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Politeness Strategies in Locker Room Communication: A Pragmatic Analysis of Bojan Hodak's Utterances in Persib Bandung

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A B S T R A C T

This study examines the politeness strategies employed by Bojan Hodak in locker room communication and analyzes how these strategies contribute to maintaining team cohesion in Persib Bandung during the 2024/2025 BRI Liga 1 season. Using a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected from 34 locker room videos on Persib Bandung's official YouTube channel, yielding 68 utterances. Eight utterances were selected through purposive sampling based on their clarity in representing the four politeness strategy types proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). The findings reveal that Bojan Hodak employs positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on record, and off record strategies to deliver motivation, instructions, and evaluations. These strategies function as pragmatic tools that balance authority, solidarity, and interpersonal respect, thereby maintaining team cohesion

Keywords: *Politeness Strategies, Locker Room Communication, Team Cohesion, Bojan Hodak, Persib Bandung*

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INTRODUCTION

Language plays a central role in human interaction as a medium for expressing thoughts, emotions, and intentions. Through language, individuals not only exchange information but also construct relationships and negotiate social meanings. According to Yule (1996), pragmatics concerns the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker and interpreted by a listener. This implies that meaning is not solely derived from linguistic forms but is highly dependent on context. Such contextual sensitivity is especially evident in spoken communication, where tone, setting, and social roles shape interpretation, making politeness a crucial aspect of pragmatic analysis.

Politeness constitutes a fundamental element in pragmatics, as it governs how individuals maintain harmonious social relationships. Yule (1996) defines politeness as an expression of awareness of another person's face, or public self-image. Brown & Levinson (1987) further argue that speakers employ politeness strategies to mitigate face-threatening acts (FTAs) and maintain social balance. These strategies enable effective communication while preserving mutual respect, particularly in hierarchical and emotionally intense settings such as workplaces, classrooms, and sports environments.

Locker room communication plays a crucial role in shaping team dynamics and performance. In this study, the locker room refers to a private space where coaches and players engage in tactical, motivational, and interpersonal interaction. It functions as a social arena where instructions, feedback, and emotional support are exchanged. Effective verbal communication enhances coordination and adaptation to situational demands, while also

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fostering trust, openness, and a sense of belonging. Such conditions strengthen team cohesion the tendency of group members to remain united in pursuit of shared goals and the satisfaction of collective emotional needs and collective efficacy (Oh, 2023).

Bojan Hodak, a Croatian football coach, is widely recognized for his tactical expertise and composed leadership style. His experience in managing Southeast Asian football clubs highlights his ability to motivate players through balanced and effective communication. His leadership emphasizes discipline, respect, and teamwork, which are reflected in his pragmatic use of language. Notably, he became the first foreign coach to lead Persib Bandung to a league championship title and the first to achieve a three in a row championship in Liga Indonesia. These achievements demonstrate not only his tactical competence but also his ability to foster trust and cohesion through communication, making him a relevant subject for pragmatic analysis.

Persib Bandung, established in 1933, is one of Indonesia's most prominent football clubs, supported by a large fan base known as Bobotoh. The club represents strong cultural identity, local pride, and community values. Its well-established supporter network provides a significant advantage (Esa Perdana, 2020). Within such a high-profile club, internal communication particularly between coaches and players becomes essential in maintaining team cohesion and sustaining collective performance throughout a competitive season. The locker room, therefore, serves not only as a tactical space but also as a site of interpersonal and emotional management.

Language functions not only as a medium for conveying information but also as a tool for constructing social relationships and negotiating meaning in context. Yule (1996), defines pragmatics as the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker and interpreted by a listener, emphasizing that meaning is shaped by contextual factors rather than linguistic form alone. This perspective is particularly relevant in spoken interaction, where the social roles, setting, and intentions of speakers significantly influence how utterances are produced and understood. Pragmatics therefore provides the foundational framework for examining how language use in specific social contexts such as professional sports carries meaning beyond its literal content.

