



Implementation of language politeness in online learning as an effort to optimise character education of pre-service elementary school teachers

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Article info	Abstract
Keywords language politeness, online learning, character education	The issue that requires serious attention is the use of language through mobile phones, which often neglects aspects of politeness in communication. This study aims to (1) examine the use of language politeness among PGSD UNNES student teachers in their interactions with lecturers through short messages and direct communication in online learning, (2) identify violations of the principles of language politeness in short message communication, and (3) develop a language politeness program in online learning as an effort to optimise character education. The research employed the research and development (R&D) method using the Borg & Gall model, with PGSD UNNES students as the subjects. Data were collected through interviews, observations, questionnaires, rating scales, tests, and performance tasks, and were analysed both descriptively and using the <i>n-gain</i> test. The validation results indicated that the language politeness handbook was deemed feasible to use (media expert score: 57 out of a total score of 75; material expert score: 73 out of a total score of 75). The effectiveness test yielded an <i>n-gain</i> of 0.7 (high category), demonstrating that the handbook effectively improves the language politeness of pre-service elementary school teachers and significantly increases students' understanding and application of polite language after the intervention.

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.33578/jpfkip.v14i5.p711-721>

Received 26 June 2025; Received in revised form 28 September 2025; Accepted 3 October 2025

Available online 12 October 2025

e-ISSN 2598-5949 | p-ISSN 2303-1514 © The Authors.

1. Introduction

The Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers (UUGD) emphasises that teachers, as professionals, are required to possess four competencies. Those are (1) pedagogical, namely the ability to manage learning and students; (2) personal, namely having a steady personality, being religious, noble in character, wise, and authoritative; (3) professional, namely mastering and studying subject matter broadly and deeply; and (4)

social, namely the ability to interact with various parties within the educational environment as well as the wider community (Nasional, 2005). Social competence requires effective communication skills, which form the basis of building harmonious relationships between teachers and students, colleagues, and society (Ahmad, 2019).

Building on this legal foundation, one important character value that strengthens social competence is language politeness, namely, attitudes and behaviours that show respect for others in accordance with norms and communication ethics (Faiz et al., 2020). Within the framework of character education, language politeness is included in the pillars of “olah hati” (cultivating the heart) and “olah rasa or karsa” (cultivating feelings or will), which shape noble character (Damayanti et al., 2021). In line with this, Presidential Regulation No. 87 of 2017 emphasises the importance of strengthening character education through 18 values, including politeness and courtesy, which can be instilled from an early age through simple habituation (Kemendiknas, 2011). Similarly, Lickona (1992) also stressed that in character education, teachers play the role of caregivers, models, and ethical mentors.

Although the value of language politeness has long been considered important, previous studies have tended to discuss character education in general without specifically highlighting the relationship between language politeness and character formation among pre-service elementary school teachers. In fact, as future educators, PGSD students bear a moral responsibility to be role models of polite communication. The phenomenon that arises shows that the development of communication technology, especially the use of short messages and online media, often fosters a style of language that is not in accordance with the principles of politeness. This has the potential to weaken the professional image of pre-service teachers in the eyes of students.

From a theoretical perspective, language politeness is also an important part of pragmatic linguistic theory. Grundy views it as the conformity of utterances with the listener’s expectations, while Watts emphasises that politeness is a linguistic behaviour that shows respect and consideration. Wardhaugh asserts that politeness is a fundamental principle that must be considered in language use. Thus, politeness is not merely a linguistic aspect but also a character value that must be instilled in pre-service teachers.

Despite its importance, previous studies have tended to discuss character education in general without specifically highlighting the relationship between language politeness and character formation among pre-service elementary school teachers. In fact, as future educators, PGSD students bear a moral responsibility to be role models of polite communication. In practice, however, the phenomenon shows that the development of communication technology, especially the use of short messages and online media, often fosters a style of language that is not in accordance with the principles of politeness. This has the potential to weaken the professional image of pre-service teachers in the eyes of students. Findings in the PGSD department also indicate that many students still use abbreviations, code-switching, or informal words when communicating with lecturers, both through text messages and in direct interactions. Such inaccuracy often causes disharmonious relationships. The situation has become more complex since online learning was implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Text-based interactions through SMS or WhatsApp do facilitate communication, but they also encourage students to neglect the norms of politeness. On the other hand, online learning brings benefits such as independent learning, improved professionalism of lecturers, and efficiency in learning evaluation. However, without awareness of polite language use, these benefits may be diminished.

