



Politeness Strategies Used by Japanese and Indonesian Speakers on Social Media

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Abstract

This study compares the politeness strategies used by Japanese and Indonesian speakers in communication on social media, based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. To investigate the utilization of politeness strategies in social media interactions, we gathered 200 comments on several contents by public figures on Twitter and Instagram posted in December 2022. The dataset comprises 100 comments from Japanese users derived from posts made by accounts like @yousuck2020, @kishida230, @watanabenaomi703, and @yuriko.koike. The other 100 comments were collected from Indonesian users from accounts such as @fiersabesari, @jokowi, @raffinagita1717, and @ridwankamil. The research findings show a similarity between Japanese and Indonesian speakers, with positive politeness strategy being the most frequently used politeness strategy in social media interactions. This is because there is a common desire to maintain good relationships in communication on social media. On the other hand, differences were observed in the utilization of negative politeness and off-record strategies. The research results reveal that the frequency of negative politeness strategies used by Japanese speakers was slightly higher than that used by Indonesian speakers. In comparison, the frequency of the off-record strategy was lower.

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INTRODUCTION

Social media is an internet-based platform that enables users to interact by sharing text, images, videos, and audio. Nowadays, social media is considered the most effective means of communication because, with an internet connection, anyone can connect and interact with others anytime and anywhere (Chandra, 2021). According to Datareportal, based on a survey conducted by Kepios, it was found that as of October 2022, 59.3 percent of the world's total population, or approximately 4.74 billion people, are social media users.

However, the emergence of social media has brought convenience and new problems. The freedom to interact and communicate without limits on social media allows users to use language freely, including impolite language and hate speeches (Bustan & Alakrash, 2020; Subyantoro & Apriyanto, 2020; Teneketzi, 2022). This makes politeness one of the issues discussed in the use of social media. Politeness is a habit, etiquette, or rule of behavior applied in a particular region (Mislikhah, 2020).

Brown and Levinson developed the concept of politeness as an action that considers or takes into account the feelings of others (Brown, 1990). The feelings in question are related to two kinds of faces: positive and negative. This means that when communicating, we must consider fulfilling the desires of our interlocutors, which are referred to as faces. This includes positive face (the desire to be liked and recognized by others) and negative face (the desire not to be disturbed by others).

However, in practice, we often face situations where we must convey something threatening our interlocutor's face. Brown and Levinson (1987) referred to this as a face-threatening act (FTA). From this idea emerged the concept of strategies that can be used when facing such situations, referred to as politeness strategies. Four politeness strategies can be used in communication as an effort to avoid face-threatening acts, including (1) Bald on-record strategy, which means to say anything directly without trying to fulfil the hearer's face; (2)

Positive Politeness strategy; which means to fulfill hearer's positive face; (3) Negative Politeness strategy, which means to fulfill hearer's negative face; and (4) Off-record, which means to say something indirectly and ambiguous (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Research on politeness has been ongoing for several decades and has undergone changes and developments. Just like in the study by Pingjing and Matsumura (2011), which analyzed free conversations in Japanese and Chinese, both of which have different linguistic systems and cultural backgrounds. The study found differences in the structure of the two languages in expressing politeness and respect, especially when applying Negative Politeness strategies. Nevertheless, Japanese and Chinese mostly use Positive Politeness strategies to avoid Face Threatening Acts (FTA) that can show familiarity and closeness with the interlocutor.

Not only in everyday conversations but politeness strategies are also manifested in interactions on social media. Ammaida (2020) researched politeness strategies used by social media users in commenting on former US President Donald Trump's posts on Instagram, based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. The study found that Positive Politeness strategies were the most used, indicating an attempt by users to establish rapport with the former president.

While previous research in the Japanese language has mostly examined politeness strategies in face-to-face conversations (Okuyama, 2005; Pingjing, 2016), there is a notable absence of studies on politeness strategies employed by Japanese speakers on social media. In studies examining politeness strategies using social media as their data source, the majority primarily focus on a single language (Alibasyah, 2018; Ammaida, 2020; Maros & Rosli, 2017; Purnama & Sukarto, 2022; Rosyadie, 2021). However, there is a notable gap in the literature, as no analysis has been comparing politeness strategies between Japanese and Indonesian languages in this context. Therefore, this study is expected to contribute to filling this gap by comparing

politeness strategies between Japanese and Indonesians based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) classification of politeness strategies and using Instagram and Twitter as data sources for the study.