Within pragmatics, politeness occupies a central role in governing how speakers maintain harmonious social relationships. Yule (2010) defines politeness as an expression of awareness of another person's face, or public self-image. Building on this, Brown & Levinson (1987) argue that speakers employ politeness strategies to mitigate face-threatening acts (FTAs) and preserve mutual respect in interaction. Their theory classifies politeness strategies into four types. Bald on record refers to direct and unambiguous communication where clarity is prioritized over face protection. Positive politeness emphasizes solidarity and reduces social distance through inclusive and supportive language (Leech, 1983). Negative politeness respects the hearer's autonomy through indirectness and minimal imposition (Yule, 1996). Off record strategy conveys meaning implicitly, allowing the hearer to interpret the intended message without direct pressure (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983). These strategies reflect the speaker's pragmatic awareness in navigating social relationships through language, making them particularly relevant in hierarchical and emotionally complex settings.

Communication in sport takes place across a variety of contexts, each carrying distinct interpersonal significance for coach-athlete relationships. Izquierdo & Anguera (2021) argue that coach-athlete interaction occurs in diverse settings including informal sessions, competition preparation, half-times, and conversations in the locker room, all of which shape the quality of interpersonal relationships between coaches and players. Among these contexts, the locker room occupies a particularly significant position as a private and emotionally intense space where coaches and players interact away from public scrutiny. In this study, locker room communication refers to verbal interaction between a coach and players that occurs in the private setting of the locker room before, during, or after a match, serving motivational, tactical, and interpersonal functions that directly influence team dynamics and cohesion.

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The significance of locker room communication not only in the content of what is said, but in how it is said. Izquierdo & Anguera (2021) demonstrate that a coach's communicative style has a notable impact on the affective relationships athletes develop toward their sport, their teammates, and the coach, suggesting that the manner of communication carries as much weight as its content. This is particularly relevant in the locker room, where the coach occupies a position of authority that inherently creates potential face-threatening situations for players. Oh (2023) further supports this by demonstrating that coaches who engage in accurate and positive communication with their athletes can significantly enhance team cohesion, which in turn contributes to improved athletic performance. Within this framework, the locker room functions not merely as a tactical space but as a social arena where the coach's language choices to maintain team cohesion.

Team cohesion is defined as a dynamic process reflected in the tendency of a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives and the satisfaction of member affective needs Carron et al., 1998 (as cited in Carron et al., 2002). This definition encompasses two interdependent dimensions: task cohesion, which refers to the degree of collaboration among group members in achieving a specific collective goal, and social cohesion, which reflects the quality of interpersonal relationships and the degree of mutual satisfaction among members (Carron et al., 2002). In professional football, both dimensions are essential players must coordinate tactically while simultaneously maintaining positive interpersonal relationships under high-pressure competitive conditions. Carron et al. (2002) further demonstrate that cohesion and team success share a strong positive relationship, particularly in interacting sports such as football where collective coordination is fundamental to performance.

Brown & Levinson (1987) argue that speakers employ politeness strategies to mitigate face-threatening acts and preserve mutual respect, while Leech, (1983) emphasizes that politeness serves a broader social function of minimizing interpersonal conflict and maintaining harmonious relationships. In the context of professional football, these functions of politeness become particularly significant within the locker room. As Izquierdo & Anguera, (2021) note, the locker room is one of the key communicative contexts in which coach-athlete interaction takes place, and a coach's communicative style has a direct impact on the quality of interpersonal relationships with players. When a coach strategically employs positive politeness, he reduces social distance and reinforces collective identity among players, directly contributing to social cohesion. When negative politeness or off record strategies are used, player autonomy is respected and trust is preserved, supporting both social and task cohesion. These outcomes align with Carron et al. (2002) conceptualization of team cohesion as a dynamic process encompassing both the pursuit of shared instrumental objectives and the satisfaction of members' affective needs. Oh, (2023) further confirms that coaches who engage in positive and strategic communication with their athletes can significantly enhance team cohesion, which in turn contributes to athletic performance. Therefore, politeness strategies function not merely as linguistic choices but as pragmatic mechanisms through which a coach actively constructs and sustains team cohesion within the locker room communication.

