

# Politeness Strategies in The Interview Between Taylor Swift and Jimmy Fallon

Rizki Putra Rendra<sup>1</sup>, Nurma Dhona Handayani<sup>2</sup>

Universitas Putera Batam, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup> pb181210053@upbatam.ac.id, <sup>2</sup> nurma@puterabatam.ac.id

## Abstract

This research employs a descriptive qualitative design to analyze the politeness strategies used in the interview between Taylor Swift and Jimmy Fallon on The Tonight Show. The study aims to explore how these strategies help maintain rapport and manage social dynamics between the speakers. Data was collected from the interview transcript, focusing on four politeness strategies outlined by Brown and Levinson (1987): bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategies. The data collection process involved transcribing the interview, identifying politeness strategies, and categorizing the utterances accordingly. For data analysis, the pragmatic identity method and the equalizing technique were applied, allowing the researcher to examine how the speakers manage social identity and maintain balance in the interaction. The findings revealed the frequency of each strategy: positive politeness was used 16 times, off-record strategies appeared 7 times, negative politeness was observed 6 times, and bald on record was used 3 times. These results show that positive politeness was the most frequent strategy, underscoring its importance in fostering solidarity and rapport in media conversations.

**Keywords:** Politeness Strategies; Social Dynamics; Linguistic Pragmatics; Interview Discourse

## INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a medium for communication through which individuals convey ideas, emotions, and intentions, and its use is deeply shaped by social factors such as culture, power relations, and social roles. The concept of face, introduced by Goffman (1967), refers to an individual's projected self-image that is continuously negotiated in interaction with others. Maintaining face is crucial in social interaction, as it helps preserve respect, social harmony, and interpersonal relationships. Contemporary pragmatic research has further developed Goffman's notion of face by emphasizing its relational and interactional nature, viewing face as a dynamic phenomenon shaped by cultural norms and communicative practices rather than a fixed individual attribute (House & Kádár, 2024). When face is threatened through communicative acts, speakers employ politeness strategies to manage or mitigate such threats. These strategies are systematically described in Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, which categorizes them into bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategies.

Brown and Levinson (1987) describe four politeness strategies that speakers may employ to avoid or mitigate the impact of face-threatening acts (FTAs): bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategies. Positive politeness functions to reduce social distance by emphasizing solidarity, shared interests, and interpersonal closeness, whereas negative politeness acknowledges the addressee's autonomy by minimizing imposition. Off-record strategies rely on indirectness and ambiguity, allowing speakers to avoid explicit

responsibility for potentially face-threatening meanings, while bald-on-record strategies involve direct and unmitigated expressions, typically used when efficiency is prioritized or when contextual norms permit such directness. Brown and Levinson further argue that the selection of these strategies is influenced by three key factors: relative power between interlocutors, social distance, and the rank of imposition involved in the act. Recent empirical research in cross-cultural communication confirms the continued relevance of these factors, demonstrating that the realization and preference of politeness strategies vary across cultural contexts and social structures (Handriani et al., 2025). Their findings show that cultural norms significantly shape how politeness strategies are selected and interpreted, reinforcing the view that politeness is a context-sensitive and culturally embedded phenomenon.

Furthermore, Holmes (1995) highlights how gender plays a significant role in the use of politeness strategies. According to Holmes, women tend to use more positive politeness strategies, emphasizing warmth, closeness, and solidarity, while men are more likely to use negative politeness strategies to preserve their independence and avoid intrusiveness. This distinction underscores the social and cultural dimensions of politeness, suggesting that gender influences not only the strategies individuals choose but also how these strategies are perceived in different contexts. Other scholars, like Leech (1983), have built on these concepts, proposing additional insights into the use of politeness as a way to maintain social balance and harmony. An example of politeness strategies in real life can be found in President Biden's remarks on Afghanistan in August 2021, where his communication style fluctuated between positive politeness and bald-on-record strategies. For instance, in addressing the situation in Afghanistan, he used positive politeness when speaking to the public, saying, "We love you too much" and "I just look at it constantly. Like, it's not... it doesn't feel in any way normal for me," displaying warmth and camaraderie. Conversely, his statements on the situation itself, where he took direct responsibility for the U.S.'s actions, were more bald-on-record, with a clear and unambiguous message: "It was the best possible case scenario".

