# Politeness Strategies Used in Job Interview

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**Abstract**

This study investigates the politeness strategies used in job interviews to understand their role in maintaining positive social relationships and minimizing face-threatening acts. Job interviews are critical in the hiring process, and effective communication is essential for both interviewers and interviewees. Building on Kasper's (1990) concept of politeness strategies, the research identifies and categorizes these strategies within the context of job interviews. Using qualitative analysis, a YouTube job interview video was transcribed and examined to identify instances of positive politeness, indirectness, and other relevant strategies. Findings reveal that both interviewers and interviewees employ various politeness strategies to create a friendly, respectful atmosphere, thereby enhancing the overall interview experience. For job seekers, these strategies can increase the likelihood of a positive outcome, while for interviewers, they facilitate more effective evaluations of candidates. This research contributes to the broader understanding of interpersonal communication in professional settings, offering practical insights for improving job interview interactions and reducing workplace stress.

*Keywords*: Politeness Strategies, Job Interview.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the Study

The job interview is a crucial step in the hiring process, where candidates are evaluated based on their qualifications, skills, and fit for the position. Effective communication and interpersonal skills play a significant role in job interviews, and politeness strategies are often employed to maintain positive social relationships and minimize face-threatening acts. Understanding the specific politeness strategies used in job interviews can provide valuable insights into the dynamics of the interview process and its impact on interviewer evaluations and candidate outcomes. Previous research has explored various aspects of job interviews, including nonverbal cues (Gifford et al.,
1985), impression management tactics (Tsai et al., 2005), and interviewee anxiety (Mastrella, 2023). However, there is a gap in the literature regarding the specific politeness strategies employed in job interviews. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the politeness strategies used by both interviewers and interviewees in job interviews.

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Kasper's (1990) concept of politeness strategies. According to Kasper, politeness strategies are used to maintain positive social relationships and minimize face-threatening acts. These strategies

include positive politeness, which involves showing friendliness and respect, and indirectness, which is used to mitigate potential face-threatening acts. To investigate the politeness strategies used in job interviews, a qualitative approach will be employed. Transcriptions of job interviews will be analyzed to identify instances of positive politeness and indirectness used by both interviewers and interviewees.

### 1.2. Research question

How do politeness strategies contribute to maintaining positive social relationships in job interviews?

### 1.3. Research objective

To identify and categorize the specific politeness strategies employed by interviewers and interviewees in job interviews.

### 1.4. Significance of the research

The research conducted by Arumugam et al. (2021) on politeness strategies used in job interviews is significant for understanding the dynamics of communication in the job interview context. This study contributes to the existing literature on politeness strategies by specifically focusing on their use in job interviews.

The findings of this research have practical implications for job seekers and interviewers. Understanding and utilizing appropriate politeness strategies can enhance the effectiveness of job interviews and improve the overall experience for both parties involved. For job seekers, being aware of and employing politeness strategies can help create a positive impression and increase the likelihood of being selected for the position. For interviewers, understanding the impact of politeness strategies can aid in conducting more successful interviews and selecting the most suitable candidates. Furthermore, this research adds to the broader understanding of interpersonal communication in professional settings. Politeness strategies play a crucial role in maintaining positive social relationships and minimizing face-threatening acts. By examining the specific context of job interviews, this study provides insights into how politeness strategies are employed in a high-stakes situation where both the interviewer and interviewee aim to present themselves in the best possible light. The significance of this research is further highlighted by its relevance to other areas of study. For example, studies have shown that perceptions of organizational politics and job stress can negatively impact job satisfaction (Poon, 2003). Understanding how politeness strategies can mitigate these negative effects can contribute to the development of strategies for improving job satisfaction and reducing workplace stress.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

### 2.1. Politeness strategies

According to Brown and Levinson certain acts may damage or threaten another person's face. Brown and Levinson (1978) view politeness essentially as a complex system for softening face threatening acts (FTAs). Thus, "communication is seen as a fundamentally dangerous and antagonistic endeavor" (Kasper, 1990: 194). FTAs can come with four strategies:

Do the FTA without redressive action: badly on record.
Do the FTA with redressive action: positive politeness.
Do the FTA with redressive action: negative politeness.
Do the FTA off record.
Do not do the FTA

### 2.2. Job interview

A job interview is a formal process in which a potential employer evaluates a candidate's qualifications, skills, and suitability for a specific job position. It is a crucial step in the hiring process and serves as an opportunity for both the employer and the candidate to assess each other's fit for the role. During a job interview, the employer typically asks a series of questions to gather information about the candidate's background, experience, and abilities. These questions may cover a range of topics, including the candidate's education, work history, technical skills, problem-solving abilities, and interpersonal skills. The purpose of these questions is to assess the candidate's knowledge, competence, and potential for success in the role.

