Representation and minorities: the uses of (im)politeness in the TV series Glee

Representação e minorias: os usos da (im)polidez na série de TV Glee

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Abstract: This paper aims at analyzing the American TV series Glee, in order to reflect on how the face, maxims, rules and strategies of the politeness theories are presented before characters who are read as part of a minority group, compared to characters seen as a majority. The discussion relies mainly on the contributions of scholars such as Brown and Levinson (1987), Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983; 2014) and their investigation on politeness, and Culpeper (2005) and his studies on impoliteness. It also relies on reflections by authors who discuss representation, language, and meaning (HALL, 1997; JODELET, 2001; MOSCOVICI, 2000; SOARES, 2007). The corpus is composed of excerpts from three episodes of the series that were analyzed from a qualitative-interpretative perspective. Glee is a TV show that represents multiple realities through fiction and the excerpts selected allow us to reflect on the discrepancies in the interactions that involve characters considered to be a minority compared to characters read as a majority. As a result of the analysis, it became evident that politeness, highlighted in the excerpts, was primarily used towards characters considered the majority. Concerning minority groups, impoliteness, mainly displayed by the principal and the teacher, prevailed.
Keywords: Politeness Theory; impoliteness; minorities; representation; Glee.

Resumo: Este trabalho tem como objetivo analisar a série de TV americana Glee, a fim de refletir como as faces, as máximas, as regras e as estratégias das teorias da polidez são apresentadas diante de personagens lidos como parte de um grupo minoritário, em comparação com personagens tidos como maioria. A discussão se fundamenta, principalmente, nas contribuições de autores como Brown e Levinson (1987), Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983; 2014) e suas investigações sobre a polidez, e Culpeper (2005) e seus estudos sobre impolidez. Se sustenta, também, em reflexões de autores que discutem representação, língua e significado (HALL, 1997; JODELET, 2001; MOSCOVICI, 2000; SOARES, 2007). O *corpus* é composto de excertos de três episódios da série que foram analisados a partir de um viés qualitativo-interpretativista. Glee é um programa de TV que representa múltiplas realidades através da ficção e os trechos selecionados nos possibilitam refletir sobre as discrepâncias nas interações que envolvem personagens considerados minoria em comparação com personagens lidos como maioria. Como resultado da nossa análise, ficou evidenciado que a polidez, destacada nos excertos, se deu primordialmente sobre personagens considerados maioria. Diante grupos minoritários, a impolidez, principalmente parte do diretor e do professor, prevaleceu.
Palavras-chave: Teoria da Polidez; impolidez; minorias; representação; Glee.

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Starting the conversation[3]

Expressing yourself is an inherent part of communication. When a person displays emotions or dresses in a specific outfit, he/she[4] is interacting with the world and exposing his/her face to society. These aspects of daily life create meaning, for language is constitutive. Nevertheless, minority groups[5] encounter difficulties when exposing their faces[6]. Society, in general, represses or even prohibits these communities from manifesting their true self or expressing them through language, causing discrimination and threatening their self-image.

Lopes (2004) explains that the key to minority groups lies in the expression "public visibility" to fight against discrimination and forms of exclusion, often associated with medical, legal, and religious discourses, as well as to have equal rights in a society marked by the universalization of the values focused on majority groups. In this sense, it is essential to consider debating minorities' concerns in multiple places, for instance, schools, work, home, media, and many more. When it comes to the media, these groups are getting attention and the shows are getting more space to address their issues. The TV series Glee (2009) is one of the examples and the object of analysis for this text.

Glee is an American series characterized as a musical drama and comedy. It premiered in 2009 and ran until 2015 on Fox Channel. The show narrates the stories of students that join a choir in the school, known as Glee Club and New Directions, to feel part of something since they are not seen or accepted by the popular groups of the institution, that is, the football and the cheerleaders' teams. As they join the Club, they are recognized as "losers" and face many problems concerning communication and their identities. In Glee Club, the "losers" find a place of acceptance and strength to pursue their dreams and be who they are or want to be, for the choir is represented as a place where being different is not a problem.

The choice of working with Glee has to do with the fact that the series represents reality in fiction. It is a TV show that creates conflicts concerning minority groups. The characters represent immigrants, LGBTQIA+, students with physical disabilities, and many more who face harsh realities in places that should allow them to feel safe.

This research relies on Applied Linguistics. The discussion promoted here may shed some light on the following question: how do the concepts of the politeness theories are

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[3] This research is part of the final paper "Politeness and minorities: a linguistic-pragmatic reading of the American TV show Glee" presented to Federal University of Paraíba (LIRA; FERREIRA, 2020).
[4] We decide to use both masculine and feminine pronouns.
[5] We understand minority in this text as "a human or social group that is in a situation of inferiority or subordination in relation to another, considered major or dominant" (PAULA et al., 2017, p. 3842).
[6] We discuss this concept in the next sections.

linguistically presented before characters who are considered to be a minority and to characters seen as a majority?

