

Politeness Strategies in Influencer Check-in Content on TikTok: A Pragmatic Study of Digital Consumer Interaction

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Abstract. *Effective communication is an important aspect in the hospitality industry as it affects the quality of service and guest satisfaction. The development of social media also makes hospitality services represented through digital platforms such as TikTok. This study aims to analyze the use of politeness strategies in TikTok content that displays the interaction between receptionists and guests during the hotel check-in process. The research uses a qualitative approach with a pragmatic discourse analysis method. The data consisted of 50 speeches obtained from five TikTok videos and an analysis based on Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness strategies. The results showed three types of politeness strategies, namely positive politeness, negative politeness, and bald on-record, while off-record strategies were not found. Positive politeness was the most dominant strategy, followed by negative politeness and bald on-record. The findings of the study show that the politeness strategy plays a role in building effective communication while representing the quality of hospitality services on social media. This research has implications for the development of pragmatic studies, especially regarding politeness strategies in hospitality communication in the digital environment.*

Keywords: Digital communication; Hospitality; Politeness strategy; Pragmatics; TikTok.

Abstrak: Komunikasi yang efektif merupakan aspek penting dalam industri perhotelan, karena memengaruhi kualitas layanan dan kepuasan tamu. Perkembangan media sosial juga menjadikan layanan perhotelan direpresentasikan melalui platform digital seperti TikTok. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis penggunaan strategi kesantunan dalam konten TikTok yang menampilkan interaksi antara resepsionis dan tamu pada proses check-in hotel. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode analisis wacana pragmatik. Data terdiri atas 50 tuturan yang diperoleh dari lima video TikTok dan analisis berdasarkan teori strategi kesantunan Brown dan Levinson. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan tiga jenis strategi kesantunan, yaitu kesantunan positif, kesantunan negatif, dan bald on-record, sedangkan strategi off-record tidak ditemukan. Kesantunan positif merupakan strategi yang paling dominan, diikuti oleh kesantunan negataif dan bald on-record. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi kesantunan berperan dalam membangun komunikasi yang efektif sekaligus merepresentasikan kualitas layanan perhotelan di media sosial. Penelitian ini berimplikasi pada pengembangan kajian pragmatik, khususnya mengenai strategi kesantunan dalam komunikasi perhotelan di lingkungan digital.

Kata kunci: Hospitality; Komunikasi digital; Pragmatik; Strategi kesantunan; TikTok.

1. BACKGROUND

Communication is one of the most important aspects of hospitality industry, as it directly affects service quality and guest satisfaction. Interactions between hotel staff and guests serve not only as a means of conveying information but also as a way to build positive interpersonal relationships. In the context of hotel service, receptionists are the frontline staff who interact directly with guests; therefore, the use of appropriate language is essential to create a professional, friendly, and responsive impression. Service quality is a strategic factor that directly influences guest satisfaction and loyalty in the hospitality industry

Anabila et al., (2022) . Therefore, the ability of hotel staff to deliver service professionally and responsively is a crucial component in maintaining the quality of guest interactions and experiences.

One aspect of communication that has been heavily studied in the field of pragmatics is politeness strategy. Brown (1987) explains that politeness strategies are used to minimize threats to the interlocutor's face and maintain harmonious social relationships. In the hospitality industry, politeness strategies play a crucial role because they enable hotel staff to convey information, provide instructions, and handle guest requests without creating an impression that is threatening or impolite. Thus, politeness strategies are a key element in fostering professional service that is focused on guest satisfaction.

The development of digital technology has brought about changes in communication practices across various sectors, including the hospitality industry. The rise of social media has made it possible for various forms of service interactions to be showcased and disseminated to the public. One platform that currently wields significant influence is TikTok. TikTok is a platform that fosters technological mimesis and the formation of an imitative public, where users tend to widely reproduce and imitate content within their communities Zulli & Zulli (2022). The TikTok platform also influences users' language politeness patterns, indicating that TikTok content has a tangible impact on language practices within the digital environment Anggraeni & Robandi (2023). In this context, TikTok influencers play a significant role in representing hospitality service interactions to millions of digital audiences, making their content a relevant subject for pragmatic analysis. Within the hospitality sector, this phenomenon has prompted many content creators to showcase simulations or documentation of interactions between receptionists and guests, particularly during the hotel check-in process. Such content not only serves as entertainment but can also shape the audience's perceptions regarding service quality, staff professionalism, and a hotel's image Djafarova & Trofimenko (2019).

