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POLITENESS AS CULTURAL PRACTICE IN CLASSROOM INTERACTION: A SEQUENTIAL EXPLANATORY STUDY IN A STATE UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Politeness in classroom interaction is not only a linguistic strategy but also a cultural practice through which authority, respect, and relational distance are negotiated. This study examined students' perceptions of teachers' politeness strategies in classroom interaction at North Eastern Mindanao State University–Cantilan Campus, Philippines. Anchored in Brown and Levinson's politeness framework, the study employed a sequential explanatory design integrating quantitative and qualitative data. A total of 210 education students participated in the survey, while qualitative data were used to explain and enrich the statistical trends. The analysis focused on four major politeness strategies: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategies. Findings revealed that bald-on-record strategies were preferred because students associated directness with clarity, confidence, and efficient classroom understanding. Positive politeness was also perceived favorably for fostering emotional support, relational warmth, and a more encouraging learning environment. Negative politeness was viewed as respectful and professional, although excessive formality was sometimes interpreted as distancing or intimidating. Off-record strategies were the least preferred because their indirectness occasionally confused classroom communication. Interpreted through a cultural lens, the findings suggest that students' responses to teacher talk reflect shared expectations about respect, authority, and appropriate interaction in Philippine higher education. The study contributes to discussions on classroom discourse and educational culture by showing how politeness strategies function not merely as communicative techniques, but as socially meaningful practices that shape student engagement and classroom behavior.

KEYWORDS: Politeness strategies, Classroom discourse, educational culture, Philippine Higher Education, Teacher-student interaction, Student perceptions, Sequential explanatory design.

1. INTRODUCTION

Classroom interaction is not only a pedagogical process but also a social and cultural space in which authority, respect, and relational distance are negotiated through language (Riordan, 2025). In educational settings, teacher talk does more than deliver lesson content; it also communicates expectations about appropriate conduct, role relations, and interpersonal sensitivity, thereby shaping how students position themselves within the learning environment (Tong et al., 2024). For this reason, politeness in classroom discourse should be understood not merely as a linguistic device but as a socially meaningful practice embedded in the culture of teaching and learning (Kádár & Haugh, 2020).

Politeness is especially important in classroom communication because teaching often involves instructions, requests, evaluations, feedback, and corrections, all of which can affect both comprehension and interpersonal relations (Rahayuningsih et al., 2020). Studies have shown that teachers use politeness through direct and indirect instructions, reinforcement, appreciation, humor, hedging, and mitigated criticism to manage interactions and reduce tension during classroom exchanges (Dedović-Atilla & Dubravac, 2022). In this sense, politeness is not an ornamental aspect of teaching; it is part of how classroom participation, classroom atmosphere, and the quality of interaction are socially organized (Riordan, 2025).

Recent work on teacher discourse further demonstrates that how teachers structure classroom talk influences student engagement and learning opportunities. In particular, interactive and adaptive discourse patterns have been associated with stronger participation, more responsive exchanges, and more productive learning conditions, suggesting that teacher communication should be examined within the broader classroom discourse ecology rather than as a purely individual speaking style (Tong et al., 2024). This perspective strengthens the argument that politeness strategies are best interpreted in relation to how classroom interaction is structured and experienced by students (Riordan, 2025).

In the Philippine context, politeness is closely linked to cultural values of respect, hierarchy, and relational sensitivity. Students often interpret teacher language not only through its literal meaning but also through culturally shared expectations about age, authority, and appropriate conduct in academic settings (Yassi, 2020). This makes classroom politeness in Philippine higher education a particularly important site for examining how

communicative choices reflect broader educational and cultural norms (Briones & Liwanag, 2023).

Local studies also suggest that politeness practices in the Philippines are shaped by sociocultural background and community-specific norms. For instance, classroom interaction among Manobo students reflects local expectations regarding respect and social conduct, indicating that politeness in educational settings is not explained fully by general pragmatic theory alone but must also be understood within local cultural frameworks (Sandoval-Delos Santos et al., 2023). Such findings reinforce the view that classroom discourse is both linguistic and cultural.

