STRATEGIC COURTESY: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF POLITENESS IN DAWN NEWS EDITORIALS

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ABSTRACT

This research article presents a comprehensive pragmatic analysis of politeness strategies in Dawn News editorials, one of Pakistan's most prominent English-language newspapers. Through the lens of Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory, the study examines how linguistic choices are strategically employed to convey critique, foster social harmony, and maintain face in the context of socio-political commentary. The research analyzes ten editorials published by Dawn News, focusing specifically on positive politeness strategies and their contribution to the persuasive and communicative goals of the editorial discourse. Using qualitative research methods and purposive sampling, the study identifies various politeness strategies and explores their function in balancing persuasion and civility in shaping public opinion. The findings reveal that Dawn News editorials employ a sophisticated blend of positive and negative politeness strategies, using inclusive language, seeking agreement, asserting common ground, and employing hedging to maintain solidarity while delivering critical commentary. This research contributes to the understanding of media discourse in multicultural contexts and offers insights into how politeness strategies function as rhetorical tools in journalistic writing, particularly in societies where maintaining harmony while addressing contentious issues is essential.
Keywords: politeness strategies, Brown and Levinson's theory, pragmatics, Dawn News editorials, media discourse, positive politeness, negative politeness, face-threatening acts

INTRODUCTION

Language serves as the foundation of human communication, enabling individuals to transmit information, preserve relationships, and navigate social interactions (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In the realm of media discourse, particularly in editorial writing, language functions not merely as a vehicle for conveying information but as a strategic tool for shaping public opinion while maintaining social harmony (Ahmad, Mahmood, & Farukh, 2020). Editorials, representing the institutional voice of newspapers, occupy a unique position in the media landscape, offering commentary on socio-political issues while attempting to balance critique with civility (Fatima, Siddique, Ahmad, & Mahmood, 2023). This delicate balance requires sophisticated linguistic strategies that allow editorial writers to express dissent or criticism without causing offense or damaging relationships with readers. Politeness theory, as developed by Brown and Levinson (1987), provides a valuable framework for understanding how language users manage social interactions through strategic communication choices. According to this theory,

individuals possess a "face"—a public self-image that can be threatened or maintained through communicative acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In media discourse, particularly in editorials addressing sensitive socio-political topics, writers must navigate complex face-threatening acts while attempting to persuade readers and maintain credibility (Sifianou & Blitvich, 2017). The concept of politeness in this context extends beyond mere courtesy to encompass a range of strategies designed to mitigate potential threats to the face of both the writer and the reader (Hassan, Alimi, Isam, & Mutalib, 2020).

Dawn News, as one of Pakistan's leading English-language newspapers, provides an ideal context for examining politeness strategies in editorial discourse. Established in 1941, Dawn has built a reputation for balanced reporting and thoughtful commentary on Pakistani politics, society, and international relations (Ahmad, Mahmood, & Siddique, 2019). The newspaper's editorials, representing its institutional stance, address a wide range of contentious issues, from domestic politics to foreign policy, requiring writers to employ sophisticated rhetorical strategies to convey their positions while maintaining credibility and fostering reader engagement (Ahmad, Mahmood, & Farukh, 2020).

The significance of studying politeness strategies in Dawn News editorials extends beyond linguistic analysis to encompass broader questions about media discourse in multicultural societies. Pakistan, with its diverse linguistic landscape and complex socio-political environment, presents a unique context for examining how media institutions navigate sensitive topics through strategic language use (Shah & Ahmad, 2020). In such contexts, politeness strategies serve not merely as stylistic choices but as essential tools for maintaining social cohesion while facilitating critical discourse (Sadia, Asgher, & Asgher, 2020). Previous research on politeness strategies in media discourse has examined various aspects of journalistic language, from hedging in academic writing to the use of stance markers in newspaper editorials (Ahmad, Mahmood, & Farukh, 2020). However, limited attention has been paid to the specific application of politeness strategies in Pakistani English-language media, particularly in

the context of editorial writing (Rabia, Mussarat, & Aatika, 2014). This study aims to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of politeness strategies in Dawn News editorials, focusing on how these strategies function to balance critique with civility in the expression of institutional positions on socio-political issues.

The theoretical framework for this study draws primarily on Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory, which distinguishes between positive politeness strategies (designed to minimize social distance and emphasize solidarity) and negative politeness strategies (designed to respect autonomy and minimize imposition) (Brown & Levinson, 1987). These strategies are particularly relevant in editorial discourse, where writers must often express disagreement or criticism while maintaining a relationship with readers (Leech, 1983). The study also incorporates insights from pragmatic theory, which examines how context shapes meaning in communication (Yule, 1996), and from research on media discourse as a site of ideological negotiation (Fairclough, 1995).

Research Objectives
This study pursues the following objectives:
1. To categorize politeness strategies used in Dawn News editorials.
2. To explore how positive politeness contributes to the persuasive and communicative goals of the editorials.

Research Questions
The study seeks to answer the following research questions:
1. What types of politeness strategies are used in Dawn News editorials?
2. How does positive politeness contribute to the overall persuasive impact of the editorials?

LITERATURE REVIEW
Brown and Levinson's (1987) seminal theory of politeness posits that individuals possess a "face," which comprises a public self-image divided into two components: positive face (the aspiration for approval) and negative face (the yearning for autonomy). Speakers must employ civility to alleviate face-threatening actions (FTAs) that could damage their self-image (Brown & Levinson,

1987). Positive and negative politeness strategies exist on a continuum between bald on-record (direct face-threatening act execution without mitigation) and off-record (indirect face-threatening act execution).

This study concentrates on positive politeness strategies that diminish social distance and highlight speaker-listener unity (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This encompasses pursuing consensus, asserting shared interests, articulating hopefulness, utilising in-group identification cues, and engaging both the speaker and the listener (Purnomo, 2016). Conversely, negative politeness strategies employ indirectness, hedging, and deference to honour the hearer's autonomy and reduce imposition (Yule, 1996).

