



Investigating (Im)Politeness in English Comments on Instagram's Broadcast Pages: Leech's Grand Strategy of Politeness in Focus

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Abstract: Human beings employ different forms of linguistic politeness to ease communication and reduce the likelihood of conflict. With the rise of technology and social media platforms such as Email, Telegram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram, the concept of politeness has faced new challenges. The present study focused on Instagram comments and analyzed politeness strategies based on Leech's grand strategy of politeness. The study examined a 20043-word corpus developed based on 696 posts across various topics on Instagram. The results revealed that Instagram users predominantly utilized negative politeness strategies (63.3%). Among the positive strategies, agreement constraints were the most frequently employed (32.7%), while tact constraint violations (32.1%) were the most common within negative strategies. The study utilized repeated measures of ANOVA and Tukey post hoc analysis via SPSS to examine differences among various constraints and their violations. Significant differences were found among most constraints, except for tact and modesty, generosity, and feeling reticence. In terms of constraint violations, no significant differences were observed between approbation and obligation of the speaker to others constraint violation, between agreement constraint violation and generosity constraint violation, between agreement and obligation of others to a speaker constraint violation, between agreement constraint violation and opinion reticence constraint violation, between sympathy and modesty constraint violation, between sympathy and feeling reticence constraint violation. The findings underscore the importance of analyzing language in specific media, providing insights into politeness and impoliteness in a specific medium. The results can enhance students' pragmatic skills and improve their online communication, prompting materials developers to consider such pragmatic dimensions.

Keywords: Politeness, Social Media, Instagram, Leech's Grand Strategy of Politeness.

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Introduction

An act of successful communication includes variable aspects that are of ultimate significance to proficiency in carrying the meaning (Ahmadi & Weisi, 2023). Effective communication behavior has many important elements that convey good meaning. One of these elements is politeness.

Politeness is a concept that specifies appropriate social behavior, rules for speech, and behavior (Brown, 2015). The issue of politeness is a distinguishing perception under the umbrella term of pragmatics and its background in research goes back to at least the sixteenth century (Eelen, 2001). Kasper (1998) clarifies that the concept of politeness in pragmatics should not be connected only to the utilization of dialect that a few social classes or a few individuals do in exceptionally particular settings, but maybe it ought to be amplified to incorporate the linguistic behavior of any individual. According to Watts (2003), politeness means making others happy through our actions toward them. Politeness can also mean behaving in a way that the society expects you to, and is seen as the appropriate way to act (Jiang, 2010). Murliati (2013) believes that politeness is a behavior that tries to take into account the feelings of others. The term politeness involves being mindful of other people's feelings and treating them with dignity and respect (Sembiring & Sianturi, 2019).

Politeness emerges as a necessary communicative action that is inclined to unify social communication. It assists in interpersonal connection between the members of the society. This phenomenon assists in lowering the power and social space between interlocutors (Dowlatabadi et al., 2014). Politeness shows a speaker's social care about how to connect with others aptly according to their personal condition and social criterion (Brown, 2015). Politeness is a way for people to treat each other nicely and avoid arguments or fights when they communicate with each other (Syaputra, 2020).

The concept of politeness cannot be considered in a vacuum. In face-to-face communication, because of its multifaceted nature, the coding of the meaning of politeness depends on the participants' expressive, facial, and bodily signals (Hübscher et al., 2020). Put differently, linguistic formats and other extra-linguistic (e.g., prosody) elements impact speakers' apprehension of politeness impressions (Vergis & Pell, 2020).

The advent of technology and the emergence of cyberspaces can induce different interpretations of politeness principles and communication styles. For example, such spaces may increase the degree of showing impolite communication, as individuals may have epithets and nicknames and hence feel less restrained (Rabab'ah & Alali, 2020).

To date, numerous studies have been conducted on politeness and social media, including politeness in Emails (Alafnan & Cruz-Rudio, 2023; Alsout & Khedri, 2019; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Chiad, 2013; Ghiasian et al., 2015; Hsieh, 2009; Krish & Salman, 2016; Kucy, 2020; Mousavi, 2012; Oandasan, 2021; Pariera, 2006; Rahmani et al., 2014; Vinagre, 2008), Facebook (Ambarwati et al., 2019; May et al., 2015; Onwubiko, 2020; Rosyidah & Sofwan, 2017; Sagala, 2021; Smadi et al., (2023), Telegram (Ahmadi & Weisi, 2023; Grami & Chalak, 2020), Twitter (Alghamdi, 2023; Cahyono, 2018; Dwicahya & Suarnajaya, 2013; Maros & Rosil, 2017; Murti, 2020, Silitonga & Pasaribu, 2021), and WhatsApp (Amanda et al., 2021; Farida & Yuliana, 2019; Flores-Salgado & Castineira-Benitez, 2018; Purnomo, 2017; Shalihah & Zuhdi, 2020, Yulandari, 2022). However, the research on politeness in Instagram comments is still lacking, the problem addressed in this research lies in the restricted comprehension of how politeness is carried out in the context of English comments on Instagram. While Leech's model of politeness offers a comprehensive framework for understanding (im) politeness in diverse communication contexts, its application and effectiveness in the unique environment of Instagram comments have remained underexplored. There is a growing concern that (im) politeness is becoming more prevalent in English comments on Instagram, which may result in negative outcomes such as misunderstandings, hurting feelings, and even online harassment, hence the study aimed to explore differences in communication styles, identify both polite and impolite behaviors, and gain insights into the linguistic behaviors of individuals from different language backgrounds by analyzing English comments on Instagram. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of cross-cultural digital interactions. The present study aimed to investigate politeness strategies used by Instagram users according to Leech's (2007) politeness model, the politeness strategy most widely used by the users, and whether there is any significant difference between the employed politeness strategies.

