



GENDER DIFFERENCE OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN THE EXPRESSION TRAUMA AND TOXICITY: THE HALSEY AND STEVEN BARTLETT PODCAST

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Abstrak

This study analyses gender-oriented language politeness strategies in the expression of emotional trauma and toxicity in Halsey and Steven Barlett's podcast. Using Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategy theory, this study explores how participants of different genders choose and use linguistic strategies in talking about intense emotional experiences. Data were collected through episode transcripts, which were analysed qualitatively to identify the face-saving and face-threatening strategies used and the role of gender identity in these communication patterns. This research shows that gender influences the choice of politeness strategies in trauma and toxicity, reflecting power dynamics, empathy, and the construction of self-identity in public communication.

Keywords: politeness strategies, gender, emotional trauma, podcast, Brown and Levinson

I. INTRODUCTION

As a means of communication, language not only conveys ideas both orally and in writing (Hidayah, 2016), but also serves as part of human identity to understand oneself, the environment, and the world (Ubaidullah et al., 2021). Human communication aims to convey information efficiently and considers social and emotional aspects, especially in maintaining each individual's self-image or face. Politeness strategies in communication are essential in maintaining social relationships and managing potential threats to the self-esteem or face of interaction participants, as well as an crucial in understanding the dynamics of social interaction, especially when discussing sensitive issues such as emotional trauma and toxicity.

Speaking politely is an essential behavior that must be practiced by every individual in communication (Sumarna, 2015), as politeness plays a role in maintaining harmony and avoiding conflict in interactions (Yuni, 2016). Politeness includes linguistic actions, individual habits, and social behavior (Wahyunengsih & Sari, 2021). The politeness theory developed by Brown & Levinson (1987) centers its analysis on the concept of face, distinguishing between positive face—the individual's desire to be valued and accepted—and negative face—the desire to mitigate potential threats to face through various approaches, such as positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on-record, and off-record strategies. Politeness strategies are used to reduce threats to



situations that have the potential to cause emotional tension, such as the disclosure of trauma or toxic experiences. Additionally, Gupta & Gupta (2020) applied this theory in developing a conversation system that considers politeness as a form of social intelligence, emphasizing the importance of context and perception in determining effective politeness strategies.

(Burrow, 2010) highlights that women's politeness strategies are generally oriented toward positive face, building solidarity and emotional involvement. However, in interactions with men, women often switch to negative face strategies to avoid threats or domination as a response to unequal power dynamics. Burrow also emphasizes that women's use of politeness strategies is often a form of self-protection from potential social or psychological harm resulting from male dominance in conversations.

In the context of gender, research on politeness has shown mixed results. Classical literature often states that women tend to be more polite than men, but recent findings challenge this assumption. Previous studies have shown that women use language to build and maintain personal relationships. In contrast, men more often use language for informational or problem-solving purposes. (Mills, 2003) asserts that politeness and impoliteness result from complex social

judgments, not merely linguistic characteristics inherent to a particular gender. Women do sometimes use strategies considered more polite due to the influence of femininity stereotypes, but in many situations, they can act just as impolitely as men. Thus, politeness strategies are contextual and influenced by the community of practice and perceptions of gender roles within that group. These differences are reflected in the choice of politeness strategies, for example, women are more likely to show concern for the interlocutor's needs and use indirect forms or hedges to express uncertainty. At the same time, men are more dominant in using direct bald on-record strategies.

In addition, Tang (2015) research shows that politeness behavior is not only influenced by the speaker's gender but also by the context of the situation and the position of power in the interaction. For example, men may use mitigation strategies in the media more than women, depending on the power dynamics and communication goals. This reinforces the argument that politeness strategies are dynamic and cannot be generalized based on gender alone.

In the context of emotional trauma and toxicity, the use of politeness strategies becomes increasingly complex and essential. Emotional trauma often involves the expression of vulnerable feelings, while



toxicity can manifest in the form of destructive or manipulative communication. A study by Miller-Ott & Kelly (2017) applied Brown and Levinson's theory to analyze how perpetrators of emotional abuse use politeness paradoxically as a tool for manipulation, by using words that are formally polite but carry demeaning or hurtful connotations toward the recipient. This research confirms that politeness strategies are not always positive but can be used to maintain dominance and hide malicious intent in toxic communication.

