# Linguistics and Literature Review (LLR)

_____

# Testing Major Linguistic Politeness Theories against the Marital Relationships of Bilingual (Urdu and Punjabi Speaking) Pakistani Couples

**Iftikhar Ahmad Khokhar**

**Article QR Code:**

Iftikhar A K

# Testing Major Linguistic Politeness Theories against the Marital Relationships of Bilingual (Urdu and Punjabi Speaking) Pakistani Couples

Iftikhar Ahmad Khokhar
Spectrum Research Centre – Lahore, Pakistan

**ABSTRACT**

The study aims to investigate the first order account of (im)politeness in the intimate relationships of married couples in the context of urban Pakistani society and with respect to four competing (face-saving, discursive, frame-based and rapport management) models of politeness. The study participants comprised 21 of those urban Pakistani bilingual (Urdu and Punjabi speaking) couples who sought psychological marital counselling from the researcher after being affected mainly by linguistic impoliteness and their training in linguistic politeness helped them out. Placed within the constructivist qualitative research paradigm and grounded in ethnography and phenomenology, findings of the study reveal that the phenomena under investigation should be studied within a more general framework, the discursive model emerges to be the most robust in its applicability though.

## Introduction

The word 'politeness' generally applies to any social behaviour, which is culturally appropriate and shows care for other people's feelings (McIntosh, 2013) whereas the term 'linguistic politeness' refers to such use of language in conversation as is appropriately considerate for the feelings and desires of the interlocutors and is intended to develop or maintain good interpersonal relationships (Huang, 2017; Sharifian, 2017; Van Olmen, 2017). The word 'appropriately' here denotes cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural differences in distinguishing the polite from the impolite (Hirschon, 2001; Lustig & Koester, 1999; Van Olmen, 2017). Linguistic politeness, both in its concept and the practice, has never been new to human beings, but serious research into this phenomenon only became evident in the 1970 and 1980s, mainly in the fields of pragmatics and sociology (Hirschon, 2001; Van Olmen, 2017). One seminal, and the most famous, contribution of that era is Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) politeness theory that draws on Goffman's (1962) notions of face and face-saving, Austin (1962) and Searle's (1979) speech act theory and Grice's (1975) cooperative principle (Márquez-Reiter, 2000). The theory quickly caught on and inspired a plenty of politeness research in the

upcoming years but several of its claims could not be tested against the accumulated data over the years (Huang, 2017; Márquez-Reiter, 2000; Mills, 2011; Van Olmen, 2017). The invariable

sociolinguistic factors did not prove to be universal, as this theory had suggested, and its second-order, observer-oriented, 'etic' approach significantly differed from the first-order, participant-generated, 'emic' perspective (Armaşu, 2012; Lakoff & Ide, 2005; Mills, 2011; Van Olmen, 2017). Several other alternative theoretical accounts of politeness and impoliteness have been proposed since then, the most influential of whom are the discursive (or postmodern) model, the frame-based model and the rapport management model (Armaşu, 2012; Haugh, 2007; Huang, 2017; Mills, 2011; Van Olmen, 2017).

According to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, politeness is a tactful act of showing awareness and consideration for the hearer's face, a public self-image, that we all have and want all others to recognize and respect. The act is tactful because it requires the speaker to tactfully assess 'weight' and accordingly choose an appropriate 'strategy' to successfully mitigate threat to both their own and the hearer's face. The weight refers to the accumulative effect of three sociocultural factors: power, distance and rank, that is, the comparative social status, the closeness of the relationship and the cultural sensitivity of the topic. And the strategy explains how the speaker chooses among the five available options in any given situation. The first option is silence: not to say anything and avoid the face threatening act altogether; the second is positive politeness: respond to the positive face wants of the hearer by expressing friendship and solidarity; the third is negative politeness: cater the negative face wants by treating the hearer with deference and avoiding any imposition on them; the fourth is off-record: produce an indirect statement by only hinting at a need and leaving full room for both the speaker and the hearer to avoid losing face and the fifth, but not the final, option is bald on-record: make a direct and open (or even imperative) statement, judging that there is no threat to the hearer's face involved whatsoever.

Drawing on Foucault (1972, 1978) and Fairclough and Wodak's (1995) earlier works, postmodern discursive theorists (such as Locher (2004), Bousfield (2008), Geyer (2008) and Culpeper et al. (2008) etc.) shifted the focus of politeness research from isolated utterances to the longer stretches of interaction; from the second order politeness to the first order politeness; from stereotypical roles of the interlocutors to those interactants who are constantly co-constructing their identity and contesting for power; from the linguistic behaviour which was viewed as inherently polite or impolite to the inferential process through which the participants assign meaning to an utterance and from the individual choices of the speaker to those dynamic social factors that shape, provoke or limit their choices for action (Armaşu, 2012; Bousfield & Locher, 2008; Haugh, 2007; Locher, 2004; Locher & Watts, 2008; Mills, 2011; Sifianou, 2010). They also differed in regarding impoliteness as just the lack of politeness or as its polar opposite and asserted that, in the struggle for power, certain contexts will rather offer impoliteness as a more suitable device to exercise power and limit the action choices of the opponent (Bousfield & Locher, 2008; Mills, 2011). That is why, investigating the role of impoliteness is far more important than the role of politeness in the relational work (Bousfield & Locher, 2008; Mills, 2011). They count impoliteness as one of the available choices and assert that the labels in interactants' judgements are far more diverse than the dichotomy of polite and impolite (Bousfield &

Locher, 2008; Culpeper, 2011). People, sometimes, find 'impolite' and 'rude' quite different from each other, perceive 'over-politeness' as 'rudeness' and do not just use impoliteness for coercive purposes alone, but for affective and entertaining reasons as well (Culpeper, 2011; Huang, 2017). Finally, about the role of the social norms in shaping linguistic behaviour of the interactants, discursive theorists assert that the interactants are aware of these norms at large but their judgements keep negotiating and renegotiating their meaning and thus their role ultimately changes from one social interaction to another (Locher, 2006).

