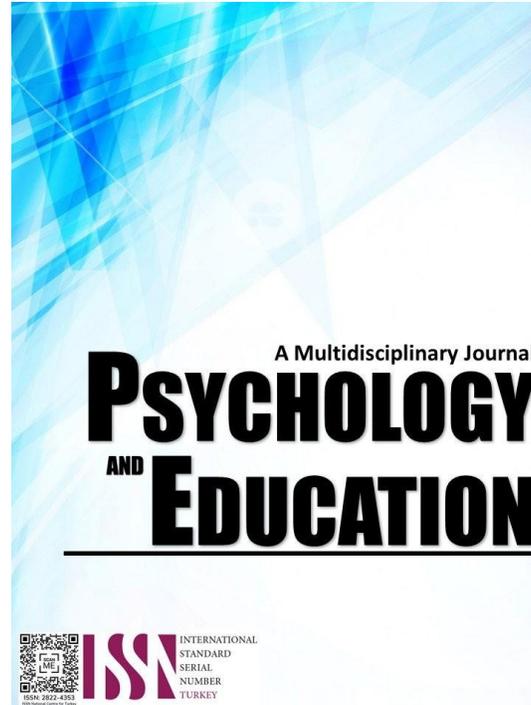


POLITENESS STRATEGIES OF CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET HEARINGS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS



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Politeness Strategies of Congressional Budget Hearings: A Content Analysis

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Abstract

Politeness is more than mere etiquette; it serves as a strategic tool to navigate challenges during budget deliberations. This study examined the politeness strategies observed in congressional budget hearings in the Philippines, focusing on how appropriations committee members and government agency officials navigate institutional power dynamics and hierarchical norms. Employing a qualitative approach, specifically content analysis, the research analyzed selected texts from 31 congressional hearing transcripts. Results revealed four primary politeness strategies: bald-on-record, negative politeness, positive politeness, and off-record. Findings indicate that power dynamics and institutional norms strongly influence the choice of politeness strategy. Specifically, the Bald-on-Record strategy reflects power dynamics by asserting authority and, in terms of institutional norms, aligns with procedural conventions. Negative Politeness mitigates imposition through the use of formal addresses and titles, while Positive Politeness fosters rapport by employing approval and compliments. Off-Record strategies enable participants to avoid direct imposition through indirect communication, emphasizing the careful balance between maintaining professional decorum and achieving accountability in legislative proceedings.

Keywords: *politeness strategies, congressional budget hearing, power dynamics, content analysis, Philippines*

Introduction

Politeness is a fundamental aspect of effective communication that cultivates respect in deliberations. People who engage in public discourse to voice their opinions while maintaining social harmony are made possible with politeness strategies (Culpeper, 2021). We often use these strategies, like honorifics and respectful tone, especially when discussing sensitive issues. However, public participation has become more open and direct, and conversations can quickly escalate, leading to instances where respectful tones are overlooked in favor of more confrontational or assertive expression (Rossini & Maia, 2021). Without politeness strategies, discussions risk turning into hostile exchanges rather than fostering respect and diplomacy in managing diverse viewpoints.

Congressional hearings, on the other hand, serve as the platform for policymakers to analyze budget proposals, justify expenditures, and challenge opposing viewpoints, sometimes leading to intense debates and partisan conflicts (Wildavsky & Caiden, 2022). However, Santoso and Rufina (2023) pointed out that the formal and sensitive nature of these hearings requires participants to employ strategic techniques to maintain institutional decorum and shape public perception. Despite these efforts, Zhang (2024) emphasized that budget hearings continue to expose underlying power dynamics and politeness strategies, reflecting broader challenges in governance. These dynamics of political authority underscore the complexity of decision-making processes within legislative institutions (Clark, 2024).

In Nigeria, investigative public hearings and public inquiries were filled with threatening acts such as complaints, orders, requests, promises, warnings, accusations, and disagreements, which threaten the negative face of the participants (Unuabonah, 2016). Meanwhile, challenges arise in maintaining consensus-driven discussions, particularly in Japanese budget deliberations, where differing political interests can create tensions despite emphasis on decorum and politeness (Yamaguchi, 2016).

On the other hand, the politics of power and dominance play a significant role in shaping public discourse, with individuals often projecting their authority to establish control (Ocampo, 2022). This creates a tense environment, especially during hearings, where members who feel threatened or challenged often resort to face-threatening strategies. Moreover, Senate hearings are especially prone to language crimes, including the use of harsh or degrading language, intimidation, and threats, where senators and witnesses navigate particularly on contentious issues (Obenza & Deluao, 2025). Correspondingly, Assistido et al. (2018) underscore the difficulty of upholding politeness in Senate hearings, as seen in the Mamasapano incident, where oppositional arguments clashed with the need for respectful communication, accountability, and managing political tensions. Also, the recent 2024 Senate hearing, which featured Governor Edwin Jubahib participating remotely from Davao del Norte through online communication, emphasizes the challenge of asserting autonomy while maintaining respect for authority (UNTV News, 2024).

Effective politeness strategies are crucial for fostering constructive dialogue and mitigating conflicts during public hearings. In environments where power dynamics are pronounced, the application of both positive and negative politeness strategies can significantly influence the outcomes of interactions. Mahadin and Bataineh (2022) demonstrated how political figures balance assertiveness while maintaining respect for their audience to prevent confrontation and uphold credibility. Dalisay (2024) asserted that, particularly in legislative hearings, the suppression of communication in formal settings, along with misinterpretations of tone and intent, can lead to unintended rudeness or miscommunication. Further, mismanagement of politeness strategies can lead to face-threatening acts, affecting public perception, voter confidence, and the overall discourse effectiveness of discourse (Nasuli et al., 2023).

Moreover, the nature of these hearings, where lawmakers challenge opposing viewpoints, frequently leads to conflicts. Dutt et al.

(2020) revealed how face-threatening acts in persuasion-oriented discussions can heighten tensions, reducing the effectiveness of communication. Similarly, van der Vegt (2023) found that verbal aggression in political exchanges discourages engagement and negatively impacts political participation. Likewise, Farrel et al. (2020) further emphasized that public criticism of authorities tends to provoke hostile responses, creating an environment where political discourse becomes counterproductive.

Despite the widespread practice of congressional budget hearings in the Philippines, a gap remains in analyzing these proceedings—particularly regarding the use of politeness strategies and their implications for respectful discourse. This research, therefore, seeks to address this gap by identifying such strategies and conducting a comprehensive analysis of the communication involved, examining textual, visual, and audio materials to uncover patterns, themes, and nuanced meanings. The results of this study aim to reveal the specific politeness strategies employed in public hearings and assess their impact on the overall effectiveness of these interactions. Ultimately, by highlighting how language shapes public dialogue, this study aspires to offer valuable insights into fostering constructive and impactful communication within both educational and political spheres.

The findings of this study were shared in various forms. First, the findings of this study were published in reputable scholarly publications focusing on politeness strategies and congressional budget hearings. These publications ensured that the study reached a broad academic audience, fostering discussions on the role of politeness strategies in legislative settings. Second, the study was presented at national and international research conferences in linguistics, political communication, and discourse analysis, providing opportunities to engage with researchers, policymakers, and communication experts.

Moreover, examining congressional budget hearings through the lens of politeness strategies held significant implications for legislative discourse, public perception, and political communication. By systematically analyzing the language used in these hearings, the study offers insights into how lawmakers navigated power dynamics, maintained credibility, and influenced decision-making. The findings contributed to enhancing public discourse, improving communication strategies in government proceedings, and promoting more effective and respectful legislative debates. Additionally, the research served as a valuable resource for students, teachers, linguists, political analysts, and policymakers in understanding how language shapes governance and public trust.

Research Questions

To generate comprehensive and meaningful findings for this study, the following primary research questions were carefully formulated and served as the basis in guiding the entire inquiry and exploration of the topic:

1. What types of politeness strategies are observed during congressional budget hearings?
2. How do power dynamics and institutional norms shape the choice of politeness strategies in these settings?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design using content analysis to identify the politeness strategies utilized in congressional budget hearings. Qualitative research focuses on exploring and understanding human experiences, behaviors, and interactions through rich descriptive data rather than numerical analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). According to Lestari et al. (2018), this approach aims to describe situations or phenomena by analyzing textual, visual, or audio content to uncover underlying patterns and meanings. As Creswell (2014) highlights, qualitative research allows researchers to gain in-depth insights by interpreting data in context, making it a suitable approach for analyzing communication strategies in complex institutional settings.

Content analysis is a systematic approach that evaluates audio, video materials, and written texts by categorizing data according to defined criteria, making it a suitable method for this study. This approach enables researchers to uncover patterns, themes, and meanings in communication, as highlighted by Krippendorff (2018). Additionally, it emphasized its flexibility in analyzing qualitative data, allowing for both inductive and deductive analysis.

In this study, three systematic steps were followed to process the data. First, data reduction was conducted to identify and categorize the politeness strategies present in the hearings. Second, the organized codes were refined into thematic categories, and lastly, data interpretation was performed to derive meaningful conclusions from the emerging patterns.

As a researcher, it is essential to ensure careful observation and apply appropriate measures throughout the analysis process. Comparing interpretations and identifying similarities from the recorded hearing statements helped establish patterns that reflect the speakers' intended meanings. These comparisons also provided valuable insights that can guide the further extraction and interpretation of relevant data.

Data Sources

The primary data for this study were derived from selected congressional budget hearing recordings, serving as the core material for analysis. As noted by Creswell (2013), primary data sources typically involve direct observations, interviews, or documents. These video recordings provide authentic and dynamic representations of verbal exchanges during the hearings. Following Clarke and Braun's (2013) recommendation that a corpus of 10 to 100 instances is sufficient to achieve data saturation, this research focused on 31

recordings, carefully selected for their relevance and comprehensiveness.

To complement these primary data sources, secondary materials such as academic articles, journals, and prior research are consulted to provide additional perspectives and contextual understanding. This combination of primary and secondary data allowed for a robust and thorough examination of politeness strategies within the congressional hearings. The process involved transcription and meticulous analysis of the recordings to capture nuanced meanings and intentions embedded in the speakers' statements, enabling a well-rounded interpretation of the findings (Creswell, 2013; Clarke & Braun, 2013).

Procedure

Creswell (2013) stated that qualitative researchers are engaged in a sequence of collecting data. An important step is to look for the necessary materials and conduct the study to obtain accurate information. As a researcher took demanding steps to collect data, the researcher engaged in a sequence of events in the data collection procedure before the study's conclusion. Proper procedures were followed in this study to ask permission before the gathering.

In conducting this study, the researcher took specific actions in the data collection while adhering to the correct research etiquette and standards to acquire the required data properly and objectively. The data collection process was based on the concept of Creswell (2013), who stated that much data is produced during the data collection process and that it is an important stage of the research process as it allows for analysis to clarify the variables of emphasis.

To ensure the ethical standards of the research, the researcher checked the research protocol and had it evaluated by the UIC Research Ethics Committee (REC) before starting the study. The researcher collected research materials once the committee cleared the study to be conducted. Then, the researcher scheduled a meeting with the adviser to seek advice on the processes taken in conducting the study. Subsequently, a plan was formulated based on the advice given. Finally, permission was requested from the Dean of the Graduate School to conduct the study.

As a researcher, relevant data covering the period from the fiscal years 2023 to 2025 were collected for the analysis of politeness strategies, with all recordings sourced from YouTube. The analysis and observation process consisted of three steps. First, data reduction started, in which the researcher examined, selected, and trimmed down the politeness strategies used during the congressional budget hearings from general strategies to more specific strategies to establish various themes. Second, the hearing attendees' utterances were analyzed based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory. Third, the data display was presented in a matrix form to facilitate clearer interpretation of the findings. Finally, the conclusion was drawn to determine whether essential information adequately answered the research questions (Lestari et al., 2018).

The approach of Krippendorff (2004) in content analysis emphasized the importance of examining smaller, manageable segments of content rather than full-length videos. This method was particularly suitable when focusing on specific rhetorical features or patterns, such as politeness strategies. For data collection, the researcher selected and saved video excerpts from controversial hearings for analysis. These excerpts were transcribed and translated when necessary, ensuring accurate and comprehensive data representation.

The transcripts underwent a rigorous analysis using Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, which categorized politeness strategies into four types: bald-on-record, positive, negative, and off-record strategies. These strategies served as the basis for identifying how politeness shaped power dynamics and institutional norms within the hearings. Each strategy was carefully examined to uncover how speakers navigated social dynamics, conveyed respect, and managed face-threatening acts during the hearings.

Lastly, the researcher sought the assistance of debriefers who were authorities in content analysis to assess the validity of the conclusions reached after studying and interpreting the corpora. This was done to evaluate the study's findings and their interpretation while removing any personal assumptions and biases that may affect the research outcome accurately and objectively.

Data Analysis

In the next stages of this study, the researcher implemented a content analysis approach to examine the video recordings of selected congressional budget hearings. Content analysis, as described by Krippendorff (2004), is a systematic and objective technique used to analyze verbal and non-verbal communication, identifying patterns and meanings within the data. This method was employed to uncover the politeness strategies used by the speakers during the hearings, using Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness as the theoretical framework for identifying key strategies such as positive and negative politeness.

The analysis started by reviewing the transcribed video recordings to identify instances where positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987) were employed. This process focused on the speakers' intentions and how these strategies contributed to the negotiation of power, solidarity, and politeness in political discourse. Through careful coding of the data, recurring patterns and themes were generated to answer the research questions about how politeness strategies were used to manage relationships and influence public perception within the context of congressional hearings.

After identifying the politeness strategies, the study examined how they shaped power dynamics and institutional norms, as suggested by Wodak (2009). This involved analyzing how political figures navigated authority, maintained legitimacy, and reinforced hierarchical structures through language. By assessing the strategic use of politeness, the study aimed to reveal how discourse practices in budget

hearings reflected broader institutional expectations, reinforcing or challenging existing power relations within legislative settings.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, the researcher independently analyzed a portion of the data for consistency. Any discrepancies that emerged during the coding process were discussed and resolved accordingly. In addition, expert feedback from a linguistics specialist was sought to validate the analysis and provide insights for improving the interpretation of the results.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher ensured that all required ethical standards and guidelines were adhered to throughout the study. To confirm ethical compliance, the paper underwent a comprehensive and rigorous review by the UIC-REC.

Thus, the study underwent a review by the institution's Ethics Committee. The researcher sought approval, ensuring the study's validity. It adhered to the standard procedures set by the Ethical Review Committee, and certification from the committee was included. Additionally, all data sources were handled with confidentiality and integrity, ensuring compliance with ethical research standards.

The plagiarism check was conducted in accordance with the institution's standard percentage or rating. Various literature reviews were incorporated to align with the study. The data were presented using simple language to ensure easy comprehension for the readers. The study's results were not solely for the researcher's use but were also published following the publication criteria set by the committee.

To gain public support and trust in the research, Quadri (2016) argued that researchers must adhere to ethical standards. The introduction of this study provided definitions of the participants and highlighted the importance of research benefits in improving the quality of education, which served as a key ethical consideration in the design, review, and execution of the study. Specifically, the results of this research were evaluated by the UIC-REC, following the ten dimensions of research ethics, which included the following:

Social Values. This study aimed to benefit the community, particularly the legislative bodies and government agencies involved in the budgeting process. By analyzing congressional budget hearings through the lens of politeness strategies, the study seeks to enhance understanding of how communication dynamics during these hearings can foster respectful dialogue and collaborative decision-making. The findings could provide valuable insights into improving the effectiveness of communication in such settings, ultimately contributing to more constructive and productive budget discussions. This research could also serve as a foundation for future studies on communication strategies in political settings. Additionally, the study aims to support the enhancement of respectful and professional discourse during budget hearings, positively impacting the quality of decision-making and public trust in governmental processes.

