

Positive Politeness Strategies in YouTube Comments: A Pragmatic Analysis of Kendrick Lamar's "Money Trees"

Nesia Monika

pb221210009@upbatam.ac.id

Afriana

afriana@puterabatam.ac.id

Universitas Putera Batam

ABSTRACT

This study examines positive politeness strategies in YouTube comments on Kendrick Lamar's Money Trees music video using Brown and Levinson's theory. It applies a qualitative descriptive method by observing and analysing selected comments. The findings show four types of positive politeness strategies: Exaggerate, Notice and Attend to the Hearer, Presuppose or Raise Common Ground, and Intensify Interest to the Hearer, with Exaggerate as the most dominant. This result indicates that viewers mainly show strong admiration and emotional support through exaggerated expressions. In conclusion, positive politeness plays an important role in creating friendly interaction and strengthening solidarity in digital communication.

Key words: Pragmatics; Positive Politeness; YouTube Comments; Kendrick Lamar; Money Trees

INTRODUCTION

Language is an essential medium for expressing thoughts, emotions, and cultural values in both face-to-face and digital interactions (Apriyanto, 2020). In the digital era, communication has increasingly shifted to social media platforms, with YouTube serving not only as a space for viewing content but also as a public forum through its comment sections. These comment sections allow users to share opinions and reactions, encouraging interaction, community building, and public discussion among diverse audiences (Fraccastoro et al., 2021). Compared to direct interaction, online communication is often perceived as more accessible and less restrictive, enabling individuals to express themselves more openly (Johnson & Kaye, 2000).

In our digital world, language functions not only to convey information but also to maintain social harmony. Politeness becomes a key strategy to ensure that communication remains respectful despite the absence of physical presence and the influence of anonymity. According to (Brown & Levinson, 1987) politeness strategies are used to manage face-threatening acts that may endanger a person's self-image or social identity. On platforms like YouTube, where users come from various cultural and social backgrounds, the possibility of misunderstanding and

conflict is high, making the use of politeness strategies crucial for sustaining positive interaction.

Linguistic politeness also represents the cultural values of a community. According to (Afriana & Mandala, 2018) politeness reflects social norms and expectations, not merely linguistic choices. One important type is positive politeness, which emphasizes appreciation, agreement, and solidarity to reduce social distance and strengthen relationships. In online communication, positive politeness appears in the form of supportive comments, compliments, and expressions of agreement. Therefore, this study applies a pragmatic framework to analyze positive politeness strategies in user comments on Kendrick Lamar's "Money Trees" music video to understand how users maintain harmony, express support, and negotiate social relationships in digital discourse.

Kendrick Lamar is a famous rapper from Compton, California, whose work has been praised by critics for its deep lyricism and keen social commentary. The song "Money Trees" from his 2012 album *good kid, m.A.A.d city* is a suitable starting point for this examination. The music video for "Money Trees" does a great job of showing the song's main ideas: the search for money and the complicated realities of street life. This makes it a great source for studying how people interact with it.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Related Study

A prior study from (Atsna & Andriyani, 2025) investigated positive politeness methods in the film *The School for Good and Evil*, employing Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory through a qualitative descriptive approach. The data were derived from the film and its script, concentrating on expressive utterances employed by the characters to convey emotions and sustain connections. The results showed that the characters used a number of tactics to develop solidarity and deal with conflict in the story. These included noticing, exaggerating, using in-group identity markers, avoiding disagreement, and making promises. The study focused on only one movie, thus the results can't be applied to other movies.

(Sari & Sutopo, 2024) examined positive politeness methods in the film *Spider-Man: Far From Home* through the lens of Brown and Levinson's theory, employing a qualitative methodology. The research delineated eight categories of positive politeness tactics employed by the characters, with Noticing and Attending to the Listener emerging as the predominant strategy (15.9% of 37 data points). The results also demonstrated that politeness was affected by rewards and certain situations, such as social distance, relative power, and how much of an imposition it was.

(Mulyanah & Andriani, 2024) investigated positive politeness methods in a podcast video through Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory employing a qualitative

approach. The statistics were sourced from a YouTube webcast featuring Grace Helbig and Mamrie Hart. The findings indicated the presence of 10 types of positive politeness techniques, with "Including Both Speaker and Hearer in the Activity" being the most often employed strategy, occurring 10 times. The study also found two things that had an effect: reward and social distance. Social distance was the most important component, showing up 16 times out of 30 times.