Another competing account of politeness came from Marina Terkourafi (2005) who developed her argument for a frame-based approach to politeness on empirical evidence from the polite use of imperatives in the modern-day Cypriot Greek (Lakoff & Ide, 2005; Terkourafi, 2005, 2008). A frame, as defined by Minsky (1975), is a "data structure [in the mind] for representing a stereotyped situation" (Minsky, 1975). Stored in our memory, it is that knowledge of our past experiences that influences our perceptions and judgements about new situations (Brown & Yule, 1983; Tannen, 1993). We acquire frames during the process of our socialization in the early years of our life (Lakoff & Ide, 2005; Terkourafi, 2005, 2008). She proposes that both interlocutors judge the conversational norms in a particular situation and then try to have an unmarked (appropriate) status within that frame, because being polite is both rational and cost-effective. So politeness does not make the processes of 'making meaning' and 'socially fitting in' difficult for the interlocutors but rather makes them simpler and easier.

The fourth influential account of politeness, Spencer-Oatey's (2000) rapport management model does not view impoliteness as a 'face-threatening act' but rather as a 'rights-threatening act' and suggests that politeness is an effort to develop, promote and maintain harmonious social relations (rapport), made on account of both interlocutors (Aoki, 2010; Félix-Brasdefer, 2008; Spencer-Oatey, 2000, 2004). Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2004) maintains that there is no such thing as 'negative face wants.' All members of a society only have positive face wants that revolve less around maintaining face and more around maintaining our sociality rights. For example, when we feel that we have been pushed to do something by a person who did not have any right to do so, we feel offended, uncomfortable or angry etc., but we do not necessarily feel that we have lost our face. She believes that politeness research should be concerned more with the (dis)harmony in social relations (which, according to her, is based on subjective social judgements and can vary from one culture or social situation to another) and less with the "linguistic strategies per se." She accepts 'face' "as a crucial base factor" but also suggests that the researchers should broaden their perspectives and should incorporate other elements (e.g. sociality rights) into politeness research, too (Spencer-Oatey, 2000, pp. 17–18).

When investigated in the context of urban, middle-class, educated, Urdu and Punjabi speaking bilingual Pakistani couples' intimate relationships, to what extent four of the above stated politeness theories will test against the first-order account of the couples, is the objective of this study. The 'urban' in this study refers to five central cities of the Punjab province of Pakistan: Lahore, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Sheikhupura and Kasur. Rationale behind the delimitation of the study is based on three factors. First, marital relationship is different from other types of relationships (Robinson, 2003; Wilson, 2015). What makes married couples' relationship unique is the intimacy of the relationship, mutual interdependence and

shared vision of goals (Cuyler & Ackhart, 2009; Mead, 2013). Wedlock, especially in the Pakistani society, is a very serious and constant commitment and the social fabric of the society makes it extremely hard for the either partner to break free of it (Malik, 2006; Mohiuddin, 2007; Rashid, 2015). It makes this relationship even more special, on the one hand, and usually taken for granted, on the other, and these two factors obviously tend to influence the attitude of one spouse towards another (Chapman, 2009; Smart, 2017). Second, Pakistan is a highly stratified society and also enormously diverse in cultural, ethnic and religious terms (Chandio, 2012; Paracha, 2014). We can expect to find one social group wildly different from another group with the addition of each single denominator as, for example, middle-class educated families can be significantly different from the upper-class educated families and the middle-class urban families may not be very similar to the middle-class rural families. Third, for urban middle-class families of the province of Pakistani Punjab, Urdu is the preferred language of communication but they find it easier to express their emotions in Punjabi than in Urdu, especially when they are romantic, excited or angry. So, although English is frequently code mixed into Urdu, the communication mostly takes place in Urdu with regular code mixing of and code switching to Punjabi (Rafi, 2017; Talaat, 2002; Umer-ud-Din, Iqbal, & Khan, 2011).

## Materials and Methods

### *Theoretical Underpinnings*

This study is placed within the constructivist qualitative research paradigm, in which the researcher emphasises "to understand a phenomenon from the perspective of those experiencing it" through observation and detailed interviewing (Fosnot, 2005; Given, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 2016). Through participant observation of the linguistic behaviour of the study participants, within their culture and the natural settings, over an extended period of two to six years, the study is grounded in ethnography (Fetterman, 1998). And in its effort to understand the phenomenon of linguistic (im)politeness from the perspective of the study participants through detailed interviews with them, it is also grounded in phenomenology (Moran & Mooney, 2002). Constructivism emphasises that the understanding of a phenomenon is co-constructed between the researcher and the study participant(s) through dialogic interaction, within the natural research settings (Fosnot, 2005; Given, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 2016). This interaction is important because reality does not exist independent of an individual and outside a particular context (Given, 2008; Mertens, 2014). The reality is not simply "out there" but "in there" in the mind of the individual who is experiencing it and who gives it a meaning through social interaction (Given, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 2016). This meaning is shaped by the blend of internal and external factors (Berry, Poortinga, & Breugelmans, 2011). The internal factors include predispositions, past experiences and the existing knowledge while the external factors are social, natural, contextual and accidental ones (Berry, Poortinga, & Breugelmans, 2011; Mertens, 2014). Owing to the interdependence of the two types of factors, the reality is best understood when its understanding develops through the joint construction of etic and emic perspectives (Fosnot, 2005; Given, 2008; Mertens, 2014). That is why postmodern researchers (see e.g. Huang, 2017; Terkourafi, 2012 and Watts, Ide, & Ehlich, 2005) emphasise that first-order politeness (termed as politeness 1)

and the second-order politeness (termed as politeness 2) should go hand-in-hand, and the same approach has been adopted in this study.

