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“And We Still Would Like a Driver Swap Here”

Adaptation and Use of Politeness Strategies in Formula One Team Orders

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This thesis investigates the application of politeness strategies in how team orders are communicated in Formula One. The goals of this study were to find out the type of strategies used and whether they influenced driver compliance, as well as how engineers attempted to repair rejected orders. The orders were extracted from transcriptions and audio recordings of team radio during twelve grand prix at the beginning of the season. Qualitative discourse analysis was then applied to the data and analyzed through the lens of Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework on politeness.

The results showed that negative politeness strategies were the most common choice for issuing team orders, with more direct approaches reserved for specific situations. None of the politeness strategies could guarantee full compliance with these requests. The engineers additionally avoided giving team orders altogether when drivers were competing for the top positions. However, rejected orders showed consistent success in repair when engineers increased their use of mitigating language. It is recommended for future research to consider grands prix over a full season as well as to factor in the length of a driver and their engineer's work relationship to reduce possible biases that smaller datasets may have on how politeness strategies manifest in the sport.

Key words: formula one, team orders, politeness strategies, discourse analysis.

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1 Introduction

Formula One is a high-pressure environment, while racing on narrow tracks among other competitors, the modern racecar can reach speeds of 210 and 220 miles per hour (Clark 2024). As a result, it often necessitates that communication with drivers is concise and compact. However, Formula One is not solely a driver's sport; its athletes are required to balance both individual wants and team success for championships (FIA 2024, 2). With two drivers competing for each team (FIA 2024, 8), this introduces a more complex dynamic in race communication, negotiation, and cohesion than what may initially be expected.

In recent decades, radios have become the primary tool for relaying information to drivers on track, sent directly to their earpieces and back to the engineers (Red Bull Racing, 2018). Throughout each race session, the radio channels of Formula One teams can be used simultaneously by nearly a hundred personnel across garages and factories (ibid.). Therefore, to maintain focus and clear communication with the team, each athlete is assigned their respective race engineer, who determines what messages get relayed and, notably, how they are conveyed (Smith, 2022). Race engineers act as the only mediators between the team and the drivers. As such, their relationship with their assigned driver has become central in ensuring effective communication and cooperative behavior by the athletes (Smith, 2022).

Subsequently, the televising of driver-engineer conversations has become a core characteristic of the sport’s broadcasting. With increasing access to team communication through channels such as F1 TV or select quotes presented live during a race (Smith, 2022), television can create live narratives to enhance viewer experience. As a result, different strategy calls, especially team orders, risk being met with heavy scrutiny by the audience despite their necessity for the sport. Team orders refer to commands given by the engineers to control how teammates race against one another. The two main orders require a driver either to avoid overtaking and hold position, or to let their teammate pass without resistance (Spurgeon 2013, Watson 2024). Such examples are commonly justified as means to maximize points for a driver higher in the championship or to optimize the team’s tally if one car is on a potentially faster strategy (Spurgeon 2013).

Although previous studies have delved into the linguistic and pragmatic features of radio communication in Formula One and other motor racing categories (Pilar 2025, 116; Darus and Joharry 2023, 59; Tyrkkö and Limatius 2019, 120), little research has focused directly on

team orders specifically (Milne, Lavallee, and Coffee 2025, 2; Dahlquist, Ericsson, and Persson 2024 8-9). Despite its strategic relevance, personal incentives still motivate drivers to not always cooperate with team orders. Whereas academia has explored the topic of face-threatening acts and politeness strategies in many sports and coaching, the issue remains whether they are present in Formula One. The research questions of this study are:

1. How do politeness strategies manifest in Formula One team orders?
2. How does the type of approach influence driver cooperation?
3. How do engineers repair and adapt rejected FTAs?

Of these research questions, (1) examines which strategies are most applied within Formula One and the type of mitigators used. In turn, (2) will give insight as to whether some strategies lead to higher rates of cooperation than others. Finally, (3) addresses how rejection influences the strategies applied to performing team orders. The thesis will begin with an introduction to politeness theory, which provides an overview of how it is applied in communication. The following subsections then go on to examine the theory's application and relevance in Formula One. Thereafter, data collection and methodology are detailed, followed by the results and discussion of relevance. Lastly, the thesis concludes with a summary of the key findings from the analysis.

2 Literature review

The following section details the theoretical basis for this research, with its focal theory introduced in subsection 2.1. Afterwards, 2.2 will expand the role and relevance of politeness within Formula One.

