



# Revealing Politeness Strategy Used by Indonesian Netizen in Instagram News Sites Regarding Ukraine and Russia Conflict

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**Abstract.** Russia began its military operation against Ukraine on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022. This event has the attention of everyone worldwide, including the Indonesian people, who share their opinions on the Instagram platform. Therefore, the researcher is interested to know netizen comments and their relationship with politeness strategy. This study aims to investigate the politeness strategy employed by Indonesian online commenters in chosen news sites' Instagram accounts covering conflicts in Russia and Ukraine and find out about influences on politeness. This study applied the descriptive-qualitative research method. The data were taken from comments, and the source of data used multiple news sites' Instagram accounts, such as CNBC, CNN Indonesia, Detik.com, and Tempo.com. The documentation technique was chosen as the data collection technique. The study discovered all types of politeness strategies found in netizens' comments. Positive politeness appeared more frequently when the netizens commented on news sites' Instagram accounts. In addition, the researcher only found 2 (two) out of 4 (four) factors that affected politeness strategy: language styles, slang, and solidarity.

**Keywords:** Politeness strategy · Russia · Ukraine · Instagram · News sites

## 1 Introduction

As a medium of communication between human beings, language plays a vital part in daily life as a medium of communication between human beings. Through voice, writing, or symbols, language becomes a conduit for expressing the human mind's thoughts, concepts, and meanings. To communicate their opinion, thought, and vision, humans as social beings require contact via communication. Language is essential to human interaction because it allows us to convey our thoughts and feelings to others. People should be prepared to master many skills when learning to speak a language. One of them is a matter of politeness.

Politeness becomes an essential thing when communicating. It is about everyone's way of thinking and how it affects their day-to-day activities. In this case, politeness strategy becomes important in selecting utterance of the sentence in life society. According to Brown and Levinson [1], politeness is about how people give an attitude in relation to how

the addressee feels about them. We can infer from this statement that the listener's feelings should be considered when a speaker says something. The "politeness approach" is a method that can assist us in achieving this goal.

In today's world, politeness can be found in various contexts, including in talk programs, movies, children's literature, and social networking platforms like Instagram. Instagram is a social media where we can post photos and videos with a caption underneath them. The focus of this study was on the politeness technique applied by Indonesian netizens in the Russia-Ukraine crisis.

Several studies have been done previously related to politeness strategy. First, the research conducted by Gunawan and Tjitrakusuma [2] about Kulinersby's culinary business promotion and its comments is considered politeness theory. There were certain similarities and contrasts identified between the idea of positive politeness. When viewed through the perspective of Watts' politeness, certain jokes that Brown and Levinson believe to be positive politeness contain irony, criticism, insult, and satire.

Another study is done by Nailah [3] with entitled "Politeness Strategies Employed by the Main Characters in the Film Transformers: Age of Extinction." Since this research explains the politeness of the main character in the film Transformer based on the theory proposed by Brown and Levinson, the author chose descriptive qualitative analysis to perform the research. The researcher obtained the data from the movie's transcript. In the same year, Silitonga [4] examined Mata Najwa's politeness technique. As hosts and guests, respectively, Najwa Shihab, Erick Thohir, and Nadiem Makarim participated in this study. The researcher saw positive politeness (76.32%), negative politeness (18.42%), and an off-the-record strategy (5.27%), but no bald record strategy.

After collecting previous research on politeness strategies, a research gap was identified. The author found a single gap in existing research, which is the subject of the study. In contrast to prior research, which utilized Instagram accounts, movies, and talk shows, this study examined a currently-occurring social phenomenon that has been researched using a politeness technique only infrequently. According to the researcher's explanation above, all of the previous studies described above are accurate. The study's purpose was to discover the politeness strategies used by netizens on their Instagram during the Russia-Ukraine war and the underlying reasons for their utilization. The novelty of this research is that it focuses on online comments on Instagram regarding Russia and Ukraine, which is a current and ongoing news report, and also aims to uncover the factors that affect netizens using a certain politeness strategy.

## 1.1 Sociolinguistics at Glance

Sociolinguistics is the study of the relationship between language and society, including how language functions in a community. Sociolinguistics, according to Wardhaugh [5], investigates the link between language and society to understand better the structure of language and how languages work in communication. As a result of the fact that people communicate with one another in their social lives, the researcher concludes that sociolinguistics plays an important role in society.

