

## Politeness and the Language of Pakistani Politicians

Rabia Yasmeen<sup>1</sup>, Mussarat Jabeen<sup>2</sup>, Aatika Akram<sup>3</sup>

Department of English linguistics Government College University,  
Faisalabad, PAKISTAN.

<sup>1</sup> [rabiayasmeen54@gmail.com](mailto:rabiayasmeen54@gmail.com), <sup>2</sup> [jabeen.musarrat@gmail.com](mailto:jabeen.musarrat@gmail.com), <sup>3</sup> [aatikaakram@yahoo.com](mailto:aatikaakram@yahoo.com)

### ABSTRACT

*Communication is determined by external factors like status social distance, social values, age, power and by the internal factors like degree of imposition and friendliness. Both these factors directly affect the conversational implicatures by distinguishing between what is said and what is interpreted and thus are resulted in certain types of evaluations regarding the participants of communication as being rude, polite, arrogant, humble and friendly, this evaluation enhance the impact of what is said, which is discussed under the term of politeness. It is a social behavior related to culture; context and norms or values existed in any society. In a society, informal and formal conversations give an idea of their culture. The polite expressions are mostly used in highly formal context by sophisticated speakers in different political institutions like Punjab assembly senate and parliament by politicians. The study examines politeness used by Pakistani politicians during the session of Privileged Motives (violations against the privileges given to the parliamentarians). Although according to the rules of conversation in Punjab provincial assembly, politicians are required to use polite language yet Pakistani politicians use language impolitely paying little attentions to the hearer's face, a public self-image. Thus the researcher, by applying the politeness model given by Brown and Levinson (1978), wants to analyze politeness strategies used by Pakistani politicians. For this purpose, the data have been collected in the form of documented debates of the Punjab Assembly from 2008 to 2013. The findings will help the linguists, politicians, sociologists, and educationalists to understand the real nature of the phenomenon .i.e. politeness.*

**Keywords:** Politeness, brown & levinson, Pakistani politicians, tahreeq-e-istehqaq

### INTRODUCTION

In any democratic country, the importance of politics is inevitable as the future of country depends upon the firm resolutions and power of decision making, of the politicians who can elevate the status and standards of their country through their autonomous hegemonic power. This power is expressed in their ways of communication by utilizing political language with the distinguish element of politeness. The politeness is considered to be a socio-cultural phenomenon based on the social values and social norms of a particular community. In recent years, the phenomenon of politeness has become central to the discussions of the human interaction. Haugh (2004) suggests “politeness involves speakers’ showing what they think about themselves and others, and addressees’ perceptions of those evaluations” (p.127). Furthermore, the phenomenon of politeness is also used in political institutes where politicians with various ideologies and characters gather to negotiate with each other, to make laws and to ponder the ways in which these laws can be executed. Thus politicians always have a potential of experiencing FTAs (Al-Rassam 2010) (Face threatening Acts) as the Member of Parliaments (MPs) challenge each other in their presentations of duty and general political affairs of the day. In the parliament, the members of the opposition and members of ruling party not only cooperate, and negotiate but also they have contradiction among themselves. Holtgrave (2008) observes that the acts of communication are social discourse

forms which are utilized to uphold and normalize social activities, and to define what the status and power relation are. Hence, politicians are being considered an important phenomenon which represents the whole social life. It is used to build and maintain social relationships.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The rationale for this research is to find out the answers of following questions