Implementing politeness theory in writing, particularly in media texts, presents unique obstacles and opportunities. Written texts facilitate exact rhetorical effects, in contrast to spontaneous interaction (Hyland, 1998). Myers (1989) asserts that politeness strategies "ensure that readers and writers communicate effectively" (p. 5), particularly when writers aim to persuade while maintaining credibility (Agbaglo, 2018).

Brown and Levinson (1987) characterised positive politeness techniques as linguistic methods that diminish social distance and highlight solidarity between the speaker and listener. These strategies are effective for writers aiming to engage readers while articulating contentious viewpoints (Purnomo, 2016).

Indahsari and Surjowati (2021) proposed that constructive politeness strategies involve seeking consensus, presuming shared understanding, utilising in-group identity markers, and incorporating both the speaker and listener in media discourse. These strategies cultivate a shared identity and objective between the writer and reader, mitigating risks and enhancing persuasion (Servitia, 2017).

Aguion (2021) observed that humour enhances communication and adds enjoyment, whereas Noor, Rashid, and Latif (2024) identified humour within Pakistani society across situational, linguistic, and visual contexts. In editorial writing, humour can mitigate criticism and foster empathy with readers; nevertheless, it must be employed judiciously to prevent belittling the subject (Noor et al., 2024).

Language etiquette varies among European, American, and Asian cultures, influenced by their respective goals of social harmony and individual autonomy, as noted by Eelen (2001). Sifianou and Blitvich (2017) found that British politeness use clichéd expressions such as "please" and "sorry," but European and American cultures favour indirect communication (Baider, Cislaru, & Claudel, 2020).

Mamat, Rashid, and Paee (2021) investigated civility in encounters between Japanese and Malaysian tourists, identifying both parallels and differences. Pakistani English-language media must reconcile local cultural norms with global reporting standards, rendering cross-cultural civility essential (Ahmad, Mahmood, & Siddique, 2019). Ahmad et al. (2020) assert that editorials in Pakistani English newspapers employ distinctive linguistic strategies to assert viewpoints while maintaining politeness, hence reflecting the socio-cultural context of Pakistani media discourse.

Politicians must reconcile the articulation of their positions with the preservation of relationships with stakeholders, rendering political discourse a rich arena for politeness strategies (Haryanto, Indriani, Safar, Fansiska, & Dewi, 2024). Haryanto et al. (2024) shown that politicians employ positive politeness strategies to cultivate sympathy with audiences when articulating political stances in political talk shows.

Political discourse highlights face, since public image influences political efficacy (Balmas, 2017). According to Balmas and Sheafer (2014), politeness strategies influence political discourse and audience perception. Lass (1995) investigated how politicians employ language to create favourable perceptions, highlighting the strategic importance of civility in political discourse.

Politeness strategies are essential in Pakistani political discourse owing to intricate power dynamics and cultural sensitivities (Shah & Ahmad, 2020). The empirical analysis by Sadia et al. (2020) revealed cultural differences in the politeness strategies employed by Pakistani and American politicians to mitigate face dangers when articulating political concepts. Rabia et al. (2014) examined the polite language and strategies

employed by Pakistani politicians to save face during political discourse.

Thematic analysis is an effective approach for assessing politeness strategies in media discourse, highlighting patterns in how authors navigate encounter threats and express viewpoints (Nowak, 2020). This methodical approach to data pattern discovery, analysis, and reporting is optimal for examining the intricate interaction between linguistic components and rhetorical objectives in editorial writing (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Despite the extensive research on politeness strategies, our understanding of their application in Pakistani English-language media, particularly in editorial discourse, remains limited. While linguistic features of Pakistani English newspaper editorials have been examined (Ahmad, Mahmood, & Farukh, 2020; Fatima et al., 2023), the application of politeness theory remains limited.

This study addresses multiple gaps in the literature. Initially, it examines positive politeness strategies in Dawn News editorials, thereby augmenting existing research on the linguistics of Pakistani English media speech. Secondly, it examines how these techniques assist editorials in persuasion and communication, elucidating the role of civility in institutional media discourse. Third, it underscores the distinctive characteristics of politeness in Pakistani English, contributing to the study of pragmatics.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design to examine politeness strategies in Dawn News editorials. Qualitative research is particularly appropriate for this investigation as it allows for in-depth analysis of language use within its natural context, enabling the researcher to identify patterns and interpret meanings in textual data (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative approach facilitates a nuanced understanding of how politeness strategies function in editorial discourse, going beyond mere identification of linguistic features to examine their rhetorical purposes and effects (Silverman, 2020).

The study is guided by a pragmatic perspective, which examines how context shapes meaning in communication (Yule, 1996). This perspective is particularly relevant for analyzing politeness strategies, as these strategies are inherently context-dependent, reflecting the relationship between writer and reader as well as the broader socio-cultural context in which communication occurs (Haugh, 2007). By adopting a pragmatic approach, the study seeks to uncover not only what politeness strategies are used but also how they function to achieve specific communicative goals in editorial discourse.

Data Collection

Selection of Source

Dawn News was selected as the source for this study due to its status as one of Pakistan's most respected English-language newspapers. Established in 1941, Dawn has built a reputation for balanced reporting and thoughtful commentary on Pakistani politics, society, and international relations (Ahmad, Mahmood, & Siddique, 2019). The newspaper's editorials, representing its institutional stance, address a wide range of contentious issues, making them an ideal source for examining politeness strategies in media discourse.

