



A Thematic Analysis of Dawn News Articles concerning Brown and Levinson's Theory of Politeness

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ABSTRACT

Politeness methods in media discourse have been studied, but their significance in mediating security reporting, diplomatic background, and government policy critiques—especially in politically constrained environments—has not. Linguistic politeness studies rarely examine how journalists handle face-threatening acts (FTAs) while maintaining institutional legitimacy. This study compares Dawn newspaper's diplomatic, policy, and security coverage of Pakistan's security issues, diplomatic relations, and government policies to see how it uses civility to mitigate FTAs and save face. A qualitative thematic analysis of nine Dawn articles using Brown and Levinson's politeness theory to discover hedging, third-party attribution, and metaphorical abstraction. Dawn actively depersonalises state failure critiques with passive voice and systemic framing and promotes solidarity with inclusive language. Indirect criticism via metaphors and expert testimonials reduces direct FTAs. While maintaining institutional legitimacy, this method may dilute accountability. The findings imply media in limited democracies can balance critique and survival with politeness, providing a paradigm for responsible journalism under authoritarian constraints. Politeness techniques, face-threatening acts (FTAs), face-saving, negative and positive politeness, bald-on-record and bald-off-record, media discourse, Pakistan, Dawn newspaper.

INTRODUCTION

Media is essential for socio-political concord by providing balanced and reliable information. Print media frequently encounters difficulties in balancing state agencies and influencing public perception, particularly in nations experiencing security challenges, deteriorated diplomatic relations, and unstable government policies. Despite the proliferation of media platforms, they do not operate with genuine freedom (Nabi et al., 2023). Dawn Newspaper is a venerable and esteemed English-language publication in Pakistan that employs linguistic tactics judiciously in addressing delicate matters; nevertheless, other newspapers such as The Nation, The Observer, and Express Tribune also significantly contribute to national discourse (Sial, 2021). This study aims to analyse how the linguistic choices in media, as informed by Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework, address national and international issues, particularly in the realms of security, diplomacy, and government policies, while also mitigating face-threatening acts (FTAs).

Language is inherently biased and serves as a tool for manoeuvring power dynamics within media discourses (Fairclough, 1995). Consequently, the press frequently employs indirect language, mitigation strategies, and hedging to circumvent direct confrontation with state officials. The term "digital authoritarianism" has recently become part of our vocabulary (Matthews & Tsagaroulis, 2020) and may be subject to censorship (Wodak, 2001). Dawn newspaper has effectively covered security operations, diplomatic rivalries, and governmental policy issues pertaining to diplomatic alliances, whether amicable or adversarial, at both regional and international levels. It reports on armed forces' counterterrorism efforts while mitigating anti-state narratives (Hashmi, 2021). Nonetheless, Brown and Levinson's "Politeness" framework offers a perspective to analyse these strategic linguistic selections. Politeness strategies, including Bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and Bald off record, highlight explicit criticism, collective welfare, respect for autonomy, and indirect language use, respectively (Brown & Levinson, 1984). These strategies ultimately serve to safeguard the addressee's self-image, which may otherwise be threatened (Yule, 2014). Within the realm of media, the interlocutors include the government, foreign nations, and the public, whereas politeness methods facilitate the navigation of power dynamics and socio-political ideals (Watts, 2003). Writers frequently utilise politeness methods, mindful of public views, to cultivate a sense of collective identity. This study addresses a neglected area that connects media discourses with politeness techniques within the South Asian environment, contrasting with previous research that mostly examined these strategies in Western settings (Clayman, 1992; Blum-Kulka, 1987). Additionally, the majority of Brown and Levinson's Politeness theory is situated within the setting of face-to-face interaction research (Leech, 2014) or utilised to investigate interpersonal communication (Culpeper, 2011). Pakistan exhibits strained civil-military ties; geopolitically precarious partnerships provide a new perspective for examining civility methods. This study substantially enhances the Politeness theoretical framework by applying it to security-related matters and examining diplomatic interactions, providing practical insights for media and government personnel in addressing sensitive communication (Nabi et al., 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research piece aims to perform a thematic analysis of politeness methods in stories concerning security issues, diplomatic relations, and government policies in the Dawn newspaper. This research intends to utilise the theoretical framework of Brown and Levinson to analyse the aforementioned themes.

