



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Analyzing Strategies of Politeness Employed by Pakistani Political Leaders to Enhance National Image

Uzma Raza^{1*}, Hasliza Abdhalim²^{1,2} School of Languages, Civilisation and Philosophy Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia**ARTICLE INFO****ABSTRACT**

Received: Oct 18, 2024

Accepted: Dec 4, 2024

Keywords

Political Discourse

Politeness Strategies

Leadership Communication

Political Interviews

Face-Saving Management

***Corresponding Author:**

uzmaraza134@gmail.com

This research analyses the types of politeness strategies employed in political discourse by the Pakistani political leaders Imran Khan and Shahbaz Sharif. This research method is descriptive and qualitative. In this research, this method is used to analyse types of politeness strategies and sub-strategies based on political leaders' utterances in TV interviews. The data source for this research is political interviews on national and international TV channels on YouTube. The theory of politeness by Brown and Levinson (1987) is applied to unfold the use of face-saving management strategies. The findings from this research are that all four types of politeness strategies are used, including bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record. Sub-strategies were also used, although not all of them were found in the research. The excessive use of these strategies on national TV helps to shape public opinions and the country's image simultaneously; on the other side, excessive use of on-record and off-record politeness strategies can successfully engage the audience but damage their public confidence and political leadership communication.

INTRODUCTION

Pakistani political leaders can influence their audience. Their method of communication as a political leader can be viewed as impactful, serving not merely to assert authority but also to foster connections with others (Aspitarsari, Budiarsa, & Rajeg, 2022; Shah & Ahmad, 2020). Effective communication occurs when the speaker's message is readily embraced by the listener, resulting in a mutual sense of satisfaction derived from a comprehensive understanding (Gholami, 2015; Yetty, 2018; Zhou & Halim, 2022). In the realm of political discourse, the cultural background of a politician is indicative of their linguistic style, where the selection of vocabulary and the structure of their expressions hold significant weight (Syahputra, Hartati & Amri, 2023).

Applying politeness strategies becomes a common occurrence in daily communication to facilitate a seamless and comprehensible exchange. In communication, politicians exhibit their capacity to sway public opinion, often drawing parallels with their counterparts in the political landscape. (Sadia, Asgher & Asgher, 2020; Shah & Ahmad, 2020). Previously, Naibaho (2022) stressed on the importance of linguistic politeness in facilitating successful communication across cultures. So, the study of linguistic strategies involving politeness in political discourse is also very important to understand the ways how politicians try to influence public opinion. The study by Hassan et al. (2019) showed how an Australian politician strategized different impression markers in his discourse to attract public attention and emphasize his stance. In fact, the strategies of politeness employed by Pakistani political leaders appear to exhibit a notable diversity in media discussions when contrasted with those of other global leaders. Pakistani political leaders strategically employ politeness as a fundamental tool to shape public opinion, influence policy decisions, and reflect the socio-political landscape of the nation. This approach enhances the visibility of the party by markedly

increasing their national presence and fostering trust with voters (Soon & Samsudin, 2016). Conversely, how they engage in local political communication, particularly through the use of politeness, may not resonate with a global audience similarly, especially in Western contexts, given the varying interpretations of politeness across cultures. This research seeks to elucidate the specific strategies of politeness, as articulated by Brown & Levinson (1987), employed by Pakistani leaders during media engagements, including television interviews at both national and international levels. In the realm of political communication, there exists a deliberate focus on political matters (Norris 2001; McNair 2017), which may also be influenced or tempered (Reichert & Print, 2017) by various cultural factors or motivations (Bayes et al., 2020; Mokal & Halim, 2023). Consequently, attitudes and behaviors may be excessively shaped (Udin, 2020), and the effects can be analyzed through observations of their language and interactions. Conversely, their use of politeness in local political communication may not resonate with a global audience, especially in Western contexts, due to the varying interpretations of politeness across cultures. This research seeks to elucidate the specific strategies of politeness, as articulated by Brown & Levinson (1987), employed by Pakistani leaders during media engagements, including television interviews at both national and international levels. In the realm of political communication, there exists a deliberate focus on political matters (Norris, 2001; McNair, 2017), which may also be influenced or tempered (Reichert & Print, 2017) by various cultural factors or motivations (Bayes et al., 2020; Mokal & Halim, 2023). Consequently, attitudes and behaviours may be excessively shaped (Udin, 2020), and the effects can be analyzed through observations of their language and interactions.

In our interconnected world, a paramount challenge is cultivating a favourable perception of a nation (Nye, 2008). However, it is important to acknowledge that nations with developmental challenges, such as Pakistan, are keen on establishing advantageous standings within the global arena (Van Ham, 2010). Politicians, in conjunction with their national image, are striving to achieve significance within the international political arena for their benefit (Balmas, 2017; Balmas & Sheaffer, 2014; Lass, 1995). However, this approach may lead to a conflation of national and international interpretations of politeness.

Prior studies focus on investigating different types of strategies. Such as Ahmad et al. (2019) explore linguistic strategies employed by the Pakistani academic writers to create coherence and cohesion in their writing. Similarly, Ahmad et al. (2020) investigate linguistic strategies to study stance marking by the newspaper editorial writers. While Ahmad et al. (2021) explore the use of linguistic strategies to study the gender imbalance in the academic discourse. Moreover, Fatima et al. (2023) study linguistic devices to investigate the stylistic and rhetorical strategies in the newspaper editorial writers. This study seeks to explore the politeness strategies used in political discourse to elevate the national image, with a particular emphasis on televised interviews. Building upon the foundational theories established by Brown and Levinson in their seminal work on politeness (1987), this study aims to broaden their framework by investigating the relatively under examined aspect of politeness in the realm of Pakistani politics, illuminating how political leaders adeptly employ politeness as a means of communication. This study serves as a scholarly contribution by offering significant insights into the communication strategies employed by Pakistani leaders during political crises.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study's theoretical framework is grounded in the politeness theory articulated by Brown and Levinson (1987), with a particular emphasis on the various strategies and classifications of politeness.

