



STUDENTS' DIRECTIVE SPEECH ACTS IN ACADEMIC WHATSAPP GROUPS: A GENERATIVE AI-ASSISTED PRAGMATIC LEARNING DESIGN

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ABSTRACT

This study examines students' directive speech acts in academic WhatsApp Groups (WAGs) and formulates a generative AI-assisted pragmatic learning design based on authentic digital academic communication. The study employed a descriptive qualitative case-study design. The data comprised 1,956 anonymized messages from 15 academic WAGs, from which 481 candidate directive utterances were identified through rule-based screening and contextual pragmatic reading. The analysis drew on speech act theory, politeness theory, Aziz's Principle of Mutual Consideration, digital pragmatics, data-driven learning, usage-based learning, construction grammar, and generative AI as pragmatic scaffolding. The findings show that students' directives mainly involved requests for participation or attendance permission, clarification or information, task guidance or submission, technical access, and confirmation. Students mitigated directives through honorific address terms, greetings, apologies, permission markers, request markers, reasons, indirect questions, gratitude, and prayer-hand emojis. Potential pragmatic problems appeared in utterances that were too direct, informal, unclear in addressee orientation, potentially perceived as assessment follow-up, or sensitive in personal disclosure. The study proposes a learning design involving exposure to authentic WAG data, noticing of politeness markers, contextual interpretation, AI-assisted revision, response simulation, and metapragmatic reflection. Generative AI is positioned as a reflective scaffold, not as an authority on pragmatic appropriateness.

Keywords: *directive speech acts; academic WhatsApp groups; digital pragmatics; generative AI; pragmatic learning*

INTRODUCTION

Digital communication has become an ordinary infrastructure of academic life. In Indonesian higher education, WhatsApp Groups are no longer used only as informal channels for exchanging brief information; they also function as learning spaces in which lecturers, tutors, and students coordinate meetings, clarify assignments, share links, negotiate participation, and solve technical problems. This transformation makes academic WhatsApp Groups an important site for digital pragmatics because the messages circulating in them do not merely transmit information. They also perform social actions and negotiate academic relations.

WhatsApp is a particularly interesting platform because it brings together two interactional orientations that are not always easy to reconcile. On the one hand, the platform encourages quick, concise, conversational, and semi-informal communication.

On the other hand, an academic WhatsApp Group remains embedded in institutional relations, especially lecturer-student hierarchy, academic norms, expectations of politeness, and learning responsibilities. This hybrid condition creates pragmatic tension: students may write in a casual digital style, while the situation still requires attention to hierarchy, social distance, imposition, and academic appropriateness.

Among the various speech acts found in academic messaging, directive speech acts are especially sensitive. In Searle's classification, directives are utterances through which speakers attempt to get hearers to do something (Searle, 1979). In WhatsApp-based academic communication, directives may appear as requests, questions seeking clarification, requests for permission, requests for task guidance, reminders, appeals for technical access, or requests for confirmation. Although such utterances are often short, they may impose on the addressee because students expect a response, an action, a decision, or tolerance from lecturers or peers.

The sensitivity of directive speech acts is well explained by politeness theory. Brown and Levinson (1987) describe directives as potentially face-threatening because they may restrict the hearer's freedom of action. Leech (2014) further emphasizes that politeness is related to tact, option, indirectness, cost-benefit relations, and social distance. Because the present study is situated in Indonesian academic communication, a local socio-pragmatic perspective is also needed. Aziz's Principle of Mutual Consideration, or Prinsip Saling Tenggang Rasa (PSTR), views politeness as the ability to consider the feelings, position, and comfort of others (Aziz, 2008). This perspective is useful for explaining why expressions such as *mohon maaf*, *izin*, and *mohon* carry social meaning beyond grammatical correctness.

Previous studies have shown that WhatsApp communication in educational contexts involves complex issues of power, age, informality, and academic etiquette. Studies on student-teacher or lecturer-student WhatsApp communication suggest that request strategies and politeness choices are shaped by power relations, social distance, age, and institutional expectations (Abourahim et al., 2024; Keshavarz & Bahri, 2024; Lukman et al., 2024; Rowiyah et al., 2025). These studies are important because they show that instant messaging is not pragmatically neutral. Nevertheless, many studies stop at the description of request forms or politeness strategies. Fewer studies connect authentic WhatsApp data with pragmatic learning design.

At the same time, pragmatic learning still faces the challenge of authenticity. Examples used in language learning materials are often constructed, decontextualized, or too idealized. Learners may know that they should be polite, but they may not always understand how politeness is built through small linguistic and contextual choices in real academic communication. Data-driven learning offers one possible response to this problem. In data-driven learning, learners observe authentic data, notice patterns, compare forms, and construct generalizations from usage (Boulton & Vyatkina, 2021). In second-language pragmatics, authentic or corpus-based materials can help learners observe variation and contextual appropriateness (Bardovi-Harlig & Mossman, 2022).