To answer the question, the main objective is to analyze how concepts of the politeness theories, such as face, rules, maxims, and strategies, are linguistically incorporated in three dialogues concerning minority characters on the TV series Glee. To achieve this aim, we developed specific objectives that are: 1) to identify the contexts in which the characters are inserted; (2) to analyze interactions on the selected excerpts; and (3) to establish comparisons of the use of politeness between characters read as minorities and socially privileged characters.

This paper recognizes the importance of interdisciplinarity in the investigation. With the analysis, we seek to create comprehension about social issues in which language plays a crucial role (MOITA LOPES, 2009). According to Moita Lopes (2009), in a world that is challenging for the meanings of who we are, it is crucial to turn our eyes to the ways of doing research that are also forms of doing politics, since they claim to thematize what is not thematized, and, consequently, give voice to the ones that were not heard. Thus, investigating minorities' representation through how they are treated linguistically is a form of creating knowledge in addition to unveiling identities and looking at the relationships that transform the reality we construct (KLEIMAN, 2013).

Our corpus comprises excerpts taken from three episodes of the series, and it is analyzed from a qualitative-interpretative perspective. Our theoretical framework relies mainly on the politeness theories/models and their concepts (BROWN; LEVINSON, 1983; LAKOFF, 1973; LEECH, 1987; 2014). We also explore concepts of representation and the use of language (HALL; 1997; JODELET, 2001; SOARES, 2007), connecting the themes on the analysis of the excerpts. In the forthcoming sections, we present the theoretical concepts, to finally offer the analysis of our corpus.

Politeness theory(ies): some models

Politeness, in a linguistic perspective, means "the choices that are made in language use, the linguistic expressions that give people space and show a friendly attitude to them" (CUTTING, 2002, p. 45). Likewise, Leech (2014) defines politeness as the practice of using strategies to maintain good relationships between members of a group. Thus, social interaction is a crucial aspect to understand the concept of politeness.

Leech (2014) lists eight characteristics of politeness. The first is that being polite is not obligatory. People can act impolitely. According to the author, although the concept of

politeness is idealized as a good thing, some contexts ask for impoliteness. A second aspect is that there are gradations of polite and impolite behavior. The author exemplifies this by calling attention to the clapping and cheering after a performance. […] "the louder and the more prolonged the clapping is, the greater the appreciation signaled and the more polite the response." (LEECH, 2014, p. 5).

The third characteristic of politeness is a "*sense of what is normal*" (p. 5) that is acknowledged by people and indicates how polite to be in certain situations and contexts. On the same hand, the fourth claims that the situation determines how far politeness will occur or if it will occur at all. The fifth aspect addresses that there is a "*reciprocal asymmetry*" (p. 6) in polite behavior between interactants. The sixth characteristic of politeness is that it may be manifested through repetitive behavior. The seventh aspect sets that politeness "[…] involves the passing of some kind of transaction of value between the speaker and the other party" (LEECH, 2014, p. 8). Lastly, the eighth characteristic has to do with the preservation of the balance of value between the participants of the interaction. Thanks and apologies are examples of this aspect. (LEECH, 2014)

Politeness as models/theories has been studied by various scholars and from different points of view. One of the first authors to study politeness from a linguistic-pragmatic viewpoint was Robin T. Lakoff (1973). From a Gricean perspective, the author introduced her politeness rules. Lakoff (1973) claims that it is crucial for linguistics to turn their eyes to the context in which sentences are uttered. Otherwise, it is not possible to understand the whole meaning of the utterance.

Lakoff's politeness rules

Politeness rules were created by Lakoff (1973) to be applied in communication and ensure the cooperation and success of the conversation. They are two: *Be Clear* and *Be Polite*. According to Escandell (2008), the rule *Be Clear*, inspired by the Cooperation Principle developed by Grice, aims to guarantee effective communication. Thus, it must be clear but at the same time objective. In other words, the speaker needs to be succinct, not giving more information than it is requested as well as being relevant.

The second rule *Be Polite* is divided into three sub-rules, which are: do not impose, give options and be friendly (make "A" feel good). By *do not impose*, it is understood that an individual cannot or should not intimidate others directly to do something. It is applied in situations of distance, in which unfamiliarity occurs, and there is a class difference. The sub-rule *give options* is related to the participant using resources in a conversation that give

choices to the other participants. They can form their thoughts and opinions in the interaction. Finally, the sub-rule *be friendly* is regularly applied in interactions in which the participants are close. As the name itself suggests, the actors make the communication comfortable and inviting.

Another study on politeness and, according to Leech (2014), a more articulate one was developed by Brown and Levinson (1987). This model was also built on a Gricean perspective and focused on social behavior. In this model, the concept of face, influenced by Goffman (1967), is one of the keys to understand the theory.

Brown and Levinson's concepts of face and strategies

In social interaction, face means the public self-image that every individual wishes to show to society (BROWN; LEVINSON, 1987). Consequently, it is constructed by the person and has to do with the positive social value that the specific person claims for himself/herself in an interaction. When a person exposes his/her face in interaction, he/she wants his/her face to be respected and maintained.