Several studies have applied Brown and Levinson's politeness theory to analyze communication in hierarchical and high-pressure contexts. Senowarsito (2013) examined politeness strategies used in teacher-student interaction in an EFL classroom, finding that both teachers and students predominantly employed positive politeness, negative politeness, and bald on record strategies. The study demonstrated that social distance, power relations, and institutional setting significantly influenced speakers' choices of politeness strategies. However, Senowarsito's study focused on educational settings and did not examine how politeness strategies function in sports contexts or their relationship to team cohesion. Nasuli et al. (2024) analysed politeness strategies in the 2020 Biden-Trump presidential debate, revealing that speakers strategically employed a combination of positive politeness and bald on record strategies to manage face threats under high-pressure communicative conditions. While this study highlighted the pragmatic significance of politeness in competitive and

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emotionally intense interactions, it did not address interpersonal communication within a team setting or its implications for collective cohesion.

Aulia et al. (2025) examined the use of politeness strategies in El Clasico match commentary, finding that commentators employed positive politeness, negative politeness, off record, and bald on record strategies to maintain objectivity and neutrality under high-pressure communicative conditions. The study demonstrated that politeness strategies function as pragmatic tools that enable speakers to deliver analysis and criticism without exhibiting favoritism, thereby preserving harmonious communication in emotionally intense football contexts. However, while this study extended the application of politeness theory into the domain of football communication, it focused on public broadcast commentary rather than internal coach-player interaction, leaving the interpersonal and cohesion-building functions of politeness within a team setting unexplored.

Building on these pragmatic studies, several researchers have also examined leadership and communication specifically in sports contexts. Peng & Wong (2025) investigated the effects of coaches' transformational leadership behaviour on team cohesion, finding that coaches who demonstrated supportive and inspiring leadership significantly enhanced team cohesion among college athletes. Their study highlighted the coach as a pivotal figure whose behavioural style directly shapes team unity and collective commitment. However, their analysis focused on leadership behaviour as a psychological construct and did not examine the specific linguistic strategies through which such leadership is enacted in communication, particularly in the locker room. Adiloğulları et al. (2025) examined the interplay between perceived supportive coach behaviours, team resilience, and collective efficacy in young team athletes, finding that athletes who perceived their coaches as supportive demonstrated greater resilience and collective efficacy under pressure. However, their study focused on psychological perceptions of coach behaviour rather than the specific linguistic strategies coaches use in communication, leaving the pragmatic dimension of coach language unexplored. Faturohman (2025) examined Bojan Hodak's leadership style, identifying a balance between authoritarian and democratic approaches in achieving team success. While this study shares the same subject as the present research, it focused on leadership behaviour rather than the pragmatic features of language, particularly politeness strategies in locker room communication.

Taken together, these studies demonstrate the relevance of communication, leadership, and politeness strategies across various hierarchical and high-pressure contexts. Studies in pragmatics have shown that politeness strategies function effectively in educational settings, political debates, and football commentary to manage face threats and maintain harmonious communication. Meanwhile, research in sports communication has highlighted the significant role of coach behavior and leadership style in shaping team cohesion and collective performance. However, none of these studies has specifically examined how a coach's politeness strategies in locker room communication contribute to team cohesion in professional football. This gap positions the present study as a meaningful contribution to the field of sports pragmatics, bridging the linguistic analysis of politeness strategies with the interpersonal dynamics of coach-player communication in a competitive football environment.

By integrating these perspectives, this study bridges pragmatics and sports communication. It focuses on how Bojan Hodak's politeness strategies function as a communicative tool to maintain team cohesion within Persib Bandung during the 2024/2025 BRI Liga 1 season.

