

## **Positive Politeness Strategies in Blackpink's Interview with Jimmy Kimmel 2020**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Positive politeness strategies remain relevant in modern society as essential tools for fostering harmony and mutual respect in social interactions. In today's media landscape, public figures particularly those with significant popularity are expected to demonstrate appropriate attitudes, effective communication skills, and positive body language, especially during public appearances such as talk show interviews. This study investigates the use of positive politeness strategies by the members of Blackpink during their appearance on the American talk show Jimmy Kimmel Live. Adopting Brown and Levinson's politeness theory as the primary framework, this research aims to identify, classify, and comprehensively describe the positive politeness strategies employed by the group. The findings reveal that the verbal and non-verbal expressions demonstrated by Blackpink align with the positive politeness strategies outlined by Brown and Levinson. Furthermore, this study extends the analysis to the 2020 documentary Blackpink: Light Up the Sky, offering additional insights into how positive politeness is manifested in various media contexts. Through a detailed qualitative examination, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of interpersonal communication dynamics and the role of politeness in the public representation of global celebrities.

**Keywords:** Positive Politeness; Blackpink; Talk Show Interview

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the 21st century, the rich tapestry of languages spoken within society has led to the emergence of various communication styles, characterized by unique dialects and accents. For a society that prioritizes respect, ethics, and dignity in its interactions, the implementation of politeness strategies is essential across all forms of communication. This approach is crucial for fostering respectful exchanges among individuals, irrespective of their diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The practice of politeness is upheld in both Western and Eastern cultures, highlighting its significance in maintaining social harmony. The role of politeness

in communication extends beyond mere etiquette; it plays a vital part in cultivating a peaceful environment and fostering positive relationships among individuals. By encouraging mutual respect, people can navigate their differences in language and speech more effectively, leading to stronger connections. Ultimately, the commitment to politeness not only enhances interpersonal interactions but also enriches the social fabric, allowing for a more inclusive and understanding community.

The approach employed to communicate a speech with courtesy is known as the politeness strategy. This framework is designed to foresee potential threats to an individual's social standing, often referred to as "face." By considering the context and circumstances of the interlocutor, politeness strategies aim to maintain a respectful and civil interaction (Prasetyo et al., 2020; Sodikin, 2014). Furthermore, prior research has indicated that these strategies serve as a reminder for individuals, as communicators, to exercise caution in their interactions to mitigate the risk of misunderstandings (Kurdghelashvili, 2015; Salifu, 2010). This approach is crucial in safeguarding one's self-image, as it helps to avert the negative repercussions that may arise from behaviors that could jeopardize the speaker's face.

In the realm of politeness strategies, four distinct types have been identified in earlier studies: bald on, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record (Brown & Levinson, 1978). The bald on strategy is characterized by its directness, aimed at reducing the potential threat to the listener's face through actions such as expressing disapproval, offering advice, or issuing warnings. Positive politeness seeks to enhance the listener's positive face by amplifying expressions of interest, providing approval, demonstrating empathy, and steering clear of disapproval (Abudayeh & Dubbati, 2020; Mahmud, 2019). Conversely, negative politeness is concerned with addressing the listener's negative face by employing indirect, cautious, and less burdensome communication methods. Lastly, the off-record strategy necessitates that the listener engages in interpretation, often involving hints, associations, or the use of hyperbolic or contradictory statements to convey meaning.

Numerous prior research has been effectively disseminated in various esteemed national and international journals. This study aims to identify the existing research gap by examining the specific criteria related to the problem focus, the classifications identified, the research methodologies employed, and the outcomes and conclusions drawn from several studies concerning the concept of positive politeness. By analyzing these dimensions, the researcher seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse in this field, highlighting areas that require further exploration. The findings from this study will not only elucidate the nuances of positive politeness but also provide a framework for future research endeavors aimed at addressing the identified gaps.