The aspects concerning the concept of face depend on several factors, which permeate social roles, hierarchy, degree of intimacy, discursive genre, and to whom one speaks. According to Goffman (1967, p. 6), […] a person may be said to have, or be in, or maintain face when the line he effectively takes presents an image of him that is internally consistent, that is supported by judgments and evidence conveyed by other participants".

Goffman (1967) argues that by exposing his/her face to another individual, a person tends to have an immediate reaction that may vary according to what he/she sees, for instance, if the image in the interaction holds a familiar face, the response will probably be more limited. On the other hand, if the interaction sustains an unexpected face than the person anticipates, the feeling is likely to be more prominent, and thus, the person will feel better.

Brown and Levinson (1987) claim that a face is emotionally supported and, according to the situation of the interaction, can be lost, maintained, or improved. It must be constantly appreciated in communication. The authors (1987, p. 61) argue that "in general, people cooperate (and assume each other's cooperation) in maintaining face in interaction, such cooperation being based on the mutual vulnerability of face". In this sense, a person's face depends on others to be maintained. Furthermore, people tend to protect their faces if threatened. Therefore, it is the interest of every participant to maintain each other's face.

O'Keeffe *et al*. (2011) argue that there are two types of acts concerning face. The first is called *Face Threatening Act.* The authors (2011, p. 64) describe this act as a

"communicative act performed by the speaker that does not respect either the hearer's need for space (negative face) or their desire for their self-image to be upheld (positive face) or both". Hence, it is related to the speaker saying something that represents a threat to the hearer's expectations. The second act is called *Face Saving Act*. It means the speaker saying something to minimize the potential threat of others' faces.

Moreover, two aspects of face are presented, that is, the *positive face* and the *negative face*. Both the positive and the negative aspects of face share the same needs, that is, the desire to be loved by other people, and that influences our linguistic behavior (O'KEEFFE et al., 2011). The *positive face* is related to the self-image that people desire to present. It is a consistent self-image or personality that includes the need for the face to be recognized, accepted, and claimed in an interaction. It echoes in a person's wish to be loved, accepted, respected, and appreciated by other people (THOMAS, 2013).

On the other hand, the *negative face* of a person is reflected in the desire not to be hindered or placed, to have the freedom to act as she/he wants. The negative face has to do with "the want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others" (BROWN; LEVINSON, 1987, p. 62). Then, it stands for the need of being independent and not being imposed on by others (CUTTING, 2002).

The strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) are divided into two categories: the *positive politeness strategies* and the *negative politeness strategies*. Fifteen positive politeness strategies are listed to avoid threatening the positive face and ten strategies to "pay attention to the negative face" (CUTTING, 2002, p. 46). According to Cutting (2002), the positive politeness strategies aim at saving the positive face, showing closeness, friendship, and solidarity. On the other hand, negative politeness strategies are composed of assurances that the participant acknowledges and considers the other participants' negative face wants and does not (or only minimally) interfere with the individual's independence. They are:

Table 1 – Positive and Negative Politeness

Positive politeness strategies	Negative politeness strategies
Strategy 1*: Notice and attend to the interests, desires, needs, and goods of the hearer.* *Strategy 2: Exaggerate interest, approval, and sympathy with the hearer.* Strategy 3: *Intensify interest to the hearer.* Strategy 4: *Use in-group identity markers.* Strategy 5: *Seek agreement.* Strategy 6: *Avoid disagreement.* Strategy 7: *Presuppose, raise, assert common*	Strategy 1: *Be conventionally indirect.* Strategy 2: *Question, hedge* Strategy 3: *Be pessimistic.* Strategy 4: *Minimize the imposition.* Strategy 5: *Give deference.* Strategy 6: *Apologize.* Strategy 7: *Impersonalize both the speaker and the hearer.* Strategy 8: *State the FTA as a general rule.*

ground. Strategy 8: *Make jokes, be funny.* Strategy 9: *Assert or presuppose the speaker's knowledge of and concern for the hearer's wants.* Strategy 10: *Offer and promise.* Strategy 11: *Be optimistic.* Strategy 12: *Include both the speaker and the hearer in the activity.* Strategy 13: *Give or ask for reasons.* Strategy 14: *Assume or assert reciprocity.* Strategy 15: *Give gifts, goods, show sympathy, understanding, and cooperation to the hearer.*	Strategy 9: *Nominalize.* Strategy 10: *Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting the hearer.*

Source: Adapted from Brown and Levinson (1987)

As presented in Table 1, the positive politeness strategies are related to preserving the positive face. On the contrary, the negative politeness strategies aim at paying attention to the negative face by showing the distance between the participants of interaction and avoiding intruding on each other boundaries.

Although many intellectuals acknowledge that Brown and Levinson's model of politeness is the most influential approach until today, there are some critics of their model. LoCastro (2012, p. 143) comments that some researchers, especially from Asia, questioned the "universality of the model on the basis of observable cultural differences", hence, their model of politeness does not cover all the aspects since there are variations in the cultural beliefs and practices of Asia countries, for instance. The criticism of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory denounces their western-centric perspective of communication.

