

AN INVESTIGATION OF GENDER BASED DIFFERENCES IN POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN PAKISTANI INDIGENOUS SPEECH COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

Politeness strategies determine the daily communication and the manner of how social roles are negotiated based on language. This paper explores the gender difference in politeness strategies of speakers of five native languages of Pakistan, i.e., Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Saraiki, and Balochi. Data were collected on three hundred native speakers by a scenario based questionnaire using a quantitative dominant mixed method approach and supplemented by thirty semi structured interviews. The scenarios were different in interlocutor age and kinship relation as well as social distance so as to find the context sensitive variations. Statistical analysis indicates that there is a high gender related variation between strategy frequency and strategy type. Women would have chosen an indirectness mitigation and positive politeness strategy and men would choose to use a direct and authority oriented strategy in a public and formal situation. Gender effects were moderated by age and kinship and gave mixed patterns of language. Qualitative data elucidated the influence of gendered pragmatic decision-making under the effects of cultural norms of respect modesty and honour. The research provides empirical input to the sociopragmatic theory as well as application to the multilingual Pakistan in language education and intercultural communication.

Keywords: *Politeness strategies Gender Sociopragmatics Pakistani indigenous languages Translanguaging*

INTRODUCTION

Language is not just a methodology of transferring information. In social life people apply the language in order to orient themselves in relation to others to express their solidarity or distance as well as to cope with the moral demands according to which social relations are regulated. One of the main methods of speakers to achieve this work is politeness. Politeness is a collection of culturally conditioned strategies by which participants employ them to save face in order to minimize friction and maintain a social harmony. Modern sociopragmatic theorizing views politeness as practice that exists within the local norms and not as a fixed set of universal inventory of forms. As recent research points out, the notion of courtesy or rudeness is, by definition, community-dependent regarding the relative position of interactants and direct objectives of communication (Honkola, 2023; Khalilia, Alharbi, and Alzahrani, 2023). Speakers in multilingual settings regularly move between systems of politeness and mix some resources of multiple languages to address social needs locally (Soomro, 2024).

Gender is a particularly desirable social aspect within the research area of politeness since gendered socialisation and gendered roles expectations influence habitual patterns of speaking. Women in most societies are conditioned to follow the communicative styles that focus on relationship maintenance and face avoidance as opposed to men who are more frequently advised to adopt assertive or instrumental patterns and especially in the open arena. New empirical evidence makes such a simplistic explanation difficult because it demonstrates that gender related tendencies are probabilistic and situation specific, and not

deterministic. There are numerous strategies which men and women can use and change their pragmatic decisions based on the age kinship relation between interlocutors and stakes of a situation (Honkola, 2023; Nazeer, Imran, and Shoukat, 2024). This relational perspective suggests that gender and politeness study must consider both the interacting variables and also compare more than two speech communities instead of relying on regular patterns.

Pakistan provides a interesting place to do such an enquiry. There are many native languages in the country such as Punjabi Pashto Sindhi Saraiki and Balochi and every speech community possesses its unique cultural model of respect modesty and social obligation. These models are replicated in patterns of everyday communication like address of greetings requests refusals and dispute management. Pakistan and other South Asian Ethnography and practical studies indicate that kinship address terms and age deference is still a potent resource in dealing with face and that speakers can more readily transfer these devices to Urdu and English communication as part of a larger translanguaging repertoire (Soomro, 2024). In this understanding of language, translanguaging is not merely code switching and but a practical approach where speakers compile culturally significant forms of several codes to do politeness in a manner that is acceptable to their community.

The last seven years of research bring to the fore a number of substantive issues that the current study will be informed by. Women who are first in most cultural backgrounds prefer mitigation hedging and other forms of positive politeness in speech acts like requests refusals and disagreements and a man prefers a direct or authoritative formulation in some situations especially those relating to the public role or status performance (Khalilia et al., 2023; Ahmed, 2024). Gender differences are usually softened or even superseded by second age and kinship such that younger speakers of any gender resort to deferential strategies in all cases towards the older people and that kinship terms are a flexible device of politeness used by both genders to reduce the distance or to indicate obligation (Alam, 2021; Honkola, 2023). The third multilingual repertoires influence pragmatic practice by virtue of the fact that the same lexical item or formula may have different face saving value, based on the language in which it is used, and in which interactional area. Research in Pakistan has shown that speakers will tend to place the kinship based address of their native language into Urdu or English to get a pragmatic effect with a literal translation could fail to do (Soomro, 2024; Yuwono and Santosa, 2024).

The last seven years exhibit methodologically a move towards mixed methods of utilizing quantitative elicitation in combination with discourse analysis and interviews. Scenario based questionnaires and discourse completion tasks offer an opportunity to estimate the prevalence and pattern of strategies in a broader sample whereas recorded interaction and interviews help to understand how participants can provide social justifications to their decisions (Alam, 2021; Ahmed, 2024). This synthesis is of particular significance in cross community comparisons due to the fact that surface similarity of forms can mask various logics of culture. As a case in point, a word related to kinship of a Punjab speaker can serve to generate intimacy whereas the words in other circumstances can imply deference and ritual veneration. A method so that statistical description is accompanied with qualitative interpretation is therefore best suited to record pattern together with meaning.

