

Politeness Strategies as Self-Presentation in Laufey's Podcast Interviews Based on Leech's Principles

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Abstract

This study examines the use of politeness strategies in Laufey's utterances in two podcast interviews, *Q with Tom Power* and *Royal Court with Brittany Broski*, based on Leech's Politeness Principle (1983). Grounded in pragmatic analysis, this research examines how politeness functions not only as a linguistic norm but also as a strategic resource for self-presentation in public digital discourse. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, 80 utterances were analyzed, revealing 87 realizations of politeness maxims. The findings show that four of Leech's six maxims are employed, namely modesty (47 instances), approbation (19), agreement (12), and tact (9). The dominance of the modesty maxim indicates a consistent tendency to minimize self-praise, even when discussing professional achievements. Drawing on Goffman's framework of self-presentation, these strategies function as forms of impression management, enabling the construction of a controlled, approachable, and professional public persona. This study highlights politeness as a strategic linguistic resource in shaping self-presentation within contemporary podcast discourse.

Keywords: politeness strategies, leech's politeness principle, self-presentation, podcast discourse, pragmatics

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary digital era, communication plays a crucial role in how public figures manage their self-presentation in front of a wide and diverse audience (Nugraha et al., 2022). Musicians, in particular, are no longer perceived solely through their musical works, but also through their public appearances in digital media such as social networking platforms and podcasts. Podcasts have emerged as a popular form of public discourse that combines elements of interview, casual conversation, and personal storytelling, allowing public figures to present themselves in a more relaxed and seemingly authentic manner (Heryani et al., 2023). This communicative setting positions language as a key resource through which public figures negotiate interpersonal relationships and construct their public personas.

Within podcast interactions, language functions not merely as a medium for conveying information, but also as a strategic tool for managing impressions and maintaining social harmony with both interviewers and audiences. Previous studies have emphasized that linguistic choices, including diction, communicative style, and pragmatic strategies, reflect how speakers position themselves socially and relationally. One prominent pragmatic framework that explains this phenomenon is

Leech's Politeness Principle (1983), which conceptualizes politeness as a set of strategies used to balance the speaker's self-interest with consideration for others (Leech, 1983). Leech proposes six politeness maxims, tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy, which guide speakers in selecting linguistic forms that support harmonious interaction. These maxims are particularly relevant in public yet personal communicative contexts, such as podcast interviews, where speakers are expected to appear sincere without appearing self-centered or socially insensitive.

In podcast discourse, politeness strategies become especially salient because speakers must negotiate a tension between personal expression and social appropriateness. This phenomenon can be observed in the utterances of Laufey, a contemporary jazz-pop musician of Icelandic-Chinese descent, who is widely recognized for her narrative-driven musical style and warm communicative persona. In various public interviews, Laufey frequently discusses her creative process, personal experiences, and professional achievements in a manner that appears reflective and approachable. Such communicative behavior suggests the strategic use of politeness to limit overt self-promotion while maintaining a positive public image.

The strategic function of politeness in public discourse can be further understood through Goffman's (1959) concept of self-presentation (Goffman, 1959). Goffman argues that individuals engaged in social interaction perform roles similar to actors on a stage, consciously managing the impressions they convey to others. In public interviews such as podcasts, speakers operate entirely within the front stage, where every utterance contributes to the construction of a public persona. Linguistic choices, including responses to praise, expressions of agreement, and displays of humility, function as impression management strategies that help speakers align their projected identity with audience expectations. Integrating Goffman's self-presentation framework with Leech's politeness principles therefore provides a comprehensive lens for analyzing how language operates both socially and performatively in digital public discourse.

Although numerous studies have examined politeness strategies using Leech's maxims, much of the existing research has focused on formal contexts such as political speeches, academic debates, or scripted media dialogues (Agustiningrum, 2020; Atmawijaya & Efryanti, 2023; Harianja et al., 2024). Studies that explore politeness in digital media often emphasize frequency and types of maxims without closely examining their strategic function in shaping self-presentation. Moreover, research that specifically investigates how young musicians employ politeness strategies across different levels of communicative formality in podcast settings remains limited. This gap indicates a need for further investigation into how politeness operates as a strategic resource for self-presentation in contemporary, informal digital interviews.

