

## Teachers' language politeness, students' academic motivation and self-efficacy during school from home

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### Abstract

This study aims to investigate the influence of teachers' language politeness on students' academic motivation and self-efficacy during online learning (school from home) and to examine the relationship between students' academic motivation and self-efficacy during online learning. This study used a quantitative approach with the correlational method. The participants of the study were 150 elementary students (male: 47%; female: 53%). Three types of scales were used in this study, namely the teachers' language politeness scale, the academic motivation scale and the self-efficacy scale. The hypothesis of the study was tested using analysis of variance assisted with SPSS version 26. The study found that teachers' language politeness significantly influences students' academic motivation and self-efficacy during online learning. Teachers' language politeness was more likely to have greater influence on students' self-efficacy than on students' academic motivation. As shown in the model, the value of the relationship between students' academic motivation and self-efficacy was 0.497.

**Keywords:** Language politeness, academic motivation, self-efficacy, school from home.

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## 1. Introduction

School from home has been an important topic to be discussed as a policy implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. It can be seen from a number of studies conducted on the similar issue. The school from home policy is implemented in order to assure that education can be continuously provided during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some studies on school from home focused on investigating students' and teachers' perceptions of online learning (Agarwal & Kaushik, 2020; Aliyyah et al., 2020); the best practices and effectiveness of online learning (Bahasoan, Ayuandiani, Mukhram & Rahmat, 2020; Morgan, 2020; Mukhtar, Javed, Arooj & Sethi, 2020); and the challenges and problems teachers, students and parents deal with during online learning (Irawan, Dwisona & Lestari, 2020; Irfan, Kusumaningrum, Yulia & Widodo, 2020; Simamora, 2020).

During school from home, teachers, students and parents have been facing issues and challenges (Burzynska & Contreras, 2020; Dong, Cao & Li, 2020; Putri et al., 2020). The problems include the inadequacy of online learning media and devices, slow internet connection, poor learning facilities at home etc. Such issues hinder the optimal learning process and prompt teachers to simply give assignments. These phenomena indicate that many teachers and students have difficulties and seem unprepared in implementing the school from home policy, although it has been taking place for 1 year (Aliyyah et al., 2020; Hutchison, Paatsch & Cloonan, 2020; Primdahl et al., 2021). The unsatisfactory learning process affects students' psychological conditions. Some studies have shown that during school from home, many students experience some problems like boredom, anxiety, and stress in learning (Kartika, 2020; Puspitasari & Noor, 2020; Rinawati & Darisman, 2020).

The problems have given rise to negative effect to the student's performance in the learning process, as it will affect to the student's academic motivation and self-efficacy. Students who experience boredom, anxiety, and stress in learning tend to have less academic motivation and self-efficacy (Graciani et al., 2020; Komarraju & Nadler, 2013). Academic motivation in learning can be defined as the encouragement possessed by students where they will try their best to achieve maximum results in the learning process. Vallerand et al. (1993) explained that academic motivation can be divided into 3 parts, namely intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation. Intrinsic motivation in the form of encouragement caused by factors within the learner, while extrinsic motivation comes from the learner's environment. In addition, amotivation is defined as the absence of student learning motivation in the learning process, students tend to have no intention or interest at all in learning. Academic motivation is influenced by 2 factors, namely internal factors and external factors. These two factors influence each other, and the weight of individual influence differs between countries, communities, demographic groups, and individuals (McCoy, Wolf & Godfrey, 2014). Internal factors include students' interest in certain subjects, the encouragement from within students to become better in this case related to future dreams or targets (Komarraju, Karau & Schmeck 2009). While external factors include the atmosphere of the learning environment related to learning facilities, positive encouragement from teachers and parents, and the influence of peers (Allison, 2010; Chen, 2008).