2.1 Politeness theory

Understanding how and why politeness is constructed has been central to many studies of cooperative behavior and discourse (Dynel 2009, 23; Rusko 2014, 90). Dynel 2009, 23; Rusko 2014, 90). Politeness as a field of study considers the management of other peoples' self-esteem, or their 'face' (Brown and Levinson 1987, 2). Faces are the public presentation of oneself, which can be divided into two core desires people strive to maintain control over: negative and positive face (Brown and Levinson 1987, 61–62). *Negative face* denotes the desire for one's behavior to remain free from any external impediments, whereas *a positive face* describes the need for such wants to be valued by others (ibid.). Speech acts whose pragmatic meaning conflict with either of these faces, such as orders, requests, or discipline (Brown and Levinson 1987, 65), are known as face-threatening acts (FTAs).
As such, it is proposed that respecting faces and avoiding committing offending acts are intrinsic qualities of discourse (Brown and Levinson 1987, 61). Hence, there is an imperative to try to mitigate the potential impact of FTAs through politeness strategies. The two strands of this framework, on record and off record, are characterized by their difference in the ambiguity of the act and form a combined total of four options for mitigation (Brown and Levinson 1987, 69). Within the former strand, the offensive act is done in an explicit manner, making the speaker accountable. On record strategies branch into three options; negative politeness, positive politeness, and bald on, separated from each other by the type of minimising language used (ibid.). In the latter strand FTAs are softened by making the request implicative rather than stated explicitly.

In negative politeness, the FTA is reduced by reducing the imposition of the request. This mitigation is often achieved through hedging, politeness markers such as 'please', or other avoidance-based strategies, where distance is created between the speaker and receiver by using passives, or changing to plural pronouns (Brown and Levinson 1987, 70, 140). Within positive politeness, however, the threatening act is reorientated by emphasizing the receiver's self-image, their shared values or interests (Brown and Levinson 1987, 101). In turn, a bald

on approach is characterized by including none of the mitigators, such as in direct commands (Brown and Levinson 1987, 69). Finally, the off record -strand proposes that the speaker can negate accountability by obscuring the message of the FTA. When no action is implicitly being imposed, the speaker's wants and needs are left ambiguous (ibid.). The discussed strategies offer a framework for examining how politeness influences the delivery of FTAs in sports like Formula One, where team orders can threaten athletes' self-esteem.

2.2 Politeness strategies in Formula One

Although existing research has been conducted on the possible implications of Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies in sports remains limited, their direct application within Formula One remains contested. A key issue in this debate centers on whether such strategies can be relevant, considering the sport's high pressure and time-sensitive environment. First, it may be beneficial to consider the driver and race engineer as separate entities with differing contexts and environments. The driver may be too focused on a high-pressure situation to consider politeness strategies in their communication. In contrast, the race engineer operates from a distance. Their reliance on limited tools, such as radio and data, creates a level of separation from the sport's otherwise time-sensitive nature. However, countering arguments such as those by Milne, Lavallee, and Coffee (2025) emphasize the consequences and the relevance of social cohesion in relation to team orders. Drawing from the experiences of a retired rally co-driver, their research explicitly characterizes team orders as a misalignment between the athlete's aspirations and the team, which negatively impacts the driver's face desires (2025, 17–18) The research proposes that higher identification with a team identity may mitigate some of these damages (ibid.), thus aligning with the same emphasis on in-group membership characteristic of a positive politeness strategy.

In the dissection of Formula One athlete Charles Leclerc's radio communication, Darus and Joharry suggest that, due to earlier discussed urgency, the application of politeness strategies in the sport becomes irrelevant (2023, 64). This may indeed reflect in communications where drivers are given instructions on driving approach, or the gap to a driver behind, where information can lose its relevance. However, more caution should be exercised when proposing a link between coaching strategies in other sports and Formula One team orders specifically, as they differ in context and nuance. In team sports, athletes generally win as a collective. For example, a football team's victory is also an individual achievement for its sportsmen. However, in Formula One, a team winning a race means only one of its drivers

doing so. Team orders in Formula One rarely benefit the driver holding or giving up position, beyond retaining status-quo. Therefore, in racing, a teammate's success, while good for the team, can threaten one's individual success (Dahlquist, Ericsson, and Persson 2024, 45).

2.2.1 Cooperation

A vast array of unpredictable factors contributes to the overall success of a strategy; however, driver cooperation is a key condition that teams may consider a guarantee. The tenure of Bottas and Hamilton as teammates from 2017 to 2021 in Mercedes's Formula One team is a central example of such effective team management (Dahlquist, Ericsson, and Persson 2024, 33). Although the drivers did not experience equal success, the team helped them maintain personal ambitions and inner-team harmony with a bilateral division of orders. Therefore, the FTAs were mitigated by the established mutual ground, where positions would be reverted if the other failed (ibid). This compliance with team orders led to the pairing winning the constructors championship each season they worked together (ibid).

However, despite the benefits of cooperation, the negative impact of competitiveness and disobedience against team orders is prominent in the sport. Particularly within Red Bull Racing, where each examined teammate pairing struggled in the Constructors' Championship despite success in the Drivers' (Dahlquist, Ericsson, and Persson 2024, 36, 44). Dahlquist, Ericsson, and Persson cite poor management, costly intra-team crashes, and disobeyed orders as causes (2024, 37, 39, 44). Competition between teammates is not only inherently damaging to both the interpersonal relationships of the athletes, but team performance alike (Dahlquist, Ericsson, and Persson 2024, 48–49). Hence, the importance of managing the driver's individual wants (negative face) in relation to team identification becomes highlighted. As inner-team politics necessitate administration and guidance, a significant case is made for team orders to reflect more complex social dynamics than other radio communication.

