

# A MODEL OF CROSS-CULTURAL LANGUAGE POLITENESS FOR TOURISTS IN THE LAKE TOBA REGION OF INDONESIA

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## Keyword

*Language Politeness, Tourism Actors,  
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## Abstract

*This paper discusses the politeness model for tourism actors in the Lake Toba area. Today's globalization allows us to easily travel to various parts of the world. Communication between countries with different cultural backgrounds occurs massively. Cultural differences between communicators can lead to understanding. For this reason, this research is very important to do. This study discusses the model of language politeness between countries with a cross-cultural perspective. The research was conducted on local and foreign tourism actors and tourists in the Lake Toba area. This place is the second largest international tourist destination in Indonesia after the island of Bali. This research is a descriptive qualitative using a sociopragmatic approach with cross-cultural studies. Dialogue between tourism actors and tourists is used as a source of data recorded by researchers. Furthermore, the utterances in the dialogue were analyzed using the equivalent and agih techniques. The results of the study show that there are differences in language politeness model between tourists and foreign tourists and domestic tourists.*

## INTRODUCTION

Language is basically a communication activity to convey messages using speech. In this case, communication will work well if each actor uses speech that can be understood so that both the speaker and the speech partner can respond to each other. In addition, another issue that deserves attention is the aspect of language politeness.

Politeness in an interaction can be used as a tool to show awareness about other people's faces because the face is a person's personal form in society. Politeness developed by the community to reduce friction in interpersonal interactions. Another definition states politeness as a strategy to avoid conflict that can be measured based on the degree of effort to avoid the conflict situation. To apply politeness in language, there are three rules that must be obeyed, namely formality (formality), indecision (doubt), and similarity or camaraderie (equality). (Yule, 1996; Lakoof, 1973; Fraser, 1978; Brown and Levinson, 1978; Pranowo 2009).

This study focuses on politeness in registering tourism services in the Lake Toba area. This lake has a length of 100 kilometers, a width of approximately 30 kilometers, and a water depth of 505 meters (1657 ft). Because it is so vast, this lake is geographically surrounded by 7 districts in North Sumatra, namely Samosir, Simalungun, Humbang Hasundutan, Dairi, Karo, Toba Samosir, and North Tapanuli Regencies with an area of 1,145 square kilometers. Therefore, Lake Toba is placed as the largest lake in Southeast Asia and the largest volcanic lake in the world

This area is one of the top tourist destinations for the government at this time. Even the Lake Toba tourist area has been designated as a UNESCO Global Geopark at the 209th Session of the UNESCO Executive Council in Paris on July 2, 2020. The government's seriousness in managing the Lake Toba area is manifested by the establishment of the Lake Toba Authority Agency in

accordance with Presidential Regulation No. 49 of 2016. The Agency The Lake Toba Tourism Area Management Authority has carried out its duties effectively starting December 31, 2016 and will work for 25 years. Various groups enthusiastically welcomed the government's decision and program. The formation of the Lake Toba Authority Agency is expected to be able to realize Lake Toba as the Monaco of Asia

The term register refers to the specific lexical and grammatical choices made by the speaker depending on the situational context. The term register here describes the language of a group of people with public or occupational interests, or the language used in situations related to that group. The register focuses on the vocabulary items used by an individual or group of people in certain terms and for certain purposes. In the semantic concept, it can be defined as an arrangement of meanings that is specifically related to the arrangement of certain situations from the field, the agent, and the means. This arrangement of situations is called context. Clearly, the register in this case includes three aspects, namely those related to the place, what language is used, and who takes the role (Halliday, 1992; Spencer, 2003).

This study specifically identifies and analyzes the registers used in tourism services in the tourist area of Lake Toba. Some of the tourist service places that are intended include ports, tourist information centers, money changers, travel agencies, hotels, restaurants, gift shops, museums and various tourist destinations which are considered as places where tourism service providers and tourists take a role in acting in speech using language. Indonesian, foreign languages and regional languages.