1. Which types of politeness strategies are more frequently used in the Punjab Provisional Assembly of Pakistan during the session of Tehreeq-e-Isteheqaq (The violation against the rights of the privileged class)?
2. Why is a particular type of politeness strategy more frequently used in the Punjab Provisional Assembly of Pakistan during the session of Tehreeq-e-Isteheqaq (The violation against the rights of the privileged class)?
3. What are the important lexical features pointing politeness used by Pakistani politicians?
4. Whether politicians use formal or informal language?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Pragmatics is the study of communicative actions in its socio-cultural context (Palmer, 2010, p.8). The context plays a vital role to understand the proper sense of the meanings in the communication. Bunt (2000) has defined context as “the totality of the conditions that influence the understanding so the context is the main element of pragmatics. Some theories presented in the field of pragmatics are significantly applied like Speech act theory introduced by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). Nguyen (2009) has observed that speech acts; as making requests and apologies, giving thanks, it all can be conveyed by the use of the words (Behnam, 2011; p.204). Mey (2001) considers that “the study of the language in the human communication as determined by the conditions of the society” (Laitinen, 2011; p.2). Searle (1969) has further explained the Austin’s (1975) speech acts theory in 1969. He considered that two types of acts i.e. direct speech acts and indirect speech acts. The speakers and the hearers cooperate with each other in the conversation. Thus, there are some rules of conversation discussed by Grice in his theory ‘Cooperative Principles’

Grice (1975) has introduced the theory of cooperative principles by using the Searle’s idea of indirectness (1969). It is an attempt to clarify (how speakers can mean more than they say during their conversation). Therefore, Grice (1975) has proposed four maxim of the conversation to make conversation more sensible and meaningful. It shows association with universal principles of the use of language as mentioned: a) Maxims of Quantity (be informative) b) Maxims of Quality (be truthful) c) Maxims of Relevance (be relevant) d) Maxims of manner (be brief). Cooperative principle explains that how an utterance may be interpreted to convey indirect message. Frajzngier and Jirsa (2006) have said that indirect means of the language are motivated only through politeness (Sani, 2012; p.30).

Politeness is primarily considered to be a wide-ranging and multi-disciplinary field. Politeness is a socio-cultural phenomenon because it is based upon the social norms and social values of the specific community. Politeness has always been considered as the foundation of the social interaction.

Lakoff (1979) has defined politeness as “a tool used for reducing friction or conflict in personal interaction” (p.135). Lakoff (1975) has developed three maxims of politeness to

create more effective communication. These are: a) Don't impose, b) Give options, and c) Make your receiver feel good (p.5)

Basically, the aim of the politeness maxims is to reduce the force of friction, roughness of behavior, conflict and the rudeness between the speaker and the hearer in the personal communication or conversation. Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed a theory of politeness which is based on the notion of face expression. Brown and Levinson (1987) explained the idea of 'Face' as "the public self-image that which every member wants to claims for himself" (p.2). Although, the individual's self-image or face is considered to be universal but its content differs from one culture to another. Ji (2000) has argued that the universality of the face and contends that "the two types of face (positive and negative) may play an unbalanced role in a particular culture, but there has been no evidence that they cannot be identified in that culture" (Jia, W.1997; p.20). The positive face is independence and similarly the negative face is togetherness. Yule (1995) observed that "face is a basic and the universal underlying concept of the politeness" (Adedimeji, 2011; p.12).

However, Brown and Levinson (1978) have said that the some of the certain acts intrinsically threaten to the face and cannot be performed without posing a threat to hearers' or speakers' face. Brown and Levinson (1978) have developed "the concept of the face threatening act (FTA's) refers to a verbal act which intrinsically threatens face and may require a face-redressive action" (Wang, 2008; p .688). Acts that threaten someone's face are also called face threatening acts (FTA's). Face threatening acts (FTA's) are those acts which the speakers use to violate the hearer's self-respect and self-esteem. People used different strategies to save, avoid and maintain their own faces during their conversation. These strategies are known as 'Politeness Strategies'.

Brown and Levinson (1987) have further described that each politeness strategy is attached to the social determinants, explicitly; the relationship between the addressees and speakers is the potential offensiveness of the content of the message. Speakers seek to avoid face-threatening acts by using some series of strategies. This is called politeness strategies. Brown and Levinson (1987) have argued that individuals use different strategies but not consciously, they intentionally use them during their conversation. So, these are used to show polite interaction for appreciation and to avoid face threatening acts (FTA's).

