

# Polite Disagreement: How Sellers Manage Conflict in Social Media Sales

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## Abstract

This study explores how sellers manage polite disagreement in online sales transactions on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter). The research aims to examine the use of politeness strategies in online text-based communication, particularly in expressing disagreement. A case study approach was employed, with data collected from sellers through questionnaires and screenshots of their transaction interactions. Content analysis was used to categorize disagreement speech acts and politeness strategies based on Searle's speech act theory, Chen's disagreement theory, and Brown & Levinson's politeness theory. The findings revealed that sellers primarily employ negative politeness strategies, particularly in situations involving direct disagreement, to soften the face-threatening nature of disagreement. The use of negative politeness allows sellers to maintain relationships with buyers while conveying disagreement in a non-confrontational manner. This research underscores the importance of understanding the context in more detail, especially in studying speech in online buying and selling. The separation between situational context and cultural context as offered in this research is an alternative way to study polite disagreement in online discourse.

**Keywords:** direct disagreement, negative politeness, online sales transaction, social media

## 1. Introduction

The advent of digital transformation has fundamentally altered the landscape of commerce, rendering online transactions an integral part of everyday life. In particular, social media platforms have become dynamic virtual marketplaces where buyers and sellers engage in complex text-based negotiations. Social media plays an important part of the evolution of e-commerce, facilitating successful consumer engagement, brand development and overall growth (Ghani et al., 2023). The shift from conventional face-to-face transactions to digital platforms offers substantial convenience and accessibility. These platforms allow easier participation in the global economy (Deng et al., 2022; Minami et al., 2021). However, this transition also presents significant communication challenges, particularly in conveying and interpreting disagreements—a speech act that can lead to misunderstanding and conflict if it is mishandled. The absence of non-verbal cues in digital communication complicates gauging tone and intent in messages. Linguistic markers and conversational structure enhance models' predictive precision in anticipating disagreements (De Kock & Vlachos, 2021). The existing studies on online transactions have largely overlooked the issue of disagreement and primarily focused on politeness, as evidenced by studies by Lee et al. (2021), Lin (2022), and Triana et al. (2021). However, observational data suggests that disagreements frequently occur in buying and selling activities. The existing literature on online transactions has not addressed the issue of disagreement. This study aims to investigate the forms of polite disagreement that emerge in the context of online transactions, with a particular focus on how sellers mitigate face-threatening acts while maintaining politeness strategies.

One of the most significant challenges in online transactions is the difficulty of effectively communicating and interpreting intentions solely through text. The lack of non-verbal cues that typically aid in face-to-face communication often increases the probability of miscommunication (Krystal, 2019; Plumb, 2013), particularly when conveying disagreement. In this context, understanding disagreement speech acts and politeness strategies becomes critical. As digital interactions become more prevalent, studying these elements is increasingly relevant, offering insights that can improve the effectiveness of communication in online transactions (Krizanova et al., 2019). The implementation of effective communication strategies can assist in the mitigation of potential risks of misunderstanding (Ishihara, 2016), thereby facilitating more seamless and more successful transactions. Exploring how disagreement is managed within the social media platforms is essential for enhancing the quality of online interactions, fostering better buyer-seller relationships, and ultimately increasing transaction efficiency and user satisfaction by minimizing misunderstandings (Guo & Stapa, 2023).

Moreover, the rise of social media platforms such as X (formerly known as Twitter) has highlighted the unique nature of digital communication which has become a channel for commercial activities (Kırcova et al., 2018). Transactions conducted on these platforms are characterized by their reliance on language, without the support of physical presence or immediate feedback (Alonzi, 2024; Xue et al., 2020). This reliance on text-based communication, especially when expressing disagreement during negotiations, underscores the significance of employing appropriate language. Politeness in the context of disagreement serves not only to maintain positive relationships but also to mitigate the potential negative impacts of conflict. In contrast, the use of impolite or unclear language in expressing disagreement can escalate tensions and negatively impact the relationship between the buyer and seller.

In light of these dynamics, an investigation into the nature of disagreement speech acts in the context of online transactions is imperative. This study addresses a gap in understanding how digital transformation affects communication practices in online sales (Corsaro & D'Amico, 2022; Mashalah et al., 2022), particularly in the area of disagreement. By examining the effective deployment of disagreement and politeness strategies in online transactions, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on digital communication. The insights gained can lead to improved user experiences and better transaction outcomes in the increasingly digital marketplace (Akter et al., 2020). As the digital marketplace continues to expand, the results of this study will have significant implications for both consumers and businesses engaged in online commerce, influencing the development of future communication strategies in digital sales interactions.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 *Speech Act*

Speech act theory, as introduced by Searle (2011) and further developed in his later works, provides a framework for understanding how language is used to perform various functions in communication. A speech act is an utterance that serves a function in communication, such as making a statement, offering, requesting, or in this case, disagreeing. Searle (2011) classifies speech acts into five categories: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Among these, the speech act of disagreement is categorized as a commissive illocutionary act, where the speaker commits to a course of action that opposes the interlocutor's statement or opinion (Austin, 1962; Searle, 2011). Commissive speech acts involve the speaker's intention to express a commitment to a future action or stance, which, in the case of disagreement, involves a rejection or counter to what has been proposed (Yule, 1996).