METHOD

This study uses the descriptive method, as it systematically elaborates, explains, and presents the findings through types and comparisons of politeness strategies used by Japanese and Indonesian speakers on social media. The study adopts a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. This is because the phenomenon studied as data is examined from the perspective of natural context, so the expected research results cannot be achieved through statistical procedures or other quantitative methods.

The research data is sourced from comments given to a public figure's post on social media platforms Twitter and Instagram, as follows:

- a. On Twitter, data was collected from user comments on posts with the usernames @fiersabesari and @jokowi for Indonesian language data and from users @yousuck2020 and @kishida230 for Japanese language data.
- b. On Instagram, data was collected from comments on posts by users with the usernames @raffinagita1717 and @ridwankamil for Indonesian language data and users @watanabenaomi703 and @yuriko.koike for Japanese language data.

200 comments were collected from posts published by those accounts within December 2022, comprising 100 data samples from Japanese speakers and 100 from Indonesian speakers.

In this research, the data collection technique used is text analysis. Based on the stages of text analysis (Krippendorff, 2004), the first stage in data collection is determining the unit of analysis. In this study, the unit of analysis is comments that demonstrate politeness strategies. The next stage is to select and obtain a data sample. The researcher selects a sample of social media comments relevant to the research

focus. Next, data collection is carried out by copying and saving these comments as data to be processed in the next stage, data analysis. In this stage, the researcher investigates differences or similarities between Japanese and Indonesian speakers in social media, based on the classification of politeness strategies by Brown and Levinson (1987), such as (1) Bald on-record, (2) Positive Politeness strategy, (3) Negative Politeness strategy, and (4) Off-record.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the results of the analysis and interpretation of the research findings obtained will be presented based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) classification of politeness strategies. The analyzed results to be discussed consist of using politeness strategies by Japanese and Indonesian speakers on social media and the similarities and differences between Japanese and Indonesian speakers.

Table 1. Percentage of politeness strategy used by Japanese and Indonesians on social media

Politeness Strategy	Japanese	Indonesian
<i>Bald on-record</i>	28	23
<i>Positive Politeness</i>	45	51
<i>Negative Politeness</i>	19	8
<i>Off-record</i>	8	18
Total	100	100

Table 1 presents the overall percentages of politeness strategies used by Japanese and Indonesian speakers on social media. According to the table, Japanese and Indonesian speakers use the positive politeness strategy most. The following section will provide more detailed explanations about using each politeness strategy.

1. The use of Bald on-record strategy

The research findings revealed interesting patterns in using the Bald on-record strategy by Japanese and Indonesian speakers on social media. According to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, the Bald on-record strategy involves direct and straightforward language without compromising clarity or politeness. In social media, where communication tends to be more open and public, Japanese and Indonesian speakers

displayed a noticeable utilization of the Bald on-record strategy. They employed explicit expressions and unambiguous statements to convey their opinions, criticisms, or requests without excessive concern for face-saving or avoiding conflict. The frequency of the Bald on-record strategy usage by Japanese and Indonesian speakers is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency of Bald on-record strategy used by Japanese and Indonesians on social media

Speakers	frequency
Japanese	28
Indonesian	23

Despite some differences in cultural background, the data reveals a relatively similar trend in both language groups. As shown in Table 2, out of the 100 Japanese comments, 28 were classified as utilizing the Bald on-record strategy, while among the 100 Indonesian comments, 23 were similarly categorized under this strategy. The usage of the Bald on-record strategy among Japanese speakers in social media comments, as indicated by the data, reflects a shift in the communication culture of the Japanese people, who traditionally prioritize using honorific and formal language. With the influence of globalization and changes in communication patterns, Japanese speakers have also started employing this strategy in their social media comments as a form of direct and straightforward self-expression, as shown in the data below.

(1) Japanese

“Nani ga bōeishi de zōzei da yo. Doko made kokumin kurushimereba ki ga sumu n da yo. Kisama fukumei kokkai giin no kyūryō herase yo.” (Instagram, December 2022)

("What are you talking about tax increases caused by defence spending? How much longer do you want to burden the people? Reduce the salaries of the members of the parliament, including yourself!")

(2) Indonesian

“Selesaikan dulu aja yang di depan mata. Hobi kok bernarasi terus.” (Twitter, December 2022)

("Just finish what's in front of you. Why keep narrating like it's your hobby?")

