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Language Politeness Strategies in Instagram Comment Columns on Public Figures: A Pragmatic Study on Social Media User Interaction

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital communication has transformed public interaction patterns through platforms like Instagram. Instagram comment sections have become digital discursive spaces that demonstrate various forms of language use, including expressions of support, criticism, suggestions, and evaluations directed at public figures. This study aims to identify and analyze politeness strategies employed by netizens in Instagram comment columns discussing public figures from a pragmatic perspective. Using a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach with a purposive sampling technique, data were collected from Instagram comments directed at public figures during January–March 2026. Data were analyzed using Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory framework, focusing on four strategy categories: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record. The results indicate that the positive politeness strategy was dominant, with a frequency of 52%, followed by bald-on-record and off-record strategies at 24% each, and negative politeness at 4%. Personal or family content tended to elicit positive responses, while public policy content more often drew direct criticism or sarcasm. This study makes theoretical contributions to cyberpragmatics research and enhances public awareness of the importance of language politeness in digital communication.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has brought significant changes in the way humans interact and communicate. In community communication, language is generally expressed through speech. Society cannot be separated from language because language serves as a means of interaction. Meanwhile, the purpose of communication is to convey various feelings and thoughts through language during speaking. Human interaction can take place effectively when supported by language as a means of communication. In addition, it states that speech is an inseparable element in the communication process. It also states that, in today's technological era, social media is common and familiar to most people. The presence of social media within the digital ecosystem allows people to share information, express opinions, and participate in public discussions without space or time limitations. Oktapiantama & Utomo (2021) (Beautiful Yustiani et al., 2024) (Ariyadi et al., 2021) (Devy & Utomo, 2021) Maharani & Utomo (2020) Aini & Utomo (2021) Ila & Rahmiati, 2024; Sulistianah et al., 2025)

Social media platforms like Instagram not only serve as a means of sharing photos and videos but also function as public communication spaces that allow direct interaction between users through the comment section. The main means of communication is language. Humans can express various concepts, ideas, experiences, desires, and emotions through language as an intermediate medium. The comment column is a digital discourse space that showcases various forms of language use, including expressions of support, criticism, suggestions, and assessments of issues and public figures. The interactions in this digital space reflect the dynamics of community communication as they convey attitudes and views about social phenomena emerging in society. This happens because basically language is used as a communication medium to channel certain desires and intentions (Hasanah et al., 2022) (Wijayanti & Utomo, 2021) (Shafari, I. S. D., Mardiningsih, & Rokhmawan, 2024; Sukandi et al., 2022). (Pratama & Utomo, 2020)

Instagram was chosen as the object of the study because it has different interaction characteristics compared to other social media platforms, such as TikTok and X. Although TikTok excels at distributing short videos. X is a fast, text-based discussion space. Instagram offers a combination of visual, audiovisual, and comment features that enable direct, continuous public interaction between users and account owners. These characteristics make Instagram a space for

public responses to certain issues or figures in a more open and documented manner. In addition, the level of engagement among Instagram users in Indonesia is relatively high, so the comments on each upload can reflect a variety of attitudes, views, and language strategies used by the digital community. Therefore, Instagram is a relevant source of research data for analyzing language use in public interaction on social media. Instagram also serves as a means to obtain various information and as a forum for users to express ideas and creativity. On social media platforms such as Instagram, the audience can watch various videos on the account. (Dewi et al., 2024) (Widyawati & Utomo, 2020)

In practice, the Instagram comment column is often a space for public expression that showcases various communication strategies used by social media users. Comments that appear can be in the form of support, criticism, suggestions, or satire against the figure who is the object of discussion. Research shows that netizens' comments on public figures often exhibit linguistic variation that reflects public attitudes, emotions, and perceptions of these figures. This condition makes the social media comment column an interesting data source for linguistic study, especially in pragmatic research. (Shafari, I. S. D., Mardiningsih, & Rokhmawan, 2024; Sukandi et al., 2022)

In pragmatic studies, language politeness is an important aspect of how speakers use language to maintain social relationships with speaking partners. According to, language politeness is part of ethics and manners in the use of language, both verbally and in writing. In communication, every speaker is required to use polite language in both formal and informal situations. Language politeness is not only related to linguistic norms but also to the communication strategies speakers use to maintain their self-image (face) and to appreciate others in social interactions. In the context of digital communication, the use of politeness strategies has become increasingly complex because interactions occur without face-to-face contact and involve users from diverse social backgrounds. Language politeness in communication is one aspect that has received significant attention in the current era of globalization. Research shows that communication on social media often varies in politeness and rudeness, influenced by the speaker's attitude towards the issue being discussed. Thus, analyzing language politeness in digital communication is important for understanding how social media users express opinions while maintaining social relationships in online public spaces. Ni'am &

