

Habituation of the Words Please, Sorry, Thank You, Excuse Me as the Foundation of Character Education in Politeness for Children

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to describe the implementation of habituating the use of the words please, sorry, thank you, and excuse me as the foundation of politeness character education for second-grade students at SD Negeri Pandanwangi 3. The research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the subjects consisting of the second-grade homeroom teacher and second-grade students. Data collection techniques were carried out thru observation, structured interviews, and documentation. Data analysis used the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, while data validity was tested thru source triangulation and technique triangulation. The research results show that the habituation of using the four magic words is consistently implemented in both learning activities and outside of learning thru teacher modeling, repeated reminders, positive reinforcement, and integration into the school culture. Supporting factors for the implementation of habituation include the exemplary behavior of teachers, a conducive school environment, and consistent execution, while the inhibiting factors are students' tendency to forget easily and the less supportive external environment. Teachers and all school members actively serve as role models and supervisors in instilling polite behavior in students. The research results also show an improvement in students' politeness character after the habituation was implemented, marked by an increase in the habit of saying please, sorry, thank you, and excuse me in various situations. Thus, the habituation of the four magic words has proven to be an effective strategy in shaping the politeness character of elementary school students.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is a very important process in shaping an individual's personality and character (Karadona et al., 2025; Rahma et al., 2024; Karadona et al., 2026; Rahmawati et al., 2025; Karadona et al., 2026). Thru education, students not only acquire knowledge and skills but also moral values that serve as guidelines in daily life (Rohani et al., 2025; Arqam et al., 2026; Alda et al., 2025). This is in line with the Republic of Indonesia Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which states that education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their potential, both in spiritual aspects, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills necessary for community, national, and state life. Thus, education plays a strategic role in shaping a generation that is not only academically excellent but also possesses good character. One of the important goals of education is to shape the character of students (Munawir et al., 2023; Fahham, 2020; Sujarwo, 2024; Rahmasari et al., 2025). Character education has become an inseparable part of

the educational process because it serves to instill moral values, ethics, and positive behaviors that will guide students in interacting with their social environment (Abdurahman et al., 2025; Putri et al., 2025; Amiruddin, 2024). Amid the development of the times marked by technological advancements and changes in social interaction patterns, the challenges in character building are becoming increasingly complex. The phenomenon of declining manners among elementary school children has become an issue that requires serious attention from various parties, especially educational institutions (Davlia et al., 2025; Ndona, 2025). Therefore, schools have the responsibility to instill character values that can shape positive behavior in students from an early age. The character of politeness is one of the fundamental values that must be instilled in students. Politeness reflects an attitude of respecting oneself and others thru behavior, speech, and actions that align with prevailing social norms. Astriadi explains that politeness is a way of life that grows within society and becomes a necessity in daily interactions (Ramadhani et al., 2024). Individuals with a polite character will find it easier to establish harmonious social relationships, show respect to others, and behave according to the values and norms prevailing in their environment (Natanti et al., 2023; Humayroh et al., 2025). Therefore, the formation of polite character needs to be carried out systematically thru various forms of habituation applied in the daily lives of students.

