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The Comparative Study of Politeness in Pashto and English Languages

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Abstract This research study aims at finding out the expressions of politeness in the Pashto Language. The data were collected from the respondents of the Pashto Language through a questionnaire of the open role-play situations of requesting and apologizing. The questionnaire was adopted from Reiter`s Study (2000), and it was also translated into the Pashto language. House and Kasper`s (1989) Analytical framework and coding scheme were applied for the analysis of the data of both the languages. The results show that politeness exists both in the Pashto language and British English, but the respondents of British English have shown more consideration towards negative politeness than the respondents of the Pashto Language. The British respondents have also shown a need to spare the hearer`s (addressee`s) face. Even, in British English, a need to respect the addressee`s negative face was also shown, corresponding to his/her distance, degree of individuation and other considerations.

Key Words: Politeness, Negative Politeness, Positive Politeness, Pashto Language, Role Plays

Introduction

This research study attempts to identify the strategies of politeness which are preferred in the Pashto language. This research study also aims to explore how requests and apologies are expressed in the Pashto language. It also explores positive and negative politeness strategies in the Pashto language and Culture. For meaningful and interactive communication, there is always a need for certain linguistic and non-linguistic strategies. Such strategies help the speakers to express themselves without offending others and even, the speakers need such politeness strategies in their speech to make their communication, conversation and talk more polite, hearer friendly and smooth.

Brown & Levinson (1978) state that such strategies are very much there in the verbal interchanges like requesting, offering, criticizing and complaining, etc. though the people may not be so much overtly aware of such strategies. It means that fine and articulate speech is not only enough for an interactive and successful speech, but the consideration of the hearer`s (addressee`s) face and feelings is very important for meaningfully successful communication. In other words, politeness in speech means that both the speaker and hearer are to abide by certain strategies to avoid face-threatening in their interaction.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

1. Find out positive and negative politeness in the Pashto language

2. Explore the validity of Brown and Levinson`s theory of politeness

3. Find out the frequently used strategies of politeness in the Pashto language

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Research Questions

1. What are the strategies used in the Pashto Language to show politeness?
2. What kind of politeness is used in the Pashto Language?
3. Are there any social patterns in a Pashto language community that determine politeness?
4. Is Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness in English (1987) valid in Pashto context?

Literature Review

Ehlich (1992) says about the origin of the term, 'polite' that it may have developed during the Middle Age. The Western feudal knight influenced by the courteous behavior of the secular upper class started to distinguish himself from the rest of the people by expressing and identifying with a set of courtesy values such as loyalty and reciprocal trust.

There are also many other scholars and social scientists who also attempt to define the term: politeness.

Robin Lakoff (1975) defines politeness "to be a way or medium which is used to reduce friction in personal interaction". Leech (1980, p. 19) finds the term politeness to be a "strategic conflict avoidance which can be measured in terms of the degree of an effort put into the avoidance of a conflict situation". Brown & Levinson (1987) define the term politeness to be a complex system for softening face threats. Arndt and Janny (1993) termed politeness to be an interpersonal supportiveness.

Hill, Ide, Ikuta, Kawasaki and Ogino (1986) find the term politeness to be a kind of constraint on human interaction". Ide (1988) terms politeness to be a kind of language which is associated to smooth communication, but Sifianou (1989) finds the term politeness to be a set of social values which the interactants find useful for the satisfaction of their mutually shared expectation.

Watts (2003) links the concept of politeness to that of impoliteness. The concepts of politeness highlighted by Lakoff (1973, 1975), Brown & Levinson (1978, 1987), Fraser and Nolen (1981) and Leech (1981) are almost the same but with the friction of difference.

Keeping in view the previous studies regarding linguistic politeness and its conceptualization. It has got two important aspects volition or strategic politeness and discernment or social indexing –volition by Hill (1986), Ide (1989) or strategic politeness by (Lakoff (1973, 1975), Brown & Levinson (1978, 1987), Fraser and Nolen (1981), and Leech (1983) and discernment by Hill (1986), Ide (1989) or the social indexing by Ervin-Tripp (1990). The difference between the volition and discernment is that volition is based on the speaker`s willingness and upon his own choice, whereas discernment requires one to conform himself or herself to the given social norms. Volition has got to deal with the linguistic performance regarding some action for the achievement of some communicative goal while discernment has nothing to do with the communicative goal which the speaker intends to achieve, but it does require one to represent some social warrants. In the case of volition, the speaker has a wide range of possibilities to choose an accurate and precise linguistic form for social interaction. Discernment and the social importance of the addressee determine the automatic and compulsory linguistic forms in accordance with the social norms and conventions.