Utomo (2020) (Chaer, 2010; Yule, 2006) (Nursita et al., 2022) (Herma, 2023; Rahmani, 2025)

The phenomenon of communication in social media is also closely related to the issue of digital communication ethics. In some cases, freedom of expression on social media is not accompanied by awareness of language ethics, leading to less polite forms of speech, such as sarcasm, ridicule, or direct criticism. Research shows that netizens' comments on social media often employ communication strategies that can threaten others' self-image, especially when discussing public figures or controversial issues. This shows that social media is not only a space for public communication but also an arena for social interaction, revealing the dynamics of relationships between society and public figures in digital discourse. (Supa'at et al., 2021; Wahyuni & Herdiani, 2025) (Yusuf & Resha, 2025)

From a pragmatic perspective, the analysis of linguistic politeness often draws on the theory of politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). This theory emphasizes that, in social interaction, every individual needs to maintain a self-image, or "face," consisting of *a positive face* (the desire to be appreciated and accepted) and *a negative face* (the desire not to be bullied or inhibited). Brown and Levinson explained that in communication, there are speech acts that can threaten the face of the speaker and the speech partner, called face-threatening acts (FTA). Therefore, speakers usually use various politeness strategies to minimize these threats, such as *bald-on-record*, *positive politeness*, *negative politeness*, and *off-record strategies* (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In the context of digital communication, these strategies often appear in various forms of language used by netizens to express criticism, support, or opinions on an issue (Sulistianah et al., 2025; Thahirah & Amin, 2025).

Several previous studies have examined politeness in language on social media from various perspectives. Research by Salsabil and Ningsih (2023) shows that netizens' comments on Instagram show various forms of linguistic politeness used to convey support and criticism of an issue. The study found that netizens' interactions on social media use positive politeness strategies to foster solidarity and closeness in public discussions. However, research on social media comments also shows that digital interactions often contain elements of impoliteness, such as sarcasm used to convey criticism of certain figures. (Ila & Rahmiati, 2024) (Culpeper, 2011; Supa'at et al., 2021)

Although much research has examined language politeness on social media, most prior

work has focused on analyzing politeness or aggressive speech in digital communication. The focus on impoliteness limits the study of the language politeness strategies that netizens use constructively in digital communication, leaving it still relatively limited. In addition, some previous studies have examined language politeness in the context of general social media communication, without specifically examining interactions between the public and public figures. (Culpeper, 1996; Yusuf & Resha, 2025) (Herma, 2023; Shafari, & Rokhmawan, 2024)

On the other hand, interactions between netizens and public figures on social media have distinct characteristics because they involve power dynamics, public perception, and broader public attention. Netizens' comments on public figures not only reflect individual attitudes but also describe the dynamics of public communication in the digital public space. Research shows that digital interactions between the public and public figures often depart from the expected norms of politeness and communication practices on social media. However, studies that specifically examine language politeness strategies in Instagram comment columns discussing public figures remain relatively limited, especially regarding constructive positive and negative politeness strategies. (Sukandi et al., 2022)

Based on the research gap, this study aims to identify and describe the language politeness strategies used by netizens in Instagram comments discussing public figures, drawing on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory. In particular, this study focuses on (1) identifying the types of politeness strategies that appear in netizens' comments, (2) determining the most dominant politeness strategies used, and (3) explaining the relationship between the use of these politeness strategies and the form of netizens' responses, such as support, appreciation, criticism, suggestions, and sarcasm towards public figures. Through this analysis, this research is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the patterns of language use in digital interactions and the dynamics of relationships between the public and public figures on social media. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich pragmatic studies, especially in the field of linguistic politeness and cyberpragmatics. In practice, the results of this research are expected to increase public awareness of the importance of using polite language on social media and to encourage the creation of a more ethical, responsible, and constructive digital communication culture.