Despite the growing body of literature on politeness and classroom discourse, more localized studies are still needed in Philippine higher education, particularly those examining how students perceive teachers' use of bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategies in actual classroom interaction (Briones & Liwanag, 2023). This gap is important because teacher talk does not merely facilitate instruction; it also shapes how students interpret authority, fairness, support, and their own place within classroom life (Aporbo, 2022).

This study, therefore, examines students' perceptions of teachers' politeness strategies in classroom interaction at North Eastern Mindanao State University-Cantilan Campus. It also investigates whether these perceptions differ across selected profile variables and how they influence student behavior in class. Viewed through the lens of educational culture, the study argues that politeness strategies function not only as communicative resources but also as culturally meaningful practices that shape participation, authority, and the social organization of classroom life (Kádár & Haugh, 2020).

2. POLITENESS THEORY AND FACEWORK

Politeness theory provides a useful framework for explaining how speakers manage interpersonal relationships through language. It focuses on how communicative choices help preserve social harmony, reduce conflict, and show regard for others in interaction, making it particularly relevant to educational settings where authority and sensitivity must be balanced carefully (Kádár & Haugh, 2020). Within this perspective, politeness is not simply a matter of being courteous; it is a socially grounded and context-sensitive practice shaped by interactional expectations (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Brown and Levinson (1987) describe face as the public self-image that individuals seek to maintain during social interaction. Their framework distinguishes between positive face, the desire to be appreciated and approved of, and negative face, the desire to act freely without imposition. Because many communicative acts may threaten either dimension of face, speakers use different politeness strategies to lessen those threats and maintain social balance.

In this model, four major politeness strategies are identified: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Bald-on-record strategies are direct and unambiguous; positive politeness emphasizes closeness, approval, and solidarity; negative politeness communicates respect and minimizes imposition; and off-record strategies rely on indirectness and implication. These categories are especially relevant in classroom settings because teachers must constantly negotiate clarity, authority, encouragement, and sensitivity while interacting with students (Rahayuningsih et al., 2020).

The concept of face is further enriched by Goffman's (1967) notion of facework, which emphasizes that participants in interaction cooperate in maintaining one another's dignity and in avoiding embarrassment. In classroom discourse, facework is particularly significant because teacher-student communication often includes correction, evaluation, requests, and responses that may threaten face if not handled carefully. From this perspective, politeness strategies matter not only for communication efficiency but also for managing the tension between institutional authority and relational sensitivity in educational interaction.

More recent scholarship reinforces the view that politeness should be interpreted in relation to context rather than treated as a fixed verbal formula. Social meanings such as respect, warmth, distance, or imposition are evaluated through shared norms and interactional expectations, which means that politeness in classroom discourse must be analyzed within the specific institutional and cultural setting in which it occurs (Kádár & Haugh, 2020). This orientation supports the present study's argument that politeness in education is not merely procedural but socially meaningful.

2.1. Politeness in classroom discourse

Politeness plays a significant role in classroom discourse because teaching and learning depend not only on content delivery but also on the quality of interaction between teachers and students (Mahmud, 2019). Classroom communication

regularly involves requests, instructions, evaluations, and feedback, so the way these are expressed can shape how students interpret teacher intentions and how willing they are to respond, comply, or participate (Rahayuningsih et al., 2020).

Research on classroom interaction shows that teachers use different discourse strategies to meet both instructional and interpersonal goals. Direct expressions may support clarity and efficiency, especially when giving instructions or managing classroom activities, whereas supportive and inclusive language can lower anxiety and help build rapport (Febriansyah & Anam, 2020). This suggests that politeness in classroom discourse is not merely decorative but central to how students experience teaching.

Positive politeness is often associated with praise, humor, inclusive language, and expressions of support that help students feel valued and comfortable in class (Fitriyani & Andriyanti, 2020). When teachers use such strategies, they can reduce social distance and encourage greater participation, thereby creating a more motivating and responsive learning atmosphere (Tong et al., 2024). In this sense, positive politeness carries both relational and pedagogical value.

Negative politeness also plays an important role in classroom discourse because it can convey respect, professionalism, and sensitivity to students' autonomy (Kádár & Haugh, 2020). However, its classroom effect may be mixed. When used appropriately, it helps preserve respect and avoid unnecessary imposition; when it becomes overly formal, it may increase emotional distance and weaken classroom closeness (Nugrahanto & Hartono, 2020). This makes its interpretation highly context-dependent.

