



A Quantitative Analysis of Politeness Maxims in Pakistani Morning Shows

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ABSTRACT

This quantitative study explores the use of politeness strategies in Pakistani morning television shows through the lens of Geoffrey Leech's Politeness Maxims. Using a mixed-method approach, it examines how tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy are expressed by hosts and guests, and how these reflect broader cultural values and social norms in Pakistan. A corpus of selected episodes from widely viewed show Good Morning Pakistan was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative analysis identified the most frequently occurring maxims, while the qualitative analysis provided nuanced interpretations of their application in real conversations. Findings reveal that tact and approbation maxims dominate, reflecting a communication style that prioritizes respect, praise, and conflict avoidance traits deeply rooted in collectivist and honor-based cultures. Moreover, the study highlights how politeness serves not only as a conversational tool but also as a means of reinforcing cultural identity and social harmony in Pakistan's media landscape. By bridging theoretical frameworks with practical media discourse, this research contributes to the understanding of politeness in Southeast Asian contexts, filling a gap in existing literature. It also offers insights for media practitioners on fostering respectful and culturally resonant communication.

Keywords: Leech's Politeness Maxims, Pakistani morning shows, media discourse analysis

Introduction

Language is not only a system of conventional spoken, manual, or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of social group and participants in its culture, express themselves. In the realms of pragmatics, language is viewed as a dynamic instrument that individuals use to perform actions and negotiate meanings within specific contexts (Taguchi, 2011, p. 289). This perspective of language underscores the significance of knowing the different ways in which language is used in social settings. This qualitative and quantitative study aims to investigate the politeness strategies utilized in selected Pakistani morning shows through the lens of Leech's Politeness Principle. By analyzing the linguistic behavior of hosts and guests, the research seeks to



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contribute to the broader field of pragmatics and enhance our understanding of language use in media discourse within the Pakistani context. The study further aims to analyze the frequency of the maxims used in the shows and the context of the politeness strategies that how they represent the cultural norms of Pakistani society.

From all the wide aspects of language, politeness is one of the most influential pragmatic aspects of language, which helps people to maintain social relations and harmony. (Kádár, 2017). According to Leech (2014), Politeness is a key component in the pragmatic competence which helps people negotiate, impress, argue in the communication to make it effective and harmonious including the strategies that individuals use to respect, argue during the conversations (p.2). As in Arabs, Politeness is also defined as showing respectful behavior for others, words like welcome, thank you, shows respect and cite for the next person's respect.

In the spoken discourse, leech's six maxims tact, approbation, Generosity, Modesty, Agreement and Sympathy Provides a framework to analyze that how language works in the social situations to maintain the social equilibrium. Expressions such as "thank you", "please" and "you are welcome" show politeness and etiquettes of the western culture; in Arab culture, the politeness is reflected in giving respect to elders, greeting people, and helping the needy (Ilyas & Mohamed Kassem, 2018 p. 350).

Language serves as an instrumental tool in presenting and constructing the social values, particularly in the media discourse. In the realms of media discourse, television particularly morning shows serves as the powerful mean through which these values are established and perpetuated in the society. Media sites serve as the significant platform to establish the identities and negotiate the social conventions (Locher & Watts, 2005 p.10). In the Pakistani context, Morning shows not only provide the entertainment but also actively shape and represent the socio-cultural dynamics.

Although, Morning shows have greater impact the shape and represent the sociocultural realm of Pakistani society. Still, very few scholarly attentions have been given to this media context. Many studies have been done explaining the leech's maxims in different context. But there is scarcity of research on Pakistani Morning shows. This perspective shows the need of research to understand that how linguistic items particularly politeness is represented and conveyed on this context.

Moreover, politeness strategies are influenced by different factors like age, gender and social settings especially in a culturally rich and diverse society like Pakistan. Understanding these factors are crucial to analyze that how language shapes and represent the socio-cultural dynamics in the media discourse, particularly Morning shows. As Holmes (2013) asserts, "politeness patterns are not universal; they are deeply embedded in cultural norms and expectations" (p. 286).

Many studies have started to address this area of study. For example, Khan et al. (2022) conducted research to find out the politeness strategies in the Pakistani Morning shows. He found that hosts and guests use positive politeness strategies more to enhance the viewers engagement and to maintain the equilibrium in the shows. However, their study primarily focused on the Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework, overlooking the Leech's politeness principle which shows a significant gap in the research leaving Leech's politeness principle. This gap is significant as leech's politeness principle provide more wide view of politeness understanding by providing Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Sympathy and Agreement (Leech, 2014, p.90).