The use of authentic WhatsApp data also aligns with cognitive linguistic perspectives. Usage-based learning argues that language knowledge emerges from repeated exposure to meaningful language use (Bybee, 2010). Construction grammar views language as a network of form-meaning-function pairings (Goldberg, 2006). In this view, polite directives such as *mohon maaf + sapaan + izin bertanya + pertanyaan* (apology + address term + permission to ask + question) are not merely strings of polite words; they are pragmatic constructions linking form, function, and context.



Recent developments in generative AI open another possibility for pragmatic learning. Large language models can provide alternative expressions, simulate responses, and give immediate feedback on learner output. Studies on AI-assisted language learning indicate that generative AI can support input, practice, and feedback, although it must be used critically (Kohnke et al., 2023; Mizumoto, 2023; Sim et al., 2025). Other studies also warn that AI may produce language that is too standardized, too formal, or insufficiently sensitive to local pragmatic norms (Cai & Ren, 2025; Chen et al., 2025; Lee et al., 2025). Therefore, AI should not be treated as the final authority on pragmatic appropriateness.

Based on this background, this study examines students' directive speech acts in academic WhatsApp Groups and explores their potential as the basis for a generative AI-assisted pragmatic learning design. The study addresses four questions: (1) What types and functions of directive speech acts appear in students' academic WhatsApp messages? (2) What politeness strategies and potential pragmatic failures emerge in these directives? (3) How can academic WhatsApp data be positioned as a small authentic corpus for pragmatic learning? and (4) How can generative AI be used as pragmatic scaffolding in a learning design grounded in authentic student communication?

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative case-study design because it aimed to understand directive speech acts in their natural digital context. The case was academic WhatsApp Group communication involving students and tutors or lecturers in online learning. The design was appropriate because the study did not isolate utterances from their interactional environment. Instead, the analysis considered the form of the message, its pragmatic function, the addressee, the surrounding interaction, and the academic situation in which the utterance appeared.

The data were collected from 15 academic WhatsApp Groups used for online learning coordination in language and translation-related academic contexts. Before analysis, all chat files were anonymized. Group names were replaced with codes G01 to G15; lecturers or tutors were coded as T; students were coded as M; telephone numbers, links, media files, names, locations, and sensitive identifiers were removed or replaced with neutral labels. The paper does not present screenshots or raw chat exports.

The initial corpus consisted of 1,956 anonymized messages. A rule-based screening was then conducted to identify candidate directive utterances. The screening used linguistic indicators that frequently signal directive function in Indonesian academic WhatsApp communication, including *izin*, *mohon*, *apakah*, *bolehkah*, *tolong*, *tugas*, *link*, *Tuweb*, *off cam*, *terlambat*, and other forms associated with requests, permission, clarification, or action. This process resulted in 481 candidate directive utterances. The number should not be understood as a final automatic classification because pragmatic meaning depends on context. The candidates were subsequently read qualitatively to validate their possible directive functions.

The analytical procedure consisted of six stages. First, the anonymized data were read to identify utterances produced by students. Second, candidate directives were classified according to their broad pragmatic function, such as participation permission, clarification, task guidance, technical access, confirmation, peer assistance, reminders, or urgent requests. Third, the utterances were examined for politeness strategies, including honorific address terms, greetings, apology, permission markers, request markers, reasons, indirect questions, gratitude, solidarity markers, and emojis. Fourth, potential

pragmatic failures were interpreted by examining excessive directness, informal register, unclear addressee orientation, perceived insistence, sensitive personal reasons, or irrelevance to the academic group. Fifth, representative data were selected for closer qualitative discussion. Sixth, the findings were synthesized into a pragmatic learning design supported by generative AI.

The study used Searle's speech act theory to identify directive functions, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory to interpret face management, Leech's pragmatics of politeness to understand imposition and interpersonal balance, and Aziz's PSTR to situate politeness within Indonesian academic culture. To support the pedagogical interpretation, the study also drew on data-driven learning, usage-based learning, construction grammar, and AI-assisted language learning. Trustworthiness was maintained through anonymization, audit trail, theoretical triangulation, repeated contextual reading, and cautious interpretation of automated categories.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings and discussion through corpus overview, distribution of directive types, politeness strategies, potential pragmatic problems, representative excerpts, and the proposed learning design. The quantitative summaries are descriptive and support qualitative interpretation; they are not intended as statistical generalizations.

