RESEARCH ARTICLE

BROWN AND LEVINSON'S POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN THE FILM KURUNG WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF BUGIS-MAKASSAR CULTURAL VALUES

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ABSTRACT

This research intends to scrutinize the politeness strategies in Very Zalman Ewa's film Kurung, utilizing the theoretical framework of Brown and Levinson (1987). The focus of the analysis is directed toward the application of four politeness strategies: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record, provided that they are linked to the socio-cultural values of the Bugis-Makassar society. The results indicate that these four strategies function adaptively according to the social context and power relations. The bald on record strategy is employed in hierarchical situations demanding firmness; positive politeness appears in contexts of solidarity and affection; negative politeness is utilized to maintain respectful distance; while off-record politeness reflects the wisdom of speech through implicit and metaphorical forms. These findings illustrate that politeness in Kurung is a reflection of the values of siri' na pesse, malebbi, and lempu'—concepts which emphasize honor, empathy, and honesty in communication. Theoretically, this research extends the application of politeness theory into the local cultural context; practically, it has implications for cross-cultural pragmatic teaching; and culturally, it strengthens the position of language as a vehicle for inheriting human values and social harmony.

Introduction

Language, acting as a medium of communication, cannot simply be regarded as neutral, provided that its speakers are inevitably negotiating social practices (whether they realize it or not). It is not merely a tool for communication, but a vehicle for negotiating identity, power, and social values (Pulungan, 2025; Almora & Heryono, 2025; Nkirote, 2024). In a society with a robust social structure like the Bugis-Makassar, language politeness functions not only to maintain relational harmony but also to protect honor (siri') and affirm empathy (pesse) as the moral foundation of interaction (Hamson et al., 2025; Reski et al., 2020).

However, within the realm of contemporary discourse (such as in the film Kurung by Very Zalman Ewa), politeness presents layers of meaning that are, to say the least, far more complex (Gani & Gani, 2024; van Dorst et al., 2024, Kusumastuti, et al., 2021). Language does not merely serve as a marker of manners but also becomes an arena of resistance against social and gender norms (Pramana et al., 2022; Sitanggang, 2025). This phenomenon raises a fundamental issue: how are politeness strategies used to negotiate power relations, maintain dignity, and voice identity in a text containing socio-cultural tension (Fikri, et al., 2023; Handriani et al., 2025). This issue becomes crucial to

examine through a pragmatic approach to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the function of politeness as a social and cultural practice.

A number of recent studies have shown that politeness is a dynamic phenomenon that shifts according to social and cultural contexts. Zhao (2025) found a transformation in the meaning of respect in Chinese culture—shifting from hierarchical forms toward social equality—marking politeness as an adaptive process to modern societal values. Meanwhile, Wang, Zhong, and Mu (2025) demonstrated that positive politeness strategies in human-robot interaction are capable of strengthening trust and emotional collaboration, whereas Federici (2025) revealed that off-record strategies in online communities function to build empathy and emotional support among participants. Furthermore, Zhang and Wu (2025) emphasize that the interpretation of politeness depends on pragmatic inference and social conventions, not merely linguistic forms. On the other hand, Lam, Cui, and Pell (2025) proved that politeness is processed neurocognitively and influenced by the accent and social identity of the speaker, while Kim, Seo, and Lee (2025) found that politeness in AI communication is capable of improving perceptions of credibility and system responsibility.

These findings reinforce that politeness involves linguistic, social, emotional, and cognitive dimensions that are intertwined (no thanks to the complexity of human interaction itself). Although these studies contribute significantly to the understanding of politeness in global and technological contexts, most still focus on the realms of digital communication, public services, or human-machine relations. Studies of politeness based on local cultural values and film contexts are still rarely undertaken, even though language in film often becomes the richest representation of politeness practices and social tensions (Amelia, et al., 2025; Haristiani, et al., 2023; Budiartini, et al., 2025). Furthermore, the implementation of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory in non-Western contexts still faces limitations, provided that the theory was built upon a foundation of individualistic culture.

In pragmatic studies, politeness has long been understood as a strategic mechanism to manage social interaction, particularly through Brown and Levinson's framework (1987) which views politeness as an effort to protect the individual's face. Although this theory is highly influential and serves as a main reference in cross-language politeness studies, a number of recent studies highlight that its basic assumptions regarding the individual nature of "face" and the rationality of the speaker are deeply rooted in the Western worldview (which is individualistic). Therefore, more pragmatic research is demanding a re-reading of politeness theory by considering non-Western cultural contexts that are communally oriented and morally charged. Thus, a study integrating classical politeness theory with communal value systems like siri' na pesse, malebbi, and lempu' in Bugis-Makassar culture is highly necessary to expand the theoretical and methodological understanding of politeness.

This gap opens space for research linking politeness strategies with aspects of morality, identity, and social resistance as reflected in the film Kurung, offering a novelty in research models as an adaptation of the Brown-Levinson approach based on siri' na pesse. This research offers a solution by examining politeness strategies in Kurung through a qualitative pragmatic approach based on Brown and Levinson (1987), adapted to the context of Bugis-Makassar cultural values as a space of representation for the socio-pragmatic practices of the Bugis-Makassar society in South Sulawesi, Indonesia.

The Bugis-Makassar society is formed by a complex system of moral values, including siri' (honor or moral self-esteem), pesse (empathy and emotional solidarity), malebbi (gentleness and refinement of behavior), and lempu' (honesty and moral integrity). These values do not merely function as a cultural backdrop but actively shape interactional expectations, speaker obligations, and social assessments of linguistic propriety. In a context such as this, politeness cannot be understood solely as an individual strategy to minimize face threats, but as a relational practice rooted in moral responsibility and collective honor. The novelty of this research lies in the integration of universal politeness theory with the local concept of siri' na pesse, which places politeness as a moral and social practice, not merely a linguistic strategy.

