

Analysis of Netizens Linguistic Politeness in the Comment Section of Posts about Naturalised Players on the TikTok

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Abstract

This study examines linguistic politeness strategies among netizens in the comment section of the TikTok account @erick.thohir concerning the naturalisation of football players. Employing a descriptive qualitative method, comments were categorised into criticism, questions, support, and other forms of expression. Brown and Levinson's politeness theory was applied to identify polite and impolite strategies, while Labov's sociolinguistic framework revealed how variations in speech styles reflect social identities. Findings show that, despite the informal and emotive tone of interaction, netizens largely uphold politeness norms in voicing opinions. Theoretically, this study contributes to digital pragmatics by integrating politeness theory and sociolinguistics to highlight nationalism-oriented discourse on a short-video platform. It demonstrates how TikTok serves as a site where digital communication ethics, identity negotiation, and civic participation intersect.

Keywords: *Naturalisation, TikTok, Discourse, Digital Pragmatics, Indonesia*

Introduction

Social media has become an integral part of public life, with platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and X functioning as dynamic spaces of interaction.¹ Comment sections, in particular, serve not only as arenas of expression but also as mirrors of linguistic culture where the public negotiate politeness and identity online². The concept of linguistic politeness in digital communication is becoming increasingly important to be examined. Based on Brown and Levinson's theory,³ politeness theory, which distinguishes between positive face (the desire to be appreciated) and negative face (the desire not to be disturbed),

¹ Feriel Gammoudi, Mondher Sendi, and Mohamed Nazih Omri, "A Survey on Social Media Influence Environment and Influencers Identification," *Social Network Analysis and Mining* 12, no. 1 (October 2022): 145, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13278-022-00972-y>; Mona Natasha Siahaan, Putu Wuri Handayani, and Fatimah Azzahro, "Self-Disclosure of Social Media Users in Indonesia: The Influence of Personal and Social Media Factors," *Information Technology & People* 35, no. 7 (September 2021): 1931–54, <https://doi.org/10.1108/ITP-06-2020-0389>.

² Syintia Nurfitria and Arzam Arzam, "Urgensi Media Sosial Sebagai Sarana Dakwah Melalui Media," *An-Nida'* 46, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.24014/an-nida.v46i1.19245>.

³ "Politeness (Brown and Levinson 1987)," *Reading*, 2011.

is especially relevant in this context.⁴ On social media, these faces are constantly tested in a spontaneous environment where conventional norms are often relaxed. The Qur'anic reminder in QS. Al-Hujurat: 11 underscores the ethical importance of avoiding mockery and insult, which resonates strongly in today's digital comment culture.⁵

In social media comment sections, these two aspects are tested in a spontaneous and open atmosphere, where linguistic ethics are often released from conventional social norms. Public expression on social media offers freedom, but this freedom often collides with the value of politeness. Rapid and mass communication frequently blurs the boundary between personal expression and general norms. The Qur'an reminds, "O you who believe, let not one people mock another... and do not insult one another, and do not call one another by bad epithets." (QS. Al-Hujurat: 11). This verse becomes an important reminder in an era of digital comments that are often full of innuendo and abuse.⁶

Erick Thohir, as both Minister of State-Owned Enterprises and Chairman of PSSI, represents a public figure whose TikTok account has become a hub for interaction with millennials and Gen Z⁷. Among the various issues he posts about, the naturalisation of football players has sparked vibrant public debate. Comments range from supportive and argumentative to critical and impolite, reflecting the diversity of Indonesia's digital discourse⁵. This phenomenon highlights the need to understand how politeness is enacted or violated in online communication.

The issue of the naturalisation of football players has become one of the pieces of content that attracts the most public comments. A variety of linguistic styles emerge, ranging from polite and argumentative to emotional and impolite⁸. This variation reflects the dynamics of Indonesia's digital culture. Therefore it is important for society to maintain ethics in digital communication so that the space of online interaction remains healthy and productive.

The urgency of this study lies in the importance of understanding the dynamics of ethics in digital communication amid the proliferation of public interaction through social media, particularly TikTok, which has become a forum for the expression of public opinion

⁴ Yuyun Purbokusumo and Anang Dwi Santoso, "Predictor for Local Government Social Media Use in Indonesia," *Digital Policy, Regulation and Governance* 23, no. 6 (October 2021): 533–52, <https://doi.org/10.1108/DPRG-12-2018-0082>.

