Communication Politeness Strategies in Gojek

Yasmin Rahma Haryanti1,* Nirasattri Handayani2

1, 2 Universitas Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia
*Corresponding author. Email: yasmin.rahma@ui.ac.id

ABSTRACT
As an essential application in Indonesians’ daily lives, Gojek has its communication pattern to connect with its users. This research highlights the politeness strategies in communication used in Gojek. The analysis is done using the descriptive qualitative method with Brown and Levinson’s (1987) theory of politeness. The study shows that the politeness strategies found in Gojek consist of doing face-threatening acts (FTA) without redressive actions, doing FTA with positive politeness, doing FTA with negative politeness, and doing FTA off-record. FTA with positive politeness and without redressive actions are found in almost equal frequency; this shows the balance of Gojek’s effort to accommodate users’ wants and make them comfortable in using the app, as well as efficiency in conveying information such as terms and conditions of the app’s features. Doing FTA with negative politeness significantly reflects how Gojek respects users’ freedom and shows its professionalism as a service provider. Meanwhile, off-record FTAs are rarely used because they don't align with the app’s communication model which needs clarity so that users can easily understand it. It is used, however, to address uncomfortable or unfortunate situations for users.

Keywords: Politeness Strategies, Communication, Gojek, FTA

1. INTRODUCTION
In this digital era, people's need for a streamlined online experience has led to the rise of the all-in-one app model called super app. A super app is an app that provides a set of features along with access to several independently created smaller apps (mini-apps)[1]. One of the super apps widely used in Indonesia is Gojek[2]. According to a survey conducted by INDEF, Gojek is used by 82% of online transportation users and 64% of online logistics service users in Indonesia[3]. In addition to these two services, Gojek also facilitates food delivery (GoFood), ticket purchase (GoTix), and bill payments (GoBills), among others.

By offering these various services, Gojek has become integral to the daily lives of Indonesians. This condition creates a close interaction between the Gojek application and humans as users. As an online service provider who assists Indonesians in their daily lives, Gojek must be able to interactively engage its users so that they are comfortable using the application and are interested in trying other services it offers. This effort to appear interactive comes, among others, through its language style. Thus, the language in Gojek has a distinctive and interesting speech pattern to study.

The language style found in Gojek is similar to the utterances spoken by sellers or service providers in offline transaction activities. Just like humans who sell or provide services, Gojek also shows politeness when communicating to its customers. The politeness strategy used by Gojek is reflected in the utterances used in the application.

This research intends to examine the politeness strategies used in the Gojek application. The problem this study aims to examine is how politeness strategies are applied in Gojek in various contexts regarding its services. This problem is elaborated into these research questions: what politeness strategies are used in Gojek? What do these politeness strategies say about Gojek’s communication pattern to its users?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
Research on politeness strategies in communication has been carried out numerous times. One study focused on the context of conversations between a wedding organizer company owner and their clients via WhatsApp [4]. The study, using Brown and Levinson’s (1987) theory on politeness strategies, found that the business owner used positive politeness strategies, negative politeness, and indirect strategies to interact with the clients. The positive politeness strategy is used most to smooth social relations between the business owner and their clients and coworkers. This is so that clients and coworkers can feel comfortable, appreciated, and respected by the business owner to
achieve harmonious relationships between the two parties.

Another research related to this topic specifically tied positive politeness strategies with marketing strategies [5]. This study examined several commercial advertisements on Instagram using Brown and Levinson's (1987) positive politeness theory and associated with the AIDA marketing model (attention, interest, desire, action). This research shows that the most widely used positive politeness strategies in commercial advertisements on Instagram are understanding customer desires and giving offers and promises. The application of positive politeness strategies in commercial advertisements can be used as one approach for advertisers to understand the desires of customers targeted by the advertisements.

These studies and ours applied Brown and Levinson’s politeness strategies to analyze various kinds of language use in society. While the previous research analyzed the speech of a business owner on WhatsApp and commercial advertisements on Instagram, our study focused on the speech in the Gojek app. This is to gain more insight into the pragmatic side of language used in technology, especially in an app that ties closely with Indonesians’ daily activities.

