

ANALYSIS OF POSITIVE POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN YOUTUBE COMMENTS ON BBC WORLD SERVICE *ARE YOU EVER TOO OLD TO HAVE A BABY*

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ABSTRACT

This research discusses the use of positive politeness in the comments of YouTube videos that discuss pregnancy in old age uploaded on the YouTube channel “BBC World Service”. This research aims to identify the types of positive politeness and also to find and explain the factors that influence the use of positive politeness in the comments of YouTube videos that discuss pregnancy in old age. In this research, all data were analyzed using Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory to identify the types of positive politeness and describe the factors that influence positive politeness. The method used and this research is qualitative method with observation technique. In this research, observations were made within 2 months, namely November and December. The result of this analysis found 55 data containing positive politeness used by the commenters. 5 politeness strategies were found, namely (1). 16 data of Notice attend to the hearer strategy, (2). 3 data of Exaggerate strategy, (3). 2 data of Seek Agreement strategy, (4). 29 data of the "Be Optimistic" strategy, and (5). 11 data of Give gifts to hearers good, sympathy, understanding, and cooperation strategy. In addition, the factors that influence the use of positive politeness are 40 data on payoff factor and 15 data on circumstances (social distance). The Be Optimistic strategy is the most dominant one found, besides that, the payoff factor is the factor that most influences the data containing positive politeness used by the comments.

Keywords: pragmatic; positive politeness; the factors of positive politeness

INTRODUCTION

Language is a social tool used by humans to communicate. Through communication, humans can share everything with others. Sending and receiving messages through verbal or nonverbal means includes speech or oral communication, writing or written communication, signs, signals, and behavior in the process of communication (DeVito, 2019). Currently, there are numerous ways to express opinions and comments on various topics, such as in open discussions, brainstorming sessions, and through social media. Many social media applications provide spaces for users to comment or share their opinions. DeVito (2019) also

states that communication is very important because the influence of social media as well as the use of cell phones and text messaging has changed interpersonal communication significantly, in addition, social media affects various aspects of interaction such as commenting on something on social media. As a result, language politeness can be found in social media.

Politeness strategies are techniques used by individuals to communicate more effectively. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), appropriate word choice in written language is crucial to maintaining linguistic politeness as it is related to the concept of the reader's "face". They developed politeness strategies to save the "face" of the listener. Face refers to an individual's self-respect and the maintenance of that "self-esteem" in public or personal situations. Brown and Levinson (1987) states that there are four types of politeness strategies: off-record politeness strategies, on-record politeness strategies, positive politeness strategies, and negative politeness strategies.

In this study, the writer will discuss the types of positive politeness strategies found in the YouTube comments on the video from BBC World Service. YouTube Channel BBC World Service often updates the latest news every day, one of which is the discussion of this news. The writer is interested in researching the BBC World Service podcast titled "*Are You Ever Too Old to Have a Baby*," which discusses the issue of pregnancy at an older age, a controversial topic in today's society. This discussion presents various perspectives, including health challenges, emotional aspects, and the social impacts faced by women who choose to conceive later in life. The podcast also highlights the cultural norms and stigmas often associated with such decisions, as well as personal experiences shared by individuals who have gone through pregnancy at an older age. Due to this topic's complexity and sensitivity, the comments emerging on YouTube serve as an important representation of public opinion. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the politeness strategies employed by users in their comments, using the politeness theory by Brown and Levinson.

This study aims to identify positive politeness strategies in the YouTube comments of the BBC World Service podcast "*Are You Ever Too Old To Have A Baby*" and explore the factors influencing their use. The findings contribute to the field of linguistics, particularly in pragmatics and politeness strategies, by highlighting how people maintain social harmony and express support in digital communication. This research benefits both academics and the general public by enhancing the understanding of politeness in online discourse, providing insights for future studies, and helping individuals communicate more effectively to build respectful and meaningful interactions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that studies the behavior of language signs in speech. In this case, pragmatics is concerned with the literal or denotative meaning of a word or sentence as well as the meaning that develops depending on the context and purpose of communication. In communication, context refers to the components that work together to determine the meaning of a message. The context of communication can change the way communication occurs, as well as the message and its interpretation (Christopher, 2023). Meanwhile, Cutting & Fordyce (2021) argued that pragmatics studies deal with the meaning of words in context (the physical and social world) and assumptions of knowledge that the

speaker and hearer share. There are three sorts of context according to them, there are Situational Context, Background Knowledge Context, Co-textual Context.

