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MORALITY BEFORE KNOWLEDGE

From cultural schemas to pragmatic practice: A sociocognitive framework for Minangkabau politeness

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ABSTRACT

Background: Politeness has increasingly been recognized as a culturally situated and interactionally negotiated phenomenon. However, existing theories provide limited explanation of how culturally shared conceptualizations are transformed into observable pragmatic behavior. Addressing this gap, this study reconstructs the sociocognitive model of culturally grounded politeness (SMCGP), an integrated explanatory framework that accounts for the sociocognitive processes linking culture and pragmatics. **Methods:** The study adopted a qualitative theory-building design using abductive reasoning and analyzed a researcher-constructed interactional corpus comprising 40 interactional units representing the four categories of *Kato nan Ampek*, the Minangkabau speech tradition governing culturally appropriate interaction. Each interactional unit was systematically examined through four analytical layers: cultural schemas, shared knowledge, context models, and pragmatic practices. **Findings:** The findings demonstrate that culturally appropriate pragmatic behavior emerges through a sequential sociocognitive mechanism rather than through linguistic strategies alone. Specifically, cultural conceptualizations are progressively transformed into shared knowledge, interpreted through context models, and ultimately realized as contextually appropriate pragmatic practices. **Conclusion:** Based on these findings, the study reconstructs the sociocognitive model of culturally grounded politeness (SMCGP), which integrates insights from cultural linguistics, sociocognitive theory, and contemporary pragmatics into a unified explanatory framework. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** The model contributes theoretically by explaining how culture becomes pragmatics and provides a transferable analytical framework for investigating culturally grounded pragmatic behavior across diverse linguistic and cultural settings.

KEYWORDS: cultural linguistics; *Kato nan Ampek*; Minangkabau politeness; pragmatic practices; sociocognitive pragmatics.

1. Introduction

Politeness is a central concern in pragmatics because it concerns how speakers negotiate interpersonal relationships through context-sensitive linguistic choices. Rather than being an intrinsic property of particular expressions, politeness emerges through the relationship between linguistic conduct, social expectations, and participants' interpretations of communicative situations. Classical approaches have explained politeness through communicative principles and strategies for managing interpersonal relations (Leech, 1983, 2014; Levinson, 1983). Brown & Levinson (1987) face-saving model, in particular, has provided an influential account of how speakers orient to face-

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threatening acts through strategies such as indirectness and mitigation. However, subsequent scholarship has questioned the extent to which politeness can be explained through universal strategies or predetermined relationships between linguistic forms and social meanings. Critical and interactional approaches emphasize that politeness is evaluated in context and negotiated through relational work, rather than simply encoded in an utterance (Eelen, 2001; Watts, 2003; Locher & Watts, 2005; Terkourafi, 2005; Haugh, 2024). Consequently, an expression conventionally associated with respect may be interpreted differently depending on the participants, their relationship, and the circumstances of communication.

This interactional perspective raises a broader theoretical question concerning how cultural knowledge becomes relevant to pragmatic practice. Cultural Linguistics offers a foundation for addressing this question by examining how culturally distributed conceptualizations inform language and meaning (Palmer, 1996; Sharifian, 2007, 2011, 2017a, 2017b; Sharifian & Palmer, 2007). Cultural schemas provide interpretive resources through which members of a community may understand social relationships, values, and communicative expectations. Ethnopragmatic research similarly demonstrates the importance of culturally specific understandings in interpreting speech practices (Wierzbicka, 1992; Goddard, 2004; Goddard & Ye, 2014; Sharifian & Jamarani, 2011). Nevertheless, culturally available schemas should not be equated with identical mental representations shared by every community member. Their relevance may vary across individuals and situations, and they may be selectively interpreted, negotiated, or contested.

Sociocognitive approaches provide complementary resources for explaining the relationship between social knowledge and situated interpretation. Van Dijk (1998, 2008, 2009, 2014) conceptualizes context models as subjective representations through which language users interpret communicative situations. From this perspective, social circumstances do not automatically determine how an utterance is understood; interpretation is mediated by participants' knowledge, experiences, and situation-specific representations. Kecskés (2018, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c) likewise emphasizes the interaction between prior experience and immediate contextual information in pragmatic meaning construction. These approaches establish that cultural knowledge, cognition, and context are already interconnected in existing theoretical accounts. The analytical challenge, therefore, is not to claim that culture influences communication—a relationship widely acknowledged in pragmatics—but to specify how culturally distributed conceptual resources, socially available expectations, individual contextual interpretations, and observable linguistic actions can be distinguished without treating them as interchangeable constructs.

This issue is particularly relevant to the study of politeness in Indonesia, where communicative expectations are situated within diverse linguistic, cultural, and social traditions. Research on Javanese and Sundanese request strategies, for example, demonstrates that speakers may employ different degrees of directness while adapting their expressions to social power, distance, and the demands of particular situations (Chintawidy & Sartini, 2022). Research on Javanese requests also identifies the relevance of speech levels and sociocultural relationships to the selection of linguistic strategies (Sukarno, 2017). These findings illustrate that Indonesian politeness cannot be reduced to a single national pattern. Rather, its interpretation requires attention to locally situated systems of social relationships and communicative expectations. Such comparisons are contextual rather than equivalent: the present study does not seek to compare Minangkabau, Javanese, and Sundanese speakers empirically, but uses this broader Indonesian scholarship to situate Minangkabau politeness within a culturally heterogeneous national context.