## 1.2 Politeness

Politeness aims to create an environment where the other person feels appreciated and at ease. Brown and Levinson's concept of politeness is the foundation for this study [1]. There are two types of faces: negative face and positive face, which Brown and Levinson [1] define as the public self-image. A positive face is characterized by a desire for social acceptance or a desire to be seen as desirable by at least some other people. The fundamental claim to have freedom of action and disruption is one with a negative face. Goffman's idea of about-face was similar to positive face, the notion of a self-image outlined in terms of acceptable social aspects in social interaction, especially verbal interaction [6].

Politeness is a reasonable attitude that strategically limits behaviors that harm one's face. The face is Facial threats that can be made in the form of an FTA (Face Threatening Act). For Brown and Levinson [1], FTAs are a speech that threatens the hearer or speaker by acting in a way that is not expected of others. According to Yule [7], FTAs are acts that put the hearer's positive or negative face at risk.

## 1.3 Politeness Strategy

Off-record, bald-on record, positive, and negative politeness are the four types of politeness strategies outlined by Brown and Levinson [1], each discussed below.

### 1.3.1 Off-Record

The purpose of an off-record strategy or indirect method is to allow the locutor to determine the goal of uncertain communication [1]. Comments not directed at a specific individual or "hints" can be considered off-record strategy. Below are presented off-record politeness strategy.

- 1) Strategy 1: Give hints
- 2) Strategy 2: Give association clues
- 3) Strategy 3: Presuppose
- 4) Strategy 4: Understate
- 5) Strategy 5: Overstated
- 6) Strategy 6: Use tautologies
- 7) Strategy 7: Use contradictions
- 8) Strategy 8: Be ironic
- 9) Strategy 9: Use metaphors
- 10) Strategy 10: Use rhetorical questions
- 11) Strategy 11: Be ambiguous
- 12) Strategy 12: Be vague
- 13) Strategy 13: Over-generalize
- 14) Strategy 14: Displace hearer
- 15) Strategy 15: Be incomplete, use ellipsis

### 1.3.2 Bald on Record

Different threats can be made to the speaker's face so that bald-on-record can be employed in various contexts. To put it simply, this method is considered the most straightforward one. It refers to the simplest method of demonstrating a process. The speakers do not have to do anything to minimize the FTAs on their audience. As a result, people may be surprised, embarrassed or a bit apprehensive when they hear this strategy.

- 1) Strategy 1: Great urgency or desperation
- 2) Strategy 2: Speaking as if great efficiency is necessary in attention getters
- 3) Strategy 3: Task-oriented or paradigmatic form of instruction
- 4) Strategy 4: Sympathetic Advice or Warning
- 5) Strategy 5: Granting Permission for Something
- 6) Strategy 6: Invitations
- 7) Strategy 7: Welcoming
- 8) Strategy 8: Greetings and Farewells

### 1.3.3 Positive Politeness

Positive politeness authorizes that the relationship between the speaker and the audience is amicable and expresses group reciprocity in order to reduce the distance between them. According to Brown and Levinson [1], this strategy seeks to address the listeners' interests, needs, desires, and goods. Positive strategy addresses the positive face needs or want for connection of the interactants. According to Brown and Levinson, positive courtesy is regarded to be less courteous than negative courtesy. The primary purpose of positive courtesy is to establish a degree of familiarity with the listener. It might be called the intimate language or code. Joking and popular forms of address can be used to do this. It contains "bro", "love", and "bestie".

- 1) Strategy 1: Notice, and attend to a hearer (her or his interests, wants, needs, goods)
- 2) Strategy 2: Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with hearer)
- 3) Strategy 3: Intensify interest to a hearer; by making a good story, draw the hearer as a participant into the conversation.
- 4) Strategy 4: (Use in-group identity markers); address form, in-group language or dialect, jargon or slang, contraction, and ellipsis.
- 5) Strategy 5: Seek agreement; repetition – agreement may also be stressed by repeating part or all of what the preceding speaker has said
- 6) Strategy 6: (Avoid disagreement); token agreement, pseudo-agreement, white lies, hedging opinions.
- 7) Strategy 7: Presuppose/raise/assert common ground; gossip, small talk, point-of-view operations, presupposition manipulations.
- 8) Strategy 8: Joke
- 9) Strategy 9: Assert or presuppose the speaker's knowledge of and concern for the hearer's wants.
- 10) Strategy 10: Offer, Promise
- 11) Strategy 11: Be optimistic

### 1.3.4 Negative Politeness

Negative politeness is “the essence of respect conduct” This strategy reduces listeners’ burden. It promotes unity. Therefore, it suggests social remoteness or discomfort. Negative politeness strategies include using hedges or queries. Here are the negative politeness sub-strategies.

