

Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Understanding Politeness Strategies in Intercultural Communication

Pragmatik Lintas Budaya: Memahami Strategi Kesopanan dalam Komunikasi Antarbudaya

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ABSTRACT

Intercultural communication is an important element in an increasingly connected world, where politeness plays a key role in facilitating harmonious interactions in the digital age. This research aims to explore how politeness strategies can reduce conflict in virtual interactions. The research method used involves collecting and analyzing literature from leading international databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, with a focus on studies regarding politeness strategies in cross-cultural communication. The results show that implementing effective politeness strategies can help reduce conflict and increase cross-cultural understanding in virtual contexts. The implications of this research suggest that the application of politeness techniques in digital communication is essential for managing conflict and enhancing cross-cultural cooperation.

Keywords: Intercultural communication, politeness strategies, virtual interaction, conflict reduction, digital communication

ABSTRAK

Komunikasi antar budaya merupakan elemen penting dalam dunia yang semakin terhubung, di mana kesopanan memainkan peran kunci dalam memfasilitasi interaksi harmonis di era digital. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana strategi kesopanan dapat mengurangi konflik dalam interaksi virtual. Metode penelitian yang digunakan melibatkan pengumpulan dan analisis literatur dari database internasional terkemuka seperti Scopus, Web of Science, dan Google Scholar, dengan fokus pada studi mengenai strategi kesopanan dalam komunikasi lintas budaya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan strategi kesopanan yang efektif dapat membantu mengurangi konflik dan meningkatkan pemahaman lintas budaya dalam konteks virtual. Implikasi dari penelitian ini menyarankan bahwa penerapan teknik kesopanan dalam komunikasi digital sangat penting untuk mengelola konflik dan meningkatkan kerjasama lintas budaya.

Kata Kunci: Komunikasi antar budaya, strategi kesopanan, interaksi virtual, pengurangan konflik, komunikasi digital

1. Introduction

Cross-cultural pragmatics studies the complex relationship between language, culture, and communication with a particular focus on politeness strategies in intercultural interactions. This study involves understanding how language and culture influence perceptions of politeness, respect, and social distance (Smith, 2024). This field explores communicative differences rooted in diverse cultures, situations and interactions, and emphasizes the importance of pragmatic competence for effective cross-cultural communication (Chintawidy & Sartini, 2022). Requests, as one of the key aspects in cross-cultural pragmatics, are known to have complex interactions with politeness across various languages and cultures (Talay, 2022).

Investigation of pragmatic transfer is important for improving cross-cultural communication competence, especially in the context of intercultural communication (Qian, 2024). Politeness, as a fundamental aspect in relationships, plays a central role in intercultural

communication, demonstrating its significance in facilitating successful interactions (Beksultanova, 2024). Cross-cultural pragmatics is seen as a cognitive, social, and cultural perspective on language and communication, highlighting its multidimensional nature (Sapoetra, 2019).

Research on intercultural miscommunication reveals the challenges faced by students in intercultural communication and the strategies used to overcome and resolve these problems (Alkelani, 2023). Understanding and producing pragmatics is considered crucial for effective communication, especially for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners involved in cross-cultural interactions (Ashraf & Ali, 2021). A multimodal and multi-method approach is recommended for examining cross-cultural pragmatics to integrate multiple cultural perspectives (Isosävi, 2023).

Increasing cross-cultural pragmatic competence in students is very important to create a sustainable learning environment, which is key to educational quality (Bardis et al., 2021). Cultural relativism and ethnocentrism are explored as principles influencing cross-cultural communication competence, emphasizing the sociocultural basis of the concept of pragmatics (Yuliya et al., 2022). Analysis of pragmatic failures in cross-cultural communication highlights the importance of understanding pragmatic-linguistic and socio-pragmatic failures to facilitate successful intercultural interactions (Liu, 2022).

Apology strategies in intercultural research highlight the role of culture in pragmatic communication, emphasizing the significance of intercultural and cross-cultural studies in understanding communication dynamics (Mir, 2023). Successful communication in a foreign language requires not only linguistic knowledge but also an understanding of pragmatics and cross-cultural communication (Nugroho et al., 2021). The development of intercultural communication competence is essential for effective English education, emphasizing the need for strategies across multiple dimensions (Wang, 2024). In conclusion, cross-cultural pragmatics plays an important role in improving intercultural communication by exploring the nuances of politeness strategies, pragmatic failures, and the influence of culture on communication dynamics. Understanding these aspects is critical to facilitating effective and respectful interactions in a variety of cultural settings.