Pragmatics and Politeness in Language

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that studies how context affects meaning in communication. Pragmatics is a branch of study that analyzes the use of language expressions in the context of communication. In addition, pragmatics is understood as a field in linguistics that examines the relationship between the structure of language and the communicative goals achieved through speech. (Alifah et al., 2022) (Mutia et al., 2022)

According to pragmatics, it focuses on the use of language in social contexts and on how the speaker conveys implicit and explicit meaning through their speech. In contrast to semantics, which studies literal meaning, pragmatics emphasizes implied meanings and how situational context shapes their interpretation. It can also be said that pragmatics examines the meaning or intent of speech, which is always related to its context of use. From a pragmatic perspective, politeness is not only reflected in polite word choices but also in a way of speaking that respects the interlocutor and considers applicable social norms and values. Language politeness is a crucial aspect in maintaining social harmony and minimizing conflict in communicative interactions. Yule (2006) (Lailika & Utomo, 2020) (Chaer, 2010)

According to Leech (1983; 2014), politeness is governed by six maxims: tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim, and sympathy maxim. These principles serve as a guide for speakers in using language politely and effectively in various communication situations. In the context of digital communication, these principles of courtesy are often tested by the characteristics of anonymous, non-face-to-face online communication. (Fatmawati & Ningsih, 2024)

Brown and Levinson's Theory of Politeness

The theory of politeness put forward by) became the dominant analytical framework in the study of linguistic politeness. This theory is based on the concept of "face," which comprises two dimensions: positive face (the desire to be appreciated, accepted, and recognized by others) and negative face (the desire not to be disturbed, inhibited, or forced by others). According to the explanation, every speech has the potential to face Brown & Levinson (1987) Brown & Levinson (1987) *threatening acts (FTA)*, so speakers use various polite strategies to minimize these threats.

The politeness strategy is divided into four main categories. First, Brown & Levinson (1987) bald-on-record is used without damping and is usually applied in emergencies or when

communication efficiency is a top priority. This strategy does not pay attention to the face of the speech partner and is generally used when the power imbalance between the speaker and the speech partner is very large or when maximum clarity is required. Second, *positive politeness*, which focuses on approaching and strengthening social closeness between speakers and speech partners through strategies such as finding common ground, using in-group signs, offering praise, and expressing concern. Third, *negative politeness* that emphasizes respect for the autonomy of speech partners through indirect language, apologies, nominalization, and conditional forms. Fourth, off records that are implicit in nature and allow the speaker to deny the intent if necessary, usually through the use of metaphors, irony, or presuppositions.

In the context of digital communication, these strategies often appear in various forms of language used by netizens to express criticism, support, or opinions on an issue. Recent research shows that in online communication, especially on social media, politeness strategies are often ignored because users feel freer to express their opinions without considering their impact on others. However, many users also consciously use politeness strategies to maintain social relationships and avoid conflicts in digital interactions. (Sulistianah et al., 2025; Thahirah & Amin, 2025) (Fatmawati & Ningsih, 2024)

Language Politeness in Digital Communication

The development of information and communication technology has brought significant changes in the way humans interact and communicate. The presence of social media within the digital ecosystem allows people to share information, express opinions, and participate in public discussions without space or time constraints. However, the characteristics of anonymous and non-face-to-face digital communication often reduce users' awareness of language politeness norms. (Ila & Rahmiati, 2024; Sulistianah et al., 2025)

The cyberpragmatics approach offers an effective analytical framework for understanding politeness in digital communication. According to Scott, in the online context, face-threatening acts become cheaper and lower risk, thus encouraging users to be more direct or even rude. Social media creates a space for "low-cost face-threatening acts" that allow users to express criticism directly, without the risk of face-to-face or real social confrontation. Fatmawati & Ningsih (2024) (Yusuf & Resha, 2025)

The research uses a third-wave pragmatics framework to analyze the meaning of discursive-integrative politeness in the digital space. The research reveals eight pragmatic meanings related to politeness in online communication, namely: (1) negative politeness aimed at avoiding confrontation, (2) negative politeness through ignorant humor, (3) positive politeness intended to prevent prolonged conflicts, (4) positive politeness to assert credibility, (5) negative politeness to assert authority, (6) negative politeness expressed through emotional outbursts, (7) negative politeness that appears in direct criticism, and (8) negative politeness that signifies relational closeness. Rahardi (2025)

Strategies of Impoliteness in Social Media

In addition to examining politeness, several studies also analyze language impoliteness in digital communication. According to the conceptualization of rudeness, it is not merely the absence of politeness, but linguistic behavior—both intentional and perceived—that causes contempt, asserts dominance, or challenges social norms. Culpeper's taxonomy includes five strategies of impoliteness: bald-on-record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm/mock politeness, and withholding politeness. Culpeper (1996; 2011)

Research on social media comments shows that bald-on-record impoliteness strategies are most frequent in certain contexts, such as Instagram user interactions. However, this variation depends on platform-specific communication norms, audience expectations, and cultural factors that significantly shape the choice and frequency of incivility strategies. Research found that many netizens' comments on Instagram violated negative politeness, including blunt remarks, sharp criticism, and even sarcasm that threatened the face of speech partners. (Wang, Nan & Wang, Li, 2023) Yusuf & Resha (2025)

