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Generation Z and Language Politeness: Challenges (Generation and Social Change Perspective)

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Article History	ABSTRACT
	Background: The linguistic politeness of Generation Z in educational settings has emerged as a significant phenomenon worthy of scholarly examination, particularly in light of the pervasive influence of digital media and shifting communication norms. **Purpose:** This study employs a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach to examine linguistic politeness challenges among students at SMA Negeri 3 Gowa as representatives of Generation Z. **Method:** Data were collected through methodological triangulation comprising participant observation, questionnaires administered to 32 students, and analysis of classroom interaction documents, utilizing purposive sampling that accounted for gender diversity and varied social backgrounds. Systematic data analysis was conducted through thematic reduction, matrix presentation, and cross-verification to ensure research validity. **Result and Discussion:** The findings reveal a prevalent pattern of code-switching between formal and informal registers, with colloquial language dominating peer interactions while more polite forms are maintained in teacher-student communication. The study identifies social media influence and peer group dynamics as determining factors in these politeness paradigm shifts. **Conclusion and Implication:** This research contributes significantly to the mapping of Generation Z's communication patterns within formal educational contexts, an area that remains understudied. The implications underscore the necessity for implementing context-aware communication education in schools that harmonizes traditional politeness norms with Generation Z's distinctive communication characteristics while preserving their digital identity. These findings provide a foundation for developing responsive language learning models attuned to contemporary communication dynamics.
Keywords:	
	ABSTRAK

Latar Belakang: Kesopanan berbahasa Generasi Z di lingkungan sekolah menjadi fenomena yang menarik untuk dikaji seiring dengan pesatnya pengaruh media digital dan perubahan norma komunikasi.

Tujuan: Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis tantangan kesantunan berbahasa pada siswa SMA Negeri 3 Gowa sebagai representasi Generasi Z

Metode: dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis desain deskriptif-analitis. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui triangulasi metode yang meliputi observasi partisipatif, kuesioner yang dibagikan kepada 32 siswa, serta analisis dokumen interaksi kelas, dengan teknik purposive sampling yang mempertimbangkan keragaman gender dan latar belakang sosial. Analisis data dilakukan secara sistematis melalui reduksi tematik, penyajian matriks, dan verifikasi silang untuk menjamin validitas temuan.

Hasil dan Pembahasan: Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan kecenderungan penggunaan bahasa campuran (formal-informal) dimana bahasa gaul mendominasi interaksi sebaya, sementara bentuk yang lebih santun dipertahankan dalam komunikasi dengan guru. Temuan ini memperlihatkan bahwa media sosial dan pengaruh kelompok sebaya menjadi faktor determinan dalam pergeseran pola kesantunan berbahasa.

Kesimpulan dan Implikasi: Signifikansi penelitian ini terletak pada upaya pemetaan pola komunikasi Generasi Z dalam setting pendidikan formal yang selama ini masih terbatas. Implikasi penelitian menyoroti pentingnya integrasi pendidikan komunikasi kontekstual di sekolah yang mampu memadukan nilai-nilai kesantunan tradisional dengan karakteristik komunikasi Generasi Z, tanpa mengabaikan identitas generasi digital ini. Temuan ini memberikan dasar bagi pengembangan model pembelajaran bahasa yang responsif terhadap dinamika komunikasi kontemporer.

| Kata Kunci | *Kesantunan berbahasa; Generasi Z; Pola komunikasi remaja* |

INTRODUCTION

The advent of the digital era has precipitated profound transformations in the communication patterns of Generation Z[1], [2], [3], particularly within educational settings. As digital natives, this cohort has developed unique linguistic characteristics where traditional verbal politeness interacts complexly with informal digital communication styles.[4], [5] This phenomenon poses distinct challenges for educational institutions like SMA Negeri 3 Gowa, which must bridge traditional politeness norms with contemporary communication realities.[6] This study originates from preliminary observations of code-mixing phenomena (formal-informal language blending) in students' daily interactions, where slang dominates peer conversations while more formal registers are maintained in teacher-student communication. The complexity of this issue is compounded by the influence of social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram that shape brief, emotive communication styles,[7] coupled with generational gaps between teachers (predominantly Baby Boomers/Gen X) and students.[8]