One important aspect of pragmatics is politeness, which relates to how one maintains social relationships through language use. Yule (1996) states that Politeness in interaction can be defined as a way to see the face of others. The Politeness Principle could be used as a common principle for anyone to reduce negative outcomes in miscommunication (Huang, 2023). The Politeness Principle is the principle of communication when the participants in a social interaction can engage in interaction in an atmosphere of relative harmony.

Strategies that speakers always use in communication to maintain face or self-esteem for either the speaker or the interlocutor are called Politeness Strategies. Brown and Levinson (1987) argued that this strategy is shown to reduce or avoid any potential threat to one's face or self-esteem that occurs during communication or interaction with each other. There are four types of politeness strategies according to them, there are Bald On Record, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness, and Off Record, here is an explanation:

1. *Bald On Record* : Bald On Record is a strategy used to convey a message directly or explicitly, and this strategy has the potential to be offensive to the interlocutor and will also be considered impolite.
2. *Positive Politeness* : Positive politeness is one of the communication techniques used to show the speaker's respect, care, and concern for the listener.
3. *Negative Politeness* : Negative politeness aims to protect the recipient's freedom of action, demonstrating respectful behavior.
4. *Off Record* : one of the politeness strategies used to convey certain intentions or messages indirectly or implicitly so that the speaker is not directly responsible for the intentions or messages conveyed.

This research focuses on positive politeness. Brown and Levinson (1987) state that this strategy is used by speakers to show respect, attention, and familiarity which in turn creates closer and more positive relationships and Positive politeness involves fulfilling a person's innate needs so that his desires and achievements are seen as good. There are 15 strategies of positive politeness according to Brown and Levinson (1987), the following is the explanation below:

1. *Notice, attend to the hearer (his interests, wants, needs, goods)* : The speaker shows attention to what the interlocutor needs, wants, and also feels.
2. *Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with the hearer)* : This is often done with exaggerated intonation, stress, and other aspects of prosody to the interlocutor.
3. *Intensify interest to the hearer* : Another way for the speaker to convey shared desires with the hearer is by enhancing the appeal of his contributions to the discussion by making a good story.
4. *Use in-group identity markers* : Speakers can implicitly claim common ground with the interlocutor through the use of greetings, language or dialect, jargon, and ellipses within the group.
5. *Seek Agreement* : Bringing up a safe topic allows the Speaker to emphasize his or her agreement with the Listener, satisfying the Listener's desire to feel 'right' or strengthened in his or her opinion.

6. *Avoid disagreement* : The desire to appear to agree with the interlocutor may result in mechanisms of pretending to agree, such as symbolic assent.
7. *Presuppose/raise/assert common ground* : This strategy is used by the speaker to express similarities in the form of experiences, feelings, or views to the interlocutor to create a closer relationship.
8. *Joke* : Jokes can emphasize shared backgrounds or values because they are based on that knowledge and values.
9. *Assert or presuppose the speaker's knowledge of and concern for the hearer's want* : The speaker can show cooperation with the Hearer by asserting or implying knowledge of the Hearer's wishes and adapting to them.
10. *Offer, promise* : The speaker may decide to emphasize the cooperation with the hearer in another manner to reduce the potential threat related to any face-threatening activities.
11. *Be optimistic* : The other side of the cooperative strategy is that the Speaker assumes that the Listener wants what he or she wants and will help achieve it.
12. *Include both speaker and hearer in the activity* : By using the inclusive 'we' form when the speaker truly means 'you' or 'me,' he can typically use cooperative assumptions and thereby redress face-threatening acts.
13. *Give (or ask for) reasons* : Another aspect of including the Hearer in the activity is for the Speaker to give reasons as to why he wants what he wants.
14. *Assume or assert reciprocity* : Cooperation between Speakers and Listeners can be confirmed by providing evidence of mutual rights or obligations between them.
15. *Give gifts to hearer goods, sympathy, understanding, and cooperation* : This strategy involves the Speaker deciding to redress the Hearer's face directly by fulfilling some of the Hearer's wants, thereby indicating that the Speaker wants the Hearer's wants for the Hearer, in some particular respects. It is by giving a gift to Hearer.

