Analyzing Positive Politeness in Self-Introductions by Players on the Albion Online Forum

Muhammad Ziddan Akbar Assyari[1], Otong Setiawan Djauhari[2]
Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic University Bandung[1,2]

Author's Email: mziddanakb@gmail.com[1], otongsetiawandjuharie@uinsgd.ac.id[2]

ABSTRACT

Players often use online game forums to meet other players and to introduce themselves. This paper will examine the positive politeness strategies in self-introduction posts of the Albion Online forum. The qualitative descriptive design was applied, and fifteen posts were chosen purposely in the "Introduce Yourself!" category, with the data acquired from January to June 2025. This data was analyzed in Brown and Levinson's politeness theory by content-based pragmatic analysis. The results indicate that strategies of greeting, possessing enthusiasm, self-disclosure, joking, and inclusive language were used by the users to build relationships and decrease the social distance. These strategies indicate that users want to be accepted and aligned with the community. This research finds out that positive politeness is one of the necessary instruments of social interaction in digital gaming forums. This means that the online platforms have a major influence on communicative behavior. It is suggested that future research be conducted to add responses or interactions toward the investigation of the patterns of politeness in longer conversations.

Keywords: Pragmatic Strategy; Interpersonal Meaning; Gaming Communities

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INTRODUCTION

Development of internet technology has effectively changed communication in a radical way, where people are able to establish social relationships in a cross-geographical manner. Among the numerous spaces created as a result of this development, online forums that are based on multiplayer games are rather special venues in which language is not only the medium of information sharing but also a means of community development and construction of identities. Such forums become a virtual gathering place where people of different linguistic, cultural, and social orientations are players. Introducing oneself in a game forum Most commonly, new users begin in a game forum by introducing themselves. This is considered a ritualized speech event, and it is performed to show social positioning and interactional interest. Although they can be discussed as procedural introductions, these introductions can be explained as some efforts to achieve social acceptability, befriend, and show that they belong to a group (Holmes, 2013).

Forums participate in how people interact, cooperate, and establish rapport with each other in massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs), such as Albion Online. Both lower-level and more experienced players use forums to interact with one another. Linguistic data represented by the introductions of users to the Albion Online community on the page of the same name (Introduce Yourself!) in its forum can reveal a lot about how recent users try to become members of the community. Such posts are voluntary in nature (and are frequently unsolicited), as a result of which they take the form of sincere attempts to be viewed in a favorable light. This is because the textuality of the interaction does not include face-context information, and the users thus rely heavily on language tools to control the interpersonal relations and inclusion (Locher & Graham, 2010). Politeness strategies are not only relevant but also a necessity in such settings.

Politeness theory of linguistic pragmatics, based on the works by (Brown & Levinson, 1987), has been one of the most influential models in linguistic pragmatics. According to the theory, people will be performing face-work (attempts to save themselves and other people their public image about themselves) in the course of an interaction. They draw the boundary between two shades of a face: the desire not to be imposed on, or, in other words, negative face, and the desire to be liked, appreciated, and accepted by others, or, in other words, positive face. The speakers can utilize negative forms of politeness (e.g., hedging, indirectness), positive politeness forms (e.g., solidarity expressions, joking), or other kinds, including off-record strategies, to avoid the face-threatening acts (FTAs) (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Positive politeness, more precisely, denotes language use with the goal of pleasing the positive face of the interlocutor, namely, depicting intimacy and sharing in common understanding. The most common ones are in-group identity markers, intensification of interest, use of nicknames, shared goals, jokes, positive language, and inclusive pronouns (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Yule, 1996). As an example, one can mention such linguistic tokens of positive politeness as word phrases and combinations such as "I hope we can be friends," "Let us have some fun together," or "Thanks in advance!" Such strategies can be frequently found in situations of communication where the use of social distance is to be reduced, i.e., when communicating with new acquaintances or when informally communicating online (Holmes, 2013; Karsch, 2022).