Responding to this gap, the present study examines the use of politeness strategies in Laufey's utterances in two podcast interviews with contrasting interactional styles: *Q with Tom Power*, which adopts a relatively formal interview format, and *Royal Court with Brittany Broski*, which is more informal and conversational. By analyzing these two contexts, the study seeks to explore how politeness strategies are adapted to different communicative situations and how they function in the construction of Laufey's public persona. Specifically, this research aims not only to identify the realization of Leech's politeness maxims in Laufey's utterances, but also to explain how these strategies serve as forms of self-presentation within public digital discourse.

This study contributes to pragmatic research by extending the application of politeness theory to contemporary podcast discourse and by integrating it with Goffman's concept of self-presentation (Wibowo & Soraya, 2023). By focusing on linguistic strategies rather than audience perception, the research offers insight into how politeness functions as a deliberate and meaningful resource for managing identity and social relations in digital media interactions. As such, this study underscores the relevance of politeness not only as a normative aspect of language use, but also as a strategic practice in the construction of public identity in the digital era.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive narrative design to examine the use of politeness strategies in Laufey's utterances during two podcast interviews. The data were obtained from two podcast episodes with different interactional styles: *Q with Tom Power* and *Royal Court with Brittany Broski*. These podcasts were selected to represent relatively formal and informal public interview contexts.

The primary data consisted of 80 utterances produced by Laufey that indicated the use of politeness strategies, resulting in 87 realizations of politeness maxims. Data were collected through observation and note-taking techniques, involving the transcription of the podcast episodes and the identification of utterances relevant to Leech's Politeness Principle. The selection of utterances was based on their relevance to politeness strategies, particularly those reflecting evaluative, responsive, or self-referential expressions. The analysis focused on the speaker's utterances, while the interviewer's speech was considered as contextual support.

Data analysis was conducted by categorizing the selected utterances according to Leech's six politeness maxims and interpreting their pragmatic functions using Goffman's concept of self-

presentation. To ensure analytical consistency, the categorization of data was carried out systematically based on the theoretical framework, and each interpretation was supported by contextual analysis. The findings were presented descriptively and supported by frequency tables to illustrate patterns of politeness strategy use in public podcast discourse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis identified 87 realizations of politeness maxims across 80 utterances produced by Laufey, indicating that some utterances simultaneously reflect more than one maxim. Among Leech's six politeness maxims, only four were observed in the data: modesty, approbation, agreement, and tact. The distribution of these maxims is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Politeness Maxims

No	Maxim	Frequency
1	Tact	9
2	Generosity	0
3	Approbation	19
4	Modesty	47
5	Agreement	12
6	Sympathy	0

The uneven distribution of maxims suggests that politeness in podcast discourse is not applied uniformly, but selectively mobilized in ways that align with the speaker's interactional goals. Rather than functioning solely as a mechanism for maintaining interpersonal harmony, these strategies operate as performative linguistic resources through which the speaker constructs and regulates a public identity. This indicates that politeness in this context is inherently strategic, serving both relational and self-presentational purposes.

Taken together, the findings suggest that politeness in podcast discourse operates not merely as interpersonal regulation, but as a performative mechanism of identity construction. Laufey's consistent use of modesty, alignment, and evaluative redirection reflects a deliberate effort to balance authenticity with public image management. In line with Goffman's (1959) concept of self-presentation, her utterances can be understood as carefully managed acts that project a persona which is simultaneously humble, relatable, and professionally composed. Thus, politeness strategies function not only to sustain interactional harmony but also to negotiate visibility, credibility, and likability within contemporary digital public discourse.

MODESTY MAXIM

The modesty maxim emerges as the most dominant pattern in the data, indicating a consistent tendency to minimize self-praise, particularly when discussing professional achievements.

Laufey: *I mean, I didn't think for a second that I was going to win it, honestly. I completely blocked it out of my mind. I really thought that I pretty much had already won by just getting nominated.*

Rather than emphasizing success, this utterance shifts the evaluative focus toward participation, thereby reducing the level of self-promotion. This pattern suggests that modesty is not merely a politeness strategy, but a recurring interactional stance through which Laufey systematically downplays personal achievement in public discourse.