Pragmatic

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that focuses on how language is used within specific contexts and how speaker's express meanings that go beyond the literal sense of words (Ramdhani & Amalia, 2023). It involves understanding the social, cultural, and cognitive aspects that shape communication, such as the roles of the speaker and listener, the intent behind the message, and the circumstances surrounding the interaction. The main focus of pragmatics is how the meaning of an utterance is influenced by the context of place, time, participants, purpose, and communication media, so that the resulting meaning is contextual or situational. Son & Afriana, 2023 highlight that in language learning, pragmatics offers significant advantages, such as enabling individuals to infer the intended meaning of others, understand their goals, and recognize the types of actions (e.g., requests, apologies) performed in conversation. However, a challenge in pragmatics is the difficulty in interpreting human intentions uniformly and without bias. Despite its complexities, pragmatic competence plays a crucial role in communication. Pragmatic competence is defined as the ability to convey and interpret meaning and to use language in context appropriately (Nurdiana, 2019). Pragmatics also examines how language is used functionally in social interaction and everyday communication.

Furthermore, pragmatics is essential for understanding how language functions in social interactions and everyday communication. It goes beyond the formal structure of language, exploring how speakers strategically use language to achieve particular social functions, such as establishing relationships, maintaining politeness, and managing face-threatening acts. This study leverages pragmatic theory to analyze the use of politeness strategies in YouTube comments, recognizing how language serves to build rapport, create solidarity, and manage social identity in digital spaces.

Positive Politeness

Politeness is an important part of how people talk to each other. It helps people get along with each other and keep their relationships strong. The subject of politeness has been extensively examined in linguistics, notably through the politeness theory proposed by sociolinguists Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson in their seminal 1987 publication, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. This theory provides a comprehensive elucidation of how individuals utilize language to

negotiate social dynamics, particularly in contexts where concerns over one's social image or self-esteem are implicated.

Positive politeness is very important for keeping social relationships peaceful. One way to do this is to show appreciation for the other person's efforts, wants, or achievements. For example, saying something like "You did a great job on this report" This is an example of this strategy: "I really appreciate the work you've put into it." The speaker makes the hearer feel good about themselves and strengthens their positive relationship by praising and thanking them. This kind of civility, which typically includes kind or approving words, is most common in casual or close contacts Ricky & Afriana, 2024. By saying things like this, speakers help build a place where everyone respects and cares for each other.

The idea of "face" lies at the heart of Brown and Levinson's theory. It refers to how a person sees themselves or their social value in a conversation. They contend that humans are driven to safeguard their own face while simultaneously exhibiting regard for the face of others. This shared concern leads to a variety of politeness tactics that speakers employ to mitigate the effects of potentially face-threatening behaviors during communication. Brown and Levinson say that there are four types of politeness: Bald-on-Record, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness, and Off-Record.

Positive politeness refers to techniques that try to meet the hearer's positive face, which is their ongoing desire to have their wants, behaviors, or values viewed as good and valued. This kind of politeness works by partly meeting that demand by showing that the speaker's own wants or interests are similar to those of the listener (Brown & Levinson, 1987b). For example, when a speaker appreciates a listener's talents or accomplishments, they are not just acknowledging the listener's strengths but also developing a positive relationship. The speaker makes the room welcoming and helpful by utilizing positive civility, which helps keep the peace and encourages open, cooperative discussion.

According to (Brown & Levinson, 1978), there are 15 strategies that speakers can use to maintain positive face:

1. Notice and Attend to the Hearer (Their Interests, Needs, Wants, or Possessions)
This strategy reflects the speaker's sensitivity to the hearer's feelings, interests, or situation. It often appears through remarks, compliments, or recognition of the hearer's condition. Such attentiveness builds empathy and warmth, allowing the hearer to feel acknowledged and respected. Example: "I can see that you've been working really hard on this project. You must be exhausted." (Ricky & Afriana, 2024). From the example show that this strategy highlights the speaker's sensitivity to the hearer's condition, acknowledging the effort they've put in, which strengthens the emotional connection and shows empathy.