As far as Pakistani society is concerned, it demands a contextual analysis of politeness strategies because of its blend of cultural, societal and religious norms. As politeness is not a universal phenomenon, it is influenced by culture, and closely reflect and represent



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the society's cultural and social norms (Locher and Watts, 2005 p.10). This research gap necessitates the analysis of politeness strategies in the Pakistani morning shows as guests and hosts conversations in the Pakistani morning shows can reveal much about how politeness strategies are used in the conversations to represent the societal structures and cultural values.

Irrespective of that, limited research on the application of leech's politeness principle leaves gap in this area. Considering the significant role, morning shows hold to represent and shape the public opinions and cultural values, it's obligatory to examine that how politeness strategies are used in the morning shows and how they represent the Pakistani society and its cultural values.

Overall, although research has been done on the Pakistani morning shows but still a considerable gap remains in the application of leech's politeness principles. Conducting this research will not only contribute to the field of pragmatics but it will offer new insights to how language, power, cultural and social norms are interconnected in the Pakistani media discourse. The aim of this qualitative study is to identify and categorize the politeness strategies used by hosts and guests in Pakistani morning shows.

Literature Review

Pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics which is concerned with the use of language in the specific social and cultural situations by the individuals for the effective communication. It does not only focus on the literal meanings of the words or sentences; pragmatics goes beyond words. It focuses on the use of words in the different social situations and the intended meaning of the speakers rather than solely relying on the literal meanings of the words and sentences. Moreover, it concerns with how speakers employ different strategies to convey the meanings, to maintain the social harmony and avoid conflict. The pragmatics is concerned with how meanings are constructed and how the meanings are interpreted based on the speaker's intentions, relationship between speaker and listener and the situational setting where the conversation is being done (2020, Yule). Many scholars have done the massive contribution into the field. One of the earliest and most influential key scholars is the H.P Grice who laid the foundation of Grice's principles (1975) which laid the foundation of conversational participants maintain the effective communication. Grice proposed four conversational maxims; Quantity, Quality, relation and manner which proposed to the foundation of effective communication. According to Grice (1975), these principles contribute to ensure that the communication is helpful, thoughtful and clear.

To address the relationship of how to maintain interpersonal relationship during communication and maintain social harmony, Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed a theory called Politeness theory. This theory was based on the core concept 'Face' which means the public image of every person. They categorized Face into two types; Positive Face, the need to be liked and accepted by the society. Negative Face which is the need to have freedom and not to be pressured by others remarks. When someone faces criticism, it's called as Face threatening act. To mitigate the impact of criticism, speakers use different kind of strategies like positive politeness strategy (showing empathy), bald on record (being direct), negative politeness strategy (being direct and respectful) or off record strategy (hinting on something).

In the earliest times, the theory was widely accepted and being used in the research but latter on it was criticized by some of the scholars. For instance; Eelen (2001) highlighted that the theory mainly reflected the western society where individual freedom is more considered. Many scholars agreed the critique and rejected the theory mainly criticizing



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it for relying on the western culture. According to them; Politeness should be studied in a way that it includes all the cultures and societies like collectivist communities where Group harmony, elders respect and honor are more concerned.

Earlier work in politeness was based on the set rules and regulations of politeness but recent works have more focused on the novelty of politeness principle. Recent researches highlight the variety of politeness strategies based on the situation and the participants communicating. Politeness is not something that can be studied through set rules and principles but it adapts on the situations and the relation between the speaker and listener and that is called as Relational approach proposed by Locher and Watts (2005).

Based on this principle, Culpeper (2011) further proposed the concept of impoliteness as the language of used to criticize, argue and confront as the key legitimate aspect in the pragmatics. Moreover, he further expanded the field by introducing the meta pragmatic comments which is defined as the comments given by people over politeness. These concepts define that politeness is not a universal set of strategies but a socially constructed process which relies on the context, culture and socio dynamics values.

Politeness is not a set rules and guidelines principle. It has close relations with the broader social factors such as gender, power and language. Additionally, the principles implied in the specific situation also rely in the situational setting and relationship of speaker and listener. Holmes and Schnurr (2005) highlighted that the way men and women use language often rely on the previous power relationship and gendered role expectations. So, politeness is not solely a linguistic phenomenon but it is shaped by several other socio dynamic and cultural aspects. In their perspective, politeness becomes a tool which speakers used to negotiate, to reflect power dynamics and to reflect socio dynamic settings.

