

**(IM)POLITENESS STRATEGIES AND SPEECH FUNCTIONS IN CNN INDONESIA
YOUTUBE COMMENTS ON “THE LOS ANGELES WILDFIRE” NEWS****Nurul Hidayatul Ummah**Institute of Prima Bangsa, Cirebon
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Abstract: This study was conducted to determine the (im)politeness strategies and speech functions employed by Indonesian netizens in the comment threads of CNN Indonesia’s YouTube about “the Los Angeles Wildfire.” This study was motivated by the phenomenon of digital interaction that shows diverse language practices, ranging from politeness expressions to forms of impoliteness. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this study examines 66 comments selected through purposive sampling, consisting of 15 initiating comments and 51 responding comments. The data were analyzed using a pragmatic approach based on politeness theory by Brown & Levinson (1987), impoliteness theory by Culpeper (1996), and speech function analysis by Eggins & Slade (1997), following the qualitative data analysis model proposed by Miles & Huberman (1984), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that 84.8% (56 of 66) of the comments employed impoliteness strategies, while only 15.2% (10 of 66) employed politeness strategies, with sarcasm or mock politeness being the most frequently used form. In terms of speech functions, all initiating comments were categorized as statements, while the responding comments consisted of acknowledgments and contradictions. These findings indicate that interactions in online comment sections involve both supporting and confronting responses, showing that online interaction is shaped not only by disagreement but also by cooperation. This study contributes to pragmatics and discourse analysis by showing how (im)politeness strategies and speech functions operate within digital news on YouTube.

Keywords: CNN YouTube Comments, Digital Interaction, (Im)politeness Strategies, Speech Functions.

INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has significantly transformed in human interaction patterns. Digital media has emerged as a new space where self-expression, idea exchange, and social discourse occur without spatial or temporal boundaries. This phenomenon signifies a transformation in language practices, where the boundary between formal and informal communication is increasingly blurred, and verbal expressions tend to be more spontaneous and diverse (Crystal, 2011). In this context, language use no longer fully adheres to conventional politeness norms but is instead shaped by the rapidly evolving dynamics of digital culture, influenced by user anonymity, the speed of information flow, and open access.

One particularly compelling domain of digital interaction is the comment section on social media platforms, which serves as a public forum for individuals to express their views on current issues. Among various platforms, YouTube comment threads stand out as a widely used medium for conveying opinions, including reactions to news events such as the Los Angeles wildfire. Various expressions can be found in the comment section, ranging from opinions, criticisms, and support to expressions of anger. As stated by Herring (2004), online interactions tend to display more direct forms of communication and often disregard social norms. This phenomenon underscores the need for a deeper investigation into how politeness and impoliteness strategies evolve within digital public interactions.

Previous studies have explored politeness and impoliteness in various contexts. Purwati et al., (2022) examined impoliteness strategies in YouTube comments within entertainment content, while Alfarabi et al., (2024) focused on face-to-face interactions among university students. Other studies, such as those by Muazzaro & Dewanti (2020) and Wijayanti (2020), analyzed initiating comments without examining responses or interactional patterns between users. Meanwhile, research by Risdianto et al., (2023) and Lestaria et al., (2024) addressed politeness and impoliteness in more formal or institutional settings involving public figures. Although these studies have provided valuable insights into politeness and impoliteness, limited attention has been given to how these strategies are constructed and negotiated through interactional exchanges in online comment threads, particularly when combined with speech function analysis. As a result, the relationship between (im)politeness strategies and the communicative functions of initiating and responding comments remains underexplored. This study addresses this analytical gap by integrating Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness theory, and Eggins & Slade's (1997) speech function framework to examine both initiating and responding comments in CNN Indonesia's YouTube comment threads on the Los Angeles wildfire. Rather than merely identifying politeness or impoliteness strategies, this study explains how these strategies function within interactive exchanges and how speech functions shape the dynamics of digital communication. Therefore, this study contributes to pragmatics by extending the analysis of (im)politeness from isolated comments to interactional comment threads, while also enriching digital discourse studies by demonstrating how online news discussions construct meaning through patterns of response and interaction.