Positive politeness in the case of computer-mediated communication (CMC) is of immense importance because of the lack of physical presence, tonality, and body language (Locher, 2004). Written words are used by the users to create an impression of friendliness and a rapport and to prevent misunderstanding. Through study, it is seen that signifiers of positive politeness like emojis, exclamation

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marks, and informal greetings are particularly common in forums, chats, and social media communications (Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil et al., 2013; Kusmanto & Widodo, 2022). These indicators assist in the levels of immediacy and visual signal substitution but encourage relationship-based goals, including affiliation and empathy (Yue, 2022).

Even in forums, when players join new social spaces, being polite is also a way of doing identity work. According to (Goffman, 1959), any social relationship takes place under the guise of a performance, and online introductions are no exception: this is a platform whereby new members introduce themselves to others who, once again, should be friendly, likable, and viable members of the community. By stating that they are excited to be part of the community or that they are still learning and are not the best and that they also adore the game, etcetera, players make clear the social intentions that extend beyond transactional use of communication (Spencer-Oatey, 2021). In this respect, positive politeness is a sensible tool that leads to controlling their own penetration in an already established group.

More recent examples of the application of the framework provided by Brown and Levinson to the analysis of the utterances of characters in fictional contexts are found. As an example, a study by (Anjeli Rupeani Chandra Dewi & Nur Ayomi, 2023) addressed the topic of positive politeness in the movie Encanto, with the focus on the utilization of common values and jokes among relatives. In the same manner, (Servitia, 2017) examined the speech in Oz the Great and Powerful, and (Novita Sari & Sutopo, 2024) elaborated on the pragmatic strategies adopted in Spiderman: Far From Home. The given studies reveal that the use of politeness strategies is essential to establish relationships between characters and uphold the narrative coherence. Nevertheless, studies investigating the issue of forum introduction in online games are rare, whereas it is no longer an important but new phenomenon that gaming forums are considered dynamic, interactive, and socially relevant online communities. The present study covers this knowledge gap through the analysis of naturally occurring introduction messages placed in the Albion Online online forum as a case of pragmatic action of the user-driven approach to CMC.

This study seeks to examine the positive politeness considerations applied by the new players when introducing themselves into the Albion Online forum. It aims to (1) name the linguistic manifestations of positive politeness that appeared in the posts on the forum, (2) group the strategies using the taxonomy provided by (Brown & Levinson, 1987), and (3) explain the way these strategies can help to create the sense of social rapport, incorporation into community, and online identity of the players of an online game. In this manner, the paper will be of assistance in advancing the body of digital pragmatics research and help to understand the role of politeness in informal user-created online scenarios.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

The study is a descriptive qualitative study about examining positive politeness strategies in online game forums. The qualitative research method is applicable in the study of pragmatic meanings in naturally occurring discourse, especially in linguistic applications to social relationships and communicative goals (Miles et al., 2013). The main theory they use is the politeness theory developed by (Brown & Levinson, 1987), in which they propose a taxonomy of positive politeness strategies. They are manifestations of interest expression, in-group markers, optimism, cooperation and solidarity, and techniques that minimize the social distance and enhance group belongingness. Based on this framework, this study is research on how new members of the Albion Online forum create interpersonal rapport during a community-based environment.

The study took place in the period from April 2025 to June 2025. The information was generated using the official Albion Online forum, more specifically, the thread called the Introduce Yourself! and which can be found at such an address as https://forum.albiononline.com. This is the part of this forum where new players can introduce themselves at will with added expressions of culmination, geniality, and social inclination. These posts can be regarded as the sources of valuable information to develop a realistic analysis because they contain spontaneous and personal efforts to obtain integration into a cyber community. This research population contains all the introductory posts in the English language made by the new users during March and June of 2025. Out of this population, 15 posts were identified under purposive sampling. The criteria used to select the tweets were family language, statements of belonging, or other features of politeness and belonging to society.

All the posts were manually captured, including the username, date of the posting, and content in textual form. The researcher was able to concentrate on any original posts left by the user and omitted system responses and contact with other users to maintain the homogeneity of the type of data. All texts were divided into utterances and analyzed with the help of a data table in accordance with the typology of positive politeness according to (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Categorical analysis involved the strategy employed, the practical role that it played, and the situational hints involved. The researcher was the primary tool for analyzing information with the use of a coding matrix to provide systematic classification.

