

## A PRAGMATIC STUDY OF THE STRUCTURE OF POLITE LANGUAGE IN AVIATION STAFF COMMUNICATION

(Kajian Pragmatik terhadap Struktur Bahasa Santun dalam Komunikasi Staf Penerbangan)

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Naskah Diterima 18 Agustus 2025; Direvisi Akhir 9 November 2025;

Disetujui 8 Desember 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26499/sawer.v31i2.1611>

### Abstract

*This study examines the politeness strategies used by aviation staff when interacting with passengers at critical service points. Using a qualitative descriptive method with a relational pragmatic approach, data were collected from purposively selected YouTube videos showing interactions at immigration, security, and check-in counters. The videos were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, Searle's speech act classification, and Locher and Watts' relational work framework. The analysis focused on identifying interaction units, classifying speech acts, and examining politeness strategies and relational work. The findings show that aviation staff combine positive politeness (greetings, empathy), negative politeness (indirect requests, modals, hedges), and bald-on-record strategies (direct instructions) to balance institutional demands with interpersonal rapport. These strategies enhance passenger comfort, procedural clarity, and professional service identity. The study contributes to contextual pragmatics and provides practical guidance for developing culturally sensitive communication in aviation services.*

**Keywords:** *politeness strategy, flight communication, relational pragmatics*

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji strategi kesantunan yang digunakan staf penerbangan dalam berinteraksi dengan penumpang pada titik layanan kritis. Menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan pragmatik relasional, data diperoleh dari video YouTube yang dipilih secara purposif yang menampilkan interaksi di bagian imigrasi, keamanan, dan check-in. Video ditranskripsi secara verbatim dan dianalisis menggunakan teori kesantunan Brown dan Levinson, klasifikasi tindak tutur Searle, serta kerangka kerja relasional Locher dan Watts. Analisis dilakukan melalui identifikasi unit interaksi, klasifikasi tindak tutur, dan pemeriksaan strategi kesantunan serta kerja relasional. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa staf penerbangan memadukan strategi kesantunan positif (sapaan, empati), kesantunan negatif (permintaan tidak langsung, modal, peredam), dan strategi langsung (instruksi tegas) untuk menyeimbangkan tuntutan institusional dengan hubungan interpersonal. Strategi tersebut meningkatkan kenyamanan penumpang, kejelasan prosedur, dan citra layanan profesional. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada kajian pragmatik kontekstual dan memberikan panduan komunikasi sensitif budaya dalam layanan penerbangan.

**Kata-kata kunci:** strategi kesopanan, komunikasi penerbangan, pragmatik relasional

### INTRODUCTION

Through interpersonal interactions between employees and passengers, the airline sector acts as a vital entry point to international

travel. A preliminary observation at an international airport revealed a recurrent pattern: staff communication, including tone,

word choice, and linguistic strategies, had a significant impact on passengers' comfort and satisfaction, in addition to procedural efficiency. At sensitive checkpoints, including immigration, security screening, and check-in counters, passengers from different cultural backgrounds reacted differently to varied communication strategies. These findings motivated us to investigate how politeness techniques serve as more than merely language etiquette; rather, they are crucial instruments for handling cross-cultural relationships and influencing how visitors view a destination's hospitality culture.

Communication in the aviation industry is not only a tool to convey information, but also serves as a basis for building credibility and creating positive experiences for customers (Black et al., 2013). The ability to communicate professionally, effectively, efficiently, and politely in various situations such as facing time pressures, cultural differences, or emergencies is required for flight personnel who work on the ground or in the air. In a limited interaction space such as the aircraft cabin and airport terminals, the speech used by staff is not just technical instructions, but a representation of corporate ethics and service standards (Goleman, 2006; Milagros Del Saz Rubio, 2011).

Employees of airlines are frequently the first to engage directly with both domestic and international tourists as part of the tourism service chain. As a result, their communication style also shapes the first perception of a nation's or region's service culture (Szondi, 2007). In this situation, being courteous in speech is essential to professionalism and the destination's reputation. In addition to demonstrating individual skill, the tourism industry's preparedness to handle the intricacies of cross-cultural interaction is evident in the use of courteous, accurate, and culturally sensitive language.

Language serves as a social bridge that enables people to establish connections, express opinions, and keep the peace in social situations, in addition to being a means of communicating ideas. In any interaction, but

particularly in a pluralistic social setting, it becomes crucial to utilize language that considers politeness. According to Levinson (1983) Being courteous when speaking is a type of communication behavior intended to make the other person feel valued and accepted so that the exchange can proceed smoothly.

The politeness theory of Brown et al. (1987), which outlines tactics speakers use to preserve or improve the "face" of their interlocutors during social encounters, serves as the major theoretical basis for this investigation. Face, which is defined as a person's sense of self-worth or public self-image, needs to be carefully managed in professional service settings because power imbalances and cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings. The paradigm developed by Brown and Levinson provides crucial analytical tools for comprehending aviation staff communication by differentiating between positive politeness (strategies that prioritize solidarity and common ground) and negative politeness (strategies that respect autonomy and prevent imposition). Additionally, we can categorize and analyze the pragmatic functions of utterances beyond their literal meanings using Searle's (1979) speech act theory, and we can investigate how politeness functions dynamically within particular institutional and interpersonal contexts using Locher & Watts (2005) relational work framework.

Language politeness has an educational component as well. According to Leech (2007), it teaches us to treat people with respect regardless of their age, status, or level of social proximity. Nowadays, being polite is viewed as a dynamic practice that adapts to the situation, the person speaking, and the context of the encounter rather than being a set guideline (Gretenkort & Tylén, 2021).