Based on the problems above, the researcher deems it necessary to conduct further study by examining the dynamics of Indonesian netizens' comments on news videos about the Los Angeles Wildfire uploaded on the CNN Indonesia YouTube channel. The selection of CNN Indonesia's YouTube channel as the data source is grounded in its reputation as one of the most trusted online news media outlets in Indonesia, with this information based on the Digital News Report 2021 released by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. This high level of public trust makes its comment section a potential space for representing a wide range of public opinions.

This study is grounded in the perspective that communication in digital environments is shaped not only by the meanings conveyed through language but also by the interactional patterns constructed among users. Therefore, this research integrates pragmatics and discourse analysis to examine how meaning, interpersonal relationships, and interaction are negotiated in YouTube comment threads. Pragmatics provides a framework for understanding speakers' intended meanings within specific communicative contexts (Yule, 1996), while discourse analysis explains how language functions across connected utterances to construct social interaction and meaning (Paltridge, 2014). Building upon these perspectives, this study uses on politeness theory by Brown

& Levinson (1987), impoliteness theory by Culpeper (1996), and speech function theory by Eggins & Slade (1997) to investigate how users initiate and respond to comments in CNN Indonesia's YouTube comment threads. Integrating these frameworks enables the study to explain not only the politeness or impoliteness strategies employed by users but also the communicative functions that shape interaction within digital news discussions. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze the (im)politeness strategies and speech functions used in CNN Indonesia's YouTube comment threads on the Los Angeles Wildfire and to contribute to the study of pragmatics and digital discourse analysis.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive strategy. This approach was chosen because it aligns with the research objective of understanding the use of (im)politeness strategies and speech functions in digital interactions. The data source in this study is derived from the comment sections of news videos on the CNN Indonesia YouTube channel that discuss about the Los Angeles wildfire. The data analyzed consist of YouTube user comments that indicate interaction, specifically comments that received replies from other users. The comments analyzed in this research were taken from several news videos published by CNN Indonesia between January 8 and January 28, 2025. The data collection process was carried out by the researcher from April 14 to May 17, 2025, or for approximately 33 days, resulting in 66 selected comments consisting of 15 initiating comments and 51 responding comments.

The data collection technique employed in this study is purposive sampling, in which comments were selected based on predetermined criteria. First, the researcher reviewed all comments posted on CNN Indonesia's YouTube videos concerning the Los Angeles wildfire published between January 8 and January 28, 2025. The comments were then filtered by selecting only comment threads that contained at least one reply, indicating interaction between users. Comments consisting of emojis, hyperlinks, duplicated content, advertisements, or comments unrelated to the discussion topic were excluded from the dataset. The remaining comments were further examined to identify utterances representing politeness or impoliteness strategies and speech functions based on the analytical framework employed in this study. The data were obtained directly from publicly accessible YouTube comment threads and therefore constituted primary data, while theories and previous studies served as secondary data. Data collection was conducted through non-participant observation, in which the researcher did not participate in the discussion but observed, documented, and transcribed the selected comments. Screenshots and written transcriptions were used to ensure systematic documentation for subsequent analysis.

Within this framework, the concept of face proposed by Goffman (1967) forms the basis of Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. This theory posits that in communication, speakers employ various linguistic strategies to maintain social harmony, particularly in preserving the interlocutor's self-image or face. Politeness strategies are essential because communication often involves speech acts that potentially threaten one's face, known as Face Threatening Acts (FTAs). Brown & Levinson (1987) proposed four main politeness strategies that speakers may employ to mitigate the impact of Face Threatening Acts (FTAs), including bald on record politeness, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record. Conversely, Culpeper (1996) developed a theory of impoliteness which is a continuation and balance of the politeness theory developed by Brown & Levinson (1987). If politeness seeks to maintain face in social interactions, then impoliteness is the opposite, an attempt to attack, damage, or disregard an individual's face. According to Culpeper

(1996) impoliteness strategies can be categorized into five main types, namely bald on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness, and withholding politeness.

To complement this framework, Eggins & Slade's (1997) speech function theory is used to analyze speech functions that emerge in digital interactions. Eggins & Slade (1997) developed a systemic functional discourse analysis model that emphasizes the significance of interactional structures, particularly in casual conversations. They introduced the concept of speech functions, which are categorized into two main types, namely initiating moves and responding moves. Each of these functions serves to construct and sustain the dialogue structure, such as asking, stating, disagreeing, or acknowledging opinions. In this study, the theory is applied to examine how Indonesian netizens shape their interactions in YouTube comments through the types of speech functions they employ, both in the form of initiation and response.

