

## **Comparison of the Concept of Politeness in Language in a Pragmatic Perspective: A Literature Review of the Theories of Politeness Strategy**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the comparative conceptualization of language politeness in a pragmatic perspective through a systematic literature study approach to contemporary politeness strategy theories. A descriptive qualitative methodology was used to analyze academic publications for the 2020-2024 period related to linguistic politeness. The findings reveal that the Brown-Levinson theory remains the dominant paradigm, but it requires adaptation to diverse cultural and situational contexts. Comparative analysis shows significant variability in the implementation of politeness strategies based on communication medium, social hierarchy, and cultural orientation. The context of digital communication presents new challenges that require theoretical reformulation to accommodate the unique characteristics of virtual interactions. The theoretical implications point to the need to develop an integrative model that harmonizes universal principles with local particularities in the analysis of pragmatic linguistic politeness. The findings indicate that Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness continues to serve as the dominant paradigm in politeness research due to its structured categorization of positive and negative politeness strategies. However, despite its enduring influence, the theory shows limitations when applied to diverse cultural and situational contexts, particularly in non-Western societies where norms of interpersonal interaction often diverge from its original assumptions.

**Keywords:** pragmatic, politeness, communicative strategy

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Language politeness is a fundamental aspect of human communication that has a strategic role in maintaining social harmony and facilitating effective interactions between individuals. In a pragmatic context, politeness is not simply understood as a universal social norm, but as a complex phenomenon that involves a variety of structured and contextual communicative strategies. This complexity reflects the diversity of cultures and social contexts that influence the way individuals express politeness in a variety of communicative situations (Widanta et al., 2023). The development of the theory of politeness in the realm of pragmatism has undergone significant evolution since the initial concept introduced by pragmatists. The theory of politeness developed by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson focuses on efforts to reduce threats to one's self-esteem or face in social interactions. This concept then developed into various theoretical approaches that offer diverse perspectives in understanding the phenomenon of language politeness (Indah & Efendi, 2025).

The diversity of theoretical approaches in the study of linguistic politeness creates a dynamic space for academic discussion about the effectiveness and applicability of each theory. Each theoretical approach offers a different analytical framework for interpreting politeness strategies, ranging from one that emphasizes universal aspects to one that prioritizes the local cultural context. These differences in perspectives result in variations in the classification of politeness strategies and the way in which politeness levels are measured in various communicative contexts. The context of contemporary communication, especially those influenced by the development of digital technology and social media, has created new challenges in the application of the theory of linguistic politeness. Politeness in language in social media requires a comprehensive pragmatic study to understand the dynamics of online communication. This change in communication medium affects the way individuals adapt traditional politeness strategies into digital platforms that have different communicative characteristics (Risianto et al., 2023).

The multilingual and multicultural realities of modern communication demand a deeper understanding of how various theories of politeness can be applied effectively in diverse contexts. Each linguistic community has unique norms of politeness, which can differ significantly from the theories of politeness developed based on specific cultural contexts. This creates the need to examine conceptual comparisons between theories of politeness to identify the advantages and limitations of each approach. Previous research has shown that the application of politeness theory in various communicative contexts has resulted in varied findings, which indicate the need for systematic comparative studies. A pragmatic study of language politeness in a political context shows the complexity of applying the principle of politeness in formal communicative situations. These variations of findings suggest that there is no single theory of courtesy that can be universally applied to all communicative contexts (Bahrun & Nurul Putri, 2021).

The gap in the academic literature related to the systematic comparison between the theories of politeness in a pragmatic perspective is the main motivation for conducting this comprehensive study. Although there are many studies that apply the theory of courtesy individually, studies that compare the advantages and disadvantages of various theoretical approaches are limited. This condition creates an urgent need to conduct a comparative analysis that can provide a holistic understanding of the theoretical landscape of linguistic politeness in pragmatics. Based on the theoretical and practical complexity of the study of linguistic politeness, this study formulates several basic research questions. First, how is the concept of linguistic courtesy constructed in the various major pragmatic theories that have developed in

contemporary academic literature? This question aims to identify the conceptual framework underlying each theoretical approach and understand the philosophical assumptions that underlie each theory.

