

The Use of Positive, Negative, and Bald-on-Record Politeness Strategies in Senior High School Students' News Texts

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: politeness strategies; news texts; pragmatic awareness; writing instruction.	Writing news texts requires students to present factual information objectively while maintaining language politeness. However, studies examining Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies in senior high school students' news texts remain limited, despite the importance of pragmatic competence in ethical news writing. This study therefore aims to identify the politeness strategies employed by students and examine the factors influencing their use. This study employed a qualitative descriptive design. Data were collected through documentation of 30 news texts written by Grade XI-2 students and semi-structured interviews with an Indonesian language teacher. The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing, while source triangulation was applied to ensure the credibility of the findings. The findings indicate that students employed three politeness strategies: Bald-on-Record, Negative Politeness, and Positive Politeness. Bald-on-Record was the most frequently used strategy, reflecting students' tendency to present information directly and objectively. Negative politeness was realized through mitigating expressions (e.g., still, not yet, and less) to soften criticism, while positive politeness appeared through attribution expressions (e.g., according to and explained) to show respect for information sources. The use of these strategies was influenced by internal factors, including vocabulary mastery and pragmatic awareness, as well as external factors such as teachers' guidance and social media. These findings highlight the importance of integrating pragmatic competence into news writing instruction to help students produce ethical, objective, and socially appropriate news texts.
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INTRODUCTION

The development of twenty-first-century education requires students to possess literacy skills that extend beyond the ability to read and write, encompassing the ability to use language appropriately, ethically, and responsibly in various communication contexts.¹ Quality literacy demands that individuals understand the social situations underlying language use so that messages can be conveyed effectively without causing misunderstanding.² In pragmatics, this ability is reflected in the application of language politeness, which serves as one of the indicators of successful communication.³ Language politeness enables individuals to maintain social relationships, respect cultural norms, and consider the feelings of others during interaction. Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson explain that politeness is a strategy used to preserve the face of both speakers and interlocutors.⁴ Whereas Geoffrey Leech views politeness as a principle that guides individuals to maximize respect for others and minimize the potential for social harm in communication.⁵

In news writing, students are expected to present factual information objectively while maintaining language politeness. This requires not only grammatical accuracy but also the ability to employ appropriate politeness strategies according to the communicative context. Brown and Levinson argue that politeness strategies help writers maintain respect for others while conveying information effectively.⁶ However, many students still experience difficulties in applying these strategies consistently when writing news texts, particularly when reporting criticism or presenting information involving other people.

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According to Brown and Levinson, politeness strategies enable speakers and writers to maintain social relationships while communicating effectively.⁸ In news writing, these strategies help writers present information objectively without threatening the face of

¹ Vismaia Sabariah Damaianti et al., "Student Needs in Digital Persuasive Writing: Integration of Literacy, Rhetoric, and Reflective Awareness" 25, no. 1 (2026): 85–94, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21831/ltr.v25i1.90276>.

² R. Kunjana Rahardi and Kristina Marta Noviance, "Politeness Strategies in Digital Conversation: An Integrative Pragmatic Analysis of Podcast Communication," *Jurnal Gramatika* 11, no. 1 (2025): 48–73, <https://doi.org/10.22202/jg.2025.v11i1.9350>.

³ Idda Astia, "Politeness Strategy in Interlanguage Pragmatics of Complaints by International Students," *IJELTAL (Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics)* 4, no. 2 (2020): 349, <https://doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v4i2.528>.

⁴ Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 68.

⁵ Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 68.

⁶ Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 70.

⁷ Nurul Hidayanti Mahas, "Politeness in Indonesian as a Reflection of Students' Religious Character: A Phenomenological Study in Higher Education," *ETDC: Indonesian Journal of Research and Educational Review* 4, no. 4 (2025): 1352–64, <https://doi.org/10.51574/ijrer.v4i4.3805>.

⁸ Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 75.

individuals or groups mentioned in the report. Therefore, examining the use of positive politeness, negative politeness, and Bald-on-Record strategies in students' news texts is important for understanding how students realize pragmatic competence in journalistic writing.

