

# Intercultural Pragmatics: An Analysis of the Politeness Strategies Employed in Imran Khan's BBC Interview

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## Abstract

*This study analyzes the politeness strategies employed by John Simpson and Imran Khan during a BBC interview, using Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework. Adopting a qualitative descriptive approach, utterances from the interview transcript were examined, focusing on bald on-record, off-record, positive politeness, and negative politeness strategies. Findings reveal that Imran Khan predominantly used positive politeness strategies, emphasizing solidarity by frequently addressing John Simpson by name and providing justifications. In contrast, John Simpson employed more negative politeness strategies, such as hedging and indirect questioning, to minimize imposition while maintaining journalistic rigor. Both participants also utilized bald on-record strategies during moments of heightened tension, and employed off-record strategies like metaphors and rhetorical questions to soften contentious remarks. The study highlights how professional roles, cultural backgrounds, and political sensitivities shaped their communication choices, offering insights into intercultural pragmatics and media discourse. These findings have practical implications for media professionals, language learners, and researchers.*

**Keywords:** Intercultural Pragmatics, Politeness Strategies, Face-threatening Acts (FTAs), Positive and Negative Politeness; Media Discourse Analysis; Brown and Levinson's Theory.

## Introduction

In today's globalized world, intercultural communication has become increasingly vital. According to the British Council (2013), approximately two billion people are expected to be using or learning English by 2025, emphasizing the need for pragmatic competence across diverse cultural contexts. Studies have shown that over 65% of communication breakdowns in multicultural settings are due to pragmatic failures rather than linguistic inaccuracies (Thomas, 1983). Moreover, research by Spencer-Oatey (2008) highlights that mismanagement of politeness norms accounts for nearly 40% of reported intercultural misunderstandings in professional environments. These statistics underscore the importance of understanding politeness strategies, particularly in high-stakes settings such as media interviews involving participants from different cultural backgrounds.

Politeness in human communication extends far beyond the superficial use of conventional phrases like "please" or "excuse me." As a fundamental aspect of social interaction, politeness encompasses a complex system of linguistic and cultural norms that govern interpersonal relationships (Watts, 2003). In contemporary pragmatics, politeness is understood as a strategic

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communicative practice that reflects sensitivity to others' feelings, social standing, and cultural expectations (Hill et al., 1986; Locher, 2004).

The theoretical foundation of modern politeness studies was significantly advanced by Brown and Levinson's (1987) seminal work, which introduced the concept of "face" as central to understanding politeness phenomena. Drawing upon Goffman's (1967) sociological notion of face, they defined it as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for themselves" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61). This conceptualization has become pivotal in analyzing how speakers navigate potentially face-threatening situations in discourse.

Within this framework, every speech act carries the potential to become a Face Threatening Act (FTA), which may challenge either the speaker's or hearer's positive face (the desire to be approved of) or negative face (the desire for autonomy) (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Culpeper, 2011). As Yule (1996) notes, these threats can manifest through various communicative channels, including verbal content, paralinguistic features, or nonverbal behavior. The management of such threats becomes particularly crucial in intercultural encounters, where participants may operate with different politeness norms and face expectations (Spencer-Oatey, 2008).

Brown and Levinson (1987) identified four primary politeness strategies that speakers employ to mitigate FTAs: 1) bald on-record (direct communication without mitigation), 2) off-record (indirect or ambiguous communication), 3) positive politeness (emphasizing solidarity and common ground), and 4) negative politeness (respecting autonomy and minimizing imposition). These strategies have been widely applied in discourse analysis, though their universal applicability has been debated in cross-cultural studies (Mills, 2003; Ide, 1989).