This approach provides a new reading of literary texts as pragmatic spaces that negotiate honor, empathy, and power relations through speech. Furthermore, this research positions Kurung as an ethnographic text revealing how politeness works in the social dynamics between tradition and identity change. By comparing the results of this analysis with recent research findings (Zhao, 2025; Wang et al., 2025; Federici, 2025; Zhang & Wu, 2025), this study expands the pragmatic horizon toward a politeness model based on local values that are globally relevant but culturally rooted.

This research aims to expose the form, function, and meaning of politeness strategies in the film Kurung and explain how these practices reflect Bugis-Makassar social and cultural values. It proposes the view that politeness needs to be understood as a culture-embedded pragmatic action, where the concept of face is not solely individual, but relational and communal. Additionally, this study demonstrates that audiovisual narrative data (such as film) can be a legitimate and productive source for examining the construction of politeness, identity, and social values in interaction. Theoretically, this research strives to develop the application of Brown and Levinson's theory through the enrichment of local values, thereby producing a more inclusive understanding of cross-cultural communication practices. Practically, the results are expected to contribute to the teaching of pragmatics and intercultural linguistics by emphasizing the importance of cultural sensitivity in understanding politeness. The urgency of this research lies in its effort to re-articulate politeness as a human phenomenon connecting language, morality, and social identity. Thus, it not only strengthens the relevance of politeness theory in a local context but also enriches the global discourse regarding the relationship between language, culture, and human values.

Materials and Methods

This research employs a qualitative method with a descriptive-analytical design. The approach used is pragmatic because it focuses on the relationship between linguistic forms and their social functions in communication contexts. Based on this, Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory becomes the primary analytical framework explaining how speakers use language to maintain honor (face), manage social relations, and avoid potential face-threatening acts. This approach allows the researcher to interpret the meaning of utterances based on social context, power relations, and the cultural values underlying them. The descriptive-analytical design was chosen not to test a hypothesis, but to describe in depth the politeness practices appearing in literary texts while paying attention to the surrounding social and cultural nuances.

The data source for this research is the film Kurung by Very Zalman Ewa, analyzed as a text representing the communication practices and socio-cultural values of the Bugis-Makassar society. The primary data consists of twenty utterances taken purposively from dialogues between characters that demonstrate speech events containing elements of politeness. Data selection was conducted by considering the situational context, social relationships between characters, and their relevance to Brown and Levinson's politeness strategy categories: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record politeness. Secondary data sources include recent studies (Zhao, 2025; Wang et al., 2025; Federici, 2025; Zhang & Wu, 2025; Kim et al., 2025) which function to strengthen theoretical validity and expand the dimensions of cross-cultural interpretation.

Data collection techniques were carried out through documentation and repeated reading of the text, accompanied by note-taking and coding on every relevant speech segment. Data analysis was conducted in stages through three main processes: identification, interpretation, and inference. In the identification stage, each datum is classified based on the form of the speech act and the potential face threat contained within it. The interpretation stage is carried out by tracing the communicative intent and social context underlying the use of specific politeness strategies. The inference stage is directed at determining the type of politeness strategy used and the cultural values it actualizes (specifically siri', pesse, malebbi, and lempu'). This analysis integrates the principles of Brown and Levinson's theory with an ethnopragmatic approach so that the research results are capable of representing the unique character of politeness in the Bugis-Makassar context. Thus, this method allows the research to produce an analysis that is descriptive linguistically and also interpretative socially and culturally.

Results and Discussion

Results Based on the analysis of twenty speech data points in the film Kurung, it was found that the politeness strategies used by the characters reflect a complex variation of forms, functions, and socio-cultural values. Each strategy, whether bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, or off-record, is chosen contextually according to social relations, emotional intensity, and the Bugis-Makassar cultural norms underlying the speech act. The results are presented as follows.

1. Positive Politeness

Positive Politeness Positive politeness is a linguistic strategy used by speakers to strengthen social relationships and show solidarity with the interlocutor. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), this strategy is oriented toward the fulfillment of positive face (the need to be accepted and appreciated). Its form appears through praise, intimate address, or expressions of empathy affirming familiarity.

Data (1)

"I hope our child will be strong, like his father."

This utterance represents the application of positive politeness strategies because it contains an element of in-group identity marker, affirming the emotional closeness between speaker and listener. Baso does not merely state a hope for his unborn child but also expresses an ideal self-image of a strong father worth emulating. From a pragmatic perspective, the utterance functions to strengthen solidarity by highlighting shared values expected in the family. This strategy is used to maintain the listener's positive face (in this case, Besse) by confirming that she and Baso share a similar vision regarding their child's future. Thus, positive politeness is present through affirmation and emotional participation that tightens interpersonal relationships in the domestic realm. From a socio-cultural perspective, the use of this strategy shows the collectivistic value of the Bugis-Makassar society, which places family harmony as the center of social interaction. Baso's hope for his child to be "strong like his father" contains pride that is not directed egoistically, but as a representation of the ideal family identity according to local patriarchal norms. In this discourse, positive politeness functions not just to maintain face, but as a cultural mechanism to affirm social cohesion and traditional gender roles. Thus, Baso's utterance can be understood as politeness combining affective functions (warmth and solidarity) with ideological functions (affirming masculinity and the father's role in the Bugis family system).

Data (2)

"I actually want a girl, so she'll be beautiful like me."