In the context of online transactions, speech acts take on a heightened importance due to the absence of non-verbal cues and the reliance on text-based communication. The negotiation phase of transactions, in particular, is often rife with disagreement as participants negotiate terms, prices, and conditions. How these disagreements are communicated can significantly impact the outcome of the negotiation (Paramasivam, 2007).

### 2.2 *Disagreement Speech Act*

The disagreement speech act is a crucial element in negotiation and transaction settings. According to Chen (2006), disagreement speech acts are complex and context-sensitive, requiring speakers to navigate the delicate balance between asserting their stance and maintaining interpersonal harmony. Chen's framework emphasizes that disagreement is not merely a rejection of a proposition but also an act that involves a negotiation of social relationships, power dynamics, and the management of face (Chen, 2006). Disagreement can be direct or indirect, with the former being more straightforward and the latter often being mitigated through various linguistic strategies to soften the impact of the disagreement (Alzahrani, 2020).

Chen (2006) also highlights that the degree of directness in a disagreement is influenced by cultural norms and the specific context of the interaction. In digital communication, especially in online transactions, where interactions are often brief and impersonal, there is a tendency to employ indirect strategies to avoid confrontation and maintain a positive relationship with the interlocutor (Ou et al., 2014). For example, indirect disagreement may involve hedging, offering counterproposals, or using questions to subtly challenge the other party's position (Alzahrani, 2020; Khammari, 2021; Wang et al., 2022).

In face-to-face interactions, non-verbal cues such as tone, facial expressions, and body language can help manage the delivery of disagreement. However, in online transactions, where communication is limited to written text, the delivery of disagreement requires careful consideration to avoid misunderstandings or offending the other party (Guo & Stapa, 2023). The strategic use of language, as Chen (2006) points out, is essential in these scenarios, as the absence of non-verbal signals makes it more challenging to convey the intended meaning without risking negative repercussions.

Recent research has explored how disagreement is managed in business negotiations (Marra, 2016). The findings suggest that disagreement in negotiations among professionals aims to clarify important information that might be misunderstood. This makes the study of disagreement speech acts particularly relevant in the context of e-commerce, where the nuances of language play a pivotal role in transaction outcomes.

### 2.3 Politeness

Politeness is a social norm that governs how people interact with one another, aiming to maintain harmony and avoid conflict in communication. According to Brown & Levinson (1987), politeness strategies are used to mitigate face-threatening acts (FTAs), which are communicative actions that might challenge the social standing or 'face' of the interlocutor. These strategies are divided into positive politeness, which seeks to reinforce the relationship by expressing friendliness or solidarity, and negative politeness, which seeks to minimize the imposition on the hearer (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

In online transactions, politeness becomes even more critical due to the absence of physical presence, which can lead to increased ambiguity in interpreting the intent behind written messages (Maros & Rosli, 2017; Pratama, 2019). Politeness strategies, such as hedging, indirect language, and the use of softeners, can help mitigate the impact of disagreements, making them less likely to provoke a negative reaction (Alzahrani, 2020; Khammari, 2021; Wang et al., 2022). The utilization of politeness in disagreements represents a strategic approach to ensuring the continued productivity of negotiations and the preservation of relationships between buyers and sellers. For the purpose of clarification, the term polite disagreement in this study refers to the implementation of politeness strategies by sellers to mitigate the impact of disagreement, rendering it more acceptable and less confrontational to buyers.

## 3. Method

This research employs a case study design to explore the linguistic phenomenon of disagreement speech acts by sellers in online transactions. A case study approach allows for in-depth examination of specific phenomena in real-life contexts, enabling detailed understanding of online communication complexities (Darke et al., 1998; Hancock et al., 2021). The focus of this study is on text-based interactions during transactions on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter), where communication occurs solely through messaging features without face-to-face interaction. This setting provides a unique context for examining how sellers navigate disagreement and maintain politeness in the absence of non-verbal cues.

### 3.1 Data Collection

The data for this study were collected through a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data. A questionnaire was distributed via X to collect responses from sellers who met specific criteria relevant to the study's objectives. The questionnaire was shared through a post on X, targeting users who are actively engaged in selling products or services on the platform. The post invited sellers to participate by completing the questionnaire.

The questionnaire included closed-ended questions for quantitative data and open-ended questions for detailed qualitative responses. The closed-ended questions provided predefined answer choices, allowing for the collection of quantitative data on specific aspects of disagreement speech acts. The open-ended questions allowed respondents to provide more detailed qualitative data by uploading documents in the form of screenshots of their actual communication experiences as sellers during online transactions. This approach enabled the collection of rich, contextualized data that reflects the real-world use of language in online discourses.