This review examines research articles published between 2016 and 2024 that address politeness strategies concerning security issues and diplomatic relations, aimed at supporting the incumbent government. It also explores the use of euphemism as a mitigation strategy to

circumvent direct criticism of government actions, whether pertaining to state policies, security concerns, or sensitive governmental initiatives. The review, which has dominated nine years of investigations, offers a thorough framework for analysing issues in contemporary research. It facilitates the analysis of news stories using a balanced framework grounded in politeness theory, particularly for delicate topics such as security, diplomatic relations, and governmental policy. While much of the current research examines politeness within security and ideological frameworks, there remains a deficiency in the analysis of South Asian English language print media regarding security-related matters, diplomatic relations, and governmental policy issues, particularly in the context of Pakistan.

In a recent study, Hosseinpur and Hosseini (2023) examined politeness methods in the coverage of the Iranian Nuclear Deal by Iranian and American newspapers. This study examined societal disparities among states from an individualistic and collectivistic perspective. The study contends that inter-state conflicts can be mitigated by the effective application of politeness tactics. This study aims to examine the role of Brown and Levinson's politeness tactics in fostering harmonious diplomatic relations. Corpus-based data was gathered and examined using a quantitative design, restricting it just to the JCPOA. Additionally, the Chi-square test was employed for frequency comparison. Four categories of politeness tactics are employed to examine Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness, Bald-on-Record, and Off-Record politeness strategies. Findings indicate that positive politeness methods surpassed hedges in the Tehran newspaper. The New York Times employed negative politeness methods more frequently than good politeness strategies. Confidential strategies reveal the USA's unwavering conduct, portraying Iran as a betrayer. This study emphasises the significance of good politeness tactics in managing inter-state contentious relations.

Nasuli et al. (2022) contend that politeness strategies significantly impact political disputes, wherein language strategically shapes speech. This study examines verbal and nonverbal politeness skills in presidential debates. The rhetorical methods illustrate variations in the application of communication skills such as confrontation and collaboration with adversaries. This article addresses the strategic gap of impoliteness in presidential rhetoric. The triangulation approach is employed in qualitative discourse analysis to investigate verbal and non-verbal politeness methods within the theoretical frameworks of Brown and McNeill. The data was obtained using video transcriptions, and six debates were analysed to capture verbal and nonverbal information. Brown and Levinson's politeness theory identifies face-threatening acts, whereas McNeill's paradigm analyses nonverbal expressions. The data indicate that Trump employed direct allegations, which are more face-threatening, whereas Joe Biden utilised mitigation methods. This study demonstrates that face-threatening and aggressive communication is favoured over polite discourse in political contexts, highlighting the intricate dynamics of language within political discourse.

Qanwal et al. (2023) assert that language is instrumental in shaping worldviews. This article centres on the Pakistani publication "The Nation". The essays analyse religious and political ideologies via politeness theory. Two articles are selected for the qualitative examination of deictic signals and politeness tactics. An examination of a religio-political belief system is conducted through the lens of in-group and out-group techniques and assumptions. Critical discourse analysis is employed to develop and analyse political narratives inside publications. An eclectic model is employed to identify linguistic manipulation in news items. To validate facts from both theoretical frameworks The triangulation method is employed. The research contends that "The Nation" newspaper mostly use positive politeness methods to connect its readership with pro-Islamic and political ideologies. Furthermore, it indicates that "The Nation" presents an inflated depiction of political narratives. This analysis indicates that 'The Nation' utilises balanced politeness methods that mitigate the potential for misinterpretation by

readers.

