

THE RELEVANCE OF MALAY PROVERBS TO POLITENESS IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATION BASED ON LEECH'S POLITENESS PRINCIPLE (1983)

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the relevance of proverbs to politeness in the context of digital communication based on Leech's Politeness Principles (1983). This study uses the text analysis method by examining 22 proverbs quoted from a Malay language textbook for level two primary schools. The analysis was conducted to analyze the relevance of proverbs to the application of politeness values based on the six maxims in Leech's Politeness Principles (1983), namely the maxim of wisdom, the maxim of generosity, the maxim of support, the maxim of humility, the maxim of agreement, and the maxim of sympathy. The findings of the study show that Malay proverbs still have high politeness values and are relevant for application in the context of today's digital communication. However, the form of delivery of politeness values needs to be adapted to the norms of online interaction so that the message can be delivered effectively. This study provides an important contribution to understanding the application of cultural values in modern communication and its implications for Malay language education and the formation of communication ethics among primary school students as digital speakers.

Keywords: proverbs, language politeness, digital communication, leech's politeness principle, textual analysis

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Malay proverbs are one of the treasures of the language that reflect the culture, values, and life guidelines of the community. In fact, proverbs also function as a reflection of social norms and ethics held by the Malay community. Looking from the perspective of the rapid development of information and communication technology, there have been significant changes in the way individuals interact, especially in the digital era (Mohd Hatta, Afferro, Syarizul Amri, Noorazman, Zawawi, Mohd Hilmi & Anwar, 2024). Digital communication through platforms such as social media, email, and short messaging applications has become the main medium. However, the rapid change in interaction does not limit the interpretation of the wisdom contained in advice proverbs that remain relevant to help society overcome the challenges of contemporary life.

In the era of globalization and digitalization that is rapidly growing, online communication has become the main medium for society to interact, including among primary school students. However, according to Saidatun Aishah, and Aminnudin (2024), the use of language in digital communication often ignores aspects of politeness, which can lead to misunderstandings,

tension, and even social conflict. Previous studies have shown that factors such as anonymity in cyber communication and lack of awareness of politeness norms contribute to the decline of manners in digital interaction (Ila & Rahmiati, 2024). This is increasingly worrying when the younger generation, especially primary school students, are exposed to the use of impolite language when using various digital platforms such as social media, online games, and short messaging applications. Users of these platforms tend to use impolite language or do not consider politeness norms in communication.

Looking at the educational context, the Malay language textbook for level two primary school contains various proverbs that aim to instill the value of politeness among students. Proverbs not only reflect the wisdom of previous societies but also function as a guide in communicating with full manners and respect (Che Su, 2024). However, there is still a lack of research examining how these proverbs can be used as a guide in digital communication, especially among primary school students who are developing their language skills. Past research that is still limited in linking proverbs with the principles of politeness in digital communication creates a knowledge gap that needs to be researched. Based on Leech's Politeness Principles (1983), there are six maxims, namely the tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim, and sympathy maxim. This principle plays a role in assessing and understanding the level of politeness in language interaction, including in digital communication. Although this principle has been used in various communication studies, studies in the context of Malay language education, especially in linking proverbs with digital communication, have still received little attention.

Therefore, this study aims to examine whether 22 proverbs found in the second level primary school Malay language textbook are still relevant in shaping digital politeness based on Leech's six politeness maxims (1983). This study is not only important to fill the gap in existing literature but also provides an important contribution to the field of language education by offering guidance to educators in instilling the value of digital politeness in students. The study is based on the second-level primary school Malay language textbook published by the Ministry of Education Malaysia. This study uses a content analysis approach to examine the suitability of proverbs in digital communication based on Leech's Politeness Principles (1983). The findings of this study can justify the importance of using proverbs in shaping politeness in digital communication as well as contribute to the development of more effective Malay language education in instilling the value of politeness among primary school students.

