

German and Indonesian Politeness Strategies: A Contrastive Study and Its Pedagogical Implications for German Language Teaching

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Abstract

This study investigates politeness strategies represented in the German textbook *Netzwerk A1* and contrasts them with documented Indonesian politeness norms to explore their pedagogical implications for German language teaching in Indonesia. Grounded in contemporary politeness theory and contrastive pragmatics, the research employs a qualitative descriptive design based on systematic document analysis. Dialogic interactions in the textbook were examined to identify patterns of directness, grammatical mitigation, hierarchical encoding, lexical politeness markers, and the use of *Konjunktiv II*. A micro-contrastive analysis of representative request forms further illustrates divergences between German structurally direct but grammatically mitigated formulations and Indonesian relationally oriented, lexically mediated politeness strategies. Interpreted through the distinction between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic dimensions, the findings reveal that differences extend beyond linguistic structure to culturally grounded evaluations of appropriateness and hierarchy. These divergences highlight potential areas of pragmatic transfer among Indonesian learners of German. This study contributes to the field of pragmatics by expanding contrastive analysis beyond English-centered paradigms and by providing a multi-layered account of politeness that integrates structural, lexical, and grammatical dimensions. The findings also offer pedagogical insights for developing intercultural pragmatic competence in German language teaching.

Keywords: *Contrastive pragmatics; Directness; German language teaching; Hierarchy; Politeness strategies*

Introduction

Politeness constitutes a fundamental dimension of human interaction and plays a crucial role in intercultural communication. While politeness plays a crucial role in maintaining social harmony across cultures, its realization varies significantly due to differences in sociocultural norms and interactional expectations. Cross-cultural pragmatics emphasizes that politeness is deeply shaped by cultural norms, values, and social expectations, which influence how respect, social distance, and appropriateness are interpreted in interaction. As a result, differences in politeness conventions across cultures may lead to misinterpretation and communication breakdown when interlocutors rely on divergent sociocultural frameworks (Evariza, 2024).

In foreign language learning contexts, communicative competence extends beyond grammatical accuracy to include pragmatic competence and sociocultural awareness (Taguchi, 2015). Learners must not only understand linguistic structures but also recognize how meanings are shaped by culturally embedded norms of appropriateness. The development of pragmatic competence is essential in foreign language learning, as successful communication requires not only grammatical knowledge but also the ability to use language appropriately within sociocultural contexts. A lack of alignment between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic norms may result in interlanguage transfer, where learners unintentionally apply norms from their native language to the target language, potentially leading to communicative failure (Shamsutdinova, 2025).

Inadequate awareness of politeness conventions may result in pragmatic failure, unintended impoliteness, or negative social evaluations in intercultural encounters. Pragmatic competence plays a crucial role in intercultural communication, as differences in speech acts and politeness strategies may lead to pragmatic failures and communication breakdown. Such failures are not merely theoretical concerns but have been shown to affect real-world interactions across domains such as education, healthcare, and professional communication (Kasim & Sueb, 2024).

The study of politeness has long been influenced by Brown and Levinson's theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) of face and face-threatening acts, which conceptualizes politeness strategies as mechanisms for mitigating threats to positive and negative face. Their framework distinguishes between bald-on-record strategies, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategies and has provided a systematic foundation for cross-linguistic analyses. Although Brown and Levinson's model has provided a foundational framework for understanding politeness strategies, recent studies suggest that the model may require refinement to better account for the complexity and variability of politeness across different sociocultural contexts (Fathi, 2024). Subsequent developments in pragmatics emphasize that politeness is not merely a universal strategy system, but a culturally situated practice shaped by social norms, relational expectations, and contextual interpretations (Haugh et al., 2013). Contemporary research therefore highlights the importance of examining politeness within specific cultural and intercultural contexts rather than assuming universal applicability. Cross-linguistic studies further demonstrate that politeness strategies are not only culturally embedded but may vary even among closely related language varieties.