Based on Data (1) and (2), it can be known that the speaker's intention is conveyed directly using straightforward language. In this case, the

speaker gives comments using direct and honest sentences without trying to save either the positive or negative face of the interlocutor or without considering the interlocutor's feelings when expressing their intention that way. Therefore, both comments are considered using the Bald on-record strategy.

Data (1) was obtained from comments on an Instagram post by a Japanese politician. The context of the post was about the visit of the Japanese football team to the headquarters and the politician's appreciation for their achievements. The comment, as shown in Data (1), was out of context, which discussed tax-related matters. This indicates that the speakers use the Bald on-record strategy to directly convey their intentions (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and expect immediate responses without waiting for contextually appropriate posts.

Meanwhile, Data (2) was found from a Twitter post by an Indonesian politician, where there is a video clip of the president's speech discussing Indonesia's efforts to become a developed country. Through the comments, the speaker emphasizes to the interlocutor to prioritize addressing the current tasks before aspiring for Indonesia to become a developed country. This message is conveyed directly without being covered with other politeness strategies, such as making requests or seeking permission beforehand, thus, it is classified as a Bald on-record strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Research findings indicate that both groups employ direct communication when commenting on posts by political figures from Japanese and Indonesian. These comments may not always relate to the original post and often include criticism of the politicians' performance. Brown and Levinson's model (1987) suggests that politeness strategies in speech depend on factors like "Power," reflecting the authority of the listener. Generally, people use more polite language when addressing someone with higher authority. This means that those with greater authority over the listener typically employ the straightforward "bald on-record" approach (Septiana, 2022).

Interestingly, this research found a commonality among Japanese and Indonesian speakers. Based on the data, around 80% of the Bald on-record strategy used by Japanese and Indonesian speakers is aimed at politicians, such as the president or governor. This shows that Japanese and Indonesian speakers are comfortable expressing their opinions on social media even when the utterance is directed towards someone with a higher status.

2. The use of a Positive Politeness strategy

The Positive Politeness strategy is one of the politeness strategies used in communication. This strategy involves providing support and appreciation to the interlocutor, creating a positive atmosphere in communication. Using the Positive Politeness strategy indicates that the speaker aims to maintain and strengthen positive social relationships with the interlocutor through efforts to fulfill a positive face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Therefore, this strategy is commonly employed in everyday communication, including social media. The use of this strategy can make the interlocutor feel valued and well-treated. This strategy can be used in social media to maintain good relationships among users. The frequency of the Positive Politeness strategy usage by Japanese and Indonesian speakers is shown in Table 3. Table 3. Frequency of Positive Politeness strategy used by Japanese and Indonesians on social media

Speakers	frequency
Japanese	45
Indonesian	51

As seen in Table 3, among other politeness strategies, most Japanese and Indonesian employed the Positive Politeness strategy. Among the 100 Japanese comments, 45 were classified under the Positive Politeness strategy, while for the 100 Indonesian comments, 51 were categorized under the same strategy.

Examples of using the Positive Politeness strategy found in the data are shown below.

(3) Japanese

"Naomi-chan heasupurei kansou honto ni otsukaesama deshita! Yube no MC mo minasan no uta mo bando mo

chou saikou de Mata mitai yo. Suteki na yoru wo arigatou." (Instagram, December 2022)

("Congratulations, Naomi-chan, on completing the performance of Hairspray! You did an amazing job! Last night's MC, everyone's singing, and the band were all superb. I would love to see it again! Thank you for such a wonderful night.")

(4) Indonesian

"Sampai jumpa kembali di lain waktu bung fiersa! Tetap muda terus ya bung ya!" (Twitter, December 2022)

("See you again another time, Mr. Fiersa! Stay youthful, okay, sir!")

Data (3) is a comment on a post by Naomi Watanabe, a Japanese celebrity who recently performed in the musical "Hairspray". In the comment, the speaker expresses appreciation for Naomi Watanabe's satisfying performance, offering praise, congratulations, and gratitude. This demonstrates the speaker's effort to uphold the positive face of the interlocutor, aiming to maintain a good communication relationship (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This result is aligned with Pingjing and Matsumura's (2011) study, which found that most Japanese used the Positive Politeness strategy to show familiarity and closeness with the interlocutor.

Comments that utilize the Positive Politeness strategy are also found in the posts of Indonesian celebrity Fiersa Besari on Twitter. Data (4) shows that the speaker bids farewell while expressing hopes to meet again with Fiersa. In the final sentence, the speaker indirectly compliments their interlocutor for looking youthful. The speaker also uses the term "bung," a special address commonly used by fans of Fiersa Besari. As Brown and Levinson (1987) explained, using group identity markers is one of the sub-strategies of Positive Politeness. This aims to enhance familiarity and create a closer relationship between the speaker and the listener.