2.0 METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with document analysis as the main design. Textual analysis was used to analyze 22 proverbs found in the second level of the primary school Malay language textbook to assess their relevance to politeness in digital communication based on the six maxims of Leech's Politeness Principles (1983). This approach allows this study to analyze the explicit and implicit meanings in the proverbs and examine whether the value of politeness in the proverbs is still relevant in today's digital communication. The data collected was analyzed thematically.

2.1 Participants and study location/study text

This study did not involve participants directly but focused on document analysis. The main source of this study is the Malay language textbook for level two primary school, published by the Ministry of Education Malaysia. This study has selected 22 proverbs contained in the textbook as a study sample. The justification for selecting this text is because this book is widely used in the education system and has a great influence on the formation of students' politeness values. Through studying the content of proverbs in this textbook, this study has been able to analyze and study the proverbs that can be applied in digital communication.

2.2 Research Instruments

The main instrument in this study is a checklist. This checklist form is adapted from Leech's Principles of Politeness (1983). This checklist contains six maxims, including the tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim, and sympathy maxim.

2.3 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are important aspects in ensuring the accuracy of the study findings. Since this study is in the form of a text study and only involves the analysis of proverbs from a level two primary school Malay language textbook, validity and reliability will be ensured through systematic validation methods, literature review, and structured document analysis.

Validity in this study refers to the analysis of the instrument being able to accurately measure the relevance of proverbs to politeness in digital communication based on Leech's six politeness maxims (1983). This study ensures validity through two main approaches: content validity and language validity against two experts. According to Mohammed Afandi, Mohd Effendi Ewan, Wan Norshuhadah, and Noor Hashimah (2020), two expert evaluators are sufficient to obtain instrument validity. Content validity includes the use of Leech's Politeness Principles (1983). Language validity includes sentence structure, grammar, and understanding of meaning to ensure that the checklist is clear and follows the guidelines of the real Malay language.

Reliability in this study refers to the consistency of analysis and stability of study results. Since this study uses document analysis, reliability is guaranteed through the following methods:

(a) Repeated analysis

The research instrument, namely the proverb analysis checklist, will be used repeatedly to ensure that the analysis results are consistent and not affected by subjective interpretation. Each proverb is evaluated based on the same criteria, namely Leech's (1983) six politeness maxims, to ensure that the results are stable.

(b) Consistency of codification

This study used a thematic codification approach based on six politeness maxims to ensure that the analysis categories were clear and could be applied consistently to all proverbs studied. Each analysis category was coded and analyzed using a descriptive approach to ensure that the data obtained could be explained systematically (Eddin Mortada, 2020; Azriana & Roslinda, 2021). This thematic codification approach went through four phases. The first phase was

called initial coding. In this phase, this study read and identified important aspects in this study, namely, 22 proverbs would be selected. The second phase was known as theme identification. During this phase, 22 proverbs were categorized according to Leech's (1983) six politeness maxims. The third phase was called grouping and analysis, namely each proverb was grouped based on the appropriate maxim and analyzed to identify how the proverbs reflected politeness in digital communication. The final phase was the pattern and relationship verification phase. During this phase, this study identified the patterns of proverb usage and how these proverbs were relevant to the principles of politeness in online interactions.

Through a systematic validation approach, literature review, and consistent use of instruments, this study has ensured that the findings are valid, stable, and reliable without the need for external validation. In fact, the use of the thematic codification approach has helped analyze the relationship between Malay proverbs and politeness in digital communication based on Leech's (1983) Politeness Principles.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedure in this study was implemented based on a qualitative text analysis approach. The main data in this study consisted of 22 proverbs obtained from a level two primary school Malay language textbook. The selection of these texts was chosen based on their relevance to Leech's (1983) Politeness Principles, especially in the context of digital communication. The data collection procedure was carried out through the following steps:

(a) Monitoring and reporting through EPRD procedures

This study has followed the study monitoring procedures, namely the Educational Planning and Policy Research Division (EPRD), which is set by the Education Policy Planning and Research Division, which is one of the divisions under the Ministry of Education, through a letter from the Institut Pendidikan Guru Malaysia (IPGM)

This monitoring ensures that the study is carried out systematically, legally, and in compliance with the code of ethics for educational research.

