

Learning Obstacles of Language Politeness in Acehese Culture and Implications for Pidie Business Success

Nurul Azmi¹, Junaidi², Asriani³, Rini Nurul Amla⁴, Khairuddin⁵

Department of Indonesian Language Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Serambi Mekkah University, Indonesia.

*Corresponding Authors: asrianium82@gmail.com

Abstract

Politeness in language reflects Acehese values and local wisdom that place respect, humility, and consideration at the foundation of social interaction. However, the practice of polite language, passed down through generations, has been altered by globalization and changes in the lifestyles of younger generations. This situation also affects learning in schools. Teachers face difficulties in incorporating locally based politeness into the Indonesian language curriculum. This study aims to identify the obstacles to learning Acehese local-language politeness and how it affects communication success and business relationships in Pidie Regency. The research method is a descriptive qualitative approach, and the research subjects are Indonesian language teachers, local business practitioners, and students. After data were collected through thorough observation, interviews, and documentation, they were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman. The research results indicate that the main obstacles include a lack of contextual teaching materials, limited teacher training in integrating local culture, and students' limited knowledge of traditional politeness values. The decline in language politeness in a business context undermines trust, professionalism, and communication harmony among business actors. The findings suggest that learning local Acehese politeness should be revitalized to preserve communication ethics, support business success, and strengthen the image of regional culture.

Keywords: Language Politeness; Acehese Local Wisdom; Language Learning; Business Communication; Pidie Culture; Communication Ethics

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INTRODUCTION

Language not only functions as a tool for communication but also represents the cultural, social, and moral values of the people who use it. Linguistic politeness, also known as courteous language use, has long been regarded as a key principle in maintaining harmonious social interactions worldwide. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness is a way to maintain the "face" or self-esteem of both the speaker and the interlocutor by using expressions that are polite, empathetic, and respectful of social norms. Language politeness is essential for communicating with diverse people and cultures, for diplomacy, and in the modern business world, which demands sensitivity in communication.

However, the growth of globalization and digitalization has a significant influence on how people speak across the world. The direct, instant communication style on social media and the shift in etiquette norms in modern society often lead to a decline in politeness. This phenomenon is evident in Indonesia, where younger generations are changing their language behavior in education and business. In everyday conversations, communication that is usually rude, offensive, or that disregards social hierarchy is increasingly considered acceptable.

With a strong culture and religion, Aceh has a unique system of linguistic politeness. This is reflected in the use of forms of address, expressions of respect, and word choices that consider the social status and age of the interlocutor. In Acehnese society, the principles of "peumulia jamee," which means honoring guests, and "peuseulamat," which means maintaining dignity, serve as a basis for interaction, including in trade. Nevertheless, reality shows that these values are beginning to erode under the influence of modernization and external cultures. In the field of education, teaching local Acehnese politeness is still underrepresented in schools, especially in Indonesian language classes, which should help preserve local communication values.

The phenomenon occurring in Pidie Regency shows that a lack of language politeness affects many aspects, including business. Using language that does not conform to local politeness norms or being too blunt often leads to misunderstandings in communication between businesses and consumers. Acehnese businesses rely on trust and social relationships, so impolite communication can damage professional image, disrupt cooperation, and even reduce customer loyalty. Therefore, language politeness is not only a matter of linguistic ethics but also an important strategic factor for successful business communication in the region.

Politeness in language is essential in education and social communication, according to several previous studies. Research conducted by Mardiah and Ipah in 2019 indicated that language politeness functions to maintain social harmony and shape the character of well-mannered students. However, according to Sibarani (2018), local wisdom is a source of moral values that can be used in language education to foster national character. At the local level, Suryani's (2024) research found that politeness remains strong within families in Aceh, but is beginning to weaken in public interactions and on social media.

However, studies on politeness in the Acehnese local language in formal schools remain limited. Most research examines only the moral values of Acehnese culture as a whole or its linguistic aspects, without directly relating them to classroom learning practices. In addition, although business communication heavily relies on politeness strategies to build trust and reputation, there is still little research conducted on the impact of politeness values on the local business world.