### 3.2 Sampling Procedures

Purposive sampling was employed to select participants for this study. This sampling method involves deliberately choosing participants based on specific criteria that align with the research objectives. Purposive sampling ensured that the selected participants had relevant experiences and insights into the phenomenon being studied, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

The data collected through open-ended questionnaires were analyzed using content analysis, guided by Spradley's (2016) four-stage framework: domain analysis, taxonomy analysis, componential analysis, and cultural theme identification. In the domain analysis stage, Searle's speech act theory (2011) and Brown & Levinson's politeness theory (1987) were used to examine how disagreement occurs in the context of social distance and rank of imposition between participants. During taxonomy analysis, disagreement utterances were categorized using Chen's (2006) theory of disagreement speech acts, providing a systematic classification of the types of disagreement in online transactions.

In the componential analysis stage, the relationships between disagreement speech acts and politeness strategies were examined, identifying key patterns within the data. The final stage involved frequency and co-occurrence analyses to uncover cultural themes, highlighting how norms and expectations influence disagreement and politeness in online transactions. This comprehensive approach revealed how sellers navigate disagreement while maintaining politeness, contributing valuable insights into digital communication and the linguistic strategies used in online text-based interactions.

**4. Results**

The total number of disagreement speech acts found in the utterances employed by sellers in online transaction activities on X is 80 utterances. These disagreement utterances can be divided into three strategies, namely no disagreement, indirect disagreement and direct disagreement. Each strategy presents four types of politeness strategies: bald on record (BR), positive politeness (PP), negative politeness (NP), and off record (OR).

*4.1 Sellers' Strategies of Mitigating No Disagreement*

The strategy of no disagreement can be expressed verbally or non-verbally by choosing actions to avoid disagreement altogether. In this context, the no disagreement strategy is associated with four types of politeness, namely bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage of No Disagreement Strategy within Each Types of Politeness Employed by the Sellers

Strategies of Disagreement	Types of Politeness				Total
	BR	PP	NP	OR	
No Disagreement	1 (14%)	2 (29%)	3 (43%)	1 (14%)	9 (100%)

According to Table 1, of the 9 (nine) total data found, the no disagreement strategy mostly uses negative politeness type which has 3 (43%) utterances. The type of negative politeness is used to save the face of the hearer and satisfy the negative face of the speech partner by showing respect for the hearer's right not to be forced to carry out the speech act of disagreement. To enhance the clarity of the findings, the type of politeness in no disagreement are also presented in graphical form below.

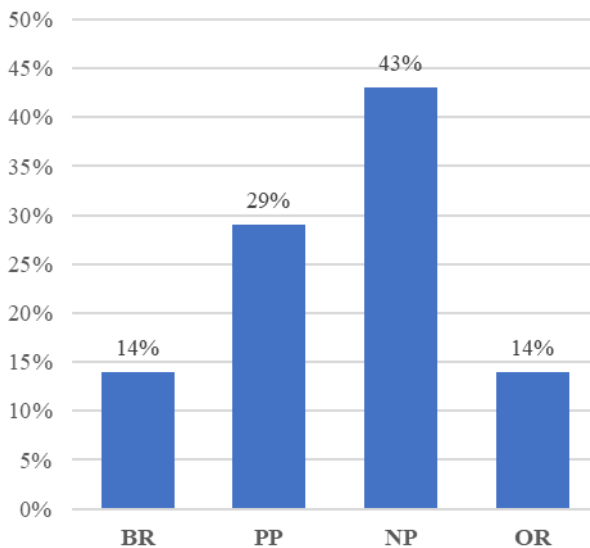


Figure 1. The frequency percentage of types of politeness in no disagreement

**4.1.1 Bald on Record**

In politeness theory, bald on record is a strategy that is expressed directly and without requiring any effort to softening or mitigating the impact on the interlocutor. In the context of no disagreement within the bald on record strategy, the speaker avoids expressing any explicit opposition or challenge to the hearer's statement. Instead, they might use markers that show acceptance, neutrality, or a lack of challenge. The type of bald on record politeness is marked with a marker of a dismissive statement. The speaker may dismiss the other's opinion or stance with straightforward remarks, such as "That's irrelevant", "It doesn't matter", "I don't care". Bald on record politeness was observed in 1 (14%) of the 9 (nine) no-disagreement utterances.

Buyer: "I'll negotiate IDR 100,000 for both, please. That's my wish list."

Seller: "No way, the original prices for both from IDR 190,000 to IDR 100,000 is really far. I told you at the beginning that this item is non-negotiable."

Buyer: "Then it's IDR 120,000 for both. Please, I really want it."

Seller: "Alright, I'll bend the high demand ones first. I bend it just a little. **I don't care whether it's something you're after or on your wish list.**" (T50/06/S)

No disagreement with bald on record strategy shows no attempt to mitigate or reduce the potential face-threatening act. Therefore, it falls under the category of no disagreement using a straightforward approach. The speech act above is an example of no disagreement because the speaker is not explicitly stating the disagreement. The form of no disagreement uttered in the speech above is a form of avoidance. The form of avoidance is an expression that refuses to express disagreement explicitly. This speech is a form of strategy to avoid expressing rejection. Generally, this form of avoidance is conveyed by means of clarifying requests and refrains from expressing opinions (Chen, 2006). However, in this speech, the speaker conveys avoidance with bald on record politeness, which the seller lashes out the buyer by saying "I don't care".