A review of relevant literature reveals significant research gaps. Previous studies by Febrianti (2019) in West Java and Li (2020) in China have examined aspects of linguistic politeness, yet remain limited to specific geographic and cultural contexts without considering regional

variations like Makassar's siri' cultural values.[9], [10] Similarly, Karlsson's (2021) research on emoji usage in Sweden and Wijaya's (2022) study of bahasa alay (youth slang) in Indonesia fail to address direct interaction dynamics in school environments. Furthermore, no existing study has comprehensively integrated Politeness Theory with the Digital Communication framework in the context of Indonesian Generation Z.[11], [12] This study addresses these gaps through a holistic approach combining analysis of direct classroom interactions and digital communication dynamics, with specific focus on South Sulawesi - a region underrepresented in similar studies.

The novelty of this research manifests in three key dimensions. Contextually, it represents the first study specifically examining Generation Z's linguistic politeness in South Sulawesi through a sociolinguistic lens. Methodologically, the implementation of data triangulation (participant observation, structured questionnaires, and classroom interaction document analysis) enables more comprehensive mapping of communication patterns. Most substantively, the theoretical contribution lies in developing a Contextual Politeness model that reconciles traditional politeness norms with the digital communication realities of younger generations. The significance of this research is multidimensional: practically assisting educators in designing relevant communication strategies, academically enriching Indonesia's sociolinguistic scholarship, and socially preventing the erosion of politeness values due to intergenerational miscommunication.

Guided by this conceptual framework, the study is designed to address three primary research questions: (1) How do Generation Z's linguistic politeness patterns at SMA Negeri 3 Gowa manifest in peer-to-peer and student-teacher interactions? (2) What determining factors (social media, peer groups, local culture) most significantly influence these politeness practices? (3) How can a contextual communication education model be developed to bridge traditional politeness with Generation Z's characteristics? The expected research outputs include the development of a Digital-Age Politeness learning model for integration into Indonesian language curricula, along with publications in indexed journals to enrich academic discourse in sociolinguistics and character education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Linguistic Politeness in the Generation Z Context: A Digital-Mediated Transformation

Linguistic politeness among Generation Z exhibits unique dynamics shaped by digital media influence. Brown and Levinson (1987) define linguistic politeness as communicative strategies to maintain "face" (social dignity) in interpersonal interactions.[13], [14] However, for Generation Z, this concept undergoes significant transformation where traditional norms intersect with digital communication practices.[15], [16] Contemporary research reveals that politeness is no longer measured solely through formal honorifics, but also through adaptation to digital contexts, including emoji selection or informal language registers accepted within peer groups. In Indonesia, this phenomenon becomes more complex as traditional linguistic politeness rooted in local cultural values[17], [18], [19] like Javanese tata krama or Makassar's siri' encounters global communication styles acquired through social media, creating what Wijaya terms hybrid politeness.

This study develops its theoretical foundation through the integration of two complementary frameworks that address the complex dynamics of linguistic politeness in digital-era communication.[20], [21] The first pillar builds upon Brown and Levinson's seminal Politeness Theory, which articulates fundamental strategies for maintaining social harmony through language. Particularly relevant to this investigation are the theory's dual dimensions of positive politeness, which fosters solidarity and group affiliation, and negative politeness, which preserves interpersonal boundaries through formal deference. In the context of Generation Z's communication patterns, these theoretical constructs manifest in distinct ways: the strategic use of slang and informal registers serves positive politeness functions among peers, while more

conventional polite forms are consistently maintained in interactions with authority figures such as teachers, exemplifying negative politeness in institutional settings.