The data analysis technique in this study employs the interactive analysis model by Miles & Huberman (1984), which includes three main stages, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. In the data reduction, irrelevant comments were eliminated, while relevant data were categorized based on the politeness strategies of Brown & Levinson (1987), impoliteness strategies of Culpeper (1996), and speech functions of Eggins & Slade (1997). Each selected comment was coded by the researcher using the operational definitions of these theories. To ensure consistency, the comments were reviewed repeatedly before being assigned to the most appropriate category. Subsequently, the categorized data were presented in tables and narrative descriptions to identify interactional patterns. Finally, the analysis involved drawing and verifying conclusions by interpreting the findings to answer the research questions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of Indonesian netizens' interactions in the comment threads on CNN Indonesia's YouTube about the Los Angeles wildfire is focused on two main aspects, including identifying the (im)politeness strategies employed and examining the speech functions that emerge, along with their interaction in shaping the flow of digital conversation. The research data consist of 66 comments, including 15 initiating comments and 51 responding comments, all of which were analyzed using a pragmatic and discourse analysis approach that highlights linguistic strategies and the dynamics of inter-comment relations, particularly how one comment may trigger supportive or confrontive responses to a previous comment. The analysis in this study is based on three main theoretical frameworks, namely the politeness theory of Brown & Levinson (1987), the impoliteness theory of Culpeper (1996), and the speech function theory of Eggins & Slade (1997). These three theories are used to examine how netizens build interactions through comments, whether in the form of agreement, rejection, sarcasm, or other types of responses that emerge in the interaction.

(Im)politeness Strategies in the Comment Threads

This section focuses on the types of politeness and impoliteness strategies employed in Indonesian netizens' comments on the CNN Indonesia YouTube about the Los Angeles wildfire. The analysis was conducted using politeness theory by Brown & Levinson (1987) and impoliteness theory by Culpeper (1996) to identify how speakers maintain, build, or even attack the interlocutor's face through linguistic strategies. The study highlights two types of utterances, namely initiation and response, each of which exhibits different tendencies in strategy selection.

Of the 66 comments analyzed, the majority of strategies were found in response comments, indicating that responses play a more dominant role in reflecting the dynamics of linguistic strategy use, while initiation function more as triggers for interaction. To provide a clearer picture of the distribution of strategies, the results are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Types of Politeness and Impoliteness Strategies Based on Initiation and Response

No	Strategy Types	Initiating Move	Responding Move
1	Positive Politeness	2	5
2	Negative Politeness	0	1
3	Off Record	0	2
4	Bald on Record Impoliteness	0	12
5	Positive Impoliteness	3	9
6	Negative Impoliteness	0	1
7	Sarcasm or Mock Politeness	10	21
Total		15	51

Positive Politeness

The following shows an example of positive politeness:



figure 1. an example of positive politeness

Figure 1 presents an initiating comment posted in response to a CNN Indonesia YouTube news video reporting the Los Angeles wildfire. The video informs viewers about the widespread wildfire that affected residential areas and raised concerns about the safety of local residents, including Indonesian citizens living in Los Angeles. The following comment was posted by a user as a response to this situation. The above comment represents an initiation comment that employs a positive politeness strategy as described by Brown & Levinson (1987), namely a politeness strategy used to maintain the hearer's positive face, their self-image as someone who wants to be appreciated, liked, and accepted. This strategy is evident in the use of the word "*semoga*", which conveys prayer and concern for the affected parties. The expressions "*diberi ketabahan*" and "*diberi keselamatan*" demonstrate the speaker's intention to express friendliness while preserving harmony. Furthermore, the mention of "*rakyat USA*" and "*WNI di sana*" emphasizes the speaker's inclusivity toward two different groups affected by the event. Thus, this comment illustrates how positive politeness strategies are applied to show care and maintain social relationships in digital interaction.