In digital media, particularly podcasts, audio spaces such as those presented in Halsey and Steven Bartlett's podcast offer unique opportunities to express and analyze gender-oriented politeness strategies in experiences of trauma and toxicity in a safer and more personal way. In the audio or video format of podcasts, which are inherently individual, guests and hosts must employ effective empathy strategies to maintain sensitivity and empathy while managing potential conflicts and emotional tension. Karathanasopoulou & Williams (2023) highlight that podcasts, as narrative spaces, allow for more open and authentic expressions of trauma, but also demand a high level of awareness regarding politeness to ensure interactions remain constructive and supportive. Therefore, an analysis of gender-oriented politeness strategies in podcasts can guide navigating

trauma and toxicity in modern public communication. This reinforces the argument that communication media influence the selection of politeness strategies, particularly in discussions involving trauma and gender issues.

This study uses Brown and Levinson's theoretical framework to examine how different politeness strategies are used by men and women in expressing emotional trauma and toxicity in Halsey and Steven Bartlett's podcast. It combines the perspectives of classical politeness theory and the latest findings on gender and emotional communication. This study is expected to enrich our understanding of the complex relationship between language, gender, and emotional dynamics in the context of contemporary digital media. Additionally, this research contributes to the development of pragmatic studies relevant to the growing phenomenon of public communication in the digital age.

II. METHOD

The research method used in this study is a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to deeply understand the politeness strategies used in expressions of emotional trauma and toxicity in Halsey and Steven Bartlett's podcast uploaded on YouTube. According to Moleong & Surjaman (2014), qualitative



research seeks to holistically understand phenomena experienced by subjects, such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, and actions through descriptive language within a natural context, utilizing various natural methods. In this approach, data collected in qualitative research methods include text, sound, speech, images, or other non-numerical data, and are analyzed using an inductive approach (Niam et al., 2024). This means that researchers must first collect data, from which understanding and conclusions will emerge. Thus, the research does not begin with a hypothesis or assumption but focuses on discovering new insights from the collected data. In this study, the researcher used data on politeness strategies employed by Halsey and Steven Bartlett in the podcast Call Her Daddy and Buble UK titled “Power Dynamics & Toxic Relationships,” which was uploaded to YouTube on October 30, 2024, with 4.7k likes and 445,672k views. and “Attachment Styles and Toxic Masculinity,” uploaded to YouTube on November 29, 2022, with 1.4k likes and viewed by 154,299k people. The videos can be accessed via the YouTube links: https://youtu.be/fMVySISl1ec?si=XwWPkrIUJm_oMTtS and https://youtu.be/bWatul53sKY?si=gy_ZRVKIXb9eSRT2.

Data was collected systematically using discourse analysis methods through several stages. According to James Paul Gee (2011), the techniques used in data collection in discourse analysis emphasize the importance of collecting authentic and contextual data to understand how language is used in social practice. The first step was to watch Halsey's podcast and Steven Bartlett's video podcast on the YouTube channels Call Her Daddy and Bumble UK. The second step was to collect and analyze videos or transcripts of interactions between Halsey and Alex and Steven Bartlett and Tolly as they shared their respective experiences. The third step is to collect relevant literature related to politeness strategies, communication theory, and gender difference interactions from the sources, and the final step is to categorize the politeness strategies used based on relevant theories.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

This study reveals several significant findings about using gender politeness strategies in emotional discourse between Halsey's and Steven Bartlett's podcast. Based on Brown and Levinson's theory, the analysis highlights patterns regarding how gender factors influence language choices in expressing conflict, trauma, and emotional complexity. Gender influences the tendency



to use strategies, but it is not the sole determining factor in indirect communication and social relationship management.

The Halsey Podcast: Power Dynamics & Toxic Relationships presents the results of data analysis conducted by researchers using Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategy theoretical framework. In this podcast, researchers identified 35 conversations that contained politeness strategies. These strategies were employed by female interviewers when addressing sensitive topics such as trauma and toxic relationships. However, for a more in-depth analysis, the author selected only 8 representative data samples from the total of 35 conversations identified. Four data points demonstrated positive politeness, two contained negative politeness, and two included of-record strategies.

In the podcast Steven Bartlett: Attachment Styles and Toxic Masculinity, the results of data analysis conducted by researchers show that there are 28 conversations that contain the use of politeness strategies based on Brown and Levinson's theory (1987). However, in this study, the author only took 9 representative data samples from the overall findings for further analysis. From these nine data samples, it was found that four conversations contained negative politeness strategies, three

data sample showed the use of bald on record strategies, one data sample fell into the off record strategies category and one data sample fell into positive politeness strategies. These findings reflect how both the interviewees and hosts in the podcast use various politeness approaches to maintain interpersonal relationships, especially when discussing sensitive topics such as trauma, toxic masculinity, and personal experiences. Negative politeness strategies dominate because they show caution in expressing opinions or personal experiences in a way that does not threaten the face of the interlocutor.