In applied linguistics, pragmatic competence has been recognized as an essential component of communicative competence. Previous studies indicate that second language learners often encounter difficulties not in grammatical accuracy but in the appropriate use of language in context (Ishihara & Cohen, 2020; Taguchi, 2015). These difficulties are often related to limited awareness of how pragmatic meaning is shaped by sociocultural norms and interactional expectations.

Textbooks also play a crucial role in shaping learners' pragmatic input. Research on the representation of pragmatic knowledge in foreign language textbooks reveals that politeness strategies are often presented implicitly and lack sufficient intercultural explanation (Ren & Han, 2016). This limitation is closely related to the tendency of language instruction to prioritize grammatical accuracy and lexical development over pragmatic and intercultural competence (Erdaffa & Priyatmojo, 2026). As a result, learners are often exposed to linguistic forms without adequate guidance on their sociocultural meanings and appropriate use in context. Consequently, learners may

inappropriately apply their own cultural norms when using the target language, which can lead to pragmatic transfer and misinterpretation in intercultural communication (Ed-Deraouy & Sana, 2024).

Within the German linguistic context, politeness is commonly associated with relatively direct communication patterns supported by grammatical mitigation strategies, particularly modal verbs and pronominal distinctions (*du/Sie*). In contrast, Indonesian politeness norms are strongly influenced by hierarchical relations, collectivist values, and the maintenance of social harmony, which are often realized through indirectness, honorific expressions, and contextual negotiation (Asteka & Sutrisna, 2022; Leech, 2014). These differences suggest that politeness is constructed through distinct sociopragmatic orientations across languages.

Despite the growing body of research on politeness and pragmatics, systematic contrastive studies between German and Indonesian politeness remain limited. Existing research in contrastive pragmatics has predominantly focused on English in relation to other languages, leaving German-Indonesian comparisons relatively underexplored (Haugh et al., 2013; Ren & Han, 2016). Moreover, studies that explicitly connect contrastive pragmatic analysis with pedagogical implications for German language teaching in the Indonesian context are still scarce. This indicates a clear research gap in understanding how politeness strategies are comparatively realized in German and Indonesian and how such differences can be systematically integrated into pedagogical practice. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by providing a contrastive analysis of politeness strategies and examining their implications for German language teaching in Indonesia.

This study addresses this gap by examining politeness strategies represented in *Netzwerk A1* and contrasting them with Indonesian politeness norms within a contrastive pragmatic framework. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on a non-English contrastive context and in its integration of multiple dimensions of politeness, including structural, lexical, and grammatical features such as modal verbs, lexical politeness markers, and *Konjunktiv II*. In this regard, Brown and Levinson's (Brown & Levinson, 1987) politeness framework is employed to analyze strategies related to directness, mitigation, and the management of social distance, particularly in the realization of requests and address forms. By adopting a multi-layered analytical approach, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of how politeness is encoded across different linguistic systems.

In addition, this study contributes to the development of pragmatics by expanding contrastive pragmatic research beyond English-centered paradigms and by offering insights into the interaction between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic dimensions in German and Indonesian. From a pedagogical perspective, the findings are expected to inform the design of more effective instructional strategies for teaching German as a foreign language in Indonesia, particularly in fostering learners' intercultural communicative competence.

Based on the issues discussed above, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How are politeness strategies represented in the German textbook *Netzwerk A1*?
2. What are the key differences between German and Indonesian politeness norms?
3. What pedagogical implications can be derived for teaching German as a foreign language in Indonesia?

Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design using a contrastive pragmatic approach. This approach is particularly relevant for examining how linguistic forms are used to perform communicative functions across different sociocultural contexts and for identifying differences in pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic realizations (Haugh et al., 2013). The study aims to analyze politeness strategies represented in a German language textbook and to contrast them with documented Indonesian politeness norms to identify potential areas of pragmatic divergence and their pedagogical implications for German language teaching in Indonesia.

The primary data source of this study was the beginner-level German textbook *Netzwerk A1*, which is widely used in German language programs in Indonesian higher education institutions. The analysis focused on dialogic interactions distributed across the instructional units of the textbook. Approximately forty dialogic exchanges across eight instructional units were examined. Only dialogues containing explicit politeness markers or speech acts associated with politeness were included in the analysis. These exchanges include greetings, requests, instructions, expressions of gratitude, and apologies that represent key communicative situations encountered by beginner learners.