The current study examines these politeness strategies in an intercultural media context through an analysis of the BBC interview between British journalist John Simpson (JS) and Pakistani ex-Prime Minister Imran Khan (IK). Media interviews represent particularly rich sites for politeness analysis as they involve carefully managed face-work between participants with potentially competing agendas (Clayman & Heritage, 2002). The intercultural dimension adds further complexity, as the interlocutors likely bring different cultural frameworks for interpreting and performing politeness (Kecskes, 2014). This investigation contributes to the growing body of research on intercultural pragmatics by:

- Analyzing how politeness strategies are employed in high-stakes political discourse
- Examining potential cultural influences on strategy selection
- Comparing frequency and implementation of different strategies between interlocutors from different cultural backgrounds

The study builds upon previous work in media discourse analysis (e.g., Hutchby, 2006) and intercultural communication studies (e.g., Scollon & Scollon, 2001), while providing new insights into how political figures manage face concerns in international media contexts.

### Research Objectives

1. To identify and analyze the types of politeness strategies employed by both JS and IK in their BBC interview, using Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework.
2. To quantitatively compare the frequency distribution of these politeness strategies between the interlocutors and qualitatively examine how their strategic choices reflect their respective cultural and professional roles.

### Research Questions

1. How do the politeness strategies (bald on-record, off-record, positive politeness, negative politeness) manifest in the discourse patterns of JS as a British journalist versus IK as a Pakistani political leader during the interview?
2. What significant differences emerge in:

- a. The frequency of specific politeness strategy types used by each speaker?
- b. The contextual appropriateness and effectiveness of their chosen strategies within this intercultural media setting?

### Significance of the Study

This study holds significant value for both theoretical and practical domains of linguistic research. Theoretically, it enhances our understanding of politeness strategies in intercultural communication, specifically within media discourse, by applying Brown and Levinson's framework to analyze the interaction between a British journalist and a Pakistani political leader. Practically, the findings offer valuable insights for English language teachers and learners, highlighting how politeness operates in real-world, high-stakes communication and providing concrete examples for teaching pragmatic competence. Additionally, the study benefits media professionals by illustrating how politeness strategies influence interview dynamics, while also serving as a resource for future research in intercultural pragmatics and political communication. By bridging theory and practice, this research contributes to broader discussions on linguistic politeness, cross-cultural communication, and media discourse.

### Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design, grounded in cross-cultural pragmatics, to explore the use of politeness strategies in a high-profile media interaction—specifically, the BBC interview between IK and JS. As qualitative research is primarily descriptive rather than predictive in nature (Creswell, 2014), this study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of how politeness is linguistically constructed and culturally mediated in the discourse of political communication. The focus is on examining the verbal strategies used by both interlocutors, representing distinct cultural and communicative frameworks, to manage face, convey respect, and navigate power dynamics. Through this descriptive approach, the study seeks to uncover patterns of politeness that reflect broader cultural values and interactional norms.

### Data Collection Sources

Keeping in view the purpose of the present study, data was purposively collected from a BBC News interview available on YouTube. The selected interview, dated September 22, 2021, was accessed through the following link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-BgpfYb\\_uU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-BgpfYb_uU). Initially, the video was watched and the dialogues between IK and JS were transcribed. Subsequently, the video was reviewed a second time to closely observe the speakers' gestures and tone while delivering specific utterances. Finally, the accuracy of the transcribed data was cross-verified using a secondary source from the website <https://www.reddit.com/r/pakistan/> to minimize the possibility of transcription errors.

### Data Analysis Procedure

For analysis, Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness strategies were identified from the selected script. The four strategies: Bald on Record, Bald Off Record, Positive Politeness and Negative Politeness have been identified and interpreted in the analysis. The number of employed strategies has been counted to check the frequency and given in the tables.

### Bald On-Record

The purpose of bald on-record strategies is not reducing the threat to the listener's face. These strategies are used in a straight line to address the other individual to express his/her needs. Employing imperative forms is an instance of bald on-record as it can be observed in the expression "give me the water". Employing mitigating devices as 'please' in the expression "please give me water" can moderate the command. Moreover, Culpeper (1996) stated that this

politeness strategy is usually employed when there is very small threat to the hearer's face (e.g., in expressions like sit down and come in) or in a condition when the orator is more authoritative than the listener as in the communication between a teacher and student when teacher says: stop talking.

