

FACE AND FACEWORK IN PASHTO LANGUAGE

Ayesha Orakzai

Department of Linguistics
University of Lahore, Gujrat Campus
Corresponding author: ayesharahmaomn85@gmail.com

Abstract

Exploring phenomena of face and facework in the Pashto language, the research paper examines applicability of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory to facework in the Pashto language for which a questionnaire survey of native Pashto speakers was conducted. The influences on facework caused by the effect of age and familiarity (power and distance) with the interlocutor were investigated. R (the cost of imposition) was kept constant in all the situations. It was found out that Pashto speakers orient to negative and positive face as proposed by Brown and Levenson in their politeness theory. Contra wise, off-the-record hint considered as the politest behavior is deemed rude in Pashto on politeness values. Pukhtoos do not use off-the-record hint as a way of polite expression.

Keywords: Face, Facework, Language, Polite Expression

INTRODUCTION

Pashto is the language of Pashtuns around the world. According to a research conducted by Mohammad, F. et al (2009) the estimated number of native Pashto speakers is 42 to 52 million people around the world. It is mainly spoken in some parts of Pakistan as well as in Eastern and Southern Afghanistan. Politeness is a salient feature of the Pashtuns society which also contains traits of hospitality and politeness to strangers apart from respect commanded by elders. However, the outside world thinks the other way round, calling Pakhtuns as rude, uncouth and uncivil as Churchill. W (1898) writes, "The Pathan tribes are always engaged in private or public war." But facts are quite contrary to the general beliefs held by those who have not come in close contact with Pashtuns. There are norms of politeness in Pakhtun society as well. The expression of these norms is different but they are in line with the general concepts of politeness shown in other societies.

We can understand politeness as maintenance of “face”. Face is a sociolinguistic concept which was introduced in the West by Erving Goffman (1955) who defined face as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact.” Thus, face refers to a person’s public self-image which needs to be maintained during an interaction. Different societies place different values on face. The face view of a culture reflects the culture. Most Asian cultures like Chinese, Thai, Japanese and Pashtuns are honor-based or shame-based cultures. They place high value on “face” as losing “face” in these societies virtually amounts to losing everything. In Pakhtunwali (which is the code of honor of Pakhtuns) face is of utmost importance. “Loss of face is irreconcilable with Pakhtunwali ” Mohammad, F. et al (2009). The equivalent term for face in Pashto is “Poza” which literally translates into nose. To cut one’s nose means to lose one’s face. Losing face is also termed as “Makhtoori” which translates into blackening one’s face (Kakakhail, 1960). In short, the value put on face is so high that Pashtuns would stop at nothing to save their face.

Brown and Levinson’s (1987) extension of the concept of face is applicable to the Pashto language. They distinguished between positive face (the desire for acceptance and approval by others) and negative face (the desire not to be imposed on by others). Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed a range of politeness strategies employed by speakers to maintain face. In the Pashto language the speakers orient to positive and negative face strategies for successful face management. The purpose of the study is to document the phenomenon of face management in Pashto language and to compare and contrast politeness strategies used in the Pashto language with the politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) in politeness theory.

As mentioned earlier, the Pashto language is the native language of about 52 million people (Mohammad. et al., 2009), yet to date no formal account of norms of politeness in Pashto has been recorded. Hence, one of the objectives of the study is to trace politeness strategies used in the language of Pakhtuns (with specific reference to speech act request) and to ascertain the extent to which Brown and Leviton’s Politeness theory (1987) is consistent with the cultural values of politeness of Pashtuns. So, the study sets out to answer the following questions:

Being the first attempt to document politeness strategies used in the Pashto language, the study provides a guideline on politeness strategies used in Pashto to help address the notion that Pashtuns are a widely misunderstood group Mohammad .et al., (2009). Knowledge of politeness norms of any given society paves the way for cooperation and understanding because people have a universal desire to be treated with politeness. Having grasped the concepts of politeness and face and using them in our difficult conversations will make it much easier to talk about hard things. Also, it will pave the ground for contrastive analysis apart from comparing the politeness strategies used in the Pashto language with politeness strategies used in other cultures.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The phenomenon of politeness has been of great interest in linguistics for a long time. There are different models of politeness including Leech's POLITENESS PRINCIPLES, developed as a refinement to Grice's cooperative principle. The politeness principle state that people need to minimize (other things being equal) the expression of impolite belief or in its positive form, 'maximize (other things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs' Leech (1938) This is designed to explain phenomenon such as the use of indirect forms in making accusations.

