Gendered Communication in Higher Education: Analyzing Politeness Patterns in a Coeducational Setting

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This paper presents a study conducted at the University of Wah, Pakistan, which investigates the use of politeness markers and strategies by male and female students within the coeducation system. Employing qualitative method, the research analyzes recorded discourses of undergraduate students to explore potential gender differences in linguistic politeness. The study's main focus is to determine whether the coeducation environment influences students' linguistic politeness. Utilizing the politeness theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), the research involved 60 participants using a stratified sampling technique. The comparative analysis of three gender groups – males-only discourse, females-only discourse, and mixed gender group discourse - revealed that the mixed gender group demonstrated a higher usage of politeness markers and employed more strategies to save face for their interlocutors. Based on these findings, the study concludes that coeducation positively impacts linguistic politeness among university students.

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INTRODUCTION

Coeducation is one of the most debated and controversial problems in the world generally and in Pakistan particularly. People argue either in its favor or disfavor with their evidences. Another controversial topic is whether men or women are more polite in the use of language and in their behavior such as, Lakoff' (1975) claims that men are less courteous than women. I tried to relate these core issues in this study. I do not go in favor or disfavor of both these issues. I investigate the politeness markers and strategies used by both the genders at University of Wah where coeducation is in vogue. The investigation is carried out in exclusive gender groups and then in their mixed group. In the study, interactions between males and males, females and females, and

mixed groups (males and females) are compared in terms of linguistic politeness. The study looks into the impact of coeducation on the linguistic politeness of both boys and girls.

Coeducation

Co-education is a type of education system in which girls and boys sit within the same classroom and study together under the equal conditions in the same school facilities. The eighteenth century saw the advent of modern education, the concept of gender coherence arose, and coeducational schools were founded for the first time in Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Russia. Despite intense opposition, this concept gradually spread to other parts of the world (Oxfam, 2006).

Despite the fact that there is a lot of opposition to the co-educational system in Pakistan, girls and boys study together in many places, especially universities. The issue of how to teach a man and a woman has been contentious for a long time. Cultural, political, societal, and religious perspectives have all been related to this problem. In traditional western and eastern countries, the conservative portion of society has generally rejected the concept of co-education. Both male and female social expansion advantage greatly from coeducation. Students in the same institution, whether they are boys or girls, mature socially earlier than students in other schools because they connect and share private experiences. This pattern is diminishing in emerging nations like Pakistan, where women make up more than half of the residents (Mathieu et. al., 2006). There are contradictory statements regarding coeducation.

Coeducation in Pakistan is considered to contradictory to the core principles of Islamic education because many people think it will foster ugliness and depravity in society. When teenagers from both sexes live together in open housing, it is thought that they will become emotional victims (Klasen, 2002).

Coeducation enables men and women to get to know one another better and live in peace. It gives women the chance to demonstrate their undiscovered abilities, potential, and skills in a variety of occupations within the context of Pakistani society's traditional values. Coeducation helps a woman's knowledge grow, enabling her to interact with people and educate her kids more successfully and effectively. Coeducation can be a helpful strategy for fostering mutual understanding and amicable interactions between men and women. This could contribute in fulfilling the aims of creating a generation that is knowledgeable, wise, and rich (Ahmad et. al., 2014).

Linguistic Politeness

Linguistic politeness is using a suitable strategy to exhibit respect through language in order to communicate and build strong interpersonal bonds. The fundamental sociolinguistic work of Brown and Levinson (1987) on the importance of avoiding error in communication by demonstrating deference to other interlocutors is to enlarge through a variety of politeness studies. To keep away from face to face communication failure, they view respectful replies as forms of good manner (Meyerhoff, 2006). The previously mentioned definition makes the assumption that the listener is the primary focus of politeness. In this manner, sensitive

awareness of other people's feelings aids in averting certain possible disputes, achieving improved comprehension, and achieving effective communication.