**Table 1: Bald on-Record Strategies**

| Sr No | Excerpt                                                                                                                          |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | <b>JS:</b> "But the Taliban are really a Pakistani creation, aren't they?"                                                       |
| 2     | <b>IK:</b> "Absolutely not."                                                                                                     |
| 3     | <b>IK:</b> "No, John. I'm talking about when Taliban took over in 96"                                                            |
| 4     | <b>JS:</b> "Another extremist, another Islamic extremist?"                                                                       |
| 5     | <b>IK:</b> "John, this is just not true. First of all, you must understand that Afghanistan has a history."                      |
| 6     | <b>JS:</b> "You must be really embarrassed by that now, aren't you?"                                                             |
| 7     | <b>JS:</b> "So you're approving the way the Taliban are operating?"                                                              |
| 8     | <b>IK:</b> "No, I'm approving of what they have said."                                                                           |
| 9     | <b>IK:</b> "John, look, you must know the situation and you do know because you know this part of the world better than others." |

There are 9 bald on record strategies that have been used in this interview: 4 by Jhon Simpson and 5 by IK. While during the interview the very face threatening act in the form of bald on record strategy has been used in the first excerpt of the table no 1 by JS when he directly blamed Pakistan for the creation of Taliban without any mitigating inserted technique, although he added tag question but still it was a direct attack. In response to this, IK responded in the same strategy by saying "absolutely not" which is a direct statement and at the same time a face threatening act for the hearer. In response to the clarification of IK that Taliban is not the product of Pakistan but Pakistan only supported the Gul Badin Hikmatyar, Jhon Simpson directly employed another face threatening act by stating him Islamic terrorist. It is a bald on Record strategy which he employed without caring the presence and the feelings of the Islamic personality sitting in front of him. In the excerpt no 5, again IK has used the bald on Record strategy because when Jhon Simpson was continuously blaming Pakistan for what happened in Afghanistan was due to the Pakistan support, then IK tried to insert softness by his tone and by calling his name Jhon but at the same time by inserting the term 'must' he directly forced him to accept his point and negated his point that Pakistan is responsible for all this. It is a face threatening act for Jhon Simpson that he must need to understand the history of Afghanistan before starting blame game, although the tone of IK was polite. In another excerpt no 6 and 7 Jhon Simpson has used other direct face threatening act towards IK by stating him that he is embarrassed now over the current condition or not. On the other hand, when IK tried to give clarification about the rule of Islam from the perspective of Taliban because he was directly blaming Islam and Muslims in the name of Taliban, he attacked IK by asking that is he approving the way of government of Taliban. It was a direct face threatening act for IK. In example 8 and 9 IK responded to him directly by stating "No" and then he gave clarification of his statement. And finally, he tried to mitigate the bald on record strategy by calling his name and directly stating to him that he needs to understand the situation. On the whole, both members wholeheartedly employed bald on record strategies during the interview.

### Off Record Strategies

Brown and Levinson (1987) have explained Off Record Strategies as the use of indirect language for the purpose of removing potential effect of imposing from the speaker.

**Table 2: Off Record Strategies**

| Sr no | Strategy                   | Excerpt                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | <b>Presupposition</b>      | JS: "I suppose you're quite glad about what's happened in Afghanistan."                                                                                                              |
| 2     | <b>Overgeneralizing</b>    | IK: "No, John."                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 3     | <b>Metaphor</b>            | IK: "Taliban were a creation of the environment."<br>JS: "Afghanistan had thrown off the shackles of slavery."<br>IK "My biggest worry right now is the looming humanitarian crisis" |
| 4     | <b>Being ironic</b>        | JS: "Prime Minister I suppose you're quite glad about what's happened in Afghanistan."                                                                                               |
| 5     | <b>Rhetorical question</b> | IK: "And, why did the Taliban emerge?"<br>IK: "so what what did US hope to achieve?"                                                                                                 |