This study applies the politeness theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) to social interaction in Pashto language. The framework is based on the concept of face. Chinese scholars claim that the concept of face was introduced in the West by a Chinese anthropologist Hsien Chin Hu (1994). She defined face as "public recognition of a person's reputation and status achieved through success and ostentation".

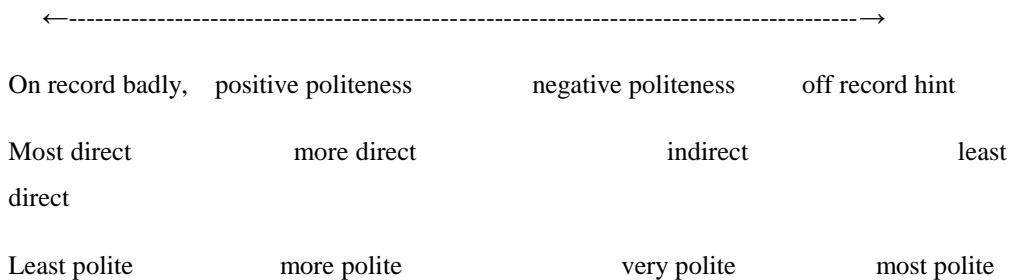
In the late 1960s it was introduced by Goffman (1955, 1987) in the West. Goffman defined face as a "positive social value that a person effectively claims for himself or herself. According to Goffman, "face" is a universal phenomenon and every individual wants his/her face to be acknowledged by others and tries to acknowledge other members faces. In other words, in our interpersonal interaction, we try to safeguard our face and the face of the interlocutor. Facework is the result of cooperation between the speaker and the interlocutor. In Pashtuns culture face is of crucial importance. The word 'Makh' which means face in Pashto is used contextually and idiomatically to refer to the concept of face. 'Pa kom makh

ba zay', 'with which face you will go'. Similarly, 'sturgay' translated as eyes is used in the same context. 'komo sturgo' literally translated as 'with which eyes meaning that after inflicting shame on yourself how can you see people in the eyes.' 'Poza' which literally translates into nose is also used in this sense. The richness of vocabulary to define the concept of face is a proof that this concept holds a crucial position in the cultural values of Pashto on politeness.

Brown and Levinson expanded the notion of the face by distinguishing between positive and negative face. *Negative face* "is the want of every competent adult member of a community that their actions be unimpeded by others." *Positive face* "is the want of every member that their wants be desirable to at least some others" Brown and Levinson. According to Meyerhof (2006) this distinction is very useful because we are polite in different ways to different people, depending upon our relationship and the presence/absence of familiarity.

Face Threatening Acts or FTA's are speech acts which necessarily threaten the speaker and/or hearer's positive/negative face. Face-saving acts are those that would mitigate the threat to face. In Brown and Levinson's framework they require the speaker to decide whether to mitigate the threat and which politeness strategies should be used. They propose three factors to estimate the degree of FTA (face threatening act), using the formula $W=D(S, H) + P(H, S) + R$. W is the weight of imposition. It is measured by D=distance between the speaker and the hearer=power, the relative power of hearer over the speaker and R=Rank cultural ranking of a subject, i.e degree of the sensitivity of a topic within a particular culture can also be defined as the cost of imposition, i.e how big a particular favor is. The theory relies on the assumption that most speech acts inherently threaten either the speaker or hearer's face and politeness is therefore a necessary component, i.e non-face threatening communication form.