Job interviews can take various formats, including one-on-one interviews, panel interviews, group interviews, and even virtual interviews conducted over video conferencing platforms. The format may vary depending on the company's preferences and the nature of the job position. In addition to asking questions, employers may also use other assessment methods during a job interview. These can include practical tests, case studies, role-playing exercises, or even psychometric assessments. These additional assessments help the employer gain a deeper understanding of the candidate's abilities and suitability for the role.

Job interviews are not only an opportunity for the employer to evaluate the candidate but also for the candidate to learn more about the company and the job position. Candidates can use the interview as a chance to ask questions about the company culture, job responsibilities, career growth opportunities, and any other relevant information that can help them make an informed decision about accepting a job offer. Overall, a job interview is a critical step in the hiring process that allows employers to assess a candidate's qualifications and suitability for a specific job position. It provides an opportunity for both the employer and the candidate to gather information, evaluate fit, and make informed decisions about potential employment.

## 3. Research Method

### 3.1. Research design

This study uses a qualitative research approach, according to Mason (2002), it is important to be sure of where to collect the data and find the most appropriate data for the research conducted. Qualitative research is a valuable approach that collects non- numerical data to explore human behavior, attitudes, beliefs, and personality characteristics that may not be easily captured by quantitative research Chai et al (2021). It focuses on opening up processes and mechanisms that may be hidden in quantitative research, Bennett & McWhorter (2016).

### 3.2. Subject of the study

The subject of this study is a YouTube video titled "Job Interview" (https://youtu.be/Z0LiClRtqlE), selected for its realistic portrayal of a typical job interview. The video features natural interactions between an interviewer and an interviewee, covering a variety of common interview questions and responses. Its public accessibility and the participants' consent ensure ethical use. The video includes both verbal and non-verbal communication cues, providing a comprehensive source for analyzing politeness strategies. This analysis has practical implications, offering insights into effective interview techniques for both job seekers and interviewers.

### 3.3. Data collection

The data for this research were collected from a YouTube video of a job interview. The selected video, titled "Job Interview" is available at https://youtu.be/Z0LiClRtqlE. The rationale for selecting this particular video is based on its comprehensive depiction of a typical job interview scenario, featuring both the interviewer and interviewee engaging in a series of structured questions and answers. This video provides a rich source of verbal interactions, allowing for an in-depth analysis of the politeness strategies employed.

To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data, the video was transcribed verbatim. The transcription process involved carefully listening to the audio multiple times and recording the spoken words, paying particular attention to nuances such as tone, pauses, and emphatic stress, which are crucial in understanding politeness strategies (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006).

## 3.4. Data analysis

The analysis of the transcribed data was conducted using qualitative content analysis, a method well-suited for identifying patterns and themes in textual data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The analysis focused on identifying instances of politeness strategies as outlined by Kasper (1990) Brown and Levinson (1987). These strategies include positive politeness, negative politeness, indirectness, and other forms of face-saving actions.

## 4. Research Finding

The transcript from job interview video, where the interviewers (P and D) interact with the interviewee (O).

Introduction
Phase: O: hey
O: hallo
P: nice to see you
P: please have a seat
P: so how are you this morning?
O: I'm good thank you, how about you
P: so far we've met some wonderful people
O: wow
P: and you will be included
O: oh thank you

Analysis:

Positive Politeness: P uses positive politeness by expressing pleasure in seeing O and by making a positive comment about meeting wonderful people, including O. This helps in building rapport and making the interviewee feel valued.
Negative Politeness: P's invitation to "please have a seat" shows respect for O's autonomy.
Information Gathering Phase:

P: Juliana I'm sorry, what we're gonna do this morning is take a moment to find out as much about you as we can, so we have enough information to make certain we know enough about you and what you want to do, and at the end of the session you can ask us some questions
O: sure
P: So, tell me a little bit about yourself, Julia

Analysis:

Negative Politeness: P apologizes and provides a detailed explanation of the interview process, showing respect for O's need for clarity and reducing the imposition.

Positive Politeness: P addresses O by her name, which personalizes the interaction and shows attentiveness.

Discussion of Qualifications:

O: My name is Juliana Lima Ferreira. I graduated in 2009 with a major in business administration. I have experience working as a financial assistant and also in the banking industry. I'm really organized, especially in the workplace. I like to keep things organized so I can find things quickly. I like to work with people, help people, work with numbers, and I really like working in groups or teams where I can share and learn new things. That's all.

D: Your English pronunciation is

excellent. O: Oh, thank you

D: Where did you learn English?

O: I took some classes in Brazil for about two years, but it was hard to learn enough because it's not the primary language. So I came to Canada last year, and I've been living here for a year and two months now.