Sampling Strategy

The study employed purposive sampling to select editorials for analysis. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where researchers select cases based on their relevance to the research questions and their ability to provide rich information about the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2015). This approach was particularly appropriate for this study as it allowed the researcher to focus on editorials that were likely to contain examples of politeness strategies in action. Ten editorials were selected for analysis, representing a range of topics including digital governance, media freedom, climate change, sports policy, public health, drug control, disaster management, cultural heritage, criminal justice, and security issues. The selected editorials were published between 2021 and 2023 and were chosen because they address major national and societal issues while likely employing courteous language that attempts to connect with the audience. The editorials analyzed in this study are:

1. "Digital Gaps" - addressing digital transformation in Pakistan
2. "Media Matters" - discussing press freedom in Pakistan
3. "Resilience or Ruin" - examining climate change preparedness
4. "Attack Mindset" - analyzing Pakistan's cricket strategy
5. "Vaccine Paradox" - discussing Pakistan's immunization efforts
6. "Battling Drugs" - addressing drug trafficking in Pakistan
7. "Rain Havoc" - examining monsoon preparedness
8. "Handle with Care" - discussing preservation of architectural heritage
9. "Death Penalty" - analyzing capital punishment reforms
10. "Terror in Kalat" - addressing security challenges in Balochistan

Data Collection Procedure
The selected editorials were accessed through the Dawn News website's digital archive. Each editorial was downloaded and saved in PDF format to ensure preservation of original formatting and content. The editorials were then anonymized by removing identifying information such as author names and publication dates to minimize potential bias during analysis.

Data Analysis
The study employed Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory as the primary analytical framework. This theory provides a comprehensive system for categorizing politeness strategies, distinguishing between positive politeness (strategies designed to minimize social distance and emphasize solidarity) and negative politeness (strategies designed to respect autonomy and minimize imposition) (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

DATA ANALYSIS
This chapter presents a detailed analysis of politeness strategies in the ten selected Dawn News editorials. The analysis identifies and categorizes positive politeness strategies according to Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework, examining how these strategies function to achieve the persuasive and communicative goals of the editorials. Each editorial is analyzed separately, followed by a comparative analysis of patterns across the sample.

Analysis of Individual Editorials
Editorial No. 1: "Digital Gaps"
The editorial "Digital Gaps" addresses Pakistan's digital transformation, highlighting both the potential of digital technology and the challenges hindering its full realization. The analysis reveals a sophisticated blend of positive and negative politeness strategies designed to convey critique while maintaining solidarity with readers.

Positive Politeness Strategies:
1. Use of in-group identity markers: The editorial frequently employs inclusive pronouns such as "we" and "our" to establish shared identity and responsibility. For example, the opening sentence, "We live in a world where interactions between the state and citizens..." positions both writer and readers as participants in a shared reality. Similarly, phrases like "our e-commerce spending" and "our economic recovery" emphasize collective experience and responsibility.

2. Seeking agreement:
The editorial employs strategies to establish common ground with readers, using phrases like "shared concern" to frame issues as matters of mutual interest. This strategy functions to minimize potential disagreement by emphasizing shared values and priorities.

3. Asserting common ground:
The editorial presupposes shared values and goals, particularly in relation to national development. For instance, the statement "digital technology holds the key to inclusive growth" assumes that readers share the goal of economic development and social inclusion.

4. Including both speaker and hearer in the activity:
The editorial uses inclusive language to position both writer and readers as participants in addressing digital challenges. Phrases like "we need to encourage digital transactions" and "we must

provide low-interest loans" create a sense of collective action and responsibility.

5. Being optimistic:

The editorial maintains an optimistic tone throughout, emphasizing the potential for positive change. For example, the statement "Pakistan has every right to demand compensation..." expresses confidence in the country's ability to advocate for its interests in the international arena.

Negative Politeness Strategies:

1. Hedging: The editorial employs various hedging devices to soften criticism and reduce the force of potentially face-threatening statements. For instance, the phrase "Pakistan has not been able to fully unleash its digital potential..." uses the negative construction "not been able to" rather than more direct criticism.

2. Impersonal constructions:

The editorial frequently uses passive voice and impersonal constructions to avoid direct attribution of responsibility. For example, the statement "patchy efforts in this direction thanks to the absence of a comprehensive policy framework" avoids identifying specific actors responsible for the lack of progress.

3. Indirectness:

The editorial employs indirectness to convey criticism without explicit confrontation. For instance, the comparison "Our e-commerce spending... was far below Bangladesh's..." allows readers to draw their own conclusions about Pakistan's performance relative to its neighbors.

Interpretation:

The editorial "Digital Gaps" demonstrates a sophisticated balance of positive and negative politeness strategies to achieve its persuasive goals. The positive politeness strategies function to establish solidarity with readers, creating a sense of shared identity and purpose. By using inclusive language and emphasizing common ground, the editorial positions digital transformation as a collective national project rather than a partisan issue.

The negative politeness strategies, meanwhile, allow the editorial to convey criticism without causing offense or alienating readers. Through hedging, impersonal constructions, and indirectness, the editorial acknowledges shortcomings in Pakistan's digital development while maintaining a constructive tone.

This combination of strategies is particularly effective in the context of Pakistani media discourse, where criticism of national performance must be balanced with recognition of achievements and potential. By employing both positive and negative politeness strategies, the editorial manages to critique current policies while maintaining a forward-looking, optimistic perspective that encourages reader engagement rather than defensiveness.

Editorial No. 2: "Media Matters"

The editorial "Media Matters" addresses press freedom in Pakistan, highlighting the challenges faced by journalists and the importance of a free media for democratic governance. The analysis reveals a strategic use of politeness strategies to convey criticism of media restrictions while showing solidarity with journalists.

Positive Politeness Strategies:
1. Notice, attend to H (hearer):

The editorial demonstrates concern for journalists and their challenges, acknowledging the risks they face in their work. The opening statement, "Pakistan's journalists are accustomed to living in dangerous situations," recognizes the difficulties faced by journalists and validates their experiences.

2. Exaggerate interest, approval, sympathy:

The editorial employs emphatic language to express solidarity with journalists. For example, the phrase "critical reporting is tempting fate" exaggerates the risks faced by journalists to emphasize their courage and dedication.

3. Use in-group identity markers:

The editorial uses inclusive language to establish shared democratic values. Phrases like "journalists are saviors of democracy" position both writers

and readers as part of a democratic community that values press freedom.

4. Assert common ground:

The editorial presupposes shared commitment to democratic principles, particularly in relation to freedom of expression. For instance, the statement "their independence guarantees that governments are held accountable" assumes that readers share the view that media freedom is essential for democratic governance.

5. Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding):

The editorial expresses empathy for journalists and their challenges. For example, the statement "Silencing the media affects society... damages the social contract" demonstrates understanding of the broader implications of media restrictions.

Negative Politeness Strategies:

1. Indirectness:

The editorial employs indirect language to discuss sensitive topics and avoid direct confrontation. For instance, the phrase "a shocking range of challenges stalks journalists in south Punjab" uses metaphor to convey the severity of threats without explicitly naming those responsible.

2. Generalization:

The editorial uses general terms to avoid identifying specific actors responsible for threatening press freedom. For example, the statement "feudals, politicians, extremist groups, and unelected elements use intense pressure tactics" employs general categories rather than naming specific individuals or groups.

3. Impersonal constructions:

The editorial frequently uses passive voice and impersonal constructions to avoid direct attribution of responsibility. For example, the statement "without institutional reforms, [this] will further throttle freedom of expression" avoids identifying specific institutions responsible for implementing reforms.

4. Hedging:

The editorial employs hedging devices to soften criticism and reduce the force of potentially face-threatening statements. For instance, the phrase "The truth is that under the current government, the desire to repress manifests more brazenly" uses the construction "the truth is that" to frame criticism as factual observation rather than personal opinion.

Interpretation:

The editorial "Media Matters" demonstrates a strategic use of politeness strategies to address the sensitive topic of press freedom in Pakistan. The positive politeness strategies function to establish solidarity with journalists and readers who value media freedom, creating a sense of shared democratic values. By acknowledging the challenges faced by journalists and emphasizing their importance to democracy, the editorial positions press freedom as a collective concern rather than a partisan issue.

The negative politeness strategies, meanwhile, allow the editorial to convey criticism of media restrictions without causing undue offense or provoking defensive reactions. Through indirectness, generalization, impersonal constructions, and hedging, the editorial acknowledges threats to press freedom while maintaining a measured tone that encourages reflection rather than confrontation.

This combination of strategies is particularly effective in the context of Pakistani media discourse, where discussions of press freedom can be highly contentious. By employing both positive and negative politeness strategies, the editorial manages to critique restrictions on media while maintaining a constructive perspective that emphasizes the importance of press freedom for democratic governance.

Editorial No. 3: "Resilience or Ruin

The editorial "Resilience or Ruin" addresses climate change preparedness in Pakistan, highlighting the urgent need for action in the face of increasing environmental challenges. The analysis reveals a nuanced use of politeness strategies to convey the severity of the situation while maintaining a constructive tone.

Positive Politeness Strategies:
1. Use in-group identity markers:
The editorial frequently employs inclusive pronouns such as "we" and "our" to establish shared identity and responsibility. For example, the statement "global warming is changing our landscape and our vulnerabilities with it" positions both writer and readers as collectively experiencing the effects of climate change.

2. Assert common ground:
The editorial presupposes shared concern about climate change and its impacts. For instance, the statement "This is climate change in motion" assumes that readers recognize the reality of climate change and its effects on Pakistan.

3. Include both speaker and hearer in the activity:
The editorial uses inclusive language to position both writer and readers as participants in addressing climate challenges. Phrases like "What Pakistan needs is..." create a sense of collective responsibility for finding solutions.

4. Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding):
The editorial expresses empathy for those affected by climate-related disasters. For example, the statement "This is a cost we can't afford" demonstrates understanding of the economic and human costs of climate inaction.

5. Be optimistic:
Despite the serious nature of the topic, the editorial maintains an optimistic tone about the potential for positive change. For instance, the statement "Pakistan has every right to demand compensation..." expresses confidence in the country's ability to advocate for climate justice.

Negative Politeness Strategies:
1. Hedging:
The editorial employs various hedging devices to soften criticism and reduce the force of potentially face-threatening statements. For instance, the phrase "Each disaster also reflects failed governance" uses the word "reflects" rather than more direct terms like "proves" or "demonstrates."

2. Impersonal constructions:
The editorial frequently uses passive voice and impersonal constructions to avoid direct attribution of responsibility. For example, the statement "municipal bodies and district administrations remain underfunded..." avoids identifying specific actors responsible for underfunding.

3. Indirectness:
The editorial employs indirect language to convey criticism without explicit confrontation. For instance, the phrase "The security establishment... must also recognize..." uses a mild imperative rather than more direct criticism.

4. Generalization:
The editorial uses general terms to avoid identifying specific actors responsible for climate inaction. For example, the statement "The political class must be held accountable" employs a general category rather than naming specific individuals or groups.

Interpretation:
The editorial "Resilience or Ruin" demonstrates a sophisticated balance of politeness strategies to address the urgent topic of climate change preparedness in Pakistan. The positive politeness strategies function to establish solidarity with readers, creating a sense of shared concern and responsibility. By using inclusive language and emphasizing common ground, the editorial positions climate action as a collective national imperative rather than a partisan issue.

The negative politeness strategies, meanwhile, allow the editorial to convey criticism of current climate policies without causing undue offense or provoking defensive reactions. Through hedging, impersonal constructions, indirectness, and generalization, the editorial acknowledges shortcomings in Pakistan's climate preparedness while maintaining a constructive tone that encourages action rather than defensiveness.

This combination of strategies is particularly effective in the context of Pakistani media discourse, where discussions of climate change can be politically sensitive. By employing both positive

and negative politeness strategies, the editorial manages to critique current policies while maintaining a forward-looking perspective that emphasizes the urgency of climate action.

Editorial No. 4: "Attack Mindset"

The editorial "Attack Mindset" discusses Pakistan's cricket strategy under new leadership, analyzing the team's recent performance and future prospects. The analysis reveals a strategic use of politeness strategies to balance praise for recent achievements with constructive criticism of ongoing challenges.

Positive Politeness Strategies:
1. Notice, attend to H (hearer):

The editorial demonstrates interest in and appreciation for Pakistan's cricket team and its performance. For example, the opening praise for Pakistan's series victory under Mike Hesson's leadership acknowledges the team's achievements.