Brown and Levinson sum up politeness behavior in four strategies: 1. bald on record, 2. the positive politeness, 3. the negative politeness, 4. off-record hint. They are arranged in ascending order from least to most polite. If we view the strategies on a continuous line, they will look like this:



Brown and Levenson (1987) theory has received criticism of its claim of universality, especially from the linguists of Asia. Japanese linguists in particular have been very critical of the theory. Sachiko & Ide (1989), a Japanese sociolinguist, argues that in Japanese society (and other collectivist societies) polite behavior is achieved differently. In Japanese society, politeness depends on socially-defined roles. In this context, the importance of discerning social behavior appropriate to the social situation is emphasized. The Japanese word for this discernment is *Wakimae*. Ide argues that *Wakimae* is a much better basis for formulating models of politeness in Japan than the kind of individualistic decisions proposed by Brown and Levinson.

However, recent research has proved that Japanese facework is in line with the theory of politeness by Brown and Levenson (Sachiko Kiyama et al 2012). This research is similar to the present research as it proves the universality of Brown and Levinson (1987). The Japanese researchers have also used a questioner survey to investigate the applicability of Brown and Levenson (1987) politeness theory.

POLITENESS FRAMEWORK IN PASHTO LANGUAGE

It is interesting to note that in Pashto language, an off-record hint which is categorized as the politest behavior by Brown and Levinson (1987) is considered rude. If we view the politeness strategies employed in the Pashto language, off-the-record hint would be on the far end of the continuum (from most to least polite). In Pashto, the politeness continuum would look like that:



Negative politeness positive politeness on record off record

Direct or indirect but with apologies and honorific pronouns plus verb inflection, occasionally Hedges are used	Use of in-group markers and showing friendliness etc.	Plain order	Hint considered to be rude
---	---	-------------	----------------------------

PASHTO LANGUAGE ORIENT TO NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE FACE

Negative Politeness: In the Pashto language, negative face orientation is carried out a little differently. Some strategies suggested by Brown and Levinson are used in the Pashto language to mitigate the threat to a negative face. For example, being pessimistic (I know it's an imposition but...) trying to defuse the FTA by minimizing the imposition (just one moment please.)

Additionally, in Pashto language honorific pronouns (to emphasize distance or power) are used, the verb is also inflected. (Pashto language gives the option of two forms of pronoun 'ta' is familiar form while 'taso' is the honorific form. For example, when asking a senior person to have a seat it can be said, 'taso kay nai' i.e. Please sit down. The honorific pronoun 'taso for you' along with verb inflection Na=nai is performing the function of please and making it a request.

Positive Politeness Strategies are the same as proposed in the framework (use of solidarity strategies) by Brown and Levinson. There is use of solidarity in-group markers. The speakers exaggerate interests in the hearer's needs and want. Also, jokes are used and complements are given etc.

On-Record: This strategy is used in a similar way as proposed in the framework of Brown and Levinson.

Off-Record Hint: It is considered to be rude. There is a social and psychological reason behind the off-record strategy being considered the least polite. If something is being hinted at Pashtuns consider it a threat to their face. Let's consider a scenario: If you are a guest at somebody's place and it's cold, instead of asking directly for the heating to be turned on, you hint at it being chilly. You would be threatening the face of your host by indirectly suggesting that he/she was not attentive to the needs of his/her guests.

METHODOLOGY

To learn about the phenomenon of politeness a questionnaire survey was conducted.

Population and Sample

The participants were all adult native speakers of the Pashto language. Cluster sampling technique was used with population being divided into two clusters: 1: Male: 50 and 2: Female: 50 (N=100)

Equal representation was given to both male and female participants in each cluster.

Questionnaire Survey

Participants were supposed to complete a survey specifically designed for the research. Five settings were explained to the participants and they were supposed to choose the appropriate response. They were instructed to consider themselves as "you" in the scenario and try to imagine their response in each situation.

Situation 1: the participant was supposed to make a request assuming that the interlocutor was a friend.

Situation 2: the participant was supposed to make a request assuming that the interlocutor was a stranger.