Therefore, strategic efforts are needed to integrate language politeness into the practice of character education for pre-service teachers. Based on these issues, this study was conducted to examine the practice of language politeness among PGSD UNNES students in online learning, to identify forms of violations that occur, and to develop a language politeness program through a handbook. Thus, this research not only provides practical solutions for online learning but also fills a gap in the literature regarding the role of language politeness in teacher character education. This study is expected to strengthen the habituation of polite communication among pre-service teachers, enabling them to become role models in both academic environments and society at large.

2. Literature Review

Abidin et al. (2021) argue that society is currently changing in the era of globalisation. Every social change produces certain consequences related to values and morals, including the shift in language use from polite to impolite forms. Language politeness is an essential aspect of communicating with others. Speakers who use polite language are regarded as educated, ethical, and cultured, gaining recognition as good communicators. It should be noted that polite language does not necessarily have to use correct or standard forms, but rather language that is appropriate to the context (Zulkarnain et al., 2024). Language politeness can also develop the speaker's emotional intelligence because, in communication, a person not only needs to convey accurate information but also must be able to maintain harmonious relationships with interlocutors (Halawa et al., 2019). As part of pragmatic linguistic studies that cannot be separated from context, politeness plays a vital role in all aspects of human life, whether in everyday communication, education, society, or the workplace.

International studies have also shown that language politeness plays an important role in supporting the success of online academic interaction. Lin et al., (2024) in the British Journal of Educational Technology, it was emphasised that the level of tutor politeness at the beginning of online learning sessions positively correlates with students' problem-solving skills. This finding reinforces the relevance of language politeness as an integral part of digital learning and supports the development of character education in the technological era. As part of the academic community, pre-service teachers have greater influence and demands regarding language politeness when they enter social life. The rapid development of technology can serve as a tool for students to implement language politeness in the current era. Lecturers and students can engage in unlimited interaction and communication, realised through online learning.

According to Jamaludin et al. (2020:3), online learning transforms the traditional education system into a digital format, presenting both new challenges and opportunities in the field of education. Online learning refers to the educational process that includes teaching and learning activities, discussions, mentoring, and assessments, which can be conducted flexibly in various places and times without requiring physical face-to-face interaction (Tuti et al., 2020). Syarifudin (2020) argues that online learning is essentially a learning process that utilises available virtual platforms. Nevertheless, the implementation of online learning must still consider achieving the competencies to be taught to students. Furthermore, Syarifudin stated that online learning is a model that can foster students' independence in learning without relying on others. According to Upt et al., (2025), online learning, or e-learning, offers advantages such as flexibility for self-paced learning tailored to individual learning styles, easy access to education without time or place restrictions, online interaction facilities between students, instructors, and peers, and an effective, efficient, and relevant learning experience. Through these various perspectives, it can be affirmed that online learning is capable of fostering students' character development.

According to Arifudin (2022), character is the trait or moral disposition that becomes a person's distinctive identity and differentiator. Meanwhile, Tanjung (2019) defines character as attitudes, dispositions, morals, and personalities that are stable and formed through a progressive and dynamic process of consolidation. The term character originates from the Greek word meaning "to mark" and emphasises applying the values of goodness through actions or behaviour. Based on the above discussion, it can be confirmed that one form of the character-building process can be achieved through character education. Character education is the process of transforming life values developed within individuals to become universal values that are beneficial to others, where the basic concept begins with change, instillation through habituation, and realisation in the form of actions and actual behaviour (Kulsum & Muhid, 2022). According to Masnur (2011:81) character education aims to enhance the quality of educational implementation and outcomes, focusing on character formation and the development of noble morals in students. This approach is comprehensive, integrated, and balanced, and it is expected to produce graduates with good personalities and morals. Based on these definitions, it can be concluded that in the learning process, both character education and language politeness are necessary for PGSD pre-service teachers.

