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POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH CONVERSATION: A PRAGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract
This study investigates the use of politeness strategies in spontaneous English conversations, addressing a significant gap in the literature where insights are predominantly drawn from scripted data. While existing research has explored how politeness functions in educational and intercultural contexts, there remains a lack of empirical evidence on real-life interactions that incorporate diverse speaker identities and contexts. The primary aim of this research is to identify and analyze the frequency and distribution of politeness strategies across various interactional settings, with particular attention to the differences between native and non-native speakers and the influence of gender. The research design employed a mixed-methods approach featuring 40 participants from different backgrounds, including both native and non-native English speakers. The study employed a triangulated set of instruments including audio recording devices to capture authentic spoken interactions, a structured Participant Profile Questionnaire to gather demographic data, and a detailed coding framework based on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory for analyzing politeness strategies. The analysis utilized quantitative methods to code the politeness strategies identified within the conversations and qualitative discourse analysis to interpret these strategies in context. Findings revealed a predominance of positive politeness in peer-to-peer interactions, highlighting the role of relationship-building and social closeness, while negative politeness was prevalent in formal student-teacher exchanges, reflecting an emphasis on respect and deference. Notably, the analysis also showed that gender differences influenced the choice and frequency of politeness strategies, with women often employing more accommodating approaches. This study enriches the understanding of how politeness strategies are contextually employed in English conversations and underscores the need for integrating pragmatic competence into language education. The implications suggest that enhancing awareness and understanding of politeness strategies can significantly improve communicative competence in multicultural and multilingual contexts, benefiting both learners and educators alike.

Keywords: English conversations, native and non-native speakers, politeness strategies, pragmatic competence

INTRODUCTION

Politeness strategies play a crucial role in interpersonal communication, particularly in English conversations, where speakers constantly negotiate face, maintain social harmony, and express relational meanings. These strategies encompass a variety of linguistic and pragmatic choices that enable speakers to avoid conflict, show respect, and foster cooperation. As language users navigate diverse social settings, the ability to apply appropriate politeness strategies becomes an essential component of communicative competence, especially in multicultural and multilingual interactions.

In an increasingly globalized world, understanding how politeness functions in English conversation has become more important than ever. Effective use of politeness not only supports smoother communication in academic, professional, and everyday contexts but also reflects speakers' sensitivity to sociocultural

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expectations and interpersonal dynamics. For language learners, mastering politeness is critical for achieving pragmatic fluency and avoiding potential misinterpretations or offense. Moreover, as English continues to serve as a lingua franca across diverse speech communities, examining how speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds deploy politeness strategies offers valuable insights into cross-cultural pragmatics and discourse practices.

Recent research has explored politeness from various perspectives, particularly within educational and intercultural settings. Suganda et al. (2022) investigated politeness strategies among Indonesian EFL learners and found cultural variations in expressing indirectness and deference. Alaiyed (2023) examined online academic discourse and highlighted shifts in politeness strategies due to digital interactional norms. In a corpus-based study, Pandey (2024) compared the use of positive and negative politeness markers in peer feedback between native and non-native English speakers. Similarly, Aksiutina (2023) explored gendered politeness strategies in Korean learners' English conversations, while Mularsih and Maudy (2020) focused on code-switching and politeness in multilingual classrooms. Despite these contributions, much of the existing research tends to rely on scripted data or simulated tasks, limiting the ecological validity of the findings.

This study addresses a significant gap in the literature by focusing on the use of politeness strategies in spontaneous, real-life English conversations across diverse contexts, such as peer discussions, student–teacher exchanges, and collaborative tasks. Moreover, while some studies have separately examined either native or non-native speakers, few have conducted comparative analyses of both groups within the same conversational settings. Similarly, although gender has been noted as a variable influencing politeness, in-depth, data-driven investigations quantifying these differences in natural discourse remain underexplored. To fill these gaps, the present research offers a novel, integrated approach by combining quantitative frequency analysis with qualitative discourse interpretation, while also incorporating speaker identity and interactional context as comparative variables. This mixed-methods approach not only enhances the depth of analysis but also broadens our understanding of how politeness is strategically employed in real-time interaction.

