Socioeconomic Status, Gender, and Politeness Strategies: Studying the Usage of Request Speech Act in Pakistani Undergraduate Students

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
	Politeness strategy has non-linguistic as well as linguistic apprehensions. Moreover, it is observed as part of the sociolinguistics and conversational competency of the orators of a particular language. This recent study investigates the politeness strategies in the context of Punjabi language. The goal is to classify the politeness strategies as a part of Pakistani set culture particularly with reference to Punjabi language context. To make this study valid, Brown and Levison's (1987) framework is employed as a ration ground for this study. The variable of gender and socioeconomic factors has been analyzed to investigate the impending result by stalking down the politeness strategies especially in Pakistani culture context. A survey was conducted through an open ended questionnaire. For this study (DCT) Discourse conclusive test is selected as a modified version. A group of 120 people which is comprised of male and female native speakers of Punjabi language are selected. This study investigates that in Pakistani culture particularly with reference to Punjabi language, people tend to remain informal when making requests which can be classified as informal politeness strategies. This study investigates socioeconomic status of Punjabi language speakers both male and female by not making in gender specific. Through this study frequency of politeness strategies has been undergone in Punjabi language. *© 2021 The authors. Published by SPCRD Global Publishing. This is an open access article under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0*

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1. Introduction

Politeness is a consciousness effort that requires patience, tolerance, perseverance. The social portent of politeness is not a new one. Its roots are embedded in history through society, norms, cultures, traditions, customs values and religion. In the entire process of evolving pleasant and smooth

interpersonal relationships, now advance and elevated strategies are must. It is evident and accepted that politeness is integral part of society and can't be ignored. Politeness requires strategic implementation for a normal and efficacious happy life. Politeness is observed as a verbal consciousness and understanding of proper social behavior. According to Lakoff (1973) societies are responsible to develop this behavior and the major cause is to facilitate and smoothen the interaction and process of effective communication among the people of the society. Though this concept constituent of conversational competency of the orator is not that primordial. The knowledge of politeness strategies as part of linguistics feature is quite mandatory for a person in order to be frequent in a particular set of language being spoken. Since the last few decades people tend more to the linguistic junctures as a rudimentary requirement. To initiate this study, it is appropriate to start with a bird's eye view of the politeness theory as evolving factors.

The politeness strategies are not a new ones and many experimental work has been done related to this term. Many researchers are on the way to analyses its impact on different societies. Their comprehensive analysis may vary according to the kind of research is being done. According to Haugh (2007) the variables between these two varieties are quite apt and can be observed being incorporating in different communities despite the language difference. Accoding to Cameron (2001) these doesn't depend on the language differences rather based on emotional, cultural and social differences to which Arundale (2006) agrees upon. Related to the existing context, many researches have also been carried out in Pakistan as well. The Pakistani researchers have examined the 'politeness theory' in the Pakistani context such as (Rehman 2998, Akram 2014, Kousar 2015). This investigation is intended to imply the politeness strategies particularly to Pakistani native orators. For this purpose Brown and Levinson (1987) theory has been selected which claims to be in nature universal. This study different because it tends to have variable analysis based on gender specific and socioeconomic status in relevance to Pakistani language and cultural context.

The present investigation is carried out on the base of following research questions:
1. What are the politeness strategies used in Pakistani context?
2. Do variables, such as, gender and socioeconomic status of speakers affect Pakistani speaker's choice of politeness strategies?

Research Objectives of this study are:
1. To examine the role gender in the choice of politeness strategies.
2. To identify socioeconomic status of politeness strategies particularly in Pakistani context.

2. Politeness as Apparatus

Yu (2003) has provides his opinion about politeness as an essential apparatus for human interaction that is only possible through language. According to him, politeness serves is a dominant apparatus in the way to successfully transferring the messages as set of communication.

