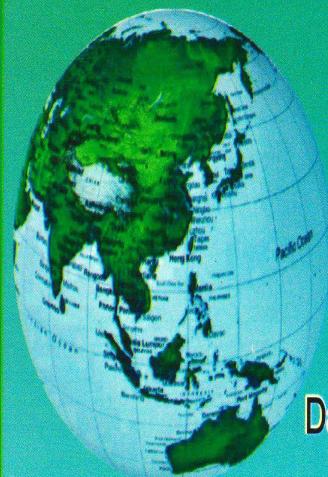


ISBN : 978-602-17017-4-4



# Character Building through Language, Culture, Arts, and Their Learning



Edited by:

David Reeve, M. Zaim, Jufrizal, Indrayuda,  
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PROCEEDINGS OF THE 3<sup>RD</sup> INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR  
ON LANGUAGES AND ARTS (ISLA-3)  
FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND ARTS

ISLA-3  
FBS UNP

FBS UNP PRESS

The Faculty of Languages and Arts of the State University of Padang  
Jalan Belibis Air Tawar, Padang – Sumatera Barat 25131, Indonesia  
Telp. (0751) 7053363

<http://fbs.unp.ac.id>

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First published 2014

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## PROCEEDING OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON LANGUAGES AND ARTS (ISLA)-3

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Cover Design	:	Havid Ardi
Lay Out	:	Havid Ardi
Publisher	:	FBS UNP Press
		<i>e-mail: <a href="mailto:info@fbs.unp.ac.id">info@fbs.unp.ac.id</a></i>
Printed by	:	Sukabina
		Jl. Prof. Dr. Hamka no. 29 Tabing Padang, Telp. (0751) 7055660

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## THE VALUE OF LANGUAGE POLITENESS IN THE EDUCATION

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### ***Abstract***

*The paper discusses how the ethics of language used in communication becomes deficit in educational interaction of student-teacher during educational process. The time changes and the value follows the changes. Those happen in the social life. The language used by students have nearly broken the norms of politeness strategies. The global era, in which everybody involves in the display of any kind of commercials and action from visual media; the parents do not really care about being together in the family to form heart by heart communication; and the educators are busy with overload jobs, are assumed to be the causes. Thus, providing students with more language instructional activities related to the discourse of language politeness strategies should be seriously considered in constructing language educational instruction as the part of character buildings.*

**Key Words:** *language politeness, deficit, communication in education, character building*

### **A. Introduction**

Language as a social phenomenon has various function. One of them is the interpersonal function. This function can be seen from the communication activities of humans to maintain the integrity of social relations. In communication, speech acts are fortified by the norms of language in social life. Among these are politeness and formality of the language defined by relations of power and social distance between speaker and listener. The farther the distance of the relationship of the speaker and listener, the more formal and polite the expressions are expressed.

Over time, changes in the value of social life continue happening. This is happening in communication at least awakened in education. Changes that occur, either the changes are positives or negative, impact the students. Any changes that occur today can no longer be separated from the development of technology. The students' ability in observing the environment around them is one of the factors that determine the direction of communication development.

Rapid technological developments and its ability to influence the way students to communicate are likely to determine the direction of changes that are made in education, especially in Indonesia. Today, the implementation of education in Indonesia is more directed to the characters' building of the learners. It is based on a growing phenomenon, namely the emergence of indication that lead to the warning of moral values. One manifestation of this problem is a real form of communication ethics in the context of education.

The current trend is the decline of ethics in communication. One of the symptoms is the lack of attention to the hierarchy of communication in the educational community. For example, the statement submitted to the faculty when a student wants to consult the following: *Saya kan sudah datang kemarin ke sini, tapi Ibu tidak ada..* In performing speech acts, this student did not consider the level of formality relating to the status and position in conversation. In other words he has violated the maxim that causes the hearer (in this case the lecturer) feels uncomfortable. It might be more polite and more comfortable for the

listener when speech is replaced with: *Kemarin saya datang Bu. Kebetulan saya tidak ketemu Ibu. Mungkin Ibu ada kegiatan yang mendadak.*

Furthermore, this paper discusses the value of linguistic politeness of the students. The causes that allow the politeness impairment are also presented. Last, the paper will review the relevant language learning possibilities to restore the level of politeness among college students in particular and education in general.

