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## **Politeness Strategy Applied by Indonesian Government Officials During a Covid-19 Pandemic**

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research was to determine what are the types of politeness strategies used by Indonesian government officials in their language use patterns and the societal impact on the politeness of language. There many Indonesian government officials conveyed the policies during covid- 19 pandemic situation. The study's focus on the employed of politeness strategies by Indonesian government officials in conveying policies. This research applied a qualitative approach with analytical methods. The instrument in this research is researcher herself, The researcher used three videos from YouTube platform about the policies that conveyed by minister of Indonesia who have been in the spotlight recently. In addition, the data obtained will be collected and analyzed using descriptive analysis techniques. Researchers used this technique to observe and categorize the type of language use in politeness strategies. The result shown that the dominant type of politeness strategy that mostly employed by minister of Indonesia in conveying policy during covid- 19 pandemic situation is Bald on record strategy. In this research, the researcher may contribute the development of pragmatics as a reference to politeness strategy in the minister of Indonesia as the government official's context.

**Keywords:** Politeness Strategy, Indonesian Government Official

## INTRODUCTION

Language has a wide range of meanings, and language has its own way of expressing them. According to (Crystal, 2021), language is a system of spoken, manual (marked), or written conventional symbols used by humans to express themselves as members of social groups and participants in their culture. As a result, language is an important aspect, particularly in society. Language has an impact on individuals and groups, particularly when it comes to communication (Muthmainnah, M., 2023). In this case, the fact is that people will struggle to communicate if they do not have access to language. Communication can also take place anywhere and on any subject. Even in the midst of a pandemic, many Indonesian government officials conveyed policies at a conference. Nonetheless, it is one of their way of communication. Communication, according to (Nordquist, 2019), is the process of sending and receiving messages via verbal or nonverbal means, including speech or verbal communication; written and graphic representations (such as infographics, maps, and charts) and signs, signals, and behaviors. Communication is defined as "the creation and exchange of meaning." Communication is inextricably linked to everyday life, whether in education,



economics, social, or even political contexts. Everyone communicates in order to achieve their goals. Utilizing the politeness strategy when government officials want to convey their policies and ideas to the public. Beside, it is necessary to employ language patterns in communication in order to be well received by the community. And it is critical for a government official to adjust the pattern of language use based on the situation, especially by employing a politeness strategy.

So far, researchers have widely discussed about studies on politeness strategies used by government officials. First, a study of Donald Trump's politeness strategies in his opening remarks to the United Nations Security Council. The researcher observed Donald Trump's politeness strategy while delivering a speech. Based on circumstances such as culture or individual preferences, this has both positive and negative effects on politeness. Second, there is another study of politeness comments on President Jokowi's official Instagram account, seen from political pragmatists and the era of character education orientation. This study concludes that there is a positive form of politeness behavior that is widely used by Jokowi's Instagram followers in the form of comments that are dominant on optimistic behavior towards Jokowi's leadership. Based on the conclusions of these two studies that there is polite behavior shown by Indonesian government officials as speakers and responses shown by the audience as the hearers. And also there is a significant impact whether it is a positive or negative form of politeness.

The purpose of this paper is to try to complete the shortcomings of previous studies which did not pay attention to the dimensions of the problem related to the type of language use patterns in politeness strategies that used by Indonesian government officials during covid-19 pandemic situation. The focus of this study is to examine more depth by analyzing and describing the types of politeness strategies used by Indonesian government officials and the societal impact on the politeness of language that used during the covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. And this article departs from an argument that many Indonesian government officials conveyed policies during the covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, various patterns of language use have been interpreted by Indonesian government officials during this pandemic. In this situation, it gives rise to various patterns of language used by government officials as a tool in politics. Such as, negotiation, debate, policy delivery and diplomacy.