Second, what are the fundamental similarities and differences between the various politeness strategies proposed by the main pragmatic theories? This question is directed to analyze the strategic components that are the focus of each theory and identify areas of convergence and divergence between theoretical approaches. This comparative analysis will provide a comprehensive overview of the spectrum of politeness strategies available in the pragmatic literature. Third, what are the advantages and limitations of each theory of linguistic politeness in analyzing communicative phenomena in diverse contexts? This question aims to evaluate the analytical capacity of each theory in the face of the complexity of real-world communication and identify communicative situations in which each theory shows certain strengths or weaknesses (Astia, 2020).

This study aims to comprehensively analyze the concept of language politeness in various pragmatic theories through a systematic literature study approach. This ultimate goal is realized through an in-depth identification and description of the conceptual framework underlying each major politeness theory in pragmatics, including the theoretical and methodological assumptions that underlie each approach. Furthermore, this study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of the politeness strategies proposed by various pragmatic theories. This analysis includes the identification of similarities and differences in the classification of politeness strategies, the operational mechanisms of each strategy, and the applicable context recommended by each theory. Through this systematic comparison, the research can produce a comprehensive mapping of the theoretical landscape of linguistic politeness in pragmatics.

The third goal is to evaluate the advantages and limitations of each theory of politeness in analyzing contemporary communicative phenomena. This evaluation was carried out by considering the theoretical capacity in explaining the complexity of multimodal, multicultural, and multimedia communication that is characteristic of the current digital era. The results of this evaluation will provide recommendations for future theoretical development. This research makes a significant contribution to the development of pragmatic science, especially in the domain of linguistic politeness. A key theoretical benefit is the provision of a comprehensive analytical framework that researchers can use to select the theoretical approach that best suits their object of study. The theoretical synthesis resulting from this research can be a reference for the development of a more integrative and adaptive theory of politeness to the context of contemporary communication.

From a methodological perspective, this study provides a comparative analysis model that can be adapted for theoretical studies in other pragmatic domains. The systematic approach developed in this study can be a template for similar studies that aim to compare various theoretical approaches in applicative linguistics. This contributes to the development of meta-analytical research methodologies in the language sciences. The practical benefit of this research lies in the provision of applicable guidance for communication practitioners, language educators, and curriculum developers in choosing effective politeness strategies for specific communicative contexts. Understanding the practice of language politeness in the context of formal education is important in the era of digital technology. The results of the research can be used to develop a language politeness learning program that is more responsive to modern communication needs.

In addition, this research provides benefits for the development of communication technology, especially in the design of digital communication systems that consider the aspect of politeness. A comprehensive understanding of various politeness strategies can be integrated

in the development of communication applications, social media platforms, and human-computer interaction systems that are more sensitive to cultural politeness norms. The long-term benefit of this research is its contribution to the harmonization of intercultural communication in the era of globalization. By understanding the diversity of theoretical approaches to politeness, individuals and institutions can develop more inclusive and effective communicative competencies in multicultural contexts. This contributes to the reduction of miscommunication and conflicts that often occur due to differences in intercultural norms of politeness.

## **II. RESEARCH METHODS**

This study applies a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to explore and describe the phenomenon of linguistic politeness in a pragmatic perspective through a comprehensive analysis of relevant academic literature. The descriptive qualitative method was chosen for its ability to provide an in-depth and holistic picture of theoretical concepts through the exploration of meaning and contextual interpretation. This approach allows researchers to analyze the theoretical complexity of linguistic politeness with a focus on an in-depth understanding of the essential characteristics of various pragmatic theories (Aini & Simatupang, 2024). The design of this study adopts a systematic literature study strategy that facilitates the identification, evaluation, and synthesis of academic sources related to the theory of linguistic politeness. The analysis process is carried out through thematic categorization stages that allow the identification of conceptual and strategic patterns in various theoretical approaches. The credibility of the analysis is strengthened through the triangulation of sources that involve the comparison of theoretical perspectives from different academic traditions and cultural contexts. The dependability of the research is guaranteed through systematic documentation of the analysis process and the consistent use of the analytical framework. The confirmability of the research is maintained through an analytical approach that focuses on the intrinsic characteristics of each theory with clear interpretive transparency.

