The Importance of Expressing Politeness: English Education Students' Perspectives

Sholihatul Hamidah Daulay[1], Nabilah Azmi[2], Tara Pratiwi[3]

[1][2][3]Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

sholihatulhamidah@uinsu.ac.id, azminabilah01@gmail.com, tarapratiwi796@gmail.com

Abstract

This study focuses on how important it is to apply politeness in speaking with someone from the perspective of English Education students. To do this research, researchers used qualitative methods. One of the techniques that researchers use in this study is non-interactive technique that is questionnaire. This questionnaire was chosen to explore deeper information about the opinions of English Education Students at State Islamic University of North Sumatera Medan starting from 2nd – 8th Semester (participants or respondents) on the importance of expressing politeness. Researchers chose the questionnaire technique in order to shorten the time and got more participants rather than had to conduct interviews. This study reports the choice of being polite for people is influenced by differences in power relations, such as notion of status, age, gender, and social distance. This study emphasizes that politeness is needed to be implemented since rudeness creates conflict between one to another person.

Keywords: *English Education Students; Politeness; Power Relations*

A. Introduction

People use language as a tool to do something, such as asking for help, making promises, reporting news, giving directions, giving greetings, and doing hundreds of other ordinary verbal actions in everyday life. In other words, language is important to fulfill human needs and convey messages or/and feelings (Finegan, 2004: 282). There are many ways to communicate. It can be in spoken and written language. These messages can contain instructions, requests, invitations, warnings, news, infotainment as well as advertisements. It's important to consider a person's attitude when they do or say something. If the speaker decides to say something, it means that he/she has already thought about the way and choice of words to use during the conversation. Another purpose of communication is to build social relationships.

In society, humans also face many differences such as age, gender, social status and ethnicity. These differences can be challenging for humans as they need to adapt their language to convey their messages and feelings to the situation. People are not always able to say exactly what they mean because they generally do not want to force or criticize the hearer (Holtgraves, 2002: 6). In establishing social relationships, several communication strategies must be applied to achieve communication goals. In linguistic analysis, there are several strategies in social relationship communication such as implicit, indirect, politeness etc. (Gunawan & Aprizawati, 2018).

Being polite allows us to show basic human politeness to others, even strangers. Politeness is more than etiquette. Understanding politeness provides insight into fundamental truths about the social world and what it means to be someone with a self and an identity. Politeness varies by culture and place. Certain actions can be polite in one area, but they can be rude in another because there are differences between Western culture and Eastern culture, especially Indonesia. Indonesian EFL students even English Education Students face difficulties in using English appropriately

according to their culture. Kim (2003: 138) has this opinion: Even if the learner has developed great abilities in the phonology, syntax, and semantics of the target language, miscommunication can occur if he or she has not acquired knowledge of exactly what to speak to whom.

Politeness is needed in any particular life. It is about maintaining a good relationship with your listeners or readers. Politeness is important because it shows the listener or reader that we value and respect them, and changing or softening our speech is less compelling. Politeness is also needed in academic purposes so that the teaching and learning process runs well. For example is in academics. When it is practiced in class discussions, or when lecturers carry out affective processes.

In teaching and learning activities in class, students are required to communicate politely, both with lecturers and with their friends because it is in university that politeness and ethics must be shaped by students. Because of this thing, researchers are interested in conducting research on the importance of politeness in language that focuses on the opinions of English Education Students' Perspectives at UINSU. The method which researchers used is qualitative. Researchers tried to make questionnaires then shared to the English Education Students to be filled in. Some questions that will be answered in this study about what situations do we use polite language?, to whom should we be polite when speaking?, how important is it for us to use polite language?.

What is Politeness?

Crystal (1997: 297) believes that politeness, in Sociolinguistics and Pragmatics, is a term that signifies linguistic features related to norms of social behavior, in relation to notions such as courtesy, good relations, respect and distance. Such features involve using a specific discourse marker (please), an appropriate tone of voice, and a tolerable form of address (e.g. intimate vs. distant pronoun choice, or first vs. last name). Eelen (2001: 1)

explains that politeness, according to the Anglo-Saxon scientific tradition, is investigated from a pragmatic and sociolinguistic perspective. It is agreed that politeness theory is involved in what falls under one of these sub-fields of linguistics because politeness is specifically concerned with language use as it relates to pragmatics – and this is a phenomenon that represents the relationship between language and the social world.

