



## Language Politeness in Javanese and Sundanese Border Cultural Landscapes in Elementary School Student Learning

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**Abstract:** Language politeness plays a crucial role in maintaining harmony and effectiveness of communication, especially for elementary school students in cultural border areas. This study aims to understand the application of language politeness in the elementary education environment in the Java-Sunda border area. This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive phenomenological approach to describe the phenomenon of language politeness in learning in grade 5 of SD Negeri Waringinsari and SD Negeri Bener. Data were collected through observation and recording of oral speech between students and teachers during the learning process, which were then analyzed using interactive data analysis techniques. The results showed that the principles of language politeness, formulated by Geoffrey Leech, were well applied by teachers and students in classroom interactions. Applying the principles of proverbs, Wisdom, Generosity, Respect, Simplicity, Agreement, and Sympathy proved effective in creating an inclusive and harmonious learning environment. In addition, the use of mixed language between Indonesian and local languages in classroom communication reflects adaptation to the local cultural context, which helps strengthen the emotional connection between teachers and students. Language politeness is important to maintain effective communication, build positive social relationships, and prevent conflicts that may arise due to cultural differences.

**Keywords:** border culture; elementary education; inclusive education; language politeness; multicultural communication

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### INTRODUCTION

Language is an essential aspect of human interaction, especially in Indonesia, which is rich in culture (Putri & Nugraheni, 2020; Utomo et al., 2024). By maintaining politeness in speech, communication and interaction can occur more effectively because it is based on ethics and sensitivity to individual feelings (Foolen, 2011; Leech, 2014; Susandi et al., 2024). Language, as a fundamental communication tool, not only conveys messages that reflect one's desires and emotions to the receiver but is also closely related to the level of politeness in communication (Giora & Haugh, 2017). Therefore, conveying messages and expressions in language, including expressions and gestures, must be adjusted to good and correct language rules to ensure effective and polite communication. The importance of language politeness becomes even more significant in the context of elementary education, where the application of the principles of politeness in language is crucial for children of elementary school age, especially those in the age range of 10 to 12 years (Hartini et al., 2023; Magliacane, 2019). At this age, children begin to develop more complex language skills and tend to imitate the way adults apply pragmatic rules, such as thanking or apologizing (Andriyani et al., 2022; Hieda et al., 2022; Mudiono, 2022). Therefore, developing polite language skills is crucial in shaping children's pragmatic abilities in their social environment, especially in border areas with significant cultural and linguistic diversity.

One interesting location to study is the Java-Sunda border area, especially in the southern border area, precisely along the Banjar-Cilacap area, which is an area of language and cultural transition (Putri & Nugraheni, 2020). For example, in the Langensari sub-district, people are generally bilingual. There are also bilingual communities in western areas, such as Majenang, Karangpucung, Patimuan, and Cimanggu. Most of the population does not understand Javanese in the Dayeuhluhur Sub-district, which is administratively located in Cilacap Regency, Central Java (Putri et al., 2021). People in these border areas' social and cultural uniqueness lies in their distinctive mindset, which is directly related to how they communicate and apply language politeness. This region's social, cultural, and economic factors play an important role in determining the level of language politeness, affecting overall social behaviors (Rivai et al., 2021; Wati, 2023). The level of language politeness in social interactions also significantly impacts communication dynamics within the family environment, which then influences the use of language by family members, including children. However, on the other hand, these cultural and linguistic differences can potentially cause various complex problems. One issue that often arises is disagreement between linguistically and culturally different groups, which can lead to stereotypes and prejudice

(Pan et al., 2023; Wildan et al., 2024). Identity issues are also highlighted, where individuals or groups often feel pressured to adapt to different cultural norms or have difficulty defining their identity amidst the diversity of existing cultural identities (Dzikowska et al., 2023). A concrete example of this problem can be observed where Javanese culture (particularly Banyumasan Javanese), which tends to be more outspoken, meets Sundanese culture (East Priangan), which is more subtle in its communication. Problems that arise are more often related to social than territorial aspects (Kittaneh, 2023). Therefore, in a society on a cultural border, the principle of politeness in communication becomes crucial, especially in the context of elementary education. In elementary school, students are in a critical phase of developing language skills and understanding social norms (Mughal, 2023; Rasna et al., 2024). Language politeness can serve as an important bridge in overcoming cultural differences, helping students develop communication skills that respect diversity and preventing prejudice or stereotyping among them.