By drawing from naturally occurring conversations and analyzing them through a combination of statistical and discourse-based techniques, this study expands the understanding of politeness in use. The exploration of conversational data from different speaker backgrounds encourages reflection on how politeness is learned, perceived, and negotiated, especially in multicultural interactions. The inclusion of multiple variables, such as gender, speaker status, and interaction type, provides nuanced insights that may guide language instruction and inform classroom practices. In doing so, this investigation enriches both the theoretical and pedagogical perspectives on politeness as a dynamic and context-sensitive phenomenon. Consequently, this study aims to (1) identify and analyze the frequency and distribution of politeness strategies used in English conversations across different interactional contexts, and (2) examine how politeness strategy usage varies based on speaker-related variables, such as native versus non-native speaker identity and gender, in order to uncover patterns of strategic language use in authentic communication.

This research contributes to the field of applied linguistics and discourse pragmatics by offering empirical evidence on the distribution and variation of politeness strategies across interactional settings and speaker identities. By analyzing how different groups of speakers manage politeness in authentic English conversations, the study contributes to the development of more context-aware models of pragmatic competence and offers a methodological model for future research in sociolinguistics and language education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Politeness in English Conversations

The literature on politeness in English conversations is founded on well-established theoretical frameworks such as Brown and Levinson's (1987) model, which classifies strategies into on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record approaches. Empirical studies have shown that these strategies are employed in various contexts. For instance, Pasaribu et al. (2021) demonstrate that lecturers and students adapt distinct politeness methods in digital thesis consultations, while Mukharomah and Sumanto (2023) illustrate similar trends in classroom settings. Zhang and Simin (2021) further reveal that teachers engage in positive politeness to build rapport with non-English major undergraduates. Complementing these, Yaghoubzadeh (2021) examines negative politeness in requests within English movies, while Zhao (2021) analyzes pragmatic distance in English writing, thereby highlighting the dynamic interplay between theoretical constructs and communicative practices in English conversations.

Contextual and cultural factors play a critical role in shaping politeness strategies. Research by Pramujiono and Nurjati (2023) underscores the significance of teachers serving as role models in demonstrating polite interactions, which is integral to fostering a respectful educational environment. Wong and Esler (2020) provide a comprehensive review on teaching and learning politeness, emphasizing that culturally contextualized approaches enhance communicative competence. Additionally, Meiratnasari et al. (2020) stress the impact of politeness strategies embedded in English textbooks on students' communication skills, reinforcing the interrelationship between classroom practices and broader cultural norms.

Pedagogical implications of these findings are evident in efforts to integrate politeness strategies into language learning curricula. Le (2022) explores conversational activities in an English coursebook, showing that explicit instruction on positive and negative politeness strategies not only improves learners' interactional abilities but also encourages a deeper understanding of social conventions in English. Such curriculum-based interventions, supported by findings from earlier studies (Pasaribu et al., 2021; Zhang & Simin, 2021; Yaghoubzadeh, 2021; Zhao, 2021; Pramujiono & Nurjati, 2023; Wong & Esler, 2020; Meiratnasari et al., 2020), underscore the necessity of embedding pragmatic competence training in educational practices. This alignment of theory with classroom application is essential for nurturing communicative proficiency and ensuring that learners can navigate varied social contexts effectively.

Speaker Identity and Politeness Strategies

The literature on speaker identity and politeness strategies reveals that social identities are dynamically constructed rather than fixed attributes. Speakers deliberately choose linguistic tools to negotiate face, authority, and solidarity in varied contexts. For instance, Urbaniak (2022) demonstrates how presidential inaugural addresses are carefully crafted to signal both personal ethos and national identity, while Koutchadé (2021) shows that grammatical structures and indirect speech acts in literary texts serve to mediate interpersonal relations. Chertian and Kuntjara (2020) employ critical discourse analysis to trace how expatriate communities negotiate their identities through culturally resonant politeness strategies, and Nazeer et al. (2023) further illustrate that shifts in political rhetoric help realign public perceptions of leadership. Holtgraves (2021) situates these findings in broader historical and socio-cultural contexts, emphasizing that identity formation is interwoven with context-sensitive linguistic practices.

In digital and interpersonal spaces, the interplay between speaker identity and politeness becomes even more pronounced. Yang (2022) provides evidence that the evaluation of im/politeness is integral to how speakers are morally and ethically appraised in everyday interactions. Joll and Aree (2022) underscore that language choices—such as autonym preference—reflect deeper group affiliations, while Ibrahim and Qura (2021) reveal that online gaming videos incorporate tailored speech acts to construct engaging and accessible digital personas. Nawaz et al. (2023) extend this idea to broadcast media, showing that television dramas utilize modality to subtly shape identity, and Alsbbagh and Abdullah (2023) contribute by analyzing the role of epistemic modality in political speeches, thereby maneuvering the delicate balance between commitment and caution.