(b) Selection and verification of data sources

This study used the Malay language textbook for level two primary school as the main source because it is the official teaching material determined by the Ministry of Education. This textbook was analyzed to identify proverbs related to politeness based on the principles of Leech (1983), which consists of six maxims, namely the maxims of tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy.

(c) Extraction and categorization of proverbs

A total of 22 proverbs were identified based on their relevance to digital communication. The proverbs were systematically extracted and organized in the form of a checklist with additional information such as the textbook page, meaning of the proverb, and categorization according to maxim. Each proverb was also categorized according to the relevant politeness maxim according to Leech's (1983) six maxims of Politeness Principles.

(d) Context analysis and the use of the thematic codification approach

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic codification approach by identifying themes of politeness in digital communication contained in proverbs. This method involved initial coding, category formation, and theme mapping based on the principles of politeness. The analysis was conducted descriptively and narratively to illustrate the suitability and significance of each proverb in the current digital communication context.

With this procedure, the data collection process can be carried out comprehensively and systematically, allowing the study findings to clearly illustrate how proverbs in textbooks reflect elements of politeness in digital communication.

2.5 Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis process in this study was conducted through qualitative content analysis, which aimed to identify and evaluate the relevance of proverbs to politeness in the context of digital communication based on Leech's Politeness Principles (1983). This study analyzed 22 proverbs found in the Malay language textbook for level two primary schools by emphasizing the six politeness maxims presented by Leech (1983), namely: (1) tact maxim, (2) generosity maxim, (3) approbation maxim, (4) modesty maxim, (5) agreement maxim and (6) sympathy maxim.

These data analysis steps include four main components, namely research steps, data collection techniques, data analysis, and data interpretation. According to Marinu (2024), generally, the four steps are used as scientific procedures to obtain valid and effective research results.

(a) Research steps

22 proverbs found in the level two primary school Malay language textbook were collected and researched based on their relevance to politeness in digital communication. Proverbs that only have more accurate politeness implications in communication were selected for further analysis.

(b) Data collection techniques

Each proverb identified was recorded and categorized according to the six appropriate politeness maxims. The thematic codification approach was used to structure the categories based on the politeness values contained in each proverb.

(c) Data analysis

The categorized proverbs were analyzed descriptively to assess whether the proverbs in the textbooks are still relevant for use in digital communication. This process is done by comparing the original meaning of the proverbs with the context of digital communication.

(d) Data interpretation

The data analyzed was interpreted descriptively to assess the relevance of proverbs in fostering politeness in digital communication. Thus, the results of the analysis have concluded whether the proverbs in the Malay language textbooks for level two primary schools are still appropriate for the context of digital communication or require a new approach in their use.

Through this procedure, the study findings can be explained systematically, comprehensively, and provide an overview of the potential effectiveness of proverbs as a tool for building politeness in today's digital communication. Based on the data analysis procedure explained, it can be summarized according to the data analysis procedure in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Data analysis procedures



3.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis conducted, it shows that the proverbs found in the Malay language textbooks for primary school level two still have high relevance to be applied in the context of digital communication in the current era. The data collected has been arranged according to maxims on the table below.

Figure 2: Graph of the number of proverbs according to maxims.