One effective approach to teaching language politeness is through education in the basic education environment, especially in elementary schools (Leech, 2014; Zhang & Li, 2024). Education in elementary schools has different characteristics compared to education at the secondary level, as it is aimed at children aged six to twelve. Children at this age have unique developmental characteristics, such as a tendency to play with peers, higher levels of physical activity, and a tendency to express themselves directly (Chen, 2023; Riyadi et al., 2023; Sulistianingsih et al., 2022). Elementary school-aged children show language development characterized by a penchant for talking and arguing with anyone, the use of more complex language structures, the ability to be a reflective listener, and an understanding of the purpose of a statement (Vlasenko & Mastruk, 2023; Yusri et al., 2024). In this process of speech development, children begin to incorporate gestures and other procedures to convey pragmatic meanings, such as requests, appeals, core information, expressions of uncertainty, or polite actions, before they can express these meanings verbally (Al-Abbas, 2023).

Therefore, teaching language politeness in elementary schools can significantly shape children's ability to interact effectively and politely in their social environment. Research on language politeness has developed significantly and has become an important topic in linguistics, particularly in pragmatics and sociolinguistics. Various studies have been conducted to understand how language politeness affects social interaction and communication in various cultural, social, and educational contexts (House & Kádár, 2023; Riyanto et al., 2023; Taib et al., 2024). Language politeness, as part of the study of pragmatics, has been widely discussed about the use of language to maintain social relationships and avoid conflict, emphasizing principles such as politeness, respect, and consideration for others' feelings as important elements in effective communication (Haselow, 2024; Wagner, 2023). The influence of culture and social norms on language politeness has also been a major research focus, as shown by Alfioda and Manaf (2023) and Sultan and Manaf (2023). These studies show that language politeness is not only determined by general pragmatic rules but is also strongly influenced by the cultural values a group of people embraces. In addition, research on language development in children, especially at elementary school age, indicates that at this stage, children begin to understand and use language with more complex structures and master pragmatic aspects such as irony and sarcasm (Campillo et al., 2009; Febriyatko et al., 2023; Hartini et al., 2023; Susandi et al., 2024). The social environment, including family and school, plays an important role in shaping children's language skills.

Other research emphasizes the importance of socio-economic conditions in children's language development. Wati (2023) noted that children from families with low socio-economic backgrounds, such as fishermen, often face access to education and literacy challenges, ultimately affecting their language skills. This is relevant to the study of how the socio-economic conditions of coastal communities affect children's language politeness. Literature relating to fishing communities also shows that they have unique linguistic characteristics, which are influenced by the social, economic, and environmental conditions in which they live (Kittaneh, 2023; Mudiono, 2022; Pan et al., 2023). In education, research on language politeness in the school environment shows that polite communication between teachers and students is essential in creating a conducive learning environment (Andriyani et al., 2022; Saefudin, 2025). This research also emphasizes the importance of understanding students' socio-cultural background in interpreting their language behaviors (Mughal, 2023; Zhang & Li, 2024). In conclusion, although language politeness has been widely researched in various contexts, there are still gaps in the literature related to studying language politeness among students from cultural and linguistic borderlands who have unique conditions. These conditions offer new perspectives in understanding the practice of language politeness in elementary school settings.

The study of language politeness has become a broad topic in linguistic research, with many studies focusing on various aspects such as pragmatics, communication culture, and social relations in diverse contexts (Giora & Haugh, 2017; Saefudin et al., 2023; Wildan et al., 2024). Previous research has highlighted the importance of language politeness in maintaining social harmony and communication effectiveness and how it is influenced by cultural and social factors (Magliacane, 2019). In addition, some studies have also discussed the influence of family environment and socio-economic background on children's language development (Hieda et al., 2022; Saefudin et al., 2023). However, research that specifically examines language politeness by

considering specific socio-cultural conditions, such as in cultural and linguistic border areas, is still limited, and even fewer address how children from these communities interact in formal educational contexts such as elementary schools. Thus, this study fills a research gap in the existing literature and contributes to developing educational strategies more sensitive to students' socio-cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, this study offers a new contribution to language politeness, focusing on elementary school students from cultural and linguistic border communities. Although many studies have been conducted on language politeness in various contexts, studies that specifically investigate students' verbal interactions from cultural and linguistic border areas, especially in educational settings, are still rare. Therefore, the study aims to enrich the understanding of the politeness of these language practices influenced by the unique conditions in the cultural landscape in border areas that have cultural and linguistic differences, especially in the context of elementary education, when students communicate with teachers and peers during the learning process in the classroom.