This utterance reflects positive politeness through the mechanism of joking or light humor as a form of closeness and intimacy. In a pragmatic context, the joke inserted by Besse functions to soften the potential difference of opinion regarding the desired gender of the child. Although propositionally Besse conveys a preference different from her husband, the humor strategy allows the interaction to remain warm and friendly. By praising herself lightly—"so she'll be beautiful like me"—Besse does not intend to be arrogant, but invites an affective response that strengthens familiarity. Functionally, this strategy maintains the positive face of both parties by displaying an egalitarian relationship in husband-wife communication colored by emotional warmth. From a socio-cultural viewpoint, Besse's use of positive politeness depicts the representation of Bugis-Makassar women capable of expressing their opinions without violating domestic politeness norms. In a culture emphasizing harmony and gender hierarchy, this form of politeness becomes a subtle way to negotiate differences without creating open conflict. Besse's utterance shows that politeness is not always identical to obedience, but can also be realized through linguistic agility and emotional sensitivity. Thus, the positive politeness strategy in this data functions as a rhetorical instrument to maintain interpersonal relationships while affirming the identity of a woman who possesses expressive autonomy within a patriarchal social structure.

Data (3)

"Just put it there, Nak (Son)."

This utterance is a clear representation of positive politeness oriented toward creating intimacy and emotional closeness between mother and child. The use of the affective address "Nak" shows an in-group identity marker element functioning to strengthen emotional bonds and family solidarity. Pragmatically, this utterance not only gives an instruction but signifies the care and affection of a mother for her child. Positive politeness here appears through expressions of interpersonal warmth maintaining the listener's positive face, making Sarip feel accepted and valued in an interaction that is hierarchical yet full of empathy. From a socio-cultural perspective, Besse's utterance shows how politeness in the Bugis-Makassar cultural context is not merely interpreted as obedience to hierarchical norms, but also as a form of nurturing social relationships based on affection. The use of "Nak" is a relational identity marker affirming the value of sipakatau—the principle of humanity respecting the dignity of others in daily interaction. By choosing a soft and affective speech form, Besse does not just command but builds a sense of security for Sarip, so a speech act potentially becoming a face-threatening act transforms into an expression of closeness. This indicates that positive politeness in the Bugis family context is not just a linguistic function, but a cultural practice to maintain social harmony through soothing and appreciative language.

Data (4)

"Go, Nak! As a Bugis man, you indeed must migrate (merantau), travel for your life; take this badik."

This utterance functions to strengthen solidarity, provide emotional support, and maintain the listener's positive face. Baso uses the affective address "Nak," signaling emotional closeness and a father's affection. Even though the context is a separation and releasing a child to migrate, Baso chooses speech containing expressions of pride and trust in Sarip's abilities. Pragmatically, this strategy aims to acknowledge and affirm the child's identity as a true Bugis man, ready to face life with courage and responsibility. Thus, positive politeness appears through the reinforcement of the listener's self-image and the provision of moral and social legitimacy to his actions. From a socio-cultural viewpoint, Baso's utterance reflects the values of siri' na pesse (honor and empathy) and pangngadereng (social conduct) in Bugis-Makassar culture, placing merantau (sompe') as a symbol of maturity and honor for a man. By giving his blessing accompanied by handing over the badik (traditional weapon), Baso confirms the legacy of masculinity values and genealogical responsibility passed from father to son. In this context, positive politeness serves not only to maintain interpersonal relationships but also becomes an instrument for the transmission of cultural values and social identity. The utterance shows that politeness in Bugis culture is not solely interpreted as gentleness of speech, but also as a way to affirm collective pride and moral legitimacy in family bonds. Thus, Baso's utterance is a manifestation of positive politeness unifying emotional, moral, and cultural dimensions in intergenerational communication.

Data (5)

"Hi, Sarip. You've been waiting here a long time, nah?"

This utterance applies positive politeness to strengthen familiarity and solidarity through warm address and the affective particle "nah," typical in Bugis-Makassar social interaction. Pragmatically, this strategy aims to maintain the listener's positive face—in this case, Sarip—by affirming a close and accepting social relationship. The rhetorical question form "You've been waiting here a long time, nah?" is not intended to request information, but to open conversation with an empathetic and friendly nuance. This utterance indicates that Jum accepts Sarip's existence without social distance, even after the changes in appearance and identity Sarip has undergone. Thus, positive politeness here functions to create a safe and comfortable interaction space for Sarip as an individual who has been experiencing social pressure. From a socio-cultural perspective, Jum's utterance reflects the value of sipakatau (humanizing each other), which is the foundation of politeness in Bugis-Makassar culture. By choosing an informal address full of closeness, Jum

symbolically rejects the social stigma against Sarip and affirms the values of empathy and acceptance. The positive politeness strategy used shows that politeness in a cultural context does not merely serve to maintain hierarchy, but can also be a tool for solidarity and social inclusion. Through this utterance, Jum shows that positive politeness is not just about how to speak, but how to restore someone's dignity through acknowledgment and acceptance. Thus, this utterance can be understood as a politeness practice balancing linguistic aspects and social ethics, making language a vehicle for the reconciliation of identity and humanity.

Data (6)

"This is Sarip, my old friend. He is also active in cultural literature, you know."

This utterance applies positive politeness strategies, which strictly pragmatically function to maintain and strengthen Sarip's positive face in front of a third party. Through this form of speech, Jum performs a face enhancement act, intentionally raising the listener's (Sarip) image by introducing him with praise and acknowledgment of his intellectual competence. The phrase "my old friend" marks personal closeness, while the phrase "active in cultural literature" is a form of appreciation affirming Sarip's value as an educated individual. In a pragmatic context, this strategy minimizes potential face threats from students who had laughed at Sarip, by framing his identity positively. Thus, positive politeness functions here as a restorative tool to restore Sarip's social dignity through linguistic solidarity. From a socio-cultural perspective, Jum's utterance reflects the principle of sipakainge (reminding and protecting each other) in Bugis-Makassar culture. Through speech acts containing praise and acknowledgment, Jum not only shows interpersonal politeness but also upholds Sarip's siri' (honor) which had been demeaned by his social environment. The positive politeness strategy in this context has a strong moral dimension, as it functions to restore social balance between individual honor and community views. Furthermore, this utterance shows that politeness in Bugis culture is not solely determined by hierarchy or status, but also by one's ability to use language to uphold respect and humanity. Thus, Jum's utterance can be understood as an affirmative politeness practice emphasizing language as a medium for identity recovery and resistance against social stigma through appreciation and empathy.