One of the topics taught in Indonesian language learning at the senior high school level is news text writing. Through this activity, students are trained to present factual information objectively, accurately, and responsibly.⁹ As a form of public communication, news texts require not only the completeness of information but also careful attention to ethical language use. Word choice, sentence construction, and the presentation of information must be handled carefully to avoid creating discriminatory, biased, or harmful impressions toward particular individuals or groups. Therefore, the application of language politeness constitutes an integral part of news writing because it is closely related to the principles of objectivity and social responsibility.

Studies on language politeness have been widely conducted in various communication contexts, including classroom interactions, everyday conversations, digital communication, and academic correspondence. Research findings consistently indicate that politeness strategies play an important role in maintaining harmonious social relationships and supporting effective communication. However, studies examining Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies in senior high school students' news texts remain limited, particularly in the Indonesian educational context.

News writing requires students to present factual information objectively while maintaining respect for the people or institutions involved.¹⁰ Therefore, the use of appropriate politeness strategies is essential to avoid face-threatening or biased expressions in news reports. Examining students' use of positive, negative, and Bald-on-Record politeness strategies can provide a better understanding of how pragmatic competence is realized in educational writing practices.

Although students are expected to produce objective and ethical news texts, many still experience difficulties in applying appropriate politeness strategies when presenting factual information. Despite the importance of this issue, previous studies have mainly examined politeness strategies in spoken interaction or digital communication, while their application in senior high school students' news texts has received limited attention. Therefore, this study adopts Brown and Levinson's politeness theory to analyze the use of Positive, Negative, and Bald-on-Record politeness strategies in students' news texts. Unlike previous studies, this research focuses on written journalistic texts produced by senior high school students in the Indonesian educational context. The study aims to provide a deeper understanding of students' use of politeness strategies and is expected to enrich pragmatic studies on written discourse while contributing to the development of news-writing instruction in Indonesian language education.

⁹ Ade Jauhari, "Realisasi Kesantunan Berbahasa Dalam Proses Belajar Mengajar Bahasa Indonesia Kelas XI SMK," *Diksi* 25, no. 1 (2018): 112–21, <https://doi.org/10.21831/diksi.v25i1.18851>.

¹⁰ Sudar et al., "Language Politeness in EFL Student-Lecturer Interactions through Technology-Assisted Communication," *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 15, no. 1 (2025): 171–82, <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v15i1.69949>.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the use of Brown and Levinson's Positive, Negative, and Bald-on-Record politeness strategies in senior high school students' news texts. The research was conducted at SMAN 1 Jenangan. The primary data consisted of 30 news texts written by Grade XI-2 students, while an Indonesian language teacher served as a supporting informant.

Data were collected through documentation and semi-structured interviews. Documentation was used to collect and compile the students' news texts, which were subsequently analyzed based on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory to identify the realization of Positive, Negative, and Bald-on-Record politeness strategies. Semi-structured interviews with the Indonesian language teacher were conducted to obtain supporting information for interpreting the students' use of these politeness strategies in news writing.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of three stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During the data condensation stage, the researcher identified, coded, and classified utterances representing Positive, Negative, and Bald-on-Record politeness strategies.¹¹ The categorized data were then presented in descriptive narratives and tables to facilitate interpretation. Finally, the researcher interpreted the identified patterns and drew conclusions regarding the realization of these politeness strategies in the students' news texts. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation was employed by comparing the results of the document analysis with the information obtained from interviews with the Indonesian language teacher.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data presented in Table 1 were obtained from the document analysis of 30 students' news texts. Following Brown and Levinson's politeness framework, each utterance was identified, coded, and classified into Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness, or Bald-on-Record strategies. Table 1 summarizes the frequency of each politeness strategy identified in the data.

Table 1. Distribution of Politeness Strategies in Students' News Texts.

