

Politeness Strategies Used in the Interview between Amna Nawaz and the Iranian Foreign Minister on Iran vs the USA-Israel War

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Received: April 2026; Revised: April 2026; Accepted: May 2026; Published: June 2026

Abstract

Political interviews frequently address sensitive issues, particularly in high-stakes contexts such as war, diplomacy, and international conflict. In such situations, speakers are frequently confronted with face-threatening questions that challenge their authority and institutional image. Therefore, politeness strategies are applied to minimize face-threatening acts (FTAs) and maintain harmonious interaction. This study examines the application of politeness strategies by both participants and explains their implications in the interaction. The interview discussed the ongoing war between Iran versus the United States of America (USA) and Israel. This research adopts Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness strategies framework and applied qualitative content analysis as the method. This study uses documentation technique to analyze the data. The data were collected from the PBS NewsHour official YouTube channel. The findings show that there are 85 utterances contain politeness strategies in the interaction. Amna Nawaz produced 29 utterances containing politeness strategies and predominantly employed Negative Politeness with 15 occurrences. In contrast, Abbas Araghchi produced 56 utterances and mainly used Bald on Record, accounting for 37 occurrences. The predominant strategy used by Amna Nawaz used to minimize imposition and maintain respect while asking critical questions. In contrast, the Iranian Foreign Minister predominantly applied bald on-record strategy. It was used to provide direct and clear responses that represented Iran's official stance. These patterns reflect their different communicative roles. The interviewer predominantly use negative politeness strategies to mitigates face-threatening questions while the interviewee adopts a direct and firm response to defend institutional positions.

Keywords: Politeness strategies; Face-threatening acts; Political interview; Communicative roles

How to Cite: Zelina, F.F., Hkikmat, M.M., & Wardoyo, C. (2026). Politeness Strategies Used in the Interview between Amna Nawaz and the Iranian Foreign Minister on Iran vs the USA-Israel War. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 6(2), 518-532. doi: <https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v6i2.4841>



<https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v6i2.4841>

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INTRODUCTION

Political interviews often involve sensitive topics such as conflict, military action, and diplomatic tension. Within this settings, speakers may express criticism, disagreement, and ask challenging questions that potentially create tension in the interaction (Handayani, 2023). Therefore, speakers need to carefully manage their utterances to maintain harmonious interaction and achieve the communication objectives (Rajik, 2025). The use of appropriate linguistic strategies becomes important to reduce this potential confrontation (Lee et al., 2021; Purba et al., 2023). This situation is reflected in the interview between journalist Amna Nawaz on PBS NewsHour and the Iranian Foreign Minister. The interview discussed the tension escalation between Iran versus the United States of America (USA) and Israel. Communication in this context becomes more complex because both participants must discuss sensitive political and military issues. The interviewer needs to ask questions that potentially threaten the interviewee's face, while the interviewee must defend his country's position.

Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed the concept of politeness strategies. It serves as linguistic strategies to minimize threats to the hearer's face and to build harmonious interaction. They further explained the concept of face, which refers to the public self-image that represents how people want to be perceived by others in social interactions. This self-image is divided into two aspects (Brown and Levinson, 1987). The first is positive face, which refers to the need to be liked, appreciated, and approved by others, and the second is the negative face, which refers to the need for autonomy and freedom from imposition. Certain communicative actions, such as asking questions, criticizing, or disagreeing, may potentially threaten these wants (Haristiani et al., 2023). Brown and Levinson (1987) refer to these actions as face-threatening acts (FTAs). To redress the impact of such actions, interlocutors apply politeness strategies.

Politeness strategies are classified into four main types based Brown and Levinson (1987) framework. There are positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on-record, and off-record strategies. Bald-on-record refers to direct expressions that do not minimize the face threat. Positive politeness is used to build harmonious interaction by reducing social distance and emphasizing solidarity. It can be expressed through showing agreement, expressing appreciation, or highlighting shared understanding, while negative politeness functions to respect hearer's freedom of action and respect for autonomy. Examples of implementing negative politeness include using indirect language, hedging, or minimizing imposition. Off-record strategies are considered the most indirect strategy because the speaker conveys the intended meaning implicitly. This indirectness violates the maxims, as the speaker deliberately avoids being clear or sufficiently informative. (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Yule, 1996; Yaghoubzadeh, 2021; Haryanto et al, 2024).

Numerous studies have examined politeness strategies in various types of discourse, including talk shows, social media, education, religious discourse, and in political discourse. In social media discourse, some studies have been done by Andini et al. (2025), Bărbuleț, (2025), Pathanasin & Eschstruth (2022), and Rahardi et al. (2025). In education and religious discourse, there are studies employed by Wardoyo (2017, 2024), Syting & Gildore (2022), Chaqmaqchee & Jasim (2022), Triyono et al (2025). The numerous studies of politeness in various contexts indicate that this topic is essential in the pragmatics study.