Research on politeness strategies in hospitality communication has been conducted by a number of researchers. Positive and negative politeness strategies are frequently used in hotel service interactions to maintain good relations between staff and guests Dewi et al. (2017). The use of politeness strategies by receptionists plays a role in creating effective and professional communication during the service process Fernández-Amaya (2022). Additionally, politeness contributes to improved service quality and customer satisfaction Ernawati et al. (2022). Aprianto (2023) demonstrates that positive politeness and negative politeness strategies are

dominant in interactions between speakers with different institutional roles, indicating that both strategies play a crucial role in maintaining smooth communication across various interaction contexts, including hotel service interactions. The use of polite language can also reinforce a hotel's positive image in the eyes of guests Noorani (2024). Additionally, positive politeness strategies, particularly those manifested through greetings and offers of assistance, are the dominant strategies employed by hotel receptionists because they are effective in fostering hospitality and comfort for guests Purnomo (2025). The use of politeness strategies in hotel discourse is also influenced by communication styles and speaker characteristics Dari et al. (2025). In addition to the hospitality sector, politeness strategies have also been extensively studied in the context of digital communication. The use of politeness strategies by content creators can increase audience engagement and strengthen interactions on social media Rahmayanti et al. (2025). Meanwhile, politeness strategies on TikTok can be manifested not only through verbal language but also through visual and symbolic elements such as emojis and nonverbal expressions Rizkya et al. (2025).

TikTok has also become the subject of research in the fields of tourism and hospitality. Tourism content on TikTok influences users' perceptions and their decisions regarding destination selection Huang et al. (2024). Additionally, experience-based content shared on TikTok can influence the behavioral intentions of the audience Liu et al. (2024). These findings indicate that TikTok functions not only as an entertainment platform but also as a communication space capable of shaping public perceptions of an organization's services and quality.

Although various studies on politeness strategies, digital communication, and TikTok have been conducted, there remains a research gap that warrants further investigation. Most previous studies have focused on face-to-face hospitality communication, telephone service conversations, or digital communication in general. Research specifically examining politeness strategies in hospitality-themed TikTok content, particularly that featuring interactions between receptionists and guests during the hotel check-in process, remains limited. Furthermore, previous studies rarely discuss how politeness strategies function not only as a means of interpersonal communication but also as a representation of hospitality service quality in the digital environment. Research comparing the representations of politeness strategies displayed by Indonesian receptionists in domestic and international hospitality contexts is also relatively scarce.

Based on this research gap, this study aims to analyze the types and functions of politeness strategies used in TikTok content depicting hotel check-in interactions between receptionists and guests. This study also aims to examine the representation of politeness strategies used by Indonesian receptionists in the context of domestic and international hospitality. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of pragmatic studies, particularly regarding politeness strategies in hospitality communication within a digital environment.

2. THEORETICAL STUDIES

Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that examines the meaning of language based on the context of its use. Pragmatics is the study of the meaning conveyed by the speaker and interpreted by the listener Yule (1996). The meaning of an utterance is determined not only by linguistic elements but also by the social context underlying the communication. Pragmatics examines the relationship between language and context that enables a person to understand the intent of an utterance Levinson (1983). Thus, pragmatics serves as a relevant approach for analyzing language use in hospitality service interactions because it highlights the relationship between the speaker, the addressee, and the communicative situation.

The Theory of Politeness Strategies

One of the key areas of study in pragmatics is politeness strategies. Every individual has a self-image, or “face,” that needs to be preserved in social interactions Brown, (1987). To reduce the likelihood of threats to this self-image (Face-Threatening Acts), speakers employ various politeness strategies.

Politeness strategies are categorized into four types: bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record Brown (1987). The bald on-record strategy is used when the speaker conveys a message directly without attempting to mitigate the threat to the addressee. Positive politeness is used to demonstrate familiarity, solidarity, concern, and a positive relationship with the addressee. Negative politeness aims to respect the freedom and autonomy of the addressee, so it is typically expressed through more subtle or indirect requests. Meanwhile, off-record is a strategy that conveys the intended meaning indirectly, requiring the addressee to interpret the intended meaning.