Informed Consent. This study analyzed language choices in congressional budget hearings using Content Analysis, with a focus on politeness strategies. The data for this study were obtained from publicly accessible video recordings of congressional hearings from trusted and reputable sources. Since the study does not involve direct interaction with participants or collection of new data, informed consent was not necessary. The analysis strictly adheres to ethical guidelines by using publicly available materials, ensuring the privacy and rights of individuals involved in the hearings are respected. All data used in the study were retrieved from reliable sources, ensuring the integrity and authenticity of the content.

Vulnerability of Research Materials. This study analyzed 31 video recordings of congressional budget hearings, rather than involving direct participants. Since the study uses publicly available materials, there are no vulnerable participants in the traditional sense. However, the study ensures that the identity and privacy of individuals featured in the hearings, such as lawmakers and witnesses, are respected. These video recordings were retrieved from trusted and reputable sources, and all data used are strictly in line with ethical research guidelines for publicly accessible content. As no personal interviews are conducted, there is no need for participants to withdraw from the study. The study's design ensures the protection of individuals' privacy throughout the analysis.

Risk, Benefit, and Safety. The personal identities of participants in the hearings would remain confidential, and ethical guidelines would be strictly followed to ensure the integrity and privacy of the data. Since the data are retrieved from trusted sources, there is no requirement for participants in the hearings to consent or withdraw from the study.

Privacy and Confidentiality of Information. This study adheres to the Data Privacy Law of 2012, which safeguards the fundamental right to privacy in communication while promoting the free flow of information for innovation and progress. The law also emphasizes the government's responsibility to secure and protect personal data and communication systems in both public and private sectors. In this study, all personal information gathered will be handled with utmost care and confidentiality, ensuring its protection throughout the research process.

Justice. In this study, fairness is a key principle in the selection of video recordings for analysis. The 31 video recordings of congressional budget hearings were chosen, with a focus on selecting controversial hearings that are relevant to the research. This selection process ensures a diverse range of hearings, including those with varying political perspectives and heated discussions, to provide a comprehensive view of communication dynamics during these events.

Transparency. Honesty and clear communication will be fundamental throughout this study. As the researcher, I ensured that the findings are presented impartially and transparently. The public nature of the congressional budget hearings analyzed in this research means that all video recordings are available for public review, and the results will be made accessible to the public and any interested parties. Any conclusions drawn from the analysis, along with the implications of the findings, will be openly shared, reflecting the



transparency of the research process.

Qualification of the Materials: The materials used in this study consist of 31 video recordings of congressional budget hearings. These recordings were chosen for their controversial nature, providing a diverse range of content that includes heated debates and contentious discussions. The selection process ensures that the materials used are suitable for the study’s objectives, offering rich data for examining the application of politeness strategies in real-world political settings. Additionally, the videos were sourced from trusted and credible platforms, ensuring their authenticity and reliability for analysis. The inclusion of these materials allows for a robust and well-grounded investigation into communication dynamics within congressional hearings.

Community Involvement: This research aims to contribute to public discourse by examining communication strategies used in congressional budget hearings. The findings will be shared with educational institutions, particularly the Department of Education, to promote awareness of effective communication approaches. By fostering discussions on language use and politeness strategies in public hearings, the study encourages critical thinking and informed dialogue within academic and civic communities.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results and analysis of the study, focusing on the politeness strategies employed during the Congressional Budget Hearings across three consecutive fiscal years. It examines how various government agencies utilized these strategies as they proposed and defended their budget allocations, highlighting the influence of power dynamics and institutional norms on their communicative choices. The analysis reveals patterns that reflect underlying social hierarchies and demonstrates how politeness functions as a means of persuasion, conflict management, and the preservation of professional decorum in high-stakes government deliberations.

Profile of the Research Data

Table 1 presents a comprehensive documentation of congressional budget hearings. Each hearing was assigned a unique confidentiality code (CBH1–CBH31) based on the order in which the hearings occurred. The label “CBH” stands for Congressional Budget Hearing, and the number indicates the specific sequence in which each agency or office was discussed. This coding system was utilized to maintain consistency, clarity in citation, and confidentiality throughout the analysis.

From each code, the title of the hearing was also presented in the table, indicating the government agency or office involved, along with the fiscal year covered by the hearing. The date when the hearing took place was likewise listed to ensure precise tracking of the temporal setting of each discussion. Meanwhile, the final column presents the primary contextual issue tackled within that hearing duration, showing what major national concern was deliberated at the time the discourse was transcribed.

Table 1. *Profile of the Research Data F.Y. 2023-2025*

<i>Code</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Date of Hearing</i>	<i>Context of Issue Tackled</i>
CBH1	Briefing/hearing on the proposed FY 2023 Budget of the office of the Vice-President	September 14, 2022	Classroom shortages and DepEd budget issues
CBH2	House hearing on the DND’s proposed 2023 budget	September 15, 2022	Legal and ethical issues of mandatory ROTC
CBH3	House hearing on DFA’s proposed 2023 budget	August 31, 2022	Protection of OFW welfare, consular service challenges, and utilization of ATN/Legal Assistance Funds
CBH4	House Hearing on the Agriculture Department’s Proposed 2023 Budget	September 5, 2022	Inconsistencies in FMR budget and prioritization of rice-producing provinces
CBH5	FY 2023 Budget Briefings (Committee): DENR	September 2, 2022	Suspension in the Processing of Applications of Friar Lands
CBH6	Committee on Appropriations: Briefing on the Proposed FY 2023 Budget of the DPWH	September 16, 2022	NEP-GAA discrepancies and continuity of major infrastructure programs
CBH7	House Hearing on the DSWD’s Proposed 2023 Budget	September 6, 2022	Regularization of DSWD employees
CBH8	FY 2023 Budget Briefings (Committee): DILG	September 1, 2022	BFP budget allocation
CBH9	FY 2023 Budget Briefings: Commission on Elections (COMELEC)	September 9, 2022	Recurring nuisance candidates and COMELEC election preparedness
CBH10	FY 2023 Budget Briefings (Committee): DOLE	September 8, 2022	Labor workforce and employment concerns
CBH11	FY 2024 Budget Briefings (Committee) Department of Education (DEPED)	August 30, 2023	Education infrastructure, learning loss, and quality education initiatives
CBH12	FY 2024 Budget Briefings (Committee) Department of Health (DOH)	September 6, 2023	PhilHealth finances, salary standardization, and Kunsulta package



CBH13	FY 2024 Budget Briefings (Committee) Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) (Part 2)	September 7, 2023	Flood control budget, and shear line rehab in Cagayan de Oro
CBH14	FY 2024 Budget Briefings (Committee) Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)	August 17, 2023	4Ps implementation program, and appeal to expand food stamp coverage
CBH15	FY 2024 Budget Briefings (Committee) Department of The Interior and Local Government (DILG)	August 31, 2023	High spending on supplies and materials for PNP and BJMP operational needs
CBH16	FY 2024 Budget Briefings (Committee) Department of Transportation (DOTR)	September 4, 2023	High domestic airfares and inadequate OFW facilities at NAIA Terminal 3
CBH17	FY 2024 Budget Briefings (Committee) Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)	August 16, 2023	Manila Bay restoration and environmental compliance
CBH18	FY 2024 Budget Briefings (Committee) Department of Tourism (DOT)	August 15, 2023	Promoting Tourism via FIBA World Cup
CBH19	FY 2024 Budget Briefings (Committee) DOLE and DMW Part 1	August 24, 2023	Administrative costs on TUPAD funds
CBH20	FY 2024 Budget Briefings (Committee) Department of Agriculture (DA)	August 22, 2023	Rice self-sufficiency plan
CBH21	Committee on Appropriations - Budget Briefing/Hearings of the FY 2025 Proposed Budget (OVP)	August 27, 2024	Use of OVP confidential funds
CBH22	DPWH 2025 Budget Department of Public Works and Highways Budget Hearing	September 1, 2024	Impact of NAIA and surrounding infrastructure on flood control
CBH23	Committee on Appropriations - Budget Briefing/Hearings of the FY 2025 Proposed Budget (DSWD)	August 21, 2024	Inconsistent cash subsidies for solo parents
CBH24	Committee on Appropriations - Budget Briefing/Hearings of the Budget (DILG)	August 15, 2024	Delayed allocation and delivery of fire trucks to districts
CBH25	DND 2025 Budget Department of National Defense Budget Hearing	August 31, 2024	Underfunding of AFP modernization program
CBH26	Live: House Hearing on the Proposed FY 2025 Budget of the COMELEC	September 3, 2024	Due process and procedural challenges in election dispute resolutions
CBH27	Committee on Appropriations - Budget Briefing/Hearings of the FY 2025 Proposed Budget (DepEd)	September 2, 2024	Poor PISA performance and low digital readiness
CBH28	Committee on Appropriations - Budget Briefing/Hearings of the FY 2025 Proposed Budget (DICT)	August 29, 2024	Decentralized National Data Centers
CBH29	House Budget Hearing: Commission on Human Rights 2025 Budget Briefing	September 3, 2024	Investigation of PNP Civil Rights Violations in KOJC
CBH30	Committee on Appropriations - Budget Briefing/Hearings of the FY 2025 Proposed Budget (DOH)	September 4, 2024	PhilHealth arrears and delayed payments impacting hospital revenue and services
CBH31	House Committee Reviews 2025 Budget for Office of the President	September 9, 2024	Supreme Court ruling on Marcos family ill-gotten wealth

The data reflects the diversity of issues tackled in the House of Representatives, ranging from education, health, agriculture, labor, and social welfare to infrastructure, environment, and national defense. These topics demonstrate the complexity of national policymaking, as well as the direct impact of legislative decisions on public welfare and sectoral concerns. This further highlight how congressional budget deliberations mirror broader governance priorities and accountability demands of the Filipino people.

A total of 31 congressional budget hearings served as the primary corpora of this study. The data were gathered from verified online sources, specifically the official YouTube channels of the House of Representatives of the Philippines, the Philippine Senate, and other government media platforms. These hearings occurred on different dates and were categorized according to their respective fiscal years to support precise contextual analysis of each documented proceeding.

The hearings selected for analysis were those considered controversial and demonstrated a high degree of strategic language use among speakers. Guided by the inclusion criteria of this research, each utterance was closely examined to identify and interpret the politeness strategies employed, namely: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record.



Across the three fiscal years examined, these documented hearings revealed recurring national concerns that consistently emerged during budget deliberations. The hearings reflected the dynamic interaction between legislators and agency representatives as they justified budget allocations and addressed questions of accountability and governance. Such patterns underscore how political discourse functions not only as a formal exchange of information but also as a negotiation of power, credibility, and strategic influence in the legislative process.

Politeness Strategies Observed During Congressional Budget Hearings

Table 2 presents a detailed overview of the politeness strategies identified in the 31 congressional budget hearings conducted across three consecutive fiscal years. In alignment with Research Question 1, which seeks to determine the types of politeness strategies observed during these hearings, the table organizes the data by strategy type, frequency of occurrence, and sample statements extracted directly from the proceedings. The frequency listed in the table represents the number of times each politeness strategy appeared in the entire corpus. From the 31-hearing corpus, a total of 962 instances of politeness strategies were identified, comprising 250 bald-on record, 264 negative politeness, 372 positive politeness, and 76 off-record strategies. These strategies indicate how speakers navigated tone, authority, and strategic persuasion during formal interactions. Their distribution demonstrates how legislators and agency representatives utilized language not only to convey information, but also to maintain decorum and negotiate positions throughout the budget deliberations.

Table 2. Politeness Strategies Observed During Congressional Budget Hearings

<i>Politeness Strategies</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Sample Statements</i>
Bald-on Record	250	“Mapupuno po siguro ng supplies and materials yong buong DILG building if I spend 17.5 billion...” CBH15
		“...Uh since we embarked on the automated elections, has there been any electoral protest which has prospered based on fraudulent uh generation of election results?” CBH9
		“That is almost saying, impossible to facilitate an e-learning system having one computer for 30 teachers.” CBH27
Negative Politeness	264	“Also, Secretary, this is a plea from our OFWs ... parang ang tipo na suplado daw ang ating consular office staff ...” CBH3
		“Uh may tanong lang ako. Uh ano po ang criteria para malagyan, magkaroon ng school building ang isang district?” CBH11
		“Well, I think that should be answered by the appropriate agency of the government, your honor.” CBH29
Positive Politeness	372	“So, there are measures being undertaken, and Usec. Adobo is right—we are recommending omnibus lifting, kasi baka naman po mag-question sila bakit ‘yung iba inuuna ‘yong lifting.’” CBH5
		“...nandito po ako para magpasalamat sa inyo pong lahat sa DSWD... kahit sabihin mong isang libo lang yan... tunay pong nararamdaman ng tao.” CBH14
		“Nabasa ko yun Mr. Chair kahit hindi ako abogado, sabi ko na-appreciate ko yon.” CBH26
Off-record	76	“Data, do we have the data on the question? (asking the staff) Mr. Chairman, uh I’ll just uh check on the... Ayaw ko po... kapag nagsabi po kasi ng data ayaw ko pong magkaila, baka ho maibalik sa akin eh. Baka sumobra o kumulang eh. At least sana ho approximate, magkadikit sila.” CBH10
		“Uh Mr. Chair, I would like to check for that the EO is not coming from PhilHealth but... from the Malacañang...” CBH12
		“Sana mapayagan ang AFP, DND to obtain loans... So, why not sa AFP to finance the modernization program...” CBH25

Bald-on Record. This strategy frequently appears in political and institutional discourse, such as budget hearings, where explicit questioning tactics, firm directives, and insistent calls for explanation are used to scrutinize the implementation of fund allocations. Gomez and Manuel (2020) emphasize that this strategy dispenses with redressive actions to prioritize clarity and efficiency. It is strategically employed to assert authority, demand accountability, and apply pressure for immediate clarification and moves that inherently heighten the level of face threat to the hearer. These direct and unmitigated acts ultimately exemplify one of the clearest

forms of face-threatening acts as described by Brown and Levinson (1987).

In the congressional hearings analyzed, 250 of bald-on-record strategies were observed, making it the third most frequently used strategy in the 31 congressional hearing corpora included in this study. This frequency indicates that speakers intentionally preferred direct, unmitigated, and straightforward utterances to achieve immediate clarity and response, especially in highly tense and contested situations (Brown & Levinson, 1987). These utterances can be categorized into direct demands for clarification, insistent questioning, and coercive threats (Culpeper, 2011). Each type demonstrates how speakers balance the need for effectiveness with consideration for their personal and institutional image, particularly when addressing sensitive issues such as budget allocations, policy implementation, and institutional accountability (Yanti et al., 2025).

One common form of bald-on record is when a speaker issues a direct demand for information or clarification (Bousfield, 2021). For instance, one lawmaker, frustrated by the overcrowded classroom situation, demanded:

“So, Madam Chair. Basi sa mga sinabi kanina sa kalagayan ng classroom talaga natin overcrowded... Ano exactly yong gagawin ng DepEd para dito?” (CBH1)

So, Madam Chair, based on what was mentioned earlier regarding the current situation of our classrooms being truly overcrowded, what exactly will the Department of Education do about this?

The utterance exemplifies a bald-on-record strategy because it is direct, unmitigated, and formulated to elicit an immediate response from the addressee. By bypassing politeness softeners, the speaker directly demands clarity on the specific action and concrete intervention that the Department of Education will implement to address the pressing issue of classroom overcrowding. This establishes a communicative premise in which urgency is prioritized over diplomacy, emphasizing the need for the Office of the Vice President to provide an immediate and actionable response to the challenges faced by the DepEd.

