



RESEARCH PAPER

Cross-Cultural Politeness Perspective of Bapsi Sidhwa's Novel "An American Brat"

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ABSTRACT

This research opens up cross-cultural politeness perspective of the Bapsi Sidhwa's novel "An American Brat". Moreover, it endeavors to explore most preferred polite linguistic strategies utilized by American speakers while interaction with the people of third world countries. Brown & Levinson's theoretical framework of politeness will be employed as a research instrument for the textual analysis of the novel. It's very supportive tool in current research. This research is exploratory in nature. Textual analysis of the novel will be conducted to deduce the results. This research concludes that Bald on- record politeness strategy is much preferred in most of powerful countries. Since America is a dominating country so most of Americans use this strategy while dealings with colonized people. Due to colonizing sub-continent for a long time they still consider themselves powerful and superior to others. Therefore, they think that they have privilege to dominate and control the social behaviors, cultural values and language of the people of sub-continent countries even after post colonization. The findings of this research will be helpful for linguists, sociolinguists and educationists in understanding the real nature politeness.

Introduction

Language is embodiment of traditions, standards and beliefs of a particular society from which it originates. Like all other social behaviors, it is also acquired from society and utilized by the people as means of socialization. Due to impacts of globalization, cross cultural communication has emerged as a crucial area of study which has highlighted cultural similarities and differences. English as an international language having so many native and non-native varieties has appealed researchers to explore it. To conduct this cultural and social analysis of linguistic

varieties, most distinguishing theories of politeness are prevalent. Politeness is a socio-cultural phenomenon, determined and affected by the social distance, power, age, degree of imposition and cultural values, influences the behaviors of people of that particular community. Haugh (2004) suggests "politeness as speakers' indication of their perceptions about themselves and others. All cultures have their own rules and regulations regarding the implication of politeness. Polite expressions of one culture are restricted and rejected by other cultures considering impolite and rude social behaviors. Through research studies it has been analyzed that Western cultures prefer negative face while Asian cultures favor positive face by considering group norms. Bapsi Sidhwa a Parsee, Pakistani American and a feminist writer has highlighted cultural issues through her writings. In her novel *American Brat* she elaborates the story of sixteen years old Pakistani, conservative girl, Feroza who changes socially, psychologically and linguistically after the exposure of dominant American culture.

Literature Review

Pragmatics was defined by Levinson as an area of study that discusses lexical, grammatical and syntactic relationship between language and social context (1983). Pragmatics contributed the significance of context in perception of meanings (Palmer:2010, p.8). Bunt (2000) identified context as an entity which influences the understanding. The most fundamental linguistic theories such as Speech act theory by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) presented in field of pragmatics are helpful in understanding the process of communication. Nguyen (2009) considered speech acts; as making requests, apologies and expressing gratitude via words (Behnam, 2011, p.204). Mey (2001) states that the language selection in human interaction is affected by social norms" (Laitinen, 2011, p.2).

Austin introduced three new aspects of meanings, locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary. a) Locutionary acts (literal meanings of the utterance); b) Illocutionary acts (Purpose of utterance) c) perlocutionary acts (effects of utterance) (Austin,1962, p. 69). Searle further categorized Austin's illocutionary into five subcategories (commissive, assertive, directives, expressive and declaratives) (Searle,1979, p.12-31). Moreover, Searle pioneered direct and indirect speech acts in linguistics. Grice (1975) proposed four maxims of conversation to make the exchange more rational and significant. These maxims have association with universal principles of using language as mentioned: a) Maxims of Quantity (be brief) b) Maxims of Quality (be true) c) Maxims of Relevance (be relevant); d) Maxims of manner 'Be perspicuous'(Grice, 1975, p. 45-46). Hung argued that indirect conversational ways are employed to maintain politeness in communication (Petrickova, 2012, p.28). House (2005) declared that "Politeness gives principles to govern human behavior, so it is regarded as a crucial element of an efficient communication (Perviz, 2012, p.184). Politeness is a socio-cultural phenomenon which is influenced by the socio-cultural norms (Kerbrat Orecchion, p.4). Lakoff presented Pragmatic rules which help the speakers in selection of appropriate words for communication. These rules are do not impose, option to choose and be friendly