Within this context, the Minangkabau tradition of *Kato nan Ampek* provides a specific framework for examining the relationship between social relationships and communicative conduct. Commonly understood as four relationally differentiated ways of speaking, it comprises *Kato Mandaki*, associated with communication directed towards

older or socially respected interlocutors; *Kato Mandata*, associated with relatively equal or socially close interlocutors; *Kato Manurun*, associated with communication directed towards younger or socially subordinate interlocutors; and *Kato Malereng*, associated with relationships requiring particular forms of reciprocal respect. These categories provide culturally situated orientations for interpreting speech in relation to age, social position, and customary relationships (Kato, 2005; Fikri & Hanafi, 2023). Existing studies have examined *Kato nan Ampek* in relation to linguistic ethics, local wisdom, speech acts, and culturally grounded communication (Efrianto & Afnita, 2019; Chaniago & Alfikri, 2022; Hendra, 2024; Yanti et al., 2024; Fitri et al., 2025; Rezi, 2025). More recent pragmatic research has also investigated Minangkabau request practices through naturally occurring conversations, identifying the relevance of social hierarchy, indirectness, and interpersonal harmony (Revita et al., 2025). This research provides important cultural and interactional foundations, although it does not in itself establish a general cognitive sequence through which cultural expectations necessarily produce particular linguistic choices.

The present study addresses this conceptual issue by proposing the Sociocognitive Model of Culturally Grounded Politeness (SMCGP). The model brings together four analytically distinguishable dimensions: Cultural Schemas, understood as culturally distributed conceptual resources; Shared Knowledge, understood as socially available expectations whose mutual recognition cannot simply be presumed; Context Models, understood as situation-specific interpretations; and Pragmatic Practices, understood as observable linguistic actions. The model's proposed contribution is not the discovery of a new cognitive mechanism or the replacement of established politeness theories. Rather, it lies in organizing these four dimensions within an explicit analytical framework that distinguishes cultural resources from social expectations, contextual interpretations, and linguistic conduct. This distinction also makes it possible to examine how communicative actions may reproduce, modify, or challenge customary expectations. In this respect, speech acts and performative dimensions of language are relevant because utterances may do more than convey information: they may enact relational positions, negotiate authority, express deference, or claim interpersonal agency (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). Such actions, however, cannot be assumed to achieve their intended effects or to receive uniform evaluations from interlocutors.

The framework is developed through a qualitative, concept-oriented examination of a researcher-constructed set of 40 interactional units distributed across the four categories of *Kato nan Ampek*. The detailed analysis presented in this article is restricted to four illustrative utterances reproduced in the manuscript. Accordingly, these examples are used to demonstrate the analytical application of SMCGP rather than to establish the actual mental representations of speakers, mutually recognized shared knowledge, recipient evaluations, or a fixed causal progression. The model is therefore proposed as a provisional and potentially recursive analytical framework whose explanatory adequacy requires further examination through naturally occurring interaction, participant judgments, and independent cultural evaluation.

The study addresses three research questions: how can cultural schemas, socially available knowledge, context models, and pragmatic practices be conceptually distinguished in the analysis of politeness within *Kato nan Ampek*? How can these four dimensions be organized into an analytical framework for interpreting culturally situated politeness while accounting for contextual variation and competing interpretations? What conceptual contribution and evidential limitations arise from integrating Cultural Linguistics, sociocognitive theory, and pragmatics in the proposed SMCGP framework?

2. Methods

This study adopts a qualitative, concept-oriented research design to develop a provisional sociocognitive framework for interpreting culturally grounded politeness in Minangkabau *Kato nan Ampek*. Rather than testing a predetermined cognitive mechanism

or measuring the frequency of particular linguistic practices, the study examines how concepts from Cultural Linguistics, sociocognitive approaches to discourse, and pragmatics can be brought together to organize the interpretation of culturally situated communicative practices. Cultural schemas are treated as culturally available conceptual resources (Palmer, 1996; Sharifian, 2017), while socially available knowledge and context models are approached through sociocognitive accounts of discourse and context (van Dijk, 2008, 2009, 2014). These perspectives are considered alongside pragmatic approaches that emphasize the relationship between linguistic choices, social relations, and situated communicative action. The resulting Sociocognitive Model of Culturally Grounded Politeness (SMCGP) is therefore developed as a conceptual and analytical proposal rather than an empirically validated explanation of how speakers process politeness.