One form of habituation that can be done to instill the character of politeness is to get used to using polite words such as "please," "sorry," "thank you," and "excuse me." These four expressions are simple forms of communication that contain values of appreciation, empathy, humility, and respect for others. The habit of saying please, sorry, and thank you can shape a positive social character, foster humility, and prepare individuals to live harmoniously in society (Bandi et al., 2025; Aprily et al., 2023; Sakti et al., 2023). Meanwhile, Az-Zahrah emphasizes that the use of polite words has a significant impact on the formation of a child's character because it can provide continuous stimulation, making the child accustomed to showing positive behavior in daily life (Azzahra et al., 2025). Schools, as formal educational institutions, play a very important role in shaping the politeness character of students (Halimatusadiyah, 2025; Azzahra et al., 2025; Gultom et al., 2024). Schools can cultivate polite character thru the creation of a harmonious environment, providing good examples, and habituating behaviors that reflect respect for others (Agustin et al., 2025; Ernawati et al., 2025; Ni'mah, 2025). A supportive school environment will help students understand and internalize the values of politeness, making them a part of their daily behavior (Hasibuddin, 2024). Therefore, the habitual use of the words please, sorry, thank you, and excuse me needs to be consistently applied in various school activities, both inside and outside of learning activities. However, the reality on the ground shows that these habits have not yet fully become ingrained in the students' culture. Based on the initial observations conducted at SD Negeri Pandanwangi 3, there are still students who pass by teachers without saying excuse me, ask for help without using the word please, and are not yet accustomed to saying sorry when making mistakes. The condition indicates that the values of politeness have been introduced to the students, but they have not yet fully internalized them into habits that are consciously and consistently practiced. The lack of continuous habituation, minimal reinforcement from the surrounding environment, and the suboptimal role modeling provided by adults are factors that can influence the process of instilling politeness character in students. Based on these issues, the habitual use of the words "please," "sorry," "thank you," and "excuse me" needs to be established as a foundation in character education for politeness in elementary schools. Consistent habituation involving all school members is expected to instill values of politeness more deeply, making them a part of the students' character. Thru this habituation, students not only develop academically but also possess polite attitudes, noble character, respect for others, and the ability to build positive social relationships in community life. Therefore, this study aims

to examine the role of habituating the words "please," "sorry," "thank you," and "excuse me" as the foundation of politeness character education for students at SD Negeri Pandanwangi 3.

II. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. This approach was chosen because the research aims to gain a deep understanding of the habituation of using the words please, sorry, thank you, and excuse me as the foundation for character education in politeness among students at SD Negeri Pandanwangi 3. According to Sugiyono, qualitative research is used to examine phenomena in natural conditions with the researcher as the main instrument, while descriptive research aims to systematically, factually, and accurately describe the facts and phenomena that occur (Sugiyono, 2022). Thru this approach, the researcher can reveal how the habituation process is applied and its impact on the formation of students' politeness character. The research was conducted at SD Negeri Pandanwangi 3 in Malang City during the 2025/2026 academic year. The selection of the research location was based on the existence of a program to habituate the use of the words please, sorry, thank you, and excuse me, which is implemented as part of character education reinforcement in the school. The research informants were determined using purposive sampling technique, which is the selection of data sources based on the consideration that they understand and are directly involved in the implementation of the habituation program. The research informants consist of the school principal, class teachers, and students who can provide information regarding the implementation process, forms of habituation, and the results obtained from the program. Data collection techniques were carried out thru observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to directly observe students' behavior in applying polite words in daily activities within the school environment. In-depth interviews were conducted with informants to obtain information regarding the implementation of the program, supporting factors, obstacles, and efforts made in shaping students' politeness character. Documentation is used to complement the research data in the form of activity photos, school regulations, habituation programs, and other relevant documents. The number of students interviewed was 5, the number of teachers was 3, and the observation duration was 1 hour over 10 days. The data obtained consists of primary data sourced from observations and interviews, as well as secondary data derived from school documents and various literature that supports the research (Achjar et al., 2023; Winarni, 2021).

Table 1. Informant Information

No.	Data Collection Techniques	Data Source/Informant	Number of Informants/Objects
1	Observation	Students of SD Negeri Pandanwangi 3	All the activities of the observed students
2	Interview	Teachers	3 teachers
3	Interview	Learner	5 students
4	Documentation	School document	Activity photos, school regulations, habituation programs, and other supporting documents

The collected data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification (Qomaruddin et al., 2024). Data reduction is carried out by selecting and focusing on data relevant to the research objectives, then the data is presented in the form of a narrative description to make it easy to understand. Next, the researcher draws conclusions based on the patterns and findings obtained during the study. To ensure the validity of the data, source triangulation and technique

triangulation were used. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from the principal, teachers, and students, while technique triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. Thus, the data obtained have a high level of credibility and can be scientifically accounted for.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Implementation of the Habit of Saying Please, Sorry, Thank You, and Excuse Me