Arshad et al. (2023) examined the cross-cultural differences in politeness strategies within newspapers. They mostly analyse euphemistic terms in Saraiki and Punjabi publications. Additionally, it emphasises cross-cultural parallelism between Punjabi and Saraiki values and beliefs, as well as their influence on linguistic choices. The politeness methods in "Daily Bhulekha," Punjabi newspapers, and the Saraiki daily "Daily Jhoke Saraiki" are examined within the theoretical framework of Brown and Levinson's theory to compare how language selections are influenced by cultural values. Thirty neutrally selected clauses are extracted from two columns to examine the use of negative and positive politeness tactics in mitigating social preconceptions. Qualitative and thematic analyses are employed for the socio-cultural understanding of these taboos and stereotypes. This study contends that both newspapers circumvent delicate topics using linguistic methods. This study proposes a future research direction focused on the influence of globalisation on the younger generation concerning societal stereotypes.

Prasetyo et al. (2019) contend that news exerts a considerable influence on public and political involvement. The news media frequently exhibits biases in political reporting. This study enhances comprehension of the ways in which online media alters political engagement. The study's major objective is to analyse the politeness methods employed by the 2019 Indonesian presidential campaign teams in online media. The descriptive qualitative approach was chosen for the pragmatic analysis of five articles from MediaIndonesia.com and Kompas.com. The communicative approach is employed for data analysis, such as identifying politeness tactics and interpreting the results according to Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness. This study paper identifies three categories of politeness strategies: persuasive, offensive, and defensive. The persuasive politeness method is employed to preserve a positive face, circumventing face-threatening actions and imposing face threats on adversaries. This study shows that politeness methods arise from cultural norms and influence political discourse. Politeness, akin to negative and positive strategies, is employed to preserve both positive and bad faces, so influencing public opinion.

Nnuta and Chinwe (2017) examined the topic of "verbal hygiene." Verbal conflicts are detrimental and significantly contribute to ethnic differences, resulting in security challenges inside the state. This study asserts that an individual intending to convey a message must comprehend the social context and cognitive frameworks of their interlocutors. The research sought to implicitly examine politeness theory, face-threatening gestures, and their significance in addressing ethnic conflicts. This essay seeks to quantify verbal hygiene within social interactions in political speech. This study advocates for government officials to utilise language to address crises and security concerns, while examining lexical and grammatical characteristics, as well as politeness techniques in inter-ethnic relations in Nigeria, referencing the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson. The analytical data is derived from Nigerian newspapers focussing on verbally unsanitary language. In conjunction with audio recordings of news broadcasts to ensure accurate findings in the research. The triangulation approach is employed to analyse politeness strategies and conversation, including the social and cultural implications of linguistic choices. This research examines two significant questions: the first pertains to lexical and grammatical characteristics, while the second concerns the politeness methods employed to recognise utterances associated with unclean encounters. This essay posits that those who criticise the misconduct of others often employ the most discourteous actions to articulate their disdain as a defence mechanism. This study demonstrates that impoliteness can exacerbate social and ethnic divisions, hence threatening national integrity. The report underscores and recommends that leaders implement mitigation techniques to resolve conflict and foster togetherness.

Ibrahim (2016) explored the application of civility strategies in Nigerian print media. The primary focus of the investigation is the "Daily Trust," a daily that reports on security issues, particularly concerning insurgent groups like as "Boko Haram." Abu Musa has utilised Brown and Levinson's politeness theory and Speech Act theory to examine how headlines constitute face-threatening acts (FTAs) against the government. This research examines how politeness serves as a mechanism for both face-saving and face-threatening actions within the government. Furthermore, does the employment of politeness serve as a means to obscure the government's shortcomings? This study examined numerous newspaper case studies related to governmental inefficiencies, military ineffectiveness, state and citizen insecurity, and territorial threats through the lens of politeness theory analysis. This research finds that the Nigerian newspaper, "Daily Trust," used politeness methods to maintain factual reporting, even when such strategies are face-threatening, hence revealing the government's failure to address threats.

