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**EUPHEMISM AS POLITENESS STRATEGY: INVESTIGATING LANGUAGE USE AMONG CHILDREN OF INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS IN MALAYSIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study explores euphemisms in the language used by Indonesian migrant workers' children in Malaysia. Focusing on intercultural communication within Indonesian schools, it employs a qualitative case study approach with observational data collection. Results reveal diverse euphemistic forms: (1) one-word substitutions; (2) circumlocution; (3) borrowing; (4) abbreviation; (5) hyperbole; and (6) figurative expression in Bugisness, Indonesian, English, and Malaysian. These euphemisms serve as linguistic politeness strategies for indirect speech acts in communication.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Children of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia generally attend the Community Learning Center (CLC) for access to education. These schools were established by the Indonesian government as part of diplomacy with the Malaysian government to provide access to education for Indonesian citizens in Malaysia (Novia, 2023; Suarno & Adam, 2023). The curriculum used in this school is Indonesian, despite its geographical location in Malaysia (Suarno & Suryono, 2021). In terms of the background of Indonesian migrant worker children as CLC students, they are generally nonfluent in spoken Indonesian because the social and cultural aspects acquired since childhood are more in the Malaysian context (Aswan, 2020a, 2020b, 2023; Aswan & Amiruddin, 2020).

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On the contrary, the teachers assigned to the CLC are Indonesian with linguistic, social, and cultural backgrounds in the Indonesian context (Jatmika, 2023). Based on this background, there are significant disparities and differences between Indonesian migrant worker children as students and Indonesian teachers in the CLC. The differences between Indonesian and Malaysian cultures include social norms, values, and daily practices.

The language and communication conditions of Indonesian migrant workers' children with teachers in CLC are included in intercultural communication. Intercultural communication in a multicultural society has been identified as a complex element. Intercultural communication has an urgency to be studied because it includes morals, knowledge, customs, beliefs, arts, and other habits or behaviors in society (Othman & Ruslan, 2020). One aspect of intercultural communication that is important to study is the use of verbals (Samovar et al., 2015). The use of different verbals in intercultural communication can potentially create many barriers and challenges in communicating with speakers from different cultures (Chen, 2022; Fayzullayeva et al., 2023). A barrier that arises in this intercultural communication is culture clash, which leads to conflicts and misunderstandings (Nabiyevna, 2023). Therefore, this study aims to investigate how children of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia use language, especially in relation to the use of euphemism forms in intercultural communication in Indonesian school settings (CLC) in Malaysia. This study aims to investigate the linguistic aspects and forms of euphemism used as a communication strategy in the diverse cultural environment of the school setting.

To identify the form of euphemism language use among children of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia, this study refers to (Allan & Burridge, 1991) theory, which classifies the form of euphemism into several forms: figurative, metaphorical, flippant, remodeling, circumlocutionary, clipping, acronym, euphemism that shortens words, omission, one-word to replace another word, hypernym, hyperbolic, meaning outside the statement, jargon, borrowing, and colloquial. These forms of euphemism appear as manifestations of vocabulary refinement, which is considered less subtle in people's lives. Nevertheless, euphemism has never been separated from its function. Euphemisms are used to disguise taboos and harsh concepts. The specific function of using euphemism is to soften utterance, keeping something secret, diplomacy, education, and averting danger (Wijana & Rohmadi, 2008).

Euphemism, a linguistic and cultural phenomenon, plays a crucial role in

communication across various aspects of social life. In the context of rapid scientific development and human civilization progress, euphemism stands as a vital component of language. Its primary function is to sidestep the use of taboo words, attacks, or unpleasant expressions, facilitating communication between speakers. Euphemisms act as substitute terms or expressions that are more pleasant and less explicit, allowing discussions of uncomfortable topics while mitigating discomfort. They serve to make challenging conversations less negative and more approachable (Jaganegara & Wijana, 2023).

