CYBERPRAGMATICS OF POLITENESS IN NETIZENS' COMMENTS ON THE INDONESIAN PRESIDENT'S INSTAGRAM POSTS

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Abstract
This study aims to reveal the content of negative politeness in netizens' speech in response to the President of Indonesia's Instagram posts for the 2024–2029 period, highlighting the disparity between expected norms of respectful digital interaction and the often impolite or aggressive language used in political commentaries. The approach used is descriptive qualitative based on pragmatic theory, especially Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, and supported by a cyberpragmatic approach. Data in the form of netizens' verbal speech was collected using note-taking and screen capture techniques, then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The results of the study show that many comments contain violations of negative politeness, such as unmitigated direct speech, sharp criticism, and even sarcasm that threatens the face of the interlocutor. However, some netizens still show politeness strategies by conveying criticism in a subtle and implicit manner. This phenomenon reflects changes in communication patterns on social media, which are characterized by freer expression but tend to ignore politeness norms. These findings reinforce the importance, especially in terms of language ethics, and open up space for the integration of a cyberpragmatic approach in learning Indonesian.

Keywords: cyberpragmatics; negative politeness; netizen comments; social media

INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, language doesn't just connect people it exposes who we are. Language is not merely a tool for communication but also a reflection of one's personality (Diani et al., 2022). The way individuals speak whether polite, direct, and structured, or rude, sarcastic, and accusatory can reveal the character they possess. As Brown and Levinso, Halil et al., (2023) emphasized in their politeness theory, linguistic choices are closely tied to one's desire to maintain face and social harmony. In this context, linguistic politeness becomes an essential aspect that indicates whether a person demonstrates virtuous behavior or otherwise. Moreover, Lailiyah (2024) highlights that politeness is not only a social norm but also a strategy to foster interpersonal relationships and minimize conflict. Whether in face-to-face settings or in digital communication, politeness remains a key to ensuring comfort and harmony in social interactions.

As digital platforms increasingly mediate our interactions, society's communication patterns have significantly evolved. Social media platforms, such as Instagram, have become new public spaces where people express their opinions,

including about important figures like the President. The comment section functions as an open arena for netizens to express support, criticism, and even mockery. According to a report by We Are Social and Hootsuite (Widiana, 2023). Indonesia has over 89 million active Instagram users, making it one of the top countries in terms of user engagement. This widespread usage contributes to the increasing role of social media in shaping public discourse.

In such conditions, it is crucial to examine how the principles of politeness are either upheld or disregarded in digital communication. Grice's Cooperative Principle and Wardhaugh's sociolinguistic insights Widiana (2024) emphasize that language use is governed by both implicit norms and contextual factors, which can become distorted in anonymous or emotionally charged online environments. The success of communication is influenced by the speaker's awareness of the shared goal in a conversation, as well as an understanding of the rules and maxims that apply (Sandjaja, 2024). When applied in the context of the digital world, a new approach called cyber pragmatics emerges, which is the study of how meaning and politeness are constructed and understood in online communication.

To contextualize digital interactions more precisely, this study adopts Dell Hymes' speaking framework. The components of communication such as setting, participants, goals, speech patterns, tone, media, norms, and genres play a crucial role in analyzing the dynamics of language use in digital spaces. Understanding these elements is essential for examining how netizens construct meaning, convey intentions, and either uphold or violate politeness norms in online interactions, particularly in politically sensitive contexts like commenting on presidential posts.This framework is essential for mapping out the context of online communication, which is often open to multiple interpretations.

Along with the rapid development of technology, Indonesian society has undergone significant changes in communication practices. Social media has become the primary platform for expressing opinions, including on the Instagram account of the President of the Republic of Indonesia for the 2024–2029 period, which is the focus of this study. According to Tamphu et al., (2024), social media has shifted communication from a monologue model to a dialogue, where all users have the opportunity to be both producers and consumers of information. Instagram has become one of the most popular platforms in Indonesia (Fitriana, 2014). Data from We Are Social in 2021 shows that the number of Instagram users reached 91.77 million people. This platform enables direct public interaction, including with national figures such as the President. In the comment section of the President's posts, the public is free to express opinions both support and criticism. However, this is where the potential for violating the principles of politeness arises, whether in the form of positive or negative face threats.

