

## Pragmatic Analysis of the Influence of Local Culture on Students' Language Politeness on Social Media

M. Firman Juniansyah<sup>1</sup>, Dedi Sumarna<sup>2</sup>, Siti Tatu Rohbiah<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten

<sup>2</sup>UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten

<sup>3</sup>UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten

Korespondensi Email : [221230090.muhammad@uinbanten.ac.id](mailto:221230090.muhammad@uinbanten.ac.id)

### **Abstract:**

*This study aims to analyze the influence of local culture on students' language politeness on social media from a pragmatic perspective. The research focuses on how students apply politeness strategies in digital communication and how local cultural values shape their language use in online interactions. This study employed a qualitative descriptive method with a pragmatic approach. The participants consisted of junior high school, senior high school, and vocational school students who actively use social media platforms such as WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that local culture strongly influences students' communication styles, particularly in adapting language based on interlocutors and social contexts. Students tend to use indirect expressions, polite markers such as "please," "sorry," and "thank you," and softened criticism to maintain harmony and avoid conflict. In addition, students frequently utilize emojis, abbreviations, slang, and regional expressions such as "rek" and "euy" to express emotional tone, create solidarity, and reduce misunderstanding in digital interaction. The study also shows that different social media platforms affect the form and level of politeness used by students. WhatsApp encourages more personal and adaptive communication, while TikTok promotes shorter, expressive, and trend-based language. Overall, students' language politeness reflects the interaction between local cultural norms and modern digital communication practices.*

**Keywords:** pragmatics, language politeness, local culture.

### **Introduction**

The rapid development of digital technology and social media has significantly transformed the way people communicate, especially among students. Platforms such as WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook have created new communication spaces where interaction occurs without direct physical presence. In digital communication, messages are mainly delivered through written text, symbols, emojis, and abbreviations. Unlike face-to-face interaction, online communication lacks non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice, which often leads to misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Therefore, language politeness becomes an important aspect in maintaining harmonious communication and social relationships in online interaction.

From a pragmatic perspective, language politeness is closely related to how speakers adjust their language according to context, interlocutor, and social norms. Pragmatics focuses on meaning in context and explains how communication strategies are used to avoid conflict and maintain mutual respect. In social media communication, politeness strategies are reflected through indirect expressions, softening devices, polite markers, emojis, abbreviations, and the adaptation of language styles. Students frequently negotiate meaning and interpersonal relationships through digital language practices that combine formal and informal expressions.

In the Indonesian context, local culture strongly influences communication behavior, including language politeness on social media. Indonesia's cultural diversity encourages values such as respect, harmony, modesty, and social sensitivity. These values shape how students communicate in digital environments. For example, students often avoid direct criticism and prefer softened expressions such as "maybe it could be better if..." instead of directly stating disagreement. In addition, regional expressions such as "rek" and "euy" are commonly used to create closeness and solidarity among interlocutors from similar cultural backgrounds. This demonstrates that local cultural identity remains influential even in modern digital communication.

Several previous studies have discussed politeness and digital communication. Michael Haugh examined politeness and impoliteness in interaction and emphasized the importance of context in communication practices. Carmen Maíz-Arévalo explored the role of emojis in online politeness, while Jannis Androutsopoulos analyzed multilingual practices and communication styles on social media. Other studies also discuss internet language, identity construction, and computer-mediated communication. However, most previous research focuses on general digital politeness strategies without specifically analyzing how local cultural values influence students' language politeness on social media from a pragmatic perspective.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the interaction between local culture and students' pragmatic politeness strategies in digital communication. Unlike previous studies that mainly discuss general online politeness, this research specifically investigates how local cultural norms shape students' language adaptation, indirect communication, use of regional expressions, and digital politeness markers across different social media platforms. This study also highlights how students actively negotiate politeness through emojis, abbreviations, and slang while maintaining cultural values of harmony and respect in online interactions.

Based on this background, the research problem of this study is how local culture influences students' language politeness on social media from a pragmatic perspective. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of local cultural values on students' politeness strategies, communication styles, and digital language practices in social media interactions. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the

development of pragmatic studies and provide deeper insights into the relationship between local culture and digital communication practices among students.

## **Method**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to analyze the influence of local culture on students' language politeness on social media from a pragmatic perspective. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to explore students' communication experiences, language behavior, and politeness strategies in digital interactions in depth. The study focused on how students construct meaning, maintain politeness, and adapt their language according to social and cultural contexts in online communication.

The subjects of this research were students from different educational levels, including junior high school, senior high school, and vocational high school students who actively use social media platforms such as WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. The participants were selected purposively to represent diverse communication backgrounds and language styles. The object of the study was students' language politeness in social media interactions, particularly the influence of local cultural values on their communication patterns.