Bald-on-record strategies are especially relevant in instructional settings because students often need explicit guidance, immediate correction, and clear expectations. Although directness may sound harsh in everyday conversation, it can be interpreted positively in classrooms when it supports understanding, task completion, and instructional efficiency (Ginting & Pasaribu, 2023). By contrast, off-record strategies depend heavily on inference and may create ambiguity when students require precise guidance for academic tasks (Mahmud, 2019).

Taken together, these studies indicate that the value of politeness strategies in classroom discourse depends not only on the form of the utterance but also on how students interpret it within a specific instructional and relational context (Riordan, 2025). Teacher talk, therefore, shapes not only classroom

management and comprehension but also students' emotional responses, willingness to participate, and perceptions of respect, fairness, and support (Tong et al., 2024).

2.2. Filipino politeness norms and educational culture

Politeness in the Philippine context is closely connected to respect, social hierarchy, relational sensitivity, and culturally appropriate conduct. In educational settings, these values shape how students interpret teachers' language, especially in situations involving instruction, correction, authority, and support (Yassi, 2020). As a result, classroom politeness in Philippine higher education should be understood not only as a matter of language use but also as part of educational culture.

Philippine studies suggest that politeness practices are not uniform across communities but are shaped by linguistic, regional, and sociocultural backgrounds. Classroom interaction among Manobo students, for example, reflects local expectations regarding social conduct and appropriate communication, showing that educational discourse is influenced by community-based norms as well as broader academic expectations (Sandoval-Delos Santos et al., 2023). This reinforces the view that politeness in Philippine classrooms is culturally situated.

Academic communication in Philippine higher education also reflects institutional hierarchy and relational awareness. In student-professor correspondence, politeness is often expressed through deference, empathy, and academic positioning, suggesting that students interpret communication within the dual framework of formal educational roles and broader cultural expectations about respect and interpersonal conduct (Briones & Liwanag, 2023). Although such work may focus on written interaction, its implications remain relevant to classroom discourse because the same sociocultural logic shapes both.

These perspectives help explain why students may respond differently to directness, friendliness, formality, or indirectness in classroom interaction. Directness may be acceptable when it is associated with clarity and legitimate instructional authority, while positive politeness may be valued when it conveys care, encouragement, and support (Aporbo, 2022). At the same time, excessive indirectness or excessive formality may be interpreted less favorably when students prioritize comprehension, immediacy, and relational accessibility (Briones & Liwanag, 2023).

Viewed in this way, classroom politeness in Philippine higher education is not simply a matter of individual speech style. It is a culturally situated interactional practice through which teachers and students negotiate authority, respect, participation, and social distance within the classroom's institutional life (Kádár & Haugh, 2020). This perspective is central to the present study because it frames politeness as part of the social organization of educational experience rather than as an isolated pragmatic phenomenon.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, in which quantitative data were collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative data used to explain and deepen the interpretation of the statistical results (Toyon, 2021). This design was appropriate because the study sought not only to determine students' perceptions of teachers' politeness strategies in classroom interaction, but also to understand how these perceptions influenced student behavior and how the qualitative responses clarified the quantitative patterns. In this way, the qualitative phase functioned as an explanatory extension of the quantitative phase rather than as a separate inquiry.

3.2. Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at North Eastern Mindanao State University (NEMSU)–Cantilan Campus, located in Barangay Pag-antayan, Cantilan, Surigao del Sur, Philippines. The setting was considered appropriate for examining classroom discourse because of its diverse student population, particularly within the Department of General Teacher Training (DGTT). For the quantitative phase, the respondents consisted of 210 education students selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across programs and year levels. The respondents came from BSEd-English (61), BSEd-Mathematics (19), BSEd-Science (28), BSEd-Filipino (24), BTLEd (31), and BTVTEd (47), totaling 470 students. For the qualitative phase, 10 students were purposively selected for the Focus Group Discussions. Selection criteria included at least one year of experience in the present educational environment, variation in gender, age, and ethnicity, the ability to express experiences clearly, and willingness to participate.

