

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.122.126149

PRAGMATIC POLITENESS STRATEGIES ACROSS HIERARCHICAL KINSHIP: A CASE STUDY OF THE SUJUD MENGIYAN TRADITION IN LAMPUNG INDIGENOUS COMMUNICATION

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Received: 20/11/2025
Accepted: 25/12/2025

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ABSTRACT

*Politeness is a fundamental aspect of human interaction, particularly within culturally bound communication practices. This study investigates the realization of linguistic politeness in the Lampung traditional ceremony of *Sujud Mengiyan* by analyzing the politeness strategies employed by male and female spokespersons. Guided by Leech's (1983) politeness theory, this research adopts a qualitative field approach. The data consist of spokespersons' utterances produced during the ceremony, collected through direct observation and in-depth interviews with traditional leaders who had served as spokespersons. The findings reveal that both spokespersons consistently demonstrate a high level of politeness by referring to the hierarchical kinship system of the Lampung indigenous community. Positive politeness strategies and the use of honorific forms dominate the interaction, indicating the strong influence of social hierarchy and cultural values on speech behavior. These results challenge the stereotype that Lampung communication is inherently direct and lacks politeness, showing instead that politeness is deeply embedded and highly respected in traditional communicative practices. However, since this study is limited to a single cultural event, the findings may not fully represent the broader variation of politeness practices across different Lampung cultural contexts.*

KEYWORDS: Politeness, Lampung Culture, Hierarchical Kinship, Positive Politeness.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is an inseparable aspect of human life, deeply intertwined with its speakers. According to (Sapir 1921; Whorf, 1956), the structure and vocabulary of a language provide crucial insights into the culture of its origin. Conversely, cultural norms and values also shape language use and meaning. (Lakoff, 1973) emphasized that language shapes the way we think and comprehend the world. (Kramersch, 1998) further highlighted the inseparability of language and culture, asserting that each language carries its own culture.

Politeness, widely agreed upon as a habitual practice, functions to reduce conflict and foster social harmony (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Research by (Bourdieu, 1991) and (Gumperz, 1982) demonstrated that language and culture contribute significantly to identity formation, with individual and group identities often expressed through language and cultural practices.

In culturally diverse contexts, communication styles often reflect societal values and norms (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). Communication serves as a vital means to exchange information, ideas, and feelings among individuals ((Watzlawick et al., 1967). Communication style is influenced by various factors, including culture, history, and social context (Hymes, 1972)

Central to understanding these interactions is the concept of linguistic politeness. (Brown & Levinson, 1987) asserted that politeness in language aims to avoid conflicts and maintain harmony in social interactions and is an indispensable part of intercultural communication. However, politeness practices vary greatly depending on cultural and social contexts, meaning politeness norms in one culture can differ or even conflict with those in another (Levinson, 1983)

Such differences can lead to social problems, as shown in studies by (Djibril, 2012), (Laila, 2023), and (Miyanti et al., 2017). Ethnic stereotypes regarding linguistic impoliteness can cause misunderstandings and conflicts. For example, some groups perceive the Lampung ethnic community as lacking politeness in communication. Standards of politeness often vary widely between cultures, and what is considered polite in one context may be seen as impolite in another (Mills, 2003). Recognizing and understanding these differences is essential to prevent intercultural miscommunication and barriers.

Politeness can be understood as actions that consider others' feelings, respect differences, and minimize potential conflict in social interactions

(Brown & Levinson, 1987). The politeness of language use can be evaluated based on word choice (diction) and linguistic style (Pranowo, 2015).

The Lampung community in Indonesia is known for a unique communication style characterized by loud intonations, direct and firm speech, and expressions perceived as harsh by outsiders. However, within Lampung culture, such communication is normal and aligns with local norms and values. This style can cause misunderstandings and conflicts when interacting with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Thus, it is crucial for those interacting with the Lampung community to understand and respect cultural differences and broaden their awareness of diverse communication styles to build effective intercultural relationships (Gudykunst et al., 1988). As (Hymes, 1972) argued, understanding language goes beyond syntax and grammar to include when, where, and how to appropriately use language in specific social and cultural contexts. Therefore, linguistic politeness demands deeper examination, particularly in social and cultural contexts.