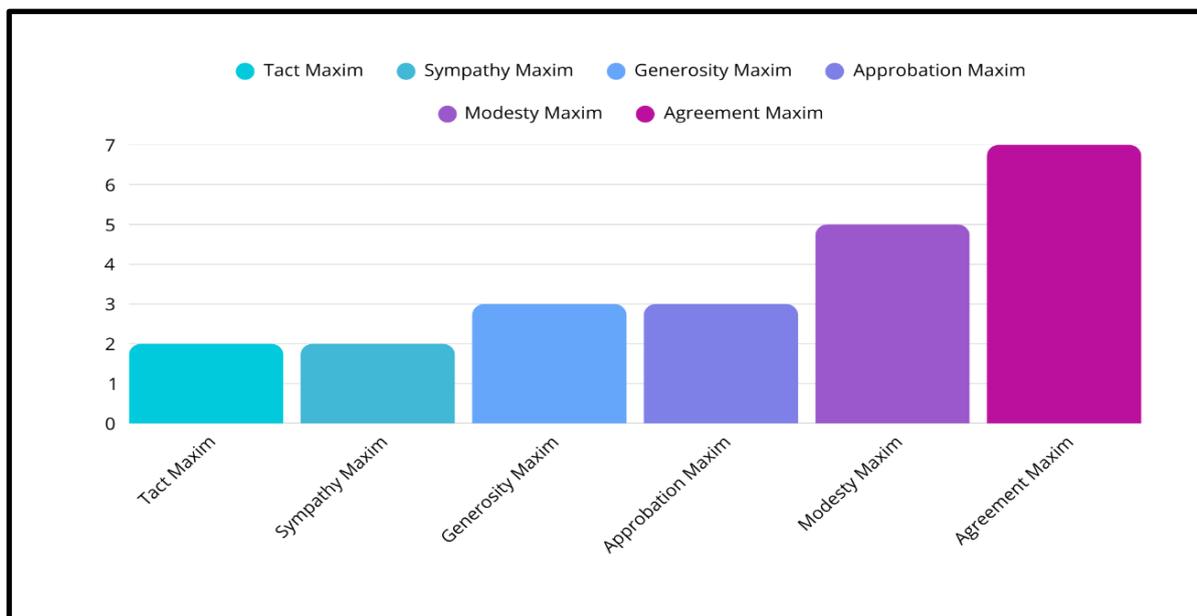
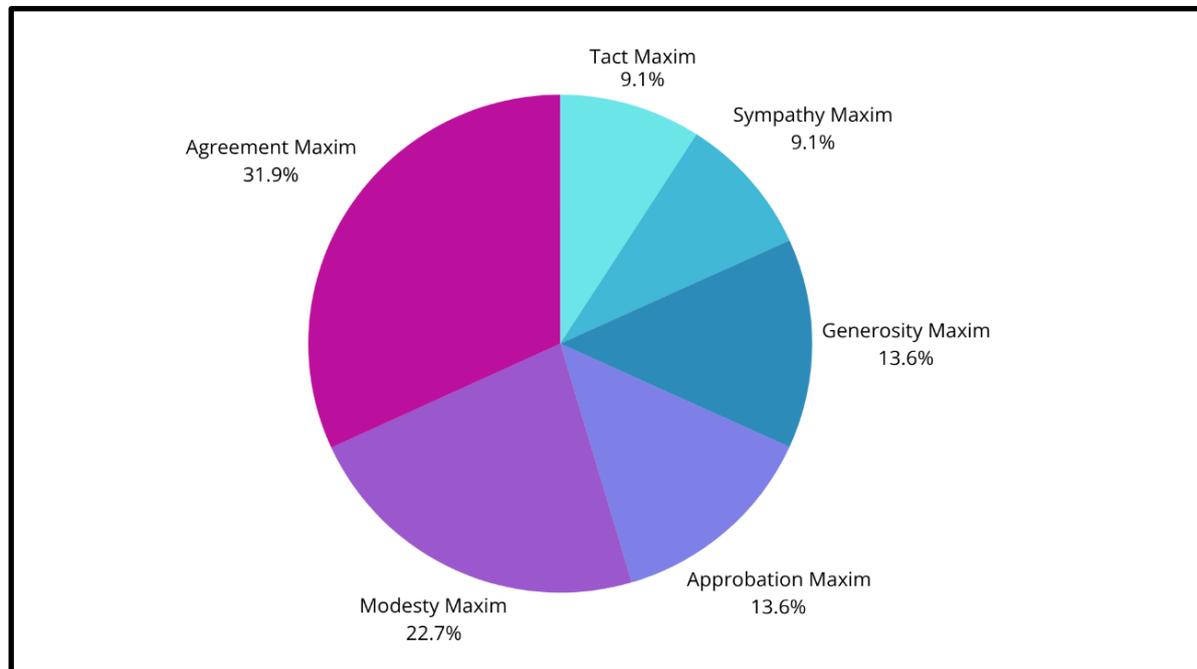


Figure 3: Percentage chart of the number of proverbs according to maxims.