In addition, the use of politeness strategies is not without reason. Several factors can influence the choice of politeness strategies. According to Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 68), two main factors influence the choice of strategy, and every "rational agent" tends to choose the same strategy when facing similar conditions or situations. The first factor is Payoff, while the second is Circumstances: Sociological variable :

1. Payoff : the concept of payoff refers to the benefits or advantages that the speaker gets when using certain strategies in interaction to manage empathy towards the face.
2. The Circumstances: Sociological Variables : Brown and Levinson (1987) identify three sociological variables that influence politeness strategies:
 - a. *Power* : This variable refers to the speaker's ability to control the listener, influenced by social position, institutional roles, or interpersonal relationships.
 - b. *Social Distance* : This refers to the degree of closeness between the speaker and listener, whether as friends, family, or strangers.
 - c. *Rank of Imposition* : This variable measures how burdensome a request or action is to the listener's freedom.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is qualitative method. According to Creswell (2018) Qualitative research is an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or

groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. The data collected for this study came from comments on YouTube. Specifically, the primary data consisted of comments from the BBC World Service YouTube account regarding the video "Are You Ever Too Old to Have a Baby?" uploaded on March 30, 2024, lasting 17 minutes. There were 6,200 comments on the YouTube video as of December 18, 2024. All of the comments that the writer used as data for this study were gathered in November and December of 2024. The data collection process consisted of several systematic steps to ensure accuracy and reliability, as outlined below:

1. Downloading the YouTube podcast "Are You Ever Too Old to Have a Baby" from YouTube.
2. Repeatedly watching the YouTube podcast "Are You Ever Too Old to Have a Baby" to ensure comprehensive understanding.
3. Observing the comments and categorizing the data based on the types of positive politeness strategies and influencing factors, as outlined in Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory.
4. Analyzing the classified data (YouTube comments) to identify politeness strategies and determine the payoffs and contextual factors influencing interactions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

There are a lot of data that the writer has found regarding the types of positive politeness strategies in YouTube comments. Of the 15 positive politeness strategies described, the writer found 6 strategies that appear, namely, 1. Notice attend to the hearer, 2. Exaggerate, 3. Seek Agreement, 4. Be optimistic, 5. Give gifts to hearers good, sympathy, understanding, and cooperation in YouTube video comments that discuss pregnancy in old age. In addition, the writer also found data showing the factors that influence positive politeness. The writer finds 2 types of factors, namely Payoff and Circumstance with Social Distance variables. The writer describes some of the findings below:

1. Types of Positive Politeness
 - a. Notice, attend to the hearer

Notice is one strategy of positive politeness that shows attention, recognition, and appreciation for the interlocutor. There are 16 data out of 55 data containing notice strategies were found, below is an explanation of some of the data that has been found:



@johannees622 8 bulan yang lalu

That comment section makes me smile from ear to ear. I am 37 and with God's Grace, I will have my family too. Thank you for sharing your life stories. Very uplifting 😊

Terjemahkan ke bahasa Indonesia

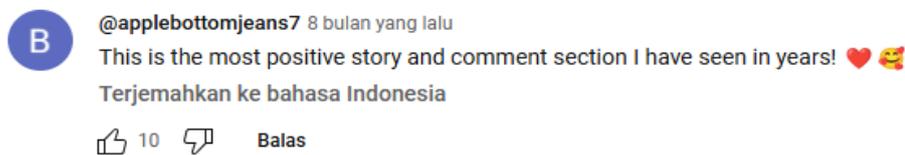
@Johanness622: *That comment section makes me smile from ear to ear. I am 37 and with God's Grace, I will have my family too. Thank you for sharing your life stories. Very uplifting* 🥰