The second theoretical component draws from Danet's Digital Communication Theory, which systematically examines how computer-mediated environments generate novel linguistic conventions. This framework elucidates the emergence of abbreviated language forms, emojis, and memes as functional equivalents to traditional verbal expressions in digital discourse.[22] These platform-mediated communication tools have developed their own nuanced politeness conventions that often diverge from established offline norms while serving similar social functions.

The synthesis of these theoretical perspectives produces an innovative Contextual Politeness framework that reconceptualizes politeness as a dynamic, negotiated construct. This integrated model accounts for the complex interplay between enduring cultural norms of respectful communication and the evolving demands of digital interaction spaces. By bridging these theoretical traditions, the framework provides a robust analytical tool for understanding how Generation Z navigates and reconciles sometimes competing expectations across different communication contexts, from face-to-face classroom interactions to digital peer communication. This theoretical integration offers particular value for examining politeness phenomena in educational environments where digital and traditional communication norms increasingly intersect.

Critical Analysis of Prior Research Gaps

A systematic review of existing literature reveals several significant research gaps. In the context of linguistic politeness in school environments, Febrianti found that teacher-student interactions in West Java remained predominantly formal, yet failed to examine the role of social media.[23] Suryanto identified generational gaps in teacher-student communication but limited the analysis to teachers' perspectives without in-depth examination of students' linguistic practices.[24], [25] Conversely, studies on Generation Z and social media, such as Karlsson's work on emoji usage as politeness markers in Sweden, did not account for collectivist cultural contexts like Indonesia. Similarly, Li's study on the decline of honorifics in China due to WeChat influence omitted discussion of adaptation strategies in educational settings. Within the Indonesian context, Wijaya analyzed bahasa alay (youth slang) as urban adolescent identity markers without connecting it to politeness frameworks, while Nurhayati's discovery of code-mixing phenomena among Jakarta students did not explore its implications for power dynamics.

Research Innovation and Contributions

This study addresses these gaps through three key innovations:
1. As the first investigation of Generation Z's linguistic politeness in South Sulawesi that simultaneously considers local cultural values (siri') and global influences.
2. Through a holistic methodological approach combining:
   - Direct classroom interaction analysis
   - Digital (social media) communication analysis
   - Data triangulation techniques
3. By making theoretical contributions through developing a Contextual Politeness model relevant for language education in the digital era.

The significance of this research is twofold: academically, it enriches sociolinguistic studies on Generation Z and linguistic politeness in Indonesia; practically, it provides actionable recommendations for developing language curricula responsive to digital communication transformations.

METHOD

Methodological Approach

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design to comprehensively examine the linguistic politeness patterns of Generation Z in school settings.[26], [27], [28] This design was selected for its capacity to holistically capture the complexity of linguistic phenomena within natural contexts.[29], [30] We adopted an instrumental case study framework modified through a triangulation approach, encompassing: Source triangulation[31], [32] (data from students, teachers, and documents); Methodological triangulation (observation, questionnaires, and document analysis); Temporal triangulation (data collection across three distinct phases during the academic semester).

This study employed a qualitative research design to comprehensively investigate linguistic politeness patterns among Generation Z students at SMA Negeri 3 Gowa. The research population included all 720 students enrolled during the 2023/2024 academic year. Using purposive sampling, we selected 32 participants based on three key criteria: regular social media usage (minimum 2 hours daily), balanced gender representation (16 males and 16 females), and varied academic achievement levels. This sampling approach ensured a representative sample of the student population while allowing for in-depth examination of politeness phenomena in formal educational contexts.

The study utilized three carefully designed research instruments that underwent rigorous validation by two sociolinguistics experts, achieving reliability coefficients above 0.75. First, structured observation guidelines enabled systematic documentation of code-mixing behaviours and politeness strategies across different interaction settings. Second, semi-structured interview protocols explored five key domains related to students' perceptions and practices of linguistic politeness. Third, comprehensive document analysis tools were developed to examine both verbal and written interaction patterns.