- 1) Strategy 1: Be conventionally indirect
- 2) Strategy 2: Do not assume a hearer is able or willing to comply to any acts imposed on him.
- 3) Strategy 3: Be pessimistic about ability or willingness of a hearer to comply to any acts imposed on him.
- 4) Strategy 4: Minimize the imposition
- 5) Strategy 5: Give deference.
- 6) Strategy 6: Apologize; admit the impingement, indicate reluctance, give overwhelming reasons, beg forgiveness.
- 7) Strategy 7: Impersonalized a speaker and a hearer; per-formatives, impersonal verbs, address terms as ‘you’ avoidance.
- 8) Strategy 8: State the FTA as a general rule
- 9) Strategy 9: Nominalize to distance the actor and add formality
- 10) Strategy 10: Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebteding a hearer.

### 1.4 Influencing Elements of Politeness Strategy

Several elements influence the application of the politeness strategy. According to Spolsky [8], four elements determine the politeness of an individual. It is separated into three sections: language styles, registers and domains, slang and solidarity, and language and gender.

People use language styles when they can select whether to communicate formally or informally depending on the person they are speaking to. According to Spolsky [8], an individual engages in his society’s valued and educated principles when he speaks formally because he can employ his language effectively. Registers refer to the use of various languages, while domains dictate how people interact regarding social position. In other words, registers and domains are both utilized in specific contexts. Most frequently, a domain is named after a location within it. Slang is used for social objectives, such as indicating membership in a group and fostering a sense of camaraderie among its users. People can show that they are cohesive as a group when they use the same language, such as the same accent or word choice. The disparities in language use between men and women are discussed concerning the concept of gender [8]. The language of males is allied with the outside world and the pursuit of economic opportunities. In contrast, the language of women is related to the household and the activities performed in it.

## 2 Methods

This study collected, analyzed, and interpreted the data using a descriptive qualitative research method designed by Creswell [9]. According to Bogdan and Biklen [10], descriptive qualitative research is a method where the data gathered is in the form of words rather than numbers. The posts and comments on CNBC, CNN Indonesia, Detikcom, Kumparan, and Tempo, served as the source of information used in this study. Because there were so many photos and videos about Russia and Ukraine conflict, the author centered the investigation to only pay attention to photo and video posts with many comments below them (at least one thousand). The data were analyzed using Brown and Levinson's politeness strategy and Spolsky's factors influencing people's politeness.

The researcher relied on documentation as the primary method of data collection throughout the process of analyzing data. The first step to collect the data was begun by opening up the Instagram application; then, locating the post associated with the crisis between Russia and Ukraine; next, find the comments containing politeness strategy. The next step was to get a screenshot of the comments; the last step was to note different ways people use politeness strategy in the comment section.

## 3 Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Politeness Strategy Made by Netizen in News Sites' Instagram Accounts Regarding Russia- UKRAINE's Conflicts

The screenshots of netizens' comments were taken from various Instagram posts of news sites: CNBC, CNN Indonesia, Detikcom, Kumparancom, and Tempodotco. The study was limited to Instagram posts concerning Russia initiating military operations and events that transpired two weeks later, from February 24 to March 14. Netizen's comments containing politeness strategy are taken into account in this study.

The researcher discovered four distinct politeness strategies in the Instagram comment sections of news sites' Instagram profiles. They are bald on record, negative politeness, off-record, and positive politeness.

#### 3.1.1 Bald on Record

##### 3.1.1.1. Strategy 4: Sympathetic Advice or Warning

CNN Indonesia uploaded a post regarding Russia's continued delivery of missiles and bombs to Ukraine amid the two-week-long crisis with Ukraine. Russia fired approximately 30 missiles toward the city of Lyiv, resulting in 35 deaths and 134 injuries.

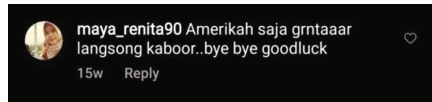
The phrase "*saran saya enak nyerah*" (I suggest it is best to give up) in the above comment is advice to the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelensky, to pursue peace with Russia. The @latefwong account sympathizes with innocent children who are forced to endure suffering, albeit they do not deserve to experience all of this (Fig. 1).