In an interview with Taylor Swift, when discussing her engagement, she uses positive politeness when saying, "I just like, He's just my favorite person I've ever met," which aims to express solidarity and affection while maintaining a friendly tone. Meanwhile, when she apologizes for taking over the conversation, she uses negative politeness, saying, "I'm sorry I've taken this over," demonstrating deference and minimizing the potential imposition on the interviewer. The study of politeness strategies extends beyond films or formal settings and is highly applicable to everyday situations, including interviews. In interviews, politeness is often essential to maintaining rapport and avoiding face-threatening behaviors. According to Holmes (1995), in her exploration of language and gender, politeness in interviews is particularly important as it allows individuals to navigate power dynamics while also demonstrating respect for the other person's face needs. Holmes argues that speakers employ both positive and negative politeness strategies to manage interpersonal relationships and avoid social discord. The study of politeness in interviews helps us understand how speakers manage the delicate balance of expressing opinions while respecting social hierarchies and relational dynamics. This insight shows how politeness is not just about following social norms, but about actively shaping the flow of conversation to achieve mutual understanding.

Before this study, there were several studies that focused on the application of politeness strategies in various forms of media, including films. One such study was conducted by (Kasim & Satria, 2024), which explored the use of politeness strategies in the movie *A Walk to Remember*. Using Brown and Levinson's theory, the study identified instances of positive and negative politeness, bald-on-record, and off-record strategies. The researchers found that

positive politeness was used most frequently, particularly in building solidarity between characters, while bald-on-record was used for direct confrontations between characters. This study contributed to understanding how politeness strategies are employed in cinematic dialogue and how they reflect relational dynamics in narrative structures.

In another study, Sandjaja and Afriana (2024) analyzed politeness strategies in social media interactions, focusing on Instagram posts by Jennie from BLACKPINK. Their research, based on Brown and Levinson's theory, revealed that the most prevalent strategy was positive politeness, particularly in compliments and supportive comments. They found that Jennie's fans often employed positive politeness strategies to express admiration and solidarity, reinforcing social bonds online.

While previous studies on politeness strategies have primarily focused on media texts like movies or social media, the present study connects these theoretical frameworks to real-world interactions, such as interviews. Both previous studies and this current study observe the dominance of positive politeness as a strategy for enhancing social bonds. However, the present research highlights off-record and bald-on-record strategies more distinctly in direct interviews, a feature not as apparent in social media interactions or movie dialogues. This suggests that the context of interaction significantly influences the choice of strategy.

The present study brings a novel approach to understanding politeness strategies by focusing on real-world interviews and contrasting them with media-based studies. Unlike earlier works, which were largely based on movies and social media, this research highlights how politeness strategies manifest in more structured and formal settings, such as interviews. The main novelty lies in bridging these contexts to explore how politeness strategies adjust based on the social distance, power dynamics, and the nature of the relationship between the participants in real-life conversations.

Politeness in linguistics refers to the strategies individuals use to mitigate the impact of face-threatening acts (FTAs) and to manage social relationships during interaction. It plays a crucial role in maintaining rapport, showing respect, and ensuring smooth communication in both formal and informal contexts. From a contemporary pragmatic perspective, politeness is understood as a socially and historically grounded phenomenon that regulates interpersonal behavior and helps maintain social order by protecting interactants' public image, or face, as well as their relational ties (Jucker, 2020). As the study of language continues to evolve, politeness has become a central concern in the analysis of communication, particularly in interviews and media interactions where social roles, power relations, and audience presence intensify face concerns. In line with this view, Holmes (1995) emphasizes that politeness is not merely a theoretical construct but an everyday communicative practice through which individuals negotiate relationships and social expectations.

The concept of face was first introduced by Goffman (1967), who defined it as the image or self-concept that an individual projects and seeks to maintain in social interaction. A Face-Threatening Act (FTA) occurs when a speaker's actions or utterances potentially damage another person's face, such as through criticism, confrontation, or challenges to social identity. According to Goffman, face is performed and negotiated through interaction, and any threat to that performance may disrupt relational balance. Expanding this view, (Spencer-Oatey, 2008) conceptualizes face within a broader framework of rapport management, emphasizing that face concerns are closely linked to the maintenance of social relationships, interactional goals, and contextual norms. From this perspective, face involves not only personal self-image but also expectations of respect, association, and appropriate behavior in interaction. Face is commonly understood as having two dimensions: positive face, referring to the desire to be liked, approved

of, and respected, and negative face, referring to the desire for autonomy and freedom from imposition. Understanding FTAs is therefore crucial for analyzing how politeness strategies function in social exchanges. As noted by Culpeper (1996), FTAs play a critical role in interactional dynamics and often motivate the strategic use of politeness to maintain smooth and effective communication.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory is one of the most influential frameworks for understanding politeness in communication. They identified three main strategies for managing FTAs: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategies.