According to Brown and Levinson in (Amaliyyah, 2021) politeness strategy are strategies used to avoid or minimize self-image damage caused by the speaker's face threatening acts. As (Terada et al., 2021) explain,



Politeness strategies are means of communicating one's demands to a counterpart without threatening the counterpart's "face" by using tactical phrasing. Meanwhile by (Silitonga, 2022) explained politeness strategy is a strategy which has an aim to show polite behaviour in communicating with other people. Politeness as "a regressive action" counterbalancing the possible face damage of the face-threatening acts (Torres, 2020). According to Brown and Levinson (1978), politeness is the foundation for the creation of social order and a requirement for human cooperation. As a result, we must exercise caution when selecting politeness strategies when interacting, because the person with whom we are conversing may misinterpret what we are saying (Fridolini et al., 2021). Moreover, defined by (TARIGAN, 2021) Politeness Strategies are employed by speakers to achieve goals such as promoting and maintaining harmonious relationships. According to (Sapitri et al., 2020) developed a theory to explain phenomena related to the politeness on verbal communication and non-verbal communication. Because politeness involves us showing awareness of other face want in the interaction between speaker keeps and cooperate to respect face themselves (Ammaida, 2020).

As Brown and Lavinson's (1987) state in (Asgher & Scholar, 2020) that model of politeness strategies is applied as a hypothetical framework. They classify politeness "as a complex system for softening face threats". Politeness can be characterized as a strategy for reducing the likelihood of confrontation in a conversation, as well as the likelihood that a confrontation will be viewed as threatening (Sarita & Simanjuntak, 2022). According to (Utami, 2019), Brown and Levinson proposed four types of politeness strategies: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record. Meanwhile, stated by Karbelani, politeness strategies are used to correct some rude utterances, to convey the speaker's intention, and to allow the listener to accept the speech (Farhana, 2021). On other hand defined by (Ali & Nasution, 2019) that politeness strategies are used to save the hearer's face when facethreatening acts are desired or necessary. People who use politeness strategies in non-hostile social communication, according to Watts, do so to ensure smooth interactions and harmonious interpersonal relationships (Hutahaeon et al., 2021). Brown and Levinson state in (Ardi et al., 2021) that every social interaction between speakers (S) and addressees/hearer (H) are related to 'face'. Furthermore, Brown and Levinson claimed that modesty is only about "face." They argue that a member's face is a public image that they want to claim for themselves (Misnarni et al., 2019). According to Lakoff (1973), an utterance is polite if the speaker does not sound arrogant, gives the listener freedom, and makes the listener happy (Mawaddah & Fitriani, 2021). This is due



to Geoffrey Leech's statement in (Maulidini, 2019) that politeness knows neither west nor east, despite differences between the two. Furthermore, expressing politeness is more than just minimising FTAs; it also involves satisfying the interactant's face whether FTA occurs or not (Ibe, 2021).

Muhammad Lutfi, the figure of the Minister of Trade who is in the spotlight regarding cooking oil policy, was born in Jakarta on August 16, 1969. He explained his policy, which is that all types of oil are sold at the same price, Rp. 14,000. "The government announced the one-price cooking oil policy tonight through the Ministry of Trade. According to this policy, all cooking oil, both premium and simple packaging, will be sold at a price equivalent to 14,000 per liter or all types of packaging, both premium and simple quality, with sizes ranging from one liter to 25-liter jerry cans are intended to meet household needs as well as micro and small businesses." The researcher discovered the type of politeness strategy used based on this statement, namely, Bald on Record is a direct speech act or practically without any small talk. A bald on record strategy, according to Levinson, is a strategy for carrying out an FTA in order to state something clearly. According to Levinson, the main reason for selecting the strategy is that the speaker wants to carry out the FTA as efficiently as possible (RISTIANI, 2021).