##### 3.1.1.2. Strategy 8: Greetings and Farewells

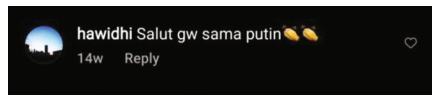
As @tempodotco reported earlier on March 2, President Joe Biden decided that the



**Fig. 1.** Sympathetic Advice found in @ennindonesia Instagram post Source: CNN Indonesia. (March 14, 2022).



**Fig. 2.** Farewell strategy found in @tempodotco Instagram post Source: TEMPO. (March 2, 2022).



**Fig. 3.** Give deference strategy found in @cnindonesia Instagram post. Source: CNBC Indonesia. (February 24, 2022).

United States would not send soldiers to Ukraine to fight against Russia as military forces are only meant for NATO members, and Ukraine is not a NATO member. Previously, it was anticipated that the United States would assist Ukraine, given that it is a superpower country that frequently assists countries in conflict.

The account @maya\_renita90 claims that Russia's power cannot be underestimated. It is why the United States does not want to assist Ukraine. Therefore, Putin declared "goodbye" to Ukraine, implying farewell because Ukraine will fight alone following the United States' decision not to deploy military assistance (Fig. 2).

### 3.1.2 Negative Politeness

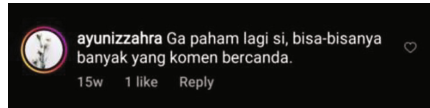
#### 3.1.2.1. Strategy 5: Give Deference

In a CNN Indonesia-posted video, Russian President Vladimir Putin advised other nations against interfering with Russia and Ukraine's troubles. "Salute to you, Putin" indicates that @hawidhi respects Putin's decision to put sanctions on anyone who inhibits Russia's relations with Ukraine. He may perceive Putin as a leader with strong convictions and a willingness to take risks (Fig. 3).

### 3.1.3 Off-Record

#### 3.1.3.1. Strategy 1: Give Hints

Kumparan made a post about President Putin, who has ordered the Russian military



**Fig. 4.** Give hints strategy found in @kumparancom Instagram post. Source: Kumparan. (February 28, 2022).

to keep their nuclear weapons ready. Putin did this after several NATO members gave aggressive statements against Russia.

In this post, many Indonesian netizens left joking comments. For example, someone commented that Putin should try bamboo spears instead of nuclear weapons as a tool of war for the Russian army. @ayunizzahra's comments include giving a hint because seeing from her comment, "I don't understand it anymore, how come there are many joke comments," she implicitly tells that this is a serious matter that should not be made a joke. She wished that people would make sympathized comments and the best pray for the Ukrainians. Russia and Ukraine's conflict must be stopped because war will not bring benefits but will only hurt the people (Fig. 4).

### 3.1.4 Positive Politeness

#### 3.1.4.1. Strategy 4: Address Form, In-Group Language or Dialect, Jargon or Slang, Contraction, and Ellipsis

President Putin has instructed his military to boost the nuclear attack alert to the highest level, which is a "special alert," according to an Instagram post published by Detikcom. It was precipitated by the response of Western nations, which imposed unlawful sanctions and took undesirable activities. Consequently, nuclear attack readiness has increased.

The majority of the comments in this piece are dominated by the word "URA." Ura is a term with a specific meaning, namely the 'Hurray' shout spoken at the moment of triumph. Since the video footage of President Putin uttering this single word became viral on social media, many Indonesian internet users have used this word. The composition of the word "URA," which consists of only three words, is therefore easy to read and has led Indonesian internet users to adopt this term as a gesture of support for Russia. Even today, the term is still used on social media anytime a Russian-related problem arises (Fig. 5).

#### 3.1.4.2. Strategy 8: Joke

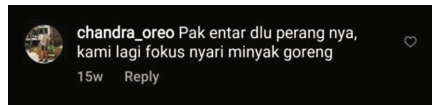
Putin took a military strike on February 24, 2022. Explosions continued nonstop in Kharkiv a few minutes after Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia, said that his country would be conducting a military intervention. At the time, Russia had initiated security operations in regions of Ukraine by deploying soldiers, tanks, and other military equipment. These activities were being carried out in Ukraine.

Because of cooking oil, @chandra\_oreo urges President Putin to delay the battle between Russia and Ukraine. It is because the news of the Russian-Ukrainian military operation coincided with an oil shortage in Indonesia. The user, @chandra\_oreo, believes that the Russia-Ukrainian conflict correlates with Indonesia's lack of cooking oil.