a. Bald on record

Bald on record is the most direct of the politeness strategies, where the speaker makes a statement or request without any attempt to mitigate the potential face-threatening impact. It involves making a clear and unambiguous statement that does not consider the listener's desires or social boundaries. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), bald on record strategies are typically used when there is little concern for face or when the social relationship between the speakers allows for such directness. This strategy is often employed in situations of high familiarity, dominance, or where efficiency and clarity are prioritized.

For instance, in the movie *How to Train Your Dragon: Homecoming*, Gobber's statement "Ta-ta-da, we're doomed" (Ramadhan & Afriana, 2024) exemplifies bald on record. This utterance makes a direct and blunt declaration of doom without attempting to soften the impact on others, reflecting a clear, unambiguous expression of his perception of the situation (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

b. Positive Politeness

This strategy is used to enhance the positive face of the other person, emphasizing shared values and interests. It often involves showing solidarity, agreement, and affection. Positive politeness is typically used when speakers want to build rapport, show warmth, and establish a connection with the listener. Holmes (1995) emphasizes that positive politeness helps create and reinforce social bonds and is often used when there is a need for solidarity between speakers.

In one example from the movie *Turning Red*, when Mei says to her friend Abby, "Let's burn this place to the ground!" (Marfirah & Ambalegin, 2023), the speaker uses the inclusive "Let's" to create solidarity and express a shared goal. By using the collective "we" in the statement, Mei not only seeks agreement but also reduces any potential face-threatening behavior by involving Abby in the action. This shows how positive politeness enhances group solidarity and facilitates smooth communication (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

c. Negative Politeness

This strategy focuses on minimizing the imposition on the other person's autonomy. It seeks to avoid threatening the listener's negative face (the desire not to be imposed upon or intruded upon). Negative politeness is marked by indirectness, hedging, and deference, such as using polite requests, apologies, or mitigation. According to Leech (2014), negative politeness strategies are vital in hierarchical or formal settings where maintaining autonomy and respect for personal boundaries is crucial.

An example from the analysis in "The Uglies" movie demonstrates negative politeness through the character's use of indirectness and hesitation. For instance, in a tense conversation, one character states, "Well, maybe a night back at the dorms will help you remember?" (Ranti & Mubarak, 2025). This phrase softens the directness of a demand, allowing the listener to interpret the suggestion without feeling directly imposed upon. By using hedging and suggesting an action indirectly, the speaker respects the autonomy of the listener and maintains social harmony, demonstrating the core of negative politeness.

d. Off-record

This strategy involves the indirect or ambiguous communication of an FTA, allowing the speaker to avoid taking responsibility for their words or actions. Off-record strategies include hints, metaphors, or other indirect expressions that leave the listener to interpret the message on their own. As noted by Brown and Levinson (1987), off-record strategies can be effective when speakers want to avoid the direct imposition of an FTA while still conveying their intentions subtly. For example, in the movie *The Princess Diaries*, Mia says, “Maybe I’m not cut out for this... I’m not sure if I can do it.” (Gulo & Afriana, 2024) This utterance is an example of off-record politeness, where Mia subtly hints at her uncertainty without directly stating her lack of readiness to be a princess. By expressing doubt indirectly, Mia avoids the direct confrontation or pressure that would come with outright rejecting the role, allowing her grandmother to interpret her feelings without feeling imposed upon. Off-record strategies are especially effective when maintaining social harmony is more important than direct clarity, particularly in sensitive or delicate situations. These four strategies provide a framework for analyzing how politeness is negotiated in different social interactions, particularly when speakers must navigate potential threats to face in delicate or formal situations. The application of these strategies helps ensure that communication remains effective without threatening the social harmony between participants.

