THE USE OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN INSTAGRAM COMMENTS ON THE "LAMBE TURAH" ACCOUNT AS A FORM OF COMMUNICATION ETHICS

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the use of polite language and communication ethics in comments written by Instagram users on the Lambe Turah account, one of the most popular celebrity gossip accounts in Indonesia. Although this account often displays sensational and controversial content, there are still some users who demonstrate polite and ethical language behavior. The research method used a qualitative approach with discourse analysis of comments on five posts with the most comments. This was combined with Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory, which examines how individuals maintain politeness and deal with potential threats to their self-image (face) in communication. Although the concept of face in Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory is not entirely identical to politeness in cultural norms, the linguistic strategies used to maintain face can reflect the level of politeness in communication. Therefore, this theory remains relevant for analyzing communication practices and language ethics in the Lambe Turah account. The data used in this study consisted of comments taken from five posts with the most comments, which were then analyzed to identify positive or negative politeness strategies used by commentators. The results showed that some comments appeared to use structurally positive language, but pragmatically, many of them contained sharp criticism, sarcasm, or moral judgments that could threaten the face or self-image of others. These findings emphasize the importance of communication ethics literacy in digital spaces, as the use of seemingly polite language does not always reflect polite intentions but can instead serve as a hidden threat to the social face of the recipient.

Keywords: polite language, communication ethics, Instagram, Lambe Turah, netizen comments, social media

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji penggunaan bahasa santun dan etika berkomunikasi dalam komentar-komentar yang ditulis oleh pengguna Instagram pada akun *Lambe Turah*, salah satu akun gosip selebritas paling populer di Indonesia. Meskipun akun ini kerap menampilkan konten yang bersifat sensasional dan kontroversial, terdapat beberapa pengguna yang tetap menunjukkan perilaku berbahasa yang sopan dan etis. Metode penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan analisis wacana terhadap komentar-komentar pada lima unggahan yang memiliki komentar terbanyak.Dipadukan dengan Teori Kesantunan menurut Brown and Levinson (1987), yang mengkaji bagaimana individu menjaga kesantunan dan menghadapi potensi ancaman terhadap citra diri (face) dalam komunikasi. Meskipun konsep *face* dalam teori Brown dan Levinson (1987) tidak sepenuhnya identik dengan kesantunan dalam norma budaya, strategi kebahasaan yang digunakan untuk menjaga *face* dapat merefleksikan tingkat kesantunan dalam komunikasi. Oleh karena itu, teori ini tetap relevan untuk menganalisis praktik komunikasi dan etika berbahasa dalam akun Lambe Turah. Data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini berupa komentar-komentar yang diambil dari lima unggahan dengan komentar terbanyak, yang kemudian dianalisis untuk mengidentifikasi strategi kesantunan positif atau negatif yang digunakan oleh para komentator. Hasil penelitian menunjukan bahwa beberapa komentar tampak menggunakan bentuk bahasa yang secara struktur positif, namun secara pragmatik banyak di antaranya yang justru mengandung kritik tajam, sindiran, atau penilaian moral yang dapat mengancam *face* atau citra diri orang lain. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya literasi etika komunikasi di ruang digital, karena penggunaan kata-kata yang tampak halus tidak selalu mencerminkan intensi santun, melainkan bisa menjadi bentuk ancaman yang tersembunyi terhadap wajah sosial penerima.

Kata kunci: bahasa santun, etika komunikasi, Instagram, Lambe Turah, komentar netizen, media sosia

INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has significantly changed the way people interact, especially on social media. As one of the most popular platforms, Instagram is used not only for sharing photos and videos, but also for interaction through its comment features. However, this ease of communication is not always accompanied by an awareness of the importance of proper language usage (Rustandi, 2019).

The ability to communicate effectively typically necessitates the production of comprehensible speech and writing. However, the capacity to articulate oneself with fluency and clarity does not inherently guarantee the success of social interactions. The act of communication entails the implementation of various sociolinguistic strategies, which are adapted to the particular circumstances of the situation. For instance, a speaker may adjust

their language to suit the interlocutor and endeavor to identify shared topics of interest, thereby fostering a sense of familiarity (Berger, 2016).

One form of communication ethics is the use of polite language. The role of language in human interaction extends beyond mere instrumentality to encompass the capacity to discern others' intents and purposes. In the digital era, the significance of communication ethics has increased considerably. It is noteworthy that every written word has the potential to shape perception, influence emotions, and even trigger conflict (Tazri, 2019). Polite language has been demonstrated to reflect respect, empathy, and social awareness in both direct and digital interactions (Ariansyah, 2014). In Indonesia, politeness in language is a highly valued cultural trait. It is not an inherent trait that is passed down through generations, but rather, it is shaped by social processes, cultural constructions, and historical contexts.

A society that neglects to implement communication strategies to avert interpersonal tensions, prevent conflicts, and cultivate mutual understanding would face significant challenges in preserving social harmony. Consequently, politeness assumes a pivotal role in social interactions. Furthermore, politeness is understood to be context-dependent, influenced by factors such as social background, environmental influences, and familial upbringing (Rustandi, 2019).