## METHODS

This study is qualitative research that aims to understand the phenomenon of language politeness in the context of learning in elementary schools in different cultural and linguistic contexts (Yin, 2016). This type of research was chosen because it allows researchers to explore students' meanings, perspectives, and experiences in their interactions with teachers and peers. The research used a descriptive phenomenological approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This approach describes and understands the phenomenon of language politeness in elementary school students. This approach allows researchers to examine students' subjective experiences in the context of learning interactions at school.

The data in this study consisted of oral speech between students and teachers during the learning process in the classroom. The research was conducted in two schools with different characteristics. The first location is in the southern border area, specifically in Langensari Sub-district, Banjar City, West Java, in the fifth-grade students of SD Negeri 1 Waringinsari. The second location is in the western border area, precisely in Majenang Sub-district, Cilacap Regency, Central Java, namely in the fifth-grade students of SD Negeri 1 Bener, which is also bilingual. This research focuses on describing elementary school students' situation and language politeness in classroom learning, both with teachers and peers. This research focuses on the principle of politeness according to Leech (2014), which is translated into six proverbs in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Principles of politeness according to Geoffrey Leech

Proverbs	Description	Example
<b>Proverb of wisdom</b>	Communicate in a way that does not harm or upset others, including providing information appropriate to the situation.	"Could you please close the window?"
<b>Proverb of generosity</b>	Ensure that the communication benefits or provides support for the other person.	"Let me buy you a snack this time."
<b>Proverb of respect</b>	Respect and pay attention to the feelings and interests of others in communication.	"You did an excellent job in the presentation earlier."
<b>Proverb of simplicity</b>	Convey the message clearly and simply without using excessive or complicated expressions.	"Ah, it is nothing. It is just luck."
<b>Proverb of agreement</b>	Make communication efficient and effective and adapt the communication style to the situation and the interlocutor.	"I agree with most of what you said, but there are some things we might need to discuss."
<b>Proverb of inference</b>	Be empathetic and considerate of others' feelings and communicate with care and understanding.	"I am very sorry to hear about the difficulties you are facing. I hope things get better soon."

Data collection in this study used data collection techniques through observation and recording. Observation was conducted to record students' and teachers' verbal and non-verbal behaviors during learning. At the same time, recording was used to record all oral speech during the learning process, which was then analyzed in depth. The main data collection instrument is the researcher, with the support of a recording device and field note format guidelines. The main data source came from all conversations recorded during the teaching and learning activities, while additional data was obtained by observing student and teacher behaviors during the interaction.

The data that had been collected was then analyzed using techniques that had been modified from the data analysis method developed by Miles et al. (2014), which is a systematic approach to understanding the complexity of qualitative data. The analysis involved categorizing the data to identify patterns and key themes and interpreting the data to understand the deeper meaning of the verbal interactions. In addition, triangulation was conducted by integrating data from various sources, including students' social environment and the broader

cultural context, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how the principles of language politeness are practiced, internalized, and understood by students in the context of learning in elementary schools.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The first research location was Langensari Sub-district, Banjar City, West Java. The school that became the research object was the fifth-grade students of SD Negeri 1 Waringinsari, located in the southern border region. This school has distinctive social and cultural characteristics, given its position on the border between two provinces, namely West Java and Central Java. The second location was in Majenang Sub-district, Cilacap Regency, Central Java, precisely at SD Negeri 1 Bener, which was also conducted in grade 5. This school is located on the western border between the two provinces, West and Central Java. This school is located on the western border between Central Java and West Java. SD Negeri 1 Bener is a bilingual school where students use two languages in their daily lives, both inside and outside the classroom. Although most of them use Indonesian in the learning process in class, local languages cannot be separated from the communication process in learning. This study adopts the framework of the Principles of Politeness according to Leech (2014), which consists of six main proverbs that help maintain social relations in communication. The Proverb of Wisdom encourages speakers to reduce burdens on interlocutors and increase benefits for them, while the Proverb of Generosity emphasizes self-sacrifice for the sake of others. The Proverb of Praise and Humility teaches us to praise others more and demean ourselves, while the Proverb of Agreement encourages harmony and reduces disagreement. Finally, the Proverb of Sympathy encourages increased sympathy and empathy towards the interlocutor. These principles aim to maintain politeness and harmony in social interactions.

