



## Students Politeness in Academic Interactions at Higher Education Institutions

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### ABSTRACT

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This study aims to describe the forms of politeness in language used by students in academic interactions at STAI Syekh Abdur Rauf Aceh Singkil and the influencing factors. The research method employed is descriptive qualitative with data collection techniques including observation, interviews, and document studies. The results show that students generally apply principles of politeness in direct communication with lecturers and peers, such as using polite address terms, expressions of permission, and structured communication. However, in digital and informal communication, some violations of politeness maxims were found, including the use of brief, informal language and the absence of opening and closing greetings. Students' politeness is influenced by Islamic values taught on campus, lecturers' role modeling, and the students' social environment. These findings suggest the need for the integration of communication ethics education into the curriculum and the development of academic communication guidelines, particularly for digital platforms. Consequently, a culture of polite academic communication can be sustainably nurtured and contribute to a harmonious and productive academic climate.

*Language Politeness, Students, Academic Interaction, Academic Communication, STAI Syekh Abdur Rauf.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Language is a primary tool for communication that not only conveys information but also reflects the speaker's attitude and social values. In the academic context, polite language use is an important indicator for building harmonious relationships between students and lecturers, as well as among fellow students. Politeness in language reflects the speaker's maturity, ethics, and understanding of the social norms prevailing in higher education environments (Rahim, 2023).

Politeness in academic interactions not only serves to maintain communication harmony but also reflects the character and integrity of

individuals. Students who can communicate politely demonstrate good social adaptability and appreciation for academic values. Conversely, lack of politeness may lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, and even disruption in the learning process.

The principles of politeness in language have been widely studied in the field of pragmatics. Leech (2015) proposed six politeness maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. Applying these maxims in academic interactions can enhance communication effectiveness and strengthen interpersonal relationships on campus (Leech, 2015).

Research by Cahyani and Rokhman (2017) showed that students at Universitas Tidar tend to adhere to politeness maxims in academic interactions, particularly the maxims of tact and agreement. This indicates that language politeness is an integral part of a healthy and productive academic culture (Cahyani & Rokhman, 2017).

However, not all higher education institutions exhibit the same level of language politeness. Factors such as cultural background, social environment, and institutional policies can influence how students communicate. Therefore, it is important to examine language politeness in specific contexts, such as at STAI Syekh Abdur Rauf Aceh Singkil.

As the first Islamic higher education institution in Aceh Singkil, STAI Syekh Abdur Rauf plays a significant role in shaping students' character and ethics through value-based Islamic education. With a vision as a center for the study and development of Islamic sciences, this institution emphasizes the importance of politeness in all aspects of academic life.

At STAI Syekh Abdur Rauf, politeness in language is not only viewed from a pragmatic perspective but also as part of *adab* and *akhlaq* (Islamic etiquette and morals) taught in Islam. This is in line with Rahim's (2023) study which highlights the importance of politeness in student-lecturer communication on social media, reflecting Islamic values in language use (Rahim, 2023).

A study by Jauhari (2024) at STIT NU Al-Mahsuni Lombok Timur also found that students' language politeness is influenced by their understanding of religious values and local culture. This affirms that religious and cultural contexts play an important role in shaping polite communication patterns in academic settings (Jauhari, 2024).

Additionally, a study by Kadir (2024) at Universitas Riau revealed that students' politeness can be strengthened through learning that emphasizes character values and communication ethics. The integration of academic

learning and character development is key to creating a polite and effective communication environment (Kadir, 2024).

Nevertheless, challenges remain in consistently applying politeness in academic communication. The development of technology and social media, for instance, can influence the way students communicate, often disregarding politeness norms. Hence, an adaptive and contextual approach is needed to foster politeness among students.

In an effort to understand and enhance students' language politeness at STAI Syekh Abdur Rauf Aceh Singkil, this study aims to identify the forms of politeness used in academic interactions and the influencing factors. It is expected to contribute to the development of learning strategies and institutional policies that support polite and effective communication.

The research method used in this study is a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collection techniques including observation, interviews, and document analysis. The data obtained will be analyzed based on the theory of politeness proposed by Leech (2015), and adapted to the Islamic context that underpins the values at STAI Syekh Abdur Rauf (Leech, 2015).