Operationally, language politeness in this study refers to students' ability to use respectful, adaptive, and context-appropriate language in digital communication. The indicators of politeness include language adaptation, the use of polite expressions, indirect communication strategies, local language usage, and the use of emojis or digital expressions to maintain harmony and avoid misunderstanding. Local culture refers to the cultural values, norms, and regional linguistic expressions that influence students' communication behavior on social media.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. This technique allowed participants to explain their experiences and opinions freely while still focusing on the research objectives. The interview instrument consisted of questions related to communication styles, the importance of politeness, strategies for avoiding conflict, the influence of local culture, and the use of digital communication features such as emojis, abbreviations, and slang. The interviews were conducted informally to encourage natural responses and authentic interaction.

The collected data were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. First, the researcher selected and categorized relevant data related to politeness strategies and cultural influence. Second, the data were organized into thematic categories such as language adaptation, indirectness, local language use, and digital expressions. Finally, the researcher interpreted the findings using a pragmatic perspective to identify patterns of politeness in students' social media communication. To ensure the credibility of the data, triangulation was conducted by

comparing responses among participants from different educational backgrounds. Since this study used a qualitative approach, hypothesis testing was not applied.

## Results and Discussion

This study investigates how local culture influences students' language politeness on social media from a pragmatic perspective. Based on the interview findings, several important patterns were identified regarding language adaptation, politeness strategies, indirect communication, local language usage, and the use of digital expressions in online interaction. The findings indicate that students actively negotiate politeness by combining local cultural values with modern communication practices on social media platforms such as WhatsApp and TikTok.

One of the major findings of this research is students' ability to adapt their language according to the interlocutor and communication context. Most participants stated that they use different styles of language depending on whom they are communicating with. Rafly, for example, explained that he tends to use formal language when communicating with teachers or older people, while using more casual and relaxed expressions when interacting with close friends. Similarly, Chica stated that she adjusts her communication style based on the "vibe" of the conversation and the relationship with the interlocutor. This finding demonstrates that students possess pragmatic awareness in selecting appropriate language forms in digital communication. Such adaptability reflects the influence of social hierarchy and cultural expectations in maintaining politeness and respect during interaction.

Another important finding concerns the use of indirect communication strategies. The interview results reveal that students generally avoid direct criticism or confrontation when interacting online. Instead of explicitly saying that someone is wrong, participants prefer softer expressions such as "maybe it could be better if..." or providing suggestions indirectly. This strategy is strongly influenced by local cultural values that emphasize harmony, politeness, and respect for others. Rieng Nurul Salma mentioned that she carefully chooses words to avoid hurting other people's feelings, especially when communicating with older individuals. These findings indicate that indirectness functions as a politeness strategy aimed at maintaining social relationships and preventing conflict in digital communication.

Furthermore, the findings show that politeness markers are frequently used by students in social media interactions. Expressions such as "please," "sorry," and "thank you" commonly appear in conversations, even in informal communication. Participants explained that these expressions help create a respectful atmosphere and reduce the possibility of misunderstanding. In addition, students often reread their messages before sending them to ensure that the tone does not sound rude or offensive. The avoidance of capital letters and harsh expressions also reflects students' awareness of the importance of politeness in online interaction.

The study also identifies the significant role of local language and identity markers in shaping students' communication styles. Several participants reported using regional expressions such as "rek" and "euy" to create closeness and solidarity with peers from similar cultural backgrounds. These local expressions function not only as linguistic variations but also as markers of identity and group belonging. This finding suggests that local culture continues to influence communication practices even in digital environments where global and modern language trends are dominant.

In addition, digital communication features such as emojis, abbreviations, and internet slang contribute to students' politeness strategies. Participants frequently use emojis to express emotions, soften messages, and avoid ambiguity in text-based communication. Expressions such as "wkwk," "otw," "ASAP," and "CMIIW" are commonly used to create a more relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Rafly explained that emojis help convey emotional tone that may otherwise be unclear in written communication. These findings indicate that digital symbols and abbreviations function as pragmatic tools that replace non-verbal cues such as facial expressions and intonation in face-to-face interaction.

Another notable finding is the influence of different social media platforms on language politeness. WhatsApp is generally perceived as a more personal and flexible platform where students can adjust their language according to the relationship with the interlocutor. Messages directed to teachers or lecturers tend to use formal and complete sentences, while conversations with close friends are more casual and abbreviated. On the other hand, TikTok encourages shorter, expressive, and trend-oriented language styles. Comments and captions on TikTok frequently contain slang, mixed languages, and hyperbolic expressions to attract attention and engagement. Despite these differences, students still attempt to maintain politeness and avoid offensive language.

The findings of this study demonstrate that students' language politeness on social media is shaped by the interaction between local cultural norms and contemporary digital communication practices. Local culture encourages indirectness, harmony, and respect, while social media platforms introduce new forms of communication through emojis, abbreviations, slang, and trend-based expressions. Therefore, politeness in digital communication is not static but dynamic and context-dependent, reflecting students' ability to adapt language according to social relationships, cultural expectations, and technological developments.

