

## POLITENESS STRATEGY TO PREVENT AND RESOLVE CYBER-CONFLICTS AMONG INDONESIAN INTERNET USERS: A CYBERPRAGMATICS APPROACH

## STRATEGI KESANTUNAN UNTUK MENGHINDARI DAN MENYELESAIKAN KONFLIK SIBER ANTARA PENGGUNA INTERNET DI INDONESIA: KAJIAN CYBERPRAGMATIK

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### Abstract

Along with the rapid growth of Information and Communication Technology, legal, social, and cultural issues concerning the use of Internet and social media are becoming new problem lately. This research discusses conflicts that occur in the Indonesian cyber world related to the language used on internet-based communications. Prior to Indonesia's 2019 presidential election, the Indonesian social media and other internet-based communications, i.e. Facebook, has become a scene of conflict between supporters of presidential candidates or political party supporters who post updates and comments that are often notoriously provocative and potentially provoke not only verbal disagreements but also harassments and bullies related to ethnicity, groups, and religions. This purpose of this research is look deeply at the aforementioned problems. This study is mixed qualitative and quantitative research that uses digital ethnography method for data collection and pragmatics approach. The result from this research is a -linguistic-based model for avoiding and resolving conflicts among users of internet-based communications.

**Keywords:** Internet-based Communications, Conflict, Resolution, Politeness, Cyberpragmatic

### Abstrak

Sejalan dengan cepatnya pertumbuhan teknologi informasi dan komunikasi, masalah hukum, sosial, dan budaya dan yang berkaitan dengan penggunaan Internet dan media sosial menjadi masalah baru akhir-akhir. Penelitian ini membahas konflik yang terjadi di dunia siber di Indonesia terkait dengan bahasa yang digunakan pada komunikasi

berbasis internet. Sebelum pemilihan presiden Indonesia tahun 2019, media sosial Indonesia dan komunikasi berbasis internet lainnya, yaitu Facebook, telah menjadi sarana terjadinya konflik antara para pendukung kandidat presiden atau pendukung partai politik yang memposting status dan komentar yang sering kali juga bersifat provokatif dan berpotensi memprovokasi. Tidak hanya ketidaksetujuan secara verbal tetapi juga tindakan berupa pelecehan dan olokan yang terkait dengan etnis, kelompok, dan agama. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah melihat secara mendalam masalah yang disebut di atas. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dan kuantitatif yang didukung dengan metode etnografi digital untuk pengumpulan data dan pendekatan pragmatik. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah model berbasis linguistik untuk menghindari dan menyelesaikan konflik di antara pengguna komunikasi berbasis internet.

**Kata kunci:** komunikasi berbasis internet, Konflik, Resolusi, Kesopanan, Siber-pragmatik

### Introduction

Conflict can happen everywhere and anywhere, not only in the real world but also in the cyberspace. Nowadays, the advance of technology has made no barrier related to time, space, and distance. The cyberspace has become a new media to not only communicate but also share news, knowledge, even ideology, giving huge impacts to various aspects of life in every country. For instance, the use of social media as a tool for campaign in order to change the political views of citizens or to attract the audience by triggering conflicts among supporters of presidential candidates are becoming usual. This also happens in Indonesia prior to Indonesia's 2019 presidential election; the Indonesian social media and other internet-based communications, for example Facebook, have become a scene of conflict among supporters of presidential candidates or political parties through posts and comments that are often notoriously provocative. Some of these have potentially provoked not only verbal disagreements but also harassments and bullies related to ethnicity, groups, and religions. Furthermore, Indonesia has a variety of languages, ethnics, cultures and religions, and therefore it is prone for conflicts to occur, especially when related to such issues. A slight misunderstanding or different point of view can easily lead to conflict.

This paper examines cyber-conflict and its resolution among supporters of two president candidates prior to 2019 presidential election using politeness theory. In 2019 election, it is predicted that it can lead to a conflict because there are only two candidates on the election that mean that Indonesian people will be separated into two different views and supporters and there is no other research that has explained about 2019 election event related to conflict and its resolution. The data in this paper was analyzed by using cyber-pragmatics approach. Cyber-pragmatics according to Yus (2011) "was coined in 2001 for a cognitive pragmatics study of Internet-mediated communication (see Yus 2001a, 2001b, 2010b, forthcoming a). The main interest is the analysis of how information is produced and interpreted within the Internet environment." The main theory of this paper is politeness and Face Threatening Acts. Politeness is conceptualized as strategic communication that can maintain social relationships and avoid potential interpersonal conflict.

