LINGUISTIC POLITENESS IN INDONESIAN LANGUAGE LEARNING INTERACTIONS: A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS BASED ON LEECH'S PRINCIPLES

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Abstract || This study aims to describe the forms of linguistic politeness exhibited by tenth-grade students during Indonesian language learning interactions at SMA Negeri 1 Tomini. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach and grounded in Geoffrey Leech's theory of politeness maxims, the research identified six types of maxims reflected in student utterances: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. Data were collected through observation, documentation, interviews, and a listening-note technique. The findings reveal that politeness is an integral aspect of student communication in the classroom and plays a significant role in fostering a harmonious, cooperative, and respectful learning environment. Furthermore, the use of polite language is influenced by students' social surroundings and family backgrounds. This study underscores the importance of reinforcing politeness values in educational settings and contributes to the development of language learning grounded in pragmatic principles.

Keywords || Linguistic politeness, Leech's maxims, Classroom interaction, Pragmatics

Abstrak || Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan bentuk kesantunan berbahasa siswa kelas X dalam interaksi pembelajaran bahasa Indonesia di SMA Negeri 1 Tomini. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dan teori maksim kesantunan Leech, ditemukan enam bentuk maksim yang muncul dalam tuturan siswa: kebijaksanaan, kedermawanan, penghargaan, kerendahan hati, kesepakatan, dan kesimpatian. Data diperoleh melalui observasi, dokumentasi, wawancara, dan teknik simak-catat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kesantunan telah menjadi bagian dari komunikasi siswa di kelas dan berperan penting dalam membentuk suasana pembelajaran yang harmonis, kooperatif, dan penuh penghargaan. Kesantunan ini dipengaruhi oleh lingkungan sosial dan latar belakang keluarga. Penelitian ini memperkuat pentingnya penguatan nilai-nilai kesantunan dalam pendidikan dan memberikan kontribusi pada pengembangan pembelajaran bahasa berbasis nilai pragmatik.

Katakunci || Kesantunan berbahasa, Prinsip Leech, Interaksi pembelajaran, Pragmatik

Introduction

Language plays a crucial role for all living beings, serving as a tool for exchanging information and communicating with others. It functions as a means through which individuals express thoughts, share information, and convey ideas and opinions. Language is a system of arbitrary signs, in the form of sounds, that society uses for communication and the exchange of information. Language is not only significant in societal contexts but also serves as a vital tool in the realm of education (Kridalaksana, 2007).

Pragmatics is the study of the relationship between language and context, focusing on how individuals use language to understand meaning in particular situations. Pragmatics explains how we interpret implied meanings based on the situational and contextual aspects of communication (Levinson, 1983).

Politeness in language refers to the behavior or actions people take when communicating, prioritizing norms and ethics. Additionally, linguistic politeness emphasizes respect for others and aims to prevent the communication from causing offense, whether in verbal or written form. The principle of politeness fosters positive social interactions and builds familiarity among individuals. The principle of politeness is divided into six maxims: 1) The maxim of tact, 2) The maxim of generosity, 3) The maxim of appreciation, 4) The maxim of modesty, 5) The maxim of agreement, and 6) The maxim of sympathy (Leech, 2014). Leech's theory on politeness should be applied in communication, particularly in educational settings. In schools, the application of polite language is essential. Politeness in language, spoken by both teachers and students, can positively influence students' attitudes and help shape their character.

In the educational context, particularly in high schools (SMA), politeness in language is a critical element of communication and interaction. It reflects proper communication etiquette and fosters a positive, harmonious learning environment between teachers and students. Language politeness is fundamental in creating a harmonious educational atmosphere and promoting a civilized personality. High school students, who are undergoing a critical phase of developing their identity and character, benefit greatly from the application of polite language (Saleh & Baharman, 2012). Unfortunately, the importance of politeness in language is often overlooked, especially among teenagers, who may fail to use appropriate and respectful language.

SMA Negeri 1 Tomini, a state high school located in Tomini Village, Tomini District, Palu Indonesia serves as an example. The primary language used by students for interaction, both in educational and social settings, is Indonesian. Indonesian is also a subject taught at the school. Through learning Indonesian, students have the opportunity to practice polite language, both orally and in writing. This education not only fosters language skills but also reflects cultural values and norms, deepening students' understanding of how to prioritize politeness in their interactions within both educational and social environments.