Politeness in Language in Interaction with Public Figures

Interaction between netizens and public figures on social media has its own characteristics, as it involves power relations, public perception, and broader public attention. Netizens' comments on public figures not only reflect individual attitudes but also describe the dynamics of public communication in the digital public space. Research shows that netizens' comments on Instagram exhibit various forms of linguistic politeness to convey support and criticism of an issue. (Sukandi et al., 2022) Salsabil & Ningsih (2023)

Furthermore, the study analyzed politeness in Twitter comments from public figures and found that digital interactions between the public and public figures often depart from the expected norms of politeness and the communication practices on social media. Another study found that netizens' interactions on social media used positive politeness strategies to foster solidarity and closeness in public discussions. Based on the description above, this study will analyze the strategy of politeness in the Instagram comment column discussing public figures using a pragmatic approach, especially the theories of politeness by Shafari & Rokhmawan (2024) and Ila & Rahmiati (2024), and by Brown & Levinson (1987).

Factors Influencing the Politeness Strategy

The analysis shows that several factors significantly influence the choice of politeness strategy in the Instagram comment section. The first factor is the topic of the public figure's upload. Posts related to controversial issues, such as politics and public policy, tend to provoke more rude comments than posts related to personal life that are positive.

The second factor is the user's identity. Users with real identities tend to be more polite in their comments than users with anonymous accounts. These findings align with the argument in a cyber-pragmatic study that digital anonymity encourages online disinhibition, leading to more rude language. (Dewi et al., 2024)

The third factor is the community context. Comments on the Instagram accounts of public figures in the entertainment sector tend to use more casual, expressive language. In contrast, comments on the accounts of public figures from academics and religious circles tend to be more formal and polite. A similar pattern was found in the analysis of speech actions in learning content, where language registers are strongly influenced by the community context in which the speech occurs. Damayanti et al., (2022)

The fourth factor is the type of upload. Posts that provoke discussion or controversy, such as public statements about social or political issues, tend to get comments with lower levels of politeness. This relates to the dynamics of public discourse on social media studied by, where the context of intense discussions encourages the use of more assertive, and sometimes less polite, directive speech. Luqyana et al., (2022) Alifah et al., (2022)

RESEARCH METHOD

Approaches and Types of Research

This study uses a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on understanding and interpreting the politeness strategies used by netizens in Instagram comments about public figures. An in-depth analysis was conducted of the form of speech, the context of language use, and the pragmatic function of each comment. Qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people or observed behaviors. The qualitative approach was chosen because it could provide a deep understanding of the phenomenon of language politeness in the context of complex digital communication. Furthermore, he explained that qualitative research involves important efforts such as asking questions, collecting specific data from participants, analyzing data inductively ranging from specific themes to general themes, and interpreting the meaning of data comprehensively. Bogdan & Taylor (2010), Creswell (2019)

This type of research is descriptive because it aims to systematically describe the forms of language politeness strategies found in Instagram comment sections about public figures. In line with the descriptive research perspective, it serves to describe or explain existing phenomena, including conditions, characteristics, and patterns observed at the time the research was conducted. This study does not aim to test hypotheses, but rather to reveal empirical facts about language politeness strategies in digital interactions. Sugiyono (2016)

Although this study is qualitatively oriented, frequency and percentage are still used in a limited way as simple quantification to show the tendency of each politeness strategy. The numerical data are not used for statistical testing or generalization, but only as support for the description and qualitative interpretation of the phenomena found.

Data and Data Sources

The data in this study are netizens' comments on Instagram comment sections discussing public figures. The research data is in the form of written speech that employs politeness strategies, including support, appreciation, criticism, suggestions, and sarcasm, towards public figures who are the object of discussion.

The research data were sourced from three Instagram accounts, namely @folkative and @fiersabesari, during the January-March 2026 period. The three accounts were chosen purposively because they have a high level of interaction and display content related to various

categories of public figures. @folkative accounts cover government officials and public policy issues, while @fiersabesari accounts feature public figures in the arts and literacy.

The selection of the three accounts aims to provide a variety of digital communication contexts to identify language politeness strategies in netizens' responses to public figures. The research data consisted of 25 comments that were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on the following criteria: (1) comments related to public figures who are the focus of the upload, (2) comments contain linguistic politeness strategies that can be analyzed using the theory of Brown and Levinson (1987), (3) comments have a clear communication context, and (4) comments are not spam, promotions, or comments that are not relevant to the topic of the upload.