The study draws on a researcher-constructed set of 40 interactional units organized according to the four categories of *Kato nan Ampek*: *Kato Mandaki*, *Kato Mandata*, *Kato Manurun*, and *Kato Malereng*. Each category is reported to contain ten units. The units represent communicative situations involving functions such as disagreement, requests, clarification, opinion expression, refusal, guidance, evaluation, acceptance, and gratitude. This balanced distribution was adopted to facilitate conceptual comparison across the four categories; it should not be interpreted as a representative sample or as evidence of the relative frequency of these practices in naturally occurring Minangkabau communication. The units are constructed examples, not transcripts of recorded or naturally occurring conversations. Accordingly, the corpus is used to illustrate the potential application of the proposed analytical framework rather than to establish patterns of actual interaction in the Minangkabau speech community.

An important distinction concerns the availability and auditability of the analytical material. Although the study reports a set of 40 constructed units, a separate, complete document containing all 40 original utterances and their unit-by-unit annotations is not available for independent examination. The present manuscript reproduces four illustrative utterances, one associated with each *Kato nan Ampek* category, and these four examples constitute the material available for detailed linguistic and interpretive discussion in this version of the study. The reported composition of the 40-unit set is therefore presented as information about the research design, not as a claim that a complete and independently auditable dataset accompanies the article. Table 2 specifies the analytical fields that are relevant to a transparent examination of the units; it should be understood as an annotation framework or analytical schema, not as a completed record of all 40 annotations or as supplementary evidence that is unavailable to readers.

The analysis distinguishes four operational dimensions. Cultural Schemas refer to culturally available conceptual resources through which social relationships, customary expectations, and communicative conduct may be interpreted. Shared Knowledge refers to socially available information and expectations that may be relevant to a represented interaction; it does not mean that the participants necessarily possess or accept identical knowledge. Context Models refer to theoretically reconstructed interpretations of particular communicative situations, including the represented participants, their relationship, and the communicative purpose. Pragmatic Practices refer to the communicative actions represented in the utterances and their observable linguistic realizations, including lexical choices, address terms, apologies, mitigation, disagreement, requests, and evaluative expressions. These dimensions are analytically distinguishable, but they are not assumed to be independent cognitive entities or successive stages in a fixed processing sequence.

The interpretive procedure follows four connected analytical operations. First, the available examples are organized in relation to the four *Kato nan Ampek* categories and their represented social relationships. Second, each utterance is described at the linguistic level, with attention to identifiable expressions and pragmatic markers; its English rendering is treated as an interpretive translation rather than an assertion of exact semantic equivalence. Third, the utterance is examined through the four SMCGP

dimensions. This involves considering which cultural conceptualizations may be relevant, what socially available expectations might inform the represented situation, how the situation can be interpreted through a context model, and what pragmatic action is represented by the linguistic formulation. Fourth, the proposed interpretation is examined against plausible alternative readings and its evidential limitations. Throughout these operations, observable linguistic features are distinguished from contextual assumptions and sociocognitive interpretations. The analytical ordering is a procedure for organizing the researcher's interpretation; it does not claim that speakers necessarily move through these dimensions in the same order when producing or interpreting an utterance.

The study also adopts a reflexive approach to interpretation because the researcher's understanding of Minangkabau communicative practices informs both the construction of the examples and their subsequent analysis. This creates a possibility that prior cultural and theoretical assumptions shape the examples and then appear to be confirmed by the framework applied to them. To limit this circularity, the analysis identifies the linguistic features that are directly represented in each example, distinguishes them from the social circumstances stipulated in the constructed scenario, and treats the proposed cultural and cognitive interpretations as analytical propositions. Alternative interpretations are considered where the available wording may support more than one pragmatic reading. However, the study does not report independent coding, participant judgments, recipient responses, or external cultural validation. It therefore makes no claim of inter-annotator agreement or independent confirmation of the interpretations.

These methodological conditions place clear limits on the claims that can be made. The constructed examples cannot establish speakers' actual mental representations, participants' mutually recognized common ground, recipients' evaluations of politeness, or the interactional consequences of the utterances. Nor can the balanced distribution of the units support conclusions about the prevalence of the four categories in everyday communication. The analysis is consequently limited to demonstrating how the four dimensions can be used to organize interpretations of the available examples. Further examination of SMCGP would require a documented and accessible dataset, naturally occurring interactional sequences, participant-based judgments, independent culturally informed scrutiny, and cases involving disagreement, misunderstanding, or pragmatic failure. Such evidence would make it possible to assess, revise, or challenge the proposed relationships among the four dimensions.

3. Results and Discussion

The analysis examines how the four categories of *Kato nan Ampek* can be interpreted through the proposed sociocognitive model of cultural grounding and pragmatic practice (SMCGP). The researcher-constructed set comprises 40 interactional units, distributed equally across the four categories. This distribution reflects the organization of the research design and should not be interpreted as evidence of the frequency or prevalence of these categories in naturally occurring Minangkabau communication. Because a separate file containing all 40 units and their completed annotations is unavailable, the detailed analysis below is restricted to the four illustrative utterances reproduced in table 3. The discussion therefore develops a conceptual interpretation of these examples rather than claiming comprehensive empirical validation of the framework.