Scovel (1998: 38) states that pragmatics represents the study of what people mean when they use language in normal social interactions; whereas sociolinguistics refers to the study of why we say, what to whom, when and where. Watts (2003: 85) states that Brown and Levinson's first theory of linguistic politeness emerged in 1978 and is called the 'face-saving' theory of politeness. Brown has produced an article entitled "Women and Politeness: A New Perspective on Language and Society" which was reviewed in Anthropology in 1976. Brown and Levinson's model appears to be an attempt to formulate a theory that reflects the way individuals produce linguistic politeness, that is, a production model. In their model, they focus on the speaker rather than the listener.

Yule (1996: 60) believes that politeness can be treated as a fixed concept, as in the idea of 'polite social behavior', or etiquette, in a culture. To be polite in social interactions in a particular culture, some general principles can be determined such as being wise, generous, modest, and sympathetic to others. He added that politeness in an interaction is defined as a means used to show awareness of other people's faces (Yule, 2010: 135). Politeness has been defined by different linguists, but their definitions show that they all agree that the "face" is the most relevant concept in the study of linguistic politeness (Mansoor, 2018: 168).

Types of Politeness

Yule (2010: 139-140) believes that cultures differ in how they identify polite behavior. According to Lakoff (1990), there are three types of politeness, namely the distance politeness, deferential politeness, and camaraderie politeness.

1. Distance politeness refers to a civilized human strategy that is similar to that of other animals. Animals make physical boundary markers to show each other: my territory, stay outside. Humans usually use symbols to make symbolic fences. Politeness seen from distance equality between participants. This was typical in the middle and upper classes in much of Europe for a very long time.

2. Deferential Politeness can be adopted by cultures that avoid the dangers of conflict. Conflict can be avoided if participants perceive that whatever is said and whatever is meant in the conversation depends on the other person. Deferential politeness assumes demeaning one participant in a conversation or both. This kind of politeness is characteristic of many Asian societies. In most societies, this is a model of interaction that women like, especially when talking to men.

3. Camaraderie politeness is the third type which indicates that interactions and connections are socially positive ideas and openness is the most significant sign of politeness. According to the camaraderie system, being open and likable means being attractive and adorable.

Power Relations in Politeness

Brown and Levinson (1987: 74) consider a number of variables that can affect the level of politeness, such as power, distance, and the rank of imposition, whereas according to Holmes (1995), there are three dimensions that prove useful in analyzing linguistic politeness, namely

the 'social-solidarity distance dimension', the 'dimension of power', and the 'dimension of formality'. Therefore, power relations are important in politeness. According to Brown and Levinson (1987: 77), power is 'a person's ability to impose his will on others' whereas according to Holmes (1995: 17), the dimension of power refers to the ability of participants to influence one another's circumstances. Therefore, a person can be said to have power over others to the extent that he is able to control the behavior of others. Power is a relationship between at least two people, and it is nonreciprocal in the sense that neither of them can have power in the same area of behavior.

Age differences

Conversations between people of different ages often show different levels of politeness. Mizutani and Mizutani (1987: 4) assert that age differences will affect the formality of the speakers and hence the level of politeness. It is a rule in Japan that older people speak in a familiar way to younger people, and younger people speak politely to older people. Conversely, people of the same age generally use familiar speech styles in conversation.

Notion of status

Another aspect of power is the notion of status, which comes from the Latin term for 'standing' and relates only to one's position in society, granting 'rights and obligations to a person as a citizen of a political community' (Turner, 1988: 2). According to Bonvillain (1993: 145-146), differences in status can be based on 'the combination of income, employment, education and resulting differences in access to social, economic, and/or political power and this reflects inequality among sectors of the population'. Such aspects of the power relationship determine the low or high level of

conversation. Brown and Levinson's idea in this regard is that 'the stronger a person is, the more influential he is in the conversation'. The level of politeness can even decrease to impolite speech. Hung and Bradac (1993: 37) state that 'Polite language can be seen as respectful and an indication of low status in some situations but is effective and indicates high status in others.'