Politeness strategy was firstly popularized by Brown & Levinson (1987) inspired by the notion of 'Face' taken from Goffman (1967). Other linguists that explain this

theory are, among others, Fraser (1990), Lakoff (1989), Coupland et al. (1988). Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed that politeness is a way to mitigate face threats. Goffman (1967: 5) says “face” is “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact.” The face in an individual can be constantly updated depending on two factors which are: changing cognitive and emotional reactions (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003: 1458). Furthermore, speakers can use language to manipulate their hearers’ physical, perceptual, emotional, or cognitive reactions to approach or withdraw from their interactants (O’ Grady, 2014). This is in line with Brown and Levinson’s statement (1987: 62) that face can be subsequently maintained, raised, or lowered, and there are two types of face labeled ‘positive face’ as the desire to be approved of by other members of society, and ‘negative face’, as “the want of every ‘competent adult member’ that his or her actions be unimpeded by others”. Therefore, if someone makes a threat to someone else’s face, that person is deemed to have done what in Brown & Levinson’s notion called ‘Face Threatening Acts’ (FTAs). There are several strategies related to the way face can be threatened (Face Threatening Acts) as follows:

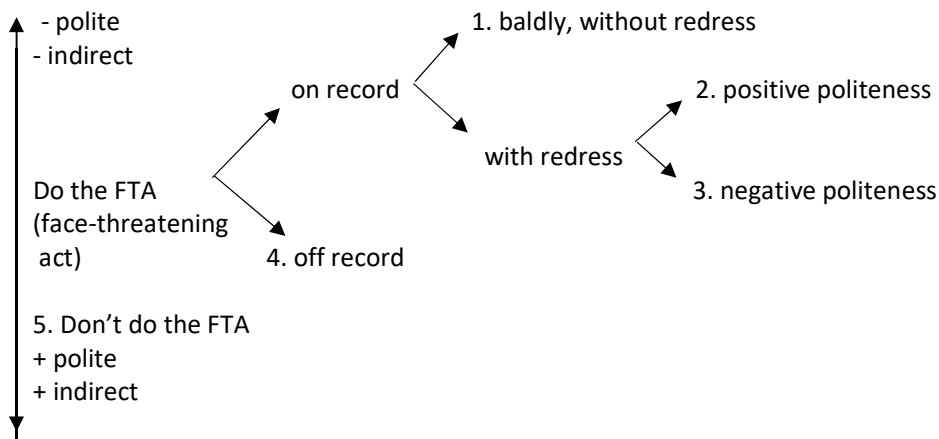


Figure 1. Possible Strategies for Using FTA's (Brown & Levinson: 69)

Being polite or using politeness is a method for a speaker to avoid a threat or to save his or her own face or the face of whom he or she is talking to. Even though politeness can be used as mitigation of face-threat in an ordinary conversation, there are situations in which individuals aim to damage the addressee’s face in pursuit of their own benefit. Lakoff (1989) says that in a therapeutic discourse, the violation of negative and positive politeness norms frequently occurs. Likewise, with non-reciprocal question-answer and search of the truth in a courtroom, a violation of negative and positive politeness norms become the usual part of the legal professionals and it is usually done intentionally.

The violation to positive and negative politeness also happens in politics prior to the presidential election in Indonesia. This case can mostly be seen on social media, in both visual and written forms. Stieglitz et al., (2012) says that nowadays political institutions have seen the importance of political institution to actively participate in social media to enhance their popularity. There has been an increasing number in the use of social media for politics. Political institutions (politicians, political parties and

political foundations) have begun to use social media such as Facebook and Twitter to make dialogues with society and encourage more political discussions with them.