Research Methodology

This research study aimed at finding out the expression of politeness in Pashto and English languages by adopting a questionnaire of open role-play situations from Reiter`s (2000). Data from the Pashto Language came through an adapted and translated questionnaire of 12 the request role-plays situations, and 12 apologies role-play situations. Then, the questionnaire of these role-plays was given to the students of Jehanzeb College, University of Malakand, University of Swat; Abdul Wali Khan, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Sheringal, Dir Upper, Islamia College University Peshawar and the University of Peshawar. The university students, as respondents, were taken the target population in order to ensure the homogeneity in terms of their educational background, age, range, and their social class. The analysis of the data was done through the adopted coding scheme of Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper`s (1989) CSSARP (Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project).

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Distribution of the Main Request Strategy types in Twelve Situations

Target Request	Strategy Type	BE	BE %	PL	PL %
	I	0	0.00%	3	20%
Request 1 "Borrowing of Book"	CI	10	66.66%	9	60%
	N-CI	5	33.33%	3	20%
No of Respondents	Total	15	99.99%	15	100%
	I	0	0.00%	2	13.33%
Request II "Asking for time off."	CI	15	100%	8	53.33%
	N-CI	0	0.00%	5	33.33%
No of Respondents	Total	15	100%	15	99.99%
	I	0	0.00%	1	6.67%
Request III "Minding the phone."	CI	15	100%	13	86.67%
	N-CI	0	0.00%	1	6.67%
No of Respondents	Total	15	100%	15	100%
	I	4	26.66%	3	20%
Request IV "Asking for direction."	CI	7	46.66%	8	53.33%
	N-CI	4	26.66%	4	26.67%
No of Respondents	Total	15	99.98%	15	100%
	I	0	0.00%	2	13.33%
Request V "asking for a lift."	CI	14	93.40%	7	46.67%
	N-CI	1	6.66%	6	40%
No of Respondents	Total	15	100%	15	100%
	I	0	0.00%	3	20%
Request VI "Asking for Car borrowing."	CI	12	80.00%	9	60%
	N-CI	3	20.00%	3	20%
No of Respondents	Total	15	100%	15	100%
	I	3	21.00%	3	20%
Request VII "Canceling or postponing the holiday."	CI	9	64.28%	6	40%
	N-CI	3	14.28%	6	40%
No of Respondents	Total	15	99.56%	15	100%
	I	0	0.00%	3	20%
Request VIII "Asking for typing letters."	CI	15	100%	6	40%
	N-CI	0	0.00%	3	20%
No of Respondents	Total	15	100.00%	15	80%
	I	0	0.00%	2	13.33%
Request IX "Borrowing house."	CI	6	63.00%	8	53.33%
	N-CI	3	37.00%	5	33.33%
No of Respondents	Total	15	100%	15	99.99%
	I	0	0.00%	1	6.67%
Request X "Swapping seats."	CI	15	100%	9	60%
	N-CI	0	0.00%	5	33.33%
No of Respondents	Total	15	100%	15	100%
	I	0	0.00%	2	13.33%
Request XI "Asking for a loan."	CI	8	53.34%	5	33.33%
	N-CI	7	46.66%	8	53.33%
No of Respondents	Total	15	100%	15	99.99%
	I	0	0.00%	3	20%
Request XII "Borrowing computer."	CI	15	100%	8	53.33%
	N-CI	0	0.00%	4	26.67%
No of Respondents	Total	15	100%	15	100%

The data above shows that there are a marked preference and tendency for conventional indirectness (CI) in both the linguistic cultures.

The Pashto Language

The lower incidence of the Imposition strategy in the Pashto Language was noted in R 3 and in R 10 (6.67% each), and it was just 13.33% each in R 2, R 5, and in R 9.

In the role plays of R 5 and in R 10, the participants are not known to each other, but in R 2 and R 3, they are familiar to one another. It is clear that the closer the speakers or the interlocutors are, the more direct form of their request would be. As it has been noted by Brown and Levinson (1987) that the fear of losing face takes place when on the record request is asked for, and then, such a request would be denied.