The research results show that the habituation of using the words please, sorry, thank you, and excuse me has been routinely implemented at SD Negeri Pandanwangi 3, especially among second-grade students. This habituation is carried out in various school activities, both during learning sessions and outside of learning. The teacher not only instructs the students to use those four words but also sets a direct example in daily interactions. For example, the teacher encourages the use of the word "please" when asking for help from students and directs students to say "sorry" when making mistakes. In addition, the use of the words "thank you" and "excuse me" is also continuously instilled in various relevant situations so that they become part of the students' habits. Based on the results of interviews with students, it was found that most of the students have understood the function and usage of those four polite words. Students expressed that the word "sorry" is used when making a mistake, the word "thank you" is said when receiving help or a gift from others, while the word "excuse me" is used when passing by someone, especially a teacher or an elder. These findings indicate that the habits instilled by the school have helped students understand the meaning and importance of using polite language in daily life.

The Role of Teachers in Instilling the Character of Politeness

The research results show that teachers play a very important role in the successful habituation of using those four magic words. Teachers serve as role models who provide real examples to students regarding polite behavior and language. The homeroom teacher stated that character building cannot be achieved merely thru the delivery of theory, but must be realized thru exemplary behavior that can be seen and emulated by the students. Therefore, all teachers at the school participate in habituating the use of the words please, sorry, thank you, and excuse me both during the learning process and during breaks. The role of teachers is also evident thru continuous supervision and reinforcement efforts. When there are students who forget to use polite words, the teacher directly gives reprimands and reminders so that the students become accustomed to using them. Some students admit that they are often reminded by the teacher when they forget to say "excuse me" or other polite words. This condition shows that the success of habituation is greatly influenced by the consistency of teachers in providing guidance, reinforcement, and exemplary behavior to the students.

Supporting Factors, Constraints, and Adaptation Strategies

The interview results show that there are several factors that support the success of instilling the character of politeness. The main supporting factors are habits practiced regularly, a conducive school environment, and the exemplary behavior of teachers. Teachers emphasize that a supportive environment and good behavior examples from all school members are important factors in shaping students' habits. In addition, parental involvement is also considered to have a significant impact in reinforcing the habits that have been implemented at school. However, there are several obstacles in the implementation of these habits. The most frequently encountered obstacle is that students still easily forget to use polite words, and the influence of the outside environment does not always

support the formation of polite character. To address these challenges, teachers implement various strategies, such as providing continuous reminders, giving rewards in the form of praise to students who demonstrate polite behavior, and establishing class rules or agreements related to the use of polite language. This strategy is implemented so that habituation does not just become a temporary activity, but develops into a culture that is ingrained in the students' lives.

The Impact of Habituation on Students' Politeness Character

The research results show a positive change in student behavior after the consistent application of the words please, sorry, thank you, and excuse me. Before the habituation program was implemented, the students' level of politeness varied. Some students have become accustomed to using polite words because they have been trained by their families, but others still often use less polite language and are not yet accustomed to respecting older people. This condition shows that family background and environment also influence the level of politeness among students. After the habituation was implemented, the teacher observed an increase in the use of polite language and courteous behavior among the students. Students who were previously not accustomed to saying "excuse me" when passing by the teacher have started doing it spontaneously. In addition, students are also becoming more accustomed to saying thank you when receiving help, apologizing when making mistakes, and using the word please when needing assistance from others. These changes indicate that consistent habituation can shape the politeness character of the students. The most developed aspect is politeness in language and behavior toward others, which is reflected in the interactions of students with teachers, peers, and other school members. Thus, the habituation of using the words please, sorry, thank you, and excuse me has proven to be one of the important foundations in character education of politeness at SD Negeri Pandanwangi 3.