Negative Politeness

The following shows an example of negative politeness:



figure 2. an example of negative politeness

The utterance above constitutes a response comment to an initiation comment that employs a form of impoliteness. In this case, the speaker adopts a negative politeness strategy as explained by Brown & Levinson (1987), this strategy aimed at preserving the interlocutor's negative face by delivering criticism indirectly and with caution. This is evident in the interrogative form "*gimana kalau mereka adalah pendukung dan pemberi donasi ke Palestina?*", which functions to invite the interlocutor to reconsider their statement without directly rejecting it, and the phrase "*kok disama ratakan*", which conveys protest without direct confrontation. The subsequent utterances, "*kalau bela kemanusiaan ya harusnya juga kasian ke mereka*" and "*benci ya cuman ke pemerintahnya*", further illustrate the use of lexical choices oriented toward clarification and suggestion rather than judgment. Thus, although this strategy appears only once in the data, it demonstrates an effort to maintain politeness and avoid open conflict amid the prevalence of impolite comments in digital spaces.

Off Record Politeness

The following shows an example of off record:

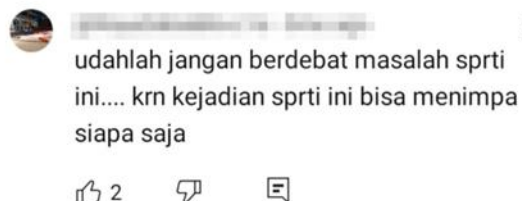


figure 3. an example of off record

The comment above is a response that emerges in the midst of a conversation dominated by debate. In this reply, the speaker employs an off-record strategy as described by Brown & Levinson (1987), namely the most indirect and implicit form of politeness strategy, typically manifested through hints or appeals that leave room for interpretation by the interlocutor. This is evident in the expression "*jangan berdebat*", which functions to ease conflict without targeting a specific individual, and the statement "*karena kejadian seperti ini bisa menimpa siapa saja*", which is universal and does not target a specific individual. By conveying meaning implicitly through

general statements, the speaker seeks to avoid direct confrontation and maintain harmony in interaction. Although this strategy was found only twice in the data, its presence remains significant as it demonstrates an effort to preserve politeness and reduce the potential for Face Threatening Act (FTA) in digital comment spaces.

Bald on Record Impoliteness

The following shows an example of bald on record impoliteness:



figure 4. an example of bald on record impoliteness

This comment is a response to an initiation comment that previously carried a sarcastic tone toward incident about the Los Angeles wildfire. The utterance represents a bald on record impoliteness strategy as proposed by Culpeper (1996), this strategy a form of impoliteness delivered overtly without any attempt at mitigation. This is evident in the word "*mampussssss*," used as a direct insult with a mocking and confrontational tone, reinforced by the elongation of the letter "s" to emphasize an expression of hatred, as well as in the phrase "*kalian warga LA*", which explicitly targets a specific group. Such an utterance attacks the positive face of the disaster victims, as it does not attempt to show respect or maintain harmonious interaction but instead conveys a blatantly confrontational stance. Thus, this comment serves as a concrete example of the realization of the bald on record impoliteness strategy in digital spaces, where the speaker freely expresses offensive attitudes without considering the social impact of the utterance.

Positive Impoliteness

The following shows an example of positive impoliteness:



figure 5. an example of positive impoliteness

The comment above is an initiation comment that employs a positive impoliteness strategy, which is a direct attack on the interlocutor's positive face by means of demeaning or excluding (Culpeper, 1996). In the context of the news post about the Los Angeles wildfire, the comment does not express concern for the victims but instead diverts the issue by comparing it to another unrelated event within the ongoing discourse. The lexical choice "*itulah*" at the beginning of the sentence conveys an accusatory emphasis, as if implying that the disaster in Los Angeles is

something natural or even deserved. Meanwhile, the phrase “*yang dirasakan rakyat Palestina*” is not intended to highlight the issue under discussion but rather functions to undermine the position of the fire victims by diverting the conversational focus. Thus, this comment represents a positive impoliteness strategy because the speaker does not attempt to maintain politeness but instead uses negative comparisons to attack the victims’ positive face in digital discourse.

Negative Impoliteness

The following shows an example of negative impoliteness:



figure 6. an example of negative impoliteness

This comment is a response to a series of previous comments that displayed impoliteness in response to the Los Angeles wildfires. The utterance represents a negative impoliteness strategy as described by Culpeper (1996), namely an attack on the interlocutor’s negative face, or their freedom from imposition and pressure. The phrase “*kalau mereka masih sombong*” functions as a form of judgment, which is then followed by the threat “*akan ditambah lagi api yang lebih panas dan besar*”. This utterance explicitly pressures the victim by asserting that their suffering is not enough, reinforced by the statement “*mungkin itu belum seberapa*”, which shows an intention to reduce the interlocutor's autonomy. Thus, this comment reflects the realization of negative impoliteness, as the speaker consciously produces an intimidating utterance that attacks the freedom of others without providing protection for their right not to be pressured in digital interactions.