The data of this research consists of secondary sources in the form of academic publications, monographs, journal articles, and theoretical documents related to language politeness in a pragmatic perspective. The data inclusion criteria include publication in the 2020-2024 time frame to ensure theoretical relevance and up-to-dateness, with a focus on works that have a significant contribution to the development of the theory of politeness. The data selection process is carried out through an evaluation of academic quality that considers the reputation of the publisher, the credibility of the author, and the impact of citations in the pragmatic academic community. The data collection technique uses a systematic search strategy in academic databases with relevant keywords and specific pragmatic terminology combinations. Data analysis is carried out through a thematic content analysis approach that allows the identification of central themes in each politeness theory. The categorization process is carried out in stages to identify the conceptual patterns that emerge from the data, followed by comparative analysis to test the consistency of the categorization with the existing theoretical framework. Data interpretation is carried out through a hermeneutic approach that considers the historical and philosophical context of each theoretical tradition. The synthesis of findings is carried out through comparative analysis that identifies convergence and divergence between theories in conceptual, methodological, and applicative aspects (Hall & Liebenberg, 2024).

### **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Conceptualization of Language Politeness in Contemporary Pragmatic Theory**

An in-depth analysis of the academic literature shows that the conceptualization of language politeness in contemporary pragmatic theory has undergone significant developments that reflect the complexity of human communicative interaction. Language politeness theory is no longer seen as a set of universal rules that can be applied uniformly, but rather as a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by diverse contextual, cultural, and situational factors. The concept of politeness in a modern pragmatic perspective emphasizes the strategic aspects of communication that involve complex considerations between the effectiveness of the message and the maintenance of interpersonal relationships. Brown and Levinson's theory, which is the main foundation in the study of language politeness, conceptualizes politeness as a strategy to minimize threats to faces in social interactions. The concept of face in this theory is understood as a positive self-image that every individual wants to maintain in communication. The development of this theory shows that every speech act has the potential to threaten the face, both positive and negative, so a special strategy is needed to reduce the level of the threat. This conceptualization provides an analytical framework that allows researchers to understand the dynamics of power and solidarity in interpersonal communication.

Further theoretical developments show that the concept of linguistic politeness cannot be separated from the cultural context and social norms that prevail in a particular linguistic community. Research conducted by (June, 2025) The Gorontalo community shows that the politeness strategy is influenced by specific situational and social contexts. The conceptualization of politeness in the context of local culture shows significant variation in the application of politeness strategies, where social hierarchy and situational context factors are the main determinants in the selection of appropriate communicative strategies. The concept of politeness in the digital era has undergone a fundamental transformation along with the development of communication technology. Analysis conducted by (Purnawati et al., 2025) on political communication in social media X shows that the conceptualization of politeness in the digital space requires a theoretical adaptation that takes into account the unique characteristics of electronic communication platforms. The concept of politeness in a digital context involves not only linguistic considerations, but also visual, temporal, and interactive aspects that are not found in traditional face-to-face communication.

The conceptualization of language politeness in the context of formal communication shows different complexities compared to informal communication. Research (Haryanto et al., 2024) On political television shows, it shows that the concept of politeness in formal communication requires a balance between professionalism and the development of interpersonal relationships. The conceptualization of politeness in a formal context emphasizes the communicator's credibility and authority aspects, while maintaining a humanist aspect that facilitates an emotional connection with the audience. The gender dimension in the conceptualization of language politeness shows that there is variation in the application of politeness strategies based on the gender identity of the communicator. Research (Joys et al., 2022) It shows that the concept of politeness in buying and selling transactions does not show significant differences based on gender, but still reflects attention to effective politeness strategies. The gender-sensitive conceptualization of politeness suggests that politeness theory needs to consider the complex social dynamics in interactions between individuals with diverse identity backgrounds.