In the last five years, research on euphemism has been conducted from various perspectives. The results of a review of previous research, the use and form of euphemisms can be scrutinized and examined in various discourse contexts and fields, such as environmental (Grolleau et al., 2022); social, and moral (Farrow et al., 2021); nonproximal (Chovanec, 2019); health (Ismailova, 2023; Okodo & Anyanwu, 2023); translation (Albarakati, 2019; Lestari & Sutrisno, 2023; Ndhlovu & Botha, 2017; Shi, 2023); teaching (Zhai, 2021); irony and banter (Terry, 2020); newspapers (Jaganegara & Wijana, 2023; Ojebuyi & Salawu, 2018); sexual (Zegeye et al., 2023); politics (Aytan et al., 2021; Kizi, 2022); and literature (Corredera, 2023; Yusupova, 2022). These previous studies have mainly focused on the use of euphemisms in terms of written discourse, such as newspapers or literature. However, the use of euphemisms at the level of intercultural communication towards cross-cultural understanding has not received adequate attention in the literature. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct research related to the exploration of euphemisms in the context of intercultural communication for children of Indonesian migrant workers at Indonesian Schools (CLC) in Malaysia to provide a more comprehensive and accurate language portrait of how euphemisms are used in cross-cultural situations. Through investigating euphemisms in intercultural conversations for migrant worker children in Malaysia, valuable insights and contributions can be made on how euphemisms can be an important factor in cross-cultural communication, especially in the context of Indonesian migrant worker children attending school in Malaysia. Furthermore, this study provides an overview of the relationship between euphemism and language politeness strategies in the context of intercultural communication in Indonesian schools in Malaysia.

## **METHOD**

This research used a qualitative method with a case study approach. The case study

approach was used to reveal the peculiarities or uniqueness of the characteristics contained in the case under study. A case study is the most suitable research method for investigating and exploring the use of language containing aspects of euphemism in the utterance of Indonesian migrant workers' children in Malaysia. The purpose of using case studies is to specifically describe the use of euphemisms as part of politeness strategies in the intercultural communication of Indonesian migrant worker children in Malaysia. This approach is not aimed to generalize but to provide a more detailed and specific depiction related to the use of euphemisms in the children of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia. By using case studies, researchers gather detailed and in-depth information using various data collection procedures over a period of time (Assyakurrohim et al., 2022; Starman, 2023).

This case study was implemented at the Community Learning Center (CLC) in Pontian Fico Sabah, Malaysia. This school is a non-formal secondary school that is a part of the Indonesian School of the Republic of Indonesia (Sekolah Indonesia Luar Negeri). This is an Indonesian school that can be reached by researchers in Sabah, Malaysia. Therefore, the subjects observed in this investigation were the children of 20 Indonesian migrant workers who were randomly or unplanned. The subjects observed were students who frequently interacted with teachers and other students in various communication contexts. Subjects aged approximately 12-14 years old with the number of ten boys and ten girls.

Data were collected using an observational technique. Through this technique, the researcher systematically observed the intercultural communication activities that occurred at the CLC. Observations were conducted continuously to obtain natural data that could be described. The observation technique has several stages, including the selection, alteration, and recording of a series of behaviors in accordance with empirical objectives (Bungin, 2011). In the selection stage, the researcher determined the subject to be observed. In the alteration stage, observation is carried out actively by carefully observing the subject. During the recording stage, the researcher listened to, recorded, and recorded parts of Indonesian migrant workers' children's utterances when communicating with their partners at school. Data analysis techniques were carried out using an interactive analysis model (Miles et al., 2014), which included data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion extraction.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Findings

Based on a comprehensive observation of 20 Indonesian migrant worker children studying at the Indonesian school CLC Pontian Fico in Sabah Malaysia, 20 utterances stating euphemisms were obtained. Approximately every subject examined produced one utterance that contained euphemism while communicating with the teacher. The analysis results are as follows:

#### Euphemism: One-Word Substitutions

The use of euphemism, in which one word is substituted for another, occurs in student discourse during conversations with their teacher. This linguistic phenomenon is exemplified by the following student utterances:

Datum (1): "*Bu, awas di kursi tuh ada **kotoran haiwan**.*"

The subject opted for the expression *kotoran haiwan* to convey a more sophisticated message, intending to refer to animal excrement. In this euphemistic instance, *kotoran* substitutes for *tahi*, and *haiwan* replaces *binatang*, illustrating the substitution of words. The subject employs this form of euphemism as a component of linguistic politeness, strategically concealing vocabulary deemed impolite. Notably, *haiwan* is perceived as a milder alternative to *binatang*. According to the Malaysian dictionary, *haiwan* encompasses two meanings: (a) living creatures (humans and animals) and (b) animals. In the provided data (1), the subject employs a one-word euphemism to replace another, aiming for a more refined connotation.