Politeness Strategy	Number of Data	Examples of Linguistic Markers
Positive Politeness	7	demanding, conveying, explaining, together, participating
Negative Politeness	8	still, not yet, less, not yet fully, requires collective attention
Bald on Record	15	implemented, started, attended, took place

As shown in Table 1, the document analysis of 30 students' news texts revealed that Bald-on-Record was the most frequently employed politeness strategy, occurring in 15 instances. Negative Politeness was identified in 8 instances, whereas Positive Politeness

¹¹ Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johny Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis A Methods Sourcesbook 3* (Singapore: SAGE Publication, 2014).

appeared in 7 instances. The predominance of Bald-on-Record suggests that students tended to prioritize direct and objective information delivery, which is consistent with the communicative purpose of news writing. At the same time, the presence of Positive and Negative Politeness strategies indicates that students also demonstrated awareness of politeness when presenting information about individuals or institutions.

1. **Positive Politeness Strategy**

The document analysis identified seven instances of Positive Politeness in the 30 students' news texts. These instances indicate that the students attempted to maintain positive relationships with information sources and other individuals involved in the reported events. Following the coding and classification process based on Brown and Levinson's politeness framework, two recurring realization patterns of Positive Politeness were identified.¹²

The coding results revealed that the first pattern involved attribution expressions used to acknowledge the credibility of information sources, whereas the second emphasized solidarity and collective responsibility among members of the school community. The first pattern is illustrated by expressions such as conveyed, stated, explained, and according to, while the second is reflected in expressions promoting cooperation and shared responsibility. These patterns demonstrate that students not only attempted to report information objectively but also considered interpersonal relationships and social values in their news writing. One example of the first realization pattern is presented in data TB-01/K1.

“A teacher conveyed that the duty roster had been clearly assigned to all students.”

The use of the reporting verb conveyed indicates that the writer attributes the information to an identifiable source rather than presenting it as a personal statement. By explicitly acknowledging the teacher as the source of the information, the writer demonstrates respect for the source's authority and role in the reported event. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, this reflects Positive Politeness because the writer recognizes and values the source's positive face through appropriate acknowledgment.¹³ In the context of news writing, such attribution also strengthens the credibility of the reported information while maintaining respectful language toward the source.

Similar attribution expressions were identified in Data TB-22/K1 and TB-29/K1 through the phrases according to one teacher and one teacher explained. These reporting expressions indicate that students consistently attributed information to identifiable sources rather than presenting it as personal statements. From Brown and Levinson's perspective, acknowledging the role of the information source reflects Positive Politeness because it recognizes the source's contribution and maintains their positive face.¹⁴ In the context of news writing, attribution expressions also strengthen

¹² Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 75.

¹³ Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 72.

¹⁴ Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 77.

the credibility and objectivity of the reported information while promoting respectful communication between the writer and the reported participants.

Besides being realized through respect for sources, positive politeness strategies were also evident in language that emphasized togetherness. This can be seen in Data TB-04/K1:

“A teacher conveyed that Clean Friday should become a collective activity carried out with awareness.”

The phrase collective activity emphasizes shared participation rather than assigning responsibility to a particular individual. By encouraging all members of the school community to contribute, the writer promotes solidarity and mutual cooperation. According to Brown and Levinson, this reflects Positive Politeness because it appeals to common ground and shared interests among participants.¹⁵ Within the context of news writing, such expressions enable factual information to be presented while simultaneously reinforcing positive social values.

The same realization pattern appears in Data TB-21/K1, TB-22/K1, and TB-28/K1 through the expressions maintained collectively by students, so that all students can participate, and encouraging students to work together. These expressions consistently portray environmental care as a shared responsibility rather than an obligation imposed on particular individuals. Such linguistic choices reflect Positive Politeness by strengthening solidarity and emphasizing cooperation among members of the school community.

Taken together, these data demonstrate that Positive Politeness in students' news texts is primarily realized through attribution to credible sources and the use of expressions emphasizing solidarity. These linguistic choices enable students to present information objectively while simultaneously promoting respectful social relationships within the school environment. Consequently, Positive Politeness serves not only an interpersonal function but also supports the ethical presentation of information in educational news writing.

