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## An Analysis of Politeness Strategies in Makna Talks Podcast Episode *Living Life to the Fullest*

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**Abstract**

This study analyses the types of politeness strategies used in the Makna Talks podcast entitled "Living Life to the Fullest" with Nicholas Saputra, based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness. Using a descriptive qualitative method, the writers analyzed the transcript of the episode and identified utterances that demonstrated politeness strategies. The writers found 75 data points and categorized them into four types of politeness strategies. The results showed that positive politeness was used most frequently (45 data points), followed by the bald on record strategy (18 data points), negative politeness (9 data points), and the off record strategy (6 data points). Positive politeness demonstrated the friendliness between the host and guest. The bald on record strategy demonstrated spontaneity and provided clarity. Negative politeness arises in situations that require caution, while the off-record strategy emerges when the speaker uses indirect messages. Thus, this study emphasises the use of politeness strategies to maintain facial expressions, appropriate language use, and create good relationships so that digital conversations such as podcasts are comfortable and relaxed.

**Keywords: politeness strategies, Brown & Levinson, Pragmatics, Makna Talks, podcast conversations**

***Abstrak***

Penelitian ini menganalisis jenis-jenis strategi kesopanan yang digunakan dalam podcast Makna Talks berjudul "Living Life to the Fullest" bersama Nicholas Saputra, berdasarkan teori kesopanan Brown dan Levinson (1987). Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif, para penulis menganalisis transkrip episode tersebut dan mengidentifikasi ucapan yang

menunjukkan strategi kesopanan. Penulis menemukan 75 titik data dan mengkategorikannya ke dalam empat jenis strategi kesopanan. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa kesopanan positif digunakan paling sering (45 titik data), diikuti oleh strategi "bald on record" (18 titik data), kesopanan negatif (9 titik data), dan strategi "off record" (6 titik data). Kesopanan positif menunjukkan keramahan antara tuan rumah dan tamu. Strategi "bald on record" menunjukkan spontanitas dan memberikan kejelasan. Kesopanan negatif muncul dalam situasi yang memerlukan kehati-hatian, sementara strategi "off record" muncul ketika pembicara menggunakan pesan tidak langsung. Oleh karena itu, studi ini menekankan penggunaan strategi kesopanan untuk menjaga ekspresi wajah, penggunaan bahasa yang tepat, dan menciptakan hubungan yang baik sehingga percakapan digital seperti podcast menjadi nyaman dan santai.

**Kata kunci: strategi kesopanan, Brown & Levinson, Pragmatika, Makna Talks, percakapan podcast**

## INTRODUCTION

Communication is a significant aspect of human interaction because it enables individuals to exchange ideas, share thought, and build social relationships in various context. As Hybels and Weaver (2015) point out, communication is a dynamic process through which people create and interpret messages in order to understand one another and respond appropriately. Through communication, individuals negotiate intentions, interpret meanings, and coordinate actions to achieve shared goals. Ln social interaction, speakers also make intentional linguistic choices that demonstrate respect, social awareness, and consideration toward others.

One important part of communication in everyday interaction is the use of politeness strategies. These strategies are the language choices people make to keep the conversation smooth, avoid unnecessary confoict, and protect each other's feelings. As Brown and Levinson (1987) explain that people use politeness strategies to reduce face threatening acts (FTAs) and to maintain both speaker's and the kistener's self image. The four politeness strategies according to them are : bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record are chosen depending on the situation, the level of closeness between speakers and how big the request or action is.

In today's digital era, communication now goes beyond traditional face to face interactions and appears widley in digital media formats such as podcasts. Podcasts become one of popular communication platform because they offer spontaneous, unscripted, and natural conversations between hosts and guests. As Kranenburg (2020) states that digital conversational media often show linguistic strategies that reflect authenticity and interpersonal bonding making them a rich source for pragmatic analysis, especially politeness.

Makna Talks is one of the widely consumed Indonesian podcasts, It offers conversations that are casual yet meaningful. The episode titled "Living Life to the Fullest" which features Nicholas Saputra Is particularly interesting because both the host and the guest use dynamic and strategic language choices. The host often asks reflective, personal, and sometimes sensitive question. While Nicholas Saputra Is known for his calm, polite and thoughtful communication style. This combination creates a unique interaction where politeness strategies are used to keep comfort, reduce a respectful conversational atmosphere.