Situation 3: the participant was supposed to make a request assuming that the interlocutor was a senior.

Situation 4: the participant was supposed to make a request assuming that the interlocutor was a subordinate.

Situation 5: the participant was supposed to make a request supposing that the interlocutor was a family member.

In the theory facework is realized as a result of interactional effects of multiple factors. The theory suggests that a speaker selects a politeness or face-saving strategy appropriate for the degree to which an act is face threatening. They proposed this formula $W=D(S, H) + P(H, S) + Rx$. D is distance between the speaker and the hearer, P is power the hearer has over the speaker while R is the degree to which an act is considered as an imposition in a culture. In the survey the two factors R and P were different in all five situations to determine their effect on interpersonal interaction. The factor R was kept constant. In all the situations the speaker had to ask for small favors for example opening the door or turning the volume of the music down etc.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

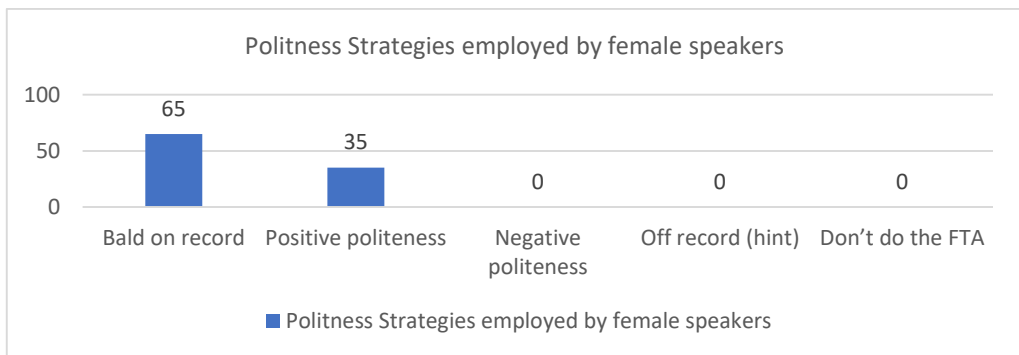
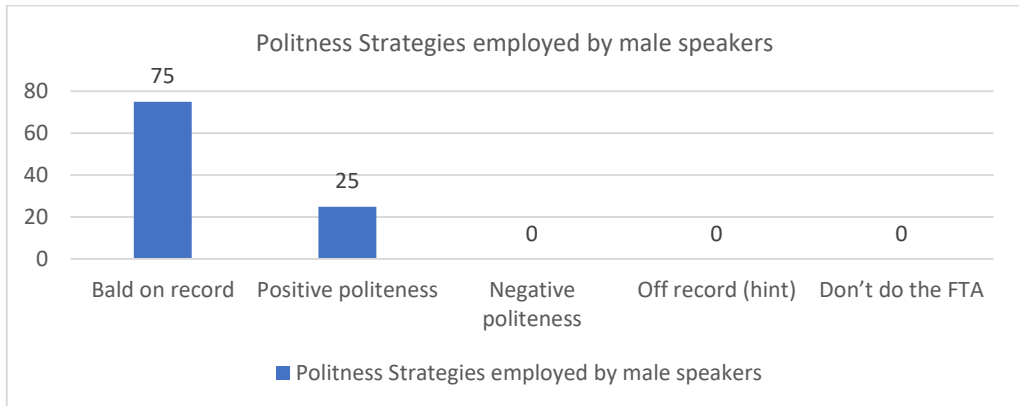
a. Questionnaire Survey

- Questionnaires were administered in groups to ensure high response rate.
- The researcher explained the purpose, relevance and importance of the study.
- The researcher clarified any questions that respondents had regarding the questionnaire.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF SURVEY

First Scenario Interaction with a Friend

In this scenario, the factors P and D were equal. The speaker was supposed to be close to the interlocutor and there was no power relation involved. Factor R (The cost of imposition) was a minor favor.