Yaqut Cholil Qoumas was born on January 4, 1975, in Rembang. He is the son of KH Muhammad Cholil Bisri, one of the Kebangkitan Nasional Party's founders (PKB). President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) officially appointed him as Minister of Religion. Recently, he issued a regulation that invites criticism from the community regarding the use of loudspeakers in mosques, stating that the volume must be regulated in order to foster more harmonious public relations in inter religious life. And yaqut likens Azan to the barking of a dog that disturbs neighbor's life. "We issued a circular of regulations yesterday; we do not forbid the prayer room mosque from using the Toa, no, please. Because we know it's part of Islam's symbols, yes, but this has to be regulated, how the volume of the speaker can't be loud, it can't be loud – up to 100 decibells, the maximum is set how when, uh, they can start using the speaker before the Azan and after the call to prayer." The researcher discovered the type of politeness strategy used based on this statement, namely, Bald On Record is a direct speech act or practically without any small talk. The first strategy is an outright on-the-record strategy. Although there are ways to use the bald on-record strategy to try to minimize the implicit FTA, it is not usually used to minimize the threat to the listener's face. The speaker has the ability to act decisively, without compensation and by involving others (Nugrahanto & Hartono, 2020).



Dr. Hj. Ida Fauziyah, M.Sc., was born July 16, 1969 in Mojokerto, Indonesia, is an Indonesian politician who served as Minister of Manpower in the Indonesia maju Cabinet. Ida Fauziah, the Minister of Manpower, issued a new rule stating that the Old Age Protection or JHT stored at BPJS Ketenagakerjaan can only be disbursed when participants reach the age of 56. Previously, JHT could be distributed immediately when participants resigned, were laid off, or lost their Indonesian citizenship. The JHT contribution is quite substantial, amounting to 5.7 percent of the worker's monthly salary. "As the name suggests, the JHT program is an effort by all of us to prepare our workers in their old age so that when they are no longer working, they can still live a good life. Because short-term interests already exist, the JHT program has been designed from the start to cater to long-term interests. Workers who are involved in situations such as accidents, permanent disability, death, or who have chosen to or are moving abroad have social security rights with special provisions." The researcher discovered the types of politeness strategies used based on this statement, namely, positive politeness strategies. When dealing with positive faces, positive politeness is indicated. This strategy must consider the listener's or audience's wants, goodness, interests, and needs. This strategy is typically used to avoid conflict based on the explanation of (Agus Prasetyo, 2019).

## METHODS

This research applied a qualitative approach with analytical methods. according to (Dr. Saul McLeod, 2019) qualitative research is the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting non-numeric data, such as language. Qualitative research can be used to understand how individuals subjectively perceive and give meaning to their social reality. In order to describe the research question and future findings, the researcher used descriptive research. In this case, the researcher wanted to examine and explained the types of politeness strategies used by Indonesian government officials and the impact that felt by the society from the politeness patterns of language during the covid-19 pandemic.

The source of the data in this research was three videos about the policies of Indonesian government officials who have been in the spotlight during the covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, the data only focused on the employed of politeness strategies by Indonesian government officials in conveying policies. The data was the utterance from the minister of Indonesia, with the context of the problem: 1) the policy of the minister of trade on cooking oil one-prices, there will be no rice imports during the harvest. 2) the use of



loudspeakers in mosques must be regulated in volume, minister of religion, instruct people to pray for Eid at home. and 3) the policy of the minister of manpower on old age protection, cipta kerja law.

The population in this research is the Indonesian government officials. In order to make this research efficient. The researcher selected a sample of minister of Indonesia, consisting of 2 males and 1 female as the participant. the researchers used the purposive sampling technique to determine the participants. But in this research the participant will be interpreted through the video that will be displayed on youtube platform. Meanwhile, the instrument of this data is the researcher herself, doing an observation by played the video from youtube platform. Thus, in order to obtain the data that relate to the research questions.

Due to the process and the technique of collecting data, data was gathered through observation. Data collection in qualitative research can be done in a variety of settings, resources, and techniques. However, in collecting the data, the researchers searching for videos on YouTube, watching and listening to video multiple times, transcribing and translated their utterances from Indonesia to English version. Each videos have different duration. Therefore, there were 3 resulted from the video from YouTube platform that later would be observed regarding politeness strategies. Furthermore, the observational results would be presented in qualitative rather than quantitative form and the data that had been collected will be analyzed.