3.3. Research Instrument

The study used a validated self-made

questionnaire and a set of Focus Group Discussion guide questions. Three experts reviewed the instruments to ensure validity and comprehensiveness. The quantitative questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section gathered demographic information, including age, sex, course, and ethnicity. The second section measured students' perceptions of teachers' politeness strategies in classroom interaction. It contained 28 statements, equally distributed across the four politeness strategies of Brown and Levinson: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record, with seven items per strategy. Responses were rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

3.4. Data Gathering Procedure

Before the final administration, the questionnaire underwent pilot testing to improve clarity and effectiveness. Reliability testing was then conducted using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. The results showed excellent internal consistency across all four subscales: Bald-on-Record (0.982), Positive Politeness (0.981), Negative Politeness (0.981), and Off-Record (0.982). These values indicate that the instrument was highly reliable for measuring students' perceptions of teachers' politeness strategies in classroom interaction. The researchers then drafted the questionnaire and submitted it for expert validation. After finalizing the instruments, permission to conduct the study was secured from the Campus Director and the DGTT Chair. Ethical safeguards were observed throughout the process. Respondents were informed of the study's purpose, and consent forms were obtained from participants aged 18 and above, while assent forms with parental or guardian consent were obtained for minors.

Following approval, the researchers administered the questionnaire to the 210 education students. Respondents were given sufficient time to complete the survey, and clarifications were provided when necessary. After the quantitative phase, the researchers developed the FGD guide questions based on the survey findings. They conducted Focus Group Discussions with 10 selected students to gain deeper explanations of the quantitative patterns.

3.5. Data Analysis

This study used a mixed-method approach to data analysis. In the quantitative phase, frequencies and percentages were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics, while mean and standard deviation were used to describe students' perceptions of teachers' politeness strategies. To

determine whether significant differences existed across profile variables, t-tests were used for sex, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used for age, academic program, and ethnicity.

In the qualitative phase, the quantitative findings informed the development of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) questions. The FGD data were then analyzed through thematic analysis following Miles and Huberman's (1994) framework. Participant responses were coded to identify key themes related to students' perceptions of teachers' politeness strategies in classroom interaction. To ensure clarity and confidentiality, participants were assigned codes such as FGD-P01, FGD-P02, and so on.

Finally, the quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated to provide a fuller understanding of students' perceptions of politeness strategies and their influence on classroom interaction.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Students' perceptions of teachers' politeness strategies in classroom interaction.

Politeness strategy	Mean	Interpretation	SD
Bald-on-Record	4.24	Strongly Agree	0.655
Positive Politeness	4.16	Agree	0.656
Negative Politeness	4.01	Agree	0.676
Off-Record	3.69	Agree	0.874
Overall average	4.025	Agree	0.715

The highest rating for Bald-on-Record suggests that direct teacher language is not automatically interpreted as impolite in this state university context. Rather, students appear to understand directness as a legitimate expression of instructional authority when it clarifies expectations, supports task completion, and reduces uncertainty. This interpretation aligns with Brown and Levinson's (1987) description of bald-on-record communication as clear and unambiguous. However, it also acquires a more culturally specific meaning in the present study: directness seems to function as a form of respectful pedagogical leadership when it helps students know what to do and how to improve. This reading is reinforced by recent evidence showing that teacher talk is positively associated with student achievement, especially when classroom discourse is dialogic and engagement-supportive (Tao & Chen, 2024). Students' preference for clarity also resonates with research showing that active participation in whole-class discourse predicts learning, particularly when communicative expectations are sufficiently

clear for students to respond with confidence (Decristan et al., 2023).

The high rating for Positive Politeness indicates that students also value teachers' warm, encouraging, and inclusive communication. Although directness ranked first, students still responded favorably to praise, affirming language, humor, and other expressions that reduce social distance and make the classroom feel more supportive. This suggests that students do not simply want authority; they prefer authority tempered relationally. In cultural terms, the finding points to a classroom norm in which hierarchy remains accepted, but emotional accessibility and encouragement are also expected. This interpretation is consistent with evidence that teacher immediacy is positively associated with academic engagement and that teacher-student rapport mediates this relationship in higher education contexts (Yuan, 2024). It also supports the broader argument that politeness in classroom discourse is not merely about softening language, but about creating conditions in which students feel safe enough to participate.