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METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the use of politeness strategies in Bojan Hodak's locker room communication during the 2024/2025 BRI Liga 1 season. A qualitative descriptive approach is appropriate for this study because it allows the researcher to examine linguistic phenomena as they naturally occur in real communicative contexts without reducing them to numerical measurements. This approach is particularly suited to pragmatic analysis, where the focus is on interpreting meaning, intention, and social function embedded in spoken utterances. Creswell (2016) defines qualitative research as an inquiry process aimed at understanding social or human problems by constructing a holistic perspective based on words, detailed views of participants, and natural settings. By employing this method, the study prioritizes contextual interpretation over statistical generalization, enabling a nuanced understanding of how politeness strategies function within the specific social dynamics of locker room communication.

The data of this study consist of Bojan Hodak's utterances that contain politeness strategies, selected through purposive sampling. Creswell (2016) explains that purposive sampling involves selecting data based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. In this study, the data are taken from 34 locker room videos from Persib Bandung's official YouTube channel (@persibofficial). From each video, two utterances were identified, resulting in a total of 68 utterances as the initial data corpus. From these utterances, eight were selected based on the following criteria: (1) the utterance clearly demonstrates one of the four politeness strategy types proposed by Brown & Levinson (1987), namely bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record; (2) the utterance occurs in a distinct communicative context, such as pre-match, half-time, or post-match interaction; and (3) the utterance reflects a direct communicative function, whether motivational, instructional, or evaluative. Each category consists of two representative utterances, chosen for their clarity in demonstrating how politeness strategies function in maintaining team cohesion.

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FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study examines the types of politeness strategies employed by Bojan Hodak in locker room communication and how these strategies function to maintain team cohesion within Persib Bandung during the 2024/2025 BRI Liga 1 season. The findings emphasize the importance of politeness strategies in delivering motivation, instruction, and evaluation in a high-pressure football environment. Through the application of politeness strategies, Bojan Hodak is able to balance authority, solidarity, and emotional control while maintaining team cohesion. These findings provide insight into how pragmatic competence contributes to leadership communication in professional sports contexts. The frequency distribution of politeness strategies identified across 68 utterances is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1 : Frequency of Politeness Strategies in Bojan Hodak's Locker Room Communication

No.	Politeness Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1	Positive Politeness	32	47.1%
2	Negative Politeness	19	27.9%
3	Bald on Record	10	14.7%
4	Off Record	7	10.3%
	Total	68	100%

Table 1 presents the frequency distribution of politeness strategies employed by Bojan Hodak across 68 utterances collected from 34 locker room videos. The data reveal that positive politeness is the most dominant strategy, appearing in 32 utterances (47.1%), indicating that Bojan Hodak consistently prioritizes solidarity, collective identity, and motivational encouragement in his communication with players. The dominance of positive politeness suggests that the coach places particular emphasis on strengthening social cohesion, as inclusive and supportive language directly fosters interpersonal closeness and a sense of shared purpose among team members. Bald on record strategy ranks second with 19

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utterances (27.9%), reflecting the coach's frequent use of direct and clear instructions particularly in pre-match and high-pressure situations. The prevalence of this strategy indicates a strong emphasis on task cohesion, as direct communication ensures that all players share a unified understanding of collective goals and expectations. Negative politeness appears in 10 utterances (14.7%), demonstrating the coach's tendency to respect players' autonomy and minimize imposition when delivering tactical guidance, thereby supporting both social and task cohesion by maintaining a respectful and trusting communicative atmosphere. Off record strategy is the least frequently employed, appearing in 7 utterances (10.3%), suggesting that indirect communication is used selectively, particularly in situations requiring emotional management or subtle evaluation, which contributes to preserving players' self-image and maintaining team cohesion. Overall, the frequency distribution reflects a communicative pattern in which Bojan Hodak balances motivational encouragement and directive instruction, demonstrating pragmatic awareness in sustaining both the social and task dimensions of team cohesion as conceptualized by Carron et al. (2002).