Based on Figure 3, proverbs under the maxim of agreement (31.9%) and the maxim of modesty (22.7%) recorded the highest percentage, showing an emphasis on the value of harmony and humility in communication. Meanwhile, the maxim of generosity and the maxim of support, each recorded 13.6% and the maxim of tact and the maxim of sympathy, each recorded 9.1% also played a role in shaping politeness in speech. This finding justifies that proverbs in Malay language textbooks not only educate traditional politeness but are also relevant to be applied by digital speakers to maintain harmonious, prudent, and empathetic interactions in virtual communication.

The relevance of proverbs in digital communication can be analyzed through the suitability of the meaning and values contained in proverbs with the needs of today's communication ethics. In the digital era, communication occurs quickly, openly, and often without clear social boundaries. As affirmed by Hairul Nisma, Wazzainab, Zailin, and Salina (2024), proverbs still play an important role in conveying manners and cultural values in the context of modern communication.

In addition, proverbs also play a role in maintaining the cultural identity of the Malay community in facing the challenges of digital globalization. Although there is concern about students' decreasing interest in proverbs, their integration into digital communication can revive the philosophy of virtue and noble values. This is in line with the findings of Zarien Nurlieyana and Norazlina (2024) which show that proverbs were able to strengthen students' understanding of cultural values that shape their identity as civilized speakers.

In fact, this can refute doubts about the relevance of proverbs in modern society because the values contained in them are universal and adaptive (Nur Alisha, 2023). In digital communication, proverbs can be used as a guide to curb the use of harsh, vulgar, or too casual

language that can affect politeness. Therefore, proverbs are not just a linguistic heritage, but also an important instrument to form polite, mature, and ethical digital speakers.

This proves that proverbs do not only function as decoration or figurative language in textbooks but rather act as a medium of value education that can be adapted to current needs. Therefore, the continued use of proverbs in Malay language learning should be continued because it can shape students as digital speakers who are polite, ethical, and still hold on to the nation's cultural identity.

3.1 Suggestions

Based on the study findings, several suggestions can be highlighted to strengthen the relevance of proverbs in building digital communication politeness.

(a) Further research can use Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory to expand the analytical perspective in the context of teaching Malay. Different theoretical approaches can provide new dimensions, allowing researchers to assess more comprehensively how politeness values can be applied through proverbs in a more contextual way in the learning of primary school students.

(b) Research for the next study should be expanded to secondary school Malay textbooks to assess the continuity of the application of politeness values through proverbs between the primary and secondary school levels. This study is important to see whether the values and functions of politeness contained in proverbs are still maintained and are suitable for application with the development of adolescents as more active digital speakers on online platforms.

(c) The production of a teaching and learning module that integrates proverbs with digital communication elements based on Leech's Principles of Politeness (1983). This module is expected to be a guide for Malay language teachers in implementing more interesting, contextual, and in line with the needs of students in the digital era. Through the module, proverbs can be taught not just as memorization, but as a guide to polite language practice in daily interactions, including online communication.

(d) In addition to the qualitative approach, further research can be conducted quantitatively to measure the level of understanding, application, and effectiveness of teaching proverbs on the digital communication politeness of primary school students. Case studies can also be conducted to examine in depth how teachers implement proverb teaching strategies in the classroom and their impact on students' language behavior on digital platforms.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In essence, proverbs are not just a decoration of language, but function as a vehicle for value education that is able to form politeness among primary school students. Appreciation of the meaning and values contained in proverbs can help students speak more civilly, be careful in their speech and maintain harmony in communication.

Not only that, proverbs have great potential to be used as an instrument for building politeness and digital literacy based on the cultural values of the nation. This study also suggests that teachers, the Ministry of Education Malaysia, the Malaysian Institute of Teacher Education, and future researchers strengthen the integration of proverbs in the teaching and study of politeness of language. Although this study is limited to the analysis of the text of the primary school Malay textbook, it can make a space for further research involving the context of language use in real communication.

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