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection technique in this study uses the see-and-record method. According to the technique, the examination is carried out by carefully listening to language use, then recording data relevant to the research problem. Data collection is carried out in the following systematic stages. First, researchers conducted initial observations of several Instagram accounts of public figures to identify uploads that triggered active, varied discussions. Second, based on the observations, three public figures' Instagram accounts were selected that met the inclusion criteria: high interaction levels and a variety of content types (public policy, professional entertainment, and personal entertainment). Third, from each of these accounts, two to three uploads with the highest number of comments (highest engagement) are selected to ensure the diversity of responses. Fourth, from each selected upload, a maximum of five most representative comments that meet the data selection criteria are selected, yielding a total of 25 comments analyzed. The comments were collected via screenshots and documentation, complete with metadata (time, upload type, interaction context). Fifth, the collected comments are transcribed into text for easy analysis and assigned data identification codes (e.g., Data 1; Data 2, and so on). Stuart (2015)

The sampling technique used is purposive sampling. According to, purposive sampling is a sampling technique based on specific considerations aimed at obtaining rich, relevant information. In this study, the data selection criteria included: (1) comments that contained a clear and identifiable strategy of politeness or language profanity; (2) comments addressed to public figures or in interactions between users related to

public figures; and (3) comments that were complete with context (time, type of upload, and interaction situation). If the number of comments on an upload is very large, the researcher applies a selection technique based on the above criteria, giving priority to comments with high engagement (the highest number of likes) and that best reflect a variety of communication strategies (support, criticism, suggestions, and sarcasm). Data collection was carried out during January–March 2026 to ensure adequate data and sufficient variation in context. Creswell, (2019)

Data Validity

The validity of the data in qualitative research was tested through triangulation techniques. According to Denzin, triangulation is a data validity check technique that uses something else to assess the degree of data trustworthiness. Explains that triangulation in credibility testing is the process of checking data across multiple sources, methods, and time points. This study applies two types of triangulation. First, theoretical triangulation, which compares the results of data analysis with various theories of linguistic politeness to ensure consistency of interpretation. Second, data triangulation, which involves comparing data from different sources (Instagram accounts of public figures across categories: government officials, celebrities, and other public figures) and across different collection times to ensure the reliability of the findings. (in Moleong 2014) Sugiyono (2016), Brown & Levinson (1987) Culpeper, (1996, 2011)

In addition to triangulation, this study also applies a trail audit, or audit trail, which documents the entire research process systematically and transparently. According to Lincoln and Guba (in), trail audits include documentation of data arrival, decision-making during analysis, and the final product. Thus, the validity of the data can be accounted for academically. Creswell, (2019)

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis in this study uses a pragmatic qualitative content analysis. According to Lasswell (in), content analysis is carried out through systematic symbol encoding, message recording, and subsequent interpretation. Data analysis is carried out through the following systematic steps: (1) data reduction, which is the process of selecting and simplifying data by focusing attention on comments that contain language politeness strategies and eliminating irrelevant data; (2) data presentation, namely the organization of data in the form of a matrix or table based on the category of politeness strategy; (3)

concluding, namely the interpretation of pragmatic meanings and interaction patterns that appear in the data. (Yusuf & Resha, 2025)

The data analysis used the framework of politeness theory) which classified politeness strategies into four categories: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record. This analysis considers the situational context, the social relationship between the speaker and the speech partner, and the communicative goals to be achieved. Each piece of data is analyzed by identifying the linguistic forms used, the politeness strategies applied, and the pragmatic meanings implied. Brown & Levinson (1987)

Data Presentation Techniques

The results of the data analysis are presented in narrative descriptions, accompanied by data citations as empirical evidence. Data presentation was carried out systematically according to the determined categories of politeness strategies. Examples of actual data from the analyzed Instagram comments, identification numbers for the data, and in-depth pragmatic interpretations accompany each category. The presentation of data includes summary tables to help readers understand the distribution and variation of politeness strategies in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The study found 25 Instagram comments from public figure accounts during January-March 2026. The data comes from accounts of government officials, celebrities, and public figures with high interaction in the comments. From the analysis of 25 comments, four strategies of linguistic politeness were identified according to the theory of Brown and Levinson (1987).

Politeness Strategies Found

Table 1. Language Politeness Strategy

Strategy	Frequency
Positive Politeness	12
Bald On Record	6
Off Record	6
Negative Politeness	1
Total	25

The results of the study showed that the positive *politeness* strategy was the most widely used, namely in 12 comments. This strategy is characterized by the speaker's efforts to get closer to public figures, for example, by praising, showing empathy, or using familiar language.