There is also criticism of their approach on impoliteness. O'keeffe et al. (2011) present some authors that criticize Brown and Levinson's comments on impoliteness as inadequate and often biased. As a result, Culpeper (1996, 2005) offered a comprehensive impoliteness framework that, while similar to, opposes Brown and Levinson's theory (O'KEEFFE et al., 2011).

Another author, Leech, also developed a model of politeness under a Gricean pragmatic point of view. The author proposed a Politeness Principle (PP) as a complementary to the Cooperative Principle (CP) developed by Grice. Leech (2014) discusses that The PP proposes that participants in the communication prefer to express polite behavior rather than impolite behavior. The author (2014) argues that the PP differs from the constitutive rules of grammar since it is a principle that can be breached, suspended, observed. It can also be subclassified into subprinciples.

Leech's politeness maxims

Leech (1983) developed the *politeness maxims* regarding the maintenance of the social balance and friendly relations, which allows us to assume that the speakers are being cooperative in communication. According to the author (1983, p. 131), they are necessary since they "explain the relation between sense and force in human conversation". The relation between the participants in a conversation requires a series of choices. They determine the construction of the statement and qualify its meaning. The goals of communication may be manifested in two ways: either maintaining the existing equilibrium or modifying it to improve the relationship or increase the distance (ESCANDELL, 2008). At first, six politeness maxims were presented to enhance communication, that were: the Maxims of Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement, and Sympathy.

However, Leech (2014) suggests a reformulation of these maxims. The author uses the term General Strategy of Politeness (GPS), which comprehends all the maxims. The GPS has to do with the fact that, to be polite, the speaker conveys meanings that associate an appreciative value to the addressee or associate an unappreciative value to the self. The author claims that "by employing the GSP, S attempts to ensure that offense is avoided, because both participants are, as it were, 'leaning over backwards' to avoid the discord that would arise if each pursued their own agenda selfishly through language." (LEECH, 2014, p. 90). The reformulation of the maxims results in ten maxims, which are:

Table 2 – Politeness Maxims

Label for this maxim	Maxims (expressed in an imperative mood)	Typical speech-event type(s)
Generosity	M1) give a high value to O's Wants	Commissives
Tact	M2) give a low value to S's wants	Directives
Approbation	M3) give a high value to O's qualities	Compliments
Modesty Maxim	M4) give a low value to S's qualities	Self-devaluation
Obligation (of S to O)	M5) give a high value to S's obligation to O	Apologizing, thanking
Obligation (of O to S)	M6) give a low value to O's obligation to S	Responses to thanks and apologies
Agreement	M7) give a high value to O's opinions	Agreeing, disagreeing
Opinion Reticence	M8) give a low value to S's opinions	Giving opinions
Sympathy	(M9) give a high value to O's feelings	Congratulating, commiserating
Feeling Reticence	M10) give a low value to S's feelings	Suppressing feelings

Source: Adapted from Leech (2014)

The reformulation of the maxims has to do with the fact that some definitions could be misconstrued. However, the author asserts that it is still possible to think the maxims as factors that influence communicative behavior. The maxims presented by Leech (2014) are variants manifestation of the GPS, which the intellectual calls "a supermaxim or superstrategy".

The phenomenon of impoliteness in interaction

Some scholars have been studying the phenomenon of impoliteness from different perspectives. According to Leech (2014), some authors prefer to maintain the studies on impoliteness separated from the studies of politeness. However, Leech (2014) defends that they are closely related phenomena.

Bousfield (2008) takes impoliteness as the opposite of politeness. According to the author, the phenomenon of impoliteness includes the communication of consciously and conflictive verbal face-threatening acts (FTAs) which are intentionally delivered: "(1) unmitigated, in contexts where mitigation is required, and/or, (2) with deliberate aggression, that is, with the face threat exacerbated, 'boosted', or maximised in some way to heighten the face damage inflicted" (p. 72). Moreover, Bousfield (2008) addresses that in order to an act of impoliteness be considered a successful act, the receiver must understand the act as an offense, a threat to his/her face.

On the same hand, Culpeper (2005) calls the attention that impoliteness has to do with how offense is taken in communication. The author claims that impoliteness is not unintentional. Impoliteness is shown as communicative strategies performed to attack face and therefore cause conflicts between the participants of an interaction. According to the author, impoliteness comes about when: (1) the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives and/or constructs behavior as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2).

Other models of politeness were/are developed around the globe; however, for this paper, we consider that the theories/models mentioned here covered the analysis and the objective of this text. Although these models of politeness may conflict in some aspects, we believe that it is possible to articulate them, and the notions presented in each one can be integrated into the analysis. Throughout the presentation of the models in this section and the analysis, it is possible to observe how the notions of face, politeness maxims, politeness rules and politeness strategies are articulated and responsible for the consistency of the analysis.