Another example of positive politeness can be observed in Data TB-23/K1:

“A teacher stated that the greening program could instill a sense of responsibility among students.”

Data TB-23/K1 further illustrates Positive Politeness through the expression could instill a sense of responsibility among students. Rather than merely describing the greening program as an event, the writer highlights its positive contribution to students and the school community. Such wording presents the reported activity in a constructive manner while recognizing the shared benefits experienced by participants. From Brown and Levinson's perspective, emphasizing positive outcomes and shared values contributes to maintaining the positive face of the individuals involved.

Overall, the seven identified instances demonstrate that Positive Politeness in students' news texts is predominantly realized through attribution expressions and language emphasizing solidarity. These findings are consistent with Novitasari's study,

¹⁵ Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 80.

which argues that Positive Politeness functions to strengthen social relationships through appreciation, cooperation, and mutual respect. However, unlike previous studies focusing primarily on spoken interaction, the present study demonstrates that Positive Politeness is also systematically realized in students' written news texts through reporting expressions and collective-value constructions. This finding extends the application of Brown and Levinson's theory to educational journalistic writing produced by senior high school students.

The interview data support these findings by indicating that the use of Positive Politeness was reinforced through classroom instruction. The Indonesian language teacher explained that students were consistently encouraged to identify reliable information sources and to acknowledge those sources appropriately when writing news texts. Students were also guided to employ language that promotes cooperation and mutual respect rather than expressions that could potentially create conflict. This instructional practice appears to contribute to the realization of Positive Politeness identified in the students' news texts, particularly through attribution expressions and language emphasizing solidarity.

The present findings suggest that integrating politeness strategies into news-writing instruction may help students develop not only writing skills but also pragmatic competence. By encouraging students to attribute information appropriately, respect information sources, and emphasize shared social values, teachers can support the production of news texts that are objective, ethically responsible, and socially appropriate.

2. Negative Politeness Strategy

The document analysis identified eight instances of Negative Politeness in the 30 students' news texts, making it the most frequently occurring politeness strategy in the data. Following the coding and classification process based on Brown and Levinson's politeness framework, these instances revealed a recurring realization pattern characterized by the use of mitigating expressions when presenting criticism, evaluation, or problems occurring within the school environment.¹⁶ This pattern indicates that students tended to convey unfavorable information cautiously while minimizing potential threats to the individuals or groups involved.

The identified mitigation strategies were realized through expressions such as *still*, *not yet*, *less*, *not yet fully*, *not yet running smoothly*, *not yet implemented* in an orderly manner, and *requires collective attention*. These linguistic choices consistently reduced the force of criticism by presenting shortcomings as conditions that could still be improved rather than as complete failures. From Brown and Levinson's perspective, such mitigation reflects Negative Politeness because it respects the negative face of the reported participants by avoiding direct blame while maintaining objective reporting.¹⁷

One example of a negative politeness strategy can be found in Data TB-01/K1
“However, the implementation of the duty roster is still not functioning as expected.”

¹⁶ Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 77.

¹⁷ Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 80.

The mitigating expression still not functioning as expected softens the criticism directed toward the implementation of the duty roster. Rather than describing the program as a failure, the writer presents the condition as one that has not yet reached its expected standard. According to Brown and Levinson, this realization reflects Negative Politeness because the criticism is expressed indirectly, thereby reducing potential threats to the positive image of those responsible for the activity. In the context of news writing, this linguistic choice enables factual reporting while maintaining neutrality and respectful language.

A similar strategy was identified in Data TB-02/K1:

“In reality, waste sorting is still receiving insufficient attention.”

A similar realization pattern appears in Data TB-02/K1 through the expression still receiving insufficient attention. Instead of directly accusing members of the school community of neglecting waste sorting, the writer presents the issue as an ongoing condition requiring improvement. This mitigation strategy allows criticism to be communicated without creating an overly confrontational tone, thereby supporting the objective presentation of information.

The same tendency can be observed in Data TB-06/K1:

“However, water-saving habits have not yet been observed consistently among students.”