The *bald-on-record* and *off-record* strategies were found in 6 comments each. The *bald-on-record* strategy is the use of direct language without qualifiers, such as sharp criticism or straightforward requests. Meanwhile, the *off-record* strategy involves using disguised language, such as sarcasm or irony, so the speaker can deny the intent if necessary.

The *negative politeness* strategy was found in only 1 comment. This strategy uses respectful, non-

imposing language, such as "may" or "may," to make room for public figures to refuse.

Differences in Strategies Based on Content Type

The analysis shows that the type of content uploaded strongly influences the choice of politeness strategy. Public policy content tends to receive direct criticism or sarcasm, while personal or family content tends to receive more praise and expressions of affection.

Table 2. Politeness Strategies Based on Content Type

Content Type	Bald On Record	Positive Politeness	Negative Politeness	Off Record	Total
Public policy	3 (33,3%)	1 (11,1%)	1 (11,1%)	4 (44,4%)	9
Celebrity business	1 (33,3%)	1 (33,3%)	0 (0%)	1 (33,3%)	3
Professional entertainment	1 (25,0%)	3 (75,0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4
Personal entertainment	1 (20,0%)	4 (80,0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5
Viral entertainment	0 (0%)	3 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3

From the table above, it can be seen that personal entertainment content, such as family photos or moments together, always gets a positive response (100%). On the other hand, public policy content received more criticism or satire (77.8%) using the bald-on-record or off-record strategy.

Discussion

Strategi Positive Politeness

The study found that the positive politeness strategy was the dominant strategy, accounting for 12 comments. These findings are interesting because they contradict the common assumption that Instagram's comment column is always full of profanity. To understand why this is so, here is an in-depth analysis of one of the data sets.

Context: This data comes from @fiersabesari's Instagram account (Fiersa Besari, musician/writer), which uploaded content about the song "Tulang Punggung" performed at a Palembang concert. This comment is intended to appreciate the work and the moment.

Data: "Thank you, dude, for the backbone song that has been sung in Palembang 🙌🏻" (Instagram account @fiersabesari, March 3, 2026, 1 like).

Analysis:

The comment is categorized as a positive politeness strategy because it contains several

linguistic indicators of appreciation and solidarity with the speaking partner. First, the phrase "*thank you*" is a form of expression that directly shows appreciation for the actions of public figures. This expression strengthens the positive face of the speaking partner by recognizing the contribution. Second, the use of the greeting "*bung*" is a marker of social closeness (an in-group identity marker). The greeting shows that the speaker seeks to reduce social distance with public figures by using familiar, egalitarian terms. Third, the use of emojis 🙌🏻 serves as a marker of nonverbal support and appreciation in digital communication. The emoji reinforces the positive meaning that has been built through prior verbal expressions. Based on these indicators, this comment shows the speaker's efforts to build solidarity, closeness, and respect for public figures, and can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy. Brown & Levinson (1987)

These findings align with research showing that netizens' comments on Instagram exhibit various forms of politeness in the language used to convey support and criticism, with praise being the most common strategy in entertainment content. In addition, these results align with the study by Ila and Rahmiati (2024), which found that netizens' interactions on social media involve the use of positive politeness strategies to foster solidarity and closeness among users in public discussions. The use of the call "dude" is also relevant to the findings that in communication with public figures on digital platforms, users often adopt familiar calls

to build fictive kinship or virtual kinship relationships. Salsabil & Ningsih (2023) Thahirah & Amin (2025)

In more intimate personal content, the strategy of positive politeness becomes an exaggerated expression of emotions. Here is an example:

Context: *The data comes from the same account (@fiersabesari) but with different content, a photo of a girl wearing glasses. This content is personal and family-oriented, triggering an emotional response different from that of professional content.*

Source: "🥰🥰🥰🥰🥰 I'm the one who criesssssss@fiersabesari s

Analysis:

The strategy of positive politeness in this comment is evident in several linguistic elements. First, the greeting "neng" shows a form of affection and emotional closeness. The greeting is used to show affection for the object being discussed. Second, the repeated use of emojis 🥰 five times serves as a very strong emotional marker. In digital communication, emojis serve as replacements for facial expressions and intonation that cannot be conveyed directly. Third, the form of the word "nangissssss" shows the elongation of consonant letters used to emphasize the intensity of the speaker's emotions. This form shows a high level of emotional involvement with the upload. Fourth, the "ih" particle and the sentence construction "why am I" show the expression of familiarity commonly used in informal communication. Thus, linguistic indicators, such as affective greetings, emotional emojis, and lengthening of word forms, indicate the use of a positive politeness strategy aimed at building social and emotional closeness with public figures.

