POLITENESS STRATEGIES AND PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE IN PUNJABI SPEECH COMMUNITIES: A COMMUNITY-BASED STUDY OF EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS IN CENTRAL PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT
The article documents a sociopragmatic community-based study of politeness strategies and pragmatic competence of Punjabi speakers in Central Punjab in Pakistan. The study examines the performance of request, refusal, apologizing, and address practices, based on a natural occurrence of data on a family, market, and neighborhood context, as outlined in participant observation, audio-recorded conversations, and semi-structured interviews. It relies on politeness and social pragmatic strategies (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Spencer-Oatey, 2008), and puts more emphasis on native cultural values, including izzat (honor), kinship indexing, and community solidarity. It has been found that the Punjabi politeness is achieved through the complex interaction of indirectness, address to honorifics and kinships, mitigation and downgrading, humor and topic-shift as face-saving strategies, and formula routines of a certain culture. Pragmatic decisions are determined by the age, gender, social distance, and context; pragmatic competence, thus, requires linguistic knowledge and social-cultural sensitivity. Consequences to the pragmatics theory, language teaching and intercultural communication are debated. The paper ends with limitations and recommendations of additional comparative and quantitative studies.
Keywords: *politeness strategies, pragmatic competence, Punjabi, sociopragmatics, community-based data, Central Punjab*

INTRODUCTION

Language is a social activity where people develop relationships, articulate values and sustain social order. In the daily choice, speakers always decide on the way to talk, what to express, how to express expressly or indirectly. These are not just arbitrary decisions; they are influenced by culturally common standards, expectations, and beliefs of what is considered to be a good behavior in a particular situation. This capability to employ language in a proper way in line with the social and cultural requirement is pragmatic competence in pragmatics (Kasper and Rose 2002). Politeness is one of the key dimensions of pragmatic competence that allows communicators to coordinate the interaction among people, secure and maintain respect and solidarity, prevent or reduce the state of social conflict (Leech, 2014).

Politeness is ingrained in daily interaction in Pakistan, a multilingual nation with intensive communal and relational cultural backgrounds. The popular indigenous language used in the country is Punjabi, which is important in the informal and semi-formal communication, especially in Central Punjab. It is applied widely in residential, trading, work places, religious and local discussions. In spite of this wide usage, relatively little pragmatic and sociopragmatic study of Punjabi has been done. In the majority of the current research in Pakistan, the indigenous languages have not been represented in the topic of politeness and pragmatic competence, as most of the current literature has discussed Urdu or English, notably in the educational and institutional settings. Such a difference is considerable since the politeness practices within the Punjabil culture are closely connected with the local cultural ideas of respect to older people, the sense of kinship, honor, and community harmony that might not be offset by the politeness models created in the Western context.

The initial politeness theories, especially the face-based theory of politeness by Brown and Levinson (1987) theorize politeness in terms of strategies that speakers employ to reduce face threatening actions. Based on this framework, speakers are concerned with negative face, the need to be autonomous, positive face, the need to be approved and belong. Contrary to this model having had a significant impact and application, it has also been criticized to have made the claim of universality and not considering cultural variation adequately. Researchers have noted that the definition of polite actions varies in various cultures and politeness is judged by the standard set in the society instead of the universal standards (Watts, 2003; Spencer-Oatey, 2008).

More current methods favor the role of sociopragmatics, the study of the influence of social norms, attitude to cultures and circumstantial conditions on the use of a language. Spencer-Oatey (2008) suggests the idea of rapport management stating that politeness is to be interpreted as the way speakers control relationships in a certain cultural context. In this regard, politeness does not merely pertain to reducing the face threats, but also to preserving harmony, satisfying social compulsions and creating conformity to societal expectations. It is a methodology that is especially applicable to the South Asian culture, whereby the act of communicating is commonly defined by societal principles, as opposed to the autonomy of individuals (Leech, 2014).

Studies of South Asian languages have revealed politeness to be often conveyed in a polite way indirectly, using honorifics, addressing in terms of kinship and using ritualized phrases. The verbs and pronouns selection and agreement with verbs are socially encoded to reflect hierarchy and respect in languages like Urdu and Hindi, and refusals and disagreements are usually cushioned using long explanations and promising to do so later (Rahman, 2007; Sharma, 2010). Punjabi has many of these characteristics in common with it also showing signs of language specific practices being influenced by local history, social organization, and patterns of everyday interaction. As an example, certain words of kinship like chacha, baji, or ustad are often used out of the family with the purpose to show respect and their closeness in relation to each other, and the intonations of the requests are indirect when addressing an elder or interlocutors of a higher status.

Recent papers in Pakistani context have started to investigate pragmatic transfer, politeness strategy and speech-act realization among the Punjabi speakers, especially English as the second language. According to these studies, the norms of indigenous politeness still affect pragmatic decisions made by speakers even in cases where the language is other than native (Saleem, 2023; Nawaz, 2024). Much of this is, however, based on elicited data, including discourse completion tasks, and these data are not necessarily enough to reveal the dynamics of everyday interaction. The community-based research that investigates the naturally occurring Punjabi discourse in the real life and how politeness is performed, perceived and assessed by speakers themselves still remains.