3 Data and Methodology

This section presents the data collection process and the methodology used in this thesis.

3.1 Data

The scope of analysis is limited to the first half of the 2025 Formula One season. The selection has been made based on limitations set by the resources available, with a preference for recent material. The halfway mark was set as an endpoint with the season still ongoing at the beginning of the research. Only race, also known as grand prix, sessions have been considered. This is because team orders given in practice, qualifying as well as other shorter formats are either uncommon or pose no substantial risk to a driver's face. In total, the dataset consists of transcripts from 12 races. The data was gathered through the combined use of transcriptions provided on *Transcripts Recursiveprojects*, as well as audio recordings on the YouTube account *Inside The Cockpit*. The transcriptions acted as the main source for identifying instances of team orders, whereas the YouTube account was referred to verify quotations. Lastly, as the transcriptions for the 2025 Australian Grand Prix are missing, online video resources acted as the sole source material.

3.2 Method

As detailed above, each driver's radio transcripts for all 12 sessions have been reviewed to identify instances of team orders. This includes all explicit and implicit instructions regarding on-track behavior with one's teammate. The extracted samples were entered into a spreadsheet detailing relevant contextual variables, including the driver and teammate's positions in the race, and compliance. Lastly, qualitative discourse analysis will be applied to each example to examine the corresponding strategy outlined in politeness theory: bald on, negative politeness, positive politeness, off record, or N/A (Not Applicable).

3.2.1 The weight of performing FTAs

To evaluate whether race results are a variable in the engineers' approach to performing FTAs, each instance was assigned a numerical value from one (1) to three (3), corresponding to the driver's position when the order was given. If teammates fell into different categories (see table 1 below), the highest position determined the value. This approach was made on the assumption that giving up a higher position poses a greater threat to a driver's negative face

(want for personal success). The value assigned to a team order was based on the sport's governing body, FIA's (2024, 5) scale for awarding points. For races, this considers the top ten finishers. The table below illustrates the basis on which FTA weight was determined.

Table 1. Scale for evaluating the FTA weight

'Position' denotes the place the driver is giving up, either by not overtaking or by allowing a teammate to pass.

Position	FTA weight
1st–3rd	3
4th–10th	2
11th–	1

The top three finishing positions are considered the most valuable, as each driver is awarded a trophy and a podium celebration. The middle value (2) contains the remaining points paying positions, and the lowest value is attributed to team orders outside these places. Finally, the following section will report the findings derived from the dataset.

4 Results

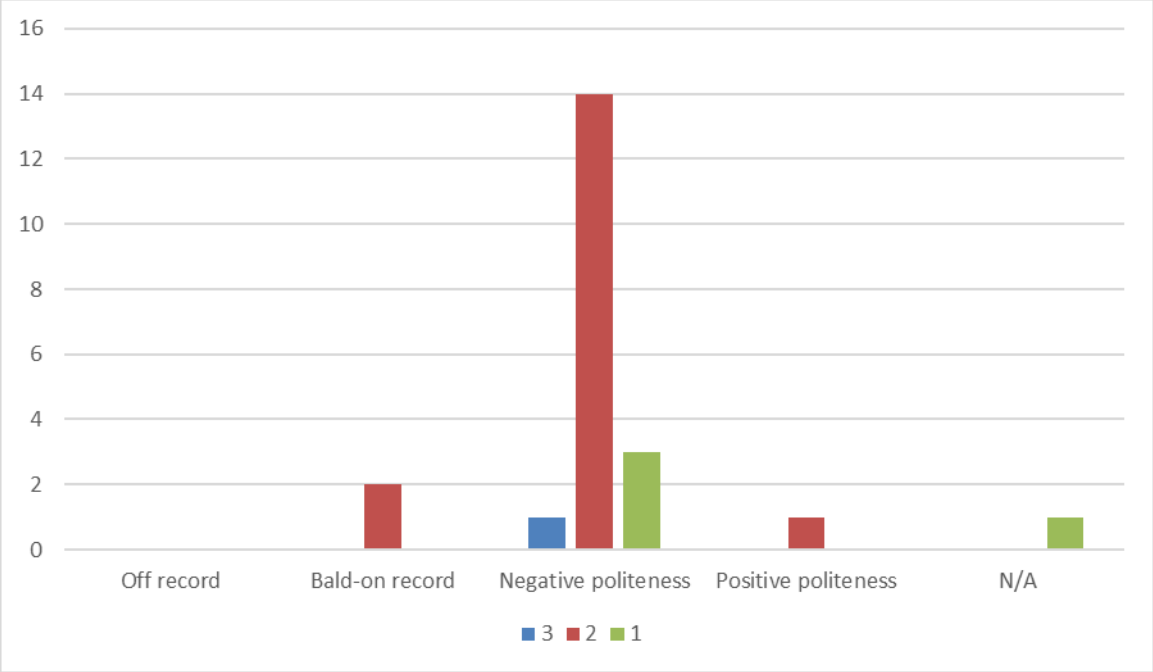
Overall, Formula One team orders showed a bias in the use of negative politeness, especially within engineer-to-driver orders. The majority of such instances required some reformulation, though drivers were ultimately incentivized to comply. Few instances employed alternative strategies, with the off-record approach not used once. When drivers took the initiative in requesting orders, more strategic variance was presented.