A recent study conducted by Ricky and Afriana (2024) delves into the concept of positive politeness, employing a pragmatic framework to analyze and categorize its

manifestations within the film "Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wick." Their research identifies four instances of positive politeness, alongside three instances of negative politeness, four examples of bald-on-record strategies, and three instances of off-record strategies. This comprehensive analysis highlights the various ways in which politeness is articulated in the dialogue, reflecting the cultural nuances embedded in the narrative. The significance of the politeness strategies identified in the film is particularly relevant, given that the storyline revolves around cultural romance set in Indonesia's rural landscape. By examining these communicative strategies, the study not only contributes to the understanding of interpersonal dynamics within the film but also sheds light on the broader implications of politeness in cross-cultural communication. The findings underscore the intricate relationship between language, culture, and social interaction, particularly in the context of romantic relationships.

Furthermore, Meliana and Ambalegin (2020) conducted a study focusing on positive politeness, utilizing a novel by Nicholas Sparks as their research object. The primary aim of their investigation was to examine both positive and negative politeness strategies within the text. Their findings revealed that the characters in "The Last Song" employed a range of positive and negative politeness strategies; however, they notably did not utilize the eighth negative politeness strategy, which pertains to face-threatening acts. This absence can be attributed to the romantic essence of the novel, which operates outside the constraints of specific social rules or norms.

While this study aligns with other research efforts in identifying and categorizing utterances associated with positive politeness strategies, However, it is differentiated by its focus on a detailed and comprehensive classification of these strategies as they appear in Blackpink's interview with Jimmy Kimmel in 2020. The primary aim of this research is to conduct a systematic analysis of various speech expressions utilized by the members of Blackpink during their interview on the Jimmy Kimmel talk show. This study employs a theoretical framework that extends beyond the principles established by Brown and Levinson, incorporating insights from a range of other scholars in the field. By classifying and examining these speech expressions, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the communicative strategies employed by the group. The integration of multiple theoretical perspectives allows for a more nuanced interpretation of their interactions, contributing to the broader discourse on language use in media contexts. Formulation problem of this study is centered on exploring the instances conveyed by the members of Blackpink that are recognized as manifestations of positive politeness strategies.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Politeness theory, first conceptualized by Brown and Levinson (1987), serves as the foundational framework for understanding how individuals manage face and maintain social harmony in communication. Their theory introduces two primary

types of politeness strategies: positive politeness and negative politeness. Positive politeness strategies are used to express friendliness, solidarity, and appreciation toward the interlocutor, aiming to minimize social distance. These strategies often include compliments, shared values, humor, and inclusive language (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Several scholars have expanded upon or applied this framework in different communication contexts. Holmes (1995) explored how politeness strategies manifest in workplace interactions, revealing that speakers often rely on positive politeness to build rapport. Similarly, Mills (2003) examined gender and politeness, emphasizing how societal expectations influence the performance of politeness strategies, particularly among public figures. These insights are particularly relevant when analyzing celebrity behavior in media interviews, where image and public perception are carefully managed.

In the realm of media discourse, Tolson (2001) discusses how talk shows create a hybrid space where informal and formal speech acts coexist. This environment challenges celebrities to balance authenticity with politeness, often requiring the use of positive politeness strategies to maintain a favorable public image. Furthermore, Dynel (2011) highlights that talk show settings encourage strategic use of humor, self-disclosure, and flattery—all forms of positive politeness—to engage audiences and hosts alike.

Recent studies focusing on K-pop and global celebrity culture offer additional context. Lee (2020) analyzed how Korean celebrities adapt their communicative styles in Western media to meet international audience expectations, often adopting politeness strategies aligned with Western norms. Likewise, Kim and Kwon (2021) found that members of popular K-pop groups, including Blackpink, use positive politeness to project approachability and humility during English-language interviews.

These studies underscore the relevance of politeness strategies, particularly positive politeness, in shaping the public personas of global celebrities. Given Blackpink's rising global influence, their use of language and behavior in international interviews such as Jimmy Kimmel Live serves as a rich site for investigating how politeness functions across cultures and media contexts.