Table 1. Corpus Overview of Academic WhatsApp Group Data

Component	Description
Academic WhatsApp Groups	15 groups
Total anonymized messages	1,956 messages
Detected participants	212 automatically detected participants
Detected tutors/lecturers	15 tutors/lecturers
Candidate directive utterances	481 utterances
Data status	Anonymized and coded through rule-based screening followed by contextual reading

Table 1 shows that the corpus is sufficiently varied for a small-corpus qualitative study. The 481 candidate directive utterances represent approximately one quarter of the total messages. This proportion indicates that directive speech acts are not peripheral in academic WhatsApp communication. Students use the group not only to receive information, but also to request permission, ask for clarification, seek task guidance, solve access problems, and negotiate participation in online learning.

Figure 1. Flow of Generative AI-Assisted Pragmatic Learning Based on Academic WAG Data

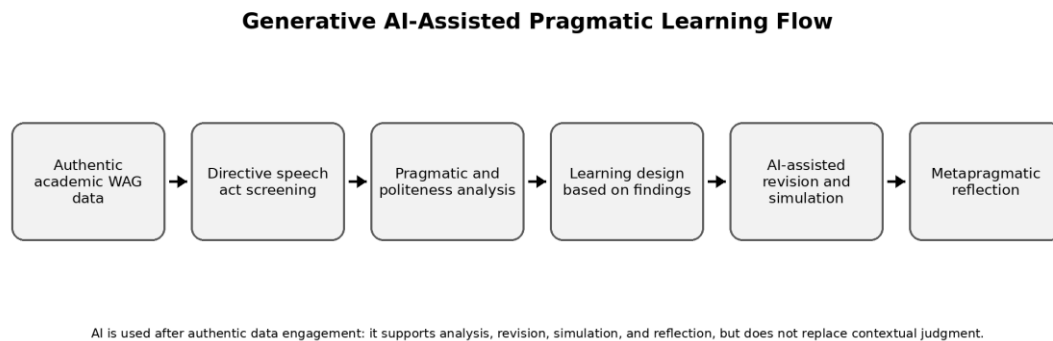


Figure 1 summarizes the logic of the study. Authentic WAG data are first organized as a small corpus, then screened for directive utterances, interpreted through pragmatic analysis, and transformed into a learning design. Generative AI is used only after students engage with authentic data so that AI supports comparison, revision, simulation, and reflection rather than replacing contextual judgment.

Table 2. Distribution of Candidate Directive Speech Acts

No.	Directive type	Frequency	Percentage	Pragmatic meaning
1	Participation or attendance permission	89	18.5%	Students negotiate absence, lateness, off-camera participation, or limited participation.
2	Clarification or information request	80	16.6%	Students seek certainty about schedules, links, meetings, tasks, or instructions.
3	Task guidance or submission request	78	16.2%	Students ask for guidance on assignments, revisions, presentations, or submission formats.
4	Technical access request	59	12.3%	Students ask for help with LMS, links, files, Zoom, or access to learning resources.
5	General request needing contextual validation	27	5.6%	The utterance contains directive indicators, but its illocutionary force depends on context.
6	Checking or confirmation request	18	3.7%	Students ask for confirmation of task status, assessment, or academic processes.

No.	Directive type	Frequency	Percentage	Pragmatic meaning
7	Participation confirmation	10	2.1%	The utterance mainly confirms readiness or attendance and is not a central directive.
8	Peer assistance or participation request	4	0.8%	Students ask other group members to help or participate.
9	Prohibition or reminder	2	0.4%	Students direct group members to do or avoid something.
10	Urgent request	1	0.2%	Students ask for immediate action with relatively high imposition.
11	Not a main directive	17	3.5%	The utterance is closer to a list, progress update, or non-directive response.
12	Candidate needing manual validation	96	20.0%	The keyword appears, but contextual reading is needed before final classification.
	Total	481	100%	

Table 2 reveals that the most frequent categories are participation or attendance permission, clarification or information requests, task guidance or submission requests, and technical access requests. These categories reflect the practical conditions of online learning. Students often need to negotiate attendance because of overlapping online meetings, work, health, travel, or technical limitations. They also use the group to clarify instructions and solve access problems. In Searle's (1979) terms, these utterances are directive because students expect the addressee to provide an answer, permission, guidance, tolerance, or action.

The presence of 96 candidates needing manual validation is methodologically significant. It confirms that automatic screening is helpful for organizing digital data but cannot replace pragmatic interpretation. A keyword such as *izin* or *tugas* may signal a directive, but it may also occur in a response, a confirmation, or a non-directive statement. Therefore, the study treats automation as a preliminary tool and contextual qualitative analysis as the decisive interpretive procedure.

Table 3. Politeness Strategies in Candidate Directives

No.	Strategy	Frequency	Percentage	Linguistic form	Pragmatic function
1	Honorific address	332	69.0%	Bu, Ibu (Ma'am/Madam); Pak, Bapak (Sir/Mr.); Miss, Mam/Ma'am	Marks academic relation and respect.