Despite extensive research on linguistic politeness, few studies have examined how it unfolds in high-stakes digital arenas like the President's Instagram comment section. Previous studies have widely explored linguistic politeness, particularly using Brown and Levinson's framework (1987) in various offline and formal contexts (Nurhikmah, etl al., 2024). In the context of social media, several researchers have examined politeness strategies on platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube (Hilal & Wahyudi, 2025). However, most of these studies tend to focus on Western or globalized settings, and only a few investigate localized political discourse, especially within Southeast Asia.

Research that specifically examines linguistic politeness in the comment sections of official political figures' Instagram posts in Indonesia remains very limited. To date, studies on online political discourse in Indonesia have largely focused on hate speech, digital democracy, and freedom of expression Ambarita (2024), but have not yet addressed in depth how politeness especially negative politeness manifests as a reflection of broader sociocultural values in political communication on platforms such as Instagram.

The gap in previous research is evident in the lack of focus on the application of linguistic politeness principles in the context of social media, particularly on platforms like Instagram used by political figures such as the President of Indonesia. While many studies have examined politeness strategies in offline contexts and other social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube few have addressed how politeness, particularly negative politeness, is applied in the comments section of political figures' Instagram accounts in Indonesia (Hilal & Wahyudi, 2025). Existing research tends to focus more on studies of hate speech, freedom of expression, or digital democracy Ambarita (2024), but does not delve deeply into how sociocultural values are reflected in digital interactions involving political figures. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by analysing the cyberpragmatics of politeness in netizens' comments on the Indonesian President's Instagram posts, a topic that has been insufficiently explored in previous literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on language politeness in the context of social media requires a strong theoretical foundation, given the evolving linguistic dynamics in the digital space. Politeness is no longer understood merely as an ethical norm in direct communication but also as a complex linguistic strategy in virtual interactions. In this context, the principles of politeness serve as analytical tools to examine how speakers convey their intentions without disrupting the harmony of communication, especially on platforms such as Instagram, which bring together users from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. This research takes place within the realm of political discourse, particularly focusing on how netizens express political opinions and emotions in the comment section of the official Instagram account of the President of the Republic of Indonesia (2024–2029).

According to Kunjana, et al., (2024), the principle of politeness is part of pragmatics, emphasizing the importance of maintaining social relationships between the speaker and the addressee. From this perspective, speakers must consider the impact of their utterances on the feelings of their interlocutors, so the communication strategies used not only focus on the content of the message but also on how the message is conveyed. Helmaliya et al., (2024) further supports this view by asserting that politeness is closely related to language practices within a speech community. Violations of politeness principles can cause discomfort or even social conflict, as language used may not align with the community's norms. Empirical evidence supports these theoretical perspectives. Ambarwati & Ajeng (2024), in his study of the *Indonesia Lawyers Club* debate program, found frequent violations of politeness

principles through interruptions and sarcasm. Similarly, Juvent & Rayyan (2024) observed that millennials tend to violate politeness norms when emotionally triggered, highlighting the influence of affective states on linguistic behavior.

In this study, these theories are applied through a cyberpragmatic lens by analyzing the comments of Instagram users on the President's official account using Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies, particularly focusing on negative politeness (Tia & Yusni, 2023). The analysis identifies linguistic forms that represent indirectness, formality, hedging, and deference key features of negative politeness in the digital context. Leech's maxims are employed to evaluate how netizens attempt to maintain (or violate) social harmony through their utterances, while Rahardi's socio-pragmatic perspective provides insight into how cultural norms and emotional states influence these expressions (Afrilanda, 2024). By applying these frameworks, the study not only categorizes politeness strategies but also interprets them in light of Indonesia's sociopolitical and educational contexts.