From the perspective of Goffman's self-presentation, this behavior reflects a form of impression management, where the speaker constructs a front-stage identity that appears humble and unassuming. By avoiding explicit self-praise, Laufey maintains a socially acceptable balance between visibility and modesty, preventing the risk of being perceived as self-centered.

A similar pattern is observed when she reflects on her earlier work:

Laufey: *Yeah, it was very sad and it was accompanied by a lack of experience.*

Here, the speaker foregrounds limitation rather than competence. This self-evaluative move reinforces a persona grounded in growth and imperfection, which enhances relatability. Such self-effacing discourse functions strategically to position the speaker not as a finished product, but as an evolving individual, thereby aligning with audience expectations of authenticity. Overall, the dominance of the modesty maxim indicates that self-effacement operates as a key front-stage strategy, enabling the speaker to maintain credibility while avoiding excessive self-promotion.

APPROBATION MAXIM

The approbation maxim is realized through the redirection of positive evaluation away from the self toward others or external elements.

Laufey: *Great line! Great line. It's so fun to sing live as well.*

In this example, praise is directed toward the lyric rather than the performer. This evaluative shift suggests that the speaker actively avoids becoming the focal point of admiration. Such a pattern indicates that approbation functions as a strategy of deflecting self-centeredness while maintaining engagement in the interaction.

This becomes more explicit in moments of direct admiration:

Brittany: *So, I'm honestly such a fan, I'm trying to hold it in.*

Laufey: *No, no, no, I'm a fan, I'm trying to hold it in. I'm like kind of nervous, I'm sweating.*

Here, Laufey reverses the direction of admiration and introduces self-deprecating elements. This response reduces hierarchical distance and constructs a more symmetrical interactional relationship. From a Goffmanian perspective, this reflects a form of impression management where the speaker adjusts her interactional positioning and resists being positioned solely as an admired figure, instead performing a more reciprocal and approachable identity. By doing so, she maintains control over how admiration is received and reframed. Thus, the approbation maxim contributes to the construction of a relational persona, characterized by appreciation, humility, and interpersonal sensitivity.

AGREEMENT MAXIM

The agreement maxim is realized through expressions that align with the interlocutor's statements, reinforcing shared understanding.

Laufey: *Exactly.*

Laufey: *Exactly. And nothing's all up... it goes up and down.*

These utterances indicate active alignment, suggesting that agreement is used to sustain conversational flow and minimize potential conflict. However, beyond its interpersonal function, this pattern also reflects a broader self-presentational strategy. Through consistent alignment, Laufey positions herself as a cooperative and attentive participant, reinforcing a persona that values dialogue rather than dominance. This aligns with Goffman's notion of interaction as a collaborative performance, where speakers must coordinate their roles to maintain a coherent social situation.

In some cases, agreement is expressed indirectly:

Tom: *...it's not the easiest thing to get into there as a musician.*

Laufey: *It's definitely a remarkable place and I came from such a strict classical music world.*

Here, alignment is achieved through the evaluation of an external entity rather than explicit affirmation. This allows the speaker to agree without centering herself, thereby maintaining both harmony and modesty. Overall, the agreement maxim supports the construction of a socially attuned persona, emphasizing cooperation, responsiveness, and interactional balance.

TACT MAXIM

Although less frequent, the tact maxim plays a significant role in managing delicate interactional moments.

Tom: *I don't want you to feel like you're in the conservatory right now.*

Laufey: *Oh yeah, no, my God, it's so fine. I'm used to it.*

This response minimizes potential discomfort and reassures the interlocutor. Rather than emphasizing awkwardness, the speaker reframes the situation as manageable and unproblematic. From a self-presentation perspective, this reflects an effort to maintain a composed and adaptable front-stage identity. By downplaying potential tension, Laufey ensures that the interaction remains smooth and comfortable. This behavior demonstrates a high level of interactional awareness, where the speaker actively anticipates and mitigates potential disruptions. Thus, while less frequent, the tact maxim contributes to the construction of a persona that is socially aware, controlled, and emotionally stable.

POLITENESS AS SELF-PRESENTATION IN PODCAST DISCOURSE

The combined use of modesty, approbation, agreement, and tact reveals a consistent and systematic pattern of self-presentation in Laufey's podcast interactions. Rather than functioning independently, these strategies operate collectively as a coordinated system of impression management, through which the speaker regulates both interpersonal relations and public identity.

