

POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN DIGITAL POLITICAL COMMUNICATION: GANJAR PRANOWO'S INSTAGRAM INTERACTION

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Abstract

This study investigates the politeness strategies employed in interactions on Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram account, with particular attention to how linguistic choices shape digital political communication. It explores the strategies used by both followers and the politician to navigate social dynamics, express solidarity, and manage face-threatening acts within a public online setting. Utilizing a qualitative content analysis approach, the study examines 250 comments and responses, categorized according to Brown and Levinson's four politeness strategies: bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record. The findings reveal that positive politeness is the most commonly employed strategy among followers, reflecting a supportive and affiliative communicative style. Bald-on-record strategies are also frequently observed, indicating direct and unmitigated expressions. In contrast, Ganjar Pranowo primarily adopts bald-on-record strategies, suggesting a preference for clarity and communicative efficiency. Negative politeness and off-record strategies appear less frequently, underscoring the overall informal and inclusive nature of the digital interactions.

Keywords: *digital political communication; Instagram; politeness strategies.*

1. Introduction

As result of advancements in technology, individuals are now required to navigate two distinct modes of interactions: offline and online. The semantic and pragmatic mechanisms appear to be the same in both interactions. In actuality, though, they contain gaps. The differences between offline and online interactions might not be immediately apparent. They are even counter-intuitive in certain situations. Humans have been interacting in person for at least 40,000 years, but in the past 20 years, online communication has become more and more prevalent. The intrusion began with a tiny and restricted application, such as email and short messages, but it has since spread to secure a few hours of our everyday human communications. People of all ages are immersed in the world of online communication. It's possible that the politeness and characteristics of offline interactions were carried over to their online counterparts, and vice versa. Certain aspects and concepts of politeness are effective in both contexts. In

any case, those are human-made concepts that are used in the human world. Nevertheless, it frequently happens that some concepts that are effective in one media do not translate well into another (Pratama, 2019).

In the digital age, social media platforms have transformed the way political figures interact with the public. Platforms like Instagram allow politicians to directly communicate with constituents, fostering engagement and transparency. However, the nature of online communication presents challenges, particularly regarding maintaining politeness and respect in public discourse. Politeness strategies, as described by Brown and Levinson (1987), play a critical role in managing face-threatening acts and ensuring harmonious interactions. Politeness can be expressed through various approaches, such as positive politeness (highlighting solidarity or friendliness) and negative politeness (acknowledging personal boundaries or minimizing imposition).

In digital communication, particularly on platforms like Instagram, the application of politeness strategies become more complex. The absence of non-verbal cues and the semi-public nature of interactions demand greater attention to linguistic subtleties (Herring, 2004). Moreover, indirectness and respect for hierarchy influences how individuals, including politicians, navigate online discourse (Kuntjara, 2023). Instagram interactions occur in a semi-public environment where multiple audiences observe every response. This dual-layered audience presents unique challenges for politicians, who must carefully craft responses that align with both cultural expectations and the dynamic nature of social media communication.

Social media platforms such as Instagram are characterized by high interactivity, enabling two way communication where political figures engage with their audiences through posts, captions, and direct responses to comments. In this context, how a politician employs politeness strategies can influence public perception, either reinforcing credibility or potentially alienating certain groups. Ganjar Pranowo, as a prominent Indonesian politician, is an interesting case study due to his active and strategic use of Instagram. His ability to balance openness, respects, and assertiveness in his responses to a diverse audience provides an invaluable opportunity to examine the interplay between digital communication and politeness strategies. By focusing on Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram interactions, this research sheds light on how politeness strategies are adapted to meet these demands, contributing the broader understanding of political communication in the digital era.

By analyzing Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram posts and responses to public comments, this research explores the linguistic strategies he uses to maintain a positive public image, address criticism, and foster engagement with followers. The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the understanding of digital political communication within an Indonesian cultural framework. While existing studies have explored politeness strategies in offline contexts (Nguyen, 2021; Kumar & Chen, 2020), few have examined their application in online environments, particularly in the political domain. This study addresses this gap by providing insights into how a high-profile Indonesian politician manages public discourse on Instagram, offering implications for both linguistic theory and practical communication strategies in the digital era.

Based on the background outlined, this study aims to address the research question regarding the politeness strategies employed in Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram interactions within the context of digital political communication.