A. Positif politeness

Data 1 : (*Halsey: Power Dynamics & Toxic Relationships_10:04 - 10:17*)

Alex : do you have a relationship with your father like does he know this is going to be on the album?

Hasley : he doesn't know it's going to be on the album we have a pretty complicated relationship which is **like you know I don't think that's like groundbreaking I feel like a lot of young women have complicated relationship with their father.**

From the data above, there is a conversation between Alex and Hasley. In this conversation, Hasley uses a positive politeness strategy when she shares her personal experience by disguising it as a common experience, reducing the impression that her bad relationship with her father is abnormal. Hasley states that many other people, especially young women, have had



similar experiences. This is a form of solidarity and an effort to build a sense of togetherness and mitigate feelings of shame or vulnerability. Like you know, I don't think that's groundbreaking. In this sentence, Hasley downplays or normalizes her personal issues, making her statement sound neither arrogant nor dramatic. This shows that Hasley does not want to invite excessive sympathy but rather wants to share within a relatable framework.

Data 2 : (*Halsey: Power Dynamics & Toxic Relationships_47:35 - 49:12*)

Alex : you can't fix someone that's going through that and I think a lot of times we feel like we can you can't and I know its easier said than done but like once you get out of those moments you obviously have clarity but when you're in it like **I just have empathy for like friends going through it or people listening and again there is no solution that we're providing today I think it's just like talking about the real that you go through.**

Halsey : I need someone to tell me at that time like you're not a bad person if you have someone who's like hurting you, you know what I mean cuz like **I was always kind of like making excuses for those things** and being like "oh but what kind of person am I if I leave someone who's like in this great of need?" and I really needed someone to be like **"baby that is your responsibility"**. you know what I mean especially cause I was just so young and also **I had to unlearn this thing** that I was going through at that time where I was like I've spent so long in just like misery wanting for fix this person.

From the data above, Alex, as the host of the Halsey: Power Dynamics & Toxic Relationships podcast, and Halsey, as the guest, used politeness strategies. Alex began by expressing empathy toward people and encouraging the audience to feel that they were not alone. This created a bond of solidarity and showed that the speaker "understood" and "felt" what Halsey was going through. Halsey responds by sharing her personal experiences and revealing her vulnerability. The use of the term "baby" is also a form of affectionate address that creates intimacy and reduces the impression of lecturing, thereby fostering a sense of solidarity and mutual understanding. By positioning herself as someone who has experienced similar situations and validating the listeners' feelings, she establishes a connection. Meanwhile, important messages about the need to break free from toxic relationships are conveyed through a personal perspective. Ultimately, this approach not only successfully conveys the harsh truth about unhealthy relationships but also provides emotional support and positive reinforcement for listeners who may be in similar situations.

Data 3 : (*Halsey: Power Dynamics & Toxic Relationships_49:50 - 51:52*)

Halsey : I feels like giving up but it's like making you're making like a it's like a it **is a hard choice** I think that started learning like in a way **you**



really do become someone, whwn you're apending that amount of time with them and you're like connecting with them on a energetic level that much where now like if I look at my partner and I wouldn't want to be them if I wouldn't want to be just like them then like I probably shouldn't be with them like you sould kind of rteally only be spending that amount of time and putting that much love and connection and vulnerablity into a person if like you know.

Alex : you're preching right now I'm like keep going you're giving us a TED talk call Her Daddy is brought to you by leeb by eve St Laurent you guys this parfume is the one that **I wear on date nights the new YSL fragrance Leeb Lonu is light it's fresh it's the perfect balance of citrus and floral** notes it's also alcohol-f free which I love and has incredible staying power so I know I'm going to be smelling absolutely amazing all night the Lee Lo is a refreshing twist on iconic Leeb Oda parfume it's lighter and tfresher and exactly the scent I'm looking for as we head into spring **there is nothing better than giving a fried a hug and her being like " oh my god Alex what are you smell amazing"**. yeah it's YSL baby also something underatted but super important is that this parfume looks good in my home.

This conversation interestingly combines two distinct parts: an emotional discussion about romantic relationships and the promotion of a perfume product. However, both parts cleverly apply Brown and Lrvinson's principles of politeness to maintain a good relationship with the listener. Here, Halsey employs a strategy of positive

politeness by acknowledging the complexity of interpersonal relationships, sharing experiences, and validating the listener's feelings. This approach builds solidarity and reduces the threat to the listener's positive face, who may have had similar experiences. Alex's product promotion is quite subtle, despite the significantly different topic. Alex maintains a sense of familiarity through positive politeness by sharing various personal experiences.

