PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE POLITENESS STRATEGIES USED IN THE DIRECTIVE SPEECH ACTS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA'S NATIONAL PARLIAMENT SITTING SESSION

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Abstract

This study presents a pragmatic analysis of the politeness strategies employed in directive speech acts during the Papua New Guinea National Parliament sitting session on May 30th, 2024. Utilizing Brown and Levinson's politeness theory as the analytical framework, the research examines how members of parliament navigate face-threatening acts through linguistic strategies to maintain social harmony and achieve political goals. Data for the study were collected from the official parliamentary transcripts, focusing on instances of directives such as requests, commands, and suggestions. The analysis reveals a predominance of negative politeness strategies, reflecting a high sensitivity to hierarchical structures and the desire to mitigate imposition. Additionally, the study identifies contextual factors, such as the socio-political environment and cultural norms, influencing the choice of politeness strategies. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersection between language, power, and culture in parliamentary discourse, offering insights into the pragmatic dynamics of political communication in Papua New Guinea. This research underscores the importance of context in the pragmatic realization of politeness and highlights the role of language in shaping political interactions within legislative settings.

Keywords: *Politeness strategies*, *Directive speech acts*, *Papua New Guinea National Parliament*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menyajikan analisis pragmatik tentang strategi kesantunan yang digunakan dalam tindak tutur direktif selama sidang Parlemen Nasional Papua Nugini pada tanggal 30 Mei 2024. Dengan menggunakan teori kesantunan Brown dan Levinson sebagai kerangka analisis, penelitian ini meneliti anggota parlemen menavigasi tindakan yang mengancam muka melalui strategi linguistik untuk menjaga keharmonisan sosial dan mencapai tujuan politik. Data untuk penelitian ini dikumpulkan dari transkrip resmi parlemen, dengan fokus pada contoh-contoh arahan seperti permintaan, perintah, dan saran. Analisis ini mengungkapkan dominasi strategi kesopanan negatif, yang mencerminkan sensitivitas yang tinggi terhadap struktur hirarkis dan keinginan untuk mengurangi pemaksaan. Selain itu, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor kontekstual, seperti lingkungan sosial-politik dan norma-norma budaya, yang memengaruhi pilihan strategi kesopanan. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman yang lebih dalam tentang persinggungan antara bahasa, kekuasaan, dan budaya dalam wacana parlementer, yang menawarkan wawasan tentang dinamika pragmatis komunikasi politik di Papua Nugini. Penelitian ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya konteks dalam realisasi pragmatis kesantunan dan menyoroti peran bahasa dalam membentuk interaksi politik dalam lingkungan legislatif.

***Kata kunci:** Strategi kesantunan, Tindak tutur direktif, Parlemen Nasional Papua Nugini*

1. Introduction

The discourse within legislative bodies such as parliaments is a fertile ground for the study of language use, particularly regarding how political actors manage interpersonal relationships and navigate complex social hierarchies. In this context, politeness strategies are crucial for mitigating face-threatening acts and maintaining social harmony. This study presents a pragmatic analysis of the politeness strategies employed in directive speech acts during the Papua New Guinea (PNG) National Parliament sitting session on May 30th, 2024, providing valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of political communication. Employing Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory as the analytical framework, this research delves into the linguistic strategies used by PNG Members of Parliament (MPs) to manage face-threatening acts (FTAs) during their parliamentary interactions. Brown and Levinson's theory posits that individuals utilize various politeness strategies to navigate social interactions and preserve face, which is defined as the public self-image every member wants to claim for themselves. According to this framework, politeness strategies can be categorized into positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, and bald-on-record strategies. Positive politeness aims to build social rapport and demonstrate friendliness, while negative politeness seeks to minimize imposition and respect personal space and autonomy.

In parliamentary discourse, directive speech acts such as requests, commands, and suggestions are common and inherently face-threatening, as they involve attempts to influence the actions of others. This study specifically focuses on these types of speech acts, analyzing how MPs in the PNG National Parliament employ politeness strategies to navigate the delicate balance between asserting authority and maintaining respectful and harmonious relationships. Data for this study were collected from the official transcripts of the parliamentary sitting on May 30th, 2024. This session was chosen due to its relevance and the richness of directive speech acts performed by MPs. The analysis reveals a predominant use of negative politeness strategies, reflecting a high sensitivity to hierarchical structures and a conscious effort to mitigate imposition. This finding is indicative of the MPs' awareness of the need to respect the social and political hierarchies inherent in parliamentary settings.