These strategies are used to reduce the burden of the threat, because the face threatening act's (FTAs) become indirect, and filtered by the speaker. Zheng (2000) has claimed that the politicians use tricky and twisted language. So, it is very difficult task to analyze the language of the politicians in their conversation.

Therefore, the Brown and the Levinson's hierarchical model of Politeness Strategies were used to interpret or evaluate the tricky, ambiguous and indirect language of the Politician of the Punjab Assembly, Pakistan. Politeness strategies divided into five main-strategies for doing face threatening act's (FTA's).

1. Bald on record (Without Redressive action)
2. Positive politeness
3. Negative politeness
4. Off record
5. Avoid FTA's

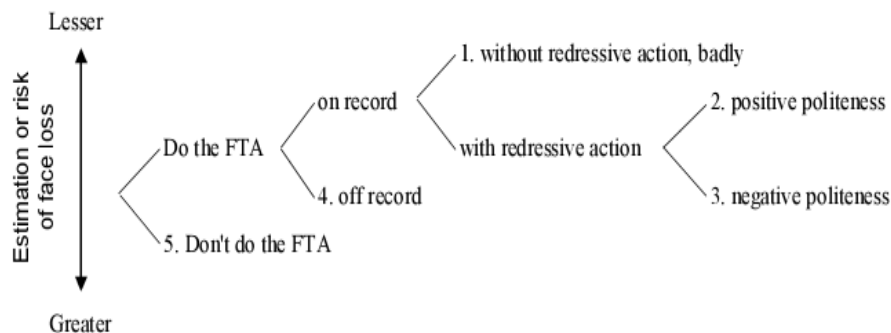


Figure 1. Model of Politeness Strategies by Brown and Levinson (1987)

First three strategies are done “on record”. Therefore, politeness strategies are developed in order to save the hearers’ face. The four super-strategies are arranged on a scale from less polite to more polite, and each of the super-strategies has a number of sub-strategies.

**Bald on record:** In this super-strategy, others can identify addressee’s utterances. **Negative Politeness:** Brown and Levinson (1987) state that negative politeness is redressive action addressed to the addressee’s negative face: person wants to have freedom of unhindered actions and unimpeded attention. The speaker has power on addressee. **Positive Politeness:** In positive politeness, every hearer has a wish to be approved and respected by the others. This strategy minimizes the threat to the addressee’s face and represents the wishes of the speaker to be approved

**Off record:** Brown and Levinson (1987) have argued that this is an indirect way of doing the communication acts in which an utterance of a speaker can be interpreted in many other ways expect producing real meaning Brown and Levinson (1987) model of politeness is considered universal and powerful tool to analyze politeness in any culture. In Pakistani culture, this is the foremost study regarding politeness; Brown and Levinson (1987) use to interpret the phenomenon of politeness in the language of the politician during the session of the Preliminary Privileges.

## METHODOLOGY

This research is descriptive in nature. The theoretical framework of this research is based on phenomenon of politeness strategies in pragmatics. Pragmatics is the study of meaning in context. Thus, Brown and Levinson (1987) Models of Politeness has been used for analyzing politeness strategies in political context. In addition, the mixed method approach is used to investigate politeness strategies in politician’s language because the research deals with finding out the answers of what and how questions. The researchers have collected the documented debates from 2008 to 2013. These are parliamentarian’s debates of Punjab Provisional Assembly. First of all, documented debates are collected and then analyzed into different categories on the basis of strategies adopted by Pakistani parliamentarians in parliament to draw capricious results.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher has used Brown and Levinson’s Model of Politeness Strategies for the analysis of data of the Pakistani politicians, conversation in the Parliament House. Politeness strategies have been divided into five main strategies and divided into several supportive strategies. The model of politeness strategies has been adopted according to the nature of the documented debates.

## Bald on Record

The bald: On-record does nothing to minimize threats to the hearer's "face". It is said to be the most clear and direct way of saying something. This is performed without redressive actions. Speakers have used direct speech acts in their conversation. Cutting (2008) has said that "the speakers tend to contain the imperative without any mitigating device" (p.13). That is why in the Parliament house, Bald on record politeness strategy is used frequently.

