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Integrating the Curriculum of Love in Strengthening Indonesian Language Politeness Based on Islamic Educational Values among Students at As'adiyah Islamic University Sengkang

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the integration of the Curriculum of Love in strengthening Indonesian language politeness based on Islamic educational values among students at As'adiyah Islamic University Sengkang. The Curriculum of Love, conceptualized by Prof. Dr. KH. Nasaruddin Umar, M.A., emphasizes compassion, respect, and ethical communication as fundamental principles of Islamic education. Using a mixed-methods approach, this research involved 156 students across various faculties through surveys, focus group discussions, and linguistic analysis of student discourse. The findings reveal three significant dimensions: the theoretical framework connecting Islamic values with language politeness, the pedagogical strategies employed in curriculum implementation, and the observable outcomes in student communication patterns. Data analysis demonstrated substantial improvements in students' use of honorifics, respectful address forms, and empathetic communication following curriculum integration. The study identifies critical success factors including faculty

commitment, culturally responsive pedagogy, and institutional support systems. These findings contribute to ongoing discussions about values-based education in Islamic universities and offer practical frameworks for integrating spiritual and linguistic competencies in higher education contexts across Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

The erosion of language politeness among Indonesian university students has become a growing concern in contemporary higher education, reflecting broader societal shifts in communication norms and values. Linguistic studies document increasing informality in student discourse, declining use of honorific markers, and diminishing attention to contextual appropriateness in language use, phenomena that challenge traditional Indonesian values of respect and social harmony. Brown and Levinson (1987) established that politeness represents a universal aspect of human communication, functioning as essential social lubricant that maintains interpersonal relationships and prevents conflict. In Indonesian contexts, language politeness carries particular significance as it embodies cultural values of respect (*hormat*), appropriateness (*sopan santun*), and hierarchical awareness that have historically characterized Javanese, Bugis, and other ethnic communication traditions. The challenge facing Islamic universities involves not merely teaching linguistic forms of politeness but cultivating genuine ethical dispositions that manifest in respectful communication.

Islamic educational philosophy offers rich intellectual resources for addressing contemporary challenges in character and communication development. The Curriculum of Love (*Kurikulum Cinta*) emerged from the visionary thinking of Prof. Dr. KH. Nasaruddin Umar, M.A., former Director General of Islamic Education at Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs, who recognized that Islamic education must transcend cognitive knowledge transmission to cultivate affective dimensions of faith including compassion, empathy, and love. This curriculum was formally declared through the Istiqlal Declaration in Jakarta, a historic gathering that brought together prominent religious and educational leaders including Pope Francis, who participated in interfaith dialogue emphasizing shared values of peace, compassion, and human dignity (Muhsyanur, 2024) and (Santalia et al., 2025). The declaration articulated a vision of Islamic education grounded in *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy for all creation), positioning love and compassion as central organizing principles rather than peripheral concerns.

The theoretical foundations of the Curriculum of Love draw from classical Islamic scholarship and contemporary educational theory, creating bridges between tradition and modernity. Noddings (2013) argues that education must cultivate caring relationships and ethical responsiveness, not simply transmit knowledge or develop technical skills. This care ethics perspective resonates deeply with Islamic concepts of *rahmah* (mercy), *ihsan* (excellence in conduct), and *adab* (proper

comportment), which emphasize that knowledge without ethical character leads to harm rather than benefit. Al-Ghazali's classical work *Ihya Ulum al-Din* establishes that education's ultimate purpose involves purifying the soul and developing moral excellence, with linguistic conduct serving as both manifestation and cultivation mechanism for inner virtues. The Curriculum of Love operationalizes these principles by structuring learning experiences that simultaneously develop intellectual capabilities and nurture spiritual-ethical dispositions.

Language politeness in Indonesian contexts operates through complex systems of linguistic markers, pragmatic strategies, and contextual sensitivity that reflect social relationships and cultural values (Muhsyanur, 2025), (Muhsyanur Muhsyanur, Nurul Hudayanti Mahas, 2025), and (Muhsyanur Muhsyanur, Setya Yuwana Sudikan, 2025). Rahardi (2005) documents how Indonesian language employs diverse politeness strategies including honorific vocabulary (*bahasa halus*), indirect speech acts, hedging devices, and formulaic expressions that convey respect and maintain social harmony. These linguistic resources enable speakers to navigate status differences, manage face concerns, and construct appropriate social identities across varied communicative situations. However, contemporary students increasingly favor informal registers and direct communication styles influenced by global youth culture, digital communication norms, and diminishing exposure to traditional socialization contexts where language politeness was modeled and enforced. This linguistic shift raises concerns not merely about surface-level manners but about deeper erosion of values including respect for elders, humility, and communal orientation.