No.	Strategy	Frequency	Percentage	Linguistic form	Pragmatic function
2	Mitigating emoji	203	42.2%	 ,  ,  (prayer-hands/pleading emoji)	Softens the message and signals humility in digital interaction.
3	Permission marker	172	35.8%	izin, ijin (permission/may I); izin bertanya (permission to ask/may I ask)	Softens the directive and opens interactional space.
4	Reason or contextual explanation	156	32.4%	karena... (because...); disebabkan... (caused by/due to...); berbarengan dengan... (coinciding with/at the same time as...)	Justifies the request and reduces arbitrary imposition.
5	Indirect question or clarification	138	28.7%	apakah... (whether/is it...); bagaimana jika... (what if/how if...); bolehkah... (may/could...)	Reduces directiveness through interrogative framing.
6	Greeting or opening	114	23.7%	Assalamualaikum (peace be upon you); Selamat pagi (good morning); Selamat malam (good evening)	Opens the interaction relationally and academically.
7	Apology	106	22.0%	mohon maaf (I apologize/with apologies); maaf sebelumnya (sorry in advance)	Mitigates possible disturbance to the addressee.
8	Gratitude	90	18.7%	terima kasih (thank you); terima kasih sebelumnya (thank you in advance)	Closes the directive with appreciation.

No.	Strategy	Frequency	Percentage	Linguistic form	Pragmatic function
9	Request marker	87	18.1%	mohon (please/kindly); bolehkah (may/could); jika berkenan (if you would be willing/if appropriate)	Reduces the impression of command.
10	Solidarity marker	32	6.7%	kita (we/us); teman-teman (friends/classmates); rekan-rekan (colleagues/peers)	Builds horizontal relations among peers.

The strategies in Table 3 are multi-label; one utterance may contain several strategies at the same time. The most dominant strategy is honorific address. This finding shows that students generally recognize the academic status of the addressee. Address terms such as *Bu*, *Pak*, *Miss*, or *Mam* are not merely vocatives. They function as relational markers that help align the utterance with academic hierarchy. The frequent use of permission markers and apologies further suggests that students often anticipate the imposition created by their requests.

In Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework, these forms indicate negative politeness because the speaker attempts to minimize imposition and preserve the addressee's freedom of action. In Leech's (2014) framework, they reduce the cost of the directive and support interpersonal balance. From Aziz's (2008) PSTR perspective, expressions such as *mohon maaf*, *izin*, and *mohon* are not formulaic politeness alone; they also show mutual consideration by acknowledging the lecturer's time, authority, and comfort. The frequent use of prayer-hand emojis also shows that digital politeness in Indonesian academic WhatsApp interaction may be built through a combination of verbal and semiotic resources.

Table 4. Potential Pragmatic Problems in Candidate Directives

No.	Potential problem	Frequency	Percentage	Typical indication	Interpretive implication
1	Relatively polite/no significant problem	153	31.8%	Adequate opening, address term, permission marker, reason, or closing	Can be used as positive examples or comparison data.



No.	Potential problem	Frequency	Percentage	Typical indication	Interpretive implication
2	Informal register or abbreviation	84	17.5%	klo, blum, gmn, brp, yg, krn, gapapa, offcam	May sound unsuitable in lecturer-student interaction.
3	Too direct or lacking academic opening	70	14.6%	Question or request appears without greeting, apology, permission, or context	May be perceived as demanding or insufficiently polite.
4	Personal or sensitive reason	56	11.6%	Work, health, family, travel, or other personal constraints	Requires careful anonymization and selective quotation.
5	Unclear addressee or target	40	8.3%	The message does not clearly show who is expected to respond	May confuse interaction in a group setting.
6	Potentially perceived as assessment follow-up	12	2.5%	The student states that a task has not been assessed or checked	Should be reframed as a confirmation request.
7	Potentially pressuring the addressee	6	1.2%	The utterance suggests urgency or immediate action	Requires stronger mitigation and contextual reason.
8	Possibly irrelevant to the academic group	2	0.4%	The request moves outside the course or learning focus	The issue is topical relevance, not only politeness wording.

Table 4 shows that many candidates are relatively polite, but several utterances still display potential pragmatic problems. These problems should not be interpreted as evidence that students are impolite by intention. Rather, they show that digital academic politeness requires sensitivity to the addressee, register, timing, topic relevance, and the

level of imposition. Following Thomas (1983), pragmatic failure may occur when the utterance is grammatically understandable but socially or contextually inappropriate.