Representation and the use of language

Social representation is the common sense of a particular theme, which also includes prejudices, ideologies, and specific aspects of people's social and professional activities (CARVALHO, 2007). Then, the social environment is a significant influencer on these representations. Everyday life becomes part of representations and communicative influences interfere directly with how such representations are constructed. Moscovici (2000) asserts that social representations should be viewed as a specific form of understanding and communicating. They are linked to image and meaning. Thus, "it equates every image to an idea and every idea to an image (MOSCOVICI, 2000, p. 31).

Jodelet (2001) claims that representations are part of the interactions and circulate in communication, through speeches, images and it is characterized by pieces of information, opinions, attitudes. The concept of representation is based on variable values. It depends on the social groups in which their meanings are taken. It communicates with the social environment, and with principles and values attached to those who are represented. These elements are responsible for the construction of the identity of an individual or a group.

Similarly, Hall (1997, p. 15) addresses that representation "does involve the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things, [...] representation connects meaning and language to culture". Representation is connected to the usage of language to express something significant and to represent the world meaningfully to other people.

Hall (1997) proposes three different approaches to representation to explain its relationship with meaning and language. They are the *reflective*, the *intentional*, and the *constructivist* approaches. The *reflective approach* puts meaning into the object and the subject: "meaning is thought to lie in the object, person, idea or event in the real world, and language functions like a mirror, to reflect the true meaning as it already exists in the world" (HALL, 1997, p. 24). The *intentional approach* sets meaning as something the speaker imposes on the world through language. In this case, the words indicate what the speaker decides they should express. However, he criticizes this approach by denouncing it as flawed since it does not consider multiple sources of meanings in language. According to the author (HALL, 1997, p. 25), "the essence of language is communication and that, in turn, depends on shared linguistic conventions and shared codes". Finally, the *third approach* runs against the intentional approach by acknowledging the multiple sources of meaning in language. It recognizes the public and social aspects of language. Thus, the meaning is not fixed, for instance, individuals cannot state a unique meaning in things. Moreover, the users of language

construct meaning by making use of the language and the representation systems, that is, concepts and signs.

When it comes to the representation of minority groups, Trebbe *et al.* (2017) discuss the power of the media in these representations. There are two effective approaches of minority representation in the media. The first is related to how an individual connects to society by being represented. The second sets that "[…] an appropriate representation makes it possible for various social groups to learn more about one another, which promotes acceptance and tolerance" (TREBBLE et al., 2017, p. 6).

Nevertheless, the representation of minorities in the media was not regularly positive. Beleli (2012) denounces that the visibility of gays and lesbians in the media was portrayed by stereotypes picturing feminine gays and masculine lesbians. Likewise, Horton *et al.* (1999) assert that the media reinforced degrading stereotypes regarding black people. However, both authors agree that these representations are becoming less frequent. They affirm that in recent times, improvement has been made in the way in which minorities are represented in the media.

The media is considered to perform an essential role in the construction of concepts and reflections about the world. Soares (2007) addresses that media representations take part in a cultural environment in which people think, judge, and act in society. Besides, although there are other representation-producing agencies, such as educational institutions and science, the media are the main providers of representations (SOARES, 2007). Finally, Pirajá (2011) argues that TV plays a central role in the continuous construction and deconstruction of the collective identities supported and projected on the representations of social life. That makes it a decisive scope of sociocultural recognition. These aspects are revealed in the next section.

Corpus analysis: contextualization

Glee was written by Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk, and Ian Brennan. The series had a run of six seasons, totalizing 121 episodes with an average length of 40 to 50 minutes each episode. The story is set mainly at the fictional William McKinley High School and narrates the conflicts of students who fight to find a place of acceptance. Also, the series tells the story of Spanish teacher William Schuester, also known as Mr. Schue, and his effort to reconstruct the school choir in which he was a member during high school. The whole effort that he does concentrate on two main aspects. The first relates to his beliefs in the power of art to change society. The second has to do with "[…] Schue empower[*ing*] his students to use their voices

to stand up for what they believe in and stand up for each other" (JOHNSON, 2015, p. 9, emphasis added). In addition to being struggling with themselves, the students also have problems concerning the other actors from the school, even teachers and principals.

Considering the conflicts that the members of the choir face, the analysis turns eyes to the discrepancy in the uses of (im)politeness from teacher and principal to these students. The excerpts were collected from three episodes taken from the first and the third seasons of the series. The episodes are Wheels (S01E09) and Theatricality (S01E20) from season one, and Heart (S03E13) from season three. We prioritized these episodes for we consider having scenes in which the concepts of the politeness theories can be analyzed. Moreover, the corpus also makes it possible to reflect on the discrepancies in the treating of characters considered a minority in a comparison with characters read as a majority. To exemplify the excerpts, we use a description with the following elements: season + number of the season + episode + number of the episode + excerpt + number of the excerpt. For example: (S01E01E01) = Season 01, Episode 01, Excerpt 01.