Politeness in Language in Learning Interactions

Politeness in language is a crucial element of interpersonal communication, particularly in fostering social harmony and preventing conflict. In general, politeness is understood as an attitude or behavior characterized by respect, courtesy, and consideration for the feelings of others during communication. In the context of language, politeness not only involves choosing appropriate and respectful words but also entails the manner in which a message is conveyed to avoid offending, belittling, or threatening the face of the interlocutor. Politeness in language serves as an essential means of facilitating effective and civilized interactions, reflecting the cultural and ethical values upheld by society.

Several linguists have proposed definitions and theories of politeness in language that form the foundation for pragmatic studies. Brown & Levinson (1987) developed the concept of "face," which refers to an individual's social self-image that they wish to have respected by others. According to their theory, politeness is a communication strategy aimed at protecting both one's own face and the interlocutor's face from potential threats or damage. They introduced the concept of face-threatening acts (FTA), referring to actions or utterances that can harm a person's face. Thus, politeness is seen as a strategic linguistic effort to maintain harmonious social relations.

In addition, Leech (2014) made a significant contribution with his Politeness Principle, which complements Grice's Cooperative Principle. Leech (2014) emphasized that effective communication involves not only clear information transfer but also consideration of the social and emotional aspects of conversation. From Leech's perspective, politeness is an effort to maximize the comfort and benefit

of the interlocutor while minimizing potential harm and discomfort. Therefore, in communication, speakers must not only strive for clarity and accuracy but also uphold the values of politeness and social ethics.

The fundamental principles of politeness in communication encompass various aspects, including: (1) adhering to applicable social and cultural norms, (2) preserving the feelings and self-esteem of the interlocutor, (3) using respectful, courteous, and non-abusive language, and (4) adjusting language style to suit the context of communication and the relationships between participants. Politeness is not merely a linguistic feature; it also involves pragmatic and sociocultural dimensions. A polite speaker is capable of selecting an appropriate communication strategy that aligns with the situation, fostering positive relationships in social interactions.

In the study of politeness, two main theories are frequently referenced: Brown and Levinson's Face Theory and Leech's Politeness Principle. Brown & Levinson's (1987) theory identifies two types of face that must be maintained: positive face (the desire to be appreciated and accepted) and negative face (the desire to be free from pressure or intrusion). To address these needs, they proposed four politeness strategies: (1) bald on-record (direct communication with no preliminary remarks), (2) positive politeness (demonstrating familiarity), (3) negative politeness (maintaining distance and being respectful), and (4) off-record (communicating indirectly or implicitly). These strategies help tailor communication to avoid tension or conflict in social interactions.

Leech (2014), on the other hand, proposed six maxims of politeness that serve as guidelines for communication: (1) The Maxim of Tact, which minimizes harm and maximizes benefit for others; (2) The Maxim of Generosity, which prioritizes others' interests over one's own; (3) The Maxim of Praise, which minimizes blame and maximizes praise; (4) The Maxim of Humility, which encourages humility and avoids boasting; (5) The Maxim of Agreement, which seeks to avoid sharp disagreements; and (6) The Maxim of Sympathy, which fosters empathy and concern for others. These six maxims are designed to encourage polite, respectful, and non-tension-inducing communication.

Politeness in communication plays a strategic role in maintaining interpersonal relationships and fostering a conducive atmosphere, particularly in educational settings such as schools (Awang et al., 2017; Ribino, 2023). In the context of learning, politeness is crucial for establishing positive relationships between teachers and students, as well as among students themselves. Polite language contributes to

creating a comfortable, open, and respectful classroom environment. Furthermore, politeness strategies help prevent verbal conflicts that could impede the learning process (Nursanti et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2008). Therefore, understanding and applying the principles of politeness in communication are essential social skills for individuals in everyday life.