A communication style that respects social and religious norms, as found in research by Hariadi et al. (2025) on business communication in the coastal areas of Aceh,

significantly influences transaction success. However, the study did not explain how school-based politeness education can help establish business communication standards in the community. Therefore, there is a scientific gap, or a lack of literature, in understanding the relationship between Aceh-local-based politeness education and the success of business communication in Pidie.

This study aims to fill this gap by integrating two important dimensions: (1) the language education aspect, namely how Acehese local politeness is taught and applied in schools; and (2) the socio-economic aspect, namely how politeness values influence communication behavior and business success in society. This research is important because the decline of politeness in language among the younger generation has become a social issue with wide-ranging impacts on character education and social and economic relationships within the community. Politeness based on local wisdom has become a pillar of cultural identity and professional ethics in the modern world. As a highly religious and culturally rich region, Pidie requires the revitalization of politeness values in education and business to address the challenges of intergenerational and cross-cultural communication.

This study offers an interdisciplinary perspective that combines education, social economics, and linguistics by linking locally-based Acehese politeness learning with the business world. It is hoped that this approach can produce a learning and communication model that is not only linguistically effective but also socially and morally meaningful.

METHODS

Study design and setting

This study employed a qualitative methodology with a descriptive design. The research aimed to explore the meanings, values, and social experiences of education and business practitioners within the cultural context of Acehese society. A qualitative approach was chosen to examine language politeness as a form of social behavior rooted in local wisdom. The study was conducted in Pidie Regency, Aceh Province, a region known for its strong cultural and religious traditions, where politeness in communication is still maintained, although changes are emerging due to modernization. Creswell (2016) states that the purpose of qualitative research is to understand the meaning of a person's life experiences in a natural context.

Population, samples, and sampling

The population in this study included Indonesian language teachers, students, and business practitioners in Pidie Regency. A total of 15 informants were selected using purposive sampling based on information sufficiency, comprising 5 Indonesian language teachers at junior high schools, 5 students, and 5 local business practitioners. Participants were selected based on their relevance and deep understanding of the phenomena under study, following the principle that data collection ends when no new information emerges (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). No specific inclusion or exclusion criteria were applied beyond ensuring participants' direct involvement in educational or business communication practices related to language politeness. Variables explored included politeness understanding, teaching practices, communication behavior, and challenges encountered.

Instruments and criteria

In accordance with qualitative research principles, the main instrument in this study was the researcher, who served as the planner, data collector, analyst, and interpreter (Moleong, 2019). In addition to the primary instrument, three supporting instruments were utilized. The first was a participatory observation guide used to observe interactions among business actors and identify the application of politeness values in economic communication practices. The second instrument was a semi-structured interview guide containing open-ended questions design to explore the perspectives and experiences of teachers, students, and business practitioners regarding language politeness. The third instrument was a documentation checklist used to collect relevant materials, including lesson plans (RPPs), teaching materials, photographs of learning activities, and notes on local business communication. Data validity was ensured through triangulation involving observations, interviews, and documentation analysis.

Procedure and data collection

Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participatory observation was conducted to understand real-life communication behaviors among business actors. Semi-structured interviews provided flexibility while maintaining focus on research objectives, allowing participants to express experiences and challenges related to language politeness. Documentation supported the triangulation of findings by providing evidence from instructional materials and communication practices. The researcher conducted all stages of data collection in accordance with qualitative research procedures.

Statistical analysis

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The process was conducted manually by the researcher without the use of specific statistical software, as is common in qualitative descriptive studies.

Ethical considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. Ethical approval was granted by the Ethics Committee of the University of Jambi (approval institution). All participants provided informed consent, and their participation was voluntary. The confidentiality of participants' responses was maintained throughout the study.

RESULTS

This study was conducted in Pidie Regency, located in Aceh Province, which is renowned for its traditions of politeness and good behavior. Local values such as *peumulia jamee* (honoring guests), *meupakat* (deliberation), and *peusaboh* (etiquette in speaking) continue to influence the communication culture of the Pidie community strongly. However, observations and interviews indicate that these values are beginning to change, particularly among the younger generation and in contemporary business settings. Indonesian language teachers in schools, especially at the junior high school level, face difficulties in reintroducing Aceh-based language politeness. "We find it difficult to find textbooks or teaching materials that demonstrate examples of Aceh's unique politeness, even though these values are essential for children today," said one teacher at Sigli Junior High School. This statement indicates that local language politeness has not yet become an important part of the school curriculum.