The second significant issue with regard to the politeness study is associated with pragmatic competence acquisition and assessment. The acquisition of pragmatic competence does not happen by receiving formal training only; it is learned in a process of socialization, watching and engaging in community activities (Kasper and Rose, 2002). Learners of Punjabi acquire the habits of speaking in a polite way through observation of the elders, by being made aware of violation of norms, and by learning over time ways of making requests, rejecting offers or disagreeing in culturally appropriate ways. Pragmatic competence thus involves not just linguistic knowledge but also cultural awareness, mindfulness on social roles and the capacity to read contextual clues, e.g. tone, gesture and body language.

Knowledge of politeness in Punjabi is also significant in that the daily engagements represent places where social relationships are endorsed and bargained. Markets, homes and neighborhood spaces are the primary areas where the speakers of various ages, genders and statuses are regularly interacting. In such environments, politeness techniques assist speakers to deal with power inequalities, show respect, and strengthen social affiliations. Such interactions can be studied sociopragmatically to show the process of how language reflects the social structure, as well as replicates them in terms of hierarchy, gender norms, and communal values.

It is on this background that the current study examines politeness strategies and pragmatic competence in Punjabi speech communities in Central Punjab in a community based approach. In the way the study will concentrate on natural interactions that occurred in real-world situations as opposed to hypothetical ones, the research expects to present a realistic and culturally based explanation of politeness functioning in actual Punjab communication. It aims to demonstrate that politeness on Punjabi is not only a question of language structure but a socially constructed phenomenon which is determined by common cultural interpretations and ethical norms.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has the following two objectives.

a) To identify and describe the major politeness strategies used by Punjabi speakers in everyday interactions in Central Punjab.

b) To examine how social variables such as age, gender, and social distance influence pragmatic competence and the selection of politeness strategies in Punjabi discourse.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study is guided by the following research questions.

a) What politeness strategies are commonly employed by Punjabi speakers in everyday community-based interactions in Central Punjab?

b) How do age, gender, and social distance shape the use and interpretation of politeness strategies among Punjabi speakers?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The research is relevant as it adds to the culturally based knowledge of politeness and pragmatic competence in an indigenous Pakistani language, which has steadily been excluded in pragmatic research. The study, based on the analysis of the naturally occurring Punjabi interactions, can provide insights that can be applied to improve the current theories of politeness and undermine the assumptions of universality. The results can also be applied in practical spheres e.g. language education, intercultural communication, language policy, especially where Punjabi speakers have contacts with the representatives of other languages or where there is the use of Punjabi language in combination with Urdu and English. The research, in general, makes the point of the need to identify local communicative patterns and daily routines to comprehend how language functions in communities, and thus, advanced more accommodative and context-sensitive methods to pragmatics research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The South Asian societies have gradually had their language use explored in a sociopragmatic perspective which views politeness as a socially constructed practice as opposed to a universal set of language rules. It has been demonstrated in research over the past five years that there has been a decisive break with decontextualized or elicitation-based research in favor of studies that put more emphasis on everyday interaction, local moral values, and community-based norms. According to scholars, politeness cannot be sufficiently interpreted without the help of culturally specific terms like respect, honour, social obligation, and relational harmony, which are of priority in Punjabi-speaking communities (Spencer-Oatey, 2018; Leech, 2014). This view applies especially to Pakistan whereby, multilingualism, strong kinship systems, and hierarchical social systems have a profound effect on the pragmatic behavior.

Pragmatic competence and recent pragmatic studies focus on the point that the concept entails not only knowledge of the linguistic forms but also an idea of when, how, and to whom these forms are to be employed. According to Kasper and Rose (2002) the pragmatic competence is a dynamic skill that is developed during socialization and engagement in interaction. Continuing this perspective, recent researches emphasize that the competence is judged on a local level, i.e., the utterances of the speakers are evaluated according to the norms in the community not to abstract theoretical criteria. In Indian Punjabis, to be pragmatically competent is sometimes to show an awareness of age, gender and social distance and the moral expectations that are imposed on these variables. What could be considered to be indirect or seemingly ostentatious within a particular cultural system will be seen as a sign of respect and social decorum in Punjabi dialogue (Watts, 2003).

In the past five years, politeness strategies in indigenous languages and specifically Punjabi and Urdu have been the subject of a number of Pakistani studies that have increasingly recognized the constraints of using Western politeness models in the absence of cultural adaptation. Studies based on the framework of Brown and Levinson remain powerful, yet occasionally researchers believe that the model is too focused on the needs of the face, and in collectivist cultures typical of South Asia, they do not explain everything (Spencer-Oatey, 2018). Research in Punjab proves that speakers, in most cases, value preserving social harmony and the need to fulfill relational obligations rather than insist on the personal territory, which results in the significant use of indirectness, mitigation, and relational forms of address (Saleem, 2023).