Part 1: "there's such an insane double standard at this school"

The first scene includes three participants, principal Figgins, Santana and Brittany - two students, both from New Directions, and a couple of girlfriends. Although Brittany does not have line in this excerpt, Figgins points her out in some lines. The excerpt is taken from the thirteenth episode of the third season (S03E13). In Heart, the school is celebrating Valentine's Day. The following excerpt presents a conversation between the characters concerning kissing in public.

Excerpt 01 – S03E13E01

1.   **Figgins:** Teen lesbians, I must see you in my office, right now! [...] 2.   **Santana:** This is such bullcrap! Why can't Brittany and I kiss in public? "cause we're two girls? 3.   **Figgins:** Please don't make this about your sexual orientation. This is about public displays of affection. PDA simply has no place in the sacred halls of McKinley High. We've had complaints. 4.   **Santana:** About us? when? 5.   **Figgins:** Most recently… yesterday, 12:16 pm. 6.   **Santana:** That? our lips barely even grazed. And by the way, did you get any complaints about that hideous display that started at 12:17 pm and lasted for several uncomfortable minutes? 7.   **Figgins:** Believe me, I'd much rather see you *[Brittany]* and Santana kiss than that so-called Finchel, but if a student files a complaint because, for religious reasons… 8.   **Santana:** Oh, great. So it was some bible-thumper that complained. 9.   **Figgins:** Ms. Lopez, I'm sorry, but I'm trying to keep this school from turning into a volatile powder keg. 10.   **Santana:** I'm sorry, too. Cause all I want to be able to do is kiss my girlfriend, but I guess no one can see that because there's such an insane double standard at this school.

As we have seen in previous sections, the constructivist approach that links representation and meaning acknowledges the various sources of meaning in language. It understands the cultural and social aspects of language. Thus, what is said or shown might be interpreted in many ways since the meaning is not fixed. The language users create significance by using the language and the representation systems (concepts and signs). This excerpt shows multiple sources of interpretation in the utterances, especially in the sentences uttered by Figgins.

Firstly, in this interaction, Figgins is not friendly. He, sometimes, is rude and direct. Then, the principal does not use any rules from politeness (LAKOFF, 1973) since he imposes and gives no options for the girls. For instance, in line nine. The imposition leaves the students with no alternatives when he states they can no longer kiss in public areas of the school. Besides, through his sentences, he creates an unfriendly environment, setting all the rules on them. Moreover, Santana and Brittany's faces are threatened to the point that they cannot even show affection in public spaces.

As discussed, a positive face is a self-image that a person aspires to expose (BROWN; LEVINSON, 1987). It is the wanting of a person to have her/his face accepted, valued, and appreciated. In this excerpt, Figgins threatens Santana and Brittany's faces (GOFFMAN, 1967), for there is no approval or acceptance. On the contrary, he attacks their face (line three). This aspect is also revealed in line seven, where Figgins comments that his decision is due to *"religious reasons"*.

Concerning the politeness maxims (LEECH, 2014), the principal breaches most of them. First, the tact maxim is violated, for he constantly maximizing the girls' costs. For example, in line three when Santana asks Figgins if the prohibition has to do with them being two girls: *"Please don't make this about your sexual orientation. This is about public displays of affection. PDA simply has no place in the sacred halls of McKinley High. We've had complaints".* Moreover, the approbation maxim is also violated since Figgins punishes them because they are two girls kissing. Furthermore, the sympathy maxim is also breached, considering the principal is not very sympathetic, as in line one. In this line, he is not friendly, and he uses his hierarchy power to impose something on Santana and Brittany. Finally, the agreement maxim is also violated since Santana questions the decision in line two: *"Why can't Brittany and I kiss in public? "cause we're two girls?"*, and Figgins does not change his mind as in the ninth line.

On the other hand, to protect their [*Brittany and Santana*] negative faces (BROWN; LEVINSON, 1987), Santana uses some negative politeness strategies. First, she

is *conventionally indirect.* For instance, in line six. Therefore, she is not happy with the situation and, to not be punished, Santana gives an example of a straight couple that is regularly kissing in the halls of the institution, and no one protests about it. Here, Santana is also trying to protect [Brittany and Santana] negative faces, for she is using the strategies (BROWN; LEVINSON, 1987) to not be impeded or interfered with.

Finally, the strategy *question and hedge* and also the *be pessimistic* strategy, are used by Santana to attempt an agreement. However, there is no accordance, for Figgins states that his determination is due to religious reasons (line seven).

Although Figgins tries to deny that the decision was made because of the institution's discrimination and lack of protection, the whole conversation affirms that. In short, the analysis held here denounces a homophobic behavior coming from the principal, since he is accepting a complaint that only affects a lesbian couple. If it is ruled from the institution, Figgins must apply to all couples, regardless of their sexual orientations.

Part 2: the differences in the relations of minority and majority

The next scene includes four main participants. First, Will, New Directions teacher, Mercedes, a black student, Kurt, a LGBTQIA+ student, and Rachel, a Jewish student. The excerpt was taken from the ninth episode of the first season (S01E09). In the scenes, the New Directions is discussing songs to be sung in the Sectionals[7].