Data TB-06/K1 also illustrates Negative Politeness through the phrase have not yet been observed consistently. The use of not yet avoids overgeneralization by leaving room for the possibility that some students have already adopted water-saving practices. Such mitigation reflects careful evaluation and demonstrates the writer's effort to avoid absolute judgments, which is consistent with Brown and Levinson's concept of minimizing face-threatening acts.

A more complex example of negative politeness was found in Data TB-10/K1:

“Unfortunately, the cleanliness competition has not yet fully fostered students' awareness.”

In Data TB-10/K1, the expression not yet fully fostered students' awareness indicates that the writer recognizes partial success while acknowledging that improvement is still needed. Rather than portraying the cleanliness competition as unsuccessful, the writer presents the program as a continuing effort. This form of mitigation illustrates Negative Politeness because criticism is balanced with recognition of existing achievements.

Data TB-17/K1 reflects a similar tendency:

“However, its implementation has not yet run smoothly.”

Similarly, Data TB-17/K1 employs the phrase has not yet run smoothly, which avoids categorical judgments such as failed or unsuccessful. This expression suggests that the program still has opportunities for improvement and therefore maintains a more objective and less confrontational tone.

Furthermore, Data TB-20/K1 contains the following example of negative politeness:

“Waste sorting at SMAN 1 Jenangan has not yet been carried out in an orderly manner, although separate bins for organic and inorganic waste have been provided.”

A similar form of mitigation is evident in Data TB-25/K1:

“Although available, the medicinal plants have not yet been utilized optimally.”

The phrase have not yet been utilized optimally in Data TB-25/K1 likewise reflects mitigation by acknowledging that the medicinal plants already exist while indicating that their potential has not yet been fully realized. This balanced presentation allows criticism to be expressed constructively rather than negatively.

Data TB-29/K1 provides one of the clearest examples of negative politeness:

“At SMAN 1 Jenangan, toilet cleanliness still requires collective attention.”

One of the clearest realizations of Negative Politeness appears in Data TB-29/K1 through the phrase requires collective attention. Rather than identifying a specific individual or group as responsible for the poor condition of the toilets, the writer frames the issue as a shared concern requiring collective action. From Brown and Levinson's perspective, this strategy minimizes face-threatening acts by avoiding direct accusation while encouraging collaborative problem-solving.

Taken together, the eight identified instances demonstrate that Negative Politeness in students' news texts is predominantly realized through linguistic mitigation. Expressions such as still, not yet, and requires collective attention enable students to communicate criticism while maintaining objectivity and respecting the individuals involved. These findings support Brown and Levinson's view that Negative Politeness functions to minimize face-threatening acts through indirect and cautious language. They are also consistent with the studies of Widya and Erika¹⁸ which emphasize the role of mitigation in reducing interpersonal conflict. However, unlike previous studies that primarily examined spoken interaction, the present study demonstrates that similar mitigation strategies are systematically realized in written news texts produced by senior high school students.

The interview findings also provide additional support for the document analysis. According to the Indonesian language teacher, students were encouraged to avoid harsh or judgmental expressions when reporting problems or evaluating school activities. During writing instruction, students received feedback on selecting objective

¹⁸ Widya Widya and Erika Agustiana, “Mitigating Devices to Save Face in Sellers and Buyers Communication in Bukittinggi Traditional Market,” *Journal of Pragmatics Research* 5, no. 2 (2023): 280–303, <https://doi.org/10.18326/jopr.v5i2.280-303>.

and respectful diction, particularly when describing shortcomings or criticism. This pedagogical guidance may explain why mitigating expressions such as *still*, *not yet*, and *requires collective attention* appeared consistently in the students' news texts. This finding extends the application of Brown and Levinson's theory to educational journalistic writing.

3. Bald-on-Record Strategy

The document analysis identified 15 instances of Bald-on-Record strategies in the 30 students' news texts, making this the most frequently occurring politeness strategy in the dataset. Following the coding and classification process based on Brown and Levinson's politeness framework, these instances revealed a consistent realization pattern characterized by the direct presentation of factual information without the use of mitigating expressions or evaluative language.¹⁹ This pattern indicates that students tended to prioritize clarity and objectivity when reporting events.