3. Method

This study employed the Research and Development (R&D) method using the Borg & Gall (1983) model, which was modified according to the needs of the research. The research subjects were 103 PGSD UNNES students selected purposively, as pre-service teachers serve as important role models in the application of language politeness. This study employed purposive sampling, focusing on PGSD students at Universitas Negeri Semarang, who are expected to be role models in polite communication as future elementary school teachers. Data were collected using several instruments, namely, (1) a needs analysis questionnaire for students consisting of 20 items (closed-ended questions on a three-point scale and one open-ended item) to identify students' perceptions and needs regarding polite language, (2) a lecturer questionnaire with similar structure to capture lecturers' perspectives, (3) expert validation scales for media (15 items) and material (15 items), each using a five-point feasibility rating to evaluate format, completeness, language, validity, importance, learnability, attractiveness, and usefulness, and (4) a language politeness assessment sheet to observe oral and written interactions based on compliance or violation of politeness principles. These instruments ensured comprehensive data collection for the development and validation of the Language Politeness Pocket Book.

The research procedure referred to the stages of Borg & Gall, which include identifying potentials and problems, data collection, product design, design validation, design revision, product trial, product revision, usage trial, final revision, and mass production. The flow of these stages can be seen in Figure 1.

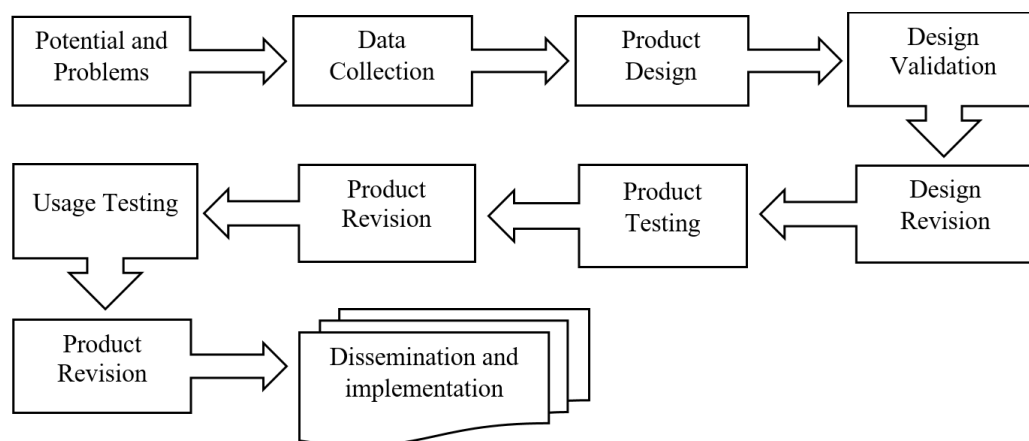


Figure 1. Stages of borg & gall development research

The research instruments used include interviews, observations, questionnaires, rating scales, tests, and performance tasks. Interviews are conducted to gather information related to students' language politeness practices in communication with lecturers. Observations are carried out to record language behaviour directly during online learning. Questionnaires and rating scales are used to measure students' perceptions and levels of language politeness. At the same time, tests and performance tasks are employed to assess the ability to apply language politeness in real contexts.

Instrument validity is determined through expert judgment, both by subject matter experts and media experts. This aims to ensure the appropriateness and feasibility of the developed product's content. Instrument reliability is ensured through a limited trial on a small group of PGSD UNNES students, which provides an overview of the consistency and clarity of the instrument items before they are used in broader trials. The data collection procedure is carried out in three stages, namely, needs analysis, media development, and product effectiveness testing. The detailed stages, participants, and descriptions of the research activities can be seen in Table 1. Furthermore, the instruments used at each stage of the research are summarised in Table 2.