Table 5. Representative Analysis of Students' Directive Utterances

Code	Anonymized utterance (ID original and EN translation)	Directive type	Pragmatic interpretation	Learning Use
D001	ID: Selamat Pagi Ibu, Mohon Maaf izin bertanya. Untuk Tuweb 1 ini dilaksanakan hari apa ya? Karena belum ada keterangan hari 🙏 EN: Good morning, Ma'am. I apologize; may I ask a question? On what day will Tutorial Webinar 1 be held? There is no information about the day yet. [prayer-hand emoji]	Clarification request	A well-mitigated clarification. The student uses a greeting, honorific address, apology, permission marker, reason, and emoji.	A positive example of the pattern greeting + address + apology + permission + question + reason.
D002	ID: Ibu, [NAMA_MAHASISWA] izin nanti saya kemungkinan tidak bisa terlalu aktif dan off cam. Karena disaat yg sama ada tuweb Public Speaking juga 🙏 EN: Ma'am, [STUDENT_NAME] would like to ask permission that later I may not be very active and may keep my camera off because at the same time I also have a Public Speaking tutorial webinar. [prayer-hand emoji]	Participation permission	The reason is clear, but informal elements such as off cam and yg need to be revised into a more academic semi-formal register.	Useful for revising informal register into academic semi-formal language.



Code	Anonymized utterance (ID original and EN translation)	Directive type	Pragmatic interpretation	Learning Use
D005	ID: apakah tuweb pertama sudah selesai?? EN: Has the first tutorial webinar already ended?	Clarification request	The question is understandable, but it lacks greeting, address term, and academic opening. It is useful for practicing how to add a polite opening and permission marker.	Useful for adding opening, address term, and permission marker.
D027	ID: Miss klo Aril nya blum ada progres gapapa? soalnya saya belum sempat revisi masih keteteran sama tugas dan diskusi EN: Miss, is it okay if my scientific article has not made progress yet? I have not had time to revise it because I am still overwhelmed with assignments and discussions.	Task tolerance/guidance request	The intention is reasonable, but the utterance contains informal abbreviations and lacks an academic opening, making it a strong example of register-based pragmatic risk.	A strong example for discussing pragmatic failure caused by register.
D098	ID: Selamat Pagi pak @~G04_T01 maaf izin bertanya untuk jadwal Tuweb Minggu ini di hari apa ya pak? Terima Kasih 🙏 EN: Good morning, Sir @~G04_T01. Sorry, may I ask what day this week's tutorial webinar is scheduled? Thank you. [prayer-hand emoji]	Schedule clarification request	A relatively safe directive pattern using greeting, address term, apology, permission marker, gratitude, and emoji.	A good comparison case for safe academic WAG directives.

Code	Anonymized utterance (ID original and EN translation)	Directive type	Pragmatic interpretation	Learning Use
D117	ID: Siang mam, baik, ijin mam untuk presentasi ini jika kamera mati apakah tidak apa2? Karena saya sambil kerja mam 🙏 EN: Good afternoon, Ma'am. May I ask permission: for this presentation, is it all right if my camera is off? I am also working at the same time, Ma'am. [prayer-hand emoji]	Participation permission	Polite enough, but the personal reason needs careful handling in quotation and teaching.	Useful for discussing ethics and sensitive personal disclosure.
D212	ID: Mohon Maaf ibu, kebetulan jadwal tuweb Aril saya juga di hari dan jam yang sama, bagaimana baiknya ya bu? 🙏 EN: I apologize, Ma'am. My scientific article tutorial webinar happens to be on the same day and at the same time. What would be best, Ma'am? [prayer-hand emoji]	Guidance request	The phrase bagaimana baiknya (what would be best) is highly mitigative because it asks for advice rather than imposing a solution.	A good example of negative politeness and Prinsip Saling Tenggeng Rasa.



Code	Anonymized utterance (ID original and EN translation)	Directive type	Pragmatic interpretation	Learning Use
D277	ID: Jam berapa pak tuwebnya? Karena Jumat saya ada tuweb artikel ilmiah, dan sabtu ada tuweb Public Speaking EN: What time is the tutorial webinar, Sir? On Friday I have a scientific article tutorial webinar, and on Saturday I have a Public Speaking tutorial webinar.	Schedule clarification request	The message contains an address term and reason, but it is still direct and lacks greeting or permission marker. It is suitable for comparing direct and mitigated directives.	Useful for comparing direct and mitigated versions.
D399	ID: Tugas 1 right, sir? EN: Is it Task 1, Sir?	Task confirmation request	The utterance is very concise and code-mixed. It may be understandable, but it lacks context and academic opening.	Useful for revising elliptical confirmation into a clear academic confirmation request.
D411	ID: izin ibu tugas 2 saya belum dinilai ibu 🙏 EN: Permission, Ma'am, my Task 2 has not been assessed yet, Ma'am. [prayer-hand emoji]	Checking/co nfir mation request	Although it contains permission marker, address term, and emoji, it may be perceived as asking for assessment follow-up if not reframed as a confirmation request.	Useful for turning a potentially demanding statement into a confirmation request.