In terms of political discourse, studies on politeness strategies have also been done by several researchers Lee et al. (2021) ; Dalimunte & Wen 2022; Haryanto et al. (2024). In the context of negotiation, Lee et al. (2021) analyzed the use of politeness in negotiation, how the negotiators adjust their utterance to achieve their objectives without offending their counterparts. While in a political debate context, Dalimunte & Wen (2022) investigated politeness strategies used in U.S. presidential debates to examine how candidates shape their political image. The study by Dalimunte & Wen (2022) found that positive politeness strategies were more dominant and were used to construct a favorable public image. In the context of a political talk show, (Haryanto et al., 2024) examined the use of politeness strategies and their factors in the Mata Najwa political talk show. This study found that political speakers employed various politeness strategies to maintain interaction and manage disagreement. Furthermore, Yafi & Maris (2025) analyzed face management in the political talk show.

Previous studies have examined politeness strategies in various contexts, including in political discourse. However, studies analyzing politeness strategies in political interviews discussing war, geopolitical conflict, and diplomacy remain limited. This study addresses these gaps by examining politeness strategies used by journalist Amna Nawaz and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in an interview on PBS NewsHour discussing Iran vs. the USA and Israel's ongoing war.

This interview provides a relevant object for analyzing politeness strategies since it discussed sensitive issues related to war, geopolitical conflict, and diplomacy between the Iranian side and the USA and Israeli side. In this setting, the interviewer is required to ask critical and potentially face-threatening questions while still maintaining professional neutrality, whereas the interviewee must defend institutional positions and respond to sensitive political issues. Therefore, the interaction becomes an appropriate context for examining how politeness strategies are used to manage conflict, maintain face, and negotiate power in an interview discussing war, geopolitical conflict, and diplomacy.

METHOD

Research Design

This study aims to identify the types of politeness strategies, determine the predominant strategy used by interlocutors in the interview, and explain the implications of using these politeness strategies in the interaction. Accordingly, a qualitative content analysis approach was adopted to analyze the data. Qualitative design was considered appropriate because it allows exploration and understanding of meaning through analysis of data in the form of words, utterances, and context (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative content analysis particularly enables the systematic examination of audiovisual texts to identify patterns of meaning and interpret communicative practices within specific social and political contexts (Wright, 2017). Furthermore, this method is used to systematically classify and interpret qualitative data by organizing it into categories relevant to the research questions. Through this method, the data are coded and grouped into meaningful units, allowing the researcher to identify patterns and interpret meanings based on a particular analytical framework (Schilling, 2017). This approach was considered suitable for examining politeness strategies since the data in this study consisted of an audiovisual political interview and the research aims is to identify and interpret the usage of politeness strategies in the interaction. The analysis was guided by Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies theory, which classifies politeness into four major strategies: Bald-on-Record, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness, and Off-Record.

Data Sources and Collection

The data source was a video interview from PBS NewsHour's official YouTube Channel entitled "Iran's Araghchi calls U.S. strikes a 'failure' and vows to fight 'as long as it takes'" with a duration of 12 minutes 44 seconds. The video was uploaded on March 10th, 2026, and had been viewed 292.369 times as of April 4th, 2026, at 21.53 (UTC+7). Data were collected using documentation. The researcher analyzed the full interview to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the interaction. The interview participants in this study were Amna Nawaz as the interviewer and Abbas Araghchi as the interviewee. The researcher played a central role in data collection and analysis, including transcription, identification of utterances, coding, classification, and interpretation of politeness strategies. The documentation sheet was used as a secondary instrument to support systematic organization of the data. The sheet consisted of interlocutors, utterance, politeness strategy, sub-strategy of each politeness strategy, and interpretation. Brown and Levinson's politeness theory was used to identify and classify utterances into four main strategies: Bald-on-Record, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness, and Off-Record. The utterances were then further categorized into their respective sub-strategies based on contextual meaning and communicative function.

The data collection process was conducted through several steps. First, the researcher selected the interview video. Second, the researcher watched the video repeatedly to gain comprehensive understanding related to the context of the interaction. Third, the interview video was transcribed into written form. The transcription focused on the speakers' verbal utterances. Prosodic features such as pauses, intonation, and fillers