Literature Review

Previous Theoretical Frameworks of Politeness

Although Lakoff's rules of politeness (avoid imposition, offer options, make a person feel comfortable, and exhibit friendliness) addressed politeness directly, they presented a reductionist perspective that limited politeness to merely avoiding offense (Fraser, 1990; Lakoff 1973). Additionally, her framework lacked adequate empirical support for analyzing politeness strategies across different cultures and did not differentiate between polite and impolite behaviors (Shahrokhi & Bidabadi, 2013). Brown and Levinson (1987) partitioned

politeness strategies into four fundamental techniques: bald-on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record politeness strategies. This model exhibits a Western bias, particularly favoring Anglo-Saxon culture, and cannot be regarded as a universal theory that applies to all languages and cultures (Leech, 2014). According to Al-Hindawi and Alkhazzadi (2016), the Brown and Levinson model fails to incorporate the concept of social politeness.

Leech (1983) outlined his politeness model consisting of six maxims: tact (Minimize the expression of beliefs which imply cost to others; maximize the expression of beliefs which imply benefit to others: *Could I interrupt you for a second?, If I could just clarify this then*); generosity (Minimize the expression of beliefs that express or imply benefit to self; maximize the expression of beliefs that express or imply cost to self: *You relax and let me do the dishes, You must come and have dinner with us*); approbation (Minimize the expression of beliefs which express dispraise of other; maximize the expression of beliefs which express approval of other: *I know you're a genius – would you know how to solve this math problem here?*); modesty (Minimize the expression of praise of self; maximize the expression of dispraise of self: *Oh, I'm so stupid – I didn't make a note of our lecture! Did you?*); agreement (Minimize the expression of disagreement between self and other; maximize the expression of agreement between self and other: *A: I don't want my daughter to do this, I want her to do that, B: Yes, but ma'am, I thought we resolved this already on your last visit*); sympathy (minimize antipathy between self and other; maximize sympathy between the self and other: *I am sorry to hear about your father*). While Leech's (1983) politeness model faced criticism similar to Brown and Levinson's, there is a key difference between the two. Brown and Levinson's model focuses primarily on the speaker, whereas Leech's model emphasizes the role of the hearer (Watts, 2003).

Leech (2007) updated his earlier politeness model and transformed it into ten constraints: generosity, tact, approval, modesty, agreement, sympathy, the obligation of speakers to others (importance of others to speakers, expressed, for example, through apologies), the obligation of speakers to themselves (responses to apologies to reduce the fault, or responses to thanks to reducing the debt), opinion-reticence (expressing one's thoughts or opinions more cautiously or less assertively), and feeling-reticence (prioritizing the feelings of others over our own). Leech argued that his theory, in addition to Western languages (i.e., English), can be applied and adopted within communicative interactions in Eastern languages (i.e., Korean, Japanese, and Chinese), knowing that despite differences, there is no East-West divide in politeness.

Previous Empirical Studies on Politeness

Politeness has been investigated in different contexts such as politeness in conversational computer games (Yildirim et al., 2005), politeness in the classroom (Jiang, 2010), politeness in English speakers' behavior (Ryabova, 2015), politeness strategy of males and female's instructors in EFL classroom (Arif et al., 2018), and politeness strategies and its realization in the classroom context (Hartini et al., 2024).

With the advent of technology and the emergence of social media like Email, Facebook, Telegram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram, the issue of politeness has faced new challenges. Many researchers have studied different models and theories of politeness on social media (e.g., Email: Alafnan & Cruz-Rudio, 2023; Facebook: Smadi et al., 2023; Telegram: Ahmadi & Weisi, 2023; Twitter: Alghamdi, 2023; Whatsapp: Yulandari, 2022; Ismail et al., 2023; Instagram: Ambarwati & Damayanti, 2024; Febianti, 2022; Karmila et al., 2023). Alafnan and Cruz-Rudio (2023) studied the politeness strategies observed in student-teacher Email requests from Malaysian and Filipino university students. These results showed the universal nature of request and politeness strategies, and shed light on the culture-specific components of certain strategies. Smadi et al. (2023) investigated the positive politeness strategies employed by Jordanians in their Facebook comments on the Roya news page. Gender differences were observed with Jordanian males often using asserting common ground as a key strategy, while females tended to employ joking more frequently. Interestingly, the study noted that news topics did not significantly impact the use of politeness strategies by either gender. Ahmadi and Weisi (2023) studied the politeness strategies utilized by Iranian EFL learners in their Telegram messages. The study demonstrated that Leech's model effectively explains politeness principles in Iran, shedding light on how cultural dynamics influence the interpretation of politeness.

Alghamdi (2023) conducted a study on the politeness strategies employed by Saudi EFL teachers when expressing disagreements on Twitter. The results indicated that Saudi EFL teachers predominantly utilized the on-record strategy in their tweets, with a higher prevalence of negative politeness strategies compared to positive politeness strategies. Factors influencing their disagreement expressions included the seriousness of the topic, language proficiency, and cultural differences between languages. While Saudi EFL and American ESL teachers exhibited similarities in expressing strong disagreements in tweets, they differed in their use of politeness strategies. Saudi EFL teachers employed both positive and negative politeness strategies, whereas American ESL teachers primarily used positive politeness strategies and rarely utilized negative politeness strategies.

