

POLITE SPEECH ACTS OF SECRETARIES FROM GENERATION Z IN FORMAL, ORAL COMMUNICATION

Hendri Pramadya, Universitas Padjadjaran
Dadang Suganda, Universitas Padjadjaran

ABSTRACT

This research aims to identify the politeness of Gen Z Secretaries (born 1996-1999) uttered in a formal, oral communication in their office surroundings (employers/ company executives, work partners, and clients). The participants are secretaries who work in certain companies in Bandung City, West Java, Indonesia. This research uses descriptive method by counting the number of language usages, communication forms, participants' cultural background, and speech acts factors related to the participants' ways of communication. The results of this study show that in general all participants use an informal communication form with work partners and a formal communication forms with their employers and clients. The research also reveals that their politeness is very much influenced by their social, cultural, and geographical background – regardless their Gen Z characteristics. This research has successfully discovered that Gen Z secretaries still keep their local value in making conversational communication with their executives at the office despite of 20-40 age gaps. The languages they use in the office are Indonesian (100%), Sundanese (20%), and English (10%). Based on the research finding we recommend that secretarial educational institution must give a high concern of giving intensive practices to use formal conversational communication for Gen Z secretaries due to the need of verbal communication in formal situation.

Keywords: Language Use, Z Generation, Politeness

INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is important in conveying messages between individuals in various organizations or institutions, especially service companies that prioritize good communication relationships and "saleable". Inevitably, formal, polite language is learned and practiced by company employees in business activities. Various studies were also conducted to reveal the most ideal language use for verbal communication with superiors, colleagues, and consumers/ customers. Problems arise when communication can be ineffective due to age gaps that are differentiated by generation groupings other than different social, cultural, and geographic backgrounds.

In connection with these problems, aspects of linguistic practice in the scope of pragmatic studies can be a tool that supports this research regarding the use of formal language in the office. Leech (1993) argues that pragmatics is the study of the meaning of speech in certain situations or in certain contexts. In pragmatics there are principles about how humans speak in certain situations. One of them is the principle of politeness or politeness.

No exception in the business world, politeness is an interesting topic to study, especially in relation to the use of polite speech acts in employee interactions in a company or institution. One of the professions that really need the principle of politeness in speaking is a secretary. Generation Z (GenZ), born in 1995 to 2005, has now entered the workforce, but there have been no studies that intensively discuss forms of communication, differences in work attitudes and speech acts of a secretary in interacting with people in the environment work. GenZ is a generation that has interacted with computers since their birth and by the time they were teenagers, they were familiar with the internet and social media. Of course, the use of the

internet and information technology will differentiate them in acting in speech, especially in acting in polite speech in an office environment.

Most secretaries have a very close relationship with their superiors considering that secretarial work includes not only clerical (administrative) duties, but also other tasks related to interpersonal relationships (face-to-face communication). Interpersonal relationships can lead to intimacy between secretaries and superiors in the context of social relationships. Some of them (secretaries) misinterpret this intimacy by violating the principles of politeness in communicating between superiors and subordinates both in speech acts and in social behavior. Example: When a superior submits a document to the secretary. The secretary responded with the sentence: "Just put it there!" This statement indicates a violation of social distancing speech acts.

In communicating, secretaries often ignore body gestures in performing formal speech acts both to superiors, coworkers, company guests, or to subordinates. In theory, a secretary should display a friendly, kind, and polite gesture in any circumstances to everyone during work (including serving complaining guests). Facts on the ground may not all secretaries understand communication patterns with gestures that are in accordance with formal conditions in the office. Sometimes they speak friendly and polite, but gestures do not show the same thing. The contributing factor may be that his heart is in trouble outside of work. The professional secretary should always speak and act with heart in any situation and condition.

The age gap between secretaries and superiors (especially junior secretaries) causes gaps in communication. The facts in the field are that many superiors complain about the behavior and speech acts of secretaries that are always not as expected even though the secretary has attended training to improve professionalism at work. Their response is that sometimes secretaries are more "bossy" than their superiors. This is also related to the behavior of GenZ adolescents who have a tendency to prioritize practicality in their lifestyle.