Out of fifteen Off Record strategies only 5 strategies have been employed by both speakers. However, JS employed presupposition, metaphor and irony and IK employed overgeneralizing, metaphor and rhetorical questions. The very first utterance of Jhon Simpson was an ironic statement for IK as he assumed that it was Pakistanis involved in Afghanistan and now, they are happy over the withdrawal of US troops. At the same time, he also presupposes the happiness of Muslims that is why he asked about it. Overgeneralizing was another Off Record strategy employed by IK throughout the Interview. When Jhon tried to be harsh, ironic and direct, every time IK called his name while responding him by mitigating the severity of his upcoming statement. Two metaphors have been used by IK "Creation of Environment" and "Looming humanitarian crisis". The first is indicating that Taliban has not been created by Pakistan but by the situation and environment, indirectly he wants to say that they came in to being response to the situation created by US. On the other hand, the consequences of Afghan War are being faced by Pakistan in the form of huge refugees. Jhon Simpson used the metaphor; "shackles of slavery" to satirical tell IK that now troops are not there therefore, Afghanis are free now. The last Off record strategy was rhetorical question which was employed by IK while responding to Jhon Simpson.

### **Positive Politeness Strategies**

In the selected discourse, "dialogue between JS (JS) and IK (IK)", the following positive politeness strategies have been used by the interlocutors to ensure that the threat to the positive face of the hearer has been reduced.

*JS: "PM I...you are quite glad..... Afghanistan. I .....very nicely, doesn't it?"*

JS has used the strategy of Exaggerating by using Intensifying modifiers, i.e., quiet and very to ensure face saving act. He has also used the strategy of tag questions, i.e., doesn't it to intensify his interest to the listener, i.e., IK to feel he is more important as a communication partner and to attend to his interests as well.

*IK: "John, I'm glad.....in 1989."*

IK has used the strategy of agreement, i.e., yes, I am glad to approve what JS has stated to be co-operative in the communication.

*IK: "John, ..... Pakistan."*

IK has used the strategy of giving reasons in order to lessen the FTAs. He has given certain reasons to JS why Pakistan feels happy and tried to influence him to show his agreement with Khan on the issue which is being discussed.

Khan has also used the strategy of exaggerating by using the adjective peaceful takeover. Moreover, he has also employed the strategy of noticing and attending by giving him an implied compliment, i.e., it has been a peaceful takeover.

*JS:* But the..... aren't they?

Sampson employs the positive politeness strategy of exaggeration by using the intensifying modifiers really. In addition, to show his enhanced interest to his interlocutor (IK), he uses the strategy of tag questioning, doesn't they? The application of both the strategies serves to ensure the face-saving act (FSA) and to avoid the face threatening act (FTA).

*IK:* "No, John, Shah Masoud."

IK applies the positive politeness strategy of in-group identity markers by calling him by his surname John and keep the atmosphere friendly and to be co-operative. Likewise, he practices the strategy of exaggerating via using the intensifying modifiers actually.

*JS:* "Another .....extremist?"

JS asks questions to present himself more politely while communicating with Khan. Through the use of questions, he tries to save the face of the addressee which is a positive politeness strategy.

*IK:* "We.....huge mistakes.....that time."

IK avail himself of the strategy of exaggerating through the use of intensifying adjectives, i.e., huge mistake. He also generalizes his statements to ensure that the face of the addressee is saved. Moreover, he uses the strategy of telling the reasons to convince his addressee of his point of view and to validate his point of view.

*IK:* "JS, this.... military action."

IK asks questions and tells JS a number of reasons to convince him why he does not agree with him on the issue of Taliban. Asking for and telling the reasons is another positive politeness strategy used by the interlocutors to maintain co-operation and remain polite during communication.

*JS:* "When.... really.... aren't you?"

JS applies the strategies of exaggeration and using question tags to ensure that the face of the addressee has been saved. The use of question tags manifests the interest of JS towards IK.

*IK:* "First of.... intended to."

IK avail himself of different politeness strategies while responding JS. They include attending to the hearer and giving reasons for his stance. He also makes grounds and tries to convince JS why is not in agreement with his point of view.

*JS:* "No, I .... now?"

JS uses the intensifying modifiers really and good in succession for the sake of exaggeration which is a positive politeness strategy. This is done to save the face of the addressee.

*IK:* "John .... encouraging statements."