However, today, political institutions or supporters use not only a positive way to introduce their candidates using social media but also tricks violating politeness on their posts or comments, which are used to provoke or trigger conflicts among the society or the netizens who read the posts. This method is used by political institutions or supporters to influence hence alter people's political views in the hope that they will choose the candidate they support. This has become a common practice in politics, but the negative impacts of this issue have outweighed the positive ones because the conflicts triggered by the issue can continue even after the campaign has finished, leaving behind problems to be curbed among internet or social media users. This happened because they seem to have been brainwashed by the issues. This paper will try to examine how conflicts happen among supporters of presidential candidates which mostly try to dominate and attack the addressees by violating politeness or using Face Threatening Acts. This paper also proposes some resolutions to the conflict. Based on the formulations of study there are three research questions to be answered in this paper:

1. What Acts are used by Internet users that trigger a cyber-conflict?
2. What Act of politeness is used to resolve a cyber-conflict?
3. What is the percentage of supporters based on gender triggering and resolving a cyber-conflict?

### Method

This study is a descriptive qualitative research using digital Kozinet's netnography for data collection and pragmatics to analyze the data. Method used in this research involves the method of collecting the data, classifying, analyzing, interpreting and drawing conclusion. The analysis focused on the linguistic features and behaviors of the internet users in conducting verbal and visual communications. Qualitative method will be used to strengthen the data. The population of this research was taken from netizens who use social media in Indonesia i.e. Facebook. Comments were taken from that social media and were used as the main data in this research. The data contains 50 (fifty) posts taken from Joko Widodo Official Facebook account and a group called "2019 ganti presiden" or "2019 replace the president" from January to August 2018. The data were taken prior to 2019 presidential election of Indonesia. The demography of the users was limited to only the area of Indonesia. The commentators were analyzed based on both gender i.e. male and female. The name of the person in comments was changed into initials to protect their privacy.

### Result and Discussion

We try to analyze the conflict based on real situations that have happened on social media, especially on Facebook. It is evident that Indonesian people often use politeness as mitigating devices to resolve conflicts on the social media in accordance with Labov and Fanshell (1977: 84) that mitigation is used to modify (one's) expression to avoid one's creating offense and it expresses the speaker's sensitivity towards the addressee. Following are three samples from fifty (50) data taken from the Facebook official account of Mr. Joko Widodo and the group called #*ganti presiden 2019* which

supports Mr. Prabowo Subianto. We used the data to see the contrasting points of view between Mr. Joko Widodo's and Mr. Prabowo Subianto's supporters on Facebook. The comments contain violation of politeness (Using FTA) and their resolutions were observed. The results were as follow:

- (i) The comments were taken from responses posted on the official account of Joko Widodo on his Facebook "President Joko Widodo". Joko Widodo posted a comment that Infrastructure to support the connectivity among islands in Indonesia is essential due to the vast area of Indonesia. According to him, Indonesia must have airports and ports, small to large. Without the infrastructure, the connectivity from one island to another will be difficult. (Posted on: 7<sup>th</sup> Aug 2018)

Sample of comments:

AR

*Betul2 saya gk sukak sama jokowi*

Really I don't like with Jokowi

"Honestly, I really don't like Jokowi."

TO

*Ya udah nggak papa, yang suka udah banyak kok*

Yes it is okay, who likes him is many indeed

"It doesn't matter; there are many who like him."

PP

*Sukses selalu Pak Presiden Jokowi*

Success always Mr. President Jokowi

"Good luck always Mr. President Jokowi"

EFM

*Ngapain loe komen*

Why you comment

"Why did you bother comment?"

BP

*TO betul pake bgt mas TO*

TO correct add more Mr. TO

"Mr.TO is correct, he is really correct, indeed Mr. TO"

It can be seen from the data that the first comment tries to violate politeness in the post by saying "*Betul2 saya gk sukak sama jokowi*" or "Honestly, I really don't like Jokowi." This utterance contains Face Threatening Acts, which is also an evidence of violating politeness since this utterance is deliberately made to trigger conflict because it can be seen from the post that the person does not like Jokowi at all, or he is deemed to hate Jokowi. The utterance made has potentially triggered a conflict among the readers. The evidence that this kind of utterance can possibly trigger a conflict can be seen from EFM's reply. She says "*ngapain loe komen*" or in English says "Why did you bother comment?" the word "*loe*" in the utterance is informal and it shows derogatory

manner. However, based on the reply made by TO, it reduces the conflict. He gives a logical statement *"Ya udah nggak papa, yang suka udah banyak kok"* or "It doesn't matter; there are many who like him." This statement contains Face Saving Act which means that he tries to lessen the conflict by trying to remind other readers the fact about the condition of Jokowi's supporters nowadays. This kind of act is evidence that politeness can be used effectively to reduce or lessen a conflict. It can be seen from the data that after TO has made the utterance, other comments follow with positive attitudes such as PP that says *"Sukses selalu Pak Presiden Jokowi"* or "Good luck always Mr. President Jokowi" and furthermore TO's statement is also supported by BP who says *"TO betul pake bgt mas TO"* or in English he says "Mr.TO is correct, he is really correct, indeed Mr. TO." Thus, this is the actual example of politeness that can be used to resolve a conflict.