Table 1. Composition of the researcher-constructed set

Kato Category	Number of Units	Proportion
Kato Mandaki	10	25%
Kato Mandata	10	25%
Kato Manurun	10	25%
Kato Malereng	10	25%
Total	40	100%

Table 1 presents the reported composition of the researcher-constructed set. The equal distribution provides a balanced basis for organizing the conceptual discussion across the four categories. It does not demonstrate that the categories occur equally often in everyday interaction, nor does it establish that Minangkabau speakers consistently organize their communicative practices according to four mutually exclusive patterns. The categories are used here as culturally informed analytical orientations whose relevance may vary according to relationships, situations, and individual communicative choices.

To clarify how the four dimensions of SMCGP are applied, table 2 presents the analytical and annotation framework. It identifies the information that would be needed to trace the interpretation of each interactional unit. It is a methodological schema, not a completed record of all 40 units. The distinction is important because the proposed cultural schemas, shared knowledge, and context models are interpretive constructs; they should not be mistaken for directly observed mental states.

Table 2. Analytical and annotation framework for interpreting interactional units

Analytical Field	Required Content and Analytical Purpose
Unit ID	A unique identifier assigned to each interactional unit.
Kato Category	The category used to organize the represented interaction: *Kato Mandaki*, *Kato Mandata*, *Kato Manurun*, or *Kato Malereng*.
Minangkabau Utterance	The complete original utterance represented in the interactional unit.
English Translation	An interpretive translation that preserves relevant address terms, apologies, mitigation, and pragmatic markers.
Represented Context	The represented speaker, hearer, social relationship, and communicative situation.
Observable Linguistic Features	Explicitly identifiable linguistic forms, including address terms, lexical choices, expressions of disagreement, and mitigation.
Pragmatic Function	The proposed communicative action, accompanied by a rationale grounded in the utterance and represented context.
Proposed Cultural Schema	The cultural conceptualization used to interpret the represented relationship and communicative expectations.
Proposed Shared Knowledge	Socially available information or expectations assumed to be relevant to the represented situation; not independently verified common ground.
Proposed Context Model	The situation-specific interpretation reconstructed analytically from the represented relationship, purpose, and circumstances.
Alternative Interpretation	At least one plausible competing interpretation, where applicable.
Interpretive Rationale	An explanation linking the observable linguistic features and contextual assumptions to the proposed interpretation.
Evidential Limitation	A statement of what cannot be established from the constructed unit, including actual speaker intentions, recipient evaluations, and participants' mental states.

Author's analytical synthesis, informed by Cultural Linguistics (Palmer, 1996; Sharifian, 2017), sociocognitive approaches to context (van Dijk, 2008, 2009, 2014), and pragmatics (Kecskés, 2018, 2023a, 2023b; Goddard, 2004; Goddard & Ye, 2014).

The framework in table 2 distinguishes four analytical dimensions. Cultural Schema refers to a culturally available conceptual resource associated with social relationships and customary expectations. Shared Knowledge refers to socially available information or expectations that may be relevant to an interaction. Context Model concerns the situation-specific interpretation reconstructed for the represented communicative event. Pragmatic Practice refers to the communicative action and its observable linguistic realization. These dimensions are analytically distinguishable, but they may overlap and influence one

another. Their inclusion in the table does not establish that participants consciously process them in a fixed order.

3.1 Kato Mandaki: Mitigated disagreement and relational deference

The utterance represents a disagreement addressed to someone positioned as socially senior or otherwise entitled to deference in the represented situation. Two observable features are particularly relevant: the apology *maaf* ("sorry") and the address term *uda*. The expression *kurang sajojuik jo pandapek uda* communicates partial disagreement rather than unqualified rejection. These linguistic choices provide a basis for interpreting the utterance as a mitigated disagreement. The first illustrative utterance is:

Maaf uda, awak kurang sajojuik jo pandapek uda.
"*Sorry, Uda, I do not fully agree with your opinion*." (S.F)

Within the SMCGP framework, the represented *Kato Mandaki* situation can be interpreted through a cultural schema in which relational positioning is relevant to communicative conduct. Socially available expectations concerning respect toward an older or senior interlocutor may inform the interpretation of the situation. The context model then concerns the particular communicative problem represented: the speaker wishes to express a different opinion while maintaining a respectful relationship. The pragmatic practice is the use of an apology, an address term, and a mitigated disagreement.

This interpretation should not be treated as the only possible explanation. The use of *maaf* may reflect an individual speaker's habitual style, a strategic effort to soften disagreement, or a locally conventional expression. Similarly, *uda* may index familiarity as well as respect, depending on the relationship and situation. The example therefore illustrates how linguistic forms can be interpreted in relation to a represented social relationship; it does not establish the speaker's actual intention or the recipient's evaluation of the utterance.

3.2 Kato Mandata: Direct disagreement and relational negotiation

Compared with the first example, this utterance contains no explicit apology and does not include the same deferential address term. Its wording presents disagreement more directly. The expression *kurang sajuak* indicates partial disagreement, while *ang* functions as an informal second-person address form in the represented interaction. The second example is:

Den kurang sajuak jo pandapek ang.
"I do not completely agree with your opinion." (L.M)

In the proposed framework, *Kato Mandata* is interpreted as an orientation to interaction between interlocutors represented as relatively equal. The cultural schema concerns the possibility of expressing a different position without necessarily invoking the same degree of deference associated with an asymmetrical relationship. Shared knowledge may include expectations that interlocutors with relatively equal social standing can negotiate differences more directly. The context model represents a situation in which the speaker responds to another person's opinion while maintaining the possibility of continued interaction. The pragmatic practice is the expression of disagreement through a relatively direct formulation.