Intercultural communication is a crucial aspect in an increasingly connected global world, where individuals from various cultural backgrounds interact in diverse contexts. Politeness, as a fundamental element in communication, plays a significant role in facilitating cross-cultural understanding and cooperation. In the digital era, where virtual interactions are becoming increasingly dominant, new challenges arise in maintaining effective intercultural communication. Advanced communication technologies allow individuals to interact in real-time without geographic boundaries, but also introduce the potential for conflict and misinterpretation caused by differences in culture and context. This phenomenon highlights the importance of understanding and implementing effective politeness strategies in virtual contexts to reduce the risk of conflict and ensure harmonious communication.

In cross-cultural virtual interactions, a number of common problems often arise, including communication conflicts and misinterpretations that can hinder work and social relationships. Differences in politeness norms and values between cultures can exacerbate tensions, as individuals may not always be aware of or appreciate cultural differences that influence the way they communicate. This conflict often arises from a lack of understanding of the politeness conventions that apply in various cultures, as well as from the limitations of digital media in conveying subtle nuances of communication. Therefore, appropriate politeness strategies and a deep understanding of different cultural norms are essential for conflict mitigation in virtual communication.

To understand how politeness can influence interactions in digital contexts, a relevant research question is: "How can an understanding of politeness strategies in intercultural communication help reduce conflict in virtual interactions in the digital era?" This research

aims to explore the strategic role of politeness in overcoming communication problems that arise in virtual environments, as well as to identify best practices that can be applied to increase the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication in increasingly complex digital contexts.

Although there are various studies on politeness in cross-cultural communication, most of the existing research still focuses on face-to-face communication contexts and does not deeply explore the dynamics of politeness in cross-cultural virtual interactions. This research gap includes a lack of understanding of how politeness strategies implemented in digital contexts can influence the reduction of conflict and misinterpretation in virtual communication. Existing research tends to ignore how differences in politeness norms and values can be affected by digital media, which often exhibit limitations in conveying the full message and subtle nuances of communication. Therefore, there is an urgent need to systematically explore how politeness strategies can be adapted and applied in virtual environments that differ from traditional face-to-face communication.

This research has high urgency in the context of communication in the digital era, where virtual interaction has become a major component in international relations, global business and academic collaboration. With increasing reliance on digital platforms for cross-cultural communication, it is important to understand how politeness can serve as a tool to reduce conflict and increase communication effectiveness. The relevance of this research lies in its ability to provide practical insights for the development of more effective and adaptive communication practices in digital environments, as well as its contribution to communication technology that can support more harmonious and productive interactions.

This research offers a new aspect by focusing on the application of politeness strategies in a virtual communication context that has not been widely researched. One innovative element is the exploration of how various politeness strategies can be adapted to function effectively in digital media, as well as how cultural differences influence the application of these strategies in virtual interactions. The contribution of this research is in expanding the understanding of politeness applied in digital contexts, providing new guidance for communication practitioners and technology developers in creating solutions that are more appropriate to the needs of cross-cultural communication in the digital era.

This research is expected to provide new insights into how politeness strategies can be used to reduce conflict in virtual interactions. By identifying best practices and effective strategic approaches, this research will offer practical recommendations for cross-cultural communication practitioners, including in the development of better digital communication tools. The main contribution of this research is in providing a framework for understanding and implementing politeness strategies in virtual contexts, as well as in improving and optimizing cross-cultural communication in an ever-evolving digital world.

2. Methods

2.1. Article Collection

Article collection is carried out through reputable international databases including Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. This database was selected because of its reputation for providing access to high-quality, peer-reviewed academic journals covering cutting-edge and relevant research in the fields of communications and humanities. Scopus and Web of Science are known for their rigorous journal selection and indexation covering publications from a wide range of scientific disciplines, ensuring that the articles obtained are of a high academic standard. Google Scholar, in addition, broadens the scope of searches to cover a wide range of publication types, including theses, conference reports, and articles from journals that may not be indexed in other databases. The aim of selecting this database is to ensure the diversity and quality of the literature obtained.

2.2. Keywords Used

In the search process, keywords used included “politeness strategies,” “intercultural communication,” “virtual interaction,” and “conflict reduction.” These keywords were selected based on their relevance to the research topic and the goal of identifying articles that specifically address the relationship between politeness strategies and conflict reduction in cross-cultural virtual communication. The selection of keywords was carried out by considering the terms most commonly used in the existing literature and those most relevant to the research questions. The search process was carried out using a combination of these keywords to ensure that the articles obtained covered various aspects of the topic under study.