Data 4 : (*Halsey: Power Dynamics & Toxic Relationships_51:57 - 53:25*)

Alex : how did normalizing anger in these relationship that you were having make you more willing to put up with the things that they were going I think that I well first of all I had to chage the way that they were doing.

Halsey : I think that I well first of all I had to change the way that I talk to myself **you know what I mean** and like I had a therapist once was who was like I was talking to them about a partner and I was like constantly tell me or make me feel like I'm not special or like you know I'm like I'm embarrassing or like I'm weak or I'm like don't know just like all these things and the person was like okay well **can I ask you a question like do you think you're special?** And I was like "no" I was like "I'm no I don't like what like I'm better than everybody else?" "no I think that that she was going to ask you as you **do you think you're special?**" and I was like "no. "I was like "and what do you tell your self like in those situations like how do you talk to yourself?" **And I was like "Well I just try to remind myself like you know like you have to be humble**



and like you're not better than everybody else and like you're not special and like you know," and she was like "Okay." face she was like "So **if that's how you talk to yourself** then when someone else talks to you the same way you're not going to notice that that's out of the norm **you know what I** mean like that's if you're if you're if you're communicating with yourself.

From the data above, it can be analyzed that Halsey exhibits positive politeness strategies. This is clearly evident in the way Halsey and her therapist interact to discuss sensitive issues regarding unhealthy relationships and self-esteem. Through Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, it is evident that this individual experiences a threat to positive face, which is the desire to be valued and viewed positively by both her partner and in the way she speaks about herself. In her relationship, she feels unappreciated, humiliated, and weakened. However, what is interesting is that she herself has become accustomed to treating herself in a similar manner. This way of thinking indicates that she engages in FTA toward herself and has normalized demeaning communication. As a result, when her partner treats her in a similar manner, she does not perceive it as unusual. The use of informal language and emotional validation, such as the therapist listening without judgment as Halsey expresses her feelings, also reinforces the sense of solidarity and support. This

conversation illustrates that individuals who are accustomed to belittling themselves in self-talk tend not to notice when others treat them unfairly.

Data 5 : (Steven Bartlett: *Attachment styles and toxic masculinity*_ 17:57 - 18:25)

Tolly : Do you think cringe or anything you don't no I don't like corny though okay like just say I love you and then let's start comparing me to roses okay yeah right just kind of like straight down you want to try to psych me so much but it's fine it's fine I can see

Steven : it it's not even me it's just what I do yeah **I'm naturally curious about psychology and Trauma** and the way that our early upbringing impacts us actually childhood psychology when I was in gcse and **I just find it really interesting** okay that's why the driver CEO is the way it is as well.

To maintain the relationship, the speaker applies positive politeness by rationalizing his behavior. This aims to reduce the impression of confrontation by showing that his interest in psychology is purely intellectual, not personal criticism. This statement serves to convince the listener that he is only interested in the topic, not intending to hurt them, and reflects the speaker's efforts to build closeness and solidarity with the listener through the disclosure of personal interests. By sharing their experiences and interest in psychology, particularly regarding trauma and childhood, the speaker not only conveys information about themselves but also creates a warmer and friendlier space for interaction. This aligns with Brown and



Levinson's concept of positive politeness, which is a strategy to acknowledge and value the listener's desire for social acceptance while strengthening a sense of togetherness in the conversation.

B. Negative politeness

Data 6 : (*Steven Bartlett: Attachment styles and toxic masculinity_* 1:26 - 1:56)

Tolly : can I call you steve?

Steven : okay, whatever you want..

Tolly : okay, I'll call you steven

Steven : okay

Tolly : **what is the greatest misconception about you?**

Steven : um, **I think people think I'm smarter than I actually am and I think typically when you achieve things** in your life there's an assumption that you're good at a lot of things from what I've understood from sitting there with some of the smartest people most talented people in the world is you only really need to be good at a very narrow amount of things and so **I think typically people think I'm smarter or more talented** than I really am fundamentally.

From the data above, there is a conversation between Steven and Tolly, which uses a negative politeness strategy where Tolly asks very sensitive and personal questions. However, because they are asked after a relaxed opening and in a soft tone, this becomes a subtle form of negative politeness, with Tolly as the interviewer still respecting Steven's personal space while asking deep questions. Additionally, the phrase "Think" serves as a common marker of uncertainty, indicating that Steven does not want to appear

to be imposing his opinion and instead allows room for interpretation by the listener. Steven maintains the listener's negative face.