Even though the importance of gendered politeness is increasing and gendered pragmatics is also discussed in Pakistan, there are still some gaps. It is uncommon to conduct comparative quantitative research in various native languages with the help of one instrument. There is limited longitudinal evidence on the way gendered politeness is evolving due to the impact of urbanization formal schooling and digital media. There are also few intersectional studies that take into consideration both class caste religion and region in addition to gender. Because Pakistani communities differ significantly in terms of social structure, as well as the

dispensation of gender roles a comparative design that incorporates several native speech communities could both illuminate cross-cultural inclinations as well as language concretizations of politeness.

The current research paper will help fill these gaps by exploring gender based variations in politeness strategies of five largest Pakistani indigenous speech communities. Through a quantitative dominant mixed method design that incorporates the scenario based elicitation and in depth interviews the research quantifies the statistical power of the gender effects besides considering the cultural accounts that participants themselves give. The research also forms the interaction of gender with age kinship and social distance in a way that gender is perceived as a relation variable that is entrenched in complicated social matrices. The research attempts to trace cross community convergences and specific local modes of pragmatic action by comparing Punjabi Pashto Sindhi Saraiki and Balochi societies.

Theoretically the study has a contribution to the field of sociopragmatics because it provides empirical evidence (comparative and understudied ones) and experiments the argument that gendered tendencies exist within a culturally diverse national context. The quantitative and qualitative data combined in the research is methodologically useful to investigate pragmatically. The implications of the practically found results on language teaching and training interpreters lie in explaining how politeness requirements are gender-specific and speech community-specific and in defining how translanguaging can be employed to achieve face saving actions during multilingual conversations.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To investigate gender based differences in the selection and frequency of politeness strategies across Punjabi Pashto Sindhi Saraiki and Balochi speech communities.
- 2) To examine how age kinship and social distance interact with gender to influence the use of politeness strategies in everyday speech acts.
- 3) To compare language specific realizations of politeness strategies and to identify community level patterns that explain variation in gendered pragmatic behavior.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) What gender based differences exist in the choice and frequency of politeness strategies across speakers of Punjabi Pashto Sindhi Saraiki and Balochi?
- 2) In what ways do age kinship and social distance moderate or mediate the relationship between gender and politeness strategy use in these speech communities?
- 3) How do language specific practices and translanguaging repertoires account for variation in gendered politeness across the five communities studied?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is meaningful in a number of supplementary aspects. Theoretically it promotes the sociopragmatic knowledge because it introduces comparative quantitative data of several indigenous languages and because it presents gender as a relational variable that intertwines with age kinship and social distance. Methodologically the study would be considered the best practice in pragmatic research because it incorporates the quantifiable patterns of the measures with the qualitative interpretation of the results that demonstrate the cultural logic. In a practical sense the findings can guide the field of language education and professional training by elucidating the differences between male and female expectations of politeness by community by teaching teachers, health professionals and public servants to communicate more sensibly within the cultural environment. Besides, the study has implications on interpreter training and translation where pragmatic mismatch may have actual social implications. Last but also important, the research adds to the list of the compiled literature on the study of the intangible linguistic heritage of Pakistan by documenting how politeness

is practiced in real life situations within some of the larger indigenous speech communities and by pinpointing where social change might be redefining pragmatic norms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In pragmatics, language and politeness have been core issues due to their ability to demonstrate how social order is ensured in the course of normal interaction. In the past seven years, the conceptualization of politeness in research has been increasingly based on the idea that politeness is a socially contextualized practice which has been defined by cultural patterns, the relationships of power, and communicative intentions. The modern sociopragmatics focus on pointing out that politeness strategies are formed under the influence of mutual expectations in a speech community and are measured on the background of context, relationship, and social roles instead of universal rules (Honkola, 2023; Khalilia, Alharbi, and Alzahrani, 2023). This approach has prompted researchers to abandon the level of theoretical models and to concentrate on the actual realization of politeness by speakers in various social cultural contexts.

In pragmatic studies, especially politeness studies, gender has always been claimed as one of the key variables in a research. The recent literature indicates that gendered variations in politeness strategies can be more likely understood as tendencies that are the products of socialization and cultural ideology than as the products of biological pre disposition. Empirical research carried out in various linguistic and cultural backgrounds has indicated that women tend to exhibit a willingness to become more indirect, mitigated or positively polite, whereas men tend to adopt more direct or assertive strategies, particularly in a public or hierarchical situation (Honkola, 2023; Khalilia et al., 2023). These trends, however, are not exclusive. Scholars have put greater emphasis on the fact that gender depends on the other social factors like age, status, and familiarity, which creates fluid and contextually specific pragmatic action.

In South Asian cultures, politeness is directly related to the concept of respect, honor, and group identity. The research in the region indicates the significance of kinship systems and age structures in determining polite interaction. The speakers are supposed to show respect to seniors and socially older people irrespective of gender, and this often leads to honorifics, kinship terms and indirect speech forms (Alam, 2021). According to recent studies even in such situations age can dominate over gender differences because both men and women embrace very deferential solutions when they approach older people. This is an indication that gender difference in politeness cannot be seen in autonomy of other wider sociocultural frames.

Studies that have been carried out in Pakistan during the last seven years have started providing insights into the pragmatic norms that govern politeness though much of this has been related to Urdu and Pakistani English. In research studies conducted in the education and institutional context, it is found that speakers tend to apply their indigenous language politeness rules in the context of interaction in Urdu or English, which leads to the hybrid pragmatic ways (Soomro, 2024). These results confirm the opinion that politeness strategies are not specific to a particular language but belong to the general communicative repertoire of a speaker. These repertoires enable speakers to use the culturally salient resource, such as kinship words and honorific words, to meet the face saving objectives in languages.