In the context of hospitality services, politeness strategies serve to maintain good relations between receptionists and guests. The appropriate use of politeness strategies can help

hotel staff provide professional service while creating a comfortable atmosphere for guests. Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness strategies is relevant for analyzing various formal and institutional discourse contexts, which reinforces the validity of using this theory in this study Rajik (2025).

Politeness Strategies in Hospitality Communication and Digital Media

Research on politeness strategies in hospitality communication indicates that politeness plays a crucial role in delivering high-quality service. Hotel receptionists tend to employ both positive and negative politeness strategies to maintain harmonious relationships with guests Dewi et al. (2017). Furthermore, positive politeness strategies are the most frequently used in hotel service interactions because they create a friendly and comfortable atmosphere Purnomo (2025). In the digital age, politeness strategies are not only found in face-to-face communication but also in communication via social media. The use of politeness strategies by content creators can increase audience interaction and engagement on social media Rahmayanti et al. (2025). Meanwhile, politeness strategies on TikTok can be manifested through both verbal and nonverbal elements, such as the use of emojis, facial expressions, and other visual symbols Rizkya et al. (2025).

These findings indicate that politeness strategies not only serve to maintain interpersonal relationships but also play a role in building a positive image and capturing the audience's attention in the digital environment. Therefore, Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness strategies was used as the primary framework in this study to analyze the interactions between receptionists and guests depicted in hospitality-themed TikTok content.

3. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using pragmatic discourse analysis. The study focuses on analyzing politeness strategies in interactions between receptionists and guests in hospitality-themed TikTok content. The research model employed is pragmatic discourse analysis within a politeness strategy framework encompassing bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record Brown (1987).

The data sources for this study are five TikTok videos depicting hotel check-in interactions between receptionists and guests. Data selection was conducted using purposive sampling based on predetermined criteria. Of the five videos, three feature receptionists working at domestic hotels and two feature receptionists working at international hotels. A

total of 50 utterances containing politeness strategies were obtained from the videos as research data.

Table 1. TikTok Data Sources of Hotel Receptionist-Guest Interactions

No	Creator/Account	Year	Interaction Context	TikTok Link	Time
1.	Cheonsa.piyy	2026	Nasional Hotel check-in interaction	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9nWnM6F/	02:39
2.	Cheonsa.piyy	2026	Nasional Hotel check-in interaction	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9nW4YF8/	02:55
3.	Antonius Haryadi	2026	International Hotel check-in interaction	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9nT6trA/	01:52
4.	Antonius Haryadi	2026	International Hotel check-in interaction	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9nWCdem/	01:03
5.	Antonius Haryadi	2026	International Hotel check-in interaction	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9nWmDMH/	01:06

Data collection was conducted through documentation and non-participant observation. Videos were downloaded, watched repeatedly, and then transcribed into text. Relevant utterances were recorded and classified based on the categories of politeness strategies proposed by Brown (1987). The research instrument was the researcher as a human instrument, supported by a data classification sheet.

Data analysis was conducted in several stages, namely data reduction, data classification based on the type of politeness strategy, interpretation of speech functions, and drawing conclusions. Data validity was ensured through diligent observation and consistent analysis, taking into account the context of the speech in each video.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of data analysis obtained from five TikTok videos featuring hotel check-in interactions between receptionists and guests. The collection of data was carried out in April 2026 from videos uploaded during 2026 by two TikTok accounts, namely Cheonsa.piyy (domestic hotel receptionist in Indonesia) and Antonius Haryadi (international hotel receptionist abroad). The research location is virtual, namely the social media platform TikTok, which is publicly accessible. From the total data analyzed, 50 speeches were found that contained politeness strategies based on Brown's (1987). The results of the data analysis are then discussed in relation to the basic pragmatic theory of politeness and the findings of previous research.

Research Results

An analysis of 50 speeches found in five TikTok videos revealed three types of politeness strategies, namely positive politeness, negative politeness, and on-record baldness.

No off-record strategies were found in the data analyzed. The frequency distribution of the three strategies is presented in the following table 1.

Table 2. Frequency of Politeness Strategies in Hotel Check-in TikTok Videos

Strategy	Frequency
Positive Politeness	22
Negative Politeness	20
Bald on-record	8
Off - record	0

The frequency data in Table 2 was obtained from transcription and speech coding from five TikTok videos. A total of 50 speeches were identified and classified into centrifugal categories of politeness. Positive politeness emerged as the most dominant strategy with 22 occurrences, followed by negative politeness with 20 occurrences, and bald on-record with 8 occurrences. Meanwhile, no off-record strategies were found throughout the overall data.

