thereby supporting his positive face. Davies also suggests that they should swap their beds, thus threatening the negative face of Aston. Davies promises that he would look after the place for him and not for his brother. And that he would be his man and not his brother's anymore. Thus, he again poses a threat to the negative face of Aston. Davies adopts a couple of negative politeness strategies, such as, using the hypothetical modal verb 'could' in his utterance and minimizing the imposition or potential threat to the addressee by using the term 'just' while mentioning 'I'll be your man, you say the word, just say the word' in the first turn. Davies is projected as an opportunist in this extract, as he seeks to get closer with hitherto neglected brother, Aston, after being rejected by Mick.



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Aston disagrees with Davies repeatedly in the second, eighth, tenth and twelfth turns in the above extract. This highlights a change in his behaviour and disposition. Aston negatively evaluates most of the aspects mentioned by the tramp towards the end of the play *The Caretaker*. Thus, he threatens the positive face of Davies by indicating potentially that he no longer cares about the tramp's feelings or wants. In the eighth turn, Aston adopts a negative politeness strategy by using the hypothetical modal verb 'could' while negating or disapproving what Davies mentions. Whereas in the ninth turn, Davies extends his favour for Aston by saying that he would like to give him a helping hand in order to put up the shed. The old tramp offers to put up the shed together with Aston. In the eleventh turn, Davies also promises Aston to remain with him always and work for him in his house. Thus, Davies threatens the negative face of Aston by indicating acts that predicate some positive future acts towards the hearer, and so puts some pressure on hearer to accept or reject them. In the fourteenth turn, Aston restates the fact by complaining that Davies makes too much noise while sleeping. Thus, this FTA by Aston shows that the speaker has a negative evaluation of some aspect of the hearer's positive face. In the last turn of the extract, Davies' fragmentary and disconnected dialogue is in the form of a lengthy monologue. He is seen asking himself a series of questions as to what he is going to do and where he is going to go now. He uses negative politeness strategy such as, minimizing the intrinsic seriousness of the imposition or potential threat to the addressee by mentioning 'You just say the word'. Davies adopts a series of hypothetical modal verbs towards the end of his monologue such as, 'could' and 'would'. Thus, he uses negative politeness strategy by using such hedges in his utterance. The play *The Caretaker* ends with Davies' pleadings and promises to Aston to be better in future, thereby threatening the negative face of the hearer.

Finally, we may conclude by saying that Brown and Levinson's conversational framework has helped in drawing insightful inferences from the various extracts carefully chosen from Pinter's absurd play *The Caretaker*. For instance, the last extract when compared with the first extract,



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shows a marked reversal in the interactive relationship of the two characters – Aston and Davies. This transition in their interactive roles is signaled by subtle differences in their politeness strategies adopted by these two characters in the play *The Caretaker*. This analysis has also helped in demonstrating how the characters manipulate their utterances in order to support or give negative/positive face. Brown and Levinson's politeness framework has enabled in assessing the peculiar relationship and behaviour of the characters which is the very essence of this absurd play. Hence, it may be stated that Brown and Levinson's politeness theory has enabled us to understand Pinter's *The Caretaker* in a better light.

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