Furthermore, the politeness theory by Brown and Levinson Putri, et al., (2024) provides an important conceptual framework for understanding the dynamics of interpersonal communication. They introduced the concept of "face" as the social self-image that every individual wishes to protect in communication. Positive face relates to the need to be appreciated, accepted, and liked by others, while negative face concerns the desire to be free from pressure, commands, or social obligations (Andini, 2023). Actions that threaten positive face, such as criticism or insult, can create discomfort, while threats to negative face may manifest in the form of unwanted commands or suggestions (Djatmika, 2024). Based on this face concept, Brown and Levinson formulated five politeness strategies: speaking directly without hedging (bald on record), using positive politeness to create closeness, using negative politeness to show respect for the interlocutor's freedom, speaking indirectly (off-record), and choosing not to speak at all (silence) (Dewi, et al., 2024). These strategies are crucial to understanding in the context of digital communication, where expressions are not always explicitly conveyed, and the absence of non-verbal cues may lead to misunderstandings.

However, conventional pragmatic theories, such as those developed by Leech and Brown-Levinson, need to be expanded when applied to online communication contexts. In this regard, the cyberpragmatics approach becomes highly relevant. According to Rahmansyah et al., (2020), communication on social media has characteristics that differ from face-to-face communication. Its context is more external, not based on direct interaction, and often occurs in anonymous or semi-anonymous situations. Therefore, the meaning of utterances cannot be interpreted solely based on text, but must also consider the medium, response time, and the dynamics of social media (Sandjaja, 2024). To help understand the context of digital communication, Dell Hymes' theory of context can be used, particularly through the

analytical device known by the acronym SPEAKING. This acronym refers to eight contextual elements that shape communication: Setting and Scene (time and place), Participants (speaker and listener), Ends (goals), Act Sequence (sequence of actions), Key (tone or style), Instrumentalities (media), Norms (interaction rules), and Genres (types of utterances). In social media platforms like Instagram, these elements manifest in unique forms for instance, virtual settings, potentially anonymous participants, and norms shaped by specific online communities (Pramujiono et al., 2023).

Social media has drastically altered the patterns of communication in society. Sholehah & Wafa (2023) mentions that online media facilitate a shift from one-way communication models (broadcast media) to multiparty dialogue (social media dialogue). Instagram, as one of the most popular platforms in Indonesia, has become a space where people from various backgrounds openly express their opinions, including to public figures such as the President of the Republic of Indonesia for 2024–2029. However, this freedom is not always accompanied by awareness of polite language. The comment section is often filled with expressions of anger, sarcasm, and hate speech, indicating a crisis of politeness in online communication.

In this context, politeness studies are important to understand how people use language in the digital public space. This research aims to examine forms of politeness and violations of politeness in netizens' utterances, specifically in the comment section of the Instagram account of the President of the Republic of Indonesia. By combining conventional politeness theory and the cyberpragmatics approach, it is hoped that a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of communication in this complex digital era can be achieved.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. This approach is chosen because it aligns with the research objective, which is to identify and describe both the negative and positive politeness elements, as well as the role of the cyberpragmatic approach in netizens' comments on the Instagram posts of the President of the Republic of Indonesia for the 2024–2029 period. The focus of this research emphasizes the process of interpreting meaning rather than the quantification of data. The data in this study consists of utterance texts found in the comment section of the official Instagram account of the President of the Republic of Indonesia (@jokowi), specifically on posts made between October 2024 and February 2025. The data is categorized as natural settings, where language expressions emerge spontaneously without the researcher's intervention.

Data was obtained using non-participant observation techniques through systematic screenshot documentation and note-taking methods. To ensure relevance and representativeness, purposive sampling was employed, with the following criteria: 1) Comments written in the Indonesian language. 2) Comments containing explicit or implicit forms of politeness strategies. 3) Comments with high engagement (likes/replies) to reflect their visibility and potential social impact. 4) Comments

responding directly to issues of political, social, or policy-related content posted by the President. A total of 150 comments were collected and selected for analysis from five Instagram posts based on thematic significance (e.g., election outcomes, policy announcements, or public holidays), with 30 comments per post. The primary research instrument is the researcher themselves, acting as the interpreter and analyst of the data using a combination of Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory, particularly negative politeness strategies, and a cyberpragmatic approach to account for the digital communicative context (platform affordances, anonymity, emoji use, and publicness of comment space).