⁵ Murtiningsih and Moses Adeleke Adeoye, "Hoaxes in Islamic Perspective: Qur'anic Solutions for Building an Anti-Hoax Society," *Al-Karim: International Journal of Quranic and Islamic Studies* 3, no. 1 (March 2025): 35–58, <https://doi.org/10.33367/al-karim.v3i1.6818>.

⁶ Mubaidi Sulaeman, Ahmad Muttaqien, and Jan A. Ali, "HYPERSPIRITUALITY OF MUSLIM TEENS LEARNING RELIGION ON THE INTERNET ERA," *Al-A'raf: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam Dan Filsafat* 21, no. 1 (June 2024): 1–29, <https://doi.org/10.22515/ajpif.v21i1.8558>.

⁷ Agnes Pertiwi Sutrisno and Ira Dwi Mayangsari, "PENGARUH PENGGUNAAN MEDIA SOSIAL INSTAGRAM @HUMASBDG TERHADAP PEMENUHAN KEBUTUHAN INFORMASI FOLLOWERS," *Jurnal Common* 5, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.34010/common.v5i2.5143>.

⁸ Arie Ramdhani Romadoni and Muhammad Fuady, "Humor Politik Dalam Acara E-Talkshow Tv One," *Bandung Conference Series: Public Relations* 2, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.29313/bcspv2i1.236>; Radita Gora, Munadhil Abdul Muqsith, and Barek Hossain, "MEDIA CONSTRUCTION OF ERICK THOHIR IN DETERMINING THE COMMISSIONERS OF STATE-OWNED ENTERPRISES (BUMN)," *EKSPRESI DAN PERSEPSI: JURNAL ILMU KOMUNIKASI* 5, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.33822/jep.v5i2.3850>.

on national issues such as the naturalisation of football players.⁹ In this context, the comment section serves as a discursive space that reflects how society forms and conveys opinions, whilst at the same time testing the extent to which values of politeness are still upheld in online communication that is fast, spontaneous, and minimally controlled.¹⁰ By analysing the linguistic politeness of netizens on the public account of a figure such as @erick.thohir, this study becomes relevant as a scientific contribution to mapping the shift in linguistic norms in Indonesia's digital culture, as well as a foundation for building communication literacy that is ethical and constructive in the virtual public sphere.¹¹

Several studies have highlighted the patterns of politeness and violations of linguistic norms in netizens' interactions. An analysis of the TikTok account @iamegamei shows that comments violating the principles of politeness are more dominant than those adhering to them, making impolite practices commonplace.¹² A communication strategy perspective, research using a cyberpragmatic approach on the issue of the Kominfo data leak reveals the dominance of impoliteness strategies. The most prominent forms include sarcasm, mock politeness, and direct attacks (bald-on-record). These strategies are not merely understood as emotional outbursts but also function as instruments of criticism and mechanisms of social accountability directed toward those deemed responsible.¹³ In addition to politeness aspects, previous research also draws attention to language errors found in netizen comments, such as incorrect spelling and improper sentence structures. These findings indicate low language proficiency among some users and simultaneously worsen the quality of online discussions.¹⁴

Overall, earlier studies demonstrate that netizens' communication practices on TikTok are rife with politeness violations, the use of impoliteness strategies, and weak language skills. These findings provide a crucial foundation for further examining communication patterns in sensitive issues, including debates on naturalized players, which may reveal new layers of complexity in the dynamics of digital interaction.

This study differs by situating itself at the intersection of sports, nationalism, and digital politeness on TikTok. Unlike previous works, it integrates Brown and Levinson's politeness theory with Labov's sociolinguistic framework to explain not only the strategies of politeness but also how variations in speech styles reveal social identity. This complementary use of

⁹ Manel Valcarce-Torrente et al., "Influence of Social Media Followers on Revenues: A Pilot Study of Europe's Top 20 Football Clubs," *Academia Revista Latinoamericana de Administracion* 38, no. 3 (June 2025): 478–96, <https://doi.org/10.1108/ARLA-12-2024-0285>.

¹⁰ Mogens Olesen, "Breaking Barriers with a Football: The Activist TikTok Narratives of Maymi Asgari," in *Women in a Digitized Sports Culture* (Routledge, 2025).