This research is very important because the success of the tourism industry is not only influenced by physical facilities, attractions and cultural wealth, but also requires cooperation and the readiness of the community to open themselves to visitors by applying the norms of politeness in speaking. Communication between tourism actors and tourists that occurs since tourists arrive, starting from airports, train stations, tourist information centers, travel agents, inns, restaurants, tourist attractions, gift shops until tourists return to their areas should comply with the rules, norms and strategies of politeness in speech. . In addition, the verbal and non-verbal language used by tourism service actors while interacting with tourists at various tourist sites is an important factor in determining the level of tourist satisfaction. This level of tourist satisfaction can be met if tourism actors have skills in serving tourists and good communication skills using politeness norms and strategies.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study of language politeness in the socio-cultural context views that language politeness is a representation of the social and cultural values adopted by certain communities. Watts (2003:6) states that in studying language politeness, we will automatically examine social interactions and appropriateness of behavior based on prevailing socio-cultural conventions where language politeness also seeks to reveal trends seen in certain communities to realize language politeness. So, the tendency of the realization of politeness in language from speakers who are in a certain cultural area is formulated to see its universality. In addition, the differences in the realization of language politeness are studied as part of an effort to find the uniqueness of the realization of language politeness from each culture. (see Saeed, 2000; Wierzbicka, 2003; Bharuthram, 2003; Locher, 2004; Moeller, 2009; Cheung, 2009; Spencer, 2010; Culpeper, 2010)..

Several studies regarding language politeness in the tourism service domain have been carried out by experts. In general, the results of these studies use Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness as the basis for their study. Purnomo (2011) examined the language of tourism services including the types of strategies and the level of politeness through politeness markers, both verbal and nonverbal. The results of his research show that the politeness of the language of tourism actors is influenced by three factors, namely power, intimacy, and financial benefits. Furthermore, Lee (2011) conducted a study of the success and patterns of communication in tourism services in the People's Republic of China by exploring the cultural values held by the Chinese and the patterns of failure of tourism services.

Kristianto (2016) uses the ethnographic theory of communication and the pragmatic theory of speech acts in expressing the model of language politeness in tourism services on the island of Bali which is termed language hospitality. Andriyani (2019) conducted a study of the language politeness strategy of tourism actors towards Japanese tourists in Bali. Susanti (2020) in her research explained that there was a violation of the maxim of politeness by tourism service providers in Ubud Bali with the main factor being the lack of competence of the tourism service actors in foreign languages and the use of polite language. Rasyid (2020) in his research examines the communication patterns contained in cross-cultural communication between Japanese-speaking Malaysian traveler guides and Japanese travelers where the use and strategy of language play an important role in cross-cultural communication between the two parties.

The study of language politeness is a cultural phenomenon, it is necessary to conduct a cross-cultural study. Horton and Hunt (1987: 4) state that when communicating with the interlocutor, culture is very binding on a person with rules that must be followed by members of the community so that they are normative and determine standards of behavior, a system of norms that regulates ways of behaving that must be carried out by members of the public. all members of society. This has resulted in each community group realizing their language politeness in different forms according to their cultural character. Certain utterances can be said to be polite in a certain community group, but in other community groups it is said to be disrespectful. It can be said that language politeness is a cultural phenomenon and must be studied cross-culturally. (compare Gunarwan, 2007; Gao, 2021).

#### **Data (1)**

**Context :** dialogue between a food merchant (F) and a Tourist (T) on the beach of Parapat Presidential Palace

F : Makan kacang kita ya kak?

'eat our nuts sis?'

W: daong Kak (menjawab dengan bahasa daerah)

'tidak kak'

'no,sis'

F : I dia tabo dang mangallang, holan mamereng-mereng. Tuhor ma jo kak.

'manalah enak kalau hanya memandang-mandang saja. Beli lah kak'

it's not good to just look. Please buy it sis'

W : daong ,kak.

Ngak kak

'No,sir'

F : satu mug pun jadi lah ,kak. Belum ada yang laku dari tadi

'even one pack is done, sis. Nothing has been done since before'

W : 'Bahen ma kak molo songoni

'Bungkus lah kak kalau begitu '

'Please, make one pack

F : Dua takkar bahenon ku? Dang cukup ra dihamu kak. Opat takkar ma ate.