#### 4.1.2 Positive Politeness

Positive politeness in politeness theory is a strategy that is expressed by satisfying the positive face of the hearer. This strategy is often used to strengthen relationships and show empathy or appreciation by showing approval, solidarity, or praise. The no disagreement strategy within positive politeness focuses on maintaining a sense of agreement and solidarity with the hearer, even when there is a disagreement. Instead of directly opposing the hearer's statement, the speaker employs strategies to minimize the appearance of disagreement by using hedging and indirectness, humor, minimizing differences, and showing appreciation or complimenting before disagreement. In the findings containing no disagreement with positive politeness, 2 (29%) utterances of the total data were found.

Buyer: "Hi, I want to offer the item for IDR 300,000, please."

Seller: "Hi, **thank you for taking part.** I'm really sorry you're not the one. **Hopefully you'll find your wish list soon.**" (T55/02/S)

The form of no disagreement with positive politeness shows how the speaker conveys the speech of disagreement implicitly, but still shows an attitude that maintains a close relationship between the speaker and the hearer. In the speech above, the seller states no disagreement with positive politeness shown by saying "thank you" as a form of showing appreciation that the buyer is interested in the goods being sold. The seller conveys their refusal to sell the goods to the buyer through avoidance by refraining from expressing opinion. However, the seller also expressed their hope that the buyer would soon be able to get the item they were looking for. This is in accordance with the type of positive politeness which is intended to maintain the relationship between the speaker and hearer, thereby reducing forms of face-threatening act.

#### 4.1.3 Negative Politeness

This type of politeness is characterized by a more indirect and formal approach, aiming to avoid conflict and minimize the threat to the hearer's face. The speaker uses strategies that show deference, maintain distance, and mitigate the force of the disagreement, often acknowledging the listener's position before expressing their own view. In negative politeness, the no disagreement strategy focuses on minimizing imposition and respecting the hearer's autonomy and desire not to be imposed upon. The speaker's goal is to avoid conflict and preserve the hearer's negative face (the desire for freedom from imposition). A total of 3 (43%) utterances containing no disagreement with negative politeness were found in this study. The no disagreement utterance with this type of negative politeness strategy is the most frequently found when compared with other politeness strategies.

Buyer: "I'll try to offer at IDR 450,000 including all, how is it? I'm really sorry if it's not suitable because I tried to offer first."

Seller: "**Wow, (the price) is too low.**" (T60/02/S)

Negative politeness used in saying no disagreement is intended to respect the hearer and reduce the burden on the hearer's negative face. The speech above is a form of no disagreement using negative politeness because it is a non-imposing way of suggesting that the price might need reconsideration, without explicitly disagreeing with the price set by the buyer. The form of disagreement in no disagreement used by the speaker is the refrain from expressing opinion. The seller avoids challenging the buyer's decision, and instead, uses an exclamation "Wow" followed by a soft critique, which acknowledges the situation without explicitly rejecting it. By not stating "I disagree" or "This price should be higher", the seller respects the buyer's and avoids imposing a demand to change the price. The seller minimizes the potential for conflict and leaves room for the buyer to adjust the price without feeling pressured or confronted. This fits the no disagreement strategy, as the disagreement is implied but not imposed explicitly, aligning with the principles of negative politeness.

4.1.4 Off Record

This strategy gives the speaker plausible deniability, reducing the potential for face-threatening acts. In off-record type of politeness, the no disagreement strategy involves expressing disagreement in an ambiguous way, allowing the hearer to “read between the lines” and interpret the message in multiple ways while minimizing the imposition, which gives the hearer the option to infer disagreement without the speaker having to state it directly. No disagreement strategy in off-record politeness operates by using hints, ambiguity, irony, understatement, rhetorical questions, or irrelevant responses to implicitly signal disagreement. Utterances of no disagreement with the off-record politeness strategy were found in 1 (14%) of the data in this study.

Buyer: “I’ll negotiate IDR 100,000 for both, please. That’s my wish list.”

Seller: “No way, the original prices for both from IDR 190,000 to IDR 100,000 is really far. I told you at the beginning that this item is non-negotiable.”

Buyer: “Then it’s IDR 120,000 for both. Please, I really want it.”

Seller: “**Alright, I’ll bend the high demand ones first. I bend it just a little.** I don’t care whether it’s something you’re after or on your wish list.” (T50/06/S)

The off record type of politeness in the form of no disagreement has the characteristic that the speaker expresses their disagreement implicitly using hints, even ironical statements. In the speech above, it is a form of no disagreement by using off record politeness because the seller does not clearly disagree with the buyer's request to lower the price but uses an implicit hint. By saying “I’ll bend it first”, the seller is hinting that the price reduction will only happen if the quality of the item is compromised (i.e. the item will no longer be in perfect condition). This is an ambiguous form of irony, where the seller offers the buyer the option to lower the price, but the consequence is that the item will no longer be in top condition. The ambiguity in the utterance leave room for the hearer to interpret it as partial agreement, even though the seller disagrees. In off record politeness strategies, the seller avoids direct confrontation and uses an ambiguous statement that can be interpreted in multiple ways. Thus, the buyer can understand that lowering the price may not be favorable, but the seller does not explicitly disagree the buyer's request. This strategy preserves the social relationship by expressing disagreement implicitly while still maintaining the seller's position.