Positive Politeness

Positive politeness often appears through greetings, welcoming expressions, offers of help, and expressions of appreciation to guests. Here is a speech that illustrates the use of positive politeness strategies in the data: "Welcome to Aston Hotel" (video 1, 00:58), "How may I assist you?" (video 5, 00:01), "Thank you for your loyalty to Marriott" (video 3, 00:16), "Welcome back, sir" (video 4, 00:20), "if you need any help just let me know" (video 3, 01:41 and video 5, 00:56). The speeches show the receptionist's efforts to create hospitality and build positive interpersonal relationships with guests.

Negative Politeness

Negative politeness is generally manifested through indirect requests and polite questions. The following remarks are categorized as negative politeness: "Can you do registration first?" (video 1, 00:11 and video 2, 00:08), "May I see your ID please?" (video 3, 00:06), "May I have your last name?" (video 4, 00:05), "Is that fine for you?" (video 4, 00:34), "How many keys would you like?" (video 3, 00:21 and video 4, 00:35). These speeches show that the receptionist is trying to minimize pressure and maintain respectful communication with guests.

Bald On-Record

The bald-on record strategy arises when the receptionist delivers direct information regarding hotel procedures and facilities. The following utterances were identified as bald on-record: "The restaurant is right behind you" (video 3, 01:16), "Wifi is open so you just join" (video 5, 00:45), "The room it's going to be level 5" (video 1, 01:39), "Breakfast is from 6 to

10" (video 2, 01:22), "Tomorrow morning we will have water maintenance" (video 3, 01:24). These speeches are delivered in a relaxed and clear manner because the receptionist prioritizes the efficiency and clarity of information during service interactions.

Off-record

No off-record strategies were found in the data. The absence of indirect expressions suggests that hotel receptionists tend to avoid ambiguity in service interactions. Clear and direct communication is preferred to ensure guests understand the information accurately during the check-in process.

Discussion

Overall, the results show that positive politeness is the dominant strategy used in hotel check-in interactions on TikTok, followed by negative politeness and bald on-record. These findings are further discussed based on their relevance to Brown's (1987) basic theory of decency and its compatibility with the results of previous research.

Positive politeness

Positive politeness was identified as the most dominant strategy in this research data. The "Welcome back sir" speech (video 4, 00:20) is categorized as positive politeness because the receptionist tries to create closeness and friendliness to guests through welcoming expressions. Similarly, the saying "How may I assist you?" (video 5, 00:01) reflects positive politeness because the receptionist offers help politely and shows concern for guests. The function of this strategy is to reduce social distancing, create comfort for guests, and build a friendly atmosphere during the check-in process.

Positive politeness is used to show solidarity and maintain a harmonious interpersonal relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor Brown (1987). The results of this study support this theory because the receptionist uses friendly and attentive expressions to build a positive relationship with guests during interactions. These findings are in line with Purnomo's (2025) research, which found that positive politeness strategies are commonly used by hotel receptionists to create a friendly and professional service atmosphere. In addition, the strategy of politeness in digital communication helps create positive perceptions and increase audience engagement Rahmayanti et al. (2025).

Negative Politeness

Negative politeness often comes in the form of indirect requests and polite questions. Say "May I see your ID, please?" (Video 3, 00:06) is categorized as negative politeness because the receptionist conveys requests indirectly and politely while still respecting the guests'

freedom. Similarly, the saying "Is that okay for you?" (video 4, 00:34) reflects negative politeness as the receptionist seeks to confirm the guest's choice without imposing a decision directly. The function of this strategy is to minimize pressure on guests, maintain polite communication, and make guests feel comfortable during the hotel service process.

Negative politeness serves to respect freedom of speech and reduce pressure in communication Brown (1987). The results of this study support this theory because the receptionist consistently uses indirect and polite expressions during check-in interactions. These findings are also in line with the research of Dari et al., (2025), which found that negative politeness is widely used in hospitality communication to maintain professionalism and polite interaction between staff and guests. And polite questions help create comfortable communication in the interaction of hospitality services Sulasmini & Benu (2026).