¹¹ Andika Hendra Mustaqim and Nanang Haroni, "SELF-AFFIRMATION AS A SOCIAL MEDIA CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION: A STUDY OF ERICK THOHIR'S POLITICAL EXPRESSION ON TIKTOK," *QAULAN: Journal of Islamic Communication* 5, no. 2 (December 2024): 117–36, <https://doi.org/10.21154/qaulan.v5i2.10132>.

¹² Irma Khilyaturrahmah et al., "Analysis Politeness Speak On Account TikTok @Iamegamei: Person India, No Vrindavan Or Pridapan," *International Journal of Educational Development* 1, no. 2 (April 2024): 66–78, <https://doi.org/10.61132/ijed.v1i2.35>.

¹³ Warmadewa University et al., "(Im)Politeness: A Cyberpragmatic Study of Social Media Discourse on the Kominfo Data Breach," *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research* 08, no. 04 (April 2025), <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v8-i4-51>.

¹⁴ Era Mita Theresia Simamora, Arsen Nahum Pasaribu, and Jubil Ezer Sihite, "Investigating Satirical Interpretation of Netizen Comments on Tiktok Toward Megawati," *Journal of Language Education (JLE)* 3, no. 1 (March 2025): 49–55, <https://doi.org/10.69820/jole.v3i1.278>.

theories strengthens the analysis: politeness theory captures the pragmatic strategies employed, while sociolinguistics contextualises those strategies as reflections of class, identity, and cultural norms. The novelty of this study lies in mapping how national issues such as football naturalisation are negotiated in the linguistic practices of TikTok users, thereby contributing both to digital pragmatics and to the broader understanding of Indonesia's evolving communication culture.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach because it aims to understand social phenomena in depth through the interpretation of narrative data. This approach enables the researcher to explore the meanings and tendencies that emerge in netizens' language use in comment sections without numerical or statistical constraints.¹⁵ Using a descriptive approach, this study seeks to depict systematically and accurately the various forms of politeness and impoliteness in digital interaction, particularly those that appear in comments related to the issue of the naturalisation of football players on the TikTok account @erick.thohir.¹⁶ This provides scope to unravel online communication phenomena in a detailed and reflective manner.

The primary data in this research are sourced from the comment sections on TikTok posts that specifically discuss naturalised players. These comments constitute the main objects of analysis to identify forms of politeness and impoliteness among netizens. The comments were collected through direct observation, without intervention or manipulation, so that they reflect the real conditions of communication occurring in the digital space.¹⁷ In addition, the study also refers to secondary data sources such as journals, books, and scholarly articles to strengthen the theoretical foundation and to compare the results of the analysis with previous studies.

Data collection was carried out using observation and documentation techniques. The researcher read and examined every comment that appeared in the comment section of TikTok @erick.thohir, and then documented them in the form of a digital archive. This documentation enables the systematic storage and classification of comments, thereby facilitating the process of data analysis. The combination of direct observation and documentation provides data that are valid, structured, and relevant to the research objectives.¹⁸

Data analysis begins with the collection of relevant comments, which are then condensed or summarised according to categories such as forms of politeness, impoliteness, types of criticism, and support. After the condensation process, the data are presented in tables or narrative form so that communication patterns can be clearly recognised. Through

¹⁵ Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johny Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis - Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, Johnny Saldana - Google Books*, in Sage Publications (2014).

¹⁶ Douglas Ezzy, *Qualitative Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315015484>.

¹⁷ Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (SAGE, 2011).

¹⁸ Małgorzata Ciesielska, Katarzyna W. Boström, and Magnus Öhlander, "Observation Methods," in *Qualitative Methodologies in Organization Studies: Volume II: Methods and Possibilities*, ed. Małgorzata Ciesielska and Dariusz Jemielniak (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 33–52, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-65442-3_2.

systematic data presentation, the researcher can trace the communication strategies used by netizens in expressing their opinions in the digital space. The final stage, in the form of drawing conclusions, is carried out reflectively and linked to the theories employed to answer the research questions and to produce a deep understanding of the ethics of online communication.¹⁹