2. Exaggerate (Interest, Approval, Sympathy)

In this strategy, the speaker amplifies their emotional expression to show strong admiration or approval. Using enthusiastic or overstated language helps convey

sincerity and involvement, strengthening the emotional connection between both parties. Example: “You’ve outdone yourself! This is absolutely amazing!” (Gulo & Afriana, 2024)

3. Intensify Interest to the Hearer

The speaker aims to make communication more appealing and dynamic. Through expressive storytelling or detailed descriptions, the speaker draws the hearer’s attention and emotions, ensuring the interaction feels lively and engaging. Example: “You won’t believe the incredible journey I had last week. It was so exciting!” (Sandjaja & Afriana, 2024).

4. Use In-group Identity Markers

This involves incorporating shared linguistic forms such as slang, nicknames, or cultural expressions to highlight group belonging. By doing so, the speaker promotes familiarity and unity with the hearer. Example: “Hey, buddy, that’s a great idea! You know we’re all on the same team here.” (Afriana et al., 2025)

5. Seek Agreement

The speaker looks for points of similarity or mutual understanding to maintain harmony. Even in everyday talk, agreeing with the hearer encourages a friendly and cooperative tone. Example: “I totally agree with you, that’s exactly how I feel about it!” (Ricky & Afriana, 2024)

6. Avoid Disagreement

Rather than rejecting another’s view outright, the speaker may use soft language or indirect responses to reduce confrontation. This helps sustain politeness and prevents tension within the conversation. Example: “Hmm, I see your point, but maybe we could also consider another perspective.” (Gulo & Afriana, 2024)

7. Presuppose, Raise, or Assert Common Ground

This strategy assumes that the speaker and hearer share similar experiences or opinions. It enhances solidarity by reinforcing the sense of familiarity and shared background between them. Example: “We both know how much effort it takes to make this work, so we’ll get through it together.” (Afriana et al., 2025)

8. Use Jokes

Humor functions as a social tool to ease tension and reduce distance. By making jokes, the speaker creates a cheerful atmosphere and strengthens emotional rapport. Example: “Well, I guess it’s time for a celebration let’s grab pizza, and no, I’m not joking!” (Sandjaja & Afriana, 2024)

9. Assert or Presuppose the Speaker’s Knowledge of and Concern for the Hearer’s Wants

The speaker demonstrates understanding and empathy by recognizing what the hearer desires or feels. This conveys genuine care and fosters trust and closeness.

Example: “I know you’ve been working hard, so let’s take a break and go for a walk.” (Gulo & Afriana, 2024)

10. Offer or Promise

This strategy shows willingness to cooperate and provide assistance. Offering or promising something conveys goodwill and strengthens mutual respect. Example: “I’ll help you with that project, don’t worry about it.” (Ricky & Afriana, 2024)

11. Be Optimistic

The speaker expresses hope or confidence that the hearer will respond positively. Such optimism encourages agreement and maintains a constructive mood. Example: “I’m sure everything will work out fine; we just need to keep pushing forward!” (Afriana et al., 2025)

12. Include Both Speaker and Hearer in the Activity

By using inclusive expressions like “we” or “let’s,” the speaker emphasizes cooperation and shared goals. This language reduces distance and fosters a sense of togetherness.

13. Give (or Ask for) Reasons

Providing explanations helps make a request sound more thoughtful and rational. It allows the hearer to understand the motive behind an action, promoting openness and acceptance.

14. Assume or Assert Reciprocity

This strategy highlights mutual exchange or cooperation, often referring to past favors or expected mutual support. It reinforces fairness and balanced social relations.

15. Give Gifts to the Hearer (Goods, Sympathy, Understanding, Cooperation)

The “gifts” can be material or emotional, such as kindness, empathy, or support. By offering these, the speaker expresses generosity and care, reinforcing positive feelings and social bonds.

METHOD

Design and Samples

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to analyze positive politeness strategies in YouTube comments on Kendrick Lamar’s “Money Trees” music video. Qualitative research was selected because it allows an in depth analysis of language use in its natural digital context. (Creswell, 2014). The data consisted of written user comments taken from the comment section of the official music video. Data collection was conducted using (Sudaryanto, 2015) observational method by closely observing and reviewing the comment section to identify relevant utterances. Only comments that reflected positive politeness were selected as the

research samples. The analysis was based on (Brown & Levinson, 1978) politeness theory, with a focus on positive politeness strategies.