Islamic educational values provide comprehensive frameworks for understanding and cultivating language politeness as spiritual practice rather than mere social convention. The Quranic injunction "*qaulan kariman*" (speak with noble words) establishes that speech quality reflects spiritual state and carries ethical weight, making language use a domain of religious accountability. Nasr (2010) emphasizes that Islamic education traditionally integrated spiritual development with all forms of learning, recognizing that knowledge acquisition, character formation, and worship constitute unified rather than separate dimensions of human development. In this paradigm, developing polite language represents not simply social skill acquisition but cultivation of *akhlaq* (moral character) that manifests in all interpersonal interactions. The integration of love as educational principle intensifies this connection, positioning respectful communication as expression of compassion and recognition of others' inherent dignity as divine creation.

Contemporary higher education faces challenges balancing academic rigor, professional preparation, and character development within increasingly constrained curricula and competitive environments. Lickona (1991) argues that educational institutions must deliberately cultivate moral development rather than assuming it occurs naturally or exclusively through family socialization. Islamic universities carry particular responsibility for character education as institutions explicitly committed to producing graduates who embody Islamic values alongside

professional competencies. As'adiyah Islamic University Sengkang, located in South Sulawesi's Bugis cultural heartland, serves a student population deeply rooted in traditions that historically emphasized language politeness and social propriety. However, faculty report observing declining linguistic courtesy in student communications, including informal address of professors, casual language in academic contexts, and diminished sensitivity to appropriate register selection.

The integration of the Curriculum of Love at As'adiyah Islamic University represents a systematic institutional response to these challenges, embedding values-based approaches across academic programs rather than limiting character education to isolated courses. Berkowitz and Bier (2005) demonstrate that effective character education requires comprehensive approaches involving explicit instruction, institutional climate development, and reinforcement across multiple contexts rather than standalone interventions. The university's implementation strategy includes faculty development on pedagogical approaches that cultivate compassion and respect, curriculum revision to integrate Islamic values with disciplinary content, and creation of institutional practices that model and reward polite communication. This holistic approach recognizes that transforming student communication patterns requires changing not merely what students know but who they are becoming through their educational experiences.

The cultural context of Bugis society provides both opportunities and challenges for implementing the Curriculum of Love in language politeness development. Traditional Bugis culture, documented by Millar (1989), emphasizes *siri'* (dignity, honor) as core value shaping social interactions and communication norms. Language politeness in Bugis contexts operates through elaborate systems of honorific vocabulary, indirect request forms, and careful attention to status markers that prevent affronts to personal or family honor. These traditional communication norms align in important respects with Islamic values of respect and proper conduct, creating cultural resources that curriculum integration efforts can mobilize. However, contemporary students navigate tensions between traditional expectations and modern communication styles, between local cultural norms and global youth cultures, creating complex identity negotiations that shape their linguistic practices.

This study addresses critical gaps in understanding how Islamic educational values can be operationalized to strengthen language politeness in contemporary university contexts. While existing literature documents the importance of character education and analyzes Indonesian politeness systems, fewer studies examine systematic integration of Islamic spiritual principles with linguistic development or evaluate such interventions in higher education settings. By focusing on the Curriculum of Love implementation at As'adiyah Islamic University Sengkang, this research provides empirical evidence regarding the feasibility, challenges, and outcomes of values-based approaches to language education. The findings contribute to theoretical discussions about the relationship between spirituality and communication, offer practical models for curriculum integration, and inform policy

decisions regarding character education in Islamic universities across Indonesia and similar contexts.

METHOD

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to examine the integration of the Curriculum of Love in strengthening Indonesian language politeness among students at As'adiyah Islamic University Sengkang. The research was conducted over one academic year, involving 156 students from four faculties: Islamic Theology, Education, Economics, and Health Sciences. Quantitative data were collected through pre-and post-intervention surveys measuring students' attitudes toward language politeness, knowledge of Indonesian honorific systems, and self-reported communication behaviors. The survey instrument was adapted from Watts (2003) and (Muhsyanur, 2024) politeness assessment framework and contextualized for Indonesian Islamic educational settings through expert review and pilot testing. Qualitative data collection included focus group discussions with 32 students exploring their experiences with curriculum integration, semi-structured interviews with 12 faculty members involved in implementation, and discourse analysis of student written communications collected at three time points throughout the academic year. Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) advocate for mixed-methods approaches when research questions require both breadth of understanding through quantitative measurement and depth of insight through qualitative exploration, particularly when examining complex social phenomena like values integration in education.