The selected interactional segments were chosen because they explicitly encode politeness strategies and reflect sociocultural conventions embedded in everyday communication. Attention was given to linguistic markers such as pronominal distinctions (*du* and *Sie*), modal verb constructions, interrogative structures, lexical politeness markers, and grammatical features such as *Konjunktiv II* that signal politeness in German interaction. To support the contrastive dimension of the study, descriptions of Indonesian politeness norms were drawn from relevant pragmatic literature, providing a sociopragmatic framework for interpreting cross-cultural differences.

Data was collected through systematic document analysis. The researcher conducted a close reading of the dialogues and communicative exercises in *Netzwerk A1* to identify interactional excerpts containing politeness-related linguistic features. Each identified excerpt was documented and categorized according to the type of speech act and its linguistic realization. The identification process focused on several pragmalinguistic indicators, including the use of address forms, modal verbs (e.g., *können*, *dürfen*, *möchten*), interrogative constructions used to mitigate directives, lexical politeness markers (e.g., *bitte*, *Entschuldigung*), and grammatical mood (*Konjunktiv II*). These linguistic features were systematically recorded and organized into analytical categories to facilitate comparison with Indonesian politeness norms.

The data analysis was conducted in three interrelated stages. First, politeness strategies in the German textbook dialogues were identified and classified based on their pragmalinguistic realization, including modal verb usage, pronoun selection, lexical markers, and syntactic structures used to formulate speech acts. Second, the identified strategies were interpreted contrastively in relation to documented Indonesian politeness norms, with particular attention to sociopragmatic dimensions such as hierarchy, social distance, and relational orientation. Third, the findings were analyzed from a pedagogical perspective to examine how these pragmatic differences may influence Indonesian learners' interpretation and production of German politeness strategies.

To ensure analytical reliability, the coding process was conducted through repeated close reading of the selected dialogues. Identified examples were cross-

checked across units to ensure consistency in category assignment. The analysis was guided by established theoretical frameworks in politeness research, particularly Brown and Levinson's model (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and subsequent developments in interpersonal pragmatics. The use of clearly defined linguistic indicators and theoretical triangulation enhanced the transparency and reliability of the analysis.

Results

The analysis of dialogic interactions in *Netzwerk A1* reveals consistent patterns in the representation of politeness strategies across communicative contexts. Overall, the findings indicate that politeness in the textbook is realized through a combination of structural, lexical, and grammatical resources that reflect the sociocultural norms of German communication. These strategies are systematically distributed across different types of speech acts, particularly in requests, greetings, and service interactions.

More specifically, several key dimensions of politeness emerged consistently throughout the analyzed units, including (1) the degree of directness in speech act realization, (2) the encoding of hierarchy and relational positioning, (3) the use of lexical politeness markers, and (4) grammatical mitigation strategies.

Directness in Speech Act Realization

Requests and task-oriented exchanges in the textbook are predominantly realized through interrogative constructions employing modal verbs such as *können*, *möchten*, and *dürfen*. These constructions maintain structural directness while incorporating grammatical mitigation. Within the framework of Brown and Levinson (Brown & Levinson, 1987), this pattern can be interpreted as a form of negative politeness, in which speakers minimize imposition through indirect grammatical strategies while maintaining clarity of intention. The following examples illustrate typical realizations of this pattern:

Datum 1: "*Können Sie mir helfen?*"

Datum 2: "*Möchtest du mitkommen?*"

Datum 3: "*Darf ich etwas fragen?*"

In these examples, requests are formulated through interrogative structures that explicitly convey the speaker's intention. Politeness is primarily achieved through modal verbs, which reduces the force of the request by framing it as a question of possibility or willingness rather than a direct command.

A closer examination of Datum 1 ("*Können Sie mir helfen?*") reveals that politeness is encoded through three key elements: (1) the modal verb *können*, which signals possibility rather than obligation, (2) the interrogative structure, and (3) the formal pronoun *Sie*, which marks social distance. These features function together to mitigate the imposition on the hearer while maintaining communicative efficiency.