Instrument and Procedure

The researcher plans, collects, analyzes, and reports on the research results. The researcher decides what the research hypothesis is and what the purpose of the study is. The positive theory of politeness will be employed in this study. The research object will be YouTube comments on the Money Tree MV, which will be looked at to figure out what they signify. The Money Tree MV YouTube comments are where the study data comes from. The data is in the form of text (comments). A source material review approach is used to collect data, which subsequently creates appropriate phrases. Next, these quotes are looked at to find the type of positive politeness.

Data Analysis

The data were examined through a qualitative descriptive framework grounded in Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory. The investigation commenced with the observation and review of YouTube comments on Kendrick Lamar's "Money Trees" music video, employing Sudaryanto's (2015) observational method. We chose comments that showed positive politeness as data and then sorted them by the types of positive politeness tactics they used. We looked at each picked speech in context to figure out what it meant and what approach it showed. By following this method, the data were carefully sorted and analyzed to find trends in how people use language, connect with each other, and show solidarity in digital communication.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on a pragmatic analysis of YouTube comments for Kendrick Lamar's "Money Trees" music video, the study identified the use of multiple positive politeness strategies. The frequency and distribution of these identified strategies are summarized in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Types and Frequency of Positive Politeness

No	Politeness Strategy	Frequency
1	Exaggerate (Interest, Approval, Sympathy)	8
2	Notice and Attend to the Hearer	3
3	Presuppose, Assert, or Raise Common Ground	1
4	Intensify Interest to the Hearer	1

Based on the positive politeness strategies presented in Table 1, the researcher summarizes the findings on the use of positive politeness in the comment sections of Kendrick Lamar's YouTube videos. The analysis identifies three main categories of positive politeness strategies: Exaggerate (Interest, Approval, or Sympathy) as

the most dominant, followed by Notice and Attend to the Hearer, while Presuppose, Assert, or Raise Common Ground and Intensify Interest to the Hearer occur less frequently. In this section, the researcher presents each strategy along with selected representative examples to illustrate how positive politeness is realized in the data and to support the overall conclusions of the study.

Exaggerate (Interest, Approval, Sympathy)

- a. **Data 1** : *“Literally timeless. This song was released 11 years ago and it sounds like it could have been released yesterday. Kendrick really knows how to make a truly good songs.”*
- b. **Data 2** : *“This song never gets old, always get goosebumps listening to it.”*

The data shows that Brown and Levinson's positive politeness method of Exaggerate was used to show significant admiration and emotional commitment to the music. This over-the-top approbation goes beyond just praising and makes supporters feel good about each other. As a result, it helps bring people closer together, deepen emotional ties, and create a sense of togetherness and shared identity among online fans.

Notice and Attend to the Hearer

- a. **Data 7** : *“I’m from India. Kendrick inspires me a lot. I’m not a native English speaker but I can really feel his lyrics and music”*
- b. **Data 9** : *“Kendrick really so versatile with the mood of his songs”*

The comment reflects Brown and Levinson’s positive politeness strategy of Notice and Attend to the Hearer by displaying the speaker’s understanding and admiration of Kendrick Lamar’s artistic ability. The speaker talks about the emotional effect of the artist's music and how good he is at conveying different moods. These are things that the artist probably values and is proud of. This kind of praise shows respect and admiration, and it also makes the speaker and the artist feel close to each other. Through such positive appraisal, the method works to lessen social distance and strengthen relationship links between fans and the artist.

Presuppose, Assert, or Raise Common Ground

- Data 13**: *“This will forever be anthem no matter west or east coast. Just timeless”*

The comment shows Brown and Levinson's "positive politeness strategy of Presuppose, Assert, or Raise Common Ground" by presuming that the speaker and the larger audience have similar values and respect for each other. The speaker creates a sense of consensus and shared identity within the group by saying that liking the song is a widely understood truth. This method works to bring fans closer

together by recognizing the link between them as already strong. This builds solidarity and a sense of belonging in the fan community.