In addition to academic motivation, another variable studied in this study is student's self-efficacy. Self-efficacy can be defined as students' belief in their own abilities in dealing with or completing a task and overcoming obstacles to achieve maximum results in the learning process. There are several previous studies that examine self-efficacy in students, employees, or other subjects (Bandura, 1978; Bandura, 1977; Mantasiah & Yusri, 2018; Saeid & Eslaminejad, 2017; Owen & Froman, 1988). Based on this research, it can be concluded that there are 4 factors that can form efficacy in students. The first factor is the past experience of students in doing something. The level of student efficacy in carrying out

these activities will increase when carrying out activities that have previously been successfully carried out. On the other hand, when a person fails to do something, his or her level of efficacy with respect to that activity will decrease. The second factor is the perceived experience. Students tend to often compare the results of their achievements with other students. When students feel capable of doing an activity that has been done by others, their self-efficacy will tend to increase. The third factor is the opinion of others. Self-efficacy can also be influenced by the words of others. When a person gets positive support and reinforcement from others, his level of self-efficacy will increase. This is the main reason why teachers and parents should be able to provide positive reinforcement on a regular basis to students. The fourth factor is the psychological state. Positive feelings and enthusiasm in students can increase self-efficacy. The psychological state in this case can certainly be described from the academic motivation possessed by students, because students who have high academic motivation tend to be more enthusiastic in learning (Bandura, 1978; Bandura, 1977).

Social support from both teachers and parents can help students relieve their stress and increase comfort during online learning. During school from home, teachers can give social support to students by providing reinforcement based on the theory of language politeness during the learning process (Mantasiah et al., 2021). Mantasiah and Yusri (2017) found that the use of language politeness in the learning process can positively affect students' academic motivation. Language politeness in the learning process conducts the way of teachers in communicating with the students. Teacher's speech can be categorized as a polite speech when following the language politeness maxims. Brown (2015) shows that there are 6 kinds of language politeness maxims consisting of modesty, tact, generosity, sympathy, approbation, and agreement maxim.

The variable of language politeness is strongly influenced by the culture of the community. This shows that the way someone perceives language politeness will tend to be different (Simatupang & Naihabo, 2021; Ningsih et al., 2019; Nurjannah et al., 2017). Based on this research, it can be concluded that speech that is considered polite by a society does not guarantee that it is also considered polite by other societies. There are potential differences in ways of perceiving the meaning of an utterance. Therefore, Brown (2015) and Brown & Levinson (1987) try to develop indicators of language politeness that can be accepted by every community through the use of politeness maxims. However, this is of course still a debate because the theory of politeness maxims is still general in nature, the cultural aspects of society have not been paid much attention to the maxims of language. Therefore, in measuring the politeness of the community's language, what cannot be done is to generalize the findings from the study, especially to people who come from different regions and cultures.

The language politeness-based reinforcement can be manifested through praises to students, words that show sympathy and appreciation and other forms of utterances. Such a notion is discussed in the theory of language politeness in pragmatics (Brown, 2015). Little attention has been given to studies on language politeness in education. Mantasiah & Yusri (2017) conducted a study on the influence of teachers' language politeness on students' academic motivation during offline learning. The current study, however, has focused on determining whether teachers' language politeness remains to have positive impacts on students' academic motivation during online learning. This study also examined another variable closely related to learning called self-efficacy. Previous studies have shown that academic motivation and self-efficacy have a positive correlation (Campos & Madrigal, 2020; Mantasiah & Yusri, 2018; Saeid & Eslaminejad, 2017). Thus, the current study also explored whether teachers' language politeness has impacts on students' self-efficacy and what is the relationship between students' academic motivation and self-efficacy during online learning.

## 2. Research Method

### 2.1 Research design

This study used a quantitative approach with the correlational method that aimed to discover the influence of teachers' language politeness as the independent variable on students' academic motivation and self-efficacy as the dependent variables and also to find out the relationship between students' academic motivation and self-efficacy as the dependent variables. More details on the research model are shown in Figure 1.

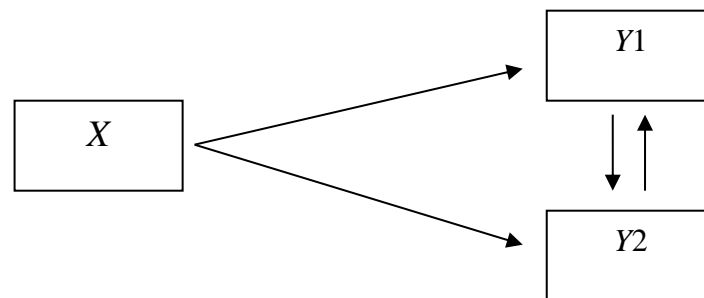


Figure 1. Research design

Notes: X: Teacher's language politeness; Y1: Students' academic motivation; Y2: Student's self-efficacy

### 2.2 Participants

The participants were 150 elementary students in South Sulawesi, Indonesia (male: 47%; female: 53%) from the fifth grade (43%) and the sixth grade (57%) who were undertaking school from home. All the participants had given the assent and consent forms that were signed online, and they were all willing to participate in the study voluntarily.