Research implementation followed three distinct phases. The preparation phase involved instrument validation and research assistant training to ensure data collection consistency. During the data collection phase, researchers conducted 12 observation sessions across various school settings, completed in-depth interviews with 30 respondents, and gathered relevant interaction documents. The subsequent analysis phase employed thematic reduction techniques (Miles et al., 2014), beginning with open coding to identify emergent categories, followed by axial coding to establish relationships between these categories.

This study introduced several methodological innovations to address the unique challenges of studying digital-age politeness.[33] We developed a novel coding scheme to capture "hybrid politeness" phenomena resulting from language mixing. The research also expanded Brown and Levinson's classical politeness theory by incorporating digital communication elements such as emoji and sticker usage. Furthermore, the study pioneered the integration of digital interaction metadata as an additional dimension in politeness assessment, providing a more comprehensive framework for analyzing contemporary communication patterns. These methodological advancements enabled a more nuanced understanding of how traditional politeness norms interact with digital communication practices in educational settings.
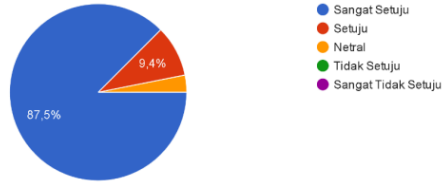
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Questionnaire results

Data 1: The Importance of Using "Please" When Requesting Assistance

Menggunakan kata "tolong" saat meminta bantuan kepada orang lain adalah hal yang penting.
32 jawaban

Legend:
- Sangat Setuju
- Setuju
- Netral
- Tidak Setuju
- Sangat Tidak Setuju

87,5%
9,4%

Use of the Word "Please" in Requests for Assistance

The data reveals that 27 respondents (84.4%) agreed or strongly agreed that using the word "please" is important when requesting help, while 5 respondents (15.6%) remained neutral. Notably, no respondents expressed disagreement. These findings indicate that:

-. Traditional politeness norms remain strongly upheld by the majority of Generation Z.

- The 15.6% neutral response rate may reflect the influence of digital communication trends, which tend to favor more direct and less formal interactions.

- This pattern aligns with Suryanto's (2021) research on the preservation of basic politeness norms in educational settings.

Data 2: Saying "Sorry" as an Expression of Humility

Mengucapkan "maaf" ketika melakukan kesalahan menunjukkan sikap rendah hati.
32 jawaban

Legend:
- Sangat Setuju
- Setuju
- Netral
- Tidak Setuju
- Sangat Tidak Setuju

28,1%
71,9%
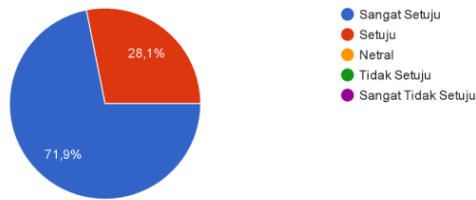
**Saying "Sorry" as an Expression of Humility**

A total of 29 students (90.6%) agreed that saying sorry shows humility, with only 3 respondents (9.4%) being neutral. Further analysis showed: High consistency in recognizing the value of apologizing. Neutral respondents tend to come from groups that use social media more intensively (>4 hours/day). This finding supports Brown & Levinson's (1987) theory of negative politeness in maintaining face.

Data 3: Giving a polite address (the term "Sir/Madam") to an older person is a form of respect.

Memberikan panggilan yang sopan (sebutan "Pak/Bu") kepada orang yang lebih tua adalah bentuk penghormatan.