Numerous studies have explored linguistic politeness, both in Indonesia (Arnawa et al., 2022; Gusnawaty et al., 2022; Mahmud, 2019; Sukarno, 2018) and internationally (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Fedriani, 2019; Felix-Brasdefer, 2005; Hamid et al., 2020; Lee, 2020; Mazzon, 2017; Osman & Wahab, 2018; Ramani et al., 2018; Sifianou, 1994; Wang & Taylor, 2019; Yaghoubzadeh, 2021).

These studies have identified various politeness strategies and their functions in different cultural settings. For example, (Faraba, 2018) observed politeness in Arek culture on Instagram, highlighting its role in relationship maintenance and conflict minimization. (Huang, 2008) compared Chinese and Western societies, underscoring the influence of cultural norms on politeness expression and interpretation. (Abdurahman, 2018) identified translanguaging as a politeness strategy among university students. Other research examined politeness in public discourse (Purba, 2023), educational contexts (Adel, 2016; Fitriyani, 2020; Hafid, 2022; Hobjilä, 2012; Selgas, 2022) and digital communication (Algiovan, 2022; Chandra, 2021; Fitriani, 2023).

Despite extensive literature, there remains a research gap concerning politeness in specific cultural contexts, such as the Lampung cultural tradition of Sujud Mengiyan. Understanding the politeness strategies employed in this ceremonial context is crucial because language use is influenced

by interlocutor and topic, which are collectively understood and agreed upon in such settings.

Therefore, this study aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of politeness strategies in the *Sujud Mengiyan* ceremony, elucidating how polite communication fosters mutual respect and effective interaction within the Lampung cultural environment.

Although there has been extensive research on linguistic politeness across cultures, there is limited focus on politeness in the specific cultural context of the Lampung *Sujud Mengiyan* ceremony. This study seeks to address this gap by providing an in-depth analysis of the politeness practices in this traditional ceremony. Thus, this research is expected to enrich academic knowledge in linguistics and communication anthropology while offering practical value in preserving tradition and promoting social harmony amidst cultural.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on language politeness has been conducted in various parts of the world, not just in Indonesia, each with a different focus and approach.

In Indonesia, research on student affectivity has been conducted by (Alifah, 2019; Arum et al., 2022; Fazilla, 2014; Rissaputantri & Wening, 2018). In the West, there has also been research on student affectivity conducted by (D. Brown, 2015; Griffith et al., 2021; Hartley & Lee, 2015; Schilling et al., 2013; Shower et al., 2008).

Furthermore, research on implicature has been conducted by (Fawziyyah et al., 2017; Suryawin, 2022; Wahyuningsih & Rafli, 2017; Y. Yulianti & Utomo, 2020). In the West, implicature research has also been conducted by (J. S. Lee, 2002; Tiel & Schaeken, 2017; S. Yulianti et al., 2022).

Furthermore, research on politeness in Indonesia has been conducted by (Arnawa et al., 2022; Gusnawaty et al., 2022; Mahmud, 2019; Sukarno, 2018). In other countries, research related to politeness in language has also been conducted by (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Fedriani, 2019; Felix-Brasdefer, 2005; Hamid et al., 2020; H. Y. Lee, 2020; Mazzon, 2017; Osman & Wahab, 2018; Ramani et al., 2018; Sifianou, 1994; Wang & Taylor, 2019; Yaghoubzadeh, 2021).

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative field research design to explore the use of politeness strategies in the Lampung traditional ceremony of *Sujud Mengiyan*. The research focused on verbal interactions occurring during the ceremonial

communication process, particularly those involving formal spokespersons. The analysis was guided by Leech's (1983) politeness theory as the main analytical framework.

3.1. Participants

The participants in this study consisted of two spokespersons: one male and one female. Both were traditional figures and cultural practitioners who directly served as official spokespersons in the *Sujud Mengiyan* ceremony. They were selected based on their active involvement, cultural authority, and extensive experience in conducting traditional communication. These two individuals constituted the primary data sources for this study.

3.2. Data Collection

Data were collected through direct observation and in-depth interviews. All formal utterances delivered by the spokespersons during the *Sujud Mengiyan* procession were documented. The interactions were audio-recorded with the participants' consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy of the spoken data. In addition, follow-up interviews were conducted to clarify the contextual meaning and cultural significance of specific utterances. The recorded data focused on politeness markers such as expressions of respect, caution, humility, empathy, and agreement.

