

## AN ANALYSIS OF POLITENESS STRATEGY USED BY RECEPTION AT BALI GARDEN BEACH HOTEL

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### ABSTRACT

Politeness strategies play a crucial role in the hospitality industry, where service quality directly impacts customer loyalty. This study investigates the implementation of politeness strategies by front office receptionists at Bali Garden Beach Hotel using a descriptive qualitative approach. Five receptionists were observed to identify the types and frequencies of politeness strategies employed during interactions with guests, based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. Data were collected through observation, interviews, note-taking, and document study, using instruments such as observation sheets, interview guides, and field notes. The analysis focused on 107 receptionist utterances. Findings revealed the use of all four politeness strategies: negative politeness, positive politeness, bald on record, and off-record. Negative politeness was the most frequently used (44.9%), indicating efforts to show respect, minimize imposition, and maintain professionalism. Positive politeness (22.4%) reflected attempts to build rapport, while bald on record (21.5%) was used for directness and efficiency. Off-record strategies (11.2%) appeared in more ambiguous or indirect situations. The study contributes both practically and theoretically by highlighting how politeness enhances service interactions and offers insights for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and pragmatic studies in hospitality contexts.

**Key Words:** Politeness Strategy, Reception, Hotel, Hospitality

### Introduction

Establishing a clear and respectful communication style is the foundation for building positive interpersonal relationships, particularly in service-oriented industries such as hospitality. In this context, communication must be not only effective and efficient but also polite, as it directly influences customer satisfaction, loyalty, and overall service quality. The ideal model of communication involves clarity, honesty, and consideration, all of which are vital for creating a comfortable and respectful atmosphere for both service providers and guests.

Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle, as cited in Yulianti (2021), outlines the fundamental maxims—quantity, quality, relation, and manner—that underpin successful communication. This principle provides a theoretical framework for understanding how speakers cooperate to make conversations meaningful and coherent. Complementing this framework is the theory of politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), which emphasizes the social function of language in maintaining harmony, avoiding conflict, and showing respect during interaction. Their theory identifies four main strategies: positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on record, and off-record strategies. These strategies help speakers navigate sensitive social contexts by choosing appropriate linguistic forms, from direct statements to more subtle, indirect utterances.

While politeness norms vary across cultures, the fundamental concept of courteous communication is universal. From a linguistic perspective, politeness can be observed through word choice, sentence structure, and conversational behavior. In service industries—particularly hospitality—politeness is a core component of successful customer service. Receptionists and front-line staff are often the first point of contact in a hotel, making their communication style critical to the guest experience. Failure to use polite language can result in misunderstandings, dissatisfaction, and negative perceptions of service quality. Conversely,

skillful application of politeness strategies can foster trust, convey professionalism, and enhance the overall guest experience.

In parallel with the rise of global tourism, the demand for English language proficiency has grown, especially in contexts where English functions as a lingua franca. English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and more specifically English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), has emerged to meet this demand by tailoring language instruction to the specific needs of learners in professional contexts. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), ESP is a learner-centered approach that aligns language content and teaching methods with learners' goals and professional requirements. One major branch of ESP is English for Academic Purposes (EAP), which focuses on academic contexts, while the other is EOP, which targets vocational and workplace needs.

In the tourism industry, ESP is essential for training staff who interact with international guests, as it combines linguistic competence with an understanding of cross-cultural communication. Pragmatics, the study of language use in context, plays a vital role in ESP by helping learners grasp the social meanings behind words and expressions. As Fromkin et al. (1999) explain, pragmatics focuses on how meaning is constructed in context, while Kadmon (2001) adds that pragmatics goes beyond literal meanings to encompass intent, social norms, and relationship dynamics. This is especially important in multicultural environments like hotels, where the ability to use appropriate language can influence the success of interpersonal communication.

Bali stands out as a prominent case study for examining the intersection of politeness, language use, and hospitality. As Indonesia's leading tourism destination, Bali attracts millions of international visitors each year. In December 2024 alone, Bali recorded 551,100 foreign arrivals, surpassing all other provinces in Indonesia (BPS, 2024). The island's cultural richness, natural beauty, and well-developed tourism infrastructure continue to drive its popularity. In 2019, Bali generated approximately USD 9.346 billion in foreign exchange from tourism, accounting for over 55% of Indonesia's total tourism revenue (RJOAS, 2023). With such economic significance, the quality of hospitality services in Bali—particularly in hotels—becomes a matter of both local and national importance.