Data (7)

"I am proud of Sarip."

This utterance is an example of applying positive politeness strategies, functioning pragmatically to strengthen the listener's positive face through praise and open acknowledgment. In the context of interaction, this utterance contains an expressive speech act conveying pride and appreciation for Sarip's identity and abilities. This strategy is used to create a sense of acceptance and recognition, especially after Sarip has experienced various forms of social rejection. By stating this explicitly, Puang affirms Sarip's position as a valuable individual worthy of respect. Positive politeness here plays a role as a means of identity affirmation, restoring Sarip's self-confidence, and strengthening interpersonal relationships based on empathy and acceptance. From a socio-cultural point of view, Puang's utterance reflects the values of sipakatau (humanizing each other) and lempu' (sincerity) in Bugis-Makassar culture, making respect for human dignity realized through honest and empathetic language. Such praise is not just a form of interpersonal politeness, but also an expression of moral solidarity toward marginalized individuals. In a cultural context that still upholds the value of honor (siri'), Puang's action contains symbolic meaning: he restores Sarip's honor through positive public acknowledgment. Thus, the positive politeness strategy in this utterance not only strengthens social relationships but functions as a restorative act upholding human values and social justice through the power of polite and meaningful language.

2. Negative Politeness

Negative politeness is a strategy aiming to maintain social distance and respect the personal freedom of the interlocutor. Brown and Levinson (1987) explain that this strategy functions to

protect negative face, namely the individual's right not to be disturbed or forced. This strategy is usually expressed through apologies, forms of caution, or mitigation to avoid face threats.

Data (8)

"Tabe, uwaina ma, tegi utaro?" (Excuse me, mother, where should I put this water?)

This utterance shows the application of negative politeness strategies, yet pragmatically also contains positive politeness elements aimed at maintaining family harmony. The word tabe functions as a distinctive politeness marker in Bugis-Makassar culture, used to show respect toward those older or of higher social status. Pragmatically, this form shows the speaker's awareness of the listener's right not to be disturbed or forced, while maintaining intimacy through a soft and polite tone. Thus, Sarip's utterance represents an effort to minimize threats to his mother's negative face, while maintaining his own positive face as a dutiful and polite son. In a socio-cultural context, Sarip's politeness contains high moral value because it reflects the internalization of Bugis norms regarding siri' (honor) and pappaseng (moral teachings in communication). The use of tabe is not merely a linguistic formula, but also a symbol of recognition of the family hierarchical structure and respect for the mother's role as an authoritative figure and caregiver. Through this strategy, Sarip shows pragmatic ability to balance obedience and social participation in the domestic realm. Ideologically, this speech act reinforces the image of politeness as a form of social virtue inseparable from local cultural identity, manifesting respect for parents through communication practices that are soft, mitigative, and full of empathy.

Data (9)

"Pajaini, Daeng, kasina anakku." (Stop it, Daeng, pity my child).

This utterance represents the application of negative politeness strategies, as the speaker attempts to soften a request or advice so as not to offend the interlocutor's negative face. The form "Pajaini" (let it be/stop) contains a mitigative meaning functioning to stop Baso's action softly, not with a direct prohibition. On the other hand, Besse adds the reason "kasina anakku" (pity my child) to reduce the threat to her husband's authority, making the request sound more empathetic than confrontational. Pragmatically, this strategy affirms that Besse is aware of her social position as a wife in a patriarchal system, yet still uses linguistic power to negotiate emotions and prevent conflict. Thus, negative politeness here becomes a communication tool maintaining the balance between obedience to hierarchy and empathetic maternal expression. Socio-culturally, this utterance reflects the values of lempu' (honesty and sincerity of heart) and sipakatau (humanizing others) in Bugis-Makassar culture. Besse does not oppose her husband frontally, but uses a soft linguistic strategy full of moral reasoning to lower the intensity of anger. In Bugis society, such forms of politeness are often understood as tudang sipulung—a way of communicating seeking a peaceful point through wisdom of speech. Through the choice of soft words and empathetic sentence structure, Besse not only maintains Baso's face as the head of the family but also protects Sarip's positive face as a loved child. Thus, negative politeness in this data has a dual function: maintaining the stability of power relations and affirming the emotional dimension of politeness rooted in Bugis cultural values.

Data (10)

"Pak… I want to ask permission to migrate."

This utterance is an example of applying negative politeness strategies, as the speaker tries to minimize threats to the listener's negative face through a polite and careful request form. Pragmatically, this utterance functions as a request speech act delivered with an indirect declarative form to respect the father's authority. The use of the address "Pak" at the beginning of the sentence shows recognition of family hierarchy and Baso's social status as the figure with authority to make decisions. Sarip chooses the form "want to ask permission" instead of the direct "permit me" to reduce the command force and show self-awareness regarding power boundaries in the father-son relationship. Thus, the negative politeness strategy here plays a role as a linguistic

mitigation tool maintaining harmony and avoiding potential conflict. From a socio-cultural point of view, Sarip's utterance reflects the internalization of Bugis-Makassar values regarding pangngaderreng (proper conduct) and siri' na pacce (honor and empathy). In this value system, a child is expected to show humility and respect to parents, especially when about to take an important decision like migrating. By submitting the request in a soft and polite form, Sarip not only shows linguistic politeness but also demonstrates moral maturity and social awareness. This utterance shows that negative politeness in the Bugis cultural context is not just a language formality, but an expression of awareness of social hierarchy maintained through verbal respect. Therefore, Sarip's utterance can be understood as a communicative act bringing together traditional obedience and personal aspirations harmoniously through politeness devices consistent with cultural norms.

