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## Framing Face-Saving Behavior on Facebook

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### Abstract

The majority of the previous research suggested that the significance of face on social communication is both prevalent and powerful. Every communication channel has the potential to risk the harmony between speakers and hearers. As a result, based on the concept of politeness strategies, this study explores face-saving behavior employed by Facebook users. By examining the different situations of interactions, the paper attempts to describe and analyze the use of politeness strategies on Facebook. The results found that all speakers employed all four politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson. The use of positive strategies with 36.67 % that was in high-rated population, and followed by bald on record politeness strategy without redressive action that took 28.89 %. Negative politeness was used 20 % in this platform channel. The last strategy is an indirect strategy called bald off-record that took 14.44 %. In conclusion, politeness strategy plays a significant role as a strategy in building a good interaction without violence the communication and can save the speaker's face as well.

**Keywords:** face-saving behavior, Facebook, politeness strategy, social communication.

### 1. Introduction

Social media has now become a channel for cyberbullying as a form of transformation of traditional bullying into online forms. This destructive behavior grows along with the interaction and communication between users of this online social media platform. At some point cyberbullying will be considered a potential risk of relying on online platforms (Abaido, 2020). Cyberbullying certainly breaks channels and disrupts the flow of communication made between users of this online platform (Haq et al., 2021). Social media users begin to realize the phenomenon that has invaded their privacy, and eventually becomes their reason to leave their social network accounts (Proudfoot et al., 2018). The occurrence of cyberbullying and other negative social interactions that occur in social networking communities causes users to be able to avoid it in certain ways. Speakers or social media users developed some strategies to manage these conditions. They established strategies and behaviors that would make the communication acts more possible to occur (Thielke, 2011: 5).

The face concept can explain individual or group organizational behavior in social interactions on social media. In the context of collectivism culture, people are more likely to judge others to avoid losing face. Individuals would try to reestablish disgraced public self-images by creating favorable self-images (Kim, Nam, 1998). The exchange of information on social media often inadvertently stimulates embarrassing behavior among users, sometimes by laughing at and expressing unkind behavior and posting funny comments that are deemed offensive to certain individuals (Choi et al., 2015). Embarrassment damages an individual's characters and reduces his or her social communication interactions. Individuals are finally motivated to eliminate this

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embarrassing behavior and to avoid situations caused it by using both verbal and non-verbal methods (Dong et al., 2013). In communicating the use of certain strategies to convey uncertain messages and a desire to be polite to save face is necessary (Holtgraves, Perdeu, 2016).

All speech acts are face threatening acts (FTAs) that can harm the harmony between the speaker and the interlocutor. An FTA, both positive and negative, are indirectly ambiguous, so they are often considered as deviations. In contrast to negative politeness strategy, which strives to fulfill the hearer's wishes under coercive circumstances, positive politeness-strategy aims to satisfy what the recipient may want. The dominant illocutionary power can threaten the face of both positive and negative recipients (Brown, Levinson, 1987). Every speaker has a face that they wish to keep, and they also want to keep the addressees' faces. To carry out an FTA, the speaker works to reduce the face threat, unless the requirement to keep face is greater than the necessity to carry out the FTA as effectively as possible (Jaszczolt, 2016). The dynamics of impoliteness in communication interactions, especially in social media, may develop our knowledge about the complexity of communication between speakers and hearers (Chen, 2017). A crucial consideration in a variety of speech acts, including apologies, wishes, protests, rejections, and arguments, is the speaker's choice of strategies. (Sayogie et al., 2022).

E.T. Vold (Vold, 2006) proposed epistemic modality markers, which are language components that indicate uncertainty assertions. The primary purpose is to indicate the writer's level of commitment (boosters) or lack of commitment (hedges) to the proposition's truth.

Social media users need to use positive politeness strategies to minimize the impact of interpersonal communication on the positive face of the interlocutor so that they feel valued (Gribanova, 2019). P. Brown and S.C. Levinson (Brown, Levinson, 1987) categorized various forms of politeness strategies for responding to FTAs. The various politeness strategies are based on three sociological factors: the hearer's relative influence on the speaker, their social closeness, and their assessment of the FTA's.

This study aims to explore how to frame face-saving behavior in building effective interpersonal communication on Facebook user interactions by using politeness strategies.