In the data analysis technique, the researcher applied the theory of Brown & Levinson (1987) to analyzed the data. The data obtained will be collected and analyzed through descriptive analysis techniques. In this technique, researchers observed and classified patterns of language use in appropriate type of politeness strategies used by Indonesian government officials in conveying their policies. Then the researcher needs to count the politeness strategy used by the minister of Indonesia and after that concluded the types of politeness strategy as the most dominant that used. Therefore, as for the result of the data will be explained and interpreted descriptively.

## **FINDINGS**

The data findings in this study will provide information related to the types of politeness strategies are used by Indonesian government officials in their language use pattern and how the societal impact on the politeness of language used by government officials during the covid- 19 pandemic.





**(Observational findings regarding the types of politeness strategies)**

ML	" <u>The government announced the one-price cooking oil policy tonight</u> through the Ministry of Trade. According to this policy, all cooking oil, both premium and simple packaging, will be sold at a price equivalent to 14,000 per liter or all types of packaging, both premium and simple quality, with sizes ranging from one liter to 25 liter jerry cans are intended to meet household needs as well as micro and small businesses."	<i>"The government announced One-price cooking oil..."</i>	Bald-on record
	"Therefore, this is my responsibility. <u>We don't need to prolong the discussion.</u> I guarantee there will be no imports during the harvest season."	<i>"..... We don't need to prolong discussion...."</i>	Negative Politeness

Table 1. From the data above. First, ML uses Bald on record in *"The government announced..."* to express the policy to the audience. Expressing the statement as his role as the minister, he shows no effort to minimize the Face threatening Act (FTA) that the speaker might have. Second, Indirectly, ML states the command but does not specify for whom the command is for. because the order is not addressed directly to whom that he wants to command. In this case, it can remove the risk of FTA from the listeners but only at a low level.

YKQ	" <u>We issued a circular of regulations yesterday, we do not forbid the mosque from using the Toa,</u> no, please... because we know it's part of Islam's symbols, yes, but this has to be regulated, how the volume of the speaker can't be loud, it can't be loud – up to 100 decibels, the maximum is set how when, uh, they can start using the speaker before the Azan and after the call to prayer".	<i>"We issued A circular of Regulation yesterday; we do not forbid mosque for using Toa..."</i>	Bald-on record
	Eid prayers are only permitted in the green and yellow zones under a health protocol with a 50% restriction. <u>We ask citizens to pray for Eid at their own homes.</u> It's alright because the Eid prayer is Sunnah but while maintaining health, personal safety, family safety and the environment is an obligation".	<i>"We ask citizens to pray for Eid at their own homes..."</i>	Positive Politeness



Table 2. From the data above. First, YKQ uses Bald on record in *"We issued a circular of regulations yesterday, we do not forbid the mosque from using the Toa"* to express the policy to the audience. Expressing the statement as his role as the minister, he shows no effort to minimize the Face threatening Act (FTA) that the audience might have and not seeking for an agreement to audience. Second, YKQ stated the instruction and he directly mentioned who it was addressed to. As a minister, he mentioned "citizen" to show his closeness to listener. In this case, the speaker is seeking an agreement and so the listener are not getting a face threat.