Research Gap

This literature analysis indicates that current studies emphasise South African security issues, security concerns between the West and the Middle East, formal debates among Western inter-state governments, the use of euphemism in cultural contexts, and politeness methods within ideological and theological frameworks. Limited research has concentrated on the thematic analysis of politeness strategies in security-related matters, the function of politeness strategies in addressing diplomatic concerns, and the examination of politeness strategies in news items pertaining to government policies in influencing public perception. Nevertheless, minimal research has been conducted at the primary level, while the majority of investigations in these domains occur only at the tertiary level. This study addresses the gap by analysing politeness techniques in Dawn news articles from Pakistan, focussing on their role in navigating security-related concerns, diplomatic relations, and government policy contexts.

Objectives of the Research

1. To examine Dawn news articles addressing security-related topics utilising politeness tactics
2. To examine the function of politeness methods in managing diplomatic relations with foreign nations.
3. To analyse the influence of politeness methods on public perception of government policy.

Research Questions:

1. What politeness strategies have been employed in Dawn news articles concerning security-related issues?
2. What role have politeness tactics had in managing diplomatic relations?
3. How do politeness methods in Dawn news items address government policy issues?

Approach

Qualitative theme design is employed to examine politeness techniques in Dawn news items concerning security issues, diplomatic relations, and government policies, utilising Brown and Levinson's theory of Politeness as a framework. Nine deliberately selected items from Dawn News are incorporated in the data, primarily addressing security issues (e.g., terrorism), diplomatic connections (e.g., Pak-Afghan, Pak-US ties), and governmental policy matters (e.g., education). The data is examined using inductive thematic analysis in accordance with Brown and Levinson's methodologies, yielding comprehensive findings that connect politeness strategies to Pakistan's distinctive media environment.

Results and Analysis

One.Politeness Strategies in Dawn's Reporting on Security Matters

This examination of Zia Ur Rehman's pieces in Dawn—The Roots of Kurram's Cycles of Bloodshed, Pakistan's Security Situation is Off the Tracks, and Hostage to the Dacoits—illustrates how politeness techniques, as posited by Brown and Levinson, influence critiques of

Pakistan's security issues. Dawn adeptly addresses difficult matters by harmonising journalistic responsibility with diplomatic discretion, while maintaining institutional decorum. We summarise the principal themes connected to the research question: What politeness methods have been employed in Dawn news stories concerning security-related issues?

I.Negative Politeness:

Systematic Framing and Depersonalisation

Dawn's security reporting predominantly employs negative politeness methods, alleviating face-threatening acts (FTAs) by ascribing failures to structural, historical, or external sources instead of direct governmental accountability.

In *The Roots of Kurram's Cycles of Bloodshed*, sectarian violence is shown as a consequence of colonial policies, specifically the "British-era Frontier Crimes Regulation," and ineffective governance, while refraining from attributing direct responsibility to current authorities. *Hostage to the Dacoits* similarly attributes the lawlessness in northern Sindh to "colonial legacies" and "socio-economic disparities," thereby depersonalising critiques of governmental inaction.

Passive constructions disguise agency, exemplified by the statement regarding Pakistan's security situation: "The National Action Plan (NAP)... has not been fully implemented."

The abstract critique of structural difficulties, as opposed to governmental failings, maintains governmental autonomy while employing negative politeness methods and respecting state sovereignty, exemplified by the normalisation strategy in expressions such as "lingering insecurity" (Kurram) and "weak governance" (Dacoits).

Expert testimony and NGO papers articulate critiques outside. For instance, "Hostage to the Dacoits" cites HRCP's Khoso:

The state's hesitance to recognise the situation as a national security concern.

This method separates Dawn from explicit allegations, conforming to negative politeness principles.

Section II.Affirmative Courtesy:

Collective Terminology and Productive Requests

Positive politeness cultivates togetherness, framing security concerns as collective challenges that necessitate collaborative solutions. The author advocates for addressing issues collectively, employing phrases like "our communities" (Kurram) and "Pakistan's security challenges" (*Off the Tracks*) to frame these matters as national concerns necessitating collaboration. This approach invites both the public and stakeholders to participate in the resolution process, as illustrated by the factual assertion in the article "Dacoits," which highlights that "800,000 residents" draw attention to human oppression through marginalisation, thereby urging for collective action.