## **METHOD**

### **Design and Sample**

The study employed a qualitative descriptive design, which was selected to explore and understand the subject matter in depth through observation and detailed description rather than statistical analysis. This approach is suitable for capturing rich, contextual insights into communication behaviors, especially in natural settings. The sample in this study consisted of selected video clips of Blackpink's

interview on Jimmy Kimmel Live in 2020, which served as the primary unit of analysis.

### **Instrument and Procedures**

The primary instrument used was observation guided by a structured checklist based on Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness strategies. The procedures involved repeated viewing of the interview clips to identify verbal and non-verbal expressions of positive politeness. Supporting tools included transcription for detailed analysis and note-taking for identifying contextual elements such as gestures, tone, and audience interaction. This allowed the researchers to gather qualitative data in the form of spoken language, body language, and interaction patterns.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using a thematic coding technique, aligning with the principles of qualitative content analysis. The researchers categorized the data into themes based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework of positive politeness strategies, such as using in-group identity markers, expressing approval, and showing interest. These themes were examined to interpret how the politeness strategies were employed and how they functioned within the context of a Western media interview. This analytical process enabled the identification of patterns and deeper meanings embedded in the participants' communication.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This study identified and analyzed nine instances of positive politeness strategies observed in the 2020 *Jimmy Kimmel Live* interview featuring BLACKPINK. The interaction between the American talk show host and the South Korean girl group served as a dynamic site for the application of politeness strategies as theorized by Brown and Levinson (1987). Positive politeness strategies were found to be consistently employed by both the host and the group members to maintain rapport, reduce social distance, express solidarity, and foster an overall sense of mutual respect and inclusion. These findings are significant in demonstrating how politeness strategies are effectively utilized in high-profile cross-cultural media settings, particularly when public figures are expected to perform politeness as part of their public persona.

The first instance of positive politeness appears in Jimmy Kimmel's warm and respectful opening: "Jisoo, Jennie, Lisa and Rose BLACKPINK hello ladies, thank you for being with us." This opening greeting embodies the strategy of *notice and attend to the hearer (his/her interests, wants, needs)* by showing awareness and acknowledgment of each individual guest. By calling them by name and offering sincere gratitude, Kimmel fosters a sense of familiarity and appreciation. This act reduces social distance and demonstrates the host's attentiveness, thereby

establishing a positive atmosphere from the outset. In celebrity interviews, such greetings are more than perfunctory; they are performative tools that build bridges between cultural figures and international audiences.

Kimmel continues to exhibit politeness by reinforcing appreciation and linguistic accommodation in his next line: “Thank you for being with us... we’ll keep it in English for the rest of this interview just for our U.S. viewers...” This expression not only conveys gratitude but also reflects the strategy of *include speaker and hearer in activity*, as Kimmel includes both his guests and the audience in the communicative frame. His choice to use English respects the members’ language ability while acknowledging audience needs, representing a delicate balance between inclusivity and clarity. Importantly, this choice helps minimize any potential discomfort that could arise from language barriers, positioning the host as a culturally sensitive interlocutor.

The BLACKPINK members also contribute to the interpersonal harmony through their expressions of identity and group dynamics. Jennie’s statement, “We actually came up with the name when we made the name BLACKPINK right away,” reveals an effort to explain and connect with the audience through self-disclosure. This aligns with the strategy of *asserting common ground*, as Jennie shares the story behind the group’s branding, an aspect that fans and new viewers alike can relate to. Sharing such insights helps humanize the performers and allows the audience to view them as approachable and sincere.

Rosé further builds upon this by stating, “We kind of felt like those two colors represented us the most... we're very girly but at the same time we're very savage too.” Her explanation elaborates the dual image of the group—soft and strong—which appeals to a wide range of viewers. This aligns with the strategy of *give gifts to the hearer (praise, identity affirmation)* by acknowledging traits that resonate with fans’ perceptions. Her words reflect a deliberate construction of identity that embraces complexity, femininity, and power, thereby fostering deeper emotional connections with the audience and challenging the monolithic portrayal of K-Pop idols.