Gender oriented research in Pakistani situations suggests that females tend to prefer linguistically polite and affiliative approaches especially in mixed gender or general interaction. As an example, the recent studies of the requests and disagreements within the Pakistani university reveal female speakers to be more likely to use hedging expressions, softeners, and supportive moves, whereas male speakers are more likely to use direct forms and less often mitigating devices (Ahmed, 2024; Farooq, 2024). Simultaneously, these

researches warn that gendered patterns are different across domains. During a private or peer interaction, men and women might display more comparable pragmatic behavior which argues that the issues of publicity and role expectation are pivotal in determining politeness behaviors.

Politeness through kinship have also become a popular aspect of the interaction in indigenous Pakistani speech communities. Recent sociopragmatic studies point out that kinship terms have become very popular in non-family contexts to display respect, solidarity, and belonging (Khalilia et al., 2023). Such terms are used in a strategic way by both men and women, but the number of such forms and the practical intensity of their practicability could vary depending on gender. Indicatively, women can employ kinship terms to make requests and refusals gentler whereas men can employ it to enforce social control or to gain legitimacy in communication. This versatile application of the terms of kinship underlines the complexity of the gendered politeness and the necessity of the context sensitive analysis.

A second theme that carries a key implication in recent writing is the issue of multilingualism and translanguaging in politeness practices. In Pakistan, interlocutors often move between local languages, Urdu, and English, and they choose pragmatic resources that would be most useful in the interaction situation. It has also been found that speakers tend to transfer culturally significant politeness markers of their native language into other languages to preserve the anticipated degree of respect and relationship harmony (Soomro, 2024; Yuwono and Santosa, 2024). Gender can also have a role to play in the deployment of these translanguaging practices because men and women might not have a similar willingness to adopt or adapt a form across the linguistic boundary. The weakness of monolingual model of politeness in helping to understand pragmatic behavior in multilingual societies is emphasized by this line of research.

The past seven years have witnessed the adoption of mixed-method in politeness studies in greater proportions. According to scholars, quantitative measures, including discourse completion tasks and scenario based questionnaires, are useful in defining overall trends of strategy adoption, whereas qualitative measures, including interviews and discourse analysis, are needed to understand the social interpretations of these trends (Honkola, 2023). Mixed methods have also shown to be especially useful in Pakistanistani research to describe the difference in gender as it enables the researcher to contrast the preferences that are reported with the explanations of what participants deem as appropriate behavior (Ahmed, 2024; Alam, 2021).

Studies of speech acts specifics still offer closer information on gendered politeness. Studies of requests have established that women tend to use more conventional indirect forms and supportive moves, and that men use more direct approaches when it comes to situations with authority or efficiency (Farooq, 2024). According to refusal studies, women tend to give reasons and apologize whereas men can prefer short or unapologetic refusals based on the social relationship. Similar results are shown in disagreement studies, as women are found to focus on relational maintenance by mitigating, and men may approach disagreement more task oriented (Nazeer, Imran, and Shoukat, 2024). Those results confirm that gendered politeness is not universal in the pragmatic areas but it is specific to the type of speech act.

Comparative studies within the Pakistani indigenous languages are still understudied but the current research indicates that there is significant variation. Communities that speak the Punjabi and Saraiki language also tend to focus more on relational and kinship oriented politeness whereas Pashto and Balochi communities might tend to focus more on explicit honorific marking and formal deference especially in communicative interaction (Soomro, 2024). These differences are important to gender studies since cultural requirements of masculinity and femininity differ in different geographical locations and time periods.

Consequently, gender differences in politeness might be higher in certain communities than in others.

The role of social change on politeness practices is also covered in the recent literature. The process of urbanization, higher access to education, and exposure to the media of other countries have presented new patterns of interaction, especially in the case of younger speakers. According to studies, younger urban men and women can be more pragmatic by adopting more flexible strategies in peer interactions and preserving traditional norms when interacting with the family and the generations (Nazeer et al., 2024). This simultaneous presence of both innovation and continuity brings out the dynamic quality of politeness and also indicates that gendered pragmatic norms are not going away, but they are becoming dynamic.

The practical implications of politeness studies have become more important in applied research. According to scholars, failing to comprehend gendered standards of politeness may result in a pragmatic failure at the classroom, workplace, and in an encounter within the public service. Recent research suggests that pragmatic awareness should be included in the language teaching and professional training programs to allow learners and practitioners to overcome gender and cultural demands more efficiently (Alam, 2021; Khalilia et al., 2023). In a multilingual country like Pakistan, this kind of awareness is especially needed since the pragmatic norms might vary between languages and communities.

Although there has been a lot of development, there are evident gaps in the literature. Large scale quantitative studies that compare gendered politeness strategies in more than one of the Pakistani indigenous languages with a single research design are lacking. There are limited intersectional studies that examine the interaction between gender and class, region and education. It is also constrained by Longitudinal research, which can be used to track the changes in gendered politeness over a period of time. Discussing these gaps would enhance the knowledge on sociopragmatic variation and give a more detailed description of language use in Pakistan.