were not analyzed because the study focused on the linguistic realization of politeness strategies. Fourth, utterances containing politeness strategies were identified and highlighted. Fifth, the selected utterances were organized into a documentation sheet and categorized based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies. Lastly, the researcher interpreted the use of selected politeness strategies based on Brown and Levinson (1987)'s framework.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis procedure. First, the interview transcript was examined to identify utterances containing politeness strategies according to Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework. First, the utterances were segmented based on speaker turns and contextual meaning to facilitate precise coding. Second, a deductive coding process was applied by categorizing each utterance into Brown and Levinson's four politeness strategies: Bald on Record, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness, and Off Record. Third, the utterances were further classified into their respective sub-strategies. Fourth, the findings were interpreted considering contextual factors such as institutional roles, power relations, topic sensitivity, social distance, level of imposition, and communicative purpose in order to explain why certain politeness strategies were employed in the interaction Brown and Levinson (1987)'s. the frequency and percentage of each strategy were calculated to determine the dominant strategies used by each speaker. Finally, the findings were interpreted by considering contextual factors such as institutional roles, power relations, topic sensitivity, social distance, level of imposition, and communicative purpose in order to explain why certain politeness strategies were employed in the interaction. Finally, the frequency and percentage of each strategy were calculated to determine the dominant politeness strategies employed by each speaker. To enhance the reliability of the analysis, the coding results and interpretations were reviewed and discussed with the second and third author who has expertise in discourse analysis and politeness studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The researchers identified 85 utterances containing politeness strategies in the PBS NewsHour interview between Amna Nawaz and Abbas Araghchi. Figure 1 below presents the distribution of politeness strategies employed by both interlocutors.

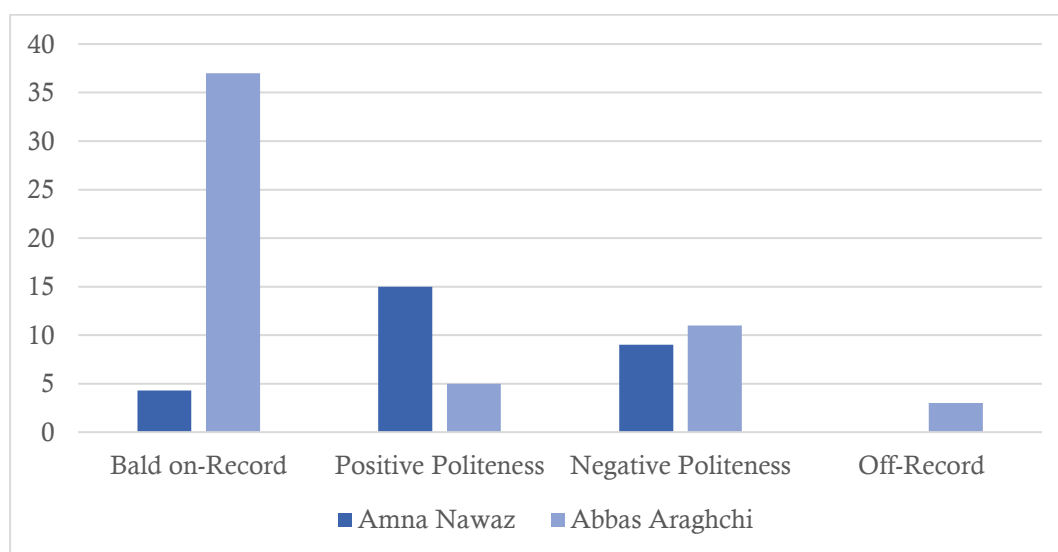


Figure 1. Distribution of the Use of Politeness Strategy Types Across both Participants

The findings reveal that the two speakers employed different dominant strategies in accordance with their institutional roles and communicative purposes. Amna Nawaz predominantly employed negative politeness strategies, whereas Abbas Araghchi predominantly employed bald on-record strategies. The detailed distribution of politeness strategies employed by the interlocutors is presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Politeness Strategies applied by Amna Nawaz

No	Types of Politeness Strategies	Sub-Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
1	Positive Politeness	S6: Avoid Disagreement	1	6,9 %
		S9: Assert/Presuppose S's Knowledge of and concern for H's wants	1	
		Strategy 15: Give Gifts to H	3	
2	Negative Politeness	S2: Question, Hedge	6	51,7 %
		S7: Impersonalize	9	
3	Bald on-Record		9	31%

The table 1 above presents that Amna Nawaz produced 29 utterances containing politeness strategies. Negative politeness emerged as the dominant strategy, accounting for 51,7% of the total utterances, followed by bald on-record. No off-record strategy was identified in Amna Nawaz's utterances during the interview.

Amna Nawaz's politeness strategies

In this section, we will discuss samples of Amna Nawaz's politeness strategies as the host during the Iran vs. USA-Israel War political interview.

Data 1

Nawaz: "I know you have said that unless there's a permanent end to the war, not a cease-fire in other words that Iran will continue to defend itself and continue to fight."

The utterance was produced in a journalistic interview context. It appears as part of a longer opening statement before Nawaz poses her main question regarding what the US and Israel are trying to achieve through the war. Nawaz restates a position that the Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has previously expressed. She used it as a foundation to lead into her question, "Can I ask you, what do you believe that the U.S. and Israel are trying to achieve or trying to change with this war?". According to Brown and Levinson (1987) positive politeness strategy 9: Assert or Presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants. It is employed when the speaker explicitly claims to know and understand the hearer's wants, needs, or stated positions. The utterance "I know you have said..." created a sense of common ground and mutual understanding between interlocutors and signaling that the interviewee has heard, remembered, and understood the interviewee's previous statement. Furthermore, the clause "*in other words that Iran will continue to defend itself and continue to fight.*" The utterance reinforces the application of positive politeness strategy 9: Assert or Presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants. The speaker paraphrased and elaborated on the interviewee's previous statement, which demonstrates a deeper level of comprehension of the hearer's intended meaning.