Bald On-Record

The bald on-record strategy arises when the receptionist relays information directly regarding hotel procedures and facilities. The speech "The restaurant is right behind you" (video 3, 01:16) is categorized as bald on-record because the receptionist conveys information freely and clearly without any additional markers of politeness. Similarly, the saying "Breakfast is from 6 to 10" (video 2, 01:22) reflects the on-record bald because the receptionist prioritizes efficiency and clarity in explaining the hotel's facilities. The function of this strategy is to provide clear, direct, and accurate information so that there are no misunderstandings during the check-in process.

The bald on-record strategy is used when the speaker prioritizes efficiency and clarity over interpersonal considerations Brown (1987). The results of this study support this theory because receptionists use direct speech in situations that require the delivery of information quickly and accurately. These findings are in line with the research of Noorani (2024) who found that direct communication contributes to the effectiveness of communication in hospitality services. In addition, the delivery of direct information is important to maintain service efficiency and guest satisfaction in the interaction of the hotel Purnomo (2025).

Off-Record

Off-record strategies were not found in the five TikTok videos analyzed in the study. Off-record strategies involve indirect or ambiguous expressions that allow the interlocutor to interpret meaning freely Brown (1987). Examples of off-record strategies in the context of hospitality are for example speech such as "The lobby is still very crowded right now" which

can imply that guests need to wait without stating it directly. However, the receptionists in this study data tended to use direct and explicit communication during the check-in process.

The absence of an off-record strategy indicates that receptionists prioritize clarity, professionalism, and communication efficiency in conveying hotel information and procedures. The use of communication that is too indirect has the potential to cause misunderstandings in service interactions. Therefore, the receptionist prefers to convey information clearly and directly so that guests can easily understand the hotel's procedures. These findings are in line with the research of Purnomo (2025) and Dari et al. (2025), which stated that hospitality communication generally emphasizes direct and professional interaction to ensure effective service and guest satisfaction.

The Difference Between Indonesian Receptionists Working Domestically and Abroad

The findings of the study also show that there is a difference between Indonesian receptionists who work in local hotels and Indonesian receptionists who work abroad. These differences are discussed below based on the data found.

Receptionists Working Domestically

The receptionists in Videos 1 and 2 tend to use more casual and personal expressions, including small talk about the shopping and travel experience, such as "Where do you guys go for the shopping?" and "It's first time to come here by the way?". This style of communication creates a more relaxed and intimate atmosphere of interaction, and reflects a more communicative style of hospitality service in a local context.

Receptionist Working Abroad

In contrast, the receptionist in Videos 3, 4, and 5 uses more formal and procedural expressions, such as "May I see your ID please?", "How many keys would you like?", and "Is that okay for you?". This speech reflects the more standardized and professional style of communication as commonly found in international hospitality services. Receptionists who work abroad also tend to use more structured service procedures as well as more formal expressions of courtesy during interactions.

These findings suggest that the work environment, international service standards, and communication culture can influence receptionists' use of politeness strategies. Although both groups strive to maintain guest hospitality and comfort, receptionists working abroad appear to be more consistent in prioritizing professionalism and clarity of procedures than receptionists working in local hotels. This has theoretical implications that socio-cultural context factors and work environment also shape the choice of politeness strategies, as stated by Brown and

Levinson (1987) that social distance and relative power influence the realization of politeness strategies in interactions.

5. CONCLUSION

This study analyzes the types and functions of politeness strategies in TikTok content that displays hotel check-in interactions between receptionists and guests based on theory (Brown, 1987). The results of the analysis of 50 speeches from five TikTok videos showed that there were three types of politeness strategies used, namely positive politeness, negative politeness, and bald on-record, while off-record strategies were not found in the data. Positive politeness is the most dominant strategy and functions to build friendliness, reduce social distance, and create a comfortable service atmosphere. Negative politeness serves to respect the autonomy of guests and maintain the professionalism of communication through indirect requests. The on-record bald is used to convey procedural information efficiently and clearly. The absence of an off-record strategy reflects the tendency of receptionists to prioritize clarity and accuracy of information in service interactions. In addition, there are differences in communication styles between receptionists who work domestically and abroad, where international receptionists tend to use more formal and standardized expressions.

This study has limitations on the relatively small amount of data, namely 50 utterances from five TikTok videos, so generalization of findings needs to be done with caution. Further research is recommended to expand the number of data and video sources so that the results of the analysis are more representative. In addition, future research may examine politeness strategies in hospitality content on other digital platforms or by considering nonverbal aspects more deeply.

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