Research on politeness in language within the context of learning has been widely conducted by previous scholars, employing various focuses and approaches. Musyawir (2022) explored the forms of politeness and the causes of impoliteness among grade XI students at SMA Negeri 13 Buru Regency. The study identified six forms of politeness maxims: wisdom, generosity, simplicity, agreement, praise, and sympathy, along with internal and external factors contributing to impoliteness. Similarly, research by Lahabu et al. (2021) examined the forms of politeness, supporting factors, and the implementation of politeness in language at SMA Negeri 1 Dulupi, Boalemo Regency. This study also identified violations of maxims and communication strategies for both polite and impolite interactions in learning contexts and beyond.

In another study, Maramah et al. (2020) analyzed politeness in language between students and teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Tanjungbumi using Leech's maxim principles. This research emphasized that the maxim of appreciation was the most dominant form of politeness in student-teacher interactions. In contrast, Herianti (2022) focused on violations and adherence to maxims in the context of limited face-to-face learning in vocational schools, highlighting student negotiations. Her findings revealed frequent violations of the maxims of tact and generosity, while the maxims of agreement and sympathy were more consistently followed in this context.

Unlike previous studies, which generally focused on grade XI students and regular or limited learning contexts, this study concentrates on the politeness of language used by grade X students during Indonesian language learning interactions at SMA Negeri 1 Tomini, Palu City, Indonesia. This focus introduces a new contribution to pragmatic studies, particularly within the scope of sociopragmatics, by emphasizing the importance of applying politeness principles early in secondary education. Moreover, this study specifically addresses the local context of SMA Negeri 1 Tomini, a subject that has not been widely explored in similar research, thus enriching the body of empirical data in language and education studies in the region. The aim of this study is to analyze the forms of politeness expressed by grade X

students in the classroom, particularly in Indonesian language learning interactions at SMA Negeri 1 Tomini, Palu, Indonesia. By examining these speech forms based on the principles of pragmatic politeness, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how grade X students apply politeness in the learning environment, as well as offer a foundation for developing teaching strategies that foster polite and effective communication in the classroom.

Methodology

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, as the researcher aims to provide a detailed account of the actual conditions observed in the subjects and objects of the study, based on the realities encountered in the field. The primary objective of qualitative research is to convey a deep understanding of the phenomena experienced by the research subjects (Lim, 2024). This approach seeks to address the central issues of the study by explaining the events experienced by the subjects, including actions and perceptions, in a comprehensive manner through the lens of language. The data for this study consist of speech or polite language utterances from students at SMA Negeri 1 Tomini during interactions. The data collection techniques employed by the researcher include observation, documentation, interviews, listening, recording, and note-taking.

The data analysis technique used in this study is the interactive qualitative data analysis method proposed by Miles et al. (2014), which includes four components: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The steps followed by the researcher in analyzing the data are as follows:

1) Data collection is the initial step in data analysis, during which the researcher gathers all necessary data for the study. The collected data consist of speech that adheres to Leech's politeness principles, within the context of Indonesian language learning interactions among students at SMA Negeri 1 Tomini. The data collection techniques include observation, documentation, listening, recording, and note-taking, utilizing a camera and voice recorder.

2) Data reduction is the second stage of data analysis, where the researcher summarizes and selects relevant data to streamline the information according to the needs of the study. In this study, the researcher reduces the data and selects the most pertinent

information that aligns with the study's objectives. This data is then categorized according to its relevance, with a focus on polite language speech in Indonesian language learning interactions at SMA Negeri 1 Tomini.

3) In this stage, the researcher presents the reduced data by conveying the information that aligns with the study's focus—specifically, the polite language speech of students during Indonesian language learning interactions in the classroom. The data is then described in narrative form or through words to address the research focus.

4) The final stage of data analysis involves drawing conclusions. In this phase, the researcher interprets the data to extract meaning and gain insights from the data collected. By processing the data and interpreting the findings, the researcher is able to draw conclusions that provide answers to the research questions.

Results

Based on research conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Tomini, the researcher identified various forms of linguistic politeness exhibited by Grade X students during classroom interactions. To further explore the students' use of polite language in this context, the findings are presented according to Leech's six politeness maxims. The study revealed that the students demonstrated forms of politeness in their language use during the learning process, consistent with Leech's six maxims.