Politeness in Javanese and Sundanese is closely related to social stratification, regulated through a language system known as '*undhu usuk*' in Javanese and '*undhak usuk*' in Sundanese (Febriyatko et al., 2023). In the Javanese context, '*undha usuk*' is a social stratification system that divides language use into three levels: krama (polite/formal), madya (medium), and ngoko (informal) (Putri & Nugraheni, 2020). These levels reflect the social status between the speaker and the interlocutor. For example, using the krama variety shows respect and politeness, especially when speaking to older or higher-status people. In contrast, the ngoko variety is used in informal situations or with equal or younger people. Swearing or '*pisuhari*' in Javanese usually appears in the ngoko form, often used in informal contexts and between peers. In Sundanese, the concept of '*undak usuk*' has a similar function and includes the *lemes* (polite/formal), *loma* (intermediate), and *garihal* (informal) varieties (Putri & Nugraheni, 2020). The lemes variety reflects politeness and respect, like krama in Javanese, while garihal is a more rude and informal variety used in everyday situations or between close friends.

However, it is important to note that the concept of '*undak usuk*' in Sundanese was only introduced after the invasion of the Javanese Mataram Kingdom into the Priangan region in the mid-17th century, which brought significant changes in the social and linguistic order of Sundanese society (Sultan & Manaf, 2023). Before the invasion, Sundanese society used the Sundanese Buhun language, which was more egalitarian and did not recognize rigid social stratification. Researchers observed students and teachers during the learning process in two elementary schools. They found compliance with the principle of politeness. The following research results provide further explanation. Leech (2014) explains that to qualify for the Wisdom Proverb, speakers must minimize harm and increase benefits to others. The following are examples of conversations in grade 5 learning between teachers and students at SD Negeri Waringinsari and SD Negeri Bener that reflect the application of these proverbs.

**Table 2.** Use of Wisdom Proverb

Proverb	SD Negeri Waringinsari	SD Negeri Bener
Proverb of Wisdom	Teacher: Now we will present our group work. Shall Group 1 come forward? ( <i>Sekarang kita akan mempresentasikan hasil kerja kelompok. Ayo Kelompok 1 maju?</i> )	Teacher: We've finished today's activity. Now I need your help to rearrange the seats. Can you help me? ( <i>Kita sudah selesai kegiatan hari ini. Sekarang ibu perlu bantuan untuk mengatur kembali tempat duduk. Kalian bisa membantu ibu?</i> )
	Student 1: Ma'am, my group can't come forward yet. ( <i>Bu, kelompok saya belum bisa maju duluan.</i> )	Student 1: Okay, Ma'am. I can help you rearrange the seats, but I'll just pick them up. ( <i>Oke, Bu. Abdi tiasa ngatur tempat duduk, tapi mung sakedik deui wae nu abdi tiasa angkatkeun.</i> )
	Student 2: I am not sure either, Ma'am. ( <i>Saya juga durung yakin, Bu.</i> )	Teacher: Please, work together. ( <i>Mangga, kerjasama bersama-sama.</i> )
	Teacher: Yes, we can listen to other groups' presentations first. When you're ready, you can come forward, right? ( <i>Ya sudah, kita bisa mendengarkan presentasi kelompok lain dulu. Nanti kalau sudah siap, kalian bisa maju, nggih?</i> )	Student: Yes, Ma'am. ( <i>Nggih, Bu.</i> )

According to Table 2, the teacher applies the Wisdom Proverb in different contexts but with the same purpose: minimizing the burden on the students and increasing their benefits. In the first conversation, the teacher showed tact by giving extra time to students who were not ready to present their group work. The teacher understands that not all students feel ready to perform in front of the class and wisely allows them to delay their turn so they do not feel pressured or burdened. This reflects the teacher's efforts to balance meeting academic demands and paying attention to students' emotional states. In the second conversation, the teacher asked the students to help rearrange the seats after the activity. Students responded with readiness but also expressed their physical limitations. The teacher then decides to work with the students, showing an understanding and supportive attitude without forcing students to do more than they can handle. The teacher also appreciates the students' cooperation in a way that encourages a sense of collective responsibility and kindness. These two conversations show how the Wisdom Proverb can be applied in everyday classroom situations. Using a tactful approach, teachers facilitate a more comfortable and effective learning process and build positive and empathic student relationships (Sulistianingsih et al., 2022). This approach encourages students to participate with a sense of responsibility while maintaining their well-being emotionally and physically. To be said to fulfil the requirements of the proverb of generosity, speakers need to respect their interlocutors. A person is considered to respect others if he can reduce his gain and maximize the gain for others (Vlasenko & Maistruk, 2023). Leech (2014) also suggests minimizing personal gain and increasing self-sacrifice. Examples of applying the proverbs of generosity in learning in two elementary schools bordering cultures and languages spoken by teachers and students are as follows.

