Unravelling the Art of Politeness Strategies in YouTube Content Episode 40 of Johnny's Communication Center

Faiza Tadzkia¹, Haryati²
Universitas Pamulang
Email: ¹faizaatz.16@gmail.com; ²dosen00511@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The study investigates the application of politeness strategies in digital communication specifically in YouTube content. Using Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness theory as a framework, this study analyzes conversational interactions between Johnny and Ten in Johnny's Communication Center Episode 40: Johnny & Ten Make Kimbap! from NCT Official's YouTube channel. Through a qualitative descriptive method, the study identifies 63 data that is divided into four types of politeness strategies—bald-on record which is found in 42 data, off-record which is found in 6 data, positive politeness which is found in 15 data, and negative politeness no found in data—and examines the factors influencing their use, such as relative power (10 data) and social distance (53 data). The findings reveal that bald-on record is the most frequently used strategy, reflecting the casual and collaborative dynamic between the speakers. Social distance appears as the most dominant factor affecting strategy choice. This study contributes to the understanding of how politeness operates in informal digital interaction and emphasizes the relevance of pragmatics in media discourse.

Keywords: *Factor, Politeness, Pragmatics, YouTube*

A. Introduction

It is a necessity for living creatures to communicate with other living creatures. This need aims to find its function as the media to express and help convey the message so that the goal of communication is achieved. Pratiwi et al. (2024) highlight language as an essential point required to fulfil the needs as an individual creature as it is a part of communication by people. In the process, it is crucial for language users to apply polite language in social interaction in order to avoid misunderstanding and hurting someone else. Additionally, by paying attention to politeness, individuals can build positive relationships, gain support, and achieve communication goals effectively. In its implementation, politeness is one aspect that is highly discussed in the context of conveying information in this digital era that cannot be separated from the lives of most people. Social media such as X, Instagram, YouTube, Threads, and others have become public communication spaces that are full of personal expressions, opinions, and even open debates. However, the language used tends to be more spontaneous and often ignores the norms of politeness that were previously upheld in face-to-face communication. According to Timotheou et al. (2023), the advancement of information technology has changed the nature and scope of the education system, including the media of social relations and communication for individuals, groups, communities, society, and other larger institutions. It means politeness plays a role in communications, including online communications on social media platforms.

As mentioned before, politeness in communication includes using polite words and paying attention to etiquette in speaking and acting. Politeness also involves awareness of the culture and values that apply in a society; therefore, interactions run smoothly and do not offend the feelings of other parties. For instance, for Western people, it is fine to call the lecturer by the way his or her name without having Miss, Ma'am, or Sir. Another example is a conversation that occurs in a meeting topic between colleagues and clients will certainly use a different level of politeness in the form of English business vocabulary or formal than conversations between a group of friends discussing holiday plans where they can use slang like that created by Gen Alpha now. By saying sigma towards something good or cool and *skibidi* which refers to bad things, that shows same strategy in politeness way but in different type. Thus, various factors that involving the politeness can also be seen from the chosen topic, social relations like the interaction of lecturer and students, or the differentiate age between the speaker and the listener, culture, customs of local communities, and so own.

Moreover, this study represents a comprehensive exploration of how politeness manifests within the realm of digital communication, particularly within the context portrayed in YouTube video, by using the form of social media content. It gives the main point that video is not only an entertainment but also has a role in educating people when people can apply the knowledge of it. The writer chose NCT official channel account on YouTube due to it is a massive YouTube channel with around 6.36 million subscribers. As a channel that displays and films about the members of a K-Pop boy group, the various entertainment content from NCT channel is certainly able to reach audiences on an international scale. Lastly, the guest star in this selected content is a native and someone who has mastered five foreign languages, including English, making their conversation in this English-only content very appropriate to grammar requirements and also speaking skills.

In conclusion, understanding politeness in language is not only relevant in the formal context of communication. Deeper, it is used in everyday interactions that is discussed in Brown & Levinson (1987)'s work about politeness strategies and the factors involved the interaction. It is through the case that the chief purposes of this study are what the types and factors of politeness strategies are those are applied in selected YouTube content.

B. Method

In this study, the researchers employed a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze politeness strategies. This method was chosen because it allows for a deeper understanding of social interaction, human behavior, and the interpretation of meaning within communication (Aspers & Corte, 2019; Cresswell, 2018). The data were drawn from the YouTube video *Johnny's Communication Center (JCC) Episode 40: Johnny and Ten Make Kimbap!* uploaded on the NCT official channel on January 24th, 2024. The video, lasting 30 minutes and 29 seconds, features interactions between Johnny (NCT 127's member) and Ten (WayV's member), providing rich material for analyzing politeness strategies in natural discourse.