The data which were explained in the previous tables and figures show that Pashto speakers used almost all the strategies. The use of I, CI, and NCI was used in various degrees by them. The Pashto speakers also used consistently CI, but less in percentage than the British respondents. Basically, in CI and NCI, an opportunity is given to the addressee to volunteer himself/herself to understand the request through any hint or clue. Thus, in such CI and NCI strategies, there is less possibility of imposition upon the addressee, and in such requests, the hearer would have the pleasure to offer for the speaker`s needs. Regarding such phenomenon, Brown and Gilman (1989) state that Off-record strategies (CI and NCI) are the mixed strategies that relate to both the positive and negative politeness.

The British English

The incidence of CI in British English was higher in R 1, R 2, R 3, R 5, R 6, R 10, and R 12. In view of the social distance and the level of their relationship, higher levels of Impositive were expected, but much higher levels of Impositive did not happen in British English. In role play 4, the interlocutors are friends and have equal status. The hearer is supposed to ask a pedestrian to guide them to a particular street. Though in the role play, a request was made to a stranger, which did not cause any cost to the stranger, still such a request could be considered as an Imposition on the time and space of unknown addressee. Even it could further be experienced that Britishers normally prefer to find out such places all by themselves rather than asking others for guidance. There is every possibility that strangers and unknown people may cooperate in a similar situation, but still, the Britishers avoided asking from unknown and strangers.

Even for the role-playing of situation 4, the two respondents of the British English refused to ask the pedestrians for guidance as they did not like asking. The respondents from the British English were not at ease for the role-playing of situation 4, but there was no problem for the Pashto speakers to agree and accept their fault of forgetting the map. The Britishers did not admit their fault of forgetting the map and did not accept responsibility but argued about it.

The British respondents made a preferable use of the conventional indirectness, but the use of non-conventional and Impositive strategies was comparatively low. So far, the use of the NCI in MF interaction of the British English is concerned; it was the male speakers who used this strategy for the sake of face-saving mechanism.

As far as the linguistic behaviour of both the British and the Pashto respondents is concerned, the Pashto speakers seemed to be a little bothered about the consideration of their negative face. The Pashto respondents did not think the level of higher directness to be negative and inappropriate as they had a very strong relationship with their friends. After the analysis of the data of the open role-plays of 12 requests and 12 apologies, a comparative evaluation of the data as per the social variables of imposition, distance and power is given. The variables had an impact on the requesting behaviour of the respondents. The gist of the comparative analysis of the social variables both in Pashto language and in British English is given in the following:

- The social power and social distance had an impact on British and Pashto speakers. The pattern and mode of their requests were motivated by these variables.
- As far as the British respondents and particularly the male respondents of the British English were concerned, they were affected by their social power rather than their social distance. Their social power upon the hearer determined the direct form of expression of the request, i.e., the more the social power, the more direct the request form would be.

- Even, though the social power and social distance variables were with consideration in the context of the Pashto language, the considerations of closeness and intensity were still more important than British English. The variables of social distance and social status (power) were predominantly considered in the British English, but almost all forms of requests (directness, indirectness, imposition) were observed in the context of the Pashto language. The British respondents found indirectness and non-conventional indirectness more than the Pashto respondents.

The comparative analysis of the request patterns shows that these requests forms were used in both linguistic cultures. The respondents of the Pashto language had a tendency towards the imposition in their requests, but they also made use of CI and NCI in their requests. On the other hand, the British respondents had a tendency towards indirectness and non-directness in their requests. It was further shown that the Pashto speakers used directness or Impositive more than the British without losing their face. It means that the appropriacy of such directness was the demand of the situation in their close circuit and it was also the expected behaviour on the part of the Pashto speakers in such a close circuit context. The British respondents, on the other hand, made the use of NCI in such situations more than the Pashto speakers.

Moreover, the Pashto respondents were also motivated by the considerations of social distance, but for the British respondents, the consideration of social power was more important than the Pashto speakers.

As far as the NCI requests were concerned, the British respondents were more inclined towards the NCI requests, and they used them more than the Pashto respondents. The NCI requests were the hearer oriented; therefore, the British respondents, used them more than the Pashto respondents. The Pashto respondents tried to reduce the level of coerciveness at the time of their request. The British respondents showed more concern towards their addressee, and they tried to avoid taking the name of their addressee, and thus, their requests were more hearer oriented. On the other hand, the Pashto speakers had a different degree of tolerance for intrusion and interference.

