

## **POLITENESS STRATEGIES IMPLIED IN THE ONLINE MARKETPLACE COMMENT SECTION OF INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT @amazondotin**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This research aims to analyze the politeness strategies used by netizens in the comment section of the Instagram account @amazondotin by applying Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987). Using a qualitative descriptive method, the researchers collected comments from 17 Instagram posts and categorized them into four politeness strategies: bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record. The findings reveal a total of 52 identified strategies, with bald on-record being the most dominant (36.54%), followed by positive politeness (26.92%), negative politeness (25%), and off-record (11.54%). These results indicate that users on e-commerce social media platforms tend to communicate directly, especially when expressing urgency or dissatisfaction, while politeness markers appear depending on contextual and intentional factors. Overall, the study concludes that digital communication in marketplace settings blends directness with socially motivated politeness strategies, reflecting users' attempts to balance clarity, efficiency, and interpersonal consideration.*

*Keywords: Brown and Levinson, Digital Discourse, E-commerce Communication, Politeness strategies.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Communication is highly essential in today's society. It is not only a medium for transmitting information but also a crucial element of social interaction. People are expected to communicate effectively based on context, relationships, and situational demands. Yule (1996) states that communication is more than simply sending messages; it also involves managing social relationships and showing consideration for others. Therefore, the way people speak reflects their understanding of social values and norms within a community. Language expresses how individuals present themselves, show respect to others, and maintain relationships. In communication, people are expected to be polite. This means that individuals tend to use words, responses, and tones that sound respectful and non-

threatening so that their messages are received positively. Politeness can be observed in various situations, including making requests, refusing offers, expressing opinions, and correcting others.

On the other hand, neglecting the importance of polite language may lead to several risks. Direct, insensitive, or harsh statements may damage the listener's self-esteem and be perceived as insulting, even when this is not the speaker's intention. Such behavior often results in misunderstandings, social tension, or conflict, disrupting communication. Impoliteness can harm relationships, reduce cooperation, and undermine the speaker's credibility in both personal and professional settings. These concerns highlight the importance of using respectful and mindful language to facilitate smooth and productive communication. Politeness strategies are speech acts that show concern for others and minimize threats to self-esteem (face) within a particular social context. Politeness acts as a social lubricant, allowing interactions to flow smoothly while promoting respect and harmony. Holmes (2013) defines politeness strategies as linguistic strategies used to ensure effective, polite verbal communication that enables cooperative interaction. In speech acts, politeness is essential for maintaining a positive self-image and protecting the face needs of others. Positive face refers to the desire to be appreciated, while negative face refers to the desire not to be imposed upon. Brown and Levinson (1987) explain that politeness strategies are used to minimize face-threatening acts (FTAs) and maintain social relationships. They propose four politeness strategies: bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record.

The first strategy, bald on-record, refers to direct communication in which a speaker delivers a message clearly and without attempting to soften its impact. This strategy is commonly used when efficiency is more important than the listener's feelings, such as in emergencies or task-oriented situations. According to Brown and Levinson, this strategy is appropriate when there is little need to reduce face-threatening acts—either due to a close relationship between speaker and listener or contextual demands for clarity. Similarly, Arsita et al. (2025) state that bald on-record communication involves delivering messages directly without softening their impact. They note that while such directness may be appropriate among speakers of equal status or in close relationships, it can be inappropriate in hierarchical contexts such as student–lecturer interactions, where it may be interpreted as impolite.

The second strategy, positive politeness, is a communication technique aimed at showing friendliness, building rapport, and highlighting shared understanding. Brown and Levinson (1987) describe positive politeness as strategies used to maintain and enhance the hearer's positive face—their desire to be respected, liked, and accepted. These strategies promote intimacy, friendly

interaction, and expressions of appreciation, making the hearer feel valued and establishing common ground.

The third strategy, negative politeness, aims to protect an individual's desire for autonomy and freedom from imposition. This strategy often involves indirect expressions, minimizing burden, showing respect, and offering apologies to avoid threatening the hearer's negative face. As noted by Brown and Levinson (1987), such linguistic mitigation plays a crucial role in interactions where face-threatening potential is high. Ainia et al. (2022), for example, found that in political debate contexts such as the Rosi Talk Show, negative politeness is strategically used by moderators to maintain neutrality, manage tension, and sustain politeness in sensitive discussions.