3. FACE AND POLITENESS STRATEGY

In pragmatics, face is the self-image that is embedded in a person emotionally, can be lost, maintained, or improved, and must always be considered when interacting [6]. There are two types of faces that a person has: negative face and positive face. A negative face is a person's desire not to be disturbed or obstructed by others, while a positive face is a person's desire to be liked, appreciated, and obeyed by others.

A conversation may contain utterances that go against the wishes of face, either positive or negative. This kind of speech is called a face-threatening act (FTA). Face-threatening acts are also divided into two types: positive and negative. Positive face-threatening acts may cause someone not to feel liked or appreciated, while negative face-threatening acts may disturb or threaten someone's freedom.

Certain strategies can reduce face-threatening acts. There are five types of strategies to do FTA, namely, doing FTA directly without politeness, doing FTA directly with positive politeness, doing FTA directly with negative politeness, doing FTA indirectly, and not doing FTA (Brown and Levinson, 1987). The direct application of FTA is done when the speaker wants to use FTA as efficiently as possible rather than keeping the face of the speech partner, for example when giving a warning. In applying FTA with positive politeness, speakers try to respect speech partners and their wishes, for example, by offering. In applying FTA with negative politeness, speakers try to respect the freedom of speech partners by giving distance to speech partners, for example, by being pessimistic. Indirect FTA is done using speech that can be interpreted freely, such as metaphors.

4. RESEARCH METHODS

The research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive method. This approach allowed us to examine and understand social or humanitarian problems from the perspective of individuals or groups[7]. Meanwhile, with the descriptive method, we could produce systematic, factual, and accurate descriptions of the phenomenon under study[8]. This research also involved a simple quantitative insight to understand the politeness strategy patterns encountered.

Our research discusses the communication politeness strategy shown in Gojek. The object studied in this research is the speech in Gojek. This is limited only to the speech produced by the Gojek application system. This means that utterances originating from parties other than Gojek, such as product descriptions sold by third parties (e.g. restaurants or shops) and user conversations with Gojek partners, are not analyzed. This research also does not include articles in Gojek because it is considered a different language construct.

The data used in this study are speech from the Gojek front page, GoRide and GoCar, GoFood, and the Help page. These are Gojek's flagship features that are widely used so that they are considered to represent the entire Gojek service. Data collection began with observation by viewing the utterances on Gojek directly through the application on the researcher's cellphone. Then, documentation was done by collecting screenshots of pages in Gojek. Observation and documentation were conducted for a week to obtain adequate data samples. The collected data were then listed to facilitate the analysis process. In addition, researchers also collect various references related to the study of politeness strategies.

Furthermore, the data were analyzed using Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness strategies. The analysis is followed by data interpretation by considering previous studies relevant to this topic. The analysis results are then presented as a description to show the pattern of politeness strategies found in Gojek.
5. POLITENESS STRATEGY IN GOJEK APPLICATION

Gojek uses politeness strategies to make users feel comfortable in using the application and reduce the discomfort that users may feel when operating it. Four FTA implementation strategies were found from the collected data, namely doing FTA without politeness acts (74 utterances), doing FTA with positive politeness (75 utterances), doing FTA with negative politeness (63 utterances), and doing FTA indirectly (4 utterances).

5.1 Doing FTA without Politeness Acts

Gojek applies FTA without acts of politeness to direct users in operating the application. In this case, the FTA comes in straightforward commands that direct users to run Gojek features. Such utterances do not need to be expressed with certain politeness acts because all parties know that these utterances will not offend users as speech partners. This is because these utterances are basic commands that guide users in using the application. The sentences below are examples of the direct use of FTA in the form of guidance to (1) type the service, food, and destination users want to search for in the search bar; and (2) save users’ favorite dishes by clicking the heart logo beside the menu.