(1973, p.296). Leech suggested the application of strategies of politeness to avoid interpersonal conflicts and to make the communication smooth and friendly. Leech has presented six maxims of politeness to minimize impolite expressions and maximize polite ones. The Tact maxim (prefer hearer's needs); b) The Generosity maxim (be generous); c) The Approbation Maxim (be pleasant in speaking); d) The Modesty Maxim (dispraising of self); e) The Agreement maxim (showing agreement) f) The Sympathy maxim (be sympathize towards others (Leech 1983, p.135) Goffman (1967) presented idea of face in politeness. Face implies self respect which everyone attempts to secure during the communication (Goffman 1967, p. 5). Brown & Levinson elaborated the term face as public image. To save this image throughout interaction is every person's wish (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.61). The notion of face is regarded universal, but it differs across cultures. According to Jia (2000) positive and negative faces survive in all cultures and contribute their roles in it. The roles of these faces are not equal (Jia, w.1997, p.20). The positive face refers freedom while negative face implies connectivity. Yule (1995) stated that "face is an essential and widespread idea of the politeness" (Adedimeji, 2011, p.12). Brown and Levinson (1978) observed that a few utterances are threat to hearers' or speakers' face, so they are regarded as Face threatening acts (FTA's). Face threatening acts (FTA's) are those linguistic acts which demolish the participants' public image. To secure and maintain social image some strategies are used by participants during communication. These strategies are referred as strategies of politeness. These politeness strategies reduce the potential of threat. According to Leech politeness strategies are employed in conversation to diminish the impact of impolite linguistic expressions (Leech 1983, p.15). Lakoff (1973) referred politeness as a socially developed set of principles developed for the evasion of interpersonal conflicts. As it's socially defined system, so Lakoff named it a culture-specific phenomenon. Brown and Levinson (1987), accordingly, sub-categorized the strategies of politeness to avoid FTA in conversation (p.68-70). These strategies are arranged hierarchically from the most polite to the least polite ones and explained them some examples (Yule, 2006).

1. Bald on record
2. Positive politeness
3. Negative politeness
4. Off record

1) Bald on record: In this strategy the FTA is carried out "in most straight, clear and brief way. (Brown & Levinson 1987, p. 69). It is a dominant and imperative way of speech preferably used by males while interaction. It threatens hearer's face wants.

2) Positive Politeness: Brown illustrated it as "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others", or alternately, "the positive consistent self-image or 'personality'...claimed by interactants" including 'the want that this self-image be appreciated and accepted of' (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Considering the

hearer's face wants, use of plural personal pronouns and showing desire of connectivity are sub-strategies of this main strategy.

3) Negative politeness: Negative politeness is avoidance-based approach which is characterized by: "Self-effacement, formality and restraint, with attention to very restricted aspects of H's self-image, centering on his want to be unimpeded (Brown and Levinson, 1987). It is indirect and reverent way of speech which is recognized in communication through the use of question hedges.

4) Off-record: Off-record is referred as "there is more than one unambiguously attributable intention so that the actor cannot be held to have committed himself to one particular intent" (Brown and Levinson, 1987; p. 5)

Sara Mills (2004) argued that the good American culture is going to become more straight, informal and irreverent' (Lakoff, 2006, p.38). To make investigation of politeness strategies in a culture Brown & Levinson (1987) model of politeness has gained universal recognition as an instrument. It is a significant study in Pakistani culture, which analyses cultural differences between Pakistan and American conversation more specifically with the application of strategies of politeness by applying Brown and Levinson's model of politeness.

Material and Methods

It is a qualitative research which strives to explore conversational dissimilarities between Pakistani and American culture. It's descriptive and exploratory in nature. Its structure is based on politeness strategies in Pragmatics. In this research an English novel "An American Brat" by Bapsi Sidhwa was chosen. Model of Politeness given by Brown & Levinson was utilized for textual analysis of the novel. First, conversations of different characters, representatives of Pakistani and American civilizations, were selected; then they were analyzed and interpreted qualitatively through deep reading to reach out conclusion.

Results and Discussion

Culture comprising beliefs, principles and traditions has dominant, modifying influence on its people. Literature mirrors the life and social conditions of a particular society (Wellek and Warren,1977, p.110). Bapsi Sidhwa a renowned parsee, Pakistani, American author has highlighted cultural conflicts through her novels. She wrote four distinguished novels namely; *The Pakistani Bride* (1982) also published as *The Bride*, *The Crow Eaters*, *Ice-Candy-Man* and *An American Brat* (1993). Her novel "An American Brat" presents contrast of Pakistani and American civilization. It is story of a Parsee Pakistani girl Feroza who belongs to a prominent and modern family. Due to prevalent political conditions she adopts conservative outlook in life. Her parents send her to her uncle Manek in America to "Broaden her outlook, get this puritanical rubbish out of her head" (Sidhwa,1993, p.14). With passage of time she changes herself according to values of American culture. The rational of this research is to analyze cultural conversational difference in Pakistanis

and American civilizations. This study utilizes Brown & Levinson's model of politeness to achieve this objective.