Robin Lakoff (1973) as a well-known scholar and nominated as the first researcher who has initiated the work on politeness strategies also stresses out on the necessity of polite gestures in order to attain the targeted goals. Through his research he concludes that the politeness is a verbal response which is essential and regarded as social behavior. This behavior is nurtured by society which enables a person to facilitate the interaction among people and the groups. This technique of politeness as a face saving technique was introduced in 1987 by Levinson and Brown. According to Goffman (1955) the theory of politeness is a much needed one as a speech act to which Austin (1962) and Searle (1969)

agreed upon after a scrutinized analysis. Grice (1989) has provided his opinion which stresses the need of politeness theory as a cooperative principle. They claimed that facial expressions are a universal phenomenon but *"in any particular society, we should expect [face] to be the subject of much cultural elaboration"* (1978). According to them (1987), politeness is an effort to constitute the art of restorative expression during the exchange of dialogues. Levinson and Brown (1987) further, described it as *"something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction"*. Moreover, the strategies of politeness serves as a medium which serves as a cooperative source for humans to understand one another. According to Sifianou (1992) politeness is "a set of social values, it guides rather instruct the members of a communication group to consider each other by satisfying shared expectations. These expectations are assumed to constitute part of socio-cultural knowledgeof the particular members of a communication group (which are termed as 'interactants' also). It includes both intentional strategies and also more fixed social indices". To guarantee and promote harmonious interpersonal relations, according to her, such knowledge and its deployment is very necessary. Holmes (1992) has presented another definition of politeness. Homes (1992) expressed his opinion as "Politeness works not alone, it involves taking account of the feeling of other person also. It is the characteristic of a polite person that they make others feel comfortable and at peace. Being linguistically polite, it involves the person make other feel easy and comfortable by speaking appropriately in the light of their relationship to you." Holmes postulated his theory on this point that the effort of politeness is based on human set of values and human rational behavior values. It also involves avoid intruding on other people.

In the most recent times, the trends in the cultural studies have stressed a lot on the need of maintaining good relations between the speakers and the hearer. According to Lin (2013), it is an important element in the face-to-face conversation. It works even more effectively when the cross-cultural communication is involved. There are a lot of cultural differences and among them social status is one. Social standing is considered to be a well-known universal one. The awareness of social status varies from one culture to another. According to Escandell-Vidal (1998) in a set system of society, every single person has his or her own hierarchical pattern which asre based on rational differences in the matter of communication. These differences are largely depended on the systematic pattern of politeness. These patterns are classified as presenting polite gestures such as friendliness or requesting; defending or arguing; and apologizing or complying.

According to the theoretical framework proposed by Levinson and Brown (1978) politeness can't be considered as asymmetric. Politeness is in close relation to social hierarchy. Lakoff (1972) has also postulated the politeness theory suggesting that a set of people exiting in a particular social circle follow a certain set of rules to interact with one another. Johnstone (2008) has provided his prevention rules to adopt. She has also expresses the two basic rules of politeness theory which are to be concise and to be relevant. On the other hand Lackoff (1972) provides his founding regarding politeness theory while stating, *"an essential asymmetry in polite behavior, in that whatever is a polite be a polite belief for the speaker tends to be impolite belief for the hearer and vice versa"*. Leech (1983) also agrees to the ration grounds presented by Lackoff. In terms of universality Leech's and Lakoff's theory is parallel. On the other hand to investigate the founding of Leech and Lakeoff, Bharumthram (2003) examined this claim. He decided by exploring the data which is known to be provided by Levinson and Brown in 1972. He examined that analysis provided be Brown and Levinson (1972) regarding the concept of 'face' as a universal notion. According to the analysis he claims that the idea is quite different when compared to the community who tends to speak English as a native language variety. He furthermore analyzed it on individual level such as he investigated the use of the world "please" in day to day conversation. He marked the conventional difference between the South African English speaking verses English

speaking community on cultural difference grounds whereas the rational was found that people tend to safe their own face while communicating. But Levinson and Brown (1978) has variable rational for this analysis. According to them "face" is not a single entity to be standardized rather it involves a level which is two folded and can be classified as positive and negative ones. They further illustrated that the speech of an adult person can set the standard of a negative or positive face and this only can be identified through his/ her movements. According to them (1978) the actions of the adults of a particular speech community with negative face are unhindered by former. On the contrary, adults with positive face have more opportunities to be connected and are considered competent member of a speech community. The attack of verbal and non-verbal gestures during the commination act is considered rational but if the actions and reaction are contrary as expected and such are titled as Face Threating Acts (FTAs) by Levinson and Brown, 1978.