The fourth strategy, off-record politeness, involves conveying messages indirectly. This strategy reduces or minimizes imposition by allowing listeners to infer the intended meaning. Brown and Levinson (1987) explain that off-record strategies use indirect language to eliminate the speaker's responsibility for potential face-threatening acts. Manuputty and Damanhuri (2016) similarly argue that off-record expressions often involve general statements or metaphors that require interpretation from the listener.

Politeness strategies reflect how people adjust their language to express respect and protect each other's self-image, depending on power relations, familiarity, and social distance. Thus, politeness is not only about choosing the right words but also about understanding the social context of interaction.

As technology evolves, communication is no longer limited to face-to-face interactions but also takes place through social media. Social media platforms allow users to share information and connect with virtual communities through text, photos, videos, and other content. Platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok have become spaces for people to express opinions, appreciation, and criticism. Davis (2016) defines social media as a set of interactive internet applications that facilitate the creation, curation, and sharing of user-generated content. While social media applications share core characteristics, Davis notes that they differ in structure, user norms, and purposes, shaping distinct communication patterns.

Among these platforms, Instagram has become one of the most popular and influential. Initially designed for photo sharing, it has evolved into a multifunctional platform where users can express ideas, interact with others, and build online communities. The comment section serves as an important interaction space, allowing users to express agreement, disagreement, compliments, or criticism. Through such interactions, politeness strategies appear in the form of appreciation, indirect language, or expressions of agreement, helping users maintain good relationships and avoid miscommunication.

Several previous studies have examined politeness strategies on social media. Sholehah and Wafa (2023) found that positive politeness was the most dominant strategy used in comments on influencers' Instagram accounts, indicating users' preference for maintaining social harmony even in online settings. Similarly, Inayah et al. (2025) found that positive politeness dominated comments on Fuji An's TikTok videos, reflecting strong emotional support and solidarity among users despite the presence of impoliteness. This study expands on their research by examining politeness strategies in a different context and dataset, allowing for broader insights into how Indonesian netizens express politeness in digital spaces.

Additionally, Yusuf and Resha (2025) analyzed politeness strategies in comments on the Indonesian President's Instagram posts. Using a cyberpragmatic approach, they found frequent violations of negative politeness through direct criticism and sarcasm, highlighting how emotional and political contexts influence online communication norms. Their findings demonstrate how digital anonymity and the lack of physical presence reduce linguistic restraint. The present study builds on their work by shifting focus to a non-political, marketplace-oriented context to examine whether similar patterns of impoliteness occur under different communicative conditions.

Based on this background, the present study analyzes politeness strategies in the comment section of the Instagram account @amazondotin. As a global brand account, @amazondotin attracts users from diverse cultural and social backgrounds, resulting in a wide range of comments including praise, support, criticism, and suggestions. This makes it an appropriate object of study to explore how politeness strategies manifest in digital communication. By analyzing users' comments, this research aims to understand how politeness operates in online interactions and how it reflects users' awareness of social norms in virtual communities. Furthermore, the study highlights how online communication mirrors broader social behavior, where politeness remains important even without face-to-face interaction.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative method to explore politeness strategies within the field of pragmatics, focusing on how individuals express politeness through language. Ellis (1999) states that "qualitative research is an open-ended process that can generate rich, thick descriptions of people's experiences." This aligns well with the study of politeness, where understanding subtle variations in tone, word choice, and context is essential. According to Stake (1995), a qualitative case study examines the particularity and complexity of a single case and seeks to understand its activities within meaningful circumstances. This approach is especially relevant

for analyzing how politeness strategies appear in specific online communication contexts.

The primary data source for this research is the comment section of the Instagram account @amazondotin. This platform provides naturally occurring interactions that are suitable for examining politeness in digital communication. The analysis focuses on Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory, which categorizes four types of politeness strategies: bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record. Researchers collected user comments from the account's posts and examined them based on linguistic cues, tone, and contextual indicators to identify politeness strategies. This method enables a systematic understanding of how users in online marketplace comment sections use language to navigate politeness, maintain social relationships, or express dissatisfaction.