Data 7: (*Halsey: Power Dynamics & Toxic Relationships_*49:19 - 49:21)

Halsey : **sorry it was intense**

Alex: I'm more just like speechless because I don't think I've ever heard someone like articulate it so perfectly that I can imagine everyone listening right now is like maybe like pulling over to the side of the road.

From the conversation data above,

Halsey apologizes, which is part of a strategy of negative politeness. This strategy shows respect for the freedom and personal space of others. Halsey realizes that her conversation may be too emotional and too heavy. Halsey tries not to impose her feelings on the listener.

Data 8 : (*Halsey: Power Dynamics & Toxic Relationships_*51:57 - 53:25)

Alex : how did normalizing anger in these relationship that you were having make you more willing to put up with the things that they were going I think that I well first of all I had to chage the way that they were doing.

Halsey : I think that I well first of all I had to change the way that I talk to myself you know what I mean and like I had a therapist once was who was like I was talking to them about a partner and I was like constantly tell me or make me feel like I'm not special or like you know I'm like I'm embarrassing or like I'm weak or I'm like don't know just like all these things and the person was like okay well **can I ask you a question** like do you think you're special? And I was like "no" I was like "I'm no I don't like what like I'm better than everybody else?" "no I



think that that she was going to ask you as you do you think you're special?" and I was like "no. "I was like "and **what do you tell your self like in those situations like how do you talk to yourself?**" And I was like "Well I just try to remind myself like you know like you have to be humble and like you're not better than everybody else and like you're not special and like you know," and she was like "Okay." face she was like "So if that's how you talk to yourself then when someone else talks to you the same way you're not going to notice that that's out of the norm you know what I mean like that's if you're if you're if you're communicating with yourself.

In this conversation, negative politeness appears in the form of questions and softened speech aimed at respecting the freedom and comfort of the interlocutor, even though there are moments when the therapist offers direct criticism. However, this criticism is conveyed in an empathetic and logical tone, rather than in a judgmental manner. The questions here are not coercive or patronizing, but rather provide space for individuals to reflect on their own beliefs.

Data 9 : (*Steven Bartlett: Attachment styles and toxic masculinity_ 14:18 - 15:22*)

Tolly : because like you said trauma you have to be aware with it right this is the thing I'm dealing because of thing that's happened you've identified it you're aware of it what now

Stevent : the first thing that's really helped me is the awareness point meant that I communicated with my

partner now my childhood so she know exactly and then it's learning how to communicate so if you had an issue with me the first thing I would do was I try and confront it as soon as possible so because I know something's wrong **can we talk about it now? sometimes women don't want to talk about it just yet they just want to give you the eye** they want to be this you know the Stitch thing where it's like nothing's wrong you know and that you wrote and but they're pissed off at you because you can see it yeah so I try and **broker** the conversation as well as I can and then when they give me stuff I listen right and I like **really listen really listen to the point where it's a it looks a little bit suspicious** and then once I feel like it's the right time **I will repeat back to you what I think I heard** right and that's usually when the other person feels hard and understood and then I'll try and speak and if **I try and speak and then there's an interjection yeah I'll ask for the space to speak** and remind you.

In the conversation above, Steven uses the theory of negative politeness, which is a strategy used when someone wants to be polite by maintaining distance, not being pushy, and respecting the freedom of the other person. When the speaker says, "Can we talk about it now?", this shows a subtle request that does not force the other person to talk immediately, but opens up space if they are ready. In addition, the speaker tries to keep the conversation going without imposing their opinion. They also say that they are repeating



what they understand from the other person, which means they are careful not to misunderstand, and this is also a form of respect for how others feel. In this conversation, the speaker uses negative politeness strategies aimed at respecting the other person's privacy, maintaining their comfort, and avoiding conflict in communication.

Data 10 : (Steven Bartlett: *Attachment styles and toxic masculinity*_ 25:05 - 26:39)

Tolly : I love that you said as a man because I wanted to kind of talk to you about gender roles and I think that as a man thing comes up a lot and I always say this and it's people find it really interesting especially when it comes to like family and being with a man and I think again it's how I was brought up like I am very much brought up as a Nigerian woman right as in like I was like weird to be a wife yeah like when my mom could it was come to the kitchen ome and know how to do this that gender Wells were very very performed in my home how do you define gender roles

Steven : Do you know what I **I don't think about it like that I just have my own perception of what I want to be as a man** okay and that's how I lead so for me me being a man is I I want to take care of my partner I wanna I wanna uh you know we think of a man as being masculine but a man should be the right blend of masculine and feminine and what I mean by **hopefully I can be as caring and as thoughtful and as emotional and as an affectionate and as you know wonderful as the women in my life have always**

been to me while also being strong and caring and a provider to you which for me I'm a I'm a bit it's the term chivalrous in the sense of like I'd always open the door I think I should pull the chair out I should pay for everything I've always even **when I was broke yeah when I was really broke broke like you know bailiff like ccj yeah if I went on a date** even though I remember one time going on a date in London I had 100 quid to my name I spent the whole hundred a day walk back because and I walked and I didn't know London at the time so I walked about three hours through some tunnel with money saving decisions but I just it just shows like I would always pay.