Data (11)

"Tabe, tapalabeka lao sompe, Indo." (Excuse me, allow me to go migrate, Mother).

This utterance is a distinctive application of negative politeness strategies, used by the speaker to avoid violating the listener's negative face through a respectful request form. Pragmatically, the word "tabe" functions as a mitigating marker—a softener culturally having the meaning of requesting permission as well as marking respect for elders. Thus, this utterance is not merely a formal request, but a representation of linguistic awareness of the social and emotional hierarchy between child and mother. The use of the indirect form "tapalabeka" (allow me) shows that Sarip tries to safeguard his mother's will, recognizing her authority, and lowering the threat force to the listener's negative face. In this context, politeness functions to affirm an emotional relationship full of love and obedience. From a socio-cultural perspective, this utterance reflects noble values in Bugis-Makassar culture placing tabe as a symbol of respect, politeness, and communication etiquette. In Bugis society, such forms of politeness show a balance between respect (siri') and affection (pacce)—two values underlying social ethics and family relations. Through this utterance, Sarip not only shows formal obedience to parents but also displays cultural understanding of the importance of obtaining blessings before making big decisions like migrating. The negative politeness strategy here plays a role in maintaining harmony between personal will and social obligation, while affirming that in Bugis culture, politeness is a form of relational ethics linking language, hierarchy, and affection into a unified moral whole.

Data (12)

"Why did you let Sarip go, Pak?"

This utterance reflects the application of negative politeness strategies positioning the speaker as a deliverer of criticism indirectly through an interrogative form. Pragmatically, this question does not merely request information, but functions as an indirect speech act containing a soft protest. By changing the declarative form into a question, Besse tries to avoid threats to her husband's negative face, specifically his freedom to make decisions as the head of the family. This form allows Besse to express disagreement without frontally opposing Baso's authority. Thus, negative politeness here functions as a mitigation mechanism—limiting potential conflict while maintaining harmony in the hierarchical husband-wife relationship. From a socio-cultural perspective, this utterance shows the refinement of Bugis-Makassar women's communication, who are required to be malebbi (gentle) yet still possess the moral power to admonish politely. The negative politeness strategy used by Besse is a reflection of the value of pessona rilipu—the ability to maintain household calm through soft and balanced speech. In a patriarchal cultural context, such forms of politeness become a symbolic space for women to negotiate feelings and views without disturbing the stability of domestic power relations. Thus, Besse's utterance not only shows linguistic politeness but contains social and emotional content reflecting Bugis local wisdom in maintaining harmony through communication that is considerate, polite, and of high moral value.

3. Bald on Record

The bald on record strategy refers to using language directly without softeners or mitigation. Brown and Levinson (1987) mention this strategy is used when communication efficiency is more important than politeness, such as in intimate or urgent situations. Its form highlights message clarity and response speed, not speech refinement.

Data (13)

"Help father cut this wood."

This utterance is an example of applying the bald on record politeness strategy, a form of communication delivered directly without the use of softeners or mitigative forms. In a pragmatic context, this utterance functions as an explicit command from a father to a son in an asymmetrical hierarchical relationship. Because there is a clear power distance between Baso and Sarip—father as authority figure and child as the party who must obey—this direct utterance is not considered to threaten the listener's face socially. Efficiency and clarity of the speech act become the main priority, not politeness mitigation. Thus, politeness here is situationally appropriate, making the direct form understood as an expression of normal norms in a hierarchical family relationship. From a socio-cultural perspective, Baso's use of the bald on record strategy reflects the traditional values of the Bugis-Makassar society upholding the concepts of pammali (moral order) and ade' (social rules). In this value system, parents have the right to give direct instructions to children as a form of educational responsibility. Therefore, speech forms like "Help father cut this wood" do not violate politeness principles, but reflect efficient communication practices in a patriarchal social structure. In this context, politeness is not measured by the level of linguistic expression refinement, but by the appropriateness of the speech act with social norms and roles attached to each participant. In other words, Baso's direct command can still be categorized as a culturally polite speech act because it aligns with the principle of respect for hierarchy and family responsibility.

Data (14)

"You are like a woman, always slow when doing something."

This utterance is a form of bald on record politeness strategy delivered directly without mitigation forms, containing potential threats to the listener's positive face. Pragmatically, this utterance is an explicit criticism implying the father's dissatisfaction with his son's behavior. In the context of family interaction, such a form is not merely a spontaneous expression of anger, but also a form of social control legitimized by the difference in status and authority between father and son. Baso reprimands Sarip directly because he feels he has a moral responsibility to "shape" his son according to the ideal values of Bugis masculinity, which is strong and hardworking. Thus, although linguistically this utterance is face-threatening, socially it functions normatively—reinforcing the father's role as educator and guardian of family tradition values. From a socio-cultural point of view, the use of the bald on record strategy in this data reflects a communication pattern typical in Bugis-Makassar society, which still places the father's authority in a central position. Direct criticism like this is often considered a form of corrective affection, not verbal aggression. Within the framework of siri' (honor) and pangngadereng (social conduct), parents have the right to admonish children with straightforward language as long as it aims to educate and maintain family honor. Therefore, politeness in this context is not measured through gentleness of speech, but through the intention or moral intent behind it. Thus, Baso's utterance can be understood as a speech act that is linguistically impolite, but socially and culturally remains containing normative politeness values functioning to maintain harmony and the continuity of Bugis cultural values in the family structure.