Data analysis proceeded through separate quantitative and qualitative phases followed by integration and interpretation. Quantitative survey data were analyzed using paired-samples t-tests to compare pre-and post-intervention scores on politeness measures, with effect sizes calculated using Cohen's d. Qualitative data analysis followed Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis procedures, beginning with familiarization through repeated reading of transcripts, followed by systematic coding to identify patterns, development of candidate themes, theme refinement, and final theme definition. Discourse analysis of student writing employed politeness markers coding scheme developed by Kadar and Haugh (2013), examining frequency and appropriateness of honorific forms, hedging devices, and indirect request strategies. Integration occurred through comparing quantitative findings regarding politeness improvement with qualitative themes explaining how and why changes occurred from participant perspectives. Trustworthiness was ensured through multiple strategies including investigator triangulation with three researchers independently coding qualitative data, member checking whereby participants reviewed preliminary findings, thick description providing detailed contextual information, and negative case analysis examining instances where expected patterns did not occur. Ethical approval was obtained from As'adiyah Islamic University's Research Ethics Committee, and all participants provided informed consent with assurance of confidentiality and right to withdraw.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Theoretical Framework Connecting Islamic Values with Language Politeness

The implementation of the Curriculum of Love at As'adiyah Islamic University revealed sophisticated theoretical connections between Islamic educational values and language politeness that participants articulated with increasing clarity throughout the academic year. Students initially understood politeness primarily as social convention or cultural tradition, describing it in terms of using formal language with professors or avoiding offensive words. However, through curriculum integration activities including Islamic ethics seminars, Quranic study circles focused on communication principles, and reflective writing assignments, students developed deeper appreciation for politeness as spiritual practice reflecting core Islamic values. One student explained that studying Quranic verses about speech made her realize that "every word we speak is witnessed by angels and will be accounted for on Judgment Day, so speaking politely is not just about manners but about our relationship with Allah." This theological framing transformed politeness from external behavioral compliance to internalized spiritual commitment, addressing what Astin et al. (2011) identify as essential connection between spiritual development and behavioral outcomes in values-based education.

Faculty members described how the Curriculum of Love provided pedagogical frameworks for explicitly connecting language instruction with Islamic character development in ways they had previously struggled to articulate. One linguistics professor noted that she had always believed language politeness mattered but lacked theoretical language to explain why beyond vague references to culture or respect. The curriculum's emphasis on *rahmah* (mercy) as foundational Islamic principle gave her conceptual tools to help students understand politeness as manifestation of compassion, explaining that choosing respectful language demonstrates care for others' feelings and dignity. This perspective aligns with Eelen (2001) critique that politeness theory has often focused excessively on strategic face-management while neglecting moral dimensions of respectful communication. By grounding politeness in Islamic concepts of mercy and human dignity, the curriculum provided ethical rather than merely pragmatic rationales for developing linguistic competence.

The theoretical framework emphasized that Islamic communication ethics extend beyond avoiding harm to actively cultivating good through beautiful speech. Students engaged with hadith literature describing the Prophet Muhammad's communication style, noting his consistent use of gentle words, active listening, and personalized address that made each person feel valued. Faculty guided students in analyzing how these prophetic examples translate to contemporary contexts, discussing how texting etiquette, classroom participation, and social media communication can embody Islamic principles of kindness and respect. One compelling insight that emerged from focus group discussions involved students recognizing that politeness serves not only interpersonal functions but communal

ones, as respectful communication prevents conflict, builds trust, and creates environments where people feel safe and valued. This communal dimension resonates with Habermas (1984) communicative action theory, which posits that ethical communication creates conditions for mutual understanding and democratic deliberation.