In more structured contexts such as organizational and broadcast communication, politeness strategies are deployed to manage sensitive subject matter and maintain cohesion. Healey et al. (2024) provide critical insights into how careful language management is essential when addressing contested topics like race and power within institutions, ensuring that conversational exchanges do not threaten individual or group face. Sumanti and Bram (2021) offer a practical illustration through televised interactions, demonstrating that the orchestration of interruptions and deference can bolster speaker credibility. Complementing these observations, Robertson et al. (2021) show that political messaging—especially in contexts like public health crises—is deliberately tailored to align with the speaker's political identity, while Aspitasari et al. (2022) reveal that in cinematic dialogues, the strategic use of both positive and negative politeness mechanisms is critical for constructing believable narrative identities.

Finally, scholarly investigation confirms that the synergy between language and identity is multifaceted and context dependent. Holtgraves (2021) examines how digital miscommunication can be mitigated through the nuanced recognition of speech acts, thereby linking pragmatic theory with practical applications. Mojo et al. (2021) demonstrate that in community settings, positive politeness strategies not only foster interpersonal bonds but also reinforce group solidarity. Furthermore, Omer and Al-Azzawi (2023) illustrate that the infusion of humor with tact in media contexts functions as a powerful tool in shaping and maintaining speaker identity. Together, these studies attest that politeness is far more than mere etiquette—it is a

strategic, contextually driven instrument through which individuals articulate and negotiate their social selves.

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design to comprehensively examine the use of politeness strategies in authentic English conversations. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative approaches is essential to capture not only the frequency and distribution of politeness strategies across various contexts but also to uncover the deeper pragmatic functions these strategies serve in real-life interactions. The quantitative phase enables the identification of patterns based on speaker-related variables such as gender and native language status, offering measurable insights into how politeness is used differently among diverse groups. Meanwhile, the qualitative phase allows for an in-depth exploration of the context in which these strategies are employed, focusing on discourse features, speaker intentions, and interactional dynamics. This dual approach is particularly appropriate for pragmatic studies, where understanding the social meaning behind language choices is as important as recognizing the structural patterns.

Participants and Setting

The participants of this study consisted of 40 individuals purposefully selected to represent a diverse range of English users. The sample was evenly divided between 20 native and 20 non-native English speakers, with an equal gender distribution of 20 males and 20 females. Participants were aged between 18 and 35 years and included both university students and professionals, all of whom demonstrated intermediate to advanced proficiency in English. This purposeful sampling was justified to ensure a broad representation of speaker identities and to facilitate comparative analysis across different sociolinguistic backgrounds. The conversations took place in naturalistic settings, such as academic discussions, casual peer interactions, and structured collaborative tasks, allowing for the observation of politeness strategies as they naturally occurred. These real-life contexts were chosen to enhance ecological validity, providing a more accurate reflection of how politeness is negotiated in everyday English communication. This participant composition and setting were particularly suited for examining the influence of identity and interactional context on strategic language use.

Research Instruments

This study employed a triangulated set of instruments to collect, classify, and interpret data related to politeness strategies in English conversation. The combination of audio documentation, participant profiling, and a theoretically grounded coding framework provided a comprehensive foundation for both quantitative and qualitative analyses.

The first instrument was an audio recording device, which played a critical role in capturing authentic spoken interaction in a variety of real-world communication settings. These settings included peer-to-peer informal discussions, student–teacher dialogues, and task-oriented exchanges that unfolded naturally. The unobtrusive nature of the device allowed participants to speak freely and

spontaneously, thereby increasing the ecological validity of the data. All recordings were conducted with prior consent and followed ethical procedures to ensure participants' privacy. The audio files were later transcribed verbatim and served as the core dataset from which politeness strategies were identified and examined.

The second instrument was a structured Participant Profile Questionnaire designed to gather essential demographic and background information about each speaker. The questionnaire consisted of short, closed-ended questions that focused on variables such as gender, age, native language, and self-assessed English proficiency. This data was critical for identifying potential correlations between speaker characteristics and their use of specific politeness strategies. For instance, it allowed for the exploration of whether native versus non-native English speakers preferred different strategies, or whether gender had an influence on the degree of politeness expressed in conversations.