As we know, an established communication, whether oral or written, carries messages that are the core of the communication itself. In addition, language is one way to communicate as a means of channeling ideas and messages to be delivered. Message delivery in a language does not only focus on the message content, but also the advanced elements of politeness which is one of the determinants of good and effective communication.

Theoretically, there are two main definitions of politeness. It can be interpreted as the use of different approaches and perspectives to look for a form of politeness. In a narrower context, politeness is defined as the choice of strategies used in communication to minimize discomfort of interlocutors (see Brown and Levinson, 1987). In this sense, politeness can be interpreted as an attempt to keep the other person's facial expressions so as not to bring up an unpleasant situation between the two parties. On the other hand, politeness can also be understood as a type of linguistic structures that express the speaker's attitude and the embodied meaning is pragmatic meanings (Held (2005: 134).

Furthermore, language politeness to maintain good relationships between parties involved in the communication. Therefore, politeness, in addition to shape and prioritize appropriate linguistic expressions, also involves attitudes in discourse, such as the initiation of the selection of topics according to the situation, the choice of means to communicate, the right words used are adapted to the context and the setting of word usage frequency (Usami: 2004). In short, the ability to communicate in the language refers to the function of language as a means of channeling the message, and making adjustments to the current situation and context.

Another thing that is very close to politeness is the norm and conventions of the language users. This is seen in the use of language strategies which are constructed in the interaction between the speaker and listener. A meaningful communication governed and constrained by norms that have become conventions of society with a particular culture. The convention becomes implied rules for each language user in the appropriate discourse in conveying ideas. Sustainability of effective communication and proper, according to Usami (2006b), is realized when speakers consider the various elements that there are people who are basically adapted to the cultural context. In other words, communication is built to have rules and restrictions that control the discourse patterns and options that are used according to the context and situation of the ongoing communication.

One form of consideration of the correct use of language conventions is appropriate greeting form in certain situations. The use of address, for example, in situations of formal and non-formal situations could be different for some people in certain environments. In addition, it also will determine the formality of address or lexical choice, and attitude in the use of such language is adapted to existing social norms.

Another equally important thing is a strategy in the use of language. As an act of politeness in the form of language, accuracy in choosing the language measures a person's ability to build positive interaction based on moral values and decency in society (Brown and Levinson, 1987). There are five levels of politeness according to the conditions and situation of the conversation that can serve as benchmarks why the most formal, formal, consultative, ordinary, and intimate.

In the interactional function of language, either directly or indirectly, politeness maxims must be noted. Three maxims of politeness proposed by Lakoff (1973) in Chapelle (2013) can be the guides to say saction. The first is not to impose the hearer with the speech act that will be delivered. The second is to give options to the listener. And the last is to provide comfort to the listener (Make (alter) feel good - be friendly). With this understanding of the maxims, politeness can be realized.

### B. Students' Language Politeness

Proficiency is determined not only from the content of the conversation, but also from various aspects of morality and norms prevailed in the society. All these elements form the basis for analyzing the failure in indicating a person's ability to communicate by embracing elements of politeness in today's education world. The selection of words are no longer in place and aimed at the wrong people, caused the formation of moral failures and politeness in communicating. Because of a lack of respect to elders have become commonpractice, one can just use the speech act that is intended for a peer to his teacher. Ironically this happened in the world of education.

In educational institutions, where the high caliber intellectual gathering, the speakers are assumed to be able to consider the various elements of communication, being able to select and use appropriate communication strategies to the context and discourse that are carried, including the element of politeness. In addition, they also understand the politeness factor influence on smooth communication on the various types of chosen means of communication.

The failure of the langauge skills' development that is based on politeness is not only happening in the educational environment at the middle to lower level, but also at the university level. Students' language skills in addressing the lecturer are very ironic considering that not only the students at undergraduate level but also students at postgraduate level, who most of them already have families, show weakness in politeness language.