Sarcasm or Mock Politeness

The following shows an example of sarcasm or mock politeness:

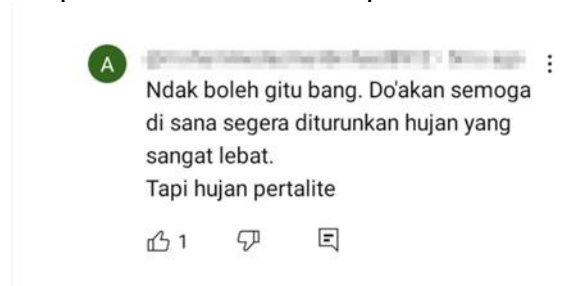


figure 7. an example of sarcasm or mock politeness

The comment above is a response to a previous initiating comment that also contained elements of sarcasm. On the surface, the speaker opens the utterance with the polite warning “*ndak*

boleh gitu, Bang”, which seems to indicate an intention to direct the interlocutor toward more reasonable communication. However, the following sentence contains a sarcastic meaning, namely through the phrase “*doakan semoga di sana segera diturunkan hujan yang sangat lebat*”, which appears neutral but is immediately followed by “*tapi hujan pertalite*”, serving as the core of the mockery. The mention of “*hujan pertalite*” is a form of sarcasm that shows how pseudo-politeness is used to belittle others. Thus, this comment reflects the strategy of sarcasm or mock politeness, namely the use of ostensibly polite forms to deliver ridicule or sarcasm. This strategy frequently appears in digital comment spaces because it allows speakers to convey impoliteness indirectly while still inflicting damage upon the interlocutor’s face (Culpeper, 1996).

Speech Functions and Conversation Flow in the Comment Threads

This section discusses how speech functions are employed in the interaction of Indonesian netizens’ comments on CNN Indonesia’s YouTube about the Los Angeles wildfire, and how these speech functions relate to (im)politeness strategies in shaping the flow of conversation. Based on the speech function theory by Eggins & Slade (1997), it was found that all initiating comments in the data were in the form of statements, which then triggered various responses from other users. These responses were divided into two types, namely supporting moves which indicate agreement, and confronting moves which express disagreement with the previous comments. This pattern shows that interactions in the comment space are not only about expressing opinions, but also building conversational dynamics through responses of agreement or disagreement with initiations. By combining the speech function analysis with the politeness theory by Brown & Levinson (1987) and the impoliteness theory by Culpeper (1996), it is seen that initiating comments in the form of statements can be accompanied by politeness or impoliteness strategies, which have an impact on the emergence of various forms of responses. In other words, although the initiation forms are uniform as statements, the linguistic strategies used in both initiation and response play a significant role in shaping the flow of digital conversation. More detailed classification results are presented in tables 2 and 3 below.

Table 2. Classification of Speech Function Types Based on Initiating and Responding Comments

Initiating Speech Function				Responding Speech Function	
Offer	Command	Statement	Question	Supporting	Confronting
0	0	15	0	38	13

Table 3. Classification of the Combination of (Im)politeness Strategies and Speech Functions in Initiating and Responding Comments

Initiating Speech Function		Responding Speech Function			
Statement		Acknowledgement		Contradiction	
Politeness	Impoliteness	Politeness	Impoliteness	Politeness	Impoliteness
2	13	3	35	1	12

Initiating Speech Function

The following shows an example of initiating speech function:



figure 8. an example of initiating speech function

The comment above is an initiation comment that appeared on CNN Indonesia's YouTube about the Los Angeles wildfire. According to Eggins & Slade (1997), initiation comments may take the form of offer, command, statement, or question. All initiation comments identified in this study are realized as statements, as they consist of direct statements that initiate a conversation. The comment above is categorized as a statement because the speaker makes a statement as the first step in the interaction. Pragmatically, this comment uses an impoliteness strategy in the form of sarcasm or mock politeness, which as Culpeper (1996) appears to be polite on the surface but actually mocks or denigration toward the interlocutor. The utterance superficially appears to be an invitation to donate, but in its meaning contains a satire on the fire incident being discussed. This utterance does not aim to build a cooperative relationship but instead violates norms of politeness by offending others through mockery. As an initiating comment, this strategy can trigger a variety of responses from other users, both supportive and confrontive, thus contributing to shaping the dynamics of interaction within the digital comment space.