Data 1 shows positive politeness with strategies: Notice, attend to the hearer. This comment shows that the commenter uses the notice strategy in the sentence “*Very Uplifting*”. The commenter expresses appreciation to other commenters about their experiences of getting pregnant in old age because the word “*uplifting*” here refers to the appreciation to other commenters who have already tell about their experiences. This comment also shows that the commenter pays attention and appreciates what others have shared in the comment field. Therefore, this comment belongs to the Notice strategy, attend to the hearer. The context in this comment is the background knowledge context because the commenter understands the situation of other commenters who share their experiences and stories. The commenter also aware that some of the people commenting here must not have had children in their old age.

b. Exaggerate

Exaggerate is one of the strategies in positive politeness that uses exaggerated words or says exaggerated words to express excitement, agreement, or concern for the interlocutor.

3 data were found that contain this strategy. Some data has been found and is explained below:



@applebottomjeans7: *This is the most positive story and comment section I have seen in years!* ❤️😊.

This data clearly shows the type of positive politeness with the Exaggerate strategy because the phrase “*I have seen in years*” very clearly shows a form of exaggeration or hyperbole that emphasizes the commenter's appreciation and amazement at the contents of other people's comments in this comment column. With the use of that phrase, the commenter shows how special the comments from other people and also the contents of the video are to the commenter. So the commenter considers this to be very positive. It is also noticeable that the commenter strongly expresses her pleasure in this comment. Commenter responded positively to the situation from the video and the atmosphere in the comments section, so these comments provide context to the situation.

c. Seek Agreement

Seek agreement which is used by the speaker to find or create a mutual agreement with the interlocutor. The purpose of this strategy is to create and strengthen the relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor. 2 data out of 55 data found that containing this strategy.



@miabhclub63 5 bulan yang lalu

I agree that women have kids so late in life due to finding a good partner, financial problems, infertility, and the list goes on.

Terjemahkan ke bahasa Indonesia

👍 1 🗨️ Balas

@miabhclub63: *I agree that women have kids so late in life due to finding a good partner, financial problems, infertility, and the list goes on.*

The phrase “*I agree*” clearly shows that this comment contains positive politeness with the Seek Agreement strategy. The commenter shows agreement with the content of the podcast which discusses that women who are often late to have children or conceive at a young age because they are looking for partners, and good finances and prepare themselves better to take care of their children in the future. This comment also directly shows that the commenter is trying to seek the same approval from others in this podcast, it can be seen from this sentence “*finding a good partner, financial problems, infertility, and the list goes on.*” because the commenter's opinion raises issues that are common and usually agreed upon by many women, thus helping the commenter reach agreement on a common view.

This comment is in a situational context because the commenter discusses the topic discussed in the video, namely why women have children at an older age. Commenters respond to the situation by agreeing with it and mentioning several factors that contributed to it

d. Be Optimistic

One of the positive politeness strategies used by the speaker to show or express an optimistic attitude to the interlocutor for something is called the Be Optimistic Strategy. 29 data out of 55 data containing optimistic strategies were found.



@azizahkahera30 5 bulan yang lalu

I married in my early 40's. I just never met the suitable life partner until that time. I will be 50 next year. We are still hoping for our miracle. I'm not giving up and I am encouraged by the comments below ❤️ God bless you all

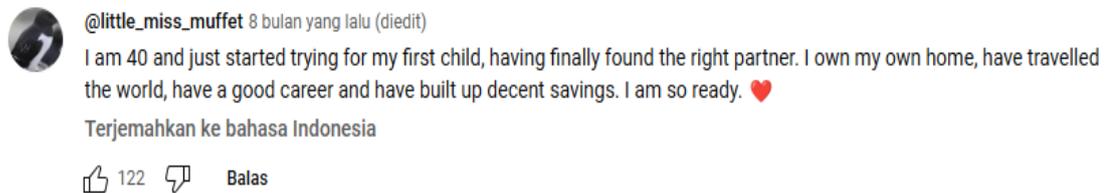
Terjemahkan ke bahasa Indonesia

👍 541 🗨️ Balas

@azizahkahera30: *I married in my early 40's. I just never met the suitable life partner until that time. I will be 50 next year. **We are still hoping for our miracle.** I'm not giving up and I am encouraged by the comments below ❤️ God bless you all*