The results of this study are expected to provide a clear picture of the practice of polite language use in the environment of STAI Syekh Abdur Rauf Aceh Singkil, and to serve as a reference for other institutions in developing a culture of polite and ethical communication in academic settings.

## **RESEARCH METHODE**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at describing the forms of students' polite language used in academic interactions at STAI Syekh Abdur Rauf Aceh Singkil. This approach was chosen as it is suitable for exploring complex social and linguistic phenomena through in-depth analysis of qualitative data (Moleong, 2016)

The data sources in this study are students' utterances occurring in academic interactions, both oral and written. Data were collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation involved recording student interactions during lectures, group discussions, and communication with lecturers. Interviews were conducted to explore students' understanding of language politeness, while documentation involved analyzing written messages such as academic emails and social media conversations (Astri et al., 2024)

During data collection, the researcher used listening, note-taking, and recording techniques to ensure accuracy of the data obtained. The listening technique was used for directly observing language use in academic

interactions, while note-taking and recording were employed to document relevant data for further analysis (Rahim, 2023)

Data analysis was carried out using Leech's (2015) theory of politeness, which includes six maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. The collected data were analyzed by identifying and classifying student utterances according to these maxims. The analysis process involved data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 2014)

To ensure data validity, this study employed source and method triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data from observation, interviews, and documentation, while method triangulation involved using various data collection techniques to reduce bias and increase the validity of research findings (Purnama et al., 2024)

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Observations in several classrooms and academic activities at STAI Syekh Abdur Rauf revealed that, in general, students exhibit politeness when interacting with lecturers. This is evident from the use of respectful forms of address such as "Ustaz/Ustazah", "Sir/Madam", and polite expressions like "permission to ask" and "excuse me, I would like to say something". These forms of politeness reflect respect for the lecturers' roles and positions within the academic structure.

In student-to-student interactions, the observations showed varied language use. In group discussions, some students demonstrated politeness by not interrupting others and showing appreciation for their peers' opinions with phrases such as "I agree, but what if...". However, there were also students who paid less attention to the maxims of agreement and tact, for example, by disagreeing in a loud tone or not giving their peers space to express ideas.

Interviews with five lecturers indicated that they felt appreciated when students used polite language, maintained appropriate tone, and used formal language in academic communication. One lecturer stated, "There is a clear difference between students who understand *adab* and those who don't. Polite students are more easily accepted in academic communication and are easier to guide."

Conversely, several lecturers complained about students' tendency to use abbreviated and casual language in digital communication, such as WhatsApp or academic emails. For example, a student might write "sir, submitting the assignment yaa" without any greeting or closing. This reflects a lack of understanding of proper digital academic communication norms.

From interviews with students, most expressed awareness of the importance of using polite language, especially toward lecturers. One student said, "I usually open with a greeting and then state my purpose formally. I know it's important to keep communication smooth." This indicates the presence of normative awareness instilled since the early stages of their academic journey.

However, the interviews also revealed that not all students received specific guidance regarding language etiquette in academic settings. Some admitted that they learned from observing others or imitating peers. This highlights the need to strengthen communication ethics education through coursework or dedicated training programs.

Documentation of email and chat messages between students and lecturers revealed varying levels of politeness. Some messages followed complete structures, including greetings, self-identification, the core message, and closing. However, there were still messages that jumped straight to the point without a greeting, or used informal language that was inappropriate for academic contexts.

In students' written discussions on the e-learning platform, there was a positive trend in the use of polite expressions such as "permission to respond," "in my opinion," and "I really appreciate my peer's opinion." This indicates that in more structured discussion settings, students are more mindful about maintaining politeness.

The results of observation and documentation also showed that students tend to maintain politeness more in formal or monitored communications (such as class discussions or official group chats). In contrast, in informal or unmonitored settings, such as personal chats or unofficial groups, levels of politeness tended to decline. This points to the need for continuous guidance across all communication channels.

Overall, it can be concluded that the level of language politeness among students at STAI Syekh Abdur Rauf is generally good in formal settings and direct interactions with lecturers. However, in informal and digital communication spaces, violations of politeness principles still occur. Students are beginning to develop awareness of communication ethics, but systematic reinforcement is still necessary.