Politeness

This study aims to examine the politeness strategies present in the political discourse of political leaders. The study seeks to analyze the strategies employed by political leaders to preserve their public image through the cultivation of trust, and concern, and the enhancement of their political party's appeal to their audiences. Political leaders demonstrate awareness of social phenomena to prevent offences that may lead to misunderstandings within the nation. Consequently, individuals must act suitably according to the context to prevent rudeness (Haryanto, Indriani, Safar, Fansiska, & Dewi, 2024). They employ linguistic strategies, behaviors, and etiquette to convey politeness in their communication. Several academic disciplines have increasingly focused on specific aspects of

politeness theory over the years. Brown and Levinson (1987) define politeness as the effort individuals make to maintain manners or behaviors and language that do not offend others' feelings. Additionally, they introduced the notion of politeness strategies designed to preserve the hearer's face. Face denotes an individual's self-respect and the preservation of self-esteem in both public and private contexts. This theory posits that politeness is a universal social phenomenon, though its specific manifestations differ among cultures and languages. The fundamental principle of politeness and face is universally acknowledged across cultures. Politeness and face work have garnered scholarly attention over the past three decades, leading to the development of various theories, models, and frameworks for studying politeness across different cultures and genres. The current research aims to determine the use of politeness strategies within Pakistani political culture as observed in conversations delivered on national and international media forums.

Politeness strategies

Brown and Levinson (1987) define politeness in language as the use of linguistic choices, speech acts, and contextual cues that reflect respect, consideration, and tactfulness in conversation. Politeness is categorized into four primary strategies: positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, and bald on-record. The current research utilizes media interviews conducted by political leaders across various national and international platforms. The researchers employed thematic analysis to achieve the research aims and objectives. The theoretical framework suggests that political leaders employ various politeness strategies in their communication to maintain face which is summarized below.

Positive politeness

Previous research on the positive politeness strategy (Marpudianto, 2020) focused on satisfying the hearers' positive faces by recognizing the friends or members of a group. This aligns with Yule's assertion that the positive politeness strategy encourages speakers to explore specific objectives, including friendship (Yule, 1996). The inclination is to emphasize the familiarity between speakers and listeners by addressing the interests of the interlocutors. In this instance, speakers utilize their emotions to convey individuals' personalities by minimizing face-threatening acts in each utterance to implement a positive politeness strategy. The employed strategies include seeking agreement, presuming speakers' knowledge and considering hearers' wants, utilizing in-group identity markers, avoiding disagreement, and involving both the speaker and hearer in the communicative process (Indahsari & Surjowati, 2021). Other strategies include exaggerating sympathy, intensifying interest, employing humour, presupposing common ground, making offers and promises, maintaining optimism, providing or requesting reasons, assuming or asserting reciprocity, and satisfying listeners to demonstrate understanding, sympathy, and cooperation (Servitia, 2017).

For example:

1. Being hopeful

Her blood will not go in vain

2. Avoiding disagreements

I count Shahbaz Sharif among my friends and I respect him and Mian Sahib a lot.

3. Presupposition manipulations

wouldn't you like a drink?

Of these strategies, humour holds paramount importance in facilitating positive interactions. For example, in a review article Aguion (2021) found it to be useful for bolstering positive interactions and making the teaching and learning enjoyable. Additionally, Noor, Rashid and Latif (2024) observe that humour operates dominantly in the sociocultural framework of Pakistan being manifested through different situational, verbal, and visual forms. These findings underline the pragmatic role of humour in politeness.

Negative politeness

The politeness methods employed by speakers to attain specific objectives in social interactions include face-threatening acts (FTA), public self-image, and self-perception (Marpudianto, 2020).

Figure 1 illustrates the tactics and linkages of employing FTAs in politeness. Various politeness criteria are enacted concerning social distance, social power, and the degree of imposition as sociological variables (Brown & Levinson, 1988). Face-saving behaviors are frequently observed in negative politeness methods (Yule, 1996). This indicates that the speaker employs FSA to preserve their favorable face by refraining from impressing the hearer. Kurniawan, Maharani and Anshori (2024) assert that “respect and deference are frequently articulated when individuals recognize another's face, particularly when the social distance is distinctly apparent.” The distinct distinction between negative politeness and positive politeness lies in their respective purposes regarding social distance. Positive politeness aims to diminish social distance and express solidarity, whereas negative politeness seeks to preserve social distance and acknowledge status disparities. This method is frequently employed by those of lower social positions who articulate their beliefs with considerable politeness. Negative politeness entails employing conventional indirectness, posing questions, utilizing hedges, expressing pessimism, reducing imposition, demonstrating deference, and offering apologies.

For example:

Apologize (beg forgiveness)

I'm sorry to bother you...

Question, Hedge

won't you open the door?

On-record

A bald-on-record politeness strategy is characterized by speakers who refuse to mitigate face-threatening acts towards the hearer. It is typically executed by speakers possessing a higher level of authority addressing others with lesser authority or power. This approach is often not executed due to the potential danger of facial harm to the receiver. The utilization of a straightforward form in language production by the speaker exemplifies directness, clarity, and conciseness (Amalia et al., 2023; Haryanto, 2017). This method is most effective when the addresses and addressee are nearby and well-acquainted. This method aims to provide recommendations, express dissent, convey commands, pose enquiries, issue threats, and deliver warnings. According to Joan (2002), employing the phrase "on record" reduces the hearer's reluctance to decline a favour or order, thereby indicating the closeness between the speaker and the hearer. Bald-on-record strategies are characterized by urgency, a focus on efficiency, task orientation, minimal concern for face-saving, and the use of alerts, welcomes, offers, and requests.

For example:

1. Great urgency *watch out!*

2. Task oriented *Pass me the hammer*

Off-record

The off-record politeness strategy conveys intended meaning through indirectness, allowing interlocutors to interpret messages independently. This is achieved via two mechanisms: inviting conversational implicature and employing vagueness. Speakers utilize conversational implicature to provide cues for interpretation by the interlocutor. In this instance, speakers contravene the maxims of the cooperative principle. Moreover, the violation of maxims is regarded as a strategy for executing off-record politeness strategies, which include understated, overstated, and tautological expressions (violating the quantity maxim); contradictions, irony, metaphors, and rhetorical questions (violating the quality maxim); as well as ambiguity, vagueness, over-generalization, displacing hearers, and ellipsis (violating the manner maxim) (Brown & Levinson, 1988). Numerous researchers have examined off-record politeness strategies, focusing on various methods of enacting politeness. These methods include the use of hedging and indirectness to express uncertainty and ambiguity, the application of polite deceit, and the employment of euphemisms to manipulate ambiguity and connotation to obscure meaning. According to Yule (1996), the success of an off-record statement is

attributed to the communication of more information than what is explicitly stated. Off-record strategies involve providing hints, employing vagueness, and utilizing sarcasm or humour.