Data 4 shows a type of positive politeness with the Be Optimistic strategy. The commenter shows a positive and hopeful attitude. The sentence delivered by the commenter “*we still hope for a miracle*” shows hope and also an optimistic attitude that she will have a child even though her condition is quite vulnerable. The sentence “*i'm not giving up*” also shows an optimistic nature to get a child by not giving up even though her condition may have been cut off to have a child. the unyielding attitude and enthusiasm possessed by this commenter strongly show her optimistic attitude. The commenter tells about personal expectations, this comment refers to the context of background knowledge. This hope comes from personal knowledge and his own experience. In addition, this commenter also deliberately shares her

story in the comment section to build encouragement for other readers who may also be experiencing the same thing as the commenter. Therefore, this comment contains positive politeness with an optimistic strategy.

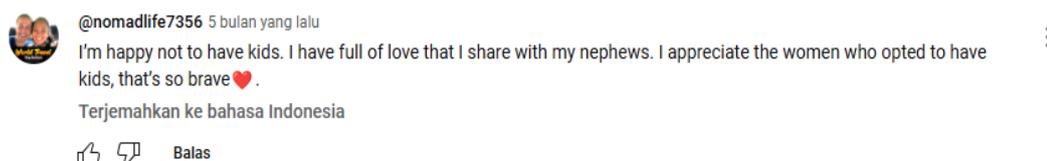


@little_miss_muffet: *I am 40 and just started trying for my first child, having finally found the right partner. I own my own home, have travelled the world, have a good career and have built up decent savings. **I am so ready.** ❤️*

This comment shows be optimistic because the commenter says “*I’m so ready*”, this shows that her enthusiasm and readiness to have children even at the age of 40 is very optimistic to the readers of her comment. This comment also has the belief that the steps taken to have children at the age of 40 are not wrong because as the commenter said she is ready and has her own house and also has a good carer. The comment given is not only to encourage herself but also to inspire others that to have children you must be ready for everything, including finances, which are usually a problem for married people. In the end, this comment contains a be optimistic strategy. In addition, this comment goes into the background knowledge context because the commenter shares his personal life experiences in this comment and also tells of his hopes for having children.

e. Give gifts to hearer (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)

This type of strategy focuses on giving something physical or non-physical that has social or emotional value from the speaker to the interlocutor. There are 11 data out of 55 data containing this strategy.



@nomadlife7356: *I’m happy not to have kids. I have full of love that I share with my nephews. **I appreciate the women who opted to have kids, that’s so brave** ❤️*

The phrase “*that so brave*” is a gift of appreciation and recognition for the courage of women who choose to have children at a young or old age. The commenter is clearly showing her appreciation to all women who want to have children even though the commenter states she does not want to have children. The gift given by the commenter is emotional, it is also a valuable form of support for women who have children at a young or old age so that what is conveyed by the commenter builds a positive relationship. Therefore, this data refers to positive politeness with the strategy: Give gifts to the hearer. In addition, this data also has a situational context because the commenter responds directly to the situation discussed in the video, the appreciation is a form of reaction from the commenter.

2. The Factors That Influence the Use of Positive Politeness Strategies

a. Payoff

In positive politeness, this payoff factor is a benefit or positive result obtained when someone uses positive politeness strategies in communication. these benefits can be in the form of familiarity, attention, respect, praise and other positive things. 40 data found to contain payoff factors.