Some companies (both local, national, and multinational) do not recruit secretaries with secretarial educational backgrounds. Employees who are assigned as secretaries, but not graduates of the Secretarial study program will not know good and positive communication patterns for a secretary in the organization as a whole.

As corporate/institutional ambassadors, secretaries have a heavy burden in their work. However, it is not realized by some secretaries that their speech acts and behavior (even on a small scale) can be a big problem for companies when they do not show attitudes that are recognized by company colleagues or potential customers of the company. For example, many secretaries ignore the principle of politeness in business negotiations. Case in point: a secretary receives a call from a potential investor who will invest heavily in the company where he works with the words "Hello, who is this?" "Whom do you want to talk to?" with a harsh tone and facial expression (detectable even by telephone). Secretaries' speech acts in this conversation certainly will not result in positive communication and the company's image tends to be weak in the early stages of business. This of course can cause huge losses for the company if the investor cancels his investment.

These problems have prompted the author to further examine how effective the forms of communication carried out by GenZ secretaries are related to the patterns of politeness they understand and experience in the perspective of:

- 1) Language used (local/regional, national, or foreign)
- 2) The form of communication used (formal, informal, or familiar)
- 3) Courtesy to speak related to speaker and speaker gaps (age, social status, cultural background, and differences in occupational levels).

RESEARCH METHODS

The theory of politeness in pragmatic studies is used in this study as a reference like (Lakoff, 1973; Brown & Levinson, 1992; Leech, 1990; Yule, 1996). They are pragmatic experts related to the study of politeness, politeness strategies, and manner of polite speech. For

example, Lakof (1973) states that speech will be considered polite if it meets the rules of formality, hesitancy, and equality. Thus, speakers must have the character of not being pushy and not demeaning the interlocutor.

Meanwhile, Brown & Levinson (1992) introduced the "face" concept. According to them, every individual has a face which is interpreted as self-esteem, self-image, or honor. Basically, the face theory requires the speaker to keep his face so that the honor and dignity of the speech partner are not undermined.

Another theory of politeness expressed by Leech (1990) is related to the six principles of politeness which we recognize as the principle of maxims:

- 1) Tact "Wisdom", the participant should hold the principle to always make other people's losses as small as possible and maximize profits for others.
- 2) Generosity, the participant's speech is expected to reduce the benefits for themselves and make the benefits themselves as small as possible.
- 3) 'Appreciation', the participant can be considered polite if in speaking he always tries to give appreciation to other parties.
- 4) Modesty "Simplicity", the participant is expected to be humble by reducing praise for himself.
- 5) Agreement "Consensus", speech participants can foster mutual agreement in telling activities.
- 6) Sympathy, speech participants can maximize sympathy between one party to another.

From the aspect of speech scale, Leech (1990) ranks politeness in classification:

- 1) Cost-benefit scale "the scale of losses and benefits", refers to the size of the losses and benefits resulting from a speech act in a narrative.
- 2) Optionality scale 'choice scale', refers to the number or number of choices presented by the speaker to the speech partner in speaking activities.
- 3) Indirectness scale "scale of unsustainability", refers to the direct or indirect ranking of the intent of a speech.
- 4) Authority scale "authority scale", refers to the social status relationship between speakers and speech partners who are involved in the speech.
- 5) Social distance scale "social distance scale", refers to the ranking of social relationships between speakers and speech partners who are involved in a speech.

Politeness in language can be influenced by social distance factors; closeness of a person to other people; differences in culture, age and social status (Yule, 1996). This theory implies that speakers can use different speech levels depending on the social status of the speech partners. Yule also said that directive speech acts are used by speakers to tell other people to do something. This speech is a reflection of the speaker's desire, for example in ordering, ordering, begging, and suggesting.