The Maxim of Tact

The following table presents the data related to each type of tact maxim politeness maxim observed.

Table 1. Categorization of Politeness Data Based on the Maxim of Tact

Polite Utterance		Type of Politeness Maxim	Total Instances
Student A:	"I am the mother. Let's finish the remaining stock so we don't incur any losses."	Maxim of Tact (Minimizing one's own benefit and maximizing benefit for others)	5
Student A:	"Come, join me."		
Student B:	"Let me handle it; you can go next."		
Student A:	"I am the mother. Just think about it—one day Wandi might need a new laptop for his studies."		
Student B:	"Just use this picture of mine. It already includes an explanation."		

Based on the data classification presented above, it is evident that the polite utterances made by Grade X students, as listed in the first table, fall under the category of the Maxim of Tact. These utterances demonstrate students' efforts to prioritize the interests of others, particularly in collaborative classroom settings such as group discussions or cooperative tasks.

As previously outlined, the Maxim of Tact is a politeness principle that focuses on maximizing benefits for others while minimizing benefits for oneself. Within this context, the students are observed assisting their peers, offering opportunities for others to participate, and exhibiting selflessness—behaviors that exemplify the practical application of the Maxim of Tact in instructional interactions.

The Politeness Maxim

Based on the data classification presented in Table 2, it is evident that the polite utterances of the 10th grade students fall under the category of the generosity maxim. Within the context of classroom interactions, students demonstrate a willingness to assist others without expecting any form of reciprocation. This is reflected in actions such as lending school supplies, offering help to peers in need, and volunteering support.

Table 2. Classification of Politeness Data Based on the Maxim of Generosity

Polite Language Utterances		Type of Politeness Maxim	Frequency
Student B:	"You can use it."	Maxim of Generosity (Minimizing benefit to oneself and maximizing benefit to others)	5
Student B:	"You're welcome. If you want to borrow it again, just take it."		
Student C:	"You can use my pen, I have a spare one."		
Student A:	"I'll pick you up later, and we'll go together."		
Student A:	"I'll erase it later, ma'am. Use my paper, ma'am."		
Student B:	"Let me join Group 5 instead—there are only four people, while your group already has many."		

As previously discussed, the generosity maxim is a politeness principle characterized by efforts to minimize personal gain while maximizing benefit to others. In this context, students exhibit a readiness to forgo personal comfort or resources to assist their peers, reflecting strong values of empathy and solidarity in classroom communication.

Maxim of Approbation

Based on the data classification presented below, it is evident that the polite utterances of 10th-grade students listed in Table 3 fall under the category of the maxim of approbation. During classroom interactions, students frequently express appreciation toward their peers by praising correct answers, acknowledging contributions during group work, or offering congratulations for specific achievements.

Table 3. Classification of Politeness Data Based on the Maxim of Approbation

Polite Utterances		Type of Politeness Maxim	Frequency
Student A:	"Masya Allah, your voice is beautiful."	Maxim of Approbation (Minimizing criticism and maximizing praise toward the interlocutor)	5
Student A:	"Wow, you really are smart!" (while clapping)		
Student A:	"Hey, don't cause a disturbance. Look at Group 1—they're presenting so well, while you're just being noisy in the back."		
Student A:	"Your group is really smart. Thank you."		
Student A:	"Masya Allah, Rindi's Quranic writing on the board is so neat."		

As previously noted, the maxim of approbation is a politeness principle that emphasizes increasing praise for others while minimizing criticism that may cause discomfort or offense. In this context, students demonstrate the ability to foster a positive and supportive communicative environment. Such behavior not only enhances peer confidence but also contributes to the creation of a respectful and engaging learning atmosphere.

Maxim of Modesty

Based on the data grouping presented below, it is evident that the expressions of politeness demonstrated by the 10th-grade students in Table 4 fall under the category of the modesty maxim. In classroom interactions, students generally refrain from boasting about their achievements or contributions and demonstrate openness to feedback and constructive criticism from both teachers and peers.