Sociopragmatic literature has devoted great attention to address practices. Recent publications prior to 2020 indicate that in Punjabi speech communities, kinship terms and honorific titles are always used as the core politeness markers. Chacha, baji, ustad, sahib terms are also common terms, used out of context to indicate respect, seniority or interpersonal proximity. According to Sommro (2024), the forms of address have powerful moral connotations and indicate that a speaker realizes the existence of hierarchy in the society and communal values. The wrong address term or the failure to use the right address term where it is supposed to be used is usually seen as an impolite move or a lack of social competence no matter how grammatically right the speech is.

Recent studies have also extensively reported indirectness as a prevailing politeness strategy. According to the findings of the research of everyday interactions of the Punjabi, requests, refusals, dissentiments are hardly done in a direct and bald fashion when the interlocutor is older or of social superiority. Rather, speakers use conditional clauses and hedging expressions, apologies and justifications to mitigate the strength of their speech (Leech, 2014; Saleem, 2023). These are not just linguistic choices but cultural driven behaviors that aid speakers to escape endangering social position of the addressee and maintain inter-personal

balance. Recent research points out the fact that in Punjabi indirectness is to be viewed as a manifestation of pragmatic sophistication, more than as a communicative inefficiency.

Some recent empirical studies have focused on the area of refusal strategies. The evidence indicates that Punjabis tend to build refusals not in terms of turn but in terms of extended sequences. These phrases usually comprise some initial grateful message, a description or an apology, and it ends with assurance to comply or show goodwill in the future (Akbar, 2025). These tendencies are in compliance with general South Asian politeness patterns but they are also characterized by language-specific realisations in Punjabi. These results support the idea that politeness strategies are sequential and interactional and hence should be most effectively described using natural occurring data as opposed to single elicitations tasks.

The other theme that is emerging in the literature is on pragmatic transfer and multilingual influence. The research based on the Punjabi speakers speaking both Urdu and English in educational or work situations demonstrates that the native politeness norms have a significant effect on pragmatic behavior in other languages. According to Saleem (2023), Punjabis often bring their mitigation patterns, address practices, and indirect refusal strategies into the realm of English communication, especially when talking to the elders or other persons of authority. The implication of this is that pragmatic competence is strongly embedded in the cultural experience and it also does not vary across languages even as surface linguistic types vary. These findings oppose findings of deficit on interpretations of pragmatic transfer but emphasize the strength of indigenous pragmatic systems.

The issue of gender has also been explored as generating a relevant variable in the recent studies of politeness. In-depth research studies indicate that Punjabi-speaking women are more inclined to utilize mitigation tools and signs of politeness, supportive feedback in their interpersonal interactions with members of the opposite sex, whereas men tend to adopt solidarity-related mechanisms like teasing or joking among themselves (Farooq, 2024). Researchers, however, emphasize that these patterns are not to be considered as fixed and universal. Urbanization, education and the shift in gender roles have brought in a great deal of variability especially among the younger speakers whereby there is a tendency of mixing traditional deference with an egalitarian style of interaction.

Among the most reported factors in politeness behavior have been age and social hierarchy. According to recent sociopragmatic studies, the respect on the basis of age is highly institutionalized in the Punjabi culture and it is highly manifested in language use. The address terms, low eye contact, lowered voice, and indirect speech are expected to demonstrate deference in communication between young and elderly speakers (Soomro, 2024). The inability to adhere to those norms is usually perceived as a moral slip up as opposed to a mere communication failure. This brings out the ethical aspect of courtesy within Punjabi societies whereby pragmatic competence is directly associated with the personality and a nurturing system.

The fifth and final year of the last decade has witnessed a growing support of community-based and ethnographic methodology in doing research in politeness in Pakistan. According to the scholars, questionnaires and discourse completion, as handy as they may be, are incapable of fully reflecting the multimodal and sequential character of politeness strategies (Spencer-Oatey, 2018). Scholarly works involving participant observation, audio or video recordings, and interviews are more informative on the way politeness is performed and tested in practice. Rafiq et al. (2024) show that these methods work especially well when it comes to identifying the implicit norms and metapragmatic beliefs that are not necessarily expressed by a speaker during the interview.

Language education Applied research also shows the relevance of learning about local politeness norms. The recent intervention research in Pakistani classrooms illustrates that

when an instruction is based on real-world examples of the local speech acts and culturally relevant politeness strategies, the pragmatic performance of learners will increase significantly (Rafiq et al., 2024). These conclusions hint at the idea that pragmatic competence cannot be properly taught on the basis of imported models and that learning materials have to be based on the indigenous communicative practices. This directly applies to the teacher education and curriculum construction in Punjab whereby Punjabi is being more frequently seen to benefit learning instead of a detriment.

Although these progresses were made, gaps are also clear in the literature. A lack of large scale, systematically gathered corpora of naturally occurring Punjabi interaction, and most studies tend to be limited in scope or small scale. The longitudinal studies on the change of politeness norms as a reaction to the social change, the influence of digital communication, and the effects of the mobility increase are still uncommon. Researchers also request an increase in the quantity of the works that incorporate the self-evaluations of politeness by speakers because such metapragmatic interpretations are crucial to comprehend how pragmatic competence can be regulated socially (Saleem, 2023; Soomro, 2024).