3. Theoretical Framework

In different cultural and linguistic context a substantial quantity of research has been conceded on the politeness strategies. On one hand, the issues regarding degree of politeness are addressed while on the other hand, the issues relevant to strategies of expressing politeness are also brought under the discussion. In literature a number of theoretical frameworks have been proposed. However, the most relevant and comprehensive theoretical framework is proposed by Levinson and Brown (1978). The success of the above mentioned theoretical framework of politeness strategies has been applauded by Locher (2014). He declares the theory of politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson as an empirical framework for investigation.

Brown and Levinson's (1978) theory is comprehensive and detailed because it has a undoubted instance for the part of the politeness as a device of face saving. They analyze the strategies of being polite as an example of being polite while relying on a very complex and complicated system of expectations and interpretations. On these sets of systems the human being interact, communicate and cooperate with each other in a society an in different settings. For to understand its need, detailed review is provided underneath. Brown and Levinson has presented a unified and all-inclusive theory of politeness. In their theoretical framework, they perceived linguistic strategies as apprehensions for strategic politeness theory.

One significant characteristic of their theory is that their arrangement which is classified in to two portions. In the first portion they have provided the fundamentals of politeness which revolves around the aspect of politeness. This also caters the interactive techniques of dialogue exchange. However, the second part is comprehensive which comprises the strategies of implementation.

In the theoretical framework purposed by Brown and Levinson, the concept of 'face' is a binding section of discussion in order to discuss the term "politeness" in detail. The term "face" is further classified into two sections entitled as "negative face" and "positive face". They have provided the explanation for positive face as a set where people self-image long for the endorsement they have for themselves. The second one is the 'negative face' which tends towards personal preserves, territories and right to non-distraction". According to their research they have explored that there are many strategic plan that are involved in 'positive polite-ness' where the audiophile regardless of the intimidation involves oneself on positive levels. The "positive face" strategic plan tends to convey positive vibes for the audiophile based on personal emotions and largely safeties. This happens in many ways but the inclusion of this successfully can be possible when both the audiophile and orator are in close relationship such as friendliness, harmony and unity. Levison (1978) has provided some samples in this theoretical analysis as *"Attend to H's interests, needs, wants, (You look sad. Can I do anything?);*

Use solidarity in-group identity markers, (Heh, mate, can you lend me a dollar?); Be optimistic, (I'll just come along, if you don't mind.); Include both speaker (S) and hearer (H) in activity, (If we help each other, I guess, we'll both sink or swim in this course.); Offer or promise, (If you wash the dishes, I'll vacuum the floor.); Exaggerate interest in H and his interests, (That's a nice haircut you got; where did you get it?); Avoid Disagreement, (Yes, it's rather long; not short certainly.); and Joke, (Wow, that's a whopper!)." (1978)

The audiophile of the negative politeness encounters reluctance of acceptance. According to Brown and Levinson interpretation the actions of orators are always unobstructed in the 'negative face politeness strategies'. Levinson and Brown (1978) have provided some samples for 'negative politeness' responses as, *"Be indirect, (Would you know where Oxford Street is?); use hedges or questions, (Perhaps, he might have taken it, maybe. Could you please pass the rice?); be pessimistic, (You couldn't find your way to lending me a thousand dollars, could you? So I suppose some help is out of the question, then?); minimize the imposition, (It's not too much out of your way, just a couple of blocks.); use obviating structures, like nominalizations, passives, or statements of general rules, (I hope offense will not be taken. Visitors sign the ledger. Spitting will not be tolerated.); apologize, (I'm sorry; it's a lot to ask, but can you lend me a thousand dollars?); use plural pronouns, (We regret to inform you.)."* (1987)

According to both researchers (1987), the strategic theory can be considered universal and is empirical on logical and rational grounds. The empirical labeling is done after scrutinized analysis as they declare the implicate nature of acceptance.