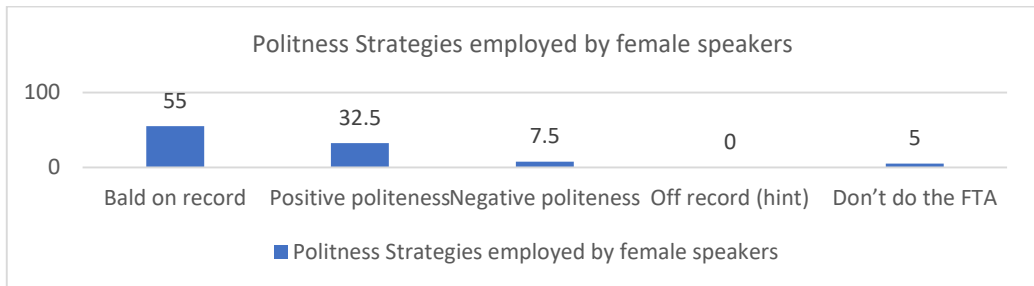
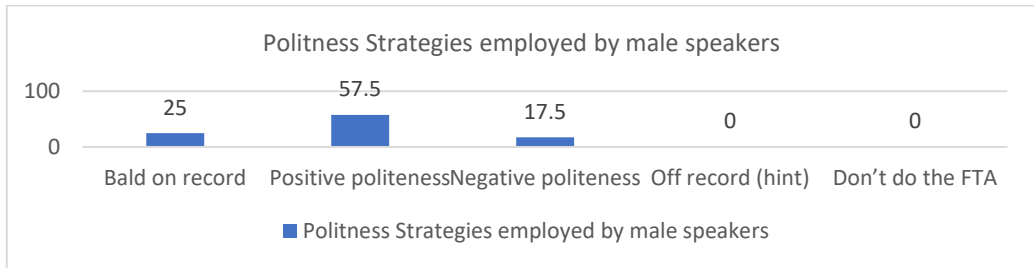


One quarter of the male participants oriented to positive face strategies. 75% of the male participants used bald-on-record strategy. On the other hand, 35% of the females oriented to positive face while 65% used bald-on-record strategy.

These results from the first setting reinforced the hypotheses that Pashto speakers orient to positive face (while interacting with friends) and sometimes are more direct but they did not use off-the-record hint as a polite expression. Differences across male and female groups were minimal. Although there was a greater tendency in male participants to be more direct when in the company of friends than females.

Scenario of Interaction with a Subordinate

In this setting there was distance and power involved. The speaker was able to use authority and there was social distance between the speaker and the hearer.

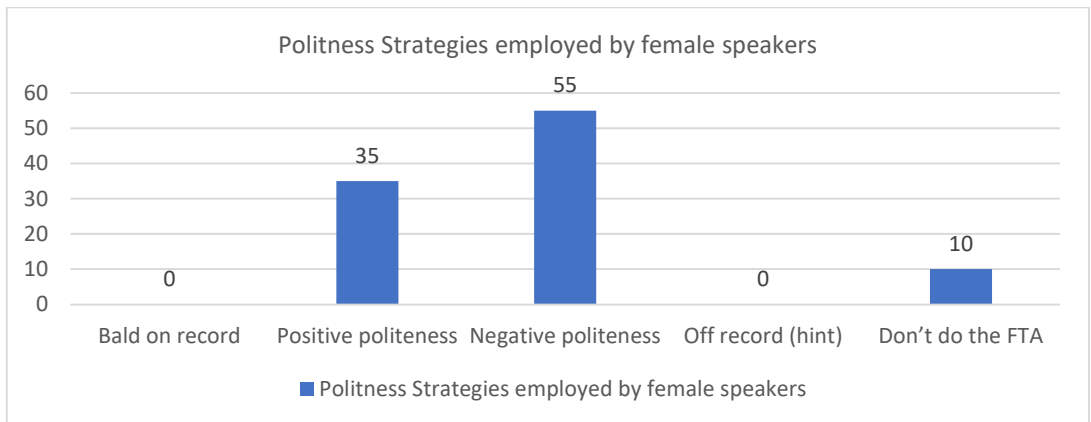
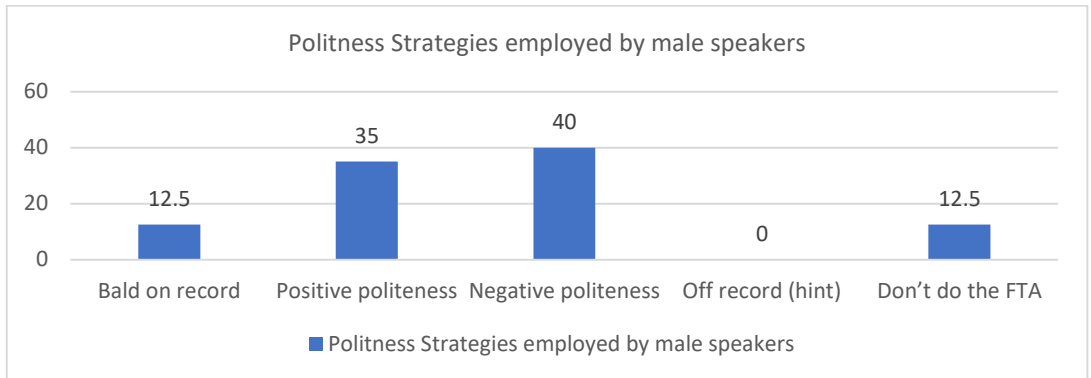


