



Engaging Audiences with Courtesy: Gender Differences in Positive Politeness Strategies within TED Educational Speech Videos

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Abstract

Improper communication, such as insults or bad language, is a communication problem. It may harm or threaten others in various situations. Positive politeness strategy can be used as the communication strategy to avoid face-threatening acts (FTA) and make the interlocutors feel comfortable. We examined positive politeness strategies used by male and female speakers in educational TED Talks speech videos and explained the differences between male and female speakers on the use of positive politeness. The strategies were analyzed using Brown and Levinson's (1988) politeness theory. This study used discourse analysis with pragmatic approach. Data was obtained from four educational TED Talks speech videos with two male and two female speakers. There were several stages to analyze the data using discourse study, including data identification, data categorization, data interpretation, conclusion drafting and verification. The findings suggest that male speakers often giving or asking for reasons in speeches to explain why they did it. Women often joked in their speeches to relaxed audiences and put them at ease. Also, joking strategy were applied differently by male and female speakers in delivering speeches. The female speaker had to explain the contexts and describe the images, whereas the male speaker was more spontaneous and fun. The findings of this study showed how male and female speakers use the appropriate utterances when delivering their speech in front of the audiences. Positive politeness strategies are used by the speakers to show their interest, build togetherness, and avoid conflict. Besides, the findings of this study can show the speakers' ability in pragmatic competence by looking at their language use in specific context.

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INTRODUCTION

Language is used in a number of circumstances, including verbal and nonverbal communication, as well as formal events such as giving speeches, debating, and public speaking. Every speaker has a unique delivery style and strategy for engaging their audience's attention. They use a range of relevant strategies depending on the situation and the message to be communicated. Politeness strategies are often employed to alleviate the hearer's discomfort and prevent face-threatening acts (FTA). The speakers' ability to employ relevant strategies can lead to produce utterances well.

Nowadays, there are several forms of public speaking rights. These rights can sometimes make others feel uncomfortable or even threatened, as indicated by words like screaming, taunting, and other similar expressions. As a result, word choice is important, especially while speaking in front of the audiences. The strategy that can be used to save the hearer's positive face is Positive politeness strategies.

Some experts discussed the meaning of pragmatics. First, Levinson (2008) defines pragmatics as the study of language use. In line with that, Leech (1983) defines pragmatics studies as how statements have meaning in current situation. Thus, this study described about how individuals communicate appropriately. Besides, Pragmatists investigate how speakers and listeners understand meaning (Yule, 1996). This study interprets what individuals mean in a given environment and how context affects what they say. This research also covers speech actions, conversational implicature, deixis, politeness, and others (Grundy, 2000). Pragmatics studies how speakers transmit meaning and how listeners perceive it.

Positive politeness is the strategy that is used by speakers to show their friendliness to the hearers or interlocutors in order to avoid giving offense (Brown & Levinson, 1988). Positive-politeness strategies are employed as a form of intimate metaphor. For the same reason, this strategy may be utilized not just to accelerate

societal change, but also to redress face threatening acts (FTA).

The speakers can utilize positive politeness strategies to engage with the audiences during their performance, such as filling in jokes and fillers to put the hearers at ease, being optimistic about their concerns, or including both speaker and hearer in the activity to connect along the speech.

Brown and Levinson (1988) divided positive politeness into fifteen strategies:

Noticing, attending to the hearer (his or her interest, wants, needs, goods). This strategy involves noticing the hearer's changes and wants the speaker to be aware of them.

Exaggerating (interest, approval, or sympathy to the hearer). The speaker praises or compliments the listener to show attention, approval, or empathy.

Intensify interest to the hearer. This strategy characterized with having interesting story before the speaker telling something, utilizing a 'vivid present' (e.g., 'and I say this...'). It also uses directly cited speech instead of indirectly reported speech, such as tag questions or statements like 'you know?', 'see what I mean?', or 'Isn't it?'.

Using in-group identity markers. The strategy allows speaker to claim common ground with hearer through group definition, address forms, language or dialect, jargon or slang, and ellipsis.

Seeking agreement. Repetition and safe subjects were used in this strategy. Safe topics allow the speakers to emphasize agreement to fulfil hearer's need to be 'right'. For example: talking about weather or garden beauty. The speakers repeat what the previous speaker stated during discussion.