Across the analyzed textbook units, similar patterns consistently occur. Requests are typically concise, grammatically mitigated, and structurally direct, with little use of extended indirect strategies such as preparatory statements or relational softening. This indicates that politeness in the textbook is primarily realized through grammatical mitigation rather than through elaborate discourse-level strategies.

Hierarchical Encoding in Address Forms

Hierarchical relations in the textbook are primarily encoded through the binary pronominal distinction between *du* (informal) and *Sie* (formal). The selection of these

pronouns reflects differences in social distance, institutional roles, and levels of formality within interactional contexts.

From a pragmatic perspective, this distinction can be interpreted as a linguistic realization of social distance and power relations. Within Brown and Levinson's (Brown & Levinson, 1987) framework, the use of *Sie* functions as a strategy of negative politeness, as it signals respect, formality, and the recognition of interpersonal distance between speakers. The following examples illustrate this contrast:

Datum 4: Peer interaction: "*Wo wohnst du?*"

Datum 5: Service interaction: "*Wo wohnen Sie?*"

In Datum 4, the use of *du* indicates familiarity and solidarity between interlocutors, typically associated with equal social status or close relationships. In contrast, Datum 5 employs *Sie*, which encodes formality and distance, commonly used in institutional or service encounters where hierarchical roles are more clearly defined.

The hierarchical distinction is realized structurally and remains stable throughout the interaction once established. Unlike languages that rely on multiple lexical honorifics or dynamically negotiated forms of respect, the German system operates within a relatively fixed binary framework. This suggests that politeness in German is systematically encoded through grammatical choices rather than through extensive discourse-level negotiation.

Overall, the findings indicate that hierarchical relations in *Netzwerk A1* are expressed through a structured and predictable system of address forms, in which social distance is linguistically encoded through pronominal selection rather than through a wider range of lexical or contextual strategies.

Lexical Politeness Markers

In addition to modal-based mitigation and pronominal distinctions, the analysis also identified the systematic use of lexical politeness markers in *Netzwerk A1*. These markers include expressions such as *Entschuldigung*, *Verzeihung*, and *bitte*, which function as conventionalized forms of politeness in German interaction. The following examples illustrate their usage:

Datum 6: "*Entschuldigung, können Sie mir helfen?*"

Datum 7: "*Verzeihung, wo ist der Bahnhof?*"

Datum 8: "*Bitte setzen Sie sich.*"

These expressions serve distinct pragmatic functions within interaction. In Datum 6 and Datum 7, *Entschuldigung* and *Verzeihung* function as pre-request markers, signaling the speaker's awareness of potential imposition before the main request is performed. In Datum 8, *bitte* operates as a mitigating device accompanying a directive, softening the force of the utterance and marking it as socially appropriate.

From the perspective of Brown and Levinson (Brown & Levinson, 1987), these lexical items can be interpreted as strategies of negative politeness, as they function to minimize imposition and acknowledge the hearer's autonomy. Unlike grammatical mitigation, which operates at the level of syntactic structure, lexical politeness markers function at the discourse level by framing the interaction as polite and socially acceptable.

The analysis indicates that these markers are used consistently across various communicative contexts, particularly in requests and service encounters. Their use complements grammatical and structural strategies, contributing to a multi-layered

system of politeness in which lexical, grammatical, and structural elements interact to produce contextually appropriate communication.

Grammatical Politeness through Konjunktiv II

Another significant feature identified in the analysis is the use of grammatical mood, particularly *Konjunktiv II*, as a strategy for expressing politeness in German. This form is commonly used to soften requests and reduce the level of imposition by presenting the action as hypothetical or less direct. The following examples illustrate this usage:

Datum 9: “*Könnten Sie mir helfen?*”

Datum 10: “*Würden Sie das bitte wiederholen?*”

Compared to their indicative counterparts (e.g., *Können Sie...*, *Wiederholen Sie...*), these constructions demonstrate a higher degree of politeness. The use of *Konjunktiv II* introduces an additional layer of indirectness by framing the request as a possibility rather than a direct demand.