Many studies have shown that, in the patriarchal settings politeness acts as the tool to show the relation between gender and authority, to reflect onto the power relations. For example, Mills (2003) reflects onto the notion that what is considered as polite or impolite varies on the basis of gendered based societal expectations particularly in the collectivist societies like Pakistani community. According to him, women in many areas are expect to show more warm and deferential behavior in certain situations so as women. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2013) also highlights that politeness is not only to maintain social harmony among participants but also to position oneself in relation to power. These studies reflect that politeness strategy is not merely a linguistic behavior to main the social harmony but it's a social practice shaped by gender roles and socio-cultural settings.

Watts (2003) argued that politeness should not be viewed through the lens of fixed norms and maxims. Instead of that, politeness is the principle that should be a relational work and should be negotiated based on the situational and cultural settings. He further added that politeness should be a process that is continuously negotiated between speakers during the conversation. This approach reflects onto the notion that politeness is not the predefined set pf rules which is shaped moment by moment based on the context, setting, and participants involved in the conversation. Such approach is particularly useful to study politeness in the public discourse such as Morning shows.

In Pakistan, cultural and moral values such as manners, etiquettes, honor and respect influence the use of politeness strategies. As, Mahboob (2009) highlighted that such values are deeply rooted in the Islamic teachings, family structure and collectivist traditions. Additionally, Shamim & Qureshi (2013) also reflected that honor, etiquettes and respect are deeply embedded in the collectivist societies like Pakistan2013). Therefore, politeness in Pakistani discourse is not just a linguistic entity but also a



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reflection of deeply held moral and social norms.

In a recent study, it was found out that, in the Pakistani discourse, teachers use sympathy maxim to ensure the authority into the classroom discourse. Moreover, Khan and Bughio (2015), observed that teachers used generous and modest expressions to maintain authority while avoiding confrontation. In return, Students, used sympathetic and tactful speech to show respect. These findings correspond to Leech's maxims, suggesting that the model is contextually relevant for Pakistan. Additionally, their findings revealed that how politeness strategies are used to maintain the power dynamics and maintain the social decorum of the settings especially in the Pakistani context.

Research Method

This research employed a quantitative approach study to analyze the collected data. This method helps to answer the research question which is to find out that the mostly used politeness strategy. Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle acts as the primary theoretical framework while the study combines the statistical analysis plus interpretive methods to conduct the research. To be relevant with the aim of this study a purposive sampling method was used. According to Etikan et al. (2016), purposive sampling allows the researchers to select the information-rich data cases that are most beneficial and relevant to the research.

The data set includes five episodes drawn from one widely viewed morning shown.

Good Morning Pakistan (ARY Digital)

While scrutinizing, each of the episodes, most of the focus was on the host guest interactions, turn takings and on the speech markers. The selected data involved the introduction, ending and the significant host guest interactions from the middle of the shows.

The data were analyzed quantitatively to address the aim of the research. Each Utterance was coded using Leech's politeness principle as in these cases;

Tact

Generosity

Approbation

Modesty

Agreement

Sympathy

The number of instances were entailed in the frequency distribution table. The, further the quantitative analysis was used to convert into bar graphs for the visual representation of the first question. To systematically measure the number of each maxim in the morning shows, the data was transcribed and coded using Leech's (1983) politeness principle. The transcribed data was coded carefully based on Leech's six maxims, Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Sympathy, Agreement and Modesty. Each utterance was coded under the respective maxim. All of the coded data was added into the Microsoft Document, where each of the utterance was labelled with the respective Maxim.

For the frequency or quantification of the maxims, Microsoft's built in search and count function was used to locate and count the number of each maxim appeared in the document. This type of software assisted manual coding was used by Bazeley and Jackson (2013), who emphasized the use of software in quantitative and qualitative coding.