3.3. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using Leech's (1983) six politeness maxims: Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Praise Maxim, Humility Maxim, Agreement Maxim, and Sympathy Maxim. Each utterance was systematically classified according to the relevant maxim based on its communicative intent. The researchers then identified the dominant politeness strategies and examined the cultural and social factors influencing the selection of specific strategies. This analysis allowed for a comprehensive interpretation of interactional dynamics and hierarchical relationships manifested in the *Sujud Mengiyan* ceremony.

The analysis revealed the dynamics of relationships between traditional leaders, particularly in terms of their tendency to demonstrate agreement, humility, tact, and empathy during formal communication during the *Sujud Mengiyan* ceremony.

3. RESULTS

To answer the fundamental research question, we divide this section into three main points in

accordance with (Leech, 1983) theory of linguistic politeness. In the first subsection, we will present the linguistic politeness data found in the conversation at the *sujud mengiyan* event. We will summarize the number of utterances made by each speaker. The second subsection will discuss each maxim used during the event. In the final

subsection, we will discuss these findings and their implications for politeness strategies in higher education in Indonesia.

Data On Politeness in The Lampung Language at The Sujud Mengiyan Event

Table 1: Distribution Of Politeness Maxims in The Lampung Language at The Sujud Mengiyan Ceremony.

No	Maxim of Politeness	Total
1	Maxim of Tact	49
2	Maxim of Generosity	36
3	Maxim of Praise	37
4	Maxim of Humility	52
5	Maxim of Agreement	58
6	Maxim of Sympathy	49
Total		281

Based on the overall data, it can be concluded that the maxims of agreement (58 data) and humility (52 data) are the most dominant forms of politeness in traditional *sujud mengiyan* conversations. This indicates that the Lampung people highly uphold the values of deliberation, harmony, and humility in every social interaction. These principles of politeness not only reflect customary

communication norms but can also be an important learning resource for developing students' social and affective competencies in the context of higher education in Indonesia.

Maxim Data Used

1. Maxim Of Tact

Table 2: Maxim of Tact in The Sujud Mengiyan Tradition.

No.	Example Utterances	Politeness Strategies	Trigger
1	<p>Lampung Language <i>Sikamji dikayinko Suntan Pukuk Marga, Suntan Puncak Negara, tuntung tajomni tuan raja ratu jak negara ratu.</i></p> <p>Meaning We are sent by <i>Suntan Pukuk Marga and Suntan Puncak Negara</i> on the orders of the king and queen of <i>Negara Ratu</i>.</p>	"sent" and "order of the king and queen"	hierarchical relationships and authority from higher parties.

In this statement, the use of words such as "sent" and "order of the king and queen" explicitly indicates that the speakers assert their role in the hierarchical relationship. They speak not only on their own behalf but also on behalf of higher authorities, namely *Suntan Pukuk Marga* and *Suntan Puncak Negara*, as well as the king and queen as the highest authority. By citing legitimate and clear sources of instruction, the speakers assert their legitimacy as carriers of important messages from those in authority.

This maxim of wisdom contains two important

elements: first, acknowledging the social structure and higher authority, and second, conveying a message that clarifies the speakers' position within the broader social relationship, thereby reducing the potential for conflict or misunderstanding that can arise if communication is not based on clear hierarchical recognition. In this sense, the speakers seek not only to maintain their own honor but also to respect their superiors, a form of politeness deeply rooted in Lampung culture.

2. Maxim Of Generosity

Table 3: Maxim of Generosity in The Sujud Mengiyan Tradition.

No.	Example Utterances	Politeness Strategies	Trigger
1	<p>Lampung Language <i>Kutimbalni jak Tuan Kunjungan Raja, Tuan Sumbahan, Suntan</i></p>	"High esteem and recognition of social status"	the interests and expectations of other parties as a priority

	<p><i>Akuan Raja, tuntung tajomni tuan raja asal insyaallah mudah2an makdok sai wat halangan hikam dapok memenuhi harapan suntan pukuk marga tiyan rumpok.</i></p> <p>Meaning</p> <p>The answer is from the King's Visit, the King's <i>Sumbahan</i>, the King's <i>Suntan Akuan</i>, and I'm grateful to the King's <i>Suntan Akuan</i>. God willing, there will be no obstacles in fulfilling the hopes of the King's <i>Suntan Pukuk</i> and his family.</p>		
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Based on G. Leech's maxim of generosity, which requires the speaker to minimize personal gain and maximize the benefit of the interlocutor, the speaker explicitly mentions the various titles and honorary positions of the interlocutor (in this case, guests or

in-laws). This shows high respect and recognition of social status, which indicates the speaker's humility.