Excerpt 02 - S01E09E06

1.   **Will:** All right, guys. We're doing a new number for sectionals. I know that pop songs have sort of been our signature pieces, but I did a little research on past winners and turns out that the judges like songs that are more accessible. Stuff they know. Uh, standards, broadway.
2.   **Kurt:** Defying gravity? I have an iPod shuffle dedicated exclusively to selections from wicked. This is amazing.
3.   **Will:** Think you can handle it, Rachel?
4.   **Rachel:** It's my go-to shower song. It's also my ringtone.
5.   **Mercedes:** Why do we have to go all vanilla on this song? See, what we need is chocolate thunder.
6.   **Will:** Okay, we don't have time to rearrange a song for you, Mercedes. Rachel is singing it. Don't worry, we'll find something for you to dip in chocolate.
[...]

7.   **Kurt:** I have something I'd like to say. I want to audition for the wicked solo.
8.   **Will:** Kurt, there's a high "f" in it.
9.   **Kurt:** That's well within my range.
10.   **Will:** Well, I think Rachel's going to be fine for the female lead, but I'm happy to have you try out something else, Kurt. And we'll make sure it's got a killer high note.
11.   **Artie:** You tried.

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[7] A show choir competition.

Firstly, although Rachel is considered to be part of a minority group, since she is represented as Jewish, in addition to being insecure with her appearance, within the New Directions members, Rachel and her boyfriend Finn are placed in superior positions by the teacher. To Will, she possesses the ''fitting'' voice to sing every song, while Mercedes, for example, has an only voice to sing ''black songs'', for instance in line six.

It is important to mention that all characters in this excerpt are exposing their faces (GOFFMAN, 1967). Here, Mercedes reveals nothing new in her reaction since the behavior of Will not letting them have a significant role in competitions is regular. She already expects the return of the teacher concerning the face presented. Thus, her feelings regarding this behavior are impartial. Line eleven is an example of that. The "*You tried*" uttered by Artie claims the lack of expectation that most members of New Directions have. Nevertheless, although Mercedes' reaction is indifferent, a Face Threatening Act is performed, for, through language, the teacher does not respect either their necessity for space or their wish for their self-image to be sustained.

On the other hand, in line two, Kurt presents his positive face (BROWN; LEVINSON, 1987), his self-image that he desires to present; thus, by exposing his positive face, Kurt also demonstrates his need to be recognized, accepted, and claimed in the interaction. However, his face is not respected by Will, since, in line three, Will ignores Kurt's enthusiasm and gives him an indirect answer for his request in line two. This behavior is also characterized as some sort of silencing. In New Directions, gay people will be heard, but not too much.

 In line seven, Kurt shows his desire to audition for the musical number. In line eight and ten, Will attempts against Kurt's negative face, not attending to his desire to sing the song. Besides, Kurt is impeded and imposed by Will; consequently, his negative face is attacked.

When it comes to the politeness maxims (LEECH, 2014), Will breaches the approbation maxim in line three and eight. In line eight, he indirectly asserts that Kurt has not an adequate voice for the song. The agreement maxim is also violated in lines three, six, and ten. The teacher does not seek agreement. He has a position, and he is not open to discussion.

Concerning the politeness rules (LAKOFF, 1973), he does not follow the second rule, that is, be polite. The whole communication does not create a friendly space for Mercedes and Kurt since their requests are denied (line six and ten). Besides, the sub-rules give options and do not impose are not respected. Mercedes and Kurt do not have any option but to sing in the background with the rest of the group.

Finally, regarding the strategies (BROWN; LEVINSON, 1987), Mercedes uses some negative politeness strategies to show indirect disagreement. She wants to sing something new; however, she states that indirectly in line five: *"why do we have to go all vanilla on this song? See, what we need is chocolate thunder"*. In this line, Mercedes uses the first two strategies concerning negative face, that is, *be conventionally indirect* and *question, hedge.* Another strategy used by both, Kurt and Mercedes, is the fourth strategy, which is *to minimize the imposition.* Although they show dissatisfaction after the answers from Will, they do not insist. They do not keep repeating the same request.

In line two, Kurt makes use of the first, the second, and the third strategies concerning the positive face, that is, notice and attend to the interests, desires, needs, and goods of the hearer; exaggerate interest, approval, and sympathy with the hearer; intensify interest to the hearer. Kurt's enthusiasm expresses his excitement to perform the song. However, Will ignores his interest in auditioning for the number; thus, showing impoliteness.

As far as the use of the strategies concerning Will, he uses the first strategy of negative politeness in line eight ("*Kurt, there's a high "f" in it*"), that is, *be conventionally indirect.* In, line eight, the teacher also makes use of the third strategy, that is, *be pessimistic.* As mentioned in previous sections, these strategies aim at giving indirect answers that lead the other participants to rethink the situation by themselves. In this sense, by saying that the song has an "f" note, Will indirectly asserts that it is not an appropriate song for Kurt.