From the discussions among lecturers in the UNP, especially in language courses, result many complaints about the attitude of the student in communicating, either directly or indirectly. Things that is often done by students is to send only a short message to lecturers when lecturing and consulting regarding of their final project. The following data are one type of speech act with a short message (SMS) addressed to a lecturer.

Among 27 data of speech acts which have been collected from the English Department lecturers, only three meet the criteria of politeness and the others tend to violate the norms of politeness in the speech act. Here are sample of data that violate the norms of politeness.

- (1) *Ms, ni X ms. Hr ini ada di jurusan ms?*
- (2) *Miss, kapan ada d kampus? Y mw mnta acc proposal. Thanks*

Data (1) and (2) are taken from different student addressed to the same lecturer. However, the strategy used to ask in no way reflect that of the speech delivered to the professor. If the speech (1) was fixed into *Blh X menemui Ibu hari ini di jurusan, Ms?* the lecturer will feel comfortable reading it. The in appropriate choice of words, make speech becomes less mannered and the lecturer felt uncomfortable with the written messages. It indicates that the closeness felt by the speaker is not in line with the lecturer. Normatively, the speaker has violated the maxim of convenience (Lakoff, 1973).

Slightly different from the data (1) and (2), the data (3) and (4) were taken from different student speech to the same lecturer intend to ask for help, but those two utterances impressed a command. Although it ended with thanks *Tq* on the data (4), the lecturer still felt

forced. In this case, the speech does not only violates the maxim of comfort politeness, **but also a maxim that is not burdensome**.

- (3) *Di mana bpk skrg? Saya perlu tanda tangan.*
- (4) *Pak J di mana skrg. Saya perlu diskusi, Tq.*
- (5) *Bu, saya Q. Ibu janji hari ini pukul 10 sy bisa ketemu Ibu. Saya sudah di kantor Ibu, tapi Ibu tidak ada. Sampai jam berapa sy tunggu Ibu.*

If we look at the data (5), this speech seems discredit by saying : *Saya sudah di kantor Ibu, tapi Ibu tidak ada.* It seems commanding the lecturer by saying : *Sampai jam berapa sy tunggu Ibu.* This clearly gives bad impression for the lecturer. In other words, the student has violated the maxim of acceptance (Chaer, 2010), where he should minimize the profits for himself.

The forms of the language used in a short message on top of being a very disturbing phenomenon given that the sentences used in the short message contains language that does not reflect the values of politeness. The sentence pattern used on above speech do not describe the proper use of language between a student to a lecturer. Based on symptoms that have reached alarming point, an analysis of the educational process taking place, both in the formal and non-formal education in the family, is the basis of moral education and the sustainability of this politeness. In other words, moral education and values of politeness should be one of the high priorities in the learners' development. As states by Dewey in Johnston (2003), the overall education is an education that is not only academically but also emphasizes the element of morality. Therefore, further attention to the learners' development of moral values and decency should be a top priority in today's education. To that end, this paper examines the possibility of the factors causing the waning of politeness and development of language learning as an alternative basis for the development of learners' moral values and decency.

### C. The possibility of the causes of the politeness decreasing

Information and Technology (IT) have undergone significant development. IT development directly or indirectly provides positive and negative effects in the development of language learners. The emergence of gadgets and various other technological tools, on one hand, can increase the English language skills of learners because most commands (instructions) are in English. In fact, there are learners who can communicate in English simply because accustomed to watching English programs shows / movies. However, on the other hand, these tools began to replace the function of communication that is usually done to build social interaction and relationships with others. Various technological sophistication begin to permeate the younger generation and drown the role and the importance of togetherness and social values in an environment. Technological developments that lead to these negative symptoms are exacerbated by the level of family members' business that drowned in a world of busy work.