Gender

It is based on the idea that men and women differ in their language. One difference is that women are said to be more polite than men. According to Speer (2002: 347), women have a higher tendency than men to apply politeness strategies in their speech such as the use of more praise, more apologies, and more words of gratitude. Hobbs (2003: 243) notes that when talking to same-sex friends, women will use many positive politeness strategies. On the other hand, men in a similar condition did not show this tendency.

Social distance

Becoming close to the person you are talking to will affect how polite you are. Brown and Levinson (1987: 74) call this 'social distancing' and refer to it as 'degrees based on stable social attributes as a reflex of social closeness'. This shows that how familiar the speakers are with each other will determine how polite they behave. The closer they got, they needed to be impolite. Speaking situations or situations, both formal and informal, are also factors that influence communication. Usually, people who speak in formal situations will use a more polite speaking style while in informal situations, speakers tend to use a more familiar speaking style. Apart from that, people also change the level of speech depending on the situation, even when talking to the same person. Holmes (1995: 17) calls this a 'formality

dimension', which concerns situational factors that influence people to be polite or not. He further states that 'context is fundamental.

Some Cases Related to Politeness

Greeting

As is generally the case for expressions of politeness, greetings can be analyzed based on facial theory. When we approach someone, we enter their personal area. This can be interpreted as an action that threatens the face, especially if we don't say anything, because in this case silence can create uncertainty, confusion, or even disgust. If we break the silence by greeting, the threatening action of the face is transformed into a sign of hospitality, which can be interpreted as goodwill towards friendship (Züger, 1998 in Rash, 2004). If properly done, with the right words, intonation and body language, greetings can reduce or weaken the potential threat of an FTA. That is, the important function of greetings is to save face and signify the intention to build relationships and friendships that are free from threats. KatrinZüger (in Rash, 2004) identifies two aspects of greeting: starting greeting and ending greeting or leaving, both of which are related to the interlocutor's intention for friendship and good relations.

Silence

It should be noted that politeness is not only expressed in speech or speech as it can be effectively expressed through silence as well. Yang (2002), for example, reports a finding that underscores the important communicative function of silence. These findings suggest that, like verbal behavior, deliberate silence can cause a person to respond by doing something that conforms to the principle of cooperation and/or the principle of politeness. The meaning and function of silence is determined by things such as the specific psychological motives of the interlocutors,

their communicative goals, their assumptions regarding the imposition or threat of certain FTAs, and the interpersonal relationships between the participants involved. Often silence is defined as polite behavior, which is behavior to avoid delivering speech acts that can seriously threaten the face of the interlocutor, especially if the interlocutor has high power and/or social status. Silence can be an efficient strategy for achieving certain communicative goals. This is efficient because without expressing the words a person can achieve certain communicative goals, which may have a significant impact on the interlocutor. In this case the interlocutor in question captures the message by concluding, namely a process that results in the interpretation of silent behavior.

Nonverbal Behavior

Eye contact and gestures using body organs can also express politeness with or without verbal expression. Xiang (2005) suggests that recent politeness theory and literature have generally placed more importance on and emphasized the verbal aspects of intercultural communication. Only a handful of studies on politeness have investigated how native or non-native speakers use nonverbal strategies to express positive or negative politeness. Likewise, it has not been much revealed how nonverbal strategies are related to socio-cultural aspects which, whether integrated or separate from verbal strategies, can be interpreted as strategies of politeness in a community or culture.

The Addressee's Role

As noted by Eelen (2001), studies on politeness tend to focus on the speaker, while the role of the receiver is generally perceived as peripheral and neglected. In fact, the role of the recipient can, and often does, greatly influence the politeness behavior displayed by the speaker. Take, for

example, a situation where a participant exhibits polite behavior by initiating a conversation to overcome silence while in an elevator with another participant when there are only the two of them. By starting a conversation, the speaker intends to expand friendships and build a relationship with the other person. The role of the receiver in this is to signal to the speaker that he is ready to engage in the conversation. Without this signal, the speaker will not be able to express his intention to make friendship and intimacy and politeness will disappear before it is fully conveyed.