The data analysis was based on the interactive model that involves data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions (Miles et al., 2013). During the first phase, the researcher discovered utterances related to the expression of positive politeness and discarded the ones that were irrelevant. These utterances were here categorized according to themes so as to determine the consistency of strategies and the type of functions they performed in the discourse. The analysis was specific to the ways in which the users identified themselves as socially desirable, pleasant, and cooperative in unfamiliar environments. In such a way, this paper aims to provide an account of politeness strategies in a computer-mediated discourse in a gaming community to have a context-sensitive picture of this phenomenon.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the results of the study are provided by analyzing 15 introductory posts of newcomers on the Albion Online forum, namely, in the section titled as Introduce Yourself! All the posts will be analyzed in order to find or define the application of positive politeness strategies according to (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Instead of dividing data into themes, this part presents each post separately as a way to maintain the authentic pragmatic decisions of each speaker in his or her context. The authentic, spontaneous, and socially oriented nature of the said text in the form of the forum posts shows the ways in which users in a digital communication context engage in relational work in order to gain inclusion, demonstrate friendliness, and reduce social distance. Here, every subtopic contains the chosen excerpt of a post with the analysis of the positive politeness strategies it consists of, comparison with the earlier studies, and, in some cases, theoretical implications.

Data 1 – "Hello!!!" by darkAspen (7 June 2025)

"Hello Everyone - I have just started playing Albion - it is my first MMO. I am very excited to experience what this online universe has to offer."

The speaker employs an optimistic tone and self-exposure in this post. The greeting "Hello Everyone" is an iconic statement that utilizes the markers of in-group identity, a sense of belonging to the society. The part "I am very excited" is an exaggeration or intensification of interest in H, whereas "what this online universe has to offer" is optimism and openness. These are the tactics to create cohesion and make the speaker look likable and willing to fit in. The same conclusions were obtained by (Rastafathya & Mulatsih, 2022) with reference to the example of vlogs, as the researcher found out that demonstrating excitement and personal background helped decrease social distancing among the audiences.

Data 2 – "Hi" by Lynthernable (25 May 2025)

"Hi I just wanna create cool builds"

The body of this extremely short text includes a light greeting, "Hi," and an objective. Although there is nothing special about the usage of the phrase along with the reduction of "just wanna," it makes the speech less harsh and conveys the note of friendliness. The goal of a shared vocabulary in an in-group context is "create cool builds," which is used as an in-group marker. The strategy fits in the positive politeness strategy 4 of Brown and Levinson, which is the use of in-group identity markers. The casual style is similar to the conversation patterns of student forums represented by (Kusmanto & Widodo, 2022), where even short affective terms played a politeness role.

Data 3 – "great game" by Spacebar (17 May 2025)

"Hey, I just started to play Albion, the music and all the sfx are amazing, and the game feels smooth... I was thinking, if I would have played the tutorial on a phone..."

A number of positive politeness strategies have been expressed in this long introduction, i.e., enthusiasm, optimism, presenting a voice, and mild humor. The user engages the interests of the community (strategy 1: notice and attend to H) by providing positive feedback about the game ("amazing," "well done," "fantastic"). The reflection on the tutorial and mobile version implies the connection and the interest to identify with it. Similar to the research by (Yue, 2022), elaborate personal thoughts in online discussion groups are commonly perceived as an indirect way of asking for agreement and participation.

Data 4 – "Not new but by no means a veteran" by nickelninja (16 May 2025)

"Hey I'm Nickelninja and I'm around 17M fame. I'm looking for new or old people to play with... Hope whoever reads this has a great day!"