Data collection was carried out systematically. the researchers first reviewed several videos before selecting this episode as the object of study. A transcript of the dialogue was then created, and politeness strategies were highlighted for further analysis. Following Brown & Levinson's (1987) framework, the researchers identified, classified, and interpreted the types and factors of politeness strategies used in the interaction.

Through this systematic process of transcription, classification, and descriptive interpretation, the study provides insights into how politeness strategies are manifested in

conversational exchanges. This methodological approach ensures that the findings are reliable and grounded in detailed contextual analysis.

C. Findings and Analysis

1. Findings

This study is conducted to determine the types and how it involves factors in politeness strategies based on Brown & Levinson's (1987) theory that is applied in a video content *Johnny's Communication Center (JCC) Episode 40: Johnny and Ten Make Kimbap!* on YouTube. The aim is to explore how various politeness strategies, such as bald-on record, off-record, positive politeness, and negative politeness, and factors of it, including as relative power and social distance are used by Johnny as host and Ten, the guest star for that episode. The details of the politeness types and the factors of it along their process to make kimbap are presenting in the following table:

1.1 Types of Politeness Strategies

In its distribution, politeness strategies explain four types related to the strategy in communication settings. The table below depicts the amount of each strategy, represented in the selected video under the title *Johnny's Communication Center (JCC) Episode 40: Johnny and Ten Make Kimbap!*

Table 1. Types of Politeness Strategies

No.	Types of Politeness	Frequency
1.	Bald-on Record	42
2.	Off-record	6
3.	Positive Politeness	15
4.	Negative Politeness	0
	Total	63

Following the theory by Brown & Levinson (1987) about positive strategies, the writers find 63 data in total consisting of 42 bald-on record as the dominant data, 15 positive politeness data, 6 data found in off-record strategy, and there is no data found in negative politeness. Based on the data mentioned, Johnny and Ten apply bald-on record strategy more often rather than other strategies. As workmate, they show that politeness has a value as an important feature of human behaviour leading people's thought in daily live to make good communication with others (Hutahaean et al., 2021). This behaviour demonstrates their effort to present a positive self-image to one another revealing several underlying dynamics in their interactions. First, it indicates a desire for acceptance and approval, showing that they care about each other's opinions and perceptions. Second, it reflects mutual respect or trust, as they believe that showcasing themselves positively in the interview strengthens their relationship and communication. Third, it aligns with social norms as maintaining a favourable image is expected in social situations.

Additionally, when considering politeness strategies in communication with people, there is also another point that support the value of it. Understanding these elements allows individuals to navigate social interactions more effectively, fostering mutual respect and minimizing the risk of misunderstandings. That is factors of politeness.

1.2 Factors of Politeness

Politeness strategies in communication are influenced by various factors that support their importance in maintaining social harmony. These factors include relative power and social distance. Both shape how people adjust the language to ensure respectful ad effective communication, making politeness strategies crucial for managing interactions in diverse social environments. The next table shows the division of each factor along the content of this study:

Table 2. Factors of Politeness

No.	Factors of Politeness	Frequency
1.	Relative Power	10
2.	Social Distance	53
Total		63

The table shows the amount of each factor influences four types in politeness strategies that explained by Brown & Levinson (1987) in their work in total 63 data. Within the framework of Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness strategy theory, the factors such as social distance and relative power are the main determinants in the selection of the type of politeness strategy used by the speaker. The findings in this study indicate that the total recorded social distance reached 53, while the relative power amounted to 10, indicating that these two factors significantly influenced the variation of strategies chosen, be it bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, or off record. High social distance tends to encourage the use of more careful and polite strategies, such as negative politeness and even bald-on record where people might have different perspective and culture how to interact with others, while higher relative power in the interlocutor also increases the speaker's tendency to reduce threats to face through indirect strategies like off-record and positive politeness that highlights the appreciations to make strong bond. Furthermore, the data below will elaborate and define it in detail explanation.

2. Discussion

Here are some data that explains how certain dialogues between Johnny as MC and Ten as guest star apply the function of politeness strategies in their conversation.

Bald-on Record
Excerpt 2
Johnny: "… Yes **let's go.** Okay, **let's sit down first.** First, **let's talk about the ingredients**."
Ten: "Okay."
The utterance happens when Johnny guides Ten to sit on the floor to start making kimbap. By saying, "… let's go, let's sit down first … let's talk about the ingredients." Johnny directly asks Ten to not wasting time and just do what they have to do in the content. The phrase let's indicates the directness without the usual politeness strategies that is shown how bald-on record works. There, Johnny not only gives Ten instructions but also takes a moment to explain the

communication style he is being used. By explaining this to Ten, Johnny helps him understand why their communication is straightforward and efficient in this context.