Analysis:

Positive Politeness: D compliments O's English pronunciation, which is a positive politeness strategy aimed at boosting O's self-esteem and building rapport.

Negative Politeness: D's inquiry about where O learned English respects O's personal efforts and

experiences.

Handling Situational Questions:

P: So why do you want to become a banker?

O: That's what I'm passionate about. I like working with numbers and interacting with people.

P: Okay, so what do you want to do long-term? Do you want to be a clerk, work in investments, or run a branch?

O: I want to run a branch. My goal is to become an assistant bank manager first, and then eventually a bank manager.

D: Give me an example of how you would deal with a customer who's very angry. You can give me more details if you want – why are they angry and what would you say

to them?

O: When I was working at a bank, I had a client who was yelling at me because of a problem with his account. I wasn't sure if I should call my manager or handle it myself. I decided to handle it myself by using my communication skills, speaking slowly to calm him down. I assured him that I would solve his problem, and in the end, I did, and he was happy.

Analysis:

Positive Politeness: O's response includes a detailed example, showing her competence and willingness to share personal experiences, which helps build a positive impression.

Negative Politeness: P's and D's questions are direct but respectful, acknowledging O's potential stress in responding.
Closing Questions:

P: Do you want to work in Canada or return to
Brazil? O: I want to work in Canada.
P: That's wonderful.
D: In a few words, why?
O: Canada has more opportunities than my city.
P: Do you have any questions for us, Juliana?
O: Yes, do new employees get a training program?
P: Training is ongoing in any organization. We have formal training programs, but we also encourage employees to take ownership of their development. You can pursue your dreams, whether it's becoming a branch manager or setting up a new branch.
O: Oh, thank you.
P: What else do you want to ask us?
O: That's all, thank you.
P: Are you sure?
O: Yes.
P: Now, a million-dollar question: Why should we choose you?
O: Because I'm passionate about what I do. If you're not happy waking up to go to your job, you should find something you're passionate about. I love what I do, and that's why you should hire me.
P: Thank you very much, you did well.
O: Thank you.

Analysis:

Positive Politeness: P and D show interest in O's future plans and motivations, providing encouragement and support.
Negative Politeness: P respects O's autonomy by asking if she has any more questions and confirming her final response, showing deference to her decision.

Throughout the interview, both the interviewers and the interviewee engage in face- threatening acts (FTAs) but manage them effectively using politeness strategies. The interviewers employ a mix of positive and negative politeness to mitigate the potential threats to O's face, making her feel valued and respected. Similarly, O responds with politeness, showing respect for the interviewers and engaging positively in the conversation.

By carefully balancing FTAs with appropriate politeness strategies, the participants create a respectful and supportive interview environment, facilitating effective communication and mutual understanding.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the transcript reveals a delicate dance of communication strategies, where both the interviewers and the interviewee navigate potential face-threatening acts (FTAs) with tact and skill. Through a judicious application of politeness strategies, they manage to maintain a positive and respectful interaction throughout the interview process. The interviewers employ a combination of positive and negative politeness strategies to mitigate potential FTAs. They express interest in the interviewee's background, qualifications, and aspirations while respecting her autonomy and minimizing imposition. This balanced approach helps to create a supportive atmosphere where the interviewee feels valued and encouraged to share her experiences and goals. On the other hand, the interviewee responds with professionalism and courtesy, effectively handling questions about her qualifications, career aspirations, and problem- solving abilities. She demonstrates her competence and willingness to engage in the conversation, thereby enhancing her credibility as a potential candidate for the position.

This study aimed to fill the gap in the literature regarding the specific politeness strategies employed in job interviews. The research conducted on politeness strategies used in job interviews is significant for understanding the dynamics of communication in the job interview context. The findings of this research have practical implications for job seekers and interviewers. Understanding and utilizing appropriate politeness strategies can enhance the effectiveness of job interviews and improve the overall experience for both parties involved. For job seekers, being aware of and employing politeness strategies can help create a positive impression and increase the likelihood of being selected for the position. For interviewers, understanding the impact of politeness strategies can aid in conducting more successful interviews and selecting the most suitable candidates. Furthermore, this research adds to the broader understanding of interpersonal communication in professional settings. Politeness strategies play a crucial role in maintaining positive social relationships and minimizing face-threatening acts. By examining the specific context of job interviews, this study provides insights into how politeness strategies are employed in a high-stakes situation where both the interviewer and interviewee aim to present themselves in the best possible light. The significance of this research is further highlighted by its relevance to other areas of study. For example, understanding how politeness strategies can mitigate negative effects such as perceptions of organizational politics and job stress can contribute to the development of strategies for improving job satisfaction and reducing workplace stress. Overall, this study contributes to the existing literature on politeness strategies by specifically focusing on their use in job interviews.

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