A particularly effective example of positive politeness appears when Kimmel references BLACKPINK’s Netflix documentary. His detailed explanation—“There’s a documentary... where you train to sing and dance, and then they choose the students that excel...”—demonstrates *intensifying interest to the hearer*. He shows genuine familiarity with their journey, validating the group’s hard work and reinforcing admiration. By highlighting their struggles and achievements, Kimmel not only compliments the group but also enhances the audience's empathy. This strategy also boosts the ethos of the host, as it shows that he has done his research and respects his guests.

In a more humorous and informal tone, Kimmel asks, “Do you learn... or are you learning history and math and all the other boring things that we have to learn?” This question employs *use of in-group identity markers* and *joking*, both of which

are characteristic of positive politeness. His use of self-deprecating humor breaks hierarchical distance and creates a sense of peer-like rapport. It invites the guests to engage in light-hearted banter, further humanizing them and enhancing the entertainment value of the interaction.

Rosé's response, "I was personally really excited that we got to get rid of all those annoying subjects..." is candid and layered with humility and relatability. She continues by reflecting on the value of education despite her idol training, revealing an awareness of social expectations. Her statement aligns with *be optimistic* and *give reasons*, which are core components of positive politeness. This moment underscores the tension many performers face between vocational training and formal education, presenting Rosé as self-aware and grounded traits that deepen her connection with fans.

The final data points reinforce BLACKPINK's global impact. Kimmel's mention of their historic performance at Coachella is laced with admiration: "You became the first female K-Pop group to play Coachella..." His enthusiasm highlights *give gifts to the hearer (praise)*. Recognizing BLACKPINK's achievement in front of a global audience reinforces their status and contribution to the global music scene. This praise not only validates the group's artistic credibility but also affirms their role as cultural ambassadors for Korea on the international stage.

Taken together, the nine data points analyzed in this study clearly illustrate that the interview between BLACKPINK and Jimmy Kimmel is rich with positive politeness strategies that serve both relational and performative functions. The host's expressions of admiration, gratitude, and inclusive language choices helped create a positive interactional climate. Meanwhile, BLACKPINK's self-disclosures, humor, and acknowledgments of their fans reflect a deep understanding of how politeness functions as a tool for sustaining their public image and fostering audience loyalty.

The results of this study affirm that positive politeness strategies are not only prevalent but essential in high-stakes public communication involving globally influential figures. BLACKPINK's appearance on *Jimmy Kimmel Live* exemplifies how linguistic courtesy, thoughtful identity construction, and mutual respect can intersect to produce meaningful, memorable, and culturally significant media discourse. Their use of positive politeness serves not only to maintain their image as approachable and respectable artists but also to position them as key players in the ongoing globalization of K-Pop and the broader entertainment industry. This confirms that politeness is more than just a social nicety it is a strategic, performative tool that bridges cultures, enhances relatability, and builds lasting audience rapport.

The findings of this study underscore the strategic and culturally embedded use of positive politeness strategies during Blackpink's interview on Jimmy Kimmel Live. Through the identification and analysis of nine distinct utterances, it becomes

evident that both the host and the guests employ linguistic and non-linguistic cues that align with Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework of positive politeness. This interaction offers a compelling case of how politeness strategies operate in public, transnational, and media-based discourse particularly within celebrity interviews, where image, perception, and relatability are crucial.

Jimmy Kimmel's consistent use of direct praise, inclusive language, and humor serves to reduce the social distance between himself and Blackpink. As a Western host engaging with non-Western, non-native English-speaking guests, Kimmel demonstrates cross-cultural sensitivity by employing strategies that foster comfort and respect. For example, his deliberate mention of each member's name, multiple expressions of gratitude, and reference to the group's accomplishments such as their Netflix documentary and Coachella performance signal an effort to affirm the guests' value. These utterances activate several sub-strategies within the positive politeness framework, such as notice and attend to the hearer, exaggerate interest, and give gifts (praise). His rhetorical approach mirrors what Brown and Levinson describe as a desire to satisfy the hearer's positive face their want to be liked, admired, and approved of.