**Table 3.** Use of Generosity Proverb

Proverb	SD Negeri Waringinsari	SD Negeri Bener
<b>Proverb of Generosity</b>	Teacher: Please help your friend who is still struggling. ( <i>Tolong bantu temanmu yang masih kesulitan, ya.</i> )	Teacher: Has anyone understood the material well? If anyone is having trouble, please help your friend. ( <i>Ada yang sudah memahami materinya dengan baik? Kalau ada yang kesulitan, tolong bantu temanmu, ya.</i> )
	Student 2: Ma'am, I don't understand. ( <i>Bu, kula durung paham.</i> )	Student: Ma'am, my friend seems to be confused. Please help me write an essay, Ma'am. ( <i>Ibu, teman saya sepertinya masih bingung. Abdi tiasa ngabantosan anjeunna menulis karangan, Bu.</i> )
	Teacher: Come on, let us help. ( <i>Ayo, ini dibantu.</i> )	
	Student 1: Yes, Ma'am. ( <i>Nggih, Bu.</i> )	

Although the two schools used slightly different languages and approaches, the principle of the Proverb of Generosity was applied in similar ways in both contexts. At SD Negeri Waringinsari, Javanese was used to show respect and cooperation, while at SD Negeri Bener, Sundanese reflected care and patience in helping friends. Both approaches reflect the values of generosity in their respective cultures, where helping others is an important part of the teaching and learning process. Thus, using Proverbs of Generosity in both schools shows how local cultural values can influence classroom interactions while achieving the same goal: helping students understand lessons better through cooperation and mutual support. This approach not only improves academic understanding but also strengthens social relationships among students. In the proverb of appreciation, a person is said to be polite if, in his speech, he always gives appreciation to others by praising and not criticizing (Leech, 2014). In this proverb, participants are expected not to insult, belittle, or ridicule each other. As spoken by teachers and students, the maximum conformity of appreciation in learning at SD Negeri Waringinsari and SD Negeri Bener is as follows.

**Table 4.** Use of Appreciation Proverb

Proverb	SD Negeri Waringinsari	SD Negeri Bener
<b>Proverb of Appreciation</b>	Teacher: Come on, help me with this. ( <i>Ayo, ini dibantu.</i> )	Student: Ma'am, my friend seems to be confused. Please help me write an essay, Ma'am. ( <i>Ibu, teman saya sepertinya masih bingung. Abdi tiasa ngabantosan anjeunna menulis karangan, Bu.</i> )
	Student 1: Yes, Ma'am. ( <i>Nggih, Bu.</i> )	Teacher: Very good, help him slowly so that he can really understand. ( <i>Bagus sekali, bantu dia pelan-pelan supaya bisa benar-benar paham.</i> )
	Teacher: Good, Thaks. You can learn together. Don't hesitate to ask questions if you still don't understand. ( <i>Bagus, matur nuwun. Kalian bisa belajar bersama-sama. Jangan sungkan untuk bertanya jika masih ada yang belum dimengerti.</i> )	

Table 4 illustrates the application of the Proverb of Appreciation in the learning process in two elementary schools located in the border area of Java and Sunda. At SD Negeri Waringinsari, the teacher applies the proverb of appreciation by showing appreciation directly after students show initiative in helping struggling

friends. When the student responds with 'Nggih, Mam', the teacher immediately expresses appreciation, such as 'Bagus, matur nuwun', recognizing the student's kindness and effort. Using polite Javanese language such as 'matur nuwun' reflects deep respect and appreciation, following Javanese culture that highly values politeness and gotong royong. At SD Negeri Bener, the Proverb of Appreciation is also applied when a student offers help to his friend struggling to write an essay. The teacher immediately appreciated the initiative by saying, 'Very good, help him slowly so he can understand.' The phrase 'Very good' is a form of appreciation that recognizes the student's generous attitude. In addition, the teacher directed the student to help patiently, which reflects Sundanese cultural values, where a gentle and caring approach is highly valued. This shows how the teacher appreciates helping and how the students do it, which is full of patience and understanding.

Despite the differences in cultural expression, both approaches have the same goal: to appreciate students' initiative to help a friend while motivating them to continue to behave well in the learning context. Using the local language combined with Indonesian also creates an inclusive classroom atmosphere that values diversity, which is especially important in border areas. Leech (2014) states that in the proverb of simplicity or humility, one will tend not to praise oneself and prioritize humility. The following is the humility proverb between teachers and students in two schools.