Analysis of student reflective journals revealed evolving understanding of politeness as dynamic practice requiring contextual judgment rather than rote application of rules. Students grappled with questions about when directness might be more appropriate than indirectness, how to balance honesty with kindness, and whether Western communication norms prevalent in academic contexts conflicted with Islamic and Indonesian politeness values. These discussions demonstrated sophisticated metalinguistic awareness and ethical reasoning, moving beyond simplistic rule-following to thoughtful navigation of complex communicative situations. Faculty noted that the Curriculum of Love's emphasis on *ihsan* (excellence) encouraged students to view politeness not as minimum acceptable standard but as continuous improvement toward communication that truly reflects divine attributes of mercy, beauty, and wisdom. This aspirational orientation addresses criticism by Kristjánsson (2015) that character education sometimes promotes mere compliance rather than cultivating virtue and moral excellence.

Pedagogical Strategies for Curriculum Integration

The integration of the Curriculum of Love into language instruction required innovative pedagogical approaches that departed from conventional grammar-focused or skills-based language teaching. Faculty developed what they termed "spiritually integrated pedagogy" that embedded Islamic values throughout learning activities rather than treating values and language as separate domains. One particularly effective strategy involved beginning each class session with reflection on a Quranic verse or hadith related to communication, followed by discussion of how the spiritual principle connects to that day's linguistic focus. For example, a lesson on honorific vocabulary began with the verse "Speak to people in a good manner" (Quran 2:83), leading students to discuss what constitutes good speech and how linguistic choices demonstrate respect for others' dignity. This pedagogical approach reflects Marzano et al. (2001) finding that explicit connections between new learning and students' existing knowledge and values enhances both comprehension and motivation.

Experiential learning activities proved essential for helping students internalize polite communication patterns rather than simply memorizing forms. Faculty designed role-playing scenarios requiring students to navigate common university situations including requesting deadline extensions from professors, resolving conflicts with peers, and participating in formal academic discussions. Students practiced multiple approaches to each scenario, analyzing which linguistic strategies best balanced directness with respect, clarity with face-saving, and individual needs with communal harmony. Debriefing discussions following role-plays encouraged

students to articulate the values guiding their linguistic choices and reflect on how different approaches aligned with Islamic principles of compassion and justice. Several faculty noted that these activities generated unexpected depth, with students raising complex ethical questions about when politeness might mask injustice or when directness might constitute necessary prophetic truth-telling.

Peer assessment and collaborative learning structures created communities of practice where students supported each other's development of polite communication. Faculty organized students into "language courtesy circles" that met weekly to review each other's written work, provide feedback on politeness aspects of their communication, and share challenges they encountered trying to maintain respectful speech in various contexts. These peer learning groups functioned as what Lave and Wenger (1991) term communities of practice, where novices learn through participation with more skilled peers in authentic activities central to the domain. Students reported that peer feedback felt less threatening than instructor correction and that explaining politeness principles to classmates deepened their own understanding. One student described how her circle noticed she consistently used informal pronouns when frustrated, helping her recognize the connection between emotional regulation and language politeness.

Table 1 presents the pedagogical strategies employed across different instructional contexts, documenting the variety of approaches faculty used to integrate the Curriculum of Love with language politeness development. The table illustrates that effective integration required coordinated efforts across formal classroom instruction, co-curricular activities, and informal institutional practices. Faculty emphasized that changing student communication patterns demanded more than isolated lessons; it required creating institutional culture where polite communication was consistently modeled, expected, and valued. This finding supports Berkowitz and Bier (2005) conclusion that comprehensive approaches addressing curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional climate produce stronger character education outcomes than any single intervention.

Table 1. Pedagogical Strategies for Integrating the Curriculum of Love in Language Politeness Development

Instructional Context	Strategy	Islamic Value Emphasis	Learning Activities	Assessment Methods
Formal Classroom	Spiritually integrated lessons	<i>Rahmah</i> (mercy), <i>Adab</i> (proper conduct)	Quranic verse analysis, honorific vocabulary instruction	Written assignments, oral presentations
Experiential Learning	Role-playing scenarios	<i>Ihsan</i> (excellence), <i>Shura</i> (consultation)	Simulated interactions, peer feedback	Performance observation, self-reflection

Instructional Context	Strategy	Islamic Value Emphasis	Learning Activities	Assessment Methods
Collaborative Groups	Language courtesy circles	<i>Ukhuwah</i> (brotherhood), <i>Nasiha</i> (sincere advice)	Peer review, group discussions	Peer assessment, portfolio review
Co-curricular Activities	Islamic communication workshops	<i>Qaulan Kariman</i> (noble speech), <i>Hikmah</i> (wisdom)	Guest lectures, video analysis	Participation records, reflection journals
Institutional Practices	Modeling and reinforcement	<i>Uswah Hasanah</i> (beautiful example)	Faculty-student mentoring, campus etiquette campaigns	Behavioral observation, climate surveys