## FINDING

This study employed Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory to analyze the types of politeness strategies used in user comments on e-commerce social media platforms. The data consisted of comments posted under 17 photo and reel posts from the official Amazon India Instagram account. These comments were examined to identify the distribution and frequency of the four major politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson.

**Table 1. The Politeness Strategies Found on Amazon Comment Sections**

<b>Types of Politeness Strategies</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Bald On-Record	19	36.54%
Positive Politeness	14	26.92%
Negative Politeness	13	25.00%
Off-Record	6	11.54%
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 1 indicates that **bald on-record** strategies were the most frequently employed in the comment sections of Amazon India's Instagram posts, accounting for 36.54% of all identified strategies. This finding suggests that many users expressed their messages directly and explicitly, with little attempt to mitigate face-threatening acts. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), bald on-record strategies are typically used when there is no need to soften the utterance, either because the social distance between interlocutors is minimal or because the context encourages

straightforward communication. The dominance of this strategy implies that users often prioritize clarity and efficiency in comment sections, reflecting the informal, fast-paced nature of social media interactions.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide valuable insights into how politeness strategies are employed by users interacting within the Amazon India Instagram comment sections. The dominance of the bald on-record strategy indicates that commenters generally prefer direct and unambiguous expressions when engaging with commercial content. This finding suggests that the communicative norms on e-commerce-related social media platforms differ from those observed in more interpersonal or community-oriented online spaces, where indirectness and face-saving mechanisms tend to play a larger role.

### 1. Bald on-Record

#### Datum 1

*"Your delivery guys are frauds."*

**Analysis:** This comment illustrates a bald on-record strategy in the context of service failure. The customer was disappointed by the delay in delivery and the lack of a response to their complaint, forcing them to use direct and accusatory language. The use of the strong term "frauds" without softening or mitigation shows a complete abandonment of face-saving methods. According to Brown and Levinson's approach, this directness could be regarded as a strategic option when the customer perceives significant errors and believes their complaints have been dismissed. The public nature of Instagram comments encourages this strategy, since customers use visibility to demand accountability. This example demonstrates how service disappointment in digital contexts may exceed conventional politeness norms, with customers valuing the expression of dissatisfaction and need for resolution over protecting the service provider's reputation.

#### Datum 2

*"Buying starts now"*

**Analysis:** This comment is a bald on-record strategy prompted by a time-sensitive promotional context. During Amazon's special Diwali deal, the customer uses the urgent mood without any politeness cues or hedging. The directness here is intended to improve transactional efficiency rather than to communicate dissatisfaction. Brown and Levinson point out that blatant on-record strategies are suitable when task urgency overcomes face considerations. In this promotional context, the customer's direct statement demonstrates a recognition that quickness and clarity take prominence over intricate politeness in business dealings. The absence of typical politeness signals such as "please" or "could you" suggests that the customer understands that the relationship is mutually goal-oriented.

#### Datum 3

*“Your delivery team messed up. Replace the item now.”*

**Analysis:** This comment combines a direct allegation with an imperative demand, demonstrating a clear bald on-record strategy in reaction to an order fulfillment problem. The two-part form first assigns responsibility ("messed up") and then makes a non-negotiable demand ("replace the item now"). The absence of softening mechanisms such as conditional mood ("could you replace"), politeness markers ("please"), and hedging ("I think there might be") underlines the customer's perception of their right to immediate corrective action. This example demonstrates how service failures in e-commerce contexts encourage customers to employ direct communication strategies, possibly because the commercial transaction generates an implicit contract that, when broken, legitimizes unreasonable requests.

#### **Datum 4**

*"Share me only the link"*

**Analysis:** This comment illustrates bald on-record strategy in simply informational interaction. The customer seeks a specific promotional link that lacks any social prelude or politeness framing. The directness of the demand "Share me" combined with the restricting modifier "only" results in maximum communication efficiency. According to Brown and Levinson's theory, blunt on-record strategies are appropriate when the face threat is low and efficiency is crucial. In this transactional setting, both parties view the interaction as instrumental rather than relational. The customer's directness indicates an underlying understanding that in commercial social media situations, clear demands for information are not considered to face threats because the connection is ultimately transactional rather than social.