According to the number of data found, the findings of no disagreement utterances are relatively small and used less frequently compared to other strategies. This happens because the speech act of disagreement requires opposing points of view from the speaker and hearer and clear clarification. In many interactions, specifically negotiations, expressing disagreement is essential, and no disagreement strategies may not provide sufficient clarity. As a result, speakers tend to rely more on indirect or direct disagreement strategies to maintain politeness, while still effectively communicating their different views or opinions.

4.2 Sellers’ Strategies of Mitigating Indirect Disagreement

The strategy of indirect disagreement entails the rejection of the hearer's statement through the suggested opinions or questions, without explicitly opposing the original assertion.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage of Indirect Disagreement Strategy within Each Types of Politeness Employed by the Sellers

Strategies of Disagreement	Types of Politeness				Total
	BR	PP	NP	OR	
Indirect Disagreement	1 (4%)	0	22 (79%)	5 (18%)	29 (100%)

In Table 2 containing the findings of indirect disagreement strategy utterances with a total of 29 data, it was found that the use of negative politeness types was greater than the negative politeness strategy used in the previous table, that is 22 utterances (79%). This result highlights that sellers are particularly sensitive to the face-threatening nature of disagreements. The purpose of indirect disagreement is to minimize the potential negative impact, including face-threatening, on the hearer's face, especially in social interactions where maintaining harmony is important. The presentation in graphic form below shows the number of findings of politeness in indirect disagreement.

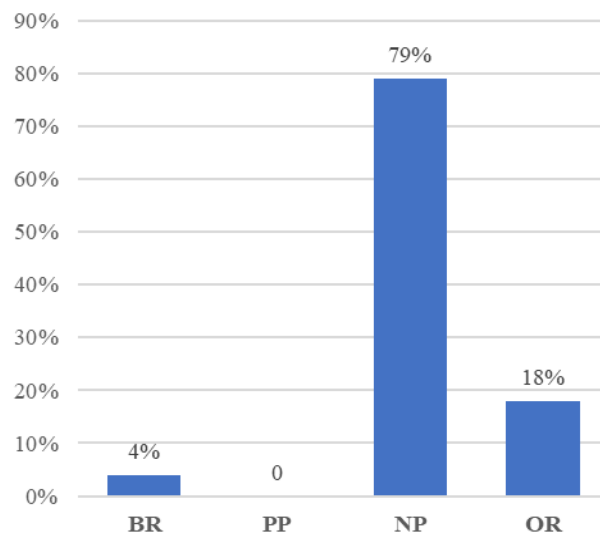


Figure 2. Frequency percentage of types of politeness in indirect disagreement

Based on Table 2, the type of positive politeness was not found in the data of indirect disagreement speech. This can be linked to the characteristics of positive politeness which focuses on building solidarity and emphasizing mutuality, so that it requires clear and explicit forms of communication to strengthen social bonds and show respect for hearers. Meanwhile, the indirect disagreement strategy is used to avoid confrontation by softening the disagreement or giving hints, which aligns with negative politeness and off record types of politeness. As a result, positive politeness is less likely to appear in contexts of indirect disagreement.

#### 4.2.1 Bald on Record

The use of the bald on record type of politeness in indirect disagreement was only found in 1 data (4%) out of a total of 29 data. Bald on record is a type of politeness that is expressed directly, without the need for euphemism to mitigate disagreement speech acts. Looking at the small amount of data, this means that speakers in expressing indirect disagreement still use bald on record in a less harsh way by offering explanations or suggesting alternatives.

Buyer: "Sorry, do I have to take all the items that being sold?"

Seller: "**Yes, it is take-all only.**" (T3/03/S)

Utterances that use bald on record politeness has the characteristics of being clear and straightforward. However, this speech above is a form of indirect disagreement which is conveyed using bald on record politeness by means of indirect refusal. Indirect refusal is a form of indirect disagreement carried out by speakers by using excuses not to reject the hearer's offer (Chen, 2006). In the utterance above, the seller affirms the buyer's statement and agrees with "Yes" but then subtly provides a limitation stating, "it is take-all only", which counters any assumption that partial options might be available. The seller disagrees with any implied alternative interpretation (e.g., buying some but not all of the product), but does so by stating a fact rather than directly disagrees. This makes the act of disagreement expressed indirectly but without any softening language, which aligns with the bald on record approach.

#### 4.2.2 Negative Politeness

Indirect disagreement within negative politeness allows sellers to express different views in indirect manner, while minimizing imposition on buyer's negative face and respecting the hearer's self-determination. Markers used in this strategy might include giving reasons, hedging, suggesting alternatives, which softens the impact. In using this type of politeness, speakers avoid expressing their disagreements strongly because they are mindful to the perspective of the hearers.