The considerations for privacy and reserve behavior were different in both the British English and the Pashto language. The British respondents were sensitive towards the consideration for privacy and reserve behavior. In other words, the attitude towards negative politeness was different in both linguistic cultures.

As far as the external and internal modification devices of the requests were concerned, the British respondents made a more frequent use than the Pashto speakers. The Pashto language respondents also made use of these internal and external strategies, but their frequency was lower than the British respondents. The use of the degree of Impositive or directness was made in both the linguistic cultures but the levels of their orientation and degree were different in both the British English and the Pashto language.

The Patterns of Requests in the British English and in the Pashto Language

As shown by the results that the respondents of both British English and Pashto Language showed their preference for conventional indirectness than any other strategies. The main reason for the use of the conventional indirectness was to ensure such an utterance that would bring clarity and non-coerciveness in the interaction.

The data exhibits the fact that CIs were mostly the hearer oriented in British English, but the Pashto Speakers tried to reduce the level of coerciveness at the time of their requests. The data showed that the Pashto respondents used the strategy of directness more than the British respondents and therefore, a negative correlation between their directness level and their social distance was also found. It means that the more close, intimate and familiar the interlocutors, were more direct and straight would be their requests. Interestingly, the use of NCIs was also made in the Pashto language. The Pashto respondents used the strategy of Impositive more than the British respondents without losing their face. The Pashto respondents` mutual and factual information sharing made them use the strategy of Impositive more appropriately and adequately.

The high frequency of the Impositive strategy in the Pashto language shows that the respondents were sure for the compliance of their requests without losing their face.

Thus, looking at the linguistic behavior of the respondents of both the British English and the Pashto language, the British respondents were inclined and more motivated towards the consideration of their social status, but the inclination of the Pashto respondents was towards the social distance.

Thus, the data shows that the respondents of the Pashto language used the strategy of directness more appropriately in most of the role-play situations.

As far as the internal and external modification devices were concerned in the request's patterns of both the languages, the British respondents used such devices of internal as well as external modification more than the respondents of the Pashto language.

The Pashto respondents also used these devices in their requests, but their requests were more tentative than the British respondents. Thus, the application and use of the request strategies along with their internal and external devices by the Pashto speakers show that they were inclined more towards the negative politeness than the British English respondents.

The results show that the levels of the conventional indirectness and non-conventional indirectness did exist in both the linguistic cultures. The levels of CI and NCI were measured as per the variables of social distance and social power. Thus, the levels of politeness were represented in the conventional indirectness and non-conventional indirectness, which were found in the 12-request role-play situations of both the languages. The requests also indicate the British level of CI was more than the Pashto speakers, but surprisingly, the level of NCI was found more than the British respondents in the Pashto language, and such NCI refers to the levels of politeness in the Pashto language.

The comparative analysis of the requests and their internal and external modification devices in both the British English and the Pashto language shows that the Pashto language respondents used all the three levels of I, CI and NCI with some internal and external modification devices but the respondents of the British English used CI and NCI only more frequently.

The Use of Apology Strategies

The apology and its sub-strategies were used in the role-play situations of both the linguistic cultures of British English and Pashto language. The form and function of apologies both in British English and Pashto language are discussed in this chapter.

Moreover, the explanatory variables and parameters of the apologies are also discussed. The data on apology strategies also came along with the request data as the respondents of both languages were supposed to perform role-plays of both requests as well as apologies. In the apology, basically, the face needs of the addressee are aimed which means to address the negative face of the addressee, but on the other hand, it also has to address the positive face needs of the speaker. In the apology, an intention is shown to offer a remedy for an offence for which a speaker has taken responsibility. So, it is quite natural that a good number of apologies are offered for an offence which has been committed.