Data (15)

"Oi Sarip, where are you going? Going for a walk?"

This utterance is an application of the bald on record politeness strategy, because it is delivered directly without mitigation forms, and even potentially contains mockery or ridicule meanings. Pragmatically, this utterance is not an informative question, but a satire highlighting Sarip's gender behavior and expression which is considered inconsistent with the social norms of the surrounding community. This bald on record form ignores the listener's face needs—both positive face (desire to

be accepted) and negative face (right not to be disturbed)—thus creating a face-threatening act. In this context, the speaker does not attempt to adjust the level of politeness to the social situation, but affirms dominance and social power through speech that is direct, open, and judgmental in tone. Socio-culturally, this utterance reflects the social mechanism used by society to enforce traditional gender norms in Bugis-Makassar culture. Such forms of communication function as repressive social control tools, making language a tool to admonish or shame individuals considered "deviant" from the ideal gender identity. In this case, the absence of politeness strategies is not just a linguistic aspect, but also an indication of power asymmetry—power inequality between the normative community and marginal individuals like Sarip. Therefore, the neighbor's utterance becomes an example of how violations of politeness principles can reveal the social ideology behind language practices, namely cultural dominance demanding behavioral uniformity and suppressing alternative identity expressions.

Data (16)
"I want to go, my place is not here."

This utterance shows the application of the bald on record politeness strategy because it is delivered directly, straightforwardly, and without linguistic mitigation elements. Pragmatically, this utterance is a form of assertive act affirming the speaker's self-boundaries and social position amidst a threatening or pressuring situation. Sarip uses a direct declarative form to state a refusal of the invitation from the banci (transgender/effeminate men) group without softening or giving long justifications. This bald on record strategy is chosen not because of a desire to violate politeness norms, but because the communication context demands clarity and firmness to protect personal face. In this case, politeness is suspended for the sake of the speaker's identity and psychological safety. From a socio-cultural perspective, Sarip's utterance shows a form of resistance against social pressure threatening his identity. In the context of Bugis-Makassar culture which heavily emphasizes the concept of siri' (honor) and dignity, the utterance is an expression of self-defense politeness, namely politeness marked not by gentleness, but by moral firmness. By stating "my place is not here," Sarip affirms the distance of his identity from the social group he views as incompatible with himself, without needing to denigrate the other party. The bald on record strategy in this context can be understood as a form of contextual politeness, as it upholds principles of honesty and clarity in communication, while maintaining self-dignity in a situation potentially causing loss of face. Thus, politeness in this utterance is protective, functioning to maintain personal integrity amidst complex social pressures.

4. Off Record
Off-record strategies refer to conveying intent indirectly so the meaning is interpreted by the interlocutor. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), this strategy relies on implicature and ambiguity to avoid direct responsibility for the utterance. Through indirectness, the speaker can maintain their own face as well as the interlocutor's face.

Data (17)
"It's done, Daeng, just accept that this is our child's fate."

The utterance above shows the application of the off-record politeness strategy because the message conveyed is implicit and suggestive. Besse does not directly oppose Baso's anger toward Sarip, but uses a statement containing an implied meaning: that Sarip's behavior should be accepted as part of his nature. This off-record strategy allows Besse to convey criticism and defense of her child without openly challenging her husband's authority. From a pragmatic side, the utterance uses a soft declarative form to avoid threats to Baso's negative face, while retaining Sarip's positive face. Thus, politeness appears not through linguistic obedience to formal norms, but through pragmatic ability to negotiate meaning between two conflicting emotional interests. Socio-culturally, the off-record strategy used by Besse reflects the communication character of Bugis women known to be careful and diplomatic in expressing opinions in the patriarchal realm. Cultural values such as siri' (honor) and pessona rilipu (household calm) require women to maintain their husband's honor

without sacrificing maternal values. In this context, Besse's utterance contains a deep social function: it becomes a form of resistance through politeness, namely resistance delivered through politeness. The utterance shows how off-record politeness plays a role as a communication strategy laden with emotional and cultural wisdom—maintaining the balance between household harmony and affirmation of human values attached to Sarip's character. Thus, politeness in this data is not just a linguistic tool, but also a symbol of ethics and wisdom in facing collisions of social values and identity.

Data (18)

"I dress like this, not because of a reason… perhaps it is my fate to be born like this."

This utterance applies the off-record politeness strategy because the speaker conveys self-defense implicitly and reflectively without directly refusing, accusing, or opposing the interlocutor. Pragmatically, this speech form uses indirectness as a means to maintain positive face—both the speaker's and the listener's—by avoiding direct confrontation. The sentence "perhaps it is my fate to be born like this" functions as a mitigation neutralizing personal responsibility and shifting the center of meaning to the concept of fate or destiny. Thus, Sarip reveals his identity and self-justification through linguistic strategies that are soft, introspective, and avoid a defensive tone that could worsen the social situation. This off-record strategy shows high pragmatic awareness, positioning Sarip as an individual who still maintains self-honor without hurting others' feelings. From a socio-cultural perspective, the utterance reflects Bugis-Makassar local wisdom in managing conflict through careful and malebbi (soft-spoken) ways. In Bugis culture, acknowledgment of "fate" is often used as a symbolic form to negotiate social realities difficult to accept, without causing open opposition. Through this utterance, Sarip positions himself not as a party challenging social norms, but as an individual trying to understand himself within the framework of divine fate—a concept having high legitimacy in the local value system. Thus, the off-record strategy chosen by Sarip not only shows communicative intelligence but also becomes a reflection of existential strategy: maintaining siri' (honor) through politeness based on introspection and cultural wisdom.