First, avoid disagreement strategy involves the speaker pretended to agree with the listener. Next, presupposing/ raising/ asserting common ground; in this strategy, the speaker uses gossip or small conversation to solve an FTA. This strategy also changes the address' perspective. "I am there, you are here" and "I am here, you are there." Where the addressee's position is 'here'. Third, Joking is used to stress that shared background or

those shared values and as exploitation of politeness strategies as well. The speaker uses joking strategy to put the listener 'at ease'. Next, the strategy of asserting or presupposing implies knowing the listener's wishes and being able to accommodate them. Also, it encourages the listener to cooperate with the speaker. In offering, promising strategy, the speaker may emphasise his cooperation with the hearer and help him achieve his goals. In a strategy of being optimistic, it is assumed that the hearer wants what the speaker wants for the speaker or both speaker and hearer, and will assist him achieve it.

Giving or asking reason strategy is characterized by giving or asking reason to explain or assuming reflexivity. Assuming or asserting reciprocity is a strategy showing reciprocal obligations or rights between speaker and hearer. Lastly, giving gifts to the hearer. In this strategy, the speaker may satisfy the hearer's positive-face wish by fulfilling certain needs.

Talking about gender and communication, social factors connect both since men and women have different characteristics and talk in various ways. Eckert and McConnell-Ginnet (2003) defined gender and sex. Gender is a social construct of biological sex, whereas sex is determined by sexuality. Many believe that biological variations between men and women define gender by affecting their abilities and dispositions. Language may be used to communicate differences in talents and dispositions. In other words, men and women have different characteristic and speaking styles. Women use terms like darling, sweet, gorgeous, charming, etc. Besides, as for diction, women call friends differently than males.

One public speaking platform, TED Talks, shows several styles of how male and female say the words, including the use of positive politeness strategies to make the hearer feel appreciated, wanted, and to avoid an undesirable communication trait.

Since 1984, TED, which stands for Technology, Entertainment, and Design, has hosted live conferences to discuss creative ideas. Academic and non-academic speakers deliver TED Talks.

TED Talks was formerly a high-end convention with paid participants. TED Talks went online in 2006 to reach more people (Nuraniwati & Permatasari, 2021). TED presentations covered fascinating tech, entertainment, and design issues. Religion, ecology, gender, and poverty are noticeable topics. TED might link speakers and audiences worldwide as it grows.

Compared to abundant video on YouTube, TED Talks was one of excellent examples to analyse positive politeness strategies and how male and female speakers applied these strategies according to the situation they faced. It has complex focus to talk, various themes to discuss, and presents many valuable speakers from different background. In addition, the speakers in TED Talks are professional, well-prepared, and can be example of how to use positive politeness strategies properly. In delivering speech, the speakers are not only focus on themselves, but also focus to the audiences.

Speakers' communication styles also engage audiences (Khairunnisa et al., 2021). In addition, O'Hair et al. (2010) represented three categories of speech: informational, persuasive, and special occasion speeches. More less, it is related with the TED Talk speakers' purpose in delivering their speech.

The three categories of speech proposed by O'Hair et al. (2010) are informative speech, persuasive speech, and special occasion speech. Informative speech generally defines, explains, describes, or shows current knowledge, ideas, or methods of thinking about a subject. It may describe someone, somewhere, or something. Informative speeches give comprehensive and clear information so the audience can comprehend. Persuasive speech affirms, changes, or motivates individuals. Some persuasive presentations aim to change audience values and attitudes. Explicit answers, such as encouraging listeners to contribute or vote. Special occasion speech is the speech for a certain occasion and purpose such as introduction, acceptance, presentation, after-dinner, and inspirational speeches.

The previous studies of politeness strategies and gender have been conducted on many different topics. Some studies focused on the use of politeness strategies in entertainment media, such as movies, talk shows, and YouTube Videos. The study of analysing politeness strategies in Proposal Movie, conducted by Azmi and Hartono (2021). The result in the Proposal movie was about the differences between positive and negative strategies, the relationship between the speaker and listener, and the language used in speech. Meanwhile, Hartoyo et al. (2019) examined the main character's positive politeness in "Greatest Snowman," a 19th-century film, and "Chappie," a 21st-century film. Positive politeness strategies differed in the two films with different century backgrounds. Despite socioeconomic class, 19th-century people respected atypical individuals and retained their families. In contrast, the 21st century saw individuals obsessed with technology, criminals using illegal weapons, and people just talking about what they like. Positive civility was more common in the 19th century than in the 21st.