Data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (Bhagaskoro et al., 2019). This analysis consists of: 1) Data Collection: Gathering Instagram comments through screenshots and compiling them in a database with metadata (post date, comment time, number of likes). 2) Data Reduction: Selecting relevant comments that meet the criteria of politeness features, categorizing them into types of politeness (positive/negative), and eliminating unrelated or spam-like comments. 3) Data Display: Organizing selected comments into thematic matrices based on politeness strategies (e.g., hedging, indirectness, formal address, etc.), supported by narrative explanation. 4) Conclusion Drawing/Verification: Interpreting patterns of politeness use, confirming consistency across samples, and linking findings with cyberpragmatic insights and broader sociolinguistic implications. This analytical process is iterative and recursive, involving multiple cycles of coding and interpretation to ensure the findings are credible, contextual, and academically accountable.

DISCUSSION

This research analyses the utterances of netizens in the comment section of Instagram posts in the caption of the President of the Republic of Indonesia 2024-2029, Prabowo, using the theory of negative politeness and the cyberpragmatics approach. The following are the analysis results of several utterance data found.

Data 1
Don't forget the Fufufafa account, sir.

The sentence *" Don't forget the Fufufafa account, sir. "*can be viewed as a form of positive politeness according to Brown and Levinson's theory (Fitriana, 2014). Here, the speaker uses a familiar and warm tone. The words "yah" and the address "*Sir*" create a sense of closeness and politeness, as if trying to maintain a good relationship while still making a request. This indicates that the speaker is attempting to build a social connection while avoiding appearing demanding or forceful.

From the cyberpragmatic perspective, this sentence reflects a typical digital communication style casual, direct, and often personal even when expressed in a public space like social media. Such expressions usually appear in comment sections or direct messages, aiming to encourage someone likely a public figure or politician to pay attention to or remember something, in this case, the account *"Fufufafa*." Its simple form still carries clear pragmatic content: an invitation, but wrapped in politeness and friendliness.

Data 2
There are so many, bro

The sentence *"There are so many, bro,"* which appeared in the comment section of the Indonesian President's Instagram post for 2024-2029, appears simple but actually holds significant meaning when viewed from a pragmatic perspective. According to Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987), this comment differs from the previous example because it does not directly demonstrate positive or negative politeness strategies. There is no attempt to appear polite, maintain distance, or build closeness explicitly. The sentence feels blunt, like a spontaneous comment from someone observing something perceived as "excessive." However, there is another interesting nuance. The word "bang," used as an address, gives a casual and relaxed impression, as though the speaker is talking to a close friend. This can be seen as a very subtle form of positive politeness the speaker delivers a sharp comment but still uses a light, even humorous, tone. Such a statement could be a form of criticism or sarcasm but is delivered in a way that avoids direct confrontation. In fact, because it is expressed casually, this comment might feel more impactful.

From the cyberpragmatic perspective, this comment strongly reflects the typical communication style of Indonesian netizens: short, straightforward, but full of meaning. On social media, people often choose creative and casual ways to express criticism or disagreement. "Banyak Amat Bang" could refer to various things perhaps too many promises, posts, activities, or even public image. But since it is not specified, the meaning of the comment becomes open and dependent on the context at that moment. This is a common digital communication strategy, where disagreement or sarcasm is wrapped in light comments, sometimes with humour or irony.

While this comment may sound light-hearted, its function is important in digital interaction. It becomes a way for netizens to express their voice or opinion freely without seeming overly confrontational. This is the power of language on social media it feels relaxed, but still conveys a strong message.

Data 3
 It's still hard to find work, especially in a company where you have to pay first.

The sentence *" It's still hard to find work, especially in a company where you have to pay first "* is an example of a netizen utterance that reflects a genuine concern, particularly regarding the job market. From Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987), this comment does not explicitly prioritize positive or negative politeness strategies but carries a tone of complaint, implying dissatisfaction and disappointment with what is perceived as an unfair situation. The underlying expression is not directed as an attack or sarcasm toward a specific individual but rather toward the system or social reality. This places the utterance within the realm of expressive speech acts, which are forms of emotional expression or opinion on the speaker's experience. There is no attempt to build familiarity with the addressee (positive politeness) or to show respect for their rights or freedom (negative politeness). On the contrary, the speaker straightforwardly shares a critical view of the recruitment process in companies (PT), which is perceived as opaque or even rife with unhealthy practices such as the "pay first" scheme.

