

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that studies the meaning of language in the context of its use, especially how the meaning generated in communication is influenced by the context of the situation and the social relationship between speaker and listener. Pragmatics emphasizes the interpretation of meaning based not only on the structure of language but also the social and situational context that the utterance occurs.

According to Hofstede (as cited by Ardita, 2025), culture significantly shapes communication pattern and pragmatic meanings. Dimensions such as power distance, individualism and collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance influence how language is used and interpreted in different societies. This theory emphasizes that pragmatic meaning is deeply embedded in cultural context, affecting politeness, indirectness, and communication strategies in social interaction.

Brown and Levinson (in Ardita, 2025) link pragmatics to the concept of politeness which is a universal phenomenon in social interaction. They explain that politeness is a pragmatics strategy used to save the face of speakers and interlocutors. Face is divided into positive faces (the desire to be appreciated and approved) and negative faces (the desire not to be disturbed and interrupted). Because of that, pragmatics also includes how speakers choose appropriate language expressions to maintain social relations and avoid conflict.

Austin (1962) proposes that language is not only used to convey information but also to perform actions. He classifies into locutionary acts (the act of producing meaningful utterance), illocutionary acts (the intended communicative function), and perlocutionary acts (the effects produced on the listener). This theory is fundamental in pragmatics for explaining how utterances function as social actions and how meaning depends on speaker's intention and context.

The theories proposed by Hofstede, Austin, and Brown and Levinson provide a strong theoretical basis for analyzing the meaning of speech in the context of real

communication. While Hofstede's theory adds a cultural dimension to the understanding of pragmatics, Austin explains the function of language as an action, and Brown and Levinson emphasize the role of politeness in maintaining social relationships through language. In summary, pragmatics is a study of meaning context, focusing on how language users convey and interpret intended.

2.2 Contexts in Pragmatics

Context is one of the important elements in the communication process that greatly influences how messages are delivered, received, and interpreted. Without a clear context, the meaning of a message can be ambiguous or even misunderstood. According to West and Turner (2007), context is the environment or situation in which communication takes place, and this environment includes various factors like place, time, physical condition, moods, and relationship between speakers and hearer.

Pragmatic studies show how language users adjust sentences to context so that they can be used appropriately and effectively (Leech, 1983; Mey, 2001). The context includes who is speaking, with whom, where, when, and in what situation the communication takes place. Without context, text or speech are likely to become meaningless or difficult to understand.

2.3 Positive Politeness Strategies

Politeness strategies are essential for social interaction, demonstrating respect, and giving harmony between speaker and listener. These strategies give the speakers the ability to avoid conflict and to consider social standing and emotions listeners. Politeness can be understood as the way people select their words and structure to communicate.

According to Brown and Levinson's theory (1987:91), the concept of "Face" refers to one's self-image and need to be respected in social interaction, between positive face (the desire to be liked and accepted) and negative face (the desire to be left alone), based on this distinction, they propose two main types of politeness: positive and negative politeness. Below is a detailed explanation of each strategy.

Positive Politeness, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), is redress aimed at the addressee's positive face, his desire that their wants to be considered desirable and this is because "face is something that is emotionally invested, and can be lost, maintained or enchanted, and must to be constantly attended to" (Brown and Levinson, 1987:66) in speech interaction, in general, it is believed that the more effort the speaker expend in face-maintaining linguistics behavior, the more he communicates his genuine desire that the hearer's face wants to be satisfied and approved of.

The strategies of positive politeness, as described by Brown and Levinson, include specific strategies like Use of greeting and salutations, group identity maker, expressions of optimism and support, use of humor and jokes, seeking agreement and offering help.

a. Notice, attend to hearer interests, wants, needs, or goods

According to Brown and Levinson (as cited in Ardita, 2025:8-18), this strategy encourages the speaker to be observant and attentive to the hearer's condition, desires, or achievements; involving commenting on elements that the hearer likely values or wishes to be acknowledged. In this context, "good" refer to anything that the hearer considers valuable, including personal possessions, abilities, achievements, social status, or other aspects that contribute to the hearer's self-image and positive face. For example:

Japanese version: *Ohiru mada desho? Issho ni tabe ni iku?*

English version: *You have not had lunch yet? Do you want to eat together?*

In the statement above, the speaker recognizes hearer's condition and expresses interest.

b. Exaggerate interest, approval, or sympathy

According to Brown and Levinson (as cited in Ardita, 2025:8-18), this strategy involves expressing interest, approval, or sympathy with heightened enthusiasm through exaggerated language, making the hearer feel appreciated, valued, or understood beyond normal expectations. For example:

Japanese version: *Tesuto kyuujuu ten!? Sugosugiru! Tensai da wa!*

English version: *You got 90 on the test!? That is insane, you are a genius!*

In the statement above, the speaker uses 'insane' to exaggerate approval for the hearer's possession.

c. Intensify interest to hearer

According to Brown and Levinson (as cited in Ardita, 2025:8-18), this strategy reflects the speaker's desire to make their messages more engaging by adding vividness, emotion, or narrative flair; it adds liveliness to the interaction, making the hearer feel as though they are experiencing the event together. For example:

Japanese version: *Nee kiite! Hisashiburi ni uchira ga chuugaku no toki ni hamatteta geemu yarou to omottara sa! Saabisu shuuryou shitetan kanashii*

English version: *Hey, guess what! I tried to play that game we were obsessed with in middle school, but it is shut down now... so sad...*

In the statement above, the speaker narrates past events to draw the hearer into the story and create a sense of immediacy.

d. Use in-group identity markers

According to Brown and Levinson (as cited in Ardita, 2025:8-18), this strategy builds solidarity by using language associated with a shared group identity, such as addressed forms, dialects, jargon, or slang, to imply familiarity with the hearer. For example:

Japanese version: *Kyou wa gochisousama!! Sasuga, watashi no **anego!***

English version: *Thanks for today! You are seriously my **boss lady!***

In the statement above, the speaker uses familiar term 'boss lady' to show closeness.

e. Seek agreement

According to Brown and Levinson (as cited in Ardita, 2025:8-18), this strategy fosters solidarity and satisfy the hearer's positive face, the desire to be validated or approved. For example:

Japanese version:

A: *Ashita no tesuto yabai wa...* B:

Sorena, *zenzen benkyou shite nai*

English version:

A: *Tomorrow's test is going to be rough* B:

For real, *I did not study at all.*

In the dialogue above, B repeats part of A's statement with an added tone of surprise; to show his emotional involvement, it serves to empathize with A and validate his experience.

f. Avoid disagreement

According to Brown and Levinson (as cited in Ardita, 2025:8-18), this strategy allows speakers to agree superficially with the hearer to preserve the hearer's positive face; speakers may twist their words to hide disagreement, avoiding damaging the hearer's self-esteem. For example:

Japanese version:

A: *Ano raamen-ya meccha oishikatta!*

B: *Un, oishii yo ne~!* ***Chotto karai kedo.***

English version:

A: *That ramen place was so good*

B: *Yeah, it was tasty, a bit spicy though.*

In the dialogue above, B is not fully agreeing with A's observation but softens his disagreement by acknowledging part of the statement.

g. Joke

According to Brown and Levinson (as cited in Ardita, 2025:8-18), this strategy uses humour to ease tension and reduce threatening hearer's 'face'; it can build

rapport by creating a sense of shared understanding and putting the hearer at ease.
For example:

Japanese version:

A: *Koo hii katte kite~*

B: *Ii yo! Ippai gosen en ni narimasu kedo* English

version:

A: *Buy me some coffee*

B: *Sure! That will be \$50 a cup*

In the dialogue above, humour lies in the playful exaggeration of the price, which creates a light, joking tone that pokes fun at them.

h. Assert speaker's concern for hearer's wants

According to Brown and Levinson (as cited in Ardita, 2025:8-18), this strategy shows the speaker's awareness of the hearer's preferences and demonstrates concern by acting as if they know what the hearer wants. For example:

Japanese version: *Jugyou de tsukareteru desho? Amai mono katte kita yo!* English version: *You must be tired after class, so I got you something sweet!*

In the statement above, the act of recognizing the hearer's fatigue and providing dinner conveys empathy, which fosters rapport and strengthen the hearer's positive face, the desire to be appreciated and cared for.

i. Include both speaker and hearer in an activity

According to Brown and Levinson (as cited in Ardita, 2025:8-18), this strategy utilizes the inclusive pronoun 'we' to involve the hearer directly in the speaker's action or request. By doing so, the speaker reduces the distance between them, emphasizing collaboration and shared effort. For example:

Japanese version: *Hima nara geemu yaro!*

English version: *Bored? Let's play a game!*

In the statement above, the speaker reduces imposition that might arise, this promotes partnership, the hearer feels involved and appreciated rather than burdened).

j. Be optimistic

According to Brown and Levinson (as cited in Ardita, 2025:8-18), this strategy involves assuming that both the speaker and hearer share common desires or goals; the speaker acts optimistically, believing that the hearer will naturally be inclined to help or cooperate. For example:

Japanese version: *Ashita no happyou, daijoubu datte! Uchira nara dekiru yo*

English version: *Don't worry about tomorrow's presentation. We got this.*

In the statement above, the speaker assumes the hearer's agreement and enthusiasm, fostering a sense of unity and alignment.

k. Give gifts (goods, sympathy, cooperation)

According to Brown and Levinson (as cited in Ardita, 2025:8-18), this strategy refers to offering intangible gifts, such as sympathy, understanding or encouragement rather than material presents. For example:

Japanese version: *Saikin totemo ganbatteiru ne. Tokidoki wa yasunda hou ga ii yo*

English version: *You've been working really hard lately. Please don't forget to take a break sometimes.*

In the statement above, by expressing concern and offering emotional support, the speaker acknowledges the hearer's emotional state, enhancing the bond between them.