The writer, in his works, endeavours to maintain equilibrium by proposing measures and initiatives to address national issues collectively, which is the sole viable solution to uphold both governmental and national reputations on the global arena.

Kurram promotes "community-led reconciliation," whilst Dacoits emphasises "technological advancements, such as drones." These proposals reflect positive civility, framing Dawn as an ally in reform rather than an opponent.

Section III.Bald-On-Record Assertions:

Factual Precision and Urgency

Direct criticism or bald assertions highlight the gravity of significant situations by presenting factual data while utilising politeness methods, typically pointing responsibility to a third party. Pakistan's security situation presents alarming statistics:

Terrorism-related fatalities increased by 45% in 2024, totalling 1,081.

In the article "Hostage to the Dacoits," the author presents accurate and unembellished facts critiquing confirmed reporting while refraining from using an angry tone, such as the phrase

"618 honey-trap kidnappings prevented."

Section IV. Non-Disclosure Techniques: Metaphors and Rhetorical Enquiries

Dawn News has underscored the issue of state default without explicitly attributing blame, utilising metaphors and rhetorical devices.

Titles such as "Hostage to the Dacoits" metaphorically critique governmental inefficacy, whilst "security situation is off the tracks" (Off the Tracks) suggests a derailment of governance. The characterisation of the Indus Highway as a "no-go zone after sunset" (Dacoits) implicitly attacks state neglect.

Rhetorical questions are exemplified by the inquiry: "How are these dacoits obtaining such sophisticated weaponry?" (Robbers). This form of critical inquiry encourages the public to contemplate institutional failures without overtly prescribing conclusions.

The state representation in the Dawn news article is preserved through the meticulous use of linguistic choices that critically analyse various dimensions via negative, positive, direct, and indirect politeness strategies. This is achieved by depersonalising, attributing claims and stances to third parties, and encouraging the public and policymakers to undertake collective initiatives to address state issues and promote a sense of solidarity.

Two. The Function of Politeness Strategies in Managing Diplomatic Relations

In this complex age of digital authoritarianism, Dawn News journalism has emerged as a case study to reconcile critique with constraints. This thematic analysis examines Dawn News articles that explore the politeness methods employed by writers in relation to security issues. Diplomatic contacts and governmental policy discussions. Dawn news articles have adeptly employed various strategies, including metaphorical language, attributing claims to third parties, mitigating blame through depersonalisation techniques, and utilising positive strategies to preserve the reputation of authorities. These themes encompass navigating conflicts with neighbours, addressing the educational crisis, managing terrorism, and critiquing governmental policy failures in education, privatisation, and the deteriorating legal conditions of the state. Dawn News employs a balanced methodology by integrating tactics that contextualise events within a historical framework and attributing responsibility to the system rather than individual government leaders.

This thematic analysis of Tauqir Hussain's articles in Dawn—Reluctant to Talk, Unpacking Trump, and Taliban Concern—illustrates how politeness methods, based on Brown and Levinson's theory, facilitate diplomatic discourse in circumstances of unequal power. This study analyses linguistic choices in critiques of India-Pakistan tensions, U.S.-Pakistan ties, and Pakistan-Taliban dynamics, demonstrating how politeness techniques reconcile journalistic accountability with diplomatic caution. We summarise essential issues that pertain to the research question: What role have politeness tactics played in managing diplomatic relations?

I. Negative Politeness: Mitigation and Indirect Criticism

Negative politeness serves as an essential mechanism to alleviate face-threatening acts (FTAs) in discussions about delicate geopolitical matters. In all three essays, Hussain utilises hedging to mitigate criticisms of dominating actors, maintaining diplomatic decorum.

In "Reluctant to Talk," India's disinterest in continuing dialogue with Pakistan is portrayed as a structural default rather than being contextualised within a framework of antagonism.