## *Study Sample and the Data Collection*

The researcher's office of the clinical and counselling psychology provided a good natural setting for the investigation of the role and the nature of linguistic (im)politeness in the married couples' relationships. During the course of the study, 227 married couples sought (psychological) marital counselling from the researcher (a counselling psychologist and linguist). As a phenomenological study requires the selection of those participants who have experienced the phenomenon themselves (Creswell, 2013) and they serve the purpose of the study well by matching those characteristics which have been specified in the delimitation of the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2010), the purposive sampling technique was employed. So out of the available 227 married couples, those 21 couples were selected whose marital relationships were mainly affected by the linguistic impoliteness and their training in linguistic politeness significantly helped them out. (For detailed selection criteria, please see *Appendix II*).

From the point of view of minimizing the interference of intervening variables, (Creswell, 2013; Morrison, 2012), these couples were then divided into two sub-groups. 5 couples in Group 1 are those couples, in whose problems, linguistic politeness played the most crucial role and the interference of other factors was perceived to be minimal (by the researcher as well as the participants). The factors considered for the selection criteria include the involvement of other members of the family, infertility issues, difference of age, education and/or family backgrounds and the forced marriage etc. (For the detailed list of these factors and the selection criteria for the Group 1, please see *Appendix II.*) The factors were finalized after detailed discussion with 5 elderly couples of the urban, middle-class, Urdu and Punjabi speaking backgrounds. Couples in Group 1 are all aged between 28 to 35 years, have university level education, have been married for about 4 to 8 years, have 1 to 3 children and their marriages are both loved and arranged ones. All five hail from urban, middle-class, bilingual (Urdu and Punjabi) speaking, moderately Islamic families of Lahore. All five couples had 6 to 10 counselling sessions with the researcher with an interval of a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 6 weeks between the two sessions.

16 couples in Group 2, however, come from a variety of family backgrounds, are aged between 21 to 44 years, have been married for 1 to 16, have differences of qualification and age-gap and live in varied family structures. But all these couples also sought marital counselling having been mainly disturbed by the linguistic impoliteness and their training in linguistic politeness also helped them out. They belong to five urban areas of Pakistani Punjab: Lahore, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Sheikhupura and Kusur. Couples in Group 2 had from 4 to 13 counselling sessions with the researcher with an interval of a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 6 weeks between the two sessions.

Both ethnographic and phenomenological conventions require that the interaction between the researcher and the participants takes place with "an open mind but not an empty head" (Fetterman, 1998; Given, 2008) and the investigation is well-informed by the extensive literature review and well-controlled by semi-structured interview questions and observation

protocols (Fetterman, 1998; Moran & Mooney, 2002). To fulfil this requirement, a list of 36 investigation questions was prepared after an extensive study on the politeness research. For more control and detailed investigation of the phenomena, these questions were then subdivided into 6 different categories. (For the list of these questions, please see *Appendix I*. It is also pertinent to note here that the technical jargon of the questions is due to the fact that they were used as the researcher's reference and not as the interview questions as such).

After each session of at least half an hour to a maximum of two hours with each couple, the researcher took notes for each of the 36 questions (separately) and prepared questions for the next session. After each next session, the notes were revised, edited and refined. During the sessions, the couples' communication included dialogic interactions (both between the counsellor and the spouse(s) and between the spouses themselves) and the spouse(s)' reflections, comments and interruptions. Paralinguistic communication was also observed and recorded. In most of these sessions, the couples had discussions with the counsellor together, with only a few exceptions, when the other partner was physically present, could see both the counsellor and the client through a transparent glass but could not hear them. The notes of the researcher were later analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively with the help of the software (NVivo 11 and Microsoft Excel 2016).

### Ethical Considerations

Because the couples contacted a professional psychologist for counselling and not for the participation in the study, it was cautiously ensured that the time and the money of the clients were not wasted in any way, the research observation and/or the questions did not pose any psychological and/or social harm to them and their counselling was not compromised. As the ethics of both counselling psychology (Altmaier & Hansen, 2012; "Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct," 2017) and qualitative research (Halai, 2006; Soltis, 1989) require, the consent from each couple was formally obtained after explaining all details and potential hazards to them. The sessions were not recorded in the audio or the video form as none of the couples was comfortable with it, such recording could be a valuable resource for the researcher though. As each couple was offered to withdraw or refuse at any time,  3 out of 24 eligible couples preferred to withdraw from the study, due to which only 21 couples could be included in the study. In order to ensure the confidentiality of the couples, any such information (e.g. the name and the location of the counsellors' office, the identities of the couples and their demographics and the years during which they sought psychological counselling etc.) that can reveal their identity has been concealed in this paper.

### Analysis of the Data and Discussion

To begin with the face-saving model, majority of the couples were found to be clearly aware of the concept of face and face wants (see *Table 1* for the statistical description of the data and *Examples* for sample instances).