@funmilayoolukanni3338 8 bulan yang lalu (diedit)

This comment section makes me smile. Im not alone after all. I will conceive my set of twins at the right time. Sending love and hugs to everyone. ❤️

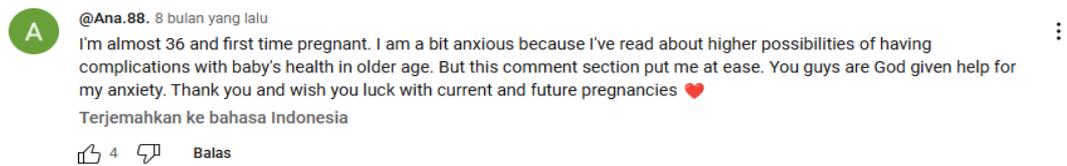
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👍 13 🗨️ Balas

@funmilayoolukanni3338: *This comment section makes me smile. I'm not alone after all. I will conceive my set of twins at the right time. Sending love and hugs to everyone.* ❤️

This comment shows the use of payoff because the phrase “*this comment section makes me smile*” very clearly shows that the commenter gets a positive response from other commenters. In this case, the commenter explicitly states that she derives emotional benefits from interacting with others in the comments section. However, this comment does not respond directly to a specific comment, but rather refers to the overall mood in the comment. In addition, the commenter also gets happiness after reading the comments in this comment section and the commenter gets support and does not feel alone, even though she does not have children yet, but she is sure that she will have twins.

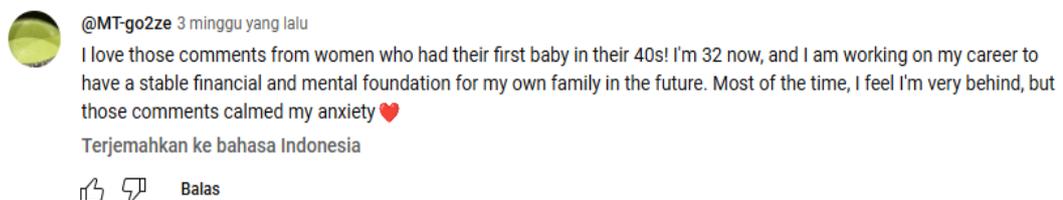
The commenter responds to the situation when reading the comments in the comment column to make her smile and feel not alone because many of the other commenters have the same experience. Therefore, the context of this data is situational context. In addition, the commenter also felt accepted and felt warmth from others in this comment section even though she was just reading. Because of the emotional gain in the form of support, this comment demonstrates the Payoff factor.



*@Ana.88.: I'm almost 36 and first time pregnant. I am a bit anxious because I've read about higher possibilities of having complications with baby's health in older age. But this comment section put me at ease. **You guys are God given help for my anxiety.** Thank you and wish you luck with current and future pregnancies ❤️*

Data 8, also shows the payoff factor in positive politeness. It can be seen from the sentence “*you guys are God giving help for my anxiety*” It is very clear that the commenter gets support and no longer worries about why she doesn't have children yet. This commenter also gets happiness after reading the comments from this podcast video. At first, the commenter was worried because she was pregnant in her old age and had read about the possible complications that women suffer when they get pregnant in their old age.

In this comment, the commenter shows her gratitude and feels helped by other comments so that it relieves her anxiety, it can be seen that this is also a direct reaction from the commenter, therefore the context of this data is situational context. But with the comments, the commenter got benefit in the form of support as many of the other commenters had shared their experiences of being pregnant in old age so the commenter felt more at ease.



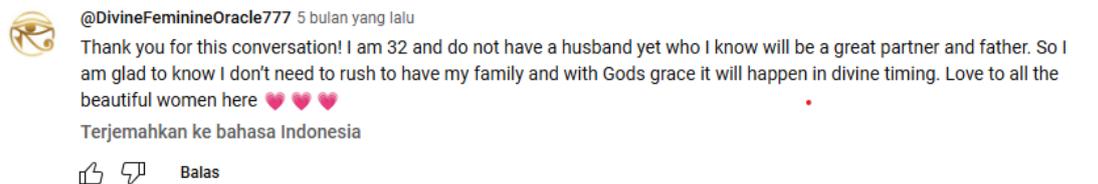
*@MT-go2ze: I love those comments from women who had their first baby in their 40s! I'm 32 now, and I am working on my career to have a stable financial and mental foundation for my own family in the future. Most of the time, I feel I'm very behind, **but those comments calmed my anxiety** ❤️*