Table 2. Apology Patterns Data in Both British English and Pashto Language (1-12) Role Play Situations

Situation	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10		11		12	
Strategy	BE	PL	BE	PL	BE	PL	BE	PL	BE	PL	BE	PL	BE	PL	BE	PL	BE	PL	BE	PL	BE	PL	E	L
IFID	1	1	3	2	3	2	5	4	1	0	2	1	6	3	1	0	1	1	6	2	2	1	1	0
IFID Intensified	8	5	12	6	11	7	1	2	14	3	9	3	0	0	4	2	11	8	9	3	9	5	11	6
Taking Responsibility																								
Explicit self-blame	0	2	0	1	1	2	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	3	0	0	0	1	1	0
Lake of intent	2	1	2	2	2	1	0	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	5	2	0	2	5	2
Expression of embossment	1	2	6	4	1	1	0	2	6	3	1	1	0	1	1	1	4	3	2	6	0	3	6	3
Admission of facts	13	7	1	1	4	2	13	7	5	2	14	7	7	3	9	6	14	6	0	9	9	6	15	9
Refusal to acknowledge guilt	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	1	4	2	0	0	3	2	0	3	1	2	1	1	1	0
Explanation	7	9	0	2	11	4	2	1	0	1	8	4	12	7	2	2	9	2	0	6	10	6	9	4
Offer of repair	8	5	11	6	3	2	0	3	13	6	14	6	7	3	1	1	13	6	0	2	2	3	14	7
Promise of forbearance	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	3	4	0	0
Distracting from offence	1	1	1	0	1	2	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	2	5	6	0	0
No of apologies	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15

Table 2 shows an overall comparative analysis of the apology strategies in the Pashto and British English. In IFID and IFID intensified strategies, the respondents of the British English were more consistent than the respondents of the Pashto language. In 'explicit self-blame' a sub-strategy of the responsibility-taking, the respondents of the Pashto language were comparatively better than the British respondents. The 'lack of intent strategy' was used almost similarly by the respondents of both the languages. The respondents of the British English were more prominent in the expression of embarrassment strategy in A 2, A 5 and A 12. However, the respondents of the Pashto language used this strategy a bit higher in A 2, A 5, A 9, A 11 and A 12. The respondents of the British English were exclusively better in the strategy of the admission of facts. They used it in high terms in A 1, A 4, A 6, A 8, A 9, A 11 and A 12 respectively. The strategy of 'refusal to acknowledge the guilt' was almost the same in both the languages. Respondents of both the languages were comparatively better on the use of the 'explanation strategy'. The British respondents used it higher in A 3, A 7 and in A 10 but while the respondents of the Pashto language made higher use of this strategy in A 1, A 7, A 10 and in A 11 respectively. The respondents of the British English were again better on the use of the offer of repair strategy, and they used it more in A 2, A 5, A 6, A 9 and A 12. The strategy of 'promise of forbearance' and 'distraction from an offence' was comparatively low in both the linguistic cultures

The Use of Apology Strategies in British English and Pashto Language

The strategies of apologies were also examined as per the variables of the social distance, social power and the ranking of imposition in both the British English and the Pashto language. The data shows that the variables of social distance and social power were applied as per the severity of the offence in both the languages. The results show that there was a relationship between social power and the degree of the severity of an offence.

The results further show that if the speaker (address or) has more social power than the hearer (addressee), still he has to apologize due to the severity of an offence. The results further indicate that British respondents used more strategies than Pashto speakers. The results also indicate that the respondents of both the languages used IFID and responsibility expressions in the apologies role-play situations. The IFID and responsibility strategies were independently used, but the other strategies of the apologies were context-dependent. The level of the realization of the IFIDs was different in both the linguistic cultures. However, the British respondents made a marked use of the IFID intensified form and their frequently used intensified form was, 'I am sorry' by adding the adverbs like dreadfully, awfully, extremely, so, really and terribly.

Conclusion

The results show that the respondents of both the languages used the strategies of requests and apologies differently, but still, there were some strategies which were nearly used by both the respondents of the British English and the Pashto language. So, it is evident from the results that both the positive and negative politeness was used in both the linguistic cultures, but the British respondents showed more consideration towards negative politeness. They also showed a need for the redressal of the hearer`s negative face, and they also showed the need to respect the addressee`s negative face due to his/her social distance and individual consideration. It is also evident from the fact that the British respondents used the strategy of the Impositive lesser than the Pashto respondents. The results further show that 'negative' and 'positive' politeness was considered as a crux for dissociation and association in both the British English and Pashto language, but the British respondents showed more inclination towards negative politeness than the Pashto language respondents.

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