To ensure data validity, this research applies source triangulation techniques. This process is carried out by comparing the findings from TikTok comments with relevant theories and previous research that discusses linguistic politeness and digital communication. Through triangulation, the researcher can ensure that the interpretations produced are not one-sided and can be accounted for scientifically. This approach strengthens the validity of the data and ensures that the research findings provide a sound contribution to studies of communication and digital culture.²⁰

Discussion

Dynamics of Public Comments on the @erick.thohir Account regarding National Issues on TikTok

The social media accounts of public figures, particularly state officials, have become strategic spaces of discourse in building communication between the government and the public. In this context, the TikTok account @erick.thohir, belonging to the Minister of State-Owned Enterprises and the Chairman of PSSI, serves not only as a channel of information on government programmes, but also as a forum for public participation in current issues. One of the issues that attracts considerable public attention is the naturalisation of football players, which gives rise to a variety of reactions and responses from netizens in the comment section.²¹

These comments reveal complex dynamics in digital public communication. On the one hand, there is support and appreciation conveyed politely and constructively. On the other hand, quite a number of comments are sharply critical, emotional, and even contain elements of impoliteness. This interaction pattern reflects how the virtual public sphere, particularly TikTok, enables a highly diverse range of expressions ranging from the rational to the impulsive, from the polite to the rude.²²

This phenomenon shows that the comment section on the @erick.thohir account has transformed into a space of public debate that is spontaneous and not always controlled. This cannot be separated from TikTok's characteristics as a platform that prioritises rapid content distribution and instant user reactions. In the context of national issues such as naturalisation, public sentiment is often polarised and coloured by group identity,

¹⁹ Uwe Flick, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Collection*, SAGE Publications Ltd, 2017, 1–736.

²⁰ Merilyn Annells, “Triangulation of Qualitative Approaches: Hermeneutical Phenomenology and Grounded Theory,” *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 56, no. 1 (2006): 55–61, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2006.03979.x>.

²¹ Aulia Zahra, “Perspektif Mahasiswa Terhadap Personal Branding Pejabat Publik Di Media Sosial,” *De Cive : Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 2, no. 7 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.56393/decive.v2i7.1672>.

²² Moh. Ichsan, Astri Irawan, and Yon Safira, “Analisis Komodifikasi Media Sosial Instagram Terhadap Citra Partai Politik Menjelang Pemilihan Calon Presiden 2024,” *JSHP : Jurnal Sosial Humaniora Dan Pendidikan* 7, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.32487/jshp.v7i1.1621>.

nationalism, and even collective emotion. All of this is recorded in the language used by netizens when commenting on ongoing public policies.

These dynamics also demonstrate a shift in the function of social media from merely a space of entertainment to an arena of public discourse. Netizens are no longer only consumers of information, but also active actors who shape narratives and influence public opinion. In the case of @erick.thohir, responses to the naturalisation issue become an indicator of how society interprets state policy in the context of sportsmanship, nationalism, and the nation's existence. Therefore, it is important to understand how language is used in these comments whether it still reflects the ethics of politeness or instead depicts a degradation of public communication norms.²³

The analysis of the dynamics of these public comments is not merely intended to assess the level of politeness among netizens, but to read the socio-cultural landscape of Indonesia's digital society. Amid an almost unfiltered tide of freedom of expression, it is important to evaluate the extent to which society is able to maintain the quality of interaction within an increasingly open digital space. Language serves as an important indicator for measuring the quality of public discourse, and the comment section constitutes rich empirical data for examining changes in communication culture in the digital era.²⁴

The TikTok account @erick.thohir serves as a strategic case study for seeing how Indonesia's digital society expresses its opinions on national issues that involve identity and state policy. The dynamics of these public comments become an entry point for exploring more deeply questions of communication ethics, linguistic politeness, and the social implications of freedom of expression on social media platforms. The findings of this research are expected to enrich academic discourse on digital communication and to serve as a reference for building ethical public literacy in the online space.

The researcher has conducted observations in the TikTok social media space on the account @erick.thohir to examine the terms and the dynamics of comments related to linguistic politeness as in the following tabulation:

Table 1. Dynamics of Comments on the TikTok account @erick.thohir

No	Name	Transcript	Category	Findings
1	Gloria 02	No need for naturalisations, sir; locals can also be great, sir, if the coach fits, sir.	Polite criticism	Rejection of naturalisation, supporting local coaches.
2	benung	Is Radja Nainggolan already too old? Try inviting him, sir.	Neutral question	Suggestion of a naturalised player in an interrogative tone.