### Politeness Strategies in Various Communicative Contexts

An analysis of politeness strategies in various communicative contexts reveals the diversity of approaches used by communicators to achieve communicative goals while maintaining social harmony. Politeness strategies show remarkable adaptability to different situational, cultural, and interpersonal contexts. The diversity of politeness strategies reflects the complexity of human communication that requires a comprehensive analytical approach to understand the dynamics of its use in diverse communicative situations. The positive politeness strategy shows dominance in various communicative contexts, especially in situations that require the development of closeness and solidarity between communicators. Research (Haryanto et al., 2024) Showing that positive politeness strategies accounted for 59% of total speeches in political television shows, indicating communicators' preference for building harmonious relationships with audiences. This strategy involves various techniques such as the use of friendly language, the search for common sense, and strategic praise to create a positive communicative atmosphere.

The implementation of politeness strategies in the context of education shows unique characteristics in terms of power dynamics between mentors and learners. Research (Muhid et al., 2024) The Master of Ceremony training clinic showed that mentors used face-saving strategies in 69.23% of the total speech, while students used similar strategies in 80%. This percentage difference reflects learners' awareness of their hierarchical positions in the context of learning, which requires a more careful politeness strategy to maintain a harmonious relationship with the mentor. Politeness strategies in commercial communication show specific adaptations to transactional goals while maintaining a relational aspect. Research (Joys et al., 2022) shows that in buying and selling transactions, the communicator uses the *Bald on record* and positive politeness as the primary approach. The selection of this strategy reflects the need for communicative efficiency in a commercial context, while still maintaining good relationships with customers for long-term business goals.

The context of digital communication shows an evolution in the application of politeness strategies tailored to the characteristics of social media platforms. Research (Purnawati et al., 2025) revealed that in political communication on social media X, the Non-FTA (Non-Face Threatening Act) strategy dominated with a percentage of 82%, followed by a negative politeness strategy of 12%. The dominance of Non-FTA strategies shows the tendency of social media users to avoid direct confrontation in political discussions, even though the topics discussed have a high potential for controversy. Politeness strategies in the context of local cultures show significant variations based on prevailing social norms and cultural hierarchies. Research (June, 2025) The Gorontalo community revealed that the politeness strategy is influenced by two main factors: the situational context and the social context. The social context related to social class differences shows that the higher the position or age of the interlocutor, the more polite the language used. This reflects the importance of social hierarchy in determining the selection of the right politeness strategy.

The application of politeness strategies in second language learning shows the complexity in the transfer of pragmatic competencies between languages. Research (Nuzulia & Agustina, 2022) reveals that English literature students use direct and indirect rejection strategies in a variety of communicative situations. Higher-semester students show a preference for strategy *deference politeness* which reflects the development of more mature pragmatic competencies in the use of second languages. The strategy of politeness in public communication shows a specific adaptation to rhetorical and persuasive demands. Research

(Aulia Febriani et al., 2024) Nwal Hadaki's TED Talk shows the use of all 15 positive politeness strategies with varying frequency. The most commonly used strategies were intensifying the listener's interest in the speaker's contribution and finding agreement on a safe topic, which appeared 3 times each. The variation in the use of these strategies reflects the communicator's expertise in adapting a politeness approach to achieve persuasive goals.

### **Comparison of the Effectiveness of the Theory of Politeness in Pragmatic Analysis**

A comparison of the effectiveness of various theories of politeness in pragmatic analysis reveals that each theoretical approach has specific strengths and limitations in analyzing communicative phenomena. The effectiveness of a politeness theory cannot be measured absolutely, but must be evaluated based on the context of the application, the purpose of the analysis, and the characteristics of the data being studied. This variation in effectiveness reflects the complexity of human communication that requires diverse theoretical approaches to understand the different dimensions of linguistic politeness. Brown and Levinson's theory shows high effectiveness in analyzing communications involving face-to-face dynamics and threat mitigation strategies. Research (Haryanto et al., 2024) It shows that this theory successfully identifies and categorizes 193 speeches in political television shows with a high degree of accuracy. The effectiveness of this theory lies in its ability to provide a clear and systematic categorization of various politeness strategies. However, the limitations of this theory arise in a cultural context that has a different concept from the Western tradition on which the theory is based.