Negative Politeness also received a favorable rating, but its lower mean suggests a more qualified response from students. This indicates that students appreciate communication that conveys respect, restraint, and awareness of imposition, yet do not always experience formal politeness as the most interactionally effective style. The result implies that in this context, formal respect and relational accessibility are not identical. Students may value politeness that acknowledges their autonomy or workload, but overly formal language may weaken rapport if it creates too much distance. This interpretation is important for the paper's cultural

framing because it shows that politeness is not valued in purely abstract terms; rather, its effectiveness depends on how it is socially received in the classroom. Kádár and Haugh (2020) similarly argue that politeness is context-sensitive and socially interpreted, not inherently positive in any one form. More recent work on teacher-student interaction also suggests that engagement is shaped not only by formal classroom roles but by the quality of interpersonal connection established through discourse (Yuan, 2024).

Among the four strategies, Off-Record received the lowest mean, although it still fell within the "Agree" range. This suggests that students are least comfortable with indirect teacher communication, especially when meaning is conveyed through hints, vague suggestions, rhetorical questions, or implied feedback. The finding should not be reduced to a simple preference for explicitness. More significantly, it suggests that in this classroom culture, students value teacher language that makes academic expectations socially readable and institutionally clear. When the teacher's meaning is too implicit, students may hesitate to participate because ambiguity raises the risk of misunderstanding, error, or embarrassment. This interpretation is consistent with recent evidence that students' participation in whole-class discourse is affected by the structure of interaction and by the availability of interpretable communicative cues (Decristan et al., 2023). It also complements the broader discussion in classroom discourse research that participation is facilitated when teacher talk reduces rather than increases uncertainty (Tao & Chen, 2024).

Table 2: Differences in students' perceptions of teachers' politeness strategies when grouped according to profile variables.

Profile variable	Politeness strategy	Test statistic	p-value	Decision	Conclusion
Age	Bald-on-Record	F = 0.182	0.908	Failed to reject the null hypothesis	No significant difference
	Positive Politeness	F = 0.447	0.720	Failed to reject the null hypothesis	No significant difference
	Negative Politeness	F = 0.431	0.731	Failed to reject the null hypothesis	No significant difference
	Off-Record	F = 2.387	0.070	Failed to reject the null hypothesis	No significant difference
Sex	Bald-on-Record	t = 1.042	0.298	Failed to reject the null hypothesis	No significant difference
	Positive Politeness	t = 0.276	0.783	Failed to reject the null hypothesis	No significant difference

	Negative Politeness	$t = 0.207$	0.836	Failed to reject the null hypothesis	No significant difference
	Off-Record	$t = 0.467$	0.641	Failed to reject the null hypothesis	No significant difference
Academic program	Bald-on-Record	$F = 1.240$	0.291	Failed to reject the null hypothesis	No significant difference
	Positive Politeness	$F = 1.256$	0.284	Failed to reject the null hypothesis	No significant difference
	Negative Politeness	$F = 1.541$	0.179	Failed to reject the null hypothesis	No significant difference
	Off-Record	$F = 2.663$	0.023	Reject the null hypothesis	Significant difference
Ethnicity	Bald-on-Record	$F = 0.053$	0.984	Failed to reject the null hypothesis	No significant difference
	Positive Politeness	$F = 0.280$	0.840	Failed to reject the null hypothesis	No significant difference
	Negative Politeness	$F = 0.200$	0.896	Failed to reject the null hypothesis	No significant difference
	Off-Record	$F = 0.186$	0.906	Failed to reject the null hypothesis	No significant difference

Table 2 shows that students' perceptions of teachers' politeness strategies did not differ significantly by age, sex, or ethnicity, and that no significant differences were found across academic programs for Bald-on-Record, Positive Politeness, and Negative Politeness. This overall pattern suggests that students in the institution share a relatively common understanding of how teachers communicate clarity, respect, and support in classroom interaction. Rather than being shaped strongly by personal demographic differences, perceptions of politeness appear to be influenced by a shared classroom discourse culture in which students become accustomed to similar expectations regarding instructional directness, relational warmth, and appropriate teacher behavior. This interpretation is consistent with evidence that teacher talk is meaningfully related to student achievement when classroom discourse supports engagement and interaction (Tao & Chen, 2024), and that students' participation in whole-class discourse is itself linked to learning outcomes (Decristan et al., 2023).