Yulandari (2022) conducted a study on the politeness strategies employed by men in group WhatsApp conversations. The findings of the study indicate that male conversations in the GK group tend to utilize both negative and positive politeness strategies. On the other hand, in the GA group, men tended to employ positive and negative politeness strategies. The finding showed that male speech in the GK group tends to be less polite, especially when the interlocutor has a close social distance. In contrast, male speech in GA conversations tends to be more polite, as evidenced by their choice of language politeness strategies. Men's utterances in GA conversations appear to rarely employ frank politeness strategies, even when their interlocutors have close social distances. The result showed that as individuals age, they become more cautious in their speech, which is also influenced by educational factors. The study recommended that lecturers and other stakeholders pay closer attention to the language politeness of students, regardless of gender, to ensure harmonious relationships between speakers and their conversation partners.

Ismail et al. (2023) analyzed the different types of positive and negative politeness strategies employed by students in their WhatsApp conversations. The main finding of the study showed that students tend to employ more positive politeness strategies when communicating with close individuals such as family and friends in contrast, they utilize more negative politeness strategies when interacting with strangers.

Febianti (2022) conducted a study to analyze politeness strategies and determine the factors that impact the Instagram comments made by followers. Instagram followers frequently apply the positive politeness strategy, demonstrating interest and empathy towards their audience. The factors influencing politeness strategies were payoff and relevant circumstances.

Karmila et al. (2023) examined to identify and describe the various forms of language politeness violation, the variables for dialect politeness violations in comments on the Instagram account @kemenkominfo, and their pertinence to learning in high school. The results of the study show that there are six infringements of maxims that happen within the comment column of the Instagram account @kemenkominfo. There was a 48% violation of the approbation maxim, 18% of the infringement of the agreement maxim, 12% of the violation of thoughtfulness maxim, 8% of the infringement of the modesty maxim and sensitivity maxim, and at that point 6% of the violation of generosity maxim. Factors that caused a violation of the principle of dialect politeness were: the speaker's lack of belief in the speech accomplice, social media as a forum for communicating emotions, the presence of

contempt from the speaker towards the discourse accomplice, and communication that happens indirectly.

Ambarwati and Damayanti (2024) conducted a study on the politeness strategies employed by Indonesian national football team players in response to Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram post discussing Indonesia's failure to host the U-20 World Cup. The study identified three types of positive politeness strategies, two types of negative politeness strategies, and two types of off-record strategies. Positive politeness strategies included exaggeration (66.67%) and humor (33.33%), while negative politeness strategies comprised pessimism (50%) and irony (50%). Exaggeration emerged as the most prevalent positive politeness strategy, indicating the presence of politeness in social media interactions.

Although many studies have been conducted on politeness in various social media, no study has investigated English comments on Instagram based on Leech's (2007) model. Hence, this study aimed to analyze English comments on the broadcast pages of BBC, CNN, FOX News, and the New York Times on Instagram based on Leech's (2007) model of politeness. In effect, we apply Leech's (2007) model of politeness to investigate how Instagram users apply politeness in their comments on Instagram according to Leech's (2007) model of politeness.

The three research questions of this study are:

1. What politeness strategies are used when Instagram users comment on posts on broadcast pages on Instagram according to Leech's (2007) model?
2. Which politeness strategy is most widely used by Instagram users when they comment on Instagram posts according to Leech's (2007) model?
3. Is there any significant difference between politeness strategies used for commenting on Instagram posts based on Leech's (2007) model?

Methods

Design of the Study

This study included quantitative and qualitative corpus analysis to investigate English Instagram comments on the broadcast pages of BBC, CNN, FOX News, and the New York Times based on Leech's (2007) model of politeness. The quantitative part focused on examining the frequency of constraints outlined in Leech's (2007) model of politeness. In the qualitative part of the study, we identified the type of prevailing politeness strategies employed by Instagram users when commenting on Instagram pages.

Corpus of the Study

The corpus of the present study consisted of 20043 words, 68 posts, and 696 comments on the broadcast pages on Instagram: CNN (17 posts, 149 comments (21.43%)), BBC (17 posts, 189 comments (27.1%)), Fox News (17 posts, 178 comments (25.61%)), and New York Times (17 posts, 179 comments (25.75%)). The comments were made during the 2022–2024 period. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the corpus:

Table 1. Characteristics of the Corpus

| Genre | Word count | Number of posts | Number of comments | Time span |
|-----------------------|------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| Instagram comments | 20043 | 68 posts | 695 comments | 2022-2024 |
| | | 17 CNN | 149 comments | |
| | | 17 BBC | 189 comments | |
| | | 17 Fox News | 178 comments | |
| | | 17 New York Times | 179 comments | |

Corpus Analysis Procedure

The comments were copy-pasted into a Word file and were analyzed based on [Leech's \(2007\)](#) model of politeness. The selection criteria for extracting pertinent samples were comments on Instagram that users posted to respond to other users. The comments were read several times to identify relevant comments based on Leech's ten constraints. The utilized politeness strategies were coded. Comments that failed to adhere to the principle of politeness, such as those containing emojis or factual statements, were disregarded. Out of the total corpus of 804 comments, 696 comments were chosen for further analysis.

SPSS version 26 was employed for providing descriptive statistics, visualizing data to illustrate the relative frequencies of different constraints, and conducting repeated-measures ANOVA to identify the potential significant difference in using various constraints and violation of constraints.

Results

The results of the corpus analysis revealed that 422 instances of the politeness strategies were positive politeness strategies (36.7%), and 708 were negative politeness strategies (violation of politeness) (63.3%). It is important to note that most comments had more than one constraint.