The subsequent subsection presents the findings in two. First, in 4.1, the team orders given by race engineers to their respective drivers have been examined in relation to each politeness strategy, focusing on both their use and reception. Secondly, the pattern of orders given by the drivers themselves is addressed in 4.2. Finally, in each of the given examples, the features corresponding to a politeness strategy have been italicized for emphasis.

4.1 Engineer-to-driver orders

Altogether, 23 team orders were observed over the 12 sessions (see Appendix 1). The majority, 17 instances as shown in Figure 1, occurred when teams were in contention for points. Engineers intervened four times when lower down the field and only once at the highest weighted category. The figure below illustrates the spread of the chosen politeness strategy in the instances across these categories.

Figure 1. The choice of politeness strategies in engineer-to-driver orders



The colour of the bar corresponds to the attributed weight of the FTA.

As shown in Figure 1., team orders were executed at the top level only once, using negative politeness. Most instances occurred in the middle category, where negative politeness was used 14 times, bald-on record twice, and positive politeness once. In the lowest category, team orders happened a total four times. Thrice with negative politeness and once where negative and positive politeness overlapped, making it not applicable to one category. This affirms the notion that teams are enticed to perform an FTA if the strategic benefit outweighs the cost to the driver's face. However, the bald on record approach was only utilized two times, with engineers showing a tendency to opt for some form of mitigation. It is therefore evident that despite the competitive atmosphere, teams do consider the social implications of team orders. No instance of an off-record approach was observed.

4.1.1 Negative politeness

The data indicates that engineers tend to favor negative face strategies over the alternatives. However, only seven out of the 18 total (see appendix 1) uses of negative politeness were successful on the first instance of the order being given. Although teams in such cases were made to adjust their communication, at no point was the initially selected strategy abandoned.

4.1.1.1 Obeyed orders

Overall, there was no discernible difference in the number of mitigators (politeness markers to soften the order) used between the middle and lower FTA weight categories. A single mitigator was used regardless of whether the driver was within a points paying position or not. Example (1) takes place during the latter half of the Japanese Grand Prix, when the Williams driver Carlos Sainz is racing in the last points-paying position (10th). As the driver needed to pit for a tyre change, he was at risk of falling lower down the order.

(1) So stay on the racing line but let Alex pass in turn 16, *please*. (Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025g)

One of the most common applications of a negative politeness marker was the adverb 'please', as illustrated in (1). While the instance is still evidently an order, the marker softens its imposition. The drivers may have a better understanding of their practical ability to follow

through with orders at a given moment; hence it is in the engineers' favor to not fully impose them. (1) conveys the teammate's expectation that the driver will "stay on the racing line", therefore avoiding an accidental collision, with the rest a suggestion rather than a demand.

Another prominent feature was the use of impersonalization using *'we'* as a replacement for *'I'* or *'you'*. The following instance comes from the inaugural race of the season, Australia. The driver in focus is racing for the race lead at his home Grand Prix, amidst changing weather conditions.

(2) Oscar, *we* should hold position *please*. Hold position. ("Oscar Piastri Full Race Team Radio | 2025 Australian Grand Prix." 2025)

(2) showcases the use of plural pronouns instead of a singular as a means of deference. This allows the speaker, in this case the engineer, to remove a target of any retaliation for the FTA by identifying with the driver or the team. With the addition of 'please', example (2) makes use of two mitigators characteristic of negative politeness. However, it is the only instance of team orders occurring within the highest weighted category. This indicates that FTAs with higher cost may be avoided altogether within Formula One.

4.1.1.2 Disobeyed orders

In total, six orders received push-back by the driver in the form of questioning or silence (see appendix 3), with three mended by an adjustment in the engineer's approach. In practice, this was often done through including a second mitigator. Most commonly, the politeness marker 'please', impersonalization by switching to plural pronouns, or reasoning, e.g., highlighting a teammate's tyre advantage was added. In cases already utilizing two or more mitigators, one of them was changed. Example 3 takes place in the opening half of the Miami Grand Prix, when each of the cars were still following one another closely. Although at the time both drivers in question were well within the points, more prestigious teams had found themselves behind the two, applying pressure to retain positions.

(3) Okay, Alex. *We* are *managing a water pressure issue* with you. We need to maintain a gap of at least a second to the car ahead ("Alexander Albon Full Race Team Radio | 2025 Miami Grand Prix" 2025)

In example (3) the driver Alex is within an overtaking distance of his teammate and may perceive that he could go faster than the car in front. Despite this, he is asked to maintain a gap, and therefore to hold position. The engineer provides overwhelming reasoning for why the order was given, emphasizing a mechanical issue. Additionally, distance is added by speaking of the team "we are managing", as well as the driver in "we need to maintain". Although in response to (3) the driver does not comply, his engineer opts to not reiterate the order. The interaction ends with the FTA and hence the order, rejected.