In general, the politeness discussed in the recent literature over the past five years can be seen as a culturally situated, socially governed and interactionally attained phenomenon. The strategies of politeness depend on age, sex, hierarchy and communal values, and the pragmatic competence is much more than grammatical correctness. All these studies indicate that there is a necessity of community-based research that will record the daily interaction in the natural environment and place linguistic analysis within the cultural context. The current research is an extension of this research field as it will offer a detailed sociopragmatic examination of the daily Punjabi communications in Central Punjab, hoping to make a contribution to the corpus of knowledge in terms of empirical and theoretical understanding of the native politeness practices.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, the qualitative, sociopragmatic research design was used because of the need to investigate the strategies of politeness and pragmatic competence at their natural occurrence in the daily interactions between Punjabi. This mode of community based was chosen due to the fact that politeness can only be comprehended in the real social environments where negotiative cultural norms, relationships, and power are practiced. The study was done in some targeted and specific urban and semi-urban regions of Central Punjab, Pakistan, where Punjabi is spoken in their day-to-day activities. Students were native Punjabis which were chosen as representatives of various age groups and genders as well as social backgrounds. The sampling method was purposive to make sure that diversity existed in terms of social roles as well as the place of interaction including family gatherings, neighborhood discussion, in marketplaces and during informal interactions at work places.

Several qualitative methods were used to collect data in order to maximize ecological validity and triangulation. This observation among the participants was conducted throughout within weeks and aimed at getting the researcher accustomed to the diverse interactional norms of the locality, field notes of contextual and non-verbal communication. Audio-recorded conversations were naturally occurring and recorded with the informed consent of the participants and targeted event speech mass phenomena including requests, refusals, greetings, apologies, and informal negotiations. Moreover, semi-structured interviews were held with the participants to provide their understanding of the polite manner of behavior, proper use of language, and rating of various possible interactional options. These interviews assisted to elicit the metapragmatic awareness of the participants and gave some idea about the way politeness norms are socially interpreted and conveyed in the community.

The data recorded were transcribed and analyzed through thematic and discourse-based processes based on sociopragmatics. The strategies of politeness were determined by reading the transcripts several times and coding the data into the following categories: indirectness, mitigation, forms of address based on honorific and kindred, face-saving moves, and supportive or affiliative expressions. The variables such as age, gender and social distance were investigated with respect to these strategies in order to find patterns. There was also the consideration of contextual and paralinguistic aspects, including tone, pauses, and turn sequencing so that a complete understanding of pragmatic behavior would be achieved. All the ethical aspects were followed closely during the research such as anonymity of subjects and safe management of audio information.

DATA ANALYSIS

This section presents a comprehensive analysis of politeness strategies and pragmatic competence in Punjabi speech communities of Central Punjab. The analysis is systematically organized in one place and is directly linked to the study's objectives and research questions. To enhance clarity and analytical strength, the findings are presented through tables and figures, followed by integrated interpretation. The data are drawn from naturally occurring interactions across domestic, neighborhood, marketplace, and informal workplace settings.

Overview of the Interactional Data

The corpus consisted of forty-eight naturally occurring interactions recorded in multiple everyday settings. This diversity allowed the analysis to capture a wide range of pragmatic behavior in authentic communicative contexts.

Table 1: Distribution of Interactional Data

Interactional Setting	Number of Interactions	Approximate Duration
Family gatherings	18	3.5 hours
Marketplaces	15	3 hours
Neighborhood talk	10	2 hours
Informal workplaces	5	1.5 hours
Total	**48**	**10 hours**

This dataset provided sufficient variation in speaker roles, relationships, and communicative purposes to examine politeness strategies in depth.
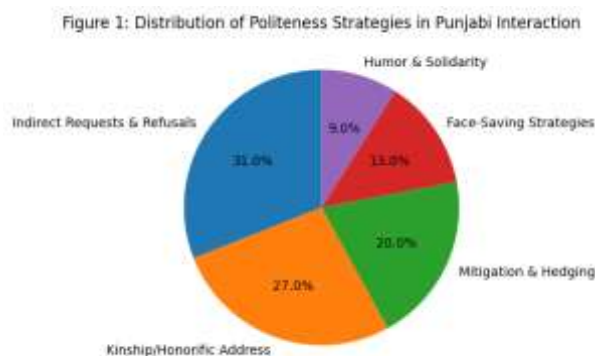
Distribution of Politeness Strategies

(Related to Objective 1 and Research Question 1)

Analysis of the data revealed that Punjabi speakers employ a structured and culturally grounded set of politeness strategies rather than random or idiosyncratic forms. The overall frequency and distribution of these strategies are presented in Table 2 and Figure 1.