Further analysis of the 422 positive politeness strategies revealed the following distribution of the strategies: 46 tact constraints (10.9 %), 96 approbation constraints (22.7 %), 138 agreement constraints (32.7 %), 29 generosity constraints (6.9%), 44 sympathy constraints (10.4 %), 4 modesty constraints (0.9%), 12 obligations of the speaker to others constraints (2.8%), 3 obligations of others to the speaker (0.7%), 27 opinion reticence constraints (6.4 %), and 23 feeling reticence constraints (5.5 %) (Table 2).

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage of Politeness Constraints

| Politeness constraint | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Tact | 46 | 10.9 |
| Approbation | 96 | 22.7 |
| Agreement | 138 | 32.7 |
| Generosity | 29 | 6.9 |
| Sympathy | 44 | 10.4 |
| Modesty | 4 | 0.9 |
| Obligation of S to others (OSO) | 12 | 2.8 |
| Obligation of Others to Speakers (OOS) | 3 | 0.7 |
| Opinion reticence (OR) | 27 | 6.4 |
| Feeling reticence (FR) | 23 | 5.5 |
| Total | 422 | 100 |

Further analysis of the 708 instances of the violation of politeness constraints revealed the following distribution of the violations of the constraints: 227 tact constraint violations (32.1 %), 149 approbation constraint violations (21.1 %), 6 agreement constraint violations (0.8%), 13 generosity constraint violations (1.8%), 54 sympathy constraint violations (7.5%), 48 modesty constraint violations (8.7%), 160 obligations of the speaker to others constraint violation (22.2 %), 2 obligations of others to the speaker violation (0.3%), 13 opinion-reticence constraint violations (1.8 %), and 36 feeling reticence constraint violations (5.7%) (Table 3).

Table 3. Frequency and Percentage of Politeness Constraints Violation

| Violation of politeness constraint | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Tact | 227 | 32.1 |
| Approbation | 149 | 21.1 |
| Agreement | 6 | 0.8 |
| Generosity | 13 | 1.8 |
| Sympathy | 54 | 7.5 |
| Modesty | 48 | 8.7 |
| Obligation of S to others (OSO) | 160 | 22.2 |
| Obligation of Others to Speakers (OOS) | 2 | 0.3 |
| Opinion reticence (OR) | 13 | 1.8 |
| Feeling reticence (FR) | 36 | 5.7 |
| Total | 708 | 100 |

A repeated measures ANOVA with a post hoc Tukey test was conducted to figure out whether there was a significant difference among constraints.

Table 4. Post Hoc Analysis for Constraints

| Measure: MEASURE_1 | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------------|-----------------------|------------|-------------------|---|-------------|
| (I) factor1 | (J) factor1 | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. ^b | 95% Confidence Interval for Difference ^b | |
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Tact | Approbation | -.069* | .016 | .000 | -.101 | -.037 |
| | Agreement | -.135* | .018 | .000 | -.171 | -.099 |
| | Generosity | .026* | .011 | .014 | .005 | .047 |
| | Sympathy | .062* | .010 | .000 | .043 | .081 |
| | Modesty | .001 | .013 | .913 | -.024 | .027 |
| | OSO | .050* | .010 | .000 | .030 | .070 |
| | OOS | .063* | .010 | .000 | .044 | .083 |
| | OR | .029* | .011 | .012 | .006 | .051 |
| | FR | .032* | .012 | .008 | .008 | .055 |
| Approbation | Tact | .069* | .016 | .000 | .037 | .101 |
| | Agreement | -.066* | .021 | .002 | -.108 | -.025 |
| | Generosity | .095* | .015 | .000 | .065 | .124 |
| | Sympathy | .131* | .013 | .000 | .105 | .156 |

| Measure: MEASURE_1 | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------------|--------------------------|---------------|-------------------|--|-------------|
| (I) factor1 | (J) factor1 | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. ^b | 95% Confidence Interval for Difference ^b | |
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| | Modesty | .070 [*] | .017 | .000 | .038 | .103 |
| | OSO | .119 [*] | .014 | .000 | .093 | .146 |
| | OOS | .132 [*] | .013 | .000 | .106 | .158 |
| | OR | .098 [*] | .014 | .000 | .069 | .126 |
| | FR | .101 [*] | .014 | .000 | .073 | .128 |
| Agreement | Tact | .135 [*] | .018 | .000 | .099 | .171 |
| | approbation | .066 [*] | .021 | .002 | .025 | .108 |
| | Generosity | .161 [*] | .017 | .000 | .127 | .195 |
| | Sympathy | .197 [*] | .015 | .000 | .166 | .227 |
| | Modesty | .136 [*] | .018 | .000 | .101 | .172 |
| | OSO | .185 [*] | .016 | .000 | .154 | .217 |
| | OOS | .198 [*] | .016 | .000 | .168 | .229 |
| | OR | .164 [*] | .017 | .000 | .130 | .198 |
| Geneorosity | FR | .167 [*] | .017 | .000 | .133 | .200 |
| | Tact | -.026 [*] | .011 | .014 | -.047 | -.005 |
| | Approbation | -.095 [*] | .015 | .000 | -.124 | -.065 |
| | Agreement | -.161 [*] | .017 | .000 | -.195 | -.127 |
| | Generosity | .036 [*] | .008 | .000 | .020 | .052 |
| | Modesty | -.024 [*] | .012 | .044 | -.048 | -.001 |
| | OSO | .024 [*] | .008 | .004 | .008 | .041 |
| | OOS | .037 [*] | .008 | .000 | .022 | .053 |
| Sympathy | OR | .003 | .010 | .782 | -.017 | .023 |
| | FR | .006 | .010 | .579 | -.015 | .026 |
| | Tact | -.062 [*] | .010 | .000 | -.081 | -.043 |
| | Approbation | -.131 [*] | .013 | .000 | -.156 | -.105 |
| | Agreement | -.197 [*] | .015 | .000 | -.227 | -.166 |
| | Generosity | -.036 [*] | .008 | .000 | -.052 | -.020 |
| | Sympathy | -.060 [*] | .010 | .000 | -.079 | -.041 |
| | OSO | -.011 [*] | .005 | .021 | -.021 | -.002 |
| | OOS | .001 | .004 | .706 | -.006 | .009 |
| | OR | -.033 [*] | .008 | .000 | -.048 | -.018 |