Datum (2): "*Jiranku baru **meninggal** kemarin, Pak.*"

The subject utilized the term *meninggal* as a euphemistic expression for "die" (*mati*), which is regarded as polite and refined. The use of the term *meninggal* aligns with the definition in the Indonesian dictionary, which refers to death or passing away, and exemplifies respect towards the deceased. This term is subtle, considerate of emotions, and appropriate to express respect towards people who have passed away. The use of the term *meninggal* thus gives an impression of respect towards people who have passed away. Additionally, that term can be utilized in everyday discourse to demonstrate consideration towards the emotions for politeness strategy.

Datum (3): "***Alumni** sekolah yang sudah ke Jawa siapa jak, Bu?*"

The subject used the term *alumni* to replace the term former (*mantan*). The term *alumni* refers to students who have completed their education in Java and are pursuing further

study. This terminology is preferred because it is more subtle than using the former (*mantan*) directly. According to the Indonesian dictionary, alumni are individuals who have attended or graduated from school or college. Utilization of the term *alumni* is considered appropriate because it denotes former students or graduates of an educational institution. Thus, this is a reasonable descriptor. The term *alumni* describes the relationships formed within an academic community that continue into individuals' further development. By contrast, the term *mantan siswa* is more general and lacks the same level of respect as *alumni*.

Datum (4): "*Ibuku terakhir pulang **Indonesia** tahun lalu, Bu*"

The subject used *Indonesia* to replace *Indon* as a country. In the context of conversations in Malaysia, the term *Indonesia* is considered more polite than other terms or phrases that indicate the country of Indonesia. Generally, people in Malaysia used *Indon* to represent Indonesia. That term is considered impolite, so the subject used *Indonesia* to avoid potentially offending their conversation partners. If simplified, the word *Indonesia* is considered more refined than *Indon* in Malaysia, because it has a more formal, official, and respectful connotation. The term *Indonesia* refers to the official name of the country and reflects Indonesia's national and cultural identity. Therefore, using the term *Indonesia* when discussing the country shows respect for its cultural and historical diversity. Simplified, the term *Indonesia* is considered more refined than *Indon* in Malaysia due to its formal, official, and respectful connotation. The term *Indonesia* refers to the official name of the country, reflecting its national and cultural identity. Therefore, using *Indonesia* when discussing the country demonstrates respect for its diverse cultural and historical heritage. The evidence in subjects (1), (2), (3), and (4) demonstrates the use of euphemism in the form of one word replacing another. This aligns with the theoretical concept of euphemism (Allan & Burrige, 1991). This type of euphemism is a linguistic strategy that strives to minimize discomfort or directness in communication concerning sensitive or inappropriate subjects.

### **Euphemism: Circumlocutionary**

Circumlocutory euphemisms were detected in subject utterances, which were observed through students' conversations with teachers in different contexts. These observations revealed the prevalence of such euphemisms in the practice of verbal

interactions between instructors and learners. Communicative exchanges between the aforementioned parties took place in various scenarios, such as classroom settings, one-on-one sessions, and group discussions. Circumlocutionary euphemism involves the use of indirect language or phrasing instead of explicit expressions in communication. Exemplified by the following subject utterances:

Datum (5): “*Bu, boleh izin ke **bilik air**?*”

The subject used the phrase *bilik air* to replace the term *toilet* or *WC*, which is considered more appropriate in formal contexts. According to the Malaysian dictionary, *bilik air* refers to a room designated for bathing and washing. This phrase is commonly used by the subject when communicating with Indonesian teachers in Malaysian schools. This is explained by their background as native speakers of Malay, which influences the way they communicate.

Datum (6): “*Pak, ini sudah selesai, **bolehkah siap siap balik kah**?*”

The subjects used the phrase *bolehkah siap-siap balik* to replace the term *pulang* or go home. This phrase is more subtle because it is an indirect statement. The use of *pulang* is considered impolite, while this longer form of euphemism is thought to be a more tactful way to inquire about a definite return schedule. Even though the phrase appears informal, the subject intent is to convey politeness instead of directly asking if it is possible to go home. The term *balik* contains Malay elements and is defined in the Malaysian dictionary as having three meanings: (a) to return or go home, (b) to the other side or that way, and (c) to the opposite or opposite directions. It is important to note that in Indonesian, *balik* also refers to going home. However, this term is not frequently used. Instead, students often use the phrase *bolehkah siap-siap balik* as a way of respectfully communicating with their teacher because use the indirect statement as a politeness strategy when communicating with the teacher.