In the next step, the results were organized into the excel sheet. Here the data was organized for the frequency analysis and numerical patterns were allocated for each of the maxim. This Frequency analysis allowed the identification of the less and the most



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frequent maxim used in the shows.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

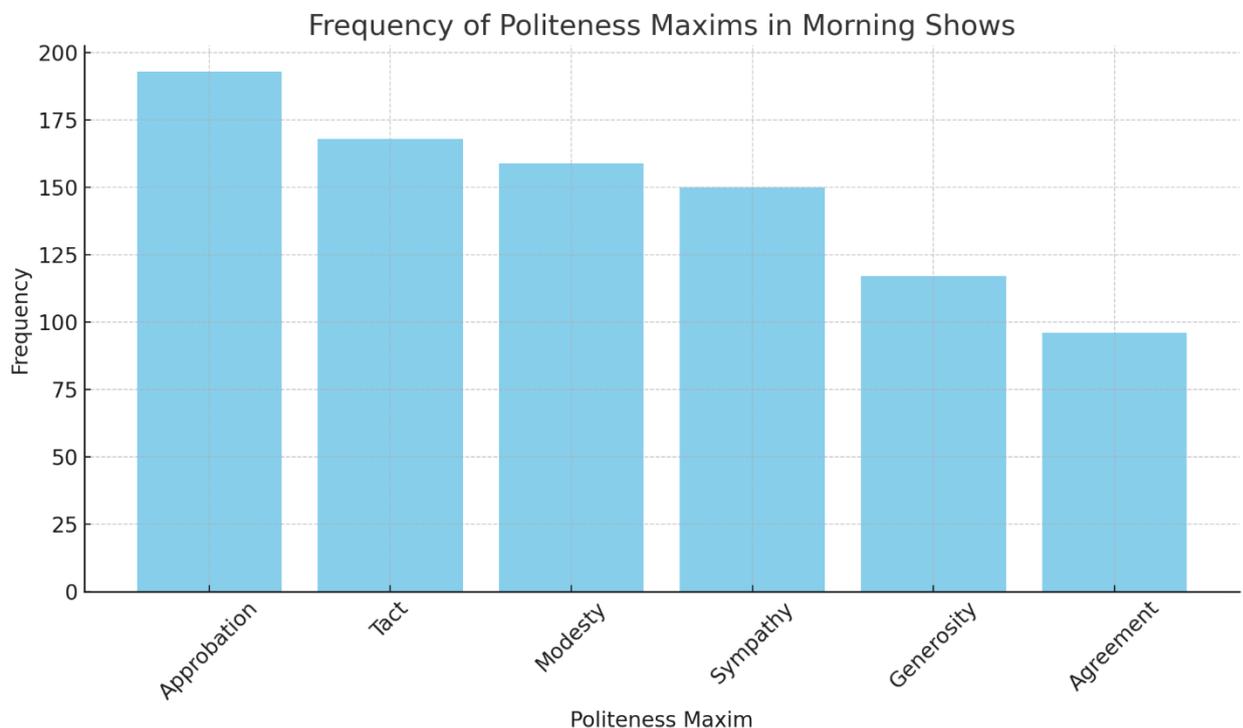
Tabulated Distribution of Politeness Maxims

The following table shows the frequency of each politeness maxim as it appeared across the three shows:

Politeness Maxim	Frequency
Approbation	193
Tact	168
Modesty	159
Sympathy	150
Generosity	117
Agreement	96

Figure 4.1

Visual Representation of the Findings



Interpretation of Quantitative Data

From the quantitative analysis, it is indicated that Approbation maxim was the most frequent politeness strategy with 193 instances among all the leech's Politeness Maxims. According to Leech, Approbation maxim defines that how the speakers use appreciation tokens and praise others. From the analyzed episodes, approbation maxim being the most frequent politeness strategy shows that hosts and guests engage in the positive evaluation of each other and praise each other by using appreciation tokens.



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The **Modesty Maxim** with the third most frequent numbers as **159 occurrences**, was also commonly observed in the dataset. As, according to Leech, this maxim shows that the speaker present itself in the humble manner while maintaining the overall harmony. Therefore, the frequent number of this maxim in the dataset shows that modesty is considered as the key in the collectivist communities like Pakistan.

The **Sympathy Maxim**, which appeared **150 times**, also played a key role in the discourse. The high frequency of this maxim shows that expressions of concern, compassion, and emotional support are central to the tone of Pakistani morning shows. These politeness strategies are particularly common during segments that discuss illness, hardship, or personal struggles.

Generosity maxim was less frequent than others. Though, it was still present, the **Generosity Maxim** was found 117 instances. As, according to Leech, this strategy focuses on minimizing personal gain while maximizing benefits for others. For instance, in in the morning show context, this often appears in discussions about charity, social responsibility, religious values, or helping others. These themes are commonly highlighted in Pakistani media to promote moral behavior and social welfare.