| Measure: MEASURE_1 | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------------|--------------------------|---------------|-------------------|--|-------------|
| (I) factor1 | (J) factor1 | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. ^b | 95% Confidence Interval for Difference ^b | |
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Modesty | FR | -.030 [*] | .007 | .000 | -.045 | -.016 |
| | Tact | -.001 | .013 | .913 | -.027 | .024 |
| | Approbation | -.070 [*] | .017 | .000 | -.103 | -.038 |
| | Agreement | -.136 [*] | .018 | .000 | -.172 | -.101 |
| | Generosity | .024 [*] | .012 | .044 | .001 | .048 |
| | Sympathy | .060 [*] | .010 | .000 | .041 | .079 |
| | OSO | .049 [*] | .010 | .000 | .029 | .068 |
| | OOS | .062 [*] | .010 | .000 | .043 | .081 |
| | OR | .027 [*] | .012 | .020 | .004 | .050 |
| | FR | .030 [*] | .010 | .003 | .011 | .050 |
| OSO | Tact | -.050 [*] | .010 | .000 | -.070 | -.030 |
| | Approbation | -.119 [*] | .014 | .000 | -.146 | -.093 |
| | Agreement | -.185 [*] | .016 | .000 | -.217 | -.154 |
| | Generosity | -.024 [*] | .008 | .004 | -.041 | -.008 |
| | Sympathy | .011 [*] | .005 | .021 | .002 | .021 |
| | Modesty | -.049 [*] | .010 | .000 | -.068 | -.029 |
| | OOS | .013 [*] | .006 | .020 | .002 | .024 |
| | OR | -.022 [*] | .009 | .014 | -.039 | -.004 |
| | FR | -.019 [*] | .008 | .016 | -.034 | -.004 |
| OOS | Tact | -.063 [*] | .010 | .000 | -.083 | -.044 |
| | approbation | -.132 [*] | .013 | .000 | -.158 | -.106 |
| | Agreement | -.198 [*] | .016 | .000 | -.229 | -.168 |
| | Generosity | -.037 [*] | .008 | .000 | -.053 | -.022 |
| | Sympathy | -.001 | .004 | .706 | -.009 | .006 |
| | Modesty | -.062 [*] | .010 | .000 | -.081 | -.043 |
| | OSO | -.013 [*] | .006 | .020 | -.024 | -.002 |
| | OR | -.034 [*] | .008 | .000 | -.050 | -.019 |
| | FR | -.032 [*] | .008 | .000 | -.046 | -.017 |
| OR | Tact | -.029 [*] | .011 | .012 | -.051 | -.006 |
| | Approbation | -.098 [*] | .014 | .000 | -.126 | -.069 |
| | Agreement | -.164 [*] | .017 | .000 | -.198 | -.130 |
| | Generosity | -.003 | .010 | .782 | -.023 | .017 |

| Measure: MEASURE_1 | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|---------------|-------------------|--|-------------|
| (I) factor1 | (J) factor1 | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. ^b | 95% Confidence Interval for Difference ^b | |
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| | Sympathy | .033* | .008 | .000 | .018 | .048 |
| | Modesty | -.027* | .012 | .020 | -.050 | -.004 |
| | OSO | .022* | .009 | .014 | .004 | .039 |
| | OOS | .034* | .008 | .000 | .019 | .050 |
| | FR | .003 | .009 | .746 | -.015 | .020 |
| | Tact | -.032* | .012 | .008 | -.055 | -.008 |
| | Approbation | -.101* | .014 | .000 | -.128 | -.073 |
| | Agreement | -.167* | .017 | .000 | -.200 | -.133 |
| | Generosity | -.006 | .010 | .579 | -.026 | .015 |
| | FR | .030* | .007 | .000 | .016 | .045 |
| FR | Modesty | -.030* | .010 | .003 | -.050 | -.011 |
| | OSO | .019* | .008 | .016 | .004 | .034 |
| | OOS | .032* | .008 | .000 | .017 | .046 |
| | OR | -.003 | .009 | .746 | -.020 | .015 |
| | | | | | | |
| Based on estimated marginal means | | | | | | |

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Least Significant Difference (equivalent to no adjustments).

The results of the analyses revealed significant differences between all constraints (Table 4), except for tact and modesty, generosity and feeling reticence, generosity and opinion-reticence, sympathy and the obligation of the speaker to others constraint, and opinion reticence and feeling reticence.