From the perspective of Brown and Levinson (Brown & Levinson, 1987), this strategy can be interpreted as a form of negative politeness, as it minimizes imposition and increases deference toward the hearer. By presenting the request as hypothetical, the speaker reduces the force of the directive and enhances its acceptability within interaction.

This grammatical strategy operates within the verb system, allowing speakers to encode politeness without relying solely on lexical or contextual elements. In this sense, *Konjunktiv II* represents a systematic and productive mechanism for expressing politeness in German.

The findings show that the use of *Konjunktiv II* complements other politeness strategies identified in the textbook, such as modal verb constructions, lexical politeness markers, and pronominal distinctions. Together, these features contribute to a multi-layered system of politeness in which grammatical, lexical, and structural elements interact to produce socially appropriate communication.

Contrastive Patterns between German and Indonesian Politeness

The contrastive analysis reveals systematic differences between German and Indonesian politeness strategies, particularly in terms of how politeness is linguistically encoded and pragmatically interpreted. These differences become evident when considering the patterns identified in the previous analysis. As shown in the German data (Datum 1–10), politeness is primarily realized through grammatical and structural means, including modal verb constructions, pronominal distinctions (*du/Sie*), lexical politeness markers, and the use of *Konjunktiv II*. These features allow speakers to maintain structural directness while simultaneously mitigating the force of the utterance.

In contrast, Indonesian politeness strategies tend to rely more heavily on indirectness, relational framing, and contextual softening. Rather than encoding politeness primarily through grammatical structures, Indonesian speakers frequently employ lexical honorifics, pre-emptive mitigation (e.g., *maaf*), and elaborated expressions that emphasize interpersonal harmony.

These differences are particularly visible in request formulation. German requests, as illustrated in Datum 1–3 and Datum 9–10, are typically concise and grammatically mitigated, maintaining clarity and efficiency. Indonesian requests, on the

other hand, often involve additional discourse-level strategies that reduce imposition through indirectness and relational consideration.

In terms of hierarchical encoding, German employs a relatively stable binary system through *du* and *Sie* (Datum 4–5), whereas Indonesian relies on a wider range of lexical and contextual markers to express respect and social hierarchy. This suggests that German politeness is more structurally encoded, while Indonesian politeness is more dynamically negotiated through interaction.

Overall, the findings indicate that German politeness strategies operate within a system that emphasizes grammatical mitigation and structural clarity, whereas Indonesian politeness prioritizes relational harmony and sociopragmatic sensitivity. These differences reflect distinct cultural orientations toward communication, in which politeness is evaluated according to different norms of appropriateness.

Micro-Contrastive Analysis of Request Forms

To further illustrate the structural and sociopragmatic differences identified above, a micro-level contrastive analysis was conducted using a representative request from the textbook.

Datum 11: German example: “*Können Sie mir helfen?*”

A pragmatically appropriate Indonesian equivalent in a formal academic or institutional context would likely be:

Datum 12: “*Maaf, Pak/Bu, boleh saya minta bantuannya sebentar?*”

Although both utterances perform the same speech act requesting assistance their internal structures reveal distinct pragmatic orientations. In the German example (Datum 11), politeness is encoded primarily through pragmalinguistic resources, including the modal verb *können*, interrogative syntax, and the formal pronoun *Sie*. These elements function together to mitigate imposition while maintaining structural directness and communicative clarity. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson (Brown & Levinson, 1987), this formulation reflects a strategy of negative politeness, as it minimizes imposition by framing the request as a question of possibility rather than a direct demand.

In contrast, the Indonesian example (Datum 12) relies more heavily on sociopragmatic strategies. The use of *maaf* serves as a pre-emptive mitigation device, signaling awareness of potential imposition, while the honorific address term *Pak/Bu* encodes respect and social hierarchy. The expression “*boleh saya minta bantuannya sebentar?*” further reduces imposition through indirect framing and temporal minimization. This comparison demonstrates that German politeness tends to be encoded through grammatical and structural mechanisms, whereas Indonesian politeness is more strongly shaped by sociopragmatic considerations, including relational sensitivity and contextual negotiation.