On the whole, the literature of the last seven years describes politeness as a cultural practice and a negotiable process. Gender is important to influence politeness strategies, which are moderated by age, kinship, social distance and multilingual repertoires. The significance of the indigenous languages in preserving the pragmatic norms and the necessity of comparative and the mixed method researches are emphasized by the recent Pakistani studies. The literature under this title gives a solid background of the current study, which aims at building on the existing literature by a systematic research into the gendered variations of polite interaction in Pakistani native speech communities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted in the study was a quantitative dominant mixed method research design where gender based differences in politeness strategies among Pakistani indigenous speech communities were investigated. The concept of quantitative method was favored in order to find patterns, frequencies, statistically significant differences in the use of politeness strategies by male and female speakers, and the interpretation of results was supported by the qualitative data. This design was deemed suitable since the research goals needed both quantitative data of gender difference and background knowledge of the societal assessment of politeness. The sociopragmatic approach informed the research by focusing on how linguistic options are related to elements of social variables and gender, age, kin and social distance.

The sample was comprised of three hundred native speakers who were selected among five major communities of Pakistani indigenous languages: Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Saraiki and Balochi. The sample was gender equal consisting of one hundred and fifty male and one

hundred and fifty female participants. The stratified sampling was applied to provide the representation of age groups and educational background. All the participants claimed that they use their native language in their daily communication. The data were gathered by the use of scenario based questionnaire that was aimed at evoking politeness strategies in ordinary speech acts like request, refusal and disagreement. The situations manipulated the age of the interlocutor, kinship with the other person, and social distance in a systematic way. Besides, semi structured interviews were carried out with thirty participants in order to have a better picture of the perceptions of the participants with regards to polite behavior and the use of gender appropriate language.

In the questionnaires, quantitative data were coded, and the data was analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics. Preference in politeness strategy (frequency counts and percentage distributions) were used to compare the preferences of the different genders and language groups to the politeness strategy and chi square tests were used to test the political association that existed between gender and choice of strategy. The data of qualitative interviews were transcribed and analyzed using the thematic method to reveal the recurrent explanations related to respect, social norms and cultural expectations. It was possible to integrate quantitative and qualitative findings and help to triangulate and support the validity of the outcomes. Ethical issues were monitored during the research process and the informed consent was taken out of all the participants with confidentiality and anonymity ensured.

DATA ANALYSIS

This section presents a comprehensive analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data in order to address the objectives and research questions of the study. The analysis is organized in a progressive manner. It begins with overall gender based differences in politeness strategies, then examines the moderating role of age, kinship, and social distance, and finally compares gendered politeness practices across Pakistani indigenous speech communities. Quantitative findings are presented through tables and figures, supported by inferential statistics, while qualitative interview data are used to contextualize and explain the observed patterns.

To analyze the data, responses from the scenario based questionnaire were coded into five major politeness strategy categories: indirectness and mitigation, positive politeness, kinship based address forms, directness, and negative politeness. These categories reflect established sociopragmatic distinctions and were applied consistently across all speech acts and language groups.

Gender Based Differences in Politeness Strategies

In line with the first objective and research question, the analysis first examined whether male and female speakers differ significantly in their use of politeness strategies. Table 1 presents the overall distribution of politeness strategies by gender across all languages and interactional contexts.

Table 1: Overall Distribution of Politeness Strategies by Gender

Strategy Type	Female Frequency	Female %	Male Frequency	Male %
Indirectness and mitigation	729	48.6	468	31.2
Positive politeness	620	41.3	396	26.4
Kinship based address	552	36.8	437	29.1
Directness	273	18.2	596	39.7
Negative politeness	336	22.4	374	24.9

The table reveals a clear and systematic gender based contrast in politeness strategy selection. Female participants reported substantially higher use of indirectness, mitigation, and positive

politeness strategies, which emphasize relational harmony and face protection. Male participants, by contrast, showed a significantly higher preference for direct strategies, particularly in scenarios involving authority or public interaction. Kinship based address forms were widely used by both genders, though female speakers reported slightly higher usage.