Although digital communication platforms are widely used, studies discussing

politeness strategies in podcasts especially Indonesian podcasts are still limited. Many previous studies have focused on films, interviews, or classroom interactions rather than digital conversational media. However, recent research has begun to explore politeness in podcast based communication. For instance, Rehardi (2025) examined politeness strategies in digital conversations within podcast mediated communication and found that speaker often employ positive and negative politeness to reduce potential face threats in spontaneous dialogue and maintain social harmony between host and the guest. Hartati (2023) also analyzed politeness strategies in Sule's podcast and reported that the guest and host frequently used positive politeness such as showing interest and expressing appreciation, to create a friendly and cooperative atmosphere through the conversation. Although these studies consider the relevance of politeness in podcast interactions, research that specifically investigates Indonesian conversational podcast such as Makna Talks is still limited. Additionally, Islami, Sudana, and Gunawan (2024) analysed politeness and impoliteness strategies in Sundanese Language Podcasts and found that the choice of strategy was greatly influenced by social proximity and the strong humour context in this podcast genre. Another study by Wahndani, Paturohmah, and Sakinah (2023) on the Jay Shetty Podcast revealed that positive politeness is predominantly used to build emotional connections between speakers, especially in personal interviews such as those with Will Smith. In the realm of everyday communication, Putri and Nurita (2021), who studied face-threatening acts and politeness strategies in Singaraja-Bali, showed that people use a combination of positive and negative strategies to maintain social relationships and reduce potential conflicts.

Although there have been many studies on politeness strategies in digital communication, this study has several differences. First, most previous studies have focused on formal or semi-formal contexts such as interviews, classroom interactions, or scripted media, while spontaneous podcast conversations have been little studied. Second, few studies have examined interactions between hosts and guests. Finally, this study specifically examines the Makna Talks podcast, particularly the episode "Living Life to the Fullest" featuring Nicholas Saputra, which has not been done before.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the types of politeness strategies which appear in the Makna Talks podcast episode with Nicholas Saputra and to explore why and how these strategies are in the conversation. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the development of pragmatic studies, especially regarding politeness in modern forms of digital communication.

## METHOD

This study uses descriptive qualitative research because it focuses on describing language naturally without manipulating data. Creswell (2014) explains that qualitative research aims to understand the meaning interpreted by participants of an event, while Bogdan and Biklen (2007) explain that qualitative research focuses on a more comprehensive understanding of data in the form of words and actions. Thus, this design is considered most appropriate for analysing the politeness strategies that emerge in a podcast conversation.

The data source for this study comes from the transcript of the Makna Talks episode entitled "Living Life to the Fullest" with guest Nicholas Saputra. Ary (2010) states that qualitative data can take various forms of documents, including notes and transcripts that provide verbal information. This episode was chosen because during the conversation, the language used was very natural and demonstrated a variety of politeness strategies relevant to

Brown & Levinson's (1987) theory.

The main instrument in this study is the writers. In qualitative research, the researcher plays a key role in collecting data, determining the research flow, analysing data, and interpreting results (Sugiyono, 2013). The researcher listened to the episodes in their entirety, selected relevant statements, and interpreted the types of politeness strategies based on the context of the interaction between the host and the interviewee. In addition, several supporting instruments are used to facilitate the data collection and analysis process, such as a notebook for making transcripts, a politeness strategy classification table for grouping data, and the analysis guidelines proposed by Brown & Levinson (1987) to determine the form and function of the strategies that have been found.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### Finding

Based on the data Analysis of politeness strategies in Makna Talks podcast episode "Living Life to the Fullest", the writers found four categories of politeness strategies based on Brown and Levinson's theory. The total findings are as the follow:

Based on the results of data grouping, it shows that the most frequently used strategy is positive politeness strategies, with a total of 42 data points. This strategy appears in various forms, such as expressions of solidarity, praise, empathy, and attempts to create closeness. The next most frequently used strategy in this podcast is bald on record, with 18 data points. Statements in this category describe instructions, direct questions, or the delivery of information without refinement. The existence of these strategies is reasonable because podcasts have a spontaneous conversation format, where the host needs clarity in gathering information. Furthermore, 9 data points were found that belonged to the negative politeness group. This strategy is widely used when the host enters a topic that is personal or requires caution in its delivery. Finally, there are 6 data points that are classified as off record. This strategy appears in the form of implicatures, subtle jokes, or indirect questions that allow the source to express their intentions flexibly. Overall, the number of data points found is 75.