From a face-threatening act (FTA) perspective, this utterance poses a relatively low level of face threat. It satisfied the hearer's positive face by acknowledging and recognizing his viewpoint. The restatement functions as a conversational framing device. It establish a shared context before moving to the question. This approach contributes to build a cooperative and less confrontational interaction.

Data 2

Nawaz: So, I would like to ask you about the news, the selection of Mojtaba Khamenei, the son of the late ayatollah, who has been named as the new selected supreme leader of Iran.

The first topic Amna Nawaz asked about in the interview was the selection of Mojtaba Khamenei as the new supreme leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its implications.

Brown and Levinson (1987) explained that the use of questions and hedges is the characteristics of Negative Politeness Strategy 2: Question and Hedge. They also added that hedges are linguistic devices used to weaken the force of an utterance and avoid presuming the hearer's willingness to comply. Therefore, the utterance above is classified as Negative Politeness strategy 2: Question and Hedge. The linguistic choice "I would like to ask you" functions as a hedge that softens the interviewer's intent before asking a potentially sensitive political question. The speaker used a mitigated form to reduce imposition and show respect for the hearer's freedom to respond. Therefore, the hedge helps minimize the potential face-threatening act while maintaining a respectful and professional tone in the interview.

Data 3

Nawaz: We have heard from President Trump who said this weekend he denied any US involvement. On Saturday, he actually said, "based on what I have seen, that was done by Iran."

The interview takes place in the context of a missile strike on a girls' school in Minab, southern Iran, which killed more than 170 people. Prior to posing her question, Amna introduces President Trump's public denial of US involvement and his counter-allegation attributing the strike to Iran. This sets up a confrontational premise that implicitly challenges the Foreign Minister's previously stated position. The utterance above is categorized as Negative Politeness Strategy 7, Impersonalize Speaker and Hearer. Brown and Levinson (1987) explained that this strategy is used when the speaker depersonalizes both themselves and the hearer by avoiding the direct use of first- and second-person pronouns—"I" and "You"—in order to distance themselves from the face-threatening acts (FTAs) they are performing. By depersonalizing the interaction, the speaker is able to deliver a potentially threatening message without making it appear as a direct personal confrontation between speaker and hearer. Speakers often use passive constructions, third-person references, or attribute statements to external sources.

This strategy is reflected in Nawaz's utterance above. The most visible marker is her linguistic choice of "We have heard" at the opening of her statement. Instead of saying "I have heard" or "I think," Nawaz used the collective pronoun "we," which distances her from personal ownership of the claim. This collective framing makes the statement sound like a shared, publicly known piece of information rather than a personal accusation directed at the Foreign Minister. It helps to reduce the interpersonal weight of the FTA.

Data 4

Nawaz: I do want to ask more about the oil prices, as you mentioned. There have been widespread disruptions to oil delivery in the Persian Gulf. We're seeing prices here in the U.S. start to rise as well. Do you believe that you can pressure the U.S. and Israel to stop their attacks by slowing or stopping oil production as well?

This utterance was produced by interviewer Amna Nawaz during the interview after the Iranian Foreign Minister mentioned that the conflict between the Iranian side and the USA-Israel side was causing a global rise in oil prices. Thus, Journalist Amna Nawaz followed up his statement by asking, "Do you believe that you can pressure the U.S. and Israel to stop their attacks by slowing or stopping oil production as well?". Brown and Levinson (1987) described Negative Politeness Strategy 2: Question and Hedge as a strategy in which the speaker uses questions and hedges to reduce the force of a face-threatening act, giving the hearer more space to respond without feeling directly pressured or imposed upon. This strategy is reflected in the phrase "Do you believe that," which

functions as a hedging device. By using “*Do you believe that*” Amna frames the issue through the Foreign Minister’s perspective. By doing so, the question becomes less assertive and more open-ended. It allowed the interviewee to express his view rather than respond to a direct accusation or assumption. Furthermore, this utterance carries a relatively high level of sensitivity because it addresses Iran’s possible use of oil production as a strategic tool to pressure the United States and Israel. This topic directly concerns Iran’s political intentions and diplomatic position in the conflict. However, by framing the issue through a hedge, Amna mitigates the confrontational force of the question and maintains professional neutrality as an interviewer.

Data 5

Nawaz: Iran has, though, hit multiple oil facilities in other nations and some of the region’s top producing nations, in fact, Saudi Arabia and Iraq and Kuwait and we heard from your top military spokesman today, who said, if you can tolerate oil at more than \$200 per barrel, continue this game. So is limiting oil supply part of your strategy here?