## METHOD

This research adopts a descriptive qualitative design to analyze the politeness strategies used in the interview between Taylor Swift and Jimmy Fallon. Descriptive qualitative research is particularly effective for examining and interpreting language use in its natural context, especially when the objective is to provide a detailed and nuanced account of the phenomena under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Such an approach allows researchers to explore meaning, patterns, and interactional functions without manipulating or controlling the data, thereby preserving the authenticity of naturally occurring discourse. In line with this view, Miles et al. (2014) emphasize that qualitative analysis enables a systematic interpretation of verbal interaction by identifying recurring patterns and socially meaningful practices within real communicative events. Accordingly, this study aims to explore the various politeness strategies employed by the interview participants, with particular attention to how these strategies function in building rapport and managing social dynamics. The data for this research are drawn from the transcript of an interview between Taylor Swift and Jimmy Fallon on *The Tonight Show*, which provides a rich source of naturally occurring conversational data suitable for qualitative pragmatic analysis.

The data collection process in this study follows the method and technique outlined by Sudaryanto (2015) for linguistic analysis. Observational method involves the researcher observing the speech act of the participants and identifying relevant occurrences of politeness strategies. In this study, the interview was carefully observed to detect instances where politeness strategies were used. The note-taking technique refers to the systematic documentation of observed data through transcription and analytic notes. In qualitative research, note-taking and field notes are considered essential for accurately capturing interactional details and organizing data for analysis, especially when researchers work with naturally occurring conversations (Taylor et al., 2016). The data collection proceeded through three steps: (1) listening to and transcribing the interview, (2) identifying utterances that could potentially involve politeness strategies, and (3) categorizing these utterances according to the specific politeness strategy employed.

For data analysis, this study utilizes the pragmatic identity method and the equalizing technique as proposed by Sudaryanto (2015). The pragmatic identity method focuses on examining how speakers present themselves and manage their social identity through language use, particularly in terms of face and politeness strategies. The equalizing technique, on the other hand, aims to balance the relationship between the speakers by analyzing the distribution of politeness strategies and their function within the conversation. The analysis of the interview follows three primary steps: (1) identifying the politeness strategies used by both Taylor Swift and Jimmy Fallon, (2) categorizing the strategies according to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) theory of politeness (bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record), and (3) interpreting the functions of these strategies within the context of the interview.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

In this study, the distribution of politeness strategies in the interview between Taylor Swift and Jimmy Fallon was analyzed based on Brown and Levinson’s (1987) theory. The findings reveal a varied use of politeness strategies, with bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategies. The table below provides a summary of the occurrences and their respective percentages for each politeness strategy.

**Table 1.** Politeness Strategies in the Interview between Taylor Swift and Jimmy Fallon

Politeness Strategy	Occurrences	Percentage (%)
Bald on Record	3	9%
Positive Politeness	16	50%
Negative Politeness	6	19%
Off-record	7	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>

As shown in Table 1, positive politeness strategies were the most frequently used, with 16 occurrences (50%). Off-record strategies appeared 7 times (22%), followed by negative politeness strategies with 6 occurrences (19%). Bald-on-record strategies were the least frequent, occurring only 3 times (9%).

### Bald on Record

#### Data 1

Jimmy Fallon : “We love you too much!”

Taylor Swift : “That was so nice!”

This expression is made by Jimmy Fallon during the introduction when the audience shows overwhelming excitement for Taylor Swift. Jimmy Fallon enthusiastically reciprocates the crowd’s energy by saying, “We love you too much!” He directly acknowledges the audience’s excitement without any mitigation or hedging.

This is a clear example of Bald on Record. By directly expressing his emotions “We love you too much!”, Jimmy uses an unambiguous statement, leaving no room for interpretation. He does not soften or hedge his words, and there is no attempt to avoid imposing on the audience’s positive face. This strategy is typically used when speakers wish to convey warmth, express affection, or strengthen social bonds without the need for politeness strategies such as hedging.

#### Data 2

Taylor Swift : “It was the best possible case scenario. Look at that! That’s what he was turning the backyard into.”

Jimmy Fallon : **“It is gorgeous!”**

Taylor Swift says this about her engagement ring when Jimmy Fallon admires it. Without any additional explanation, she states, “It’s gorgeous.” This direct response is made in front of the audience, where Taylor is showing off the ring and giving her personal opinion about it.

This is another example of Bald on Record. Taylor’s statement, “It’s gorgeous,” is a straightforward expression of admiration with no attempt to downplay her words. There is no use of mitigating language or hedging, and Taylor does not worry about imposing on the other person’s autonomy. By using a direct and clear statement, she is expressing her emotions openly and honestly, which is characteristic of bald-on-record politeness strategies.