4.1.2 Positive politeness

Although FTAs in Formula One are primarily against one's negative face, a single instance employed positive politeness strategies to mitigate the order. The 2025 Monaco Grand Prix introduced a new rule obligating each team to pit their drivers two times during the race. Despite its intended purpose to alleviate the difficulty in overtaking on the track, it caused a pattern of teams ordering their drivers to "hold position" and slow down cars behind, allowing one's teammate to pit without losing places. In (4) the Racing Bulls driver Liam Lawson is behind his teammate early in the race. He is instructed to slow down his pace even more than before, and hence to hold position to aid his teammate.

(4) *Let's* try to manage this tyre even more, *as we discussed*. (Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025n)

Example (4) illustrates this effect of the rule change in practice, as two positive politeness strategies are employed in the order: both the engineer and the driver are included in the action using 'let's', and common ground is being asserted with "as we discussed". Note how the use of 'we' in example (3) is linguistically exclusive, 'we' referring to the team, not the driver, whereas 'let's' as seen in (4) is inclusive. Both the strategies rely on the assertion that the engineer and driver share the same desire.

4.1.3 Bald-on

Although the approach is the most direct as the order is given with no mitigators to alter the FTA, only two instances of a bald on record strategy was observed. In both circumstances, the

order was instituted by team Williams to preserve the teams' points-scoring positions at the Monaco Grand Prix. Example (5) comes at the halfpoint of the race, when the driver's teammate is close to pitting.

(5) OK, Carlos. Critical instruction. Lap time target 19.0, please. Hold position. Lap time target 19.0. (Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025m)

As shown in (5), the urgency of the order was made explicit by stating the message was 'critical'. Although the orders include a negative politeness mitigator 'please', the time sensitivity of a bald on approach negates it. Therefore, while acting as a marker of a suggestion in obeyed orders, this option is not truly available to the driver in bald on record strategies. As such, the athlete obeys the order in both instances.

4.2 Driver-to-engineer orders

In contrast to the similarities in strategies used in driver-to-engineer orders, the drivers' approaches show much more variation. To further examine these differences, it is worth considering the impact of weight levels and their relative contexts. Two out of the three found instances (see appendix 4) were made by the McLaren driver Oscar Piastri, who was in a title fight against his teammate. In contrast, the third instance was given by a driver for a team with neither in contest for the individual title, however, who were on a run to achieve their highest constructor's result in nearly a decade. Therefore, it is probable that these would result in differing responses from the teams. Accordingly, this thesis will first analyse orders intended to further collective success, followed by examining those done for individual results.

4.2.1 Constructor focused approaches

Example (6) takes place amid the Monaco Grand Prix, with both Williams drivers within points. In response to the strategy adopted by Racing Bulls, Alexander Albon suggests for his teammate to also slow down to create a gap from the cars behind.

(6) Get Carlos to black off. (Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025l)

In the request in (6), Albon uses no mitigators. Meaning, there is no attempt to soften the damage of the FTA. This falls in line with the presumption on the inapplicability of politeness strategies on the drivers. As it is time-sensitive that his teammate creates enough of a gap behind him for the stop, it seems unlikely that Albon would therefore consider the politeness of his message either. To note, however, that while the team accepted the request, the order itself did not cost either of the drivers to drop off outside points. When combined with the difficulty in overtaking, as well as the team's position in the championship, it is possible that the drivers may have felt a heightened identification with the team. Hence, a focus on collective results may alone mitigate the FTA.

4.2.2 Individual focused approaches

In contrast, an individual-first mindset is likely to take precedence over collective success for those in a title fight. The observed instances employ more indirect strategies to further one's results. Notably, example (7) given by Oscar Piastri uses an off-record approach in the latter half of the Japanese Grand Prix, when he was racing behind his teammate in 2nd place.

(7) If Lando is still saving, I think he should go soon. I think I have the pace to get [M]ax (Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025i)

Although the order does not directly request that the drivers switch positions, the emphasis on Piastri's potential pace relative to his teammate hints of this desire. By being vague, the message can be interpreted in two ways: his teammate should overtake the car in front, or the team should switch positions to allow Piastri to try it. As such, the driver leaves possible deniability and avoids responsibility for the FTA, making use of an off record strategy. The team, however, does not act on the suggestion, nor is the alternative interpretation of the message (i.e. to overtake) relayed communicated onwards. In example (7) Piastri uses positive politeness to petition team orders in response to a penalty for receiving a penalty for hard braking after a safety car at the British Grand Prix that would set him behind his teammate.

(6) I don't think the penalty before was very fair. I mean, *I know it's a big question*, but if *you don't think it was fair either*, I think *we* should swap back and race. (Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025c)

After assurance from his race engineer that the team did not think the penalty was deserved, Piastri attempted to lean on mutual ground to encourage them to consider issuing team orders. In stating “if you don't think it was fair either”, he implies the race engineer shares the same desire. Despite employing positive politeness, the team rejects the order again.