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The speaker mixes self-disclosure, invitation, and wishing goodbye. The identity and credibility are constructed by mentioning the "17M fame" and "I am 18," and the farewell information that "Hope whoever reads this has a great day" is done according to strategy 6: avoid disagreement and demonstrate concern with H's desires. They are consistent with the observations of (Anjeli Rupeani Chandra Dewi & Nur Ayomi, 2023), who considered such closures to mark polite alignments in the dialogue of the Encanto movie.

Data 5 – "Hello Albion Adventurers" by TheLeader61 (15 May 2025)

"I have recently joined Albion journey, so far it's been a great adventure for me. I'm on Bridgewatch faction, see you there."

The speaker takes an inclusive language "Albion journey" and "great adventure" in creating rapport. The in-group relevance indicates the nature of the faction, saying about the faction, "Bridgewatch." Composing with the concluding utterance "See you there" serves as an invitation (strategy 12: involve speaker or hearer on both sides in an activity). According to (Holmes, 2013), these invitations have been used as one of the main techniques of creating solidarity within the real and online communities.

Data 6 – "Came here from World of Warcraft" by LegendaryGreyheart (29 April 2025)

"Hi there, I'm obviously new here. How y'all doing? I'm all too used to the grind... Albion is my new home."

The speaker offers casual greetings like "Hi there" and "How y'all doing," self-disclosure, and affiliative expressions. Referring to Albion as "my new home" is an indirect mark of a commitment to the in-group (strategy 15: give gifts to H: goods, sympathy, understanding). To (Goffman, 1959), such performance of self is a component of attaining credibility within new communities.

Data 7 – "Hi im new here!" by Meowieee3 (7 April 2025)

"Im new to games like this so if anyone has any tips i would appreciate some! I hope we can become great friends lolol <33"

In this post, the desire to receive assistance has become a mixture of emotional speech and colloquial signs. On the optimistic side is the phrase, "I hope we can become great friends." Emoticons, "<33" and "lolol," add to informativeness and familiarity. According to (Brown & Levinson, 1987), this falls into strategy 13, give reasons, and strategy 1, notice and attend to H, which is indispensable in the discourse of digital youth.

Data 8 – "Albion Romania" by JustFlo (3 March 2025)

"Hi all... I also love hearing from my viewers, so feel free to leave a comment and let me know what you'd like to see..."

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The post serves as a kind of self-promotion, at the same time being polite and interesting. The use of phrases such as "Hi all" and "I also love hearing my viewers" to express their interest alludes to keen interest in what the hearer wants. It remains that online influencers are known to use a combination of promotion and relation strategies (Rastafathya & Mulatsih, 2022), meaning that even in self-marketing, positive politeness may prevail.

Data 9 – "Hello Albion Community!" by hylmiardiyanto (4 February 2025)

"Hello everyone, I'm Hylmiardiyanto, a new player in Albion Online on the Asia server. I'm very enthusiastic to join this community and learn together. I will try to contribute with the knowledge that I have, and of course I'm also open to learning new things from all of you. Thank you!"

The following post illustrates some tactics of positive politeness. The introduction begins with a group-inclusive phrase including everyone in greeting, "Hello everyone," and the speaker takes his place as a novice and thus as a person with similar aspirations and emphasizes shared objectives, "learn together." Such phrases as "very enthusiastic," "try to contribute," and "open to learning" demonstrate the 13th strategy: give reasons, and the 12th strategy: include speaker and hearer in the activity. The conclusion by adding the word thank you supports strategy 1: notice and attend to H by displaying the respect towards the community. This is a good combination that helps to affiliate with group regularities, and it is also spoken of in (Locher & Graham, 2010) insofar as politeness in community discourse is concerned.

Data 10 – "A Hello from Funkel" by Funkel (28 January 2025)

"Hey, hey! Just wanted to introduce myself here on the forum. I'm Funkel... I've been playing since 2021/2022 and enjoy various aspects of Albion... That's it – just a small introduction about me!"

The use of strategy 6 (avoid disagreement by making the introduction brief with "just a small introduction") goes to exhibit modesty as exhibited by this speaker. The enthusiastic tone is also formed by the double greeting of "Hey hey!" By calling the content of the game that they like, the user claims common interests (strategy 7: presuppose/raise common ground) and positions himself or herself in the same cadre as experienced players without bragging. According to (Spencer-Oatey, 2021), this sort of relational moderation is also typical of online introductions where users exercise the balance between authority and approachability.