IK exercised the strategy of using in-group identity markers to show his intimacy towards the interlocutor JS. He also uses intensifiers encouraging statements. In addition, he also gives a number of reasons to JS why he standby his stance regarding Taliban. He shows his disagreement via his opinions to ensure the face-saving act in communication and to consider his addressee.

*IK:* "No, .... stability."

IK expresses his Pessimism which is a positive politeness strategy when he presents his hopes for stability and peace in Afghanistan.

*IK:* "You, .... implement them."

The use of intensifying modifiers can be seen consistently in IK utterances. He uses adjectives great and huge and the adverb actually to ensure that the face of the hearer is saved.

*JS:* "I must.....Afghans."

JS tries to give reasons in favour of his stance and uses intensifiers pretty terribly to exaggerate and to ensure face saving.

*IK:* "John .... beginning."

IK uses in-group identity markers by calling him through his name John. He also employs intensifying modifiers quiet tense, biggest worry, looming humanitarian crisis, and huge crisis. These strategies are employed to ensure that the face of the addressee is saved.

*IK:* "His main.... Pakistan"

In response to JS question, IK uses the strategy of giving reasons which is a positive strategy of politeness. This strategy mitigates the harsh response of the interlocutors and presents them as co-operative in the process of communication.

*IK:* "John, look, .... Pakistan."

IK continuously uses the in-group identity markers to establish common grounds and to stay co-operative and polite. He tries to ensure that the face of his addressee has been saved. He gives copious reasons to justify his claim.

*JS:* "And yet..... benefitting."

Simpson uses intensifying modifiers "big and completely" for exaggeration. He also gives his views contrary to Khan via his own opinions.

*IK:* "John, President Ghani."

IK employs the markers of in-group identity by calling his addressee by his own name John. He also tries to establish common grounds with JS by stating that they were the partners in the peace dialogue of Afghanistan. He produces certain logical reasons to convince JS of his point of view and to avoid imposition. All these strategies serve to ensure FSAs.

*IK:* "People, government."

IK gives reasons to JS on the issue of Afghanistan and ask JS that the recognition was not an individual decision of the IK led government, but rather it was done through mutual consensus and dialogue. IK gives reasons time and again to stay polite and co-operative during communication.

*JS:* "The fact .....into power?"

JS once again uses the strategy of questioning to increase the interest to the hearer IK. The purpose of the strategy is to save the face of the addressee.

*IK:* "So far..... represented."

IK has used the strategy of seeking agreement. He has also used hedges to soften the utterances and make them less offensive. Both strategies serve as FSAs.

*JS:* "But .....should be?"

JS continuously asks questions to attend to the hearer's needs and interests and also to enhance the interest. He does so to stay communicatively polite and co-operative.

*IK:* "I think.....know."

IK uses the in-group identity markers quite often to guarantee FSAs and to avoid FTAs. He also makes use of Optimism with words such as "we hope...."

*IK:* "We have.....them."

IK practice the in-group usage of addresses and establishes common grounds with JS to lessen the FTAs and enhance the face-saving act of the hearer.

**Table 3: Summary of Positive Politeness Strategies**

| Sr No | Name of Strategy                                   | Frequency |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 01    | Noticing and attending to the hearer               | 08        |
| 02    | Exaggeration via the use of intensifying modifiers | 10        |
| 03    | Intensifying interest to the hearer                | 08        |
| 04    | In-group identity markers                          | 06        |
| 05    | Seeking agreement                                  | 04        |
| 06    | Avoiding disagreement                              | 02        |
| 07    | Showing common grounds                             | 03        |
| 08    | Showing concern for the hearer wants               | 03        |
| 09    | Being optimistic                                   | 01        |
| 10    | Include both the speaker and the hearer            | 01        |
| 11    | Telling or asking for reasons                      | 14        |

Keeping in view of the above analysis and discussion, IK has copiously made the use of the intensifying modifiers. This strategy has been used 10 times by both the interlocutors, but the frequency of IK was 07 out of 10. It means he used this strategy more than JS. IK also used the strategy of noticing and attending more than JS. Whereas JS used this strategy 03 times, IK employed it 05 times. All the 06 in-group identity markers have been used by IK. JS did not make use of it at all. Khan also established common ground 03 times whereas JS did not use this strategy. Through the discourse, most of the positive politeness strategies have been employed by IK. Although JS also practiced the positive politeness strategies, he used it less in number as compared to Khan.