'Mungkin tidak cukup kalau dua bungkus, empat bungkus ya kak'

'maybe not enough two packs, four packs

Sis'

W : cukupma nasaon

'cukuplah'

'enough, sis'  
F : mauiate da kak.  
'terima aksih ya kak'  
'thank you, sir'

The politeness markers used by the tourist actors above include *us* and *sis*. It appears that the speaker in this case the merchant uses the word *we* to show the closeness of the trader, while the word *kak* is chosen to show a polite greeting to the interlocutor. In addition, politeness markers can also be seen in the speaker's thanks to the speech partner at the end of the conversation. The politeness principle used in speech (2) above is the consensus maxim where the speaker tries to reduce the discrepancy by using the offer sentence "dua takkar bahenokku?" and the persuasive sentence 'tuhor ma jo kak'. In the dialogue above, the speaker tries to influence by using the word 'apala' (see Leech, 1983; Otay 2008)

Several studies related to cross-cultural language politeness in the socio-cultural dimension have been carried out by Sifianou (1992), Elen (2001), Seed (2000), Lakoof and Sachiko Ide (2001), Zeyrek (2001), Baruthram (2003), Deutscham (2003), Murphy and Levi (2006) and Haugh and Obana (2011). This study was originally initiated by Grice (1975), Brown and Levinson (1978) and Leech (1983) which subsequently attracted the interest of many linguists in the fields of pragmatics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, philosophy of language and discourse analysis.

## METHOD

### a) Participant

In general, this research involves tourism actors in the Lake Toba area, including Silangit airport officers, ferry port employees Ihan Batak, information officers at tourist information centers and money changers, tour guides at travel agencies, hotel receptionists, restaurant waiters, souvenir shop employees, and museums as well as various tourist destinations which are considered as places for tourism service providers to interact with tourists.

### b) Procedure

The data are selected from various natural speech events between tourism service providers and tourists. The data collection methods used were observation and field notes, recording, giving questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Data in the form of conversations between tour service providers and tourists are taken from the following activities: (1) booking tickets, hotel rooms, etc., (2) picking up tourists at the airport/train station, (3) providing information from the airport/train station to the airport/train station. hotels, (4) handling registration at hotels, (5) telephone handling, (6) giving directions/directions, (7) providing information on art and entertainment performances, (8) starting a tour and explaining tourist routes, (9) explaining tourist objects along the tour, (10) food and beverage service in restaurants, (11) explanation of the process of making art objects, (12) bargaining souvenirs, and (13) explanation of tourist objects. The data that has been collected and sorted according to the research objectives are then analyzed using the parameters of politeness markers (Spencer-Oatey, 2008), politeness principles (Leech, 1983)pol and politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson, 1987)

## RESULTS

### a) Politeness Marker

The results of this study indicate that tourism service providers use various politeness markers in the tourism service register to serve tourists at certain times, but violate them at other times. The order of politeness markers used from the most frequent to the least frequent are: (1) politeness markers to greet and offer help, (2) politeness markers to give approval, (3) politeness markers to thank, (4) politeness markers for making requests, (5) politeness markers for apologizing, (6) politeness markers for giving compliments, (7) politeness

markers for notification, (8) politeness markers for giving suggestions, (9) politeness markers for making rejections, and (10) a polite sign to give orders. One example can be seen in the following data

Data (2)

**Context: Conversation between Receptionist  
(R) with tourists women (WT)  
women at the hotel GM  
Marsaringar Balige**

R : Selamat malam, Kak

'Good Evening ,Sis'

WT: Malam dek

'Night'

R : Ada yang bisa kami bantu?

'Is there anything we can help you with?'

WT: mau chek in, Kakak atas nama Lisa

Saragih

'want to check in of Lisa Saragih'

R : Oh iya, ibu sudah dp 300 tapi tadi kakak

tambah ekstra bed ya?

'Oh yes, mom already paid 300 but earlier,

did you add an extra bed?'

WT: iya

'Yes'

R : Bisa saya pinjam KTP nya bu?

'Can I borrow your ID card, ma'am?'

WT: KTP ya mbak

ID Card ?

R : Boleh

'Yes'

In the conversation above, R uses politeness markers in the form of greetings with the words Good evening followed and greetings Sis. R chose the speech Good evening by connecting the time when the WT arrived at the hotel, which was 20.15 WIB. Greetings such as good night, good morning or good afternoon are very common and have become a standard form of service in hotels, recreational facilities or other tourist attractions, both in formal and informal settings.