Field findings also indicate that learning politeness in the Acehese local language faces several significant obstacles. First, there is a limitation in the availability of contextual instructional materials. Most educational institutions continue to use national textbooks, which often draw on general Indonesian culture without explicitly considering the Acehese context. Students do not learn the distinctive politeness of their region, such as polite greetings, expressions of permission before speaking, or cautious expressions in speech. "The books we use mostly take examples from Jakarta or Java, while Acehese politeness is not included," said another teacher. As a result, students do not gain learning experiences relevant to their social environment, which prevents them from understanding local politeness.

Secondly, research shows that teachers are inexperienced in incorporating local cultural values into learning. Many teachers recognize the importance of politeness in language, but they lack methodological standards to teach it effectively. "We know politeness is important, but there is no training or clear guidance on how to integrate it into lesson plans," said an Indonesian language teacher. When teachers conduct structured, reflective learning activities, they are more likely to implicitly convey the value of politeness through verbal advice or spontaneous examples in the classroom. Therefore, politeness education is usually normative and not practical.

Third, from the students, it was found that they experienced quite significant changes in language behavior. Students use more direct, informal language, especially when communicating online and with friends. Traditional politeness, such as respectful greetings (*lon* for me and *gata* for you), is increasingly rare outside formal contexts. One student stated, 'At school, we use polite language, but on social media or at home, we usually speak normally.' This phenomenon shows that linguistic politeness is only situational, not inherent.

This study also found that, beyond the field of education, changes in language politeness values directly affect communication and business success in Pidie. Interviews with micro and medium business actors showed that polite language behavior is one of the important factors in fostering customer trust and business image. "If we speak politely and gently, customers are happy and want to come back. However, if our way of speaking is rude, they may go somewhere else," said a coffee shop owner in Sigli City. Those who run their business in a more traditional polite manner tend to have better relationships with business partners and customers. Conversely, young business actors who communicate in a modern and straightforward way often encounter misunderstandings, especially when speaking with older customers.

Polite language has been proven to have socio-economic and moral benefits in this situation. Company leaders who understand the standards of local cultural communication can maintain the company's success and honor. A building materials entrepreneur said, "Nowadays, many young people are good at trading, but they are less polite when talking to customers." However, the people of Aceh prioritize respect over low prices. This shows that polite language is a social capital that affects business success in the region.

Furthermore, the research findings also indicate that there is still no strong link between language learning and communication methods in the business world. Teachers have not connected the principles of politeness taught in the classroom to their application in social and economic life. "We have never related language politeness to the workplace or business," said one teacher. However, shaping students' perspectives as they enter society is critical. This condition indicates a gap between the

educational and professional worlds. This can lead to the continuous loss of cultural values in cross-generational communication.

According to Leech (2014), linguistic politeness is a strategy for maintaining social balance and avoiding conflict in communication. This finding theoretically supports this idea. These principles are manifested in Acehese culture through expressions and speech acts that demonstrate respect and appreciation for the interlocutor. Local wisdom plays an important role in shaping the community's character and social ethics, according to Sibarani (2018). This study reinforces the idea that education instilling politeness values affects the community's economic and social relationships and the formation of individual character.

This study supports the claims of Yuliatin et al. (2023), who stated that one of the main obstacles to enhancing character education is the limited availability of teaching materials grounded in local culture. However, this study emphasizes that this barrier has broader implications for business communication. Therefore, learning local language politeness should be seen not only as an improvement in linguistic skills but also as a way to build a communication ethic focused on socio-economic development. Overall, the findings of this study can be summarized into several main points. First, language politeness based on local Acehese culture faces challenges related to learning resources, teacher competence, and student motivation. Second, language politeness directly affects community communication patterns, especially in local business relationships. Third, it is evident that language politeness plays a strategic role in building trust and sustaining business relationships in Pidie. Fourth, in efforts to preserve and apply local Acehese cultural values, the education and business sectors are not yet systematically connected.