From the cyberpragmatic perspective, this comment exemplifies how social

media provides a space for people to express frustrations and inner thoughts. It delivers serious social criticism with simple and direct language, characteristic of Indonesian netizens. It shows how the online world gives people the opportunity to engage in social control over conditions or policies they feel are not in favor of the public. Indirectly, this comment can also be read as a form of resistance to image-building, especially when made under a public official's post. When the government showcases success or programs that are perceived as disconnected from real-world issues, netizens respond by voicing the realities they face daily. In this case, the comment acts as a counter-narrative, playing a key role in the dynamics of digital political communication.

In short, while it might sound like a common complaint, this comment voices social concerns in an honest and direct way. In the context of politeness and digital communication, utterances like this show how language can be a tool for advocating justice, offering criticism, and raising collective awareness through the digital world.

Data 4
All the old faces, aren't they easy to overthrow, sir?

The comment *" All the old faces won't be easy to overthrow, sir? "* is a critical and satirical utterance, and strategically, it is closer to the absence of politeness strategies. In Brown and Levinson's theory, this comment does not reflect full positive or negative politeness but leans toward a violation of positive politeness strategies. This is because the speaker directly damages the positive face of the addressee by implying that the selection of old figures in the government poses a high risk of political instability, even opening the possibility of a "coup."

Positive politeness is typically used to build closeness, solidarity, or respect interpersonally. In this sentence, there is no attempt to build a relationship or show sympathy toward the addressee. On the contrary, criticism is delivered directly and tends to be sharp. The address "*Sir*" may seem polite on the surface but is more ironic than a genuine form of respect. Therefore, this address reinforces the cynical tone of the comment.

In comparison with negative politeness strategies which typically maintain distance, respect the addressee's autonomy, or avoid confrontation this sentence does not exhibit those features. The speaker does not use mitigation, ask for permission, or restrain themselves in expressing an opinion. Instead, the utterance is direct and presses the positive face of the figure addressed, namely the president, by openly questioning their policy and challenging it. In the cyberpragmatic context, this comment shows that netizens use social media as an open space to voice political criticism. Such a statement is an example of a direct speech act, reflecting public dissatisfaction with governmental policies or decisions. Its straightforward and open form shows that netizens feel they have the freedom to speak critically in the digital realm, even if it means ignoring politeness norms in formal communication.

In summary, this utterance does not display positive or negative politeness strategies and is, in fact, a violation of both. The criticism is delivered directly without softening, showing a high level of tension and a tendency for the speaker to prioritize expressing honesty or disappointment over maintaining social relationships or decorum in communication.

Data 5

Fufufafa down

The comment "*Fufufafa down"* is very brief in form, but in terms of meaning, it represents a strong directive or demand that implies dissatisfaction with the public figure mentioned. When analysed using Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987), this comment represents a violation of negative politeness strategies. In negative politeness strategies, the speaker typically seeks to preserve the addressee's freedom and autonomy, avoiding coercion. However, in this comment, the speaker directly demands that the person addressed step down from their position, without allowing for any alternative options or softening the meaning. There is no mitigation such as "maybe" or "should," making it clear that this utterance threatens the negative face of the addressee.

From a positive politeness standpoint, this comment also shows no effort to build solidarity, respect, or intimacy. There is no address like "Sir," "Please," or any other language indicating respect. Therefore, there is no positive politeness strategy here.

From the cyberpragmatic perspective, this comment reflects the typical communication style of netizens on social media: quick, direct, and filled with criticism. Such statements are directive speech acts that also carry an expressive element, as they represent emotions like disappointment or anger towards the current political situation.

In conclusion, this comment is clearly a violation of negative politeness, as it directly threatens the freedom of the figure addressed. Additionally, it does not contain any positive politeness elements, as it does not seek to build interpersonal relationships or show respect. This is an example of how social media serves as a space where criticism is delivered directly and without filters, especially in political communication.

Data 6

Should we change the president?

The comment " *Should we change the president?"* may seem lighthearted at first because it uses a rhetorical question structure common on social media. However, upon further examination, this utterance contains a strong insinuation and political push. From Brown and Levinson's politeness theory Firdausi (2020), this comment violates negative politeness strategies, but it is framed more gently than direct imperative comments like "*step down*" or "*resign now*."