Datum (7): “*Pak, maaf kemarin tidak masuk sekolah sebab **tidak enak badan**.*”

The subject used the phrase *tidak enak badan* to replace the term *sakit* or sick. Replacing the terms’ *sakit* or *sick* reflects a preference for a more nuanced expression of mild illness. The use of the phrase *tidak enak badan* to replace the terms *sakit* or sick reflects a more sophisticated way to express an unhealthy physical condition. Additionally, it suggests their keen awareness of cultural nuances in health-related languages, demonstrating a higher level of communication skills. The phrase *tidak enak badan* is considered more appropriate in Indonesian and Malaysian cultures because it indicates

physical discomfort or unease without explicitly mentioning an illness or its symptoms, especially in formal contexts.

Datum (8): “Pak, saya ***datang tidak tepat waktu.***”

The subject used the phrase *datang tidak tepat waktu* to replace *terlambat* (late) and described his intention to be late for school. Using this phrase sounds polite because it describes a situation that may be considered less favorable or pleasant. The euphemistic approach avoids direct confrontation and explicit blame. The term 'not on time' refers to a student's tardiness without directly mentioning that the subject is late. In the context of communication, this phrase maintains politeness by avoiding explicitly mentioning someone's mistakes or assigning blame. This can reduce embarrassment and discomfort for all parties involved. The use of euphemisms such as this enables communication without causing negative emotional reactions or uncomfortable situations. The analyzed sentences of subjects (5), (6), (7), and (8) showed evidence of the existence of a special type of euphemism known as circumlocution euphemism. The phrases found in these data are similar to the basic principles of euphemism theory outlined by (Allan & Burridge, 1991), and utilizes lengthier and more indirect phrasing to convey information.

### **Euphemism: Borrowing**

Several utterances of Indonesian migrant worker children in Malaysia use euphemisms in the form of borrowing terms when communicating with teachers. These euphemisms were employed by students to refer to topics that might be considered sensitive or less polite when expressed in a more direct language. This reflects the subject efforts to speak more cautiously and adhere to the communication norms prevailing in the school environment. This euphemism can be traced to the following utterance:

Datum (9): “Bu, saya bolehkah izin ***absen*** besok, soalnya mau pigi bandar?”

The subject used the term *absen* to replace *tidak hadir*. The context of using the term *absen* is to express the subject's *absence* from school. The term *absen* is derived from the *absence* of an English term. According to the Indonesian dictionary, *absen* refers to either *absent* (from school, work, etc.) or *absent*. This term is used as a more polite language strategy than *tidak masuk*. Therefore, students use the term *absent* to express their intentions, which is more subtle and acceptable among speakers in a formal manner. Simplistically, borrowing terms are terms or expressions taken from other languages to

convey nuanced situations. This allows for a more precise and descriptive communication style.

Datum (10): "***Tabé'***, Bu"

The subject used the term *tabé'* to politely ask the teacher for permission. The term *tabé'* originates from the Bugis dialect spoken in South Sulawesi. It is mainly used by students to express courteous behavior and demonstrate politeness. That term is considered a euphemism as it helps younger individuals address the elderly or high-status individuals more respectfully and politely. The use of *tabé'* in this context promotes ethical speech, behavior, and reflects a positive attitude. Euphemisms such as *tabé'* convey the speaker's adherence to cultural norms within a diverse setting. Its use creates a more polite and respectful environment, aligning with the cultural values upheld in the Bugis society. The use of the term *tabé'* by Indonesian school students in Malaysia is influenced by their parents' backgrounds originating from South Sulawesi. Most children of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia have the South Sulawesi lineage. Hence, the term *tabé'* is commonly used.

Datum (11): "Bu, bila ***surat lahir*** kami dikumpulkan?"

The subject used the phrase *surat lahir* to convey the meaning or intent of the *akta kelahiran* or the birth certificate. The phrase *surat lahir* replaces the phrase *surat beranak*, which is commonly used in Malaysian society. The phrase *surat lahir* is a formally used Malaysian phrase. Therefore, the phrase *surat lahir* in Malaysia is a form of euphemism because it is used to refer to a more clinical and precise medical term, namely, birth certificate. The use of the phrase *surat lahir* as a euphemism helps maintain a lighter, relaxed, and social impression in everyday conversation, while still referring to important concepts related to birth and official documents.