Similarly, other sample utterances analyzed during this fiscal year, like those in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), were also expressed in imperative and declarative forms that expect immediate acknowledgment and require concrete governmental action rather than extended justification or elaboration. These statements denote an assertive communicative strategy where authority, accountability, and rapid resolution are highlighted over negotiation. Ghampson and Afful (2024) state that the direct mode of speech strengthens the speaker’s authoritative stance and reinforces the characteristic features of the bald-on-record politeness strategy in the congressional hearings.

Another form of bald-on record occurs when speakers press for clarification, especially when they perceive inconsistencies or contradictions. These inconsistencies often arise when agency representatives provide vague, incomplete, or conflicting data regarding budget allocations and program implementation (Rajik, 2025). In such cases, legislators employ direct questioning to challenge the accuracy of statements and to ensure accountability in the presentation of information.

“So, in 2022, you have no issuance or disposition of Friar Lands? In 2022?” (CBH5)

The repetition of the phrase ‘in 2022’ emphasizes both the timeframe and the seriousness of the inquiry, pressing for a clear answer regarding the Friar Lands. This linguistic repetition not only reinforces the question but also underscores the implied lack of action or documentation in the handling of the Friar Lands application within the DENR. Such emphasis conveys a pressing demand for accountability, with no issuance of the lands, suggesting that the speaker is dissatisfied with vague or incomplete responses. The manner of delivery reflects the expectations of transparency and responsibility in institutional discourse, where clarity and factual accuracy are essential.

This form of strategy prioritizes task efficiency and message clarity over face-saving concerns (Kim, 2017). In the context of a congressional budget hearing, the speaker’s use of this approach underscores the formal power dynamics at play, wherein assertive questioning is both permissible and expected (Rahma, 2025). The utterance demonstrates how directness becomes a pragmatic choice to ensure accountability, particularly when addressing issues of public interest and governmental responsibility. The question is brief, direct, and demanding, reflecting no attempt at mitigation. Likewise, the statement exposes the perceived inconsistency directly, leaving no space for the hearer to save face (Said, 2011). Such utterances are typical in legislative discourse, where accountability and accuracy are paramount. By bypassing politeness, the speaker signals impatience and insists on immediate clarification.

Aside from pressing clarifications, Putra (2024) posits that the use of forceful statements to assert authority and impose potential consequences, leaving no room for ambiguity, was also evident during the deliberations. One notable example from the data illustrates this approach:

“I will hold your budget for the next uh coming election.” (CBH9)

This utterance demonstrates a strong and assertive tone, as the legislator delivers a complaint regarding the recurring problem of nuisance candidates handled by COMELEC. The absence of mitigating expressions underscores the speaker’s deliberate intention to assert dominance and highlight the consequences of inaction or failure to resolve nuisance petitions (Nugrahanto et al., 2020). By explicitly linking the budget to the forthcoming election, the speaker introduces both urgency and conditionality, compelling the COMELEC Secretary to respond promptly and demonstrate accountability and transparency regarding the disqualification of nuisance

candidates.

This directness eliminates ambiguity, ensuring that the message is clearly conveyed and immediately impactful within the formal and authoritative context of a congressional hearing (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In this setting, the speaker's statement functions both as a warning to COMELEC and as a directive for prompt action, reinforcing the institutional dynamics of the hearing. The use of a bald-on-record approach illustrates how political communication often relies on linguistic assertiveness to demand compliance and accountability, particularly in matters concerning governance and the allocation of budgetary resources.

Another instance of bald-on record politeness strategy appeared when the speaker expressed frustration and urgency through a vivid illustration of a potential delay (Simatupang, 2024). This approach reflects the speaker's intention to confront the issue directly without softening the criticism, emphasizing inefficiency in government processes or decision-making (Ghampson & Afful, 2024). An example utterance from the data:

“Yeah! ... Imagine may... may ano ka nang one or two years walang mangyayari.” (CBH11)

Yeah! ... Imagine, you already have one or two years, yet nothing is happening.

This utterance conveys a pronounced sense of impatience and exasperation from the district representative, as he directly highlights the stagnation implied by the phrase “one or two years walang mangyayari” (nothing will happen for one or two years). The use of the word “imagine” serves as a rhetorical device, inviting the listener to visualize the prolonged delay of the classroom projects, thereby amplifying the emotional and persuasive impact of the statement. Rather than softening the critique with the use of politeness markers or indirect phrasing, the speaker employs a straightforward delivery of the message, emphasizing the seriousness of the situation and the agency's responsibility to allocate the budget for school-building constructions, which have otherwise become stagnant projects. Also, the exclamatory “Yeah!” further reinforces the assertive tone, signaling the speaker's disapproval of the DepEd undersecretary's explanation while continuing to insist that the funding for the projects must proceed without delay.

In budget hearings, seeking clarification is a common expectation. Weidenbach and Jarren (2021) note that when discussions involve amounts or numerical data, they are often prone to misinterpretation and correction. A clear manifestation of this occurs when the speaker directly challenges or seeks clarification without hesitation or the use of softening expressions. This approach highlights the speaker's determination to obtain precise information and ensure accuracy during the proceedings (Putra, 2024). One notable example from the data illustrates this pattern:

“No! I am asking whether your estimate... would amount to 18,652...” (CBH15)

The speaker exhibits a straightforward and corrective tone as she immediately rejects the previous response before restating the question regarding the exact number of unfilled positions in the DILG. The emphatic use of “No!” functions as an assertive cue that signals dissatisfaction with the undersecretary's response, indicating that the answer provided was not aligned with the expected or required level of accuracy. Also, the absence of hedging, politeness markers, or mitigating language reflects the speaker's prioritization of factual precision over maintaining interpersonal harmony, which is highlighted in the study of Mulyono (2023) that supports the common characteristic of the bald-on-record politeness strategy in formal institutional settings.

In this instance, the speaker's direct questioning about the unfilled positions of the DILG serves as a mechanism to keep the deliberation focused on verifiable numerical information. In budget hearings, confirmation of numbers is often tricky, as it can easily lead to misinterpretation if not immediately and precisely clarified, which may further hint at inadequacy or incompetence on the part of the department. According to Fadoli (2022), the manner of delivery therefore reinforces transparency, and the speaker's authoritative stance within the deliberative process, highlighting as well that strong comprehension and listening skills are essential to fully grasp the intent and direction of the inquiry made by the committee officials.

Similarly, another instance of the bald-on record politeness strategy is evident when the speaker delivers an unmitigated question that conveys urgency and possible skepticism toward the topic being discussed (Ginting & Pasaribu, 2022). This is shown in the utterance:

“Ano itong safe implementation of OVP initiatives and confidence building?” (CBH21)

What is this safe implementation of OVP initiatives and confidence building?

This statement reflects the speaker's straightforward demand for clarification regarding the term “safe implementation of OVP initiatives and confidence building,” suggesting uncertainty or doubt about its meaning or relevance to fund allocation. The direct and concise phrasing indicates the speaker's desire for a specific and immediate explanation rather than a vague or generalized response. This type of questioning underscores the speaker's commitment to ensuring that issues presented during the hearing are explicitly defined and should be properly justified for the guidance of the committee officials in the budget hearing.

Furthermore, Norton (2006) emphasizes that several exchanges of messages revealed the use of direct and assertive speech, particularly when addressing issues of accountability, accuracy, and transparency. Speakers often employed unmitigated statements or questions to emphasize urgency, seek clarification, or express dissatisfaction (Manosevitch, 2024). This communication style reflects the formal and authoritative nature of deliberations where precision and responsibility are highly valued.

During congressional hearings, discussions concerning national security and territorial matters often elicit assertive and straightforward exchanges. The statement below exemplifies a bald-on record strategy, where the speaker conveys a direct expression of concern and seeks confirmation without employing politeness markers or mitigating devices. This form of communication reflects the speaker's confidence and urgency in addressing a matter of significant national importance. The following excerpt highlights this approach:

"Definitely we are at a disadvantage as far as the West Philippine Sea situation is concerned... will the secretary agree?" (CBH25)

The utterance demonstrates a deliberate use of assertiveness, beginning with a strong declaration, "Definitely we are at a disadvantage," which immediately frames the issue as a pressing concern for the Department of National Defense (DND). The absence of hedging or cautious phrasing indicates that the speaker intends to present the statement as an undeniable shortcoming rather than a debatable opinion. By following it with a direct question, "Will the secretary agree?", the speaker places pressure on the DND to either confirm or contest the claim, effectively prompting accountability and engagement with the specific issue.

This manner of communication stresses the efficiency and impact of bald-on-record strategies in political and institutional dialogues (Yanti et al., 2025). The speaker's straightforward tone of confirming the secretary ensures that the message is perceived as firm, urgent, and credible. Such directness minimizes ambiguity and reinforces the gravity of the issue being discussed, making it clear that the concern warrants immediate acknowledgment and response from the recipient (Supriyanta, 2025).

The use of bald-on record strategies during congressional hearings and conferences reflects the formal and goal-driven atmosphere of these institutional exchanges. Lawmakers and agency representatives often communicate with directness and precision, prioritizing clarity and accountability over politeness (Brown & Levenson, 1987). In such settings, speakers express their thoughts openly and assertively without softening their language, as the focus lies on resolving issues, clarifying information, or asserting authority. This kind of communication ensures that messages are received clearly and efficiently, eliminating ambiguity and reinforcing the urgency or seriousness of the discussion. Also, the straightforward tone used in these interactions signifies the speaker's confidence, the importance of the issue that needs to be addressed, and a commitment to transparency (Rajik, 2025).

This strategy is evident in how participants handle urgent or sensitive issues that require immediate clarification or decisive responses (Dacalanio et al., 2024). While speakers often favor directness to convey urgency and prompt accountability, the non-minimization of face threats is tempered by their concern for personal and institutional image. As a result, bald-on-record strategies rank as the third most used in congressional budget hearings, with speakers balancing the need for clarity against potential social or professional repercussions. Such exchanges frequently occur in contexts where power dynamics allow the speaker to assert authority, but strategic consideration of politeness and self-presentation still influences language choice (Rajik, 2025). Broadly, bald-on-record strategies demonstrate an efficient means of communication in high-stakes environments, providing clarity and accountability while still reflecting careful attention to social and professional norms.

Negative Politeness. This involves indirectness, deference, and a formal tone to soften requests or criticisms while still allowing the speaker to exercise authority (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Unlike bald-on record strategies that prioritize clarity over face needs, negative politeness uses hedging, modal verbs, and respectful expressions to minimize threat. In congressional budget hearings, legislators often employ phrases like "May I know...", "If I may...", "Apologies po," and "With due respect..." to maintain courtesy and reduce face-threat while still pressing for information or accountability (Maginnis, 2011).

In the budget hearings analyzed, a total of 267 instances of negative politeness were identified, showing that speakers frequently used this strategy to preserve respect and avoid direct confrontation. One of the strategies employed in negative politeness is the use of hedging and deference, which help soften the force of an utterance and show respect toward a person of higher authority (Kousar, 2015). Hedging involves using cautious or tentative language to reduce the impact of a request or statement, while deference acknowledges another's position or power. These were evident when legislators phrased their questions in tentative forms such as "May we know...", "Perhaps you can clarify...", or "With due respect, Madam Chair..." to avoid sounding accusatory or disrespectful. In highly sensitive issues such as controversies in fund allocations, legality of expenditures, or questioning the validity of program implementations, speakers relied on negative politeness to maintain decorum, avoid escalating tensions, and still extract critical information needed for decision-making (Khair et al., 2024).

In the sample utterance:

"...the head of our tactical working group that is dealing with the Department of Education is Undersecretary Madrigal. If I may be allowed Madam Chair to call on undersecretary Madrigal." (CBH2)

it demonstrates the strategic use of hedging and deference to minimize imposition and to acknowledge the authority of the presiding officer from the Department of National Defense (DND), reinforcing the speaker's intent to remain respectful while still pursuing clarification. The phrase "if I may be allowed" acts as a polite hedge that softens the request and projects humility to the committee chairperson rather than giving an assertive statement. By addressing "Madam Chair" directly and incorporating respectful language, the speaker adheres to the conventions of institutional communication while ensuring that their action, while calling another official to speak, is approved formally. Mulyono (2025) implies that this balance of politeness and purpose maintains professionalism and reinforces the collaborative tone expected when passing the responsibility to answer the question to the officer-in-charge.

Moreover, this type of strategy preserves a polite tone while addressing a concern that requires clarification, such as the sample utterance above that compares the old ROTC curriculum with the newly proposed program instruction. By phrasing the question in a tentative manner, the speaker acknowledges the authority and expertise of the resource person, allowing them space to respond comfortably and confidently while providing adequate justification and supporting information on the proposed curriculum. This structure of statement strengthens professionalism and ensures that the exchange remains respectful, courteous, and aligned with the decorum expected in formal hearings (Akkawi et al., 2025).

In terms of seeking clarification to the programs being implemented by the government agency negative politeness through indirect asking is delivered. In the utterance:

“So, it can be part of the regular maintenance program of DPWH National. I’d like to know the status of this or are we still in the transitional period?” (CBH6)

By framing the inquiry tentatively, the speaker acknowledges the authority of the respondent and respects their discretion in providing an update about the national roads for BARMM under the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) program. This careful phrasing reflects the speaker’s intent to maintain social distance and formality while ensuring that the exchange remains respectful and professional. Rather than asserting entitlement to information, the speaker uses a tone of curiosity and humility in requesting clarification, which helps preserve the listener’s positive face in answering the DPWH concerns. In the context of a congressional hearing, this approach promotes open dialogue without threatening the respondent’s sense of autonomy or expertise (Kurniatin, 2017).

Another sample utterance demonstrates hedging and deference is to convey respect and minimize imposition while seeking clarification on a sensitive issue.

“...we’ve been advocating in favor of job contracting and against labor-only contracting. May I just know the thoughts of our good secretary about the increasing number of job orders in government offices.” (CBH10)

The speaker begins by establishing context and alignment through the phrase “we’ve been advocating,” which frames the inquiry as part of a shared institutional concern rather than a personal challenge. The expression “May I just know” functions as a hedge, softening the request for information and showing deference to the secretary’s authority to answer the concern about the unresolved labor-only contracting. More so, the phrase “our good secretary” serves as a respectful form of address used by the district representative, emphasizing politeness and esteem before presenting the main question. Through this carefully worded question, the speaker balances the need to raise a critical issue with the intent to maintain harmony, professionalism, and mutual respect within the formal discourse.

Speakers often employ a cautious tone when presenting factual updates to maintain professionalism and respect for authority (Voinov, 2013). This approach helps prevent statements from sounding overly assertive or self-congratulatory while ensuring clarity and accuracy in communication. In this utterance, the speaker begins with hesitation markers and a formal address to acknowledge the presence of authority.

“Uh again, Mr. Chair we were able to... we were granted the uh salary increase as certified by the GCG...” (CBH12)

The cautious and measured tone adopted by the government agency’s officials reduces the force of the statement, signaling deference and preserving decorum within the institutional setting as shown in the study of Boginskaya (2025) about the Negative politeness in professional negotiations. As shown in the sample text, the phrasing used also shows the speaker’s intent to present verified information regarding the certified process that led to the salary increase of PhilHealth members, while still promoting humility and cooperation. By stating “we were able to,” the speaker emphasizes collective success rather than individual achievement, contributing to an objective and respectful tone. This subtle linguistic choice by the Department of Health (DOH) spokesperson aligns with the collaborative and transparent nature of the discussion. In general, this utterance demonstrates how tactful language can convey important information while maintaining politeness and institutional respect even when responding to a highly critical inquiry (Wahyuni et al., 2024).