**Table 5.** Use of Simplicity Proverb

Proverb	SD Negeri Waringinsari	SD Negeri Bener
<b>Proverb of Simplicity</b>	Student: Ma'am, I do not understand the task. ( <i>Bu, saya dereng paham tugasnya.</i> )	Student: Thank you, Ma'am, but I still feel uncertain. ( <i>Hatur nuhun, Bu, tapi saya masih merasa belum pasti.</i> )
	Teacher: Which one? The one about making up, right? ( <i>Yang mana? Tentang berbaikan, ya?</i> )	Teacher: But you can answer correctly. ( <i>Tapi, kamu bisa menjawab dengan benar.</i> )
	Student: I'm still often confused about writing. Even though I often read, you know. ( <i>Saya masih sering bingung mengarang. Padahal aku sering baca lho.</i> )	

Table 5 shows the application of the Simplicity/Humility Proverb in Waringinsari State Elementary School and Bener State Elementary School. At SD Negeri Waringinsari, the student acknowledges his limitations in understanding the task despite his efforts, showing a humble attitude and not being arrogant. The teacher responds with attention, ready to help without judgment. While at SD Negeri Bener, the student expressed doubt despite having answered the question correctly, reflecting a humble attitude. The teacher appreciated the students' efforts while still appreciating their humble attitude. These two examples emphasize the importance of humility in the learning process, creating a supportive and inclusive environment that values students' efforts and encourages them to keep improving. Leech (2014) states that speakers should always reduce disagreement with interlocutors and increase agreement with interlocutors to fulfil the proverb of agreement. This proverb encourages speakers to realize mutual agreement in speaking activities. The fulfilment of the proverb of agreement between teachers and students in learning activities at SD Negeri Waringinsari and SD Negeri Bener is as follows.

**Table 6.** Use of Agreement Proverb

Proverb	SD Negeri Waringinsari	SD Negeri Bener
<b>Proverb of Agreement</b>	Teacher: Tomorrow morning there will be a test on theme three. Please study it. ( <i>Besok pagi akan ada ulangan tema tiga. Pelajari itu ya.</i> )	Teacher: That's a good idea. What about the others, do you agree with this division of labour? ( <i>Bagus sekali idenya. Bagaimana dengan yang lain, setuju dengan pembagian tugas seperti ini?</i> )
	Student 1: Yes, Ma'am. ( <i>Nggih, Bu.</i> )	Student 1: Ma'am. I am agrees, so that the work can be done quickly. ( <i>Bu. Abdi ogé satuju, supaya pekerjaannya jadi cepet selesai.</i> )
	Student 2: But, don't make it difficult, Ma'am? ( <i>Tapi, jangan sulit-sulit ya, Bu?</i> )	
	Teacher: Yes, but don't forget to study. ( <i>Ya, tapi jangan lupa belajar ya.</i> )	

The agreement proverb was used in both schools to create understanding and agreement in the learning process. At SD Negeri Waringinsari, an agreement was reached through a more interactive dialogue, with students expressing their concerns about the difficulty level of the test. The teacher responded in a calming manner, which helped to reduce students' anxiety while still keeping the focus on test preparation. At SD Negeri Bener, an agreement was reached more directly with students regarding the proposed division of tasks. The teacher ensured that all students agreed and felt comfortable with the assigned tasks, creating a positive atmosphere of cooperation. Overall, the teacher plays a key role in ensuring that students feel heard and that agreement is reached in a way that considers their feelings and needs, ultimately increasing students' engagement and motivation in the learning process. Leech (2014) states that speakers can express the proverb

of sympathy by minimizing antipathy between themselves and others. Speakers can also increase sympathy as much as possible. If the interlocutor gets luck or happiness, the speaker must congratulate him. If the interlocutor encounters a problem or disaster, the speaker must express condolences or sadness as a sign of sympathy. The following is a form of fulfilment of the proverb of sympathy in learning at SD Negeri Waringinsari and SD Negeri Bener.