Datum (12): "*Ibu, lampu sekolah yang di depan dikasi **off**?*"

The subject used the term *off* to convey the meaning of *mati* or to turn off the lights in school. The term *off* is used to replace the term *mati* or *dead*, which is considered too rude when spoken to a teacher. In some situations, the term *off* can be interpreted as impolite or sensitive. In such contexts, the term *off* is an appropriate strategy because it is considered more polite. The term *off* refers to English vocabulary that can mean *off*. Thus, the use of that term represents a subtle language strategy. The term *off* is a form of euphemism, or the use of a more neutral or soft term to replace a harsher or more direct term, such as *dead*. This euphemism is used to avoid the strong or uncomfortable

connotations associated with the term *dead*.

The subjects (9), (10), (11), and (12) used a type of euphemism known as borrowing. This finding aligns with the theory of euphemistic borrowing, indicating that the use of a foreign language as a euphemism can manifest in students' communication contexts (Allan & Burridge, 1991).

### **Euphemism: Abbreviation**

The subject speech reveals the presence of abbreviation euphemisms, particularly observed in their communication with teachers within the school environment. This form of euphemism is evident in the following instances:

Datum (13): “*Bu, kalau **OKU** di Indonesia masih boleh sekolah kah?*”

The subject employed the acronym *OKU*, derived from the Malay phrase *Orang Kurang Upaya*, which typically denotes individuals facing physical or mental disabilities. This term is commonly utilized to describe individuals with enduring physical, intellectual, mental, or other disabilities. *OKU* serves as a representation for those experiencing long-term disabilities, often resulting in limited participation in various community activities (Tahir et al., 2020). Therefore, using the *OKU* abbreviation is more subtle than having to say *orang kurang upaya*. The equivalent of *OKU* in Indonesia is disabled.

Datum (14): “*Bu, maafkan saya, **pr** belum saya kerjakan?*”

The subject substitutes *PR* for *Pekerjaan Rumah* (homework) in student expressions. The abbreviation *pr* is a concise form of *pekerjaan rumah*, employed to convey a more understated meaning. This language choice reflects a student's strategy for linguistic politeness, wherein specific vocabulary is replaced with simpler terms to enhance acceptability in formal communication with teachers at school.

Datum (15): “*Kami Anak **PMI** kalau lanjut sekolah boleh dapat beasiswa gak Bu?*”

The subject used the abbreviation *PMI*, which stands for *Pekerja Migran Indonesia*, Indonesian migrant workers. The abbreviation *PMI* is used to replace other abbreviations, *TKI* or Indonesian labor (*Tenaga Kerja Indonesia*). Generally, people recognize and use the abbreviation *TKI*, but it is currently considered too rude because it refers to Indonesian workers at a relatively crude level. *TKI* has a more controversial history of use and may have more negative connotations. Thus, as knowledge has developed, a new abbreviation has emerged: *PMI*. It is noted that the abbreviation or term *Pekerja Migran Indonesia* is still used at the formal level only and is not yet used and understood by all students.

Datum (16): “*Minggu depan kita belajar **daring**?*”

The subject uses the term *daring* to replace the term *dalam jaringan* or *online*. The abbreviation *daring* as a euphemism in this context is an attempt to give a positive or more official impression of the use of Internet technology. The term *daring* has a more neutral image and is considered more formal than *online*, which contains less serious associations. In addition, the use of euphemisms can be related to language change and usage accepted by society. Sometimes, new terms appear to replace old ones to better suit technological and cultural development. In the history of the use of online abbreviations, this term was popular, appeared during the Covid-19 Pandemic, and is still popularly used today in the context of education. Therefore, students use the term because it is used during the learning period.

Datum (17): “*kayaknya kita belajar **luring**?*”

The subject used the term *luring* from an abbreviation *luar jaringan*. Its use was strategic to replace an *offline* term that sounded too stiff. *Luring* refers to activities that occur outside of cyberspace or the Internet. This term is particularly relevant in educational contexts, such as direct learning, which involves physical or face-to-face learning rather than online methods. In the context of this student's utterance, the term *luring* is part of the shorthand euphemism because it is used to refer to an activity or situation that is actually less desirable or not allowed, but is conveyed with a more subtle term. However, it is noteworthy that the use of *luring* euphemisms may be influenced by cultural and contextual factors. In certain situations, some individuals may not perceive the usage of the term *luring* as euphemistic or may utilize it with a more precise and unbiased connotation.