This research was conducted using data collection techniques in the form of distributing questionnaires to ten participants (GenZ born 1996-1999). These participants are classified into the same social class, namely the secretary. Milroy in Mahsun (2017) states that social class is a group of people who have similarities in work and income as a consequence they have similar lifestyles and beliefs. The implication is if two people with different social classes (secretary with superiors, secretary with company guests/customers), the two people will have different behavior, both linguistic and nonlinguistic behavior. The contents of the questionnaire included language use and the types of communication they had at work. The workplaces of the participants are in Bandung (nine participants and Bekasi (1 participant). There are nine participants who work as secretaries and assistant secretary 1. They work in private companies, BUMN (Indonesian State-Owned Company), and ministerial institutions with the following classification:

- 1) Secretary of the Board of Directors (1 person)
- 2) Secretary to the Director of Finance (1 person)
- 3) Secretary of the Division Head (3 people)
- 4) Junior Secretary (4 people)
- 5) Assistant secretary (1 person)

The author conducted a qualitative research method, namely a method for exploring and understanding the meaning that comes from social problems (Creswell, 2019), and the analytical tool for this research is factual language data in the field. The author classifies the questions in the form of a questionnaire and sorts the data according to the needs of the analysis through the following stages: distributing questionnaires to secretaries belonging to GenZ, processing data in the form of percentage data, classifying research data, analyzing data, and concluding findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

This research is focused on the use of the language used by the secretary at work; speaker and speaker relationships based on age; gaps in job titles and social status; form and type of communication used when in an office/company environment.

The results of the study were strongly influenced by the background of the speakers and hearers who were classified as follows:

- 1) Participant data: age range (year of birth), type of work, place of work, and length of work;
- 2) The language used by the participants (local, national, foreign);
- 3) The place where communication occurs (at home, at the office);
- 4) Relationship between participants (as speakers) and speakers (superiors, colleagues, and customers);
- 5) Types of oral communication used: formal, informal, polite, very polite, familiar;
- 6) Forms of oral communication (telephone conversations, formal conversations in the office in online meetings/conference calls, face to face with customers/clients);
- 7) Cultural background (Javanese, Sundanese, or other ethnic groups);
- 8) Age differences between participants and speakers: gen z, gene y (millennial), or gene x, baby boomers;
- 9) Frequency of use of formal language with speakers: very often, often, and rarely.

The stages taken in analyzing research data:

- 1) Identifying the language usage;
- 2) Classifying the types of communication used by speakers/participants;
- 3) Classifying participants based on age, social and cultural differences;
- 4) Identifying the type of communication used by speakers and speakers;
- 5) Describing the research data in percentage terms;
- 6) Describing examples of the use of the GenZ secretary's polite language in various situations;
- 7) Analyzing the politeness scale of GenZ secretary's speech acts.

In analyzing the politeness scale, the data used are oral conversations uttered by secretaries in different workplaces in the form of transcribed videos. Oral speech as material for research studies is classified in the form of a politeness scale based on the conditions and situations faced by speakers. The results of recordings of speaker's conversation activities with people in their work environment (superiors, coworkers, or clients/customers) are analyzed based on the theory of politeness principles by Lakoff (1972); Brown & Levinson (1978); Leech (1983); Yule (1996).

To determine the politeness scale of the GenZ secretary's speech acts, the background of the speakers is classified so that the participants' classification can be accurately identified based on age, regional origin, place of work, language used, and ethnic origin. Referring to Table 1, the majority of respondents were born in 1999 (40%), came from Bandung (60%), worked in Bandung (90%), used Indonesian at work (100%), and came from the Sundanese ethnic group (50%). Even so, some informants used foreign languages (10%) and regional languages (10%) when working in the office.

Table 1					
SPEAKERS' BACKGROUND					
Speakers' Background	Data and Percentage				
Birth Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	

	(10%)	(20%)	(30%)	(40%)	
Place Origin	Bandung (60%)	Sumedang (10%)	Tasikmalaya (10%)	Ambon (10%)	Medan (10%)
Workplace	Bandung (90%)	Bekasi (10%)			
Language Used at Home	Indonesia (100%)	Daerah (40%)	Asing (0%)		
Language Used at The Office	Indonesia (100%)	Local Language (10%)	Foreign Language (10%)		
Ethnic Origin	Sundanese (50%)	Javanese (40%)	Batak (10%)		

Differences in cultural background, ethnicity, place of work, and the environment in which they grew up greatly influenced the speech acts of the participants when communicating formally. For example, a secretary who comes from Bandung, grew up in Bandung, and works in Bandung will certainly have a different level of politeness than a secretary who comes from another city, grew up in another city, and works in another city. Language behavior is also influenced by cultural differences as applied in the concept of habitus and cultural arenas (Bourdieu, 2016). Through this concept, the participants' speech acts are differentiated into social behavior and place/arena. Furthermore, individual speech acts are influenced by how the participants' knowledge, experiences, and place of 'arena' are perceived by participants in communicating in formal situations.