In negative politeness strategies, a speaker maintains distance, respects autonomy, and avoids pressing the addressee. While this comment is a question, its meaning implies a push for leadership change. The phrase " *no way*?" a common informal expression creates a light tone and appears to invite discussion, yet pragmatically it still carries a directive speech act urging a particular political action. Thus, it can be concluded that this comment still threatens the negative face of the addressee the president even in a more subtle and popular manner. From the positive politeness perspective, this comment does not explicitly attempt to build closeness or solidarity with the addressee. However, the use of casual language and the light tone of the question could be seen as an attempt to build rapport with fellow netizens, not with the criticized figure. Therefore, there is a nuance of positive politeness among netizens but not between the speaker and the target of the utterance.

From the cyberpragmatic approach, this comment is very characteristic of

digital communication style short, light, rhetorical, but with considerable meaning. In public spaces like social media, such forms are used to express political criticism indirectly but still sharply. It is an example of a mitigated directive speech act, where the speaker conveys political urges in the form of a question that invites responses from a broader audience. Such a style allows political messages to be delivered without appearing overtly aggressive. The analysis of six data comments from netizens shows that in digital communication, especially on social media, politeness strategies are often disregarded. Comments like "*Fufufafa down"* and " *All the old faces, aren't they easy to overthrow, sir? "* show violations of negative politeness strategies because they directly threaten the autonomy and freedom of the addressees. This aligns with the findings of Pramujiono et al., (2024), who stated that in social media interactions, violations of negative politeness are frequent because users feel freer to express opinions without considering the impact on others. On the other hand, comments like *" Should we change the president?"* show mitigation in delivering criticism, using rhetorical questions and casual language. However, these comments still contain directive speech acts urging political change. According to N. I. P. Nurhikmah (2025), in digital communication, implicature or implied meaning becomes more important as messages often rely on the reader's interpretation to understand the true intent.

The cyberpragmatic approach helps to understand this phenomenon, where social media creates a space for "low-cost face-threatening acts," allowing users to deliver criticism directly because there is no risk of face-to-face interaction or real social confrontation. Nurhikmah (2024) explains that in the online context, face-threatening acts become cheaper and less risky, encouraging users to be more direct or even impolite. This phenomenon also reflects a low awareness of the importance of politeness in digital communication. Solichin (2020) highlights that the lack of understanding of politeness is reflected in how social media users often disregard basic politeness principles, such as respecting the addressee, using polite language, and considering the impact of the words they utter.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that netizens' comments on the President's posts on Instagram represent a significant phenomenon of violations of politeness principles, both in the form of explicit face-threatening acts (FTAs) such as sarcasm, personal attacks, and harsh criticism and implicit FTAs, including subtle mockery, passive-aggressiveness, and indirect expressions of discontent. These findings answer the research questions by showing that: 1) Forms of positive politeness such as expressions of solidarity and support appear less frequently than negative politeness or impolite utterances. 2) Negative politeness strategies, including indirectness, hedging, and the use of honorifics, are employed inconsistently by netizens, often depending on the topic's sensitivity or personal relevance. 3) The cyberpragmatic approach proves effective in contextualizing digital communication behavior by accounting for Instagram's platform features, user anonymity, and public visibility, which significantly influence the expression of politeness or impoliteness. 4) These linguistic patterns have direct relevance for language and literature education, especially in promoting ethical and responsible digital literacy in Indonesian language teaching. However, this study is not without limitations. First, the data is limited to one social media platform (Instagram) and focused solely on the President's account, which may

not fully represent the broader discourse across other platforms or topics. Second, the analysis is limited to comments in the Indonesian language, which restricts multilingual or cross-cultural insights. Third, the research focuses on written comments only and does not include multimodal elements like emojis, memes, or images, which could carry pragmatic meanings. Therefore, future research is recommended to explore cross-platform comparisons (e.g., Twitter, TikTok, YouTube) and cross-cultural contexts, to provide a more holistic understanding of digital politeness. Studies that incorporate multimodal discourse analysis would also enhance the depth of interpretation regarding online language behavior.

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