The front office department, especially the receptionist, plays a central role in shaping guest impressions and experiences. According to Kasavana and Brooks (2016), front office personnel are responsible for guest interactions throughout the guest cycle, from pre-arrival to check-out. This includes room allocation, information provision, billing, and service inquiries. As the first and last point of contact, the receptionist's ability to communicate politely and effectively is crucial to ensuring guest satisfaction and maintaining the hotel's reputation. In high-traffic tourist areas like Kuta, where guests come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, the importance of using appropriate politeness strategies becomes even more pronounced.

Bali Garden Beach Hotel, located in the heart of Kuta's tourism district, offers an ideal setting for examining politeness strategies in cross-cultural communication. With 183 rooms and a wide array of facilities, including restaurants, spas, and meeting rooms, the hotel serves a diverse clientele. Guest reviews highlight the professionalism, friendliness, and helpfulness of the reception staff, suggesting a consistent application of politeness in service interactions. These observations make Bali Garden Beach Hotel a relevant site for exploring how politeness strategies are employed in real-world hospitality contexts.

This study focuses on identifying the types and frequencies of politeness strategies used by front office receptionists at Bali Garden Beach Hotel, based on the framework developed by Brown and Levinson (1987). Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the research examines how politeness contributes to successful guest interactions and supports the broader goals of customer satisfaction and service excellence. Beyond its practical relevance to

hospitality management and staff training, this study also offers theoretical contributions to the fields of pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and English for Specific Purposes. In particular, it highlights how politeness serves not only as a communication tool but also as a reflection of cultural sensitivity and professional competence in global tourism settings.

## Research Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore the use of politeness strategies by five front office receptionists at Bali Garden Beach Hotel. The research focused on capturing authentic language use during receptionist–guest interactions. Data were collected using three primary instruments: an observation sheet to document verbal exchanges, an interview guide with open-ended questions to understand the receptionists' perspectives, and field notes to capture contextual and non-verbal elements. The data collection process followed three stages: the description (orientation) stage to familiarize with the setting, the reduction stage to filter relevant data, and the selection stage to identify key interactions for analysis. Data were analysed using the interactive model by Miles and Huberman (1994), involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To enhance the credibility of the findings, data triangulation was applied by incorporating multiple data sources and perspectives, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the politeness strategies used in a real-world hospitality setting.

## Findings and Discussion

### Type of Politeness Strategy Used by Receptionists at Bali Garden Beach Hotel

The analysis revealed that receptionists at Bali Garden Beach Hotel employs various politeness strategies to manage communication with guests. Table 4.1 categorized the different utterances used by receptionists according to their communication style into four main types: Positive, Negative, Bald on Record, and Off Record. These utterances were analysed across four key areas of hotel service: Check-In, Taking Orders, Handling Complaints, and Check-Out.

**Table 1.** Type of Politeness Strategy used by Receptionists at Bali Garden Beach Hotel

No	Utterance	Positive Politeness	Negative Politeness	Bald On Record	Off Record
<b>Check In</b>					
1	Good morning	✓			
2	Please show us your ID so we can double check with your reservation			✓	
3	Today's weather quite hot, isn't it?	✓			
4	We've received your reservation for 01 Deluxe Room for 12 – 15 January 2025 from Booking.com	✓			
5	If you don't mind, is it possible for us to make a copy from your credit card for our secure please?		✓		
6	Could you please check the name of the reservation please? As the name in the passport given and reservation name is slightly different		✓		
7	You look amazing today; did you do something on your hair?				✓

8	Kindly be informed that the room is non-smoking room	✓	
9	Have a pleasant stay!		✓
10	Welcome! May I confirm your check-in date and the number of nights?	✓	
11	We're delighted to have you with us, may I see your booking confirmation?	✓	
12	Just a quick ID check, if you don't mind.	✓	
13	Your room is almost ready, thank you for your patience.	✓	
14	If you'd like to wait, feel free to enjoy our lounge area.		✓
15	Do you have any preferences for floor or bed type?	✓	
16	We've set up a special amenity for you, hope you like it!	✓	
17	Just confirming, you've booked one Deluxe Room for two adults?		✓
18	This is your room key; just tap it at the elevator.		✓
19	Here's a quick guide to our facilities and services.		✓
20	Would you like assistance with your luggage?	✓	
21	Our check-out time is 12 noon, let us know if you need late check-out.		✓
22	Kindly let us know if you're celebrating a special occasion!	✓	
23	You'll find complimentary water and toiletries in your room.		✓
24	Wi-Fi access details are on this card, super easy to connect.		✓
25	Your room is located on the 5th floor, just past the elevator.		✓
26	Please note a security deposit will be held during your stay.	✓	
27	Let us know if you'd like housekeeping at a specific time.		✓
28	We've noted your early check-in request and did our best to prioritize.	✓	
<b>Taking Order</b>			
29	If you don't mind before we take your order, would you please inform us your room number?	✓	
30	Let me quickly check our storage for that extra pillow!	✓	
31	Would you need any additional decoration in your room?	✓	