In discussions during budget deliberation, speakers often use measured language when explaining technical or complex matters so that the respondent can comprehend the inquiry and answer carefully in a comfortable manner. Rowiyah et al. (2025) reveal that this approach ensures that information is communicated clearly without sounding overly assertive or condescending.

“Thank you, sir. Airfare uh there is such a thing as a sir yong revenue management system — it’s a dynamic pricing system...” (CBH16)

Thank you, sir. Regarding airfare, there is something called a revenue management system — it’s a dynamic pricing system.

The inclusion of hesitation markers such as “uh” and deferential address terms like “sir” softens the tone, signaling respect while presenting a factual clarification about the dynamic pricing system adopted by all airlines under the Department of Transportation (DOTr). This linguistic approach allows the undersecretary to appear informative yet courteous to the speaker, maintaining professionalism throughout the exchange of information.

By employing hedging, the speaker introduces the technical term “revenue management system” without imposing authority or making the listener feel uninformed. The polite and indirect phrasing makes the explanation sound more like a contribution to the discussion rather than a correction to the speaker (Jeong, 2024). This mitigated tone fosters a collaborative atmosphere, encouraging understanding

rather than a confrontational style.

In such cases, maintaining humility and respect is crucial to preserving professionalism and credibility. In the statement:

“I would not... I have no idea on the time frame for the Bulacan airport at this point in time, your honor. My apologies po.” (CBH22)

The cautious phrasing of DPWH secretary “I would not” and “I have no idea” minimizes the force of the admission, while the polite address “your honor” and the apology “po” express deference and sincerity. This thoughtful use of language helps maintain a positive impression even when delivering an unfavorable response by admitting a lack of knowledge at the moment (Batool, 2024).

By combining cautious phrasing with an explicit apology, the speaker successfully mitigates the potential threat to their credibility or authority within the department. The statement reflects a balance between honesty and politeness, as the speaker prioritizes transparency while maintaining a courteous tone. Such linguistic strategies are essential in formal interactions because they demonstrate accountability and respect for the audience’s expectations. Even when the question cannot be fully answered, the careful wording conveys humility and professionalism. Thus, the utterance reinforces trust and decorum, exemplifying how tactful language sustains effective and respectful communication (Sulistiyarningsih et al., 2021).

In discussions that involve sensitive or legal matters, committee officials in the deliberation of the national budget often employ deference and hedging to express their points carefully without sounding confrontational or overly assertive (Banat, 2024). This politeness strategy allows speakers to remind others of important principles while maintaining respect for differing views, as in the following statement:

“Alam nyo po ang problem natin issue po ng due process syempre... presumption to innocence.” (CBH26)

You know, our problem is really about the issue of due process... and of course, the presumption of innocence.

The inclusion of polite markers such as “po” and the conversational cue “Alam nyo” softens the tone, creating an impression of mutual understanding rather than sounding to the hearer as a direct correction.

By presenting the statement as a shared observation, the speaker acknowledges the sensitivity of the topic while subtly emphasizing adherence to legal and ethical standards (Wahyuni et al., 2024). Instead of asserting the point in an absolute or argumentative manner, the speaker’s phrasing invites reflection and consideration, aligning with the values of fairness and respect (Yergazy & Denisenko, 2024). Such linguistic restraint not only preserves the decorum of the exchange but also strengthens the collaborative tone of the conversation, emphasizing the importance of professionalism and empathy during the deliberation.

Negative politeness reflects a shared understanding conveyed with a respectful attitude (Al-Mahasees et al., 2024). It highlights the speaker’s awareness of social boundaries and sensitivity to the listener’s autonomy. By employing strategies such as hedging, deference, apology, and indirect questioning, communicators maintain harmony and avoid confrontation, particularly in formal or high-stakes contexts. These linguistic choices not only signal politeness but also demonstrate professionalism, humility, and consideration for others’ perspectives (Clelland, 2023). Ultimately, negative politeness functions as a crucial mechanism for sustaining balanced communication, allowing clarity to be achieved without compromising respect and enabling authority to be exercised with empathy and tact (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Positive Politeness. Speakers often aim to satisfy the hearer’s desire to feel valued, appreciated, and socially included, using language that conveys interpersonal connection (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In this study, out of 962 recorded politeness instances, 372 were identified as positive politeness strategies, making it the most frequently used type in congressional budget hearings for fiscal years 2023–2025. Positive politeness is typically expressed through compliments, inclusive language, expressions of gratitude, or statements affirming shared goals and alignment (Kousar, 2015). Committee officials consistently employed positive politeness to secure cooperation and foster smoother decision-making processes, especially when negotiating sensitive issues requiring collective agreement (Rohman et al., 2024). Its dominance reflects the Philippine cultural norm of maintaining harmony and “pakikipagkapwa” in discourse, where showing respect, solidarity, and interpersonal sensitivity is central to effective communication.

Furthermore, illustrates how government representatives skillfully use warm, respectful language to promote harmony and engagement during deliberations. According to Mayerhoff (2011), this approach not only softens the delivery of potentially sensitive remarks but also strengthens relationships among participants, ensuring that discussions remain productive and grounded in mutual respect. One of the most common ways to express positive politeness is through solidarity and inclusion, where the speaker aligns with the listener to promote cooperation and collective responsibility (Song, 2012). Through this strategy, the speaker reduces social distance, encourages mutual understanding, and emphasizes shared goals that support more constructive dialogue during institutional discussions (Rohman et al., 2024).

In the utterance:

“But please, siguro po mapapaintindi natin sa kanila ... kahit konting pang-unawa, dagdagan na lang natin.” (CBH3)

But please, maybe we can help them understand... let us just add a little understanding.

It exemplifies how solidarity and inclusion function to create a friendly and collaborative tone. By using the inclusive term “natin” (we), the speaker invites others to take part in the solution rather than imposing an instruction. The phrase “kahit konting pang-unawa” (a little understanding) softens the request, appealing to empathy and the shared responsibility of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to address the shortage of consular office staff, as highlighted by the OFWs through their representative. This type of positive politeness fosters harmony, reduces the sense of imposition, and promotes unity, encouraging cooperation and shared problem-solving instead of assigning blame (Shaqra, 2023).

Another form of positive politeness is expressing gratitude and friendliness, which reinforces respect and interpersonal warmth (Winiharti & Mubarak, 2023). This strategy helps maintain a positive atmosphere even in formal or structured settings such as hearings or conferences.

“Daghang salamat... thank you... That would be all.” (CBH7)

Thank you very much... thank you... That would be all.

This statement highlights the use of multilingual gratitude to convey sincerity and respect. The repetition of “thank you” in both English and Cebuano demonstrates a genuine appreciation that transcends linguistic boundaries. Another, ending with “That would be all,” offers a polite and composed closure, balancing professionalism and warmth. Such expressions not only acknowledge the DSWD secretary’s assurance that the unfilled social worker positions will be addressed but also help maintain an atmosphere of courtesy, mutual respect, and collaborative engagement among participants.

Positive politeness can also be conveyed through reassurance and support, particularly when the speaker aims to ease tension or express empathy (Sangaji et al., 2024). This approach demonstrates attentiveness to the hearer’s needs and contributes to a cooperative conversational tone.

“Mr. Chair will give you extra time, your honor. I will give you extra time your honor, don’t worry.” (CBH13)

The utterance demonstrates the chairperson’s willingness to accommodate and support the legislator’s queries directed at the government agency, reflecting genuine concern and consideration. The phrase “don’t worry” serves to alleviate anxiety while reinforcing trust and mutual understanding between the subordinate and the chairperson. Through this supportive expression, the speaker builds a sense of solidarity, reduces social distance, and upholds mutual respect within the formal setting (Voinov, 2013). Such reassurance highlights how positive politeness can strengthen professional relationships and promote a sense of shared purpose.

An additional strategy of positive politeness involves showing interest and involvement, where the speaker engages actively with the hearer to encourage participation (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This approach reflects attentiveness and respect, thereby strengthening interpersonal rapport, as illustrated in the sample statement below.

“Well I believe that—I believe that suspicion that just for your information. Uhm uh suportado niyo na ba yong DWR (Department of Water Resources) ...?” (CBH17)

Well, I believe that—I believe that suspicion, just for your information. Uh, do you already support the DWR (Department of Water Resources)?

The statement demonstrates how interest and engagement can invite cooperation and open dialogue. By acknowledging the listener’s viewpoint through “just for your information” and asking “suportado niyo na ba” (do you already support), the speaker maintains a tone of respect and collaboration by asking the DENR secretary’s support on the particular matter. This approach balances assertiveness with deference, encouraging interaction and ensuring that the exchange remains constructive rather than confrontational (Al-Eer et al., 2025). Furthermore, Atsna & Andriyani (2025) indicate that by actively involving the listener in the communication, the speaker signals attentiveness to their perspective, fosters mutual understanding, and creates a sense of shared responsibility in decision-making. Thus, the speaker’s involvement reflects a genuine commitment to collaboration, reinforcing the principles of positive politeness and promoting a respectful environment in formal institutional discourse (Kawashima, 2024).

One key indicator of positive politeness is the use of explanations to maintain rapport and promote a favorable response (Rahardi, 2020). By clarifying information rather than asserting authority, the speaker preserves a respectful and cooperative exchange.

“Yes, Mr. Chair. Kasi dumadaan po ito sa prosesong procurement...” (CBH19)

Yes, Mr. Chair. Because this goes through the procurement process...

In this statement, the speaker strives to maintain a harmonious tone by providing a clear and calm explanation of the process of procuring PPE per beneficiary in the implementation of the DOLE, TUPAD Program. The respectful address “Mr. Chair” acknowledges the institutional role and authority of the listener, while the phrase “dumadaan po ito” (this goes through) functions as a polite clarification rather than a defensive justification. This phrasing indicates that the speaker values the chairperson’s understanding and aims to promote transparency regarding the procedural flow of the program. Instead of asserting finality or superiority of knowledge, the speaker explains the process in a manner that sustains mutual respect and preserves the positive relationship within the deliberation setting. This reflects how positive politeness is used not only to clarify policy matters but also to uphold professionalism

and maintain relational harmony in formal discourse (Lee, 2023).

Positive politeness also manifests through appeals to shared goals, where the speaker highlights cooperation to strengthen collective responsibility (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This approach promotes unity and emphasizes the common purpose of the discussion.

“...kaya tinatanong natin... para malaman natin kung meron talagang plano.” (CBH23)

...that’s why we are asking... so we will know if there is a plan.

In the above statement, the speaker uses inclusive language, such as “natin” (we), to signal joint involvement in the process of inquiry and decision-making. By framing the question this way, it is not positioned as a critique, even though the topic is somewhat sensitive. Instead, it becomes a shared pursuit of clarity, focusing on examining the plan of the DSWD Secretary regarding the solo parent subsidy. The repetition of “natin” reinforces teamwork and demonstrates respect toward the hearer. This strategic phrasing sustains solidarity and builds trust among participants, aligning with the principles of mutual understanding and contributing to a more collaborative and constructive discussion.

Expressions of respect during deliberations are fundamental to maintaining positive relationships in formal discussions. The compliments and greetings exchanged by committee officials not only uphold decorum but also reinforce both interpersonal and institutional bonds, as exemplified in the sample statement.

“Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. To our committee chairman and our Senior Vice-Chairperson, and good morning to our distinguished Secretary of National Defense...” (CBH25)

The speaker demonstrates courtesy and attentiveness through formal address and structured acknowledgment of the personnel present in the hearing. The repetition of titles such as “Mr. Chair” and “distinguished Secretary” reflects the speaker’s intent to recognize hierarchy and show respect to the attendees. By opening with gratitude and extending greetings, the utterance sets a positive tone that fosters goodwill among participants. This kind of formality not only maintains order but also reinforces the speaker’s awareness of social dynamics, ensuring that communication remains respectful and dignified.

Another clear display of positive politeness is through giving praise, which strengthens goodwill and affirms positive relationships (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Such expressions help establish a friendly and supportive atmosphere in professional exchanges.

“First of all, congratulations to our new DepEd secretary, the honorable Sonny Angara.” (CBH27)

By offering congratulations, the congresswoman expresses appreciation and respect toward the DepEd Secretary, reinforcing a sense of camaraderie and creating a positive atmosphere. The phrase “the honorable Sonny Angara” adds a tone of respect that acknowledges both status and achievement, signaling a more relaxed and cordial type of conversation. This form of recognition helps establish a cooperative tone for subsequent discussions, reducing social distance and enhancing relational warmth between the person asking the question and the one answering. It exemplifies how polite acknowledgment can serve as a bridge between professional courtesy and personal regard before posing a question to the hearer.

Positive politeness may also take the form of highlighting shared values, allowing the speaker to establish common ground with the listener. This approach reinforces solidarity and signals alignment with institutional principles and collective expectations, as reflected in the statement:

“I’ve said this before, and I will say this again, this is about transparency and accountability.” (CBH31)

Although the statement may come across as intense in highlighting that the Office of the President is not exempt from deliberation, it demonstrates how emphasizing shared ideals through each phrase promotes unity and encourages adherence to the processes and rules set by the committee. The repetition of “I’ve said this before, and I will say this again” reinforces the speaker’s commitment and sincerity in reminding all participants, while the reference to “transparency and accountability” invokes values that are mutually respected in governance. By reiterating these principles, the speaker strengthens credibility and fosters an atmosphere of trust, contributing to a positive deliberative strategy. The way of uttering the statement effectively connects personal conviction with collective purpose, which illustrates how shared beliefs can enhance cooperation and respect in formal dialogue.

Positive politeness emerged as the most frequently used strategy in the analyzed congressional hearings, reflecting the participants’ preference for maintaining cooperation, respect, and mutual understanding (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This approach helps manage the balance between authority and approachability, allowing both lawmakers and agency representatives to express their views without choosing creating tension. By employing language that emphasizes inclusion, appreciation, and shared responsibility, speakers were able to uphold professionalism while preserving the social harmony essential in formal conferences (Sutyrajmi et al., 2025). This strategy demonstrates how rapport-building techniques such as giving compliments, expressing gratitude, and appealing to shared values contribute to smoother communication and reduce the risk of conflict in high-stakes discussions (Yergazy & Denisenko, 2024).

Moreover, the dominance of positive politeness highlights the underlying culture of respect and collaboration present in formal institutional settings (Kousar, 2015). Speakers’ use of polite markers, acknowledgment of others’ roles, and expressions of solidarity stress the intent to sustain constructive relationships while ensuring that messages remain persuasive and credible. This communication

style not only enhances understanding among participants but also strengthens public perception of civility and decorum within government discourse. Overall, positive politeness serves as a key linguistic tool that bridges authority with empathy, ensuring that discussions remain respectful, inclusive, and goal-oriented.

Off-Record. It is the least commonly used politeness strategy in this study as it relies on an indirect and subtle type of communication (Akuka et al., 2021). Speakers hint at disagreement or concern rather than stating it outright, which can be risky in formal settings like congressional hearings. In high-stakes deliberations, participants often prefer clear and explicit language to ensure their points are accurately understood and officially recorded (Rajik, 2025). While Off-Record remarks help maintain professionalism and harmony, their subtlety limits their frequency, as speakers may avoid ambiguity to prevent misinterpretation or reduce the impact of their argument (Mulyono, 2025).

Thus, an off-record politeness strategy is characterized by indirectness, allowing the speaker to communicate criticism or concern without overtly stating it (Nisa, 2024). This strategy provides the listener with interpretive freedom, minimizing potential conflict or embarrassment during sensitive exchanges.