3. Maxim Of Praise

Table 4: Maxim of Praise in The Sujud Mengiyan Tradition.

No.	Example Utterances	Politeness Strategies	Trigger
1	<p>Lampung Language</p> <p><i>Ketumpakni dipuskam ketujuni diunyin segala punyimbang tuha raja tiyuh Negeri Ratu, terutamani Tuan Kunjungan Raja, Tuan Sumbahan, Suntan Akuan Raja, tuntung tajomni tuan raja asal tiyan sang muari.</i></p> <p>Mean</p> <p>The main aim is aimed at all traditional figures in the village of Negeri Ratu. Especially the visiting king, the offering, the king's confession, the spokesperson for the king and his family.</p>	"Explicit praise of social status and important roles"	honorary titles and high social positions

This utterance explicitly mentions the various honorific titles and high social positions of the figures who are the interlocutors, such as "Tuan Datang Raja," "Tuan Sumbahan," "Suntan Akuan Raja," and *Tuntung Tajomni Tuan Raja Asal*. The mention of these titles is a form of explicit praise for the interlocutors' social status and important role

within the Lampung traditional structure. In traditional culture, this kind of recognition is not merely a formality, but a form of praise strategy that strengthens social relations and demonstrates high respect.

4. Maxim Of Humility

Table 5: Maxim of Humility in The Sujud Mengiyan Tradition.

No.	Example Utterances	Politeness Strategies	Trigger
1	<p>Lampung Language</p> <p><i>Sikamji dikayinko Suntan Pukuk Marga, Suntan Puncak Negara, tuntung tajomni tuan raja ratu jak Negara Ratu.</i></p> <p>Mean</p> <p>We were sent by <i>Suntan Pukuk Marga</i> and <i>Suntan Puncak Negara</i> on the orders of the mouthpiece of the lord king and queen from Negara Ratu.</p>	"sent" and "mouthpiece"	does not position himself as a center of authority or decision maker

The speaker in this utterance clearly identifies himself as someone "sent" by higher traditional

figures, namely *Suntan Pukuk Marga*, *Suntan Puncak Negara*, and *Tuan Raja Ratu*. This expression indicates that the speaker does not position himself as the center of authority or decision-maker, but

rather simply as a conveyor of messages.

5. Maxim Of Agreement

Table 6: Maxim of Agreement in The Sujud Mengiyan Tradition.

No.	Example Utterances	Politeness Strategies	Trigger
1	<p>Lampung Language <i>The ceremony was held in conjunction with the arrival of the king's visit to Negeri Ratu.</i></p> <p>Mean As planned, the ceremony was held in one group to deliver the title money to the visiting king and his family in Negeri Ratu.</p>	<p>"Unification of attitudes and opinions"</p>	<p>The Existence of Previous Joint Decisions, Demands of Customary Ethics, Maintaining Social Harmony</p>

The speaker employs a politeness strategy of aligning attitudes and opinions with the interlocutor. The phrase "*juk api sai jadi naik*" (intentional) indicates that the action was based on collective deliberation, not a personal decision.

This strategy demonstrates respect for the value

of deliberation (*muakhi*), which underpins Lampung customs. By emphasizing that their actions are based on consensus, the speaker strengthens social ties and demonstrates adherence to shared norms.

6. Maxim Of Sympathy

Table 7: Maxim of Sympathy in The Sujud Mengiyan Tradition.

No.	Example Utterances	Politeness Strategies	Trigger
1	<p>Lampung Language <i>Hiji pusabaian ram kak tigoh jak Negara Ratu mungkin wat sai haga tiyan rumpok sampaiko ganta.</i></p> <p>Mean Our in-laws have arrived from Negara Ratu and they probably have something to say now.</p>	<p>"Give space and opportunity politely"</p>	<p>empathy and attention to the interests of others</p>

In the above data, the speaker conveys the information that the in-laws are present and "perhaps they have something they would like to convey." This expression is not merely informative, but also demonstrates empathy and concern for the interests of the other party, in this case the in-laws from Negara Ratu. The speaker does not immediately demand or order, but rather politely gives the in-laws space and opportunity to convey their intentions.