### 2.3 Research instruments

Three types of scales were used in this study, namely the teachers' language politeness scale, the academic motivation scale and the self-efficacy scale.

- a. The teachers' language politeness scale: The scale developed by Mantasiah, Yusri, and Umar (2019) consists of six dimensions, namely modesty, tact, generosity, sympathy, approbation and agreement. Each dimension was manifested into four question items; so, there were 24 question items in total. The results of the instrument analysis showed that all dimensions and sub-dimensions of the scale had Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.7.
- b. The academic motivation scale: The scale developed by Vallerand et al. (1993) comprises 28 items. It consists of a total of seven different dimensions, each with four items, with three intrinsic motivations, three extrinsic motivations and one amotivational dimension. This scale has been translated into Indonesian and tested on 1,168 students by Natalya and Purwanto (2018). The results showed that all the dimensions and sub-dimensions of the scale had Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.7, which ranged from 0.746 to 0.898; the corrected item-total correlation values were also greater than 0.3 (CITC  $\geq$  0.3) and ranged between 0.467 and 0.728.

- c. The self-efficacy scale: The scale commonly called the college academic self-efficacy scale was developed by Owen and Froman (1988). This scale has been translated into Indonesian and tested on Indonesian students by Ildil, Bariyyah, Dewi and Rangka. (2019). The scale consists of 33 question items. The results of the test showed that all items are reliable with an  $\alpha$  coefficient of 0.931.

#### 2.4. Research procedures

The questionnaire was created using Google Form and completed online. Several elementary school teachers helped distribute it. Before completing the questionnaire, students were asked to read the instructions and the description of the research goals carefully. Students and parents were also asked to add their signatures online as a form of consent to participate in this study. It took on average 15 minutes for the students to fill out the questionnaire. Out of 320 students filling out the questionnaire, there were only 250 students whose data could be analysed further because some other data were incomplete.

#### 2.5. Data analysis technique

The hypotheses of the study were tested using the analysis of variance assisted with SPSS version 26. Meanwhile, the demographic data of the participants were analysed using descriptive statistics.

### 3. Finding

Table 1 presents the general description of the data of each research variable presented with the descriptive statistics.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of research variables

|                     | N   | Minimum | Maximum | Mean  | Std. deviation |
|---------------------|-----|---------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Language politeness | 150 | 65      | 72      | 69.15 | 1.266          |
| Academic motivation | 150 | 61      | 93      | 80.79 | 4.196          |
| Self-efficacy       | 150 | 92      | 102     | 99.03 | 1.597          |
| Valid N (list-wise) | 150 |         |         |       |                |

The maximum score and the mean of the language politeness variable were 120 and 69.5, respectively. Thus, the percentage of teachers' language politeness during online learning was only 57.91%. On the other hand, the maximum score and the mean of the academic motivation variable were 140 and 80.79, respectively. Thus, the percentage of students' academic motivation during online learning was only 57.70%. Furthermore, as shown in Table 1, the maximum score and the mean of the self-efficacy variable was 160 and 99.03, respectively. Thus, the percentage of students' self-efficacy during online learning was 61.89%. All these results indicate that students' self-efficacy is higher than their academic motivation during online learning.

#### 3.1. Influence of language politeness on students' academic motivation

Table 2. Model summary 1

| Model summary |                    |          |                   |                            |
|---------------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model         | R                  | R square | Adjusted R square | Std. error of the estimate |
| 1             | 0.478 <sup>a</sup> | 0.229    | 0.224             | 3.697                      |

<sup>a</sup>Predictors: (Constant), Language politeness.

Table 2 shows that the correlation value between the language politeness and academic motivation variables was 0.478, with the coefficient of determination being 0.229. Thus, the percentage of influence of language politeness on students' academic motivation during online learning was only 22.9%.