Another example was taken from comments on a Facebook group account "2019 Ganti Presiden" or "2019 replace the President". This group mostly supports another candidate for President in 2019.

- (ii) On the Facebook post, the group has invited the audience to join a healthy walk program for Solo's Moslem Community and the theme is "togetherness to welcome Islamic leadership in Indonesia". However, there is also a video embedded below the post which tries to invite the audience to come. Yet, the invitation has been given inside a mosque. (Posted on: 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018)

The post and video have invited reactions from the viewers as follows:

WNM:

*Pake nama jalan sehat umat islam... heee jangan jual islam untuk meraih ambisi ya... sy muslim tidak setuju dengan pendapatmu..... selogan ini mungkin lebih pas "JALAN SEHAT UMAT NAFSU BESAR TENAGA KURANG"*  
Use name walk health community islam don't sell islam to achieve ambition yes I moslem not agree with opinion your slogan this maybe more suitable walk healthy community passion big power less

"Why use the name Moslems community healthy walking... heee don't sell Islam to achieve ambitions ok... I am a Moslem and I don't agree with your opinion ... .. this slogan might be more suitable "COMMUNITY HEALTHY WALKING, PASSIONATE, BUT POWERLESS."

Sample of comments:

DGS

*Setuju dengan WNM jangan mau jadi alat politikus apalagi bawa2 agama.*  
Agree with WNM don't want to become tool politician moreover take religion  
"I agree with WNM to not be a tool for politicians, especially when religion is being used."

MS

*Ini sudah meleceh kesucian mesjid bawa dan bentangkan sepanduk ganti presiden berpolitik dalam mesjid gimana dewan mesjidnya*

This has harassed the sanctity of the mosque carry and unfurling banner change president politic inside mosque how council mosque

“This has been harassing the sanctity of the mosque, carrying and unfurling banners for the replacement of the president. Using politics inside the mosque; what about the council of the mosque?”

AN

*Yaudah kalo nggak setuju nggak usah ikut kan beres*

Its fine if do not agree do not fuss to come it finish

Well, if you don't agree, you don't have to come along, it will be finished right

AN

*MS kamu sudah tau belum, bbm naik? Barangkali pa lurah juga ndak tau.*

*Yang tau tuh Cuma rakyat kecil. Kalo kamu cukong. Ya pantes kalo ngga tau'*

MS you know or not fuel raise maybe Lurah also doesn't know. The know is only citizen small if you wealthy person so clear if you don't know

MS 'are you aware or not aware that the fuel prices have increased? Maybe Mr. Lurah (headman) doesn't know it either. The one who knows is only the grassroot people. You're a *cukong* (a boss). Clearly, you don't know anything about it.'

AN

*DGS coba ngomong dong, jangan mau bbm naik baru tuh saya setuju. Hehehe nggak berani kan?*

DGS try to speak don't want fuel raise that I am agree hehehe don't dare right

DGS, please try to talk, disagree with the raising fuel price and then I will agree. Hehehe you don't dare, don't you?

MS

*AN maaf ini tidak ada sangkut pautnya BBM dengan mesjid anda salah kaprah apa tidak ada lagi tempat lain untuk mencurahkan hati anda jangan kotori kesucian masjid (dia mengirimkan gambar dengan tulisan: jangan habiskan sisa hidupmu untuk membenci siapapun hidup kita tak lama di dunia ini)*

AN sorry this has nothing to do BBM with mosque your is misguided is there no other place to pour out heart you do not disrupt the sanctity of the mosque

“Sorry AN, fuels have nothing to do with the mosque. You've been misguided. Were there no other places to pour out your heart? Do not disrupt the sanctity of the mosque.”