- I. Mian Tariq Mehmood: Janab e Speaker! Main apke notice main lana chahta hon ke iss mamle main bohat bara blunder hua hai. Agr iss main likha hua hai ke ala afsaran iski inquiry karain. {Page: 152 Date: 2010-01-21}. [*Mian Tariq Mehmood: Honorable speaker! I want to bring this point into your notice that there must be a big blunder in this issue if it has been written that higher authorities should investigate it*].
- II. Quaide Hizbe Ikhtilaf (Chaudhary Zaheer Ud Din Khan): Janab e Speaker main apne dost ki dono baton ka ikhtisar se jawab don ga ke iss mulak ki badqismati hey ke yahan teen baraherast elections huay hain jo dicatatron ne karwaye hain. {Page:3157, Date:2010-01-21}. [*Leader of opposition party (Chaudhary zaheer ud din khan): Honorable Speaker! I want to answer my friend briefly that unfortunately all three elections in this country have been conducted by dictators*].

The above examples express a flawless and bold way of expression used by Pakistani politician. In first example, politician has expressed his apprehensions of some big mistakes and in second the politician has raised a point about the credibility of elections under dictatorship. They are courageous in explaining the ideas and points without any doubt and fear.

## Positive Politeness

Positive politeness shows that hearer has a desire to be respected. It also confirms that the relationship is friendly and expresses group reciprocity. In Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness (1987), positive face is always used to reduce the threats to the hearer's face. Thus, all the examples show that how Pakistani politicians have used positive politeness strategy in their political conversation. These are given below:

- I. Rana Tanweer Ahmed: Main haal hi main waqo pazeer honay walay aik aham aur fori masla ko zeray e bahas lanay ke liay tahreeq e istehqaq pesh karta hon jo assembly ki fori dakhil andazi ka mutkazi hey {page 257, Dated 2010-01-22}. [*Rana Tanweer Ahmed: Honourable Speaker! I present the movement of privileged rights to discuss a very important and current issue which demands urgent attention of the assembly*].
- II. Doctor Samia Amjad: Honorable Speaker! Walkout kia tha bycot to nahe kia tha walkout ka lafz zaror kaha tha abb chon ke ap ne issko take up kia hai to issko subha tak ke liay pending ker dain. Hum iss per bat karainge. {Page 697, Dated 2009-06-24}. [*Doctor Samia Amjad: Honorable speaker! I nearly walked out not involved in boycott. I had only used the word of walkout. Now you have taken it up so postponed it till tomorrow. We will talk about it*].

Here the language and words are more polite in nature. The first politician has justified his rationale of presenting movement of privileged rights and the choice of words is apt for maintaining both self-respect and social integrity. The speaker is using polite language to express his desire. There is no sign of directive or command in order to create pleasant and friendly atmosphere. Politician has adopted a very reasonable way to defend herself and to



express her gratitude for taking up the issue. Politeness strategy is also called solidarity strategy. Here the word “we” express a desire to be connected with the group.

### Negative Politeness

Brown and Levinson (1987) state that negative politeness is redressive action addressed to the addressee’s negative face: person wants to have freedom of unhindered actions and unimpeded attention. Negative politeness is essentially avoidance-based. Brown and Levinson (1987) have argued “negative politeness is the heart of respected behavior, which performs the function of minimizing the particular imposition which the FTA unavoidably effects” (p.25).

In the documented debates of Pakistani Politicians during the session of Tehreeq-e-Isteheqaq are the following:

- i. Doctor Tahir Ali Jawed: Point of order Janabe Qaim Mukam Speaker:J i Doctor Sahib! Doctor Tahir Ali Jawed: Janabe Speaker! Aapka bohat bohat shukria {Page 227, Dated 2009-06-20} [Doctor Tahir Ali Jawed: Point of order Honourable Speaker: yes Doctor Tahir Ali Jawed: Honourable Speaker! Thank you so much]
- ii. Janab Muhammad Mohsin khan Laghari: Shukria Janabe Speaker! Main app ko appreciate karta hon ke app ne Punjab ka numainda honay ka sabot dya aur app ne hamare haqq ke liay iss chair per beth ker bat ki.{Page 896, Dated 2009-06-26}. [Honorable Muhammad Mohsin khan Laghari: Thank you Honorable Speaker! I appreciate that you prove yourself as representative of Punjab province and you speak out for our rights].