If the speaker starts off with a greeting and the recipient responds as he or she wants, the conversation will continue with both participants feeling the intimacy and friendship that develops during the conversation, even though the substantial content of the conversation may not be important to both of them.

Thanks and Apologies

British people say thank you for something offered to them which they refuse by saying "No thanks," while for something offered they receive they say "Yes, please." In a similar situation, a participant from Indonesia might say "Thank you" in both instances. For the British, apology is a speaker's expression to admit that he or she has done something wrong or offense (for details, see Blum-Kulka, et al. (Eds.), 1989).

The method used in this research is qualitative. Moleong argues that qualitative methodology is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written and spoken words from people and observed behavior (2007: 3). The questionnaire technique that researchers use is to dig deeper information from the respondents. Questionnaire is a technique of collecting data indirectly (researchers do not directly ask and answer the respondents). The data collection instrument or tool is also called a questionnaire containing a number of questions that must be answered or responded to by respondents (Sutopo, 2006: 82). Respondents have the

freedom to provide answers or responses according to their perceptions. Researchers chose the questionnaire technique in order to shorten the time and got more participants rather than had to conduct interviews.

Participants

Participants or respondents in this study involved only 39 students of English Education Department at UINSU starting from 2nd – 8th Semester. Researchers shared questionnaires via WhatsApp contacts and WhatsApp discussion groups. Before the research began, researchers explain the research objectives and research methods in Google Form. Some of students didn't write their full names and they just wrote pseudonym.

Research Procedures

The questionnaire technique is chosen as the design for answering research questions. Firstly, the researcher explained the purpose of the research and what the topic meant. After that, researchers gave some questions in Google Form about what did they think about the importance of expressing politeness and to whom and what situations we should be polite. Researchers only gave two days for respondents to answer the questions asked and the respondents only need at least two minutes to answer the questions. The answers that have been collected would be checked by researchers and made them into the lists.

B. Method

The data used in this study are primary data. Primary data is information obtained directly by the researcher in accordance with the factors or variables needed in the study. The data in this study were obtained by distributing questionnaires to respondents, they are English Education Students (2nd–8th semester). The data collection method used in

this study was a questionnaire method. Researchers used 170 respondents as the sample. The process of distributing questionnaires is carried out by giving questionnaires to respondents through filling in the Google Form. The following questions answered by respondents:

1. In your opinion, what situations do we use polite language?
2. To whom should we be polite when speaking?
3. How important is it for us to use polite language?

Data Analysis Method

The data processing that is carried out:

1. Editing, is the activity of checking and re-examining data obtained from the results of questionnaires and interviews, to find out whether the existing data is sufficient and complete or whether there is a need for correction.
2. Coding, is the activity of classifying data from respondents' answers by providing codes/symbols and scores according to existing criteria. The answer to each item of the instrument uses a Likert scale in the form of choices. Likert scale is used to measure attitudes, opinions and perceptions of a person or group of social phenomena (Sugiyono, 2001: 73-74). For each statement item is given a score of one to five from the lowest to the highest result.
3. Tabulation, which is the activity of processing data into tables by processing the frequency count for each category, either manually or with the help of a computer.

C. Findings and Discussion

Researchers have distributed questionnaires to several sources that we share via Google Form. The questionnaire contains three filled-out questions that must be answered by respondents one by one in stages and

we just took 16 respondents' answers from 39 respondents. Here we attach the results of the questionnaire:

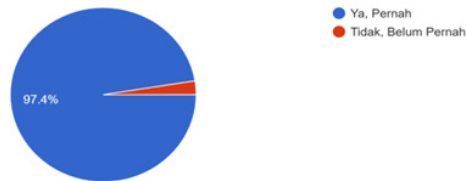**Table 1**. Participants opinion about Language Politeness

Nama	Questions		
	In what situations do you think we use polite language?	**To whom should we be polite when speaking?**	**How important is it for us to use polite language?**
Dita Khairunnisa	Situations when we are in a formal event, for example, such as in seminars, meetings with organizations, teaching and class presentations.	To anyone, especially to the older ones.	Very important because it shows the personality of a person.
Silviana simatupang	In all situations, especially when in a learning situation.	To all people, everyone	Very important, because it reflects our personality.
Rizky Azhar Tanjung	All situations both formal and informal	To everyone means those who are older than us and younger than us, because those who are younger than us will absorb behavior from us.	Very important, politeness is moral, if it is impolite it means we are immoral.
Ismet Amanullah	When we attend a formal event	parents, older people, lecturers/ teachers, etc	In my opinion, using polite language is important, especially when it is applied in everyday conversations because by using polite language we respect the people we communicate with so that our communication partners respect us and enjoy talking to us.