(1) Cari layanan, makanan, & tujuan ‘Search service, food, & destination’
(2) Pencet love buat nyimpan menu ‘Click love (heart) to save menu’

FTA in Gojek expresses information that requires efficiency, such as explaining the terms, conditions, and how to use a feature or promo. The direct application of FTA aims to make users immediately aware of the conditions or limitations that apply so that they can prepare the things needed to overcome these limitations. The following sentences show the direct application of FTA to inform the limitation of GoFood promo availability and GoRide/GoCar fares.

(3) Ketersediaan promo tergantung pada tipe pesanan ‘Promo availability depends on order type’
(4) Tarif ini belum termasuk ongkos tol/parkir ‘This rate does not include toll/parking fees’

Gojek also uses FTA without politeness to remind or attract users’ attention to services or promos considered favored, newly released, will soon disappear, or quickly change (e.g. vouchers or trending restaurants). This can be seen in the examples below.

(5) 30 vouchers akan hangus ‘30 vouchers will expire’
(6) Jadwalin GoFood (Baru) ‘Schedule GoFood (New)’

5.2 Doing FTA with positive politeness

In general, the use of informal language in Gojek shows a form of positive politeness. This informal language is characterized by a variety of informal words such as *cuma* ‘only’ and *udah* ‘already’ as well as the use of acronyms commonly used in everyday conversation such as *ongkir* (*ongkos kirim* ‘shipping costs’) and *murmer* (*murah meriah* ‘cheap’). With this language style, Gojek seeks to eliminate the distance between them and users, implying that Gojek and their users are in the same social group. The effort to eliminate this distance is also evident from using the pronoun *kamu* (-*mu*) ‘you’ to refer to the user. This pronoun shows the closeness between the app as a service provider and the user. The utterances below are examples of the use of informal language varieties and the pronoun *kamu* (-*mu*) in Gojek.

(7) Resto murmer di dekatmu
Ongkirnya cuma 5rb kalo pake Mode Hemat
‘Cheap restaurants near you
Shipping cost only 5k with Mode Hemat’
(8) Drivermu udah divaksin! ‘Your driver has been vaccinated!’

In connection with the effort to get closer to users, Gojek also applies positive politeness by joking as in the following.

(9) Mau ke mana, (username)?
Bahagia itu perjalanan. Jalan bareng yuk?
‘Where to, (Username)?
Happiness is a journey. Let’s have a trip!’

Speech (9) can be found when opening the GoRide/GoCar feature. The invitation *Jalan bareng yuk?’ ‘Let’s have a trip’ is often used when inviting a lover to go out or on a date. However, in the context of GoRide/GoCar, it is used as a playful invitation to welcome users who will be traveling using GoRide/GoCar.

Gojek also shows positive politeness when providing attractive offers for users. These offers include discounts and ease of installment. Positive politeness can be seen from Gojek’s understanding of users’ wants and needs which are then channeled into Gojek’s product offers as in the following utterance.

(10) #REKOMENDASI
BUAT YANG SERING NEKAT BEGADANG DEMI MABAR
Pasti Ada Promo
DISKON HINGGA 110RB*
Lebih hemat pakai gopay coins & gopaylater
*S&K Berlaku
Mabar enaknya ditemenin pizza atau donat, ya?
Ada banyak #REKOMENDASIK menu yang pas buat nemenin mabar. Pesen GoFood & nikmatin diskonnya!
‘#REKOMENDASIK (Fun Recommendations) FOR THOSE WHO STAYS UP LATE FOR THE GAMES
There must be a Promo UP TO 110K DISCOUNT*
Save more with gopay coins & gopaylater
*T&Cs Apply
Do you like pizza or donuts?
Many #REKOMENDASIK menus are perfect to accompany your game. Order GoFood and enjoy the discount!

Positive politeness is also seen in utterances that appreciate customers and give reasons. These reasons and expressions of appreciation are generally motivated by conditions that disturb the user, including certain requests from the application. Giving reasons and appreciating the user's actions is a means to reduce discomfort due to obstruction of the user's will or requests from the application as in the following utterances.