Considering constraint violations, the results of the repeated measures ANOVA with a post hoc Tukey test were done. The result of this study is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Post Hoc Analysis for Constraint Violation

| Measure: MEASURE_1 | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|------------|-------------------|---|----------------|
| (I) factor1 | (J) factor1 | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. ^b | 95% Confidence Interval for Difference ^b | |
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Tact(v) | Approbation(v) | .109 [*] | .024 | .000 | .061 | .157 |
| | Agreement (v) | .316 [*] | .018 | .000 | .281 | .351 |
| | Generosity (v) | .306 [*] | .018 | .000 | .271 | .341 |
| | Sympathy (v) | .246 [*] | .018 | .000 | .210 | .282 |
| | Modesty (v) | .256 [*] | .019 | .000 | .218 | .294 |
| | OSO (V) | .092 [*] | .019 | .000 | .056 | .128 |
| | OOS (V) | .322 [*] | .018 | .000 | .287 | .357 |
| | OR(V) | .306 [*] | .019 | .000 | .269 | .343 |
| | FR(V) | .273 [*] | .019 | .000 | .235 | .311 |
| Approbation (v) | Agreement(v) | .207 [*] | .016 | .000 | .175 | .239 |
| | Generosity (v) | .197 [*] | .016 | .000 | .165 | .229 |
| | Sympathy (v) | .136 [*] | .018 | .000 | .101 | .172 |
| | Modesty(v) | .147 [*] | .018 | .000 | .111 | .182 |
| | OSO (V) | -.017 | .019 | .355 | -.054 | .019 |
| | OOS(V) | .213 [*] | .016 | .000 | .182 | .244 |
| | OR(V) | .197 [*] | .016 | .000 | .165 | .229 |
| | FR(V) | .164 [*] | .017 | .000 | .130 | .198 |
| Agreement(V) | Tact (v) | -.316 [*] | .018 | .000 | -.351 | -.281 |
| | Approbation(v) | -.207 [*] | .016 | .000 | -.239 | -.175 |
| | Generosity (v) | -.010 | .006 | .108 | -.022 | .002 |
| | Sympathy (v) | -.070 [*] | .011 | .000 | -.091 | -.049 |
| | Modesty(v) | -.060 [*] | .010 | .000 | -.081 | -.040 |
| | OSO (V) | -.224 [*] | .016 | .000 | -.256 | -.193 |
| | OOS(V) | .006 | .004 | .157 | -.002 | .014 |
| Generosity (V) | OR(V) | -.010 | .006 | .090 | -.022 | .002 |
| | FR(V) | -.043 [*] | .009 | .000 | -.061 | -.025 |
| | Tact (v) | -.306 [*] | .018 | .000 | -.341 | -.271 |
| | Approbation (v) | -.197 [*] | .016 | .000 | -.229 | -.165 |
| | Agreement(v) | .010 | .006 | .108 | -.002 | .022 |

| Measure: MEASURE_1 | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|------------|-------------------|---|----------------|
| (I) factor1 | (J) factor1 | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. ^b | 95% Confidence Interval for Difference ^b | |
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| | | | | | | |
| Sympathy(V) | Sympathy (v) | -.060 [*] | .011 | .000 | -.082 | -.039 |
| | Modesty(v) | -.050 [*] | .011 | .000 | -.071 | -.029 |
| | OSO(V) | -.214 [*] | .016 | .000 | -.246 | -.182 |
| | OOS(V) | .016 [*] | .006 | .004 | .005 | .027 |
| | OR(V) | .000 | .007 | 1.000 | -.014 | .014 |
| | FR(V) | -.033 [*] | .010 | .001 | -.053 | -.013 |
| | Tact(v) | -.246 [*] | .018 | .000 | -.282 | -.210 |
| | Approbation (v) | -.136 [*] | .018 | .000 | -.172 | -.101 |
| | Agreement (v) | .070 [*] | .011 | .000 | .049 | .091 |
| | Generosity (v) | .060 [*] | .011 | .000 | .039 | .082 |
| | Modesty(v) | .010 | .013 | .448 | -.016 | .036 |
| | OSO(V) | -.154 [*] | .017 | .000 | -.187 | -.120 |
| | OOS(V) | .076 [*] | .010 | .000 | .056 | .097 |
| | OR(V) | .060 [*] | .011 | .000 | .039 | .082 |
| | FR(V) | .027 [*] | .013 | .035 | .002 | .053 |
| Modesty(v) | Tact (v) | -.256 [*] | .019 | .000 | -.294 | -.218 |
| | Approbation (v) | -.147 [*] | .018 | .000 | -.182 | -.111 |
| | Agreement(v) | .060 [*] | .010 | .000 | .040 | .081 |
| | Generosity(v) | .050 [*] | .011 | .000 | .029 | .071 |
| | Sympathy (v) | -.010 | .013 | .448 | -.036 | .016 |
| OSO(V) | OSO (V) | -.164 [*] | .017 | .000 | -.198 | -.130 |
| | OOS(V) | .066 [*] | .010 | .000 | .047 | .085 |
| | OR(V) | .050 [*] | .010 | .000 | .030 | .070 |
| | FR(V) | .017 | .011 | .109 | -.004 | .038 |
| | Tact (v) | -.092 [*] | .019 | .000 | -.128 | -.056 |