It makes sense to employ appropriate techniques to ensure that speakers and listeners behave politely during an interaction. In keeping with the idea of politeness, Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest that in order to reduce the likelihood of endangering the face (or public self-image) of others, certain linguistic tactics must be used in language. Each member of society tries to save the face of others. They list bald on-record, negative politeness, positive politeness, and off-record as the four primary strategies. First of all, the bare on record technique is a straightforward approach to communicating ideas in a clear, simple, unambiguous, and direct manner without downplaying the imposition. Positive politeness techniques emphasize the speaker and hearer's friendship and solidarity; the speaker's wants are somewhat comparable to the hearer's wants. The speaker employs in-group indicators, such as a work culture or belief system, to show that both the speaker and the hearer are a part of a single social category. Negative politeness strategies are employed in order to meet the hearer's wants for autonomy and independence from interference in making decisions for themselves. Off-record is a strategy of linguistic for being courteous that depends on inference. This strategy is highly deceptive and involves deviating from social norms in order to suggest a specific recommended course of action. Though it is implied subtly, the speaker is depending on the hearer's ability to understand and interpret what they mean.

Politeness Markers

Language is used to express politeness through the usage of politeness markers (Watts, 2003). Expressions that are introduced to a speech to indicate respect or ask for collaboration are known as politeness markers. 'Please' and 'if you wouldn't mind' are the most frequently used examples. 'The native speakers use patterns to convey politeness. Examples of these structures include committers, intensifiers, courtesy markers (such as "please"), hedges (such as "sort of," "kind of," and "rather"), and other words that are used to lessen the degree of burden placed on the addressee (Watts, 2003).

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

- To examine and compare the usage of politeness markers and strategies employed by male and female students within the higher coeducation system
- To investigate gender differences in the nature and frequency of politeness markers and strategies used by students in mixed-gender (Male-Female) discourse as opposed to single-gender (Male-Male and Female-Female) discourses
- To determine the impact of the coeducation system on the linguistic politeness of students

Research Questions

1. How do male and female students differ in their use of politeness markers and strategies within the coeducation system?
2. What is the impact of the coeducation system on the linguistic politeness of the students?
3. Who make comparatively more politeness markers and strategies, male or female students or mixed gender groups?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender and Linguistic Politeness

Studies on gender and politeness language exploded in the 1970s as a result of movements for women's liberation. Over the past few decades, a large number of studies have looked at how men and women behave politely in social situations.

One of the foremost prominent research topics in sociolinguistics has been the differences in how men and women use politeness language tactics. The conversation about gender-related differences in etiquette is said to have begun with Lakoff's (1975) study on language and women's place. She discovered in her ground-breaking research that female voice sounds are significantly more polite than male speech sounds in linguistic forms like tag-questions and requests. To put it another way, Women are more prone than males to use politeness techniques in conversation. The speaker shouldn't impose his or her viewpoint on others as part of good manners. As it doesn't force the addressees to just accept or believe, a tag-question can be seen of as a kind of polite statement. The employment of tag-questions may be a unique language aspect of politeness variations between men and women.

Holmes (1992) investigated how men and women contributed to formal discussions in TV debates, public conferences, and whole-class discussions in classrooms in New Zealand. In her finding, Holmes concluded that in formal settings like seminars, men speak more and contribute more frequently than women. In less formal settings, women frequently speak more, and their contributions extensively explores the issues. Moreover, females use more tags than males. Women use facilitative positive politeness devices, putting more emphasis on the polite or emotive functions of tags. Conversely, men use more tag-questions to emphasize their uncertainty. In reality, women utilize tag questions to show respect, but men use them to show hesitation in normal situations.

It is clear from the facts presented by Holmes (1988) that girls offer and receive rather more compliments than men. Men and women both employ compliments. According to her research, men may perceive compliments differently than women do, who typically interpret them as positively affective speech acts.

An enormous body of research suggests that women's verbal behavior can be roughly categorized as collaborative or affiliative as opposed to controlling or competitive (Cameron, 1985). Women are interactively facilitative and positive politeness-concerned with (Holmes,

1986). Since women tend to contribute to conversation in another-oriented way, linguists have come to the conclusion that compliments are effective tools for women to use as a kind of civility. As a result, the concept that girls utilize more praises than males is in line with this attitude (Holmes, 1988)

Hobbs (2003), contrary to Lakoff (1975) contends that negative politeness markers are almost as common in male speakers as that of female speakers, corroborated by data from voice mail messages left during a legal crisis. Hobbs gathered 22 instructional messages, 11 from men and 11 from women, to look at the differences in how men and girls use politeness methods. Within the legal voice mail messages, her findings show that the prevalent concept that women are more courteous than males is fake. Only one female speaker employed any of the positive politeness techniques, such as compliments, jokes, reciprocity claims, and other forms of flattery, which were almost exclusively used by male speakers. In their voicemail messages, five of the six male attorneys employed positive politeness, as did the lone female attorney, proving that positive politeness was solely used by attorneys (Hobbs, 2003). The findings largely comprise two categories of politeness: positive and negative politeness. She shows how equally as many negative politeness strategies are employed by men and women in voice mail correspondence. Both male and female lawyers frequently use techniques including saying thanks, taking ownership of mistakes, apologizing, and reducing the severity of requests.