Previous research indicated that Japanese speakers often use negative politeness strategies in face-to-face conversations to maintain social distance and avoid conflicts (Pingjing, 2016; Okuyama, 2005). However, this study reveals a different behavior in the context of social media. On digital platforms like social media, Japanese speakers use politeness strategies that show familiarity with their interlocutors. This suggests that Japanese speakers are more open and

expressive in online interactions, possibly due to social media's unique dynamics and norms. These findings offer new insights into how politeness strategies can vary in online communication compared to face-to-face conversations.

3. The use of the Negative Politeness strategy

Negative Politeness is a politeness strategy used to address the negative face of the interlocutor by apologizing, giving reasons, and using polite language. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the Negative Politeness strategy is employed when the speaker wants to demonstrate respect for the interlocutor's autonomy and freedom of action. It can also be used to request permission, avoid imposition, and acknowledge one's own shortcomings.

In social media discussions, Negative Politeness can manifest in various ways. Users may apologize for expressing differing opinions or challenging someone's viewpoint to minimize the threat to their negative face. They may use polite language, avoid direct confrontations, or soften their requests to maintain harmony and avoid offending. Users may also employ indirect language, ask permission, or express uncertainty to show respect for the interlocutors' autonomy and avoid imposing their negative face. Table 4 shows the frequency of Negative Politeness strategy usage among Japanese and Indonesian speakers.

Table 4. Frequency of Negative Politeness strategies used by Japanese and Indonesians on social media

Speakers	frequency
Japanese	19
Indonesian	8

In analyzing the speech patterns of both language groups, there is a notable difference in using honorifics and questions designed to mitigate threats to the interlocutor's negative face. This research findings reveal that Japanese speakers employ negative politeness strategies more frequently than Indonesian speakers. This finding aligns with previous studies by Pingjing (2016) and Okuyama (2005), where the frequency of Japanese speakers employing negative politeness strategies exceeded that

observed in other languages, including Chinese and Korean.

Examples of the use of the Negative Politeness strategy found in the data are shown below.

(5) Japanese

"Kokumin no iken ni mimi o katamukete kudasai." (Instagram, December 2022)

("Please listen to the opinions of the people.")

(6) Indonesian

"Mohon dikawal segala prosesnya agar benar-benar delivered, pak." (Twitter, December 2022)

("Please ensure that all the processes are properly delivered, sir!")

Data (5) was collected from comments on an Instagram post made by a Japanese politician, which shared about the visit of the Japanese football team to the headquarters and the politician's expression of gratitude and admiration for their accomplishments. Although not directly related to the context of the post, in the given sentence, the speaker requests the Japanese politician to listen to the opinions and voices of the people. The comment is conveyed in a polite manner, using sentence structure and considerate vocabulary choices. This demonstrates the speaker's effort to save the negative face of the interlocutor, indicating the use of the Negative Politeness strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Meanwhile, the usage of Negative Politeness by Indonesians, as shown in Data (6), was found in the comments on a Twitter post by an Indonesian politician regarding the provision of donations to the victims of a recent natural disaster that had just occurred in Indonesia. In the sentence, the speaker uses the word "*mohon*" (please) to make the request more polite and reduce the sense of imposition on the interlocutor. Then, at the end of the sentence, the speaker uses the honorific term "*Pak*" to show respect, one of the sub-strategies of Negative Politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The minimal usage of the Negative Politeness strategy, especially by Indonesian speakers in social media comments, can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, social media platforms often encourage direct and straightforward communication, where

individuals express their thoughts and opinions without excessive concern for maintaining face or avoiding conflict. The nature of social media, with its limited character count and fast-paced interactions, may lead to more concise and assertive communication styles.

Secondly, the a difference in communication patterns on social media compared to offline interactions. Okuyama's (2005) study clearly shows that overall, the strategy most commonly used by Japanese in their daily conversations is Negative Politeness because they frequently use polite expressions that show respect and give freedom to the interlocutor. However, unlike face-to-face interactions, where indirectness and reading between the lines are valued, social media platforms prioritize quick and efficient communication.

Social media platforms provide a more informal and relaxed environment than offline interactions. This informality encourages individuals to communicate more directly and casually, where honorifics may be less common.