The third and most central instrument was a detailed Coding Scheme grounded in Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory. This coding framework provided a theoretical lens for categorizing each utterance within the conversations into one of four key strategy types: positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, and bald-on-record. Each strategy category in the coding manual was clearly defined, accompanied by illustrative examples and linguistic markers drawn from established research. The coding scheme also included subcategories to account for nuanced expressions, such as hedging, indirect hints, apologetic language, and inclusive pronouns. This level of specificity enabled consistent classification across different coders and ensured analytical rigor throughout the study.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process for this study followed a structured procedure to ensure the validity and reliability of the data related to politeness strategies in English conversation. First, participants were briefed on the purpose of the study and provided informed consent, with assurance of confidentiality and the voluntary nature of their involvement. Audio recording served as the primary method for capturing natural spoken interactions, which took place in authentic settings such as informal peer conversations, student–teacher discussions, and task-based dialogues. Participants were encouraged to engage in natural communication without intervention, allowing for the spontaneous use of politeness strategies. These interactions were recorded discreetly to minimize observer effects and enhance ecological validity. After data collection, all audio recordings were transcribed verbatim to create a detailed textual dataset.

Simultaneously, each participant completed a structured profile questionnaire that collected background information including gender, age, language background, and English proficiency. This information was essential for comparative analysis based on speaker variables. Once transcription and profiling were complete, the data underwent systematic analysis using a coding scheme based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. Trained coders identified and classified each utterance according to defined strategy types and subcategories. To maintain consistency, coders used a manual with examples and criteria for each politeness strategy, enabling both quantitative frequency counts and qualitative

discourse interpretation. This triangulated procedure ensured a comprehensive and context-sensitive examination of politeness in authentic English conversations.

Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis in this study followed a multi-layered approach that integrated both quantitative and qualitative techniques to gain a comprehensive understanding of how politeness strategies function in English conversation. On the quantitative side, the transcribed utterances from all conversations were systematically coded according to the four primary politeness strategies: positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, and bald-on-record. These coded instances were then tabulated to examine the frequency and distribution of each strategy across different variables, including interactional contexts (such as peer conversation, student–teacher exchanges, and task-based dialogues), speaker identity (native versus non-native English speakers), and gender. Microsoft Excel was employed to calculate percentages, generate cross-tabulations, and identify patterns in strategy use.

Qualitative analysis complemented the statistical findings by focusing on how the strategies were pragmatically and contextually used in real interactions. A discourse-based framework allowed for deeper exploration into the conversational functions of each politeness strategy, such as expressing solidarity, mitigating face threats, or maintaining social harmony. Thematic analysis was employed to group expressions according to their pragmatic features, such as the use of inclusive pronouns ("let's"), indirect hints ("It's cold in here"), and apologetic language ("I'm sorry to ask…"). Selected utterances were then categorized and exemplified to show how participants adapted their politeness strategies depending on the social dynamics of each conversation.

Triangulation

To enhance the validity and reliability of the research findings, the study adopted a multi-layered validation strategy, with methodological triangulation serving as a core principle. This involved the integration of three distinct but complementary data sources: recorded interaction data, participant demographic profiles, and a theoretically grounded coding framework for politeness strategies. The triangulation of these instruments allowed the researchers to cross-verify findings and ensure consistency between observed behavior, speaker characteristics, and the theoretical interpretation of language use. Additionally, member checking was implemented by selecting a representative subset of participants and sharing preliminary analyses with them. These participants were invited to review the researchers' interpretations of their conversational data to confirm the accuracy and authenticity of the findings, thus reinforcing the validity of the conclusions. To further mitigate the potential for researcher bias, reflexive memos were maintained throughout the coding and analysis phases. These memos documented the researchers' evolving perspectives, interpretive decisions, and possible assumptions that could influence the analytical process. By explicitly acknowledging and examining their positionality, the researchers maintained a critical stance toward their own role in shaping the analysis. This combination of triangulation, participant feedback, and ongoing reflexivity contributed to a rigorous and transparent research process that strengthens the overall trustworthiness of the study's outcomes.

FINDINGS

Table 1 presents the frequency of politeness strategies employed across four different types of English conversational settings: peer-to-peer interactions, student–teacher dialogues, group settings, and task-oriented exchanges. The table categorizes politeness strategies into four main types based on Brown and Levinson's framework: positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, and bald-on-record. By quantifying the occurrence of each strategy across these interactional contexts, the table provides a comparative overview that highlights how speakers adjust their pragmatic choices depending on social roles, power relations, and communication goals.