This approach paves the way for a deeper understanding of the relationships between participants in communication, as it takes into account social complexities such as power, emotional distance, and roles in social structures (Haugh & Bargiela-Chiappini, 2010). In a reality full of diversity, the norm of

decency is not always uniform; It is shaped by cultural background, social status, and even certain situational pressures. Therefore, the theory of decency that considers this diversity, as explained by Kádár (2013) offers a more contextual and realistic framework for analyzing language practices in the real world.

Since politeness directly relates to how people use language to establish and preserve social relationships, it has gained significant attention in the field of pragmatics (Cutting, 2005; Fraser, 2005). Numerous studies have particularly looked at communication in the aviation sector from a variety of angles, albeit with different emphasis than the current study.

In his investigation of politeness theory in public relations settings, Theunissen (2019) showed how face-saving techniques and the proper use of politeness indicators are crucial to developing relationships in professional communication. Similar to this, customer satisfaction measures and service delivery outcomes have been the main focus of research on airline service quality. While SERVQUAL-based research and studies by Parasuraman et al. (1988) have looked at aspects of service quality like responsiveness, dependability, and courtesy, these studies usually treat communication as a single variable rather than examining the linguistic and pragmatic strategies used.

Several facets of the problem have been examined in recent research in the particular setting of cabin crew communication. Communication problems between the cockpit and cabin crew have been studied by cabin crew members (Bienefeld & Grote, 2012; Chute & Weiner, 1995), with an emphasis on organizational hierarchies and safety consequences. In their investigation of the emotional labor and communication difficulties that flight attendants encountered during Covid-19, Winkler et al. (2025) showed how face masks and a reduction in service impacted their capacity to use facial expressions to convey politeness. Additionally, research on cabin crew rapport-building practices Kim et al. (2022) showed that polite conduct and empathy have a big impact on team performance and

organizational atmosphere, but these studies mostly examined relationships within the crew rather than interactions between the crew and passengers.

Communication training research has also emerged as an important area. Gibbs et al. (2017) examined competency-based training for flight attendants, emphasizing stress management, conflict resolution, and customer service skills. Studies on English language communication Sa-idi & Pittpant (2024) has highlighted the importance of linguistic competence for airport ground staff in multicultural environments, though these studies focus on language proficiency rather than pragmatic strategies.

Despite the valuable contributions of these studies, several critical research gaps persist. First, while service quality research acknowledges the importance of "courtesy" and "communication," there is limited in-depth pragmatic analysis of how specific politeness strategies are deployed, negotiated, and perceived in actual aviation staff-passenger interactions. Most studies treat politeness as a general attribute rather than examining the strategic, context-dependent selection of linguistic forms.

Second, the pragmatic structure of language used at particular crucial interaction points like immigration checks, security screenings, and check-in counters is rarely analyzed in aviation communication research, which has mostly concentrated on internal crew communication (cockpit-cabin coordination) or general customer service training. These are the best places to study how institutional roles and interpersonal etiquette are balanced since they are the exact points where power dynamics, procedural requirements, and cultural differences collide.

Third, there is still a lack of research on the cross-cultural aspect of civility in airline settings. Few studies have systematically investigated how aircraft workers manage cross-cultural pragmatic differences through their use of politeness techniques, despite calls by Nkirote (2024) and others for broader theoretical models to accommodate varied cultural contexts in politeness research.

Fourth, there is a lack of an integrated analysis of how politeness strategies function relationally, that is, how they simultaneously serve institutional efficiency requirements while maintaining interpersonal harmony and respecting passengers' face needs across different cultural contexts. Most research looks at politeness from the perspectives of the service provider or the customer in isolation.

A new strategy that is more contextual and in keeping with the actual communication situation in the tourism industry is required, as shown by the gaps that have been found. The interaction between flight attendants and passengers at crucial service checkpoints is one of the situations that has not been thoroughly examined. Tourists' first impressions of a nation's service culture and hospitality standards are greatly influenced by these encounters.

In this context, pragmatic approaches that refer to Relational Theory become very relevant. Aviation staff not only serve as technical service providers, but also as representatives of a nation's hospitality culture. First, the airport serves as an entry point for tourists and becomes an initial contact space that influences their first impression of the country they visit. Second, polite, friendly, and linguistically structured interactions show the quality of professionalism as well as social values upheld by the local community (Hadi et al., 2022). Third, unlike routine commercial transactions, airport interactions often involve heightened emotions (anxiety, fatigue, excitement) and high-stakes outcomes (travel authorization, security clearance), making the pragmatic management of face needs particularly critical.

Within this framework, politeness research through a relational pragmatic lens makes it possible to identify and analyze in depth how the values of politeness and hospitality are constructed, understood, and practiced in the professional interactions of flight staff. By examining naturally occurring interactions at three critical checkpoints (immigration, security, and check-in), this study distinguishes itself from previous research in several key ways: (1)

Methodological distinction. Rather than relying on surveys, interviews, or experimental scenarios, this study analyzes authentic video-recorded interactions from YouTube, capturing actual communication strategies as they unfold in real service contexts. This approach provides access to naturally occurring data that reflects the complexity and spontaneity of genuine staff-passenger encounters. (2) Depth of analysis. Although prior research has recognized the significance of politeness in service quality, this study offers a detailed pragmatic examination of particular speech acts, linguistic forms, and politeness strategies, looking not only at whether staff members are courteous but also at how they strategically use various forms of politeness to meet institutional requirements while preserving interpersonal relationships. (3) Specificity in context. The study illustrates how politeness strategies are tailored to various institutional requirements, power dynamics, and communication goals by concentrating on three different interaction types (immigration, security, and check-in). This shows that politeness in aviation is a contextually sensitive communicative resource rather than a standard practice. (4) The aspect of cross-culturality. The study contributes to the larger topic of intercultural pragmatics by specifically addressing how politeness tactics work in multicultural airline environments, where employees must modify their communication to passengers from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Thus, this research is expected to produce: (1) A thorough taxonomy of air services' politeness tactics, arranged in accordance with the successive phases of service engagement at various checkpoints. (2) A thorough comprehension of how flight attendants strategically choose speech acts and etiquette forms to pragmatically strike a balance between institutional authority and interpersonal empathy. (3) Analysis of the relational and face-management functions of politeness strategies in creating passenger comfort, facilitating procedural efficiency, and

projecting professional service identity. (4) Insights into cross-cultural pragmatic adaptation in aviation communication that can inform training programs and service protocols.