4. Research Methodology

In order to discover the possible related responses to the investigation queries this research is intended. Through this research, an amount of reactions are collected from the students of undergraduate level. A questionnaire is designed to collect the desired the data. The questionnaire is open-ended one which is designed according to DCT (Discourse Completion Test). The questionnaire serves the need to extract the relevant data that a researcher wants to explore. The questionnaire designed for the present study tends to investigate the students responses both adult male and female. They were asked to jot down the answers according their real life experiences. The questionnaire designed for the students comprise the personal statistics regarding the socio-economic status such as job status and particularly the level of education. While doing son the anonymity of statistics can be assured. The questionnaire comprises ten questions which includes questions related to socioeconomic status defending on diverse circumstances. The response is based on the assumption that while responding to the situation the students have provided the speech act. For this study, speech act is selected categorized as 'request'. It is because of its intrinsic and fundamental reflection of politeness. The speech act of request is widely applicable to a sum of circumstances related to the student's daily life status. In the current study, another significant aspect is that the 'gender' and 'socio-economic status' of the speaker were the variables and these are applicable to the speaker only, not the hearer.

4.1   Participants

The age group selected to execute this study a total of one hundred and twenty participant were selected ranging from 18-30 age group including both male and female. The participants are students of Bahauddin Zakaria University, Multan. The interesting feature was as the students were of four different including department of Sociology, department of Psychology, department of Zoology and micro- biology departments. Two of the department are form social sciences domain and remaining are pure sicenes. It made it more interesting on the in level which can also comprise the educational level

of understanding as an impact.   This investigation was done on the part of parental jobs and educational hierarchy which is further classified into clusters.

- A group of men with low socio-economic status
- A group of women with high socio-economic status
- A female group with low socio-economic status
- A female group with high socio-economic status

The researcher administered the survey herself. The word limit to jot sown their answers the students are given no word limits or any strict paradigm to follow. Some of the respondents were sent the questionnaire through E-mail, and other social media connections (Whatsapp messenger, Facebook Messenger).

4.2   Data Analysis
The answers gathered through the help of the questionnaire are categorized based on the structural study for this research. As it has been declared the Brown and Levinson (1987) research model entitled as 'politeness theory' is applied as a framework. The framework initiates about the negative and positive politeness. Furthermore, the data is analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Software) to clarify the connection between genders along with socio-economic status. Furthermore, it will throw light on the question that how politeness strategies are used in Pakistani culture.

5. Result and Discussion
Discourse Completion Test (DCT) serves as the bird's eye view for this current study as an adapted model particularly to Pakistani culture context. The selected method of Discourse Completion Test (DCT) in the form of questionnaire reveals that the university students of undergraduate level, who participated in this study, use five strategies of politeness. Brown and Levinson (1987) interestingly enlist ten basic strategies for negative politeness. The following as mention below:

- Be conventionally indirect
- Question, Hedge
- Be pessimistic
- Minimize the imposition
- Give deference
- Make an apology
- Inclusion of personal pronouns
- FTA as a universal rule
- Participative
- Obligation

After a scrutinized analysis it is scaled as all three of all above mentioned fall under the category of negative politeness and the reaming can be entitled as the sub categories. In the list of negative politeness responses the first strategy serves the part of being indirect in the conversation. The second one can be suggested as question strategy which at time can be more valid as negative politeness strategy. However, the third one serves the both ends such as negative and positive ones which lo list entitled on the position of six as "apologize".

According to the students responses it is observed that students tends to respond more toward the positive strategy in comparison to the negative one which according to Brown and Levinson (1987)

can be titled and known as supra-strategy of positive politeness. The classified scheme of supra-strategy is mentioned below.

- "Notice, attend to H
- Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with hearer)
- Intensify interest to H
- Use in-group identity markers
- Seek agreement
- Avoid disagreement
- Presuppose/raise/assert common ground
- Joke
- Assert or presuppose S´s knowledge of and concern for H´s wants
- Offer, promise
- Be sanguine
- Be indirect
- Enquire
- Take responsibility or declare mutuality
- Collaboration/ assistance". (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 102)

It is evident from the statistical analysis that the politeness strategy that is mostly occurred in the Punjabi language was negative politeness strategy of 'hedging'.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of all five negative politeness strategies used by all participants

Type of Negative strategy					
1	2	3	4	5	Total
320	372	32	25	269	1018
31.4%	36.5%	3.1%	2.5%	26.4%	100%

As it is presented in Table 1, the negative and positive politeness strategies are given the numbers as mentioned below.