The dominance of the modesty maxim indicates a pattern of controlled self-disclosure, in which personal achievements are acknowledged but strategically downplayed. This allows the speaker to remain visible in the interaction without appearing self-promotional. At the same time, the use of approbation and agreement contributes to relational alignment, as the speaker consistently directs attention toward others and reinforces shared understanding. These strategies help maintain interactional balance and reduce potential asymmetry between the speaker and the interlocutor.

Meanwhile, the tact maxim plays a complementary role by ensuring interactional comfort, particularly in moments that could potentially disrupt the flow of conversation. By minimizing discomfort and reframing sensitive situations, the speaker maintains a stable and harmonious interactional environment.

From the perspective of Erving Goffman's framework of self-presentation, these patterns can be understood as part of a front-stage performance, in which the speaker actively manages how she is perceived by both the immediate interlocutor and the wider audience. The consistent use of these politeness strategies suggests that self-presentation in podcast discourse is not spontaneous, but strategically organized and interactionally achieved.

Taken together, these strategies construct a front-stage persona characterized by humility, relational warmth, cooperation, and emotional control. This persona reflects a careful balance between authenticity and performativity, where the speaker appears natural and sincere while still maintaining control over her public image.

These findings indicate that politeness in podcast discourse functions as a multifunctional communicative resource. It not only maintains social harmony at the interpersonal level but also enables speakers to shape how they are perceived in broader digital contexts. In this sense, politeness extends beyond normative language use and becomes a deliberate practice of identity construction, through which public figures negotiate credibility, relatability, and audience engagement in contemporary media environments.

CONSISTENCY OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES

Although this study involves two podcast interviews with differing interactional styles, the overall pattern of politeness strategy use remains consistent across both contexts. The realization of modesty, approbation, agreement, and tact appears in both Q with Tom Power and Royal Court with Brittany Broski, indicating that these strategies are not strongly dependent on situational variation but instead form a stable pattern of self-presentation.

This pattern suggests that the speaker maintains a relatively uniform approach to managing self-presentation, regardless of differences in communicative setting. While the tone and delivery of utterances may vary due to interactional dynamics, the underlying tendencies, such as minimizing self-praise, aligning with the interlocutor, and maintaining interactional comfort remain consistent.

From the perspective of Erving Goffman's framework, this indicates that the speaker sustains a coherent front-stage identity across multiple performances. Rather than fundamentally altering her self-presentation, Laufey adapts her linguistic expressions while preserving a consistent projected

persona. This finding reinforces the view that politeness strategies function not only as context-sensitive interactional tools but also as stable resources for identity construction. In this sense, politeness reflects a deliberate and sustained form of impression management, enabling the maintenance of a recognizable and coherent public identity across different instances of mediated interaction.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the realization of politeness maxims in 80 utterances produced by Laufey across two podcast interviews, identifying a total of 87 instances distributed across four types of maxims: modesty, approbation, agreement, and tact. Among these, the modesty maxim emerged as the most dominant, indicating a consistent tendency to minimize self-praise in public interaction.

The findings demonstrate that politeness strategies function not only to maintain interpersonal harmony but also as strategic resources for self-presentation. Through the consistent use of modesty, approbation, agreement, and tact, Laufey constructs a public persona characterized by humility, approachability, cooperation, and interactional sensitivity. These strategies operate systematically as forms of impression management, allowing the speaker to balance personal expression with socially appropriate conduct in a public communicative setting.

Furthermore, this study addresses the gap in previous research by showing that politeness strategies are not merely distributed patterns of language use, but function as meaningful and structured resources for managing public identity in digital discourse. The findings suggest that the use of politeness remains relatively consistent across different interactional contexts, indicating that such strategies contribute to the maintenance of a coherent and recognizable public persona.

By integrating Leech's politeness principles with Erving Goffman's framework of self-presentation, this study highlights how linguistic choices operate simultaneously at the interpersonal and performative levels. In this sense, politeness extends beyond its traditional role as a means of maintaining social harmony and becomes a key mechanism in the construction and regulation of identity in contemporary media environments.

However, this study is limited to a relatively small dataset and focuses on a single public figure within podcast discourse. Future research may expand the scope by examining a wider range of speakers, platforms, or cultural contexts to further explore how politeness strategies function across different forms of digital communication.

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