Mulyana (2019) said that communication is a process of sharing meaning through verbal and nonverbal behavior and communication will occur if at least a source generates a response to the recipient, both verbal and nonverbal without having to ensure that the two communicating parties have the same symbol system. Mulyana (2019) also adds that face-to-face communication is influenced by culture, socio-culture and psycho-culture. Viewed from the cultural aspect, the variety of politeness in the language of an ethnic group can become a culture that has been taught by ancestors from generation to generation. For example, the Javanese and Sundanese tribes have a *undak usuk bahasa* 'level of speech' which requires speakers to speak softly using polite language and a polite attitude towards older or respected speakers. For the Sundanese and Javanese people, socially and culturally familiar or abusive language may only be used if communicating with long-known peers or people who are younger and already familiar. However, in office use, problems arise when people who use soft language have to interact with other tribal people who have no language steps.

In table 2 we can see cross-cultural representations of formal verbal communication between secretaries and superiors. We realize that there is quite a gap between GenZ secretaries and their superiors who are 41 years-50 years old on average in the X Generation category (50%) even above 51 years (baby boomers (40%)). occurred between informants who are majority Sundanese (60%) and their superiors (speakers) who are mostly Javanese (50%) and other ethnic groups (40%) - see Table 2.

Hearers' Background	Data Dan Percentage				
Employers' Culture (Ethnic Origin)	Sundanese (20%)	Javanese (50%)	Batak (10%)	Minang (10%)	Chinese (10%)
The Age of Employers	25 -40 years old (10%)	41 – 50 years old (50%)	51 years old (40%)		

Formal language is used by secretaries when communicating in formal situations in the office that require them to speak in standard language. The results revealed that the genZ secretary language uses formal language with superiors, colleagues, and consumers or customers in formal situations at the office. The formality of speech is shown in table 3.1 with the level of

politeness: very polite, polite, friendly. The data shows that speaking very politely with consumers has the highest rating (60%), while with colleagues the lowest (10%).

Types and Forms of Communication	DATA DAN PERCENTAGE		
Oral Communication with Employers	Very polite (30%)	Polite (60%)	Familiar (10)
Oral Communication with work partners	Very polite (10%)	Polite (30%)	Familiar (60%)
Oral Communication with Clients, Customers, Consumers	Very polite (60%)	Polite (30%)	Familiar (10%)

Culture is a communication system that is used by the community to obtain cooperation (Chaer 2010: 5) - in this case, cooperation in communication between the secretary and the people in their environment. Culture is a legal rule that binds people not to violate the norms formed in their society. Likewise, in terms of language. Good communication is built by being polite. However, what causes the participants in this study to act politely? The majority of answers focused on age differences (70%) when communicating with superiors, cultural differences when communicating with colleagues (60%) and customers (70%), see Table 4.

Description	Reasons and Percentage		
Important Factors Acting Polite with Superiors	Due to Age Differences (70%)	Due to Position (70%)	Due to Cultural Differences (50%)
Important Factors Acting Polite with Colleagues	Due to Age Differences (50%)	Due to Position (20%)	Due to Cultural Differences (60%)
Important Factors Acting Polite with Clients, Customers, Buyers	Due to Age Differences (30%)	Due to Position (40%)	Due to Cultural Differences (70%)

How often the participants communicate verbally with superiors, colleagues, is an important part of examining how intensely the GenZ secretary uses polite language in daily communication. For example, the more often formal verbal communication with superiors, the more polite speaking skills will be attached to the GenZ secretary in formal conversations in the office with other speakers (outside the leadership). The results of data collection of respondents found that the participants communicated verbally very often with their superiors (70%) and colleagues (70%). From this data we can conclude that even though in the digital era (social media) written communication is more dominant than verbal communication. Facts in the field of verbal communication between superiors and secretaries are still common. For this reason, it will be a new challenge for GenZ secretaries (who are accustomed to written-text messaging) to communicate verbally in polite and formal language related to the habits of their superiors (Gen X and Baby Boomers) who are still predominantly using verbal communication.