"India has transcended the South Asian barrier and secured a position at the global high table" (Hussain, Reluctant to Talk).

The author frames India's presumptuous remarks as a paradigm change (e.g., U.S. support), thereby circumventing direct criticism and maintaining equilibrium without provoking conflict. The author employs a depersonalisation technique by utilising qualifiers such as "however vague" in reference to ambiguous US policies, while shifting the burden of judgement onto the reader regarding the Taliban's concerns through the use of rhetorical questions (e.g., "Did our security establishment miss something?"), thereby diminishing the direct criticism of Pakistan's

institutions.

These techniques embody a diplomatic necessity: hedging enables states with lesser power (e.g., Pakistan) to challenge dominating powers (e.g., India, the U.S.) while maintaining communication channels.

Section II. Bald-On-Record Assertions: Factual Context for Credibility

Bald-on-record methods are utilised to highlight essential truths, although their effectiveness is moderated by dependence on substantiated evidence. Hussain use factual precision to substantiate direct criticisms, hence reducing perceived prejudice. For example, in *Reluctant to Talk*, India's abrogation of Kashmir's autonomy is depicted unequivocally:

“India's decision on August 5, 2019, to revoke Kashmir's special constitutional status” (Hussain, *Reluctant to Talk*).

The essay “Taliban Concern” critiques the Taliban's inflexibility by employing Bald on Record techniques, such as direct criticism: “The Taliban lack both the political will and capacity to act against the TTP” (Hussain, *Taliban Concern*).

In *Unpacking Trump*, institutional critiques are based on discernible tendencies (e.g., “Critical governance institutions will yield to his influence”), positioning criticism as systemic rather than individual.

By integrating positions into evidence-based events, Hussain has substantiated the criticism by refraining from accusations of partisanship, which is a crucial approach for maintaining credibility in diplomatic discourse.

Section III. Confidential Strategies: Analogies and External Endorsement

Hussain utilises metaphors and third-party references for implicit criticism, so reducing direct confrontation. The term “South Asian ceiling” critiques India's hegemony in South Asia through metaphor, whereas the parallels in “Unpacking Trump” (e.g., “break some china”) depoliticise the difficult bilateral relations between the U.S. and China.

The author has presented assertions to other entities to substantiate his positions, facilitating the navigation of conflicting claims through depersonalisation. For instance:

According to the *Economist*, “America is wagering on India's inevitable ascent” (Hussain, *Reluctant to Talk*).

The author in the essay “Taliban Concern” elucidates Pakistan's alienation as a component of a larger diplomatic strategy, highlighting the increasing collaboration of regional actors with the Taliban in contrast to Pakistan.

These tactics enable Hussain to critique power inequities while preserving plausible deniability, a fundamental aspect of diplomatic communication.

Section IV. Scholarly Detachment:

Mitigating Critique via Academic Objectivity

Hussain, a former ambassador, adeptly employs diplomatic language, which enhances his academic excellence by skilfully addressing delicate issues through purposeful depersonalisation of arguments. The phrase “need-based and episodic” in “Unpacking Trump” enables the author to convey the information politely, rather than use confrontational terminology to illustrate the state of Pakistan-U.S. relations. A further analysis of the relationships in “Reluctant to Talk” further demonstrates Hussain’s academic rigour through his impartial approach to challenges.

The linguistic choices are more pronounced in “Taliban Concern,” where the decline of institutions is depicted through metaphorical terminology such as “hollowed out” body politic, shifting the blame from the current administration to historical processes. By utilising this strategy, the writer has addressed topics of a conflicting nature by manipulating words through linguistic strategies.

V. Paradoxical Framing: Reconciling Critique and Diplomacy

Paradoxical statements articulate realistic issues; for instance, the writer employs antithesis to mitigate the effects of the United States' indifferent stance towards Pakistan, as evidenced in "Unpacking Trump," where he asserts, "Pakistan may have lost its importance but not its relevance," thereby softening the impact of diminishing U.S. interest. Additionally, "Reluctant to Talk" utilises rhetorical questions (e.g., "Will India's policies backfire?") to affirm that Pakistan will maintain its relevance due to its geopolitical and strategic significance, despite the U.S. losing interest in it.