As such, negative politeness strategies appear as the most common approach in engineer-to-driver orders. Alternate strategies were used sparingly, and ambiguity was avoided altogether; none going off record. While drivers resist orders, the majority of team orders eventually receive compliance as engineers attempt alternative forms of mitigation under the selected approach. Drives exhibit more varied uses of politeness strategies in requesting orders. When approaches strive to enhance collective results, teams appear more receptive to direct requests, whereas more mitigators are applied to orders that benefit only the individual.

5 Discussion

This thesis aimed to examine how politeness strategies manifested in Formula One, to determine whether the type of approach influenced compliance, and to analyse how engineers responded to and repaired rejected FTAs. The findings revealed that most team orders utilized negative politeness strategies. Although a matched approach did not significantly influence driver cooperation, engineers managed to mend most rejections by increasing the number of mitigators. In turn, drivers, though less successful in having their suggestions accepted, employed strategies beyond negative politeness to request team intervention. As such, no single type of an approach appears to ensure cohesion across team orders.

In examining how politeness strategies manifest in engineer-to-driver correspondence, the findings showed that most team orders employed negative politeness strategies. Because these orders inherently threaten the drivers' freedom, it follows that the most common forms of mitigation were also aimed toward this threat. Mitigation was typically achieved through a form of deference, e.g., the use of politeness markers or hedging. Comparatively, positive politeness strategies were rare, which suggests that orders may not be pre-planned. As Brown and Levinson (1987, 103) argue, these strategies largely rely on the familiarity between the speaker and correspondent, such as prior agreements like 'as we discussed' (example 4), being levied in enforcing the FTA. Therefore, if decision-making over team orders was spontaneous, it would also inform its lack of use, as utilizing common ground would be made difficult. The occasional use of a bald on approach, such as in the rare case of a 'critical instruction' (example 5), further strengthens the argument for politeness in Formula One. If teams operated exclusively based on urgency, as Darus and Joharry (2023, 64) suggest, bald on strategies would be the most attractive due to their efficiency. The scarcity of such strategies in practice, however, indicates that teams are not incentivized to fully impose orders. In contrast, driver-to-engineer requests were more greatly varied. Orders that benefitted the team as a collective were bald on and reflected Darus and Joharry's (ibid.) expectations on the urgency of the environment. However, those in title-fights exhibited much higher consideration toward overall social dynamics employing positive and off record politeness. Together, this pattern suggests a conscious decision in how orders are given. If social dynamics were disregarded, all orders would likely default to one approach.

In exploring how different approaches shaped driver cooperation, the analysis showed that no single strategy guarantees compliance. Although negative politeness strategies were the most

common choice, an approach that corresponded to the face being threatened did not significantly influence driver cooperation. However, as Dahlquist, Ericsson, and Persson (2024, 16) argue, receiving team orders may by nature compel drivers to want to negate them to improve one's own results. The evidence may therefore indicate a similar pattern, where how an order is delivered is not the determining factor for cohesion. Additionally, there was a notable disparity in the number of instances between podium positions and the other categories. One interpretation of this is that the cost of an FTA in such circumstances would be too high, causing teams to opt out entirely. This is reinforced by Dahlquist, Ericsson, and Persson's argument, as it stands to reason that drivers in podium positions would have increased motivation to maintain such accomplishments. Nevertheless, driver-led orders were also heavily rejected regardless of the applied strategy. Requests that sought to improve the team's net sum of points were accepted, whereas those that would result in no change were denied. As it has already been established that drivers, and one's teammate by extension, may be predisposed to reject orders, teams may not want to risk increased conflict. Together, the findings suggest that compliance with team orders was influenced by a vast number of factors, such as the collective performance of a team or FTA weight, not only the type of politeness used.

Finally, the findings on how engineers repair and adapt rejected FTAs showed that while cooperation could not be ensured on the first attempt, orders could reliably be reiterated upon. Even as drivers disobeyed the initial order, all repairs eventually led to successful compliance. Typically, rejections were mended by including additional mitigators or changing out the previous ones the second time an order was issued. Similar to the selection of a politeness strategy, there was no set number of mitigators that worked universally. Instances with only 'please' used to soften a request (example 1) and those with an added form of impersonalization (as in example 2) were as likely to succeed on the first attempt. Only the process for repair was therefore consistent, and as such, drivers may be incentivized to ultimately comply. Applying a classical politeness model to the analysis of radio communication demonstrates that politeness remains relevant despite the time-sensitive environment of motor racing. By opting to use urgent language only in specific instances, both the engineers and the athletes showed a high level of consideration toward the team's social dynamics. Teams did not carry out driver-requested orders when they posed possible conflict with their teammate, and authority was not levied to ensure cooperation with those

that were issued. Therefore, the study of discourse in sports settings requires a more nuanced approach.

6 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine the appearance of politeness strategies in Formula One team orders. This was achieved by examining the influence a chosen strategy had on cooperation and whether rejected instances were adapted upon. Brown and Levinson's work on politeness served as the focal theory behind the study, providing a framework for the analysis of the sampled team orders. Altogether, the majority of identified instances employed negative politeness, with alternate approaches, such as bald on and positive politeness, rare.