### Negative Politeness Strategies

In this discourse which is a “dialogue between JS (JS) and IK (IK)”, the following negative politeness strategies are employed by the communicators to make sure that no imposition has been laid down on the hearer.

*JS: “I suppose ..... Afghanistan.”*

JS has employed the strategy of “hedging” that is, “I suppose” in the very beginning of the communication to weaken and attenuate the hidden strength of the utterance, and to mitigate the implicit assumptions in the Face Threatening Act (FTA).

*IK: “Taliban..... environment.”*

In response to JS argument, IK uses the strategy of generalizing. IK does not directly address and attack JS and his country but rather indirectly put forward his point of view by giving certain reasons for his claim. This negative politeness strategy serves as mitigating agent in communication and ensures co-operation and politeness.

*JS: “Sorry.... excuse me.....experienced?”*

JS makes use of the negative politeness strategies minimizing the imposition and hedges, i.e., sorry, excuse me to avoid the FTAs. By applying the former strategy, the interlocutor (speaker) suggests that the deep-rooted or intrinsic seriousness of the act of imposition is not great; whereas, by practicing the later strategy the speaker tries to make the propositional content soften and attenuate its potential strength.

*JS: “But now.... approve of.”*

JS disagrees with IK indirectly and comes up with his own opinions so as to mitigate the intensity of the utterances.

*IK: “JS, this.... military action.”*

IK also shows his disagreement by juxtaposing it with politeness. He does so by expressing his own opinions.

JS: “No, I .... now?”

JS put into practice the strategy of asking IK different questions to minimize the imposition. He does so to ensure that the threat to the face of his addressee has been minimized.

JS: “So, .... operating?”

JS unceasingly employs the strategy of asking questions to avoid being offensive and to minimize the imposition. He tries to mitigate the threat to the face of his addressee which is a negative politeness strategy.

IK: “No, .... stability.”

IK has juxtaposed his point of view in pessimism. He does so via using certain phrases like I am afraid, and I cannot predict. He uses this strategy to ensure that the threat to the face of the hearer has been minimized.

JS: “And you, .... properly?”

JS repeatedly uses the negative politeness strategy of asking questions to minimize the imposition and to attend to his hearer interests. He does so to avoid FTAs.

IK: “You, .... implement them.”

IK practiced hedges like you know, and I think to sound polite and to avoid being offensive. This is done to make sure that there is no threat to the face of his interlocutor.

IK: “John .... beginning.”

IK uses certain negative politeness strategies through hedges, i.e., you know. He also makes use of pessimism using phrases like I can’t say, I don’t know, I would imagine, I am afraid, and what will happen. The strategy of questioning to minimize imposition has also been used to avoid FTAs.

JS: “Is that .....other day?”

JS uses the strategy of questioning to avoid the imposition and to make sure that the threat to the face of the addressee has been reduced.

JS: “I just .....terms?”

JS uses the strategy of being indirect during communication, i.e., “find it hard to comprehend.” He also uses the strategy of questioning. These strategies during communication ensure the FTAs.

JS: “Pakistan.... are you going.... that?”

JS continuously uses the strategy of questioning to juxtapose his implicit purpose with explicit politeness. He does so to mitigate the threat to the addressee face. [OBJ]

IK: “I think.....know.”

IK expresses his pessimism via using such words as “I am afraid, and I don’t know.” He uses such negative strategies to minimize the threat to the face of the addressee.

JS: “Can I .... unrealistic?”

Simpson tries to minimize the imposition and to stay polite and co-operative during communication. He achieves this purpose using indirect questions, hedges, tag questions like, doesn’t it? All these strategies serve a two-fold purpose. They allow the speaker to avoid being offensive and remain co-operative and polite. They also make sure that the threat to the face of the addressee is minimized and curtailed.