Observed Outcomes in Student Communication Patterns

Quantitative analysis of pre-and post-intervention survey data revealed statistically significant improvements across multiple dimensions of language politeness. Students demonstrated increased knowledge of Indonesian honorific systems, with mean scores rising from 68.4 (SD = 12.3) to 84.7 (SD = 8.6), $t(155) = 14.82$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.52$, indicating large effect size. Self-reported frequency of using polite language forms similarly increased significantly, with students reporting more consistent use of formal pronouns, honorific titles, and indirect request strategies following curriculum integration. Attitude measures showed that students developed more positive valuation of language politeness, with 89% agreeing post-intervention that polite communication reflects Islamic character compared to 64% pre-intervention. These quantitative findings provide evidence that systematic integration of the Curriculum of Love produced measurable changes in students' politeness-related knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes.

Discourse analysis of student written communications documented observable linguistic changes supporting survey results. Examination of 468 student emails to faculty revealed substantial increases in appropriate honorific use, proper greeting and closing formulas, and indirect request formulations following curriculum integration. Pre-intervention emails frequently employed informal pronouns (*kamu* rather than *Bapak/Ibu*), abrupt requests lacking mitigating devices, and casual closings inappropriate for student-faculty relationships. Post-intervention emails demonstrated marked improvement, with 82% appropriately using honorifics compared to 47% pre-intervention. Students also showed increased sophistication in indirect speech acts, employing hedging ("Apabila berkenan" - if willing), conditional formulations ("Jika tidak keberatan" - if you don't mind), and elaborated justifications when making requests. These linguistic changes suggest that curriculum integration

influenced not merely students' explicit knowledge but their actual communicative practices.

Qualitative interviews revealed that students experienced improvements in communication relationships alongside linguistic changes. Multiple students described how adopting more polite language improved their interactions with faculty, with professors responding more positively to respectfully worded requests and students feeling more confident approaching faculty for assistance. One student explained that before the curriculum integration, she avoided speaking with her professors because she felt uncomfortable and didn't know how to address them properly, but learning appropriate forms gave her confidence to seek needed academic support. This finding resonates with Spencer-Oatey (2008) relational work theory, which emphasizes that politeness functions not merely as face-management but as relationship construction and maintenance. Students also reported unexpected benefits in peer relationships, noting that using respectful language reduced conflicts and created more positive classroom atmosphere.

Faculty observations corroborated student reports of communication improvements but also identified areas requiring continued development. Professors noted that while formal written communication showed substantial improvement, students still struggled with polite communication in informal contexts including hallway conversations, digital messaging, and peer interactions. Several faculty described persistent challenges with students using polite language authentically rather than performatively, mechanically applying formal formulas without genuine respect or consideration. One professor worried that some students had learned politeness as external compliance rather than internal character, questioning whether behavioral changes reflected genuine values integration or simply response to institutional expectations. These concerns highlight ongoing challenges in character education, echoing Lapsley and Narvaez (2006) and Herlina and Muhsyanur (2024) caution that moral development requires cultivating authentic virtue rather than mere behavioral conformity. Faculty emphasized need for sustained, long-term reinforcement rather than treating curriculum integration as one-time intervention.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that integrating the Curriculum of Love in language politeness instruction at As'adiyah Islamic University Sengkang produced meaningful improvements in students' linguistic knowledge, communication behaviors, and attitudes toward respectful speech. The research reveals that grounding language politeness in Islamic values of mercy, excellence, and human dignity provides powerful pedagogical frameworks that transform politeness from external social convention to internalized spiritual practice. Effective integration required comprehensive approaches combining explicit instruction, experiential learning, peer collaboration, and institutional culture development rather than isolated interventions. While quantitative and qualitative data document substantial positive outcomes, the findings also highlight ongoing challenges including ensuring

authentic rather than performative politeness, extending improvements from formal to informal contexts, and sustaining long-term character development beyond initial intervention periods. These results have important implications for Islamic universities across Indonesia, suggesting that values-based curricula offer viable pathways for addressing contemporary challenges in student character and communication development while honoring institutions' religious missions and cultural contexts.

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