These findings underscore the importance of integrating politeness values into learning—both directly through the curriculum and indirectly through lecturer role models. Thus, language politeness is not only a social norm but also a vital part of the academic culture that must be nurtured and preserved.

## Discussion

The research findings indicate that students at STAI Syekh Abdur Rauf Aceh Singkil generally apply politeness principles in academic interactions, both with lecturers and fellow students. This aligns with findings from Cahyani and Rokhman (2017), who reported that students at Universitas Tidar tend to adhere to politeness maxims, especially tact and agreement (Cahyani & Rokhman, 2017)

In interactions with lecturers, students often use polite expressions such as “permission to ask,” “sorry,” and “thank you,” which reflect the application of the maxims of tact and approbation. These expressions indicate respect for authority and a desire to maintain harmonious relationships in academic settings (Astri et al., 2024).

However, in digital communication via platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram, some students were found to violate politeness principles. They used overly casual or informal language, such as abbreviations or omitting greetings. This suggests that awareness of politeness in digital communication still needs improvement (Rahim, 2023).

In peer interactions, especially during group discussions, most students practiced the maxims of agreement and sympathy by listening to opinions, offering support, and avoiding direct confrontation. Nonetheless, some instances showed students disregarding these principles by interrupting or responding with a harsh tone (Kadir, 2024).

The implementation of politeness principles is also influenced by the cultural background and Islamic values taught at STAI Syekh Abdur Rauf. In Islam, *adab* and *akhlaq* in communication are highly emphasized, making students more aware of the importance of speaking politely (Jauhari, 2024).

Lecturers at STAI Syekh Abdur Rauf also play a crucial role in developing students’ awareness of language politeness. Through role modeling and guidance, they instill politeness values in their students. This supports the findings of Sudrajat et al. (2022), who stated that lecturers consistently practicing politeness can positively influence student behavior (Sudrajat et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, challenges remain in consistently implementing politeness, particularly in informal and digital communication. Technological developments and shifting communication styles among younger generations affect how students interact, making adaptive strategies essential for fostering politeness (Rahim, 2023).

To address these challenges, institutions need to integrate language politeness education into the curriculum—for example, through courses on

communication ethics or special training sessions. This will help students understand and apply politeness principles in various communication contexts (Astri et al., 2024).

In addition, institutions should provide clear guidelines or communication codes of conduct, especially concerning the use of social media and digital platforms. These guidelines can help students understand the norms and boundaries in academic communication (Kadir, 2024).

Technology can also be utilized to support politeness education, such as through learning apps or interactive online modules. With the right approach, students will find it easier to understand and apply politeness principles in daily life.

Evaluation and feedback from lecturers are also essential in fostering students' polite language use. Lecturers can offer constructive feedback on how students communicate, both verbally and in writing, to help them improve their language skills (Sudrajat et al., 2022).

In general, students at STAI Syekh Abdur Rauf Aceh Singkil show a positive trend in language politeness, especially in formal contexts and direct interactions with lecturers. However, continuous efforts are needed to raise awareness and consistency in applying politeness principles, particularly in informal and digital communication.

With a holistic and collaborative approach involving the institution, lecturers, and students, it is expected that a culture of polite and ethical communication will continue to develop and become an integral part of academic life at STAI Syekh Abdur Rauf Aceh Singkil.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of observation, interviews, and document analysis, it can be concluded that students at STAI Syekh Abdur Rauf Aceh Singkil generally exhibit polite language use in academic interactions, particularly in direct communication with lecturers and within formal discussion forums. They apply politeness principles such as tact, agreement, and approbation, reflected in their use of respectful language, communication etiquette, and appreciation for conversation partners. This is closely tied to the influence of Islamic values and strong local culture within the campus environment.

However, in informal and digital communication contexts – such as social media and messaging apps – there are notable violations of politeness principles, indicating that students' understanding of academic communication ethics still needs strengthening. Therefore, more systematic and continuous efforts are necessary, including the integration of politeness values into the

curriculum, lecturer role modeling, and the development of official communication guidelines, to ensure that polite academic communication becomes consistently embedded and preserved.

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