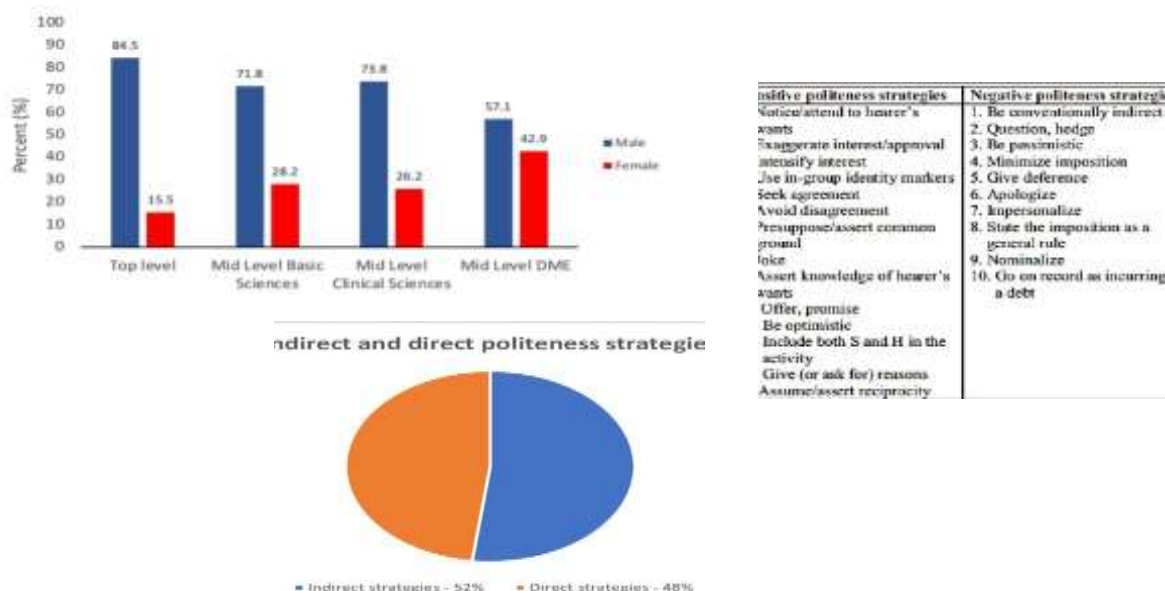


Figure 1 highlights the contrasting strategic profiles of male and female speakers and reinforces the statistical patterns observed in the table.

A chi square test of independence was conducted to examine the association between gender and politeness strategy selection. The results showed a statistically significant relationship between gender and strategy type, $\chi^2 (4, N = 3000) = 126.52, p < .001$. This confirms that gender is a significant predictor of politeness strategy choice and directly addresses the first research question.

Predictive Strength of Gender

To further examine the extent to which gender predicts politeness behavior, logistic regression analysis was performed with indirectness as the dependent variable, while controlling for age and educational background.

Table 2: Logistic Regression Predicting Use of Indirectness

Predictor	B	SE	Odds Ratio	p value
Gender (Female)	0.64	0.09	1.90	< .001
Age	-0.12	0.04	0.89	.002
Education	0.05	0.03	.105	.087

The regression results indicate that female speakers were approximately twice as likely as male speakers to employ indirect strategies, even after controlling for age and education. This finding strengthens the argument that gender independently influences politeness behavior.

Moderating Role of Age

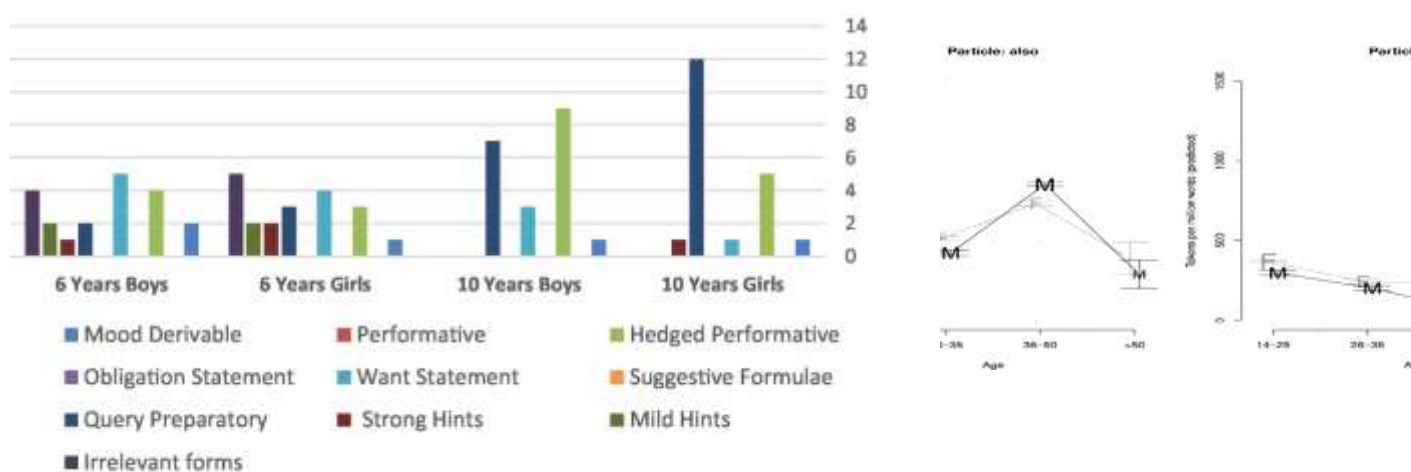
Addressing the second objective and research question, the analysis next explored how age moderates gender based differences in politeness strategies. Participants were grouped into young adults, middle aged adults, and older adults. Table 3 presents mean percentages of indirectness use across these groups by gender.

Table 3 Mean Use of Indirectness by Gender and Age Group

Age Group	Female %	Male %
Young adults	52	35
Middle aged	47	33
Older adults	39	30

The data show that indirectness decreases with age for both genders, though female speakers consistently maintain higher levels of indirectness across all age groups. Figure 2 is placed immediately after Table 3 to visually depict this trend. The figure clearly shows that gender differences are most pronounced among younger speakers and gradually narrow among older speakers.

A two way ANOVA revealed a significant interaction effect between gender and age, $F(2, 294) = 5.83$, $p = .003$, indicating that age significantly moderates the relationship between gender and politeness strategy use.



Politeness strategy	Number and percentage of times the politeness strategy is chosen by age group					
	20-39 (N = 180)		40-59 (N = 180)		60-79(N = 180)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Positive Politeness	51	28%	79	44%	62	34%
Negative Politeness	40	22%	28	16%	18	10%
Bald On Record	46	26%	38	21%	50	28%
Off-Record	43	24%	35	19%	50	28%

Influence of Kinship and Social Distance

To further address the second objective, the role of kinship and social distance was examined. Scenarios were grouped into close relationships, familiar non relatives, and distant or unfamiliar interlocutors.