“So, Madam Chair, I would like to ask how did they prepare the farm-to-market of 13 billion in the NEP. So, it was not the President directly and was not followed.” (CBH4)

As manifested in the statement, it demonstrates the use of hints and implicature to raise a critical point, indirectly signaling to the Department of Agriculture (DA) Undersecretary that their implementation of the project differs from the instructions given beforehand. Rather than directly accusing or confronting, the speaker frames the statement as a question and clarification, encouraging the listener to draw their own conclusions and explain how their processes were carried out. The phrasing implies doubt and concern about the DA’s budgeting process for the farm-to-market roadmap without explicitly expressing disapproval. By employing this indirect approach, the speaker avoids threatening or confronting the listener while still questioning the credibility or rationale behind the issue (Julianti, 2024).

Another notable form of off-record politeness involves indirect questioning, where the speaker conveys criticism in a subtle and non-confrontational manner (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This technique allows them to challenge inconsistencies or express disbelief without sounding accusatory or disrespectful (Safitri, 2015).

“How come you know how to... you need 2,000 you don’t... you don’t even know which regions into what and how many.” (CBH8)

The speaker’s statement above reflects an attempt to expose the uncertainty or lack of preparedness of the BFP agency indirectly. Rather than issuing a direct criticism about the lack, the fragmented and hesitant phrasing allows the speaker to express skepticism in a conversational tone as a way of confirming the number of recruits. This creates a rhetorical question that guides the listener to infer the underlying concern about insufficient planning or unclear data. The strategy minimizes direct confrontation while maintaining the speaker’s critical stance about the uncertainty of the number of personnel hired by the department. Through this approach, the speaker balances assertiveness with restraint, fostering reflection without escalating tension. The speaker balances assertiveness with restraint, which fosters a reflection without escalating tension during the communication process (Maaya & Feliciano, 2025).

Off-record communication can also be realized through indirect expression of agreement or stance, where the speaker subtly aligns with another’s opinion without making a firm or overt declaration (Shen, Zhao, & Lai, 2023). This form of politeness allows the speaker to show support while maintaining diplomatic distance (Yoon et al., 2020).

“...my manifestation was uh support in... in support with the manifestation of uh honorable Edcel Lagman that we can dispense with the budget of DSWD, except, NCIP, madam chair, your honor...” (CBH14)

In this utterance, the speaker uses a mild and indirect tone to express alignment with another participant’s view. The phrase “in support of Honorable Edcel Lagman” conveys agreement while maintaining respect and decorum through the use of titles and deferential phrasing. By not asserting the opinion as their own strong claim, the speaker avoids potential confrontation or opposition. The speaker then utters an exception regarding the NCIP, ending the statement without elaboration, which implies a reasoned concern behind their cautious phrasing. This strategy allows them to contribute thoughtfully while preserving harmony within the deliberative setting. The indirect support expressed here underscores how Off-Record politeness can balance personal stance with institutional respect, signaling agreement while subtly indicating reservations in formal discourse.

Certainly, off-record politeness often includes speculation to introduce a topic or concern subtly. This approach allows the speaker to engage the listener’s attention or elicit a response without imposing or making explicit claims (Brown & Levinson, 1987). It preserves the listener’s autonomy while still communicating a meaningful point.

“If China qualifies in the quarter finals, is going to be big... Definitely, the Italians will be coming over...” (CBH18)

This statement illustrates the use of speculative language to draw attention to a potential scenario regarding tourists arriving in Manila, one of the host cities for the FIBA World Cup. Rather than directly instructing or asserting what the Department of Tourism (DOT) should do, the speaker implies that China’s qualification could have significant implications for the number of tourists and viewers, which would, in turn, promote the Philippines. The use of “If” introduces a hypothetical scenario, encouraging listeners to consider

potential outcomes and the preparations that may be needed. This approach demonstrates strategic subtlety, prompting awareness and foresight through suggestion rather than making a direct statement. By framing the scenario indirectly, the speaker maintains conversational harmony while still achieving the intended communicative effect.

Another form of off-record politeness is indirect suggestion, where the speaker offers an idea or recommendation without asserting authority or imposing it on others (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This is often done through modal verbs or tentative phrasing that signal deference and openness to interpretation, as demonstrated in the sample statement:

“...we have to be ready to export also, Mr. Chair... it will be a business decision.” (CBH20)

In this statement, the speaker conveys a recommendation regarding the exportation of rice once productivity improves and sufficiency is achieved, while maintaining a tone of formality and respect. By framing the suggestion as a “business decision,” the speaker avoids issuing a direct command or directive. The phrase of the Department of Agriculture’s (DA) undersecretary, “we have to be ready,” serves as a gentle prompt rather than an authoritative instruction, allowing the listener to interpret it as a cooperative insight about the rice program. This indirect approach reduces the forcefulness of the statement, portraying the speaker as considerate and tactful, which aligns with the principles of Off-Record politeness.

Off-record politeness can also manifest through hints and implied intentions, where the speaker conveys a plan or request subtly without explicitly stating expectations (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This indirect form minimizes pressure and maintains the listener’s freedom to respond voluntarily.

“Even sa region namin. Kung makakakuha sayo ako ng executive na meeting ipakausap ko sainyo ang witness ko. Hinda tiga gobyerno mga tao taga doon saamin.” (CBH24)

Even in our region. If I can secure an executive meeting with you, I will let you talk to my witness. They are not from the government; they are people from our area.

The statement “Kung makakakuha sayo ako ng executive na meeting” (“If I can secure an executive meeting with you”) serves as a hint that the speaker seeks cooperation or approval, while remaining conditional and non-demanding. The speaker uses this approach when questioning the DILG’s commitment to providing a fire truck to the district, a request that had not been fulfilled and lacked a clear explanation. By introducing individuals who might clarify the issue with the BFP department, the speaker indirectly addresses the concern without directly confronting the listener. This method allows the listener to understand the intent while preserving their sense of control and dignity. By hinting rather than insisting, the speaker maintains rapport and respects hierarchical boundaries, an essential feature of Off-Record politeness in formal and institutional discourse (Hussein & Rashid, 2023).

Moreover, off-record politeness often employs indirect lead-ins to initiate sensitive or potentially confrontational topics in a respectful manner. This approach helps soften the transition into questioning or critique by signaling intent without immediately imposing or challenging the listener. It allows the speaker to maintain courtesy and consideration before proceeding with more direct inquiries. As shown in the statement:

“Anyway, marami po akong tanong Mr. Chair dahil... I just want to wind up yung free Wi-Fi gusto ko lang kasing i-point out kaya tayong may utang dahil hindi nabibigay yung pondo ng free Wi-Fi.” (CBH28)

Anyway, I have many questions, Mr. Chair, because... I just want to wrap up the issue on free Wi-Fi. I just want to point out that the reason we are in debt is that the funds for free Wi-Fi are not being released.

This example demonstrates how a speaker from the DICT tactfully uses Off-Record politeness to prepare the listener for upcoming questions. The use of “Anyway” functions as a conversational buffer, subtly shifting attention to a new topic without sounding abrupt or confrontational, which is a hallmark of Off-Record strategy. Additionally, addressing “Mr. Chair” with politeness markers such as “po” conveys respect and formality, helping to maintain a calm tone while preparing for a critical inquiry regarding subscription-related debt. By prefacing the question indirectly, the speaker signals engagement and curiosity without issuing a direct challenge, allowing the listener to consider the issue voluntarily (Destiyana & Muslim, 2024). This indirectness reduces the risk of tension, fosters a cooperative atmosphere, and exemplifies how Off-Record strategies balance assertiveness with tact in formal discourse (Anugrawati & Syam, 2023).

In some instances, speakers employ indirect disagreement to express dissent in a tactful and socially acceptable way rather than directly opposing an idea. The speaker introduces contrast through implication, maintaining respect and minimizing the threat to the listener’s face (Daar et al., 2023).

“Pero Mr. Chair, the actual experiences of the Filipino people say otherwise at yun sana yung gusto nating matanong para masagot ng Office of the President.” (CBH31)

But Mr. Chair, the actual experiences of the Filipino people say otherwise, and that is what we would like to ask so that the Office of the President can answer.

This statement reflects the strategic use of indirectness to express disagreement regarding the performance of the Office of the President



without engaging in overt confrontation (Mensah, 2024). By attributing the opposing view to “the actual experiences of the Filipino people,” the speaker distances themselves from personal judgment, framing the disagreement as rooted in collective reality rather than individual criticism (Assistido et al., 2018). The phrase “say otherwise” delicately contrasts prior statements, signaling a difference in perspective while maintaining a respectful tone (Daar et al., 2023). This indirect approach preserves decorum and allows the speaker to assert a counterpoint gracefully, exemplifying a key feature of Off-Record politeness in formal and deliberative settings (Pratita et al., 2024).

Correspondingly, Hussein (2023) implies how off-record politeness strategies, as observed in the congressional hearings, are characterized by indirectness and the use of implication to convey meaning without overt statements. These strategies often rely on hints, speculative remarks, or indirect disagreement to express criticism or suggestions in a tactful manner (Wijayanti et al., 2022). By allowing listeners to interpret the message on their own, speakers preserve the decorum. Thus, it reflects a careful balance between expressing opinions and maintaining professional respect, especially in a setting where hierarchy and decorum are highly valued (Yoon et al., 2020).

However, this strategy emerged as the least used among all politeness approaches during the hearings (Akuka et al., 2021). The nature of congressional discussions, where clarity, accountability, and responsiveness are prioritized, limits the practicality of indirect communication. Legislators and officials often favor more direct yet respectful exchanges to ensure transparency and understanding (Rajik, 2025). Hence, while off-record politeness effectively minimizes face-threatening acts, its subtle and interpretive nature makes it less frequent in formal deliberations that demand precision and explicit responses.

The Content Analysis of Politeness Strategies in Congressional Budget Hearings

Table 3 provides a structured overview of the politeness strategies identified in the congressional budget hearings, emphasizing their function and significance within formal discourse (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The emerging themes are identified to reveal systematic patterns of interaction and strategic choices made by participants. The table organizes the data and analyses to demonstrate how different strategies operate to manage interpersonal relations, maintain decorum, and facilitate effective communication during the budget deliberations. Consequently, the presentation allows readers to understand not only the presence of these strategies but also their implications in shaping interactions between committee officials and government agency personnel, influencing decision-making, and setting the overall tone of the hearings.

Table 3. Content Analysis of Politeness Strategies in Congressional Budget Hearings

<i>Politeness Strategies</i>	<i>Emerging Themes</i>	<i>Analysis</i>
Bald-on Record	Demands accountability through direct questioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenging officials openly without using mitigating language Seeking immediate answers to pressing issues
	Emphasizes authority through assertive expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using commanding tone to establish control and confidence Delivering statements that convey determination and power
Negative Politeness	Highlights urgency through unsoftened confrontation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing problems directly to prompt swift action Stressing the importance of immediate response or correction
	Reinforces transparency through explicit communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presenting facts and criticisms clearly without ambiguity Holding individuals responsible through straightforward dialogue
	Maintains respect through hedging and deference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using cautious and polite expressions to avoid offense Recognizing authority while preserving professionalism
Positive Politeness	Reduces tension through indirect phrasing and mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Softening statements to prevent confrontation Choosing indirect wording to lessen imposition
	Preserves decorum through formal address and restraint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employing courteous titles and honorifics in communication Displaying humility to maintain a respectful tone
	Promotes understanding through apology and clarification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledging limitations or uncertainty when responding Offering explanations to avoid misinterpretation and conflict
	Builds rapport through acknowledgment and appreciation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expressing gratitude and recognition Valuing others’ contributions and efforts
Off-record	Promotes collaboration through shared goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasizing collective purpose and teamwork Encouraging joint responsibility in discussions
	Strengthens relationships through compliments and greetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrating warmth and respect in interaction Creating a friendly and respectful atmosphere
	Fosters unity through respectful and inclusive language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using affirming words to reduce social distance Including others in conversation to maintain equality
	Conveys criticism through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using subtle remarks to express disagreement indirectly



hints and implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing listeners to infer meaning without direct confrontation
Raises issues through indirect questioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framing concerns as inquiries to avoid overt challenge • Encouraging reflection or response without imposing authority
Promotes tact through ambiguity and suggestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing vague or suggestive language to soften criticism • Allowing space for interpretation to maintain politeness

Bald-on Record

The analysis of the bald-on record strategy reveals emerging themes that capture the nature of communication in congressional budget hearings. These themes reflect how directness and assertiveness function as tools for ensuring accountability and driving immediate responses from government officials. By examining the patterns of demand, questioning, and confrontation, the study uncovers how this strategy shapes the tone, power relations, and overall dynamics of the deliberations.

Demands accountability through direct questioning. One of the most evident patterns under the Bald-on Record strategy is the way lawmakers demand accountability through direct questioning (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This approach is marked by their tendency to challenge officials openly without using mitigating language, reflecting an assertive stance toward transparency and truthfulness (Ginting & Pasaribu, 2022). In the utterances:

“May timetable po ba tayo dito? Ano bang... ano bang expectation... ano bang sasabihin namin sa aming mga constituents?” (CBH22)

Do we have a timetable for this? What... what is the expectation... what should we tell to our constituents?

Another committee official stated:

“But may I ask regarding the Legal Assistance Fund, which is 200 million... What is the current status of these funds as of now? And what is the breakdown of the assistance given to each fund and to whom it was given?” (CBH3)

This form of communication often appeared when legislators sought clarification about policy decisions, fund allocations, or project delays. The absence of softening devices, such as hedges or deferential markers, indicates a deliberate effort to prioritize factual accuracy over conversational politeness (Mulyono, 2023).

Moreover, this directness highlights the lawmakers’ goal of seeking precise and immediate answers to pressing issues, especially those concerning public interest (Supriyanta, 2025). Their tone often conveys urgency and responsibility, ensuring that government representatives provide clear, verifiable responses. This style of communication demonstrates not only the power dynamics inherent in legislative discussions but also the functional role of straightforward questioning in maintaining accountability (Rahma, 2025). By addressing issues directly, lawmakers reinforce their duty to uphold transparency and demand justifications from concerned agencies, thus sustaining the integrity of the inquiry process.

The bluntness of these demands can create tension, but that very atmosphere highlights the weight of the proceedings. In an environment where accountability is paramount, choosing not to soften words ensures that the urgency of the matter is fully recognized (Ghampson & Afful, 2024). Collectively, Misir (2024) strengthens that language itself becomes a tool to enforce both seriousness and directness in achieving the objectives of the hearing.

Emphasizes authority through assertive expression. Another recurring theme observed in the use of the Bald-on Record strategy is how lawmakers emphasize authority through assertive expression (Rahma, 2025). This is manifested when they use a commanding tone to establish control and confidence during exchanges with officials. The assertive delivery of statements not only reinforces their institutional power but also signals their firm stance on governance issues as manifested in the sample utterances.

“So, I don’t think you need the additional budget, Sir. Kasi binibigyan na nga kayo ng libre...” (CBH8)

So, I don’t think you need the additional budget, Sir, because you’re already being provided with it for free...

Another committee official stated:

Ano po ang criteria para malagyan, magkaroon ng school building ang isang district? And who is in charge of this?” (CBH11)

What is the criteria for a district to have or be given a school building? And who is in charge of this?

Such authoritative communication often serves as a reminder of the lawmakers’ mandate to oversee and scrutinize government actions, thereby positioning them as decisive figures within the hearing.

Lawmakers often deliver statements that convey determination and power, ensuring that their intent is clearly perceived by the audience and the respondents (Misir, 2024). Their choice of words and delivery reflect an awareness of their influential role, making it clear that they expect compliance or at least a serious acknowledgment of their concerns. This assertive approach helps steer discussions toward accountability while minimizing opportunities for evasion or vague responses (Yanti et al., 2025). In this way, the expression of authority becomes both a communicative and procedural tool for maintaining order and asserting legislative oversight.