2. Exaggerate interest, approval, sympathy:

The editorial employs emphatic language to express approval of the team's new approach. For instance, the phrase "refreshing approach" used by Hesson and captain Salman Ali Agha exaggerates the novelty and effectiveness of their strategy.

3. Assert common ground:

The editorial presupposes shared interest in cricket and support for the national team. For example, the statement about the team's switch to attack mode assumes that readers recognize the importance of this strategic shift.

4. Include both speaker and hearer in the activity:

The editorial uses inclusive language to position both writer and readers as supporters of the team. Phrases like "our team" create a sense of shared investment in the team's success.

5. Be optimistic:

The editorial maintains an optimistic tone about the team's future prospects. For instance, the statement about the team's hope for ongoing momentum expresses confidence in the team's ability to build on recent successes.

Negative Politeness Strategies:
1. Hedging:

The editorial employs various hedging devices to soften criticism and reduce the force of potentially face-threatening statements. For instance, the phrase "It will be a challenge..." hedges the prediction of future difficulties rather than presenting them as certainties.

2. Indirectness:

The editorial employs indirect language to discuss sensitive topics and avoid direct confrontation. For instance, the question about how Babar and Rizwan will fit into the new aggressive plan is posed indirectly rather than as a direct criticism.

3. Impersonal constructions:

The editorial uses passive voice and impersonal constructions to avoid direct attribution of responsibility. For example, the discussion of selecting spinners for Sri Lankan conditions avoids identifying specific decision-makers.

4. Generalization:

The editorial uses general terms to avoid identifying specific individuals responsible for challenges. For example, the statement about the team not having completely moved on from the past avoids naming specific players or aspects of performance.

Interpretation:

The editorial "Attack Mindset" demonstrates a balanced use of politeness strategies to discuss Pakistan's cricket strategy. The positive politeness strategies function to establish solidarity with readers who support the national team, creating a sense of shared investment in the team's success. By acknowledging recent achievements and expressing optimism about future prospects, the editorial positions itself as supportive of the team while still offering constructive criticism.

The negative politeness strategies, meanwhile, allow the editorial to convey criticism of ongoing challenges without causing undue offense or provoking defensive reactions. Through hedging, indirectness, impersonal constructions, and generalization, the editorial acknowledges areas

for improvement while maintaining a constructive tone that encourages reflection rather than confrontation.

This combination of strategies is particularly effective in the context of sports journalism, where criticism of team performance can be sensitive for passionate fans. By employing both positive and negative politeness strategies, the editorial manages to offer balanced analysis that acknowledges both achievements and challenges, maintaining credibility with readers while still providing insightful commentary.

Editorial No. 5: "Vaccine Paradox"

The editorial "Vaccine Paradox" addresses Pakistan's immunization efforts, highlighting both successes in vaccine coverage and ongoing challenges, particularly in relation to polio eradication. The analysis reveals a strategic use of politeness strategies to balance recognition of achievements with acknowledgment of persistent challenges.

Positive Politeness Strategies:
1. Notice, attend to H (hearer):

The editorial demonstrates appreciation for Pakistan's achievements in immunization. For example, the opening statement "Pakistan has recorded its highest-ever coverage of the DTP vaccine" acknowledges the country's success in this area.

2. Exaggerate interest, approval, sympathy:

The editorial employs emphatic language to express approval of recent progress. For instance, the phrase "This is an encouraging figure" exaggerates the significance of the achievement to emphasize its importance.

3. Assert common ground:

The editorial presupposes shared commitment to public health and immunization. For example, the statement "Pakistan should celebrate the achievement" assumes that readers recognize the importance of immunization success.

4. Include both speaker and hearer in the activity:

The editorial uses inclusive language to position both writer and readers as participants in public health efforts. Phrases like "our health infrastructure" create a sense of shared responsibility for health systems.

5. Be optimistic:

The editorial maintains an optimistic tone about the potential for further progress. For instance, the statement "The success in DTP coverage shows that Pakistan's health infrastructure can deliver" expresses confidence in the country's ability to address health challenges.

Negative Politeness Strategies:
1. Hedging:

The editorial employs various hedging devices to soften criticism and reduce the force of potentially face-threatening statements. For instance, the phrase "If this progress is indeed accurate..." hedges the assertion about vaccine coverage data rather than presenting it as unquestioned fact.

2. Indirectness:

The editorial employs indirect language to discuss sensitive topics and avoid direct confrontation. For instance, the statement "Pakistan may soon hold the shameful distinction..." conveys criticism indirectly rather than as a direct accusation.

3. Impersonal constructions:

The editorial uses passive voice and impersonal constructions to avoid direct attribution of responsibility. For example, the statement "The same ingredients can and must be applied to the polio campaign" avoids identifying specific actors responsible for implementing changes.

4. Generalization:

The editorial uses general terms to avoid identifying specific individuals responsible for challenges. For example, the statement "There is no excuse for failing to eliminate a disease..." employs a general imperative rather than naming specific responsible parties.

Interpretation:
The editorial "Vaccine Paradox" demonstrates a nuanced use of politeness strategies to address

Pakistan's immunization efforts. The positive politeness strategies function to acknowledge achievements and build momentum for further progress, creating a sense of shared pride in public health successes. By recognizing progress and expressing optimism about future prospects, the editorial positions itself as supportive of health initiatives while still highlighting areas for improvement.

The negative politeness strategies, meanwhile, allow the editorial to convey criticism of ongoing challenges without causing undue offense or provoking defensive reactions. Through hedging, indirectness, impersonal constructions, and generalization, the editorial acknowledges shortcomings in polio eradication efforts while maintaining a constructive tone that encourages action rather than defensiveness.

This combination of strategies is particularly effective in the context of public health communication, where balancing recognition of achievements with acknowledgment of ongoing challenges is essential for maintaining momentum. By employing both positive and negative politeness strategies, the editorial manages to provide a balanced assessment that celebrates success while still emphasizing the urgency of addressing remaining challenges.

Editorial No. 6: "Battling Drugs"

The editorial "Battling Drugs" addresses Pakistan's challenges with drug trafficking and substance abuse, highlighting both ongoing efforts to combat the problem and persistent systemic issues. The analysis reveals a strategic use of politeness strategies to convey the severity of the situation while maintaining a constructive tone.