Buyer: "Can I purchased it for IDR 25,000?"

Seller: "**Sorry, it turns out it can't (be sold) at that price. If IDR 45,000 you can take it, it includes packaging.**" (T18/04/S)

In negative politeness, the speaker seeks to minimize imposition and respect the hearer's autonomy. The phrase begins with an apology, "Sorry," which softens the rejection of the buyer's proposed price and shows deference, acknowledging that the disagreement may inconvenience the buyer. This aligns with the feature of negative politeness which attempts

to mitigate the face-threatening act by expressing regret or humility. The form of disagreement presented by the seller is indirect because instead of bluntly saying “No”, the seller explains the situation “... it turns out it can’t be sold at that price” and offers an alternative “If IDR 45,000, you can take it, it includes packaging”. In this utterance, indirect disagreement is conveyed using a suggested opinion, which means proposing alternatives rather than contradicting the interlocutor's opinions (Chen, 2006). By providing an explanation and offering a solution, the seller tries to minimize the conflict and maintain the buyer's positive feelings, making the interaction feel less confrontational. This approach reduces the threat to the buyer’s face while still conveying the seller's position, typical of negative politeness.

4.2.3 Off Record

This strategy explores that sellers may prefer hinting at disagreement, thus giving the buyer the chance to interpret the message as they see fit. The speaker may give hints or use ambiguous language that leaves room for the hearer to interpret the message as they wish. The use of this type of politeness in indirect disagreement can avoid direct confrontation, which can be beneficial in maintaining buyer-seller relationships.

Buyer: “I'll try to offer at IDR 450,000 including all, how is it? I'm really sorry if it's not suitable because I tried to offer first.”

Seller: “Wow, (the price) is too low. **The purchase price I spent was up to a million.**” (T60/02/S)

Off record politeness is conveyed by the speaker using hints in the form of indirect disagreement, allowing the hearer to interpret the message and infer the meaning. In this utterance, the seller indirectly disagrees with the buyer’s suggested price by providing information about the high purchase cost, which implies that they cannot sell the item at a lower price, without explicitly rejecting the offer. The form of indirect disagreement in the utterance above is indirect refusal, which is using excuses to avoid agreeing to the buyer's offer price. This indirect approach avoids confrontation and gives the buyer opportunity to reconsider their offer without feeling pressured. The seller does not directly say “I cannot sell it for less”, but the implication is clear through the provided fact, leaving the interpretation to the buyer. This fits off record politeness because the speaker avoids explicitly stating disagreement, instead using an indirect and non-confrontational way to communicate their position.

4.3 Sellers' Strategies of Mitigating Direct Disagreement

A direct disagreement strategy is one that explicitly opposes the hearer's statement without any pretext. This encompasses contradiction, whereby the speaker directly contradicts the hearer's statement with a negative evaluation or alternative proposition, and direct refusal, whereby the speaker firmly adheres to their initial plan or directly declines the hearer's suggestion or offer.

Table 3. Frequency and Percentage of Direct Disagreement Strategy within Each Types of Politeness Employed by the Sellers

Strategies of Disagreement	Types of Politeness				Total
	BR	PP	NP	OR	
Direct Disagreement	17 (38%)	2 (5%)	26 (58%)	0	42 (100%)

A total of 42 conversation containing speech with a direct disagreement strategy were found in this research. The amount of data with this strategy is the most frequently found compared to the two previous disagreement strategies, indicating that sellers are often bold to challenges buyers’ views, even there are consequences of expressing face-threatening act. Furthermore, the negative politeness type is the most common politeness strategy which has 26 utterances (58%). This shows that sellers balance the face-threatening nature of direct disagreement by making attempt to mitigate the impact of the directness and softening the impact without introducing vagueness. Below are the results of the findings of politeness in direct disagreement which are presented in graphical form.



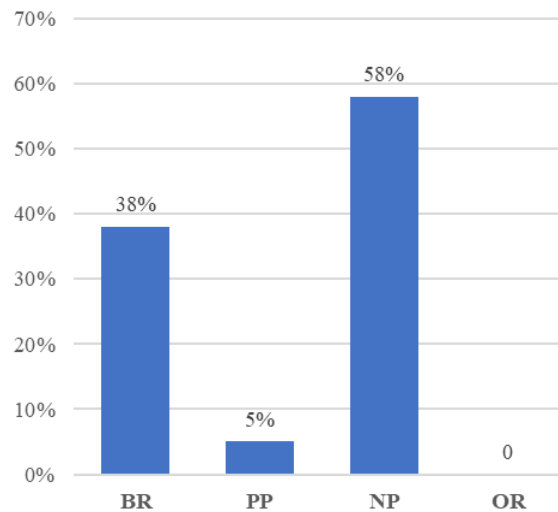


Figure 3. Frequency percentage of types of politeness in direct disagreement

In the direct disagreement strategy, the use of the bald on record type of politeness is more widely used than in the strategies in the two previous tables, that is 17 data (38%). However, there is no data of off record type of politeness found in this strategy. It is because off record are designed to be indirect and leaving interpretation up to the hearer, while direct disagreement is characterized by clear and explicit contradiction which goes straight to the point.