This situation applies social distance factor as the cultural shapes the formulation of requests, especially when social proximity is involved and highlighting the importance of attention-getters in the context (Munkova, et al., 2023). The social gap between Johnny and Ten allows for a more relaxed and natural exchange while still connecting to the necessary respect and formality expected in educational or professional settings. It is proven by the highlighting sentence, "Yes let's go. Okay, let's sit down first." that emphasize Johnny's request by showing is title or social as MC to Ten.

Excerpt 4
Ten: "Secondly, it's ham."
Johnny: "No no no. **Let's go this way**."

The context of this conversation is they start to mention the ingredients to make kimbap and they argue about it. The way Johnny denies Ten's statement with saying, "Let's go this way." instead of agreeing with mentioning ham, showing the point of bald-on record. This phrase has a correctly meaning and directly without concerning more interpretation to make the interlocutor understands, specifically to make Ten follows Johnny's advice and desire that the second should be burdock, a vegetable rich in antioxidants that people often use as a natural remedy for several skin conditions and is a common ingredient in kimchi fillings in Koreans.

Having different perspective from the previous word "let's", this context explains how Johnny uses the relative power factor towards his guest star, Ten. He emphasizes his rejection of Ten's opinion that the second ingredient is ham by replying, "No no no." The next sentence which is a bald-on record in politeness strategies is, "Let's go this way." Showing dominance as a host or someone who has power over the ongoing content. Although not intended to hurt the guest star, Johnny's statement this time shows his authority as an MC to direct the direction of the event. MC often possesses strong communication skills, flexibility, and the ability to adapt the interaction with the audiences (Hernández-Serrano et al., 2025). The role is critical to maintaining the flow and energy of an event.

Positive Politeness
Excerpt 1
Johnny: "… because today, on JOHNNY's Communication Center, **we have a very special guest. Not that special anymore, but kind of special. You want to be special? Okay, here he is my friend, Ten!**"

This dialogue happens in the beginning of content that said by Johnny as he is a MC. The sentence in it conveys a message of positive politeness about how this strategy pays attention to solidarity or respect between the speaker and the listener or the interlocutor (Luh et al. 2020). By saying his line, it shows Johnny's enthusiasm, supported by his positive face, towards the guest stars on the JCC episode at that time. Moreover, Johnny adds more the friendliness tense with a joke "not that special anymore, but kind of special" and "he is my friend" even though Ten is a year younger than him to show how close they are as a friend who work together for this episode. Pointing the explanation from Afriana (2018), positive politeness emphasizes kindness and mutual respect, as it is an essential factor for managing social interactions. This thing creates a positive and harmonious interactional atmosphere while maintaining the politeness norms of the social context between the MC and the guest star.

The dialogue is primarily influenced by social distance. Johnny's use of phrases such as "My friend, Ten!" and the humorous remark "Not so special anymore, but kind of special" indicate a relaxed and friendly relationship between him and Ten, which indicates little social distance. By joking around and describing Ten as a "special" guest in a light-hearted manner, Johnny reinforces the closeness and familiarity they have, considering their friendship rather than any hierarchical

or formal relationship. This approach reflects solidarity and positive interaction, which characterizes low social (Xiao & Li, 2024). In terms of relative power, there is no clear indication that Johnny is trying to assert authority or dominance over Ten. Instead, Johnny's role as MC is more about facilitating the interaction in a friendly and approachable manner, which highlights the egalitarian nature of their relationship. The focus is more on the friendship rather than the power imbalance between them. Thus, Johnny's strategy aims to foster a warm and informal atmosphere, as well as strengthen the relationship with Ten and the audience or viewers.

Off-record

Excerpt 53

Johnny: "I did so well, should I start cooking?"

Ten: "Let me try If you open up a restaurant, can I be the one who does the plating?"

Johnny: "Plating? Okay. **I'm afraid it will take too long**."

This sentence shows Johnny's joke about his worry that if Ten plants as a chef in a restaurant, it will take a long time because Ten is not good or reliable in that matter. This means that Ten needs more effort and a long time to serve food well to consumers, as the concept of how off-record happens in conversation. This ambiguity is a core element of many jokes, as it invites the listener to "read between the line" and find the humor in what is implied rather than what is directly stated (Purnamasari & Soepriatmadji, 2017). In addition, after that Ten says no and it can be supported by the next Johnny's statement when he says, "The food will get all cold." Thus, instead of directly applying the bald-on record character to say that Ten's plating is bad, Johnny says this sentence by using the off-record rule.