Positive Politeness Strategies:
1. Notice, attend to H (hearer):
The editorial demonstrates appreciation for efforts to combat drug trafficking. For example, the opening praise for Pakistan's continuous efforts acknowledges the work being done in this area.

2. Assert common ground:
The editorial presupposes shared concern about drug trafficking and its impacts. For example, the statement about drug use affecting people of all genders and classes assumes that readers recognize the widespread nature of the problem.

3. Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding):
The editorial expresses empathy for those affected by drug abuse. For instance, the statement pointing out how socioeconomic circumstances lead young people to use drugs demonstrates understanding of the root causes of substance abuse.

4. Include both speaker and hearer in the activity:
The editorial uses inclusive language to position both writer and readers as participants in addressing drug challenges. Phrases like "we are hardly close" create a sense of shared responsibility for finding solutions.

5. Be optimistic:
Despite the serious nature of the topic, the editorial maintains an optimistic tone about the potential for positive change through systemic reform. For instance, the suggestion of "big changes and a fair judicial system" expresses confidence in the possibility of improvement.

Negative Politeness Strategies:
1. Hedging:
The editorial employs various hedging devices to soften criticism and reduce the force of potentially face-threatening statements. For instance, the phrase "20 police officers were allegedly engaged" uses the word "allegedly" to hedge the assertion about police involvement.

2. Indirectness:
The editorial employs indirect language to discuss sensitive topics and avoid direct confrontation. For instance, the statement "random activities are bound to fail" conveys criticism indirectly rather than as a direct accusation.

3. Impersonal constructions:
The editorial uses passive voice and impersonal constructions to avoid direct attribution of responsibility. For example, the statement "The fact that these tactics don't work has major

emotional and social effects" avoids identifying specific actors responsible for ineffective policies.

4. Generalization:
The editorial uses general terms to avoid identifying specific individuals responsible for challenges. For example, the statement about political favoritism and the police-drug connection employs general categories rather than naming specific individuals or groups.

Interpretation:
The editorial "Battling Drugs" demonstrates a sophisticated balance of politeness strategies to address the sensitive topic of drug trafficking and substance abuse in Pakistan. The positive politeness strategies function to establish solidarity with readers concerned about this issue, creating a sense of shared concern and responsibility. By acknowledging efforts to combat the problem and expressing empathy for those affected, the editorial positions drug control as a collective challenge rather than a partisan issue.

The negative politeness strategies, meanwhile, allow the editorial to convey criticism of systemic issues without causing undue offense or provoking defensive reactions. Through hedging, indirectness, impersonal constructions, and generalization, the editorial acknowledges shortcomings in current approaches while maintaining a constructive tone that encourages systemic reform rather than blame.

This combination of strategies is particularly effective in the context of discussing sensitive social issues like drug abuse, where criticism can easily provoke defensiveness. By employing both positive and negative politeness strategies, the editorial manages to highlight the severity of the problem while still offering constructive solutions that encourage reflection and action rather than confrontation.

Editorial No. 7: "Rain Havoc"
The editorial "Rain Havoc" addresses Pakistan's challenges with monsoon rains and flooding, highlighting both immediate responses and long-term preparedness issues. The analysis reveals a strategic use of politeness strategies to convey the urgency of the situation while maintaining a constructive tone.

Positive Politeness Strategies:
1. Notice, attend to H (hearer):
The editorial demonstrates concern for those affected by monsoon rains. For example, the opening reference to "Mother Nature" in an "unforgiving mood" acknowledges the severity of the situation and its impact on people.

2. Assert common ground:
The editorial presupposes shared concern about natural disasters and their impacts. For example, the statement about the loss of more than 60 lives during the monsoon assumes that readers recognize the human cost of these disasters.

3. Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding):
The editorial expresses empathy for those affected by flooding. For instance, the statement about Rawalpindi being one of the worst-hit districts demonstrates understanding of the localized impacts of the disaster.

4. Include both speaker and hearer in the activity:
The editorial uses inclusive language to position both writer and readers as participants in addressing climate challenges. Phrases like "The cost of doing nothing is higher than the cost of preventing" create a sense of shared responsibility for finding solutions.

5. Be optimistic:
Despite the serious nature of the topic, the editorial maintains an optimistic tone about the potential for positive change through improved preparedness. For instance, the call for "quick climate adaptation" expresses confidence in the possibility of improvement.

Negative Politeness Strategies:
1. Hedging:
The editorial employs various hedging devices to soften criticism and reduce the force of potentially face-threatening statements. For instance, the phrase "blaming climate change alone for the

tragedies that keep happening is 'disingenuous'" hedges the criticism by framing it as a characterization rather than a direct accusation.

2. Indirectness:

The editorial employs indirect language to discuss sensitive topics and avoid direct confrontation. For instance, the statement "no province has prepared well enough" conveys criticism indirectly rather than as a direct accusation.

3. Impersonal constructions:

The editorial uses passive voice and impersonal constructions to avoid direct attribution of responsibility. For example, the statement "billions spent on advertising could have been better utilized" avoids identifying specific actors responsible for misallocation of resources.

4. Generalization:

The editorial uses general terms to avoid identifying specific individuals responsible for challenges. For example, the statement about politicians regularly talking about adapting to climate change employs a general category rather than naming specific individuals.

Interpretation:

The editorial "Rain Havoc" demonstrates a nuanced use of politeness strategies to address Pakistan's challenges with monsoon rains and flooding. The positive politeness strategies function to establish solidarity with readers affected by or concerned about these disasters, creating a sense of shared concern and responsibility. By acknowledging the severity of the situation and expressing empathy for those affected, the editorial positions disaster preparedness as a collective imperative rather than a partisan issue.

The negative politeness strategies, meanwhile, allow the editorial to convey criticism of preparedness failures without causing undue offense or provoking defensive reactions. Through hedging, indirectness, impersonal constructions, and generalization, the editorial acknowledges shortcomings in current approaches while maintaining a constructive tone that encourages systemic reform rather than blame.