Moreover, the study identifies several contextual factors influencing the choice of politeness strategies, including the socio-political environment and cultural norms specific to PNG. The socio-political context of PNG, characterized by its diverse cultural landscape and complex political history, plays a significant role in shaping the communication strategies of its political actors. Cultural norms, such as respect for authority and community orientation, further underscore the preference for negative politeness strategies in parliamentary discourse.

The findings of this research contribute to a deeper understanding of the interplay between language, power, and culture in legislative settings. By highlighting how politeness strategies are employed to navigate FTAs, this study offers insights into the pragmatic dynamics of political communication in PNG. It underscores the importance of context in the pragmatic realization of politeness and emphasizes the role of language in shaping political interactions within legislative environments.

This research not only enriches the theoretical understanding of politeness and directive speech acts but also provides practical implications for political communication and discourse analysis. The insights gained from this study can inform the development of more effective communication strategies within parliamentary and other formal settings, promoting more harmonious and constructive political interactions. Overall, this research attempts to answer these two research questions:

a. How do Members of Parliament in Papua New Guinea employ politeness strategies in directive speech acts during parliamentary sessions?

b. What contextual factors influence the choice of politeness strategies in the legislative discourse of Papua New Guinea?

2. Literature Review

The study of politeness strategies in directive speech acts within legislative discourse is a rich and evolving field of linguistic research. This review aims to contextualize the current study within the broader scholarly work on politeness theory, directive speech acts, and parliamentary discourse, with a specific focus on the socio-cultural and political dimensions of Papua New Guinea (PNG).

Politeness theory, as formulated by Brown and Levinson (1987), serves as a cornerstone in the analysis of linguistic strategies aimed at mitigating face-threatening acts (FTAs). According to their theory, politeness strategies are essential in managing social interactions, particularly in contexts where power dynamics and social hierarchies are pronounced. Brown and Levinson's framework delineates four main strategies: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record (indirect) strategies. Each of these strategies offers varying degrees of directness and politeness, tailored to the social context and the relational dynamics between interlocutors.

Directive speech acts, such as requests, commands, and suggestions, inherently possess a potential for FTAs, as they often impose on the recipient's autonomy or impose obligations

(Searle, 1976). In political settings, where power relations and public scrutiny are heightened, the use of politeness strategies becomes even more significant. Research has shown that politicians frequently employ complex politeness strategies to navigate the demands of political discourse while maintaining social harmony and authority (Harris, 2001; Ilie, 2010).

The analysis of parliamentary discourse provides a fertile ground for examining the interplay between language, power, and politeness. Previous studies have documented the use of politeness strategies in various legislative contexts, revealing a preference for negative politeness in formal and hierarchical settings (Bayley, 2004; Bull & Wells, 2012). Negative politeness strategies, which include hedging, indirectness, and formal address, are particularly effective in mitigating the imposition of directive acts, thus preserving the face of both the speaker and the addressee.

In examining the parliamentary discourse of PNG, it is crucial to consider the unique socio-political and cultural landscape of the country. PNG's political culture is characterized by a complex interplay of traditional and modern influences, with a strong emphasis on respect for hierarchical structures and communal relationships (Narokobi, 1983; Dinnen, 2004). These cultural norms inevitably shape the linguistic behavior of parliamentarians, influencing their choice of politeness strategies in directive speech acts.

Papua New Guinea presents a distinctive socio-political environment that profoundly impacts its parliamentary discourse. The country is known for its linguistic diversity, with over 800 languages spoken, and its political landscape is marked by a blend of traditional governance systems and modern democratic institutions (Kale, 2011). The cultural emphasis on respect, communal harmony, and the maintenance of social order translates into a heightened sensitivity to politeness in political communication (Standish, 1993).

Previous research on PNG's political discourse highlights the importance of understanding the cultural underpinnings that influence communicative practices. For instance, Narokobi (1983) emphasizes the Melanesian value of "Big Man" leadership, which necessitates the careful navigation of social relationships and the strategic use of language to maintain authority and social cohesion. Similarly, Dinnen (2004) underscores the role of customary practices in shaping contemporary political interactions, including the use of politeness strategies to negotiate power and solidarity.