The greetings of Sis and Ms. are used to show R's respect for WT. Besides that, it is also R's effort to familiarize himself with WT in a relaxed and familial situation. This greeting is commonly used by female R to female W. If R is male and WT, usually the greeting will be used Bu. The greeting of Mr or Mrs is considered more universal and as one of the honorable calls and can be used for all ages

Verbal politeness expressions used by R are marked sequentially, including bowing their head, moving their hands which are directed as a hint that R is checking the guest book. It also smiles to express happiness in welcoming WP.

Data (3)

**Context : Conversations of Restaurant Employees with Tourists At Damar Toba Restaurant**

W : (Gets out of the car carrying his parents to the restaurant)

PR: here I will help you ma'am

W : What time do you open?

PR : From e... 10 am

W : Oh... the hotel is already open, isn't it?

PR: Already. Be careful mam...

W : (Javanese music is heard from inside the restaurant) In Batak land the song is Javanese (s smile)

PR : Let's vary ma'am (smile). Where are you sitting? It's about to rain. Here no, ma'am? (pointing with a bow)

W: Here? Thank you ..

In the conversation above, PR uses polite expressions which can be seen from the speech. Here, I will help, ma'am; Be careful, ma'am...; Where are you sitting, ma'am? ; It's about to rain, ma'am; just stay here, ma'am?; The statement Here I help PR is used as an expression of politeness and sympathy for female tourists who are walking towards a restaurant. The condition of the road leading to the restaurant is quite steep, allowing one to slip if not careful. Seeing a female tourist walking slowly, PR volunteered to help by supporting her.

The word of caution, Bu is used as a PR way to politely remind W to walk carefully. Where do you sit, ma'am? Used to ask for approval regarding the desired seating position by W and his entourage. In addition, the speech is about to rain, ma'am, which is continued by here, ma'am? Chosen as an expression of politeness with an offer marker. PR offered W to sit on one of the restaurant chairs which was not too far from the entrance and was equipped with a tent so that if it rained, W and his entourage would not be exposed to the rain.

PR uses polite expressions to make a good impression on visitors. PR realizes the importance of a good welcome to visitors so that visitors feel happy to come to the restaurant. In addition, PR explained that what was done had been adjusted to the SOP that was in effect at the restaurant.

#### b) Politeness Principal

The results of this study indicate that tourism service providers in Danau Toba area use various politeness principles in the tourism service register to serve tourists at certain times, but violate them at other times. The order of politeness maxims used from the most frequent to the least frequent are: (1) the maxim of generosity, (2) the maxim of wisdom, (3) the maxim of compatibility, (4) the maxim of praise, (5) the maxim of sympathy, and (6) humility maxim. While the order of politeness maxims that are violated from the most frequent to the least frequent are: (1) the maxim of compatibility, (2) the maxim of sympathy, (3) the maxim of praise, (4) the maxim of humility, (5) the maxim of generosity, and ( 6) maxim of wisdom.

#### Data (3)

#### Context: Conversation between a female receptionist (R) of Hotel Saulina Pangururan and a female caller (C) through telephone

C : Halo. Ini hotel Saulina pangururan? Masih ada kamar kosong, Mbak?

'Hallo. This is Hotel Saulina? Do you have a vacan room?'

R : Wah sudah penuh semua mbak .

'All rooms are occupied, Mam.'

C : Masak satu pun nggak ada yang kosong?

'Really? I just want a room.'

R : Ya kebetulan semua kamar sudah diboking karena long weekend

'All rooms have been booked because long weekend

C : Oh, begitu ya? Terima kasih atas

Informasinya

'Oh, okay. Thanks'

R : Hotel sebelah masih ada kosong. Kalau bapak mau, saya bersedia memberikan nomor teleponnya.

'The hotel next door is still empty. If  
you want, I give phone number

C : Oh, ya? Boleh ..  
Oh, yeah? Its good

In the dialogue above, R applies the maxim of the principle of generosity. Maximize profits for yourself in an effort to minimize your own gains and maximize losses for yourself. In the dialogue above, it can be seen that R is trying to make profit for himself as seen in 'The hotel next door is still empty. If you want, I'll give you a phone number. This statement shows that R is not only prioritizing profit for its hoyttel, but is trying to offer vacant rooms to other hotels. This of course can help C to find a hotel that he can stay in.