Data 11 – "hi albion online members" by fawjia (29 March 2025)

"i am japanese, plaing for asia server. also, start 2 years ago. foram is looked by customer suport url ! good game !"

This post is an expression of affiliation and approval, although it is restricted by grammar. It is noted that both mentioning of identity "I am Japanese" and regional context "Asia server" indicate use of in-group identity markers. On the part of common appreciation, the last line is a confirmation, a kind of notice and attention to H (strategy 1) with "Good game!" The presenter tries to relate with her point on

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knowledge and common passion. This goes forth to support the argument by (Holmes, 2013) that good politeness can be attained even when one has little language as long as relation-mindedness is evident.

Data 12 – "Hello! New here!" by Koldep23 (23 March 2025)

"Hello, I just started playing Albion yesterday, and I think this game could be very exciting as I go on, feels like this is a good community."

This post displays gratitude and hope. The expression, which demonstrates strategy 2, i.e., "I think this game could be very exciting," which is very exciting, can be seen, with the strategy 2 working as a complement to the group identity, by expressing it, i.e., "This is a good community." It is a form of positive politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987), a well-known type of compliment, and works well in digital mediums where social validation strengthens communication (Holmes, 2013).

Data 13 – "what to say" by bussybussy (17 March 2025)

"Hi, so happy to be part of the forum i cant wait to kick start and learn more also contribute thanks."

This strategy 2 of exaggeration, used by the speaker by means of affective terms such as "so happy" and "can't wait," contributes to the creation process of sincerity. Strategy 12 is the readiness to learn and to contribute: involve S and H in the activity. The phrase to close with is the word "thanks," which is a politeness feature signifying gratitude. This is as (Rastafathya & Mulatsih, 2022) in their study on vlogs indicated that positive emotional expression played an important role in rapport with the audience.

Data 14 – "Helloooooo" by Godsmark (6 March 2025)

"Hey, im Godsmark, no my name isnt linked to religion before you ask :)), im from northern England and i found my way here through a youtube ad that i misclicked while trying to skip it haha"

The introduction is a funny and self-disclosing one based on the strategy. 8: joke and the strategy 4: Use of in-group identity markers. The indicative heading "No, my name isn't linked to religion" foresees the possible expectations and makes it sound jovial. There is also personal narrative presented by the speaker, and this is a means of establishing solidarity through narratives. Regarding the balance of face needs in the digital world, humor in introductions is identified by (Locher, 2004) as the tool.

Data 15 – "Hello from JustFlo" by JustFlo (3 March 2025)

"Hi all,... My channel is dedicated to bringing you the best content... Don't forget to subscribe... I also love hearing from my viewers..."

The last data point is a combination of self-promotion and doing good. Although he advertises a YouTube channel, the speaker applies strategy 1: attend to hearer, i.e., "I love hearing from my viewers," and strategy 15: give gifts to H, i.e., sharing knowledge and entertainment. This is consistent with

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(Rastafathya & Mulatsih, 2022), who discovered that relational moves were usually used by vloggers to conceal directive or promotional speech acts in order not to increasingly appear more assertive.

CONCLUSION

This research was conducted to examine the employment of positive politeness strategies in the self-introduction posts analysis on the Albion Online forum. Back to the research purpose, it is possible to say that the players take several strategies in order to overcome social distance and to be accepted in the community, including greeting, enthusiasm, self-disclosure, and inclusive language. This evidence testifies to the fact that, despite the informality of the digital context, users do not forget to conduct relational work in terms of language.

The paper supports the theory advanced by (Brown & Levinson, 1987) in the realm of the gaming discourse as well as emphasizes the role of positive politeness in encouraging online community interactions. A larger number of studies should also be done in the future with a longer interaction or comparative analysis of politeness approaches in various cultural backgrounds to expand the body of digital pragmatic research to bring out more results.

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