Sholihatul Hamidah Daulay, Nabilah Azmi, Tara Pratiwi

Anbar Khalisah	Of course, in all situations, including when joking with family and friends, use jokes without offending others. Even if we are in an angry situation, we must still use polite words to rebuke others.	To older people and strangers	Very important
Bujing Safitri	When meeting siblings, strangers, and older people	To people who are older than us.	It's very important, if we want other people to speak politely to us, then we also do the opposite
Iklima	We should use polite language regardless of the situation because we should use polite words to anyone. But what I have found is that we use polite language in older people and in formal situations. To anyone, especially those who are older than us. It is very important that we speak in polite language. And our ethics in speaking are also a good supporter of a person's behavior.	To anyone, especially to those who are older than us	It is very important that we speak in polite language. And our ethics in speaking are also a good supporter of a person's behavior.
Syafitri. S	All situations	To everyone, including children too because he will imitate our language	Important in certain circumstances.

Salmiati Kudadiri	In any situation, we should say polite words	To whoever is speaking to the opponent	Very important. Because I think the words or utterances that come out of our mouths reflect our attitudes and personalities
Diah Safithri Armin	I think a wide variety of situations	To parents or higher the answer.	It is very important, because language politeness shows the character of the language user itself.
Ahmad husein nst	When in meetings, learning in class, visiting other people's homes, etc.	To anyone. Especially to older people	Very important
Nita amalia	In every situation.	To everyone	Very important, because it is a good attitude
Ilham Harahap	Any situation	To all people	It is very important because if we use polite language to others then people will be polite to us and people will respect us more and vice versa
Tomi	Conditions in a formal meeting	Yes, there are many, such as parents, teachers, lecturers, people who are older than us	100/100
Rizky Harianti	In a formal activity	Coworkers or boss	In a formal activity Coworkers or boss is very important
Hani Umaina Siregar	Any situation	To everyone especially those who are older than us	Any situation To everyone especially those who are older than us It is very important to use polite language so that we can carry out good communication with the other person

Picture 1. Participants' response about Language Politeness

From the results of the above research, the researcher found that 97.4% of the 39 questionnaires answered that they had heard language politeness. This shows that politeness in language is familiar to society. With this large number of quantitative people, people should be able to apply and use politeness in this language.

As some of the questionnaires said in the interview results that some of the questionnaires used politeness in language in formal situations as well when talking to someone who was older than him or had a higher position than his position, then some of the questionnaires said that politeness in language should also be used when we convey an opinion to another person, especially if his opinion is different from the opinion of others. Do not forget there are also many questionnaires that say that we also need to use politeness in language in any situation, especially when we are outside the public such as malls, cafeterias, airports or terminals.

The third question in the interview, the researcher asked about whom we should use polite language. Many of the questionnaires answer, language politeness should be used when speaking to older people whether we know them or not. Not a few of the questionnaires also said that we need to speak politely to children, because if we don't maintain politeness in talking to children they might stay away and imitate the bad words we say. Position

is also our reason for speaking in polite language like talking to a boss or someone who is higher than our position.

Speaking in polite language according to the questionnaire is very crucial and important because by using polite language other people will also speak politely to us, this happens because with politeness we have indirectly shown respect for our opponents. we talk. Speaking politely will also improve people's impression of us where with the use of polite language we will look like an educated person who is usually characterized by good attitudes and behavior. Polite language can also be used as an effective way of communicating because this will make it easier for the other person to understand and understand what we are saying.

D. Conclusion

From the results of this study, the researchers conclude that the use of polite language is very important and must be emphasized when we speak in formal situations such as in work meetings, asking questions during presentations, delivering speeches in public or simply asking someone we do not know. The use of polite language should be applied by people in everyday conversation because this can bring up an attitude of respect and respect, as well as to build a good impression on ourselves and the people we represent.