2.4 Overview of LINE as a Japanese Chatting Platform

LINE is a mobile instant messaging application that has become one of the most widely used communication platforms in Japan. It was developed by NHN Japan, a subsidiary of NAVER Corporation, and launched in 2011

following the Great East Japan Earthquake, during which conventional communication networks were severely disrupted. The application provided a stable, internet-based alternative that enabled users to maintain interpersonal communication during emergency situations, which significantly accelerated its adoption nationwide (Kikuchi, 2012; Tanaka, 2015).

LINE offers various features, including text messaging, voice and video calls, group chats, and expressive stickers. These features facilitate not only information exchange but also emotional expression and interpersonal engagement, which are essential components of Japanese communication culture (Sugiyama, 2015; Nishimura, 2016). Previous studies indicate that the extensive use of stickers and emojis on LINE contributes to the expression of politeness, empathy, and relational closeness in digital interactions (Nishimura, 2016; Shindo, 2018).

Due to its widespread use and its function as a primary medium for informal interpersonal communication, LINE provides a rich and authentic source of linguistic data. Therefore, this platform is considered appropriate for analyzing pragmatic phenomena, particularly the realization of positive politeness strategies in Japanese digital discourse.



(Picture2,1 Logo of LINE)

2.5 Previous Related Studies

In support of this research, various previous studies share similarities and differences. This shows the application of the same idea and approach in research on this topic. The first study, conducted by Ardita (2025) and titled “Positive and

Negative Politeness in The Utterances Found In “The Banshees of Inisherin” (2022) Movie Script”. The study aims to analyse positive and negative politeness strategies based on Brown and Levinson’s theory. by using a qualitative description of method to identify how politeness appears in the movie script.

The results show that positive politeness is used more frequently (62 times) than negative politeness (49 times), showing the characters efforts to build closeness and respect in communication. This study uses the same politeness as mine and focuses on how people express politeness in communication. However, the difference lies in the data source and platform. While her study uses a movies script and mine focuses on LINE conversations which reflect digital and real-life communication instead of written fictional dialogue.

The next study was conducted by Shindo (2018) and titled “A Pragmatic English Discourse: The Multi layered Nature of Positive Politeness”, and this study aims to analyze how compliment expressions function as positive politeness strategies in Japanese and English movie dialogues, based on Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory. It focuses on how praise reduces face threatening acts and builds social closeness.

The results show that English speakers use compliments more frequently and often combine them with humor, repetition, address terms while Japanese’s speakers tend to express politeness through gratitude. This study is like mine in that both apply Brown and Levinson’s theory and compare Japanese’s and English politeness strategies. However, the difference lines in the data and focus - Shindo analyzed spoken compliments in movies, while my research examines digital LINE conversations, where politeness appears through written messages, emojis, and tone.

The third study, by Budiartini, et al. (2025) research entitled "Positive Politeness Strategies in All the Bright Places Movie" utilizes Brown and Levinson' theory, which is supported by Halliday and Hasan's (1989) theory of context of situation, to reveal and investigate positive politeness strategies used to the characters in the movie.

Using qualitative analysis, it examines the screenplay for the results demonstrate that 14 out of the 15 positive politeness strategies proposed by

Brown and Levinson's (1987) are utilized in the film, with Strategy 4, using in-group identity markers, occurring most often. These strategies are important not only to promote social peace, emotional bonds and character virtues. This study has the same theoretical base as my study, adopting Brown and Levinson's politeness theory and using a qualitative descriptive design to investigate how politeness strategies work in interaction.

Similarly, the two studies are interested in investigating how language can preserve unity and show respect while interacting with other people. However, the most interesting differences are to be found in the means, and extent. While Budiartini et al. (2025) focuses on spoken dialogue in a film, my study investigates written digital communication on LINE chatting platform. Moreover, my research includes a cross-cultural comparison among Japanese and Indonesian politeness strategies, whereas Budiartini's work is limited to English-language film discourse. Additionally, my study considers digital features, such as emojis and tone, as expressions of politeness in online settings.