The factor that supports this point is social distance. In this scenario, Johnny's indirect statement about Ten's potential to take too long with plating reflects a level of familiarity and comfort between them. When individuals share a closer relationship, such as friends or colleagues, they tend to use more subtle and indirect communication to express thoughts they may be perceived as sensitive. By jokingly implying that Ten's plating would take too long, Johnny avoids directly insulting Ten's skills, which could create tension or discomfort. This use of off-record communication; therefore, allows Johnny to express a concern, maintaining the positive social distance between them. It shows that in context where social distance is smaller, individuals often rely on humor and indirectness to navigate potential social, as a more direct approach in their friendship relationship.

Negative Politeness

Pointing from Brown & Levinson, (1987), negative politeness is a strategy used to respect someone's negative face. For example, saying, "I'm sorry to bother you, but…" instead of asking for something directly. Nevertheless, this 30 minute 30 second content does not display any negative politeness strategies at all. It is caused Johnny and Ten, then even the cameramen and implicit involvement with the fans, do not need to avoid conflict as the offending or triggering confrontation and maintain the formality to give more respectful and appropriate distant. Moreover, they are a close friend and the relationship between idols and fans have a strong bond-built love. The idols care about their fans and shows appreciation, while the fans—known as Sijeuni or NCTzen and WayZenNi, support and cheer for the idol with loyalty.

D. Conclusion

The analysis of Episode 40 of Johnny's Communication Center shows that Brown & Levinson's four politeness strategies are strongly shaped by the context of interaction between Johnny and Ten. Among the 63 instances identified, bald-on record was the most dominant strategy, reflecting the casual atmosphere and their close personal relationship as fellow NCT

members of nearly the same age. Positive politeness was used to strengthen solidarity and show attentiveness, while off-record strategies appeared in moments requiring indirectness or humor. Interestingly, negative politeness did not appear at all, which indicates that their communication did not require formality or distance. This pattern highlights that the selection of strategies is not random, but is influenced by the speakers' closeness and the shared setting of the show.

The two main factors, social distance and relative power, also contributed to how politeness strategies unfolded. Social distance was the most influential factor, with 53 instances, as Johnny and Ten's familiarity allowed them to interact directly without causing face-threatening acts. This can be seen when Johnny casually addressed Ten or even the staff, showing that intimacy reduced the need for mitigated forms of politeness. Relative power, on the other hand, appeared in Johnny's role as host, when he guided the direction of the conversation or gave instructions, but even then, it remained balanced by their friendly rapport. Together, the four strategies and two factors demonstrate that politeness is negotiated dynamically: it reflects not only the theoretical categories of Brown & Levinson but also the real social relationships and situational roles that shape communication in media contexts.

E. Reference

Afriana & Ricky. (2018). A Pragmatic Analysis of Politeness Strategies in ' Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck. 554–60.

Aspers, P. and Corte, C. (2019). What Is Qualitative in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Sociology* 42(2):139–60. doi: 10.1007/s11133-019-9413-7.

Hernández-Serrano, M. J., Cullen, J, Jones, B., & Romo, N. M. (2025). A Flexible Framework Integrating Digital and Social Competences in Vocational Education Across Diverse Contexts."*Media and Communication* 13:1–19. doi: 10.17645/mac.8974.

Hutahaean, D. T., Herman, & Afrodita, F. F. G. (2021). An Analysis Of The Politeness Strategies Utilized By Pesbukers In Their Variety Show. *Wanastra : Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra* 13(1):39–46.

Munkova, D., Stranovska, E., & Munk, M. (2023). Communication Models in a Foreign Language in Relation to Cognitive Style Category Width and Power Distance. *Frontiers in Psychology* 14(January). doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1272370.

Pratiwi, T. L., Togatorop, S. A., Putri, A., A., & Zaki, L. B. (2024). Enhancing English Speaking Skill of Students in Tunas Baru High School through ICT- Integrated News Reporting. 5(2):205–17.

Purnamasari, Y., & Soepriatmadji, L. (2017). Politeness Strategies Reflected in The Graha Norton Show on BBC One. Dbb V12 N2 Juli 2017 45P 11(1):92–105.

Timotheou, Stella, Ourania Miliou, Yiannis Dimitriadis, Sara Villagrá Sobrino, Nikoleta Giannoutsou, Romina Cachia, Alejandra Martínez Monés, and Andri Ioannou. 2023. *Impacts of Digital Technologies on Education and Factors Influencing Schools' Digital Capacity and Transformation: A Literature Review*. Vol. 28. Springer US.

Yuniarti, E., Natsir, M., & Setyowati, R. (2020). Positive Politeness Strategies on Catwoman Movie. *Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Seni Dan Budaya* 4(2):264–76.

https://youtu.be/eJt7uLV9d7c?si=kUw_-bixUXQ6SfQk