The representative utterances selected through purposive sampling for in-depth analysis are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Observation Results from Official Youtube Channel of Persib Bandung

No.	Statement	Type of politeness strategies
1	"We are just we are not finished yet. maybe maybe this is enough but we need to go to malut, if we win, it will change everything." (Second leg Persib vs Bali United)	Positive Politeness
2	"Let's go out, we need to kill them. Come on, put the heads up, if you want to be the champions." (Second Leg Persib vs Persija)	Positive Politeness
3	"It will be very difficult because it's full stadium. It will be very difficult from us at the side to shout. So you need to talk in between eleven of you on the field." (Second leg Persib vs PSS)	Negative Politeness
4	"This is our stadium, our home. so don't put the pressure for yourselves."(First leg Persib vs Borneo FC)	Negative Politeness
5	"Okay, Warming up! Just be focus, Let's to win the game!" (Second leg Persib vs PSS)	Bald on Record
6	"Focus on the game! good warming up! come on! important game for us." (First leg Persib vs Persita)	Bald on Record
7	"So adjust if you need shoes with higher studs or not, then just check." (Second leg Persib vs Bali United)	Off Record
8	"Today was not bad. As I've already said, much more positive than negative." (First leg Persib vs PSM)	Off Record

Table 2 presents examples of politeness strategies employed by Bojan Hodak in locker room communication during the 2024/2025 BRI *Liga 1* season. The data demonstrate how different politeness strategies are utilized to deliver instructions, motivation, and tactical messages to players. Positive politeness is reflected through utterances that emphasize solidarity and collective spirit among team members. Negative politeness appears in statements that minimize imposition while encouraging players to communicate

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independently on the field. Bald on record strategy is used to convey direct instructions in urgent situations where clarity and efficiency are prioritized. Meanwhile, off record politeness is employed through indirect expressions that allow players to interpret and respond to the coach's message without explicit pressure. These findings indicate that politeness strategies function not only as linguistic devices but also as pragmatic tools for maintaining authority, motivation, and team cohesion within the locker room communication.

The Use of Politeness Strategies to Maintain Team Cohesion

"We are just we are not finished yet. maybe maybe this is enough but we need to go to malut, if we win, it will change everything." (Second leg Persib vs PSS Sleman)

This utterance was delivered by Bojan Hodak in the post-match locker room following Persib Bandung's victory in the second leg against Bali United. Despite the win, the context suggests that the overall competition was not yet decided, as the team still needed to secure another match in Maluku Utara (Malut) to clinch the championship. In this situation, Bojan Hodak uses the locker room as a space to manage the team's emotional state, preventing overconfidence while maintaining collective motivation.

The utterance demonstrates the use of positive politeness because Bojan Hodak emphasizes solidarity and collective identity through the repeated use of the pronoun "we." This expression reduces social distance between the coach and players, showing that success and responsibility are shared collectively within the team. The phrase "it will change everything" also functions as motivational encouragement that strengthens optimism and togetherness among players.

The use of positive politeness in this utterance helps maintain team cohesion by creating a sense of unity and shared purpose inside the locker room. Rather than emphasizing individual performance, Bojan Hodak focuses on collective achievement and mutual struggle. This strategy encourages players to feel emotionally connected to one another and to the coach, fostering cooperation and team solidarity in a high-pressure competitive situation. Through supportive and inclusive language, the coach reinforces interpersonal closeness while maintaining motivation and confidence within the team.

"Let's go out, we need to kill them. Come on, put the heads up, if you want to be the champions."(Second leg Persib vs Persija)

This utterance was delivered by Bojan Hodak in the pre-match locker room before Persib Bandung's away fixture against Persija, their long-standing rival. Playing away against a rival team presents additional psychological pressure, as the players must perform without home crowd support in a hostile environment. In this context, Bojan Hodak uses the locker room as a space to elevate the players' mental readiness and reinforce their collective ambition, recognizing that a victory in this match would significantly strengthen the team's championship mentality.

The utterance demonstrates the use of positive politeness because Bojan Hodak employs inclusive and motivational language to strengthen collective identity among players. The expressions "let's go out" and "we need to kill them" emphasize collective action and shared responsibility, reducing social distance between the coach and players. The phrase "put the heads up" functions as emotional encouragement that reinforces optimism and solidarity within the team. Furthermore, the conditional phrase "if you want to be the champions" appeals to the players' shared ambition, strengthening collective motivation and commitment.