Hussain similarly exposes the Taliban's lackadaisical approach to problem-solving, asserting that "A weakened Pakistan will enhance the Taliban's leverage," thereby converting criticism into a plea for self-reflection. This framing maintains national dignity while promoting policy reform.

The interplay of language in Hussain's essays facilitates strategic functions, allowing states to manage power disparities without conflict. Negative politeness (hedging, indirectness) and bald-on-record declarations (factual rigour) coexist to balance critique with restraint, while metaphors, third-party validation, and academic detachment depersonalise sensitive analysis. Down news serves as a mediator by maintaining state sovereignty, alleviating face threats, and promoting collaborative activities, all while safeguarding governmental reputation through the implementation of constructive methods that reduce geopolitical tensions.

Three Strategies for Politeness in Mediating Government Policy Issues

This examination of Asim Sajjad Akhtar's pieces in Dawn—The National Question, Education Meltdown, and Privatisation Myth—demonstrates how politeness methods, based on Brown and Levinson's paradigm, facilitate critiques of governmental policy. By reconciling media transparency with diplomatic restraint, these tactics allow Dawn to address controversial matters while maintaining institutional etiquette.

We synthesise essential elements related to the research question: How do politeness methods in Dawn news items influence government policy issues?

I. Mitigation via Indirect Critique and Hedging

Bald on Record is a significant strategy for mitigating face-threatening activities by employing hedging in the context of government-impaired regulations. Akhtar has characterised the failure of government policy as a systemic failure by depersonalising accountability through the use of conditional language and hypothetical framing.

In "The National Question," the government's failure in Baluchistan is shown as a structural malfunction rather than a state fault.

The crisis of hegemony is expected to intensify if repression and resource appropriation persist (Akhtar, The National Question).

The usage of "if" employs conditional language that aids the government in maintaining an autonomous facade by utilising negative politeness methods while critiquing structural tendencies. Similarly, in Education Meltdown, passive formulations such as "funding... has declined... as successive regimes have acceded to neo-liberalization" shift the responsibility for structural failure to global entities like the IMF and World Bank, so obfuscating accountability for politicians. This negative politeness tactic reframes comments as analytical findings instead than partisan accusations.

II. Metaphorical Abstraction and Informal Strategies

Metaphors and idioms facilitate the depoliticisation of crucial topics without direct confrontation with authorities and policymakers. Akhtar encourages the public to reflect on policymakers' activities without directly engaging stakeholders, so liberating himself from the responsibility of interpretation, which cultivates solidarity through common cultural references inherent in informal tactics.

Akhtar has utilised universal comparison to emphasise the duality of the PPP government by adopting the metaphor “running with the hare and hunting with the hounds” (The National Question), which hindered him from identifying specific party individuals and instead portrayed the duality as a systemic failing. In his article “Privatization Myth,” Akhtar metaphorically describes privatisation as a “turbo-charged hybrid regime,” associating this ironic circumstance with academic impartiality while refraining from directly criticising the authorities.

Moreover, in Education Meltdown, the use of metaphors like “education rapidly metamorphoses into a profit-loss enterprise” links education to business and their reforms, critiquing the privatisation of education through hypothetical statements rather than direct condemnation, exemplified by the term metamorphoses. The use of off-record methods in language encourages the public to independently consider policymakers, so shifting the burden of duty onto the media.

III. Illustration and Passive Structures

Exemplification substantiates critiques through concrete instances, generalising complaints while constraining FTAs. By concentrating on particular outcomes, Akhtar circumvents generalisations, adhering to negative politeness.