IF	"As the name suggests, the JHT program is an effort by all of us. To prepare our workers in their old age so that when they are no longer working, they can still live a good life. Because short-term interests already exist, the JHT program has been designed from the start to cater to long-term interests. Workers who are involved in situations such as accident, permanent	<i>"As the name Suggest, the JHT Program is an Effort by all of us...."</i>	Positive Politeness
	"That the cipta kerja law still regulates the terms and protection for workers or laborers with a certain time of work agreement. Which is the basis for the arrangement of work agreements. Besides that, the cipta kerja law also regulates an additional protection in the form of worker or labor compensation at the end of a certain time of work agreement."	<i>"That the cipta kerja law still regulates the terms and protection for workers or laborers with a certain time of work agreement"</i>	Bald-on record

Table 3. From the data above. First, IF uses Positive Politenes in *"As the name suggests, the JHT program is an effort by all of us."* To express the policy to the audience. IF uses the first-person pronoun plural "us" to include herself in expressing the statement as her role as the prime minister, she shows an effort to reduce the Face threatening Act (FTA) that the listener might have, seeking for familiarity and interest the listener. Second, in explaining the policy. She started to talk by directly conveying the meaning of what she wanted to explain without courtesy. So, it makes her as a speaker does not have an effort to save her face and also her listeners' faces from threats that can damage face the findings and discussion section consist of description of the results of the data analysis to answer the research question(s) and their meanings seen from current theories and references of the area addressed. The proportion of this section is 40-60% of the total article length.



## DISCUSSION

Regarding the finding above, there are several utterances type of politeness strategies are employed by the government officials in conveying policies. There are several categories of politeness strategies based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) were examined, which are bald on record 3 times, negative politeness 1 time and positive politeness 2 times. Therefore, the Indonesian government officials tends to employ bald on record strategy more often in conveying the policies during the situational of covid – 19 pandemics. Then, they have to employ the type of politeness strategies to keep the self-image and avoid or minimize Face Threatening Act (FTA) that can damage the face whether it is from the speaker or listener. Besides that, Several studies have justified those findings above (Abudayeh & Dubbati, 2020); (Hussain, 2021); (Anuar & Ngadiran, 2021); (S & Soframi, 2020) and (Kartika & Aziz, 2021)

The research conducted by (Abudayeh & Dubbati, 2020) investigated the Politeness strategies in translating Donald Trump's offensive language into arabic in Arab. They found that translators negotiate the offensive and inappropriate nature of comments made by Donald Trump that could threaten the positive face of Arab audiences. The finding on this study is how the translator reproducing Donald Trump's offensive comments. They use politeness strategies to show that is the focus not only concern when dealing with Donald Trump speech but translators might also intervene to protect their own face because it also be considered responsible for the use of face-threatening language acts. This research in Arab was relevant with the statement above about the use politeness strategies. It's not only focus on the speakers face but the audiences face to protect from FTA that can damage their face.

A study investigated by (Hussain, 2021) that Imran Khan's Maiden speech as prime minister of Pakistan in using a politeness strategies. As a prime minister, he employed the politeness strategies to find out what functions these strategies served. The finding in this research, Imran Khan used different kinds of politeness strategies in his speech to performing the FTA different kinds of politeness strategies namely positive politeness strategies, negative politeness strategies, bald on record strategies, and bald off record strategies. Therefore, speaker as well as hearer can do the FTA for saving their face and reducing the FTA. Beside it can also respect and satisfy the listener as the audience. This research in Pakistan was suitable with the statement before about the use politeness strategy. That is to reduce the FTA whether its performing by speaker or listener.



Furthermore, (Anuar & Ngadiran, 2021) politeness strategies used by the Malaysian prime minister in his maiden speech. They found that there are types and frequency of the politeness strategies used by Muhyiddin Yassin in his maiden speech as the eighth prime minister in Malaysia, which are negative strategies and positive strategies. However, generally the use politeness strategies are used by him to establish their communication to become harmonious and intend to do the face-saving concept between people in malaysia. And this research in malaysia, he dominantly employed the positive politeness strategies in his political speech. That were to notice, attend to the receiver's need, interest, or want" while "use of exaggeration", "seek agreement", and "avoid disagreement". In contrast with the findings above that the most dominant type of politeness strategies was Bald-on record and then was positive politeness strategies. The relevant thing that relates to the research in Malaysia was the context of positive politeness strategies which is in part "to reciever's (listener/audience) interest that can be seen in findings the table 3.