Overall, this micro-level analysis reinforces the broader finding that differences between German and Indonesian politeness systems extend beyond linguistic form and reflect distinct cultural orientations in the evaluation and realization of politeness.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that politeness strategies represented in *Netzwerk A1* reflect sociocultural norms characteristic of German communicative

practices. The predominance of modal-based interrogative constructions indicates a systematic reliance on grammatical mitigation rather than on extended indirectness. This pattern aligns with Brown and Levinson's (Brown & Levinson, 1987) framework of negative politeness, in which speakers minimize imposition through linguistic devices such as modal verbs and interrogative structures.

These findings are consistent with previous research on pragmatic representation in language learning materials, which suggests that politeness is often encoded through structurally constrained and conventionalized forms rather than through elaborate discourse strategies (Ren & Han, 2016). Similarly, studies in instructed pragmatics have shown that learners are frequently exposed to pragmalinguistic forms without sufficient emphasis on sociopragmatic variation, which may influence how politeness is interpreted and produced (Taguchi, 2015).

Within the German sociopragmatic framework, clarity and efficiency are not incompatible with politeness. Directness, when mitigated through appropriate grammatical forms and formal address (*Sie*), functions as an acceptable and even expected mode of communication. This observation supports contemporary perspectives in interpersonal pragmatics, which emphasize that politeness is not universally defined by indirectness but is evaluated within culturally specific norms of appropriateness (Haugh et al., 2013). Thus, German politeness may be understood as structurally direct yet pragmatically appropriate within its sociocultural context.

In contrast, Indonesian politeness norms emphasize relational harmony, hierarchical sensitivity, and contextual negotiation. This orientation is reflected in the frequent use of indirect strategies, lexical honorifics, and mitigating expressions that function to maintain social balance and avoid potential face-threatening situations. These findings are consistent with previous studies on Indonesian pragmatics, which highlight the central role of social hierarchy and contextual sensitivity in shaping speech act realization (Asteka & Sutrisna, 2022).

From a theoretical perspective, this pattern can be understood as a stronger reliance on sociopragmatic factors, in which politeness is evaluated based on social relationships, contextual expectations, and cultural norms rather than solely on linguistic form. This contrasts with the German data, where politeness is more systematically encoded through pragmalinguistic resources.

The distinction between these two orientations can be further explained through Thomas's (Thomas, 1983) framework of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence. The German data illustrate a system in which pragmalinguistic resources such as modal verbs, pronominal distinctions, and grammatical mood play a central role in encoding politeness. Indonesian politeness, on the other hand, is more strongly influenced by sociopragmatic considerations, including hierarchy, relational expectations, and contextual appropriateness. This divergence indicates that differences between German and Indonesian politeness systems extend beyond linguistic structure and reflect deeper cultural conceptualizations of respect, distance, and interpersonal relations.

In addition to modal-based mitigation and pronominal distinctions, the findings also highlight the important role of lexical politeness markers and grammatical mood in shaping politeness in German interaction. The use of expressions such as *Entschuldigung*, *Verzeihung*, and *bitte* demonstrates that politeness in German is not only encoded through structural or grammatical means but is also supported by conventionalized lexical items that function at the discourse level.

From the perspective of Brown and Levinson (Brown & Levinson, 1987), these lexical markers can be interpreted as strategies of negative politeness, as they serve to minimize imposition and acknowledge the hearer's autonomy. Pre-request expressions such as *Entschuldigung* and *Verzeihung* function as mitigating devices that prepare the hearer for a potentially face-threatening act, while *bitte* operates as a softening marker that reinforces interpersonal consideration.

Furthermore, the identification of *Konjunktiv II* as a politeness strategy reinforces the role of grammatical structures in encoding politeness. By transforming direct requests into hypothetical or less assertive forms (e.g., *Könnten Sie...*, *Würden Sie...*), speakers reduce the perceived imposition and increase the level of politeness. Within Brown and Levinson's framework (Brown & Levinson, 1987), this can also be understood as a form of negative politeness, as it mitigates the force of the request while maintaining communicative clarity.