Several studies were mentioned related to talk shows. Hutahaean et al. (2021) aimed to analyse the various types of politeness strategies, decide the most frequently used politeness strategies, and find out what factor influenced politeness strategies in the "Pesbukers" variety show. Moreover, the study from Alif Ruansyah and Rukmini (2018) focused on describing the types of politeness strategies that is used by the host in Ellen Degeneres' talk show to explain the realization of impoliteness strategies that is used by the host in Ellen Degeneres' talk show, and to explain the guest star responses to the impoliteness strategies addressed to him in Ellen Degeneres' talk show.

The study of analysing politeness strategies on YouTube videos was conducted by Sofia and Adlina (2023). They focused on the patterns of apologizing videos by following Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. The study found that YouTube creators have a balanced number of using positive and negative politeness depending on the situation. The strategy of 'apologizing' in negative politeness was

frequently used and followed by 'Offering promise'.

The study of politeness strategies related to the interview section was conducted by Arianti (2022). She focused on positive politeness strategies used in interviews with Desi Anwar, Dewi Soekarno, and Bill Gates. The research found that Japanese respondent, Dewi Soekarno applied more positive politeness strategies than American Bill Gates. This conclusion opposed Japanese and American communication approaches since Americans utilize positive politeness while Japanese do not. Some utterances are analysed and identified based on the language function of positive politeness in James Corden's interview. The result of the study showed that strategies of positive politeness from Brown and Levinson's theory are found (Ika Mahayani et al., 2018).

On average, the mentioned studies above were similarly applied positive politeness strategies theory proposed by (Brown & Levinson, 1988). Meanwhile, this study examined male and female speakers' differences of positive politeness strategies when giving educational TED Talks speech videos.

The studies that focused on politeness and gender were also mentioned. Isfara et al., (2023) explained that social factors such as gender can impact language usage. The way male and female interact or communicate are different, although it can be similar in certain situations.

The Iraqi EFL students in Al-Anbar used a politeness strategy. There are different ways to use politeness strategies based on gender; female students used politeness strategies more slightly than male students. In other words, female students tend to use negative politeness more than male students (Hamood & Challob, 2023).

The study conducted by Alaa'M et al. (2023) focused on investigating positive politeness strategies used by Jordanian males and females through their Facebook comments on the Roya news page, including investigating the effect of gender and news topics on politeness strategies.

The study conducted by Torres (2020) explored politeness strategies used by the voices of Philippines coaches, emphasizing their genders and exposure to Western culture. The result showed that positive politeness was mostly used, followed by negative politeness, bald on-record, and off-record. Furthermore, the differences in politeness strategies used by coaches based on gender and exposure to Western cultures were also examined.

The study from Al-Abbas (2023) Investigated Jordanian children's politeness strategies in gender requests at various ages. The research found that six-year-olds understand civility, but the right speaking act is still unclear. Boys and females utilized similar politeness methods. Girls favoured indirect request methods, while boys preferred direct ones. Meanwhile AlShurafa et al. (2022) was not only focused on positive politeness, but also negative politeness strategies. They examined Saudi TV male and female politeness strategies. As the result, negative politeness strategies were more common among women. The male interviewer was neutral toward the woman. However, male interviewees only applied positive politeness strategies while interacting with interviewer. Sholikhatin and Indah (2019) focused on positive politeness in male and female Instagram comments to Bill Gates' post.

This research found that men and women utilized different versions of the 15 positive politeness strategies. Males and females mostly applied noticing or attending to one's preferences and needs. However, males' comments used the strategy of joking about putting the hearer at ease and the strategy of offering and promising. Females often noticed the hearer's interests, wants, needs, or things.