#### **Data (4)**

**Context : Conversation between a female Seller (F) with visitor (W) to bargain for the miniature of the house of the Batak Toba**

W : Berapa harga patung rumah batak ini kak?  
How much this miniature?

F : bisa bu? yang mana?  
can ma'am? Which one?

W : yang ini (menunjuk salah satu miniatur  
rumah batak)  
'this one (pointing to one of the miniature  
ethnics houses)

F : 250 ribu bu  
'250 thousand ma'am'

W : mahal juga ya..  
'expensive too..'

F : memang buatnya agak payah itu bu,  
ukirannya rumit  
'it's a bit lousy to make, ma'am, the carving  
is complicated'

W : ngak kurang bu? bisa 200 ribu?  
'isn't it less? maybe 200 thousand?'

F : belum bisa segitu bu.. tambah lah ya..  
'can't do that yet..'

W : segitu lah ya..  
'Add it'

F : 225 bikin ya  
'225 yeah..'

W : kurang lagi lah kak  
'it's less sis'

F : ya sudah lah 200 ribu untuk ibu . Ibu udah  
dapat murah kali segitu bu  
'yes already 200 thousand for mother. It's  
been so cheap this time'

W : Ini 200 ya (memberi uang 2 lembar seratus  
ribuan)  
'This is 200 yes (gives 2 hundred thousand  
notes)'

F : terima kasih ya.. cantik kali nanti ruang  
tamu ibu kalau diletakkan itu .  
'thank you.. your room will be beautiful'

In the dialogue above, RS uses the maxim of praise to others. 'yes already 200 thousand for mother. It's been so cheap this time' shows that RS gives praise to W so that W does not feel lost. In addition, at the end of the dialogue, the Hospital also conveyed his praise by saying: 'thank you.. your room will be beautiful'. Why did the souvenir seller follow the Leech's approbation maxim? The approbation maxim was implemented because the souvenir seller respected the tourists who were smart in bargaining for the souvenir.

c) Politeness Strategy.

The results of this study indicate that tourism service providers in Danau Toba area use various politeness strategies in the tourism service register to serve tourists at certain times, but violate them at other times. The sequence of positive politeness strategies used from the most frequent to the least frequent are: (1) paying special attention to the interlocutor; (2) make offers and promises; (3) presuppose or create a perception that the speaker understands the wishes of the interlocutor; (4) increase interest in the interlocutor; (5) giving sympathy to the interlocutor; (6) seek and seek agreement with the interlocutor; (7) presupposes or creates the perception of a number of similarities between the speaker and the interlocutor; (8) showing a sense of optimism; (9) trying to involve the interlocutor and speaker in a certain activity; (10) avoid conflict with the interlocutor; (11) using markers that show the similarity of identity or group; (12) giving and asking for reasons; (13) make jokes; (14) exaggerating a sense of interest, approval, sympathy for the interlocutor and (15) offers a reciprocal action, namely if the interlocutor does X then the speaker will do Y

While the sequence of negative politeness strategies used from the most frequent to the least frequent are: (1) express it indirectly according to the convention; (2) pay homage; (3) state the act of threatening face-to-face as a general social provision; (4) use the form of questions with certain particles; (5) reduce the strength or power of the threat to the face of the interlocutor; (6) use apologies; (7) do it carefully and don't be too optimistic; (8) do not mention the speaker and the interlocutor; (9) nominalize the statement; and (10) state clearly that the speaker has given kindness (debt) or not to the interlocutor. The sequence of positive politeness strategies that are violated from the most frequent to the least frequent are: (1) presupposes or creates the perception of a number of similarities between the speaker and the interlocutor; (2) presuppose or create a perception that the speaker understands the wishes of the interlocutor; (3) offering a reciprocal action, namely if the interlocutor does X then the speaker will do Y; (4) ) using markers that show the similarity of identity or group; (5) exaggerating a sense of interest, approval, sympathy for the interlocutor; (6) make jokes; (7) trying to involve the interlocutor and speaker in a certain activity; (8) showing a sense of optimism; (9) make offers and promises; (10) increase interest in the interlocutor; (11) give and ask for reasons; (12) seek and seek agreement with the interlocutor; (13) avoiding conflict with the interlocutor; (14) giving sympathy to the interlocutor; and (15) pay special attention to the interlocutor. While the sequence of negative politeness strategies that are violated from the most frequent to the least frequent are: (1) clearly state that the speaker has given kindness (debt) or not to the interlocutor; (2) reduce the strength or power of the threat to the face of the interlocutor; (3) do not mention speakers and interlocutors; (4) do it carefully and don't be too optimistic; (5) declare face-threatening actions as a general social provision; (6) nominalize the statement; (7) use apologies; (8) use the form of questions with certain particles; (9) pay homage; and (10) express indirectly according to convention. Here are some examples found in the collected data