(He sends a picture with the inscription: don't spend the rest of your life hating people; our lives are not eternal in this world)



The comment made by WN contains FTA. WN says *Pake nama jalan sehat umat islam... heee jangan jual islam untuk meraih ambisi ya... sy muslim tidak setuju dengan pendapatmu..... selogan ini mungkin lebih pas "JALAN SEHAT UMAT NAFSU BESAR TENAGA KURANG"* or in English WN says 'Why use the name Moslems community healthy walking... heee don't sell Islam to achieve ambitions ok ... I am a Moslem and I don't agree with your opinion ... this slogan might be more suitable "COMMUNITY HEALTHY WALKING, PASSIONATE, BUT POWERLESS'. This utterance contains sarcasm, followed by criticism and disagreement and also mocking. Those four acts contain positive face threatening acts that can trigger a conflict or counter attack from its reader. The reply to this comment at the first time has been an agreement. DGS has agreed with the statement and said *Setuju dengan WNM jangan mau jadi alat politikus apalagi bawa2 agama* ("I agree with WNM; don't be a tool for politicians, especially when using religion.") Another reaction has also come from another participant Mr. MS who says *Ini sudah meleceh kesucian mesjid bawa dan bentangkan sepanduk ganti presiden berpolitik dalam mesjid gimana dewan mesjidnya* ('This has been harassing the sanctity of the mosque, carrying and unfurling banners for the replacement of the president. Using politics inside the mosque; what about the council of the mosque'). He has tried to do FTA by criticizing the topic just as WN has.

After the commentators have spoken there is another person, AN, who actually first tries to be polite and to reduce the conflict by saying *"Yaudah kalo nggak setuju nggak usah ikut kan beres"* or in English the person says 'Well, if you don't agree, you don't have to come along, it will be finished right?' The following comment, however, contains negative FTA by trying to restrict the hearer's personal freedom. AN has tried to question MS and DGS. AN uses sarcasm by saying *"MS kamu sudah tau belum, BBM naik? Barangkali pa lurah juga ndak tau. Yang tau tuh Cuma rakyat kecil. Kalo kamu cukong. Ya pantes kalo ngga tau"* (MS, are you aware or not aware that the fuel prices have increased? Maybe Mr. Lurah (headman) doesn't know it either. The one who knows is only the grassroot people. You're a *cukong* (a boss). Clearly, you don't know anything about it) and AN also challenges DGS by saying *"DGS coba ngomong dong, jangan mau BBM naik baru tuh saya setuju. Hehehe nggak berani kan?"* ('Please try to talk, disagree with the raising fuel price and then I will agree. Hehehe you don't dare, don't you?') The comment from AN could lead to a conflict. However, the reaction from MS contains politeness; he says *"AN maaf ini tidak ada sangkut pautnya BBM dengan mesjid anda salah kaprah apa tidak ada lagi tempat lain untuk mencurahkan hati anda jangan kotori kesucian masjid"* ('Sorry AN, fuels have nothing to do with the mosque. You've been misguided. Were there no other places to pour out your heart? Do not disrupt the sanctity of the mosque.'). In the utterance MS said "Sorry" to reduce the threat and at the same time it shows politeness. Furthermore, MS disagrees with what AN has said to MS and MS also gives further reminder by sending a picture with the inscription: don't spend the rest of your life hating people; our lives are not eternal in this world. By using this kind of utterance, the conflict has stopped.

### Quantitative Results

Based on the data being observed on Facebook related to the conflict, there are 50 posts on Facebook (the total respondents consist of 70 males and 50 females) collected for the research purpose. Based on gender, FTA or violation of language



politeness has been done more by male respondents than by female. Several acts have been found in the data, which have triggered conflicts. Those Acts are as depicted in Table 1 below:

**Table 1.** Acts That Can Trigger a Conflict Based on Gender

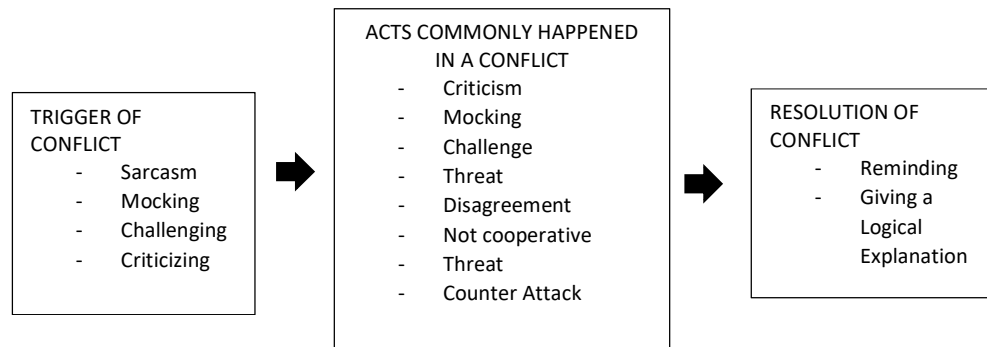
TYPE OF ACTS	USED BY MALE	USED BY FEMALE
SARCASM	60%	40%
MOCKING	70%	30%
CHALLENGE	60%	40%
CRITICIZING	40%	60%