Research on Linguistic Politeness in Pakistan

In Pakistan, linguistic politeness has been studied from various angles by different researchers, such as Yasmeen et.al (2014), Kousar (2015), Khokhar (2017) etc. to name a few.

Yasmeen et al. (2014) investigated Pakistani politicians' use of politeness strategies in recorded Punjab Assembly speeches from 2008 to 2013. In their results, it was highlighted that the most popular politeness strategy to demonstrate control and a relaxed manner of communication was the "bald on record" strategy. Moreover, the politicians paid little attention to formality.

Kousar (2015) examined linguistic politeness in the speech act of apology in relation to social status in society. According to the findings, speakers tended to use negative politeness strategy when speaking to people of both high and low social status. Positive politeness techniques were used to apologize to the addressee, who was of equal social status.

Khokhar (2017) investigated the linguistic politeness in the friendly interactions of wedded couples in the setting of urban Pakistani society through the lenses of 4 models of politeness to find out which model best describes the linguistic politeness phenomena. He concluded that for studying linguistic politeness in interpersonal and intimate relationship phenomenon, an eclectic approach is necessary, only one model cannot encapsulate these phenomena.

The current study investigates the impact of coeducation on linguistic politeness in a higher education setting (university), and compares three groups of students I their use of politeness markers and strategies. Thus this study is unique in its approach and provides a clear gap for the research in hand.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The design of the study was a cross-sectional one and it utilized qualitative method to analyze the impact of coeducation on linguistic politeness within the discourses of three different gender groups, i.e. discourses of males-only students (M-M), females-only students (F-F), and mixed gender group (M-F).

The data were collected from over a hundred students in the form of audio recording. The discourses of the students were recorded in various settings. In the second phase after recording, the discourses of only 60 randomly selected students were transcribed as a sample of adult regular students of University of Wah. They were the students of BS and MA programs. The participants were adult native speakers of various indigenous languages of Pakistan. But they used English as an academic language. The sample consisted of three different gender groups, i.e. twenty (20) students were exclusively girls and their discourses were recorded which made F-F group. Twenty (20) were exclusively boys students and their discourses were recorded and made M-M group, and twenty (20) students, 10 girls and 10 boys made the mixed group of interaction (M-F). They ranged in age from 20 to 24 years.

Data analysis

The researcher uses techniques like searching, gathering, organizing, evaluating, interpreting, and finally coming to a decision within the descriptive part. Politeness markers, politeness strategies were searched within the transcription of the audio-recordings of all the three groups. The intended politeness markers that were focused in the study were of greeting, gratitude, address terms, apology, fillers and hedges as shown in table 1 below:

Table 1:*Politeness Markers*

Greetings	Gratitude	Address Terns	Apology	Fillers	Hedges
A polite word or phrase we say when we meet others such as hi, hello, assalam u alaikum, what's up, morning, how are things etc.	The expression of thankfulness to someone for something, such as 'thank you', 'it was kind of you'. 'It really helped me', 'thanks a lot' etc.	A word, phrase or title used to address someone. The polite address terms save the face of others and they feel respected when being addressed with such terms such as, sir, miss,	The expression of feeling sorry for doing something done wrong to others such as 'sorry', I am sorry', 'pardon me', 'please forgive me', 'I beg your pardon', etc.	Fillers in interaction are considered polite words because they lessen the harshness of expression particularly declining someone's offer, such as 'um', 'well', 'you know', etc.	Words, phrases or clauses that makes an expression less assertive by introducing seemingly uncertainty to it, such as 'a sort of', 'a kind of', 'I think', 'may', 'might' etc.

	miss plus last name, Mr. plus last name, etc.

These politeness markers were classified and analyzed in the discourses of all the three groups and the number and frequency of their usage for each group of students were calculated.