The study of directive speech acts in PNG's parliamentary discourse offers valuable insights into the pragmatic dynamics of political communication in a culturally rich context. Directive acts, such as requests and commands, are often employed by parliamentarians to achieve legislative objectives, mobilize support, and assert authority. However, given the

cultural sensitivity to hierarchical relations and communal values, these acts must be carefully crafted to avoid social friction and maintain political harmony.

Research has shown that in highly hierarchical and collectivist societies, negative politeness strategies are predominant in formal settings like parliamentary sessions (Matsumoto, 1988; Gu, 1990). These strategies help to soften the directive force of speech acts, thereby reducing the risk of face loss and conflict. In the context of PNG, where respect for authority and communal relationships are paramount, the use of negative politeness in parliamentary directives can be seen as a reflection of cultural norms and political pragmatism.

The findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of how politeness strategies are employed in legislative discourse to navigate the complex interplay of language, power, and culture. By focusing on the PNG National Parliament, this research sheds light on the contextual factors that influence the pragmatic realization of politeness, offering a nuanced perspective on the dynamics of political communication in a culturally diverse setting.

This study aligns with previous research that underscores the importance of context in the pragmatic analysis of politeness. For instance, Holmes and Stubbe (2003) argue that the choice of politeness strategies is heavily influenced by socio-cultural and situational factors, which shape the expectations and norms of communicative behavior. Similarly, Watts (2003) highlights the role of cultural and contextual variables in determining the appropriateness and effectiveness of politeness strategies in different interactional settings.

3. Research Method
3.1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design aimed at providing an in-depth description of politeness in directive speech acts during the proceedings of Papua New Guinea's National Parliament Sitting on the 30th of May 2024. The qualitative approach was chosen to gain a comprehensive understanding of the subtleties and contextual nuances of politeness strategies used by parliament members in their discussions. Qualitative research is particularly suited for examining complex social interactions and understanding the underlying mechanisms of communication within specific contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). By focusing on a single parliamentary session, this study can closely analyze the language and behaviors of parliamentarians, providing insights into how politeness is constructed and negotiated in a formal legislative setting.

Directive speech acts, as defined by Searle (1976), are communicative actions where the speaker attempts to get the listener to do something. In the context of parliamentary proceedings, these can include requests, commands, and suggestions. The use of politeness strategies in such directives is crucial as it can influence the tone of the debate, the receptiveness of the audience, and the overall effectiveness of the communication (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Politeness strategies are culturally and contextually specific (Holmes, 1995). In Papua New Guinea, a country with a rich linguistic diversity and complex social hierarchies, understanding these strategies within the parliamentary discourse is essential. This study draws on the framework of politeness theory, particularly the work of Brown and Levinson (1987), which categorizes politeness strategies into positive politeness (strategies that seek to minimize the distance between speaker and listener) and negative politeness (strategies that acknowledge social distance and the listener's autonomy).

By employing qualitative methods such as discourse analysis and participant observation, this research aims to uncover the nuanced ways in which politeness is enacted in directive speech acts. Discourse analysis allows for a detailed examination of the language used, including the choice of words, sentence structures, and rhetorical devices (Gee, 2014). Participant observation provides contextual insights and a deeper understanding of the non-verbal cues and situational dynamics that accompany spoken language (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011).

This focused study on the parliamentary proceedings of Papua New Guinea not only contributes to the broader field of sociolinguistics and political communication but also provides practical insights for improving parliamentary discourse. By highlighting effective politeness strategies, this research can inform training programs for parliamentarians and support efforts to foster more respectful and productive legislative debates.

3.2. Sample Selection

A purposeful sampling technique was used to select the sample for this study. This technique allowed for the deliberate selection of participants who could provide the most relevant and rich data regarding the use of politeness in directive speech acts. The sample comprised 111 members of the National Parliament, including 22 governors representing the 22 Provinces of PNG. This specific group was chosen because their positions likely involve frequent use of directive speech acts in formal settings, making them ideal subjects for this study.

3.3. Data Collection

Data were collected through the documentation of recording transcripts of the parliamentary proceedings televised by Papua New Guinea's commercial television station, EMTV. The recordings were sourced from the EMTV online YouTube channel https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFwcAYFu-5U). These transcripts provided a detailed and accurate account of the spoken interactions during the session, ensuring the authenticity and reliability of the data.