Table 1. Frequency of politeness strategies by conversation type

Politeness Strategy	Peer-to-Peer	Student–Teacher	Group Setting	Task-Oriented	Total
Positive Politeness	45	20	30	10	105
Negative Politeness	15	40	20	15	90
Off-Record	10	5	25	5	45
Bald-on-Record	5	3	2	30	40
Total	75	68	77	60	280

A closer look at the data reveals that positive politeness was the most frequently used strategy overall (105 instances), especially dominant in peer-to-peer conversations (45 instances), followed by group settings (30). This pattern suggests that in informal or egalitarian contexts, speakers often seek solidarity, express friendliness, and reduce social distance. In contrast, negative politeness was the leading strategy in student–teacher interactions (40 instances), indicating a higher emphasis on formality, deference, and respect for the interlocutor's autonomy—typical in hierarchical or academic relationships. Interestingly, off-record strategies appeared most prominently in group settings (25), possibly reflecting an indirect or face-saving approach in more socially complex interactions, where ambiguity may help maintain group harmony.

The data also show that bald-on-record strategies were most frequent in task-oriented conversations (30 instances), making it the dominant strategy in that context. This suggests that in situations where clarity, efficiency, and directness are prioritized—such as completing structured tasks—speakers tend to minimize politeness to avoid miscommunication. Comparatively, bald-on-record usage was minimal in more relational contexts like student–teacher and peer interactions. These findings demonstrate that politeness strategy usage is highly context-sensitive: speakers tailor their pragmatic choices not only to interpersonal dynamics but also to the functional demands of the interaction. This nuanced distribution underscores the importance of situational awareness in pragmatic competence.

Table 2 provides a breakdown of politeness strategy usage by speaker type, specifically comparing native and non-native English speakers. The table categorizes each type of politeness strategy—positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, and bald-on-record—and shows the frequency with which each group employed them. With a total of 280 strategies observed across all participants, the table highlights distinct patterns in how native and non-native

speakers approach politeness in spoken English, reflecting differences in pragmatic competence, cultural norms, and possibly language confidence.

Table 2. Politeness strategy use by speaker type (native vs. non-native)

Politeness Strategy	Native Speakers	Non-Native Speakers	Total
Positive Politeness	60	45	105
Negative Politeness	50	40	90
Off-Record	35	10	45
Bald-on-Record	25	15	40
Total	170	110	280

In general, native speakers used all four politeness strategies more frequently than non-native speakers, accounting for 170 out of 280 total instances. The most notable differences appear in the use of off-record strategies, where native speakers produced 35 instances compared to only 10 by non-native speakers. This suggests that native speakers may be more comfortable employing indirect or ambiguous language to convey politeness—possibly due to greater pragmatic fluency or familiarity with subtle conversational cues. Native speakers also showed a higher usage of negative politeness (50 vs. 40), indicating a stronger tendency to use strategies that emphasize respect and deference.

Meanwhile, non-native speakers demonstrated a relatively stronger reliance on positive politeness (45 instances), close to native speakers' count (60), showing their awareness of strategies that build rapport and solidarity. However, their lower use of off-record and bald-on-record strategies may point to a more cautious or formulaic approach to politeness, shaped by language learning contexts that emphasize clarity and safety over nuance. Overall, the table reveals that speaker type significantly influences the distribution of politeness strategies, and these differences may reflect varying levels of sociopragmatic awareness, linguistic confidence, and exposure to authentic conversational norms in English.

Table 3 presents a set of common expressions categorized according to the four main politeness strategies outlined in Brown and Levinson's framework: positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, and bald-on-record. For each strategy, the table provides example expressions and explains their pragmatic function in conversation. This collection illustrates how language users strategically modify their speech to manage interpersonal relationships, avoid offense, and achieve communicative goals in contextually appropriate ways. These examples help clarify how politeness operates not just in theory, but in everyday spoken interaction.

The positive politeness expressions in the table aim to reduce social distance and build a sense of camaraderie. Phrases like *"Hey buddy, how's it going?"* and *"You're really good at this, can you help me?"* are clearly designed to express friendliness, appreciation, and mutual cooperation. The use of compliments, inclusive pronouns (*"Let's work on this together"*), and casual tone helps speakers appear warm and approachable. These strategies are particularly useful in peer-to-peer interactions where fostering solidarity is valued.