The use of positive politeness in this utterance helps maintain team cohesion by reinforcing a sense of unity and shared purpose before entering the match. By framing the challenge as a collective endeavor, Bojan Hodak encourages players to feel emotionally connected and motivated toward a common goal, fostering team cohesion including both social and task cohesion as conceptualized by Carron et al. (2002).

"It will be very difficult because it's full stadium. It will be very difficult from us at the side to shout. So you need to talk in between eleven of you on the field." (Second leg Persib vs PSS)

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This utterance was delivered by Bojan Hodak in the pre-match locker room before Persib Bandung's second leg against PSS. The match was held in a fully packed stadium, creating an intense and noisy atmosphere that would make sideline communication between the coaching staff and players extremely difficult during the game. In this context, Bojan Hodak uses the locker room as a space to prepare the players mentally and communicatively, emphasizing the need for extra on-field communication among the players themselves.

The utterance reflects negative politeness because Bojan Hodak delivers instructions in a way that respects the players' autonomy and independence on the field. Instead of imposing direct control, he explains the situation first by stating that communication from the sidelines will be difficult due to the stadium atmosphere. This indirect explanation softens the instruction and minimizes pressure on the players.

The statement "you need to talk in between eleven of you on the field" emphasizes trust in the players' ability to manage communication during the match. By allowing players to take responsibility for their own coordination, Bojan Hodak maintains mutual respect between coach and team members. This strategy contributes to team cohesion because it encourages cooperation, awareness, and collective responsibility among players. The use of negative politeness also creates a supportive communicative atmosphere where players feel respected rather than controlled, strengthening interpersonal harmony within the team.

"This is our stadium, our home. So don't put the pressure for yourselves." (First leg Persib vs Borneo FC)

This utterance was delivered by Bojan Hodak in the pre-match locker room before Persib Bandung's first leg against Borneo FC, who were leading the league standings at the time. The match carried significant weight as Persib needed a victory to remain on track for the championship title, creating considerable psychological pressure on the players. In this high-stakes context, Bojan Hodak uses the locker room as a space to manage the players' mental state, reminding them of the advantage of playing at home while reducing unnecessary anxiety before the match.

The utterance reflects negative politeness because Bojan Hodak delivers the message in a way that respects the players' psychological autonomy and minimizes pressure. Instead of directly imposing instructions, he first provides a contextual reminder that the match is being played at home, establishing a sense of comfort and familiarity before delivering the message. The phrase "don't put the pressure for yourselves" softens the communicative intent by framing it as a consideration for the players rather than a strict command.

The use of negative politeness in this utterance helps maintain team cohesion by creating a supportive and psychologically safe communicative atmosphere within the locker room. By acknowledging the players' emotional state and reducing unnecessary pressure despite the high stakes of the match, Bojan Hodak demonstrates respect and care toward his players. This strategy encourages players to perform with confidence rather than anxiety, supporting interpersonal harmony and collective stability within the team.

"Okay, Warming up! Just be focus, let's to win the game!" (Second leg Persib vs PSS)

This utterance was delivered by Bojan Hodak in the pre-match locker room before Persib Bandung's second leg against PSS at their home stadium. Despite playing at home, the players required additional motivation to maintain focus and intensity before entering the pitch. In this context, Bojan Hodak uses direct and concise language to immediately shift the players' mindset from preparation mode into competitive readiness, ensuring that the team enters the match with full concentration and collective determination.

The utterance demonstrates bald on record politeness because Bojan Hodak delivers the message directly and clearly without minimizing the force of the instruction. The expressions "warming up" and "be focus" are straightforward commands intended to create immediate understanding and action from the players. This type of strategy is commonly used in urgent situations where effectiveness and clarity are prioritized over indirectness.