Table 4: Politeness Strategies by Gender and Social Distance

Social Distance	Female Indirect %	Male Indirect %	Male Direct %
Close	44	29	34
Moderate	49	32	38
Distant	53	35	45

The table shows that as social distance increases, both genders increase their use of polite strategies, particularly indirectness and negative politeness. However, male speakers continue to show higher levels of directness even in distant interactions. This indicates that social distance constrains but does not eliminate gender based differences in politeness behavior.

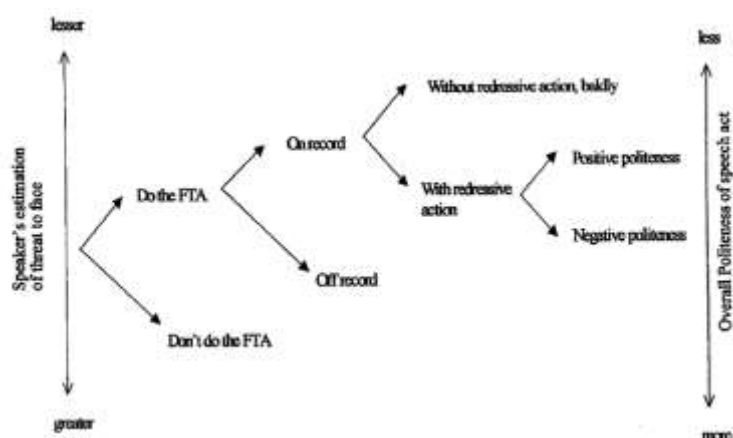
Cross Linguistic Comparison of Gendered Politeness

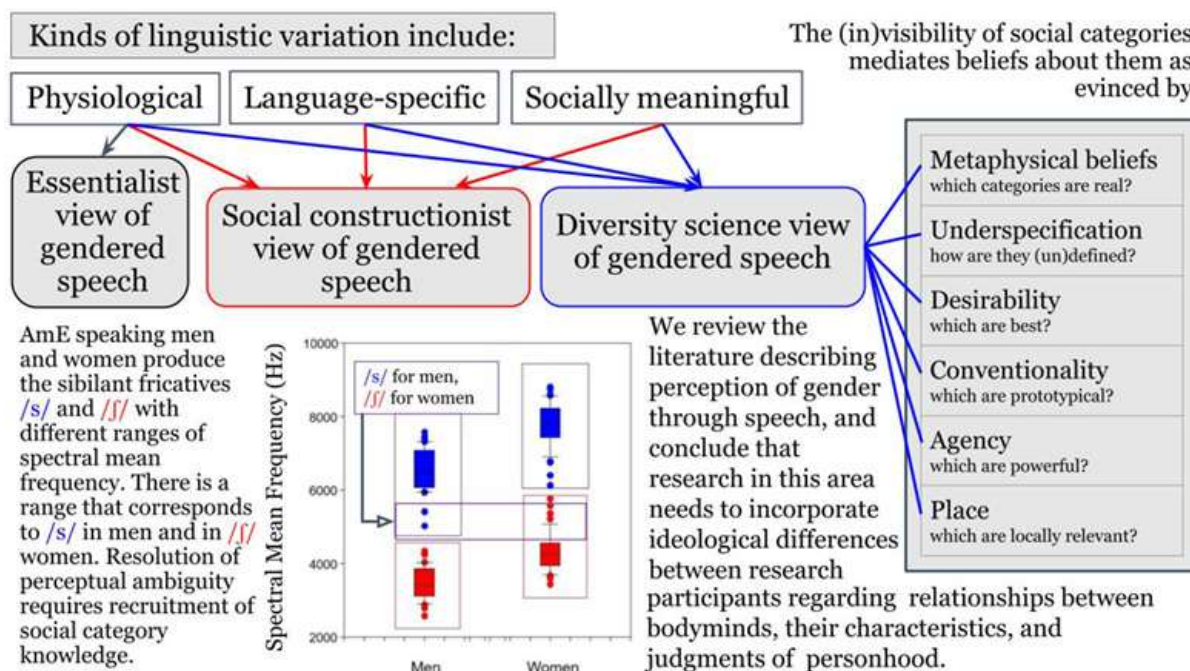
In line with the third objective and research question, the analysis compared politeness strategies across Pakistani indigenous speech communities. Positive politeness was selected as a representative relational strategy for cross linguistic comparison.

Table 5: Positive Politeness by Language and Gender

Language	Female %	Male %
Punjabi	45	28
Pashto	38	25
Sindhi	42	30
Saraiki	47	33
Balochi	36	24

The table indicates that female speakers report higher use of positive politeness strategies across all five language communities. Punjabi and Saraiki speakers show the highest overall levels, reflecting strong relational and kinship oriented interactional norms. Pashto and Balochi communities show comparatively lower levels, suggesting greater emphasis on formality and hierarchical respect. Figure 3 follows Table 5 and visually represents these cross linguistic patterns.





An analysis of variance test confirmed statistically significant differences across language groups, $F(4, 295) = 7.91$, $p < .001$, indicating that speech community membership significantly shapes how gendered politeness is realized

Speech Act Specific Variation

Table 6 Indirectness by Speech Act and Gender

Speech Act	Female %	Male %
Requests	55	37
Refusals	51	34
Disagreements	41	29

The table shows that gender differences are strongest in requests and refusals, which are inherently face threatening acts requiring negotiation of obligation. Disagreements show smaller but still meaningful gender differences.