Highlights urgency through unsoftened confrontation. The Bald-on Record strategy also highlights urgency through unsoftened confrontation. This is evident when lawmakers address problems directly to prompt swift action (Ghampson & Afful, 2024). By confronting issues head-on, they remove unnecessary politeness markers that might dilute the gravity of the matter. This direct approach often emerges in discussions involving delays, inefficiency, or misuse of public funds and situations where immediate resolution is necessary, as described by Brown and Levinson (1987). In the sample utterances below from the congressional budget hearing, an unsoftened tone underscores the lawmakers' intent to expedite decision-making and prevent further complications in government operations.

“Mapupuno po siguro ng supplies and materials yong buong DILG building if I spend 17.5 billion...” (CBH15)

The entire DILG building would probably be filled with supplies and materials if I spent 17.5 billion...

Another committee official stated:

“The 5,957 hectares covered by reclamation permits... that’s 14.5 trillion. Does the cumulative impact assessment include economics?” (CBH17)

The question is framed in stark numerical terms with no softeners. This directness pressures the DILG and DENR to address specific concerns.

Thus, Supriyanta (2025) mentioned that this communicative stance involves stressing the importance of immediate response or correction, leaving no room for ambiguity or postponement. Lawmakers, especially in the budget allocation hearing, use direct confrontation that serves as both a pressure mechanism and a rhetorical strategy to ensure accountability. Through their deliberate refusal to soften their words, they create an atmosphere of urgency that compels officials to act decisively (Putra, 2024). Such exchanges illustrate how straightforward confrontation, though tense, becomes instrumental in demanding timely actions aligned with public service obligations.

Reinforces transparency through explicit communication. The final theme under the Bald-on Record strategy reveals how it reinforces transparency through explicit communication (Norton, 2006). Hearing committee officials demonstrate this by presenting facts and criticisms clearly without ambiguity, ensuring that their statements are easily understood by both the public and the officials addressed (Fadoli, 2022). In the utterances:

“Kung 350 pesos, tapos long-sleeves lang yan, apti sombrero parang ang mahal naman po non, Mr. Chair.” (CBH19)

If it’s 350 pesos and it’s just for a long-sleeved shirt and a hat, that seems quite expensive, Mr. Chair.

Another committee official stated:

“...Therefore, you cannot conveniently use the supreme court ruling on the mandamus to stop this.” (CBH17)

The first utterance exemplifies a Bald-on Record strategy by directly questioning the reasonableness of an expense, reflecting the speaker’s intent to demand justification and promote fiscal accountability. Similarly, the second utterance conveys an assertive expression of authority, as the speaker firmly establishes a legal boundary to refute an argument, reinforcing both expertise and institutional control within the hearing (Rahma, 2025). This straightforward style of communication minimizes misinterpretation and fosters open dialogue by focusing on factual and concrete issues rather than emotional appeals (Mulyono, 2023). Through such transparency, according to Fadoli (2022), lawmakers demonstrate their commitment to public accountability, integrity, and truth-seeking during the congressional proceedings.

Negative Politeness

The analysis of the negative politeness strategy highlights key themes that demonstrate how courtesy and restraint are used to maintain professionalism during congressional budget hearings. These themes reveal how agency officials manage potential conflicts by clarifying, defending, and justifying their actions while showing deference to lawmakers. Through cautious phrasing and formal address, this strategy helps preserve mutual respect and reduce tension in the discussion of sensitive budget matters (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Maintains respect through hedging and deference. The use of negative politeness in the congressional budget hearings primarily reflects an effort to maintain respect through hedging and deference (Kousar, 2025). Both lawmakers and agency officials strategically use cautious and polite expressions to avoid offense, especially when addressing controversial topics or potential mismanagement issues (Jeong, 2024). By softening their tone, speakers prevent misunderstandings that may arise from overly direct statements of authority (Voinov, 2013). This linguistic restraint not only protects the speaker’s image but also safeguards the dignity of the person being addressed, fostering a professional and respectful exchange as shown in the study of Boginskaya (2025). In the sample statement below it uses hedging (“urging,” “pleading,” “please”) to mitigate imposition when requesting legislative action.

“Unfortunately, it is an amendment that was not reintroduced the last budget season but we are urging again and pleading with the honorable congress people to please introduce it as another amendment because it’s a program we think is worthwhile to expand and

to grow especially with the rate of teenage pregnancies in the country.” (CBH23)

Negative politeness serves as a way of recognizing authority while preserving decorum inside the hearing. Officials often acknowledge the superior role of lawmakers, demonstrating deference to their oversight responsibilities (Batool, 2024). However, they also balance this with professionalism by responding thoughtfully and precisely, avoiding submissiveness (Akkawi et al., 2025). Such expressions of respect help maintain a constructive atmosphere where both parties can engage in dialogue without hostility, showing that civility and assertiveness can coexist in institutional communication (Rowiyah et al., 2025).

Reduces tension through indirect phrasing and mitigation. Another key feature of negative politeness observed in the hearings is how it reduces tension through indirect phrasing and mitigation (Sulistiyarningsih et al., 2021). Lawmakers' confrontation and government representatives' softening statements to prevent confrontation, especially when clarifying budget allocations or addressing performance concerns (Banat, 2024). Indirect expressions help manage sensitive exchanges and minimize face-threatening acts that could provoke defensive reactions (Maginnis, 2011). Instead of openly criticizing, the speakers employ gentle inquiries that subtly raise concerns without sounding accusatory, as shown in the following utterances.

“So, Madam Chair, I would like to ask how did they prepare the farm-to-market...?” (CBH4)

“It should be stricken out in the ballot so that it does not confuse the voters. May I ask, Mr. Chair, the whole COMELEC En Banc what they do?” (CBH9)

Another committee official stated:

“Uh madam chair, I will forgo the opportunity to defend the OVP 2025 budget proposal by question and answer...” (CBH21)

The first two utterances focus on seeking clarification and accountability regarding processes, such as the farm-to-market preparation and the actions of the COMELEC En Banc, while the third asserts control over participation by openly stating the decision to forgo defending the budget, thereby emphasizing transparency and authority in the hearing. At the same time, speakers often employ indirect wording to lessen imposition, especially when making requests or seeking clarifications from higher-ranking officials. This careful phrasing reduces the perceived pressure on the listener, ensuring that communication remains balanced and non-threatening. By using indirectness, participants uphold mutual respect and maintain a collegial tone despite differing opinions or agendas, resulting in a more diplomatic exchange that prioritizes dialogue over debate.

Preserves decorum through formal address and restraint. The hearings also demonstrate that negative politeness helps preserve decorum through formal address and restraint (Boginskay, 2025). Participants consistently employ courteous titles and honorifics in communication, such as “Mr. Chair,” “Madam Secretary,” or “Honorable,” to signify respect for the institutional setting. This linguistic formality reinforces the seriousness of the discussion and highlights the speaker’s adherence to protocol. By using proper forms of address, lawmakers and officials ensure that even strong criticisms are conveyed respectfully, as illustrated in the sample utterance.

“...as requested, Mr. Chairman, we will submit to the committee uh specifically to our good congressman yung gusto niya pong makitang breakdown.” (CBH19)

...as requested, Mr. Chairman, we will submit to the committee, specifically to our good congressman the breakdown he wishes to see.

The speaker complies with the request formally and politely, acknowledging the authority of the committee while demonstrating a willingness to provide the breakdown (Boginskay, 2025). Furthermore, this strategy reflects humility, maintaining a respectful tone especially when addressing potentially contentious matters. Speakers often soften their remarks or include disclaimers such as “with due respect” to express disagreement without creating confrontation. This restraint exemplifies the decorum expected in legislative discourse, where professional courtesy takes precedence over personal emotion. Ultimately, such careful phrasing underscores the principle that civility enhances credibility, even during rigorous debate (Sulistiyarningsih et al., 2021).

Promotes understanding through apology and clarification. Lastly, the use of negative politeness is evident in how it promotes understanding through apology and clarification (Batool, 2024). Officials and legislators frequently acknowledge limitations or uncertainty when responding to inquiries, showing openness to feedback and accountability. This willingness to admit gaps or mistakes indicates humility and transparency, reducing defensiveness and inviting collaboration (Yergazy & Denisenko, 2024). By offering apologies where needed, speakers maintain credibility and reinforce mutual respect among participants (Khair et al., 2024).

“Sorry, Sir. Our budget is from... (verifying a document with staff)” (CBH21)

As stated by another committee official:

“Sorry, Mr. Chair. The National Expenditure... the NEP... the NEP in 2022, Mr. Chairman, is six hundred eighty-six billion (₱686 billion).” (CBH6)

Both utterances demonstrate the use of negative politeness through apology and clarification, as the speakers acknowledge potential confusion and take care to explain complex budgetary information (Clelland, 2023). By politely providing details and justifying their statements, they reduce the risk of misinterpretation and prevent conflict, thereby maintaining a professional and respectful tone

(Al-Mahasees et al., 2024). This approach helps bridge communication gaps, ensures that discussions remain productive, and fosters trust and mutual understanding in formal legislative deliberations.

Positive Politeness

In congressional hearings, words become bridges that connect authority with approachability. Positive politeness is a key strategy used by government representatives to create a cooperative and friendly atmosphere during formal discussions (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The following are the essential themes observed, highlighting how speakers employ gratitude, compliments, inclusive language, and shared goals to foster solidarity and collaboration.

Builds rapport through acknowledgment and appreciation. The use of positive politeness in the congressional budget hearings clearly builds rapport through acknowledgment and appreciation (Rahardi, 2020). Lawmakers and officials often express gratitude and recognition toward one another, particularly before or after making requests or presenting arguments (Yergazy & Denisenko, 2024). Such expressions of thanks, like “Thank you, Mr. Chair” or “We appreciate your clarification,” serve to soften the tone of discourse and demonstrate mutual respect. This approach helps maintain goodwill even during challenging exchanges, enabling speakers to address sensitive issues without appearing confrontational, as illustrated in the following utterances.

“Madam Chair, may I know from the CHR if they are cognizant of the fact that KOJC is a religious organization?” (CBH29)

As stated by another committee official:

“We appreciate the guidance of the committee.” (CBH26)

Both speakers demonstrate positive politeness by showing respect and appreciation toward others to foster interpersonal harmony (Lee, 2023). In the first example, the official politely seeks information from the CHR, recognizing their role and expertise, while the second expresses gratitude for the committee’s guidance. By acknowledging contributions and efforts, these strategies strengthen professional relationships, encourage cooperation, and create a supportive environment where constructive and respectful dialogue can take place. This verbal recognition was noted by Shagra (2023), which allows both lawmakers and agency representatives to address issues collaboratively while maintaining respect and diplomacy, ultimately fostering a productive and harmonious atmosphere during formal proceedings.

Promotes collaboration through shared goals. Another central pattern of positive politeness identified in the hearings is how it promotes collaboration through shared goals (Kuosar, 2025). Furthermore, Atsna & Andriyani (2025) indicate that legislators and agency officials often emphasize collective purpose and teamwork by framing their statements around unity and mutual responsibility. Phrases such as “we are working together” or “our common goal” highlight cooperation rather than division. This shared framing fosters a sense of belonging, turning potentially adversarial exchanges into opportunities for collaboration, as seen in the utterance:

“So, there are measures being undertaken, and Usec. Adobo is right—we are recommending omnibus lifting, kasi baka naman po mag-question sila bakit ‘yung iba inuuna ‘yong lifting.” (CBH5)

So, there are measures being undertaken, and Usec. Adobo is right—we are recommending an omnibus lifting because they might question why others are prioritized for lifting.

The speaker acknowledges ongoing measures and agrees with the undersecretary, while also preemptively addressing potential questions about prioritization, demonstrating both transparency and consideration of others’ perspectives. Additionally, Song (2012) remarks that speakers encourage joint responsibility in discussions, particularly when tackling national concerns such as education reform, infrastructure, or social welfare. By presenting issues as shared challenges rather than individual faults, participants maintain a collaborative tone that invites constructive solutions (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This cooperative communication style reduces defensiveness, allowing all parties to focus on outcomes beneficial to the public (Putra, 2024). Positive politeness, therefore, becomes a rhetorical bridge that transforms formality into partnership (Rahma, 2025).

Strengthens relationships through compliments and greetings. Positive politeness is further manifested when speakers strengthen relationships through compliments and greetings (Mayerhoff, 2011). Legislators often demonstrate warmth and respect in interaction by offering polite salutations, compliments, or congratulatory remarks before discussing serious matters (Winiharti & Mubarak, 2023). Such gestures ease tension and prepare the listener for dialogue, signaling that the speaker values relationship-building as much as policy deliberation (Yergazy & Denisenko, 2024). A simple greeting or commendation contributes to maintaining a congenial tone even in moments of disagreement.

“Mr. Secretary, maayong buntag. I understand that you also speak in Bisaya, that’s good. Ah simply lang, ah I’d like to thank you for the—well, for part of your team...” (CBH7)

Mr. Secretary, good morning. I understand that you also speak Bisaya, that’s good. Ah, just simply, I’d like to thank you for the—well, for part of your team...

In this utterance, the speaker opens the discussion with a polite greeting and acknowledges the Secretary’s ability to speak Bisaya, while also expressing gratitude toward part of the team, thereby setting a courteous and collegial tone. Likewise, these expressions

create a friendly and respectful atmosphere that humanizes formal exchanges (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Through polite acknowledgment, such as praising a colleague's leadership or recognizing an agency's progress, speakers reaffirm their mutual respect (Rohman et al., 2024). These acts reduce social and institutional barriers, making discussions more open and less adversarial (Voinov, 2013). Compliments and greetings thus serve as effective social lubricants, ensuring that communication remains respectful, professional, and relationship-centered.

Fosters unity through respectful and inclusive language. Lastly, the data show that positive politeness helps foster unity through respectful and inclusive language (Sutyrajmi et al., 2025). Participants frequently use affirming words to reduce social distance, such as "we," "our," and "together," which signal cooperation and solidarity. Thus, Mayerhoff (2011) notes these inclusive terms create a sense of shared responsibility, aligning individuals with institutional objectives. By emphasizing respect and equality, speakers ensure that their discourse remains both engaging and unifying. As shown in the following examples.

"Uh we have updated that already, Madam Chair." (CBH7)

As stated by another committee official:

"In fact ... we will be quite thrilled to continue the engagement with you." (CBH3)

In these utterances, the speakers provide updates and express enthusiasm in a polite manner, demonstrating inclusivity and recognition of others' contributions within the discussion. In addition, speakers include others in conversation to maintain equality, often inviting input or acknowledging differing viewpoints in a courteous way (Al-Eer et al., 2025). This openness conveys that every voice in the discussion matters, fostering trust and group cohesion. Through such linguistic inclusion, communication becomes participatory rather than hierarchical (Rahardi, 2020). Overall, the strategic use of inclusive and respectful language underscores the collaborative spirit of governance and reinforces harmony in formal deliberations.

Off-record

In the high-stakes setting of congressional hearings, not every criticism or concern is voiced directly; some messages are delicately woven through subtle hints, suggestions, and indirect remarks (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Off-record communication allows speakers to express disagreement, raise issues, or provide cautionary advice without confronting the listener openly (Julianti, 2024). This careful approach preserves professionalism, maintains harmony, and ensures that sensitive matters are addressed while minimizing tension and conflict (Maaya & Feliciano, 2025).

Conveys criticism through hints and implications. In congressional hearings, speakers frequently convey criticism through hints and implications to raise concerns without directly offending others (Destiyana & Muslim, 2024). Participants use subtle remarks to express disagreement indirectly, allowing them to address controversial issues while maintaining professional decorum (Yoon et al., 2020). This method ensures that critique is communicated thoughtfully, balancing the need for accountability with the desire to avoid confrontation. In the following utterances:

"...siguro hindi ganon ka priority ang Navy, in the past. So, we are now experiencing ano itong nangyayaring ito." (CBH25)

...perhaps the Navy was not that much of a priority in the past. So, we are now experiencing the effects of what is happening.