In this conversation excerpt, the strategy of negative politeness is evident when the speaker defuses potential differences in views on gender roles by positioning his opinion as a personal perception. The speaker not only avoids giving the impression of imposing his opinion, but also demonstrates humility and openness to other views. Additionally, the speaker shares personal experiences, such as the story of spending all their money on a date, presented as an illustration of their life choices rather than a norm to be followed. This strategy reflects an effort to preserve the freedom of the interlocutor while still expressing the speaker's views and values. The speaker explains that his concept of masculinity is shaped by his personal experiences with women in his life, making it seem subjective rather than normative



Data 11 : (Steven Bartlett: *Attachment styles and toxic masculinity*_ 29:03 - 29:21)

Tolly : Are you romantic because **there is that great story I'm going to let you tell it** oh where you went to go get your girl back?

Steven : **Yeah that's her**

Tolly : **So tell us a great story** because it sounds like something out of a

Lancome Steven : yeah it is I write

In this conversation, the careful use of negative politeness strategies is evident when discussing the interlocutor's personal romantic story. The speaker subtly asks for the story using an indirect approach, which shows an effort to maintain the negative face of the main speaker by not forcing the request directly. This strategy is reinforced by the use of praise, which serves as both an encouragement and a softening of the request, creating a more intimate and non-pressuring atmosphere. The speaker responds with a vague answer that allows flexibility to either continue the story or end the topic according to comfort. Such interactions are particularly common in discussions about sensitive personal topics, where participants must balance the desire to share stories with the need to maintain privacy and psychological comfort. Through the use of negative politeness, the conversation flows naturally without creating social pressure or threatening the speaker's self-image.

C. OFF- record

Data 12: (Halsey: *Power Dynamics & Toxic Relationships*_45:57-47:00)

Alex: did you experience that with this relationship?

Hasley: yeah I mean **I dated a lot of addicts like that was like kind of a reoccurring theme for me until I was just like "Okay no."** You know and like I think that you know part of the part of the problem I think when you're romantically involved with someone who is in active addiction is that there's no logic right so you try to reason with them and you try to go like "Okay well can't you see that if you do this then it hurts me and then I feel this way or like you did that I watched you do it and it's like they live in a completely different reality that they've constructed to you know as a as a survival mechanism to not think about the fact that they're an active **you're reasoning with someone based on reality and like that's not their reality** so there there's no you can't you can't like reason with someone who's not living in a world of reason and then it turns into like this cognitive dissonance like thought spiral where you start to feel like you're crazy

Alex : you start to go insane because there's no growth it feels like growth. when they're right they're not on drugs so then you're getting closer and you feel like oh we're so back and then it happens again and then you're like wait no but then the progress that feels like progress it's just you're just getting a little bit back to like normal what it's like it's a really really difficult spiral that I like empathize with anyone.



From the data above, there is a conversation between Alex and Hasley. In this very emotional and sensitive conversation, Hasley uses an off-the-record politeness strategy. He has had relationships with several people who are addicted. In these relationships, she tried to convey logic and emotions, but felt that her partner's reality was different, leading to confusion. In the sentence, "I dated a lot of addicts like that was like kind of a recurring theme for me until I was just like 'Okay, no,'" Hasley does not mention names or blame specific individuals. He uses generalization and personal experience to avoid explicitly targeting anyone, while in the sentence "You're reasoning with someone based on reality, and that's not their reality," he explains the difference in perspective in a relationship with someone who is addicted, without directly blaming them or mentioning their name.

Data 13 : (*Halsey: Power Dynamics & Toxic Relationships*_48:54-48:59)

Halsey : **I'm just like the lesson I'm the martyr, I'm the catalyst I exist** in their life just so that they could go be better for someone .

The data above uses an off-record strategy, which is an indirect way of speaking. The speaker conveys their meaning through implicature or implied meaning, giving the listener the freedom to interpret the meaning themselves. In the data above, Halsey uses three implied words instead of explicitly

saying that she feels used and hurt in the relationship. Halsey uses the word "the lesson" because she feels she is merely a lesson in that person's life, not a valued partner. She then uses the word "the martyr" because she feels she has sacrificed in the relationship without receiving emotional compensation in return. Additionally, Halsey uses the word "the catalyst," implying that her presence is merely a trigger for change in the relationship, not someone actively involved in that change.