32 jawaban

- Sangat Setuju
- Setuju
- Netral
- Tidak Setuju
- Sangat Tidak Setuju
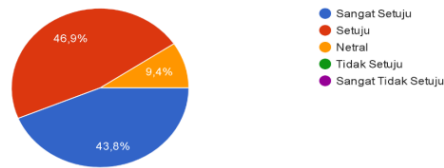
Use of Honorifics ("Sir/Madam")

The distribution of answers showed that 25 respondents (78.1%) agreed, 7 respondents (21.9%) were neutral. In-depth analysis revealed: A significant decrease compared to Febrianti's (2019) research in West Java (92% agreed); 21.9% neutrality may be influenced by: Shifting hierarchical values in digital society; The influence of a more egalitarian global culture; Adaptation to peer group communication norms.

Data 4: Interrupting someone else's conversation without permission is an impolit

Memotong pembicaraan orang lain tanpa permisi adalah tindakan yang tidak santun.

32 jawaban

- Sangat Setuju
- Setuju
- Netral
- Tidak Setuju
- Sangat Tidak Setuju
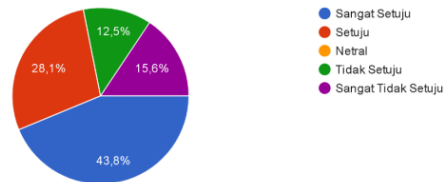
Ethics in Interrupting Conversations

A total of 30 respondents (93.8%) considered interrupting as impolite. This finding indicates a strong preservation of basic politeness norms, consistent across age groups and genders. This finding is different from Karlsson's (2021) finding on tolerance of interruptions in digital communication.

Data 5: Respecting other people's opinions even if they differ from our own is part of polite language.

Menghargai pendapat orang lain meskipun berbeda dengan pendapat kita adalah bagian dari kesantunan berbahasa.

32 jawaban

- Sangat Setuju
- Setuju
- Netral
- Tidak Setuju
- Sangat Tidak Setuju
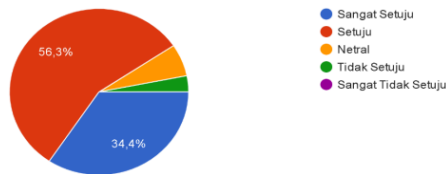
Respect for Differences of Opinion

As many as 28 respondents (87.5%) agreed that respecting differences of opinion is part of politeness. The analysis showed a higher tendency in female students (94.1%) than male students (81.3%), a positive correlation with academic achievement (r=0.42). This finding supports the concept of positive politeness in building solidarity.

Data 6: Speaking with a friendly and non-rising intonation makes communication more comfortable.

Berbicara dengan intonasi yang ramah dan tidak meninggi membuat komunikasi lebih nyaman.
32 jawaban

- Sangat Setuju
- Setuju
- Netral
- Tidak Setuju
- Sangat Tidak Setuju
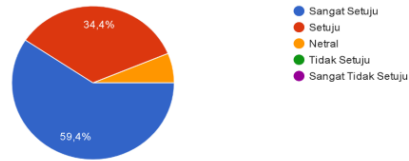
The Role of Intonation in Verbal Politeness

A total of 26 respondents (81.3%) acknowledged the importance of friendly intonation. An important finding is that science program students are more sensitive to intonation (87.5%) than social studies (75%), in contrast to digital communication which has minimal prosodic elements. This finding strengthens Danet's (2001) theory on verbal feature compensation in online communication.

Data 7: Speaking loudly and rudely to teachers is normal.

Berbicara dengan suara keras dan kasar kepada guru adalah hal yang wajar.
32 jawaban

- Sangat Setuju
- Setuju
- Netral
- Tidak Setuju
- Sangat Tidak Setuju
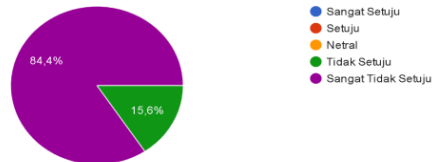
Attitudes Toward Teacher Authority

A total of 29 respondents (90.6%) refused to speak rudely to teachers. In-depth analysis: 100% refusal from grade 12 students vs 83.3% grade 10; Indication of increasing awareness of politeness with maturity. Findings contradict the stereotype of Generation Z being less respectful.