Table 1. List of research subject details

Activities	Participants	Description
Stage needs analysis	UNNES PGSD students	
Stages of development	Researcher	Design Prototype Revised Media Finalization
	Expert Team	Media and Language expert team
Implementation stages	UNNES PGSD students	Implementation of the Language Politeness Program using a pocket book.

Table 2. Research instruments

Activities	Instruments
Needs Analysis	Questionnaires (open and closed questions), interviews, observations, and documentation. (Data was analysed using descriptive statistics)
Development	Media feasibility assessment sheet based on media experts and material experts, PGSD student response questionnaire.
Test Stages Product Effectiveness UNNES PGSD student	Literacy test (Analysed using t-test and N-test. Gain).

Data are analysed using a qualitative descriptive approach for interview and observation results. Quantitative data from questionnaires, rating scales, tests, and performance tasks are analysed using the N-Gain test to determine the effectiveness of the product in improving the language politeness of pre-service elementary school teachers.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Needs Analysis Results

During observations, interviews, and documentation in the PGSD department of FIP Unnes, several lecturers reported that students tend to use less polite language. The use of abbreviations, mixing of out-of-place language, and informal words in academic conversations were reported by many PGSD lecturers. A lecturer stated that “Many students still send messages like ‘sy’ or ‘gpp’ without greetings, which does not reflect polite communication in academic settings.” In addition, documentation of student chats supported these reports, showing casual expressions being used in lecturer–student communication. Violations of oral language politeness were also found when students spoke with lecturers in the academic environment. A lecturer mentioned, “Sometimes students talk to us as if we are their peers, without using polite intonation or honorifics.”

Based on observations, interviews, and documentation, it is stated that PGSD students still face obstacles in daily communication due to guidelines that promote the habituation of language politeness in both academic and non-academic settings. One student explained that *“I know I should be polite, but sometimes I don’t know the proper way to message a lecturer, especially when it feels too formal.”*

The implementation of lectures is currently still carried out in a hybrid manner, so that student and lecturer communication is limited to written communication through WA chat. Meanwhile, oral communication is usually carried out in online lectures through Zoom and face-to-face meetings. In addition, students who are not accustomed to applying polite communication will have more difficulty getting a direct example.

At the use analysis stage, researchers developed a Language Politeness Pocket Book to improve the language politeness of PGSD students, which can be used by students and lecturers anywhere and anytime. This eases students and lecturers in applying polite communication, both oral and written, in both academic and non-academic situations. Based on the needs analysis conducted by researchers, it can be concluded that PGSD students have difficulty applying the concepts and principles of politeness in language. Therefore, it was decided to develop a Language Politeness Pocketbook to improve the language politeness of PGSD students. It is hoped that with the development of this pocketbook, the language politeness of PGSD students can increase.

4.2 Development Results of Language Politeness Pocket Guide

The development of the Language Politeness Pocketbook begins with designing the material, selecting examples of violations for each principle of language politeness, designing texts and exercise questions, and preparing assessment instruments. The pocketbook is designed with a simple concept but dense content, making it easy for students to use. Stimulus is given at the beginning to provoke students' thinking about the concept and importance of language politeness in everyday life. After that, students are invited to understand the concept of communication and language politeness through material presented concisely and clearly. Examples of violations in each principle of language politeness are also presented to help students identify mistakes that are often made in daily communication. Meanwhile, correcting these violations also serves as an example for students on how to communicate politely with lecturers and seniors. Furthermore, exercises are provided to students to train their analytical skills in implementing the principles of language politeness. Finally, the assessment instrument is designed to facilitate lecturers who teach MKU Indonesian, Elementary Language Studies, and Writing Scientific Works and Textbooks in evaluating the competence of language politeness in these courses. Here is the appearance of the Language Politeness Textbook.