The above illustrations indicate the negative politeness. There is an eloquent glimpse of deference for addressee in these example which is an important supportive strategy of negative politeness Moreover, it is also lucid from examples that speaker does want to encroach his hearer. They don’t wish to obeisance their addresses through imposition because in negative politeness speaker seeks independence from all sorts of restrictions for himself and for addressee Speaker has also used the “I appreciate” instead of “we appreciate” which indicates a hidden desire of individual identity to make himself free from restrictions imposed on the members of group. Above illustrations do not provide any veiled desire of collaboration with other members of group.

### Off Record

This is indirect strategies. This takes some of the pressure off and tries to avoid the direct FTA. Politicians have used ambiguous speech acts to save their face like backbiting etc Li (2008) has stated that politician’s language is mostly vague ambiguous and indirect and obscure. Off record strategies has been used by male politicians.

- I. Janabe Depty Speaker: Masti Khel Sahab! Main ne app ki baat sun li hey aur samaj gaya hon. Abhi bohat ziada business para hua hey Mujay karwai karne dain. Aaj unki conference ho jaye gi isske baad baat karain ge. Basra sahab! Meray pas bohat ziada business hey. Please, app tashreef rakhain. Sheikh sahab! Main thori dair baad app ki taraf ata hon. {page 1857, Dated 2010-02-09.}[Honorable Deputy Speaker: Mr Masti Khel! I have listened and understood your point. Let me process still a lot of business is pending. Today they will do their conference after that we will talk. Mr basra! I have a lot of business please, Sit down Mr Shekh I will come to your point after a short while]
- II. Janabe Speaker: Ji main suno ga lekin abhi nahi. Iss tarha nahi. Jab moqa aye ga uss waqt bolain yaa phir app kal a jate. Najaf Sial! ,Main baar baar aap ko kah raha

hon. Aap meharbani karain. Main ne inko floor dia hua hey main apko aisa nahe karne don ga. {Page 688, Dated 2010-06-22} [*Honorable speaker: I will listen to you afterwards. Only speak on your turn or you should have come yesterday. Mr Najaf I am again and again telling you that I have given them floor I will not let you do this*].

The above example gives us a lucid account of ambiguity. There is nothing has been clearly defined in these example. It is evident from data that speaker is avoiding and reluctant to face the situation moreover in order to assert his point the use of excessive imperatives is made to hide his vague justifications. It seems that the speaker has turned his face off. The speaker does not want to disgrace his addressee so he has chosen an ambiguous way to hide his inner feelings.

### **Lexical Choices used for Reverence**

Politicians are used to address each other in a polite and in a respective way. They have used different address form to address someone in the Parliament House. The very first three item; *Janabe speaker Muhtarrma* (use to call female), and person nick name (specific) such as *Niazi sahab* has shown as trends of using any name with word “*sahab*” (used to call male) These are used more frequently in Politician’s conversation rather than others forms of address. The logic behind this is the Islamic culture of our country because we have inherited the teachings of mutual respect from the preaching’s of our forefathers. Moreover, in order to be a vigilant part of social setup we become more conscious in our choice of words.