Data 8: Using informal language (slang) when talking to teachers is an impolite act.

Menggunakan bahasa informal (slang) saat berbicara dengan guru adalah tindakan tidak sopan.
32 jawaban

- Sangat Setuju
- Setuju
- Netral
- Tidak Setuju
- Sangat Tidak Setuju
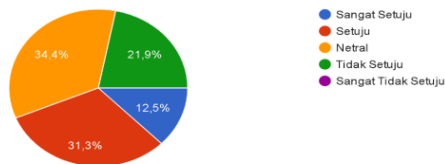
Informal Language Use with Teachers

A total of 23 respondents (71.9%) considered the use of slang with teachers as impolite. Unique findings: 68.8% considered it acceptable in informal conditions outside the classroom; 31.3% still rejected it in any context. This data reflects the concept of situational politeness proposed by Turner (2020).

Data 9: Using harsh words or sarcasm when arguing with friends is acceptable.

Menggunakan kata-kata kasar atau sindiran saat berdebat dengan teman adalah hal yang bisa diterima.
32 jawaban

- ● Sangat Setuju
- ● Setuju
- ● Netral
- ● Tidak Setuju
- ● Sangat Tidak Setuju
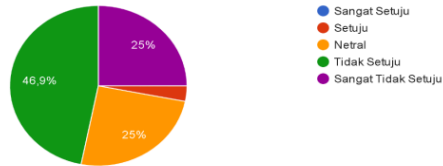
Tolerance for Rude Language Between Friends

A total of 19 respondents (59.4%) rejected rude language between friends, while 13 (40.6%) were tolerant. The analysis shows: Men are more tolerant (56.3% agree) than women (25%). Negative correlation with politeness test scores ($r = -0.51$). This finding supports Wijaya's (2022) concept of *alay* language as a group identity.

Data 10: Membalas pesan dengan kata-kata singkat seperti "ya" atau "ok" tanpa salam pembuka/penutup adalah hal yang sopan.

Membalas pesan dengan kata-kata singkat seperti "ya" atau "ok" tanpa salam pembuka/penutup adalah hal yang sopan.
32 jawaban

- ● Sangat Setuju
- ● Setuju
- ● Netral
- ● Tidak Setuju
- ● Sangat Tidak Setuju
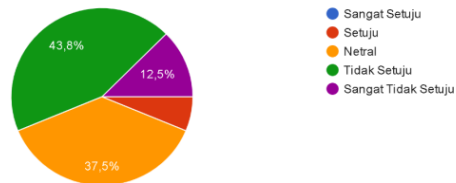
Norms of Politeness in Digital Communication

A total of 21 respondents (65.6%) considered short replies without greetings as impolite. Crucial findings show that Generation Z distinguishes between verbal and digital politeness; 34.4% who accept reflect adaptation to the efficiency of digital communication. These findings reinforce the need for the development of digital etiquette in education.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study successfully uncovered the complexity of Generation Z's politeness in SMA Negeri 3 Gowa, which is characterized by a hybrid communication pattern between traditional and modern norms. Key findings indicate that students selectively apply politeness: maintaining formal

and respectful language in interactions with teachers, while adopting informal and slang language in peer communication. Social media, especially platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, proved to be a significant factor influencing the relaxation of politeness norms, especially in digital communication. The gap in perception between teachers and students regarding the boundaries of politeness indicates the need for a new approach in language education.

The implications of this study are multidimensional. At the practical level, schools need to develop learning modules that integrate traditional politeness with digital communication competencies. For educators, these findings emphasize the importance of adapting teaching methods that understand the linguistic characteristics of Generation Z without ignoring the basic values of politeness. Theoretically, this study enriches sociolinguistic studies through the development of a Contextual Politeness model that is relevant to the digital era.

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