| Measure: MEASURE_1 | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|------------|-------------------|---|----------------|
| (I) factor1 | (J) factor1 | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. ^b | 95% Confidence Interval for Difference ^b | |
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| | | | | | | |
| OOS(V) | OOS(V) | .230* | .016 | .000 | .198 | .262 |
| | OR(V) | .214* | .017 | .000 | .181 | .247 |
| | FR(V) | .181* | .017 | .000 | .148 | .214 |
| | Tact (v) | -.322* | .018 | .000 | -.357 | -.287 |
| | Approbation (v) | -.213* | .016 | .000 | -.244 | -.182 |
| | Agreement (v) | -.006 | .004 | .157 | -.014 | .002 |
| | Generosity (v) | -.016* | .006 | .004 | -.027 | -.005 |
| | Sympathy (v) | -.076* | .010 | .000 | -.097 | -.056 |
| | Modesty(v) | -.066* | .010 | .000 | -.085 | -.047 |
| | OSO (v) | -.230* | .016 | .000 | -.262 | -.198 |
| | OR(V) | -.016* | .005 | .002 | -.026 | -.006 |
| | FR(V) | -.049* | .009 | .000 | -.066 | -.032 |
| OR(V) | Tact (v) | -.306* | .019 | .000 | -.343 | -.269 |
| | Approbation (v) | -.197* | .016 | .000 | -.229 | -.165 |
| | Agreement (v) | .010 | .006 | .090 | -.002 | .022 |
| | Generosity (v) | .000 | .007 | 1.000 | -.014 | .014 |
| | Sympathy (v) | -.060* | .011 | .000 | -.082 | -.039 |
| | Modesty (v) | -.050* | .010 | .000 | -.070 | -.030 |
| | OSO(V) | -.214* | .017 | .000 | -.247 | -.181 |
| | OOS(V) | .016* | .005 | .002 | .006 | .026 |
| | FR(V) | -.033* | .010 | .001 | -.053 | -.013 |
| Based on estimated marginal means | | | | | | |

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Least Significant Difference (equivalent to no adjustments).

The study revealed that there was no significant difference between the following constraint violations: approbation and obligation of the speaker to others constraint, agreement constraint, generosity constraint, agreement and obligation of others to the speaker, agreement and opinion reticence, sympathy and modesty, sympathy and feeling reticence.

Discussion

This section restates the findings of the present study and discusses them according to the previous studies.

The First Research Question

The first question is as follows:

What politeness strategies are used when Instagram users comment on posts on broadcast pages on Instagram according to [Leech's \(2007\)](#) model?

The findings of the present study disclosed Instagram users applied two sets of strategies in English comments: positive, and negative strategies. The positive strategy here means the strategies that align with politeness constraints, and the negative strategy means the violation of the politeness constraints. The negative strategies had a higher frequency and percentage (422, 36.7%) than the positive strategies (708, 63.3%).

The findings of the present study are in line with those of some studies, indicating that the negative strategy had more frequency and percentage than the positive strategy (Email: [Rahmani et al., 2014](#), [Alsout & Khedri, \(2019\)](#); WhatsApp: [Farida & Yuliana, \(2019\)](#)). Some studies, however, have revealed that the positive strategies had higher frequencies than the negative strategies in specific social media (e.g., Email requests: [Vinagre, 2008](#); Twitter: [DwicaHYa & Suarnajaya, 2013](#); [Maros & Rosil, 2017](#); Instagram: [Nurfarida, 2016](#); [Ammaida, 2020](#); WhatsApp: [Amanda et al., 2021](#)).

The mixed results obtained in the literature and the present study suggest (im)politeness is a multifaceted phenomenon with various aspects such as cultural differences and values, context and media of interaction, topic of interaction, and the interlocutor's gender, power, social distance, age, and socioeconomic and educational status. For example, the results of a study by [Suh \(199\)](#) showed that Korean learners did not consistently apply politeness like native English in various social and psychological contexts. Another study by [Yamazaki \(2001\)](#) showed that Japanese high school students use a hierarchical politeness system toward their teachers, American students employ a deference politeness system toward teachers and peers with a relatively advanced developmental stage, and Australian students more commonly utilize a solidarity politeness framework. The study by [Baidaa'F \(2012\)](#) showed that while British individuals' respect aligns with [Brown and Levinson's](#) politeness model, Arabs' respectful behavior appears not to follow this model. The study by [Mousavi \(2012\)](#) indicated that Iranians exhibit the politest style, the Chinese use the most intimate discourse, Indians display the least polite and intimate styles, while Pakistanis' style falls between

Iranians and Chinese. The study by [Yan \(2016\)](#) indicated that Chinese students tend to employ diverse politeness strategies based on social distance and power dynamics, while American students predominately use positive politeness strategies, followed by negative politeness strategies, irrespective of social factors. [Asghar et al. \(2021\)](#) indicated that Pakistani EFL learners tend to adopt a more direct approach to expressing disagreement, whereas British speakers make use of mitigating devices to soften the impact of their disagreement. The study by [Alghamdi \(2023\)](#) showed that while Saudi EFL and American teachers exhibited similarities in expressing strong disagreements in tweets, they differed in their use of politeness strategies. Saudi EFL teachers employ both positive and negative politeness strategies, whereas American ESL teachers primarily use politeness strategies and rarely utilize negative politeness strategies.

Considering the effect of gender in selecting politeness strategies, the study by [Krish and Salman \(2016\)](#) indicated female students exhibited greater awareness of employing appropriate strategies, particularly demonstrating indirectness in requests, while males tended to use more direct approaches when requesting via Email. [Arif et al. \(2018\)](#) indicated that students perceived both male and female lectures as polite, with the male lecturer being viewed as more formal and the female lecturer as friendly. [Onwubiko \(2020\)](#) revealed that females use more politeness strategies than males.