The only statistically significant result emerged for Off-Record strategies when grouped according to academic program. This finding suggests that indirect teacher communication is the most sensitive to disciplinary context. While more direct and conventionally polite strategies were interpreted similarly across programs, off-record strategies such

as hints, vague suggestions, or implied feedback may be understood differently depending on the communicative norms of specific fields. Students in programs that value precision, explicit instruction, and procedural clarity may be less receptive to indirectness. In contrast, students in language-oriented or interpretive disciplines may be more comfortable with nuanced meaning. This result strengthens the article's cultural argument by showing that politeness is shaped not only by broad institutional norms but also by micro-cultures within the university, where disciplinary expectations influence how respectful communication is interpreted in practice. This reading is also compatible with research showing that classroom communication and students' willingness to participate are influenced by how teachers provide affective support and by how students regulate apprehension during classroom interaction (Xu & Pan, 2025).

The lack of significant differences by age, sex, and ethnicity also implies that politeness in this setting may be functioning as a relatively stable institutional norm rather than as a highly individualized preference. In other words, students appear to interpret teachers' language through a common academic frame shaped by repeated exposure to similar authority relations, discourse routines, and expectations of respectful conduct. This does not eliminate cultural variation; rather, it suggests that

within the present university context, classroom interaction has developed a recognizable discourse culture that students broadly share. Such a reading is consistent with recent work showing that teacher immediacy and teacher-student rapport are centrally

related to academic engagement, indicating that shared interactional expectations can play an important role in how communication is evaluated in higher learning contexts (Yuan, 2024).

Table 3: Qualitative themes on students' perceptions and behavioral responses to teachers' politeness strategies.

Focus area	Essential theme	Core qualitative insight	Influence on student behavior	Sample excerpt from the original results	Illustrative meaning
Bald-on-Record / clarity in teacher communication	Clarity in teachers' communication builds student confidence and improves performance.	Students described clear, direct, and respectful instructions as helpful for understanding expectations, improving performance, and reducing confusion. Honest feedback was appreciated when it clearly pointed out what to improve.	Students became more confident, better prepared, and more willing to participate because they knew what was expected of them.	"Personally, I like this bald-on-record strategy because it allows me to clearly define what I should do when it comes to instructions." (FGD-P01)	Clear communication functions as instructional guidance and builds confidence in classroom participation.
Positive and Negative Politeness / supportive and respectful classroom climate	Politeness fosters a safe, engaging, and inclusive classroom environment	Students valued praise, encouragement, humor, an affirming tone, and respectful language because these made them feel comfortable, motivated, and included. They also appreciated respectful formality when it conveyed value and professionalism.	Students reported greater participation, emotional engagement, motivation, and willingness to cooperate when teacher language felt supportive and respectful.	"Because of humor in our discussions, I enjoy entering the class." (FGD-P06)	Politeness operates as interactional care that supports both emotional safety and active learning.
Off-Record / indirect communication	Ambiguous teacher communication may hinder comprehension and participation.	Students often found hints, vague suggestions, and indirect feedback confusing. Although a few saw indirectness as encouraging critical thinking, most preferred explicit guidance.	Confusion, hesitation, reduced enthusiasm, and lower participation were associated with excessive ambiguity in teacher talk.	"Indirect language will lead to confusion. Hence, full understanding of the lesson cannot be achieved." (FGD-P06)	Indirectness may weaken participation when students cannot easily interpret the teacher's meaning.
Positive reinforcement and affirming language	Friendly tone and affirming language encourage participation and emotional engagement.	Students linked motivating words, praise, humor, and friendly expressions with enjoyment and confidence in class.	Students became more participative, emotionally engaged, and responsive during classroom activities.	"It makes me feel confident to participate in class." (FGD-P10)	A warm, communicative tone helps lower pressure and increase engagement.
Respectful treatment and workload awareness	Respectful treatment and workload awareness foster cooperation and accountability	Students appreciated polite requests, respectful tone, and teachers' awareness of student workload, especially when these conveyed fairness and understanding.	Students became more cooperative, responsible, and willing to comply when they felt understood and respected.	"It warms my heart when teachers consider our workload; it makes me want to participate more." (FGD-P06)	Respectful communication strengthens accountability by making classroom expectations feel fair.