#### 4.3.1 Bald on Record

In the context of direct disagreement with bald on record type of politeness, disagreement is expressed without any softening or face-saving methods. The speaker is not concerned with mitigating the impact on the hearer's face and prioritizes clarity and efficiency. It's commonly used when the speaker has no concern for the social relationship or when urgency is prioritized.

Seller: **“I can’t sell at the price you ask.”** (T17/01/S)

In bald on record politeness, the speaker communicates their message without any mitigation or softening. The utterance above directly rejects the buyer's proposed price by stating “I can’t sell at the price you ask”. This straightforward disagreement leaves no ambiguity, and the seller makes their position immediately clear, which is characteristic of the bald on record. The seller does not attempt to minimize the face-threatening act or mitigate the impact of the disagreement. There is no use of polite expressions, explanations, or apologies that would soften the disagreement. The statement is factual, efficient, and direct, which prioritizes clarity over politeness.

#### 4.3.2 Positive Politeness

Speakers may use of positive politeness in direct disagreement, but in a way that still maintain solidarity, compliment the hearer, or emphasize similar background. This action is done by acknowledging buyers’ perspective and expressing appreciation to maintain good relationship. The goal of using this type of politeness is to strengthen the relationship between sellers and buyers despite the disagreement.

Buyer: “Are these available?”

Seller: **“The goods have been sold. Maybe you can just join the group order first if you want, because later I will drop product updates in the group.”** (T10/02/S)

In positive politeness, the speaker tries to minimize the imposition and soften the impact of their disagreement. The seller directly informs the buyer that “the goods have been sold,” which is a clear and factual disagreement with any potential request or assumption that the item is still available. However, rather than leaving it at that, the seller uses positive politeness strategies to soften the disagreement by offering a solution. By suggesting that the buyer can “join the group order” and receive “product updates in the group”, the seller emphasizes shared interests and provides a helpful alternative, making the disagreement more acceptable and maintaining a positive relationship. Positive politeness strategies aim to preserve the hearer's positive face by showing concern for their needs and maintaining social harmony. In this case, the seller not only rejects the immediate request but also makes an effort to offer a path forward, implying that the buyer is still valued. The use of phrases like “if you want” and providing future opportunities to get updates highlight a sense of inclusion and cooperation, which are key elements of positive politeness.

### 4.3.3 Negative Politeness

Negative politeness in the context of direct disagreement involves hedging or using indirect strategies to avoid threatening the hearer's negative face, which is the desire for autonomy and freedom from imposition. Direct disagreement is mitigated by apologies or respectful language, aiming to reduce the imposition of the face-threatening act on the buyer.

Buyer: "Hi, I'm interested! Can purchase now."

Seller: "**I'm sorry. It's reserved now and I'm waiting for the transfer. You can buy if this order is cancelled. And in that case, I will tell you again.**" (T39/02/S)

The speaker directly disagrees with the buyer's implied request to purchase the item, clearly stating that "It's reserved now and I'm waiting for the transfer". This direct rejection aligns with negative politeness, which focuses on minimizing the impact of a face-threatening act. The disagreement is softened by the initial apology, "I'm sorry," which serves to show respect for the buyer's feelings and reduce the force of the refusal. A key feature of negative politeness is that it tries to mitigate imposition and respect the hearer's autonomy. After the direct refusal, the seller provides an alternative "You can buy if this order is cancelled", and adds reassurance "I will tell you again", giving the buyer the possibility of future action without imposing an immediate rejection. This conditional offer respects the buyer's negative face by giving them an option rather than closing the interaction entirely.

## 5. Discussion

The data found reveals that sellers in online transactions may frequently express disagreement speech act and they tend to use negative politeness to soften the potential face-threatening impact of their interlocutor. Negative politeness is the most used strategy across all types of disagreement, particularly in indirect (72%) and direct disagreement (55%). This aligns with Brown and Levinson's (1987) view that people are generally cautious about threatening others' negative face, particularly in online transactions, where maintaining relationships is important. Sellers focus on minimizing imposition while effectively conveying disagreement.

Bald on record type of politeness is most commonly used in direct disagreement (38%), suggesting that sellers sometimes find it necessary to be clear and unambiguous. This is likely driven by the transactional nature of online sales, where clarity can prevent misunderstandings or disputes, even if it risks face-threatening consequences.

Off record types, while not the most frequent, are present in indirect disagreement (18%), supporting the idea that sellers sometimes prefer to hint at disagreement without explicitly stating it. This strategy allows buyers to save face by interpreting the disagreement in a less confrontational manner.

Positive politeness is used more in no disagreement (29%) and direct disagreement (5%) strategies. Sellers seem to reserve the use of positive politeness for less direct opposition, where they might emphasize friendliness and agreement to maintain the relationship while subtly signaling disagreement.