Politeness is needed in any particular life. It is about maintaining a good relationship with your listeners or readers. Politeness is important because it shows the listener or reader that we value and respect them, and changing or softening our speech is less compelling. Politeness is also needed in academic purposes so that the teaching and learning process runs well. For example is in academics. When it is practiced in class discussions, or when lecturers carry out affective processes. In teaching and learning

activities in class, students are required to communicate politely, both with lecturers and with their friends because it is in university that politeness and ethics must be shaped by students.

References

Blum-Kulka, S., J. House, & G. Kasper (eds). (1989). *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies.* Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Use*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Crystal, D. (1997). *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. (4th ed.). Great Britain: Blackwell publishers Ltd.

Eelen, G. (2001). *A Critique of Politeness Theories.* Manchester: St Jerome.

Finegan, E. (2004). *Language: It's Structure and Use (5th ed.).* Boston: Michael Rosenberg.

Gunawan, M.I. & Aprizawati. (2018). *Types and markers of politeness depicted in public service advertisement in Pekanbaru.* Inovish Journal, 3 (1), 84-94.

Hobbs, P. (2003). The medium is the message: Politeness strategies in men's and women's voice mail messages. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 35, 243-262. DOI: 10.1016/S0378-2166(02)00100-5

Holmes, J. (1995).*Women, Men, and Politeness.* London and New York: Longman.

Holtgraves, T. (2002). *Language as Social Action. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publisher*.

Hung, S., & Bradac, J. J. (1993). Power in Language: Verbal Communication and Social Influence. London: Sage Publications: *International Educational and Professional Publisher.*

Kim, H. J. (2003). A study of compliments across cultures: The effect of sociolinguistic transfer on EFL learners. *Journal of Pan-Pasific Association of Applied Linguistic*, 7 (2). Retrieved May 30th, 2021, from http://www.paaljapan.org/resources/proceedings/PAAL8/pdf/pdf015.pdf

Lakoff, R. T. (1990). *Talking Power: The Politics in Language in Our Lives*. Glasgow: Harper Collins.

Mansoor, I.K. (2018). Politeness: Linguistic study. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities* (IJRSSH), 8 (4), 167-179.

Mizutani, O., & Mizutani, N. (1987). *How to be Polite in Japanese.* Tokyo, Japan: The Japan Times, Ltd.

Moleong, Lexy J. (2007). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif.* Bandung: Remaja Rosda Karya.

Rash, F. (2004). "*Linguistic Politeness and Greeting Rituals in German-Speaking Switzerland*". Retrieved on May, 30th, 2021. Available online at http://www.linguistic-online.net/20_04/rash.html.

Scovel, T. (1998). *Psycholinguistics. China*: Oxford University Press.

Speer, S. A. (2002). Sexist Talk: gender Categories, Participant' Orientations and Irony. *Journal of Sociolinguistics,* 6(3), 347-377. DOI: 10.1111/1467- 9481.00192

Sugiyono. (2001). *Metode Penelitian.* Bandung: CV Alfa Beta.

Sutopo, HB. (2006).*Metode Penelitian Kualitatif,* Surakarta: UNS Press.

Turner, B. S. (1988). *Status*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Watts, R. J. (2003). *Politeness.* USA: Cambridge University Press.

Sholihatul Hamidah Daulay, Nabilah Azmi, Tara Pratiwi

Xiang, H. (2005). "*New perspective of politeness: Non-verbal aspects of Chinese apology*". Retrieved on May, 30th, 2021. Available online at http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/english/politeness/poster-abstracts.

Yang, A. W. (2002). "*Silences as politeness strategies in trade negotiation*". Retrieved on May, 30th, 2021. Available online at http://www.lpss.sinica.edu.tw/abstracts/miscellaneous_02.pdf.

Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Yule, G. (2010). *The Study of Languge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sugiyono. (2019) . *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif dan R & D* . Bandung: ALFABETA

Sukmadinata, N.S . (2011) *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan* : Bandung: Remaja   Rosdakarya