**Table 1. Politeness Strategies Based on Students' Responses**

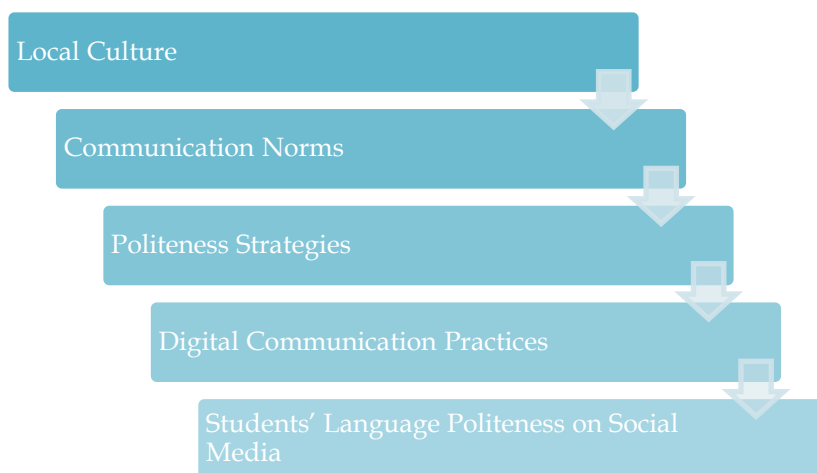
No	Description	Explanation
1	Language Adaptation	Students adjust language based on interlocutor (formal and informal communication)
2	Use of Polite Expressions	Frequent use of expressions such as "please," "sorry," and "thank you"

3	Indirect Communication	Criticism and disagreement delivered in softened and indirect forms
4	Local Language Usage	Use of regional expressions to build closeness and solidarity
5	Use of Emojis and Slang	Emojis, abbreviations, and slang used to express tone and emotion

Source: Research Data, 2026

Based on Table 1, the findings indicate that students apply various politeness strategies in social media communication as a reflection of pragmatic awareness and local cultural influence. Students tend to adapt their language depending on the interlocutor and communication context by distinguishing between formal and informal expressions. The frequent use of polite expressions such as “please,” “sorry,” and “thank you” demonstrates their effort to maintain respect and harmonious interaction in digital communication. In addition, students often employ indirect communication strategies when expressing criticism or disagreement in order to avoid conflict and protect the feelings of others. The use of regional expressions also reflects the influence of local culture in creating closeness, solidarity, and a sense of shared identity among interlocutors. Furthermore, emojis, abbreviations, and slang function as important pragmatic tools to convey tone, emotion, and friendliness in text-based interaction. Overall, these findings show that students’ language politeness on social media is dynamic and strongly influenced by the interaction between cultural values and contemporary digital communication practices.

**Figure 1. The Influence of Local Culture on Students’ Language Politeness on Social Media**



Source: Researcher, 2026.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between local culture and students' language politeness on social media. The figure shows that local culture becomes the primary foundation influencing communication norms within society. These norms then shape the politeness strategies used by students, such as indirect communication, respectful expressions, and careful word selection. Furthermore, these politeness strategies are reflected in digital communication practices through the use of emojis, abbreviations, slang, and adaptive language styles across different social media platforms. As a result, students' language politeness on social media is formed through the interaction between cultural values, communication norms, and contemporary digital communication practices. This finding indicates that local cultural values continue to play an important role in guiding students' online behavior and maintaining harmonious communication in digital environments.

In conclusion, this study reveals that local culture has a significant influence on students' language politeness on social media from a pragmatic perspective. The findings demonstrate that students actively adapt their language according to the interlocutor, communication context, and the characteristics of different social media platforms. Local cultural values encourage the use of indirect communication, respectful expressions, and careful word choices to maintain harmony and avoid conflict in digital interactions. In addition, the use of local expressions, emojis, abbreviations, and slang shows that students combine traditional cultural norms with modern digital communication practices. Therefore, language politeness on social media is dynamic and context-dependent, reflecting students' pragmatic awareness in balancing cultural values, interpersonal relationships, and contemporary technological developments in online communication.

## **Conclusion**

This study concludes that local culture has a significant influence on students' language politeness on social media. The findings indicate that students actively adjust their language according to the interlocutor, communication context, and the type of social media platform they use. Local cultural values encourage students to maintain harmony, show respect, and avoid direct confrontation through indirect expressions and softened language strategies. In addition, the use of politeness markers such as "please," "sorry," and "thank you," as well as emojis, abbreviations, and slang, demonstrates how students combine traditional cultural norms with modern digital communication practices.

The study also reveals that politeness in digital interaction is dynamic and context-dependent. Platforms such as WhatsApp tend to encourage more personal and adaptive communication, while TikTok promotes shorter and more expressive language styles. Despite these differences, students consistently attempt to maintain respectful communication and minimize misunderstandings. Therefore, this research implies that pragmatic competence and cultural awareness remain essential in online communication, especially among students in increasingly digitalized environments. Future studies are

recommended to explore language politeness across broader social media platforms and involve participants from more diverse cultural backgrounds to obtain deeper insights into digital communication behavior.

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