These accomplishments demonstrate that this research not only theoretically advances contextual pragmatic studies but also has applications in the creation of civil, efficient, and culturally aware public service communication tactics for the aviation sector. This study provides empirically supported insights into how language serves as a tool for institutional efficiency and a medium of interpersonal care in the international tourism service industry by bridging the gap between linguistic theory and professional practice.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Three interrelated frameworks are used in this study: (Locher & Watts, 2005) Relational Work Framework, (Searle, 1969, 1979) Speech Act Theory, and (Brown et al., 1987) Politeness Theory. These frameworks offer complementary tools for comprehending language as an interpersonal resource and an institutional tool.

The focus of (Brown et al., 1987) theory is social interaction "face" management (Heritage & Clayman, 2023). While negative face is concerned with autonomy and freedom from intrusion, positive face represents the desire to be respected and appreciated. Bald-on-record (direct communication for efficiency or emergencies, such as "Fasten your seatbelt"), positive politeness (emphasizing solidarity through greetings and empathy, such as "Welcome aboard"), negative politeness (demonstrating deference through indirect requests, such as "May I see your passport, please?"), and off-record (indirect communication, rarely used in aviation due to clarity needs) are the four politeness strategies identified by the theory. The degree of imposition, relative strength, and social distance all influence the strategy choice.

Searle (1969, 1979) the theory analyzes pragmatic functions beyond literal meanings, focusing on illocutionary acts that reveal communicative intentions. Five categories apply to aviation contexts: representatives (stating facts, e.g., "Your flight departs at 10:30"), directives (requesting actions, e.g., "Please place your bag on the scale"), commissive (committing to future actions, e.g., "I'll check that for you"), expressive (expressing psychological states, e.g., "Thank you for flying with us"), and declarations (creating changes, e.g., "You're all set"). Directives, being inherently face-threatening, are frequently mitigated through negative politeness strategies.

(Locher & Watts, 2005) propose "relational work" as the effort invested in negotiating relationships, recognizing politeness as socially co-constructed practice. They distinguish politic behavior (expected, unmarked baseline conforming to context norms), polite behavior (exceeding expectations, positively marked), and impolite behavior (falling below expectations, negatively marked). What counts as each type depends on institutional context, activity type, participant relationships, and cultural factors. This framework enables analysis of how staff construct professional identities while managing institutional requirements and cross-cultural expectations.

Brown and Levinson's study look at face-management techniques, Searle's theory identifies communicative functions, and Locher and Watts place them within the framework of relationship building and institutional practice. Together, they show how aviation employees strategically achieve a number of objectives, including managing cross-cultural differences, preserving authority, preserving autonomy, establishing welcoming environments, and effectively communicating information. This shows that relational sensitivity and sophisticated pragmatic awareness are necessary for effective professional communication.

## **METHOD**

This study examines the use of politeness techniques in professional encounters between airline staff and passengers using a descriptive qualitative approach grounded in relational pragmatic theory. The study focuses on how politeness tactics are developed, modified, and negotiated in delicate service scenarios at airport check-in procedures, security checks, and immigration checks.

The data source includes recordings of airline communication training, service simulations, and documentation of actual services, as well as films of flight staff talks posted to YouTube. YouTube was chosen because it offers clear and genuine illustrations of interactions with aviation services. Videos that featured vocal exchanges between flight attendants and passengers, had representative service contexts (immigration, security, check-in), and originated from reliable sources like official airline channels or aviation training facilities were purposefully chosen.

Data collection was carried out systematically beginning with identifying relevant videos using search keywords such as "airport immigration check," "airport security screening conversation," and "airline check-in interaction." Videos were screened based on predetermined criteria, prioritizing those with clear verbal interactions, good audio quality, and authentic service scenarios. Selected videos were downloaded and transcribed verbatim, capturing every utterance by flight staff and passengers. The transcription included all words as spoken, pauses and intonation patterns noted in brackets, sequential numbering of speech turns, and clear speaker identification. Contextual elements such as physical setting, participant relationships, power dynamics, cultural differences, and communicative atmosphere were also systematically recorded.

Data analysis employed a pragmatic content analysis approach combining

politeness theory and relational theory frameworks. The analysis proceeded systematically through five stages. First, all transcripts were read repeatedly to identify natural interaction units such as adjacency pairs or transactional sequences, which were then coded for institutional function. Second, speech acts were identified and classified based on Searle's taxonomy into representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives, with particular attention to how directives were formulated and mitigated. Third, utterances were analyzed using Brown and Levinson's framework to determine which politeness strategy was employed (bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, or off-record), documenting linguistic features such as modal verbs, politeness markers, hedges, and mitigation devices. Fourth, Locher and Watts' relational work framework was applied to assess whether communicative behavior constituted politic, polite, or impolite behavior, considering institutional norms, activity requirements, power relationships, and cultural expectations. Finally, findings were synthesized across all interactions to identify patterns and variations in politeness strategy use across the three service contexts, examining relationships between speech act types and politeness strategies. Throughout the process, analytical memos were maintained, and reliability was enhanced through colleague review and discussion of selected data portions.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Analysis of Politeness Strategies in the Context of Immigration Check**

The following are the results of the analysis that has been carried out on the first conversation in the context of immigration check.