This combination of strategies is particularly effective in the context of discussing natural disasters, where criticism of government response can be sensitive. By employing both positive and negative politeness strategies, the editorial manages to highlight the urgency of improved preparedness while still offering constructive solutions that encourage reflection and action rather than confrontation.

Editorial No. 8: "Handle with Care"

The editorial "Handle with Care" addresses the preservation of Karachi's architectural heritage, highlighting both the value of historical buildings and threats to their survival. The analysis reveals a strategic use of politeness strategies to convey concern about heritage loss while maintaining a constructive tone.

Positive Politeness Strategies:

1. Notice, attend to H (hearer):

The editorial demonstrates appreciation for Karachi's architectural heritage. For example, the opening description of heritage sites as "pathways to the past that vitalize the present and provide vision for the future" acknowledges the value of these buildings.

2. Assert common ground:

The editorial presupposes shared concern about cultural heritage and its preservation. For example, the statement about the demolition of 44 old buildings assumes that readers recognize the loss this represents.

3. Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding):

The editorial expresses understanding of the challenges involved in heritage preservation. For instance, the statement about gaps in the law, lack of money, and not enough people demonstrates understanding of the systemic challenges.

4. Include both speaker and hearer in the activity:

The editorial uses inclusive language to position both writer and readers as participants in heritage preservation. Phrases like "we need to act now"

create a sense of shared responsibility for protecting cultural heritage.

5. Be optimistic:

Despite the serious nature of the topic, the editorial maintains an optimistic tone about the potential for positive change through improved policies. For instance, the call for "extensive and updated laws" expresses confidence in the possibility of improvement.

Negative Politeness Strategies:
1. Hedging:
The editorial employs various hedging devices to soften criticism and reduce the force of potentially face-threatening statements. For instance, the phrase "news... is disturbing" hedges the expression of concern rather than presenting it as a direct accusation.

2. Indirectness:
The editorial employs indirect language to discuss sensitive topics and avoid direct confrontation. For instance, the statement "fears abound... can serve as a pretext" conveys criticism indirectly rather than as a direct accusation.

3. Impersonal constructions:
The editorial uses passive voice and impersonal constructions to avoid direct attribution of responsibility. For example, the statement "old rules are abused" avoids identifying specific actors responsible for the abuse.

4. Generalization:
The editorial uses general terms to avoid identifying specific individuals responsible for challenges. For example, the statement about "institutional avarice" employs an abstract concept rather than naming specific individuals or institutions.

Interpretation:
The editorial "Handle with Care" demonstrates a sophisticated balance of politeness strategies to address the preservation of Karachi's architectural heritage. The positive politeness strategies function to establish solidarity with readers who value cultural heritage, creating a sense of shared appreciation and responsibility. By acknowledging the value of historical buildings and expressing understanding of preservation challenges, the editorial positions heritage protection as a collective imperative rather than a partisan issue.

The negative politeness strategies, meanwhile, allow the editorial to convey criticism of threats to heritage without causing undue offense or provoking defensive reactions. Through hedging, indirectness, impersonal constructions, and generalization, the editorial acknowledges shortcomings in current preservation efforts while maintaining a constructive tone that encourages systemic reform rather than blame.

This combination of strategies is particularly effective in the context of cultural heritage preservation, where criticism of current policies can be sensitive. By employing both positive and negative politeness strategies, the editorial manages to highlight the urgency of heritage protection while still offering constructive solutions that encourage reflection and action rather than confrontation.

Editorial No. 9: "Death Penalty"
The editorial "Death Penalty" addresses the elimination of the death penalty for two crimes in Pakistan, analyzing both the significance of this step and the need for further reform. The analysis reveals a strategic use of politeness strategies to convey support for abolition while acknowledging the complexity of the issue.

Positive Politeness Strategies:
1. Notice, attend to H (hearer):
The editorial demonstrates appreciation for progress toward death penalty reform. For example, the opening description of the step as "welcome" acknowledges the significance of this development.

2. Assert common ground:
The editorial presupposes shared commitment to human rights and justice. For example, the statement about the irreversibility of death assumes that readers recognize the unique finality of capital punishment.

3. Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding):
The editorial expresses understanding of the complexity of capital punishment issues. For instance, the statement about the degradation experienced by death row inmates demonstrates understanding of the human costs of the death penalty.

4. Include both speaker and hearer in the activity:
The editorial uses inclusive language to position both writer and readers as participants in justice reform. Phrases like "we need to rethink our approach" create a sense of shared responsibility for improving the justice system.

5. Be optimistic:
Despite the serious nature of the topic, the editorial maintains an optimistic tone about the potential for further reform. For instance, the suggestion of "reform, rehabilitation, and respect for human dignity" expresses confidence in the possibility of improvement.

Negative Politeness Strategies:

1. Hedging:
The editorial employs various hedging devices to soften criticism and reduce the force of potentially face-threatening statements. For instance, the phrase "the step is called 'feeling insufficient'" hedges the criticism rather than presenting it as a direct accusation.

2. Indirectness:
The editorial employs indirect language to discuss sensitive topics and avoid direct confrontation. For instance, the statement "the way the bill was passed suggests..." conveys criticism indirectly rather than as a direct accusation.

3. Impersonal constructions:
The editorial uses passive voice and impersonal constructions to avoid direct attribution of responsibility. For example, the statement "death is irreversible" avoids identifying specific actors responsible for implementing capital punishment.

4. Generalization:
The editorial uses general terms to avoid identifying specific individuals responsible for challenges. For example, the statement about "the system" that "deals cruelty in response to cruelty" employs an abstract concept rather than naming specific individuals or institutions.

Interpretation:
The editorial "Death Penalty" demonstrates a nuanced use of politeness strategies to address the complex issue of capital punishment reform in Pakistan. The positive politeness strategies function to establish solidarity with readers who support human rights and justice reform, creating a sense of shared values and responsibility. By acknowledging progress toward abolition and expressing understanding of the complexity of the issue, the editorial positions death penalty reform as a collective imperative rather than a partisan issue.