In the contemporary era, communication has transcended the confines of face-to-face interaction. The advent of social media has facilitated efficient communication at any time and place (Dwi Putri, 2022). Popular social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok have gained widespread popularity, including among elementary school students. The role of social media in the development of younger generations' thought processes, behaviors, and linguistic expression is a subject of considerable concern. In the context of junior high school students, social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube are frequently utilized as references for spoken language, informal slang, and expressions that may not align with established norms of politeness. The use of harsh words, mockery, or sarcastic remarks in videos or comment sections can easily be mimicked without a comprehensive understanding of the context or the ethical implications. Lestari's (2021) study identified a correlation between the imitation of viral language by adolescents and a concomitant decline in politeness, both within school environments and in daily interactions.

The cultivation of politeness in language use constitutes an indispensable component of character education. In Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum, values such as politeness, tolerance, and communication ethics are integral components of the student profile, defined as the five principles of the Indonesian constitution. However, the unregulated nature of social media exposes students to improper language, particularly when digital literacy and character reinforcement are lacking in both school and home settings (Damayanti, 2020).

The employment of courteous language in Instagram comments is not merely a linguistic concern; it also mirrors cultural and moral values in communication. Therefore, it is imperative to examine how social media users, particularly on Instagram, apply politeness as part of ethical communication. This study is pertinent in fostering awareness about maintaining communication quality in digital spaces and creating a healthier, more inclusive, and respectful social media environment (Tazri & Ariansyah, 2019).

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RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

The present study employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing a discourse analysis approach to investigate the application of politeness strategies in Instagram comments. The objective of this study is to interpret the phenomenon of language use in digital communication, with a particular focus on Instagram, and to understand how ethical language is applied in social interactions on social media. While some commenters are celebrities, the majority are ordinary users.

The qualitative method was selected because it enables an in-depth and holistic examination of social dynamics in digital spaces (Sugiyono, 2017). The primary focus of this study is on Instagram comments written by users. The data set under consideration consists of secondary sources obtained through the researcher's observation and analysis of comments from five Instagram posts with the highest number of interactions. The content of these posts encompasses a wide range of subjects, including violence, gossip, and social issues. The data were then subjected to a thorough analysis, with an emphasis on patterns of language use, communication ethics, and the various types of speech acts observed in the comment sections. The selection of posts was based on two criteria: their relevance to the phenomenon of digital communication and their popularity, which influenced user interaction.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Celebrity Content: "Gissel Annatasia and Brian in the spotlight at Luna Maya and Maxime's wedding"
   - Comment :" orang yang nikah , dia yang birahi "
   - Theme :Romance
   - Source: : https://www.instagram.com/p/DJb2JHNznsO/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA
   - Context: The Lambe Turah post shows Gisel and Bryan hugging intimately during Maxime and Luna Maya's wedding.
     Analysis :
     Netizen comments regarding the appearance of Gisel and Bryan, who were seen being affectionate at the wedding of Luna Maya and Maxime—posted by the gossip account Lambe Turah—revealed a notable remark: "orang yang nikah dia yang birahi." Although the comment does not explicitly mention a name, the context and connection to the post make it easy for readers to identify the person being referred to. This utterance constitutes a threat to the **positive face** of the targeted individual, as it undermines their social image and dignity.
2. Regular Community Content: "Boy in Depok Intentionally Almost Burns Down Market, Fortunately Owner Acts Quickly"
   - Comment : "
   - Theme : Crime
   - Source: : https://www.instagram.com/p/DJeH4yAT64p/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA
   - Context : CCTV footage shows three boys running with matches and starting a fire.
     Analysis :
     The comment "still a kid, but already acting anarchist" is a direct utterance that disregards politeness strategies in language use. In relation to Brown and Levinson's theory, the speaker immediately assigns a negative label— "anarchist"—to the child without employing any *positive politeness* strategy.

Moreover, the use of the word *"bocil"* (a slang term for young child) carries a demeaning tone and potentially threatens the child's *negative face*, which refers to their right not to be treated harshly or judged in public spaces.

3. Regular Community Content : "Father abuses his 2-month-old baby"
   - Comment : "kalo ga siap jadi orang tua jangan nikah dulu "
   - Theme : crime
   - Source: : https://www.instagram.com/p/DJguxyJzbHd/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link
   - Context : The arrest of a man who abused his 2-month-old baby, with the baby shown covered in injuries (sensored).
     Analysisis :
     The comment "kalo ga siap jadi orang tua jangan nikah dulu "
     is a form of direct criticism that lacks politeness strategies. According to the theory proposed by Brown and Levinson, this remark can be regarded as a negative face threat, as it appears to challenge the offender's identity as a parent. The utterance in question has been observed to carry a harsh and judgmental tone, despite the possibility that it was motivated by anger towards the act of violence. This remark also exemplifies a dearth of linguistic empathy in its articulation.