Nevertheless, the absence of an apology does not prove that the utterance is impolite, confrontational, or socially neutral. Its interpretation may depend on intonation, prior conversational turns, interpersonal familiarity, and the local meaning of the address form. These features are not available in the constructed example. The analysis consequently

treats directness as an observable feature of the represented utterance, while its interpersonal effect remains open to contextual interpretation.

3.3 Kato Manurun: Evaluative advice and the representation of guidance

The utterance presents an evaluation of a particular course of action. The expression *manuruik uni* ("in my opinion") marks the statement as a perspective attributed to the speaker, while *caro ko labiah elok* expresses a preference for one way of doing something. The use of *uni* is relevant because it represents the speaker through a relational address term associated with an older female or senior female interlocutor, depending on context. The third example is:

Manuruik uni, caro ko labiah elok.
"*In my opinion, this way is better*." (S.H.I)

Kato Manurun is interpreted here as an orientation in which guidance, advice, or evaluative direction is represented as relevant to the relationship. Through the Cultural Schema dimension, the example can be understood against a conceptualization of social interaction in which advice may be offered in relation to differences in age, experience, or social position. Shared Knowledge may involve socially available expectations concerning the appropriateness of offering guidance. The Context Model concerns the specific represented situation in which the speaker presents a preferred course of action. The Pragmatic Practice is an evaluative statement framed as a personal perspective rather than as an explicit command.

An alternative interpretation is that the utterance simply expresses an individual preference. The phrase *manuruik uni* may soften the evaluation by presenting it as a personal view, but the example alone cannot establish whether the hearer regards the statement as advice, persuasion, or ordinary opinion. Nor can it establish whether the represented relationship gives the speaker recognized authority to guide the hearer. The analysis therefore identifies a possible advisory function without assuming that the recipient accepts the guidance.

3.4 Kato Malereng: Deferential advice-seeking and customary authority

The utterance represents a request for advice addressed to someone treated as a respected customary authority in the represented situation. The expression *ambo mohon* frames the request deferentially, while *pitaruah* identifies the requested advice or guidance. The address term *Angku* marks the addressee through a relational form associated with respect or customary standing. The fourth example is:

Ambo mohon pitaruah Angku tantang hal ko.
"*I respectfully ask for Angku's advice on this matter*." (H.M)

Within SMCGP, the Cultural Schema dimension concerns the cultural significance that may be attached to customary authority and the seeking of advice from a respected person. Shared Knowledge may involve socially available expectations that consulting such a person is appropriate in certain circumstances. The Context Model represents a situation in which the speaker seeks guidance on a matter considered to require the addressee's advice. The Pragmatic Practice is a deferential request for counsel.

However, the use of *Angku* does not independently demonstrate that the addressee possesses uncontested authority, that the speaker recognizes such authority in every respect, or that the advice will be accepted. The utterance could also reflect conventional respect, strategic politeness, or a social obligation associated with the represented situation. Without naturally occurring interactional data, the analysis cannot determine how the addressee responds or how the relationship is negotiated in practice. Table 3

brings together the four illustrative utterances and the linguistic features that inform the preceding interpretations. The table distinguishes the represented pragmatic function from claims about actual cognitive or interpersonal outcomes.

Table 3. Illustrative utterances and proposed pragmatic interpretations across *Kato nan Ampek*

Kato Category	Minangkabau Utterance	English Rendering	Observable Linguistic Features	Proposed Pragmatic Interpretation
Kato Mandaki	*Maaf uda, awak kurang sajojuik jo pandapek uda.*	Sorry, Uda, I do not fully agree with your opinion.	Maaf ("sorry"); address term uda; mitigated expression of disagreement.	Mitigated disagreement in a represented relationship involving deference.
Kato Mandata	*Den kurang sajuak jo pandapek ang.*	I do not completely agree with your opinion.	Direct expression of partial disagreement; informal address term ang.	Expression of disagreement in a represented relationship between relatively equal interlocutors.
Kato Manurun	*Manuruik uni, caro ko labiah elok.*	In my opinion, this way is better.	Perspective marker manuruik uni; evaluative expression labiah elok.	Presentation of an evaluation or possible guidance as a personal perspective.
Kato Malereng	*Ambo mohon pitaruah Angku tantang hal ko.*	I respectfully ask for Angku's advice on this matter.	Request expression ambo mohon; advice term pitaruah; address term Angku.	Deferential advice-seeking in a represented relationship involving customary respect.

Cultural interpretations are informed by studies of Minangkabau language, customs, and Kato nan Ampek, including Kato (2005), Efrianto & Afnita (2019), Chaniago & Alfikri (2022), and Fikri & Hanafi (2023)

As seen in table 3, English renderings communicate the represented meanings and are interpretive translations rather than claims of exact semantic equivalence. The address terms uda, uni, and Angku carry relational and cultural significance that may not be fully captured by English equivalents. The first example retains maaf and provides "sorry" as its English rendering because the apology is relevant to the interpretation of mitigation. These examples represent constructed situations; they do not independently establish speakers' mental states, mutually recognized expectations, or recipients' evaluations.