For example:

1. Give hints

It is cold in here

2. Use rhetorical questions

How many times do I have to tell you?

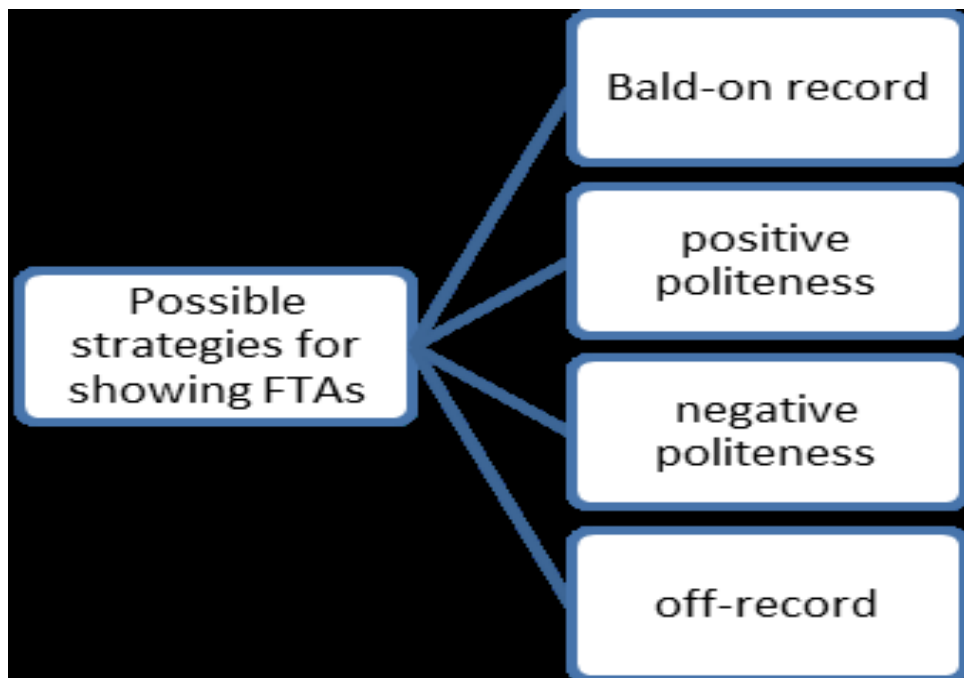


Figure1: Model of politeness strategies by Brown and Levinson (1987)

Language use is influenced by various factors, including linguistic, social, and individual elements, as it functions within the social system and necessitates communication strategies (Hartati, 2021). This study investigates politeness strategies in national and international talk shows, building on prior research (Silitonga, 2022; Indahsari & Surjowati, 2021). The prior research is distinct in that it did not elucidate the variables influencing speakers' language production; instead, it concentrated on identifying the linguistic choices of embedded politeness patterns that impact the language use of political leaders, as demonstrated in the analysis of Imran Khan and Shahbaz Sharif during political talk shows on both national and international platforms.

Table1: Name of Pakistani political leaders on national TV

Ser.no	Name of Political leaders on National forum	Name of TV channel
1.	Imran Khan	ARY News
2.	Shahbaz Sharif	SAMAA TV

Table 2: Name of Pakistani political leaders on international TV

Ser.no	Name of Political leaders on international forum	Name of TV channel
1.	Imran Khan	CNBC
2.	Shahbaz Sharif	CGTN

Furthermore, the purposive sampling strategy employed in this study, which is categorised as a non-probability sampling method, is designed to yield comprehensive data for providing in-depth responses rather than for generalization. Ames, Glenton & Lewin (2019) asserted that this strategy facilitates a profound comprehension of intricate phenomena by emphasizing the experiences and viewpoints of research participants while integrating other contextual elements. This research employs this strategy to ensure the sample is adequate to substantiate the findings.

Data collection strategies enable researchers to acquire data. This study employs note-taking procedures due to the nature of the subject, which is an interview necessitating transcripts for analysis (Talmy, 2010). Nonetheless, it facilitated the representation of the intricate nature of the interviews in a manner that was both comprehensible and beneficial. The transcriptions of this study data are not intended to supplant the original recordings of political debates; rather, they aim to furnish supplementary tools for the analysis and interpretation of these recordings (Heritage, 1984b; Psathas & Anderson, 1990). Before that, interviews on national television were initially translated into English and subsequently transcribed. The researcher recorded the interview (Sugiyono, 2010), transcribed the dialogue, examined the transcription, and identified the speakers' statements. All videos undergo manual transcription. This data delineates the principles of politeness, resulting in a characterization of the linguistic politeness techniques employed by political leaders during interviews (Haryanto et al., 2024).

This research aims to validate the reliability of data and its interpretation by examining the method, findings, strengths, and flaws to assure trustworthiness. All interpretations were substantiated by citations and quotations. Merriam (2001) and Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) posited that it permits the reader to evaluate the findings' transferability, dependability, and confirm ability. The researcher selects the qualitative approach based on the premise that the findings are dependable (Merriam, 2001; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Subsequently, when data were extracted mostly from documented transcripts, researchers confirmed that each sampled was articulated by the identified speaker/author during the preparation process. The political leaders Imran Khan (2018-2022) and Shahbaz Sharif (2022-till now) both can be considered as a well-known member of the Pakistani Parliament. Both have shared the same status as the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Moreover, Imran Khan, the focal leader of the present study, has been ranked among the top 500 Muslim political leaders globally for five consecutive years, which further attests to his credibility. On the other hand, Shahbaz Sharif is currently the Prime Minister of Pakistan (October 2024) and represents the whole nation.