3.4. Data Analysis

The researcher meticulously reviewed the transcripts of parliamentary sessions to identify instances of directive speech acts that included politeness devices. This comprehensive analysis involved a systematic approach to categorizing and coding the speech acts according to established linguistic frameworks (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Searle, 1976). The primary focus was to examine how politeness was employed within these speech acts, paying particular attention to the cultural and situational context of the parliamentary proceedings, which often reflect the intricate socio-political dynamics of Papua New Guinea.

Specific attention was given to the types of politeness strategies used, drawing on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, which differentiates between positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record politeness. Positive politeness strategies are those that seek to build rapport and show friendliness, such as compliments or expressions of solidarity. Negative politeness strategies, on the other hand, are designed to acknowledge and respect the listener's need for autonomy, often manifesting as indirectness or formal expressions of deference. Off-record politeness strategies involve indirect hints or vague statements that allow the speaker to avoid direct imposition.

The analysis also considered the frequency and context of these politeness strategies. For example, the use of positive politeness strategies was often observed in contexts where maintaining group cohesion and solidarity was paramount, such as during collaborative discussions or when addressing collective goals. Negative politeness strategies were more prevalent in situations where there was a need to mitigate face-threatening acts, particularly when delivering criticism or making requests that could impose on the listener. Off-record strategies were less common but notable in their use during highly sensitive or potentially contentious issues, allowing speakers to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics without direct confrontation (Holmes, 2008; Watts, 2003).

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the findings from analyzing utterances in the PNG National Parliament during the "Vote of No Confidence" motion. The data comprises parliamentary proceedings, highlighting key themes, rhetorical strategies, and discourse patterns. The findings elucidate the dynamics of political communication, power relations, and persuasive tactics employed by different members. They provide insights into the parliamentary debate structure and its implications for governance and democratic processes in Papua New Guinea.

The results reveal 40 utterances, 20 directive speech acts of politeness by the MPs of the PNG National Parliament, the shape of directive utterances, the strategies employed to perform the directive speech of politeness, and the context of the utterance grasped from the lens of pragmatic approach. This study focuses on the illocutionary directive speech utterance and assertive one.

4.1. The Context of the Directive Politeness Utterances

During a session of the Papua New Guinea (PNG) National Parliament, held at the National Parliament House, Opposition Members of Parliament (MPs) attempted to move a "Vote of No Confidence" against the sitting Prime Minister and his government. This meeting occurred within the formal and procedural context of parliamentary proceedings, characterized by structured debates and adherence to legislative protocols. The primary topic and objective of the session were to challenge the current leadership and potentially initiate a change in government. The directive and assertive speech utterances, central to the proceedings, were delivered by national parliamentarians, each with a background in representing their respective constituencies and possessing varying degrees of political experience and influence. The speeches aimed to persuade fellow MPs, assert positions, and direct the course of the debate, reflecting the high stakes and intense political maneuvering inherent in such critical parliamentary events. Table 1 below illustrates Politeness strategies in the directive speech acts employed by parliament members during a recent Parliament Sitting.

Table 1. Politeness strategies in the directive speech acts of parliament members

Speakers	Politeness strategies in the directive speech acts of parliament members		
Member of Parliament (MP)	**On Record**	**Positive Politeness Types**	**Negative Politeness Types**
MP 1	*Direct Command:* "Mr. Speaker, I move that the Prime Minister be removed from office immediately."		*Hedging:* "It seems that there might be a need to reconsider the current leadership, given recent events."
MP2		*Inclusion:* "We all want what's best for Papua New Guinea, and it's clear we need a change in leadership." *Compliment:* "I appreciate the Prime Minister's efforts, but we need stronger leadership now."	
MP 3	*Explicit Criticism:* "The current administration has failed to address the corruption issues plaguing our nation."	*Agreement:* "We can all agree that progress has been made, but we must do more to tackle the pressing issues."	*Indirect Request:* "Would it be possible to discuss the possibility of a leadership change?"
MP2		*Shared Values:* "As representatives of the people, we share a common goal of	

		improving our nation's future."	
MP 3			*Deference:* "I understand the difficulties of the role, but perhaps it's time for new leadership to take charge."
MP 4	*Unmitigated Assertion:* "This government has lost the confidence of the people."		
MP1	**Blunt Question:** "Can the Prime Minister explain why he has not fulfilled his promises?"		*Negative Politeness:* "If it pleases the house, I propose we evaluate the current administration's performance and consider a vote of no confidence."
MP 2		*Optimistic Outlook:* "Mr. Speaker, Together, we can usher in a new era of transparency and accountability".	
MP3	*Direct Accusation:* "You have betrayed the trust of the citizens of PNG."		*Apology:* "Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I must express my concerns about the Prime Minister's recent decisions on 2023 budget."
			Formal Language: "If it pleases the house, I propose we evaluate the

			current administration's performance and consider a vote of no confidence."