Data (19)

"All this time society considers people like Sarip a disaster… but people nowadays do not all understand that."

This utterance is an application of the off-record politeness strategy because the speaker conveys social criticism indirectly and with great care. Pragmatically, this utterance is reflective and evaluative, yet framed in the form of a general observation ("society considers…") instead of a confrontational statement. By shifting the focus of criticism from the individual to society at large, Puang tries to avoid threats to the listener's face while keeping the conversation atmosphere harmonious. This choice of indirect form allows the speaker to convey criticism against social prejudice without offending specific parties. Furthermore, the shift from criticism to empathy ("but people nowadays do not all understand that") shows a strong mitigation mechanism—giving emotional distance between the speaker and the sensitive topic discussed. From a socio-cultural perspective, the off-record strategy used by Puang depicts traditional Bugis-Makassar communication practices laden with malebbi (refined language) and pappaseng (moral advice delivered indirectly) values. In Bugis culture, such forms of communication are considered more civilized and effective, because they allow criticism to be conveyed without shaming others, consistent with the highly upheld siri' (honor) principle. Puang's utterance also shows the social function of politeness as an educative tool—he not only criticizes society's perception but directs the listener to a more empathetic understanding of Sarip's identity reality. Thus, off-record politeness in this utterance does not merely function to maintain interaction harmony, but also becomes a medium for conveying cultural wisdom: that social truth should be conveyed with wisdom, not confrontation.

Data (20)

"Wake up and rise, show your beaming face…"

This utterance is an application of the off-record politeness strategy because its meaning is metaphorical, indirect, and full of symbolism. Pragmatically, this poetic language form contains

commands, invitations, and self-empowerment delivered softly and aesthetically, without confrontation toward the listener or other parties. Through figurative style, Sarip uses ritual language to affirm the restoration of identity and self-esteem (face restoration), after experiencing a series of insults and social pressures. The poetic utterance can be understood as a spiritual reflection: Sarip not only invites the "sleeping god" to wake up, but also himself to stand tall as a whole person. Thus, off-record politeness in this context functions to channel emotional and existential expressions through the beauty of language, allowing deep messages to be conveyed without threatening anyone's face. From a socio-cultural perspective, the off-record politeness form realized through sureq reflects the distinctive character of traditional Bugis communication placing figurative language (basa to rilangi) as a medium for expressing noble values. In that tradition, truth and advice are not conveyed directly, but through symbols and metaphors respecting the listener's wisdom. Sarip's utterance becomes a form of auto-politeness—politeness directed at oneself—by affirming his dignity through soft and sacred language. By taking the path of ritual language, Sarip restores siri' (honor) not through verbal resistance, but through aesthetic contemplation reconciling himself with the social and spiritual world. Thus, the off-record strategy in this data does not merely show linguistic beauty, but also functions as an existential recovery mechanism rooted in Bugis cultural politeness and wisdom values.

Discussion

The analysis of twenty speech data points in the film Kurung shows that the politeness forms appearing can reflect linguistic strategies and also construct the socio-cultural value system of the Bugis-Makassar society. Based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theoretical framework, four politeness strategies—bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record—are identified proportionally, depending on social relations, power, and emotional context between characters.

The bald on record strategy appears dominant in hierarchical interactions, for example in Baso's utterance to Sarip ("Help father cut this wood"), spoken directly without mitigation. In the context of the Bugis family, such speech forms are not considered to violate politeness because efficiency and clarity are prioritized over refined forms. This phenomenon aligns with Brown and Levinson's concept that the level of politeness depends on social variables such as distance, power, and ranking of imposition.

Positive politeness strategies appear in various interactions emphasizing solidarity and affection, such as the utterance "Go, Nak! As a Bugis man, you indeed must migrate.". The utterance shows an effort to maintain the listener's positive face through identity affirmation and emotional support. In Bugis culture, this form becomes a manifestation of siri' na pesse (honor and empathy) values functioning to strengthen social cohesion. This finding aligns with the research results of Wang, Zhong, and Mu (2025), showing that positive politeness strategies can increase emotional engagement and value co-creation in agent interaction, even in technological contexts. In Kurung, positive politeness has a symbolic dimension affirming social roles and family love as the moral foundation of traditional society.

Negative politeness strategies, such as in the utterance "Pak… I want to ask permission to migrate" and "Tabe, tapalabeka lao sompe, Indo," show high pragmatic awareness from the speaker to avoid violating the listener's negative face. The permission request in indirect form functions to lower the threat intensity and show obedience to gentle hierarchical norms. This phenomenon corresponds with Zhao's (2025) research revealing the shift in the meaning of respect in Chinese society from hierarchical forms toward equality, without losing the dimension of pragmatic caution. In the same context, Zhang and Wu (2025) affirm that politeness appears through social inference and conversation conventions, not solely from the speaker's explicit intent. Thus, negative politeness in Kurung shows a balance between the expression of personal will and respect for social authority, indicating the functionality of Brown and Levinson's politeness principles in the Bugis value system.

Meanwhile, off-record strategies appear dominant in utterances that are implicit and metaphorical, such as in the utterance "It's done, Daeng, just accept that this is our child's fate" as well as in Sarip's sureq "Wake up and rise, show your beaming face.". These utterances use symbolic language to convey advice and criticism in a way that does not threaten the listener's face. The off-record strategy becomes a hallmark of Bugis communication upholding malebbi (refined language) and pappaseng (moral advice) values. This is consistent with Federici's (2025) finding stating that indirect strategies in online communities are capable of building empathy and emotional solidarity. In the context of Kurung, the use of this strategy shows the speaker's effort to negotiate identity differences and social tensions through poetic and contemplative speech forms, so politeness functions not only relationally but also existentially.