Acts that contain politeness that could be used to resolve a conflict are as follows:

**Table 2.** Acts That Can Resolve a Conflict Based on Gender

TYPE OF ACTS	USED BY MALE	USED BY FEMALE
REMINDING	60%	40%
GIVING A LOGICAL EXPLANATION	70%	30%

The data can also be described inside a diagram as follows:



**Figure 2.** Conflict and Resolution Diagram

**Discussion**

Conflict has become an issue that is frequently confronted in everyday life. Conflict research has drawn many linguists attention. Research on conflicts includes disputes in courts (Lakoff, 1989; Penman, 1990), conflict in the family (Vuchinich 1990 in the military (Culpeper, 1996), teenagers conflict (Labov, 1972; Goodwin and Goodwin, 1990), and physicians and patients conflict (Mehan, 1990). This paper points the importance of understanding a conflict not only in the real world but also in the cyberspace. Based on the data, it could be seen that most conflicts have been triggered by four acts that contain Face Threatening Acts. Conflicts have been triggered by

violations of politeness which is deemed to have been intentionally done by speakers. The violation of politeness that have happened in social media, especially on Facebook, has been done by the speakers by doing several acts: sarcasm, mocking, challenging and criticizing. Those acts have triggered conflicts in the cyberspace. The responses to those four acts are: criticizing back, mocking back, challenging back, threatening back, or losing the atmosphere of being cooperative with the hearers. Those acts can usually be found in a sequence of conflict. This has happened also on Facebook comments in our data.

Based on the data taken from Jokowi Official Facebook account, comments come mostly from those who criticize him, but they have not used abusive words. Very probably the reason is that the account is an official account of the president hence they do not want to be disrespectful. It is different with the account of another group, which supports another president candidate for 2019. In this Facebook account or group, people are free to use abusive language. They have used sarcasm and mocking language. Thus, it is in accordance with what Brown and Levison (1987) says that politeness and face threatening depend on power, distance, and relation. Here the two accounts are different; one is the official account of the ruling president that has more power than the other account. Therefore, people use different languages in those two respective accounts.

Likewise, commentators have responded in a way that tries to resolve conflicts with the same method. They have used politeness, in this matter using an utterance that contains reminder, or they give a logical explanation hence avoiding conflicts from occurring or stopping them. Based on the calculation of the data taken from the Facebook accounts, based on gender, it has been shown that male respondents or commentators have been more provocative and blatant when they post a comment. They use more sarcasm and mocking, while female respondents or commentators mostly give their comments in a subtle way, such as criticizing. However, no matter what acts they have used in their comments, those acts have triggered conflicts.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, this research can be used to avoid conflicts by examining how utterance works in a dialogue. The main method to avoid conflict is by how people manage their utterances. However, there are several conceptual and methodological limitations in this study. First, because the data were based on written reports, it has been difficult to pinpoint nonverbal aspects. Second, the sample size was relatively small and composed only of Jokowi and Prabowo supporters and haters, and it has happened only in Indonesia. Therefore, it cannot be used as an exact measurement for other populations with different cultures, especially with regards to the ratings of appropriateness and effectiveness of the categories.

In other words, the result may vary based on the location where the research is conducted. To avoid conflicts, further research is needed to get comprehensive linguistic patterns and structures. Moreover, the information and communication technology are rapidly continuing to develop hence it is deemed essential that we find solutions to avoid and manage conflicts in the future. The most important thing is that we need to make sure that the cyber-conflict that happens on the Internet will not become an issue that can brainwash people or divide a nation into. Overall, the study serves as a first step to show that Face Threatening Acts or the violation to politeness can trigger conflicts and that politeness is deemed effective to curb the problem of raising conflicts among Internet users.

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