	There will be an additional charge for that. Would you like me to proceed with the arrangement?	✓	
32	I'm really sorry, if you need pool towel there will be a deposit for guarantee the return, either by prior deposit or conducting room charge. Please don't worry, we will return your money if you already returning the pool towel.	✓	
33	It's starting to rain now, maybe an umbrella?		✓
34	May I help you schedule a wake-up call for tomorrow?	✓	
35	We can assist you with printing or scanning at the front desk.		✓
36	Would you like us to call a taxi or arrange airport transfer?	✓	
37	If you'd like to explore the area, we have maps and guides here.		✓
38	We can store your luggage if you're heading out before check-in time.		✓
39	Let me check availability for an additional blanket or pillow.	✓	
40	Our fitness center is open from 6 AM to 10 PM.		✓
41	Need help booking a local tour? We'd be happy to assist!	✓	
42	Umbrellas are available at the concierge, just let us know.		✓
43	If you need an iron or ironing board, we can bring one up.		✓
44	Would you like assistance booking a massage or spa nearby?	✓	
45	The laundry bag and form are in your closet, just call when ready.		✓
46	We offer printing and photocopying at the business center.		✓
47	A small sewing kit is available upon request.	✓	
48	Our team is available 24/7 for anything you need.	✓	
49	If the 'Do Not Disturb' light is on, we'll skip housekeeping.		✓
50	The rooftop terrace is a lovely place to relax in the evening.		✓
51	Please let us know if you need an adaptor for your charger.	✓	
52	We have a first aid kit at the reception in case of minor injuries.		✓
53			

54	Would you like a late check-out or an extended stay?	✓
55	Let us know if you'd like extra amenities for a child or baby.	✓
56	We have multilingual staff, feel free to ask if you need help.	✓
57	You can request a room refresh any time before 6 PM.	✓
58	We're currently offering complimentary shuttle service to the mall.	✓
59	Lost something? We'll check with housekeeping right away.	✓
<b>Handling Complaints</b>		
60	We won't make you wait forever; we will get back really quick	✓
61	Could you tell us about the inconvenience that you felt in your room?	✓
62	We do apologize for the inconvenience caused	✓
63	We understand the delay may have caused inconvenience for you, but please allow us one moment to check with our receptionists in charge	✓
64	I'm so sorry for what just happened. It's a mistake on our end. We will fix the matter right away.	✓
65	If you want to exchange room, we are afraid that there will be additional charge as the room type is different	✓
66	I can offer a discount on the upgrade if that helps	✓
67	I'm really sorry to hear that. Would you mind telling me what happened?	✓
68	We understand this might have made your stay less comfortable.	✓
69	If it's okay with you, I'll check with my team and get back shortly.	✓
70	May I ask a few more details so we can fix it properly?	✓
71	We're sorry for the trouble. We'd like to make it right, if that's okay with you.	✓
72	Would it be alright if we moved you to another room while we fix this?	✓
73	Thanks for letting us know, we're really sorry this happened.	✓
74	Would you prefer a new room or maybe a small apology gift?	✓