In contrast, negative politeness expressions focus on showing respect and minimizing imposition. Statements such as *"Would you mind if I asked something?"* and *"If it's not too much trouble, may I...?"* reflect the speaker's effort to

acknowledge the hearer's autonomy and personal space. These expressions commonly feature hedges, modal verbs, and apologies to soften requests. Meanwhile, off-record strategies, like *"It's kind of cold in here, isn't it?"*, employ indirectness, leaving room for interpretation and thus avoiding direct confrontation. Bald-on-record expressions, such as *"Close the door"* or *"Stop talking now"*, are used when clarity and efficiency are prioritized over politeness, often in high-pressure or hierarchical situations. Together, the examples in this table provide a rich illustration of how speakers navigate social interactions using varied politeness strategies suited to different conversational goals and contexts.

Table 3. Common expressions representing each politeness strategy

Strategy	Example Expression	Function
Positive Politeness	Hey buddy, how's it going?	Builds rapport, expresses solidarity
Positive Politeness	You're really good at this, can you help me?	Compliments to create closeness
Positive Politeness	Let's work on this together, shall we?	Inclusive language to foster cooperation
Negative Politeness	Would you mind if I asked something?	Shows deference, minimizes imposition
Negative Politeness	I'm sorry to bother you, but could you...?	Polite request using apology
Negative Politeness	If it's not too much trouble, may I...?	Hedges to reduce imposition
Off-Record	It's kind of cold in here, isn't it?	Hints at request indirectly
Off-Record	Someone forgot to lock the door, I guess.	Implied criticism without direct blame
Off-Record	I wonder if there's a way to fix this...	Indirect suggestion
Bald-on-Record	Close the door.	Direct command
Bald-on-Record	Give me that report.	Blunt request for an object
Bald-on-Record	Stop talking now.	Immediate directive

Table 4 presents the gender differences in the usage of politeness strategies by male and female speakers. The table compares the frequency of four types of politeness strategies—positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, and bald-on-record—used by male and female participants. By examining these figures, the table provides insights into how gender may influence the application of politeness in English conversations, shedding light on potential patterns in interpersonal communication between men and women.

Table 4. Gender differences in politeness strategy usage

Politeness Strategy	Male Speakers	Female Speakers	Total
Positive Politeness	40	65	105
Negative Politeness	45	45	90
Off-Record	20	25	45
Bald-on-Record	25	15	40

In terms of positive politeness, female speakers used this strategy more frequently (65 instances) than male speakers (40 instances). This suggests that

women may be more inclined to employ strategies that build rapport, express solidarity, and foster cooperation in conversations. The use of positive politeness can be associated with nurturing communication styles often attributed to women, which aim to create warmth and closeness in social interactions. On the other hand, negative politeness strategies were used equally by both male and female speakers, with 45 instances each. This indicates that both genders value politeness in the form of deference and hedging, likely to mitigate the imposition on others and maintain social harmony in various contexts.

When examining off-record strategies, female speakers again used them slightly more (25 instances) than male speakers (20 instances), suggesting that women may be more inclined to use indirectness and hints in their conversations, perhaps reflecting a preference for maintaining face and avoiding confrontation. Conversely, bald-on-record strategies were used more frequently by male speakers (25 instances) than female speakers (15 instances). This points to a greater tendency among men to issue direct commands or blunt requests, which may be consistent with gendered communication patterns where men are sometimes more assertive and straightforward in their interactions. Overall, these gender-based differences in politeness strategy usage offer valuable insights into how social norms and gender roles can shape communicative behavior.

DISCUSSION

The study examines how politeness strategies in English conversations vary significantly depending on the context and the relationships between the speakers involved. It reveals that speakers adapt their communication styles based on the interaction type, highlighting that different strategies are employed in different settings. Positive politeness is more prevalent in peer-to-peer interactions, where speakers emphasize solidarity and camaraderie. Negative politeness, on the other hand, is crucial in more formal settings, such as student-teacher interactions, where speakers tend to show deference and respect for authority. Additionally, off-record strategies are strategically employed during group discussions, where the goal is to maintain harmony and avoid direct confrontation, while bald-on-record strategies are commonly used in task-oriented situations, where clarity and efficiency are key. These variations in politeness strategies not only align with the expectations of the conversational context but also suggest an inherent flexibility in how speakers navigate the social dynamics of their interactions. Moreover, the study further explores the differences between native and non-native speakers in the use of these politeness strategies, with native speakers often demonstrating a more nuanced approach to employing indirectness, while non-native speakers may show a more direct or overt style. Furthermore, notable gender differences also emerge in the data, with women tending to utilize more positive politeness strategies, which are generally seen as more accommodating and rapport-building, while men are more likely to be direct, reflecting the divergent social expectations placed upon them.