Other data show that verbal conversations were conducted by participants in various forms of communication media: telephone (very often 50%), formal meetings (often 60%) and daily conversations in the office (very frequent, 40%), see Table 5.

Description	Percentage of communication frequency		
Oral Communication with Employers	Usually (70%)	Often (30%)	Rarely (0%)
Oral Communication with Colleagues	Usually	Often	Rarely

	(70%)	(30%)	(0%)
Communicating Over the Phone	Usually (50%)	Often (50%)	Rarely (0%)
Communicating in Formal Meetings	Usually (0%)	Often (60%)	Rarely (40%)
Communicating in Formal Office Activities	Usually (40%)	Often (30%)	Rarely (30%)

Discussion

In this study, the profile of the GenZ secretary and the politeness of GenZ's secretary will be described as the main informants in this study.

The Profile of the GenZ Secretary

Secretary is a profession that has the main task of helping the leadership to make the work of the leader easier, faster and more precise and the work is carried out in a spirit of cooperation for the sake of service efficiency to the leadership (Sedarmayanti, 2014; Sidiq, Sofro, Jalil & Achmad, 2021). Priansa (2014); Wursanto (2006) agree that secretaries must be trained and prepared to do their jobs professionally and have good personality and communication skills. Regarding communication with superiors, France (2015) implies that secretaries must show a polite attitude in speaking, but speaking must also be full of enthusiasm/life/enthusiasm (animated tone of voice) so that the leader has a positive attitude towards the secretary. Then what about the GenZ Secretary profile? Do GenZ secretaries still have the same ethics as the previous generation secretaries? Of course, we must first understand how the background of generation Z's character formation. GenZ is a generation that is estimated to have been born in the period 1995-2012 and is the first generation in the world to place all physical aspects (humans and places) as having digital equivalents (phygital). GenZ characters in general are they are capable of customizing/customizing identity, realistic, independently. GenZ is more interested in situations where they can have multiple roles in one office (Stillman, 2019).

The GenZ profile is the most different from the previous generation. The GenZs prefer practical, economical, direct "direct", rational, while the secretary profile requires them to be more subtle indirect "indirect", respectful, polite, polite, especially in the aspect of formal communication. This character must be owned by a secretary who is generally dominated by women. However, along with technological developments related to the massive use of the internet, women are increasingly existing, plus they have multitasking skills which are part of women's DNA and become the winning formula in the era of social media (Kartajaya, 2019).

In this study, we will try to reveal whether there is still a gap for the GenZ secretary (with his new character) to understand how to act politely and speak politely related to the adaptability of secretaries (women) in socializing and communicating in accordance with job requirements. With regard to the ability of secretaries in managing "faces", difficulties in speaking politely will be easily resolved. Their profession requires them to be "tactful", "smart", respectful, and polite when dealing with other people in carrying out all their secretarial duties. Moreover, the secretary is an ambassador for the leadership and ambassador of the company who must always maintain the good image of the company. The problem is that many secretaries who are recruited by companies/government institutions have never received secretarial education. Such a secretary will experience a culture shock, a "culture shock" in understanding manners and speaking politely in an office environment that has a high level of formality.