Table 3. Coefficients<sup>a</sup> of Model 1

| Model |                     | Unstandardised coefficients |            | Standardised coefficients | t      | Sig.  |
|-------|---------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|-------|
|       |                     | B                           | Std. error | Beta                      |        |       |
| 1     | (Constant)          | -28.880                     | 16.545     |                           | -1.746 | 0.083 |
|       | Language politeness | 1.586                       | 0.239      | 0.478                     | 6.629  | 0.000 |

<sup>a</sup>Dependent variable: Academic motivation.

Table 3 shows that the significance value (0.000) is lower than the used standard of significance value (0.05). These results signify that teachers' language politeness has a significant influence on students' academic motivation during online learning.

### 3.2. Influence of language politeness on students' self-efficacy

Table 4. Model Summary 2

| Model | R                  | Model summary |                   |                            |
|-------|--------------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
|       |                    | R square      | Adjusted R square | Std. error of the estimate |
| 1     | 0.938 <sup>a</sup> | 0.879         | 0.878             | 0.557                      |

<sup>a</sup>Predictors: (Constant), Language politeness.

As illustrated in Table 4, the correlation value between the variable of language politeness and of self-efficacy was 0.938, with the coefficient of determination being 0.879. Thus, the percentage of influence of language politeness on students' self-efficacy during online learning was only 87.9%.

Table 5. Coefficients<sup>a</sup> of Model 2

| Model |                     | Unstandardised coefficients |            | Standardised coefficients | t      | Sig.  |
|-------|---------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|-------|
|       |                     | B.                          | Std. error | Beta                      |        |       |
| 1     | (Constant)          | 17.242                      | 2.491      |                           | 6.921  | 0.000 |
|       | Language politeness | 1.183                       | 0.036      | 0.938                     | 32.831 | 0.000 |

<sup>a</sup>Dependent variable: Self-efficacy.

It can be seen from Table 5 that the significance level of the influence of the language politeness variable on the students' self-efficacy variable (0.000) was lower than the standard of significance (0.05) used in this study. These results signify that teachers' language politeness can significantly improve students' academic motivation or decrease students' self-efficacy during online learning.

### 3.3. Relationship between academic motivation and self-efficacy

Table 6. Correlations

|                     |                       | Academic motivation | Self-efficacy |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Academic motivation | Pearson's correlation | 1                   | 0.497**       |
|                     | Sig. (two-tailed)     |                     | 0.000         |
|                     | N                     | 150                 | 150           |
| Self-efficacy       | Pearson's correlation | 0.497**             | 1             |
|                     | Sig. (two-tailed)     | 0.000               |               |
|                     | N                     | 150                 | 150           |

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

Table 6 shows that there is a relationship between the variables of academic motivation and self-efficacy. It can be seen from the table that the significance value (0.000) was lower than the standard of significance (0.05) used in the study. These results suggest that the higher students' academic motivation during online learning, the higher students' self-efficacy. Based on the results of the analysis on the three variables, a model was designed to describe the extent of the influence of the language politeness variable (X) on the academic motivation variable (Y1) and on the self-efficacy variable (Y2), as well as the relationship between academic motivation (Y1) and self-efficacy (Y2) as dependent variables.

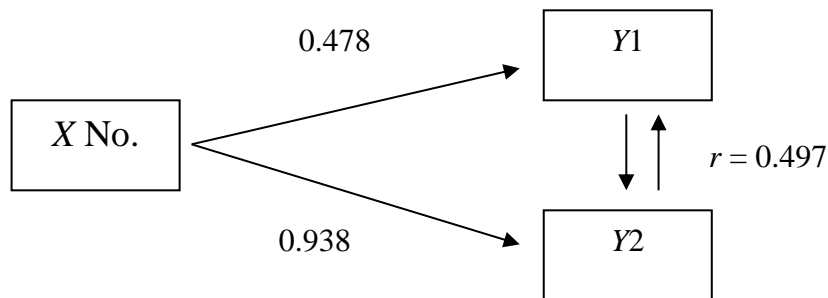


Figure 2. Relationship model of research variables

Figure 2 shows that during online learning, teachers' language politeness can have a significant impact on both students' academic motivation and self-efficacy. However, it can also be assumed that teachers' language politeness tends to have greater influence on students' self-efficacy than on students' academic motivation. Besides, it can be seen from the model that the value of the relationship between students' academic motivation and self-efficacy was 0.497.