2. Literature Review

Politeness strategies are fundamental in understanding how individuals manage social interactions while preserving both their own “face” and that of others (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Politeness strategies are categorized into four main types namely bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record. (1) Bald-on-record strategies provides no effort by the speakers to minimize the impact of the FTA’s (*Face-Threatening Acts*). However, this type of strategy is commonly found with people who know each other very well, and very comfortable in their environment such as family, and close friend; (2) Positive politeness is the strategy oriented by the speaker toward the positive face or the positive self-image of the hearer that the speaker claims for himself; (3) Negative politeness is the strategy to increase the social distances between interlocutors, and; (4) Off-record means taking some pressures of the hearer by using indirect language that constructs more general utterance or actually different from what one mean (Brown & Levinson, 1987). These strategies have been widely applied in linguistic research across various contexts, including intercultural communication and digital discourse (Culpeper et al., 2021).

In online communication, politeness strategies take on new dimensions due to the unique characteristics of online platforms, such as asynchronous interaction, textual communication, and visibility to a broad audience (Herring, 2004). Several studies highlighted that in online era, the semi-public nature of platforms necessitates a careful balance between positive and negative politeness strategies to address diverse audiences (Nguyen et al., 2021). To provide a broader context for understanding politeness strategies in digital communication, it is important to consider previous studies on similar platforms. It is found that the most frequently utilized polarity of politeness is positive politeness when analyzing comments on various YouTube videos (Zainurrahman & Kofau, 2020).

Positive politeness strategies are often employed in public forums like YouTube comments because they foster solidarity, express friendliness, and seek to build a connection between the speaker and the audience. Such strategies may include compliments, expressions of agreement, or supportive remarks. These behaviors align with the cooperative and community-driven nature of many online platforms, where users aim to engage positively with content creators and fellow commenters. Conversely, negative politeness strategies-such as being indirect, apologizing, or showing deference-are less common in this setting. The straightforward and casual nature of YouTube comments often prioritizes direct engagement, leaving less room for the elaborate or reserved tone associated with negative politeness.

However, people's comments are not always positive; in contrast, people frequently make harsh remarks to others as well. Receiving unhelpful criticism, being judged, and being ridiculed are all unpleasant outcomes of living in cyberspace. This is made possible by the fact that people can use anonymity on social media, hiding behind a screen or a protected or fake account, which is similar to wearing a mask, to predict that they will have no problems when saying whatever they want to without taking into account additional moral responsibilities. People can say and act in ways that seem contrary to real-life because they would not dare to say and to the same speech acts on a face-to-face basis (Pratama, 2019).

On the Instagram accounts of famous Indonesian politicians such as Anies Baswedan, it was found that the majority of politeness strategies that emerged were positive politeness strategies (Silitonga & Pasaribu, 2021). This finding indicates that

positive politeness strategies, which aim to build camaraderie, express approval, and foster solidarity, are particularly effective in digital platforms like Instagram. Politicians often use these strategies to engage with a broad audience, creating a sense of approachability and shared identity.

Building on this understanding of the prevalence of positive politeness strategies in Indonesian political communication, it becomes essential to explore how these strategies are employed by other influential figures in the digital sphere. Politician's interactions on social media are not only reflective of their personal communication style but also serve as a strategic tool to engage with diverse audiences, maintain their public image, and foster political support. To gain deeper insights into the role of politeness strategies in shaping public discourse, this study focuses on Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram interactions. As a prominent Indonesian politician with a substantial social media presence, Ganjar's engagement with his followers provides a valuable case for examining the nuanced application of politeness strategies in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Investigating Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram interactions holds significant relevance due to his prominent political influence in Indonesia and the role his digital communication plays in shaping public perception and engagement. While prior research has examined politeness strategies in YouTube comments (Zainurrahman & Kofau, 2020), there remains a notable gap in studies focusing specifically on Instagram. Given Instagram's distinct features, including interactive functionalities, visual content, and direct audience engagement, analyzing Ganjar Pranowo's interactions on this platform offers valuable insights into the application of politeness strategies by political figures to promote positive discourse and uphold their public image in digital spaces.

3. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative content analysis approach to investigate the politeness strategies utilized in Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram interactions. Content analysis is well-suited for examining textual and contextual features within communication, allowing the researcher to identify patterns and underlying meanings in the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). By focusing on Instagram comments and posts, the study seeks to explore how positive and negative politeness strategies, as conceptualized by Brown and Levinson (1987), manifest in Ganjar's digital interactions with his followers.