Code	Anonymized utterance (ID original and EN translation)	Directive type	Pragmatic interpretation	Learning Use
D425	ID: Assalamu'alaikum Ibu izin bertanya untuk revisi tugas 2 apa boleh langsung saya gabungkan dengan tugas 3 saja? Karena review terbaru dari Ibu baru ada di e-learning tanggal 19 kemarin dan saya tidak bisa upload lagi. Terima Kasih ibu 🙏 EN: Peace be upon you, Ma'am. May I ask whether the revision of Task 2 may be directly combined with Task 3? The latest review from you only appeared on e- learning on the 19th, and I can no longer upload it. Thank you, Ma'am. [prayer-hand emoji]	Task guidance/dis pensation request	A relatively polite and reasoned request, but the sentence is long and can be reorganized so that the main question, reason, and closing are clearer.	Useful for separating the main question, reason, and closing.

The representative data in Table 5 demonstrate that students' directives are mostly connected to practical learning needs. They ask for schedules, task instructions, permission to participate with limitations, and confirmation of task status. Utterances with complete pragmatic framing tend to be safer, especially those containing a greeting, address term, apology, permission marker, question, reason, and gratitude. By contrast, utterances that are too short, heavily abbreviated, or too informal may create pragmatic risk even when the speaker's intention is academically reasonable.

These patterns support a constructional view of pragmatic competence. Formulae such as *mohon maaf + sapaan + izin bertanya + pertanyaan* or *sapaan + mohon izin + alasan + terima kasih* operate as recurrent pragmatic constructions. They link linguistic form with social function and context. In usage-based terms, repeated exposure to such constructions can help learners develop sensitivity to academic politeness not as abstract rules, but as patterned language use (Bybee, 2010; Goldberg, 2006).

The findings also confirm that WhatsApp Groups can be treated as small authentic corpora for pragmatic learning. Unlike invented textbook examples, the data display real problems faced by students, including overlapping online classes, task revision, access to learning platforms, unclear deadlines, and uncertainty about assessment. These situated problems make the data pedagogically valuable. Through data-driven learning, students can observe how small choices, such as adding *mohon maaf* or changing a direct



statement into a confirmation request, alter the social effect of a message (Boulton & Vyatkina, 2021; Nuzzo & Brocca, 2024).

Table 6. Generative AI-Assisted Pragmatic Learning Design

Stage	Learning activity	Role of WhatsApp data	Role of generative AI	Student output
1. Exposure to authentic data	Students read anonymized WhatsApp directives.	Provides authentic input from digital academic communication.	Not used yet, or used only to organize examples.	Recognition of academic WAG contexts.
2. Noticing of politeness patterns	Students mark greetings, address terms, apologies, permission markers, reasons, emojis, and closings.	Shows form-function-context patterns.	Helps list pragmatic elements, but students verify them.	Identification of politeness strategies.
3. Directive classification	Students identify the directive type and illocutionary function.	Serves as classification material.	Provides preliminary predictions that must be validated.	A table of directive types and functions.
4. Pragmatic failure analysis	Students identify risks such as directness, informality, assessment follow-up, or unclear target.	Provides real cases for analysis.	Suggests possible pragmatic risks for discussion.	Notes on potential pragmatic problems.
5. AI-assisted revision	Students use context-specific prompts to revise utterances.	Serves as practice material.	Offers alternative expressions and simulated responses.	More polite and clearer directives.

Stage	Learning activity	Role of WhatsApp data	Role of generative AI	Student output
6. Response simulation	Students compare possible responses to the original and revised utterances.	Provides authentic scenarios.	Simulates lecturer/tutor or peer responses.	Understanding of possible perlocutionary effects.
7. Metapragmatic reflection	Students justify their language choices and revisions.	Grounds reflection in authentic evidence.	Provides preliminary feedback for discussion.	Written metapragmatic reflection.
8. Mini-guide production	Students produce a short guide to academic WAG communication.	Provides examples and cases.	Helps refine wording, not decide appropriateness.	A mini-guide to digital academic politeness.

The design in Table 6 places generative AI as pragmatic scaffolding. AI can help learners generate alternative utterances, simulate possible lecturer responses, and compare pragmatic effects. However, AI is not treated as the final authority on appropriateness. This is important because generative AI may produce responses that are too formal, too standardized, or insufficiently sensitive to local academic norms (Cai & Ren, 2025; Chen et al., 2025; Lee et al., 2025). Therefore, AI-generated revisions must be compared with authentic WhatsApp data and evaluated through Indonesian socio-pragmatic norms.

To operationalize this design, Table 7 presents sample prompts that can be used during classroom activities. The prompts are formulated to guide learners through directive identification, context interpretation, politeness analysis, pragmatic failure detection, AI-assisted revision, response simulation, metapragmatic reflection, and mini-guide production.