3.5 The sociocognitive interpretation of the four categories

The four examples illustrate how SMCGP separates cultural conceptualizations from situation-specific interpretations and observable communicative practices. The categories of *Kato nan Ampek* provide a culturally situated point of departure for examining relational expectations, but they do not function as direct evidence of individual cognition. This distinction is consistent with Cultural Linguistics, which examines the relationship between language and cultural conceptualizations without requiring that all members of a community share identical mental representations (Palmer, 1996; Sharifian, 2017).

The first dimension, Cultural Schema, concerns broader conceptual resources through which social relationships and customary expectations may be understood. In the examples, these resources are represented through distinctions involving seniority, relative equality, guidance, and customary respect. The second dimension, Shared

Knowledge, concerns socially available expectations that may be relevant to a particular interaction. It is not treated as proof that two interlocutors actually possess identical knowledge or agree on a norm. The third dimension, Context Model, concerns the situation-specific interpretation reconstructed for each example. This dimension is informed by sociocognitive accounts of context, particularly the view that context involves participants' subjective models of communicative situations rather than merely objective features of the setting (van Dijk, 2008, 2009, 2014). In this study, however, the context models are analytical reconstructions of constructed scenarios, not observations of participants' actual mental models.

The fourth dimension, Pragmatic Practice, focuses on what the represented utterance does and how its communicative action is linguistically realized. This includes address terms, apologies, expressions of disagreement, evaluative formulations, and requests for advice. The approach connects sociocognitive interpretation with pragmatic analysis by asking how linguistic choices can be understood in relation to culturally and situationally relevant expectations. It does not assume that a particular linguistic form automatically produces a particular social effect. The interpretation of politeness remains dependent on interactional context and may be negotiated by participants. Table 4 summarizes the distinctions and the evidential status of each dimension. Its purpose is to clarify what the framework allows the researcher to interpret and what remains beyond the available evidence.

Table 4. Analytical dimensions of SMCGP, operational distinctions, and evidential status

SMCGP Dimension	Operational Distinction	Application to the Examples	Evidential Status and Limitation
Cultural Schemas	Culturally available conceptual resources associated with social relationships, customary expectations, and communicative conduct.	Provides a conceptual basis for interpreting relational orientations represented by the four *Kato* categories.	A theoretical interpretation; does not establish that all Minangkabau speakers endorse or apply the same schema.
Shared Knowledge	Socially available information or expectations that may be relevant to the represented interaction.	Identifies expectations that could inform deference, disagreement, guidance, or advice-seeking.	Analytically proposed; actual common ground or participants' knowledge states are not independently verified.
Context Models	Situation-specific interpretations involving the represented relationship, communicative purpose, and circumstances.	Reconstructs why a particular utterance may be appropriate or meaningful in each constructed scenario.	An analytical reconstruction; not direct evidence of participants' actual mental representations.
Pragmatic Practices	Communicative actions and their observable linguistic realization, including lexical choices, address terms, mitigation, and pragmatic markers.	Examines how disagreement, evaluation, advice, and requests are expressed in the four utterances.	Linguistic forms are available for analysis, but recipient evaluations, interactional effects, and actual outcomes are not established.

(Palmer, 1996; Sharifian, 2017; van Dijk, 2008, 2009, 2014; Kecskés, 2018, 2023a, 2023b; Goddard & Ye, 2014)

As seen in table 4, the four dimensions are analytically distinguishable but are not assumed to constitute successive cognitive stages. The evidential limitations identify what

the present data cannot establish; they do not imply that the relevant cognitive or interactional processes do not occur.

3.6 Comparison with previous research

The interpretation of *Kato nan Ampek* in this study is consistent with research that treats Minangkabau communicative conduct as culturally situated and related to customary values and social relationships. Studies by Efrianto & Afnita (2019), Chaniago & Alfikri (2022), and Fikri & Hanafi (2023) provide relevant discussions of the ethical and cultural significance of *Kato nan Ampek*. Such work supports the importance of considering relational positioning when examining Minangkabau language use. The present study extends this discussion conceptually by distinguishing cultural schemas, socially available expectations, situation-specific context models, and observable pragmatic practices within one analytical framework.

Research on Minangkabau pragmatic practices also indicates the value of examining communicative actions in relation to cultural context. For example, Revita et al. (2025) examine pre-request speech acts in Minangkabau and discuss how pragmatic choices relate to social relationships and interactional expectations. The present study shares an interest in culturally situated pragmatic interpretation but has a different purpose: it proposes a conceptual framework for organizing the relationship between cultural conceptualizations and pragmatic practices. Because the present examples are constructed and limited in number, the study does not claim to offer stronger empirical evidence than research based on naturally occurring conversations.