²³ Nuryadi Kadir, "Media Sosial Dan Politik Partisipatif : Suatu Kajian Ruang Publik, Demokrasi Bagi Kaum Milenial Dan Gen Z," *RESIPROKAL: Jurnal Riset Sosiologi Progresif Aktual* 4, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.29303/resiprokal.v4i2.225>.

²⁴ Stepanus Angga, Antonius Alfredo Poa Poa, and Fabianus Rikardus Rikardus, "Etika Komunikasi Netizen Indonesia Di Media Sosial Sebagai Ruang Demokrasi Dalam Telaah Ruang Publik Jurgen Habermas," *Jurnal Filsafat Indonesia* 6, no. 3 (2023).

3	hooh_tennan	Where have the original local players gone?	Casual criticism	An insinuation about the disappearance of local players.
4	jokey boy	Mr Erik, will they already be able to play on the FIFA match day, sir?	Neutral question	Concern about the eligibility of naturalised players.
5	admin Michat	Indonesia is vast, Mr Thohir—why are there instead mostly foreign players...	Sharp criticism	Highlighting the policy of foreign players over local potential.
6	brar	Is Margono not going ahead, sir? As a back-up keeper he can do build-up, sir; Indonesia rarely, even hardly any, can build up.	Polite suggestion	Recommendation of a local player with technical reasons.
7	fan	How about the local players?	Neutral question	Brief question about the status of local players.
8	Virgo26	Sir, I want to ask—hopefully it's answered. Those players are from which countries, sir?	Polite question	Request for information on the players' origins.
9	rivaldo.	How about Justin Hubner, sir?	Brief question	Suggestion or question regarding a single player's name.
10	owner depot restu ibu	Naturalise a good striker, Mr Erick Thohir, so our national team is great.	Positive support	Supporting naturalisation provided the player is of quality.
11	Maintenancen technician	Sorry, Mr Erick, why take foreign players rather than those from our own country...	Subtle criticism	Concern over the dominance of naturalised players.
12	imoyy	Our football is rightly handled by Mr Erick Thohir...	Humorous appreciation	Support for Erick Thohir interspersed with a hope for a gift (free tickets).

Source: Observation and documentation on the TikTok account @erick.thohir (2025)

The analysis of netizens' comments on posts about the naturalisation of football players on the TikTok account @erick.thohir shows variations in the forms and functions of language used by social media users in responding to public issues. William Labov, in his sociolinguistic theory, emphasises that language is not merely a tool of communication, but

also reflects social identity, class, and individuals' attitudes towards an event. In this context, these comments become a reflection of the linguistic varieties and social attitudes of netizens towards public policies considered to concern nationalism and the representation of national identity through football.

Labov explains that language variation is strongly influenced by the speakers' social context. In the comments analysed, it can be seen how users from diverse social backgrounds use informal Indonesian with a mixture of emotive expressions such as emojis, abbreviations, and even rhetorical sentences. For example, the comments 'pemain asli lokal nya kmna' or 'natrulisasi striker yg bagus pk eric Tohir, biar jos timas kita' show non-standard linguistic varieties that reflect a speech style typical of informal digital communities. This variation marks the presence of solidarity and closeness among netizens in the virtual public sphere.²⁵

The analysis of comments on the @erick.thohir TikTok account shows that netizens' responses to the naturalisation issue can be grouped into supportive, critical, interrogative, and emotive expressions. While many comments appear informal and spontaneous, the majority still follow politeness norms. This tendency can be explained by a combination of factors: socially, Indonesian culture continues to value courteous communication; culturally, football operates as a symbol of unity that encourages solidarity; and technically, TikTok's open comment visibility creates peer monitoring that discourages excessive impoliteness. These dynamics suggest that politeness online is not incidental but shaped by intersecting social, cultural, and platform-specific contexts.

Beyond individual strategies, the comments also carry broader socio-political weight. Supportive voices reinforce government legitimacy, while critical remarks reflect public scepticism toward policies seen as undermining local identity. In this sense, the comment section becomes a civic arena where nationalism is negotiated through everyday language practices. By integrating Brown and Levinson's politeness framework with Labov's sociolinguistics, this study demonstrates how politeness strategies not only manage interpersonal relations but also structure collective discourse about identity and policy. The novelty lies in showing how a short-video platform like TikTok serves as both a site of digital etiquette and a medium of political dialogue in Indonesia's evolving communication culture.