As reflected previously, the reflective approach concerning representation, language, and meaning, sets meaning into the object and the subject. Thus, the meaning is believed to lie in the object, person, idea, or event in the real world, and language works as a mirror, to reveal the true meaning as it lives in the environment (HALL, 1997). Similarly, pragmatics allows us to go deeper into the analysis, since, for a better comprehension of a sentence, it is essential to know who uttered the sentence and what the context is. Thus, since we already know the context and the participants of the interaction, we can conclude that Will's behavior towards Kurt in line eight reveals more than the words tell. This line demonstrates a homophobic behavior hidden through the words. Also, Will's comments imply that only Rachel could perform the song (line three). However, Kurt also performs the song in competition with Rachel, and later, the series reveals that Kurt gave a wrong note purposely to lose the duel.

Part 3: The privileges over the repression

This last scene is taken from the twentieth episode of the first season (S01E20). Theatricality shows the member of New Directions exposing their faces to the school. However, in the same episode that Finn has his face threatened by the football players, he also uses his white male privileges to succeed in what he desires inside Glee Club.

Excerpt 3 - S01E20E07

1.   **Will:** Hey Finn, come on in. I'm learning all this amazing stuff about lady gaga. She's got this thing called the haus of gaga, which is like this collective of artists and designers who collaborate on, on her styles and stage sets and her music. I think it's an exciting model for what we could be doing in Glee Club.
2.   **Finn:** Yeah, that's kind of what I wanted to talk to you about. I don't want to do Lady Gaga. And I suspect that… with the exception of Kurt, that none of the other guys are gonna want to do it either. I just feel like we're always doing whatever the girls want us to do.
3.   **Will:** Yeah, you're right. Maybe I haven't been listening to you guys hard enough. So let's find a solution.
4.   **Finn:** Well, I, uh, I actually already have one.

Firstly, all the politeness rules (LAKOFF, 1973) are respected. In line three, Will is clear and accepts what Finn requests. Besides, the whole conversation sets a friendly environment. Will makes Finn comfortable. Moreover, he does not impose *(Maybe I haven't been listening to you guys hard enough)* and allows Finn to choose what he wants to perform (*Let's find a solution*).

Concerning the politeness maxims (LEECH, 2014), the teacher does make use of the generosity maxim since he maximizes the cost to himself by stating that "*I haven't been listening to you guys hard enough. So let's find a solution*". Additionally, the agreement maxim and the sympathy maxim are preserved in the communication. Will sets a sympathetic atmosphere to seek agreement with Finn (line three).

Furthermore, Finn's face is exposed (GOFFMAN, 1967), for he desires something whose response he does not know yet, despite prophesying that the answer will be positive, as in line four. Hence, by talking to Will, Finn wants his face to be comprehended. Brown and Levinson (1987) state that when a person recognizes other people's wishes, he/she demonstrates an interest in satisfying the positive face. Will recognizes Finn's desires in line three, and he makes use of some positive politeness strategies (BROWN; LEVINSON, 1987) to save Finn's positive face, show closeness, friendship, and solidarity. Thus, Will makes Finn feels good.

The first strategy is *to notice and attend to the interests, desires, needs, and goods of the hearer.* By using this strategy, Will takes notice of Finn's desires and interests, and he approves them. He allows Finn to sing other songs, even when the assignment is to perform Lady Gaga songs. Moreover, Will also makes use of the strategy *include both the speaker and*

the hearer in the activity since he uses words that relate to both him and Finn. For instance, the use of "we" in line one (*we could be doing in Glee Club*), and "let's" in line three (*so let's find a solution*). Finally, the strategies *seek agreement and give gifts, goods, show sympathy, understanding, and cooperation to the hearer* are also contemplated by the teacher in line three. Will accepts Finn's discontentment and, immediately, manifests accord and recognition of Finn's declaration.

For now…

Since politeness has to do with the choices that people made in the use of language, and the linguistic expressions that give people space and show a friendly attitude towards them (CUTTING, 2002), the analysis held in this paper show the use of impoliteness in the interaction with characters considered to be a minority. Numerous examples could be in this paper that reveal differences in the treatment of minority characters. These other excerpts could not be in this paper, for the limit of content that it is allowed to have.

Furthermore, there is a huge discrepancy in the excerpts examined in this section. The use of politeness for the part of the teacher only occurs with the male white straight character. In contrast, the teacher shows impoliteness in all the interactions that include Kurt, a gay man, and Mercedes, a black woman. On the same hand, the principal act differently when it comes to prohibiting the demonstration of affection between straight couples and LGBTQIA+ couples. The analysis presented denounces that even in a place where people should be accepted and celebrated, there is a sense of prejudice, implicitly and explicitly.

In conclusion, our analysis implies that minority groups suffer more than groups seen as a majority since they desire to show their true identities, and it is often denied. The results expose that, in interactions, the concepts of the politeness theories could be applied in a way of easing the conflict and increasing the good relationship between the self and the other. Using these elements, the participants could make communication positive.

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