Around 17.5% of the male participants oriented to negative face while 25% of the male participants used bald-on-the-record strategy and 57.5% male speakers oriented to positive face. In the female population, 5% chose not to perform the FTA while 7.5% opted for negative politeness strategies with 32.5% opting for positive politeness strategies and 55% used bald-on-the-record strategy.

Again, it was very clear that though different percentage points of speakers oriented to negative and positive face, some had opted for most direct form but the frequency of the occurrence of off-the-record hint was 0%. An interesting phenomenon was observed in this situation: in dealing with subordinates females were less polite than male participants and 55% used bald-on-record strategy as compared to the male speakers 57% of whom opted for positive face orientation. This provided evidence against the conventional assumption that female speakers are more polite than male speakers Brown (1980).

Scenario -3 Conversation with a Stranger

In this scenario factor D (distance) was dominant. The interlocuter was a stranger. The factor P (power) was not involved as the interlocuter was a new neighbor and people in the same neighborhood usually belong to the same class. The factor R (rate of imposition) was a small favor.

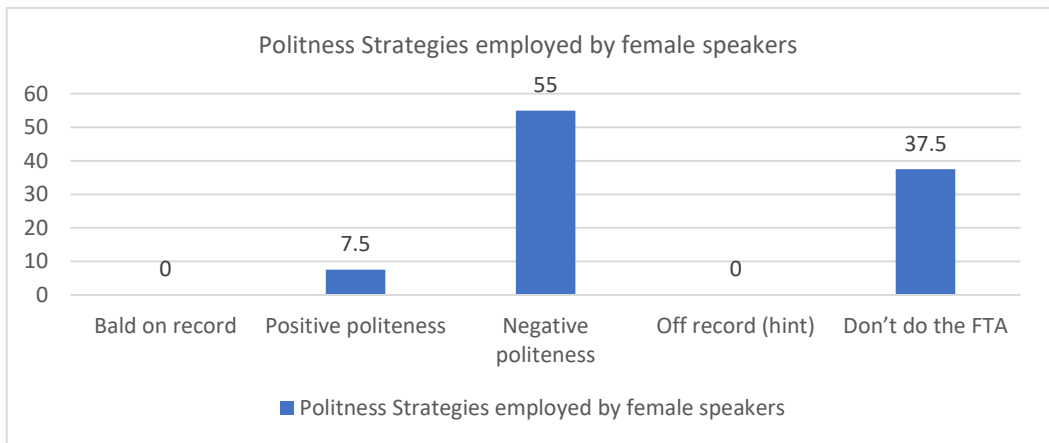
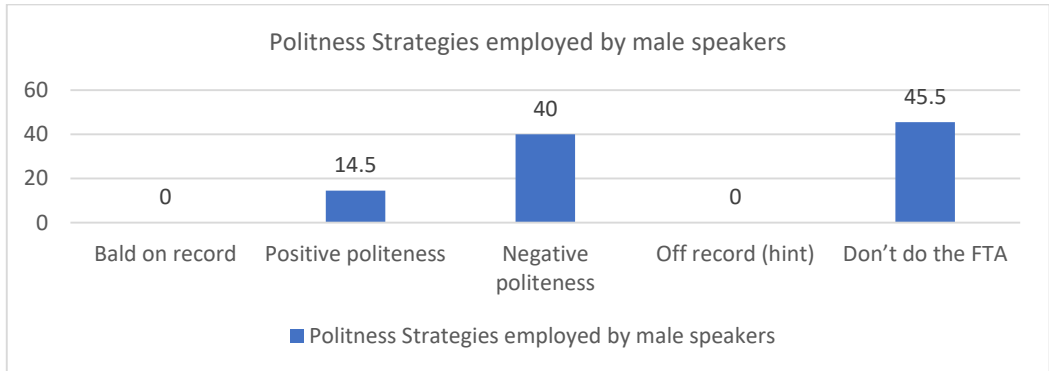