Interactions within the family that should awaken in a harmony by spending time together to share stories disappear along with the decrease of both parents who are busy with their respective jobs. Family should be a place to start to understand and apply the elements of politeness and cultivation of moral values and no longer offers a reasonable social life. The role of the parents to provide interactions to family members through their ability to communicate politely is no longer existed. It can be seen from the experience of students who want to inform their parents about their success in school depicted in the following:

Anak : *Pa, gambar Abang dibilang bu guru bagus.*

Papa : *Humm, (terus memencet HPnya untuk menghubungi seseorang)*

Anak : *Papa. Ibu guru memuji Abang tadi.*

Papa : *Ah, Papa sibuk. (kesal karena telponnya tidak nyambung)*

The above examples, show that the father made student felt that he did not get a good response, even felt blamed. As a result, students tend to imitate the behavior of parents who speak curtly and rudely. This ofcourse brings negative impacts in the development of moral values and understanding of the social norms that are in the society. In turn, in revealing something, students speak without knowing the norms and politeness.

In the context of communication, a change in the model seen from the students in their environment is the basis of their attitude changes. Nothing can replace the function of communication in social relationships as the base of students' moral values and decency education. When it was discovered that the technology and the information can not be separated from everyday life, then integrating it with communication in the social life of the society becomes an effective way in instilling the values of politeness. Personal approach and environmental approach must be integrated with the use of various tools and electronic media and communications (see McKee, 1992).

This communication problem has not only been happening in the social environment in general. This phenomenon spread up to the level of formal education. The formation of a weak personality in family environment leads to low adoption of moral values and decency in a formal educational environment, including at the university level. Problems in educational institutions can be a factor in politeness decreasing. Among them, the educator who is currently busy with a load of work, led the opportunity for dialogue with students is reduced. Implementation of the program of activities of institutions that are likely not well planned and impressed round suddenly, causing the program discussion forum that has been agreed with the student becomes constrained. Due to the level of student faculty interaction is reduced, the discomfort in both participants appear. This leads to unhealthy communication that eventually led to a less polite language. Dialogue on the data (5), for example, implies dissatisfaction of students to lecturers. This is indeed a problem because on

one hand at the same time there is an appointment with the student, and on the other hand, suddenly, the lecturers have to attend an emergency meeting held by the institution.

The high degree of inaccuracy in the use of language in accordance with social norms requires that educators to develop politeness in communication. In relation to the function of forming students' moral, Johnston (2003) confirms the difference between "the teaching of morality" and "morality of teaching". Teaching of morality refers to moral teaching explicitly while teaching morality of an act of the teacher in the classroom who represents moral values. The interesting thing lies in the morality of teaching that emphasize the importance of reflection by the teacher in the classroom as a model that describes the moral values and decency that should be owned by the student.

The relationship developed between learners and educators are not only limited to communications that contain involves transferring the knowledge but also the values and norms of politeness that no one will build self learners. As stated by McLennan (2006):

*The students have spiritual and moral expectations of the teacher, at the same time with the expectations of their intellectual development; the teachers must teach, not just transmit knowledge. All these aside, the teacher must maintain the integrity of the taught discipline; the teacher must encourage his students to learn how to adopt an ethical attitude, periodically revised in the light of critical reflection and life experience; As the goal of the university is not just to transmit knowledge but also "to help students to developing their intellectual capacity – not just career-wise – but also for their participation in family life and politic field."*

This confirms that the task of the educator is not only related to the delivery of knowledge, but also develops an agent task instill moral values and decency for learners. Planting the value can be tested by language learning techniques in shaping communication skills which are based on the values of politeness, especially in education. This is in line with what is described by Johnston (2003) who states that educators are forming a moral agent; therefore the teacher or lecturer plays an important role in the moral development of students.

#### **D. Language Learning Development**

Based on the experience and data obtained in the field, the development of language learning that emphasizes on personality formation and cultivation of politeness can not be suspended again. Based on the collected data, the indicator internalized that the value of politeness in language still must be addressed. Learning a language tends to investigate the language and its use, both Indonesian and English as a foreign language. It had not seen fully integrating the values of politeness in speech acts in a short message.

