CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter concludes the research. It summarizes the key findings related to the researchquestions, followed by interpretations and implications of these findings. The chapter is divided into two main sections: Conclusions and Recommendations. The Conclusions summarize the general findings and highlight key insights gained from this research. The Recommendations section offers recommendations for future researchers, educators, and digital platform users who may benefit from the results of this study.

5.1 Conclusions

This section concludes the study by answering the research questions based on the findings presented in Chapter IV. The aim is to highlight the significance of this study in understanding how politeness strategies are used in YouTube comment sections—particularly in response to politically charged content. This conclusion summarizes the types of politeness strategies identified, their frequency, their relationship to ideological positions, and their broader communicative functions in online discourse.

This research has examined the politeness strategies employed by YouTube users in the comment section of a politically charged video titled "Israelis or Palestinians – Who's More Tolerant?" uploaded by PragerU. Utilizing Brown and Levinson's (1987) foundational theory of politeness as a theoretical framework, this study has revealed how linguistic choices in digital political discourse reflect not merely interpersonal dynamics but constitute sophisticated mechanisms for ideological positioning, emotional expression, identity performance, and community formation within highly polarized digital environments.

94

The comprehensive analysis of 100 YouTube comments has demonstrated that all four categories of politeness strategies—bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record—are strategically deployed with varying degrees of frequency and complexity, with their specific functions being systematically influenced by users' ideological alignments, perceived audience dynamics, and communicative objectives.

Positive politeness emerged as the most dominant strategy, particularly among users who aligned themselves with pro-Israel perspectives. These users consistently employed praise, admiration, solidarity-building phrases, and expressions of gratitude to affirm shared values, strengthen group identity, and express approval of the video content. Phrases such as "Love you for doing this" or "Thank you for putting the truth out" reflect deliberate attempts to build rapport and reinforce in-group cohesion while simultaneously positioning the speaker as a supportive community member. This pattern suggests that positive politeness in digital political contexts functions as both an interpersonal tool and a mechanism for ideological community maintenance.

Negative politeness was predominantly utilized by pro-Palestine or moderate users who sought to express disagreement or criticism through respectful, indirect approaches. These strategies encompassed hedging, polite requests, rhetorical questions, and appeals to fairness and open-mindedness. Statements such as "Please open your heart and mind…" demonstrated sophisticated efforts to mitigate face-threatening acts while still challenging dominant narratives. This strategic choice reflects users' awareness of operating within potentially hostile discursive environments and their consequent need for careful linguistic navigation to maintain credibility and avoid defensive responses.

95

Off-record strategies, including sarcasm, irony, rhetorical understatement, and implicit criticism, were strategically employed by users across ideological divides to critique opposing views indirectly while maintaining plausible deniability. These comments often allowed speakers to convey strong opinions without explicit confrontation, reflecting the platform's unique affordances that encourage ambiguity and indirect engagement in contentious discussions. The prevalence of such strategies highlights the sophisticated nature of digital political communication, where users must balance authentic expression with strategic risk management.

Bald-on-record strategies were frequently deployed by users expressing unwavering ideological convictions, characterized by direct, unmitigated, and often confrontational language such as "Palestine was NEVER a country" or "You can't fix stupid." This strategic choice reflects high degrees of ideological commitment coupled with reduced concern for face-saving in adversarial discourse contexts. The employment of such strategies suggests that certain users prioritize ideological assertion over interpersonal harmony, viewing direct confrontation as more effective than diplomatic engagement.

According to the results, it could be argued that pro-Palestinian comments are more tolerant than pro-Israeli ones. This can be seen in the high frequency of negative politeness strategies (e.g., rhetorical questions, explanations, and hedging), which serve to maintain social distance and minimize the potential for face-threatening behavior. In addition, off-record tactics such as light irony or indirect criticism are often available to show that you disagree without slapping your opponent's face. Pro-Israeli comments, on the other hand, are more characterized by positive politeness that serves to build up in-group camaraderie

96

but also frequently resort to bald-on-record strategies, which are direct and forceful (sometimes face-threatening).

This trend shows that both sides apply politeness strategies to negotiate identity and stance, but one side—pro-Palestinians in this case—displays a less confrontational communicative style compared with Israeli-Jews; it reflects greater tolerance to others in discussion in the focus of this work.

The analysis revealed that ideological alignment systematically influenced politeness strategy selection, creating distinct patterns of linguistic behavior across different political positions. Pro-Israel commenters demonstrated tendencies toward assertive, direct, and affiliative communication through positive politeness and bald-on-record strategies, reflecting confidence in their position and comfort with confrontational discourse. Conversely, Pro-Palestine and neutral commenters consistently favored negative politeness and off-record strategies to avoid direct conflict while expressing critical perspectives, suggesting their perception of operating from marginalized or contested positions within the discourse community.