While team orders serve a strategic role within the sport, the dynamic is flexible and purposefully enables opportunities for pushback and feedback. Despite the scarcity of alternative strategies, borders between them were explicit, and hence the choice of them was also deliberate. Politeness is therefore crucial to maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between drivers and the teams. In addition, it is shown to yield more effective driver-led strategies or potentially strengthen cooperation. As such, the findings affirm the existence of a complex social dynamic within radio communication and the relevance of such approaches in the sport.

Finally, the span of races examined in this research was relatively short and would likely strongly impact the highest- weighted category. With a lower number of races left in a season, the pressure around a title-campaign may lead teams to issue orders more diversely. Additionally, although drivers tend to have the same race engineer for extended periods, the data revealed no use of terms of endearment or familiarity common to other politeness strategies. Future research can therefore examine sessions over a full season or longer, as well as to consider the length of a driver and the engineer's relationship.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 All team orders

Driver	Order	FTA weight	Obeyed	Politeness strategy	Source
Oscar Piastri	“Oscar, we should hold position please. Hold position”	3	Yes	Negative politeness (hedging, please)	(“Oscar Piastri Full Race Team Radio | 2025 Australian Grand Prix.” 2025)
Carlos Sainz	“OK, first car behind you is Alex. [...] You know when he's closer, we let him pass”	2	No	Negative politeness (impersonalization)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025g)
Carlos Sainz	“So stay on the racing line but let Alex pass in turn 16, please.”	2	Yes	Negative politeness (please)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025g)
Esteban Ocon	“Please swap out of turn 14.”	1	Yes	Negative politeness (please)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025h)
Carlos Sainz	“Try to protect Alex.”	2	Yes	Negative politeness (hedging)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025o)
Esteban Ocon	“Please let Ollie pass, not start-finish.”	1	Yes	Negative politeness (please)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025p)
Lance Stroll	“OK, Lance, that's Fernando behind with DRS. We let him through into one. He's on a newer tyre.”	1	Yes	Negative politeness (impersonalization)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025r)
Alexander Albon	"Okay, Alex. We are managing a water pressure issue with you. We need to maintain a gap of at least a second to the car ahead"	2	No	Negative politeness (impersonalization, overwhelming reasons)	("Alexander Albon Full Race Team Radio | 2025 Miami Grand Prix" 2025)

Charles Leclerc	“We swap the cars in turn 17 to give Hamilton a chance on medium. If he doesn't pass, we'll let him.”	2	Yes	Negative politeness (impersonalization, overwhelming reasons)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025j)
Lewis Hamilton	“We're going to swap the car in 17”	2	No	Negative politeness (impersonalization)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025k)
Lewis Hamilton	“We will follow SWAP in 11, please.”	2	Yes	Negative politeness (impersonalization, please)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025k)
Carlos Sainz	“We'll do the swap next lap.” “Swap this lap, Alex, 15.1.”	2	Yes	Negative politeness (impersonalization)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025m)
Kimi Antonelli	“So we have George at 2.2 behind on that new soft tyre.” “So, don't lose time racing George. Just stick to the long gate.”	2	Yes	Negative politeness (overwhelming reasons)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025s)
Gabriel Bortoleto	“OK, Gabi. Nico just came out of the pits in new tyres.” “OK Gabi, let Nico pass”	2	Yes	Negative politeness (overwhelming reasons)	("Gabriel Bortoleto Full Race Team Radio | 2025 Spanish Grand Prix" 2025)
Nico Hülkenberg	“Car behind now is Gabi. After he gets DRS, we will swap cars. He's 1.5 behind him.” “Do you have a preferred corner for the driver swap, Nico?”	2	No	Negative politeness (impersonalization, hedging through questions)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025a)
Nico Hülkenberg	“Let's swap cars at turn three, Nico. There's a	2	No	Negative politeness (impersonalization,	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025a)

	two and a half second gap to Bearman behind Gabi.”			overwhelming reasons)	
Nico Hülkenberg	“And we still would like a driver swap here, Nico.”	2	Yes	Negative politeness (hedging, impersonalization)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025a)
Esteban Ocon	“Please let Ollie go before turn 6.”	1	Yes	Negative politeness (please)	("Esteban Ocon Full Race Team Radio | 2025 British Grand Prix" 2025)
Gabriel Bortoleto	“For your awareness, car behind is Nico, two seconds behind. He's lapping around one second quicker in a precious set of tyres. Let's keep looking ahead.” “OK, Gabi, we are going to let Nico pass before turn 22.”	1	Yes	N/A, mix of negative politeness (overwhelming reasons, impersonalization) and positive politeness (shared orientation)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025q)
Carlos Sainz	“OK, Carlos. Critical instruction. Lap time target 19.0, please. Hold position. Lap time target 19.0.”	2	Yes	Bald on record (repetition, no mitigation)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025m)
Carlos Sainz	“Swap position, turn 12 now. Critical. Remember, the car ahead is keeping the racing line.”	2	Yes	Bald on record (no mitigation)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025m)
Liam Lawson	“Let's try to manage this tyre even more, as we discussed.”	2	Yes	Positive politeness ("Let's", prior agreement, solidarity)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025n)

Appendix 2 Successful uses of negative politeness.