Given that language is a means to convey the message in communication, language learning strategies should prioritize the form and language that includes moral values and decency. Johnston (2003) states that there are differences in language learning model with elements of politeness between the teaching of morality and the morality of teaching. The first is learning about the values of politeness. The development of language as a form of politeness implementations can be applied through the moral teaching as a learning. Here, the teacher / lecturer invites learners to create in real activity, for example, creating a slogan that contains the values of decency and morality.

Thus, in the learning process, all components of language teaching and moral values and decency is integrated in the educational process in general (Jackson in Johnston, 2003).

He suggests three ways of applying morality of language learning in the classroom, the rules in the classroom, the structured learning programs, and expressive morality.

The rules that have been prepared by applying implemented through a commitment of teachers / lecturers and learners so that all being within the boundaries and corridors are set together. One example is the regulation that governs the class on how to ask questions, to provide feedback, and to give arguments in polite language when participating in classroom activities.

A structured language learning program is an activity most associated with increased language politeness. Four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing, can be applied through a variety of text types. All types of text (genre) have different social functions with the contents of particular social norms that aim at creating language politeness. Learning with topics selected by the constructive learning techniques designed to be applied directly learner skills are planned. Thus, the internalization of social norms in language skills can be achieved. This is in line with Jackson in Johnston (2003) comprises "*conditions that operate to sustain and facilitate every teaching session in every school in every subject within the curriculum*".

Furthermore, the application of expressive morality performed through implicit action, but by disclosing what is right and wrong, leads to an understanding of what is good and what is bad. This is done through oral language educators and actions, gestures, facial expressions even seat rules in preparing learners. Educators in demonstrating exemplary efforts in using polite language indicated in the educational process are an activity that needs to be considered.

From the explanation above, it is envisaged that educators play a major role in shaping a common opinion in the classroom by demonstrating that each activity undertaken in the classroom is not only aimed at academic achievement alone, but also leads to agreement for mutual understanding, mutual respect and be friendly between the individual to another. This opportunity is intentionally formed through a process conducted continuously educators in every meeting and learning process in the classroom.

In terms of language ability, involving the planting of politeness as an indicator of good communication can also be done by applying the morality of teaching (Johnston, 2003). The values of decency need to be implanted as early as possible because this requires a process that emphasizes modeling and real implementation in everyday life.

## CONCLUSION

Language acts as a means of determining the relationship of human social communication. Social and cultural norms which are internalized in the use of language are crucial smoothness of communication in society by relying on linguistic politeness. From time to time in line with changes in the social order, in this case the fields of education, the perceived value of linguistic politeness have faded. This is thought to be caused by globalization, which allows one to communicate with the use of advanced technology products. In addition, individual activities are very varied in their respective jobs, both in the family and in educational institutions led to the disruption of social relationships between individuals so that the interaction is less well implemented. Even if there is a communication, often perceivability violates the rule of politeness.

Dealing with this problem, the teachers / lecturers / instructors need to improve language learning strategies. At least, there are three things to consider, namely the rules in the classroom, learning programs are academically structured, and expressive morality. In designing programs that polite language learning activities, the integration of social norms and culture of the language through the appropriate genre is one of the ways suggested. By

designing a program of language learning activities based on the three components above, and with appropriate learning techniques, it is expected to minimize bleeding over politeness.

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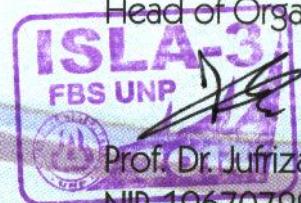
International Seminar on Languages and Arts (ISLA)-3

with the theme "Character Building through Language, Culture, Art, and Their Learning", held by Faculty of Languages and Arts, State University of Padang on October 17 - 18, 2014 in Padang, Indonesia  
as

## Keynote Speaker



Prof. Dr. M. Zaim, M.Hum.  
NIP. 19610321.198602.1.001



Padang, October 18, 2014  
Head of Organizing Committee,  
Prof. Dr. Jufrizal, M.Hum.  
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