The findings of abbreviation-type euphemism in the form of abbreviations and acronyms in the students' utterance data (13), (14), (15), (16), and (17) are in line with the theory of euphemism (Allan & Burridge, 1991). The abbreviation euphemism type emphasizes the use of acronyms and abbreviations as a means of simplifying the term.

### **Euphemism: Hyperbole**

Hyperbolic euphemism of this kind is identified in the interaction between the children of Indonesian migrant workers, functioning as students, and their teachers within the classroom. Instances of this euphemistic expression can be observed in the following

statements:

Datum (18): "*Pak, Bu, si X **bagus sekali** tulisannya.*"

The subject utilized the expression *sangat bagus* to convey the idea of *bagus* or good. The addition of the extra term renders the utterance somewhat redundant, serving to emphasize the subject's positive assessment. Despite the exaggeration, these phrases contribute to a more courteous and nuanced atmosphere compared to a simple expression like nice. This aligns with the context of the statement, employed for praising. *Bagus sekali* doesn't have a specific dictionary definition but can be deconstructed into *good*, meaning *very good* and *sekali* which means *very*. Combining these elements results in an exaggerated yet subtly nuanced expression. The phrase *bagus sekali* falls into the category of hyperbolic euphemism, characterized by language that amplifies the intended message. This hyperbolic language is not confined to poetry but is also present in everyday communication (Allan & Burridge, 1991).

### **Euphemism: Figurative Expression**

The children of Indonesian migrant workers employed a subtle and indirect way of expressing themselves in statements (19) and (20). This form of euphemism was observed in the way the subjects spoke to their teachers at school. A more in-depth example of this sophisticated figurative expression can be seen in the statements that follow:

Datum (19): "*Bu, setelah saya cuci **kain** baru pigi sekolah.*"

In speech, the subject used the term *kain* symbolically to refer to clothing. This term is frequently incorporated into the subject's everyday conversations. Instead of its literal meaning, *kain* serves as a symbolic expression encompassing a range of clothing items, including shirts and pants. The substitution of *kain* for *pakaian* is made because the latter is considered somewhat formal or harsh in spoken language. *Kain* is a more commonly used term that conveys the broader concept of various types of clothing.

Datum (20): "*Pak, pas **tanggal merah** jadikah kita beres-beres sekolah?*"

The subject employs the expression *tanggal merah* as a figurative way to signify a day off or holiday. This phrase is utilized to represent the idea of a holiday, serving as an allegory for school breaks. The subject incorporates this expression within the indirect speech to soften the message, employing it as a polite strategy when communicating with teachers. According to the Indonesian dictionary, *tanggal merah* is commonly used in daily

communication contexts, denoting a holiday. The discoveries regarding euphemism types in the students' expressions (19) and (20) align with the theory of figurative euphemisms. This theory posits that figurative euphemisms employ symbolism or allusion as a tactic to enhance language use, making it more acceptable to speakers (Allan & Burridge, 1991).

## **Discussion**

Through the analysis, it was observed that among children of Indonesian migrant workers students used expressions involving various types of euphemisms: (1) one-word substitution; (2) circumlocution; (3) borrowing; (4) abbreviation; (5) hyperbole; and (6) figurative expression. These euphemistic forms serve as a politeness strategy among children of Indonesian migrant workers when communicating with teachers in formal contexts or Indonesian school settings. Consequently, the utilization of euphemisms in student expressions can be identified as a language politeness strategy. These findings are in line with the various perspectives and theories of politeness that one of the politeness strategies is to use indirect utterance (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Hasan et al., 2021), politeness is used as part of speaker ethics (Geertz, 1960), politeness is used to minimize conflict (Lakoff, 1990; Sifianou, 1992), politeness is viewed as formal and distancing behavior that is not intrusive or imposing (Holmes, 1995), and politeness is a strategy to build character and motivation in the classroom (Mahmud, 2018). Therefore, politeness strategies should be used in communication, especially in education, politeness in formal communication in expressing and conveying ideas is a distinguishing characteristic.