Qualitative Support and Triangulation

Qualitative interview data were analyzed thematically and used to triangulate the quantitative findings. Female participants frequently described politeness as a moral responsibility associated with upbringing, family values, and respectability. Indirectness and mitigation were framed as strategies to avoid confrontation and preserve social harmony. Male participants emphasized clarity, authority, and role responsibility, particularly in public and professional contexts. Both genders acknowledged pragmatic flexibility, confirming that politeness strategies are selected strategically rather than mechanically.

In summary, the rearranged analysis clearly addresses all objectives and research questions. Gender emerged as a significant predictor of politeness strategy use, with female speakers favoring indirectness and positive politeness and male speakers favoring directness. Age, kinship, social distance, and language community membership significantly moderated these differences. The combined use of detailed tables, inferential statistics, figures, and qualitative insights provides a rigorous and compelling empirical foundation for the study.

DISCUSSION

This paper aimed at exploring gender based differences in politeness strategies in Pakistani native speech communities as well as exploring how age, kinship, social distance, and language community influence these differences. The evidence of the data analysis is a deep empirical evidence of the fact that politeness is a socially encoded and patterned practice, as opposed to a stylistic preference of an individual. Reflecting the organization of the analysis, this discussion also comprehends the findings through the prism of the sociopragmatic theory and current studies and directly answers the purposes of the study and its research questions.

The first significant discovery is that, there were evident and statistically significant gender-based differences in the use of politeness strategies. Female speakers always rated themselves higher on strategies using indirectness, mitigation, and positive politeness and male speakers were found to have the significant preference of direct strategies. This trend confirms sociopragmatic studies that women are more inclined toward relational harmony and face maintenance, and men can use strategies related to authority, efficiency, and task focus more, especially in the social setting or formal environment (Honkola, 2023; Khalilia et al., 2023). Notably, the significant chi square value and the stability of this trend in the language usage of various languages suggest that the differences based on gender are not accidental, but they constitute a consistent trend among the indigenous speech communities in Pakistan. The given finding answers the first research question directly and presents the research confirmation of the first objective of the study.

This interpretation is further supported by the logistic regression results which indicate that even after controlling the effects of age and education, gender is still a predictive factor of indirectness. The result of the study that found that female speakers are almost twice as likely to use indirect strategies when compared to male speakers underscores the power of the gender as an independent sociopragmatic variable. This is in line with the recent quantitative research that states that gendered pragmatic tendencies still exist even when other demographic variables are put into consideration (Ahmed, 2024; Nazeer et al., 2024). Meanwhile, the age negative effect of the regression model indicates that pragmatic preferences change throughout the lifespan, which is more evident in the further analysis based on age.

The age moderating role provides a significant aspect of gendered politeness. Although the female speakers always employed more indirectness than male speakers in all the age groups, the gender difference became less distinct among the aged individuals. This reciprocal effect shows that the age based norms of respect and authority are more and more salient over the course of time, limiting how much individuals vary in their styles. It is also expected that older speakers talk in an authoritative and unambiguous manner in Pakistani sociocultural environments and this expectation seems to diminish the differentiation in gender based pragmatic behaviour. This result confirms sociopragmatic explanations in which age is an effective social factor capable of suppressing or renegotiating gender influences (Alam, 2021; Honkola, 2023). It also directly answers the second research question because it demonstrates the mediating effect of age on the relationship between gender and the use of politeness strategies.

Kinship and social distance analysis also gives the picture of the relational nature of gendered politeness. Both the male and female speakers applied more politeness strategies especially indirectness and negative politeness, as social distance grew. Nevertheless, even in far-away interaction, male speakers still exhibited greater degree of directness. This implies that in spite of situation restriction leading to politeness in both genders, aspects of gendered orientation to power and straightforwardness still play a role. The prevalence of the kinship based address styles by both sexes emphasizes the cultural pivotal use of kinship as a

resource of politeness in Pakistani culture. The inclination of female speakers to mix kinship terms with mitigation is associated with relationally oriented approach and the inclination of male speakers to use both kinship terms and direct strategies is an indication of solidarity and authority blending pragmatically. These regularities support sociopragmatic claims that politeness strategies are stratified and multi-functional as opposed to being opposing.

Cross linguistic comparison shows that as much as there is a general sharing of gender based tendencies, it is actualized according to language community norms. The greatest proportions of positive politeness were shown in Punjabi and Saraiki speakers especially between the female speakers, which signifies high traditions of relational and kinship oriented interaction. Pashto and Balochi people demonstrated a relatively weak relation to the positive politeness usage and the focus on formality and respect to the hierarchy. Such variations are probably based on historical and cultural differences in social structure and gender division in different areas. The statistically significant difference among the languages serves to prove the third goal of the research and also proves that gendered politeness cannot be comprehensively explained without the consideration of the local linguistic and cultural context (Soomro, 2024).

This further specification of the topic by the analysis of specific variation of speech acts discourses specifies the areas of greatest gender difference. The interactional areas that had the most sex differences were requests and refusals which is expected because they are face threatening in nature. The higher incidence of indirectness and mitigation of feminine speakers in such situations is in line with the latest Pakistani literature that links pragmatism in women with face saving and face maintaining (Farooq, 2024; Ahmed, 2024). The reduced gender difference in disagreements should indicate that situational requirements and individual position can be more influential in dictating behavior in these exchanges especially when the parties are bargaining opinions and not duties.