The broader Indonesian context also cautions against treating politeness as a uniform national system. Research on Javanese requests, for example, has discussed the role of linguistic markers and social contexts in politeness strategies (Sukarno, 2017). Chintawidy & Sartini (2022) compare request strategies and politeness in Javanese and Sundanese contexts, demonstrating the relevance of cultural and social variation to pragmatic choices. These studies are useful points of comparison, but they do not establish that Javanese, Sundanese, and Minangkabau practices are equivalent. Rather, they support the broader argument that politeness needs to be examined in relation to culturally and socially situated expectations.

The SMCGP framework also draws on Cultural Linguistics and sociocognitive pragmatics. Palmer (1996) and Sharifian (2017) provide a basis for understanding cultural conceptualizations as relevant to language and meaning. Van Dijk's work (2008, 2009, 2014) helps distinguish socially and culturally available knowledge from situation-specific context models. Pragmatic approaches, including Kecskés (2018, 2023a, 2023b) and Goddard & Ye (2014), further support attention to the relationship between linguistic choices, contextual interpretation, and culturally situated meaning. The proposed contribution is not the discovery of four entirely new cognitive processes. Rather, it is the explicit analytical separation and integration of these dimensions for examining politeness in relation to *Kato nan Ampek*.

3.7 Alternative interpretations, relational work, and pragmatic variation

The examples also demonstrate why politeness should not be reduced to a fixed correspondence between linguistic forms and social meanings. An apology may mitigate disagreement, but it may also reflect an individual communicative preference. A direct expression of disagreement may be appropriate in one relationship and face-threatening in another. An evaluative statement may function as advice, persuasion, or a simple expression of preference. A deferential request may express respect, strategic politeness, or an obligation associated with the represented relationship.

These possibilities are compatible with approaches to relational work, which emphasize that interpersonal meanings are negotiated rather than mechanically determined by linguistic forms (Eelen, 2001; Watts, 2003; Locher & Watts, 2005;

Terkourafi, 2005; Haugh, 2024). From this perspective, the four *Kato* categories are best treated as culturally informed orientations for interpreting communicative conduct, not as rigid rules that determine how every speaker must speak. Speakers may interpret, adapt, contest, or depart from expected patterns. The same expression may also be evaluated differently by different interlocutors.

The current analysis cannot establish how recipients actually interpret the four utterances because it does not include naturally occurring conversational sequences or recipient responses. It also cannot determine whether the represented expectations are mutually recognized, whether the utterances achieve their intended effects, or whether they lead to misunderstanding or disagreement. These limitations are especially relevant to claims about authority and agency. The use of a deferential address term may represent an orientation to authority, but it does not prove that authority is uncontested. Likewise, the use of mitigation may represent a speaker's attempt to manage a relationship, but it does not establish that the recipient accepts that attempt.

3.8 Developing SMCGP as a provisional, non-linear framework

The proposed SMCGP brings together four dimensions that are often discussed separately: Cultural Schemas, Shared Knowledge, Context Models, and Pragmatic Practices. Its conceptual contribution lies in providing an explicit analytical structure for examining how culturally available conceptual resources may relate to socially available expectations, how these expectations may be interpreted in particular situations, and how communicative actions are realized through observable linguistic choices.

The relationship among the dimensions should not be interpreted as a fixed causal sequence. Cultural schemas may inform socially available expectations, but particular interactions may also reshape how those schemas are understood. Situation-specific context models may draw on shared knowledge while also reflecting individual experiences and immediate communicative purposes. Pragmatic practices may reproduce, adapt, or challenge established expectations. The model is therefore best understood as a heuristic framework with potentially recursive and mutually influencing relationships. Fig. 1 represents this provisional conceptual arrangement.

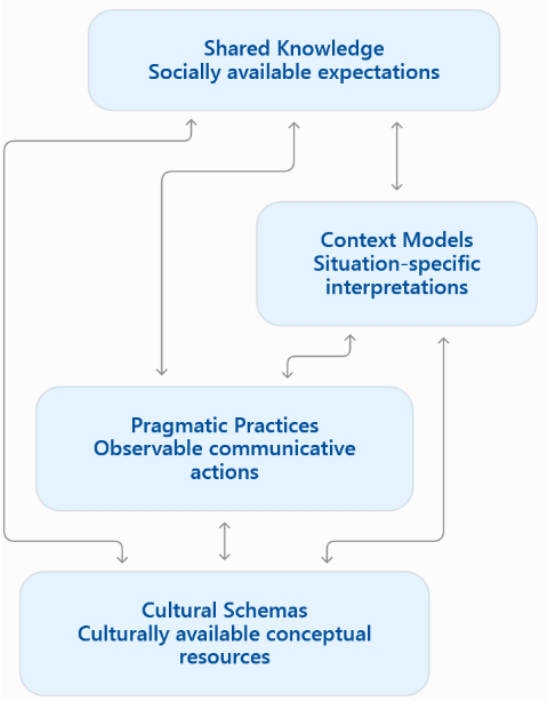


Fig. 1. Diagram model SMCGP
(Palmer, 1996; Sharifian, 2017; van Dijk, 2008, 2009, 2014; Kecskés, 2018, 2023a, 2023b).