3. FINDINGS

Focusing on the systematic collection and examination of utterances in discussions about political issues within national and international television forums, particularly by Pakistani politicians, is crucial and should be centered on previously outlined themes. The examination uncovered the existence of politeness strategies in their statements. An extensive examination has revealed 159 politeness strategies, encompassing positive, bald-on, negative, and off-record methods. Politeness strategies were discerned in National Forum 110 and International Forum 49. The data were meticulously organized and compiled into frequency and percentage, as demonstrated in the table below.

Table 3: Percentage of Politeness Strategies in a conversation conducted by Imran Khan on national and international TV

Imran Khan				
	National TV		International TV	
Politeness strategies	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Positive politeness	12	22.22%	02	11.76

Negative politeness	15	27.77%	01	5.88%
On-record	15	27.77%	07	41.77%
Off-record	12	22.22%	07	41.77%
Total	54	100%	17	100%

Table 3 shows that Imran Khan on the national forum shows positive politeness with 12 (54) % followed by 15 (27.77)% of negative politeness, 15 (27.77) % followed by On-record and 12 (22.22) % followed by off-record politeness strategies. Similarly, on international forum shows positive politeness with 02(11.76) % followed by 01(5.88)% of negative politeness, 07(41.17)% followed by On-record and 07(41.77)% followed by off-record politeness strategies.

Table 4: Percentage of politeness strategies in conversation conducted by Shahbaz Sharif on national and international TV

Shahbaz Sharif				
	National TV		International TV	
Politeness strategies	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Positive politeness	15	26.78%	10	31.25%
Negative politeness	14	25%	07	21.87%
On-record	24	42.85%	08	25%
Off-record	11	19.64%	07	21.87%
Total	56	100%	32	100%

Table 4 shows that Shahbaz Sharif shows 15 (26.78) % positive politeness, 14 (25)% negative politeness, 24 (42.85)% on record, and 11 (19.64)% off-record. In contrast, on international TV, he uses 10(31.25) positive politeness, 07(21.87) % negative politeness, 08(25)% on-record, and off-record 07(21.87)%.

Imran Khan

In a national television interview, Imran Khan and Arshad Shareef elucidated significant facets of Pakistan's political mechanisms, underscored his party's resilience amidst legal challenges, alongside the considerable public backing for his leadership. Arshad Shareef's comments purportedly centred on the strategies of the PTI and the imperative for the opposition to counter what he perceived as the PTI's aim to diminish its adversaries. In contrast to international television, Imran Khan focused on the economic challenges and geopolitical intricacies. He underscored the precarious state of Pakistan's economy, attributing it to political turmoil and insufficient governance. He underscored Pakistan's pivotal role in the region, particularly in cultivating relationships with major global powers such as China and the United States.

Positive politeness

During the interview, political leaders use different sub-categories of politeness strategy: optimism, joke, acknowledgement, and exaggeration. The following are examples of utterances

1. Optimism: "We want to become a great nation, independent, believing in Allah." (Imran Khan speaks with SAMMA TV)

Imran Khan's remarks during his SAMMA TV interview emphasized optimism about Pakistan's future. He stated, "We want to become a great nation, independent, believing in Allah." This sentiment underscores his vision of self-reliance and faith as central to the country's progress. Khan highlighted the importance of fostering unity, enhancing economic independence, and rebuilding national pride, often framing these as core tenets of his leadership philosophy.

2. Optimism: "Look, I can't say what will be the outcome, but for me, it is important to try my best..." (Imran Khan speaks with CNBC TV)

Imran Khan's statement during his CNBC interview, "Look, I can't say what will be the outcome, but for me, it is important to try my best," reflects his pragmatic optimism and perseverance. It encapsulates his belief in effort over certainty, emphasizing the importance of striving for goals despite uncertainty. Whether in his cricket career, philanthropic ventures, or political journey, his focus has consistently been on giving his utmost effort regardless of challenges. Khan's candid acknowledgement of unpredictability contrasts with typical political overpromises, reinforcing his authenticity to supporters.

3. Joke: "Just look at the vision (smile) from 2008 to 2018." (Imran Khan speaks with SAMMA TV)

This joke refers to Imran Khan's statement on SAMMA TV where he humorously reflects on the changes in Pakistan's political landscape from 2008 to 2018, implying a shift in leadership and vision over that decade. The smile adds a fun touch and shows that good things have happened or progress has been made during that time.

Exaggerate: "Look at their foreign policy, from all the cold war between Americans and the Sovereign Union... Due to India's foreign policy, look at the respect of India's passport and Pakistan's passport." (Imran Khan speaks with SAMMA TV)

Imran Khan's comment highlights, as he sees it, the striking disparity between the foreign policy of India and Pakistan. Referring to the Cold War ("between Americans and the Sovereign Union"—probably a slip for "Soviet Union"—he is inflating the historical weight of foreign policy dynamics). Emphasising the "respect of India's passport against Pakistan's passport" points to a startling disparity in worldwide reputation, presenting India's diplomacy as a success and Pakistan's as a failure in relation. The bombastic tone accentuates his criticism of the foreign policy inefficacy of Pakistan.

4. Include both the speaker and the hearer in the activity: "Pakistan needs a strong army. We need a strong army for our country." (Imran Khan speaks with SAMMA TV)

Imran Khan's assertion that "Pakistan doesn't just need a strong army—we need to stand united, shoulder to shoulder, building and supporting an invincible force for our country" could be overstated by highlighting unity and shared responsibility, involving both the audience (the hearer) and himself (the speaker). Having an army isn't enough; we must work together to ensure Pakistan's security and strength at every turn. The call to action is heightened in this rendition, which elevates it to a shared duty and mission.

5. Seeking Agreement: "Inflation is high, I absolutely agree with you, it's high but we are trying to fix it." (Imran Khan speaks with CNBC TV)

Imran Khan's message emphasizes attempts to control inflation while acknowledging its worry in an attempt to garner consensus. To develop rapport and find common ground, the speaker in the aforementioned example identifies himself with the viewpoint or concerns of the audience.

Before offering a remedy or explanation, he is attempting to recognise that there is a common understanding of the inflation problem.