The use of bald on record strategy in this context helps maintain team cohesion by ensuring that all players receive the same clear instruction and focus on a common objective. The phrase "let's to win the game" also reinforces collective motivation and shared goals within

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the team. Although the utterance is direct, it functions positively in the locker room environment because it creates discipline, coordination, and unified concentration before the match.

"Focus on the game! good warming up! come on! important game for us."(First leg Persib vs Persita)

This utterance was delivered by Bojan Hodak in the pre-match locker room before Persib Bandung's first leg against Persita. The match held significant importance in the context of the overall league campaign, requiring the players to be fully focused and mentally prepared from the outset. In this situation, Bojan Hodak uses concise and direct language to immediately capture the players' attention and reinforce the importance of the match, ensuring that every player enters the pitch with the right mindset and collective determination.

The utterance demonstrates bald on record politeness because Bojan Hodak delivers the message directly and explicitly without any hedging or softening devices. The repeated use of exclamatory expressions such as "focus on the game!" and "come on!" reflects a straightforward and unambiguous communicative intent. The statement "important game for us" further emphasizes the urgency and seriousness of the situation, prioritizing clarity and efficiency over face protection.

The use of bald on record strategy in this utterance helps maintain team cohesion by ensuring that all players receive a clear and unified message regarding the collective importance of the match. By explicitly emphasizing the significance of the game, Bojan Hodak reinforces shared commitment and collective accountability within the team. The directness of this utterance is appropriate within the locker room context, where clarity and discipline are essential for effective pre-match preparation, contributing primarily to the team cohesion.

"So adjust if you need shoes with higher studs or not, then just check." (Second leg Persib vs Bali United)

This utterance was delivered by Bojan Hodak in the pre-match locker room before Persib Bandung's second leg against Bali United. Prior to the match, the weather conditions were rainy, making the pitch potentially slippery and affecting the players' choice of footwear. In this context, Bojan Hodak uses the locker room as a space to ensure that players are physically prepared for the field conditions without imposing a strict directive, instead allowing players to assess and adjust their own equipment based on personal judgment and comfort.

The utterance reflects off record politeness because Bojan Hodak conveys the message indirectly without explicitly commanding the players to change their equipment. Instead of giving a strict instruction, he provides a suggestion that allows players to interpret and decide the most appropriate action based on field conditions. The phrase "if you need shoes with higher studs or not" leaves the decision entirely to the players, reflecting the coach's trust in their ability to make informed preparation decisions independently.

The use of off record politeness in this context contributes to maintaining team cohesion by creating a communicative atmosphere based on trust and mutual understanding. By avoiding overly controlling language despite the potentially challenging weather conditions, Bojan Hodak encourages players to become more aware and responsible for their own preparation. This strategy helps maintain team cohesion in the locker room because the coach delivers practical advice in a calm and non-threatening manner, allowing players to feel respected and trusted while still receiving the intended message, strengthening cooperation and emotional balance within the team.

"Today was not bad. As I've already said, much more positive than negative."(First leg Persib vs PSM)

This utterance was delivered by Bojan Hodak in the post-match locker room following Persib Bandung's draw against PSM. A draw in a competitive league match can be a source of disappointment, particularly when the team is competing for the championship title. In this context, Bojan Hodak uses the locker room as a space to manage the players' emotional state after a result that may not have met their expectations, carefully framing the outcome in a

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constructive and balanced manner to prevent a decline in team morale and collective confidence.

The utterance reflects off record politeness because Bojan Hodak conveys his evaluation of the team's performance indirectly without explicitly stating specific strengths or weaknesses. The expression "today was not bad" avoids direct praise or criticism, leaving room for players to interpret the intended meaning based on their own understanding of the match. Similarly, the phrase "much more positive than negative" delivers a balanced assessment implicitly, allowing players to reflect on their performance without feeling directly judged or pressured.