The question was asked after the Iran Foreign Minister denied Iran’s responsibility for the disruption of oil supply and claimed that the disruption was caused by Israeli and U.S. attacks. He also emphasized that Iran did not close the Strait of Hormuz or prevent oil transportation. Amna Nawaz challenged his claim by mentioning reports that Iran had struck oil facilities in major producing countries and referring to a warning from Iran’s military spokesman about oil prices reaching \$200 per barrel. Based on Araghchi’s previous statement, she asked whether limiting oil supply was part of Iran’s strategy. Brown and Levinson (1987) stated that a bald on-record strategy is used when a speaker performs a face-threatening act in a direct, clear, and unambiguous way without redressive action.

Abbas Araghchi’s politeness strategies

Furthermore, the politeness strategies applied by Abbas Araghchi as the Foreign Minister of Iran is presented in the Table 2 below.

Table 2. The Politeness Strategies applied by Abbas Araghchi

No	Types of Politeness Strategies	Sub-Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
1	Positive Politeness	Strategy 2: Exaggerate	2	8,92%
		Strategy 5: Seek Agreement	1	
		Strategy 15: Give Gifts to H	2	
2	Negative Politeness	S2: Question, Hedge	10	19,64%
		S7: Impersonalize	1	
3	Bald-on-Record		37	66,07%
4	Off record	S10: Use Rhetorical Question	3	5,36%

As we can see from Table 2, there are 56 utterances containing politeness strategies found in Abbas Araghchi’s responses. These utterances consist of four types of politeness strategies, namely bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record. The result shows that Bald on record appears as the predominant strategy used by Abbas Araghchi as the foreign minister of Iran, with a total of 66,07%. We will discuss in much detail analysis of the politeness strategies used by Abbas Araghchi.

Data 6

Nawaz: Some say his election is a message of continuity of his father's leadership, of continued defiance to the U.S. and Israel. Do you agree with that? Is that the message Iran would like to send?

Araghchi: Well, I think that is the correct evaluation. It shows that the continuity, some sort of stability at the same time.

The bold utterance was made by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in response to the interviewer's statement or characterization regarding the selection of Mojtaba Khamenei as the new Supreme Leader of Iran. Nawaz had stated that *"some say his election is a message of continuity of his father's leadership"*. The Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi validated her statement before elaborating further. Brown and Levinson (1987) describe Positive Politeness Strategy 5: Seek Agreement as a strategy in which the speaker seeks or expresses agreement with the hearer by looking for aspects of a topic on which it is possible to agree and repeating part or all of what the preceding speaker has said in order to stress agreement. The bold utterance above, ***"Well, I think that is the correct evaluation. It shows that the continuity, some sort of stability at the same time."*** is the reflection of the use of Positive Politeness Strategy 5: Seek Agreement. The phrase *"Well, I think that is the correct evaluation,"* explicitly stated agreement with the interviewer's statement. It describes Nawaz's characterization as *"correct."* Furthermore, the phrase *"It shows that the continuity, some sort of stability"* reflects another important aspect of Positive Politeness Strategy 5 (Seek Agreement) identified by Brown and Levinson (1987), namely repetition. The word *"continuity"* had previously been said by interviewer in her question, *"some say his election is a message of continuity of his father's leadership."* By repeating the same term in his response, the Foreign Minister signals agreement with Amna's framing of the issue.

Data 7

Nawaz: Has he (Mojtaba Khamenei) or anyone in your leadership had any contact with U.S. officials? Is that something that he is open to, to talk about negotiations or a cease-fire?

Araghchi: Well, first of all, it's too soon for him to make any comment, you know. We are all waiting for his speeches and comments, which would come later on. But I don't think the question of talking with Americans or negotiation with Americans once again would be on the table because we have a very bitter experience of talking with Americans.

The interviewer asked whether the newly selected leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, is open to negotiations or a cease-fire. In response, the Foreign Minister addresses the possibility of future negotiations with the United States of America by saying, *"But I don't think the question of talking with Americans or negotiation with Americans once again would be on the table because we have a very bitter experience of talking with Americans."* In terms of face-threatening acts (FTAs), this utterance carries considerable weight, as Araghchi is essentially rejecting the possibility of negotiation in a public, international setting. This action potentially threatens both America's positive face and Iran's own face in the eyes of the global community. Furthermore, Araghchi used the phrase *"I don't think"* while stating the rejection. Brown and Levinson (1987) explained that the use of hedges is one of the key characteristics of Negative Politeness Strategy 2: Question and Hedge. Brown and Levinson (1987: 145) define hedge as *"a particle, word, or phrase that modifies the degree of membership of a predicate or noun phrase in a set,"* and argue that hedging assumptions underlying a speech act is *"a primary and fundamental method of softening routine interactional threats."* In this utterance, two layers of hedging can be identified. The first is the phrase *"I don't think,"* which functions as a Quality hedge. Brown and Levinson (1987: 164) explicitly list expressions such as *"I think," "I believe,"* and *"I assume"* as examples of Quality hedges that suggest *"the speaker is not taking full responsibility for the truth of his utterance."* By opening with *"I don't think,"* Araghchi frames his rejection not as an official statement or certain fact, but merely as a personal opinion, thereby weakening the sincerity condition of his assertion and avoiding full epistemic commitment to the proposition.