7. In-group Identity Markers: "In the 60s Pakistan's government actively promoted industrialization we are we were the fastest-growing economy and then we lost our way with nationalization socialist, the socialist government came along and then for someone that

mindset never changed making money was considered a crime almost now we have we encourage businesses industry we are doing everything possible so that people can make profits." (Imran Khan speaks with CNBC TV)

Imran Khan inspires hope in Pakistan's capacity for economic recovery and justifies the path of his government's policy using this historical framework. Imran evokes national pride and a shared sense of accomplishment among Pakistanis by referencing 1960 as the Golden Age. The comment then turns to a conversation about the changes his government was implementing to undo the harm prior policies generated. Imran's frequent use of "we" and "our" emphasizes a shared identity and collective duty, therefore appealing to both the pride in Pakistan's previous successes and the need for togetherness in confronting present difficulties. Framing the story as a voyage taken by the country helps him to present his policies as part of a team effort to bring Pakistan back to its previous splendour.

Negative politeness

1. Give deference: "I will never speak against my army; I will never speak publicly about any of my issues because Pakistan needs a strong army." (Imran Khan speaks with SAMMA TV) Imran publicly declares his allegiance, demonstrating his profound regard for the military as a cornerstone of Pakistan's power. Imran highlights the value of unity and upholding the army's public image for the benefit of the country by forbidding the public expression of complaints or disagreements. This demonstrates that he prioritizes the needs of the nation over individual or political disagreements. Imran fortifies the individual and group bond by addressing the military as "my army," portraying himself as a patriot dedicated to the same objectives as the military.

2. Minimize Imposition: "I was telling you from the first day that you should leave the government and go, so this... I have to face my Allah... In any case, the money of the nation has been stolen." (Imran Khan speaks with SAMMA TV)

Imran frames his statement as the counsel he has continuously offered, implying that it is a well-thought-out position he has upheld over time rather than an impetuous or forceful demand. Imran reduces the imposition on the hearer by focusing on his moral obligation rather than confronting or condemning the listener directly by referencing his accountability to Allah. By framing the criticism as an ethical duty rather than a personal charge, this method softens it. The remark focuses on a larger issue—the theft of national wealth—instead of a specific person. By doing this, conflict is avoided and the matter is brought into line with national goals, shifting the focus from individual guilt to group accountability.

3. Be conventionally indirect: "People from outside need the Mir Jafars here and they did exactly that." (Imran Khan speaks with SAMMA TV)

In the following scenario, the speaker used indirect language to imply manipulation and treachery without directly accusing anyone. Imran names Mir Jafar, a historical person from the period of British colonial control over India. By doing this, he makes a connection to people seen in Pakistan's modern political scene as players of outside forces or betrayers. This oblique parallel suggests disloyalty without specifically calling out those he questions.

4. Impersonate S and H: "What should I ask for NRO? (smile) from these thieves...." (Imran Khan speaks with SAMMA TV)

Imran Khan campaigned on a platform of accountability, promising to rid the country of corruption and establish a fair and just system. His statement during the interview reflects his frustration with the persistent corruption and the perceived reluctance of previous governments to hold the corrupt accountable. It was likely made in the context of addressing public concerns about political corruption and the misuse of power.

5. Question: "Why do I say it's serious? Because I worry that this will now spill over..." (Imran Khan speaks with CNBC TV)

Imran Khan's choice of the word "serious" conveys the seriousness of the current circumstance. He worries about the wider ramifications of an occurrence rather than just the specific one. In his remarks, Imran Khan expresses his concern about the possible consequences should the matter at

hand worsen or grow. This could entail societal unrest, economic difficulties, or political instability. Engaging the audience strategically forces them to think about the seriousness of the situation and the stakes. It highlights the significance of his worries by asking the listener to consider the possible outcomes.

On-record

1. Cases of non-minimisation of the face threat: "This is a huge N-league disinformation campaign." (Imran Khan speaks with SAMMA TV)

Imran Khan did not waver in his position or try to downplay the significance of the comment. He charges the opposition directly with spreading false information without any diplomatic or conciliatory effort. The term "huge" accentuates the gravity of the problem and presents it as a major and destructive strategy used by the adversary. This strong phrase highlights the supposed threat the N-league presents.

2. "India has been taken over by an extremist ideology which is called Hinduja or the RSS." (Imran Khan speaks with CNBC TV)

Imran Khan criticises India's political and ideological shift under the leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its affiliated groups, such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), in a straightforward and combative manner. By clearly identifying the organizations and philosophy, he eliminates any possibility of misunderstanding or softening the remark. By characterising the ideology as radical and detrimental in India, the term "extremist" expresses a strong opinion about its nature. Imran Khan's disapproval of India's domestic policies and their effects on the area is shown in this severe portrayal.

Off-record

1. Hints: "There are record dollars in Pakistan... record exports mean dollars in, record remittances dollars in." (Imran Khan speaks with SAMMA TV)

Imran Khan suggests in terms of economic success the higher influx of funds resulting from greater exports and remittances. Referring to these data, he hints subtly a growing economy and favourable financial times. These lines suggest concrete advantages from more exports and remittances, such as foreign exchange gains. By concentrating on these particular milestones, Imran Khan gently highlights the economic successes of his government and their favourable effect on Pakistan's reserves. The sentence is meant to appeal to a wider audience comprising the business community as well as the general people. It addresses favourable economic data in a way that is easily understandable and connects with shared worries about economic development.

2. Use rhetorical questions: "Even if Imran Khan is removed, how will he run this country?" (Imran Khan speaks with SAMMA TV)

By framing the question this way, he indirectly questions the ability of anyone else to manage the country as effectively, which subtly asserts his value and leadership qualities. Imran Khan's question underscores his belief in his unique ability to lead Pakistan. The rhetorical question implies that the country's issues might not be as easily resolved under a different leadership, reinforcing his stance as the right choice for the role. The use of "how" introduces an implied challenge, suggesting that only he can provide the necessary leadership to manage Pakistan's complex issues. It connects with concerns about governance and stability, areas that are often front and centre in public discourse. By doing so, Imran Khan not only reinforces his image but also validates his narrative as the only suitable leader in the current scenario.