Driver	Order	FTA weight	Obeyed	Politeness strategy	Source
Oscar Piastri	“Oscar, we should hold position please. Hold position”	3	Yes	Negative politeness (hedging, impersonalization, please)	(“Oscar Piastri Full Race Team Radio | 2025 Australian Grand Prix.” 2025)
Esteban Ocon	“Please swap out of turn 14.”	1	Yes	Negative politeness (please)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025h)
Carlos Sainz	“Try to protect Alex.”	2	Yes	Negative politeness (hedging)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025o)
Esteban Ocon	“Please let Ollie pass, not start-finish.”	1	Yes	Negative politeness (please)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025p)
Lance Stroll	“OK, Lance, that's Fernando behind with DRS. We let him through into one. He's on a newer tyre.”	1	Yes	Negative politeness (impersonalization, overwhelming reasons)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025r)
Charles Leclerc	“We swap the cars in turn 17 to give Hamilton a chance on medium. If he doesn't pass, we'll let him.”	2	Yes	Negative politeness (impersonalization, overwhelming reasons)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025j)
Carlos Sainz	“We'll do the swap next lap.” “Swap this lap, Alex, 15.1.”	2	Yes	Negative politeness (impersonalization)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025m)
Kimi Antonelli	“So we have George at 2.2 behind on that new soft tyre.” “So, don't lose time racing George. Just stick to the long gate.”	2	Yes	Negative politeness (overwhelming reasons)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025s)

Gabriel Bortoleto	“OK, Gabi. Nico just came out of the pits in new tyres.” “OK Gabi, let Nico pass”	2	Yes	Negative politeness (overwhelming reasons)	("Gabriel Bortoleto Full Race Team Radio | 2025 Spanish Grand Prix" 2025)
Esteban Ocon	“Please let Ollie go before turn 6.”	1	Yes	Negative politeness (please)	("Esteban Ocon Full Race Team Radio | 2025 British Grand Prix" 2025)

Appendix 3 Adaptation of unsuccessful uses of negative politeness

Driver	Order	FTA weight	Obeyed	Politeness strategy	Source
Carlos Sainz	“OK, first car behind you is Alex. [...] You know when he's closer, we let him pass”	2	No	Negative politeness (impersonalization)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025g)
Carlos Sainz	“So stay on the racing line but let Alex pass in turn 16, please.”	2	Yes	Negative politeness (please)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025g)
Alexander Albon	"Okay, Alex. We are managing a water pressure issue with you. We need to maintain a gap of at least a second to the car ahead."	2	No	Negative politeness (impersonalization, overwhelming reasons)	("Alexander Albon Full Race Team Radio | 2025 Miami Grand Prix" 2025)
Lewis Hamilton	“We're going to swap the car in 17”	2	No	Negative politeness (impersonalization)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025k)
Lewis Hamilton	“We will follow SWAP in 11, please.”	2	Yes	Negative politeness (impersonalization, please)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025k)
Nico Hülkenberg	“Let's swap cars at turn three, Nico. There's a two and	2	No	Negative politeness (impersonalization,	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025a)

	a half second gap to Bearman behind Gabi.”			overwhelming reasons)	
Nico Hülkenberg	“Car behind now is Gabi. After he gets DRS, we will swap cars. He's 1.5 behind him.” “Do you have a preferred corner for the driver swap, Nico?”	2	No	Negative politeness (impersonalization, hedging through questions)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025a)
Nico Hülkenberg	“Let's swap cars at turn three, Nico. There's a two and a half second gap to Bearman behind Gabi.”	2	No	Negative politeness (impersonalization, overwhelming reasons)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025a)
Nico Hülkenberg	“And we still would like a driver swap here, Nico.”	2	Yes	Negative politeness (hedging, impersonalization)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025a)

Appendix 4 Driver-to-engineer orders

Driver	Order	FTA weight	Obeyed	Politeness strategy	Note	Source
Alexander Albon	“Get Carlos to black off.”	2	Yes	Bald on record (no mitigation)	Driver request for team orders	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025l)
Oscar Piastri	“If Lando is still saving, I think he should go soon. I think I have the pace to get max”	3	No	Off record (request is implied)	Driver request for team orders	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025i)
Oscar Piastri	“I don't think the penalty before was very fair. I mean, I know it's a big question, but if you don't think it was fair either, I think we	3	No	Positive politeness (request for shared agency)	Driver request for team orders	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025c)

	should swap back and race.”					

Appendix 5 Bald on

Driver	Order	FTA weight	Obeyed	Politeness strategy	Source
Carlos Sainz	“OK, Carlos. Critical instruction. Lap time target 19.0, please. Hold position. Lap time target 19.0.”	2	Yes	Bald on record (repetition, no mitigation)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025m)
Carlos Sainz	“Swap position, turn 12 now. Critical. Remember, the car ahead is keeping the racing line.”	2	Yes	Bald on record (no mitigation)	(Transcripts Recursiveprojects 2025m)