Politeness in communication is closely connected to euphemism. Euphemisms serve as a tool to establish a polite communication environment (Mislikhah, 2020). They function as discursive verbal strategies to mitigate and, when possible, prevent potential conflicts arising from speech acts in specific communicative situations. The use of euphemisms in communication aims to steer clear of negative perceptions related to the discussed context. Typically, euphemisms are applied to present a more delicate interpretation of terms that may be considered taboo or harsh. This approach of framing contributes to the creation of politeness in communication. In essence, euphemism provides an alternative means to foster language politeness.

The employment of euphemisms by the subject in this research functions to enhance language refinement. To our understanding, there is no existing study that delves into the topic of euphemisms in student expressions. Within this study, students utilize euphemisms as a means of polite communication with older speech partners, particularly

in formal contexts. The discovery of various euphemistic types used by students signifies a strategic approach to fostering a harmonious atmosphere between students and teachers within the school environment. The students use polite terms because their interlocutor is the teacher. Teachers serve as role models for students to adopt polite language. Utilizing language that suits the context can establish a climate of harmony between speakers and their communication counterparts (Leech, 1983). The level of politeness exhibited in speech acts is contingent upon factors such as context, level of formality, sincerity of communication, relationship between individuals, and social distance. Regarding relative politeness, it is crucial to note that individuals may adhere to specific cultural norms when exhibiting politeness in communication (Ryabova, 2015). Furthermore, employing polite language serves as a politeness strategy to cultivate intimacy among speech participants who may not be very familiar or acquainted with each other (Kreswantono, 2022).

Children of Indonesian migrant workers as students in Indonesian School CLC Pontian Fico use euphemisms as a form of language politeness, employing Indonesian, the local language, English, and Malaysian. The requirement to use the Indonesian language specifically stems from the school's context as an Indonesian institution. The curriculum, teaching materials, teachers, and other school elements are situated within the Indonesian sociocultural context. However, students tend to mix languages because the Indonesian standard language has a limited vocabulary, resulting in Malaysian language forms appearing in their utterances. This is natural since the students were born and raised in Malaysia, which led to the limited use of Indonesian vocabulary. However, the Malaysian language still reflects politeness. Subject utterance and attitude can define personality traits, characteristics, place of origin, social culture, education, and other related factors (Brown & Yule, 1983).

Therefore, politeness levels in speech are influenced by factors other than just the language used. These factors include the age, social distance between speakers, location, time, situation, and purpose of the conversation. As a social phenomenon, language use are not only determined by linguistic factors (Clark et al., 2021) but are also influenced by social and situational factors, thus creating language variations (Casillas et al., 2021). These theories support the research findings that children of Indonesian migrant workers as students in Indonesian schools use euphemisms as a politeness code through indirect speech strategies in communicating with Indonesian teachers based on sociocultural knowledge held by speakers and speech partners.

The students, children of Indonesian migrant workers, and the teachers at the Indonesian CLC Pontian Fico school have distinct backgrounds, with students having a Malaysian background and teachers having an Indonesian background. Despite these differences, politeness remains a crucial element for effective communication. Both Indonesia and Malaysia share a common cultural heritage rooted in Malay culture, with historical and geographical ties. Despite experiencing different colonial influences, the cultures of these two countries, including the respect for elders and the use of titles like "sir" or "madam," exhibit notable similarities. Greetings, modest clothing norms, and the tradition of returning home to older family members are also shared practices between Malaysians and Indonesians (Hartini et al., 2023). Intercultural speakers employ diverse linguistic or nonlinguistic expressions that are contextually comprehensible to others during communication (Yildiz, 2021).

Observations reveal that language forms, including euphemisms, are manifested through Malay and Indonesian vocabulary, given the multicultural context of the children of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia and Indonesia. Despite the linguistic diversity, communication between students and teachers is generally smooth due to the shared linguistic roots of Malaysia and Indonesia. Students tend to express themselves politely when communicating with teachers, influenced by the character education emphasized in the school context. However, teachers note certain limitations in students' politeness expression, particularly in the use of standard Indonesian vocabulary, leading to the adoption of Malay-Malaysian language patterns. While these limitations don't hinder learning, efforts are deemed necessary to enhance students' proficiency in standard Indonesian vocabulary, especially in the realm of euphemistic expressions.