The effectiveness of politeness theory in the context of second language learning shows results that vary depending on the level of linguistic and pragmatic competence of the learner. Research (Nuzulia & Agustina, 2022) shows that Beebe et al.'s theory is effective in analyzing the rejection strategies of English literature students, but reveals differences in the application of strategies based on semester level. High-semester students exhibit the use of more complex and context-sensitive strategies, which suggests that the effectiveness of politeness theory in learning contexts develops along with the improvement of pragmatic competence. Analysis of the effectiveness of politeness theory in the context of local culture shows the importance of theoretical adaptation to specific cultural norms. Research (June, 2025) The Gorontalo community shows that Brown and Levinson's theories can be applied effectively, but require modifications in terms of the weight of social and situational factors. The effectiveness of this theory increases when combined with a deep understanding of social hierarchies and local cultural norms that influence the selection of politeness strategies.

The effectiveness of politeness theory in the analysis of digital communication presents a unique challenge in terms of adaptation to the characteristics of electronic communication mediums. Research (Purnawati et al., 2025) suggests that Brown and Levinson's theories can be applied in the analysis of social media communication, but require adjustments in terms of interpreting context and identifying implicit politeness strategies. The effectiveness of this theory in a digital context depends on the researcher's ability to understand the nuances of communication that are not available in written texts, such as tone, intonation, and situational context. A comparison of effectiveness in the context of formal communication shows that the theory of linguistic politeness has different strengths in analyzing different types of formal interactions. Research (Muhid et al., 2024) In the context of training clinics, it is shown that the theory of politeness is effective in identifying face-saving strategies and face-threatening actions. The effectiveness of this theory lies in its ability to uncover power dynamics in the context of formal learning and explain how politeness strategies contribute to communication effectiveness.

The effectiveness of politeness theory in commercial communication analysis shows good adaptability to transactional objectives. Research (Joys et al., 2022) suggests that Brown and Levinson's theory successfully identifies a politeness strategy in buying and selling transactions, although it shows the dominance of certain strategies that reflect the need for efficiency in a commercial context. The effectiveness of this theory in a commercial context is limited to its ability to explain the economic motivations behind the choice of a politeness strategy. A comparative analysis of the effectiveness of politeness theory in intercultural communication reveals the importance of theoretical flexibility in dealing with cultural diversity. Research (Handriani et al., 2025) *Politeness Strategies in Cross-Cultural Communication : A Pragmatic Approach* It shows that rigid theoretical approaches are less effective in analyzing intercultural communication involving fundamentally different norms of politeness. The effectiveness of politeness theory in intercultural contexts increases when combined with an ethnopragmatic approach that considers the cultural uniqueness of each linguistic community.

### **Contextual and Cultural Implications in the Implementation of Politeness Strategies**

The contextual and cultural implications of the application of politeness strategies reveal fundamental complexities in communication between humans that transcend universal theoretical boundaries. The cultural context not only influences the selection of politeness strategies, but also determines the interpretation of the meaning of politeness itself in a variety of communicative situations. Cultural diversity creates significant variations in norms of politeness that challenge the universal application of language politeness theory and require a sensitive approach to the uniqueness of each cultural tradition. The implications of the social hierarchy context in the application of politeness strategies show the importance of understanding power structures in different cultures. Research (June, 2025) to the Gorontalo community revealed that the social context related to differences in social class, age, and position determines the level of politeness used. The higher the position or age of the interlocutor, the more polite the language used, which shows that social hierarchy is a determining factor in choosing a politeness strategy. This implication suggests that the theory of politeness needs to consider the specific power dynamics in each cultural context.

Situational context shows a significant influence on the adaptation of politeness strategies in various communicative settings. Research conducted by various researchers shows that formal and informal situations require different approaches to politeness. Formal contexts such as political television shows show the dominance of positive politeness strategies aimed at building credibility and connection with the audience. In contrast, informal contexts such as buying and selling transactions show the use of a more direct strategy while maintaining the basic politeness aspect. The implications of collectivist versus individualist culture in the application of politeness strategies reveal fundamental differences in the concept of face and social harmony. Research (Handriani et al., 2025) suggests that collectivist Asian cultures emphasize indirectness and hierarchical respect to maintain group harmony. Instead, a more individualistic European culture combines continuity with mitigation strategies. These implications suggest that an understanding of fundamental cultural orientation is necessary for the implementation of effective politeness strategies in intercultural communication.