On average, the mentioned studies above were similarly applied positive politeness or politeness strategies theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1988) and focused on gender's difference in using politeness strategies in YouTube videos, interview session, or entertainment. The gap between the previous studies and this study is about the focus. The previous studies focused on several topics and not

many of them take the focus to TED Talks videos. Thus, the current research focuses more on analyzing the use of politeness strategies by TED Talks speakers with two research questions as follows:

1. What are the positive politeness strategies used by male and female speakers in educational TED Talks speech videos?
2. What are the differences between male and female speakers on the use of positive politeness strategies?

METHOD

This study applied discourse analysis with pragmatic approach to examined language context. The aims of this study were to describing positive politeness strategies used by male and female speakers, including the contexts, and to explain the differences in using both strategies using positive politeness strategies theory proposed by (Brown & Levinson, 1988).

There were two male and two female speaker of educational speech videos that used as the source of the data. We selected the data by observing and watching some of TED Talks videos, then we chose the videos that contained positive politeness strategies. We also considered the views of watching to see the impact of positive politeness strategies to the viewers. These videos were shown in the form of table below:

Table 1. The list of male and female speakers in educational TED Talk speech videos

Video 1: Male speaker
“It’s not what you teach, it’s what kind of teacher you are” by Gregory Chahrozian. This video was uploaded on 19th of July 2023, Number of views: 44.127 x watched.
Video 2: Male speaker
“How to make learning as addictive as social media” by Luis Von Ahn. Uploaded on: 26th of October 2023. Number of views: 6.990.007 x watched.
Video 3: Female speaker
“The joy of learning random things on Wikipedia” by Annie Rauwerd. (Uploaded on: 19th of October 2023. Number of views: 78.117 x watched.
Video 4: Female speaker

“Should we let students use ChatGPT?” by Natasha Berg. Uploaded on: 24th of September 2023. Number of views: 102.201 x watched.

Observation and table analysis were applied as the instruments of collecting data. First, this study used indirect observation in order to see the past videos, since we cannot watch the circumstance, participants, or getting to the location at that time. There were some steps in doing observation, including choosing the videos on TED Talks, watching the speech videos to mark or checklist the utterances that included as positive politeness strategies, and categorizing the data based on the positive politeness strategies used by speakers in their speech. In line with that, the analysis of political speeches, debates, and talk programs were also applied indirect observation. We chose this because TED Talks can be included as a talk program. The videos showed the speakers' words, gestures, and emotions.

The second tool was analysis table. The analysis table was used to arrange the appropriate types of positive politeness based on the speakers' utterances. Besides, it was used to answer the research question and highlight speakers' positive politeness strategies. It also helped to categorise, analyse, and interpret the data. The excerpt of the analysis table is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Example of Data Analysis

Code	Sentences	Sub-types of positive politeness	Explanation
PP/V2/001	This is a public announcement, that is where Guatemala is. (showed the map and hearers were laughing)	S 8: Joke	In this context, the speaker tried to make it clear by showing the map location of Guatemala and somehow it is fun when he said "this is a public announcement and pointed where Guatemala is"

The table analysis consisted of the code of analysis, sentences, sub-types of positive

politeness, and the explanation why the sentences included as the use of positive politeness. The code “PP” was positive politeness; “V2” was video 2; and “001” was the number of sentence. There were four steps in doing data analysis. The first step was selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data contained in the written field notes or transcription. We only focused on positive politeness strategies proposed by the theory of Brown and Levinson (1988). Next, we categorized the utterances that related to positive politeness strategies and explained the genders differences on this strategy. After that, we interpreted each sentence related to positive politeness strategies. Then, we wrote the contexts to draw a picture of the situation, and adding the related previous studies to strengthen the interpretation. Finally, we presented the findings and discussions of positive politeness strategies based on Brown and Levinson (1988)'s theory and gender differences in using these strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Positive Politeness Strategies Used by Male and Female Speakers in TED Talks Educational Speech Videos.