Meanwhile, comments such as "maaf pak erick knp ngambil pemain luar dari pada negri sendiri..." or "Indonesia Luas Pa Tohir Knpa Malah Kbnykan Pemain Luar..." show forms of criticism that still maintain norms of politeness. Labov states that linguistic varieties are also influenced by social functions: some serve to maintain the status quo, whilst others become forms of symbolic resistance. In this case, comments containing criticism of naturalisation become symbols of anxiety over the loss of national identity and local potential, without needing to be aggressive or sarcastic.

Other comments such as "justin hubner gimana pak?" and "pak mau nanya mudah2han di jawab..." show forms of communication that are functional and informative. These comments tend to be neutral and focus on requests for information. According to

²⁵ Regna Darnell and William Labov, "Sociolinguistic Patterns," *Language* 51, no. 4 (1975), <https://doi.org/10.2307/412715>.

Labov (2009), this falls within the referential function of language, namely when language is used to convey information or to ask directly. The use of polite forms and the expectation of a reply show how norms of interaction are maintained even in an open digital space.

In the context of the social stratification of language, Labov asserts that language choice and speech style can represent the speaker's social class. Several comments that use more complex and argumentative linguistic structures, such as "margono gajadi pak? buat lapis kiper dia bisa buildup...", indicate a higher discursive capacity, possibly from users with technical knowledge or a particular interest in football. On the other hand, comments such as "pemain lokal nya gmna" or "radja nainggolan apa udah tua ya" display simpler forms of language, yet remain communicative and expressive²⁶.

Labov also emphasises the concept of style-shifting, namely the change of linguistic style depending on context and communicative purpose. This is evident in comments such as "sepakbola kita sudah tepat di pegang oleh Bpk Erick Thohir... semoga sukses selalu yah pak", which employ a formal register, a prayer/blessing, and respectful forms of address. Such a style shows that users adjust their linguistic style when interacting with public figures or authorities. This indicates that although communication takes place in the digital sphere, users remain aware of the prevailing social relations²⁷.

Comments appearing in the issue of player naturalization reflect the diversity of language use that is highly characteristic of Indonesia's digital community. Labov's sociolinguistic theory is particularly relevant in analyzing this phenomenon, as it reveals that language choice, levels of formality, and modes of message delivery in comments are not random but are laden with social meaning. The language used in TikTok comment sections serves as a mirror of the social complexity of digital society, encompassing expressions of identity, solidarity, critique, and forms of participation in public issues.²⁸ TikTok, as a space of interaction across class, age, and background, illustrates how netizens actively construct and respond to public discourse through language. Therefore, linguistic analysis of such comments becomes crucial for understanding the changing ways Indonesians communicate when engaging with national issues through an ever-evolving digital medium.

Research conducted by L.P.F. Yanti, I.N. Suandi, and I.N. Sudiana highlights the dynamics of linguistic politeness among netizens in the comment sections of news on Facebook. Their findings reveal that netizens frequently express opinions using impolite language, such as insults and hate speech, although a number of comments still reflect politeness.²⁹ This study employed a qualitative descriptive method along with documentation and content analysis techniques. A strong similarity can be seen in the focus on netizens' language practices in social media and the role of digital media in shaping the space of public

²⁶ Nikolas Coupland, "Labov, Vernacularity and Sociolinguistic Change," *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 20, no. 4 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12191>.

²⁷ Allan Bell, Devyani Sharma, and David Britain, "Labov in Sociolinguistics: An Introduction," *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 20, no. 4 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12199>.

²⁸ Darsana Vijay and Alex Gekker, "Playing Politics: How Sabarimala Played Out on TikTok," *American Behavioral Scientist* 65, no. 5 (May 2021): 712–34, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764221989769>.