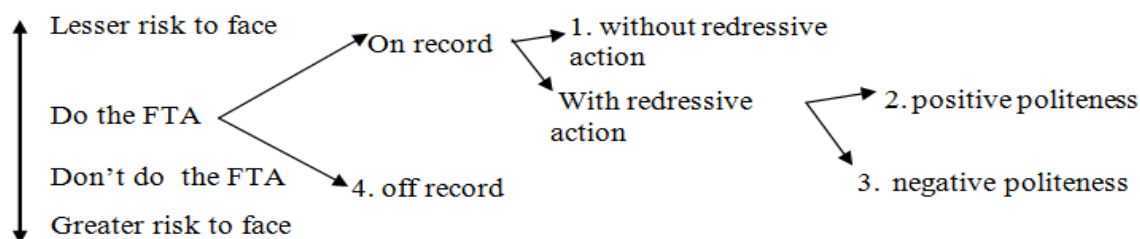
## 2. Materials and methods

This study is descriptive and qualitative methods because it purposes to analyze, classify, examine, and describe one specific case that is interesting to explore (Kim et al., 2017). The current analysis stresses on the four patterns of politeness strategies (Brown, Levinson, 1987; Jaszczolt, 2016) used by Facebook users to avoid FTAs. The choice of materials was determined by the differences of the situation use of the communicative purpose, which makes the study of politeness strategies oriented. The sources of materials subjected to investigation comprise authentic scripts of Facebook user interactions. The discussion presented below is based on samples collected from Facebook profiles of 90 during 2022.

## 3. Discussion

The majority of previous research (Ademiluyi et al., 2022; Alim, 2016; Boddy, Dominelli, 2017; Özel et al., 2017; Rajbhandari, Rana, 2022; Schodt et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2020) observed that negative social interactions in social media will be considered as a possible problem to lose social media users' face. In framing face-saving behavior, users must learn or develop an instrument as a personal assistant that is politeness strategies (Andriuzzi, Michel, 2021; Eshghinejad, Moini, 2016; Maros, Rosli, 2017).

The goal of this study was to examine the concept of FTAs to achieve the understanding of politeness strategies used by Facebook profiles. Politeness strategies were commonly used in their posting and comments. As G. Eelen (Eelen, 2014) explained that politeness is an expression of social relations that is expressed verbally to relieve interpersonal tensions that arise from interactions that are contrary to cultural and social norms. The attribution shields can let speakers or hearers to avoid commitment for their statements. This avoidance motive has the potential to protect both individual and group values to ensure good and harmonious relationships (Ginsburg et al., 2016).



**Fig. 1.** Model for politeness strategies (Brown, Levinson, 1987)

The use of positive strategy with 36.67 % that was in the most population. The results support the most common strategy applied to gain positive face to protect an FTA to maintain relationship. Positive politeness performs to protect the hearer's positive face by considering as participants of an in-group which convinces that the FTA is not perceived as a negative assessment of hearer's face. This strategy saves positive face by representing intimacy, and addressing relationship. Examples are, "*We're not feeling well, are we?*", and "*Hey Bud, have you gotta minute?*" (Maros, Rosli, 2017). Positive politeness strategy is frequently used in friendship groups, strong-relationship communities, and other settings where people are well acquainted. By showing warmth and demonstrating a keen interest in reducing FTA to the listener, the positive politeness strategy seeks to reduce the distance between speakers and hearers. The speaker literally states "*The team played horribly last night, right?*", and "*Isn't your new car a beautiful color!*". The use of safe topics to seek agreement enables the speaker to underline his agreement with the hearer's need to be correct and have his beliefs supported

Bald on record politeness strategy without redressive action took 28.89 %. With this strategy, the speaker makes no attempt to lessen the threats to the hearer's face. The speaker will make the hearer uncomfortable and unpleasant due to communicating them directly or through direct command. The famed "bald on record" strategies are employed to directly address the hearer or the other person to communicate the speaker's needs. It is a straightforward method of communication without imposing oneself. A bald on record technique doesn't make any efforts to lessen the risks to the hearer's face. The speaker may also have varied motivations or reasons for the FTA with greatest effectiveness, therefore there are many reasons why the bald on record is employed in different situations (Brown, Levinson, 1987). From the results, bald on record strategy is a straightforward statement that employs a negative term that is denoted as a "rude" face. It is a bald on statement since it is blunt and contains negative language when the speaker literally says "*Just open your messenger, b\*\*tard*".

Negative politeness is used 20 % in this platform of virtual communication on Facebook. Negative politeness related to the hearer's negative face is redress. To demonstrate to the addressee speaker's respect, recognition, and assurance that he or she is not the one who will intrude on the addressee's negative face, the basis is on avoidance. The strategy could come off as quite formal and understated. When using this strategy, "apologies for meddling or transgressing, hedges on the illocutionary acts, and impersonalizing mechanisms (such as passives)" are frequently used. By showing distance and caution, negative politeness is directed through the hearer's negative face. Negative politeness frequently gives the other person the impression that the speaker is imposing on them (Brown, Levinson, 1987: 70-71). This strategy is employed to prevent encroachment on one another's space, and apologies, hedging, and questioning are utilized to prevent imposing on the other hearers. Negative politeness might come off as very formal and constrained.

