



## Case Study: Language Politeness in Preschool Children at Ar-Rahman School

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose of the study:** This research aims to investigate how preschool children use language politeness. The method used is a pragmatic approach with a qualitative approach. Language politeness is usually part of adult human abilities. Adults will be better able to judge whether an utterance is considered polite or not, depending on various factors such as social distance, culture, and power relations.

**Methodology:** The data that has been copied and grouped is then analyzed using the politeness theory of language developed by Brown and Levinson. In qualitative research, data analysis begins with reducing data, categorizing data, presenting data, drawing conclusions from findings, and verifying.

**Main Findings:** The research results show that language politeness can be divided into four main strategies. However, the results show that preschool children, especially those aged 3-5 years, do not fully understand the concept of politeness. The data obtained showed considerable variation in children's understanding of politeness strategies, without any clear consistency.

**Novelty/Originality of this study:** The novelty of this research is the methodological approach that uses direct observation in various activity situations at school as well as in-depth interviews with teachers and parents, which provides a comprehensive picture of language politeness practices. This makes a significant contribution to academic literature and educational practitioners in understanding and developing language politeness from an early age.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of politeness as an integral part of language phenomena, especially in relation to the science of pragmatics. Politeness is not just good or ethical behavior, but is also an effort to create pleasant, non-face-threatening, and effective interactions [1], [2], [3]. However, the difference between politeness and respect needs to be understood, because both can be demonstrated through social behavior and language. Pragmatics, as a branch of linguistics, shows that the ability to think and reason is influenced by the ability to use language well [4], [5], [6].

The phenomenon of linguistic politeness also has an important cultural dimension. Even though the principles of politeness are universal, each culture has different measures and expressions of politeness. For example, politeness in Eastern and Western cultures has differences, although there are basic similarities between the two. In Indonesia, the phenomenon of linguistic politeness is also influenced by cultural diversity and customs, so that what is considered polite by one culture is not necessarily considered polite by another culture [7], [8], [9].

Apart from that, it is important to understand that language politeness is not only owned by adults, but also needs to be taught to children from an early age. Although at the preschool stage, children may not fully understand the concept of politeness, their environment plays an important role in shaping their understanding of it [10], [11], [12]. Good communication in children is built through their social environment, and the role of adults, including caregivers and parents, is very important in this process [13], [14], [15].

Apart from the social environment, formal education also has a role in shaping children's language politeness. Children in Indonesia are starting to recognize social rules not only at home but also at school [16], [17], [18]. Through interactions with teachers and peers, they consolidate their knowledge about language politeness. Research observations at the Ar-Rahman school show that children are starting to demonstrate accuracy in communication according to situations as part of the development of their cognitive competence.

Families and schools play an important role in educating language politeness for preschool-aged children [19], [20], [21]. Now awareness of the importance of socializing is increasing among parents. They started enrolling their children in playgroups. Therefore, from an early age, Indonesian children, especially in big cities, begin to become familiar with educational institutions [22], [23], [24]. In this case, children's introduction to social rules is not only limited to the home environment, but also to the school environment. When children enter school, they consolidate their knowledge of politeness through teachers and peers.

Based on the researcher's observations at the Ar-Rahman school, it was found that preschool children are starting to show accuracy in communicating according to the situation as part of the development of cognitive competence. The diversity of children's conditions makes researchers want to know how each child speaks. In particular, this research discusses a number of politeness strategies taken from several situations. Bernadette Kushartanti in her journal has also researched children's politeness strategies in expressing wishes, such as: children learning how to greet people, convey wishes, express curiosity, express disagreement, and so on. Therefore, in order to establish good communication, politeness in language needs to be practiced and implemented from an early age. Choosing good vocabulary, paying attention to who the interlocutor is, and where and when the communication occurs with good intentions between the speaker and the interlocutor.

Previous research found that there were students' speech that obeyed the maxim of wisdom, the maxim of generosity, the maxim of appreciation, the maxim of simplicity, the maxim of consensus, and the maxim of sympathy. However, there are also students' speech that violates the maxim of wisdom, the maxim of generosity, the maxim of respect, the maxim of simplicity, the maxim of consensus, and the maxim of sympathy [25], [26]. Similar research also examines language politeness and finds that children can accept mistakes, children can be more polite and polite in speaking, children are used to gentle reprimands.

Although much research has been conducted on language politeness in children, most of these studies tend to focus on elementary school-aged children and adolescents. Research on language politeness in preschool children is still relatively limited, especially in the context of formal education environments such as the Ar-Rahman School. In addition, existing research often emphasizes theoretical aspects rather than practical applications in the field. Therefore, there is a significant research gap regarding how preschool children apply language politeness in their daily interactions in the school environment.

Based on the research gaps that have been conducted, this research highlights language politeness in preschool children at the Ar-Rahman School with a holistic approach that includes direct and indirect teaching. The novelty in this study lies in the in-depth focus on the role of teachers as models of behavior and the influence of the school environment that supports language politeness. For further research, the subject can be expanded by examining language politeness in preschool children in various types of educational institutions, such as inclusive schools and other religion-based schools.

This research is important to carry out in order to fill the gap by exploring and analyzing language politeness in preschool children at the Ar-Rahman School. Thus, it is hoped that this research can provide a more comprehensive contribution to our understanding of the development of language politeness in early childhood, as well as its implications for education and learning at the preschool level.