2.3. Number of Articles Retrieved

From the initial search using predetermined keywords, a total of 127 articles. This number reflects initial coverage of the literature relevant to the research topic, indicating the existence of a sufficient data base for further analysis. A further screening process will be carried out to ensure that the articles obtained meet the predetermined inclusion criteria and are relevant to the research focus.

2.4. Article Inclusion and Exclusion Techniques

Article inclusion and exclusion techniques were carried out based on the following criteria:

1. Inclusion Criteria: Included articles must be relevant to the research topic, published in reputable journals, and focus on politeness strategies in virtual communication. Only articles that are peer-reviewed and offer a significant contribution to the understanding of politeness strategies in digital contexts will be considered.
2. Exclusion Criteria: Articles that are not relevant to the topic, are not peer-reviewed, or do not provide sufficient information regarding politeness strategies in virtual communication will be excluded. The article selection process involved an assessment of the abstract, methodology, and suitability of the content to the research question to ensure the quality and relevance of the literature included in the review.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Definition and Concept of Politeness

Politeness in communication is a complex socio-cultural construct, encompassing both physical and non-physical aspects of human interaction (Muldagaliyeva et al., 2022). Politeness involves ritual practices observed in various social situations, such as greetings and farewells, that reflect the cultural norms and values of a society (Mugford, 2020). The concept of politeness is not universal and varies across different cultural contexts, influencing the way individuals interact both verbally and non-verbally.

In the Kazakh cultural context, politeness is closely related to the concept of face and social hierarchy, emphasizing the importance of maintaining harmony and respect in interactions (Muldagaliyeva et al., 2022). In contrast, in Mexican culture, politeness is often demonstrated through specific practices in interpersonal relationships, highlighting the roles of host and guest in social gatherings (Mugford, 2020). These cultural differences demonstrate the importance of understanding politeness within a particular cultural framework to navigate social interactions effectively.

Overall, politeness in communication is a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by cultural norms, values, and practices. Examining politeness in various cultural contexts provides insight into the ways in which diverse individuals express respect, consideration, and social harmony through their communication behavior. This understanding allows for a deeper understanding

of the dynamics of cross-cultural communication and how politeness strategies can be adapted to reduce conflict and increase the effectiveness of interactions.

3.2. Major Theories in Cross-Cultural Pragmatics

Politeness theory, as proposed by Brown and Levinson, is a basic framework in linguistics and sociology that explains how language is used to maintain social norms of respect, understanding, and empathy towards others (Arief, 2023). This theory plays an important role in intercultural communication, where politeness becomes the main maxim in relationships, especially in diverse cultural contexts, which helps in the maintenance of social order and human cooperation (Fridolini et al., 2021; Ong, 2021). The application of politeness theory in intercultural communication research is very significant because it helps in understanding how language can be used to navigate cultural differences and prevent conflict (Nurhastuti, 2022).

In the realm of intercultural communication, conflict often arises due to incompatibilities in values, norms, goals, and communication outcomes between individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Dai & Chen, 2022). Effective intercultural communication, based on politeness strategies, is essential in bridging cultural gaps and building open, tolerant, and respectful relationships between diverse groups (Lin et al., 2022). Additionally, intercultural competence, which includes the ability to communicate effectively across cultures, is critical in preventing misunderstandings, disputes, and communication conflicts that may arise due to a lack of intercultural awareness (Hou, 2023). Furthermore, managing intercultural conflict requires the application of face management strategies, which are important in navigating conflict situations and maintaining harmonious relationships between individuals from different cultures. Face negotiation theory, in particular, provides valuable insight into how individuals manage conflict based on cultural norms and identities, contributing to the resolution of intercultural disputes.

In conclusion, politeness theory serves as a foundation for understanding and improving intercultural communication by providing a framework for maintaining social norms, preventing conflict, and encouraging respectful interactions across a variety of cultural contexts. By integrating politeness strategies, face management techniques, and intercultural competence, individuals can effectively navigate cultural differences, reduce conflict, and promote harmonious relationships in intercultural settings.