Responding Speech Function

The following shows example of responding speech function:



figure 9. an example of initiating speech function



figure 10. example of responding speech function

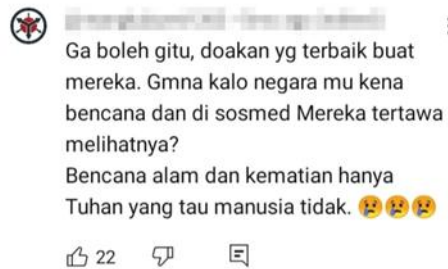


figure 11. example of responding speech function

The comment interaction above occurred within the context of news coverage of the Los Angeles wildfire uploaded on CNN Indonesia's YouTube channel. The initiating comment in this interaction employs an impoliteness strategy in the form of sarcasm or mock politeness, triggering various responses from other users. The first response, expressed through the utterance *"Mampussss kelen warga LA"*, is categorized by Eggins & Slade (1997) as a speech function of acknowledgement, since the speaker affirms the content of the initiation comment without rejecting it. Pragmatically, this response reflects the strategy of bald on record impoliteness, a form of impoliteness delivered directly and explicitly without any mitigation (Culpeper, 1996). While the initiating comment was still sarcasm, this response is more direct and reinforces the direction of the interaction, which does not consider norms of politeness.

The second response is expressed through the utterance *"Ga boleh gitu, doakan yang terbaik buat mereka. Gimana kalo negaramu kena bencana dan di sosmed mereka tertawa melihatnya? Bencana alam dan kematian hanya Tuhan yang tau manusia tidak"*, which demonstrates the speech function of contradiction. Within the framework of Eggins & Slade (1997), this function belongs to a confronting move because the speaker explicitly rejects the content of the initial comment. Pragmatically, this comment employs a strategy of positive politeness, as reflected in the appeal to pray for the victims and the emphasis that disasters are determined by God. According to Brown & Levinson (1987), positive politeness strategies may be used to express friendliness or reduce social distance between the speaker and the interlocutor. Through this strategy, the speaker attempts to provide a polite admonition while simultaneously redirecting the interaction toward a more cooperative orientation. The comparison between these two responses illustrates a contrasting dynamic, with some reinforcing impoliteness, while the other attempts to mitigate it, resulting in diverse digital interactions that do not always progress linearly from the initial comment.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the use of (im)politeness strategies and speech functions in the comment threads of Indonesian netizens on CNN Indonesia's YouTube channel about the Los Angeles wildfire. Through a pragmatic analysis, the study demonstrates that the choice of linguistic strategies and types of speech functions not only reflects individual attitudes but also contributes to shaping the dynamics of digital conversation. Accordingly, the research objective can be considered achieved, as it successfully illustrates language practices within a complex and open public comment space.

The results of the study related to the first research question show that impoliteness strategies are more dominant than politeness strategies. Of the total 66 comments, 31 comments were found to use sarcasm or mock politeness, making it the most prominent form of impoliteness. In contrast, politeness strategies such as positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record appeared in smaller numbers. Regarding the second research question, all 15 initiating comments were in the form of statements. Meanwhile, the 51 responding comments were divided into two main types of speech functions, including 38 comments were categorized as acknowledgement and 13 as contradiction. These findings indicate that most netizens attempt to maintain the continuity of the conversation even though the linguistic strategies used can be polite or impolite, while others show differences of opinion that enrich the dynamics of interaction.

These findings indicate that CNN Indonesia's nature as a news platform widely accessible to audiences with diverse backgrounds contributes to the interaction patterns that occur in the comment section. This study contributes to the understanding of language practices in digital communication, particularly on social media, by uncovering how (im)politeness strategies and speech functions reflect the non-linear dynamics of public interaction and its openness to various forms of response. The analysis further underscores the importance of pragmatic awareness in understanding how linguistic choices influence interaction in digital spaces, particularly when discussing sensitive public issues. For future research, the scope can be expanded by comparing comment interactions across different digital media platforms or by examining more closely the interrelation between cultural context, audience identity, and the choice of linguistic strategies in online communication.

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