The data for this research were collected from a purposive sample of Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram account. A total of 250 interactions were selected, comprising 10 Instagram posts and their accompanying follower comments. Posts were chosen based on their relevance to political discourse and their engagement level (e.g., number of comments and likes). The selection of 10 Instagram posts was based on specific criteria to ensure relevance and data richness. The chosen posts were those that: (1) featured Ganjar Pranowo's direct engagement with followers, such as replies or acknowledgments; (2) contained politically themed content, reflecting his role as a public figure; and (3) generated a significant number of comments, indicating active public interaction. This purposive sampling technique was employed to capture diverse instances of politeness strategies within meaningful and contextually rich interactions. This sampling method ensures a diverse representation of interactions that reflect both routine and significant political events. The comments were categorized into four types of politeness strategies to facilitate systematic analysis. Purposive sampling is

appropriate for this study as it allows the researcher to focus on rich, relevant data sources that align with the research objectives (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The collected data were analyzed using a thematic content analysis approach. This method involves coding data into themes that align with Brown and Levinson's politeness framework, ensuring a systematic examination of politeness strategies within the interactions. The coding process was iterative, starting with identifying explicit uses of politeness strategies in the data, followed by categorizing them into four types of politeness strategies. To ensure intercoder reliability, multiple coders were involved in the data analysis process. Prior to coding, the coders underwent training to familiarize themselves with the politeness strategy framework to promote consistent interpretation. A coding manual with clear definitions, examples, and guidelines was provided to maintain uniformity in the coding process. Additionally, a pilot coding session was conducted to identify discrepancies and refine coding criteria. Cohen's Kappa coefficient was calculated to assess the level of agreement between coders, ensuring the reliability of the analysis.

The results were then contextualized to assess their alignment with Indonesian cultural norms and the digital medium's affordances. Thematic analysis allows for flexibility in identifying both explicit and nuanced patterns in data, making it particularly effective for analyzing online discourse (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To minimize researcher bias, several measures were implemented. First, triangulation was employed by cross-referencing data from multiple sources, including previous studies and theoretical frameworks, to validate findings. Second, researcher reflexivity was maintained by documenting assumptions, interpretations, and decision-making processes throughout the study. Finally, peer debriefing was conducted with colleagues to review coding results and interpretations, ensuring greater objectivity and enhancing the study's overall validity.

4. Discussion

This study analyzes the politeness strategies employed in the digital interactions on Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram account, focusing on the various linguistic features used by followers when engaging with political content. In this discussion, the results will be interpreted in the context of politeness strategies theory, particularly Brown and Levinson's framework, and explore the implications of these strategies for political communication in digital spaces.

There are 250 data in the form of comments from followers and also comments from Ganjar Pranowo himself taken from the 10 posts. The comments are then analyzed and categorized as follows:

4.1 Bald-on-record

Bald-on record is a politeness strategy used directly without any attempt to soften or mitigate the message. One of the data sample is the Ganjar Pranowo's reply on his follower's comment. The analysis can be seen as follow:

@riyantilauren: *Saya di singapura klau ke supermarket sll beli tempe,*

This comment is replied by Ganjar Pranowo by saying "*Joss*". The term "*Joss*" carries distinct sociolinguistic implications in the Indonesian context. Commonly used in informal discourse, particularly in Javanese and Indonesian slang, "*Joss*" is an expression of praise, approval, or admiration. In the context of Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram interactions, followers' use of "*Joss*" reflects a

positive evaluation of his actions, statements, or public image. This term not only conveys agreement or support but also establishes a sense of solidarity and familiarity between Ganjar Pranowo and his followers. Its usage illustrates how informal language can function as a politeness strategy, fostering rapport and strengthening social bonds in digital political communication. In the context of the comment “*Joss*”, the message is delivered straightforwardly without additional explanation to reduce the threat to the “face” or social face of others. The word “*Joss*” is a short response that shows agreement or acceptance of a statement or action without further explanation. This comment does not attempt to add formal politeness elements such as expressions of gratitude, requests for permission or other forms of respect. In everyday conversation, the word “*Joss*” is often used to express something that is liked or agreed upon. This word is commonly used in conversations between close friends which explains that the two speakers are very familiar.