This phenomenon aligns with findings on cyberpragmatics, which show that in online communication, visual elements such as emojis replace prosody and facial expressions in marking politeness intent. The study also found that in celebrity personal content, the positive face of the speaker (fans who want to be recognized) is often more dominant than the negative face of the speaking partner, leading to an expression of emotions that seems excessive but functional in building a fan community. Fatmawati & Ningsih (2024) Herma (2023)

Strategi Bald On Record

The *bald-on-record strategy* is found in 6 comments, with interpretations that depend heavily on context. In public policy content, this strategy

serves as a direct criticism, while in entertainment content, it can signal familiarity.

Context: *Data comes from @folkative's Instagram account that discusses the MBG (Free Nutritious Meals) Program of the National Nutrition Agency. This comment is aimed at government officials and contains policy-critical content.*

Data: *"The MBG program should be focused on disadvantaged areas only, the impact is more on target, and the budget savings can be much greater" (Instagram account @folkative, January 15, 2026, 25.7k likes).*

Analysis:

This comment is categorized as a bald-on-record strategy because the speaker conveys his opinion directly without using language-refining elements. The first indicator is seen in the use of the word "should". The word denotes a normative demand that implicitly directs the relevant party to take certain actions. The second indicator is the absence of mitigating elements such as "maybe", "maybe", "I think", or the form of apology typically used to reduce threats to the speaking partner's face. The third indicator is seen in the declarative sentence structure, which is firm and direct: "focused on disadvantaged areas only". This structure shows that the speaker does not try to disguise the purpose of the criticism conveyed. Based on these indicators, this comment is a bold-on-record strategy because the message is conveyed straightforwardly and without dampening.

These findings reflect the "low-cost face-threatening acts" described by. In digital communication, anonymity and physical distance reduce the risk of confrontation, so netizens tend to use more indirect strategies to express criticism of problematic policies. The study also found that in interactions with public figures, social media users often ignore conventional norms of politeness when they feel that their position as a "public watchdog" gives them the right to be direct. Adding that politeness is not only seen in the choice of words, but also in the way of speaking that respects the interlocutor and takes into account the social norms and values that apply in this context, the norm of "public surveillance" legitimizes direct language. (Yusuf & Resha, 2025) Wang & Wang (2023), Chaer (2010)

However, in different contexts, the same strategy can mean completely different things:

Context: *Data comes from the same account (@fiersabesari) as the professional content—*

a fan request to create a reel of the song "Pelukku pour Pelikmu".

Data: "Req reels Pelukku for Pelikmu dude" (Instagram account @fiersabesari, February 22, 2026, 1000 likes).

Analysis:

The bald-on-record strategy appears in the use of the word "Req" (request), which directly expresses the speaker's desire without opening or smoothing the speech. In addition, the comment structure consists solely of the core request, without any introductory phrases such as "if possible", "please", or "I hope so". This shows that the speaker conveys his or her intention directly. However, the use of the greeting "bung" helps maintain interpersonal relationships so that speech is not perceived as rude. Therefore, this comment is categorized as bald on record because it prioritizes the clarity of the message through direct delivery.

Brown & Levinson (1987). Explains that the Bald On Record strategy can be used without face threats when the speaker has good faith (mutual orientation) with the speaking partner. In this context, the fan-artist relationship that is built over time creates this mutual orientation. found that in communication with public figures on digital platforms, users often adopt short, direct language as a sign of familiarity, not rudeness. Thahirah & Amin (2025)

Strategi Off Record

The off-record strategy was found in 6 comments with very different functions between the political and entertainment contexts. In politics, this strategy serves as protection against confrontation, while in entertainment, it fosters community solidarity.

Context: Data comes from the @folkative Instagram account that discusses fuel and long weekend policies. This comment uses situational irony to criticize policy inconsistencies.

Data: "eh it turns out that they are on a long weekend vacation and fuel consumption has increased 😊" (Instagram account @folkative, March 12, 2026, 7,420 likes).

Analysis:

This comment is categorized as an off-record strategy because the criticism is not explicitly conveyed. The first indicator is the phrase "eh, apparently," which literally expresses surprise but, in this context, is used ironically to convey criticism. The second indicator is evident in the implicit relationship between "long weekend" and

"increased fuel consumption". The speaker does not directly state that the policy failed, but the reader can infer the criticism through the information presented. The third indicator is the use of emojis 😊 that serve as markers of irony and sarcasm. The emoji helps the reader understand that the comment is not meant as ordinary information, but rather as an indirect criticism. Thus, the meaning of criticism emerges through implication, so this comment is an off-the-record strategy.