Table 2: Frequency of Politeness Strategies in Punjabi Interaction

Politeness Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Indirect requests and refusals	112	31%
Kinship and honorific address	98	27%
Mitigation and hedging devices	72	20%
Face-saving strategies	48	13%
Humor and solidarity markers	32	9%
Total	**362**	**100%**

Figure 1: Distribution of Politeness Strategies in Punjabi Interaction

Figure 1. Distribution of Politeness Strategies in Punjabi Interaction

Figure 1 visually demonstrates that indirectness is the most dominant politeness strategy in Punjabi everyday communication, followed closely by kinship and honorific address forms. This pattern reflects a strong cultural emphasis on maintaining respect, minimizing imposition, and sustaining interpersonal harmony. Mitigation and hedging further indicate speakers' preference for softening utterances, particularly in potentially face-threatening situations. Less frequent but still significant are face-saving strategies and humor, which are typically used to manage delicate conversational moments or reinforce solidarity among peers.
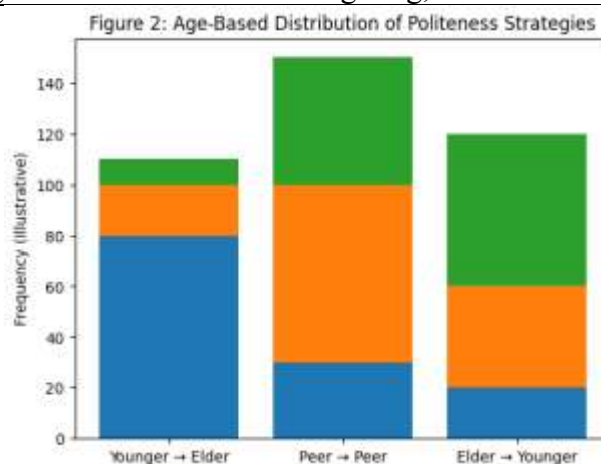
Age and Politeness Strategy Selection

(Related to Objective 2 and Research Question 2)

Age emerged as one of the most influential social variables shaping politeness behavior. Speakers consistently adjusted their pragmatic choices based on age relations between interlocutors.

Table 3: Politeness Strategies Across Age Relations

Age Relation	Dominant Politeness Strategies
Younger to elder	Indirectness, honorifics, mitigation
Peer to peer	Humor, solidarity, relative directness
Elder to younger	Advice-giving, mild directness, affiliative tone

Figure 2: Age-Based Distribution of Politeness Strategies

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As illustrated in Figure 2, interactions where younger speakers address elders show a markedly higher use of indirectness and mitigation, reflecting culturally entrenched norms of age-based respect. In peer interactions, politeness is largely expressed through humor and solidarity rather than deference. When elders address younger speakers, politeness is maintained through an affiliative tone rather than extensive mitigation, indicating

asymmetrical expectations of deference. These patterns highlight that pragmatic competence in Punjabi requires sensitivity to age hierarchy and relational positioning.

Gender and Politeness Patterns

Gender also influenced the choice and realization of politeness strategies, particularly in public and mixed-gender settings.

Table 4: Gender-Based Distribution of Politeness Strategies

Gender Context	Observed Politeness Tendencies
Female speakers	Greater mitigation, indirectness, supportive language
Male speakers	Humor, teasing, directness among peers
Mixed-gender settings	Careful address choices, increased indirectness
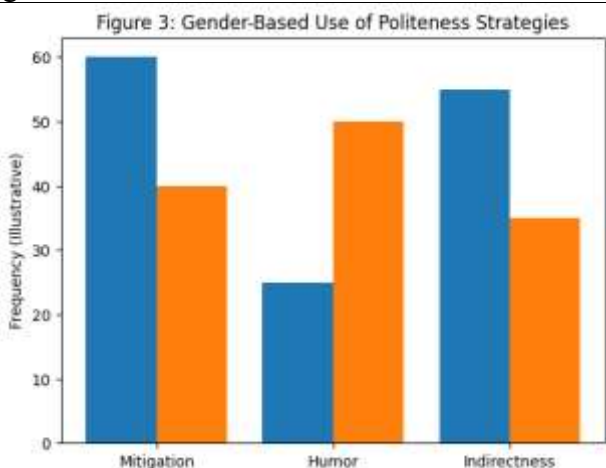
Figure 3. Gender-Based Use of Politeness Strategies

Figure 3 indicates that female speakers employ mitigation and indirectness more frequently, especially in public interactions, reflecting heightened sensitivity to social norms. Male speakers, on the other hand, show greater use of humor and solidarity markers in same-gender interactions. However, the overlap between patterns confirms that gender does not rigidly determine politeness behavior; rather, it interacts with context, social distance, and relational goals.

Pragmatic Competence as Sociocultural Awareness

Beyond individual strategies, the data demonstrate that pragmatic competence in Punjabi speech communities is best understood as the ability to align language use with culturally defined expectations. Speakers showed consistent awareness of when to intensify politeness, when solidarity allowed informality, and how to repair potential face threats.