(11) Kenapa gak bisa batalin pesanan ini?
Pesanannya langsung dibuat sama restonya sehabis dikonfirmasi. Mereka tentunya senang kamu udah pesan! Jika pesanannya bermasalah, silakan tekan 'Bantuan'.
‘Why can’t I cancel this order?
The restaurant will process your order as soon as it's confirmed. They must be happy you ordered! If you have any issues with your order, please click 'Help'.

(12) Kasih tip buat driver
Tipmu pasti berharga untuknya.
‘Tip your driver
Your tip must be valuable to them.’

Asking for reasons and feedback is also a form of implementing FTA with positive politeness. With this strategy, Gojek tries to capture user opinions as evaluation material to improve their service quality in the future. Examples of the application of positive politeness by asking for reasons and asking for feedback are seen in the following utterances.

(13) Wih, apa nih yang oke?
[Waktu pengiriman/Penemuan lokasi/Komunikasi/Sikap driver]
‘Wow, what makes it so good?
[Delivery time/Location finding/Communication/Driver’s attitude]’

(14) Ceritain detailnya, yuk [Type here everything]
‘Tell us the details [Type here everything]’

Gojek applies positive politeness by assuming in recommending restaurants or menus in GoFood. The assumptions in question are search keyword suggestions (e.g. restaurant name or menu) that appear when the user has just typed part of the keyword. With these assumptions, users can make orders more efficiently by not having to type the restaurant name or desired menu fully. This is shown in the following speech.

(15) Maksud kamu ini, ya? [HokBen] ‘Did you mean this? [HokBen]


Conveying hope is another form of positive politeness in Gojek. The use of speech that contains hope indicates Gojek's concern for user comfort and shows the intention to return to provide services in the future. Positive politeness by conveying hope is seen in the following utterances.

(17) Tip kamu sangat berarti
Semoga kebaikannya kembali ke kamu
‘Your tip means a lot
May the favor returns to you’

(18) Oke, GoCar Hemat kamu udah dibatalin
Lain waktu, semoga kami yang anterin kamu, ya.
‘Okay, your GoCar Hemat has been canceled
Next time, hopefully, we'll be the ones to take you.’

Positive politeness appears when Gojek shows enthusiasm for the user's situation. In addition to showing a positive reaction to circumstances that benefit users, this enthusiasm implies that users benefit by using Gojek’s services. Positive politeness in the form of enthusiasm for the user's situation is characterized by enthusiastic intonation and interjections, as in the following utterances.

(19) Makanannya udah di jalan
Bentar lagi makanannya datang!
‘Your food is on the way
‘Your food will arrive shortly’

(20) Yay! Kamu hemat 36.000 untuk pesanan ini.
‘Yay! You saved 36.000 for this order.’

5.3 Doing FTA with negative politeness

Along with using informal language as a positive politeness strategy, Gojek also uses formal language to apply negative politeness. This is intended to respect customers and show a professional attitude in certain situations. The use of formal varieties can be found in the Help section as seen in the following examples.

(21) Hai, (username) *emoji tangan*
Saya bot Customer Service Gojek. Ada yang bisa saya bantu?

‘Hi, (username) *waving emoji*
I’m Gojek Customer Service bot. May I help you?’

(22) Saya telah memvalidasi laporanmu terkait restoran yang tutup. Pesananmu telah berhasil dibatalkan dan nominal pembayarannya akan dikembalikan.

‘I have validated your report regarding the closed restaurant. Your order has been successfully canceled and your payment will be refunded.’

Negative politeness strategies also appear in the form of questions. These questions allow users to choose actions or services that suit their needs. This shows that Gojek does not make assumptions about user circumstances that can offend or burden them. The following are examples of these questions.

(23) [MODE HEMAT] Mau kenalan lebih jauh sama Mode Hemat? [Mau, dong]

‘[MODE HEMAT] Want to know more about Mode Hemat? [Yes]’

(24) Mau naik apa? ‘What do you want to ride?’