(1)     **Beevi**: Saaryan de wich beh ke aihne meri bisti keeti. (Punjabi)
         (*Wife [very angry; misty-eyed]: He insulted me among all.*)

**Shohar**: Aho nak lath gai teri. Bisti keeti ay ke tere maan payo nu tere kartoot dassay ne. Doctor Saab ay'ee masla ay aidha. Galti nai mannay gi, hujtaan kari jaye gi. (Punjabi)

(*Husband [very angry; sarcastic]: Did I? As if you really lost your face, eh? Was I insulting you or showing your parents your true colours. Doctor, this is the very problem with her. She will never admit her mistakes and will rather turn to justifying herself.*)

(2)     **Beevi**: Bachon ke samne sharminda to nahi karna chahye na. (Urdu)

(*Wife [complaining]: He shouldn't make me feel embarrassed in front of the children.*)

**Table 1**: Statistical Description of the Coupes' Communication

| Grp. 1 | Grp. 2 | Coll. | Observations |
|---|---|---|---|
| 80% | 56% | 68% | have a clear sense of face and face wants. |
| 20% | 44% | 32% | concerned more with sociality rights than face. |
| 16% | 24% | 20% | view sociality rights and face as substitute concepts. |
| 20% | 25% | 23% | consider any utterance inherently polite or impolite. |
| 60% | 75% | 68% | negative face wants are stronger than positive face wants. |
| 40% | 19% | 30% | try to avoid threatening their partner's face. |
| 100% | 88% | 94% | expect the other to avoid threatening his/her face. |
| 80% | 69% | 75% | think that politeness goes unmarked as compared to impoliteness. |
| 40% | 19% | 30% | try to have an unmarked status in the conversation. |
| 60% | 78% | 69% | have conflict of interests and preferences. |
| 60% | 82% | 71% | communication is clearly intended for power contestation. |
| 80% | 72% | 76% | communication is clearly intended for identity construction. |
| 60% | 75% | 68% | view impoliteness as more effective strategy than politeness. |
| 40% | 44% | 42% | view politeness and impoliteness as polar opposites. |
| 60% | 69% | 65% | think that their linguistic choices are determined by social and linguistic factors. |
| 80% | 58% | 69% | think that linguistic context is more important than social context. |
| 60% | 69% | 65% | admit that their attitudes are shaped by past experiences, especially socialization. |
| 80% | 79% | 80% | report that their partners' behaviour is mostly predictable. |
| 60% | 69% | 65% | accept that norms of married couples' conversation exist. |
| 20% | 31% | 26% | conform to these norms. |
| 100% | 100% | 100% | admit that maintaining healthy marital relationships is important. |
| 40% | 19% | 30% | communication is intended for harmony. |
| 60% | 82% | 71% | have unhealthy beliefs. |
| 60% | 73% | 67% | have poor interpersonal skills. |
| 40% | 56% | 48% | have annoying habits. |

This finding raised a question: do other couples not have any such concept or they are not actually conscious of it? Detailed discussions with the couples in the later sessions revealed that they also had a clear concept of face and face wants but they were concerned more with sociality rights than face (some of them also viewed sociality rights and face as

substitute concepts though). These couples do not feel insulted or demeaned as such, but feel angry, frustrated and/or depressed etc. instead (some of them experience mixed feelings, too, though).

(3)     **Shohar**: Mujhe to ghussa mahsoos hota hai. (Urdu)
(*Husband*: *I rather feel angry.*)

(4)     **Beevi**: Nai bas mood bohat off ho jata hai. Saath main ghussa bhi feel hota hai. (Urdu with English code-mixing)
(*Wife: It puts me in a very bad mood, I feel a bit angry, too, though.*)

(5)     **Beevi**: Inka aisa kehna banta nahi tha. (Urdu)
(*Wife: He had no right to say that.*)

Linguistic choices of both types of couples and their interpretation of an act as face-threatening or rights-threatening, however, depends on their assessment of *weight*: the comparative social status, the closeness of the relationship and the sensitivity of the topic assigns their partner the right to speak a certain utterance and/or employ a certain politeness strategy. But the assessment of none of these three factors is universal or constant (as suggested by the face-saving model), nor do the majority of the couples consider any utterance inherently polite or impolite. Their assessment is very dynamic and keeps changing from one situation to another (as observed by the discursive theorists). It all depends on how the frame of mind of the interlocutors, at that particular moment, views and places one partner in relation to another and how they assign meaning to the social and/or the linguistic context of an utterance.

(6)     **Beevi**: Ye to baat hi gaali se shuru karte hain. Lekin ye to situation pe depend karta hai. [Laughing] Ghussay main to tareef bhi tanz lagti hai. (Urdu)
(*Wife*: *It all depends on the situation, otherwise he habitually starts with a swear word. Look, for example, even praise sounds sarcastic when you are angry.*)

(7)     **Shohar**: Tum ghar par aa kar baat karti to mujhe bura na lagta. Haaji Saab ke saamne tumhain nai kehna chahye tha. (Urdu)
(*Husband: Had you said that having been home, I wouldn't have minded it. But it was wrong to speak about it in the presence of Haaji Saab.*)

Next, negative face wants of the couples are stronger and clearer than the positive face wants as they seem to be concerned more with protecting their own face than saving the other's. They feel badly hurt when their own face is threatened and interpret it as totally unacceptable and unjustifiable, but when they themselves threaten the other's face, they find it totally reasonable and well-justified. Speech acts of apology and acknowledgement occur very infrequently and when they occur, they are usually preceded by long stretches of argument. Mostly performed speech acts are advice, rebuke and criticism. First, these findings are against the frame-based model that suggests that interlocutors try to have an unmarked status in the conversation. Then, it also indicates that couples' communication is not intended for seeking harmony in the relationship, as suggested by the rapport management model, but is rather directed towards negotiating their identity and contesting for power, as proposed by the discursive model. The conflict of interests and preferences,

poor mutual understanding and lack of shared vision and goals are major reasons that compel the couples to contest for power and the construction of desired identity. In their struggle for power, most of the couples find impoliteness the preferred choice of action for exercising power and view politeness as an ineffective strategy to limit undesirable action choices of the other.