The payoff factor is also visible in Data 9. In the comments, it clearly shows that the commenter gets support and positive responses from this comment section as well. “*But those comments calmed my anxiety*” It can be seen that the commenter felt relieved after reading the comments in this video. In this statement, “those comments” refers to an overall impression of some of the comments that the speaker has read rather than a specific comment. Since there is no explicit reference to a specific comment, it is difficult to ascertain which part of the comment field caused the response. In addition, these comments also reduced the anxiety, and the commenter felt comforted and also relieved the negative feelings of the commenter.

This is a form of payoff because the commenter benefits emotionally from this comment, which makes her calmer. In addition, this data has a situational context. After all, the commenter expressed gratitude while reading because these responses made a real difference in helping them feel less anxious.

b. Circumstances (Social Distance)

Social distance is one of the circular factors that indicate how close the speaker is to others during social interaction. From the many data that have been found, 15 data found to contain circumstances (social distance) factors.



@DivineFeminineOracle777: Thank you for this conversation! I am 32 and do not have a husband yet who I know will be a great partner and father. So I am glad to know I don't need to rush to have my family and with Gods grace it will happen in divine timing. Love to all the beautiful women here ❤️❤️❤️

The commenter is trying to explain and provide his personal experience in the comment, data 10 also shows the social distance factor. This can build new relationships with other commenters. She creates an environment where other readers can feel connected if they are in the same situation by sharing this experience. In addition, the sentence “Love to all the beautiful women here” clearly shows the sense of solidarity built by the commenter, reducing social distance, and the support the commenter gives to other women. Therefore, in wanting to build a good relationship with women who have similar experiences, this commenter encourages the use of the social distance factor. In addition, the commenter gave expressions of affection and support as a form of response to the situation where she had read the other comments and also the content of the video. Therefore, the context of this comment is situational context.

In the findings of this study, there are 5 types of positive politeness and there are also 2 types of factors found. The data found in this study amounted to 55 data, some data indicate the existence of 2 strategies in 1 comment. The findings show that the strategies most used by commenters in this comment column are Be optimistic, and the least strategy found is Seek Agreement. Many of the comments use the strategy of being optimistic because many of the commenters want to feel pregnant and give birth to children even though their age is no longer possible. There is much hope and great confidence from commenters to be able to have children in old age, therefore there are many comments that use the Be optimistic strategy. In Addition, Payoff is the most dominant factor that appears. Many commenters get support, prayers, support, and also knowledge from other commenters who provide stories and share their experiences. Therefore, many of the commenters benefit emotionally when they see the commenters in the comment section.

CONCLUSION

This study found that there are 55 instances of positive politeness strategies used in the comment section of a BBC World Service YouTube video discussing pregnancy at an older age. The video received numerous responses from netizens who had similar experiences. The phenomenon of women becoming pregnant and giving birth at an older age has attracted the attention of many people who wish to experience it, go through it, or have already had such an experience. Although there are various risks associated with pregnancy at an older age, many comments expressed optimism and hope for having children despite being at an advanced age.

These findings indicate that many people use positive politeness strategies in writing comments. This is evident from how they provide support to one another, share experiences, and express their hopes and optimism. Additionally, the most dominant strategy found in these comments is being optimistic. Moreover, the use of positive politeness in communication, both spoken and written, is one of the essential aspects that can help build better relationships, especially in situations that require emotional support. Through this strategy, people can maintain good relationships and enhance their social interactions.

The writer suggests that future research analyze other politeness strategies within this discussion, such as negative politeness, bald on record, and bald off record, as some comments also reflect these strategies. Furthermore, future researchers are encouraged to explore other linguistic aspects in this case, such as pragmatics, expressions, and meanings. The writer also recommends that future research examine positive politeness strategies in comments on other YouTube videos with different topics, as well as on other platforms, such as interviews, debates, podcasts, or movies. This would provide a broader understanding of how politeness strategies are used in various digital communication contexts.

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