Through quote (23), Gojek lets users get acquainted with Mode Hemat, a new feature in GoFood. With this question, Gojek does not force users to read the introduction of Mode Hemat so that users are free to get to know the feature at any time. In quote (24), Gojek allows users to choose the mode of transportation when using GoRide/GoCar. Although GoRide and GoCar are two different features, users can still choose between using a motorcycle or car when they enter one of these features. Gojek also provides GoRide/GoCar options with different prices and vehicle sizes so that users can choose according to their needs.

There is also the use of hedges in the form of the particle ya as a marker of negative politeness. This particle softens Gojek’s requests to users to do something or discuss unfavorable circumstances for customers, e.g. when changing food orders from other restaurants or waiting for the page to load. This can be seen in the following quotes.

(25) Mau ganti pesan dari resto ini aja?

‘Want to order from this restaurant instead?
Sure you can. But we will delete the menu you chose from the previous restaurant.’

(26) (page loading) Tunggu sebentar, ya… ‘Please wait a moment…’

A negative politeness strategy is also seen when the application provides choices to give users the freedom to express their experiences, for example, when rating food, restaurants, or drivers as in the quotes below.

(27) Gimana makanannya?

[Aku kecewa./Kurang memuaskan./Oke kok./Enaaak!/Enak bangeeet!]

‘How was the food?
[I’m disappointed./Not quite satisfying./Okay./Great!/Sooo tasty!]’

(28) Gimana posisi drivermu?

Kasih tahu kami apakah posisi driver… [Driver sampai lebih lama dari estimasi waktu/Driver sampai lebih cepat dari estimasi waktu/…]}

‘How is your driver’s position?
Tell us if the driver… [Driver arrives later than estimated time/Driver arrived faster than the estimated time/…]’

FTA with negative politeness is also done by stating FTA as a general rule. Thus, users can understand the restrictions imposed on them as common rules that need to be followed. The negative politeness strategy of stating FTA as a general rule is seen in the following quote.

(29) S&K buat jaminan tepat waktu

- Voucher tidak akan diberikan kalau kamu ganti lokasi jemput.
- Voucher akan dikirim setelah perjalananmu selesai.
- Nilai voucher: 5rb buat layanan motor, 10rb buat layanan mobil.
- Gak berlaku buat GoRide Electric, GoBluebird, dan layanan instant.

‘T&Cs for on-time guarantees
- Vouchers will not be issued if you change your pick-up location.
- The voucher will be sent after your trip is complete.
- Voucher value: 5k for motorcycle service, 10k for car service.
- Not applicable for GoRide Electric, GoBluebird, and instant services.’

(30) Baik, terima kasih infonya. Perlu diketahui bahwa pesanan kamu mungkin akan dibatalkan setelah dilakukan pengecekan.

‘Thank you for your information. Please note that your order may be canceled after checking.’
Gojek uses negative politeness by apologizing to compensate for uncomfortable situations for users, for example, when waiting or experiencing problems in order. This can be seen in the following utterances.

(31) *Terima kasih udah menunggu*
Maaf, pengantaran tadi melewati estimasi waktu
‘Thank you for waiting
Sorry, the delivery exceeded the estimated time.’

(32) *Mohon maaf atas ketidaknyamanan ini, ya.*
Restoran terkait akan kami edukasi kembali agar hal seperti ini tidak terulang lagi.
‘We apologize for the inconvenience. We will re-educate the restaurant so that this will not happen again.’

Gojek applies negative politeness by alleviating pressure on users in situations that suggest a final state, for example, when subscribing to a service or sending a food order to a restaurant. By reducing pressure on users, Gojek provides freedom for users from the final state. That is, users are not limited by their current choices but can change the situation now or in the future. Such a case is seen in the following examples.

(33) *Kamu bisa berhenti pakai fitur ini kapan aja.*
Tinggal matikan tombol yang tertera di bawah.
‘You can stop using this feature at any time. Just turn off the button below.’

(34) *Ada lagi pesanannya?*
Masih bisa nambah menu lain, ya.
‘Any more orders? You can still add other dishes.’