Intensify Interest to the Hearer

Data 4 : *“I really like how the chorus makes you feel like you are under the tree. The subtle bird chirping, the use of percussion in different rhythms in the left and right ear give you a sense of being somewhere 3D, as if the world surrounding you was going on, left and right things are happening, but you listening to the birds, under the tree. Its those details that differential good music from great music”.*

The comment shows Brown and Levinson's positive politeness method of Intensify Interest to the Hearer by framing the appreciation of the song through a vivid and shared sensory experience. The speaker doesn't just want people to enjoy themselves; they want them to have the same emotional and sensory experience, which makes it a group experience. This method works to improve the bond and connection between people in the same group by getting them all to listen to the music together. So, the feeling of closeness comes from sharing emotions with others, not only from admiring them.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study shows that the most common positive politeness method adopted by people who remark on Kendrick Lamar's Money Trees music video is to exaggerate their interest, approval, or sympathy. Fans often utilize emotive and expressive language to show how much they admire someone, close the social gap, and create a strong sense of community and solidarity inside the digital community. There are additional positive politeness methods that don't show up as often, such Notice and Attend to the Hearer and those that focus on shared experiences, but they nevertheless help keep interactions between users friendly. These results corroborate the perspective that language in digital environments serves not only as a vehicle for articulating thoughts but also as a mechanism for maintaining social cohesion and enhancing interpersonal interactions, as highlighted in pragmatic and politeness theories. This study examines a singular music video and one musical genre; thus, subsequent research should investigate positive politeness strategies across various music genres or compare different social media platforms, including Instagram, TikTok, or Twitter, to enhance the understanding of how platform characteristics and audience cultures affect politeness in online communication.

REFERENCES

- Afriana, A., Hanus Tewart, S., Arianto, T., & Lismalinda, L. (2025). Positive politeness strategies in business correspondence: A pragmatic analysis of letters from the Oxford handbook. *EScience Humanity Journal*, 5(2), 451–462. <https://doi.org/10.37296/esci.v5i2.267>

- Afriana, A., & Mandala, R. S. (2018). Kesantunan berbahasa pada pembelajaran mahasiswa Universitas Putera Batam. *Jurnal Basis*, 5(2), 43. <https://doi.org/10.33884/basisupb.v5i2.777>
- Apriyanto, A. (2020). Language as a communication tool in human life. Retrieved from <http://ejournal.seaninstitute.or.id/index.php/Justi/index>
- Atsna, J., & Andriyani, S. (2025). An analysis of positive politeness strategy used on expressive utterance in *The School for Good and Evil* movie.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage* (Studies in interactional sociolinguistics 4). Cambridge University Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Fraccastoro, S., Gabrielsson, M., & Pullins, E. B. (2021). The integrated use of social media, digital, and traditional communication tools in the B2B sales process of international SMEs. *International Business Review*, 30(4), 101776. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2020.101776>
- Gulo, L., & Afriana, A. (2024). Politeness strategies on apologizing expression of *The Princess Diaries*.
- Johnson, T. J., & Kaye, B. K. (2000). Using is believing: The influence of reliance on the credibility of online political information among politically interested Internet users. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 77(4), 865–879. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900007700409>
- Mulyanah, E., & Andriani, D. I. (2024). Positive politeness in the TMGW podcast. *Jurnal Basis*, 11(2), 183–192. <https://doi.org/10.33884/basisupb.v11i2.9281>
- Nurdiana. (2019). Understanding pragmatics and pragmatic competence in ELT material. Retrieved from <http://journal.ubm.ac.id/xxx/xxx>
- Ramdhani, M. I., & Amalia, S. (2023). *Pocket book of pragmatics*. <https://yayasancec.or.id>
- Ricky, & Afriana, A. (2024). A pragmatic analysis of politeness strategies in *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van der Wijck*.
- Sandjaja, A., & Afriana, A. (2024). Politeness strategies in social media on Instagram Jennie Blackpink.
- Sari, I. N., & Sutopo, A. (2024). An analysis of positive politeness strategies in *Spider-Man: Far From Home* movie.
- Son, W., & Afriana, A. (2023). An analysis of positive politeness strategies on YouTube video entitled “Ariana Grande I full video.” *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Ilmu Sosial dan Teknologi (SNISTEK)*, 5, 151–156. <https://doi.org/10.33884/psnistek.v5i.8076>
- Sudaryanto, S. (2015). *Metode dan aneka teknik analisis bahasa*. Sanata Dharma University Press.