In parliamentary sessions, speech acts play a crucial role in conveying political stances, particularly in the context of a vote of no confidence. These acts can be categorized into three primary types: bald on record, positive politeness, and negative politeness, each serving a distinct purpose.

Bald-on-record speech acts are characterized by their directness and lack of mitigation, making the speaker's intentions unequivocal. Examples include straightforward commands ("Mr. Speaker, I move that the Prime Minister be removed from office immediately"), explicit criticisms ("The current administration has failed to address the corruption issues plaguing our nation"), unmitigated assertions ("This government has lost the confidence of the people"), blunt questions ("Can the Prime Minister explain why he has not fulfilled his promises?"), and direct accusations ("You have betrayed the trust of the citizens"). These forms are often used to assert authority and convey urgency without concern for the interlocutor's face as conferred in Culpeper (1996) and Limberg (2009),

Positive politeness, in contrast, aims to build camaraderie and show approval, often by emphasizing shared values and common goals as expressed in Márquez Reiter (2010) who conducted a comparative study of politeness strategies in British and Uruguayan contexts, highlighting how positive politeness is used to establish and maintain rapport. For instance, inclusive language ("We all want what's best for Papua New Guinea, and it's clear we need a change in leadership") and compliments ("I appreciate the efforts the Prime Minister has made, but we need stronger leadership now") are employed to foster solidarity. Other examples include agreement ("We can all agree that progress has been made, but we must do more to tackle the pressing issues"), appeals to shared values ("As representatives of the people, we share a common goal of improving our nation's future"), and an optimistic outlook ("Together, we can usher in a new era of transparency and accountability"). These strategies seek to minimize the threat to the interlocutor's face by highlighting positive aspects and common objectives.

Negative politeness strategies are designed to respect the listener's autonomy and mitigate imposition. This can involve hedging ("It seems that there might be a need to reconsider the current leadership, given recent events"), apologies ("With all due respect, I must express my concerns about the Prime Minister's recent decisions"), indirect requests

("Would it be possible to discuss the possibility of a leadership change?"), deference ("I understand the difficulties of the role, but perhaps it's time for new leadership to take charge"), and formal language ("If it pleases the house, I propose we evaluate the current administration's performance and consider a vote of no confidence"). These forms are particularly useful in maintaining politeness while addressing contentious issues which is echoed in Bousfield's (2008) and research on impoliteness in political discourse and examines how politicians employ both politeness and impoliteness strategies to achieve their communicative goals. He highlights the use of negative politeness strategies as a means to respect the interlocutor's autonomy and mitigate face-threatening acts, particularly in adversarial political settings. The study underscores the importance of context in determining the appropriateness and effectiveness of these strategies in maintaining social harmony and authority in political interactions.

In summary, the use of bald on record, positive politeness, and negative politeness strategies in parliamentary sessions, especially during discussions of a vote of no confidence in Papua New Guinea, illustrates the diverse approaches to political communication. Each strategy serves to navigate the complex interplay of asserting opinions, building solidarity, and respecting the autonomy of others.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of politeness strategies in the directive speech acts during Papua New Guinea's National Parliament sitting session on May 30th, 2024, reveals a sophisticated interplay between different forms of speech acts. Examining these strategies provides insights into the pragmatic dimensions of parliamentary discourse, particularly in the context of a highly charged vote of no confidence motion. In conclusion, the pragmatic analysis of politeness strategies in the directive speech acts during the parliamentary session underscores the strategic use of language in political discourse. The interplay between bald on record, positive politeness, and negative politeness strategies reflects the nuanced ways in which parliamentarians manage interpersonal relations and advance their political objectives. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the communicative practices in Papua New Guinea's parliamentary context, offering valuable insights for scholars and practitioners of political communication.

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