DISCUSSION

This study aims to examine the politeness strategies used by male and female speakers in interactions at the Lampungnese cultural event, *sujud mengiyan*, with a focus on the forms and communication strategies initiated by both parties. The findings of this study reveal several important patterns that confirm and extend previous research, while also highlighting the uniqueness of the cultural context.

The main finding is that Lampungnese speakers rely heavily on politeness strategies derived from a

strong kinship system and social hierarchy, as well as symbolic and material respect. These strategies include title greetings, indirect speech, and expressions of gratitude. This three-step formula for polite communication reflects a strong adherence to social and cultural norms and an acknowledgment of the hierarchical relationship between the groom and the bride. This pattern is consistent with the findings of Sembiring and Sianturi (2021) and Shalihah and Zuhdi (2020), who observed the frequent use of greetings, apologies, and gratitude to minimize conflict in communication. This preference for formal greetings, particularly those of a religious nature, echoes the findings of Fitriyani (2020) and Hafid et al. (2022), who noted the role of cultural and religious norms in shaping politeness.

Notably, neither male nor female speakers used negative or informal politeness strategies significantly in the conversations at the cultural events (*sujud mengiyan*) studied. The absence of negative politeness (which typically involves indirectness or stealth to avoid coercion) suggests that both groups viewed the *sujud mengiyan* cultural

event as a relatively direct, yet respectful, communication space. This likely reflects the informal nature, as well as the trust and familiarity that have become the norm in Lampungnese communication in this context.

Overall, these findings support Leech's (1983) argument that politeness strategies serve to maintain social harmony and manage power dynamics. The specific patterns observed – the exclusive use of positive politeness that pays attention to hierarchy, social status, and the use of titles by both parties – reflect the unique interaction between hierarchy and cultural norms.

These results have several implications for future practice and research. First, it is important to integrate a deeper understanding of politeness strategies rooted in kinship systems, social hierarchies, and local cultural values into cross-cultural communication instruction. This understanding can help ensure that participants can appreciate and apply politeness norms appropriately in different social contexts, including traditional rituals such as *sujud mengiyan*.

Second, future research should expand the study of variations in linguistic politeness across Lampung subcultures and other traditional cultures, including indirect communication methods such as indirect speech, which are rich in symbolic value and implicit meaning. This is crucial for enriching theories of pragmatics and politeness in a highly pluralistic and complex cultural context such as Indonesia.

Third, the absence of negative politeness strategies in the *sujud mengiyan* interaction demonstrates a high level of intimacy and openness, while maintaining a deep sense of respect. This can serve as an ideal model for effective and harmonious communication in a social context rooted in cultural norms. Further research could investigate how nonverbal and symbolic aspects, such as the use of customary titles and material respect, contribute to strengthening the overall effect of politeness.

Finally, these findings confirm the relevance of Leech's (1983) theory of positive politeness in the Lampung cultural context and provide an empirical basis for developing adaptive and contextual communication strategies that can be applied to cultural preservation and future intercultural

dialogue. Thus, these results can serve as an important reference for the development of ethnopragmatic studies and linguistic politeness strategies relevant to Indonesia's evolving socio-cultural context.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

7.1. Key Findings

This study reveals that the politeness strategies used by the bride and groom's spokespersons in the Lampung cultural event *Sujud Mengiyan* are predominantly characterized by positive politeness. These strategies are strongly influenced by the hierarchical kinship system, social structure, and the symbolic as well as material expressions of respect. The consistent application of these strategies contributes to harmonious and peaceful relationships between the families involved.

7.2. Local Relevance

At the local level, this research enriches the study of cultural pragmatics in the Lampung community and reinforces the importance of politeness as a core cultural value. The findings also support efforts to preserve *Sujud Mengiyan* as part of Lampung's cultural heritage and as a marker of community identity that strengthens social cohesion and inter-family relations.

7.3. Global Implications

In the global context, this study contributes to the broader understanding of how local cultural values can be sustained amid the dynamics of globalization. The politeness practices observed in *Sujud Mengiyan* highlight the importance of maintaining traditional values to support social harmony while fostering cross-cultural respect. This research also opens opportunities for further studies in cultural pragmatics and intercultural communication to promote mutual understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity worldwide.

7.4. Recommendation

Future research is recommended to examine politeness strategies across different Lampung cultural events and broader social settings to obtain a more comprehensive picture of linguistic politeness within the Lampung cultural context.

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