The systemic authoritarianism in KP is shown by the persecution of ex-MNA Ali Wazir in baseless, fabricated cases, as noted in the article "National Question," which hindered the writer's ability to generalise the viewpoint through factual validation rather than fiction. Furthermore, “Education Meltdown” illustrates the impact of neoliberal policies on education by noting, “visiting faculty members... without pay” and “resorting to daily wage work.” The writer depersonalises responsibility by attributing it to systemic failures rather than individuals, use passive reasoning to shield the government from unfavourable scrutiny, as seen in the remark, “public utilities are being auctioned” in the Privatisation Myth.

IV. Attribution of Responsibility to External Factors

Akhtar assigns responsibility to external entities, portraying conflicting policies as a result of external pressure rather than internal failure, so safeguarding the government's favourable image by suggesting that these issues stem from worldwide sanctions.

In "Privatisation Myth," privatisation is ascribed to IMF dictates.

“Public utilities are being auctioned, a process expedited by IMF loan stipulations” (Akhtar, Privatisation Myth).

By redefining state activity in accordance with external rules, the author emphasises systemic failure rather than prescribing directives to policymakers. Moreover, “Education Meltdown” shifts the blame to “international lending agencies” for their failure to provide funding, redirecting responsibility from the government to global entities.

V. Inclusive Language and Collective Appeals

Positive politeness tactics cultivate a sense of collectivity by establishing solidarity and recognising obstacles as communal issues that require societal support. The author has utilised inclusive pronouns to address these common issues.

Phrases such as “our public universities” (Education Meltdown) and “our rulers” (Privatisation Myth) utilise the collective term “our” to nationalise issues, suggesting that national challenges necessitate collective initiatives to confront and resolve these threats, rather than attributing blame to a specific party for the situation. The article "Privatisation Myth" asserts that "long-suffering ethnic peripheries" demand global justice while condemning suppression, tyranny, and injustice without attributing guilt to stakeholders.

VI. Theoretical Framework and Scholarly Authority

Akhtar has articulated criticism in a professional and scholarly manner by utilising depersonalisation strategies and transferring responsibility and assertions to third parties or global actors, so enhancing the credibility of the writer's positions. In his article "Privatisation

Myth," he asserts that "primary accumulation, an inherently violent process," critiques capitalism via a Marxist lens, and diminishes FTAs through scientific impartiality.

Akhtar's papers illustrate how politeness methods facilitate critiques of government practices by reconciling accountability with constraint. Indirect criticism, metaphorical abstraction, and exemplification mitigate personal accountability, whilst externalisation and inclusive language maintain institutional decorum. Theoretical framing and passive constructions enhance the legitimacy of the analysis, establishing Dawn as a conduit between public responsibility and diplomatic pragmatism. These techniques allow Dawn to manoeuvre through Pakistan's unstable political environment, promoting discussion while maintaining connections to power structures.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Dawn News employs politeness strategies in articles pertaining to policy, security, and diplomacy by incorporating stances on historical events and structural failures, as well as global pressures to act in specific ways, rather than directly criticising the government for state failures. This approach allows Dawn to maintain the government's image by alleviating Face Threatening Acts. Security challenges are emphasised by utilising metaphors and universal analogies within a theoretical framework. The utilisation of inclusive language to advocate for collective action cultivates unity, prompting the public to recognise that national issues are shared concerns that necessitate a unified response rather than assigning blame to one another. By converting antagonistic tales into appeals for systemic introspection, the daily reconciles journalistic integrity with diplomatic pragmatism, maintaining its voice as both critical and credible in Pakistan's tumultuous socio-political landscape.

However, bias resulting from deliberately chosen articles restricts the generalisability of the findings. Future research could employ a mixed-methods approach, extending beyond a single Pakistani English daily to conduct a comparative examination of politeness tactics across many Pakistani English newspapers, incorporating a non-Western politeness paradigm. This research urges media outlets to meticulously employ politeness methods in delicate discussions and prompts stakeholders to acknowledge the media's influence on public perception. The analysis of Dawn news articles underscores how media can address and discuss power irregularities by utilising politeness strategies in an era of digital authoritarianism, offering insights for balancing linguistic choices to hold stakeholders accountable for their actions in authoritarian-leaning contexts.

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