**Table 1. Category of Politeness Strategies in Makna Talks Podcast Episode *Living Life to the Fullest***

| No. | Category of Politeness Strategies | Occurrences |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Positive Politenes | 42 |
| 2. | Bald on Record | 18 |
| 3. | Negative Politeness | 9 |
| 4. | Off Record | 6 |
| **Total** | | **75** |

## Discussion

### Positive Politeness

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), positive politeness refers to strategies used by speakers to reduce social distance by showing friendliness, solidarity, approval, and attention to the hearer's positive face. This strategy aims to make the interlocutor feel appreciated, understood, and accepted within the interaction.

In the Makna Talks podcast episode "Living Life to the Fullest", positive politeness appears as the most dominant strategy used by both the host and Nicholas Saputra. One clear example can be seen in the host's question, "What is the easiest thing and the most difficult thing about being Nicholas Saputra?" This utterance demonstrates the notice and attend to the hearer strategy, as the host explicitly shows interest in Nicholas's personal experiences and emotional life as a public figure. By asking a reflective and personal question, the host acknowledges Nicholas's subjective perspective, which helps reduce social distance and create conversational comfort.

This type of question also opens space for self-reflection and encourages deeper responses, supporting a closeness-oriented interaction. This finding aligns with Hartati (2023), who states that Indonesian podcast hosts frequently employ positive politeness to build warm interpersonal relationships and maintain a natural conversational flow.

Another example of positive politeness is found in the host's question, "What makes you grounded?" This utterance implicitly affirms Nicholas's positive personal qualities, such as humility and emotional stability. By highlighting the guest's admirable traits, the host applies the approval and admiration strategy. Wahndani (2023) notes that praising guests' positive characteristics is common in Indonesian podcast discourse, as it creates a sense of security and encourages openness. In this context, the host not only facilitates dialogue but also validates Nicholas's identity, strengthening interpersonal closeness.

Positive politeness is further reflected in Nicholas's response through self-disclosure, such as in the statement, "I find it very difficult to understand something without seeing it directly." This utterance reveals Nicholas's personal thinking style and cognitive process, which are not commonly exposed to the public. Brown and Levinson (1987) categorize this act as intensifying interest to the hearer, as sharing personal information helps strengthen social bonds. This finding supports Thurlow's (2020) argument that self-disclosure in digital conversations, including podcasts, fosters collaborative and trust-based interaction.

In addition, compliments also function as positive politeness strategies in this conversation. For instance, when the host describes Nicholas as a "calm and thoughtful" person, the utterance serves as a form of giving gifts to the hearer, such as praise and appreciation. Hartati (2023) emphasizes that compliments play an important role in maintaining a cooperative conversational climate. Nicholas's statement, "Travelling was a big part of my life," further reinforces this interaction through identity disclosure. Leech (2014) explains that revealing personal identity contributes to conversational harmony and strengthens interpersonal relationships. Overall, the dominance of positive politeness illustrates a mutual effort to create a warm, relaxed, and respectful communication environment.

### Bald on Record

Although positive politeness dominates the interaction, bald on record strategies also appear, particularly when the host requires clarity or narrative continuity. Brown and Levinson (1987) define bald on record as a direct strategy used without mitigation, often prioritizing efficiency and clarity.

An example of this strategy is the host's utterance, "Explain that," which is delivered directly without softening devices. Similarly, the utterance "Tell me more about that" functions as a straightforward request for elaboration. In the podcast context, such directness does not threaten face because a cooperative relationship has already been established through positive politeness strategies.