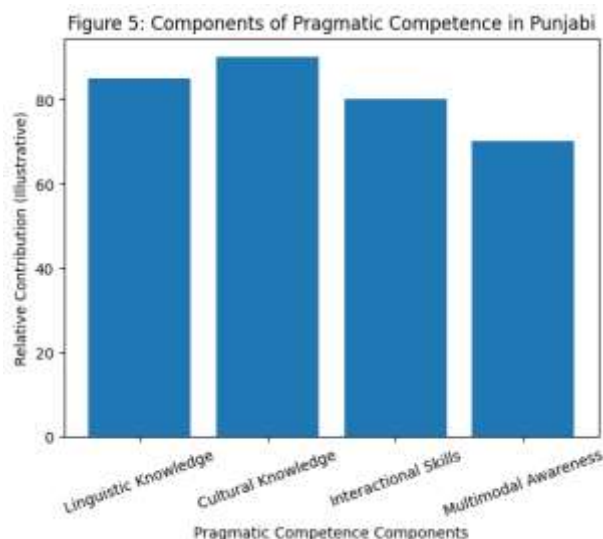**Table5: Components of Pragmatic Competence in Punjabi**

Component	Evidence from Interactional Data
Linguistic knowledge	Use of indirect forms and formulaic expressions
Cultural knowledge	Kinship norms, respect for elders, izzat orientation
Interactional competence	Turn sequencing, topic management, repair strategies
Multimodal awareness	Tone, pauses, gesture, gaze

These components collectively demonstrate that pragmatic competence in Punjabi extends beyond grammatical correctness to include cultural literacy, interactional skill, and embodied communication.

Figure 4: Effect of Social Distance on Use of Indirectness
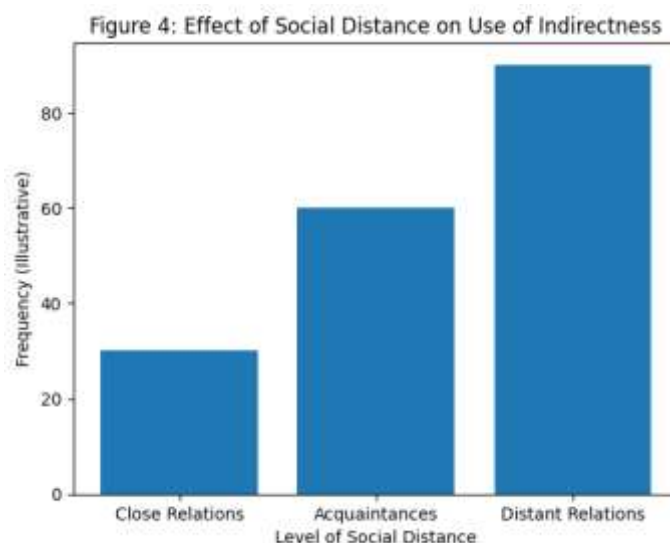
Figure 4. Effect of Social Distance on the Use of Indirectness

Figure 4 illustrates the relationship between social distance and the use of indirectness in Punjabi interactions. The visual shows a clear upward trend, indicating that as social distance increases, speakers rely more heavily on indirect politeness strategies. Interactions among close relations involve comparatively lower levels of indirectness, as familiarity allows for greater directness without threatening social harmony. In contrast, interactions with acquaintances show a noticeable increase in indirect forms, reflecting caution and relational negotiation. The highest level of indirectness appears in interactions with distant relations, where speakers carefully mitigate requests and opinions to avoid face-threatening acts. This figure confirms that social distance is a crucial sociopragmatic variable and that pragmatic competence in Punjabi involves the ability to adjust indirectness according to relational proximity.

Figure 5: Components of Pragmatic Competence in Punjabi

Figure 5. Components of Pragmatic Competence in Punjabi Speech Communities

Figure 5 presents the relative contribution of different components to pragmatic competence in Punjabi speech communities. The figure highlights cultural knowledge as the most influential component, underscoring the importance of understanding social norms, respect conventions, and values such as *izzat*. Linguistic knowledge, including familiarity with indirect structures and formulaic expressions, also plays a significant role. Interactional skills, such as turn management and repair strategies, contribute substantially to successful

communication, while multimodal awareness—including tone, gesture, and gaze—complements verbal strategies. This visual reinforces the argument that pragmatic competence in Punjabi is multidimensional and extends far beyond grammatical accuracy.

In summary, the data analysis confirms that politeness in Punjabi speech communities is systematic, culturally embedded, and socially regulated. Indirectness and relational address forms dominate everyday interaction, while age, gender, and social distance significantly shape pragmatic choices. Pragmatic competence emerges as a dynamic ability that enables speakers to manage respect, hierarchy, and solidarity across contexts. By presenting all findings in a unified and visually supported manner, this section provides a clear empirical foundation for the discussion and conclusions that follow.

DISCUSSION

The current research had the objective to study politeness strategies and pragmatic competence during the Punjabi speech communities by carrying out a community based study of the daily interactions within Central Punjab. The results are good empirical evidences of a sociopragmatic approach of politeness, where it is a culturally-based and contexts-dependent practice and not a set of linguistic rules. The study provides a refined insight into the negotiation of respect, status, and solidarity of the daily communication process of the Punjabi speakers, by connecting naturally existing interactional data with social variables, including age, gender, and social distance.