Data 14: (*Steven Bartlett: Attachment styles and toxic masculinity*_ 27:17 - 28:00)

Tolly : How did does it show up in your relationship since you have been successful and has it changed who you look for and how you do?

Steven : **It definitely has** so I'm very fortunate now about my money at all to the point like we'll go to a nice hotel **she'll want to stay at the bad one she'll want to stay down at the hut**

Tolly : I mean it makes me look good

Steven : No no no but I've seen that game play out as well and I've seen that well no I don't care and then you know no she like legit doesn't care okay **she grew up on a farm in Bordeaux she drives a Citroën saxo and drives her brother to school every day right she cares about like plants and trees and spirituality and stuff like that**

The strategy of record is used through descriptions of the couple's behavior and background to convey their nature implicitly. It indirectly suggests that the couple



prioritizes simplicity over luxury. Similarly, it implies a greater emphasis on non-material values in life, allowing the listener to conclude on their own that the couple is not influenced by the speaker's financial success. This strategy effectively maintains a natural impression while allowing the listener to draw their own conclusions.

D. Bald of record

Data 15: (*Steven Bartlett: Attachment styles and toxic masculinity_ 13:32 - 13:49*)

Tolly : maybe an anxious and yeah okay so seeing how your parent interacted yeah clearly affected your future relationships oh I mean it defined it ?

Steven : well yet you wouldn't call it daddy your mummy issue in any way shape or form no because it's both of them it's the model of both of them and how they engaged and what that taught me about **when I meet a woman I'm basically meeting in my sort of subconscious mind my mother.**

From the data above, there is a conversation between Tolly and Steven about how parental relationships shape a person's understanding of love, romantic relationships, and childhood trauma. When I meet a woman, I'm basically meeting my mother in my subconscious mind. This sentence contains an off-the-record politeness strategy, which conveys deep and personal meaning indirectly. It also uses metaphors and implicit structures to protect the speaker's and listener's face, inviting reflection and interpretation rather than judgment or

rejection. This sentence illustrates how language can be used to convey trauma and introspection in a polite, elegant, and nuanced way. This sentence does not explicitly state that "when I meet a woman, I am basically meeting my mother in my subconscious mind," but uses metaphorical and conceptual structures, making it pragmatically ambiguous. Steven does not directly blame his mother, but highlights the deep psychological influence

Data 16: (*Steven Bartlett: Attachment styles and toxic masculinity_ 20:55 - 22:07*)

Tolly : So I've listened to you talk about how you work before in the past maybe you're better at now that doesn't sound too far to how you work

Steven: I think she definitely taught me the import she showed she showed me hard work to the point where as kids growing up we were just always working we're always working on something like in one of the houses you know I remember giving me a knife and saying scrape all the paint off all these wolves and I'm seven I find it right you're gonna I'm gonna get a pound when I do one week so I'm gonna get this all done you know so we were always working growing up as kids but I think the thing that made me hard working was actually the context in which I lived **we were the poorest family** so when I said how businesses failed I mean like **I watched my mum stand in the street with police officers there as they tried to repossess her restaurant** and she wouldn't she wouldn't give it up and



she ends up in a prison cell that night like we were we were in tremendous financial hardship the whole time I thought we were bankrupt pretty much my whole childhood and this goes to where my hard work comes from **I'm the only black kid in an all-white era in Devon** our house is smashed to Pieces **my brother's windows on the face facing the street was smashed for 15 years** but we live in a nice neighborhood yeah and Chris Rock has that quote where he says like we were poor enough to grow up uh broke in a middle class area it's like that was my life six foot high grass out the front my neighbor's

In the conversation above, Steven consistently uses the bald of record strategy to convey his hard and challenging life experiences. Since childhood, he was taught the value of hard work by his mother. He describes how his mother fought desperately to keep her business afloat, including when the police came to seize her restaurant, which resulted in her being detained overnight. Their home was often targeted by vandalism, such as broken windows and overgrown yards, reflecting the discomfort of living in an unfriendly environment. Steven quotes Chris Rock's statement about “growing up poor in a middle-class neighborhood” to describe how difficult it was to live in poverty while surrounded by more affluent people. These experiences shaped him into a resilient and unyielding individual. The use of straightforward and expressive language in

this conversation aims to emphasize the harsh reality he experienced without being cloaked in conventional politeness. This strategy reflects sincerity, honesty, and high emotional intensity in conveying traumatic experiences.