Rahardi (2025) explains that direct utterances are commonly used in podcasts to maintain conversational flow and efficiency. Another example is the host's question, "Do you think the pressure is huge on him to play Rangga?" Although the topic is sensitive, the host chooses a bald on record strategy to obtain explicit and in-depth responses. This reflects the open and dialogical nature of podcast conversations, where clarity often takes precedence over indirectness.

**Negative Politeness**

Negative politeness strategies are employed when the host addresses potentially sensitive or personal topics that may threaten the guest's negative face, particularly the desire for autonomy and freedom from imposition. Brown and Levinson (1987) describe negative politeness as strategies that show respect, restraint, and caution.

This strategy is evident in the use of hedging expressions such as "Do you think…" before asking about Nicholas's emotional stress or personal pressure. Such phrasing allows Nicholas the option to respond indirectly or withhold information, thereby respecting his personal boundaries. Wahndani (2023) similarly found that podcast hosts often use mitigation strategies when discussing personal issues to maintain guest comfort.

Another example is the host's statement, "Maybe you feel that…" which precedes a discussion about public objectification. This expression softens the imposition and leaves room for reinterpretation or disagreement. By avoiding coercion, the host demonstrates sensitivity and respect, which helps create a safe conversational space for discussing delicate topics.

**Off-Record**

Off-record strategies also appear in the conversation, particularly through metaphor and humour. Brown and Levinson classify off-record strategies as indirect forms of communication that require interpretation from the listener.

One example is Nicholas's statement, "I take over myself, I become the subject," which metaphorically expresses his desire to regain control over his life after being subjected to public scrutiny. The indirect nature of this metaphor places it within the off-record category. Additionally, the host's use of light humour when describing Nicholas as a calm person functions as an off-record strategy aimed at reducing tension and maintaining a relaxed atmosphere.

Islami (2024) argues that humour in podcast discourse helps minimize pragmatic conflict and enhances audience engagement. Therefore, off-record strategies in this podcast contribute to emotional balance and allow sensitive meanings to be conveyed subtly.

Discussion Summary

Overall, this study demonstrates that politeness strategies in the Makna Talks podcast function not only to maintain conversational harmony but also to reflect the interpersonal relationship between the host and Nicholas Saputra. The dominance of positive politeness highlights the podcast's role as a conversational space that emphasizes closeness, mutual respect, and self-reflection. Meanwhile, bald on record, negative politeness, and off-record strategies complement the interaction by ensuring clarity, sensitivity, and natural conversational flow.

These findings confirm the continued relevance of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory in contemporary digital communication contexts, particularly in podcast discourse.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that politeness strategies used in the Makna Talks podcast episode entitled "Living Life to the Fullest" play different roles in communication. Of the 75 data analysed, positive politeness appeared more frequently, indicating a friendly tone of conversation. In addition, the bald on record strategy was also frequently used, particularly for clarity in the conversation process. Negative politeness was used to show caution, while the off-record strategy was used to describe ideas indirectly, either through humour or more polite phrases.

The use of these strategies shows that both hosts and guests have a role to play in managing facial expressions, maintaining social relationships, and choosing appropriate words in podcasts. This study contributes to the understanding of politeness strategies in digital conversation platforms and emphasises that podcasts provide benefits for exploring pragmatic phenomena in interactions.

## IMPLICATION

This study presents several important implications regarding the understanding of unity strategies in digital conversation media, particularly podcasts. First, the dominance of positive politeness unity strategies indicates that communication builds warmth, familiarity, and solidarity between hosts and guests. This shows that digital conversation platforms can be effective spaces for building closeness even without face-to-face interaction. Second, the use of bald on record strategies emphasises the need for efficiency and clarity in podcast conversations, as smooth dialogue is essential to maintain listener engagement. Third, the presence of negative unity strategies indicates that speakers are aware of sensitive or personal topics, so hosts need to be careful to protect guests' feelings and freedom of speech. Finally, the off record strategy shows that indirectness through metaphors, humour, and implicatures not only functions as a form of unity but also enriches the flow of conversation. Overall, these findings imply that politeness strategies in podcasts are multifunctional and flexible, reflecting both interpersonal needs and the communicative demands of digital media.

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