	I understand this must be frustrating.	✓	
75	I'm really sorry.		
	If you don't mind waiting a few	✓	
76	minutes, we'll take care of it.		
	We're sorry this happened. It's not how	✓	
77	things should be.		
	We'll speak to the cleaning team to fix		✓
78	this right away.		
	If that's alright with you, we'll send	✓	
79	someone now to help.		
	I'll let our manager know so it doesn't		✓
80	happen again.		
	We're very sorry, would a small gift	✓	
81	during your stay be, okay?		
	We can offer an upgrade at a discount.	✓	
82	Would that be helpful?		
	I'm truly sorry. Would it be okay if we	✓	
83	follow up soon?		
	We're working on it now, thank you for	✓	
84	being patient.		
	I get this might be upsetting. We'll try	✓	
85	to fix it fast.		
	If you give us a chance, we'd love to	✓	
86	make it better.		
<b>Check Out</b>			
87	Good morning	✓	
88	How's your day?	✓	
	The sky is crying because you leave		✓
89	today		
	If you don't mind, would you wait a	✓	
	second as we need to check whether		
90	there's still remaining bill or not?		
	It will be really helpful for us, if you	✓	
91	may share your feedback on this paper.		
	Thank you, and see you on your next		✓
92	coming		
	Good morning! Are you checking out	✓	
93	today?		
	May I confirm the room number,	✓	
94	please?		
	Thank you for staying with us, how	✓	
95	was your experience?		
	We hope you enjoyed your stay, any	✓	
96	feedback for us?		
	Would you like help with your bags or	✓	
97	transport?		
98	Everything's all set, you're good to go.		✓
	It's been a pleasure having you. Hope	✓	
99	to see you again!		

100	We've checked the room, no extra charges.	✓
101	Here's a copy of your bill, let us know if you have any questions.	✓
102	Please take your time, no rush at all.	✓
103	We hope your stay was relaxing and memorable.	✓
104	If you enjoyed your stay, a quick review would mean a lot to us.	✓
105	Here's a small thank-you gift from our team.	✓
106	Safe travels and we hope you come back soon!	✓
107	Goodbye for now, and thank you again!	✓

In line with Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, the communication strategies employed by hotel receptionists during guest interactions such as check-ins, order processing, complaint handling, and check-outs, demonstrate a careful balance between clarity, efficiency, and the maintenance of social harmony. The Bald on Record strategy was most evident in moments that required directness and urgency. Receptionists frequently used this strategy when requesting guests' identification, confirming reservations, or asking for a credit card for security purposes. These interactions, such as *"Please show us your ID"* or *"May I take a copy of your credit card?"*, reflect the need for unambiguous, efficient communication in transactional exchanges where mutual understanding is assumed. Despite the directness of some interactions, receptionists also consistently employed Negative Politeness to mitigate face-threatening acts. This strategy allowed them to maintain professionalism while reducing potential discomfort for guests. For instance, requests were softened with hedging expressions such as *"If you don't mind..."* or framed within policy explanations to demonstrate respect for guest autonomy. This was particularly evident in interactions involving hotel rules, such as the non-smoking policy or during data verification procedures. By doing so, receptionists effectively minimized imposition and upheld courteous service standards.

Off Record strategies were also observed, primarily serving a relational function. Indirect or playful remarks, such as complimenting guests or making light-hearted comments about the weather, such as *"The sky is crying because you leave today"*, created a warm and welcoming atmosphere. These utterances, while not necessary for the transactional content of the interaction, functioned to build rapport and reduce social distance, aligning with the hospitality industry's emphasis on personalized service. In complaint-handling scenarios, a pragmatic blend of Bald on Record and Negative Politeness was common. Receptionists addressed issues directly for example, acknowledging delays or room assignment errors using statements such as *"We understand the delay may have caused inconvenience for you."* These were typically followed by polite explanations or compensatory offers, such as alternative arrangements or discounts, which served to soften the impact and preserve the guest's positive perception of the service. This dual approach helped to balance the institutional need for transparency with the interpersonal need for face preservation. Similarly, the check-out process featured a combination of strategies. Bald on Record strategies were used for clarity in financial matters and feedback solicitation, while Negative Politeness was applied when asking guests to wait during billing procedures. Meanwhile, Off Record remarks added a personal touch to the farewell, reinforcing a positive final impression.

Overall, regardless of individual lexical choices or stylistic differences, each utterance fulfilled a pragmatic function tailored to the situation. Receptionists demonstrated a high level



of pragmatic competence, skilfully shifting among politeness strategies based on context, relational dynamics, and communicative goals. This aligns strongly with Brown and Levinson's theoretical framework and underscores the importance of politeness in effective service delivery. In the hospitality industry, such strategic language use is not only a reflection of professionalism but also a key factor in enhancing guest satisfaction and maintaining a positive service reputation.