Another committee official stated:

"...there were a lot of provinces, with all due respect to our colleagues, that got higher allocations and they are not high rice producing. So, how can you say that the budget was prepared according to the President's priority, when the actual NEP allocations do not reflect the priority, Madam Chair?" (CBH4)

These utterances illustrate the use of indirect or mitigated criticism, where speakers highlight issues or express concerns without directly confronting others (Tanka, 2025). In the first example, the official points out that the Navy may not have been prioritized in the past, subtly connecting this to current challenges. In the second, the speaker questions the alignment of budget allocations with presidential priorities while softening the critique with "all due respect to our colleagues," thereby avoiding direct accusation. Thus, this strategy allows listeners to infer meaning without feeling attacked, giving them space to reflect on the criticism and respond appropriately (Maaya & Feliciano, 2025). By implying rather than explicitly stating disagreement, officials manage sensitive discussions tactfully, preserving positive working relationships and minimizing the risk of conflict (Nisa, 2024).

Raises issues through indirect questioning. Another characteristic of off-record communication is how it raises issues through indirect questioning, enabling participants to explore concerns without imposing authority (Julianti, 2024). Speakers frame concerns as inquiries to avoid overt challenge, presenting questions in a way that encourages dialogue rather than confrontation (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This approach is particularly useful in high-stakes settings, where maintaining civility and respect is crucial while still obtaining information or clarification. For example, consider the following utterances:

"Kaya naman hopefully ano ito yung mga hinahanap ng taong bayan natin, bakit ganito parin hanggang ngayon. Nasaan po ang pag-babago" (CBH31)



That is why, hopefully, these are the things our people are looking for—why things are still like this until now. Where is the change?

Another committee official stated:

“...yun ang delikado... Madam Chair, I am curious hindi ba mababatak yung ating Armed Forces kung papasok pa sa Paaralan para magturo?” (CBH2)

...that’s the risky part... Madam Chair, I’m curious—won’t our Armed Forces be stretched too thin if they also enter schools to teach?

In these utterances, the committee official frames challenges indirectly, using phrasing like “hopefully” or “I am curious” rather than issuing direct accusations. By presenting concerns as questions rather than statements, the speaker mitigates potential offense while still raising doubts about feasibility, such as the involvement of the AFP in schools. This indirect approach encourages reflection and careful responses without imposing authority, allowing listeners to consider their answers thoughtfully (Akuka et al., 2021). Overall, such phrasing reduces the likelihood of defensive reactions and fosters a cooperative and constructive atmosphere for discussion.

Promotes tact through ambiguity and suggestion. Off-record strategies also promote tact through ambiguity and suggestion, which helps soften potentially critical statements (Mulyono, 2025). Speakers choose vague or suggestive language to soften criticism, ensuring that issues are raised delicately without creating confrontation (Mensah, 2024). This subtlety allows for critique while preserving the dignity of both speaker and listener. In the utterance:

“I would like to put on record that last budget hearing I already said na baka dapat i-explore na ng DSWD yung GCash, PayMaya...” (CBH7)

I would like to put on record that during the last budget hearing, I already mentioned that the DSWD might need to explore using GCash or PayMaya...

The speaker strategically records a previous suggestion regarding the use of GCash or PayMaya, framing it in a way that maintains politeness while addressing a potentially sensitive issue. Furthermore, this strategy allows space for interpretation, giving the audience flexibility in understanding the intended message. By avoiding blunt statements, officials create room for discussion, reflection, and negotiation, which supports constructive engagement in formal hearings (Boginskaya, 2025).

In the setting of congressional budget hearings, not every criticism or concern is voiced directly; some messages are delicately woven through subtle hints, suggestions, and indirect remarks (Akuka et al., 2021). Off-record communication allows speakers to express disagreement, raise issues, or provide cautionary advice without confronting the listener openly (Julianti, 2024). This careful approach preserves professionalism, maintains harmony, and ensures that sensitive matters are addressed while minimizing tension and conflict (Mulyono, 2025).

Building on this, every politeness strategy employed in congressional hearings serves a specific purpose tailored to the context and the speaker’s goals. Bald-on Record strategies, for instance, are used to assert authority and demand accountability (Fadoli, 2022). In contrast, positive politeness reinforces collegiality and fosters a cooperative atmosphere (Rohman et al., 2024), while negative politeness minimizes imposition and shows deference to hierarchy or expertise (Kurniatin, 2017). Even off-record strategies have a clear function. These strategies are not arbitrary; each is deliberately chosen to balance clarity, respect, and influence, ensuring that communication remains effective, professional, and conducive to collaborative decision-making (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Ways on how Power Dynamics and Institutional Norms shape the choice of Politeness Strategies

Table 4 presents the politeness strategies observed across the 31 congressional budget hearings analyzed in this study, namely bald-on-record, negative politeness, positive politeness, and off-record. In congressional budget hearings, authority and procedural norms dictate the flow of conversation, turning each question and statement into a display of power and accountability. Central to addressing Research Question 2, the table illustrates how power dynamics are manifested within the hearings and how institutional norms shape participants’ choice of politeness strategies. To further substantiate these observations, sample excerpts from the corpus are provided to demonstrate how each strategy emerges in actual communicative exchanges.

Table 4. *Ways on how Power Dynamics and Institutional Norms shape the choice of Politeness Strategies*

<i>Politeness Strategy</i>	<i>Power Dynamics</i>	<i>Institutional Norms</i>	<i>Sample Text from the Corpora</i>
Bald-on Record	Maintaining Authority	Procedural Conventions	“Madam Chairman, kaya ko kong meron silang monitoring dapat alam nila yon... Again, gusto kung malaman ng lahat...” CBH2 “Please give me a valid reason.” CBH27
	Controlling Discussion	Enforcing Procedural Rules	“I hear a lot of rumors... that the delay of such promulgation actually is... a reason for others to ask for dispensation of certain personal—alam mo na kung ano ang sinasabi.” CBH9 “Can you submit the updated report within the week?” CBH26



Negative Politeness	Clarifying positions through direct communication	Using directives to maintain order in formal settings	<p>“How is it that you are requesting subsidy and then you are close to doubling your income? How can we justify this...?” CBH12</p> <p>“Can we get a commitment from you...?” CBH7</p> <p>“...sana po masama din po ang distrito namin sa food stamp.” CBH14</p>
	Mitigating Imposition	Using formal address and titles	<p>“...Gusto kung malaman kung bakit merong charge ng administrative cost back to the DOLE central office...” CBH19</p> <p>“Madam Chair, hihingi nalang ako ng mga programs no kasi yon ang specific na tanong ko...” CBH1</p>
	Showing Deference	Employing Indirect Responses	<p>“Iche-check ko, Mr. Chair... Uh karamihan po kasi mga position, uh I think, uh they’re mga social workers ang kailangan, at saka may mga masteral degrees po.” CBH7</p> <p>“There is a possibility, Mr. Chair. As I mentioned, we already submitted our proposal... We can assure you of our constant follow-up, as we have been.” CBH18</p>
Positive Politeness	Building Rapport	Using approval and compliments	<p>“We will continue to work with the leadership... we pray and hope...” CBH6</p> <p>“The state shall promote social justice... and that is why... on behalf of the city of Cagayan de Oro, we express our gratitude to secretary Rex...” CBH14</p>
	Acknowledging Expertise	Inclusive Language	<p>“...I could not agree more with the observation of the honorable congressman... this is one of the main causes of early deterioration of our roads...” CBH22</p> <p>“...dapat po masagot tayo no very specific kung ano yong ginawa no sa pera ng taong bayan...” CBH21</p>
	Aligning with Goals	Softening Hierarchy	<p>“At paulit-ulit ako and I want to put this on record, ano po ba ang legal basis kung bakit pwedeng gamitin ang pondo na earmark sa isang bagay.” CBH28</p> <p>“Can I get a confirmation or reply from our good secretary? (silently laughing)” CBH6</p>
Off-Record	Avoiding Direct Imposition	Indirect Communication	<p>“Don’t you think that there are negative impacts on the economics... because of the suspension?” CBH17</p> <p>“I would like to apologize for the inaccurate statement that I made earlier.” CBH5</p>
	Shifting Responsibility	Listener Inference	<p>“...puro kasi tayo kuwan eh ‘fitted for but not with’ nangyayari fitted for but never nangyayari kasi walang pondo.” CBH25</p> <p>“Now, let me go to another topic...” CBH9</p>
	Tactful Management of Power	Avoiding Explicit Accountability	<p>“As the president is also rightly uh... uh expressed Mr. Chair we would like to make sure that our farmers will benefit...” CBH20</p>

Bald-on Record

Maintaining Authority. Although bald-on-record is not the most frequently used politeness strategy in budget hearings, it is the most direct linguistic approach, enabling legislators to deliver statements without softening devices as a means of firmly maintaining authority (Graham & Hardaker, 2022). During congressional hearings, both minority and majority committee members employ bald-on-record strategies to assert of authority, a practice that mirrors the hierarchical structure of legislative oversight. This direct style enables lawmakers to issue warnings about questionable fund utilization, impose consequences such as the potential withholding of budgets, and demand clear accountability from agency officials. A study by Lammers et al. (2021) states that by deliberately avoiding

politeness markers, legislators highlight their institutional power over resource allocation and reinforce their role as guardians of public interest. The power asymmetry between legislators and government agencies becomes particularly evident in moments when a lawmaker prioritizes urgency and transparency over politeness (Kuzhevskaya, 2019), as in the sample texts:

“I will hold your budget for the next election” (CBH9); and

“Yeah! ... Imagine may... may ano ka nang one or two years walang mangyayari” (CBH11)

Procedural Conventions. According to Sarangi and Roberts (1999), the strict procedural structure of congressional hearings shapes bald-on-record statements by institutional norms that demand clarity, efficiency, and precision. Committee officials are expected to pose direct and unambiguous questions to sustain the flow of deliberation and obtain the specific information required for evaluation and decision-making (Al Kayed, 2024), as shown in the sample text:

“So, Madam Chair. Basi sa mga sinabi kanina sa kalagayan ng classroom talaga natin overcrowded... Ano exactly yong gagawin ng DepEd para dito?” (CBH1)

So, Madam Chair, based on what was mentioned earlier regarding the current situation of our classrooms being truly overcrowded, what exactly will the Department of Education do about this?

In this instance, the speaker’s directness fulfills procedural requirements by prompting a clear, solution-based response rather than asserting dominance (Lammers et al., 2021). Such straightforward questioning ensures that the hearing remains structured, transparent, and goal-oriented, particularly when addressing pressing challenges such as the classroom shortage in the Department of Education. This example demonstrates how committee officials employ bald-on-record strategies to comply with procedural expectations and secure focused, informative responses aligned with the formal protocols of the hearing.

Controlling Discussion. During congressional hearings, interruptions are a noticeable part of the communicative process, functioning as a strategic tool for legislators to regain or maintain control over the direction of the discussion (Lakoff, 2028). This typically occurs when agency representatives provide incomplete, inaccurate, or evasive responses that risk derailing the procedural goals of the inquiry (Theunissen, 2019). In the supporting statement, the speaker interrupts to verify the accuracy of the number mentioned, signaling that the initial answer was incorrect or insufficient:

“No! I am asking whether your estimate... would amount to 18,652...” (CBH15)

This direct use of language reflects a deliberate exercise of institutional power, allowing the legislator not only to redirect the dialogue but also to enforce accountability by demanding precision and relevance (Jegede, 2024). Such moments illustrate how power dynamics influence politeness strategies during hearings and how authority is prioritized over mitigation to ensure that the proceedings remain focused and factually accurate (Winans, 2020). The interruption in the sample demonstrates how a budget committee official firmly reorients the exchange to obtain a specific numerical confirmation, exemplifying how bald-on-record directness is used to immediately correct the communicative course and maintain procedural control (Tanen, 2020).

Enforcing Procedural Rules. Institutional protocols govern congressional budget hearings, ensuring that all information presented adheres to reporting standards, documentation requirements, and legal mandates (Tannen, 2020). In this context, bald-on-record directness emerges not merely from hierarchical authority but from the legislator’s obligation to uphold the integrity, accuracy, and transparency of the deliberative process (Krippendorff, 2018). The expectation of transparency in these hearings allows legislators to engage in direct interrogation without the need for mitigation, as full disclosure is a procedural norm (Oandasan, 2021). By demanding exact figures, Harris (2019) asserts that through verifiable records and consistent documentation from government agencies, committee members reinforce the procedural rules that structure the interaction and safeguard the credibility of the proceedings. One-way legislators test procedural compliance is through explicit questioning. In the text: The sample text:

“So, in 2022, you have no issuance or disposition of Friar Lands? In 2022?” (CBH5)

It illustrates how a direct question functions as a tool for procedural enforcement, compelling the agency to clarify its records regarding the issuance of Friar Lands and thereby aligning its response with formal accountability expectations.

Clarifying positions through direct communication. In high-stakes settings such as congressional budget hearings, the subordination process is strictly observed, requiring all members to show respect to the committee chairperson, who serves as the leader and facilitator responsible for maintaining order and guiding the flow of discussion (Thanh, 2022). Within this structured environment and clear power asymmetry, legislators frequently employ bald-on-record strategies to compel agency officials to articulate clear, unambiguous positions on critical national issues (Pikhart, 2017). Direct questioning becomes a mechanism for extracting explicit commitments and preventing respondents from relying on vague, qualified, or evasive statements. This form of directness underscores the legislator’s dominant role in shaping the communicative agenda, using institutional authority to ensure that responses are transparent, concrete, and aligned with principles of public accountability (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The sample below demonstrates this dynamic, as the legislator presses the official to confirm a stance on a sensitive geopolitical concern, illustrating how direct communication is used to clarify positions and eliminate ambiguity:

“Definitely we are at a disadvantage as far as the West Philippine Sea situation is concerned... Will the secretary agree?” (CBH25)

Using directives to maintain order in formal settings. Institutional norms in congressional budget hearings require legislators to issue direct directives when clarification of official documents or program descriptions is necessary to sustain orderly proceedings (Lakoff, 2018). These directives operate as procedural tools that ensure terminologies, budget items, and agency initiatives are clearly defined, preventing misinterpretation and supporting informed, evidence-based deliberation (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). The directness displayed by the speaker reflects adherence to institutional expectations rather than an assertion of personal authority, as legislators are responsible for maintaining a structured, accurate, and comprehensible record of the discussion. In the sample text:

“Ano itong safe implementation of OVP initiatives and confidence building?” (CBH21)

It exemplifies this norm by showing how a legislator issues a straightforward request for an explanation about the implementation of the Office of the Vice President, using a directive to preserve clarity and order within the formal setting.

Negative Politeness

Mitigating Imposition. During budget hearings, legislators frequently employ strategies to mitigate imposition when posing questions or making requests that could potentially pressure agency officials and answer the question (Agnir-Paraaan, 2019). By framing inquiries politely and indirectly, the legislator reduces the forcefulness of the imposition while still achieving the goal of eliciting necessary information (Krippendorff, 2018; Maginnis, 2011; Dalisay, 2024). This strategy reflects the power dynamic in which the legislator maintains authority but exercises tact to avoid face-threatening acts that could disrupt procedural decorum.

. The following examples demonstrate this careful balance:

“...we’ve been advocating in favor of job contracting and against labor-only contracting. May I just know the thoughts of our good secretary about the increasing number of job orders in government offices.” (CBH10)

“So, it can be part of the regular maintenance program of DPWH National. I’d like to know the status of this or are we still in the transitional period?” (CBH6)

Both statements mitigate imposition by softening the request, like using “May I” and “I’d like to” for information, while maintaining legislative control over the discussion.