#### **Datum 5**

*"I need this order in 30 mins max."*

**Analysis:** This comment shows a frank on-the-record technique influenced by tight time constraints. The customer's use of "I need" followed by a specified and demanding timeframe ("30 mins max") indicates the direct expression of urgent requirements with no mitigation. The phrase serves as both a confession of need and an implicit demand, with no hedging to reduce the request's potentially threatening nature. In the context of "great deals" day promotions, the customer's directness can be justified using Brown and Levinson's concept of urgency justifying bald on-record strategies. The unrealistic timescale (30 minutes for order fulfillment) emphasizes the customer's preference for their needs over face concerns or practical considerations.

## **2. Positive Politeness**

#### **Datum 1**

*“So trendy and useful”*

**Analysis:** This comment contains a direct compliment highlighting two positive qualities: “trendy” and “useful.” In Brown and Levinson’s Positive Politeness strategy, compliments function to show appreciation and acknowledge the hearer’s positive value, thereby creating social closeness. The speaker indicates that the content is relevant and beneficial, which helps enhance the positive image of Amazon.

**Datum 2**

*“Such satisfying post, visuals are stunning”*

**Analysis:** This comment uses strong positive evaluative expressions (“satisfying,” “stunning”) that convey admiration. It reflects the strategy of showing approval and sympathy. By praising both the quality of the post and its visuals, the speaker attempts to build rapport and show alignment with Amazon, reinforcing a positive social relationship.

**Datum 3**

*“Amazon is best”*

**Analysis:** The statement is a form of hyperbolic compliment, placing Amazon at the highest level by calling it “the best.” Brown and Levinson identify exaggerated approval as a common Positive Politeness strategy. Such overstatement signals strong enthusiasm and support, strengthening solidarity between the speaker and the brand.

**Datum 4**

*“Just wow, love it”*

**Analysis:** This expression shows spontaneous admiration through the exclamation “wow,” followed by an effective statement “love it.” Affective expressions are part of the strategy of showing warmth and emotional involvement, which helps to maintain a positive relationship. The comment reflects genuine excitement and approval from the speaker.

**Datum 5**

*“Totally relatable content”*

**Analysis:** This comment highlights shared experience between the speaker and the content. By calling the post “relatable,” the speaker employs the strategy of claiming common ground, a key element of Positive Politeness. It suggests that the speaker and Amazon share similar perspectives or experiences, fostering a sense of closeness and mutual understanding.

**3. Negative Politeness**

**Datum 1**

*“I need to file a complaint regarding my amazon account, please share email ID”*

**Analysis:** The comment illustrates negative politeness through its structure and justification. The speaker begins by explaining the reason for the request “I need to file a complaint”, which Brown and Levinson identify as

a strategy for mitigating face-threatening acts. By giving reasons, the speaker reduces the perception of imposition and frames the request as necessary rather than arbitrary. The presence of the politeness marker “please” further softens the directive, making it a polite and indirect request for information. Overall, the combination of justification, polite wording, and indirectness signals the use of negative politeness.

**Datum 2**

*“I request you to please process my refund of ₹404 immediately and share the refund reference number with me”*

**Analysis:** This particular comment strongly reflects negative politeness through multiple strategies. First, the speaker uses conventional indirectness with “I request you to...”, which avoids the face-threatening force of a direct command. Second, the inclusion of the politeness marker “please” softens the request and signals respect toward the hearer. Third, the clause frames the action of processing a refund as a formal administrative step, which reduces the perceived imposition. All these strategies work together to maintain the hearer’s negative face by showing deference and allowing them the freedom to decide how to respond. As a result, this clause is a clear example of negative politeness.

**Datum 3**

*“Please verify the issue and attempt redelivery the product as as possible process an immediate”*

**Analysis:** The comment demonstrates negative politeness through the presence of a mitigated request embedded within an otherwise direct complaint. The politeness marker “please” softens the directive and acknowledges the hearer’s autonomy, which aligns with Brown and Levinson’s (1987) strategy of using politeness markers to reduce imposition. Additionally, the speaker provides justification for the request by first explaining that no delivery attempt or contact was made; this follows the strategy of giving reasons before issuing a request, thereby mitigating the face-threatening act. Although the tone begins as a complaint, the final request portion qualifies as negative politeness because it employs indirectness and polite forms to minimize the imposition on the addressee.