In the last, the **Agreement Maxim** was the least frequently observed from the dataset, with **96 occurrences**. Despite its lower frequency, its presence demonstrates that the morning show conversations contribute to maintain the smooth conversational flow by avoiding direct disagreement and promoting consensus.

Dominant Politeness Strategies

The quantitative results derived from the analysis of fifteen episodes of Pakistani morning talk shows revealed a clear and consistent trend in the application of politeness maxims. Among the six maxims outlined in Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle, the **Approbation Maxim** appeared most frequently, with 193 instances. This was closely followed by the **Tact Maxim** (168 occurrences), **Modesty Maxim** (159), **Sympathy Maxim** (150), **Generosity Maxim** (117), and finally, the **Agreement Maxim**, which appeared 96 times throughout the dataset.

This distribution highlights a distinct preference for politeness strategies that promote positive face, reduce the risk of conflict or imposition, and help build an emotionally warm and socially cohesive atmosphere. These linguistic choices are not random; rather, they align closely with the cultural expectations of Pakistani society, where politeness, respect for others, and emotional sensitivity are valued in public communication.

For example, a statement such as, "Saba told everything very well by locking the river in a pot," is not merely a compliment but a highly stylized and metaphorical form of praise. The use of such expressive and poetic language reflects the speaker's intent to elevate the guest's contribution while adhering to cultural expectations of showing admiration in public discourse. This stylistic exaggeration serves a social function—enhancing the speaker's own image as polite and respectful, while also reinforcing the status and dignity of the guest.

In this way, the frequent use of the **Approbation Maxim** signals how much importance is placed on praising others, especially in front of an audience. This aligns with Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions theory, which categorizes Pakistan as a collectivist and high-context society. In such societies, maintaining group harmony, preserving face, and emphasizing social relationships are key components of everyday communication. Praise, when given in this manner, helps strengthen communal bonds and presents both the speaker and the recipient as cooperative and respectful members of the social group.

Moreover, the **Tact Maxim**—which appeared 168 times—also supports this



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interpretation. It demonstrates how speakers consciously reduce imposition and enhance the benefit to others, particularly when discussing sensitive topics or addressing individuals of higher status. The frequent presence of Modesty and Sympathy maxims further shows how speakers often downplay their own achievements and show emotional understanding toward others, which again reflects the collective values embedded in Pakistani communication norms.

Conclusion

This study explored the use of politeness strategies in Pakistani morning shows by analyzing 15 episodes using Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle as a theoretical framework. The analysis revealed that the most frequently employed maxims were the Approbation Maxim, Tact Maxim, and Sympathy Maxim. These strategies appeared consistently across different hosts and guests, suggesting that praise, indirectness, and emotional sensitivity form the backbone of polite communication in Pakistani media discourse. The high frequency of the Approbation Maxim reflects a strong cultural preference for positive evaluation, admiration, and face-enhancement (Leech, 1983). In a society where public image (*izzat*), honor, and group affiliation are of central importance, praise becomes a culturally acceptable way of reinforcing social harmony and building relational closeness (Hofstede, 2001; Scollon & Scollon, 2001). Similarly, the Tact Maxim appeared frequently in conversations involving guests of higher status, older individuals, or emotionally sensitive issues, suggesting that indirectness is a preferred strategy in contexts where power distance or face-threat is perceived (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Hofstede, 2001). The Sympathy Maxim, often used in conversations about health, family, or struggles, highlights the role of emotional support and shared experience in Pakistani communicative norms (Holmes, 1995; Rahman, 2002). On a practical level, this research offers insights for multiple stakeholders. For media professionals, understanding how politeness works can help improve audience engagement, build trust, and maintain professional rapport on screen. For language educators, morning show transcripts and clips can serve as culturally rich materials for teaching pragmatic competence and intercultural communication. For researchers in discourse analysis and sociolinguistics, the study provides a replicable model for examining how politeness operates in other regional media contexts or platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, or political talk shows. Furthermore, it can be added that this study demonstrates that politeness in Pakistani morning shows is a rich and multifaceted phenomenon. It is not simply about avoiding rudeness but about expressing core cultural values such as humility, empathy, respect for elders, and communal care. These values are enacted through language in strategic, often performative ways that reflect both the speaker's identity and the audience's expectations. By analyzing how politeness is used in this influential media genre, the study not only adds to our understanding of pragmatics in South Asian contexts but also shows how language continues to be a powerful tool for shaping social interaction, constructing cultural meaning, and fostering emotional connection.

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