Politeness Speech Act of Generation Z Secretary in Formal, Oral Communication

The GenZ Politeness based on research data is clasified into:

1. Using local/regional language to make the interlocutor happy, comfortable.

- (1) Secretary of the Board of Directors: *Bade tuang sareng naon dinten ieu, Pak?* 'What do you want to eat today, sir?' (speaking Sundanese politely)

Her Boss: *Ikut aja.* 'Just same as you are'. (Responded using informal Indonesian)

In conversation (1) the speaker (Secretary of the Board of Directors) uses the regional language, Sundanese, to his superior (speaker) who comes from the Javanese tribe. This conversation took place during a lunch break in the Board of Directors room. What is interesting about this conversation is that even though the speakers (Chairman of the Board of Directors) did not come from Sundanese, the speakers (Secretary of the Board of Directors) considered that the highest scale in speaking politely was using Sundanese. Another assumption is that his boss understands Sundanese because he has lived in Bandung for a long time and will understand the level of polite speech in the local language. Thus, it can be concluded that local value can be a measure of politeness scale in formal communication using Indonesian as the language of daily communication in the office. Why is that? Speakers understand the Sundanese *undak usuk bahasa* 'language social level' that the word *tuang* 'eat' has the highest level of politeness to replace the word *eat*. It is analogized by the speakers that *tuang* 'eat' will have a higher politeness scale than eating. It is interesting to make further research related to the use of regional languages to interlocutors from other regions to show the level of politeness.

From the aspect of social distance, speakers use informal (familiar) language in conveying agreement to interlocutors who have lower job levels. Thus, the farther the social distance, the lower the politeness level of the language used.

2. Give praise to the other person

- (2) Colleagues: The 2018 financial audit report assignment has been sent over email this morning.

Finance Director Secretary: Great! Congratulations, exemplary employees!

Conversation (2) shows that the speaker (Secretary to the Director of Finance) tries to convey praise so that the interlocutor feels happy and proud of the achievements he has achieved. Formal language is used because the conversation takes place in formal weekly meetings. This is an example of polite conversation with interlocutors who are of the same age and social level, but the conversation takes place in a formal 'arena'. The result, the communication that is formed is formal oral communication.

3. Show a low attitude towards the interlocutor

- (3) Boss: Your English is great too, huh.

Division Head Secretary: Could be a little, sir.

Conversation (3) took place between the Secretary of the Division Head and his superior after the employee gathering event with company guests from Singapore. The secretary became the Master of Ceremony using English at the event. The secretary managed the event well in very fluent English. The secretary's response to his boss's praise is a reflection of the humility he expresses because of different social distancing.

4. Show sympathy to the other person

- (4) Customer 'customer': Sorry. I didn't come yesterday. My daughter was sick.

Junior Secretary: I'm sorry to hear that, Madam. Get well soon!

Conversation (4) is an example of speaking politely by expressing concern for the interlocutor who is afflicted with adversity (a sick child). A secretary must be able to have a

positive "face" by acting politely to interlocutors, especially those who have a much higher social distance. The customer is the interlocutor with the highest level of speech based on the benefits the company gets. The secretary who acts as ambassador for the company and ambassador for leadership as well as front liner in charge of managing his superior's guests, has acted well by conveying concerns to his customers. Thus, the "face" of the boss and the company is well preserved as well. It is very important for secretaries to always maintain the good name of the company and superiors by speaking politely to all guest leaders both from the aspects of speaking style, intonation, and gesture. Conversation (4) was expressed by the secretary with a sad face - a sorry expression.

5. Show agreement to the interlocutor.

(5) Chancellor's Secretary: Meeting consumption should come in fifteen minutes before the meeting. Yes!

Assistant Secretary: Agreed, ma'am. So that the meeting is not going to be disturbed.

The Assistant Secretary's expression of approval to the Chancellor's Secretary is an example of polite speech. He realized that the interlocutor had a higher job position with longer work experience. Thus, responding with approval is an appropriate step for a conversational situation (5).

CONCLUSION

This study succeeded in revealing that GenZ secretaries in Bandung, based on random sample data, used polite language in formal oral communication in an office environment in certain situations that required them to act politely. Their speaking politeness is influenced by differences in social distance, culture, and age gap. The important findings in this study are

- 1) Local values play an important role in polite speech acts of the GenZ secretary.
- 2) The profile of GenZ which is considered to be difficult and 'different' in not polite speech contradicts the data in the field that they are able to sort and understand the right situation to speak politely in formal communication at the office.
- 3) The large age gap between secretaries and superiors does not have much effect in the production of secretaries' polite speech acts as long as they have a secretarial educational background.

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