Table 4. Classification of Politeness Data Based on the Maxim of Modesty

Polite Utterance		Type of Politeness Maxim	Frequency
Student A:	"My drawing is still not very good; I'm sure some of my classmates have done better."	Maxim of Modesty (Minimizing self-praise and increasing self-deprecation)	5

Polite Utterance		Type of Politeness Maxim	Frequency
Student A:	"No, ma'am, this isn't much. I'm sure many of my classmates can answer and are even smarter."		
Student A:	"Ma'am, these are my notes. I apologize if my handwriting is messy."		
Student A:	"No, ma'am, there are many others who did a better job."		
Student B:	"Thank you, but it's nothing—I'm sure many of your writings are even better."		

As previously noted, the modesty maxim is a principle of politeness that involves minimizing self-praise and increasing self-deprecating remarks. In this context, students exhibit a humble disposition by avoiding self-aggrandizement and instead downplaying their accomplishments. Such behavior reflects a level of communicative maturity and contributes to the development of respectful and constructive social relationships within the learning environment.

Maxim of Agreement

Based on the data grouping presented below, it can be observed that the politeness exhibited by 10th-grade students, as shown in the fifth table, falls under the category of the agreement maxim. In learning interactions, students demonstrate a cooperative attitude by more frequently agreeing with their peers' opinions or teachers' instructions and striving to reach consensus during group or class discussions.

Table 5. Grouping of Politeness Data Using the Maxim of Agreement

Speech (Politeness in Language)		Type of Maxim of Politeness	Frequency
Teacher:	"You need to divide the task of finding the answers—one person over there will look for answer number 8, and the person here will search for answer number 7."	Maxim of Agreement (Reducing disagreement and increasing mutual agreement)	5
Student A:	"Okay, ma'am."		
Students:	"Just give them the assignment, sir."		
Student A:	"Yes, sir, because yesterday you also explained the material."		
Teacher:	"Do you agree that whoever does not complete their assignment will be given a punishment?"		
Students:	"Agreed, ma'am."		
Teacher:	"Children, can we study in front of the office because it's hot in your classroom?"		

Speech (Politeness in Language)	Type of Maxim of Politeness	Frequency
Students: "Okay, ma'am, that's better." Teacher: "Before we start, we have to sing the national anthem. Do you agree?" Students: "Okay, ma'am, I agree."		

As previously discussed, the agreement maxim is a principle of politeness that emphasizes efforts to minimize disagreement and foster mutual agreement. In this context, students tend to avoid conflict or stark differences in opinion, aiming instead to find common ground in every situation. This approach contributes to the creation of a harmonious and productive learning environment.

Maxim of Sympathy

Based on the data grouping presented below, it is evident that the expressions of politeness exhibited by 10th-grade students in Table 6 fall under the category of the sympathy maxim. In classroom interactions, students demonstrate empathy by offering verbal and non-verbal support to peers who are experiencing difficulties or personal challenges.

Table 6. Grouping of Politeness Data Using the Maxim of Sympathy

Speech of Politeness	Type of Maxim of Politeness	Total
Student C: "Hopefully Fani recovers soon." Student A: "Sir, he didn't answer but disturbed people." Student A: "Hopefully the school can provide more textbooks so that they will be enough for studying later." Student B: "Be patient, hopefully your father will get well soon." Student B: "Be patient, hopefully the money will be sent soon."	Maxim of Sympathy (Reducing antipathy and increasing sympathy for others).	5

As previously discussed, the sympathy maxim is a principle of politeness that emphasizes reducing expressions of antipathy while increasing expressions of concern and compassion toward others. In this context, students exhibit sensitivity to the emotional well-being of their classmates by offering words of encouragement, showing care for their situations, and fostering a compassionate and supportive learning environment.

Discussion

This study adopts Geoffrey Leech's theory of politeness, which encompasses six maxims of politeness, to analyze the forms of polite speech within Indonesian language learning interactions. The research was conducted with tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Tomini, focusing on how politeness is reflected in verbal expressions during the teaching and learning process. Leech's framework serves as the primary theoretical foundation, as it effectively explains communicative strategies that are not only linguistically sound but also courteous and respectful within a social context.