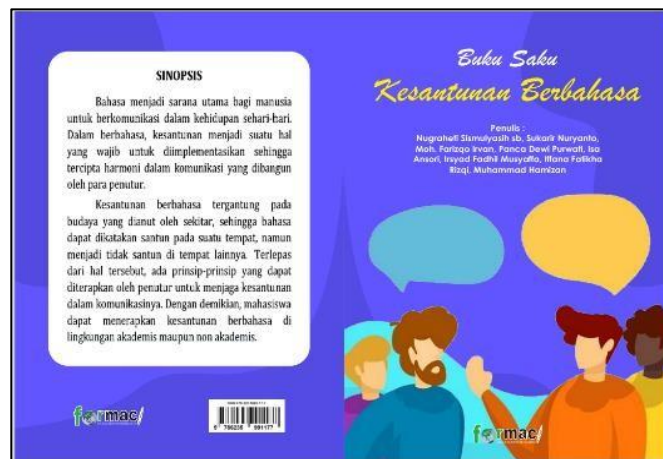


Figure 2. Cover of the language politeness textbook



Figure 3. Identity and content of the teaching book on language politeness

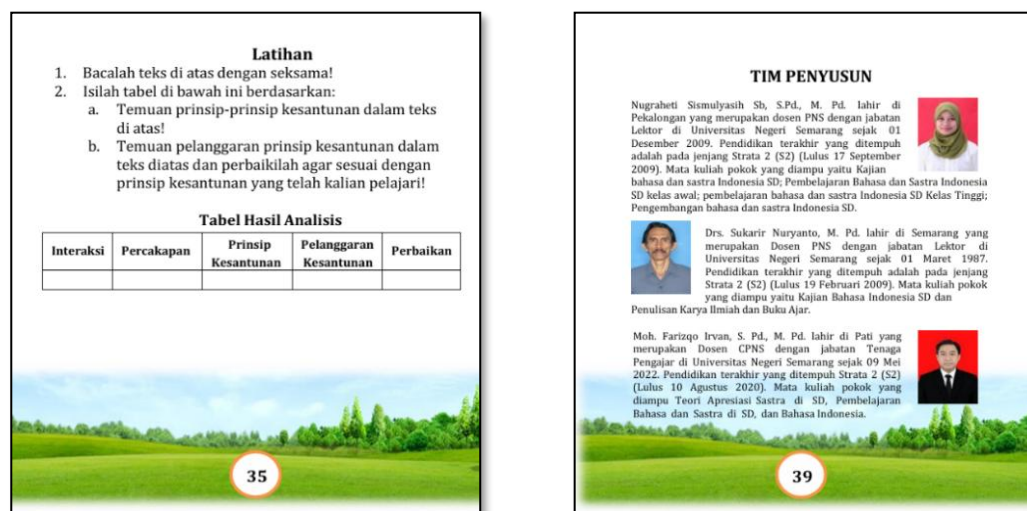


Figure 4. Assessment and compilation of language politeness textbooks

4.3 Feasibility Test of Zig-zag Book Media Assisted by Augmented Reality

The first validation test obtained from the media expert assessment questionnaire was 57 out of a total score of 75. The value was obtained through a total score of 35 for format aspects, 12 for content completeness, and 10 for language aspects. Meanwhile, the score obtained from the material expert on the material assessment questionnaire was 73 points. In the validity section, the total score is 14 points, with levels of importance, learnability, and attracting attention each at 15 points, and usefulness at 14 points. To interpret these results more objectively, a rubric was used to categorise the level of feasibility, as shown below.

Table 3. Rubric of feasibility levels for validation results

Score Range	Categories	Interpretation
60-75	Very Feasible	Suitable for use without revision
45-59	Feasible	Suitable with minor revisions
30-44	Less Feasible	Needs major revision before being implemented
<30	Not Feasible	Not suitable for use

Based on this rubric, the score of 57 from the media expert falls into the Very Feasible category, and the score of 73 from the material expert also falls into the Very Feasible category. Therefore, both assessments objectively conclude that the Language Politeness Pocket Book is suitable for use without revision.