**Table 1. Analysis of Politeness Strategies and Relational Functions in Immigration Conversation 1**

No.	Utterance	Politeness Strategy	Types of Speech Acts	Relational Function
1	Hello Madam	Positive Politeness	Greetings	Establish a friendly and respectful atmosphere at the beginning of the interaction.
2	Hi	Positive Politeness	Greetings	Respond politely and friendly, strengthening interpersonal relationships.
3	Can I see your passport, please?	Negative Politeness	Demand	Use polite forms and indirect requests to maintain social distancing.
4	Passport? Yes.	Cooperative	Submission of Documents	Showing a cooperative attitude as a form of functional politeness.
5	I'm going to ask you some questions, is that okay?	Negative Politeness	Permission Request	Asking for consent as a form of respect for individual rights.
6	Okay.	Cooperative	Assent	Confirm permissions concisely but politely.
7	Are you traveling alone?	Bald on Record	Informational Questions	Relevant direct questions in the context of the examination; socially neutral.
8	Yes, I'm alone	Informative	Answer	Answering honestly and directly, strengthens trust.
9	Is it your first time in Canada? I mean have you ever visited Canada before?	Positive Politeness	Clarification of Questions	Provide follow-up questions that show concern and intent to explain.
10	No, first time	Informative	Answer	Affirm your identity as a new visitor.
11	Are you traveling for work, study or leisure?	Bald on Record	Objective Questions	Explicit questions without mitigation; institutional efficiency.
12	I don't understand	Metapragmatic	Request for Clarification	Indicates communication barriers; Implicit politeness strategies.
13	I mean are you here to do any of these things, studying, working or for fun time, leisure time	Positive Politeness	Re-Explanation	Showing patience and trying to bridge miscommunication; building inclusive relationships.
14	Oh, to see my brother	Informative	Answer	Answer honestly while building the context of personal relationships.
15	Leisure. And where will you be staying? In a hotel or someone's home?	Bald on Record + Clarification	Question	Continue with open-ended questions; efficient but still polite.
16	My brother's house	Informative	Answer	Give answers that show social support (family relations).
17	Right, and what is the duration of your stay?	Positive Politeness	Question	Show acknowledgment of the previous answer before proceeding to the next question.
18	Two weeks	Informative	Answer	Demonstrate certainty and honest intentions on the journey.
19	Two weeks, right. And do you have medical insurance?	Positive Politeness	Clarification + Questions	Ensure information while maintaining a friendly tone.
20	Yes, I have insurance	Informative	Answer	Demonstrate compliance with administrative requirements.
21	Great, so welcome to Canada	Positive Politeness	Closing + Welcome	Closing the conversation with praise and a warm welcome, reinforcing the positive image of the institution.
22	Thank you very much	Positive Politeness	Response	Expressing appreciation, creating a harmonious closing.

This conversation in the context of immigration checks shows the complex dynamics of politeness between attendants and travelers. In general, the politeness strategy used reflects a blend of positive politeness and negative politeness, which is strategically tailored to institutional demands and the need for harmonious interpersonal interaction

### **Positive Politeness**

This strategy is widely used at the beginning and end of interactions. The goal is to build a warm and cooperative relationship. The "Hello Madam" greeting and the "Hi" response indicate the intention to open the conversation in an atmosphere that does not

threaten the speech partner's face (*face-saving*) (Brown et al., 1987). This strategy is also seen in adjusting the officer's speaking style when re-explaining questions when the traveler does not understand, which shows empathy and concern for the speaking partner.

### **Negative Politeness**

This strategy comes in the form of polite and non-intrusive requests, such as in the words "Can I see your passport, please?" and "I'm going to ask you some questions, is that okay?". This shows that the officers try to maintain a relational distance while respecting the autonomy of the tourists, even though they are in a formal and powerful situation (Culpeper, 2011).

### ***Bald-on-Record Strategy***

Some direct questions of an administrative and procedural nature use this strategy because efficiency is considered more important than polite impressions. However, because the context is institutional and expected, this form of direct speech is still considered reasonable (*Conventionally appropriate*) (Locher & Watts, 2005).

### ***Relational Work***

In the framework *Relational Work* (Locher & Watts, 2005), these conversations can be read as a constant attempt to negotiate and maintain social relations that conform to the norms of interaction in public services. The officer shows *relational appropriateness* by balancing authority and empathy, while tourists respond cooperatively, which shows acceptance of the expected relationship.

For example, in speech 13, the officer adjusts the explanation to simpler language

after noticing a miscommunication. This reflects not only linguistic politeness, but also *relational repair*, which is an effort to maintain the comfort and effectiveness of intercultural communication (Haugh, 2015).

### ***Intercultural Dimension***

These interactions also reflect sensitivity to differences in cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Tourists' response "I don't understand" shows that there is a *face-threatening situation* potential, which was successfully responded to by the officers with a *Face-saving strategy*. This supports the importance of communication strategies that are rooted in relational politeness in the international context (Kádár, 2013).