### 5.1 Disagreement Mitigation and the Eastern Culture

The use of direct disagreement is most common in online transactions due to lower perceived risk compared to face-to-face interactions. Online discourse, especially in the use of social media, is often associated with toxic behavior (Fan et al., 2021) because it tends to allow someone to dare to express opinions directly, including behaving impolitely towards their conversation partners. This behavior, known as the disinhibition effect, occurs as speakers feel freer to express disagreement in extreme ways (López-Bonilla et al., 2021; Suler, 2004). Additionally, in the situational context of online transactions, the anonymity and physical distance between the seller and the buyer provides room for the seller to more firmly and directly reject or challenge the buyer's views without worrying about significant emotional or social repercussions. This anonymity creates social distance between sellers and buyers which is a key factor in politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This does not happen in direct buying and selling, because in direct buying and selling buyers tend to choose sellers who are known and familiar. Sellers and buyers already have a fundamental of mutual trust which is formed from frequent direct contacts (Poon et al., 2017; Zalega, 2018), so that sellers and buyers try to maintain relationships in direct buying and selling interactions. Meanwhile, in online buying and selling, sellers and buyers do not know each other because the transaction axis is based on the availability of goods, without considering who the seller is. Thus, direct disagreement emerges due to the situational context specific to online negotiation interactions.

However, this research proves that direct disagreement in online buying and selling is mitigated using negative politeness. In other words, even though disagreement is expressed directly, the expression still contains politeness. Considering that this research was conducted within the scope of Eastern culture, the emergence of negative politeness is indicated to be influenced by cultural values. Individuals from Eastern cultures tend to use a high-context

communication style that is based on principles of negative politeness, which tends to use more apologetic expressions (Anugrawati et al., 2020; Moon, 2023; Ramlah & Sartini, 2023; Yao et al., 2021). In light of this comprehension, the cultural context fundamentally underpins the use of negative politeness strategies, shaping their application in virtual sales exchanges.

Therefore, the emergence of the phenomenon of mitigating direct disagreement using negative politeness was created by combining situational context and cultural context. This implies the importance of understanding the context in more detail, especially in studying speech in online buying and selling. The separation between situational context and cultural context as offered in this research is an alternative way to study polite disagreement in online discourse.

The practical application for sellers demonstrates that amiable sellers who utilize polite language in carrying out transactions are more likely to encourage repeat purchases from buyers, thereby benefiting from increased repeat purchases. Politeness and ethical behavior are crucial for sales success, as they build trust, foster customer loyalty, and promote repeat business (Mansouri et al., 2022). Adaptive selling, supported by training in politeness and responsiveness, enables sellers to meet individual customer needs and effectively navigate diverse interactions (Ahmad & Akbar, 2020). By prioritizing superior service and fostering long-term relationships, sellers gain a competitive edge and ensure sustained profitability in competitive markets.

Furthermore, the practical application of these principles on X (previously Twitter) is constrained due to the platform's absence of a dedicated marketplace feature. Transactions are executed directly via direct messages, with payment methods discussed and agreed upon privately. Nevertheless, the findings of this study can be extended to other social media platforms with integrated marketplace features, such as Facebook, or to dedicated e-commerce platforms like Amazon, eBay, Alibaba, etc. It is imperative for novice sellers on these platforms to comprehend seller politeness strategies. Incorporating practical explanations and educational materials on these strategies into FAQs or seller guidelines could transform marketplace platforms into venues for buying and selling as well as forums for fostering education in commerce.

## 6. Conclusion

Based on the findings explained in the previous section, the amount of data on the direct disagreement strategy was the most frequently found with 42 data, followed by indirect disagreement with 29 data, and no disagreement with 9 data. Direct disagreement was found most frequently indicating that sellers often boldly challenge buyers' views, despite the consequences of face-threatening acts. The use of direct disagreement occurs because the seller prioritizes clarity and honesty in transactions, so as to avoid misunderstandings and show firmness in maintaining the terms set by the seller.

Of the three disagreement strategies, the type of politeness that is most widely used is negative politeness. The type of politeness in the form of negative politeness was most often found in the direct disagreement strategy with 26 data. Negative politeness is used in direct disagreement by sellers with the aim of mitigating face-threatening acts, so that buyers feel comfortable when transacting online. This politeness pattern increases sellers' chances of quickly selling their items.

The practical application of this study demonstrates that amiable sellers who prioritize politeness and ethical behavior in transactions are more likely to build trust, foster customer loyalty, and encourage repeat purchases, thereby gaining a competitive edge and sustained profitability in competitive markets. While X (formerly Twitter) lacks a dedicated marketplace feature, the findings are applicable to platforms like Facebook, Amazon, and eBay, underscoring the importance of integrating educational resources on seller politeness strategies to enhance both commerce and seller development. Future research needs to be conducted to better understand and clarify sellers' language behavior on other marketplace platforms.

Within a limited scientific taxonomy, this research managed in finding a pattern of using negative politeness in conveying disagreement. The situational context of the online transaction causes direct disagreement to emerge, while the cultural context is the basis for the use of negative politeness. The separation between the situational context and the cultural context complemented with the buyer's perspective will produce more comprehensive scientific contributions, for other researchers in the future.

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