This section answered the objective of study. The result showed in the form of table below:

Table 3. Findings of positive politeness strategies used by male and female speakers educational TED Talk speech videos

Strategies	Males		Females	
	V1	V2	V3	V4
S1				
S2	10	6	8	
S3	2	5	2	3
S4	3	5		1
S5				1
S6				
S7	1	1		
S8		16	13	4
S9				
S10				
S11			1	

Strategies	Males		Females	
	V1	V2	V3	V4
S12	1		1	
S13	5	15	3	5

Table 3 shows that there were nine from fifteen strategies applied by both genders. Male speakers applied seven from fifteen strategies and the most frequently used strategy was S13/giving or asking for reason. Meanwhile female speakers applied eight from fifteen strategies and the most frequently used strategy was S8/joking. The positive politeness strategies that not found used by both genders were S1/noticing, attending to the hearer, S6/avoid disagreement, S9/asserting or presupposing the speaker’s knowledge, S10/offering or promising, S14/assuming or asserting reciprocity, and S15/giving gifts to the hearer. Each strategy explained below.

1. Exaggerating (interest, approval, or sympathy to the hearer)

The speaker showed his interest, approval, or sympathy to the hearer by saying a nice thing or giving praise. I found this strategy is used 16 times by both male speakers. For example: (PP/V1/026)

“For example, my art teacher was a petite, scruffy, nail-biting mumbling man, but he was an amazing artist.”

The utterance above showed the speaker’s amazed feeling to his art teacher. he used Exaggerate word ‘amazing’ even he has to mention some of his art teacher’s characters, like ‘petite’, ‘scruffy’, and ‘nail-biting mumbling man’ at first.

One of female speaker applied this strategy 8 times and she used it to express her interest to something. For example:(PP/V3/043)

“I said that I get really into trivia. Some of this people will spend a long time doing very trivial things.”

The sentence above described about the speaker’s interest about trivia by exaggerating that she is really into trivia. Trivia is information and data that is considered to have a little value. It was different to the study from Sholikhatin and Indah (2019) where this strategy is used by

speakers to show their interest or approval to exaggerate strategy by expressing an expectation.

2. Intensifying interest to the hearer

Male speakers applied little bit more frequent (7 times) than females (5 times). However, both genders showed different function in this strategy. Male speaker used overstate to intensify hearers’ interest. For example: (PP/V1/004)

“I had to walk through this long courtyard with **hundreds of googly eyes** just staring at me.”

The utterance discussed the speaker's first-day teaching nervousness. He felt a spotlight effect that day, with many pupils and others thinking about him.

One of unique findings from female speaker was using this strategy by telling a little story and thrown a joke in the end of utterance. For example: (PP/V5/034)

“When I was in the – (showed a picture of Breast-shaped hill), in the summer of 2020, I kept posting my favourite trivia. Physically, I was quarantined, but I was exploring the world. Things like breast-shape hills or this unusual chess opening (showed a picture of Bong cloud attack).”

The speaker tried to tell the audience about her quarantine-era status and ability to explore the globe online. Her discovery of a breast-shaped hill and an odd chess opening was humorous. This line is unique because she gave a brief story to grab the audience attention, then made a joke. Sofia and Adlina (2023) found that intensifying interest to the hearers was able to express a praise to the receivers for their contribution and support.

3. Using in-group identity markers

Male speakers applied this strategy more frequent (8 times) than females (once). Male speakers applied this strategy to mentioned their family’s name or the jargon/ mascot in speech. For example: (PP/V2/011)

“Common applications like **Snapchat, Instacart, Duolingo, and Quizlet** have also begun to integrate this technology into their platforms. And then OpenAI released gpt4 in march which is the newest version of the system that powers chat GPT.”

The utterance above was about speaker that described some examples of common

applications that integrated with ChatGPT to the audiences. This research found comparable results as (Sholikhatin & Indah, 2019). One study discovered that males used this strategy as address form by calling 'Bill' on Instagram comment.

4. Seeking agreement

This strategy only applied once by female speaker. For example: (PP/V4/047)

"I think most of Educators would agree that the goal of education is to help our students learn how to think critically and problem solve"

The speaker looked for agreement on education's goal and AI's role in teaching and learning. It related to the study from (Santos et al., 2023). They discovered that students seek agreement by repeating or focussing on the addressee's statement.

5. Presupposing/ raising/ asserting common ground

This strategy only applied twice by male speakers. For example: (PP/V2/094)

"My hope is that, I know we can do this, but, you know, my hope is that as humanity, we can do what Duolingo has done for learning languages but for all other subjects."

The speaker wished for further educational applications like Duolingo to teach various disciplines. The speaker also employed personal-centre switch terms like "you know," which may not claim that hearer's knowledge of the specific specifics is comparable to speaker's but rather that hearer's understanding of that circumstance in general.