Table 7. Sample Prompts for Generative AI-Assisted Pragmatic Scaffolding

STAGE	SAMPLE PROMPT	PEDAGOGICAL PURPOSE
DIRECTIVE IDENTIFICATION	Analyze the following student message from an academic WhatsApp Group. Identify whether it functions as a directive speech act. Explain the directive type and the expected action from the addressee.	To help students recognize that a message may function as a request, permission, clarification, guidance, or confirmation.



CONTEXT INTERPRETATION	Interpret the following student message by considering the participants, addressee, communicative goal, level of imposition, timing, and lecturer-student relationship in an academic WhatsApp Group.	To help students understand that pragmatic appropriateness depends on context, not only linguistic form.
POLITENESS ANALYSIS	Analyze the politeness strategies in the following Indonesian student message. Identify greetings, address terms, apology, permission markers, request markers, reasons, gratitude, and emojis. Explain how each element reduces the imposition of the directive.	To train students to notice layered politeness strategies in authentic WAG data.
PRAGMATIC FAILURE DETECTION	Evaluate the following student message in the context of lecturer-student WhatsApp communication. Identify possible pragmatic problems, such as excessive directness, informal register, unclear addressee, perceived insistence, or assessment follow-up tone.	To help students identify why a grammatically understandable message may still be pragmatically risky.
AI-ASSISTED REVISION	Revise the following student message into two more polite and contextually appropriate versions for an academic WhatsApp Group in Indonesia. Keep the message natural, concise, and respectful. Do not make it overly formal.	To help students compare alternative directive forms and revise risky utterances.
RESPONSE SIMULATION	Simulate two possible lecturer responses to the original message and the revised message. Explain how the tone of the student message may influence the response.	To help students understand possible perlocutionary effects.
METAPRAGMATIC REFLECTION	Compare the original message and the revised version. Explain why the revised version is more appropriate in terms of directive	To develop metapragmatic awareness and critical judgment of AI output.

force, politeness strategy,
lecturer-student relationship, and
Indonesian academic norms.

**MINI-GUIDE
PRODUCTION**

Based on the analysis and
revisions above, formulate five
practical guidelines for polite
academic WhatsApp
communication between students
and lecturers. Use concise and
student-friendly wording.

To help students
transform pragmatic
analysis into a
practical guide for
digital academic
politeness.

The prompts in Table 7 make the AI component explicit while keeping the learning process grounded in authentic WAG data. They direct AI use toward analysis, revision, simulation, and reflection rather than mere grammar correction. Each AI output should be checked against the original context, Indonesian academic norms, and the lecturer-student relationship so that pragmatic judgment remains a human and pedagogical task.

Directive functions and online academic needs

The distribution of directive types suggests that students' pragmatic needs in WAGs are closely related to the management of online learning. The prominence of participation or attendance permission indicates that students frequently need to negotiate their presence in synchronous online activities. They ask permission to be absent, to join late, to turn off the camera, to turn off the microphone, or to participate only partially. These requests often arise from overlapping online tutorials, work obligations, health problems, travel, unstable internet connection, or other constraints. From a pragmatic point of view, such messages are not merely reports of personal condition. They are requests for institutional tolerance.

Clarification and information requests also occupy a central position. Students frequently ask about schedules, links, task deadlines, presentation requirements, and submission procedures. These findings indicate that academic WAGs function as spaces for immediate clarification. In online learning, instructions may be distributed across learning management systems, chat groups, video meetings, and files. When students experience uncertainty, WAG becomes the fastest channel for asking. However, because the request is often addressed to a lecturer or tutor, the form of the question still requires politeness management.

Task guidance and submission requests demonstrate another important function of WAG communication. Students ask whether a task may be submitted in a particular format, whether a revision may be combined with another task, whether an incomplete draft can be sent, or whether a presentation should include certain elements. Such utterances reveal that academic directives are often embedded in learning negotiation. Students are not always asking for simple information; they are asking for a decision, permission, or pedagogical judgment. This increases the pragmatic weight of the utterance.

Technical access requests, such as asking for meeting links or access to LMS/Tuton, show that digital learning creates new forms of directive speech acts. In face-to-face settings, students might ask for a classroom location or printed material. In online



settings, they ask for links, uploaded files, open access, reshare requests, or confirmation that a platform is working. These requests are pragmatic actions shaped by the material infrastructure of online learning. They also show why digital pragmatics must take technological affordances seriously (Scott, 2022; Yus, 2011).

Politeness as layered mitigation

The data show that politeness in WAG directives is built through layered mitigation. The most complete messages combine several strategies: greeting, address term, apology, permission marker, indirect question, reason, gratitude, and emoji. Data D001 and D098 illustrate this pattern. Their pragmatic strength lies not in one polite word but in the cumulative effect of several markers. The student does not abruptly demand information; instead, the message opens relationally, acknowledges the lecturer, frames the question as a permitted act, gives a reason, and closes politely.