Data 17: (*Steven Bartlett: Attachment styles and toxic masculinity_ 28:00 - 28:07*) Tolly : How long have you been together before ?

Steven : We had a there was a gap in between but **three years**

In this conversation, the bald of record strategy appears in the response given immediately after the question about the duration of the relationship. This answer is concise, factual, and without the addition of softening phrases or explanations that could soften its direct impression. The use of this strategy indicates that the speaker prioritizes clarity of information and speed of communication, which aligns with the characteristics of the bald of record approach, where conventional politeness is reduced in favor of message delivery effectiveness.

Data 18: (*Halsey: Power Dynamics & Toxic Relationships_1:01 : 31- 1: 02: 06*)

Alex : If you have any advice to maybe someone that's watching this right now that is like fully in that cycle of whether it's with an abusive partner or a toxic partner and they just can't get out of it and they're like **"But I'll never find something that makes me feel**

Halsey : You will you have to heal first when you get out it's not going to feel that way right away because you need to heal and then like that new healed version of you is going to like you



know I don't know it's kind of like when you get a **wound** and then you know the wound hurts and it hurts and it hurts but at least you're feeling something and then it scars and the **scar** is numb and you're like I don't have no feeling here but then eventually **new skin** grows and you get to feel again but it's not **it doesn't hurt you**

The speaker deliberately and effectively uses a blunt approach in giving advice to victims of toxic relationships, employing a direct communication style that is unmitigated in order to penetrate the denial that often occurs in victims. The speaker deliberately avoids softening words to convey the harsh but necessary truth, choosing raw analogies about physical wounds specifically for their ability to vividly describe the emotional healing process without romanticization. This approach is strategically designed to break the victim's distorted thought patterns, which may be trapped in the illusion of “never finding love again,” by deliberately shattering that doubt through firm statements. The effectiveness of the bald-of-record approach in this context lies in its ability to create absolute clarity and prevent the psychological manipulation that victims often inflict on themselves. Although it may sound harsh, this unfiltered communication style is a critical necessity in emotional emergencies, where empty comfort or overly gentle advice can prolong the cycle of violence. The speaker deliberately chooses this frontal approach to

map out a realistic healing timeline and instill hope based on reality, not illusion.

B. Discussion

Research findings on gender-based politeness strategies in the expression of emotional trauma and toxicity in Halsey and Steven Bartlett's podcast, using Brown and Levinson, reveal the complex dynamics between language, gender, and power in emotionally charged public communication.

The findings of this study indicate that Halsey predominantly uses politeness strategies and negative politeness. These strategies appear to be chosen to maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships and demonstrate empathy when discussing sensitive emotional experiences. As a female interviewee, Halsey often uses positive and negative politeness to create a sense of solidarity and emotional closeness with her interlocutors or listeners. This aligns with women's tendency to prioritize social relationships and create a supportive conversational atmosphere, especially when discussing topics related to emotional vulnerability.

Conversely, Steven Bartlett, as a male source, tends to use on-the-record and off-the-record statements more proportionally, especially when seeking to explore information directly or convey criticism



subtly. This indicates a more direct approach while still considering the social and emotional context of the conversation.

The difference in the use of politeness strategies indicates the influence of gender on how someone manages face in communication, especially when discussing traumatic experiences and toxicity.

Additionally, the use of politeness strategies in this podcast also shows that media platforms like podcasts can serve as safe spaces to openly discuss emotional issues, provided the communication strategies used maintain a balance between honesty and politeness. Thus, the results of this analysis reinforce the view that context, social role, and gender have a significant influence on the selection of politeness strategies. Overall, this study affirms the relevance of Brown and Levinson's theory in understanding the dynamics of modern interpersonal communication, particularly in the context of digital media such as podcasts.

IV. CONCLUSION

Research findings on gender-based politeness strategies in the expression of emotional trauma and toxicity in Halsey's podcast and Steven Bartlett's podcast, using Brown and Levinson's theory, reveal the complex dynamics between language, gender, and power in public communication. Burrow

(2010) asserts that male politeness standards tend to employ strategies to control conversations and demonstrate power, while women are more oriented toward solidarity and emotional support. This aligns with the findings of Dolinina and Cecchetto (1998), who state that politeness strategies can be used to reinforce hierarchies, whether in the form of equality or dominance.

The findings of this study are also in line with Cimmieron Alvarez's (2020) study, which highlights how politeness strategies can be used paradoxically in relationships full of emotional manipulation.

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