Besides, the four politeness strategies, in line with Brown & Levenson (1987), were also investigated in the discourses of the three groups of participants, i.e. positive politeness, negative politeness, bald-on record strategy and off-record strategy. The detail of the strategies are given in the following table 2:

Table 2: *Politeness Strategies*

Positive politeness	Negative politeness	Bald on record	Off record
Positive politeness demonstrates the listener's wish to be appreciated. It also indicates group cooperation and the camaraderie of the two individuals. Positive face is always employed in Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness to lessen threats to the listener's face.	Negative politeness is defined by Brown and Levinson (1987) as a remedial behavior directed towards the listener's negative face. The freedom to act without interference is what the speaker wants. Avoidance is the fundamental foundation of negative politeness.	Bald on Record is the most clear and undeviating strategy of saying something. This strategy does not lessen threats to the listener's "face". This is carried out without remedial behavior. Speakers employ direct speech acts in their interactions.	Off Record is indirect strategy. This attempts to defuse some of the tension and prevent a direct face-threatening act (FTA).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The audial recorded data were transcribed and analyzed for using different politeness markers and politeness strategies in different speech events.

Politeness Markers

This section contains the students' politeness expressions in the form of politeness markers utilized in their conversation when they were in university education system. Greetings, gratitude, address terms, apologies, fillers, and hedges were assessed as politeness markers used by all the three groups of students.

Politeness markers are words to show regard to the addressee and to demand a cooperative conduct. The word 'please' is the most common politeness marker in English, although there are others, such as 'if you wouldn't/don't mind' and queries that are tagged with the modal verb 'will/would' after an imperative structure (Close the door, will you/would you?)

The researcher recorded the discourse of male university students when they were interacting with one another. The data was transcribed and then the patterns of politeness were sorted out in their discourse. The politeness markers they used in their interaction were highlighted and counted in different perspectives such as greetings, thanking, using address terms, making apology, using fillers, and hedges. The study divided the sample into three groups for the sake of comparison, i.e. male-only group (M-M), female-only group (F-F), and mixed gender group (M-F). In findings, the number of politeness markers used by male-only students group (M-M) was 90 in total, and that of female-only group of students (F-F) was 104, while that of the mixed gender group of students (M-F) was 140. The findings indicate that this group used more politeness markers in their discourse. In other words, we can say that the linguistic behavior of female students towards each other is more polite than that of the male students of the university. In other words, we can say that the linguistic behavior of mixed gender group of students (M-F) towards each other is more polite than those of the male-only students (M-M) and of female-only students (M-M) of the university.

The Comparison of Politeness Markers Used by the Three Groups

After the analysis of the politeness markers used in discourses of the individual groups, the researcher compared the all the three groups in relation to their use of politeness markers and tried to find out which group among the three used comparatively more politeness markers and which group used comparatively less number of politeness markers so that on the basis of frequency rates some conclusions to be reached at.

In the findings of the study, it was observed that the most linguistically polite group turned out to be mixed gender group (M-F) with the overall usage of politeness markers of 140 and made a frequency of 41.9 %. The details of comparison of the groups in using politeness markers are given in the following table 3.

Table 3: *The comparative frequencies of politeness markers used by the three groups*

Group	Greetings	Gratitude	Address Terms	Apology	Fillers	Hedges	Total	%
M-M	15	4	17	4	30	20	90	26.9
F-F	19	5	19	6	32	23	104	31.2
M-F	23	6	23	8	43	37	140	41.9
Total	57	15	59	18	105	80	334	

It is evident from the results of the table that the linguistically polite group among the three is mixed gender group (M-F) with 140 politeness markers (41.9%) in their discourses. The second one is female-only (F-F) group with 104 politeness markers (31.2 %). And the lowest group in using politeness markers is male-only group (M-M) of students (M-M) with only 90 politeness markers (26.9 %).

Politeness strategies

After analyzing politeness markers, the researcher analyzed the politeness strategies adopted by the three groups of students of the university. Four types of strategies were found in the results and were highlighted, i.e. positive politeness strategies, negative politeness strategies, bald on record strategies and off record strategies in the transcription of the interview and note-taking.

Positive politeness strategies place a strong emphasis on kindness in an effort to avoid offending. Using humor, nick names, honorifics, tag questions, particular discourse markers (please), and in-group slang and jargon are a few examples of these strategies.

By demonstrating deference, negative politeness strategies aim to avoid offending anyone. These strategies consist of speculating or questioning, hedging, and presenting opposing viewpoints as opinions.