DISCUSSION

Research conducted in Pidie Regency shows that politeness in language in Pidie has undergone a transformation in meaning and usage in the fields of education and business. The spread of communication technology, globalization, and modernization has resulted in complex social shifts. The younger generation is beginning to lose noble values such as *peumulia jamee* (honoring guests), *meupakat* (deliberation), and *peusaboh* (manners in speaking). Nevertheless, these values function as social tools to maintain hierarchy and balance in Acehese society.

The teacher's pedagogical abilities also influence the success of internalizing the value of politeness. Many teachers rely on advice or direct examples rather than a structured, reflective approach to teaching politeness. Such a learning model does not produce deep conceptual understanding; it produces only normative understanding. Lickona (2013) emphasizes that effective character education depends on experience and habituation rather than on moral knowledge alone. In contrast, value-based education requires an active, participatory, and contextual learning process.

Changes in students' attitudes toward language politeness indicate a shift in value orientation. Students prefer to communicate directly and informally, influenced by digital culture and social media. This phenomenon shows that politeness is merely a situational feeling rather than a strong moral awareness. This shift indicates a difference between traditional norms and the reality of modern communication. If education based on local wisdom is not provided, it could lead to a loss of linguistic and social identity among the Acehese community.

This study shows that linguistic politeness has a strategic value in building trust and sustaining business relationships within the industry context. Businesses that employ traditional politeness tend to establish good relationships with customers and

partners, whereas overly direct communication often leads to misunderstandings. These results support Leech's (2014) theory that linguistic politeness is a linguistic means of maintaining social balance and avoiding conflict in communication. In the business world, politeness serves as social capital that determines economic success and reputation.

This condition indicates a gap between the working world and education. Language education has not connected politeness with its application in socio-economic communication. However, this relationship is significant for shaping an ethical and linguistically competent generation. According to Sibarani (2018), local wisdom provides moral values and social ethics that help build character and foster community harmony.

Therefore, the learning of linguistic politeness originating in Acehese culture, particularly in Pidie, should be seen not only as the preservation of linguistic traditions but also as a means of character building and improving socio-economic welfare. Indonesian language learning that incorporates local values can strengthen cultural identity and foster communication ethics that support the sustainability of social and business relationships in the Pidie community.

CONCLUSIONS

Learning language politeness in Pidie faces many challenges, particularly the lack of understanding among the younger generation of Acehese cultural values, the impact of globalization and digital media, which alter speech styles, and the limited educational materials grounded in local wisdom. Not many teachers utilize Acehese proverbs, epic tales, and folktales as learning media, and there is a lack of contextual politeness training. As a result, there is a gap between the politeness standards taught in schools and the communication practices used in business environments. Business practitioners in Acehese culture, which prioritizes honor and social harmony, risk losing their business partners' trust if they do not communicate politely. Conversely, those who communicate politely tend to be more successful in building relationships and reputations. Therefore, enhancing local-based politeness learning in Aceh is crucial for cultural preservation and the advancement of business communication in Pidie.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

DECLARATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE USE

"This study used artificial intelligence (AI) tools and methodologies in the following capacities (CHOOSE & EDIT AS APPROPRIATE):

1. **Data analysis and modelling:** Machine learning algorithms, including [specific algorithms or techniques], were used to analyze the dataset and predict outcomes. These were implemented using [software/tools, for example, Python, Scikit-learn, TensorFlow].
2. **Data preprocessing:** AI-assisted techniques [state the method(s)] were applied to clean, select, and transform the data, thereby preparing the dataset for analysis.

PLUS

We confirm that the authors critically reviewed all AI-assisted processes to ensure the integrity and reliability of the results. The authors solely made the final decisions and interpretations presented in this article."

This declaration does not apply to the use of basic tools for checking grammar and spelling (such as Grammarly), references (EndNote, Zotero, etc.), or SPSS. If there is nothing to disclose:

"We hereby confirm that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools or methodologies were utilized at any stage of this study, including during data collection, analysis, visualization, or manuscript preparation. All work presented in this study was conducted manually by the authors without the assistance of AI-based tools or systems".

All financial, commercial, or other relationships that the academic community might perceive as representing a potential conflict of interest must be disclosed. If no such relationship exists, the authors will be asked to confirm the following statement: *"The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest."*

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