4.2. Positive politeness

Based on the research findings, it is found that positive politeness strategies are used in Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram interaction. Positive politeness is a politeness strategy that aims to strengthen social relationships by showing attention, appreciation, or solidarity to the person we are speaking to. In Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram interaction, it is found that one of his followers commented as follow:

@ilhamadityapranata: *Masih berharap Pak Ganjar beneran jadi Presiden.*

This comment shows positive expectations for Ganjar Pranowo, namely that he will become President. This reflects support and trust in Ganjar's abilities and potential, which is part of the positive politeness strategy. The phrase “*Pak Ganjar*” is used as a form of respect, but in an informal tone like this, it shows familiarity or a sense of closeness. This expression makes the relationship between the commenter and Ganjar appear warmer and friendlier. The statement “*masih berharap*” implies empathy or recognition of the situation, which can increase the emotional connection with the recipient of the message. Comments like this create a positive and supportive communication atmosphere, enhancing Ganjar's image as a figure who is respected and expected by the community. This is in accordance with the goal of positive politeness which strengthens social relations with the interlocutor or audience.

4.3 Negative politeness

One of comments that can be categorized as negative politeness strategy is a comment by:

@d1on_w4hyu who stated “*Maaf pak. Bagaimana menurut anda tentang hal itu Pak Ganjar?*”

The phrase “*maaf pak*” is a form of hedging, which is characteristic of negative politeness. It softens the impact of the request, making it less imposing or demanding. The use of “*bagaimana menurut anda*” explains that the commenter is trying to remain polite by using the word “*anda*” which also explains that there is distance between them. The term “*Pak Ganjar*” reflects respect for the individual being addressed, showing that the speaker is aware of the social hierarchy and is trying to minimize any threat to Ganjar's face or status. The commenter is not directly demanding that Ganjar clarify his stance but is instead

phrasing it as a polite question. Negative politeness strategies aim to avoid making the request or statement too forceful, which is evident in the indirect nature of the comment.

4.4. Off-record

Off-record strategies are used by Ganjar’s followers in his Instagram interaction. The data can be seen as follow:

@anliman08: “*Mantap presiden kita lagi kunjungan kerja*”. This sentence can be analyzed as a form of irony, considering that Ganjar Pranowo is currently not the President of Indonesia, but rather a former presidential candidate or a politician who is visiting a place. This sentence mentions "presiden kita", which literally indicates Ganjar as the president of Indonesia. However, in reality, Ganjar had not yet served as president at the time this comment was made. This statement functions as irony because it contains a contrast between what is said (Ganjar is the president) and the reality (Ganjar is not the president). Comments like this may also be used to strengthen a political position or support a former candidate (Ganjar), while alluding to the inappropriateness of the actual status of the position. The use of "presiden kita" can indicate disagreement with the status quo, namely the fact that Ganjar is not president, while simultaneously supporting or hoping for political change. The use of the word "*mantap*" (meaning "great") could also be a veiled satire to suggest that Ganjar should have been president, even though he was not the legitimate president at the time. This adds a dimension of irony to the comment, where the speaker indirectly states that Ganjar is the figure who is wanted to lead, even though in reality he has not held the office.

After analyzing the data from Ganjar Pranowo’s Instagram interaction, it can be inferred that there are 250 comments found. The data was obtained from 10 Instagram posts by Ganjar Pranowo and from each post 25 comments were taken which were then categorized based on politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson. Here are the results.

Comments	Politeness Strategies				Freq	%
	Bald-on-record	Positive politeness	Negative politeness	Off-record		
Followers	49	138	24	17	228	91%
Ganjar Pranowo	18	4	-	-	22	9%
Total	67	142	24	17	250	100%

Table 1: Result of the Study

The data provides a clear insight into the politeness strategies employed in the interactions between followers and Ganjar Pranowo on Instagram. From a total of 250 comments, the majority of politeness strategies utilized are concentrated within the positive politeness strategies, comprising 142 instances or 56,8% of all comments. This dominance of positive politeness aligns with findings from previous studies that highlight the tendency of social media users to express solidarity, approval, and support in their comments, particularly when interacting with public figures such as politicians.

The high frequency of positive politeness strategies (56,8%) reflects followers' inclination to reduce social distance and establish camaraderie with Ganjar Pranowo.