3. Give hints: "Because you know the sort of issues I faced; I really haven't watched much cricket..." (Imran Khan speaks with CNBC TV)

The statement hints at Imran Khan's shift in priorities from personal interests to his responsibilities as a leader. By admitting that he hasn't watched much cricket, he implies that his focus has been on more pressing issues, likely related to governance and nation-building. This hints at the sacrifices he has made to focus on his political and leadership roles, subtly framing him as a leader who prioritizes the nation's welfare over his interests. All this serves as a strategic way to manage public perception.

By hinting at his sacrifices and dedication, he subtly bolsters his image as a leader who prioritizes the nation's interests over personal pursuits.

4. Use metaphors: "He is polishing the boot, what did Imran Khan say to the EU, what did he say to America, it is a security threat." (Imran Khan speaks with CNBC TV)

"Polishing the boot" is a metaphor for servitude or subordination. It suggests an excessive submission to outside forces and a lack of self-respect. Using this analogy, Imran Khan criticises behaviours that seem unduly submissive to foreign powers, comparing them to a subservient person polishing a boot, which he frames as a security risk. Imran Khan exercises public accountability by directly criticising the government's activities through the use of similar metaphors. It highlights possible flaws in diplomatic tactics and functions as indirect criticism.

Shahbaz Sharif

In an interview with SAMAA TV, Pakistan's main television network, Shahbaz Sharif discussed several important political and economic issues facing the country. Regarding Pakistan's energy issues, Sharif underlined the significance of infrastructure and renewable energy investments under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). He promoted fair and open procedures during his political speech about the upcoming general elections. Pakistan and China have a long-standing strategic alliance, which former Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif described in an interview with CGTN as an "iron-clad friendship." He underlined the importance of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a key element of this partnership, highlighting its impact on Pakistan's energy development, infrastructure, and economic stability.

Positive politeness

1. Optimism and Well-Wishes: "I pray to Allah that this politics of abuse is buried forever." (Shahbaz Sharif speaks with SAMAA TV)

By condemning political abuse, which is probably a practice that everyone finds objectionable, Shahbaz Sharif (speaker) appeals to common moral or ethical standards. This demonstrates that the speaker is in line with the listener's possible wish for civility and fruitful discussion. The statement softens the criticism by concentrating on the nebulous idea of "politics of abuse," rather than naming specific people or organisations explicitly. By imagining a better, abuse-free future, the speaker subtly encourages others to strive towards this common objective, which promotes teamwork. This improves the statement's acceptability and is consistent with positive politeness techniques, which seek to preserve harmony.

2. Seek agreement: "I am submitting to you that it has been revealed to you." (Shahbaz Sharif speaks with SAMAA TV)

According to Shahbaz Sharif, there is hope for the future in which civility and respect for one another will take the place of the negative and polarising elements of political discourse. The expression "buried forever" highlights his hope for a long-lasting transformation and a radical change in the political culture. The statement is consistent with the universal principles of unity, respect, and productive discourse. Many people find it appealing, even those who are sick of contentious political discourse. Shahbaz Sharif joins the growing number of people who want a more civil and solution-focused political atmosphere by voicing hope for a better political culture.

3. Acknowledgement: "It's a matter of great privilege and honour to visit China on the invitation of the Chinese leadership and being one of the first few guests here is a great manifestation of our iron Brotherhood." (Shahbaz Sharif speaks with CGTN TV)

By expressing his appreciation and highlighting the good ties between China and Pakistan, Sharif demonstrates positive politeness. By doing so, you can show that you value the visit and begin to establish rapport. The term "iron" has been used repeatedly to describe the friendship between Pakistan and China; it stands for strength, endurance, and unbreakable bonds. By praising the host country and its leaders, the message shows cultural awareness. As a result, both personal and diplomatic ties are strengthened.

Negative politeness

1. Minimize the imposition: *"Please be brave and listen to the answer."* (Shahbaz Sharif speaks with SAMAA TV)

Shahbaz Sharif begins with "please," employing courteous language to present his request, which lessens the feeling of imposition. The phrase "be brave" creates an indirect appeal, enhancing the directive's engagement while softening its confrontational nature. It implies support instead of an imposing requirement. The statement is designed to promote active listening while honouring the audience's perspective. It engages their sense of fairness and curiosity, gently supporting the speaker's perspective. Shahbaz Sharif fosters a more inclusive atmosphere for discussion by reducing imposition, which can aid in tackling potentially contentious issues.

2. Be conventionally indirect: *"This is not for me and you to decide."* (Shahbaz Sharif speaks with SAMAA TV)

By referring to institutions, legal processes, or collective consensus, Shahbaz Sharif evades direct accountability for decision-making and shifts the blame to higher authorities or more general frameworks. By avoiding direct accusations, this method makes the remark more diplomatic and less divisive. Subtly implied in the sentence is the idea that decisions of this kind necessitate institutional input, legal frameworks, or common wisdom. It challenges the audience to go beyond snap judgements and consider alternative viewpoints.

3. Question: *"I think it's what they call it 'batiya' am I right?"* (Shahbaz Sharif speaks with CGTN TV)

By asking this question, Shahbaz Sharif is looking for confirmation to show that he is ready to talk to his guests, which means that you give the audience or interviewer a chance to react and make things clear. Using a word that is special to one culture, like "batiya," shows that Shahbaz Sharif is trying to understand his audience's situation and culture. By asking it as a question, he makes sure it is correct and shows respect for local customs or language, which builds trust. The question sets a friendly, casual tone that breaks down boundaries and makes the conversation feel more open and approachable.

Bald on-record

1. Cases of non-non-minimization of the face threat: *"Find a way out of this. It is not my job to conduct elections."* (Shahbaz Sharif speaks with SAMAA TV)

There is no hedging or equivocation in the delivery of this order, making it crystal clear. It implies that other people are in adequate or will fail to resolve the problem, which puts the burden squarely on their shoulders and may even be humiliating. Shahbaz Sharif states categorically that it is not within his remit to oversee the conduct of elections. His credibility with the audience may take a hit if his finality in saying "it is not my job" came out as a lack of effort or commitment. The technique may define duties and responsibilities, which may serve a strategic objective, despite its directness. A possible implication of Shahbaz Sharif's statements is that he does not have authority over electoral processes. This strategy, which runs the risk of coming across as abrupt or condescending, can assist shift attention to the right people.