The first theme, clarity in teachers' communication builds student confidence and improves performance, is strongly consistent with the original discussion in your manuscript. Students

repeatedly linked direct instructions and honest feedback with better understanding, stronger performance, and greater confidence. One participant explained that bald-on-record

communication helped define clearly what needed to be done (FGD-P01), while another emphasized that clear instructions improved understanding of lessons and tasks (FGD-P04). This supports your original point that direct communication is appreciated when it reduces ambiguity and guides performance. That reading remains compatible with Ginting and Pasaribu (2023), Rahayuningsih et al. (2020), and Anugrawati et al. (2020), which your manuscript already uses to support the value of directness in instructional settings. To strengthen this point, Chen et al. (2022) found that instructional clarity is positively associated with students' achievement-related outcomes, including academic emotions and self-concept.

The second theme, politeness fosters a safe, engaging, and inclusive classroom environment, also follows the original line of interpretation in your file. Students described praise, humor, encouragement, and respectful language as making the classroom feel more comfortable, motivating, and less intimidating. One participant said, "Because of humor in our discussions, I enjoy entering the class" (FGD-P06), while another noted that motivating words increased eagerness to report and participate (FGD-P05). This supports your original discussion that positive and negative politeness can foster a supportive learning atmosphere when used appropriately. The same point is already reflected in the manuscript's use of Kádár and Haugh (2020), Jayanti et al. (2024), Urbis et al. (2022), and Aprianto (2022). As a concise

indexed reinforcement, Luo et al. (2024) show that classroom climate and teacher-student relationship quality play an important role in language-learning outcomes, which strengthens the interpretation that supportive politeness has both relational and academic value.

The third theme, ambiguous teacher communication may hinder comprehension and participation, explains why students were less favorable toward indirect teacher talk. In the original results, participants reported that vague or indirect language often led to confusion, hesitation, and lower participation. One participant stated, "Indirect language will lead to confusion. Hence, full understanding of the lesson cannot be achieved" (FGD-P06). At the same time, another said that when teachers relied on hints, participation decreased because meaning was not always clear (FGD-P09). This aligns with your original interpretation that off-record strategies may occasionally stimulate critical thinking but often hinder understanding when students need explicit guidance. That view remains consistent with Anugrawati et al. (2020) and the original discussion in the manuscript. As a light-indexed reinforcement, recent work on classroom communication strategies in higher education contexts also emphasizes that teachers' communication patterns influence how students engage reflectively and respond during instruction (Haile et al., 2024).

Table 4. Joint display of quantitative and qualitative findings.

Aspect/ focal point	Quantitative findings	Qualitative findings	Integrative interpretation
Students' preference for Bald-on-Record strategies	Bald-on-Record received the highest mean ($M = 4.24$, Strongly Agree).	Students reported that clear, direct instructions made them feel more confident, guided, and prepared to perform classroom tasks. One participant explained, "Personally, I like this bald-on-record strategy because it allows me to clearly define what I should do when it comes to instructions" (FGD-P01).	Students value instructional directness when it promotes clarity, confidence, and task completion.
Effectiveness of Positive Politeness on motivation	Positive Politeness obtained a high mean ($M = 4.16$, Agree).	Students shared that praise, humor, and affirming language made the classroom feel lighter, safer, and more motivating. One participant stated, "Because of humor in our discussions, I enjoy entering the class" (FGD-P06).	Encouraging and inclusive teacher language contributes to emotional safety and active engagement.
Mixed reception of Negative Politeness strategies	Negative Politeness was positively rated ($M = 4.01$, Agree), but lower than Bald-on-Record and Positive Politeness.	Some students appreciated respectful formality and distance, while others felt that excessive formality could be intimidating and reduce comfort in participation.	Respectful communication is valued, but it becomes less effective when it creates too much relational distance.
Low rating of Off-Record strategies	Off-Record received the lowest mean ($M = 3.69$, Agree).	Students often described indirect hints and vague feedback as confusing. One participant said,	Indirect communication may hinder comprehension and