3.3. Virtual and Digital Interaction

Virtual interaction refers to online interactions mediated by technology, enabling communication and collaboration without geographic limitations (Bassani & Buchem, 2019). This type of interaction often involves multimedia content and interactive features such as gesture recognition and head tracking to enhance the user experience (Shen, 2023). Users have the flexibility to engage in virtual communities at any time and from any location, facilitating rapid information sharing and live interactions (Wang, 2024). Virtual reality technology creates immersive digital environments that offer interactive experiences that connect individuals with virtual worlds (Xue, 2022).

Digital media, especially social media, plays an important role in enhancing intercultural communication by providing a platform for virtual intercultural experiences (Zhou, 2021). This experience encourages users, especially students, to interact with speakers of various languages, thereby increasing their understanding of various cultures (Zhou, 2021). Social media interventions have been shown to increase intercultural learning and meaningful engagement among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds (Jin, 2023). By critically evaluating and comparing different cultures, individuals can develop the skills necessary to interact effectively in diverse social settings and resolve intercultural conflicts (Zhou & Sun, 2020).

Overall, virtual interactions leverage technology to facilitate online communication and collaboration, transcending geographic boundaries. Digital media, especially social platforms, enhance intercultural communication by encouraging virtual intercultural experiences and promoting intercultural learning and engagement among individuals from diverse backgrounds. These tools not only offer immersive and interactive experiences, but also contribute to the development of intercultural competencies that are crucial for effective communication in an increasingly connected world.

3.4. Politeness Strategies in Intercultural Communication

Successful intercultural communication relies heavily on the application of pragmatic strategies such as politeness formulas and face-protecting techniques to maintain harmony and preserve face (Smith, 2024). Understanding the participants' communicative goals and the pragmatic meaning of their statements is essential for effective intercultural communication (Khosh, 2020). The development of politeness strategies is crucial for increasing learners' intercultural communicative competence (Sztencel, 2020). By encouraging cross-cultural sensitivity and providing training, individuals can navigate cultural differences more effectively, which in turn facilitates successful intercultural communication and cooperation (Zhang, 2023).

Cultural identity acts as a mediator in resolving conflicts, promoting mutual understanding, and facilitating effective communication between different cultures ("Intercultural Communication Strategy from a Cultural Identity Perspective: Seasons of China Case Study", 2024). Knowledge of politeness mechanisms used in various social and cultural contexts encourages shared understanding in communication (Locher & Larina, 2019). Politeness cannot be separated from communication, especially in cultures with different degrees of politeness (Dirham, 2022). Nonverbal cues play an important role in effective communication, especially in cross-cultural contexts (Matthews, 2023). The role of the entertainment industry, especially film, is emphasized in facilitating cross-cultural communication by transcending language and geographic barriers (Minglei, 2023).

Ethical and responsible communication practices are essential to maintaining trust and legitimacy in intercultural communication, emphasizing honesty, transparency, and respect for diverse perspectives (Semande, 2024). Various strategies are implemented to demonstrate language politeness, which is significant for maintaining good communication and social relations (Suyono & Andriyanti, 2021). Strategies aimed at promoting intercultural understanding and communication are essential to increasing the effectiveness of educational assistance programs in various cultural environments ("Intercultural Perspectives on Evaluating and Improving the Effectiveness of Educational Assistance Programs in Africa", 2024).

3.5. Conflict in Virtual Interaction

Conflict in virtual communication can arise from various sources. Factors such as communication delays, time zone differences, personality differences, and absence of face-to-face interaction due to geographic separation are common contributors to conflict in virtual groups (Zhu et al., 2019). In cross-cultural virtual interactions, conflicts can arise from issues such as cultural diversity, language barriers, time zone differences, and geographic separation (Alkoud et al., 2023). These challenges can result in communication breakdowns, lack of synergy among team members, and unresolved conflicts among individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Sagar et al., 2022).

Furthermore, conflict in virtual interactions can manifest in various types. Social conflict in online communities may arise from differences in logic, power dynamics, unethical behavior, and alignment issues within teams (Kristiansen et al., 2022). In virtual teams, factors such as leadership, communication, collaboration, commitment, conflict management, trust, diversity, and empowerment are critical for team performance (Topaloğlu & Anac, 2021). In

addition, conflict can also arise from variations in values, beliefs, personalities, goals, and perceptions between individuals (Mukazhanova, 2024).