Finally, the study has indicated that context can also play a significant role in selecting appropriate politeness strategies. The study by [Biesenbach-Lucas \(2007\)](#) indicated that users in different contexts applied different strategies. For example, the results of the study showed that students used more positive politeness strategies in email than in voicemail.

The Second Research Question

The second question is as follows:

Which politeness strategy is most widely used by Instagram users when they comment on Instagram posts according to [Leech's \(2007\)](#) model?

The second research question disclosed that Instagram users most widely employed the agreement constraint in their comments on Instagram (32.7 %), and most widely violated the tact constraint (32.1 %).

The obtained results are similar to those obtained in some previous studies. The previous research employed the [Leech \(1983\)](#) model. [Chen \(1993\)](#) compared the politeness strategies used by American English speakers and Chinese speakers when responding to compliments. The result showed that American English speakers primarily adhere to Leech's

agreement maxim while Chinese speakers were driven by his modesty maxim. The distinction was linked to variations in social values between the two societies, specifically in individual convictions regarding the definition of self-image. [Jewad et al. \(2020\)](#) conducted a study about politeness strategies used in communication among Allah, prophets, and humans in five surahs of the Holy Quran. The four politeness maxims observed in the surahs were the tact maxim (3.86%), approbation maxim (3.31%), modesty maxim (4.41%), agreement maxim (7.73%), and sympathy maxim (3.31%). [Ahmadi and Weisi \(2023\)](#) studied the politeness strategies utilized by Iranian EFL learners in their Telegram messages based on Leech's grand strategy of politeness. The ten politeness constraints were observed: tact constraint (16.26%), approbation constraint (11.00%), generosity constraint (4.78%), modesty constraint (7.65%), agreement constraint (18.18%), obligation of speaker to other (12.91%), obligation of others to speaker (6.22%), opinion reticence (10.04%), sympathy (7.17%), feeling reticence (5.74%). The study demonstrated that Leech's model effectively explains politeness principles in Asian cultures, particularly in Iran, shedding light on how cultural dynamics influence the interpretation of politeness.

[Karmila et al. \(2023\)](#) identified and described the various forms of language politeness violation, the variables for dialect politeness violations in comments on the Instagram account @kemenkominfo, and their pertinence to learning in high school. The findings of the study showed that there were six infringements of maxims within the comments of the Instagram account @kemenkominfo. There was a 48% violation of the approbation maxim, 18% of the infringement of the agreement maxim, 12% of the violation of thoughtfulness maxim, 8% of the infringement of the modesty maxim and sensitivity maxim, and at that point 6% of the violation of generosity maxim. The result of this study is in contrast with those of the present study that showed the tact constraint (maxim) was most widely violated by Instagram users.

The Third Research Question

The third research question of the study is as follows:

Is there any significant difference between politeness strategies used for commenting on Instagram posts based on [Leech's \(2007\)](#) model?

Based on the findings of this study, there are significant differences between almost all constraints. However, there is not a significant difference between tact and modesty constraints, generosity and feeling reticence, generosity and opinion reticence, sympathy and the obligation of the speaker to others constraint, and opinion reticence and feeling reticence.

And about constraint (maxim) violation, there is no significant difference between approbation and obligation of speaker to others constraint violation, between agreement constraint violation and generosity constraint violation, between agreement and obligation of others to a speaker constraint violation, between agreement constraint violation and opinion reticence constraint violation, between sympathy and modesty constraint violation, between sympathy and feeling reticence constraint violation.

The results have some implications for language instructors, students, and materials developers. For language teachers, analyzing English comments on Instagram allows authentic examples of politeness and impoliteness in online media, enabling them to enhance students' pragmatic strategies and digital language features in their teaching methods, making language instruction more relevant for their students. Learners can benefit from studying these constraints to navigate online discourse effectively and engage in respectful conversations. Materials developers can incorporate these principles in teaching materials, fostering learners' digital communication skills and preparing them for real-life online interactions. They can address the ethical and cultural implications of materials, by considering the social and linguistic aspects of online communication. They can also focus on politeness issues in materials. Overall, the results of the current research offer valuable insights for language education, equipping teachers, learners, and material developers with relevant examples and strategies for effective online communication.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that various parameters seem to affect the employment of various (im)politeness constraints in various contexts and through various social media. The use of (im)politeness strategies in communication is influenced by various factors such as media characteristics, user demographics, and contextual norms. Different social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook shape interactions in unique ways. Twitter's character limit leads to more direct and potentially rude messages, while Instagram allows for more diverse and polite communication through images and captions. Users have to be mindful of their language on these public platforms to maintain their image. User demographics, including age and gender, also affect politeness strategies. Younger users may use more informal language and abbreviations that may be considered less polite, while older users may follow traditional standards of politeness. Women tend to use more polite language than men, and politeness levels vary based on the situational context of the interaction.

Overall, these factors create a complex landscape of (il)citizenship in social media, reflecting broader social norms and expectations.

Future studies can compile a larger corpus than we used in this study. Retrieving a large corpus will, in turn, increase the reliability and generalizability of the study. Future studies can also investigate emojis and non-linguistic characters to investigate other possible means of communicating (violation of) politeness constraints. Future studies can also distinguish between native and non-native comments to see whether they use the constraints in significantly different ways. Overall, Future studies can investigate politeness strategies used in Instagram comments while controlling for mediating factors such as gender. Ultimately, Future studies can investigate politeness in Instagram comments using other (im)politeness models such as [Culpeper's \(2011\)](#) impoliteness model.

Statements and Declarations

The article has not been published elsewhere and is not currently being considered for publication.

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Ethical Approval

This study was performed in line with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Consent to Participate

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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