4. Regular Community Content : " Vocational students hire a DJ to celebrate graduation"
   - Comment : " Kebiasaan di luar jangan di bawa di dalam sekolah ataupun di tempat kerja nanti. Kalian kalau mau rusak tanggung sendiri, tapi jangan bawa itu ke dalam pendidikan maupun pekerjaan."
   - Theme : Violation of Social Norms
   - Source: : https://www.instagram.com/p/DJY5TqZzPWd/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA
   - Context : Some teenagers wore tight, revealing high school uniforms while dancing enthusiastically.
     Analysis :
     The comment " Kebiasaan di luar jangan di bawa di dalam sekolah ataupun di tempat kerja nanti. Kalian kalau mau rusak tanggung sendiri, tapi jangan bawa itu ke dalam pendidikan maupun pekerjaan." is a critical statement intended as a warning. While the comment carries a positive intention—to remind students to uphold ethics within educational and professional settings—it lacks positive politeness strategies as outlined by Brown and Levinson. The message is delivered directly, with blame, and without softening language. Phrases like "if you want to ruin yourself" represent a form of face-threatening act that can damage the social image of the recipient. This shows that the speaker is not attempting to build solidarity, but instead delivers a moral judgment in a straightforward and potentially confrontational manner.

5. Regular Community Content: "Viral, This Girl Feels Sad After Reading Comments About Vocational School Students Getting Jobs at Minimarkets: 'Is it that low?'"
   - Comment : " 50% pengangguran sulit dapat kerja karena GENGSI
   - Theme : Violation of Social Norms
   - Source: : https://www.instagram.com/p/DKyFdrJTobp/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA
   - Context : A woman wearing a convenience store uniform is bowing her head at her workplace.

Analysis :
The comment "50% pengangguran sulit dapat kerja karena GENGSI" can be categorized as a positive remark, yet it employs a negative politeness strategy according to Brown and Levinson's theory. This is because the speaker conveys a moral message implicitly through social judgment, suggesting that all types of work should be respected. The comment also reflects an effort to raise social awareness about the persistent culture of pride in society. By using a generalized statement ("50% of unemployed..."), the speaker avoids a direct threat to the negative face of the content's subject and instead voices a normative opinion on broader social attitudes.

Based on analysis of comments on the Lambe Turah Instagram account revealed a tendency among social media users, particularly on Instagram, to engage in communication that often disregards principles of politeness. The findings of this study suggest that among the five posts that garnered the highest number of comments, multiple comments transgressed established norms of politeness and posed a threat to the interlocutor's emotional well-being. While some of these comments were intended to offer constructive feedback or express moral opinions, the manner in which they were conveyed frequently lacked effective linguistic strategies to mitigate their impact. The findings of this study cannot be disentangled from the theoretical framework of politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), which served as the primary analytical paradigm. The theory posits that in any given communication, individuals invariably encounter circumstances that have the potential to compromise the self-image (or "face") of others. This can manifest in either a positive form, characterized by the aspiration to gain acceptance and approval, or a negative form, marked by a desire to be free from imposition and judgment.

A significant factor influencing the level of politeness in social media comments is the nature of the content being posted. Celebrity-related content, for instance, has been observed to elicit a greater variety of comments with respect to linguistic style and courtesy. This phenomenon can be attributed to the perception of celebrities as public figures who have become accustomed to the scrutiny and criticism from the public on social media, both positive and negative. This can, in turn, create a sense of ease among users, encouraging them to express their opinions without hesitation. Conversely, content pertaining to criminal acts, particularly violence against children or violations of social norms, frequently elicits profound emotional responses. Feelings such as anger, disappointment, or disgust drive netizens to leave direct and unfiltered comments, thereby ignoring politeness strategies such as positive politeness or negative politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Damayanti, 2020).

However, certain comments continue to demonstrate an effort to maintain cordiality through the employment of more delicate language or indirect expressions. This suggests that, despite the absence of formal regulations and oversight in social media spaces, many Indonesian users exhibit a strong adherence to established norms of social interaction, including respect for elders, the avoidance of direct conflict, and the promotion of harmonious interactions, which are deeply ingrained in their local cultural values (Lestari, 2021). These strategies also reflect positive face management, in which speakers attempt to protect others' feelings while expressing criticism or opinions.

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CONCLUSION

This study shows that the use of politeness strategies in netizen comments on social media, particularly on the Lambe Turah Instagram account, varies greatly. Some comments reflect an awareness of the need to use polite language, but most—especially on content related to crime—tend to disregard the principles of politeness. These findings align with the perspective of Brown and Levinson (1987), who state that any form of communication has the potential to offend or hurt others' feelings, especially when delivered directly without considering more subtle or polite ways of expression.

And phenomenon is also linked to social media's digital and somewhat anonymous nature. Crystal (2006) says that online communication tends to create a more casual and less formal language style. This reduces control over politeness rules that usually apply in face-to-face conversations. Also, the interactive nature and fast flow of information cause comments to be more reactive and emotional, as seen in the criminal content that was analyzed.

Also, politeness is greatly affected by the social and cultural setting. Holmes (2013) says that cultural values like respect, togetherness, and levels of authority have a big impact on how people choose to speak. In Indonesia, the culture of working together and respecting social harmony is often seen in comments that use indirect language or generalizations to make social criticisms. This can be seen in comments that use statistics to reinforce values.

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