After analyzing the first conversation, the next analysis is carried out on the second conversation in the context of immigration checks. Here are the results;

**Table 2. Analysis of Politeness Strategies and Relational Functions in Immigration Conversation 2**

No.	Utterance	Politeness Strategy	Types of Speech Acts	Relational Function
1	May I see your passport and boarding pass?	Negative Politeness	Demand	Respect the autonomy of the interlocutor through polite requests.
2	Sure, here you go	Cooperative	Submission of Documents	Respond positively and cooperatively, maintaining smooth interactions.
3	Thank. What's the purpose of your visit?	Positive Politeness	Thank You + Questions	Building good relationships while diverting to administrative questions.
4	I'm here on vacation	Informative	Answer	Provide information directly and honestly.
5	How long will you be staying?	Bald on Record	Informational Questions	Procedural efficiency in the institution; neutral in politeness.
6	I'll be here for one week	Informative	Answer	Provide certainty of the duration of stay.
7	Do you have a return ticket?	Bald on Record	Administrative Questions	Explicit questions as part of the screening protocol.
8	Yes, I do. Here it is	Cooperative	Submission of Documents	Demonstrate quick response and compliance with instructions.
9	Thank. Have you visited before?	Positive Politeness	Thank You + Questions	Show gratitude and maintain a friendly atmosphere.
10	No, this is my first time	Informative	Answer	Describe your status as a new visitor.
11	Are you carrying any restricted items?	Bald on Record	Procedural Questions	Explicit questions that are common in the context of immigration checks.
12	No, just my clothes and personal items	Informative	Answer	Convey the contents of luggage honestly.
13	Okay, everything's in order. Enjoy your stay!	Positive Politeness	Closing + Welcome	Convey a friendly closing and strengthen the image of good service.
14	Thank	Positive Politeness	Response	Provide appreciative responses that maintain the harmony of interactions.

The strategy of politeness in the interaction of flight services, particularly at the immigration screening stage, reflects a combination of linguistic approaches adapted to institutional and intercultural contexts. Based on data analysis, several main patterns

were found in the use of politeness strategies that reflect specific communication goals as well as relational dynamics between officers and passengers. The following is a description of each strategy identified in the interaction;



### Negative Politeness

Opening remarks such as "*May I see your passport and boarding pass?*" Reflecting negative politeness strategies that aim to maintain social distancing and respect the personal freedom of speech partners. This strategy is common in institutional contexts so as not to seem coercive (Brown et al., 1987).

### Positive Politeness

Use of expressions "*Thank you*" before and after administrative questions, as well as concluding sentences such as "*Enjoy your stay!*", demonstrate a positive politeness strategy. The goal is to build friendly relationships and create the impression of friendly service (Holmes & Stubbe, 2015; Locher & Watts, 2005).

#### Bald on Record

Some direct questions such as "*How long will you be staying?*" or "*Are you*

*carrying any restricted items?*" It is a form of bald on record, which is direct speech without mitigation. In the discourse of examination, this strategy is considered efficient and contextually appropriate (Spencer-Oatey, 2008).

### Cooperative and Informative

Responses like "Sure, here you go" or "Yes, I do. Here it is" show a cooperative and informative attitude of the second speaker. This attitude reflects the principle of cooperation Grice (1975) and is part of functional courtesy in the context of public service.

### Analysis of Politeness Strategies in the Context of Immigration Check

The following are the results of the analysis conducted on the first conversation in the context of a security check;

**Table 3.** Analysis of Politeness Strategy and Relational Function in Security Check Conversation 1

No.	Speech	Politeness Strategy	Relational Function
1	Please have your passport ready.	Negative politeness – conventionally indirect request	Safeguarding the personal rights of travelers; show respect for personal space
2	No breaks, just goooooo	Bald-on record strategy (direct and without mitigation)	Demonstrate operational urgency and efficiency; Strengthening institutional norms
3	Arigato gozaimashita (Traveler)	Positive politeness – cross-cultural solidarity	Creating intercultural familiarity and respect
4	Hey, how do you doin'?	Positive politeness – informal greetings	Build a friendly atmosphere; Ease security tensions
5	Yes sir (repeated several times)	Negative politeness – a form of deferency and respect	Demonstrate hierarchical compliance; Strengthening formal relationships
6	You use to live in Japan? – I was stationed there...	Positive politeness strategy – personalization of interactions	Increase interpersonal closeness through shared experiences
7	I had a pacemaker so uh I died (lol)	Positive politeness – use of humor	Relieves tension; Build personal connections and comfort
8	All right, have a safe trip	Positive politeness – an expression of goodwill	Closing the interaction politely and sympathetically
9	Forgive me, sorry. – Gomenasai	Negative politeness – acknowledgment of minor norm violations	Maintaining social harmony; Fixing Potential Relationship Disruptions

Interaction in Security Check Conversation 1 reflects the complex pragmatic dynamics between security officers and travelers. By using the theoretical framework of the politeness strategy Brown et al. (1987) and relationship management approaches from Spencer-Oatey (2008), these conversations can be analyzed as a form of institutional relationship that combines power, assertiveness, and interpersonal empathy.

### Negative Politeness Strategy

Speech such as "Please have your passport ready" Using strategies Negative Politeness, which is a request that is not coercive and shows respect for the personal autonomy of the traveler. Brown et al. (1987) mentioned that negative politeness is aimed at minimizing threats to the rights and freedoms of speech partners. This is especially relevant in the security context, where authority needs to be enforced without harming personal honor.

### ***Bald on Record***

Speech such as "No breaks, just gooooo" and "No cocktails" is an example of a strategy Bald-On Record, which is delivered directly without mitigation. This strategy reflects the dominance of institutions and the urgency of security procedures, as shown in research Holmes & Stubbe (2015) that public agencies often use the form of bald-on records to convey orders that must be obeyed immediately.

### ***Positive Politeness Strategy***

On the other hand, some parts of the conversation, such as "Hey, how do you doin'?" and closing with "Have a safe trip", reflects the strategy Positive Politeness. This strategy is used to build solidarity and create friendly interpersonal relationships (Brown et al., 1987). Even the use of humor by tourists ("I died") shows an effort to melt the tense atmosphere through the technique Face-enhancing, which according to Holmes (2004), is important in a work environment that has a dimension of power and high risk.