The identified Bald-on-Record strategies were primarily realized through declarative sentences describing events, participants, places, and time sequences in a direct and factual manner. Unlike Positive and Negative Politeness strategies, these utterances did not attempt to express solidarity or soften criticism. Instead, the students presented information exactly as it was observed, reflecting the communicative characteristics of news writing.

One example of a Bald-on-Record strategy can be seen in the following excerpt:

“The flag ceremony was held on Monday at the school field and was attended by all students from Grades X to XII.”

The sentence presents factual information regarding the event, time, and participants without adding personal evaluation or linguistic mitigation. The writer simply reports the observed event in a straightforward manner. According to Brown and Levinson, such direct communication represents Bald-on-Record because the primary communicative goal is the efficient delivery of information rather than the protection of interpersonal face.²⁰ In the context of news writing, this realization supports the principles of factual accuracy, clarity, and objectivity that characterize journalistic discourse.

A similar strategy is evident in the following data:

“The community service activity began at 07:00 a.m. and continued until completion.”

Taken together, the fifteen identified instances demonstrate that Bald-on-Record is the dominant politeness strategy employed in students' news texts. The predominance of this strategy indicates that students consistently prioritize the direct presentation of factual information, which corresponds to the communicative purpose of news writing. The interview data further indicate that classroom instruction emphasized the importance of presenting factual information accurately and

¹⁹ Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 82.

²⁰ Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 90.

distinguishing facts from personal opinions in news writing. The Indonesian language teacher explained that students were repeatedly encouraged to prioritize clarity, completeness, and objectivity when reporting events. This instructional emphasis may contribute to the predominance of Bald-on-Record strategies identified in the document analysis, as students tended to present information directly without unnecessary evaluation or mitigation.

These findings support Brown and Levinson's view that Bald-on-Record is appropriate when communicative efficiency is prioritized over face management.²¹ They also align with studies on journalistic language, which emphasize that factual reporting commonly employs direct and concise expressions. However, unlike previous studies focusing on professional journalistic discourse, the present study demonstrates that similar communication patterns are also realized in news texts written by senior high school students. This finding extends the application of Brown and Levinson's theory to educational writing contexts.²²

The present findings suggest that news-writing instruction should continue to emphasize the importance of presenting factual information through clear and objective language. The frequent use of Bald-on-Record strategies indicates that students are able to construct straightforward news reports that minimize unnecessary evaluation. At the same time, writing instruction should help students distinguish situations in which direct factual reporting is appropriate from those requiring Positive or Negative Politeness strategies when communicating evaluation or criticism. Integrating pragmatic competence into news-writing instruction may therefore support students in producing texts that are informative, objective, and socially appropriate.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that senior high school students employed three politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson, namely Bald-on-Record, Negative Politeness, and Positive Politeness, in writing news texts. Bald-on-Record emerged as the predominant strategy because students tended to prioritize factual, direct, and objective reporting. Meanwhile, Positive Politeness was mainly realized through attribution expressions and language emphasizing solidarity, whereas Negative Politeness was reflected in mitigating expressions used to communicate criticism and evaluation respectfully. These findings indicate that students adjusted their language choices according to different communicative purposes in news writing.

The interview findings further suggest that the realization of these politeness strategies was supported by classroom instruction. Guidance provided by the Indonesian language teacher encouraged students to acknowledge information sources appropriately, distinguish facts from opinions, and employ objective language when reporting criticism. These instructional practices appear to strengthen students' pragmatic competence and their ability

²¹ Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 92.

²² Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 94.

to produce ethical and socially appropriate news texts.

These findings imply that news-writing instruction should integrate pragmatic competence alongside text structure and linguistic accuracy. By introducing students to different politeness strategies and their communicative functions, teachers can help students produce news texts that are not only informative and objective but also ethically responsible and socially appropriate.

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