²⁹ L. P. F. Yanti, I. N. Suandi, and I. N. Sudiana, "ANALISIS KESANTUNAN BERBAHASA WARGANET PADA KOLOM KOMENTAR BERITA DI MEDIA SOSIAL FACEBOOK," *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia* 10, no. 1 (June 2021): 139–50, https://doi.org/10.23887/jurnal_bahasa.v10i1.405.

discourse. However, the object of study differs: their research centers on Facebook as a forum for debates on political or social news, while the present study is more specifically concerned with TikTok and the issue of naturalized football players, a discourse marked by more populist and emotional nuances.

Meanwhile, the study conducted by Ningrum, Suryadi, and Wardhana focuses on hate speech in social media and explores the social motives behind extreme expressions that emerge on online platforms. Using a critical discourse analysis approach, their research delves into the intentions, contexts, and power relations embedded in the language of hate speech. This differs from the present study, which does not confine itself to extreme hate speech but instead examines a broader spectrum ranging from politeness to impoliteness in comment sections. In this sense, the present study occupies a middle ground between constructive comments and those that shift toward norm violations, though not necessarily falling into the category of radical hate speech.³⁰

When compared with William Labov's sociolinguistic theory, this study positions netizen comments as linguistic variants that reflect users' social identities, whether in the form of critique, support, or satire. Labov emphasizes that speech styles shift depending on social context, class, and communicative goals. However, within the context of TikTok, the boundary between formal and informal communication becomes blurred, as users from diverse social backgrounds interact within the same space. This study challenges Labov's assumption of consistency between speech style and the speaker's social background, as it finds that users who express opinions politely are not necessarily from higher social strata, and conversely, impolite comments do not always represent a particular social class. Instead, they are more strongly shaped by emotional dynamics and the freedom of expression facilitated by the platform's algorithm.³¹

The findings of this study reveal that the comment section of TikTok account @erick.thohir is filled with a diversity of linguistic expressions, ranging from subtle criticism, polite questions, and constructive suggestions to light sarcasm. Most netizens continue to maintain polite forms of communication, even when voicing disagreement with naturalization policies. This indicates that, amid the freedom of digital expression, ethical language awareness is still upheld by a portion of users. However, there is also a tendency toward informal, emotive, and spontaneous communication styles, which are characteristic of contemporary digital culture.

This study presents novelty by focusing its analysis on linguistic politeness within TikTok comment sections concerning the issue of football player naturalization, a topic rarely addressed in previous digital pragmatic studies. Unlike earlier research that concentrated on extreme hate speech or political commentary on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, this study highlights the dynamics of public communication emerging within the intersection of sports and nationalism through TikTok—a platform defined by fast-paced, visual, and populist interactions. Another point of novelty lies in its

³⁰ Dian Junita Ningrum, Suryadi Suryadi, and Dian Eka Chandra Wardhana, "KAJIAN UJARAN KEBENCIAN DI MEDIA SOSIAL," *Jurnal Ilmiah KORPUS* 2, no. 3 (2018): 241–52, <https://doi.org/10.33369/jik.v2i3.6779>.

³¹ William Labov, *Sociolinguistic Patterns* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1973).

interdisciplinary approach, combining Brown and Levinson's politeness theory with William Labov's sociolinguistic framework to examine the linguistic expressions of netizens across social classes in the digital sphere. Thus, this research not only fills a gap in the study of language ethics on short-video-based social media but also contributes a critical perspective on the relationship between speech style, social identity, and the performativity of public discourse in the algorithmic era.

Conclusion

This study reveals that the comment section of the TikTok account @erick.thohir, particularly in posts concerning the naturalization of football players, functions as a space that reflects the dynamics of linguistic politeness in Indonesia's digital society. The diversity of comments demonstrates that netizens employ language not merely to express support or criticism but also to articulate social identity, collective emotions, and active participation in national issues. Although the majority of comments maintain a polite tone, they frequently adopt the informal style typical of social media, while still exercising caution in voicing criticism of government policies.

By integrating Brown and Levinson's politeness theory with William Labov's sociolinguistic framework, this study underscores that linguistic politeness in digital spaces cannot be separated from the users' social context, the influence of platform algorithms, and the power relations between netizens and public figures. Language emerges as a crucial medium in shaping constructive public discourse, while TikTok as an interactive platform fosters a more fluid and responsive transformation of communication norms. Accordingly, strengthening digital communication literacy is essential to ensure that online interactions are conducted with ethical awareness, politeness, and a heightened sense of social responsibility.

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