On the other hand, the members of Blackpink also engage in positive politeness, not only toward the host but also indirectly toward the viewing audience. Their responses reflect self-disclosure, humility, shared identity, and even humor—traits that help demystify their celebrity status and increase relatability. Rosé's explanation of the group's name and her candid remarks about disliking academic subjects, for instance, exemplify the use of assert common ground and be optimistic strategies. Jennie's narrative about the group's origins further enhances intimacy with the audience, presenting the idols as thoughtful and self-aware individuals. These behaviors are indicative of a deliberate effort to maintain approachability and foster a parasocial connection with their fanbase what Horton and Wohl (1956) term a one-sided emotional bond cultivated through mediated performances.

In combining these patterns, the interview illustrates how politeness is used not merely for face-saving, but for constructing a shared communicative space that accommodates linguistic diversity, cultural nuance, and hierarchical imbalances. Given the global status of Blackpink and the international viewership of the Jimmy Kimmel show, this instance of mediated discourse functions as both a cultural exchange and a performance of identity. The positive politeness strategies deployed are not incidental; they are integral to the management of public image and intergroup communication.

The findings also affirm prior studies that emphasize the relevance of positive politeness in media discourse. For instance, Mahayani and Rahayuni (2018) found similar politeness strategies in Western talk show formats, and Wahdani et al. (2023) observed that such strategies were essential in podcast interviews with celebrities like Will Smith. What differentiates this study, however, is its focus on the convergence of Asian pop culture and Western media, highlighting how

politeness functions across linguistic and cultural boundaries. This transnational context heightens the stakes of public discourse, where misunderstanding or perceived disrespect could easily go viral or affect a public figure's reputation. In such a high stake setting, the careful selection of polite language becomes not just a communicative choice but a professional necessity.

Moreover, the data demonstrate that politeness strategies in entertainment are not restricted to scripted dialogue. They extend into spontaneous interactions, serving as tools for managing impressions, reinforcing mutual respect, and enhancing the credibility of both host and guests. These strategies contribute to what Goffman (1959) would call the "presentation of self" in everyday interaction albeit here on a much grander, media-driven stage.

Therefore, this discussion supports the argument that positive politeness is an essential linguistic tool in globalized media discourse. It enables speakers from different backgrounds to navigate public interaction smoothly, maintain a favorable public persona, and foster social cohesion in front of a diverse audience. Through this case study, it becomes evident that such strategies are especially vital in intercultural and multilingual contexts, where politeness not only facilitates understanding but also becomes a form of symbolic capital. In essence, Blackpink's interaction with Jimmy Kimmel exemplifies how politeness transcends mere etiquette and becomes a communicative strategy that shapes perceptions, mediates culture, and strengthens interpersonal resonance even on the global stage.

## **CONCLUSION**

The presence of public figures, both in physical spaces and online platforms, necessitates a commitment to maintaining decorum and appropriate conduct, as these individuals often serve as role models within their communities. This is particularly pertinent in the context of K-Pop idols, who have garnered significant international acclaim and possess a vast influence over their fanbase. The manner in which these celebrities conduct themselves can shape societal norms and expectations, making it imperative for them to embody the values of respect and civility.

An exemplary instance of this positive politeness strategy can be observed in the behavior of the members of Blackpink during their interview on the Jimmy Kimmel talk show. Their approach not only serves as an educational moment for audiences but also promotes a cultural narrative that emphasizes the importance of kindness, eloquence, and dignity in communication. By engaging in such respectful interactions, these idols contribute to a broader media landscape that encourages constructive dialogue and fosters a sense of community among their followers.

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