Furthermore, the nature of virtual communication, which relies heavily on written exchanges and asynchronous work, can exacerbate conflict within teams (Flus et al., 2023). In multicultural virtual teams, the adaptation process occurs when members from diverse backgrounds interact, requiring the establishment of trust and effective communication to reduce conflict (Karim et al., 2023). Stakeholder conflicts in projects can be triggered by problems such as relationship dynamics, cultural barriers, weak communication, and trust issues (Irfan et al., 2019). Overall, conflict in virtual interactions can be multifaceted, stemming from a combination of communication challenges, cultural differences, power dynamics, and individual perceptions. Effective conflict resolution strategies, clear communication, trust building, and cultural sensitivity are critical to managing and mitigating conflict in virtual settings.

3.6. Case Studies and Related Research

In the realm of cross-cultural pragmatics and intercultural communication, an understanding of politeness strategies is essential for effective interactions. Politeness strategies vary across cultures and contexts, influencing communication outcomes. Research by Ismail (2023) explored politeness strategies applied by students in WhatsApp communications, highlighting differences based on the relationship with the recipient. This study confirms the importance of considering cultural norms and relationships in communication.

Additionally, the influence of politeness strategies in digital communication has become a topic of interest. Research such as Mahmud (2019) emphasizes the significance of politeness in communication, showing its important role in facilitating effective interactions. Understanding and implementing appropriate politeness strategies in digital communications can improve the quality of intercultural exchanges and reduce conflict.

In virtual interactions, conflict can arise, affecting communication dynamics. Research by U. U. (2024) assesses digital campaign strategies in Nigerian elections, providing insight into the role of social media platforms in political communication. Virtual interactions, such as those occurring on social media, can influence public opinion and shape political discourse, underscoring the need to effectively manage conflict in this space. Furthermore, Alves et al. (2022) explored how virtual interactions in teams can influence trust and conflict resolution. Virtuality, including instant messaging and email, presents unique challenges in conflict management. Understanding how conflict arises in virtual settings and the role of emotions in digital interactions is important for creating a positive communication climate. In conclusion, the interplay between politeness strategies, virtual interactions, and conflict resolution in digital communication confirms the complexity of cross-cultural pragmatics. By examining these aspects, individuals can navigate intercultural communication more effectively, facilitating mutual understanding and respectful interactions in a variety of settings.

4. Conclusion

Politeness theory, as proposed by Brown and Levinson, provides a basic framework for understanding intercultural communication by emphasizing the importance of social norms such as respect and empathy in maintaining harmonious relationships. In the context of intercultural communication, politeness strategies help prevent conflict and maintain a positive social order (Arief, 2023; Fridolini et al., 2021; Ong, 2021). In the digital era, virtual interactions enable communication across broad geographies, but also bring challenges such as conflicts that arise due to differences in culture, language, and power dynamics (Zhu et al., 2019; Alkoud et al., 2023). Previous research suggests that social media and digital technologies can facilitate better intercultural communication by increasing cross-cultural engagement and

understanding, but also require effective conflict management strategies (Zhou, 2021; Jin, 2023).

4.1. Implications

The implications of this research indicate that the application of politeness strategies and facial management techniques is important in intercultural communication, especially in the context of virtual interactions involving participants from various cultural backgrounds. Organizations and individuals involved in cross-cultural communication need to implement these strategies to reduce conflict and increase cooperation (Smith, 2024; Khosh, 2020). In addition, social media and digital platforms must be used wisely to facilitate effective interactions and manage potential conflicts by taking into account cultural differences and communication norms (Zhou & Sun, 2020; U U., 2024).

4.2. Limitations

This research has several limitations. First, most of the studies reviewed focused on specific communication contexts and platforms, which may not fully cover the diversity of cross-cultural communication situations in the real world. Second, much research on virtual interactions has not explored in depth the role of emotions in conflict management, which can significantly influence communication outcomes (Alves et al., 2022; Flus et al., 2023). Third, the lack of longitudinal research monitoring changes in politeness and conflict management strategies across different stages of communication technology development is also a limitation.

4.3. Future Research Recommendations

Future research should examine the application of politeness theory in broader and more diverse contexts, including cross-cultural communication situations beyond digital platforms. Further studies are needed to understand the emotional impact of virtual interactions and how this affects conflict management. Longitudinal research is also recommended to evaluate how politeness strategies and conflict management techniques adapt as communication technology develops and cultural norms change (Mahmud, 2019; Karim et al., 2023). Additionally, a deeper exploration of the influence of culture on virtual interactions, including differences in the perception and use of politeness strategies across cultures, would provide more comprehensive insights into managing intercultural communication in the digital era.

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