Bald on record strategy is the most direct, clear way of saying something without any minimization of the threat towards the listener's face.

Off-record strategies are the ones in which something is said indirectly and in a roundabout way to save the listener's face.

The results showed that the number of politeness strategies males-only group of students (M-M) It is evident from the table that out of 52 strategies, the M-M group used 20 bald on record strategies which is a very high number in discourse and bald on record strategies are against the norm of politeness because it does not minimize threat to someone's face. It is an indication that the male students of university within the male group are very direct and don't care for the politeness. The number of politeness strategies in discourses of females-only group (F-F) was 55 in total. They used 16 positive politeness strategies, 19 negative politeness strategies, 9 bald on strategies and 11 off-record strategies.

The number of politeness strategies in mixed gender group (M-F) discourse was 56 in total. They used 25 positive politeness strategies, 7 negative politeness strategies, 3 bald on strategies and 21 off-record strategies.

It means that out of 56 strategies, the mixed gender group (M-F) used 25 positive strategies which is a very high number in discourse and 21 off-record strategies. These two strategies are the hallmark of linguistic politeness. This group of students represent coeducation in the university. This indicates that the male and female students in the presence of opposite sex try to remain polite and become careful.

The comparison of politeness strategies used by the three groups

After the analysis of the politeness strategies used in discourses of the individual groups, the researcher compared the all the three groups in relation to their use of politeness strategies and tried to find out which group among the three used comparatively more politeness strategies and which group used comparatively less number of politeness strategies so that on the basis of frequency rates some conclusions to be reached at.

In the findings of the study, it was highlighted that the most linguistically polite group turned out to be mixed gender group (M-F) with the overall usage of politeness strategies of 56 and made a frequency of 34.5%. The details of comparison of the groups in using politeness strategies are given in the following table 4 below:

Table 4: *The comparative frequencies of politeness strategies used by the three groups*

Group	Positive	Negative	Bald on	Off record	. Total	%
M-M	13	11	20	7	51	31.49
F-F	16	19	9	11	55	33.95
M-F	25	7	3	21	56	34.56
Total	54	37	32	39	162	

It is evident from the results of the table that the linguistically polite group among the three is mixed gender group (M-F) with a percentage of 34.5 in using politeness strategies particularly using positive politeness strategies and avoiding bald on strategies. The second one is females-only group (F-F) with 55 politeness strategies (33.9%). And the lowest group in using politeness strategies is males-only group (M-M) with 31.48%. Besides, M-M group has the lowest positive strategies and the highest bald on strategies.

Overall, the findings indicate that the three groups differ in how they employ various politeness techniques. The F-F group leans toward negative politeness strategies, the M-F group employs a comparatively higher number of positive and off-record strategies, and the M-M group appears to use more Bald on-record strategies. These findings demonstrate that, in comparison to the other two groups, the M-F (Mixed Gender) group uses politeness markers and strategies more frequently.

CONCLUSION

The study investigated the linguistic politeness in discourses of all the three groups. Their discourses were recorded and some of the important extract from their discourse were noted in

transcription process. The researchers analyzed the transcriptions of the discourses of the three groups in the light of the theory of Brown and Levenson (1987) for the politeness markers and politeness strategies. In the findings, the nature and use of politeness markers and politeness strategies was found to be variegated. The most linguistically polite group turned out to be the mixed gender group which used most politeness markers and most politeness strategies. Both the male and female students surprisingly exhibited linguistic politeness in the presence of the opposite sex, in spite of the fact that the selfsame males and females students in their in-groups, i.e. (M-M) and (F-F) showed comparatively less polite linguistic behaviors. From the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that whatever the underlying reasons might be, coeducation has a positive impact on the linguistic politeness of the students.

Implications of the study

The study is significantly important for the mixed gender education and other comparable settings such as business forms and industrial organizations as the results indicate that both the genders remain polite and use politeness markers and strategies to save the faces of others. For whatever reason the students or professionals try to remain polite in the presence of the opposite sex. That's why it is implicated that if an organization desires to maintain disciplined and make their organization impressive and polite, they need to hire employees of both the sexes. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on linguistic politeness theories, particularly within the context of coeducation in Pakistani universities.

Suggestions for Future Research

Further research is needed to investigate the underlying reasons for being polite in the presence of opposite sex whether they are cultural, religious or any other reasons.

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