Therefore, understanding language politeness in preschool children is important to study. This is the main reason the researcher chose the title 'Case Study: Language Politeness in Preschool Children at Ar-Rahman School' to dig deeper at what age humans actually begin to be able to understand and apply language politeness, especially for children who are still in the stage of early development.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach using pragmatic methods. A qualitative approach allows researchers to understand and present the complexity of the social world as well as the perspectives that emerge from concepts, behaviors, perceptions and problems that are relevant in the research context [27], [28]. This method includes the use of various techniques such as interviews, observations, and document analysis to collect descriptive and in-depth data about the phenomenon under study [29], [30]. In this context, the pragmatic approach was chosen because of its relevance to the study of language politeness strategies which involve language analysis in the context of everyday life.

The population that is the focus of the research is preschool children, especially those who are members of play groups, in one of the preschools in Jakarta. The sample was selected from children in the Play Group class with an age range of around 3-4 years. Data was collected through direct observation and video recording of their language interactions in various situations in the school environment. Selecting this population is important because preschool-aged children are a group that is developing their initial understanding of language politeness, and this study aims to explore the strategies they use in communication.

The data collection technique in this research involves direct observation using passive and disguised participant observation. Researchers actively observe children's language interactions without interfering with their activities. Data was obtained from video recordings that captured their verbal and non-verbal interactions in various contexts at school. This observation was carried out to gain an in-depth understanding of the language politeness strategies used by preschool children in real situations.

Data analysis techniques include a series of systematic steps. First, the video recording data is transcribed to convert it into written text. Then, children's speech is identified and categorized based on previously determined language politeness strategies. An explanation of the meaning and context of each utterance is also provided to understand the reasons behind the use of certain strategies. In addition, researchers also explored social factors that influence children's language, such as power and social distance, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their language interactions.

The research procedure began with data collection through direct observation and video recording of preschool children at the selected preschool. After that, the data was recorded and transcribed for analysis. Data analysis steps include identification, categorization, explanation of meaning, and exploration of social factors that influence children's language. The results of the analysis are used to draw conclusions about the phenomenon of language politeness in preschool children, as well as its implications in the context of children's education and development.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A case study of language politeness in preschool children at the Ar-Rahman School produces an in-depth understanding of how children in the 3-5 year age range understand and apply the concept of language politeness in their daily interactions. Data analysis using the politeness theory of language by Brown & Levinson identified four main strategies in children's use of language: positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on record, and off record. From the 11 speech situations observed, there were a total of 102 speech data which were classified into different politeness strategies.

The results of the research show that children at preschool age are still in the stage of developing their understanding of the concept of language politeness. However, there was significant variation in their understanding, with some children showing better understanding than others. Although sometimes they show a fairly good understanding of the concept, there are also situations where they do not seem to understand it well.

Positive politeness strategies are proven to be the most dominant in children's speech, with a number of sub-strategies such as seeking agreement, asking for reasons, paying attention to the wishes of the speech partner, and so on. However, negative politeness strategies appear in lesser numbers, indicating that children tend to prefer to communicate positively rather than dismissively or condescendingly.

In addition, this research reveals that female students tend to be more dominant in applying language politeness strategies in their speech compared to students. Even though the number of male students is greater, female students appear to be more active and more fluent in expressing themselves and applying more polite language strategies.

In some situations, children demonstrated higher levels of power than their teachers, indicating the existence of complex dynamics in language interactions in the preschool environment. However, the teachers in this study understood this condition and provided a broad understanding of children's understanding of language politeness. Although children at preschool age have acquired linguistic politeness norms, their understanding of these concepts is still in the developmental stage. Variations in the understanding and application of language politeness strategies demonstrate the complexity in preschool children's language interactions, with the influence of social and power factors also needing to be considered in the context of preschool education.

In addition, the findings from this research also highlight the important role of the environment in shaping children's understanding of language politeness. The school environment and interactions with teachers, peers, and parents play a key role in shaping children's communication patterns and social understanding. Therefore, an approach that involves parents and teachers in guiding children in understanding and applying language politeness can be an effective strategy in developing healthy communication.

In addition, findings showing that female students tend to be more dominant in applying language politeness strategies highlight the importance of gender research in the context of preschool education. Understanding the differences in communication patterns between boys and girls can help teachers design learning approaches that are more inclusive and responsive to children's individual needs in terms of communication and social interaction [31], [32], [33].

findings. As a case study conducted in one particular preschool, the generalizability of the findings to a broader population may be limited. Apart from that, the use of qualitative methods with a focus on observation and text analysis also has limitations in terms of generalizing the findings. Therefore, further research involving larger samples and different methodological approaches can provide more comprehensive insights into the understanding and application of politeness in preschool-aged children.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Overall, this research produces a deeper understanding of language politeness practices in preschool children at the Ar-Rahman School. The findings show that children in the 3-5 year age range do not yet fully understand the concept of linguistic politeness, although they gradually internalize social norms related to communication. This research identified four language politeness strategies applied by children, with variations in their understanding and use. However, this study has limitations in the generalization of the findings, so that further research with a larger sample and different methodology could provide more comprehensive insight into the understanding and application of politeness in preschool-aged children. Future research can be conducted using quantitative methods to measure the effectiveness of different teaching strategies and their impact on children's social-emotional development. This study can also be expanded by examining the role of parents in supporting language politeness teaching at home and its impact on the consistency of children's language behavior at school and at home.

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