"President Xi Jinping's re-election as general secretary for the third time... his dynamic leadership in the last 10 years has transformed Chinese society." (Shahbaz Sharif speaks with CGTN TV)

This recognises an important milestone in Chinese politics and emphasises the ongoing leadership of Xi Jinping. By mentioning the re-election, Shahbaz Sharif connects his comments to China's political successes, showcasing admiration and acknowledgement of their system. The statement highlights Xi Jinping's influence, crediting his leadership with significant transformations in Chinese society. The commendation reinforces the bond between Pakistan and China by demonstrating unity and backing for China's leadership. This statement is crafted to connect with a Chinese audience, reflecting their national pride and commemorating an important political moment.

Off-record

1. Give association clues: *"No, no, but this is the department's job."* (Shahbaz Sharif speaks with SAMAA TV)

Shahbaz Sharif indicates that the work or issue is their responsibility by clearly linking it to the appropriate department. He highlights the organised allocation of duties within governance and defines positions by pointing to the department. The focus is shifted from him to the appropriate entity when the obligation is linked to a particular department. This promotes accountability at the institutional level and implies that the problem is within the department's jurisdiction. It supports the notion that instead of micromanaging every detail, leaders should rely on institutional structures for efficient management.

2. Give hints: *"I don't know about it but Imran Khan has confessed."* (Shahbaz Sharif speaks with CGTN TV)

Shahbaz Sharif indicates uncertainty or disinterest by beginning the statement with "I don't know," removing any chance of offering specific specifics. This serves as a subliminal clue to pique interest or inquiry without providing specific details, urging listeners to investigate or remember

What Imran Khan might have admitted to. By focusing on Imran Khan's behaviour, this strategy lets the audience decide how to interpret it. Imran Khan's credibility and accountability are subtly called into doubt by the hint. The comment appears less forceful while still accomplishing its goal of raising questions or diverting attention because the wording avoids confrontation.

Displacement: "This job is a method of action. I pray to Allah that this politics of abuse is buried forever. Thieves, robbers, calling yourself an angel, calling yourself an angel, using the name of Rezasat e Madinah. The action is to reverse this and anger the friendly and brotherly countries of Pakistan and destroy the economy of Pakistan. I pray that whatever the party comes after the next election, they will end this kind of politics forever. Here tolerance brother, love, sacrifice and solidarity rule." (Shahbaz Sharif speaks with SAMAA TV)

Rather than addressing a particular question or concern, Shahbaz Sharif redirects attention to a wider discussion regarding political culture, societal values, and the future of Pakistan. This displacement generates a feeling of diversion, where the pressing concern is eclipsed by broader ideals or ambitions. Shahbaz Sharif critiques political opponents indirectly by condemning behaviours like "calling yourself an angel" or "using the name of Rezasat e Madinah." This subtle critique shifts the focus away from individual actors and directs attention towards the broader systemic issues present in the political landscape.

3. Overstated: *"China is now touching the zenith of glory...not through only speeches but through practical implementation and hard work."* (Shahbaz Sharif speaks with CGTN TV)

This statement implies that China has achieved the highest level of success and influence, which is an overblown approach to describe its accomplishments. It gives China's achievements a sense of unmatched grandeur and raises them to the greatest level imaginable. Shahbaz Sharif implies that China's achievements are not merely symbolic but are firmly anchored in inefficient governance and action by exaggerating the significance of hard effort and real implementation. By bringing Pakistan's story into line with China's reputation as an example of political and economic success, this exaggerated praise helps to improve diplomatic ties between the two countries. It shows a desire to improve the two countries' relationship by bringing Pakistan's policies and visions into line with China's.

4. Be ambiguous: *"We should remain aligned to one goal, and that is that this world, this universe should remain happy, prosperous, and in peace."* (Shahbaz Sharif speaks with CGTN TV)

The statement lacks clarity, implying a broad aim while failing to detail the means of achieving this goal or identifying the specific parties responsible. It invites a wide range of interpretations, enabling it to connect with a diverse audience by tapping into shared values such as happiness, prosperity, and peace. The ambiguity of the statement permits various interpretations, enabling Shahbaz Sharif to sidestep a clear position on contentious issues. This strategy enables Shahbaz Sharif to convey an uplifting and hopeful image while refraining from making concrete commitments to particular

actions or policies. This approach serves to bring together various perspectives and cultivate a feeling of worldwide unity, positioning it as a tactical option for diplomatic communication.

4. DISCUSSION

This research analyzes the politeness methods employed by Pakistani political leaders, utilizing the framework proposed by Brown and Levinson (1998), which encompasses bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategies. Pakistani political leaders employ civility methods in national and international television interviews. This can serve as a method to identify the types of politeness strategies and sub-strategies observable by all.

Researchers observed the use of politeness strategies by speakers Imran Khan and Shahbaz Sharif based on the results obtained. The comparison of the interviews conducted by one speaker on both national and international platforms revealed variations in the selection of politeness strategies, as evidenced by the analyzed data. Additionally, the implementation of a politeness strategy is inherently linked to the concept of a politeness sub-strategy (Sefrianita & Hamzah, 2024). The sub-strategy plays a crucial role in identifying the politeness strategy employed by political leaders. Consequently, the political leaders employed sub-strategies derived from the four categories of politeness strategy. According to the findings, Imran Khan employed sub-categories of positive politeness, including optimism, humour, and exaggeration, while incorporating both S and H in the activity as a strategic approach. On an international level, he utilized optimism and the pursuit of agreement as techniques. Furthermore, the findings regarding negative politeness in national forums included giving deference, minimizing imposition, being conventionally indirect, and impersonating S and H. Conversely, on an international level, questioning was employed as a tool. FTA's bald on-record strategy was employed in instances of non-minimization of face threats in both national and international forums. He implemented an off-record strategy, utilizing hints on both forums while employing rhetorical questions on national TV and metaphors on an international level. In a similar vein, Shahbaz Sharif employed optimism and the pursuit of consensus on a national platform, demonstrating a positive approach to politeness, while on the international stage, the emphasis was placed on reaching agreements. Sub-categories of negative politeness, such as minimizing imposition, conventionally indirect expressions regard ingnational matters, and questioning, were employed as strategies on international TV. Similarly, the Bald-on record strategy employed by him exemplified instances of non-minimization of face threat. Additionally, off-record displacement of the hearer was utilized in both forums, with clues provided on national forums and hints noted internationally.