6. Joking

The speaker uses joking strategy to put the listener 'at ease'. A male speaker applied this strategy 16 times, meanwhile both female speakers applied this strategy in total 17 times. Both genders have different style in making jokes. Male speaker made the joke spontaneously, meanwhile female speaker should explain the context of the picture. For example: (PP/V2/006)

"It's a smaller country, it's a poor country, and well, what can I tell you, it has much better Mexican food. (hearers laugh and clap hand)"

The speaker claimed that even he came from a small and poor country, they have better Mexican food. The audiences laugh at that time. Whereas, the example from female speaker: (PP/V3/018)

"I was reading about Goblu and Beatosu, fake towns (showed a picture). They don't exist, but they were put on the official Michigan map in the Ohio section at the bottom by mischievous mapmakers in the '70s (people's laugh)"

The speaker showed listeners some fascinating Wikipedia trivia. She read about Goblu, Beatsou, and fake towns. Expectedly, several audiences laughed.

7. Being optimistic

This strategy only found once in female speaker. For example: (PP/V3/031)

"Wikipedia sometimes feels infinite. And I'm sure you've heard warnings that it's not perfect (showed a picture)."

In utterance above, the speaker expressed her opinion and was sure that the audience had received the warning against using Wikipedia as a source due to its imperfections.

8. Including both speaker and hearer in the activity

One of male and female speakers applied this strategy on their speech. Male speaker applied it to motivate the audiences and invite them to do better things. For example: (PP/V2/64)

"So, those who are in education or those wanting to be educators, let us strive to have an impact and mold the future for the better one student at a time"

The speaker inspired audiences to make a difference in school, society, and life to improve better students. He used 'let us', which involves speaker and listener in the activity.

9. Giving or asking reason

The male speaker used this strategy to describe why he created an educational software and its benefits. While the female speaker used it to clarify her point. Male speakers utilised this method 20 times and female speakers 5 times. The example from male speaker: (PP/V2/022)

“And let me tell you why. There’s a number of reasons. One of them is that there’s a huge audience for it.”

In this utterance, the speaker explained his desire to build an instructional software and chose foreign languages. He said he started teaching various languages because of the huge audience.

The example from female speaker: (PP/V5/054)

“I don’t think I would call anything useless knowledge, **because** the thing about trivia is that it’s an invitation to learn more about a subject.”

She spoke to the audiences on useful knowledge. Even trivia or amusing facts may inspire us to study more about any topic.

The Differences Between Male and Female Speakers on the Use of Positive Politeness Strategies

Besides sharing ideas, the speakers must communicate with the audiences to closer the distance. There were also clear differences between genders in using this strategy. It can be from the purpose they used or the combination of strategy in an utterance.

First, the use of exaggerating. One of speakers applied this strategy to show their admiration to someone they liked. Meanwhile female speakers applied this strategy to show her interest to something.

Second, the use of intensifying interest to the hearer. Both genders have different purpose in using this strategy. Male speakers applied it to express overstate and use direct reported speech. Meanwhile female speakers applied it by telling a good story before explaining something to increase the audiences’ interest to listen.

Third, the use of joking. Male and female differed in making joke. Male speaker’ jokes were more spontaneously and easier to make audiences laugh. Whereas, Female speakers need to demonstrate and explain several showed pictures. In addition, the female speaker also joked while arguing.

Forth, giving or asking reason. In giving their reason, male and female speaker had their own purpose. When describing anything, male

speaker frequently explain why they did it. It differed with female speaker where they applied this strategy to explain why they like something and to give reason from their argument. Besides, there were some strategies that applied by male speaker but not in females.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to describe positive politeness strategies used by male and female speakers in educational TED Talk videos. Using discourse analysis with pragmatic approach, I draw two conclusions based on findings and discussions. First, male speakers frequently applied giving or asking reason strategy on their speeches. It was used to explain about why they did it. Female speakers frequently used joking strategy in their speech. It was used to put the audiences at ease and to reduce the tension in speech. Second, the unique difference between male and female speakers in delivering speech was joking strategy. The female speaker had to explain what was going on and describe the illustrations, whereas the male speaker was more spontaneous and entertaining.

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