The implications of the learning context and cultural transfer in the application of politeness strategies show particular challenges in second language learning. Research (Nuzulia & Agustina, 2022) reveals that students need to develop pragmatic competencies that enable them to adapt politeness strategies from the mother tongue culture to the target language. This implication shows the importance of pragmatic education in language learning that focuses not only on structural aspects but also on sociopragmatic aspects. The context of

technology and digital communication creates new implications in the application of politeness strategies that have not been fully understood in traditional theory. Research (Purnawati et al., 2025) shows that political communication on social media shows the dominance of Non-FTA strategies that reflect adaptation to the characteristics of digital platforms. The implications of this technology require the development of a theoretical framework that can explain how the digital context affects traditional norms of politeness.

### **Development of an Integrative Model of Language Politeness Theory**

The development of an integrative model of linguistic politeness theory is an urgent need in the face of contemporary communication complexities that cannot be fully explained by a single theoretical approach. An effective integrative model must be able to accommodate the diversity of communicative contexts, cultural variations, and social dynamics that influence the implementation of politeness strategies in a variety of situations. This theoretical integration aims to create a more comprehensive and adaptive analytical framework for the reality of modern communication that is multidimensional and dynamic. The integrative model developed based on the findings of this study proposes a multidimensional approach that considers five main dimensions in the analysis of linguistic politeness. The first dimension is a universal dimension that adopts the basic principles of Brown and Levinson's theories of advance concepts and threat mitigation strategies. This dimension provides a basic framework that can be applied cross-culturally with modifications that suit the specific context. The universality of this dimension lies in the assumption that all human beings have a need to maintain a positive self-image in social interactions (Barus et al., 2024).

The second dimension in the integrative model is the contextual dimension that considers the situational factors that influence the selection of politeness strategies. This dimension includes an analysis of the communication setting, communicative goals, and characteristics of the communication medium used. Research (Purnawati et al., 2025) shows that digital contexts require the adaptation of different courtesy strategies from face-to-face communication, which shows the importance of contextual dimensions in integrative models. This dimension allows flexibility in the implementation of politeness strategies according to the demands of specific communicative situations. The third dimension is the cultural dimension that integrates an understanding of local norms of politeness and fundamental cultural orientations such as individualism versus collectivism, social hierarchies, and culturally specific facial concepts. Research (Handriani et al., 2025) and (June, 2025) shows significant variation in the application of politeness strategies based on cultural contexts, which shows the need for a cultural dimension in an integrative model. This dimension allows the adaptation of the theory of politeness to the uniqueness of each cultural tradition without losing theoretical coherence (Akmal Mundiri & Ana Muthmainnah, 2021).

## **IV. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

### **4.1 Conclusion**

A systematic examination of the conceptual diversity of linguistic politeness in the pragmatic realm reveals the multiplicity of theoretical orientations that express the sophistication of communication phenomena in the modern era. Evaluative stratification indicates that the Brown-Levinson construct maintains its validity as an epistemological basis, even if it requires recalibration in the face of contextual fluctuations and sociocultural variables. The efficacy of the operationalization of politeness tactics shows a meaningful correlation with

the situational components, social gradations, and communicative modalities used, implying the urgency of a flexible approach in theoretical execution. The metamorphosis of electronic communication has facilitated a normative paradigmatic progressivity that necessitates the restructuring of conventional analytical frameworks to accommodate the distinctive characteristics of cyber interactions.

#### 4.2 Suggestion

1. Theoretical Evolution: Fabrication of a polydimensional synthetic model that aligns conceptual universality with the specificity of indigenous culture through a holistic ethnopragmatic methodology
2. Applicative Implementation: Operationalization of a pragmatic curricular structure that facilitates the transfer of transcultural politeness capabilities in secondary language education with a focus on contextual responsiveness
3. Ongoing Investigation: Intensive penetration of the dynamics of politeness in the digital habitat that includes multimodal examination and interactivity of futuristic communication platforms

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