4. The use of Off-record strategy

The Off-record strategy is a politeness strategy used to indirectly convey a message or intention without explicitly stating it. It involves hinting, implying, or making indirect suggestions, often expecting the listener to understand the intended meaning. By using the Off-record strategy, the speaker can express their thoughts or requests in a subtle and non-confrontational manner while still allowing the listener to infer the intended message. Brown and Levinson (1987) describe the Off-record strategy as a way to minimize the potential face-threatening effect of certain messages. By not explicitly stating the message, the speaker gives the listener the freedom to interpret and respond to the message in a way that maintains their own face and avoids direct confrontation or conflict.

Social media platforms often have a wide and diverse audience, including people from different cultural backgrounds and social contexts. In such a public and heterogeneous environment, employing the Off-record strategy allows speakers to express their intentions

indirectly and diplomatically, reducing the risk of causing offense or misunderstanding. Japanese and Indonesian cultures emphasize maintaining harmonious relationships and avoiding explicit disagreements. Using the Off-record strategy, speakers can indirectly convey their opinions or requests, allowing for a more subtle negotiation of social norms and expectations.

Table 5. Frequency of Off-record strategy used by Japanese and Indonesians on social media

Speakers	frequency
Japanese	8
Indonesian	18

Another noteworthy difference was observed in the use of Off-record strategies, where the frequency of data from Japanese speakers was lower compared to Indonesian speakers. As shown in Table 5, the results revealed that out of 100 Indonesian comments, 18 utterances utilized Off-record strategies, while in Japanese comments, only 8 utterances employed this strategy. This finding is exciting given the indirect communication culture associated with Japanese, as typically reflected in the Off-record strategy (Septiana, 2022).

Examples of using the Off-record strategy found in the data are shown below.

(7) Japanese

"Nihon-koku o dō shitain deshō ka? Naze giin o shite iru no deshō ka? Kokumin no koe ga kikoetemasu ka?" (Twitter, December 2022)

("What do you want to do with Japan? Why are you in politics? Can you hear the voice of the people?")

(8) Indonesian

"Kayaknya itu lagu jadi mantra pemanggil ujan." (Twitter, December 2022)

("It seems like that song serves as a rain-summoning spell.")

Data (7) above is a comment on a Twitter post by a Japanese politician regarding the award given to a Japanese teenager who recently won the US Women's Amateur Championship. When considering the context of the post, the comment clearly does not align with it. The speaker indirectly expresses their dissatisfaction with the politician's performance through a rhetorical question, which is a sub-strategy of Off-record (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In doing

so, the speaker can avoid direct conflict and save the interlocutor's face.

The Off-record strategy is also found in comments on an Indonesian singer's post, where they shared a photo of themselves after a concert in one of the cities in Indonesia. Data (8) shows that the speaker uses a metaphorical expression to associate a song with the rain that occurred during the concert. The speaker reduces the threat to the interlocutor's face by not explicitly criticizing the song or stating their opinion directly.

The Off-record strategy is characterized by indirectness and implied meaning or hints. This type of communication may not be commonly used or preferred by individuals on social media platforms, where communication tends to be more direct, concise, and focused on immediate responses.

Regarding the cultural context, Japanese culture strongly emphasizes maintaining harmony, avoiding conflict, and preserving face. This often leads to the use of indirect strategies, including the Off-record strategy, to express opinions or concerns in a more subtle and nuanced manner. Interestingly, our analysis of social media comments reveals that Off-record is the least utilized strategy among Japanese speakers.

Meanwhile, Indonesian culture values politeness and respect, but there may be a greater preference for more direct and explicit communication styles. This could be attributed to the influence of globalization and the convergence of communication styles in the digital age. As social media platforms become more global and interconnected, users may be exposed to different communication styles and strategies from various cultures, leading to a certain level of convergence in their usage.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, both language groups employ Positive Politeness strategies and show minimal differences using the Bald on-record strategy. This is because social media serves as a public space where users aim to maintain close relationships with their interlocutors,

emphasizing language that conveys familiarity through positive politeness or direct language, as reflected in the bald-on-record strategy. Compared to Indonesians, Japanese speakers tend to utilize negative politeness strategies more frequently but employ off-record strategies less frequently.

The findings of this study also indicate a notable difference in the communication style of Japanese individuals. In face-to-face conversations, they have been known for employing honorific language and indirect expressions. However, this research reveals a different communication style among Japanese Speakers, characterized by a more direct and friendly language in online interactions. This change can be attributed to various factors, such as globalization, cultural influences, and the evolving nature of digital platforms such as social media.

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