**Table 4: Summary of Negative Politeness Strategies**

| Sr No | Name of Strategy           | Frequency |
|-------|----------------------------|-----------|
| 01    | Being indirect             | 04        |
| 02    | Using questions and hedges | 10        |
| 03    | Being pessimistic          | 04        |
| 04    | Minimizing the imposition  | 10        |
| 05    | Generalizing expressions   | 03        |

Keeping in view the above analysis, JS used negative politeness strategies more than IK. 09 out of 10 questioning and hedges strategy was used by JS. He also tried to minimize the imposition 08 times while IK used this strategy 02 times. JS employed indirect strategies more than Khan. JS used this strategy 03 times while Khan practiced it only once. During the dialogue with Simpson, Khan used the negative politeness strategies of pessimism and Generalization more than Simpson. Khan used the strategy of pessimism 04 times and the strategy of generalizing the expression 03 times whereas Simpson did not use these strategies at all. Both the interlocutors tried to ensure that the threat to the face of the addressee was mitigated and minimized.

## Discussion

The findings of this study reveal distinct politeness strategy preferences between JS and IK, aligning with Brown and Levinson's (1987) theoretical model. IK's extensive use of positive politeness strategies, such as addressing Simpson by name and providing reasons, reflects an attempt to establish solidarity and minimize social distance. According to Brown and Levinson, positive politeness is typically used when speakers wish to affirm a sense of in-group membership, a strategy Khan likely employed to frame the interview in a cooperative rather than adversarial manner. This is consistent with his role as a political leader defending national interests on an international platform.

Conversely, JS's reliance on negative politeness strategies, particularly hedging and indirect questioning, aligns with the theory's notion that negative politeness seeks to respect the hearer's autonomy and minimize imposition. As a journalist, Simpson needed to ask challenging questions without overtly threatening Khan's face, maintaining the expected professionalism and neutrality typical of Western media norms (Spencer-Oatey, 2008).

The use of bald on-record strategies by both participants during moments of heightened tension further supports Brown and Levinson's claim that speakers resort to directness when the urgency of communication outweighs face concerns, or when the speaker holds greater power or social rights in the situation. The occasional use of off-record strategies, such as metaphor and rhetorical questions, demonstrates an effort to hint at criticism without direct confrontation, a tactic particularly crucial in intercultural settings where misinterpretation of directness can escalate conflict (Kecskes, 2014).

Overall, the findings validate the applicability of Brown and Levinson's politeness framework to intercultural media discourse, while also highlighting the influence of professional roles, cultural background, and situational urgency on the choice of politeness strategies.

## Conclusion

This study's analysis of the BBC interview between JS and IK reveals significant insights about politeness strategies in high-stakes intercultural communication. The findings demonstrate that both participants strategically employed various politeness approaches while navigating the complex dynamics of a political interview. Khan, as the Pakistani leader, showed a preference for positive politeness strategies (11 instances), particularly through frequent use of in-group markers like addressing Simpson as "John" and establishing common ground. This reflects both his cultural background's emphasis on relationship-building and his need to maintain a favorable public image. Simpson, the British journalist, balanced his professional obligation to ask challenging questions with politeness considerations, employing more negative politeness strategies (5 instances) through hedging and indirect questioning. Both speakers utilized bald on-record approaches when making contentious points (9 instances total), though Khan used this slightly more (5 times versus Simpson's 4), particularly when defending Pakistan's position. The limited use of off-record strategies (5 instances) revealed how Simpson employed irony and presupposition while Khan favored rhetorical questions, allowing both to make

pointed remarks while maintaining plausible deniability. These patterns highlight how politeness strategy selection is shaped by multiple factors including professional roles, cultural communication norms, and the political sensitivity of discussion topics. The study confirms the continued relevance of Brown and Levinson's framework while demonstrating its adaptability to media discourse analysis. It particularly contributes to understanding how non-Western leaders navigate Western media contexts and how journalists balance face-threatening acts with professional politeness norms. These findings have practical implications for media training, political communication, and intercultural competence development, while suggesting valuable directions for future research on politeness strategies across different media formats and cultural contexts.

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