		<i>"Indirect language will lead to confusion. Hence, full understanding of the lesson cannot be achieved"</i> (FGD-P06).	discourage participation when meanings are not explicit.
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The joint display shows that the qualitative findings do not merely accompany the quantitative results; rather, they explain why certain politeness strategies were evaluated more favorably than others. The quantitative data indicated that Bald-on-Record was the most preferred strategy. At the same time, the qualitative responses clarified that students value this form of teacher talk because it provides clear instructions, reduces confusion, and strengthens their confidence in performing classroom tasks. In this sense, directness is not simply bluntness but a form of instructional clarity that supports learning and classroom participation (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Chen et al., 2022; Tao & Chen, 2024).

A similar pattern is evident in Positive Politeness. Although it ranked below Bald-on-Record, it still received a high mean rating, and the qualitative data explain this favorable response by showing that praise, humor, encouragement, and affirming language help create a classroom atmosphere that is emotionally safe, motivating, and inclusive. These responses suggest that students value not only clarity in instruction but also teacher language that reduces social distance and promotes supportive classroom relationships. This interpretation is consistent with studies showing that classroom climate and teacher-student relationships contribute meaningfully to students' engagement and perceived learning outcomes (Luo et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2024).

The integrated findings also clarify the more qualified response to Negative Politeness. While the quantitative results show that students generally agreed with this strategy, the qualitative responses reveal that its effectiveness depends on how it is enacted. Respectful formality, polite requests, and sensitivity to workload were appreciated because they conveyed professionalism and regard for students. However, excessive formality could also create relational distance and reduce students' comfort in participating. This suggests that students value respect in teacher communication, but not when it becomes interactionally distancing or intimidating (Kádár & Haugh, 2020; Liu et al., 2024).

Finally, the convergence between the two datasets is especially clear regarding Off-Record strategies. Quantitatively, this strategy received the lowest mean, while qualitatively, students explained that indirect hints, vague suggestions, and implied

feedback often led to confusion, hesitation, and reduced participation. These responses indicate that indirectness may be less effective in classroom settings where students expect teacher communication to be clear, interpretable, and instructionally helpful. Taken together, the joint display confirms that students evaluate politeness strategies not only by linguistic form but also by how teacher talk affects comprehension, confidence, and participation in classroom interaction (Decristan et al., 2023; Haile et al., 2024; Tao & Chen, 2024).

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined education students' perceptions of teachers' politeness strategies in classroom interaction at North Eastern Mindanao State University–Cantilan Campus using a sequential explanatory design. The findings showed that students perceived all four politeness strategies positively. However, they showed the strongest preference for Bald-on-Record, followed by Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness, and Off-Record strategies. These results indicate that students value teacher communication that is clear, direct, and supportive, while highly indirect communication is less preferred in classroom settings.

The qualitative findings helped explain these patterns by showing that direct communication builds confidence and improves performance, positive politeness creates a safe and motivating classroom environment, and respectful communication encourages cooperation when balanced appropriately. At the same time, ambiguous communication may hinder comprehension and participation. Viewed more broadly, the findings suggest that teacher politeness strategies operate within a classroom culture in which instructional authority and relational care are both valued. Students appear to respond positively to directness when it provides guidance and fairness, and to warmth when it makes participation feel safer and more encouraging.

No significant differences were found when perceptions were grouped according to age, sex, or ethnicity, indicating a relatively shared understanding of teacher politeness within the institution. However, the significant difference found for Off-Record strategies across academic programs suggests that disciplinary context may influence how indirect communication is interpreted. Overall, the

study shows that politeness strategies in classroom interaction function not only as pragmatic choices but also as culturally and pedagogically meaningful practices in Philippine higher education.

Future research may examine teachers' perspectives on the same strategies to compare

intended communication practices with students' interpretations. Such work may deepen understanding of how politeness functions in both classroom interactions and how it can support more effective, culturally responsive teaching.

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