Hedges are part of negative politeness strategy. Speakers can use hedges to blur limits or ranges when they don't want to clearly reveal their original objective or true concept in order to protect themselves and maintain their face (Liu, 2020). Hedges are a typical linguistic characteristic that can be found in both written and spoken language. A communication strategy known as a hedge weakens the statement's illocutionary force, which would otherwise make it sound rude, impolite, or plain. Hedges as mitigating expressions are considered to smooth social communication (Ginsburg et al., 2016). Hedges are a unique pragmatic tool for communication that can reduce and weaken the importance of information in sentences while also changing the subject (Liu, 2020). On social media, language is a means of creating reality in different ways in constructing, sharing, and shaping views, perceptions and identities to gain recognition, and provides a description of reality in a means of discourse that creates its own meaning (Gergen,

Thatchenkery, 2004). The speaker says “*I wonder whether you read my message*”, and “*Perhaps, you could give me more time*”. The use of content words and function words beyond the differential perlocutionary effect directly affects the hearer (Ludwig, de Ruyter, 2016). The strength of the illocutionary force has a perlocutionary effect in realizing the communication of a complete speech act in a particular sociolinguistic community like in social media platform. Intrinsically interaction in speech requires linguistic perception and acceptance in the communication process built which results in other forms of speech acts (Ordenes et al., 2017). The argument that each application of social interaction theory is likely to produce differences and interactions in different outcomes (Tsoumou, 2020). Self-presentation in attractive language on social media is a progressive area of using certain platforms to produce and share content (Amirudin, Triyono, 2018).

The last strategy is an indirect strategy called bald off-record that took 14.44 %. Bald off record is different from bald on record without corrective action in that it provides indications, clues, and confusing statements. Bald off record refers to not explicitly stating an actor's intention so that they can avoid being held accountable for performing an FTA. On the other hand, an addressee can miss the information and take the speaker's words in a different light than intended (Brown, Levinson, 1987). The speaker says “*Money is money*”, and “*Well between yes and no*”.

#### 4. Results

The study explored the types and patterns of politeness strategies used by Facebook users avoiding face threatening acts. The goal of the present study was to examine the types and patterns of politeness strategies employed by Facebook users to prevent FTAs. The results were presented based on information gathered from Facebook users' interactions in various contexts to address the research topics.

**Table 1.** Facebook users employed politeness strategies

Politeness Strategies	Occurrence	Percentage (%)
Bald on record strategy	26	28,89
Positive politeness strategy	33	36,67
Negative politeness strategy 1	18	20
Bald off record strategy	13	14.44
Total	90	100

From the results, the most popular strategy in virtual conversations on *Facebook* is positive politeness. Positive politeness, which expresses warmth and a great interest in the hearer's desire for respect, can work to bridge the gap between speaker and hearer. The need for friendliness in communicating as a goal of interacting so this strategy is the most widely used. The results showed that the speaker used several positive politeness sub-strategies including making jokes or humor in conversation, paying attention to hearers' interests, giving gifts to listeners, avoiding disputes, seeking agreement, and building commonalities. Furthermore, the results indicate that the bald on record strategy is the second-best strategy. The sub-strategy of direct negative comments, sympathetic cautions, and advice was used by the speakers. The use of profanity occurs in this strategy. In extreme cases, the speaker ignores the faces of people who are much older in spite of social differences but at the same time still maintains status and honor. The third politeness strategy used is negative politeness. Speakers employ strategies of apologizing, hedging, minimizing coercion and respect. The reason this strategy is least frequently utilized on Facebook is that there is frequently no respect shown there, and most speaker prefer to use positive politeness strategy to uphold friendship without going overboard or imposing. The negative politeness is frequently employed while interacting with acquaintances to reduce FTA and while the speaker wants to keep the hearer's negative face. This negative politeness strategy is frequently used in exchanges between two different states. It was noted that many people favor the direct strategy and the indirect strategy is almost equal, making it clear that certain people have a preference. Most speakers employ sub-strategies including metaphors, hints, generalizations, and paradoxes. FTAs are reduced through indirect methods in the most deceptive and vague ways. According to the results, instances of "sarcasm" were also discovered in the data. The indirect strategy might be advantageous since the speaker can try to enforce an FTA without accepting responsibility.



## 5. Conclusion

Facebook is now becoming a virtual online communication platform. Due to the prevalence of cyberbullying and other unfavorable social interactions in social networking sites, *Facebook* users are able to avoid them in some ways. Social media users or speakers have evolved several management strategies for these circumstances. They developed strategies and behaviors that would increase the chances that the communication activities would probably occur. The harmony between the speaker and the interlocutor can be harmed by all communication activities, which are considered as face threatening acts (FTAs). To make their interlocutor feel valued, social media users need to employ good politeness strategies to reduce the negative effects of interpersonal communication. The results indicated that all speakers consistently used all four of Brown and Levinson's recommended politeness strategies.

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