During the research process, the researcher successfully identified 61 instances of speech that exhibited elements of politeness consistent with Leech's maxims. These data were collected through classroom observations and documentation of interactions between teachers and students, as well as among students themselves. Each utterance was analyzed according to specific categories of maxims, such as the maxim of tact, the maxim of approbation, the maxim of agreement, and others. The findings suggest that politeness is indeed a core component of classroom communication, although some aspects still require improvement.

Moreover, this study concludes that politeness plays a vital role in the educational setting. By practicing politeness, students not only become more effective communicators but also develop a sense of respect and etiquette in both verbal and written interactions. The study also reveals that family and environmental influences significantly shape an individual's understanding and application of politeness principles. Therefore, the involvement of multiple stakeholders—including schools and families—is essential in fostering politeness from an early age.

Relevant studies conducted by Herianti (2022); Lahabu et al. (2021); Maramah et al. (2020); Musyawir (2022) also explore politeness in the school context. Their research analyzes students' use of polite language both during classroom learning and in interactions outside the classroom, focusing on the application of Leech's politeness maxims as reflected in student communication.

In contrast, the present study offers a more specific focus: it examines forms of polite speech used by tenth-grade students specifically within the context of Indonesian language learning at SMA Negeri 1 Tomini, Palu. This research not only observes students'

general behavior but also closely analyzes their use of polite language in formal classroom settings. As such, the scope of this study is more narrowly defined, concentrating on a particular educational context and grade level.

The primary distinction between previous research and the present study lies in the scope and depth of analysis. While earlier studies tended to focus on students' overall interactions both inside and outside the classroom, this study concentrates specifically on the classroom learning process as the principal setting for observation. The aim is to describe how tenth-grade students construct, select, and deliver their speech while adhering to the principles of linguistic politeness.

The strength of this study lies in its ability to identify forms of politeness as they naturally occur in real-time classroom interactions. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the researcher endeavors to capture the nuances of communication among students and between students and teachers in greater depth. Furthermore, this research highlights the unique local context of SMA Negeri 1 Tomini—a site that has been largely underexplored in similar studies—thereby offering a valuable contribution to the empirical literature in the field of pragmatics.

The innovation of this study lies in its effort to foreground the dimension of politeness from an applied pragmatic perspective, specifically by examining how students practice polite communication within the teaching and learning process. The findings of this research are expected to enrich the field of pragmatics, particularly in understanding the interplay between linguistic meaning and contextual usage. In pragmatics, meaning is not derived solely from linguistic structure, but also from the situational and communicative intent behind the language. Accordingly, the analysis of politeness reveals how the meaning of utterances is shaped by both their delivery and the social context in which they are expressed. This study also raises awareness of the crucial role that politeness plays in everyday communication. Politeness is not merely a supplementary aspect of language use; rather, it is a reflection of one's character, attitude, and ethical values. By observing the maxims of politeness, individuals can foster respectful and harmonious communication while avoiding unnecessary social friction.

Conclusion

This study aims to describe the forms of linguistic politeness demonstrated by tenth-grade students during classroom learning interactions, using Geoffrey Leech's theory of politeness maxims as the analytical framework. Through observation and documentation of classroom interactions, six types of politeness maxims were identified in students' speech: the maxims of tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. For instance, students expressed concern for peers during group discussions, offered help without expecting personal gain, praised classmates' contributions, humbly accepted feedback, complied with teacher instructions, and showed empathy toward peers experiencing difficulties.

The findings indicate that politeness in language constitutes an integral part of student communication dynamics within the classroom setting. Polite expressions not only strengthen social bonds among students and between students and teachers but also contribute to a learning environment that is harmonious, collaborative, and mutually respectful. Moreover, the students' use of polite language is shaped by their family backgrounds and social environments, which influence their understanding and application of politeness values in everyday interactions.

In this context, language functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a reflection of students' character and attitudes. To further enhance the understanding of politeness in educational settings, future research is recommended to explore additional dimensions—such as expanding the study to different grade levels or age groups, examining gender-based differences in politeness, and conducting longitudinal studies. Further investigations might also include analyses of politeness in digital communication, interdisciplinary approaches involving educational psychology, the development of teaching media grounded in politeness theory, and comparative studies across different cultural contexts.

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