Negative politeness in the form of pleading is applied when Gojek gives orders or appeals that interfere with user freedom. In delivering orders or appeals, Gojek uses the word *mohon* ‘please’ to reduce authority over users so that the delivery of orders and appeals is still done with respect for users. This can be seen in the following utterances.

(35) *Mohon cek semua barang yang kamu bawa sebelum turun dari mobil. Sampai jumpa~*
‘Please check all your belongings before getting off the car. See you soon~’

(36) *Mohon centang pernyataan di bawah ini sebelum mengirimkan formulir*
‘Please check the statements below before submitting the form’

### 5.4 Doing FTA indirectly

The strategy of doing FTA indirectly is used by Gojek when discussing things that are detrimental or considered annoying to users, especially when ordering. Indirect FTAs can be seen in the following utterances.

(37) *Ada pesan dari keluarga driver*
Makasih banyak udah mengikuti protokol J3K di trip ini. Sehat selalu, Kak!
‘Message from the driver’s family:
Thank you so much for following the J3K protocol on this trip. Stay healthy, sis!’

(38) *Wah, semua driver sedang sibuk...*
Sepertinya driver sedang laris manis saat ini.
Mohon coba lagi ya.
‘Well, all the drivers are busy...
Looks like drivers are selling well at the moment. Please try again.’

In quote (38), Gojek conveys a message from the family of the driver, who thanks the user for complying with health protocols. This speech reminds GoRide/GoCar service users to always comply with health protocols during the trip. During the pandemic, this appeal can be found in various lines of life, including online ride-hailing services. To prevent users’ discomfort of being constantly reminded of the same thing, Gojek uses variations by delivering messages as quoted. The appeal in the form of this message can also grow users’ sympathy for drivers and their families so that they are moved to implement health protocols for the safety of all parties.

Meanwhile, quote (39) can be found when GoCar users fail to get a driver. Instead of explicitly informing that users have not managed to get a driver, Gojek said that all drivers are busy and users need to try to reorder. Gojek also conveyed the assumption that, at that time, drivers were selling well, so no one had taken the user’s order. With the delivery of these reasons and assumptions, users are expected to understand why they did not get a driver and try to order GoCar again.

### 6. CONCLUSION

The above illustration shows four types of politeness strategies in the utterances contained in the Gojek application. These strategies consist of doing FTA without politeness (74 utterances), doing FTA with positive politeness (75 utterances), doing FTA with negative politeness (63 utterances), and doing FTA indirectly (4 utterances). The strategy of performing FTA without politeness appears in the context of directing application operations, stating terms or conditions, and drawing users’ attention to matters requiring special attention. Positive politeness is applied to create a comfortable and pleasant impression in using the application, which is achieved by using informal varieties, joking, showing
understanding of customer interests and needs through various offers, appreciating customers and giving reasons, asking for reasons and feedback, assuming, conveying expectations, and showing enthusiasm. Negative politeness is applied by using formal language form, using hedges, giving choices to users, stating FTA as a general rule, apologizing, reducing pressure on users, and pleading. Indirect FTAs are applied to discuss detrimental or uncomfortable situations for users.

The high occurrence of FTA with positive politeness indicates that Gojek tends to accommodate the wants and needs of users and put themselves in the same social group as users so that users feel comfortable using this application. The almost equal number of occurrences of applying FTA without politeness shows that Gojek is also concerned with efficiently conveying information that users need to know, for example, regarding the general operation of the application or the terms and conditions of a feature. Furthermore, the high presence of FTA with negative politeness shows Gojek's efforts to respect user freedom and shows Gojek's professionalism as a service provider. The application of indirect FTA is very rarely used because it is not in line with the application communication model which requires clarity so that users can understand it easily.

This research is a pragmatic study of language use in an application very close to the Indonesian community. However, its scope is still limited to describing the forms of politeness strategies contained in the Gojek application. The community's opinion as Gojek users regarding the use of language found in this research becomes an interesting thing to research in the future. Further studies are needed to obtain a more comprehensive picture of politeness strategies in Gojek, especially by focusing on the application users' reception of these linguistic forms.

REFERENCES