**Datum 4**

*“I urge you to address this issue promptly and provide satisfactory resolution”*

**Analysis:** This comment reflects negative politeness through the use of conventional indirectness, as seen in the phrase “I urge you to...”. Instead of issuing a direct command, the speaker frames the request in a formal and respectful manner, which reduces the force of the imposition. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), such indirect expressions help protect the hearer’s negative face by acknowledging their freedom of action. The

formal tone also conveys deference, showing that the speaker recognizes the hearer's authority or ability to decide whether to comply.

**Datum 5**

*"I request you to take immediate action and refund my money to my original source account as soon as possible"*

**Analysis:** This comment demonstrates negative politeness through the formal and indirect nature of the request. Instead of issuing an imperative, the speaker uses the phrase "I request you to...", which is a clear example of conventionally indirect language. Brown and Levinson describe such phrasing as a way to acknowledge the hearer's autonomy while still conveying the speaker's needs. Even though the clause contains urgency ("immediate action"), the formal structure minimizes the imposition by presenting the action as a request rather than a demand. The respectfulness embedded in the wording helps maintain the hearer's negative face.

**4. Off-Record**

**Datum 1**

*"My wallet is already crying"*

**Analysis:** This comment shows that the speaker did not state their intention directly but used a metaphor to imply that they ran out of money or that the price of the item was too high. Brown & Levinson's theory (1987) states that metaphors in the off-record strategy convey a message indirectly. In this comment, the listener must interpret the meaning.

**Datum 2**

*"Online shopping is my weakness"*

**Analysis:** This comment shows that the speaker does not convey complaints or intentions directly, but gives a "hint" through general statements about himself. Brown & Levinson's theory (1987) states that the giving of hints, an off-record strategy in which the speaker implies a message without stating it directly. In this comment, the reader must interpret the true intent, such as whether the speaker is often shopping or can't help but shop.

**Datum 3**

*"Who else is shopping right now?"*

**Analysis:** This comment shows that the speaker did not state the intention directly, but used a question sentence. The speaker implies that the speaker himself is shopping, or it may also mean a mild complaint, such as implied shopping or being tempted by promos. Brown & Levinson's theory (1987) states that rhetorical question within the off-record strategy, where the speaker asks questions that are not intended to be answered or to elicit information, but rather to make a hint at expectation. This comment is in the form of a question, but the real purpose is only to convey a sense of sarcasm or self-implicature.

**Datum 4**

*"The accuracy is painful"*

**Analysis:** This comment uses an indirect sentence to satirize subtly. The speaker implies that the post relates to customers' shopping or spending habits. Brown & Levinson (1987) state that off-record contradictions occur when the speaker says something contrary to what is intended. In this type, it is often used to express feelings or opinions indirectly.

**Datum 5**

*"Someone tell me to stop"*

**Analysis:** This comment shows an ambiguous sentence in which the speaker is unclear about what is meant. In the word 'someone,' it can point to anyone because it is not specific, and the meaning of the sentence is unclear about what it really wants to convey. According to Brown & Levinson (1987), this type is a "be vague/be ambiguous" type, in which the speaker expresses a message that is unclear and leaves the reader to interpret it. The comment becomes ambiguous because the speaker does not convey the message explicitly, leaving it to the readers' interpretation.

**CONCLUSION**

This study aimed to identify the politeness strategies used by netizens in the comment section of the Instagram account @amazondotin by applying Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory. The analysis of 52 comments showed that the bald on-record strategy was the most dominant, indicating that users tend to communicate directly, especially when expressing dissatisfaction, urgency, or transactional intentions. Meanwhile, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategies appeared in varying proportions, demonstrating that some users still attempt to maintain friendliness, show respect, or convey messages indirectly.

These findings suggest that online interactions in marketplace contexts prioritize clarity, speed, and efficiency, even when face-threatening acts occur. However, the presence of other politeness strategies shows that users also consider social norms, emotional factors, and communicative goals when interacting in digital spaces. Overall, the results reflect how digital communication blends directness with socially motivated politeness choices, shaped by the fast-paced and public nature of social media discourse.

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