Parliamentarians’ have started their discussion with these sentences:

### **Choice of Expressions for Performing Specific Functions**

Parliamentarians make the use of various lexical items to perform series of actions for: making plea, express gratitude, grant permission, and to apologize someone. The following are few examples of such expressions:

- Meharbani (Thank you)
- Shukria (Thanks)
- Mashkooor (Thankful)
- Ijzat dain (Allow me/ permit me)
- Guzarish (Request)
- Moazrat (Sorry)
- Istada (Request)
- Baray meharbani (Kindly)

### **Mixed Vocabulary and Less Formal Language**

Parliament is a place of free talk therefore parliamentarians use mixed vocabulary. They are more concerned with the contents rather than style. Mixed language reveals their carefree attitudes and their pride as well. They want to enjoy an unhindered freedom and don’t want to bear any kind of imposition of rules regarding choice of language. Their status and power give them such splendid privilege of switching between two languages.

- Main aapke *notice* main lana chahta hon
- Yahan teen *elections* huay hain
- Do din ka *time* manga hey
- Subha tak *pending* ker dain

Humbly *request* hey mujay maaf ker dain  
Apko *appreciate* karta hon  
Main bohat *serious* masla bayaan karna chahti hon  
Kitni ziada *negligence* hey  
Aapka bhi *rural background* hey  
Maazart chahti hon *in the heat of discussion* mujh se *slip* ho gaya tha

## CONCLUSION

This study was started with key objectives of exploring politeness strategies in the politician's conversation during the session of '*Tehreeq-e-Isteheqaq*' (The violation against rights of the privileged Class) in '*Punjab Provisional Assembly*', Pakistan.

This study has analyzed numerous strategies employed by Pakistani politicians like bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness and off record. Among these strategies, bald on record strategy is found to be most frequently used strategy to exhibit power and carefree style of communication. Moreover in order to maintain social distance a set of linguistical choices is used to pay homage to higher authorities and to reveal their submissiveness. Speakers indicate their reverence for other by attaching specific words (nick names) with names. Being a part of Islamic republican they always abide by the rules of social setup to maintain social integrity by choosing various words to indicate their obligations (thankfulness) and respect for others. Power discrimination among the members of parliament obliged them to be more polite and avoid the use of excessive imperatives. Finally, it has been observed that Pakistani politicians make the use of less formal and mixed language to express their feelings and ideas by paying a little attention to the formality.



## REFERENCES

- [1] Adedimeji, S. T. (2011). The Theory and Practice of Politeness Phenomena in Nigerian University. Retrived November 13, 2012, from <http://www.uv.uio.no/isp/forskning/aktuelt/aktuellesaker/2011/dokumen>
- [2] Behnam, B. (2011). An Investigation of Iranian EFL Learners' Use of politeness Strategies and Power Relations in Disagreement across Different Proficiency Level. *English Language Teaching*, 4(4), 204-220.
- [3] Haugh, M. (2009). *Intention(ality) and the Conceptualization of Communication in Pragmatics. Australian Journal of Linguistics*, 29(1), 91-113
- [4] Haugh, M.(n.d.). The Discursive Challenge to Politeness Research: An Interactional Alternative. *Journal of Politeness Research. Language, Behaviour, Culture*, 3(2), 295-317.
- [5] Jia, W. (1997). Facework as a Chinese Conflict-Preventive Mechanism: A Cultural Discourse Analysis. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, (VII), 43-58.
- [6] Laitinen, M. (2011). Breaking the Rules of Communication: Verbal and Non Verbal Impoliteness in the American Hospital Drama House. p.1-81
- [7] Palmer, D. S. (2010). Second Language Pragmatic Socialization in World of War craft. *University of California*, p.1-364
- [8] Rassam, A (2010). Analyzing Political Discourse Towards a Pragmatic Approach. *College of Basic Education Researchers*, 10(6), 1-25.
- [9] Sani, H. M. (2012). Politeness in the Communicative Behaviour of Staff and Students in Selected Libraries in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. p.1-93
- [10] Wang, Y. F. (2008). Beyond Negation the Roles of Meiyou and Bushi. (N. Love, Ed.) *Language Sciences*, 30(6), 679-713.
- [11] Zhang, I. K. (2009). Activating, Seeking, and Creating Common Ground, A Socio-Cognitive Approach. *Pragmatics & Cognition*, 17(2), 331-355.