The results indicated that all Pakistani political leaders favoured employing various politeness tactics and their subcategories. Imran Khan employed a greater variety of positive, negative, on-record, and off-record civility methods in the national forum than at the international forum. Another speaker, Shahbaz Sharif, exhibited a mixed perspective on a national forum and opted for directness by employing both on-the-record and off-the-record statements. Moreover, political leaders have demonstrated the prevalence of politeness strategies, indicating that a political leader's exhibition of integrity such as honesty, trustworthiness, and positive demeanour may significantly influence their nation's image more than their competence and likability (Ingenhoff & Klein, 2018; Wu, Halim & Nordin, 2021). The themes of conversation, the participants, and the television station are the factors that indicate to political leaders when to employ politeness methods. The positive politeness approach is evident due to the tendency for familiarity between speakers and listeners, alongside the intention to showcase a leader's personality by mitigating face-threatening acts in every utterance (Rabia, Mussarat & Aatika, 2014). The findings indicate that the primary determinants influencing positive politeness strategy as the prevailing approach are rank, status, social distance, and the degree of imposition among interlocutors (Haryanto et al., 2024). The level of imposition they employ during conversation suggests that they are maintaining an argument by employing negative civility, as they believe that their language can maintain it (Amalia et al., 2023). The country's image can be considerably impacted by the use of bald on-record and off-record strategies by political leaders during TV interviews, both domestically and internationally. A leader's credibility, transparency, and the public's trust in the political system can be either reinforced or undermined by the specific implications of each communication style. Pakistani political leaders frequently employ direct, clear, and unambiguous statements, often without regard for the listener's reaction or the ability to mitigate the message. They employed an on-record strategy to positively influence the

country's image by speaking directly and assertively, demonstrating to the audience that political leaders are willing to address challenging queries directly. This was a demonstration of political transparency. In addition, they instill confidence in both national and international media when they address challenging such as the American- Afghan War or Pakistan's foreign policies, particularly about India. However, the utilization of subcategories of directness has demonstrated their uncompromising, impolite, and blunt nature, particularly in national forums. Pakistani political leaders are observed to employ less direct utterances as a diplomatic strategy on international TV. Global audiences may interpret direct comments as hostile or confrontational, which could potentially affect foreign policy and impair international relations.

The off-record involvement of political leaders in this research suggests a strategy of indirectness and ambiguity to evade accountability on sensitive issues or to preserve a favorable public image. Political leaders often employ indirect utterances to circumvent confrontation or inflammatory language, thereby aiding in the maintenance of stability during face-to-face interactions (Azzahra, Pratama & Saleh, 2023). Pakistani political leaders may strategically manage these approaches to uphold public trust, diplomatic relations, and international credibility.

5. CONCLUSION

Pakistani politicians use a mix of positive, negative, on-record, and off-record communication methods in national and international interviews. These techniques serve different aims, reflecting Pakistan's complicated political and media context. The variety of politeness methods used by Pakistani politicians shows the fluidity of political discourse. Pakistani leaders utilize direct speech to show their authority and clarify their positions, yet it can come out as aggressive or overly assertive, affecting their diplomacy and flexibility. Political leaders utilize diplomatic skills to avoid straight answers and deflect unpleasant enquiries, which raises worries about openness and accountability. Maintaining a balance between the country's image and the leaders' image while creating a rapport with voters encourages national unity, discredits opponents, and contrasts opposing political parties is tough.

In the end, the public's opinion of political leaders and the larger political conversation are shaped by the frequent application of these politeness techniques in national interviews. When used excessively, particularly in a vague or evasive way, on-record and off-record strategies can damage public confidence in media integrity and political leadership, even though they can successfully engage audiences.

6. LIMITATIONS

The current study has several limitations that must be recognized to inform future research endeavours. The data sources were limited to interviews of Imran Khan and Shahbaz Sharif conducted in national and international media. One interview with each leader on national television and one on international television. Future research should consider expanding its data size to enhance representativeness and transferability. Additionally, the analysis lacks consideration of non-linguistic features, such as gestures, movements, and facial expressions, which could be further examined to uncover aspects of politeness exhibited by political leaders. Third, minimal attention was paid to the host and his behavior concerning the application of politeness strategies. This study primarily investigates politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1988) to elucidate how these patterns are embedded in conversations and influence the construction of the country's image (Ingenhoff & Klein, 2018).

7. IMPLICATIONS

This study highlights the necessity for additional investigation into the impact of these politeness strategies on voter behaviour, national conduct, and the credibility of media sources. Furthermore, examining the variations in politeness strategies between international and national interviews may provide profound insights into the practices of political communication and their influence on the nation's image. Consequently, subsequent investigations may delve deeper into this matter through

a gender lens to elucidate the distinct roles played within the political landscape of Pakistan.

Acknowledgement statement: Not applicable

Conflicts of Interest: The authors affirm that there are no known financial interests or personal relationships that might have influenced the work presented in this paper.

Author contribution statements: Author 1 contributed to ideation, methodology, formal analysis, and writing-original draft. Author 2 contributed to writing-reviewing & editing, and supervision.

Funding: This research did not receive any specific support from public, commercial, or non-profit agencies.

Ethical consideration statement: Not relevant. This research did not include studies involving humans or animals.

Data availability statement: Even though the data of speeches in video form is readily accessible on YouTube. Nevertheless, the original data (in transcription form) will be accessible upon the editor's or reviewers' request. Additionally, data was encoded using N-VIVO. Additionally, it will be accessible upon request.

Disclaimer: The perspectives and opinions articulated in this article belong to the author(s) and contributor(s) and do not necessarily represent the official policy or stance of editors. All responsibility for damage to persons or property resulting from any concepts, techniques, directives, or goods referenced in the article is explicitly disavowed.

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