(8)     **Beevi**: Inko ye nai samajh aati ke main kaya chaahti hun. (Urdu)
        (*Wife [complaining]: He never tries to understand what I actually want.*)
        **Shohar**: Chalo main nai samajta to ye samajh le. Yai samajh le ke iska shohar kaya chahta hai. (Urdu)
        (*Husband [reacting]: Suppose I don't understand her, then why doesn't she try to understand me instead? I ask if she has ever tried to understand what her husband wants.*)

(9)     **Shohar**: Doctor saab payaar nal mandi nai. Yaqeen manno kai aari aidhe agge hath vi jorrhe ne par ay nai je samajhdi. (Punjabi)
        (*Husband: Doctor, she doesn't respond to politeness. Would you believe it that I've even tried imploring her but it didn't seem to work.*)

(10)    **Beevi**: Doctor saab, yahan log ap ki narmi ka faida uthaate hain. Wo sochte hain is ne konsa kuch kehna hai, bas isko dabai jao. (Urdu with code-mixing of and literal translation from Punjabi)
        (*Wife: Doctor, people here take your politeness for weakness and start exploiting you. They think that you are too weak to retaliate. So they keep oppressing you.*)

As far as the politeness strategies are concerned, most of the communication of these couples takes place in 'bald on-record' mode. All other strategies are also employed but mainly not to avoid threatening the other's face but for coercion, expressing romantic love and/or entertainment. Secondly, these strategies do not seem to be mutually exclusive as the couples interpreted the same utterance with several different labels at the same time. Then, most of the couples do not regard lack of politeness as impoliteness. They label different instances of behaviour on the continuum of over-polite (e.g. Urdu: *zuroorat se zayada izzat de rahe hain*), polite (e.g. Urdu: *izzat de rahe hain*), neutral (e.g. Urdu: *izzat to nahi de rahe lekin be'izzati bhi nahi kar rahe*), cold (e.g. Urdu: *bas aap apne mood main hain, doosron ko lift nahi karwaa rahe*), impolite/rude (e.g. Urdu: *mood dikha rahe hain; seedhay moon baat nahi kar rahe; ghuma phira kar be'izzati kar rahe hain*) and insulting (e.g. Urdu: *seedhi seedhi be'izzati kar di;* Punjabi: *laa paa ke hath parraa'ti*) while polite and neutral being *appropriate*, over-polite, cold and impolite/rude being *inappropriate* and insulting being *offensive*. These three findings are similar to those of the discursive theorists Mills (2004), Roloff and Riffee (2004), Bousfield and Locher (2008), Culpeper (2011) and Johnson (2011) etc. So a better explanation, once again, does not come from the face-saving model but from the discursive account.

(11)    **Shohar**: Bad'tameezi nai keeti te aidha matlab ay nai ke tusi barri izzat keeti ay. Banda marra jaya mood vi wakha sakhda ay. Te zuroorat ton zayaada tameez vi ainj lagda ay banda meesna ay. (Punjabi)

*(Husband: Not being impolite doesn't necessarily mean that you are polite. Sometimes, people are a little cold, too. And being overpolite is like you are obsequious.)*

With regard to the frame-based model, the couples report that their partners' behaviour is mostly predictable, but at times, it also turns out to be surprisingly different. It indicates that frames do play an important role in shaping their behaviour but frames are also vulnerable to both sudden and gradual change under the influence of the current mood, new information, new experience(s) and the then relevant social and linguistic context. When a person actively behaves as a thinking being and when he/she stays passive subject to the internal or the external pressures, in both cases, habitual communication patterns are likely to become prone to occasional variations.

(12)   **Beevi**: Jin dinon main in ki walida hamaaray haan ai hoti hain, un dinon main ye thorra different behave karte hain. (Urdu with English code-mixing)
(*Wife: He only behaves a bit differently during when his mother has come to stay with us.*)

As far as the existence of and the conformity with the social norms of conversation between the husband and the wife are concerned, the couples do not always accept that such norms exist or they do not always conform to them. As the discursive model explains, they keep negotiating and renegotiating their role and importance. Many couples, while talking about their partners' actions, complained that such norms existed and were violated by their partners but, while justifying their own actions, they asserted that no such norms existed or the norm was to "get even" with the other. Similarly, they accept that politeness usually goes unmarked as compared to the impoliteness but they do not usually try to have an unmarked status during their conversation.

With reference to the rapport management model, most of the couples admit the importance of developing and maintaining healthy relationships with their partners, but they do not usually make any such sincere effort. They tend to take their marital relationship for granted and mostly put the burden of this responsibility on the other's shoulders. In most of the cases, they do not keep from saying any such thing that can threaten harmony and find their action well-justified and reasonable. Once again, they seem to be struggling less for harmony and more for power.

(13)   **Beevi**: Galtiyaan man man ke ee te tenu chorr keetay. Aj tak ay ee koshish keeti ay ke gal nibdi jaawe, nibdi jaawe, par dooja banda vi te ehsaas kare na. Ke ikko ee qurbaani dai jaaye, te dooja ser te charr da jaaye. (Punjabi)
(*Wife [very angry and upset]: I've rather overindulged you by always giving in – just to save the relationship. But why be it just one-sided? It's unfair that one keeps sacrificing and the other never seems to care.*)