The results of these observation are in line with the findings of (Rohmawati & Pahlevi, 2023) that environment is an important factor in shaping student behavior. A positive environment can have a positive behavioral impact on students. Conversely, a negative environment can have a negative behavioral impact on students. The school environment influences the formation of the character of the discipline and the character of students in the school environment through various ways and settings. Simply put, the environment influences students' attitudes toward language. A positive environment contributes positively to students' behavior, while a negative one may have adverse effects. The school setting plays a crucial role in influencing students' discipline and character, ultimately impacting their attitudes toward language.

After analyzing twenty datasets of student speech containing euphemisms, the observed function is discernible through the various types of euphemisms. Broadly speaking, euphemisms serve the purpose of language censorship and refining speech in the students' discourse. This function is particularly pronounced due to the roles of the speech participants, who are students and teachers, necessitating the application of politeness values. This becomes crucial, especially in the formal setting of a school context.

The function of euphemisms in smoothing speech among students is contingent upon the context and the participants involved in the conversation. The formality of the speech situation demands that students employ language with utmost smoothness to avoid any semblance of coarseness. Furthermore, the role of speech participants is paramount, with students, as younger participants, expected to deliver polite speeches when communicating with older teachers. The function of euphemisms as speech-smoothing agents forms the foundation of language politeness. This is in line with the opinion of (Wijana & Rohmadi, 2008) who assert that euphemisms are used to soften expressions or vocabulary with negative denotations, conveying bad or low connotations.

The study's outcomes provide an understanding of how euphemism can be an important factor in intercultural communication, particularly in the context of Indonesian migrant workers' children attending school in Malaysia. Different societies require strategic politeness (Mahmud, 2019). The study provides guidance for educators and policymakers to understand the communication needs of these children, considering their unique cultural and linguistic nuances, thus facilitating their learning in such an environment. In addition, this study can enhance the comprehension of euphemism use within diverse cultural contexts and its effects on individuals' learning and adaptation in a culturally diverse society. A comprehensive understanding of the role of euphemisms in communication is crucial. The study's findings will offer valuable insights into two important aspects:

- a) Raising Awareness of Communication Needs: The research will identify communication difficulties experienced by Indonesian migrant workers' children in Malaysian schools. The outcomes will assist educators and policymakers in recognizing the significance of comprehending language and cultural subtleties to enhance children's education.
- b) Improved Educational Capabilities: A deeper comprehension of the function of euphemisms in communication can aid educators in devising more efficient and

adaptable teaching techniques for children of migrant workers. This will boost the standard of education they receive and facilitate them in achieving their maximum potential in the educational setting of Malaysia.

- c) Inclusive Education Policy Development. The study's findings can serve as a basis for policymakers to create education policies that are more inclusive and culturally aware. This can entail the inclusion of instruction on euphemisms and cross-cultural communication in school curricula.
- d) Understanding the Role of Euphemisms in a Culturally Diverse Society: This study can aid in comprehending the function of euphemisms in diverse societies beyond educational benefits. It can be a significant contribution to broader social and cultural contexts, particularly in an increasingly multicultural society.

Hence, this research will not only provide important insights into intercultural communication in educational settings, but also potentially have a broader positive impact on the formation of inclusive and culturally diverse educational, cultural, and societal policies. Intercultural communication is crucial in the age of globalization as it directly influences understanding, peace, and progress. Efficient intercultural communication promotes mutual respect, prevents conflicts, and fosters healthy speaker relationships (Mappaenre et al., 2023; Uteeva et al., 2023).

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

Indonesian migrant children as students at CLC use various forms of euphemism in intercultural communication activities. Euphemism is part of a student's politeness strategy when communicating with teachers in a formal context. This serves as a strategy to soften utterances when speaking formally. The use of such euphemisms is influenced by the subject's cultural and social backgrounds. Euphemisms are expressed through linguistic forms in the local, Malaysian, and Indonesian languages. This is expected considering the multicultural background of the subject.

The study's findings suggest that parental euphemism is influenced by the background of parents who still use local language terms, the use of Malaysian language because the subject was born and raised in the socio-cultural scope of Malaysia, and the subject used Indonesian language because it is in the context of Indonesian school learning. This investigation enhances our insight into how the children of Indonesian migrant workers engage in communication with their teachers within the context of

intercultural communication within the school setting. However, this study has some limitations, particularly in that it only examined euphemisms from the perspective of Indonesian migrant workers' children, while aspects of teachers' language use were not examined. Therefore, future researchers are recommended to investigate the language patterns utilized by Indonesian teachers in Malaysia when communicating with students.

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