

ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the effect of institutional power differences on the use of politeness strategies within Michael's responses in his dispreferred adjacency pairs in the TV series *Suits*. The series tells about Harvey and Michael, a senior lawyer and his subordinate in a law firm with different institutional power. Harvey and Michael were chosen as the objects of the study because their interactions frequently involve argumentation and disagreement within a hierarchical workplace setting, making them relevant for the focus of this research, the objectives of the study are: (1) to identify the types of dispreferred adjacency pairs produced by Michael Ross in response to Harvey Specter; (2) to analyze the politeness strategies employed by Michael in delivering those dispreferred responses; and (3) to explain how subordinate power relations influence Michael's choice of politeness strategies. By mixing the theory of politeness strategies by Brown & Levinson (1987) and the theory of adjacency pairs by Levinson (1983), the results show that Michael produces five types of dispreferred adjacency pairs: Question–Answer (Unexpected), Assessment–Disagreement, Blame–Denial, Command–Refusal, and Request–Refusal, with Assessment–Disagreement as the most dominant type. In delivering these responses, Michael employs four politeness strategies: Bald-on-Record, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness, and Off-Record, with Positive Politeness as the most frequently used strategy. The findings also indicate that Michael's politeness strategies are strongly influenced by subordinate power relations, particularly relative power, social distance, and ranking of imposition, which shape how he negotiates disagreement, refusal, and denial while maintaining professional relationships.

Keywords: *Adjacency Pair, Politeness Strategy, Power Relation*