Using formal address and titles. Fairclough (1989) emphasizes that formal address and titles to comply with institutional norms that govern congressional hearings. Because a budget hearing is a highly formal setting, participants are expected to address one another using appropriate titles and honorifics. Sarangi and Roberts (1999) argue that these norms align with procedural expectations for maintaining decorum, signaling respect for the authority of the chairperson, and demonstrating professional accountability throughout the discussion. Admitting gaps or limitations in knowledge also maintains professionalism while respecting hierarchical boundaries (Clarke & Tarhan, 2024). By carefully using honorifics, structured phrasing, and measured acknowledgment of uncertainties, speakers align with the formal protocols that structure the hearing, ensuring both clarity and respect (Mirzaei, 2018). This is exemplified in the statement:

“I would not... I have no idea on the time frame for the Bulacan airport at this point in time, your honor. My apologies po.” (CBH22)

Here, the speaker employs formal address and apologetic phrasing to acknowledge the chair’s authority and to comply with institutional standards while responding to an inquiry.

Showing Deference. Speakers recognize both procedural and rank-based authority, which serves to reduce potential face-threats (Watts, 2009). In budget hearings, deference is expressed through acknowledgment of hierarchical roles and the careful positioning of statements to show respect for authority. Legislators and officials employ indirect requests, recognition of leadership positions, and courteous phrasing to maintain productive and orderly discourse while honoring power relations (Clarke & Tarhan, 2024). This approach illustrates how power dynamics shape politeness strategies, allowing legislators to exercise oversight and enforce accountability without provoking conflict (Fairclough, 1989). Examples from the corpus include:

“...the head of our tactical working group that is dealing with the Department of Education is Undersecretary Madrigal. If I may be allowed Madam Chair to call on undersecretary Madrigal.” (CBH2); and

“Uh again, Mr. Chair we were able to... we were granted the uh salary increase as certified by the GCG...” (CBH12)

Both statements show the speaker acknowledging authority and adhering to procedural hierarchy, demonstrating deference while facilitating discussion.

Employing Indirect Responses. Congressional hearings often require speakers to provide indirect responses to navigate sensitive or legally constrained topics, balancing transparency with procedural compliance (Nurmukhamedov, 2020). By using mitigated language, hedging, or generalization, officials respect institutional norms and maintain professional decorum while still addressing the question (Mirzaei, 2018). This strategy ensures that responses are aligned with legal, ethical, and procedural expectations, preventing potential conflict or overstepping of authority (Quimbo, 2023). The following text illustrates this approach:

“Alam nyo po ang problem natin issue po ng due process syempre... presumption to innocence.” (CBH26),

You know, sir/ma’am, our problem is really about the issue of due process... and of course, the presumption of innocence.

It demonstrates how indirectness allows the speaker to address sensitive issues while upholding institutional norms and avoiding face-threatening acts (Agnir-Paraan, 2019).

Positive Politeness

Building Rapport. Legislators build rapport by fostering cooperative and collegial interactions with committee members, officials, and other participants within the hearing (Culpeper & Hardaker, 2021). Through establishing rapport, committee officials encourage the use of approval, compliments, and courteous greetings, which help foster goodwill, reduce tension, and create a collaborative atmosphere during the deliberation of the budget (Febriansyah, 2021). Briones and Liwanag (2023) found that expressions of gratitude sustain relational warmth and reduce social distance, allowing legislators to exercise authority without appearing confrontational. By aligning with these strategies, they promote constructive dialogue and mutual respect. For example, expressions of gratitude and formal recognition such as:

“Daghang salamat ... thank you... That would be all...” (CBH7)

Thank you very much... thank you... That would be all.

“Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. To our committee chairman and our Senior Vice-Chairperson, and good morning to our distinguished Secretary of National Defense...” (CBH25)

Using approval and compliments. Institutional norms encourage legislators to use approval, compliments, and formal recognition as part of polite communication (Briones & Liwanag, 2023). These norms guide how legislators phrase their statements, allowing them to acknowledge others’ contributions, accomplishments, or authority while reducing tension and fostering goodwill. By following these norms, legislators can exercise power positively, maintaining professional authority without threatening the participants’ face (Fairclough, 1989). For instance, phrases like:

“First of all, congratulations to our new DepEd secretary, the honorable Sonny Angara.” (CBH27); and

“You may proceed with your point, Representative.” (CBH26)

exemplify how approval and compliments are strategically used to support rapport-building, validate contributions, and encourage active engagement in hearings (Hasanah, 2025).

Acknowledging Expertise. Recognizing the expertise of agency officials or fellow lawmakers functions as a crucial strategy in congressional hearings (Culpeper & Hardaker, 2021). This acknowledgment allows legislators to highlight the knowledge, role, and authority of others while encouraging a cooperative exchange of information (Götzner, 2021). By affirming the contributions of key actors, legislators help sustain respectful dialogue, promote clarity, and support productive engagement throughout the discussion (Pikhart, 2017). This strategy balances power by showing respect for participants’ knowledge and encouraging transparent responses, which is essential for oversight and informed decision-making (Zhang et al., 2024). Statement such as:

“Well I believe that—I believe that suspicion that just for your information. Uhm uh suportado niyo na ba yong DWR...?” (CBH17)

Well, I believe that—I believe that suspicion, just for your information. Uh, do you already support the DWR?

illustrate how legislators signal recognition of the participant’s expertise while guiding the discussion toward substantive issues (Wong, 2020).

Inclusive Language. Institutional norms promote the use of inclusive language to ensure that communication is respectful, collaborative, and non-threatening. In hearings, this includes polite markers and framing questions or statements to validate the contributions of respondents (Culpeper & Hardaker, 2021). For example,

“Yes, Mr. Chair. Kasi dumadaan po ito sa prosesong procurement...” (CBH19)

Yes, Mr. Chair. Because this goes through the procurement process...

shows how inclusive language acknowledges the procedural and organizational context while maintaining politeness (Wijayanti, 2022). By following these norms, legislators uphold institutional expectations and create a setting that encourages open dialogue, effectively supporting the power dynamic of acknowledging expertise (De Felice, 2018).

Aligning with Goals. Legislators often use positive politeness to align participants toward shared objectives, such as transparency, planning, and accountability, while maintaining collegiality in hearings (Culpeper & Hardaker, 2021). By framing statements in ways that emphasize shared responsibility and common purpose, they ensure that all participants understand the legislative priorities and work toward the same outcomes (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The statements below demonstrate how legislators guide discussions while promoting a sense of collective mission.

“Mr. Chair will give you extra time, your honor. I will give you extra time your honor, don’t worry.” (CBH13)

“...kaya tinatanong natin... para malaman natin kung meron talagang plano.” (CBH23); and

...that’s why we are asking... so we will know if there is truly a plan.

“I’ve said this before, and I will say this again, this is about transparency and accountability.” (CBH31)

Softening Hierarchy. Reducing hierarchical distance is encouraged in institutional settings, where polite phrasing and the use of inclusive pronouns help legislators guide discussions without appearing overly authoritative (Kuzhevskaya, 2019). Mendoza and Cruz (2021) similarly note that these strategies create space for open participation while preserving respect for the formal structure of hearings. Sample text from the corpora demonstrates how such polite and indirect language fosters alignment with shared goals, promotes cooperation, and distributes responsibility more evenly in reflecting the nuanced interplay between institutional norms and power dynamics.

“But please, siguro po mapapaintindi natin sa kanila ... kahit konting pang-unawa, dagdagan na lang natin.” (CBH3)

But please, maybe we can help them understand... let’s just add a little understanding.

Off-Record

Avoiding Direct Imposition. The limited use of off-record strategies during budget deliberations also reflects their role in shaping power dynamics by allowing legislators to assert oversight and control without overt confrontation (Agnir-Paraaan, 2019). Through indirect questioning or subtle critique, legislators maintain their authority while avoiding direct threats to the face of agency representatives (Thanh, 2022). This approach uses indirect critique that enables them to uphold accountability and sustain professional decorum throughout the discussion. For example:

“How come you know how to... you need 2,000 you don’t... you don’t even know which regions into what and how many” (CBH8)

illustrates how a legislator indirectly challenges the respondent’s knowledge and preparation without issuing a direct command.

Indirect Communication. The institutional norms in hearings encourage legislators to employ indirect communication, allowing respondents to infer concerns or criticisms instead of being directly instructed (Drew & Heritage, 2006). This reduces tension in formal interactions, reflecting the expected professional conduct within congressional settings. The sample text below demonstrates how indirect phrasing communicates concern about funding delays while adhering to institutional expectations of polite (Spencer-Oatey, 2008), formal discourse.

“Anyway, marami po akong tanong Mr. Chair dahil... I just want to wind up yung free Wi-Fi gusto ko lang kasing i-point out kaya tayo may utang dahil hindi nabibigay yung pondo ng free Wi-Fi” (CBH28)

Anyway, I have many questions, Mr. Chair, because... I just want to wrap up the issue on free Wi-Fi. I just want to point out that the reason we are in debt is that the funds for free Wi-Fi are not being released.

This statement subtly highlights a critical problem, which is the delayed release of funds, without directly accusing any specific agency or individual. By embedding the critique within an explanatory comment, the legislator maintains politeness while still communicating a clear institutional concern (Suparno, 2023).

Shifting Responsibility. The use of support or endorsement is one of the strategies observed during congressional budget hearings, especially when legislators advocate for funding district and provincial projects (Isfara, 2022). Through this approach, the power dynamic allows them to exercise oversight while minimizing personal confrontation and enabling smoother decision-making. By attributing a stance or decision to a colleague, the legislator signals alignment or deferral rather than issuing a direct personal directive (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

“...except my manifestation was in support with... honorable Edcel Lagman that we can dispense with the budget” (CBH14)

This statement subtly transfers responsibility to another legislator, implying collective agreement rather than individual assertion. In doing so, the speaker maintains institutional harmony while still influencing the direction of the discussion.

Listener Inference. Congressional norms favor listener inference, where statements are structured so that respondents must interpret the point or implication themselves (Isfara, 2022). As shown in the sample text below, this method preserves procedural respect and avoids overtly assigning blame while still communicating expectations. Thus, it allows the audience to infer the critique based on public experience, demonstrating institutional reliance on subtle communication cues.

“Pero Mr. Chair, the actual experiences of the Filipino people say otherwise” (CBH31)

Anyway, But Mr. Chair, the actual experiences of the Filipino people say otherwise...

Tactful Management of Power. Committee representatives tactfully manage power in hearings by structuring statements that assert

authority while still promoting collaborative interaction (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This strategy enables them to guide discussions and shape outcomes without overtly dominating the conversation. For example:

“Even sa region namin. Kung makakakuha sayo ako ng executive na meeting ipakausap ko sainyo ang witness ko. Hindo tiga gobyerno mga tao taga doon saamin” (CBH24)

Even in our region. If I can secure an executive meeting with you, I will let you talk to my witness. They are not from the government; they are people from our area.

In these excerpts, the speaker tactfully signals pressure by referencing external stakeholders and potential consequences, subtly reminding the agency of its responsibilities without issuing a direct threat (Mirzaei, 2018). This demonstrates how a legislator can assert influence and redirect attention while preserving a polite and non-confrontational tone, which is an essential balance in formal institutional settings (Watts, 2009).

Avoiding Explicit Accountability. The final norm observed in hearings encourages committee representatives to avoid explicitly assigning personal accountability, thereby preserving procedural fairness (Fairclough, 1989). By framing statements as collective or procedural decisions, representatives can influence outcomes without appearing coercive (Alcosero & Gomez, 2020). The sample statement below illustrates how the legislator deflects responsibility to the broader institutional context, reflecting the norm of avoiding direct accountability in formal deliberations.

“...we have to be ready to export also, Mr. Chair... it will be a business decision.” (CBH20)

In this example, the speaker shifts responsibility away from individual actors by attributing the decision to market forces and institutional processes (Harris, 2019). This phrasing allows the legislator to address the issue without directly assigning blame or obligation. It also reinforces the idea that outcomes arise from systemic considerations, thereby minimizing personal exposure to accountability.

Conclusions

Conducting this study on the use of politeness strategies in congressional budget hearings was both intellectually insightful and professionally revealing. Throughout the analysis, the researcher gained a deeper understanding of how communication within this institutional setting extends beyond the exchange of facts and functions as a negotiation of power, respect, and accountability. The hearings provided a dynamic space where authority and deference constantly interacted, and where every word, tone, and gesture carried weight in shaping both perception and outcome.

What stood out most was how different politeness strategies—bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record—served specific communicative purposes depending on institutional hierarchy and context. Lawmakers often employed bald-on-record strategies to assert authority and demand accountability, particularly when addressing pressing fiscal concerns. In contrast, positive politeness emerged as a tool for collaboration, allowing officials to acknowledge effort and foster solidarity even amid disagreement. Negative politeness, meanwhile, reflected a conscious effort to uphold decorum and respect institutional boundaries, balancing assertiveness with tact. Finally, off-record strategies demonstrated how ambiguity could function as both a protective and persuasive mechanism, allowing speakers to raise sensitive issues while maintaining institutional harmony.

Through this study, it became clear that politeness in congressional hearings is not merely a matter of courtesy; it is a form of strategic communication that sustains the integrity of democratic processes. It reflects how participants navigate competing demands between transparency and diplomacy, between critique and respect. Observing these interactions deepened the researcher’s appreciation of how linguistic choices can reinforce institutional norms, maintain professional relationships, and ultimately contribute to effective governance.

However, this exploration also highlighted the fragility of communication in power-laden environments. Misjudged tone or excessive directness can be interpreted as disrespect, while overuse of indirectness may obscure accountability. Thus, mastering the balance between clarity and courtesy remains crucial in maintaining both credibility and institutional harmony.

Reflecting on the entire process, the researcher realized that politeness strategies in congressional hearings mirror the broader political culture of negotiation and restraint. They are not merely linguistic choices but deliberate acts of leadership and diplomacy. Future research may continue to uncover how these communicative patterns evolve, especially in the speeches of presidents and other high-ranking officials, and how they shape public trust, policy deliberation, and the nation’s democratic discourse.

Confirmation of Theories. This study confirms the relevance of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) Universal Politeness Theory, which posits that politeness is essential for maintaining social harmony, though its application varies across contexts. In the congressional budget hearings in the Philippines, bald-on-record strategies were used to assert authority and demand compliance, demonstrating how direct communication can coexist with institutional norms to achieve accountability. Negative politeness strategies, including hedging and mitigation, were employed to respect hierarchical boundaries while minimizing face-threatening acts, whereas positive politeness strategies reinforced solidarity, built rapport, and promoted collaboration within formal structures. Off-record strategies, such as

indirect hints and ambiguity, allowed participants to navigate sensitive issues subtly, preserving professional relationships and institutional harmony. These findings illustrate that politeness is both universal and strategically adapted to complex hierarchical and political contexts.

Additionally, the study affirms Fairclough's (2001) Power Theory, showing that politeness strategies are not merely social niceties but tools for negotiating authority and shaping discourse. Participants in the hearings used these strategies to assert credibility, influence decision-making, and maintain institutional legitimacy. By analyzing discourse through the lens of text, discourse practice, and social practice, the study demonstrates that politeness operates as a mechanism for balancing power, preserving decorum, and achieving strategic objectives in high-stakes legislative settings.

By integrating Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory with Fairclough's Power Theory, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of how language functions in formal political contexts. Each strategy—whether direct, mitigated, collaborative, or indirect—reflects a deliberate choice shaped by hierarchical structures, institutional norms, and relational dynamics. The findings confirm that politeness is both relational and strategic, highlighting its critical role in fostering social harmony while navigating authority and power in educational and political environments.

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