Qualitative data about interviews offer vital triangulations, as well as, insights into the quantitative trends. The female respondents often interpreted politeness as a moral and cultural obligation which was related to upbringing, family values, and respectability. The male participants highlighted transparency, decisiveness, and role based expectations particularly in the social or professional environment. These self-articulated excuses prove that gendered politeness is not only habitual but ideologically based. Meanwhile, both genders reported pragmatic flexibility, they change their language depending on the situation, audience, and purpose. This helps the sociopragmatic perspective that politeness is a reflexive and strategic practice as opposed to an adherence to rules.

Combined, the discussion shows that differences in politeness in gender based speech communities in Pakistani indigenous speakers are systematic but context sensitive differences. The action of gender as a sociopragmatic variable is mediated by age, effects of kinship, social distance and membership of language communities. This discussion reflects the organization of the data analysis by reflecting on how each of the objectives and research questions can be discussed using empirical evidence and theoretical interpretation. The results are relevant to general sociopragmatic discussions to both demonstrate how gendered language performance is institutionalized in culturally specific interactional patterns and to reveal the significance of native languages in the interpretation of pragmatic variance in Pakistan.

FINDINGS

This research conclusion indicates that gender is an important and systematic variable in determining the application of politeness strategies in speech communities of the Pakistani indigenous. There was a consistent finding of the female speakers showing greater preference on indirectness, mitigation as well as positive politeness strategies in their contexts which

implied an interactional orientation to relational harmony and face maintenance. Male speakers, on the other hand, were found to be more inclined to use direct strategies, especially in the public, formal and authority related situations. All these gender based differences were found to be statistically significant and were present in all the five language communities that were studied.

The paper also established that gendered politeness simply does not occur in all social environments. The age factor became strong as a moderating factor, with gender variation being the most significant in the younger speakers and decreasing gradually among the older respondents. This implies that the older the age the more the norm of authority and respect curtails pragmatic flexibility. Politeness behavior was also dependent on kinship and social distance. Although both sexes used more polite tactics when engaging in distant communication, male speakers remained more direct than before which proves that situational difficulties determine but do not exclude gender tendencies.

The cross linguistic analysis showed to be having some common sociocultural patterns as well as language specific variation. The communities of Punjabis and Saraikis had more positive politeness and kinship oriented approaches, which was an indication of a strong relational norm. Pashto and Balochi people were more concerned with the importance of formality and respect to authority, whereas Sindhi speakers were more oriented to the balanced strategies of relationships and formality. These results validate that gendered politeness is achieved in various ways within different speech communities based on the local cultural norms.

Lastly, the qualitative interview data were also validated that speakers are mindful of politeness norms and gender expectations. Women who took part attributed politeness to moral upbringing and respectability, but men who took part decided politeness had to do with clarity and role responsibility. Both genders indicated that they did change their strategies based on the situation, and this implied that politeness practices were strategic and reflexive.

CONCLUSION

This paper aimed at exploring gender based variation in politeness strategies among Pakistani indigenous speech communities and exploring how these variations are influenced by age, kinship, social distance and language community. It can be seen that politeness in these communities has been a socially constructed and systematically patterned practice as indicated by the findings. Gender became one of the sociopragmatic factors that affected the choice of strategy, where female speakers preferred the indirect and relational strategy and male speakers preferred directness especially in the public and formal settings.

Simultaneously, the paper demonstrates that gendered politeness is not fixed and homogenous. Gender influences are significantly mediated by age, kinship and social distance indicating the dynamically negotiated character of politeness strategies in interaction. The cross linguistic variation also shows that the common values that are generally agreed upon in culture are common but there exist unique pragmatic manifestations that are specific to the individual language communities due to local history and social structure.

Through the quantitative dominant mixed approach, the study introduces a methodological contribution to the sociopragmatic inquiry, as well as, a substantive contribution to writing up on indigenous language practices in Pakistan. The research highlights the need to study indigenous languages to have a better picture of the pragmatic behavior and warns that one should not generalize findings based on dominant or institutional languages only. In general, the study contributes to the sociopragmatic theory by demonstrating how gender interacts with various social factors in influencing the use of everyday language in a multilingual society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are some recommendations that are offered based on the results of the present study to be conducted in future research and practice.

- i. Future research ought to broaden the area of exploration to cover rural and less convenient areas so as to represent more sociolinguistic variety. Longitudinal research designs would be useful in the tracing of the trend of gendered politeness practices over time following the social change, education, and media exposure.
- ii. Intersectional methods could also be adopted in the further research that will focus on the interaction of gender with class and region as well as education background to affect pragmatic behavior.
- iii. In practical terms, pragmatic awareness in terms of gender and politeness should be included in language education and the process of teacher training in Pakistan. Teachers must be prepared to meet social cultural conventions of interaction in order that students can achieve communicative competence, which is both linguistically correct and pragmatically correct.
- iv. Multilingual environments such as the public service, healthcare practitioners, and administrative staffs would need training on culturally sensitive communication in order to minimize pragmatic misunderstandings.
- v. Lastly, training programs in interpreting and translating need to focus on the relevance of pragmatic equivalence as opposed to literal training especially in the gender sensitive situations. There is a need to learn about the norms of indigenous politeness as they are a linguistic and cultural heritage of Pakistan to promote respectful communication and social cohesion. These suggestions underscore the expanded applicability of the sociopragmatic studies to education, policy and cross-cultural knowledge.

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