The total number of the students who enthusiastically provided their responses which a total number of 1018 responses including both the positive and negative politeness strategies. These responses are further classified as out of 1018 responses 327 as a percentage of 36.5% responded with the 'hedging/questioning' strategy. This further is classified on gender bases as a solid and valid hypothesis. So politeness strategies were analysed separately to investigate the acute modification between the responses made by the males and the females. This further is investigated on the bases to square down level of frequency on the bart of gender classification.

Table 2: chi-square of effects of participant's gender on type and frequency of employed politeness strategy

Strategy	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
1	179	152	331
2	190	192	382
3	18	14	32
4	12	13	25
5	125	144	269
Total	524	515	1039
	Chi-square 4.10079	P-value 0.63714	

According to chart, it is quite clear that the level of frequency is more concerned with the difference on part of gender.

Table 3:   The Chi-square analysis for politeness strategies used by male and female participants of high socioeconomic status

Strategy	Gender		total
	Male	Female	
1	78	94	172
2	89	83	172
3	15	7	22
4	7	7	14
5	87	53	140
Total	276	244	520
Chi-Square 5.38619	P-value 0.29131		

Table 4: The Chi-square analysis for strategies used by male and female participants of low socioeconomic status

Strategy	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
1	73	77	150
2	99	102	201
3	7	7	124
4	9	7	16
5	69	66	135
Total	257	259	503

Chi-Square	P-value
0.151313	0.86209

The significant difference on part of gender response is done with the use of Chi-square analysis to testify the level of frequency and occurrence. To make it valid this analysis is done on the level of socioeconomic status. In term of the analysis carried out, it can be unveiled that no significant differences are found as part of investigation which is evident in in both table No. 3 and table No. 4.

Table 5: The Chi-square analysis for the effect of participants' socioeconomic status on their politeness strategy use

Strategy	status		Total
	High	Low	
1	148	172	335
2	195	177	299
3	15	17	29
4	26	10	36
5	130	139	278
Total	503	504	1238
Chi-Square		P-value	
3.95618		0.41197	

On the second level, it is estimated that there is no significant difference found on the level of both high and low level socioeconomic status that is evident in table No. 5 through a chi-chart. There were ten situations that were given to the respondents. The analysis of types of strategies all ten situations express that in Pakistani setting, the speakers appear to give priority to the "negative politeness strategies" especially while requesting. According to the result, it is found that 71 % of the students are more inclined toward the frequency of "negative politeness" but on the contrary "positive politeness strategies" were imply by 29 % students. According to the result, one can say that while requesting "negative politeness strategies" have been adopted in Pakistani cultural context in contrast to "positive politeness strategies". However, on the level of gender variable analysis, the findings the level of frequency on both gender and socioeconomic hierarchy have been analyzed with no significant difference. Moreover, it is also have analysis the "politeness" strategies are similarly implied in contrast to many languages being spoken round the world communities. Cross cultural similarities have also been explored and it is found that there is indeed a close connection between the different dimensions of language on the level of politeness. It is quite important to know that the culture of a particular community has strong impact of the frequency of occurrence and expression in the speech act process but can have a variety of expressions and emotional intensity. Another significant observation has been declared that the model presented and experimented by both Levinson and Brown which claims to a universal one is actually valid and practical in nature.

6. Conclusion

This study aims at the impact of Punjabi language usage based on gender specific and socioeconomic status. This study is conducted under the paradigm of the theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) entitled as "politeness strategies" which includes framework for both positive and negative response. This theoretical framework proposed by Brown and Lenvinson claims to be universal after a long her investigation and research. To conclude it is found that the variables investigated in this study are baseless. These variables have no effect on the occurrence of politeness both on the basis of level of

gender as well as on socioeconomic level. However, the findings suggests that cultural orientation plays a significant role during the act of communication and dialogue exchange especially while requesting, pleading and imploring. Secondly, the findings also suggests the rationality of the framework designed by the Levinson and Brown (1987) for the strategies of politeness which tends to discover the cross culture varieties and diversity of both language and culture. Tho extend this study one can also be investigated further on the paradigm of educational level, profession grounding and largely dialect and regional level.

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