### ***Relation Management***

From a theoretical point of view Management Report by Spencer-Oatey (2008), this interaction shows the management

of relational dimensions: social identity (recognition of veteran status), social rights (the use of the greeting "sir" as a form of deference), and interpretation accuracy (clarification of travel destinations and stays). When a traveler mentions having served in Japan and reveals his medical condition, he is not only answering questions, but also building a social identity that is relevant to security officers.

### ***Intercultural Sensitivity***

The use of Japanese phrases by travelers such as "Arigato gozaimashita" and "Gomenasai" demonstrate cross-cultural awareness and can be seen as a positive politeness strategy aimed at showing respect for local values. In line with the view Thomas (1995), cross-cultural pragmatic sensitivity is becoming an essential element in effective intercultural communication, particularly in institutional domains such as airports.

The second conversation in the security check section took place in an efficient, courteous, and formal atmosphere, reflecting the standard security screening protocols at international airports. The following table 4 presents the classification of the politeness strategies and relational functions found in Security Conversation 2;

**Table 4. Analysis of Politeness Strategy and Relational Function in Security Check Conversation 2**

No.	Speech	Politeness Strategy	Types of Speech Acts	Relational Function
1	Please place your bag on the conveyor belt	Negative (command mitigation)	Directive	Politely request that passengers follow the procedure without appearing coercive
2	Should I remove my shoes?	—	Interrogative (Implicit directive)	Demonstrate a sense of courtesy by asking for clarification before acting
3	Yes, please. Also, take out any electronics...	Negatives & Positives	Directive	Politely confirm, accompanied by additional instructions in the form of mitigations
4	Sure. Here's my laptop and phone	—	Representative	Provide information cooperatively as requested by the officer
5	Do you have any liquids in your bag?	Negative (indirect check)	Interrogative (Implicit directive)	Indirect inquiring as a form of courtesy in the examination
6	Yes, I have a small bottle of perfume	—	Representative	Answer honestly and cooperatively, reflecting an open attitude
7	Please put it in the tray as well	Negative (use "please")	Directive	Asking for additional action in a polite tone
8	Okay, done	—	Representative	Declaring compliance with previous instructions
9	Great. Please step through the scanner	Positives & Negatives	Directive	Show appreciative attitude while directing the procedure politely
10	Alright	—	Representative (response)	Showing acceptance of the officer's instructions
11	You're all set! Have a safe flight	Positive	Expressive	Conveying good wishes as a form of positive and friendly relational

No.	Speech	Politeness Strategy	Types of Speech Acts	Relational Function
12	Thank	Positive	Expressive	Show gratitude, reinforcing the positive image of the relationship between the server and the customer

After identifying the speech in Security Conversation 2, it can be seen that the interaction between security officers and passengers does not only represent a mere procedural process, but also shows the application of complex pragmatic strategies. The speeches in these conversations reflect the application of various forms of politeness strategies, types of speech actions, and relational functions that reflect institutional awareness of the importance of polite, efficient, and inclusive communication in the context of public service. The following analysis elaborates on these dimensions systematically based on relevant pragmatic and courteous theories.

### ***Negative Politeness Strategy***

Negative politeness is manifested through the forms *Mitigated Directive* such as "Yes, please" and "Please put it in the tray as well", which reflect the appreciation of the freedom of action (negative face) of *Traveler*. Shape *Please* serves as a refining strategy (*softener*) in the delivery of directives acts, avoiding the impression of coercion (Brown et al., 1987). This strategy is important in the context of procedural security services while maintaining passenger comfort. The placement of commands in the form of polite requests also indicates a shift from institutional power to a form of collaborative interaction (Locher & Watts, 2005).

### ***Positive Politeness Strategy***

Saying "Great. Please step through the scanner" and "You're all set! Have a safe flight" is a form of positive politeness that aims to strengthen interpersonal relationships (Haugh, 2015). This sentence indicates that there is attention to the needs and interests of passengers, as well as creating a supportive and friendly communication atmosphere. This strategy reflects the affiliate dimension (*Affiliation*) in the theory of relational politeness (Arundale, 2006), where officers

build positive relationships as part of professional services.

### ***Directive and Representative Speech***

Most of the speech in this conversation is *Directing Speech* (directive speech acts), which are linguistic actions to direct the behavior of speech partners (Searle, 1979). For example, "Please place your bag..." and "Also, take out any electronics..." is an indirect command that is mitigated by politeness. However, there are also speech acts *Representative* such as "I have a small bottle of perfume" that conveys factual information. This diversity shows that communication at airport security points is not only transactional but also informative, as well as involving the cooperation of participants in the success of the inspection process (Spencer-Oatey, 2008)

### ***Cross-Cultural Pragmatics and Professional Interaction***

Although these interactions are brief and procedure-oriented, the structure of the conversation nonetheless shows cultural sensitivity through the use of polite formulas such as "Thank you" and "Have a safe flight", which are universal forms of politeness rituals (*Ritual politeness*) in the context of public service (Kádár, 2013). In an international service culture such as airports, these expressions become an essential part of a professional work ethic that balances efficiency with courtesy (García et al., 2017).

### ***Relation and Social Face***

This dialogue shows a high awareness of the *Face* speech partners, both in the form of *Face Protection* (protect the freedom and honor of passengers) and *Face Enhancement* (show appreciation and empathy). The final remark "Have a safe flight" is not only a transactional closure, but also reinforces the positive image of the security institution as a friendly and supportive entity. This is in line with the idea that public service interactions

must pay attention to the balance between institutional needs and individual rights (Locher & Watts, 2005).