Discussion

Implementation of the Habitual Use of the Words "Please," "Sorry," "Thank You," and "Excuse Me" to Foster Politeness Among Second Grade Students at SD Negeri Pandanwangi 3

The research results show that the habituation of using the words please, sorry, thank you, and excuse me has been consistently applied in various school activities, both during the learning process and outside of it. Teachers instill the use of these four words thru exemplary behavior, direct instructions, repeated reminders, and guidance in various everyday situations. The habituation is carried out from the initial learning activities, core activities, to closing activities, so that students have the opportunity to continuously practice the use of polite language. In addition, the use of four magic words is also applied in social interactions within the school environment, such as when asking for help, making mistakes, receiving help from others, or when passing by teachers and elders. These findings indicate that the formation of polite character is not only achieved thru theoretical instruction but also emphasizes the process of continuous habituation. Consistent habituation allows students to internalize the values of politeness, making them a part of their daily behavior. The results of this study are in line with Sugiyono's opinion, which states that habituation is a process carried out repeatedly and continuously, thereby forming a behavior that becomes permanent in a person. Thus, the use of four magic words can be an effective means of instilling the value of politeness in students from elementary school age. The implementation of this habituation is also supported by strategies applied by teachers, such as providing direct examples, reminding students when they forget, appreciating positive behavior, and avoiding actions that criticize students. According to Fadillah Ulfa, the success of habituation in children can be achieved thru repetitive practice, consistent reminders, appreciation of positive behavior, and an approach that does not undermine the child's

self-esteem(Ulfa et al., 2025). Therefore, the habituation of using the words please, sorry, thank you, and excuse me at SD Negeri Pandanwangi 3 not only serves as a language habit but also as a means of character education that instills values of appreciation, empathy, and social responsibility. In addition to being applied in daily interactions, the habituation of the four magic words is also starting to be integrated into the school culture thru rules and class agreements. This effort shows that the school is committed to making politeness a part of the living culture in the educational environment. These findings align with Hada's opinion, which states that schools play an important role in building a culture of politeness thru a harmonious environment and a culture of mutual respect Hada et al., 2024). Thus, the habituation of the four magic words can become an important foundation in shaping the character of students' politeness sustainably.

Supporting and Hindering Factors in the Implementation of the Four Magic Words Habit among Second Grade Students at SD Negeri Pandanwangi 3

The research results show that the success of implementing the habit of the four magic words is influenced by several supporting factors, namely the exemplary behavior of teachers, a positive school environment, and the consistency of habit implementation. Teachers become the main figures who provide examples of polite behavior to students, so that the students have role models to emulate in their daily lives. In addition, a supportive school environment and the establishment of routine habits help students understand and apply the values of politeness more easily. This condition shows that character education requires the involvement of all elements of the school in order to be effective. These findings are in line with the opinion of Bintank and Maunah, who state that character education is not sufficient thru the delivery of theory alone, but must be realized thru practice and habituation that takes place in daily life (Bintank et al., 2022). Students tend to imitate behaviors they see directly rather than just receiving verbal explanations. Therefore, the presence of teachers who can provide exemplary behavior becomes a very important factor in shaping students' polite behavior. On the other hand, this study also found several inhibiting factors in the implementation of the habit of using the four magic words. The most frequently encountered obstacles are the students' habit of easily forgetting to use polite words and the less supportive influence of the environment outside of school. Some students are still accustomed to using impolite language when interacting with peers in their residential environment. This condition shows that character formation is not only influenced by school but also by family and the broader social environment. These findings reinforce Astriadi's opinion that politeness is the result of the social interaction process that takes place in community life (Ramadhani et al., 2024). To overcome these various obstacles, teachers implement strategies such as providing positive reinforcement thru praise and non-material rewards to students who demonstrate polite behavior. In addition, the teacher also continues to provide reminders and guidance consistently. This strategy has proven to be able to increase students' motivation to use the words please, sorry, thank you, and excuse me in their daily lives. This result is in line with the opinion of Priya and Richa (2025), who state that giving rewards can evoke feelings of happiness and appreciation, thereby encouraging individuals to repeat the positive behavior they have exhibited.