#### 4. Discussion

During online learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers have encountered some challenges regarding how to explain the learning materials, evaluate students' works and maintain communication with students. Mantasiah and Yusri (2017) stated that teachers' communication skills in the learning process can positively affect students' academic motivation. Bambaerero and Shokrpour (2017) shows a similar finding related to the impact of communication style of teacher on success in teaching. However, communication style in the study conducted by Bambaerero and Shokrpour (2017) focused

to non-verbal communication style. In this study, the communication skills are focused on how teachers take language politeness into consideration when communicating with students. The study was conducted in a normal situation when teachers and students could communicate easily with each other.

The results of the current study indicate that the intensity of the language politeness used by teachers during online learning is more likely to be declining. Data in Table 1 show that the percentage of teachers' language politeness during online learning was only 57.91%. It is likely that the low use of language politeness for communication is a result of the low intensity of direct communication between teachers and students. Mantasiah, Yusri, Sinring and Aryani. (2021) found that during online learning, teachers used WhatsApp more frequently as the main media to deliver the lessons. WhatsApp is certainly different from Zoom, Google Meet and other online platforms. Through WhatsApp, two-way communication cannot be carried out directly and teachers inclined to use written form of communication. As a result, language politeness was used less intensively during the learning process. Nevertheless, some teachers were still able to carry out positive communication practices by applying language politeness. This is in line with the results of other studies, showing that some teachers were more likely to provide students with verbal positive reinforcement based on the language politeness theory despite online learning (Mantasiah et al., 2021).

It can be assumed that despite online learning in which teachers' language politeness is mostly carried out through written texts, it still positively impacts students' academic motivation and self-efficacy. Natalya and Purwanto (2018) explained that academic motivation encourages students to be more serious in carrying out academic activities. Students with high motivation tend to be more active and committed in following the lessons. Teachers' language politeness can affect students' academic motivation despite its minor scale. It can be seen from Table 1 that the percentage of the influence of teachers' language politeness on students' academic motivation during online learning was only 22.9%. The other findings of the study also suggest that the use of language politeness in communication affects not only students' academic motivation, but also students' self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to one's confidence in taking actions to generate desirable results. Students with high self-efficacy are more likely to possess capabilities for controlling a situation and producing favourable outcomes. Studies by Mavianti and Ananda (2021) and Palupi (2020) found that during online learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, students were inclined to suffer from stress in learning. This indicates that students lack self-efficacy because they seem to have no control in the situation, they are in.

The findings of this study certainly cannot be guaranteed to show the same results when carried out in other regions or countries. There are several things that need to be considered before generalizing the findings of this study. The variable of politeness in language cannot be separated from the culture of the community because it is strongly influenced by these cultural factors (Simatupang & Naihabo, 2021; Ningsih et al., 2019). In cognitive semantic science, the meaning of words that are processed in the brain is strongly influenced by the person's experience, in this case one of them is the cultural aspect. Cultural differences tend to potentially provide different ways of perceiving the meaning of a word or speech (Schrerer et al., 2011; Ellis et al., 2015). In addition to language politeness variables, several other studies also show that academic motivation variables tend to be also influenced by cultural aspects (Torres, 2018; Artelt, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Some of these studies show that the factors that influence students' academic motivation have the potential to be different. Therefore, for further research it is important to examine how the influence of politeness in language on learning motivation and well-being of students in different areas which of course have cultural differences with the participants involved in this study.



## 5. Conclusion

During school from home, the use of language politeness by teachers is influential on students' academic motivation. The extent of the influence, however, is lower during online learning than during offline learning. This is because the intensity of the use of language politeness by teachers during online learning is less optimal than that during offline learning. This study also found that the use of language politeness by teachers has a greater effect on students' self-efficacy than on students' academic motivation. This finding suggests that teachers' polite utterances towards students during online learning can increase students' confidence in the process of adaptation to the online learning environment. Therefore, it can be concluded that teachers' language politeness can contribute to the success of both online learning and offline learning. The findings of this study certainly cannot be generalized internationally, because the language politeness variable is strongly influenced by the culture of the community. Cultural differences in society will have the potential to produce different research findings. Therefore, this is a recommendation for further research.

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## Declaration of interest statement

The author(s) declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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