So detailed (qualitative and quantitative) analysis of the data reveals that each model of linguistic politeness explains couples' communication to a certain extent but not completely. One aspect fits into one model while the other corresponds to another.
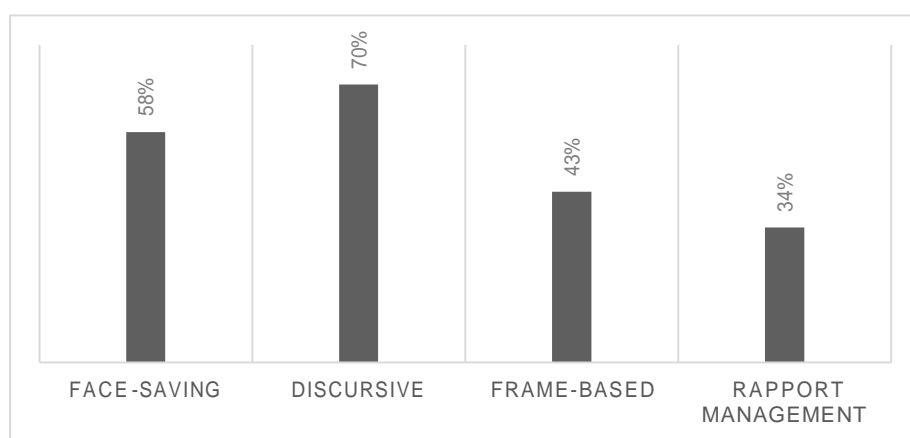


**Figure 1**. Applicability of politeness models

Discursive model, however, appears to be the most robust in its applicability and scope. But it does not take into account the role of frames, nor does it cover those instances of communication which are genuinely intended for rapport management. Most of the couples' strained relationships stemmed from unhealthy beliefs, poor interpersonal skills and annoying habits that they developed mainly during childhood socialization.

(14)  **Shohar**: Banday da kam aurat di khidmat karna nai, aurat nu Allah ne hukam ditta ay ke khawand di khidmat kare. (Punjabi)
(*Husband: It does not behove a husband to serve his wife. Allah has rather commanded the wife to serve her husband.*)

(15)  **Shohar**: Ye sirf gilay shikway karti hain. Main ne kabhi in ke moon se apni ya apne ghar waalon ki taareef nahi suni. (Urdu)
(*Husband: She is always complaining. I've never heard her say a single word of praise for me or my family.*)

(16)  **Beevi**: Mujhe bas is cheez se karaahat aati hai ke ye roz kaprre nahi badalte. (Urdu)
(*Wife: Just one habit of his disgusts me. He doesn't change his clothes daily.*)

And the psychological treatment of these variables by the frame-based and the rapport management theorists is far more in-depth, focused and coherent than the "relational work" of the discursive model (see e.g. Terkourafi, 2005; Haugh, 2007; Locher, 2012). Then, as a counsellor, I found face-saving model the most useful (and convenient) in assessing impoliteness and providing politeness training. It was hard for almost all couples to grasp rather philosophical concepts of identity construction, power contestation, rapport management and frames. It was, however, easy to talk in terms of face and politeness strategies: silence is best, negative politeness will always pay, bald off-record is safer, positive politeness is the last option and save bald on-record for only special occasions. But this training was only workable when couples realized the importance of developing and maintaining healthy relationships and when they found themselves powerful and sensible enough to challenge the integrity and the rationality of frames, contextual factors and

individual utterances. This leads us to the conclusion that (im)politeness can better be studied within a general framework and its investigation should not be restricted to just one model. Several postmodern politeness researchers (see e.g. Gough, McFadden, & McDonald, 2013; Huang, 2017; Lakoff & Ide, 2005; Terkourafi, 2012; Van Olmen, 2017) have also had similar findings and recommendations.

## Conclusion

When studying linguistic (im)politeness in the interpersonal communication of the intimate relationships, in general, and of the Pakistani, urban, bilingual (Urdu and Punjabi speaking), educated married couples, in particular, all four politeness theories provide a significant understanding of the phenomena, but discursive model appears to be the most comprehensive and the best suited description. But because discursive model alone does not encompass all aspects and nuances of these complex and multifaceted phenomena, it is better that they are studied within a general framework instead of being restricted to just one model.

## References

Altmaier, E. M., and Hansen, J.-I. C. (Eds.). 2012. *The Oxford handbook of counselling psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Aoki, A. 2010. Rapport management in Thai and Japanese social talk during group discussions. *Pragmatics. Quarterly Publication of the International Pragmatics Association (IPrA)* 20(3): 289–313.

Armaşu, V. D. 2012. Modern approaches to politeness theory: a cultural context. *Lingua. Language and Culture* 11(1): 9–19.

Austin, J. 1962. *How to do things with words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bousfield, D. 2008. *Impoliteness in interaction*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.

Bousfield, D., and Locher, M. A. (Eds.). 2008. *Impoliteness in language: studies on its interplay with power in theory and practice*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Brown, G., and Yule, G. 1983. *Discourse analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press.

Brown, P., and Levinson, S. 1978. Universals in language usage: politeness phenomena. In *Questions and politeness: Strategies in social interaction*, 56 –311. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, P., and Levinson, S. 1987. *Politeness: some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press.

Chandio, A. 2012, June 22. Pakistan — a land of cultural diversity. Retrieved December 25, 2017, from http://blogs.epakistan.com/pakistan-a-land-of-cultural-diversity/

Chapman, G. 2009. *The five love languages: how to express heartfelt commitment to your mate*. Chicago: Moody Publishers.

Creswell, J. W. 2013. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Culpeper, J. 2011. *Impoliteness: using language to cause offence*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Culpeper, J., Bousfield, D., and Wichmann, A. 2003. Impoliteness revisited: with special reference to dynamic and prosodic aspects. *Journal of Pragmatics* 35(10–11): 1545–1579

Culpeper, J., Haugh, M., and Kádár, D. Z. (Eds.). 2017. *The Palgrave handbook of linguistic (im)politeness*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cuyler, E., and Ackhart, M. 2009. *Psychology of relationships*. Nova Science Publishers.

Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct. 2017, January 1.

Retrieved from: http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx

Fairclough, N., and Wodak, R. 1995. *Critical discourse analysis*. London: Sage Publications.

Félix-Brasdefer, J. C. 2008. *Politeness in Mexico and the United States: A contrastive study of the realization and perception of refusals*. 171. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.

Fetterman, D. M. 1998. *Ethnography: step by step*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Fosnot, C. T. (Ed.). 2005. *Constructivism: theory, perspectives, and practice* (2nd ed). New York: Teachers College Press.

Foucault, M. 1972. *The archaeology of knowledge, trans. AM Sheridan Smith*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, M. 1978. *The history of sexuality: An introduction* 1. New York: Random House.

Geyer, N. 2008. *Discourse and politeness: ambivalent face in Japanese*. London; New York: Continuum. Retrieved from: http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=472770

Given, L. M. (Ed.). 2008. *The Sage encyclopaedia of qualitative research methods*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Goffman, E. 1967. *Interaction ritual: essays on face-to-face behaviour*. New York: Doubleday Anchor Books.

Gough, B., McFadden, M., and McDonald, M. 2013. *Critical social psychology: An introduction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Grice, H. P. 1975. Logic in conversation. In *Syntax and Semantics: Speech Acts*, eds., P. Cole and J. Morgan, 41–59. New York: Academic Press.

Halai, A. 2006. Ethics in qualitative research: Issues and challenges. *EdQual A Research Programme Consortium on Implementing Education Quality in Low Income Countries.* 4(1): 1–12.

Haugh, M. 2007. *The discursive challenge to politeness research: An interactional alternative*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Hirschon, R. 2001. Freedom, solidarity and obligation. In *Linguistic politeness across boundaries: the case of Greek and Turkish*, eds., A. Bayraktaroğlu and M. Sifianou. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Huang, Y. (Ed.). 2017. *The Oxford handbook of pragmatics*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Johnson, B., and Christensen, L. 2010. *Educational research: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches*. California: Sage Publications.

Johnson, D. I., Roloff, M. E., and Riffee, M. A. 2004. Politeness theory and refusals of requests: Face threat as a function of expressed obstacles. *Communication Studies* 55(2): 227–238.

Lakoff, R. T., and Ide, S. (Eds.). 2005. *Broadening the horizon of linguistic politeness*. Amsterdam ; Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing.

Lincoln, Y. S., and Guba, E. G. 2016. *The Constructivist Credo*. London: Routledge.

Locher, M. A. 2004. *Power and politeness in action: Disagreements in oral communication* 12. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Locher, M. A. 2006. Polite behavior within relational work: the discursive approach to politeness. *Multilingua - Journal of Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage Communication* 25(3): 249–267.

Locher, M. A., and Watts, R. J. 2008. *Relational work and impoliteness: Negotiating norms of linguistic behaviour*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Locher, M. A. 2012. Politeness research from past to future, with a special focus on the discursive approach. Miriam A. Locher. *New perspectives on (im)politeness and interpersonal communication* 36.

Lustig, M. W., and Koester, J. 1999. *Intercultural competence: interpersonal competence across cultures*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley Longman.

Malik, I. H. 2006. *Culture and customs of Pakistan*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Márquez-Reiter, R. 2000. *Linguistic politeness in Britain and Uruguay: a contrastive study of requests and apologies*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

McIntosh, C. (Ed.). 2013. *Cambridge advanced learner's dictionary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mead, E. 2013. *Becoming a marriage and family therapist: from classroom to consulting room*. Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons.

Mertens, D. M. 2014. *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods*. London: Sage Publications.

Mills, S. 2011. Discursive approaches to politeness and impoliteness. In *Discursive approaches to politeness*, ed., I. Kecskes. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

Minsky, M. 1975. A framework for representing knowledge.

Mohiuddin, Y. N. 2007. *Pakistan: A global studies handbook*. California: ABC-CLIO Publications .

Moran, D., and Mooney, T. 2002. *The phenomenology reader*. London: Psychology Press.

Morrison, K.2012. *Causation in educational research*. London: Routledge.

Paracha, N. F. 2014, January 12. Multiculturalism will eat itself. Retrieved from: http://www.dawn.com/news/1079945

Rafi, M. S. 2017. Bilingualism and identity construction in the digital discourse. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* 12(3): 254–271.

Rashid, A. 2015, October 30. Pakistanis have a strange obsession with not getting divorced. Retrieved from: http://www.dawn.com/news/1216382

Robinson, M. 2003. *Family transformation through divorce and remarriage: a systemic approach*. London: Routledge.

Searle, J. R. 1979. *Expression and meaning: studies in the theory of speech acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press.

Sharifian, F. 2017. *Advances in cultural linguistics*. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4056-6

Sifianou, M. 2010. Derek Bousfield and Miriam A. Locher (eds.), Impoliteness in language: Studies on its interplay with power in theory and practice. *Language in Society* 39(1).

Smart, J. 2017. *50 telltale signs your man is taking you for granted: learn to make him love and respect you*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Soltis, J. F. 1989. The ethics of qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 2(2): 123–130.

Spencer-Oatey, H. 2000. Rapport management: A framework for analysis. *Culturally Speaking: Managing Rapport through Talk across Cultures*, 1146.

Spencer-Oatey, H. 2002. Managing rapport in talk: Using rapport sensitive incidents to explore the motivational concerns underlying the management of relations. *Journal of Pragmatics* 34(5): 529–545.

Spencer-Oatey, H. 2004. *Culturally speaking: Managing rapport through talk across cultures*. AandC Black.