### Analysis of Politeness Strategy in the Context of Check-In

The following table presents an in-depth analysis of the speeches that appear in Check-In Conversation 1 based on the politeness strategy, the type of speech act, and the relational function contained in it;

**Table 5. Analysis of Politeness Strategy and Relational Function in Check-In Conversation 1**

No	Speech	Politeness Strategy	Types of Speech Acts	Relational Function
1	<i>Good afternoon</i>	Positive Politeness	Expressive	Building early relationships, creating a warm atmosphere
2	<i>I can help. Where are you flying to today?</i>	Positive politeness (offering help)	Commissioner + Directive	Demonstrate engagement and care
3	<i>Are you checking any bags?</i>	Bald on record + neutral politeness	Directive	Searching for information for procedural purposes
4	<i>Can you put it on the scale?</i>	Negative politeness	Directive	Direct action without coercion
5	<i>No, I can't. You'll need to pick it up in Rio...</i>	Bald on record	Representative	Convey procedural information straightforwardly
6	<i>That's right</i>	Positive politeness	Representative	Strengthen understanding, maintain cooperation
7	<i>I need to ask you some security questions</i>	Negative politeness (notification before requesting personal info)	Directive	Maintain privacy while carrying out procedures
8	<i>Who packed your bags? etc.</i>	Bald on record (direct question)	Directive	Security procedures, institutional efficiency
9	<i>Great. Here are your boarding passes</i>	Positive politeness (praise + deliverance)	Expressive + Commissive	Resolve interactions on a positive note
10	<i>Have a great trip</i>	Positive politeness (prayers and good wishes)	Expressive	Friendly cover, strengthens interpersonal relationships

The sentences spoken by officers and passengers reflect public service communication practices that not only prioritize clarity of information, but also build comfort and harmonious social relations. This analysis will be elaborated in the following key points;

#### **Intercultural Dimension**

The strategy of negative politeness is evident in imperative forms mitigated by polite expressions such as "Can you put it on the scale?" or "I need to ask you some security questions." Use of modalities such as *can* and indirect structure shows respect for the passenger's freedom of action (negative face), as explained by Brown et al. (1987). Requests for information are also submitted in a polite format that is not threatening, so that the relationship between officers and passengers is maintained in a formal but friendly context. This shows an institutional awareness of the importance of maintaining a balance between

procedural authority and personal freedom of passengers.

#### **Positive Politeness Strategy**

Positive politeness in this conversation comes in the form of warm greetings such as "Good afternoon," empathetic expressions such as "I can help," and friendly closing remarks such as "Have a great trip." These forms serve to build social closeness and strengthen solidarity between officers and passengers (Haugh, 2015). This strategy also reflects affiliation in relational politeness theory (Arundale, 2006), where officers form a self-image of a friendly and supportive institution. These kinds of remarks are very important in creating a positive atmosphere of interaction, especially in the context of air travel which often makes passengers feel anxious.

### ***Directive, Representative, and Expressive Speech***

Most of the speech in this conversation is classified as directive speech, such as "Can you put it on the scale?" and "Follow the signs to departure." This is a form of instruction or request for passengers to perform certain actions (Searle, 1979). However, there are also representative speech acts such as "The machine didn't recognize my passport" and "We're flying to Rio and then we have a connecting flight to Recife" that convey factual information. In addition, sayings such as "Thank you very much" and "Have a great trip" are included in expressive speech that shows gratitude and good hope. This variety of speech enriches the function of communication in the context of service, making it not only transactional but also relational (Spencer-Oatey, 2008).

### ***Professional Interaction in Multicultural Public Service***

These conversations demonstrate the importance of pragmatic sensitivity in public services that are multicultural in nature, such as international airports. The expressions of politeness used are part of the global communication norms that can be accepted across cultures, such as greetings, apologies, or thanks (Kádár, 2013). Clarity of instruction is combined with verbal politeness to avoid

misunderstandings, especially when travelers come from different cultural backgrounds. Thus, the use of a courtesy strategy not only strengthens professional interactions, but also builds a more inclusive passenger experience.

### ***Relational Aspects and Face Protection***

Throughout the interaction, it was seen that the officers consistently kept *Face* through a supportive, non-intimidating, and cooperative style of communication. This is shown by the way the officer responds to questions, provides information in detail, and ensures that passengers understand the procedures to be followed. Sayings such as "You have an aisle seat and a middle seat" are delivered without an authoritative tone, but as a form of informative service. This is in line with the theory *facework* from Locher & Watts (2005), that in the context of public service, the institution's task is not only to provide functional services, but also to maintain the self-esteem and psychological comfort of its clients.

The second conversation further describes the interaction between the officer and the passenger at the check-in desk which takes place in a friendly, informative, and according to service procedures. Here are the results of conversation two in the context of check-in;

**Table 6. Analysis of Politeness Strategy and Relational Function in Check-In Conversation 2**

No.	Speech	Politeness Strategy	Types of Speech Acts	Relational Function
1	Hello! Where are you flying to today?	Positive (greeting + interest)	Interrogative	Build a friendly initial relationship
2	Hi, I'm flying to New York	-	Representative	Provide information on the destination of the flight
3	May I have your passport, please?	Negative (polite request)	Directive (request)	Respect passengers' freedom, procedural courtesy
4	Yes, of course. Here you go	Positive	Commissioner/Representative	Showing cooperation and good faith
5	Do you have any checked bags?	Neutral	Interrogative	Procedural questions for the check-in process
6	Yes, I have a suitcase	-	Representative	Provide luggage information
7	Okay. Place your baggage over here	Negative (impersonal + instructional)	Directive	Mitigated procedural instructions
8	And I want to take this bag with me on the airplane	-	Representative	Declaring personal preferences
9	Okay, you can take your carry-on bag with you	Positive	Directive/Representative	Expressing consent in a friendly tone of approval
10	Can I use my laptop in the airplane?	Negative (permission request)	Interrogative	Respect the authority of the officer, maintain a polite relationship
11	Yes, you may use your laptop on board except during takeoff and landing	Positive (information + permission)	Directive/Representative	Answer questions while giving directions
12	Okay.	-	Non-verbal response	Demonstrate acceptance/understanding
13	Here's your boarding pass	-	Representative	Provide information on important documents