This could be attributed to the nature of digital political discourse in Indonesia, where supporters often use social media to display enthusiasm and collective identity (e.g., "*Mantap, Pak Ganjar!*"). Positive politeness fosters a sense of belonging and mutual respect, which is especially prominent in political contexts where individuals feel connected to their preferred candidates. This finding is in line with the previous study which states that positive politeness strategies are more frequently used when commenting on Anies Baswedan's (one of former candidate of President) Instagram account (Silitonga & Pasaribu, 2021). The positive politeness strategies used indicate that the agreement and support from the followers to their favorite politician.

The second most frequent strategy is bald-on-record, with 67 occurrences (26,8%), often characterized by direct statements or commands, such as "*Tetap semangat, Pak Ganjar!*" This finding suggests that followers may not feel the need to mitigate their comments, possibly due to a perceived closeness or an informal context where directness is socially acceptable. Bald-on-record strategies often arise in interactions where the speaker prioritizes efficiency over politeness (Culpeper et al., 2021).

Negative politeness appears less frequently, with 24 instances (9,6%), reflecting a more formal or cautious interaction style. This might occur in comments where followers feel a need to maintain distance or show deference, such as in polite requests or carefully worded criticism (e.g., "*Maaf, Pak Ganjar, bisa jelaskan lebih lanjut kebijakan ini?*"). Similarly, off-record strategies (17 occurrences, 6,8%) highlight indirectness, such as implied praise or subtle suggestions, showcasing a desire to avoid imposition while still contributing to the discourse. This finding aligns with a previous study that indicates negative politeness strategies are less frequently employed by Indonesian politicians (Eliyana & Susanti, 2023). The positive politeness strategies are preferred due to the purpose of gaining trust from audiences.

Interestingly, comments from Ganjar Pranowo show a contrasting pattern. Out of his 22 comments, the majority are bald-on-record (18 comments, 81,8%), reflecting a direct and concise communication style, typical of public figures addressing a broad audience. His minimal use of positive politeness (4 comments, 18,2%) may indicate an effort to maintain professionalism while still engaging with his followers. The absence of negative politeness or off-record strategies suggests that his communication is more focused on clarity and efficiency than on mitigating potential face-threatening acts.

The prevalence of positive politeness among followers emphasizes the relational and affiliative nature of political discourse on social media. Polite language should be used when uploading comments or writing on social media (Sulistiyowati et al., 2024). It suggests that followers use language not only to communicate but also to express shared identity and support. On the other hand, Ganjar Pranowo's preference for bald-on-record strategies aligns with the need for clear and authoritative communication as a political figure.

Public figures, including politicians, often prioritize positive politeness strategies to foster engagement and maintain a favorable public image (Suerni, 2024). This connection is particularly relevant to the present study, as Ganjar Pranowo's use of similar strategies reflects broader patterns observed in Indonesian political discourse. By demonstrating consistency with previous research findings, this study reinforces the role of politeness strategies in shaping effective online interactions. Every social media user needed to maintain politeness when interacting, they need to make the right choice of words, avoid using harsh words, and respect the views of others (Suparno et al.,

2023). The interplay between followers' supportive comments and Ganjar's direct responses highlights the dynamic nature of digital communication, where linguistic strategies adapt to varying social roles and expectations.

5. Conclusion

This study analyzed the politeness strategies employed in interactions on Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram account, focusing on the linguistic and social dynamics of digital political communication. The findings revealed that positive politeness strategies were the most dominant, reflecting followers' tendencies to express support, admiration, and solidarity with the political figure. This aligns with the relational nature of digital platforms, where users often employ inclusive and affiliative language to build a sense of community and shared identity.

In response to the research question, the findings indicate that Ganjar Pranowo's responses are predominantly characterized by bald-on-record strategies, emphasizing directness and efficiency. This suggests a pragmatic approach to engaging with followers, aligning with the expectations of a public figure communicating in a professional yet relatable manner. The limited presence of negative politeness and off-record strategies underscores the generally informal and affiliative tone of the interactions, which may reflect cultural norms and the nature of Indonesian digital political discourse.

This study contributes to the understanding of linguistic politeness in digital contexts, particularly in political communication. It highlights the role of social media as a platform where politeness strategies are employed not only to convey meaning but also to negotiate power, solidarity, and identity.

Further studies could explore politeness strategies used by politicians on different social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok, to examine platform-specific communication styles. In addition, comparative studies between Indonesian and non-Indonesian political figures could uncover how cultural norms and societal values shape politeness strategies in digital political communication.

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