### **Positive Politeness**

#### **Data 3**

Taylor Swift : **“You guys are the best.”**

Jimmy Fallon : **“They’re the best crowd.”**

Taylor Swift says this line while expressing gratitude and appreciation toward the audience after receiving a loud, enthusiastic welcome. This occurs at the beginning of the interview, when Taylor is acknowledging the crowd’s warm reception.

This is an example of positive politeness. By saying “You guys are the best,” Taylor enhances the positive face of the audience, emphasizing shared enjoyment and camaraderie. This expression shows solidarity and appreciation for the audience’s role in creating a positive atmosphere. It helps build rapport and strengthen the social bond between Taylor and the listeners, making her more relatable and likable to the audience. This strategy fosters a connection and a sense of belonging, which is typical in positive politeness, where speakers aim to build relationships and show affection.

#### **Data 4**

Jimmy Fallon : **“Uh, let’s talk “Life of a Showgirl!” is out now. It went to number one. It is the biggest streaming day for any album released this year across all platforms, including Amazon, Apple, Spotify. Every platform. Number one. Congratulations.”**

Taylor Swift : **“That’s all you guys. Thank you so much.”**

Audience : [Cheers and applause]

Here, Taylor is acknowledging the audience’s role in her success. She says “thank you so much,” followed by “that’s all you guys,” emphasizing that the achievement is thanks to the collective effort or enthusiasm of the people around her.

This is another instance of positive politeness. Taylor’s use of “thank you so much” coupled with “that’s all you guys” serves to highlight the social connection between her and the audience. She attributes her success to them, reinforcing the idea that their participation or support is valuable. This form of politeness is designed to reinforce bonds and show that she cares about the listeners’ feelings, encouraging mutual respect and admiration.

#### **Data 5**

Jimmy Fallon : **“Because you don’t own it. Someone else is getting..”**

Taylor Swift : **“Because you don’t own it. You never will. And that’s. And you just have to make peace with that.” So it’s actually, I’ve had to reroute my entire absorption system of my own work to be just stoked whenever I see any of it. And it is the best feeling in the world. **Thank you, guys, for caring about this at all.**”**

Audience : [Cheers and applause]

In this part of the interview, Taylor Swift expresses her appreciation towards the audience for their support and emotional investment in her work. She acknowledges the fans’ care and attention to her personal and professional achievements.

This utterance exemplifies Positive Politeness as outlined by Brown and Levinson (1987). By saying “Thank you, guys,” Taylor enhances the audience’s positive face, showing that she values and appreciates their involvement in her success. This expression of gratitude helps to build solidarity and establish a sense of mutual respect between Taylor and her listeners. It strengthens the social bond between them, contributing to the positive, supportive tone of the conversation. Taylor’s choice of words reinforces the positive relationship she shares with her audience, making them feel included and appreciated.

#### Data 6

Taylor Swift : **“But the fact that this is the person that I get to hang out with every day forever is just like.. That’s the whole thing of it.** You look at that, and you’re like, “I get to hang out with him forever.” And this represents that.”

Jimmy Fallon : “That’s the win. Yeah.”

Taylor Swift shares her feelings about her fiancé, emphasizing the significance of spending the rest of her life with him. This statement is made during a lighthearted moment in the interview, where she reflects on the happiness she feels about her engagement. It’s a personal and affectionate comment, demonstrating her deep emotional connection.

This utterance exemplifies Positive Politeness as defined by Brown and Levinson (1987). By emphasizing her love and admiration for her fiancé, Taylor enhances his positive face, showing warmth and affection. She also creates a sense of solidarity with the audience by sharing a personal moment. Her statement strengthens the rapport with her listeners, making them feel included in her joy and reinforcing social bonds through shared emotional expression.

#### Negative Politeness

##### Data 7

Jimmy Fallon : “That was awesome, what you did!”

Taylor Swift : “...And the fact that when I did say to the fans like, “This is something I care about. **I know that you don’t have to care about this...**”

Here, Taylor is explaining something personal but quickly acknowledges that the audience does not necessarily need to be concerned with it. She is being self-aware about potentially imposing her personal details on the listeners.