Among the most vivid results of the research is that the predominant politeness strategy in Punjabi communication is indirectness. The high frequency of indirect requests, softened refusals, and conditional constructions is indicative of the fact that the Punjabi speakers are very sensitive to the amount of imposition and interpersonal harmony. This is in line with sociopragmatic studies in South Asian backgrounds that has continually demonstrated that indirectness acts as an instrument of communicative competence and not ambiguity or unintelligibility. During the Punjabi community, indirect speech is seen as evidence of social consciousness and deference, especially in the presence of the elderly or other social elders. The results of the study therefore dispute the deficit-oriented explanations of indirectness that are common with pragmatic models in the West and support the thesis that politeness should be assessed against the local cultural standards.

The large amount of forms of addressing someone using the terms of kinship and honorific further underscores the relational aspect of Punjabi politeness. The use of terms like baji, chacha, ustad and sahib was often used out of biological relations with kin and worked as useful pragmatic tools to index respect, social status and moral obligation. Such argument favors the opinion that Punjabi courtesy is more enshrined in the community and social network where relationships are preoccupied with the foreground rather than individual autonomy. It is also indicated in the findings that pragmatic competence in Punjabi is also the knowing of not just what linguistic forms to employ, but which relational identities to mobilize in the context of a specific interaction. Inability to use correct forms of addresses had been implicitly considered as violation of social rules rather than mere linguistic mistake, which shows the ethical aspect of courtesy in the Punjabi society.

The age factor was found to be one of the most significant factors of politeness behavior, which proves its pivotal role in determining the social organization in Punjab. The young speakers showed more intensive degrees of indirectness, mitigation and deferential address to the adults and the adults had more license to be direct. This inequality is culturally institutionalized in terms of age-related power and reverence. Notably, these tendencies did not depend on settings, which puts forward the idea that age order is not contingency-dependent but rather a strongly-rooted sociocultural rule. Pragmatic competence perspective

implies that effective communication in Punjabi involves a sharp attention to age relationships and the possibility to modify speaking the language in accordance.

The variations in data in terms of gender also demonstrate how politeness, social norms, and context interact. Female speakers used more mitigation and supportive language especially in a mixed or a public context, whereas male speakers more often had recourse to humor and solidarity-based approaches among themselves. These tendencies were not strict and fixed, though. They moved instead depending on setting, relationship and communicative purpose. The result confirms contemporary sociopragmatic research which considers gender as a variable that interacts with other variables, but not as a predetermined predictor of politeness behaviour. It is also indicative of social change that is taking place within the Punjab communities wherein more education and urbanization is changing the norms of interaction.

Social distance analysis gives more insight into how Punjab politeness is adaptive. The more social distance between the speakers, the more they were dependent on indirectness and mitigation, which proves that the speakers are aware of the possible face threat in relationships with less familiar persons. On the contrary, intimate communication enabled more straightforward communication without endangering social peace. Such a gradient application of politeness strategies emphasises the fact that pragmatic competence in Punjabi is not concerned with the issue of maximising politeness, but with how to tune language use to relational proximity. These results support sociopragmatic theory of politeness as relational work and not a status of politeness.

This is the most important, perhaps, the study redefines the concept of pragmatic competence as a multidimensional concept, which combines linguistic knowledge, cultural knowledge, interactional skill, and multimodal awareness. Management of politeness was a successful tool which was based not only on the verbal, but also on the tone, pauses, gesture, gaze and turn sequence speakers used. These multimodal resources were important in making utterances soft, indicating deference, and correcting possible face threats. This confirms the views that pragmatic competence is not fully represented by means of textual analysis only and that communal based, interactional data plays an important role in understanding how politeness is practically acted.

Politeness theory also has significant implications on the findings. Although the traditional models of politeness offer helpful tools of analysis, the Punjabi data proves that the line between positive and negative politeness is frequently misdrawn in practice. Deference and solidarity, respect and warm, and mitigation and affiliation were often mixed by speakers. This implies that more adaptable and culturally based models are required that are able to integrate hybrid politeness schemes as well as collective orientations. These findings therefore give credence to rapport-management and sociopragmatic strategies which emphasize local norms and relational objectives, as opposed to general taxonomies.

Applicatively, the research can have obvious implications on language education, intercultural communication and public-service interaction in Punjabi speaking situations. Education in grammatical correctness without any reference to local pragmatic conventions is dangerous as it may give the students that have no comprehension of local pragmatics but are linguistically competent individuals. To achieve communicative effectiveness and minimize misunderstanding, especially in multilingual environments (where Punjabi is used in combination with Urdu and English) that involve using Punjabi politeness strategies, incorporation of real-life examples of Punjabi politeness can lead to improved effectiveness of communication and a smaller number of misunderstandings.