In this case, 12.5% of the male population opted for not performing the FTA while 40% chose negative politeness strategies while 35% chose positive politeness strategies with 12.5% choosing Bald-on-record form. On the female side, 10% decided not to do the FTA with 55% opting for negative politeness strategies and 35% adopted positive politeness strategies.

These results were also consistent with the hypotheses as negative and positive face orientation could be clearly observed but the occurrence of off-the-record hint was 0%. Results across genders showed that female speakers were politer than their male counterparts in their dealings with strangers, thus supporting the conventional assumption about female speakers being politer than their male counterparts (Brown, 1980).

Scenario 4: Interaction with a Senior Citizen

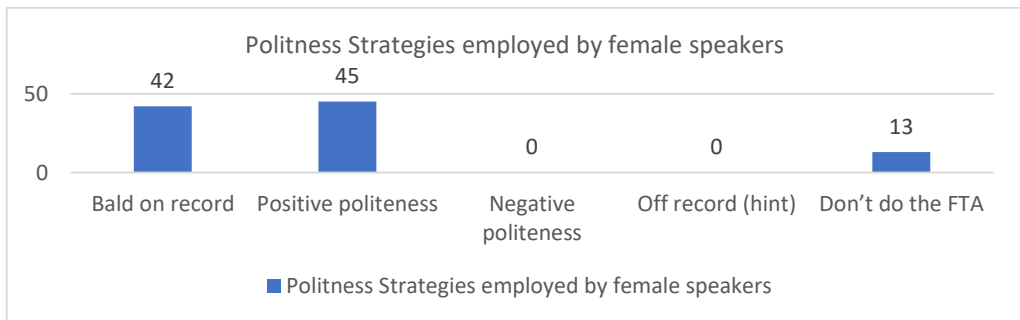
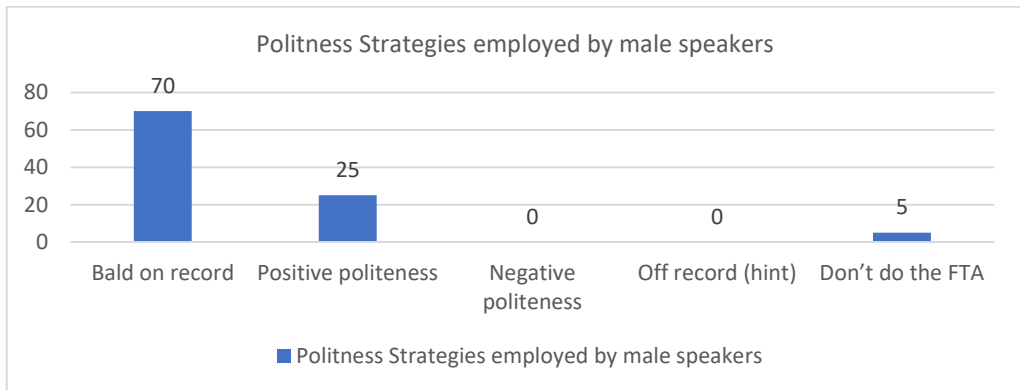
In this setting factors P (power) and D (distance) were affecting the interaction. Senior citizens are held in highly esteemed in the pakhtuns society as younger generation keep a respectful distance in dealing with senior citizens. Factor R (rate of imposition) was a minimal favor.