The use of off record politeness in this utterance helps maintain team cohesion by creating a communicative atmosphere based on trust and emotional balance within the locker room. By framing a disappointing draw in a constructive and non-critical manner, Bojan Hodak preserves the players' self-image and maintains interpersonal harmony after the match.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that politeness strategies play an important role in maintaining team cohesion within Persib Bandung locker room communication. The analysis shows that Bojan Hodak employs positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on record, and off record strategies to deliver motivation, instructions, and tactical communication effectively. The use of these strategies reflects pragmatic awareness in balancing authority, solidarity, and interpersonal relationships in a professional football environment.

Positive politeness is used to strengthen solidarity and create a sense of togetherness among players. Through inclusive expressions such as "we," Bojan Hodak emphasizes collective identity and shared responsibility within the team. This finding supports Brown & Levinson (1987) view that positive politeness functions to reduce social distance and reinforce interpersonal closeness. In the context of locker room communication, supportive language helps players feel emotionally connected and motivated toward common goals, directly contributing to the social cohesion dimension of team cohesion as conceptualized by Carron et al. (2002).

Negative politeness appears in utterances that respect the players' autonomy while still maintaining the coach's authority. By providing explanations before giving instructions, Bojan Hodak minimizes imposition and creates a respectful communicative atmosphere. This finding aligns with Yule (1996) perspective that negative politeness is commonly realized through indirectness and consideration toward the hearer's independence. In football communication, this strategy encourages players to develop responsibility and cooperation without feeling excessively controlled, thereby supporting team cohesion.

The use of bald on record strategy highlights the importance of direct and efficient communication in urgent situations. In pre-match or high-pressure moments, Bojan Hodak employs straightforward instructions to ensure clarity and immediate understanding. Although direct, this strategy remains effective because the locker room context prioritizes discipline, focus, and coordination. This finding supports Brown & Levinson (1987) argument that bald on record politeness is commonly used when efficiency is more important than minimizing face threats, and contributes primarily to task cohesion dimension of team cohesion by reinforcing collective goal pursuit among players.

Meanwhile, off record politeness is used to deliver suggestions indirectly and allow players to interpret the intended meaning independently. This strategy reflects trust in the players' judgment and creates a less confrontational atmosphere within the locker room. The indirect nature of off record politeness helps maintain team cohesion while still achieving communicative goals. As explained by Brown & Levinson (1987), indirect expressions enable speakers to avoid excessive imposition and preserve social relationships, which in turn strengthens the team cohesion.

Overall, the findings indicate that politeness strategies function not only as linguistic devices but also as leadership tools in professional sports communication. The ability to

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balance directness, respect, motivation, and solidarity enables Bojan Hodak to maintain effective interpersonal relationships and strengthen both the task and social dimensions of team cohesion as defined by Carron et al. (2002). This is further supported by Oh (2023), who demonstrated that coaches who engage in positive and strategic communication can significantly enhance team cohesion. Therefore, this study highlights that pragmatic competence and politeness strategies contribute significantly to leadership effectiveness in locker room communication, and positions politeness not merely as a linguistic feature but as a pragmatic mechanism through which team cohesion is actively constructed and sustained.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that politeness strategies serve as important pragmatic mechanisms for building and maintaining team cohesion in football locker room communication. Positive politeness primarily strengthens social cohesion by reinforcing solidarity and collective identity, while bald-on-record strategies enhance task cohesion by ensuring clarity and discipline in high-pressure situations. Negative politeness and off-record strategies further support cohesion by respecting players' autonomy and maintaining interpersonal harmony. Together, these strategies balance authority, motivation, and respect to sustain team commitment throughout a competitive season. Theoretically, this study extends Brown and Levinson's politeness theory to professional sports communication, showing that politeness strategies function as tools for constructing social relationships and strengthening team dynamics. It also provides linguistic evidence linking coaches' communicative choices with the social and task dimensions of team cohesion. Practically, the findings suggest that football coaches should develop pragmatic awareness to communicate motivation, instruction, and feedback effectively while preserving players' self-esteem and trust. Future research should examine politeness strategies across different sports, cultures, and competitive levels to broaden understanding of sports leadership communication.

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