The findings of this study uncover significant patterns in how politeness strategies are used across a variety of conversational contexts. Notably, positive politeness was found to be most frequent in peer-to-peer interactions, where the social bond between speakers encourages the use of strategies aimed at fostering closeness. In contrast, negative politeness emerged as the dominant strategy in student-teacher dialogues, reflecting the formality and respect that characterize

these relationships. These results are closely aligned with existing literature, particularly Brown and Levinson's (1987) theoretical framework, which categorizes politeness strategies into four distinct types: positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, and bald-on-record. This framework continues to serve as a fundamental guide in understanding how conversational dynamics and social roles influence language use. It provides a structured lens through which the underlying motivations for language choices in different contexts can be understood, offering valuable insights into the broader cultural and social norms that shape communication.

One of the most striking outcomes of this research is the predominance of positive politeness in peer-to-peer conversations. This observation is consistent with Pasaribu et al. (2021), who demonstrated that individuals adapt their politeness strategies to fit their social relationships, particularly in informal contexts. In such settings, the use of positive politeness serves to reduce social distance, thereby facilitating smoother interactions. The findings align with Zhang and Simin (2021), who similarly found that teachers often employ positive politeness to establish rapport with their students. This suggests that rapport-building remains a critical component of effective communication, even in hierarchical settings such as education. Thus, regardless of the power imbalance between teacher and student, teachers often make a conscious effort to bridge the gap through the strategic use of politeness, reinforcing the importance of creating a positive, supportive learning environment.

Conversely, Mukharomah and Sumanto (2023) highlight the adaptive nature of politeness strategies within educational settings, noting that while positive politeness is common in peer interactions, the academic environment demands a shift in the dynamics of communication. The findings of this study contribute to this ongoing discussion by suggesting that a spectrum of politeness strategies is employed depending on the context, thereby reinforcing the idea that the context in which communication occurs plays a pivotal role in shaping strategic choices. This perspective emphasizes the fluid nature of politeness strategies and how they must adapt to various social contexts and conversational goals. The research further illuminates how social relationships, such as the student-teacher dynamic, influence the application of politeness strategies, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of communication in different settings.

In contrast, negative politeness strategies were found to be the most frequently employed in student-teacher communications, where formality and respect are highly prioritized. This finding echoes the work of Yaghoubzadeh (2021), who explored the ways in which speakers in hierarchical relationships, such as students and teachers, utilize language to show deference. The frequent use of negative politeness in these contexts highlights the importance of respecting authority and maintaining a certain level of formality, which is crucial in academic and professional interactions. Moreover, Zhao (2021) expands on this notion by discussing the significance of pragmatic distance in English writing, where formal politeness plays a similar role in ensuring clear and respectful communication. The findings of this study align with Holtgraves (2021), who argues that social context is a key determinant in the choice of politeness strategies. These results reinforce the idea that the use of politeness strategies is not arbitrary but instead reflects the social hierarchies and interpersonal dynamics at play in any given interaction.

Interestingly, the findings of this study reveal that off-record strategies were most frequently used in group interactions. This finding is consistent with the work of Chertian and Kuntjara (2020), who demonstrated how members of expatriate communities often employ indirect politeness strategies to negotiate their identities in ways that are culturally appropriate. The use of off-record strategies in group settings is often a tactic employed to maintain social harmony and prevent conflict, particularly when sensitive or contentious topics arise. This finding is further supported by Joll and Aree (2022), who argue that language choices in group settings are deeply influenced by the desire to maintain positive relationships and avoid potential tension. The reliance on indirectness in group settings reflects a broader cultural tendency to prioritize consensus and avoid confrontation, a strategy that allows speakers to navigate complex social interactions without jeopardizing their relationships.