Talaat, M. 2002. *The form and functions of English in Pakistan* (PhD Thesis). Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan.

Tannen, D. 1993. What's in a frame? Surface evidence for underlying expectations. *Framing in Discourse* 14(1): 56.

Terkourafi, M. 2005. *Beyond the micro-level in politeness research*.

Terkourafi, M. 2008. Toward a unified theory of politeness, impoliteness, and rudeness. In *Impoliteness in language: Studies on its interplay with power in theory and practice, eds.,* D. Bousfield and Miriam, A. Locher, 45–74.

Terkourafi, M. 2012. Politeness and pragmatics. *The Cambridge Handbook of Pragmatics*, 617–637.

Umer-ud-Din, Iqbal, M., and Khan, M. K. 2011. Multiple nested triglossic situation in Pakistan. *Language in India* 11(3): 9 -18.

Van Olmen, D. 2017. *Politeness in language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Watts, R. J., Ide, S., and Ehlich, K. 2005. *Politeness in language: studies in its history, theory and practice*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Wilson, P. D. 2015. *The caregiving trap: solutions for life's unexpected changes*. New York: Morgan James Publishing.

# Appendix I: The Researcher's Reference Questions for Investigation

## Face-saving model of politeness

1. Do they have a sense of 'face' and the 'face wants'?
2. Are their face wants 'positive' or 'negative' or of both types?
3. Do they try to avoid threatening the other's face?
4. Do they expect the other to avoid threatening his/her face?
5. Which one(s) of the five strategies do they employ when trying to avoid threatening the other's face? Do they employ (a) silence, (b) positive politeness, (c) negative politeness, (d) off-record or (e) bald on-record, (f) none of them, (g) several of them or (h) all of them?
6. Does this theory adequately encompass all aspects of their mutual communication?
7. Which particular utterances do they regard as inherently polite or impolite? Which utterances do they use for saving or threatening the other's face?
8. Which particular utterances do they use for different face-saving strategies?

## Discursive model of politeness

9. Is their communication intended for power contestation? Do they have to contest for power?
10. Why do they have to contest for power?
11. Is their communication intended for negotiating and/or renegotiating their identity? Do they have to negotiate and/or renegotiating their identity?
12. Why do they have to negotiate and/or renegotiating their identity?
13. Do they think that social factors play a role in their linguistic choices?
14. Do they find any utterances inherently polite or impolite or they assign meaning to them themselves?
15. Do these factors play the same role in each situation or their role and the meaning changes from one situation to another?
16. Are they aware of social norms of conversation between a husband and a wife?
17. Do they tend to conform to those norms or they renegotiate them in each situation?
18. Is impoliteness a polar opposite or the lack of politeness or an entirely different construct?
19. Are 'impoliteness' and 'rudeness' substitute words or two different constructs?
20. Do they tend to label linguistic behaviours as just polite and impolite or their labelling is diverse?
21. Do they use impoliteness for only coercive purposes or do they use them for non-coercive (e.g. affective and entertaining) purposes, too?

## Frame-based model of politeness

22. Does politeness go unmarked as compared to impoliteness?
23. Do any norms of conversation between husband and wife exist in their society?
24. Do they tend to conform to or deviate from these norms? What role do these norms play in their choices of action?
25. Do they try to have an unmarked status within a particular frame?

26. What role do their past experiences, especially their socialization play in shaping their present attitudes towards politeness and impoliteness? How strong or weak is their effect?
27. Is it permanent and/or lasting or vulnerable to change and/or volatility?

**Rapport management model of politeness**

28. Do they have any sense of their 'sociality rights'?
29. Do they find 'face' and 'sociality rights' two similar and/or substitute ideas or altogether different constructs?
30. Do they consider sociality rights more important than 'face'?
31. When their sociality rights are infringed, do they feel as if their face has been threatened or do they feel offended instead?
32. Is their communication intended for rapport management?
33. Do they consider rapport management important? How much importance do they assign to it?
34. Are they concerned more with the rapport management than the face-saving?

**General framework of politeness**

35. What causes linguistic (im)politeness and the failure of couples' communication?
36. Which other elements need to be incorporated into the politeness research?

# Appendix II: Selection Criteria for the Purposive Sampling

## Selection Criteria for the Couples in Group 1

1.  The couple has been married for four to ten years.
2.  The marriage is both arranged and loved one.
3.  Both partners have received university level education.
4.  Both partners hail from middle class urban families of Lahore.
5.  There is no significant difference in their family backgrounds or in their religious, political or sociocultural orientations.
6.  Both partners are aged between twenty-four to thirty-five years.
7.  The gap between the ages of the partners is less than five years.
8.  The difference between the qualification levels is not significant.
9.  The couple has children and there are no fertility (or sensuality) related issues.
10. The couple is either living as a nuclear family or in such a joint family setup where the involvement of other members of the family is minimal or non-interfering.
11. They mainly use Urdu and Punjabi as languages of communication between them and either do not use English (or any third language) at all or the use of English (or any third language) is restricted to code-mixing only.
12. The husband is the working partner whereas the wife is a housewife.
13. Their marital relationship was mainly troubled by linguistic impoliteness and their training in linguistic politeness helped them out.
14. The couples had a minimum of 6 counselling sessions with the researcher.

## Selection Criteria for the Couples in Group 2

1.  The couples' marital relationship was mainly troubled by linguistic impoliteness and their training in linguistic politeness helped them out.
2.  They belong to urban, middle-class families of the Pakistani Punjab.
3.  Both partners have received university level education.
4.  They mainly use Urdu and Punjabi as languages of communication between them and either do not use English (or any third language) at all or the use of English (or any third language) is restricted to code-mixing only.