The negative politeness strategies, meanwhile, allow the editorial to convey criticism of current policies without causing undue offense or provoking defensive reactions. Through hedging, indirectness, impersonal constructions, and generalization, the editorial acknowledges shortcomings in current approaches while maintaining a constructive tone that encourages further reform rather than confrontation.

This combination of strategies is particularly effective in the context of discussing capital punishment, which can be a highly contentious issue. By employing both positive and negative politeness strategies, the editorial manages to advocate for abolition while still acknowledging the complexity of the issue and offering constructive solutions that encourage reflection and action rather than confrontation.

Editorial No. 10: "Terror in Kalat"
The editorial "Terror in Kalat" addresses security challenges in Balochistan, highlighting both the severity of the threat and the need for effective government response. The analysis reveals a strategic use of politeness strategies to convey concern about security issues while maintaining a constructive tone.

Positive Politeness Strategies:
1. Notice, attend to H (hearer):
The editorial demonstrates concern for the security situation in Balochistan. For example, the statement "This should be cause for alarm..." acknowledges the severity of the security threat.

2. Assert common ground:
The editorial presupposes shared commitment to national security and stability. For example, the statement about the need to "restore public confidence" assumes that readers recognize the importance of public trust in security institutions.

3. Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding):
The editorial expresses empathy for those affected by terrorism. For instance, the rhetorical question "Was it a 'crime' for them..." demonstrates understanding of the unfair suffering of innocent people.

4. Include both speaker and hearer in the activity:
The editorial uses inclusive language to position both writer and readers as participants in addressing security challenges. Phrases like "requires public support..." create a sense of shared responsibility for improving security.

5. Be optimistic:
Despite the serious nature of the topic, the editorial maintains an optimistic tone about the potential for positive change through improved policies. For instance, the suggestion that "it may be the surest way..." expresses confidence in the possibility of improvement.

Negative Politeness Strategies:
1. Hedging:
The editorial employs various hedging devices to soften criticism and reduce the force of potentially face-threatening statements. For instance, the phrase "there is no line they are unwilling to cross" hedges the criticism of militant behavior rather than presenting it as a direct accusation.

2. Indirectness:
The editorial employs indirect language to discuss sensitive topics and avoid direct confrontation. For instance, the statement "if the latter cannot fulfill..." conveys criticism indirectly rather than as a direct accusation.

3. Impersonal constructions:
The editorial uses passive voice and impersonal constructions to avoid direct attribution of responsibility. For example, the statement "responsibility of the state" avoids identifying specific individuals within state institutions.

4. Generalization:
The editorial uses general terms to avoid identifying specific individuals responsible for challenges. For example, the reference to "Pakistan's eastern neighbor" rather than naming India directly employs diplomatic generalization.

Interpretation:
The editorial "Terror in Kalat" demonstrates a sophisticated balance of politeness strategies to address security challenges in Balochistan. The positive politeness strategies function to establish solidarity with readers concerned about national security, creating a sense of shared concern and responsibility. By acknowledging the severity of the security threat and expressing empathy for those affected, the editorial positions security improvement as a collective imperative rather than a partisan issue.

The negative politeness strategies, meanwhile, allow the editorial to convey criticism of security failures without causing undue offense or provoking defensive reactions. Through hedging, indirectness, impersonal constructions, and generalization, the editorial acknowledges shortcomings in current approaches while maintaining a constructive tone that encourages systemic reform rather than blame.

This combination of strategies is particularly effective in the context of discussing security issues, which can be highly sensitive in Pakistan. By employing both positive and negative politeness strategies, the editorial manages to highlight the urgency of improving security while

still offering constructive solutions that encourage reflection and action rather than confrontation.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the use of politeness strategies in *Dawn* News editorials, focusing on how these strategies balance critique with civility when articulating institutional perspectives on socio-political issues. A qualitative analysis of ten editorials across diverse topics revealed clear patterns in the application of positive and negative politeness strategies and their role in achieving persuasive and communicative goals.

Summary of Findings

The findings indicate that *Dawn* editorials skillfully combine positive and negative politeness strategies to engage readers while delivering critical commentary. Positive politeness strategies—such as in-group identity markers, shared references, and inclusive language—help establish solidarity and a sense of shared purpose. Negative politeness strategies—such as hedging, indirectness, and impersonal constructions—mitigate face threats and allow criticism to be expressed respectfully. Most editorials follow a consistent rhetorical pattern: they build common ground with readers, identify challenges, and offer constructive solutions, thereby maintaining reader engagement and minimizing defensive reactions. Editorials on politically sensitive topics tend to rely more heavily on negative politeness strategies, whereas less sensitive topics display a more balanced mix of both types.

Implications

The study has theoretical and practical significance. It extends the concept of politeness beyond spoken discourse to written media texts, illustrating how civility functions within institutional communication. For journalism, these findings provide a framework for editorial writers seeking to critique contentious issues without alienating readers. For education, the research highlights the value of teaching media literacy and rhetorical awareness, enabling readers to critically analyze how language shapes public discourse.

Limitations

The study's scope was limited to ten editorials from a single newspaper, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. It focused solely on written discourse, omitting visual, structural, and multimedia elements that may also convey politeness. Moreover, the absence of reader-response data limits conclusions about the strategies' effectiveness. Researcher interpretation may have introduced subjectivity in coding and analysis

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Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies should include a larger and more diverse sample of editorials, conduct multimodal analyses incorporating images and layout, and gather reader feedback to better measure audience reception. Comparative studies across different newspapers or countries, as well as diachronic analyses, could further reveal how politeness strategies evolve over time and across cultural contexts.

Summary

Overall, this study demonstrates that politeness strategies are powerful rhetorical tools in editorial writing, allowing newspapers to deliver critical perspectives while maintaining civility and reader trust. By highlighting this strategic use of language, the research contributes to pragmatics, media discourse analysis, and journalism studies, offering valuable insights for scholars, educators, and media practitioners seeking to promote constructive public discourse in multicultural societies.

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