Data (5)

**Context: Conversation between a mFemale souvenir seller (S) and a female tourist (V) in Siburak burak Souvenir Market**

T: Gantungan kunci ini satunya berapa, Bang? 'How much is this key handle?'

S: Lima ribu, Bu.

'Five thousands rupiahs, Madam.'

T: Tidak bisa kurang harganya



' can you reduce the price?'

S: Wah itu sudah murah, Bu. Mau beli berapa biji? 'Mmm ... that's already cheap, Madam. How many pieces you want to buy?'

T: Lima aja 'Fifty pieces.

S: Oh... kalau lima saja tidak ada pengurangan bu. Kalau beli 10, untuk ibu kita kasih discount. Ibu beli 10 aja , bagaimana?

"Oh ... if only five, there is no reduction, ma'am. If you buy 10, we will give you a 10 percent discount.'

T : Ngak lah bang, saya mau 5 aja.

It's okay, I want 5 only.

S : Oh, harganya nggak kurang bu..

'Oh, the price is not less, ma'am'.

In the dialogue above, it can be seen that S uses a positive strategy to T by using the word choice for our mother, we have a discount and what if you buy only 10? In the speech, it can be seen that S uses the concept of Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation).

S has a good attitude, understanding and very cooperative in communicating even though in the end T only bought five key chains, according to his needs.

d) Language Politeness with Cross-Cultural Perspective

The results of this study indicate that there are similarities and differences in perspectives regarding politeness between English-speaking tourists who have a Western cultural background and Indonesian-speaking tourists who have an Indonesian cultural background to the tourism service registers used by tourism service providers in Danau Toba area . The order of perspective similarities they felt from the most frequent to the least frequent were: (1) formality, (2) indirectness, (3) humility, (4) emotional control, (5) goal orientation, and (6) hidden things. While the order of the differences in perspective that they felt from the most frequent to the least frequent were: (1) expressions of spontaneity, (2) very clear expressions, (3) continuity, (4) informality, (5) emotional expressions, and (6 ) selfishness.

**Table 1 Language Politeness Of Tourism Service Providers in Danau Toba Area**

	Local Touristm	Global Tourism
formality	✓	✓
indirectness	✓	✓
Emotional control	✓	
Goal orientation	✓	✓
Hidden thing	✓	✓

The results of the study indicate that in the language politeness of tourism actors in the Lake Toba area, there are cultural norms of politeness that are applied when they serve tourist both foreign and domestic tourists. The intended norms include:

1. The use of regional greetings that show respect and familiarity. Some of the greetings that are often used include eda, lae, ito, amang and host.
2. The use of terms or proverbs to refine meaning.
3. Trying to get acquainted with visitors who come with *martarombo*

**CONCLUSION**

This research shows that the proper use of politeness markers, principles, strategies and norms in tourism-service register by the tourism service providers in Danau Toba area affect their politeness levels. The more appropriate they use the politeness markers, principles, strategies and norms, the more polite levels they get. Moreover, the more polite their tourism-

service register they use, the more satisfaction the tourists obtain. Therefore, it is suggested that tourism service providers should always use politeness markers, principles, strategies and norms as well as possible when serving tourists to ensure their satisfaction.

The findings can also be used in teaching language and ethics for tourism service providers in Indonesia, especially in Danau Toba area, in serving international tourists who speak some English and local tourists who speak Indonesian influenced by Batak Toba Languages. Moreover, the findings can be used as materials to develop models for improving quality of service to tourists using appropriate nuances of politeness in English, as well as in Indonesian for tourism service providers and students of tourism schools to improve their competence in cross-cultural communication.

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