Around 45.5% of the male participants decided against the FTA with 40% choosing negative politeness while 14.5% chose positive politeness. On the female side 37.5% decided against the FTA while 55% oriented to negative face while 7.5% chose positive politeness strategies. Once again, it could be noticed that both males and females chose not to do the FTA out of respect but there was no instance of resorting to off-record strategies.

Scenario -5 Interaction with a Family Member

In this setting, factors P (power) and D (distance) were not affecting the interaction. The interaction was characterized by closeness. Factor R (rate of imposition) was a small favor.



In the male population, 5% decided not to do the FTA and 25% chose positive politeness while 70% chose bald-on-the-record strategy. Among the female participants, 13% decided not to do the FTA while 45% oriented to positive politeness while 42% used bald-on-the-record strategy. Again, the occurrence of off-the-record hint was 0%. Female speakers proved to more polite than male speakers in interaction with family members.

DISCUSSION

The results of the data prove that Brown and Levenson's politeness theory (1987) is a plausible theory as it states the general principles of politeness that can be applied to all cultures across the board. The expression of these principles may vary from culture to culture but the core principles (positive and negative face orientation) are generalizable. This somehow echoes Chomsky's (1980) principles and parameters distinction of language rules. Principles that are common to all human languages and parameters with different values for each language. The universals are the principles of politeness (negative and positive face orientation) and the parameters in this context can be the expression of values which is rooted in culture and hence differ from culture to culture. The different choices of polite forms that each language provides its speakers with are culture specific but they perform the universal function of negative and positive face orientation. Female speakers proved to be more polite than the male speakers in most interactions except in their dealing with the subordinates.

LIMITATIONS

Due to constraints in shape of time and funding only speech act request was examined while apologies, disagreements etc. were not dealt with in the study. Also, the impact of age and education on polite behavior was not dealt with in the study. However, this should not stop the reader from making generalizations about other instances of FTA's, considering the fact that basic norms of negative and positive face orientations are dealt with in detail.

REFERENCES

- Brown, P. and Levinson, S. (1987) *Politeness: some universals in language usage*. Cambridge Cambridge University Press.
- Goffman (1955) 'On facework: an analysis of ritual element in social interaction', *Psychiatry*, 18:213-31.
- Brown, P. (1980') 'How and why are women more polite: some evidence from Mayan community' in S. McConnell-Ginet, Rebroke, and F. Furman (Eds) *Women and language in literature and society*.
- Meyerhof. (2006), *Introducing Sociolinguistics*. Routledge: Taylor and Frances Groups.

Kakakhail, Z.S.B.S (1960). Zafar-ul-lughat. Peshawar (Pashto -Urdu dictionary)

Sachiko IDE-et al (1986) Universals of Linguistic Politeness. Journal of pragmatics 10 (1986) 347-371) North Holland.

Sachiko Kiyama et al (2012)' Applicability of Brown and Levenson's Politeness theory to a non-western culture: Evidence from Japanese Facework behaviors' Sage Open October to December 2012:1-15 <http://sgo.sagepub.com>

Mohammad, F. et al (2009) The Pathan code of Honor. Journal of Ares Study Center, University of Peshawar Pakistan (no :65) (1-17)

Leech. (1983) Principles of Pragmatics. London: Longman.

Chomsky. (1981) Lectures on Government and Binding. Floris Publication