Data 8

Nawaz: Has he (Mojtaba Khamenei) or anyone in your leadership had any contact with U.S. officials? Is that something that he is open to, to talk about negotiations or a cease-fire?

Araghchi: ... We negotiated with them last year in June, and they attacked us in the middle of negotiations, and again this year, they tried to convince us that this time is different. They promised us that they don't have any intention to attack us. They wanted to resolve the Iran's nuclear resolution peacefully and to find a negotiated solution, and we finally accepted. But again, after three rounds of negotiation and after the American team in the negotiation said itself that we made a big progress, still they decided to attack us.

The interviewer asks whether the newly selected leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, or the Iranian leadership has had any contact with U.S. officials and whether he is open to negotiations or a cease-fire. At first, Araghchi stated that Iran is not open to discussing negotiations and cease-fire with the USA and Israel. He further added the explanation of that rejection by saying, *"We negotiated with them last year in June, and they attacked us in the middle of negotiations, and again this year, they tried to convince us that this time is different. They promised us that they don't have any intention to attack us. They wanted to resolve Iran's nuclear resolution peacefully and to find a negotiated solution, and we finally accepted. But again, after three rounds of negotiation and after the American team in the negotiation said itself that we made a big progress, still they decided to attack us."* These utterances were said directly and firmly without any effort to minimize the FTAs. Thus, these utterances are categorized as a bald on-record strategy. Brown and Levinson (1987) stated that bald on-record strategy is employed when an utterance is delivered in a clear, direct, and unambiguous manner, without attempts to mitigate the face-threatening act or employ face-saving devices. They also added that his strategy is chosen when the speaker prioritizes efficiency and clarity over social harmony, or when the communicative situation demands maximum rhetorical impact.

Data 9

Nawaz: ... Do you believe that you can pressure the U.S. and Israel to stop their attacks by slowing or stopping oil production as well?

Araghchi: ... The oil production, the transportation of oil has been slowed down or stopped not because of us, because of the attacks and aggression made by Israelis and Americans against us...

Amna Nawaz as the interviewer asked whether Iran's strategy of stopping oil production could be used as a form of pressure to the USA and Israel to stop their attacks. In response, Araghchi rejected this assumption and clarified that Iran did not cause the slowdown in oil production and transportation. He stated that the disruption occurs because of the attacks and aggression carried out by Israel and the USA against Iran. According to Brown and Levinson (1987) Araghchi's linguistic choices in responding to the question demonstrate the use of the bald-on-record strategy. Bald-on-record strategy is the strategy in which the speaker delivers the message directly and clearly, without any effort to soften the message, such as using hedges or apologies. Furthermore, Brown and Levinson further distinguish two classes of bald on record usage. The first class refers to cases where the face threat is not minimized and face is entirely ignored or treated as irrelevant, such as in situations of urgency or emergencies where the communicative priority overrides any consideration of the hearer's face. The second class refers to cases where the speaker, by performing the FTA baldly on record, paradoxically minimizes the face threat by implication, such as when a firm and direct invitation like *"Come in!"* actually makes the hearer feel more at ease rather than threatened (Brown & Levinson, 1987 p. 95). Araghchi's utterance, *"The oil production, the transportation of oil has been slowed down or stopped not because of us, because of the attacks and aggression made by Israelis and Americans*

against us," appears under the first situation, particularly where clarity and efficiency in conveying a message are prioritized over face considerations. As the utterance is delivered in the context of an international interview setting, discussing the war between Iran—the country in which he represents as its foreign minister—and the USA and Israel.

Data 10

Nawaz: ... some analysts say the U.S. may be laying the groundwork for some kind of public uprising. Do you believe that's the case? And if protesters take to the streets, will they be allowed to protest?

*Araghchi: **Well, where are those protesters?** We have now millions of people in the streets right now in support of the Islamic Republic, in support of the new supreme leader, in support of their military armed forces.*

In responding to the interviewer's question, Araghchi started with, "Well, where are those protesters?" followed by the statement, "We have now millions of people in the streets right now in support of the Islamic Republic, in support of the new supreme leader, in support of their military armed forces." According to (Brown and Levinson 1987), off record strategy refers to an indirect communicative act in which the speaker's intended meaning is not explicitly stated and may be open to multiple interpretations. One of the strategies of off-record strategy is the use of rhetorical question (strategy 10), in which speakers ask questions without genuinely expecting an answer. The use of a rhetorical question violates the sincerity condition of questioning since the speaker does not seek information but instead conveys meaning indirectly through implicature (Brown & Levinson, 1987 p. 223). Thus, the intended message is delivered implicitly.