Comparison with the research of Lam, Cui, and Pell (2025) shows that politeness perception is not only processed socially but also neurocognitively. The brain's rapid reaction to politeness prosody proves that politeness is an automatic psychological experience, influenced by accent and the speaker's social identity. In the film Kurung, a similar phenomenon appears in how society responds to Sarip's identity with acceptance and rejection often determined by social perception of his speech form and style. Politeness becomes an identity marker as well as a social acceptance mechanism. This perspective also intersects with the research of Kim, Seo, and Lee (2025) finding that politeness functions to build credibility and trust in communication, including in the context of generative technology like AI. In the social context of Kurung, politeness plays a role in enforcing interaction morality and mediating tension between tradition and identity change.

The findings of this research have significant theoretical implications for pragmatic and sociolinguistic studies, especially in the development of cross-cultural politeness theory. Using Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework as a starting point for analysis, this research exposes that the politeness strategy categories—bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record politeness—remain descriptively relevant in classifying speech act forms. However, the analysis results also reveal that the theoretical assumptions underlying that framework, especially the conception of face as an individual psychological entity, are not fully capable of explaining politeness practices in the Bugis-Makassar cultural context which is communally oriented and morally charged. In the analyzed interactions, face is not merely understood as an individual right to be respected or not disturbed, but as a relational value attached to collective honor and the speaker's social responsibility toward their community. The values of siri' (moral honor) and pesse (collective empathy) function as the main evaluative foundation in assessing whether an utterance is considered polite or not. Thus, politeness operates not only as a face threat mitigation strategy but also as a mechanism for affirming moral position and social legitimacy in interpersonal relations. These findings indicate the necessity of expanding the concept of face in politeness theory, from one that is individual to one that is relational and communal (communal face). Furthermore, this research shows that the function of politeness in the Bugis-Makassar context does not always correlate directly with the level of indirectness or linguistic mitigation, as assumed in the universal model. The bald on record strategy, for example, can be understood as a legitimate and normative form of politeness in certain hierarchical relations, provided that the utterance aligns with the moral values and social roles collectively recognized. This challenges the dominant view in pragmatics tending to link politeness solely with the refinement of linguistic forms, and strengthens the argument that politeness needs to be understood as an evaluative practice determined by local interactional norms, not just by grammatical forms or universal pragmatics.

Another theoretical implication relates to the interpretation of off-record politeness strategies. In the analyzed data, this strategy functions not only to avoid direct responsibility for an utterance but also plays a role as a means of articulating moral wisdom and social caution. Indirectness and metaphor in Bugis-Makassar speech reflect a cultural orientation toward malebbi (refinement of character) and lempu' (moral sincerity), placing politeness as an expression of social virtue, not merely a strategic calculation of a rational speaker. Thus, off-record strategies in this context need to be understood as value-laden pragmatic practices, not merely linguistic implicature phenomena.

The findings of this research support a pragmatic approach viewing politeness as culture-embedded pragmatic action. This perspective affirms that politeness theory cannot be separated from the value systems, ideologies, and self-conceptions living within a speech community. Therefore, this research contributes to the effort of de-universalizing politeness theory by showing that models developed in Western cultural contexts need to be re-examined and enriched through empirical data from non-Western societies. In the context of linguistic studies, such an approach opens space for the development of a politeness theory that is more pluralistic, reflexive, and sensitive to the diversity of ways humans construct interactional meaning through language. Overall, the research results show that Brown and Levinson's politeness theory remains relevant for understanding communication practices in non-Western cultural contexts, but needs to be enriched with local value variables. Politeness in Kurung reflects not only face-saving efforts, but also a manifestation of respect for siri' na pesse values, emotional balance (pacce), and linguistic wisdom (lempu'). This strengthens the views of Federici (2025) and Zhao (2025) that politeness is dynamic, contextual, and becomes a medium for negotiating social and emotional identity. Thus, Kurung expands the theoretical horizon of politeness by showing that polite linguistic strategies can function to maintain interaction harmony as well as to build a human space connecting honor, empathy, and social acceptance.

Conclusions

The results of the analysis of twenty speech data points in the film Kurung using Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory framework show that politeness strategies in Bugis-Makassar culture are not just linguistic devices to avoid conflict, but also social instruments reflecting the society's value and moral structure. The four politeness strategies, bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record, appear balanced and contextually, adjusting to social position, power relations, and the emotional situation between participants. The bald on record strategy functions to enforce hierarchy and authority without losing normative politeness; positive politeness strengthens familiarity and solidarity ; negative politeness affirms respect and caution in communication; while off-record politeness reflects speech wisdom rooted in malebbi and siri' na pesse values.

Thus, politeness in Kurung cannot be understood solely through universal categories of Brown and Levinson, but through their integration with local value systems placing language as a means to maintain honor, affection, and social balance. These findings affirm that Brown and Levinson's politeness theory remains relevant, but needs to be expanded through a cultural perspective to understand the complexity of politeness practices in non-Western societies. Integration of previous research results, such as Zhao (2025), Wang et al. (2025), Federici (2025), and Zhang & Wu (2025), shows that politeness is dynamic, contextual, and multidimensional, covering linguistic, social, emotional, and even neurocognitive aspects. In the context of Kurung, politeness functions as a communication mechanism, a means of identity negotiation, as well as a space of resistance against social stigma through language that is empathetic and reflective. Thus, this research contributes to strengthening the cross-cultural perspective in pragmatic studies, showing that politeness is a layered human practice, connecting social logic, speech aesthetics, and relational ethics into a unified whole of meaning

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