In addition, the literature suggests that in more socially complex interactions, such as those found in group settings, the use of ambiguity can serve as a useful tactic to manage multiple social relationships simultaneously. This observation is echoed in the work of Ibrahim and Qura (2021), who argue that tailored speech acts in various contexts help individuals forge accessible identities and navigate diverse social landscapes. The nuanced use of off-record strategies in this study reflects the broader understanding of how individuals use language as a tool for social negotiation and relationship management, especially in complex, multicultural settings. The findings suggest that indirect communication is not merely a stylistic choice but a strategic maneuver to preserve group cohesion and manage the multifaceted dynamics that define group interactions.

The prevalence of bald-on-record strategies in task-oriented conversations highlights the need for clarity and directness, which is essential in contexts where efficiency is paramount. This is consistent with the findings of Robertson et al. (2021), who observed that language is often tailored to ensure that messages are clear and easily understood, particularly in high-pressure situations such as public health messaging. In such scenarios, speakers prioritize directness and simplicity to facilitate quick comprehension and action. Furthermore, Sumanti and Bram (2021) underscore the strategic use of interruptions and deference in structured communication, such as public speaking, where credibility and authority are crucial. In these cases, minimizing politeness and maximizing directness enables speakers to convey information more efficiently, reflecting the demands of the situation. Holtgraves (2021) also highlights that situational awareness plays a critical role in determining language choices, a concept that is confirmed by the findings of this study, which demonstrate that language use in task-oriented settings is driven by the need to convey information as clearly and quickly as possible.

The comparative analysis between native and non-native speakers provides additional insight into the use of politeness strategies in various contexts. The data indicates that native speakers tended to use all four politeness strategies more frequently than their non-native counterparts, particularly in the use of off-record strategies, where native speakers displayed a greater comfort with indirect communication. This finding is consistent with Wong and Esler (2020), who suggest that native speakers possess a more refined understanding of social norms and conventions, which allows them to navigate ambiguity with greater ease. The ability to use indirectness effectively is often a result of a deeper cultural

understanding of the social dynamics that influence communication, and this is reflected in the data from this study, which shows native speakers' higher frequency of off-record strategy use.

In contrast, the study found that non-native speakers employed positive politeness strategies at nearly the same rate as native speakers, suggesting that non-native speakers are actively trying to build rapport despite potential language limitations. This outcome supports research by Meiratnasari et al. (2020), who found that teachers play a crucial role in modeling polite behavior, which helps non-native speakers develop sociolinguistic competence. However, the study also indicates that non-native speakers were more cautious with the use of off-record strategies, which may be influenced by cultural norms that prioritize clarity over ambiguity. Pramujiono and Nurjati (2023) discuss this tendency in the context of language learning, highlighting how non-native speakers' use of directness may be shaped by their cultural and educational backgrounds.

Finally, the study touches upon the issue of gender-based differences in the use of politeness strategies. While not directly addressed in the findings, previous research has shown that gender norms and expectations often shape the way individuals communicate and choose politeness strategies. For instance, women tend to employ more positive politeness strategies, such as building rapport and using inclusive language, while men are often more direct and use strategies like bald-on-record to convey clarity (Pasaribu et al., 2021). This aligns with Holtgraves (2021), who notes that social roles and expectations influence communication styles, with women generally favoring strategies that foster connection and men opting for more straightforward approaches. Moreover, Yaghoubzadeh (2021) observed that women are more likely to use negative politeness strategies in formal settings, emphasizing deference and respect, while men tend to prioritize autonomy. These findings suggest that gender plays a significant role in shaping the use of politeness strategies, offering an interesting avenue for future research into how gender influences language use in various conversational settings.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals key findings regarding the frequency and distribution of politeness strategies used in English conversations across various interactional contexts. The results indicate that positive politeness strategies are prominently utilized in peer-to-peer settings, underscoring the importance of fostering relationships and reducing social distance. In contrast, negative politeness is predominantly observed in student-teacher interactions, highlighting a greater emphasis on formality and respect. These observations suggest that speakers intuitively adjust their use of politeness strategies based on the social dynamics and communication goals present in different contexts. Furthermore, the study implies that speaker-related variables, such as native versus non-native speaker status and gender, significantly influence the pragmatic choices made by individuals in conversation.

However, this study faces several limitations. The sample size may not fully capture the diversity of conversational contexts, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the focus was primarily on English conversations, which may not account for variations in politeness strategies across different languages or cultures. Future research should aim to broaden the scope by including a more

diverse participant base and exploring the use of politeness strategies in multilingual interactions. Investigating the impact of cultural influences on politeness could also provide deeper insights into how these strategies function in varied communication contexts.

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