The Role of Teachers and School Community in Instilling the Character of Politeness thru the Habit of Four Magic Words

Research results show that teachers play a central role in instilling the character of politeness thru the habitual use of four magic words. Teachers not only have the duty of delivering learning materials but also serve as role models who provide real examples of polite behavior and language. In practice, teachers always encourage the use of the words please, sorry, thank you, and excuse me in communication with students. In addition, teachers actively remind students who forget to use

those words so that the habituation can continue sustainably. The role of the teacher as a role model is very important because elementary school students tend to learn by imitating the behavior they see from the people around them. The findings of this research align with the Javanese educational philosophy that states "guru digugu lan ditiru," which means that teachers are trusted and serve as role models for their students. When teachers consistently demonstrate polite behavior, students will find it easier to understand and apply those values in their daily lives. Therefore, the success of character education is greatly influenced by the quality of exemplary behavior demonstrated by the teacher. Beside teachers, all school members also contribute to creating a culture of politeness. The research results show that all teachers and educators also support the habituation of using the four magic words thru supervision, reinforcement, and reminders to the students. The involvement of the entire school community creates an environment conducive to the character development of students because they gain consistent experiences in interacting with an environment that upholds the value of politeness. This condition shows that character education is a shared responsibility that cannot be placed solely on one party. The findings of this study align with Hartatu's opinion, which states that the success of character education requires the active involvement of the entire educational environment in building a positive culture (Hartati et al., 2025). Furthermore, Abeng also emphasizes that a positive school culture can strengthen the character formation of students because they become accustomed to seeing and repeatedly practicing polite behavior (Abeng et al., 2026). Thus, the synergy between teachers, educators, and the entire school community becomes an important factor in the success of instilling the four magic words as the foundation of polite character education.

The Level of Student Politeness Before and After the Habituation of the Four Magic Words

The research results show that the level of politeness among students before the implementation of the four magic words habit is still varied. Some students have become accustomed to using the words please, sorry, thank you, and excuse me because they have been habituated to them by their family environment. However, others are still not used to using polite language and even often use impolite words when interacting with friends or elders. These differences indicate that family background and social environment have an influence on the character development of students. After the habituation was consistently applied at school, positive behavioral changes were observed in the students. Students have started to get used to saying "excuse me" when passing by teachers, saying thank you when receiving help, apologizing when making mistakes, and using the word "please" when needing assistance from others. These changes indicate that repeated habituation can help students internalize values of politeness and apply them in their daily lives. The findings of this study support Manurung's opinion, which states that polite words have the power to shape a child's positive character thru a continuous stimulation process (Manurung et al., 2024). The more often children use polite language, the greater the likelihood that such behavior will become ingrained in them. In the context of this research, the use of four magic words has become an effective means of raising students' awareness of the importance of respecting and valuing others. In addition to changes in language use, this research also shows developments in the behavioral and social attitudes of the students. Students become more polite in interactions, more respectful toward others, and show more courteous behavior toward teachers and peers. These findings align with the views of Bintank and Maunah, who assert that character education requires a continuous process thru practice and habituation. Therefore, the results of this study prove that the habitual use of the words please, sorry, thank you, and excuse me is an effective strategy in shaping the character of politeness among elementary school students.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the habituation of using the words please, sorry, thank you, and excuse me at SD Negeri Pandanwangi 3 is carried out in a planned and consistent manner thru learning activities, daily interactions, teacher modeling, positive reinforcement, as well as class rules and agreements. The habituation serves as an effective means of instilling values of politeness in students from an early age. The success of implementing the habit of the four magic words is supported by the exemplary behavior of teachers, a positive school environment, and regular execution. Meanwhile, the obstacles encountered include students' habits of easily forgetting and the influence of the external environment that does not support polite behavior. To overcome these obstacles, teachers provide continuous reminders, offer non-material rewards, and involve parents in the character-building process of the students. Teachers and all school members play an important role as role models in building a culture of politeness within the school environment. Thru the active involvement of all parties, students receive real examples of polite behavior that can be applied in daily life. The research results show that after the habituation is applied consistently, there is an improvement in students' politeness character, evident from the habit of saying please, sorry, thank you, and excuse me in various situations. Therefore, the habituation of the four magic words can serve as a foundation for effective character education in politeness for elementary school students.

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