This finding aligns with the concept of "negative politeness through ignorant humor" from the third-wave pragmatic framework. It also explains that, in social media, speech that threatens the face becomes cheaper and carries lower risk, thus encouraging users to be more direct or even impolite in a disguised way and adding that in Rahardi (2025), Yusuf & Resha (2025), and Fatmawati & Ningsih (2024), cyberpragmatics, emojis serve as stance markers that replace prosody in conveying the meaning of irony.

Strategy Negative Politeness

The *negative politeness* strategy was found in only 1 comment. To understand why this strategy is so rarely used, here is an in-depth analysis of the data.

Context: Data comes from the @folkative Instagram account that discusses MBG Program policies. This comment offers advice while still respecting the speaking partner's official status.

Data: "Maybe it can be made into a day for you to be a blessing 🙏" (Instagram account @folkative, February 18, 2026, 6,342 likes).

Analysis:

This comment shows a strategy of negative politeness because the speaker seeks to minimize the threat to the speaking partner's face. The first is found in the word "maybe," which functions as a hedge or speech smoother. The word shows that the speaker does not impose his proposal. The second is found in the word "can," which gives the speaking partner the choice to accept or reject the proposal. The third is the salutation "sir," which recognizes the social status of the speech partners. Fourth, emojis 🙏 serve as markers of respect and politeness in digital communication. Based on this, the speaker seeks to maintain the speaking partner's autonomy and freedom, so this comment is a negative politeness strategy according to Brown and Levinson (1987).

Research shows that politeness in Instagram comments requires a balance between freedom of expression and respect for others' personal space.

Data 3 shows that some social media users still maintain conventional norms of politeness. The very low research findings indicate that, in Indonesia's digital culture, which tends to be collectivistic and solidarity-oriented, strategies that emphasize social closeness are more dominant than those that emphasize distance and individual autonomy. The study explained that in the Indonesian-language digital space, positive politeness aimed at preventing prolonged conflict is more commonly used than negative politeness, which avoids confrontation. The principle of politeness emphasizes that the maxim of sympathy and agreement is more dominant in a collectivist culture than the maxim of wisdom that emphasizes individual autonomy. Herma (2023), Rahardi (2025), Leech (2014)

Implications of Findings for Cyberpragmatic Studies

The findings of this study show that Indonesian netizens have a rich repertoire of situational politeness strategies. They are not always rude, but they are also not always polite in the conventional sense. The choice of strategy depends heavily on context: praise for family, sarcasm for policy, familiarity for the creative community.

Fourth, the politeness strategies used by Instagram users indicate that, although digital platforms offer greater freedom of expression, users still maintain a pragmatic awareness, enabling them to choose a language strategy that suits their context and communication goals. Melani & Utomo, 2022 Nabila et al., 2023

This research significantly enriches the understanding of cyberpragmatics in the Indonesian context. In contrast to the assumption that digital communication tends to be impolite, this study shows that netizens employ a complex strategy and are aware of politeness norms, even though their implementation differs from face-to-face communication. This complexity reflects the adaptation of oral culture to a digitized written medium, where conventional norms of politeness remain relevant but are modified by the technological and social characteristics of social media.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

This study found that politeness strategies in Instagram comments about public figures varied in complex ways, depending on the type of content uploaded. The positive politeness strategy was most frequent, with 12 data points, indicating that netizens tended to build solidarity and social

affiliation in digital interactions. The bald-on-record and off-record strategies were found in 6 data sets each, generally used in controversial public policy content. The negative politeness strategy was found in only 1 data point, suggesting that in Indonesia's collectivist digital culture, strategies that emphasize social distancing are less dominant. These findings confirm that digital communication is not always rude; Netizens have a complex strategic repertoire and are aware of politeness norms, even though the implementation differs from face-to-face communication. Personal or family content received a positive response. In contrast, public policy content received more criticism or sarcasm, reflecting the dynamics of the relationship between society and public figures in the digital discourse space.

Advice

Based on the research results, it is recommended that social media users increase awareness of the importance of choosing the right politeness strategy for the interaction context, especially when conveying criticism of public policies, so that they remain constructive and do not excessively threaten the self-image of public figures. The researcher is further advised to develop a cyberpragmatic study by extending the research object to other social media platforms, such as TikTok or X (Twitter), as well as considering additional variables such as gender, age, or the user's educational background to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of language politeness in digital communication. Social media platforms also need to develop digital communication ethics education features that guide users in using positive and negative politeness strategies in a balanced manner, thereby creating a more polite, ethical, and responsible digital communication culture.

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