Discussion

The findings show a contrast in the politeness strategy patterns used by the interlocutors. Amna Nawaz predominantly used negative politeness strategies, which accounted for 51,7%, making it her most dominant strategy, followed by bald-on-record at 31%. In contrast, Abbas Araghchi predominantly uses bald on-record strategy with 66,07% followed by negative politeness with 19,64%. These findings reflect communicative orientations shaped by the interlocutors' respective institutional roles, communicative goals, and the broader geopolitical context in which the interaction takes place.

Negative politeness is used to minimize imposition and respect the hearer's freedom of action (Duffau & Fox Tree, 2024). This strategy helps speakers maintain social distance, show deference, and reduce the potential threat to the hearer's negative face (Beschieru, 2021; Brown et al., 1987b; Tabachnikov, 2024). It is commonly employed when speakers ask questions, make requests, or discuss sensitive issues that may challenge the hearer's position. By using negative politeness strategies, speakers attempt to avoid confrontation and create a more polite and professional interaction (Pompeu, 2021; Rahardi et al., 2025). This indicates that the interviewer attempts to maintain professionalism and reduce imposition while asking potentially sensitive questions. By using hedges, indirect forms, and respectful expressions, Nawaz shows awareness of the interviewee's negative face and consistently employs hedging devices, indirect questions, and impersonalized language to reduce the imposition of these face-threatening acts. However, Nawaz's preference for negative politeness should not be interpreted as a reflection of institutional inferiority. Macaulay (2017) further explained that political interviewers possess substantial latent power to threaten the interviewee's face despite differences in political status. In this sense, Nawaz's frequent use of negative politeness is better understood as a strategic manifestation of journalistic professionalism. She was able to raise sensitive and potentially confrontational issues while maintaining professional neutrality and maintaining a supportive

interaction that encourages the interviewee to remain engaged through cautious questioning. The occasional use of Bald-on-Record strategy in several utterances further suggests that directness was selectively employed when communicative clarity and precision became more important than face-saving concerns. A similar pattern of selective application is observed by Yafi & Maris (2025b) in a political interview within Indonesian presidential candidates contexts, where bald-on-record strategies are mainly employed to convey assertive and precise information rather than emphasizing face-saving considerations.

The findings are also supported by Macaulay (2017), who argues that politeness and impoliteness in political interviews are strategically employed according to the communicative demands of the interaction. Macaulay (2017) further notes that interviewers may selectively adopt confrontational strategies, such as loaded questions, to challenge interviewees and direct the flow of discussion. This perspective aligns with the present study, particularly in Nawaz's selective use of Bald-on-Record strategy alongside her dominant use of negative politeness. Such a pattern suggests that journalistic questioning in political interviews is not entirely fixed but is strategically adjusted according to communicative purpose and interactional context.

Study by Khoiriyah (2016) also strengthens the findings within the present study. Khoiriyah (2016) examined face strategies employed by the host of *The Rachel Maddow Show* when interviewing politicians and non-politicians, found that Negative Politeness was the dominant strategy used when interacting with political guests. A similar pattern is evident in the present study, in which Nawaz predominantly employed Negative Politeness when interviewing Araghchi, an Iranian political figure. This similarity suggests that the use of negative politeness may represent a broader communicative tendency among journalists when addressing politically influential interviewees, particularly in contexts involving sensitive or potentially face-threatening issues. However, an important contextual difference should also be noted. While Khoiriyah (2016) focused on a domestic political talk show, the present study examines a diplomatic interview conducted during an ongoing geopolitical conflict. Nawaz continued to rely predominantly on negative politeness strategies despite the higher political stakes and increased sensitivity of the discussion. This finding suggests that cautious and mitigated questioning may remain a preferred journalistic approach even in highly confrontational political settings.

In contrast, the predominance of Bald on Record strategy in Araghchi's responses reflects a different communicative orientation. Bald-on-record strategy is used when a speaker performs a face-threatening act (FTA) directly, without any attempt at redressive action. It is because the speaker prioritizes clarity and efficiency over protecting the listener's face. This strategy is also used to assert authority while ensuring the message is communicated effectively (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Ejembi & Abochol, 2026). Therefore, the dominant use of a bald-on-record strategy suggests that Araghchi, as Iran's Foreign Minister, aims to appear firm and to assert his country's stance regarding this war to the international audience. This direct, clear, and firm statement is a strategy he uses to strengthen Iran's legitimacy, reject opposing claims, and convey national defence arguments.