A significant finding was the frequent use of personal identity markers—including sexual orientation, nationality, religious background, and lived experience—as rhetorical strategies to reinforce argumentative authority and credibility. Users strategically deployed these identity markers not merely as biographical information but as sophisticated forms of argumentative currency that enhanced their perceived legitimacy and speaking rights within the political discourse.

97

This study makes substantial contributions to the broader field of digital pragmatics by demonstrating how traditional politeness theories must be adapted and extended to account for the unique affordances of digital platforms—including anonymity, asynchronicity, multimodality, persistent visibility, and complex audience dynamics. The findings reveal that digital environments create new contexts for strategic communication that require theoretical frameworks capable of accounting for these technological and social innovations.

Furthermore, the research illuminates how politeness strategies function not merely as tools for interpersonal management but as performative acts of ideological identity construction, particularly in politically sensitive discussions where language choices become acts of political participation and community membership. This finding extends traditional politeness theory beyond its original interpersonal focus to encompass broader questions of political identity, digital citizenship, and democratic participation.

The study reveals that politeness strategies in YouTube comment sections serve multiple, simultaneously operating functions :

1. Interpersonal relationship management : Maintaining social harmony and avoiding direct confrontation while enabling meaningful engagement with opposing viewpoints.
2. Ideological positioning and boundary maintenance: Establishing and reinforcing political identities while distinguishing in-group from out-group members through strategic linguistic choices.
3. Identity performance and authenticity signaling: Constructing credible, authoritative personas through strategic self-presentation and identity marker deployment.
4. Power negotiation and credibility establishment: Managing perceived authority and

98

legitimacy within hierarchical discourse communities through careful strategic positioning.

5. Emotional expression and community building: Facilitating affective engagement and solidarity formation among like-minded participants while managing emotional tensions.

6. Risk management and strategic communication: Navigating the inherent dangers of face-threatening acts in hostile environments while maintaining the ability to participate meaningfully in contentious debates.

These findings reveal the complex, multifaceted, and strategically sophisticated nature of politeness in digital political environments, where language operates simultaneously as a medium of communication, a tool of ideological struggle, and a mechanism of democratic participation. The strategic deployment of politeness in such contexts represents a form of linguistic citizenship, where communicative choices become acts of political engagement and identity performance within the digital public sphere.

5.2 Suggestions

This section presents recommendations derived from the research findings. These recommendations are intended for a variety of stakeholders, including future researchers, educators, and social media users. The goal is to broaden the research's impact by suggesting areas for further investigation and offering practical advice for navigating digital communication more effectively and ethically in politically sensitive contexts.

5.2.1 Recommendations for Future Research

Methodological Enhancements :

1. Expand the dataset scope to include a wider variety of videos, creators, and platforms.

Analyzing multiple videos from different ideological perspectives, diverse content creators, and various platforms (e.g., TikTok, Facebook, Twitter, Reddit) would provide a more comprehensive understanding of politeness strategies across different digital ecosystems and their specific affordances.

2. Implement longitudinal analysis to track how politeness strategies evolve over time within specific political discussions, examining how initial comments influence subsequent discourse patterns and how politeness norms shift as discussions develop.

3. Incorporate advanced multimodal analysis by examining not only text-based comments but also the strategic deployment of emojis, GIFs, images, memes, video replies, and other multimedia elements as integral components of politeness strategies in digital spaces. This approach would provide deeper insights into how users exploit platform-specific affordances for strategic communication.

4. Develop comparative cross-platform studies to understand how different technological affordances (character limits, reply structures, visibility algorithms) influence politeness strategy selection and effectiveness across various social media environments.

Theoretical and Conceptual Extensions :

1. Explore cross-cultural and multilingual perspectives on politeness in online political discourse by comparing comment sections from different cultural backgrounds, languages, and political systems to examine how cultural politeness norms interact with universal digital communication patterns.

2. Integrate discourse-historical approaches to connect identified linguistic patterns with broader socio-political contexts, particularly in examining how historical narratives and collective memory influence contemporary politeness strategy deployment in conflict-related discussions.

3. Investigate the role of artificial intelligence and algorithmic influence on politeness patterns, examining how content recommendation systems, automated moderation, and engagement algorithms shape the strategic deployment of politeness in digital political discourse.

4. Develop intersectional analysis frameworks that examine how multiple identity categories (race, gender, class, nationality, religion) simultaneously influence politeness strategy selection and reception within digital political communities.