Taken together, these findings suggest that German politeness operates through a multi-layered system that integrates lexical, grammatical, and structural resources. While previous research has often emphasized modal verbs and pronominal distinctions, the inclusion of lexical politeness markers and *Konjunktiv II* highlights a more comprehensive system of politeness realization.

From a contrastive perspective, these features further distinguish German politeness from Indonesian strategies. While Indonesian politeness relies heavily on lexical honorifics and relational framing, German combines lexical politeness markers with systematic grammatical mitigation. This indicates that, although both languages employ lexical politeness devices, German places greater emphasis on grammatical encoding, whereas Indonesian relies more extensively on sociopragmatic negotiation.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings of this study highlight the importance of integrating explicit contrastive pragmatics into German language teaching in Indonesian contexts. The differences identified in this study particularly in modal-based mitigation, pronominal distinctions (*du/Sie*), lexical politeness markers, and the use of *Konjunktiv II* indicate that politeness in German is encoded through linguistic resources that may not be immediately transparent to Indonesian learners.

These differences have important implications for pragmatic transfer. Indonesian learners may interpret structurally direct German requests as abrupt or insufficiently polite when evaluated through their sociocultural norms. Conversely, learners may transfer Indonesian indirectness into German, resulting in overly elaborate or pragmatically marked expressions that deviate from target-language conventions.

This suggests that difficulties in foreign language communication are not solely linguistic but are often rooted in mismatches between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic expectations (Thomas, 1983). Therefore, language instruction should not only focus on grammatical accuracy but also explicitly address how politeness is constructed and interpreted across different cultural contexts.

To address these challenges, pedagogical practices should incorporate contrastive analysis, metapragmatic explanation, and contextualized practice. For example, learners can be guided to compare German and Indonesian request formulations, analyze the use of modal verbs and *Konjunktiv II*, and reflect on differences in directness and relational strategies. Activities such as role-play, dialogue analysis, and guided discussion can help learners develop greater awareness of sociopragmatic norms and improve their intercultural communicative competence.

Overall, these findings underscore the importance of integrating linguistic and cultural dimensions of politeness in foreign language instruction, enabling learners to navigate intercultural communication more effectively.

Conclusion

This study examined politeness strategies represented in the German textbook *Netzwerk A1* and contrasted them with documented Indonesian politeness norms in order to explore their pedagogical implications for German language teaching in Indonesia. The findings demonstrate that politeness in German is realized through a multi-layered system involving structural directness, pronominal distinctions (*du/Sie*), lexical politeness markers, and grammatical mitigation strategies, particularly the use of *Konjunktiv II*.

The analysis shows that German politeness strategies tend to employ structurally direct formulations that are mitigated through grammatical and lexical devices, whereas Indonesian politeness relies more heavily on indirectness, relational framing, and sociocultural negotiation. These differences indicate that politeness is not only a linguistic phenomenon but also a culturally embedded system shaped by distinct sociopragmatic norms.

This study contributes to the field of contrastive pragmatics by addressing the limited research on German–Indonesian politeness and by expanding analysis beyond English-centered paradigms. In addition, it offers a more comprehensive account of politeness by integrating structural, lexical, and grammatical dimensions, highlighting the role of *Konjunktiv II* and lexical politeness markers as key components of German politeness strategies.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings emphasize the importance of incorporating explicit contrastive pragmatics into German language instruction in Indonesia. By raising learners' awareness of differences in pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic norms, educators can help reduce pragmatic transfer and support the development of intercultural communicative competence.

However, this study is limited to textbook-based document analysis and does not include empirical data on learner performance. Future research may extend this investigation by examining how Indonesian learners interpret and produce German politeness strategies in authentic communicative settings.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest

Author Contributions

All authors have made substantial, direct, and intellectual contributions to the work, encompassing but not limited to conceptualization, methodology, investigation, formal analysis, drafting the original manuscript, and reviewing and editing. Each author has read and approved the published version of the manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

Data will be made available on request

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