The framework also provides a way to discuss speech acts, performativity, authority, and agency without treating them as outcomes already demonstrated by the four examples. From a speech-act perspective, the utterances represent actions such as disagreeing, evaluating, and requesting advice (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). Their performative significance depends on the circumstances in which they are produced and interpreted. Authority may be relevant to the represented relationships in *Kato Mandaki* and *Kato Malereng*, while agency is visible analytically in the speaker's choice to mitigate disagreement, express a different opinion, offer an evaluation, or seek advice. These are interpretations of the represented communicative actions, not empirical findings about participants' actual intentions or social power.

The figure should be read as an analytical representation rather than a chronological account of cognitive processing. The arrows indicate possible relations among the dimensions; they do not establish a universal direction of influence or a necessary sequence. The framework requires further examination using naturally occurring interactional data, participant judgments, recipient responses, and independent cultural scrutiny.

Overall, the four examples show how *Kato nan Ampek* can provide a culturally situated point of departure for analyzing politeness through the SMCGP dimensions. They illustrate possible relationships between relational expectations and linguistic practices, while also demonstrating the importance of alternative interpretations and evidential restraint. The proposed framework is consequently a conceptual contribution for organizing future analysis, not an empirically validated model of Minangkabau speakers' cognitive processes. Further research should test, refine, or challenge its analytical distinctions through naturally occurring conversations, interactional sequences, participant evaluations, and cases involving disagreement, misunderstanding, and pragmatic failure.

4. Conclusion

This study has proposed the sociocognitive model of cultural grounding and pragmatic practice (SMCGP) as a conceptual framework for examining politeness in relation to Minangkabau *Kato nan Ampek*. Its principal theoretical contribution lies in distinguishing and bringing together four analytical dimensions: Cultural Schemas, Shared Knowledge, Context Models, and Pragmatic Practices. The analysis of the four illustrative utterances demonstrates how these dimensions can be used to interpret different relational orientations represented by *Kato Mandaki*, *Kato Mandata*, *Kato Manurun*, and *Kato Malereng*. The examples highlight the potential significance of address terms, apologies, mitigation, expressions of disagreement, evaluative statements, and requests for advice in representing culturally situated communicative practices. Rather than treating politeness as a fixed correspondence between linguistic forms and social meanings, SMCGP offers an analytical perspective in which cultural conceptualizations, socially available expectations, situation-specific interpretations, and observable linguistic practices may interact recursively. Its contribution is therefore conceptual and methodological: it provides an organized framework for analyzing the relationship between cultural grounding and pragmatic action without assuming that the four dimensions constitute a universal or linear cognitive sequence.

Several limitations, however, qualify the conclusions that can be drawn. Although the research design reports a constructed set of 40 interactional units distributed across the four *Kato* categories, only four illustrative utterances are available for detailed analysis, and a complete independently examinable set of unit-level annotations is not available. Consequently, the findings should be understood as provisional interpretations rather than empirical confirmation of Minangkabau speakers' actual mental representations, shared knowledge, communicative intentions, or recipients' evaluations. The constructed examples also cannot establish the frequency, uniformity, or interactional consequences of the four categories in everyday communication. Future research should therefore examine naturally occurring conversations and sequential interactional data, incorporate

participant judgments and recipient responses, and involve independent cultural scrutiny of the interpretations. Particular attention should be given to variation, disagreement, misunderstanding, and pragmatic failure, as these may reveal how cultural expectations are negotiated, adapted, or contested in practice. Such investigations would provide an empirical basis for evaluating, refining, or challenging the proposed SMCGP framework and for exploring its applicability beyond the present Minangkabau context.

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Author Contribution

Conceptualization, S.F.; Methodology, S.F.; Software, S.F.; Validation, S.F.; Formal Analysis, S.F.; Investigation, S.F.; Resources, S.F.; Data Curation, S.F.; Writing–Original Draft Preparation, S.F.; Writing–Review & Editing, S.F.; Visualization, S.F.; Supervision, S.F.; Project Administration, S.F.

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Ethical Review Board Statement

This study used a researcher-constructed corpus and did not report the recruitment of human participants or the collection of participant data. On this basis, formal ethical review and informed consent were not applicable to the study as conducted. The final wording should be checked against the journal's ethics requirements and the author's institutional policies.

Informed Consent Statement

Not available. The study did not involve the recruitment of human participants or the collection of participant data.

Data Availability Statement

The article reports a researcher-constructed set of 40 interactional units. However, a complete, separately documented corpus with unit-by-unit annotations is not available for public access. The article therefore reproduces and discusses four illustrative utterances, which constitute the material available for detailed examination in the present manuscript. The reported corpus composition should be interpreted as part of the researcher's study design and not as a publicly accessible or independently auditable dataset.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no competing interests.

Declaration of Generative AI Use

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used ChatGPT (OpenAI) solely as an assisting tool for language refinement, improvement of textual clarity, manuscript organization, and formatting of tables and sections. The tool was also used to assist in refining the presentation of the conceptual framework. The author critically reviewed and revised all AI-assisted content and takes full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, interpretation, and integrity of the published work.

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