**Table 7.** Use of Sympathy Proverb

Proverb	SD Negeri Waringinsari	SD Negeri Bener
<b>Proverb of Sympathy</b>	Teacher: Read paragraph number one. Find the main sentence! ( <i>Coba kamu, baca paragraf nomor satu. Temukan kalimat utama dimana!</i> )	Teacher: Is there anyone who is struggling or finding it difficult to complete the task? ( <i>Apa ada yang kesulitan atau merasa kesulitan menyelesaikan tugas?</i> )
	Student: Yes, Ma'am. But how is it wrong? ( <i>Ya, Bu. Tapi mbok salah bagaimana?</i> )	Student: I am, ma'am. ( <i>Saya Bu.</i> )
	Student: It is not right to be wrong. You will not be punished, teacher. ( <i>Ora sah wedi salah. Ra bakal dihukum, Guru.</i> )	Student: I don't know, don't teach me here. ( <i>Teu kunanaon, Tong ngajar kuring di dieu.</i> )
	Teacher: Yes, try it first. ( <i>Ya, coba dulu.</i> )	Teacher: That is good, try to help. ( <i>Mantep, coba dibantu.</i> )

In both schools, the Inference/Sympathy Proverb was applied to support and encourage students to help each other and provide emotional support. At SD Negeri Waringinsari, other students showed sympathy by calming their friends who were worried about making mistakes. In contrast, at SD Negeri Bener, sympathy emerged through direct offers of help to students who were experiencing difficulties. Teachers in both schools played an important role in strengthening sympathy among students by providing support that encouraged collaboration and mutual understanding. Teachers' positive responses to students' initiatives help to create a safe learning atmosphere where students feel comfortable admitting their difficulties and are open to receiving help. Implementing the Inference/Sympathy Proverb in both schools shows that sympathy is an important element in learning. By creating an environment of emotional support, teachers and students build an inclusive and respectful atmosphere, encouraging students to continue learning without fear of mistakes (Andriyani et al., 2022; Rivai et al., 2021). The proverb of sympathy requires all speech participants to maximize sympathy and minimize antipathy towards their interlocutors. If the interlocutor gets lucky or happy, the speaker must congratulate him.

The results of this study confirm and are in line with the theory of language politeness proposed by Leech (2014), where the proverbs of politeness, such as Wisdom, Generosity, Respect, Modesty, Agreement, and Sympathy, are applied in the interaction between teachers and students. In this context, Leech's theory provides an effective framework to understand how language politeness is practiced in real classroom situations, especially in culturally and linguistically diverse areas. However, the results of this study also show that Leech's theory needs to be adapted to the local cultural context. For example, the mixed language use between Indonesian and Javanese or Sundanese shows that language politeness is about general pragmatic rules and adjusting to local cultural norms (Fahrudin & Saefudin, 2025; Birsyada et al., 2024). This suggests that the theory of language politeness should consider significant cultural variations in its application, especially in a multicultural educational environment.

Using mixed language between Indonesian and Javanese or Sundanese in the classroom learning significantly impacts communication effectiveness and emotional connection between teachers and students. Teachers can establish a stronger emotional connection with students by inserting local languages in conversations dominated by Indonesian, creating a more familiar and comfortable learning atmosphere (Hieda et al., 2022; Saefudin et al., 2023). Local languages, such as Javanese or Sundanese, carry a deep sense of familiarity and cultural respect, which helps to reduce student burden and provide greater comfort in interactions. In addition, using mixed languages also increases the effectiveness of message delivery, as students may feel more valued and understood when teachers use a language closer to their cultural identity. This creates an inclusive and supportive environment and facilitates more subtle politeness in communication, thus helping to maintain harmony and respect in the classroom (Kittaneh, 2023; Mudiono, 2022; Pan et al., 2023). Thus, mixed language becomes an important tool in applying the Proverbs of Wisdom, enriching the learning process, and respecting students' cultural diversity.

This study also shows that it aligns with previous research that emphasizes the importance of language politeness in social interactions, especially in educational contexts. For example, House and Kádár (2023) underline that language politeness is a crucial element in maintaining harmony in communication, which is in line with the findings of this study. In the context of elementary schools in cultural borderlands, language politeness effectively creates a conducive learning environment and supports students' academic and social development (Haselow, 2024; Wagner, 2023). This research confirms that politeness helps maintain harmony

and improves communication effectiveness between teachers and students.

A key novelty of this study lies in its focus on how language politeness principles operate in specific cultural frontier areas, such as the Java-Sunda border. Previous research, such as [Magliacane \(2019\)](#), has explored the role of politeness in forming positive social relationships in educational settings. However, this study uniquely illustrates how cultural and linguistic diversity influences how politeness is expressed. Unlike previous works that broadly discuss the interplay between culture and politeness ([Alfioda & Manaf, 2023](#); [Sultan & Manaf, 2023](#)), this study provides a more granular analysis of how politeness is negotiated in mixed-language interactions, demonstrating the nuanced adaptations teachers and students make to accommodate local norms. Doing so fills an important research gap and offers a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which politeness adapts to sociolinguistic diversity.