Overall, the discussion has shown that politeness in Punjabi speech communities is a socially regulated and culturally based, and interactionally obtained practice. Pragmatic competence comes into being as the competence to direct the use of languages in accordance with

common cultural norms, and relation realities. The focus on analyzing primarily based on the everyday interaction, this research paper provides a more comprehensive and context-driven view of politeness and provides a good base to future research on indigenous pragmatics in Pakistan.

FINDINGS

According to the research, politeness in Punjabi speech community in Central Punjab is a culturally situated and social control practice and not a linguistically determined phenomenon. It is analyzed that, the politeness strategy that is the most dominant in daily Punjabi interaction is indirectness. Indirect requests, mitigated refusal, and conditional constructions are used by speakers on a regular basis to limit imposition and retain interpersonal harmony. This approach is especially eminent in the communication with older people or other socially superior individuals, which means that indirectness is an indicator of respect and practical competence.

The other important discovery is the major position of the forms of kinship and honorific address in Punjabi politeness. The terms used baji, chacha, ustad, sahib are also extensively employed outside the biological kinship to mark the respect, social hierarchy, and the closeness of relationships. These forms do not constitute optional politeness forms but necessitate elements of a socially appropriate speech. The inability to address the appropriate address terms was indirectly considered as rude or social deviant, which reveals the ethical aspect of politeness in the Punjab culture.

The paper also establishes that age is the most significant sociopragmatic factor that impacts the politeness behavior. When speaking to the older ones, younger speakers always use deferential styles, namely, indirectness, mitigation, and lowered tones, but the latter have more freedom when speaking directly. There are also gender differences in politeness which tend to be more mitigated and supportive in terms of use by female speakers in public or mixed gender situations, and more often, employed by male speakers in terms of humor and solidarity strategies amongst their peers. But these patterns are not absolute patterns, but situational. Moreover, the social distance is also important in determining pragmatic decisions, as speakers become more indirect and use more signs of politeness, when communicating with less well-known interlocutors.

Lastly, the results also show that pragmatic competence in Punjabi is multi-dimensional. It involves linguistic facts, cultural understanding of conventions including izzat (honour), interactional resources such as turn management and repair strategies and multimodal resources such as gesture, gaze and tone. The effectiveness of communication lies in the fact that speakers should be capable of combining these elements and matching their language use with situational and relational expectations.

CONCLUSION

In this work, the researchers aimed to investigate the topic of politeness strategy and pragmatic competence in Punjabi communication with the help of the community approach to the everyday communicative interaction in Central Punjab. The results validate that Punjab politeness cannot just be dictated by the universal linguistic rules but is highly conditioned by the local cultural values, social stratifications and relationship processes. Face-saving practices, mitigation, kinship-based address, and indirectness are politeness strategies, and they serve as a fundamental means of ensuring peace in the interpersonal program and negotiating respect in everyday living.

The study is also valuable in sociopragmatic studies in that it offers empirically-based knowledge about an indigenous Pakistani language, which has been relatively underrepresented in the literature of pragmatics. Using interactional data that are produced naturally, the study provides a realistic and culturally aware explanation of the way politeness

is performed and judged in the community. The results also undermine the relevance of inflexible, Western-dominant models of politeness and argue in favor of the necessity of more flexible frameworks which pay attention to communal orientations and culturally specific principles.

All in all, the paper has shown that pragmatic competence in Punjabi goes well beyond grammatical accuracy. It is a socially acquired skill, which helps speakers to negotiate age hierarchies, gender rules, social distance, and cultural values. It is imperative that these indigenous politeness practices are identified and recorded in writing to come up with a more inclusive and contextualized view of language use in multilingual societies like in Pakistan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Research, education, and practice are proposed to be treated with a number of recommendations based on the study findings. To begin with, the scope of sociopragmatic investigation can be expanded in the future by carrying out a comparative study of Pakistani languages (Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and Saraiki), and finding out the common and language-specific politeness norms. It is also advised that longitudinal and corpus-based research should be done to investigate how politeness practices change over time and whether this is because of urbanization, digital communication, and social roles shifting.

Second, scholars are advised to use the community-based and multimodal approaches when studying pragmatic competence. Interactions between naturalistic recording and interviews with participants and observational data may offer further information about interactional practices as well as the metapragmatic awareness of speakers. This kind of approach is particularly useful in eliciting implicit norms that cannot be elicited using elicitation tasks alone.

Third, the conclusions have significant implications on language teaching and teacher education. Indigenous politeness norms and real-life examples of daily interaction should be introduced in the educational curriculum in order to make the learners achieve both pragmatic competence and linguistic accuracy. The teachers and the trainers must be sensitized to the sociocultural aspects of politeness in such a way that communication in the classrooms expresses local communicative realities.

Lastly, it is suggested in the study that more focus should be placed on pragmatic awareness in terms of professional and public-service positions, including education, healthcare, and administration, where proper communication with Punjabi-speaking communities is crucial. The mutual understanding, miscommunication, and the respectful interaction in multilingual environments can be improved with the help of the training programs that focus on the culturally appropriate interaction.

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