4.4 The Effectiveness of the Language Politeness Pocketbook in Improving the Language Politeness of PGSD Students

The n-gain test aims to determine the criteria for increasing the pre-test and post-test scores of PGSD students' language politeness. The following is the calculation of the n-gain test.

Table 4. Result of N-Gain Calculation

Variable	Sample Size (N)	Pre-test Average	Post-test Average	Maximum Score	N-gain	Criteria
Language politeness	103	71.7	87.7	95	0.7	High

The average pre-test score for language politeness among PGSD students is 71.7, while the average post-test score is 87.7. Meanwhile, the highest score that can be obtained is 95. Based on the calculation using the n-gain formula, the language politeness value of PGSD students has increased to the High category.

In addition to these quantitative results, qualitative findings also revealed that students experienced practical benefits from using the politeness handbook. Based on interviews and observations, students acknowledged that the handbook helped them understand how to communicate politely in various situations, both through short messages and direct interactions with lecturers. This indicates that the handbook not only functions as a technical guide but also as a means of student self-reflection in managing academic communication.

Furthermore, students' experiences with the language politeness handbook showed that aspects of character education were also developed. For example, students became more careful in choosing diction, paying attention to sentence structure, and demonstrating respectful attitudes toward lecturers. These changes reinforce the connection between language politeness and the formation of pre-service teachers' personalities, as emphasised in character education.

These findings are consistent with (Faiz et al., 2020), who highlighted the importance of language politeness as part of teachers' social competence, as well as Damayanti et al., (2021), who implied that language politeness is rooted in the pillars of character education. Thus, the politeness handbook can be seen not only as a means to improve communication skills but also as a support for the development of students' academic character.

The broader implication for teacher training is that the language politeness handbook can serve as supplementary material in teacher education curricula. Its use supports the strengthening of teachers' personal and social competencies, which are part of the four core competencies of teachers as stated in Law No. 14 of 2005. With this provision, pre-service teachers are expected to become role models of polite, professional, and ethical communication in both academic and social contexts. Therefore, the benefits of the handbook extend beyond improving language use to strengthen the character education of pre-service teachers, aligning with the national education goals of producing graduates with strong personalities and good morals.

This study has several limitations. The subjects were taken from a single institution, which requires caution in generalising the findings. Furthermore, the measurement of effectiveness did not consider other external factors that may influence students' language politeness. These limitations suggest the need for further studies involving participants from different institutions and contexts, as well as the inclusion of additional variables to obtain a more comprehensive understanding.

5. Conclusion and Implications

5.1 Conclusion

Language politeness is an essential attribute for pre-service elementary school teachers in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0. The teaching of language politeness for pre-service elementary school teachers can begin with habituation programs that foster polite

communication within the PGSD Department environment. Such a situation can be realised with the support of a language politeness handbook. The handbook was developed based on material analysis, media analysis, and user analysis, following the seven development steps of Borg & Gall. It was declared feasible by both media experts and material experts. The media expert provided a score of 57, while the material expert gave a score of 73. Based on these feasibility results, the language politeness handbook was deemed appropriate for use. In addition, the effectiveness of the handbook was tested by involving PGSD students. The N-Gain test yielded a score of 0.7, which falls into the high category. Thus, it can be concluded that the Language Politeness Handbook is effective in improving the language politeness of pre-service elementary school teachers.

5.2 Implications

Based on the research results and conclusions, both theoretical and practical implications can be examined as follows. The theoretical implication is that the findings of this development research can serve as a reference for similar studies. The practical implications are (1) through this study, teachers and pre-service teachers are expected to gain additional insights into language politeness to optimise character education, and (2) this research can provide ideas as an alternative supplementary material in the study of language politeness to improve the quality of education.

Furthermore, this study recommends that the language politeness handbook be more widely integrated into teacher training programs. Integration can be carried out through character education courses, field teaching practice, or training and workshops on academic communication. Thus, the language politeness handbook not only enhances communication skills but also strengthens the social and personal competencies of pre-service teachers, thereby supporting the realisation of professional educators with noble character.

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