Furthermore, this study reinforces [Magliacane \(2019\)](#), who found that language politeness is important in forming positive social relationships in educational settings. This research adds a new dimension by showing how the principles of language politeness are applied specifically in cultural border areas such as the Java-Sunda border, where there is diversity in ways of communicating influenced by cultural and linguistic differences ([Hieda et al., 2022](#); [Saefudin et al., 2023](#)). In this sense, this study contributes to our understanding of the dynamics of language politeness in multicultural environments. However, some unique findings in this study have not been widely discussed in previous research. For example, mixed language between Indonesian and the local language (Javanese or Sundanese) in classroom communication shows adaptation to specific local norms. [Alfioda and Manaf \(2023\)](#) and [Sultan and Manaf \(2023\)](#) have indeed highlighted the influence of culture on language politeness, but this study shows in more depth how specific local contexts influence the forms of politeness used. Using local language in classroom interactions reflects respect for the local culture and increases student engagement in learning.

This study also found that language politeness in cultural border areas can be an important tool to overcome potential conflicts due to cultural and linguistic differences. This aligns with [Pan et al. \(2023\)](#), who showed that language politeness can effectively bridge intercultural communication. However, this study extends those findings by emphasizing that language politeness in the context of elementary education has a long-term impact on shaping students' attitudes and behaviors towards cultural diversity. Thus, this study makes a new contribution by showing how language politeness can effectively teach children to appreciate cultural differences from an early age. In addition, this study shows how students' socio-economic and cultural backgrounds can influence how they understand and apply language politeness. [Wati \(2023\)](#) highlighted that children from different socio-economic backgrounds may have different access to education, which impacts their language skills. This research confirms the findings by showing that in cultural frontier areas, where there is diversity in socio-economic backgrounds, language politeness becomes increasingly important as a tool to bridge the gap ([Kittaneh, 2023](#); [Mudiono, 2022](#); [Matradewi et al., 2025](#)). Teachers play a key role in ensuring every student feels valued and supported in the learning environment, regardless of background.

Overall, this study confirms the findings from previous research and extends them by adding new insights into the application of language politeness in a particular context, namely in a cultural border region. The findings highlight the importance of considering the local context in understanding and applying the principles of language politeness and showing how politeness can effectively manage cultural diversity in educational settings. This research thus makes an important contribution to the literature on language politeness, especially in the context of multicultural education. Applying the principles of language politeness in elementary schools is important in creating an inclusive learning atmosphere that values cultural diversity. In addition, this study also successfully reveals how the local cultural context influences how language politeness is applied, which provides new insights into developing educational strategies that are more sensitive to students' socio-cultural backgrounds. Overall, this research fills a gap in the literature by making an important contribution to how the principles of language politeness are implemented in the context of education in cultural borderlands and how this can support creating a harmonious and effective learning environment.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the study's findings, it can be concluded that language politeness is crucial in fostering a conducive and inclusive learning environment, particularly in culturally diverse regions such as the Java-Sunda border. The application of language politeness principles, as formulated by Geoffrey Leech, has proven effective in enhancing communication between teachers and students, facilitating positive and harmonious social interactions in the classroom. This study highlights that universal pragmatic rules do not solely govern language politeness but is also deeply shaped by local cultural norms. The use of mixed language (combining Indonesian with local languages such as Javanese or Sundanese) reflects significant adaptation to cultural contexts, creating a more familiar and comfortable learning atmosphere for students. Moreover, the findings indicate that language politeness is a powerful tool for mitigating potential conflicts and breaking down stereotypes that may arise due to cultural and linguistic differences. It also fosters students' appreciation for cultural diversity from an early

age, reinforcing the importance of respectful communication in a multicultural educational setting. Given these findings, teachers and educators in culturally diverse areas should continue developing and implementing communication strategies sensitive to local cultural values. Educators must consider students' socio-cultural backgrounds in every classroom interaction and integrate the principles of language politeness into their teaching methods. Education policies should emphasize teacher training in multicultural communication and language politeness to ensure inclusive learning environments that value diversity and promote social cohesion. The implications of this study suggest that language politeness should be recognized as an essential component of educational curricula, particularly in regions with significant cultural diversity. Teaching language politeness effectively can enhance students' communication skills and encourage a more positive attitude toward cultural differences, which is crucial for their long-term social development. Finally, further research is recommended to explore the application of language politeness across various educational settings and to develop more targeted strategies that support cultural diversity in school environments.

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