### Politeness Strategy That Frequently Used by Receptionists at Bali Garden Beach Hotel

Table 2 presents the frequencies of politeness strategies employed by receptionists at Bali Garden Beach Hotel across four key service interactions: check-in, taking orders, handling complaints, and check-out. The data categorizes these strategies into four types: positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on record, and off record. This table highlights how receptionists adapt their communication to different service scenarios, emphasizing the role of politeness in maintaining guest satisfaction and professionalism.

**Table 2.** Frequencies of Politeness Strategies That Used by Receptionists at Bali Garden Beach Hotel

Amount	Positive	Negative	Bald on Record	Off Record
Check in	8	8	8	4
Taking Order	6	10	9	6
Handling Complaints	0	25	2	0
Check Out	10	5	4	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>22.4%</b>	<b>44.9%</b>	<b>21.5%</b>	<b>11.2%</b>

Based on the data analysis, negative politeness emerged as the most frequently employed strategy, accounting for 44.9% of the total 107 utterances. This finding highlights the receptionists' tendency to prioritize deference, minimize imposition, and maintain professional boundaries. Utterances such as *"If you don't mind, would you wait a second..."* and *"We are afraid that there will be an additional charge"* reflect careful linguistic choices aimed at preserving the guests' face and autonomy. Positive politeness strategies accounted for 22.4%, focusing on creating social closeness and warmth through expressions of shared experience and friendliness, such as *"Today's weather is quite hot, isn't it?"* and *"The sky is crying because you leave today."* These expressions contribute to a more relaxed, hospitable environment. Bald on record strategies, which made up 21.5% of the utterances, were typically used in situations requiring clarity and efficiency, especially during procedural exchanges such as, *"Please show us your ID..."*. Off-record strategies appeared in 11.2% of the data, characterized by indirect suggestions that allow guests to interpret meaning with autonomy, such as *"It's starting to rain now, maybe an umbrella?"*.

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate a thoughtful and strategic application of politeness strategies by hotel receptionists. The prominence of negative politeness suggests a professional emphasis on courtesy, ensuring that the receptionists minimize impositions and maintain a respectful distance while attending to guests. This strategy underscores the importance of maintaining boundaries while still providing quality service. On the other hand, positive politeness fosters warmth, inclusivity, and interpersonal connection, which helps build rapport and makes guests feel valued and welcomed. While less frequently employed, the use of bald on record and off record strategies reflects a flexible approach tailored to different communication contexts. Bald on record strategies, although direct, are used when clear, unambiguous communication is needed, especially in routine or task-oriented interactions. In contrast, off record strategies, which are more indirect, are often used to provide guests with

the freedom to interpret or decline a suggestion, showcasing respect for autonomy and guest preferences.

Together, these combined politeness strategies contribute to a respectful, effective, and guest-oriented service delivery. The use of these strategies not only enhances the clarity and warmth of communication but also ensures that hotel receptionists create a welcoming and professional environment. Understanding the subtle interplay between these strategies can lead to more tailored training programs for reception staff, which in turn could further improve guest satisfaction, loyalty, and overall service excellence. These findings align with previous studies by Holmes (1995), Kádár (2013), Selfia and Marlina (2016), Suryani et al. (2019), and Annisa and Mahmud (2023), confirming that service workers utilize a variety of politeness strategies based on situational needs and communicative goals. The results underscore the pragmatic sensitivity of receptionists in adapting their language to varying social contexts and guest expectations.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, two key conclusions can be drawn regarding the use of politeness strategies by front office receptionists at Bali Garden Beach Hotel. First, all four types of politeness strategies identified by Brown and Levinson (1987) such as negative politeness, positive politeness, bald on record, and off-record, were present in a total of 107 recorded utterances. This demonstrates a broad and context-sensitive application of politeness strategies in professional hospitality interactions. Second, the most frequently employed strategy was negative politeness (44.9%), indicating the receptionists' consistent efforts to demonstrate respect, minimize imposition, and uphold formal service standards. Positive politeness strategies (22.4%) reflected attempts to build rapport and create a friendly, welcoming atmosphere, while bald on record strategies (21.5%) were typically reserved for situations requiring directness and procedural clarity. Off-record strategies (11.2%) appeared in more ambiguous or indirect contexts, allowing for guest interpretation and autonomy. These findings underscore the receptionists' pragmatic awareness and communicative competence in navigating social distance, power relations, and guest expectations. Overall, the strategic deployment of these politeness strategies plays a significant role in enhancing guest satisfaction and supports the importance of pragmatic training in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) within the hospitality industry.

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