**Fig. 5.** Jargon or slang strategy found in @detikcom. Source: Detikcom. (February 28, 2022).



**Fig. 6.** Joke strategy found in @cnbcindonesia Instagram post. Source: CNBC Indonesia. (February 24, 2022).

## 3.2 Influencing Elements of Politeness Strategy

### 3.2.1 Language Style

This research found language styles that influence the online commenters in using positive politeness and bald on record strategy. The language styles of the commenters could be seen whether they used formal or informal language. Most commenters use informal language even though the content they comment on is considered a serious matter. It is because Instagram is a social media where all its users are on the same level or equal. Consequently, the relationship between the users and politicians related to Russia- Ukraine conflict is equal. Besides, netizen use informal language more frequently in their daily life than formal language. Therefore, the netizen used informal language to express their opinion in the comment section. For example, in Fig. 6, the user used the informal language “*entar dulu*” toward the most influential person in the world, President Putin.

This research found language styles that influence online commenters in using positive politeness and bald-on-record strategy.

### 3.2.2 Slang and Solidarity

The slang and solidarity factors were also found to become factors for online commenters in using positive politeness strategy. “URA” is the word that appears most often in the news site’s Instagram account comments. The word was meant to encourage Russian soldiers but became slang among netizens. It is such a common thing in Indonesia, where there is a video that goes viral on social media. The words or sentences in the video will easily go viral too, marked by the frequent appearance of people saying it in everyday life or typing it on social media.

As noted in the prior chapter, the research findings were presented here, followed by a discussion of those findings. The researcher employed the theory of Brown and

Levinson [1] and Spolsky [8]. Brown and Levinson's theory analyzed the different types of politeness strategies in netizen comments. Spolsky's theory [8] was used to determine the elements influencing the option of politeness strategy found in netizen comments.

On Instagram, the researcher found all four sorts of politeness strategies: off-record, negative politeness, bald on-record, and positive politeness. These strategies were found in the selected news portals' Instagram accounts. The form of politeness known as positive politeness was shown to be the most prevalent type of politeness strategy in the netizens' comments. The findings by Silitonga and Pasaribu [11] were identical to the findings of this paper. The information obtained for this study came from comments made by internet users on Anies Baswedan's Twitter and Instagram accounts. The comments were about the celebration of World Water Day. The result revealed four different politeness strategies were utilized, including bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record. Positive politeness was used more when commenting on Anies Baswedan's Twitter and Instagram.

Meanwhile, the researcher found slang & solidarity as the elements determining the choice of politeness strategy. This result was contradictory to Rosari's study [12]. The results indicated that linguistic style, register, domain, slang, and character solidarity affected the civility of the characters' speech. The language and styles of the film, which includes formal and informal terms, are triggered by the dialogue of the characters. Campus and debate-related conversation themes became the realm and registration. Rosari [12] argued that the sorts of politeness methods and the elements influencing the politeness of the characters were interrelated. When revealing the four sorts of politeness methods, the characters of the film *The Great Debaters* were influenced by three elements. In contrast, this study identified only two factors: language and styles and slang and solidarity. Regarding language and styles, the author did not find formal language in the comment section; internet users usually use informal language.

Hutahean et al. [13] researched the politeness strategies used by the *Pesbukers* in their variety show. The researchers used Brown and Levinson's theory to determine the characteristics that influence *Pesbukers*' politeness strategy. There are three factors, according to Brown and Levinson: relative power (P), social distance (D), and imposition rank (R). In contrast to this study, the author chose Spolsky to analyze the elements that influence the politeness technique employed by netizens.

## 4 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the data gathering, it is possible to conclude that four different forms of politeness can be identified among the comments made by Indonesian netizen on the Instagram accounts of Indonesian news sites regarding the crisis between Russia and Ukraine. Positive politeness was the most common form of politeness strategy employed by Indonesian netizen.

Secondly, the findings also discovered that the factors affecting the netizen's comments on the Russia and Ukraine conflict were language styles, slang, and solidarity. The language styles occurred because the event took place on social media. Hence all Instagram users are on an equal level. The slang and solidarity marked with the word "URA" show that someone is following the viral word trend on social media.

**Authors' Contributions.** Fadiya Rizkyna Asadanie conceived and planned the experiments. Lisetyo Ariyanti carried out the experiments and the simulations. Djoko Susanto contributed to sample preparation and contributed to the interpretation of the results. Fadiya Rizkyna Asadanie took the lead in writing the manuscript. All authors provided critical feedback and helped shape the research, analysis and manuscript.

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