This is another example of negative politeness. The phrase “I know that you don’t have to care about this” serves to distance the speaker from a potential imposition, showing respect for the audience’s autonomy. By making this statement, Taylor mitigates the force of her own words, ensuring that the audience does not feel obligated to engage with or be interested in her personal story. This is a classic strategy to maintain social distance while still sharing something personal.

##### Data 8

Taylor Swift : “You know, like, I was like, don’t mention it.”

Jimmy Fallon : “Yeah, it’s not about you.”

Taylor Swift : **“Maybe turn it around.”**

Audience : [Laughter]

During the playful conversation, Taylor suggests a change in direction but phrases it as a suggestion rather than a command, signaling her deference to Jimmy’s control over the conversation.

This example demonstrates Negative Politeness because Taylor uses an indirect approach to express her desire, softening the potential imposition. Instead of telling Jimmy directly what to do, she suggests, “Maybe turn it around.” This mitigates the potential threat to Jimmy’s negative face by not making a direct demand or imposing her will. The phrase “maybe” further distances the request from being a command, which aligns with Brown and Levinson’s (1987) concept

of minimizing the imposition on the listener's autonomy while maintaining a respectful and polite tone.

#### Data 9

Jimmy Fallon : "Okay. You can take this home with you. All right."

Taylor Swift : "And if it's true, I, **I'm sorry I've taken this over.**"

Jimmy Fallon : "No, I love this."

During the conversation, Taylor Swift acknowledges that she has taken control of the conversation and apologizes for possibly dominating it, signaling respect for Jimmy Fallon's role in the interview.

This is another instance of Negative Politeness, where Taylor apologizes to Fallon for taking the conversational lead. The apology, marked by "I'm sorry," is used to reduce the imposition on Jimmy, acknowledging that she may have overshadowed him. Brown and Levinson (1987) explain that Negative Politeness aims to preserve the listener's autonomy by acknowledging the potential for imposition. By expressing regret, Taylor softens the impact of her actions and ensures that Fallon's face, or his desire for freedom from imposition, is protected. This shows deference and politeness by minimizing the threat of her dominance in the conversation.

#### Off-Record

##### Data 10

Taylor Swift : "I think we should do two verses of "Shake It Off," into "Blank Space," into "Cruel Summer" would be great. **Like, it's just like, this is, and this is nothing to do with Travis.** He would love for me to do it. I'm just too locked in."

Jimmy Fallon : "Good."

Taylor Swift : "Like, yeah."

Taylor uses this off-record strategy to make a point while distancing herself from a specific topic. She introduces a thought but avoids directly engaging with it, keeping the conversation ambiguous.

This is an example of off-record politeness. The phrase "this is nothing to do with Travis" is an indirect way of distancing herself from any direct connection to the topic being discussed. By framing her statement this way, Taylor avoids confronting the matter head-on, thus minimizing the potential for face-threatening consequences. The indirectness here allows her to manage the conversation without taking full responsibility for the direction it takes.

##### Data 11

Taylor Swift : "He did. He did. **And he had it for a really long time before he gave it to me, too.**"

Jimmy Fallon : "He did?"

Taylor Swift : "Yeah. He had it."

Taylor is talking about her engagement ring, and this statement is part of her explanation of the ring's significance and how long it took for it to be ready.

This is an off-record politeness strategy. Taylor uses ambiguity and indirect language to frame the situation, without explicitly saying why the delay occurred. By leaving the information open-ended, she allows the listener to draw their own conclusions while avoiding any direct face-threatening implications that could arise from explaining why the ring was delayed.

##### Data 12

Taylor Swift : "It was the best possible case scenario. Look at that! That's what he was turning the backyard into."

Jimmy Fallon : "**It is gorgeous!**"

In this conversation, Taylor is describing her engagement and the efforts of her fiancé, Travis, to create a special moment for her. She doesn't directly explain what Travis did but instead offers a vague, indirect description: "the best possible case scenario."

Taylor uses Off-record politeness by making a statement that can be interpreted in many ways. By not directly explaining or revealing the details of what Travis created for her, she gives the audience the opportunity to form their own conclusions. This indirectness allows her to express excitement while minimizing the risk of revealing too much or imposing specific expectations on the conversation. It keeps the interaction light and positive, allowing for the audience to fill in the emotional context without pressure.

## Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that politeness strategies play a crucial role in shaping interactional dynamics in media interviews. All four politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on record, and off-record, were identified in the interview between Taylor Swift and Jimmy Fallon, although they appeared with different frequencies. This variation reflects the communicative demands of interview discourse, where relational management, face maintenance, and audience engagement are central concerns. Positive politeness emerged as the most frequently used strategy in the interview. This dominance indicates that the interaction was strongly oriented toward building rapport, expressing solidarity, and maintaining a warm conversational atmosphere. In a televised interview context, positive politeness functions as an effective means of reducing social distance between the host, the guest, and the audience.

This finding is consistent with previous studies on politeness strategies in media contexts. Kasim and Satria (2024), in their analysis of politeness strategies in the movie *A Walk to Remember*, found that positive politeness was the most dominant strategy, particularly in scenes where characters sought to build emotional closeness and solidarity. Similarly, Sandjaja and Afriana (2024) reported that positive politeness was the most prevalent strategy in social media interactions on Instagram, where fans used compliments and supportive language to express admiration and strengthen social bonds. The consistency of these findings across different media forms suggests that positive politeness is a key strategy for fostering interpersonal connection, regardless of whether the interaction occurs in films, social media, or interviews.

Negative politeness strategies were also identified in the interview, although they occurred less frequently than positive politeness. Their use indicates sensitivity to conversational roles and interpersonal boundaries, particularly in moments where personal narratives or conversational control could potentially impose on the interlocutor. This result aligns with the findings of Kasim and Satria (2024), who observed that negative politeness was employed in cinematic dialogue to manage social distance and show respect between characters. In the present study, negative politeness serves a similar function by allowing the guest to share personal experiences while still acknowledging the host's role and conversational authority. This suggests that negative politeness remains relevant across different media genres as a strategy for maintaining respect and autonomy.

Bald-on-record strategies were used least frequently in the interview, indicating that direct and unmitigated expressions were generally avoided. This pattern supports the findings of Kasim and Satria (2024), who noted that bald-on-record strategies in films were primarily used during moments of direct confrontation. In contrast, the interview context examined in this study favors politeness and relational harmony, limiting the use of such direct strategies.

Off-record strategies, on the other hand, were employed to convey meanings indirectly and to avoid explicit face-threatening acts. While Sandjaja and Afriana (2024) found off-record

strategies to be less prominent in social media interactions, where messages are often explicit and publicly visible, the present study highlights the importance of off-record strategies in interviews. This difference suggests that real-time spoken interactions, such as interviews, encourage indirectness as a way to manage sensitive topics and maintain conversational flexibility.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that while positive politeness consistently dominates across various media forms, the use of bald-on-record and off-record strategies is strongly influenced by interactional context. Unlike films or social media, interviews involve spontaneous, face-to-face interaction in front of a live audience, which requires speakers to balance openness with caution. This study therefore extends previous research by showing how politeness strategies operate in real-world interview discourse, highlighting the role of context in shaping strategic language use.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the use of politeness strategies in the interview between Taylor Swift and Jimmy Fallon on *The Tonight Show* using Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. Focusing on bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategies, the study found that positive politeness was the most dominant strategy, reflecting the importance of rapport-building, solidarity, and audience engagement in media interview discourse. The limited use of bald-on-record and off-record strategies indicates that speakers tend to avoid excessive directness and ambiguity in public interviews in order to maintain face and conversational harmony.

These findings contribute to existing research on politeness strategies by extending previous studies conducted in films and social media contexts to real-world interview interactions. While prior research has consistently shown the dominance of positive politeness, this study highlights how the interview setting shapes the selective use of other strategies, particularly off-record and bald-on-record strategies, due to the presence of a live audience and spontaneous interaction. This demonstrates that the choice of politeness strategies is strongly influenced by interactional context.

Future research may explore the influence of cultural background, gender, and power relations on the use of politeness strategies in media discourse. Additionally, comparative studies across different interview formats or media platforms could provide deeper insights into how politeness strategies function in various communicative settings. Investigating audience reactions and their role in shaping conversational dynamics may also enrich understanding of politeness and face management in public discourse.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I sincerely thank my lecturer, Ms. Nurma Dhona Handayani, S.Pd., M.Pd., for her invaluable guidance, continuous support, and constructive feedback throughout the completion of this article. Her expertise and insights significantly enhanced the quality and depth of this research. I am also deeply grateful to my family and friends for their unwavering encouragement, patience, and understanding during this process. Their support played an essential role in the successful completion of this work.

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