14	Thank. Where should I go now?	Positive (thank you + ask)	Interrogative	Show appreciation and continuation of interactions
15	You should go to the gate 178 in the lounge area	-	Directive	Indicate the location of the gate
16	And what time can I get on the airplane?	Neutral (request for information)	Interrogative	Ask for specific information (boarding time)
17	Boarding will start at 10.30. Please be at the gate 30 minutes before	Negative (please + instructions)	Directive/Representative	Polite directions regarding time
18	Thank	Positive	Expressive	Showing gratitude and polite ethics
19	Have a nice flight	Positive (closing polite)	Expressive	Closing interactions with positive effects

This analysis was carried out systematically to show how pragmatic principles work in public service interactions, particularly in the context of check-in desks at airports. Each point describes the relationship between politeness strategies, types of speech actions, and relational functions reflected in these speeches. The theoretical framework refers to Brown et al. (1987), Arundale (2006), Haugh (2015) and Searle (1979), taking into account relevance in the context of cross-cultural and professional service.

### ***Negative Politeness Strategy***

Speech such as "May I have your passport, please?" and "Please be at the gate 30 minutes before..." demonstrate a negative politeness strategy. The officer conveys the request indirectly and politely, using the form of questions and courtesy markers Please. This strategy reflects respect for the personal rights (negative face) of passengers (Brown et al., 1987). In a procedural professional context, this form of mitigation is important to maintain a humanist and non-authoritarian institutional image (Locher & Watts, 2005).

### ***Positive Politeness Strategy***

Speech like "Hello! Where are you flying to today?", "Okay, you can take your carry-on bag with you" and "Have a nice flight" is a manifestation of positive politeness. Officers try to build social closeness with passengers, showing affiliation and goodwill. According to Haugh (2015), this form of politeness strengthens interpersonal relationships and creates a friendly atmosphere in interactions that are serviceable. Final expressions such as "Have a nice flight" It also shows an emotional concern for

passenger comfort, not just an administrative task.

### ***Dominance of Directive and Interrogative Speech***

The majority of speech in this conversation is directive and interrogative speech, for example "Place your baggage over here", "Where should I go now?" and "Can I use my laptop in the airplane?". Directives are used to regulate behavior (Searle 1979), while interrogators function to dig up information. Even though it is instructional, the officer still conveys directions in a polite and accommodating manner. This reflects collaborative interaction in good public service (Spencer-Oatey, 2008).

### ***Relational Aspects and Institutional Representation***

Through a consistent politeness strategy, check-in officers maintain the institution's image as an efficient entity while respecting individuals. Expressions like "Here's your boarding pass" and "Boarding will start at 10.30" is a form of informative communication layered with friendly interpersonal relationships. By view Arundale (2006), these interactions are not only transactional, but also relational, where a balance between formal roles and human connections is maintained.

### ***Cross-Cultural Sensitivity and Universal Civility Practices***

Some sayings such as "Thank you", "Here you go" and "Have a nice flight" reflects the universal expression of ritual politeness in cross-cultural service (Kádár, 2013). The use of these formulas shows that politeness in airport professional communication also plays

an important role in building a positive customer experience globally (García et al., 2017).

## CONCLUSION

This study successfully achieved its four research objectives in examining politeness strategies in aviation staff communication through a relational pragmatic approach.

First, the research has developed a comprehensive taxonomy of politeness strategies mapped across three service checkpoints. At immigration checks, staff predominantly use negative politeness strategies with mitigated directives ("May I see your passport, please?") to respect passengers' autonomy. At security screenings, staff combine bald-on-record strategies for urgent instructions with positive politeness for rapport-building. At check-in counters, staff flexibly alternate between positive and negative politeness strategies, demonstrating contextual adaptation to different interaction goals.

Second, the analysis reveals how flight staff pragmatically balance institutional authority with interpersonal empathy. Directives are consistently mitigated through modal verbs (can, may, would), politeness markers (please, thank you), and indirect question forms. Staff demonstrate sophisticated pragmatic competence by packaging institutional requirements in linguistically respectful formats, performing their authoritative roles while attending to passengers' face needs.

Third, the study demonstrates that politeness operates as a multifunctional resource in aviation contexts. Positive politeness strategies create passenger comfort and project institutional hospitality, while negative politeness strategies facilitate procedural efficiency without triggering resistance. Together, these strategies maintain both passengers' positive face (desire to be valued) and negative face (desire for autonomy), while constructing staff members' professional identities as courteous, competent service providers.

Fourth, the findings reveal that aviation staff navigate cultural diversity through universally recognizable politeness formulas combined with adaptive strategies. When miscommunication arises, staff simplify language, adjust explanation complexity, and provide additional clarification, reflecting sophisticated intercultural pragmatic competence.

These findings contribute theoretically by demonstrating how Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, Searle's speech act theory, and Locher and Watts' relational work framework can be integrated to analyze professional service communication. Practically, the findings inform aviation training programs that should emphasize pragmatic politeness and cultural sensitivity, teaching staff how to strategically adapt their language to different contexts and passengers.

Future research should examine multilingual aviation contexts, incorporate multimodal analysis of nonverbal communication, capture passenger perspectives on politeness strategies, and conduct longitudinal studies tracking changes following pragmatic training interventions. Such research will advance understanding of how language functions as both an instrument of institutional efficiency and a medium of interpersonal care in globalized service contexts.

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