Moreover, a study by (S & Soframi, 2020) investigated that politeness strategies in President Donald John Trump's speech. This research was to identify the most used of politeness strategy by President Donald John Trump toward the audience. It consists positive politeness and negative politeness strategies. He mostly used the positive politeness strategies to attract people in his speech by promising something. But on other hand, he used negative politeness strategies to state the FTA as general rule. It means that he wanted to emphasize the American peoples. This was their obligation to elect the head of state and from that, he intended to gain audience's attention to chose him in this election without reducing the FTA from him as a speaker. But, more wanted to driven the audiences more happily in order to elect him in the Presidential election. In contrast with the findings above in table 1, the type politeness strategy is used to state command without damage the listener's face and for the positive politeness, it is similiar with table 3 that is to interest the listener.

The use of politeness strategies can be a way for government officials in delivering their policies to reduce the FTA. But on other hand, a study researched by (Kartika & Aziz, 2021) found that Shinzo Abe as prime minister was using the politeness strategies to expressive speech acts with various forms of politeness. Shinzo Abe was the longest serving Prime minister. But now, Shinzo Abe has resigned from his position. The finding found that in Shinzo Abe's resigning speech, he used a politeness strategy in the form of kenjougo and teineigo with four expressions of thanks/gratitude, one expression of condolence, and one



expression of pardon/apology. He did that as a respect to the Japanese people, the government of Japan, and professional medical by lowering his speech.

Based on the results of the discussion above, various types of politeness strategies have been studied by previous researchers. The use of politeness strategies by Indonesian government officials is more focused on Indonesian ministers in conveying policies during the pandemic. But while the other studies about politeness strategy from outside Indonesia focus more on government officials in the context of heads of state and prime ministers in delivering speeches and comments related to politics and didn't deliver it during the covid-19 pandemic situation.

## CONCLUSION

This research has shown that the politeness strategies employed by government officials was very important in social communication. It turns out that during the Covid-19 pandemic, ministers in Indonesia tend to use the type of politeness strategy, that is Bald on record strategy. Employing bald on record, it can help them straightforwardly for conveying their opinion and demonstrates politeness strategies through policy. The use of bald on record, it does not attempt to minimize the face threatening act. Therefore, this type of strategy has a significant impact toward the society and the listener respond as the audience can become uncomfortable, shocked and sad toward the speaker. The researcher found that this research has a perspective in the realm of government officials in conveying the policies that given by minister of Indonesia during the covid-19 pandemic situation, but unfortunately, it still has few discussions about this research.

For suggestion, this research can be carried out by other researchers who are interested in politeness strategy and are expected to be a additional reference for evaluation and consideration of other researchers. The use of politeness strategy is the important aspect in our daily life and the realm of politeness strategy are not only revolve around the realm of education or pedagogical but has broad area. By this research, it hopes that this research can be useful for everyone. In order to understand politeness in social communication, The researcher wants to continue this research into a more specific scope. The researcher states that in Indonesia, which is a country that rich in culture and language. Beside that, the language are produced in every region in Indonesia has various characteristics. Therefore, a politeness strategy is needed and also it can maintain relationship and creating a comfortable environment in society. Especially in the most eastern region of



Indonesia, Papua. Papua consists of 255 tribes, each of tribes has a different language. Moreover, it would be interesting to analyze how they communicate effectively by using politeness strategy.

The researcher realizes that in this research, there are still some limitations, including: first, this research is limited by collecting journal references that related to the year of publication and the data source too. If there is relevant research, it will also make easier for other researchers in discuss about politeness strategies. Second, the government context is wide but the researcher chose a sample from the minister of Indonesia that consist 3 people. The third, in the process of collecting data through the YouTube platform, there an obstacle. Several ministers in Indonesia rarely do conferens openly through social media platforms, especially YouTube. So, it's hard to find a video with a full statement from the minister of Indonesia directly. And therefore, the researcher is aware that this study is far from ideal, so any constructive criticism would be appreciated.

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