They further distinguish two forms of bald-on-record usage: one in which face concerns are ignored or treated as irrelevant, and another in which face threats are indirectly minimized through implication. The first type occurs when face concerns are ignored or treated as irrelevant. It leads interlocutors to perform face-threatening acts directly and explicitly without mitigation or face-saving

devices. This type commonly occurs in situations where clarity, urgency, efficiency, or communicative precision is prioritized over politeness considerations. It is typically found in emergencies, task-oriented interactions, and situations involving power asymmetry (Brown & Levinson, 1987).. The second type, referred to as FTA-oriented bald-on-record. It involves direct utterances that nevertheless reduce face threat by implication in which directness may indirectly convey friendliness, cooperation, or concern for the hearer. Brown & Levinson (1987) explained that this form commonly appears in socially cooperative situations such as welcomings, farewells, invitations, and offers, where directness functions as a sign of positive interpersonal intention. The findings of the present study indicate that Araghchi's responses predominantly reflect the first form, as many of his utterances are expressed directly without hedging, mitigation, or face-saving devices toward the opposing parties.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi was speaking in an international media interview during an ongoing geopolitical conflict. Araghchi occupied a position in which communicative clarity and precision appeared to outweigh face considerations. In such a context, the need to convey Iran's official position clearly may explain his frequent reliance on direct and unmitigated language. This interpretation is supported by Macaulay (2017) observation that political interviews are often characterized as confrontational and competitive encounters, in which disagreement and direct challenges constitute expected communicative practices. The predominance of Bald-on-Record strategy in Araghchi's utterances therefore reflects a deliberate communicative choice aimed at emphasizing diplomatic firmness, political authority, and national representation.

Positive politeness strategies appear less frequently in both speakers' utterances. This reveals that the interaction is in a formal setting, as the interview discusses political conflict and both participants prioritize conveying information and defending their positions rather than emphasizing closeness. The off-record strategy is also only used by Abbas Araghchi. This indicates that he sometimes conveys messages indirectly when addressing sensitive claims. This indirectness allows him to convey certain meanings without making explicit statements that could heighten tension. The contrast in strategy use shows how each participant adjusts their communication style to their institutional roles and the topic's sensitive nature.

The findings of this study differ from previous research. Yafi & Maris (2025) found a balanced use of positive politeness strategies and negative politeness strategies in Mata Najwa's political talk. Similarly, Haryanto et al. (2024) reported that positive politeness was the most frequently used strategy, indicating an emphasis on building solidarity and reducing social distance. This difference is influenced by the high-stakes war context, in which the Foreign Minister tends to deliver direct and assertive responses, whereas the interviewer mitigates face-threatening acts through cautious and respectful questioning.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the types and use of politeness strategies in the interview between Abbas Araghchi, Iran's Foreign Minister, and Amna Nawaz, a journalist from PBS NewsHour, on the Iran vs. US-Israel War. The findings show contrast in the politeness strategies patterns applied by both interlocutors. Abbas Araghchi predominantly employed bald-on-record strategies, while Amna Nawaz mostly used negative politeness strategies. These contrasting patterns reflect the fundamentally different communicative orientations between interlocutors. The dominance of bald on record in Araghchi's responses indicates his preference for direct, clear, and explicit communication when delivering Iran's official stance. This strategy allows him to defend

positions clearly and assert authority, especially when discussing sensitive political issues. In contrast, Nawaz's use of negative politeness reflects her effort to minimize imposition and maintain respect while asking critical questions.

Thus, the difference in strategy use reflects their institutional roles in the interview. The interviewer prioritizes caution and mitigation through negative politeness. In contrast, the interviewee prioritizes directness through bald-on-record strategies to firmly represent Iran's stance in the ongoing political conflict. These findings contribute to the understanding of how politeness strategies function in conflict-related diplomatic interviews, particularly in relation to face management, media discourse, and political communication. Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. The analysis is based on a single interview involving two specific interlocutors within a particular geopolitical context, which may limit the broader applicability of the findings. Therefore, future studies are encouraged to examine multiple diplomatic interviews across different geopolitical settings and cultural backgrounds to gain a more comprehensive understanding of politeness strategy use in diplomatic discourse. In addition, integrating politeness theory with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) may provide deeper insights into the ideological dimensions of diplomatic language, particularly in relation to power, legitimacy, and national identity.

RECOMMENDATION

This study analyzes the data using Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework which mainly focuses on identifying the types of strategies used by interlocutors and the meaning behind the usage of the strategies. Therefore, future researchers are encouraged to conduct a more in-depth analysis by exploring the interlocutors' power, contextual factors, and the significance of the strategies within the discourse.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to express her deepest gratitude to her family members—Ayah, Ibu, Dede, and Mbak Ita—especially her parents for their continuous financial and emotional support throughout the completion of this study. The author also extends appreciation to all her teachers and lecturers, especially Kyai Abun who always gives her guidance and encouragement. The author is also deeply grateful to her lecturers, particularly Mr. Wardoyo for his patience, kindness, and his valuable guidance during the supervision process. Appreciation is also addressed to the author's friends who accompanied her throughout this journey in striving to achieve a SINTA 2 publication as the completion of my undergraduate thesis.

AI Declaration

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used OpenAI's ChatGPT, Anthropic's Claude, Google Gemini, and Grammarly to support language refinement, improve clarity and readability, and assist with grammar checking. All outputs were critically reviewed, revised, and verified by the author. The author takes full responsibility for the content, interpretation, and conclusions presented in this manuscript.

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