5.2.2 Recommendations for Educators and Digital Literacy Advocates

Curriculum Development :

1. Integrate findings into academic curricula across multiple disciplines, including pragmatics, discourse analysis, digital communication, political science, and media studies courses. This study provides concrete examples of how theoretical politeness frameworks operate in contemporary digital environments, making abstract concepts more accessible to students.

2. Develop specialized digital citizenship education programs that incorporate politeness theory to help students understand the strategic dimensions of online communication and develop skills for respectful, critical, and effective participation in digital democratic discourse.

3. Create interdisciplinary learning modules that connect linguistic analysis with political science, sociology, and psychology to help students understand the complex relationships between language, ideology, identity, and digital platform dynamics.

Pedagogical Applications :

1.Utilize case study methodology using examples from this research to demonstrate how politeness strategies are adapted and strategically deployed in digital communication,

particularly in emotionally charged or ideologically polarized contexts.

2.Develop critical media literacy programs that help students analyze and evaluate the strategic dimensions of online political discourse, enabling them to become more discerning consumers and producers of digital political content.

3.Design experiential learning opportunities where students can practice applying politeness strategies in simulated online political discussions, developing both analytical skills and practical competencies for democratic participation.

5.2.3 Recommendations for Digital Platform Developers and Policymakers

Platform Design Improvements :

1. Implement interface design features that encourage more thoughtful and strategic communication, such as reflection prompts before posting, politeness assessment tools, or structured dialogue frameworks that support more constructive political discourse.

2. Develop sophisticated content moderation systems that consider the strategic and contextual dimensions of politeness rather than relying solely on keyword-based filtering or surface-level analysis of offensive language.

3. Create platform-specific guidelines that recognize and support the legitimate strategic use of various politeness strategies while discouraging genuinely harmful or destructive communication patterns.

Policy Development :

1. Inform regulatory frameworks for digital platforms by providing evidence-based insights into how linguistic strategies function in online political discourse, supporting more nuanced approaches to content moderation and free speech protection.

2. Support democratic discourse initiatives that leverage understanding of politeness strategies to design interventions that promote more inclusive and productive political conversation across ideological divides.

5.2.4 Recommendations for Digital Citizens and Community Moderators

Individual User Development :

1. Enhance digital communication competency through awareness of politeness strategies, enabling users to engage more constructively in online discussions, particularly on sensitive or controversial topics where strategic communication is essential for productive dialogue.

2. Develop strategic empathy skills that help users understand how their communication choices affect others and how to adapt their strategies to different audiences and contexts while maintaining authentic expression.

3. Cultivate reflective communication practices that encourage users to consider the multiple functions their language choices serve and the potential impacts on both immediate recipients and broader digital communities.

Community Management :

1. Implement evidence-based moderation practices that recognize the strategic dimensions of politeness and distinguish between legitimate rhetorical strategies and genuinely harmful communication patterns.

2. Design community guidelines that support diverse politeness strategies while maintaining standards for respectful engagement, creating spaces where different approaches to political discourse can coexist productively.

3. Develop conflict resolution protocols that leverage understanding of face-threatening acts and face-saving strategies to help moderators identify potential conflicts early and respond with appropriate interventions.

5.2.5 Broader Implications for Democratic Participation

Democratic Innovation :

1. **Inform digital democracy initiatives** by providing insights into how citizens actually communicate in online political spaces, supporting the development of more effective digital democratic institutions and practices.
2. **Support civic engagement programs** that help citizens develop the communicative competencies necessary for meaningful participation in increasingly digital democratic processes.

3. **Contribute to public discourse quality improvement** by providing evidence-based strategies for enhancing the civility and productivity of online political conversations without sacrificing authentic expression or democratic pluralism.

5.2.6 Methodological Innovations for Future Studies

Technical Developments :

1. **Develop automated politeness strategy detection tools** using natural language processing and machine learning approaches to enable large-scale analysis of politeness patterns across massive digital datasets.
2. **Create real-time discourse analysis systems** that can track and analyze politeness strategy deployment as it occurs, providing immediate insights into evolving political conversations.

3. **Design experimental methodologies** that can test the causal effects of different politeness strategies on audience responses, engagement levels, and attitude change in controlled digital environments.

In conclusion, this study underscores the critical importance of politeness strategies in digital political discourse and provides a foundation for future research exploring how

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language, ideology, technology, and democratic participation intersect in contemporary digital societies. The findings invite continued investigation into the evolving nature of political communication in digital environments and its implications for democratic engagement, civic education, and social cohesion in increasingly polarized political contexts. By understanding these dynamics, researchers, educators, platform developers, and citizens can work together to create more productive, inclusive, and democratic digital spaces that support meaningful political dialogue across ideological differences.

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