This layered structure is important for teaching because it demonstrates that politeness can be observed as a pattern. Students may understand that *mohon maaf* is polite, but they also need to understand when it is appropriate, how it combines with *izin bertanya*, and why a reason helps reduce imposition. A data-driven approach can help learners compare a minimally polite message with a fully mitigated one. For example, *Jam berapa Pak Tuwebnya?* (What time is the tutorial webinar, Sir?) and *Selamat pagi, Pak. Mohon izin bertanya, Tuweb hari ini dijadwalkan pukul berapa?* (Good morning, Sir. May I ask what time today's tutorial webinar is scheduled?) perform similar communicative functions, but they differ in relational work.

Emoji use deserves special attention. In formal academic writing, emoji would be inappropriate. In WhatsApp interaction, however, emoji may function as a pragmatic resource. The prayer-hand emoji often appears after permission requests, apologies, or expressions of gratitude. In the data, it frequently works as a softener. Nevertheless, emoji cannot replace verbal mitigation. A message that consists only of a direct request plus emoji may still sound abrupt. Therefore, the pedagogical point is not that emoji is either polite or impolite, but that its appropriateness depends on how it interacts with the verbal message and the academic context.

Pragmatic failure and the limits of grammatical correctness

The potential pragmatic failures found in the data show that a message may be understandable but still socially risky. Informal register is one common problem. Abbreviations such as *klo*, *blum*, *gmn*, *brp*, *yg*, *krn*, or *gapapa* are efficient in peer chat, but may be less appropriate when a student addresses a lecturer. This does not mean that all informal forms are automatically impolite. Rather, the problem emerges when the informal register does not match the academic relation or when it makes the message appear careless.

Directness is another recurring issue. Some students ask questions without greeting, apology, or permission markers. In a fast-moving WhatsApp environment, this directness may arise from efficiency rather than disrespect. However, in academic hierarchy, efficiency can be perceived as lack of consideration. A short message may require the lecturer to infer the context and the intended action. This is why directness must be evaluated contextually rather than mechanically.

The data also show that some utterances are indirect but still potentially problematic. D411, for example, states that a task has not been assessed. Formally, it is a statement. Pragmatically, it asks the lecturer to check or assess the task. The problem is

not that the student asks for confirmation, but that the utterance may be perceived as asking for follow-up if it is not framed with apology, confirmation language, and space for the lecturer's response. A safer version would frame the message as a confirmation request rather than a demand. This distinction is useful for pragmatic learning because indirectness alone does not guarantee politeness.

Contribution to pragmatic learning

The main pedagogical contribution of the study is the transformation of naturally occurring WAG data into learning material. Students can be asked to compare polite and risky utterances, identify the pragmatic markers in each message, revise problematic messages, and explain their revisions. This process trains noticing and metapragmatic awareness. It also helps students understand that academic politeness is not about making messages unnecessarily long. A good message is not simply the longest or most formal one; it is the one whose form, function, and context are aligned.

In the proposed design, generative AI provides a second layer of interaction. After students analyze the data themselves, AI can offer alternative revisions or simulated responses. Students then evaluate whether the AI suggestions are appropriate. This sequence is important. If AI is used before students observe authentic data, they may depend on AI output. If AI is used after noticing and interpretation, it can support comparison and reflection. Thus, the design positions learners as critical users of AI rather than passive recipients of AI-generated politeness.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that academic WhatsApp Groups are rich sites for examining students' directive speech acts. From 1,956 anonymized messages across 15 groups, 481 candidate directive utterances were identified. The dominant categories were requests for participation or attendance permission, clarification or information, task guidance or submission, and technical access. These findings indicate that WAGs function not only as information channels but also as spaces where students negotiate academic participation, seek guidance, solve technical problems, and manage learning obligations.

The analysis also shows that students frequently use politeness strategies, including honorific address terms, greetings, permission markers, apology, request markers, reasons, indirect questions, gratitude, and mitigating emojis. These strategies indicate basic pragmatic awareness. Nevertheless, potential pragmatic failures appear in utterances that are too direct, too informal, unclear in addressee orientation, potentially perceived as assessment follow-up, or sensitive in personal disclosure. These findings suggest that students need explicit support in digital academic pragmatics.

The study concludes that anonymized WAG data can serve as a small authentic corpus for data-driven pragmatic learning. Such data allow students to observe form-function-context relations in real academic communication. Generative AI can support this learning process by offering alternatives, simulated responses, and preliminary feedback. However, AI must be positioned as pragmatic scaffolding rather than an authority on politeness. The proposed learning design therefore combines authentic data, contextual interpretation, AI-assisted revision, response simulation, and metapragmatic reflection to help students develop more critical and context-sensitive pragmatic competence.

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