Table 1

Characters	Sentences	Sub-strategy	Main strategy
Zareen	"We 're sending Feroza to you"	Direct	Bald on-record
Zareen	"Just for two or three months.. is it okay".	Seek agreement	Positive politeness
Zareen	"Will you look after her?"	Minimize imposition	Positive politeness
Manek	"You don't have to shout just because you 're twenty thousand miles away"	Direct	Bald on-record
Manek	"Don't yell".	Imperative	Bald on-record
Manek	"Why you third world Pakis shout so much?"	Ask for reason	Positive politeness
Manek	"Oh God... Please don't bring your gora complex with you".	Direct	Bald on-record
Manek	Stupid girl, D you know how much your screeches are costing your parents.	Direct	Bald on-record
Manek	"Stop it."	Imperative	Bald on-record
Manek	"And listen__ get rid of your 'white man complex before you come to America".	Imperative	Bald on-record
Feroza	"I'm so excited"	Exaggerate	Positive politeness
Feroza	Why should I have a gora complex?	Ask for reason	Positive Politeness

Material Process of Zareen, Manek and Feroza (Sidhwa, 1993, p.17-18 -Appendix A)

Analysis and Discussion

Politeness is a social phenomenon which is founded on the social context of a society. Haugh (2004) suggests "politeness implies speakers' indication of their perceptions about their own selves and others. (p.127). Since colonizers consider themselves more powerful and superiors so they apply direct and dominating politeness strategies to oppress the people of third world countries. On the other hand, higher level of linguistic politeness is expected from colonized to show their subordination towards colonizers while interaction. Zareen employs polite expressions to indicate her desire, and to seek Manek's approval concerning Feroza's sending to America. No sign of command is evident in her language to maintain self-respect and public face of Manek. Zareen's preference for positive politeness

strategy is demonstration of speaker's desire to be accepted and valued by hearer. On the contrary, bald on record strategy as conversational tool of powerful people is frequently utilized by Manek in turn. His straightforward remarks represent Americans direct way of speech. He is courageous enough to insult Feroza and her country in bold way without any sense of shame and fear. His satirizing and derogatory remarks put threat to Feroza's negative face. Manek's satirizing conversational manner also reflects Americans' prejudice against Third world countries. Materialistic approach of Americans is also visible from his conversation. On the other hand Zareen and Feroza's deferential way of expression is manifestation of respect for addressee's face.

Table 2

Characters	Sentences	Sub-strategy	Main-strategy
American Police officer	"I'm an officer of the United States Immigration Service."	Direct	Bald on-record
American Police officer	"You can't leave the terminal".	Imperative	Bald on-record
American Police officer	"Write it down".	Imperative	Bald on-record
American Police officer	"Show this after you collect your luggage"	Imperative	Bald on-record
American Police officer	"If you give false testimony in this proceeding, you may be prosecuted for perjury."	Warning,	FTA
American Police officer	"You can be fined two thousand dollars or imprisoned for no more than five years".	Warning	FTA
American Police officer	"Open your bags"	Imperative	Bald on-record
American Police officer	"Stop lying!"	Imperative	Bald on-record
American Police officer	"The wedding negligee!"	Direct	Bald on-record
Feroza	"My bags are heavy....can you?"	Minimize the imposition	Positive politeness
Feroza	"I don't know how to get this...can you show me?"	Minimize the imposition	Positive politeness
Pakistani	"Jee, can I help u carry something, jee?"	Offer	Positive politeness
Pakistani	"Can we get you something to drink, jee?"	Offer	Positive politeness
Pakistani	"A coke, or tea?" A sandwich?	Offer	Positive politeness

Pakistani	"We wondered if you'd care to join us for a gup-shup?"	Offer, use of plural pronoun 'we'	Positive politeness
Material Process of Feroza, a Pakistani and American Police Officers (Sidhwa, 1993, p.44-56-Appendix B)			

Above textual examples are eloquent illustration of conversational differences between Americans and Pakistanis. On the airport, American police officer makes repetitive use of imperatives and face threatening remarks for Feroza's self-esteem. He discusses Feroza's under garments in an audacious and direct way without any sense of shame and fear. For instance, his bold expression "the wedding negligee!" embarrasses Feroza and threatens her public image. She is bamboozled and frightened from American officer's sneering attitude to such an extent that she is unable to answer. Feroza's condition is the reflection of problems faced by colonized immigrants in colonizers' country. She employs polite and indirect approach to seek Pakistani's favor. Her words are appropriate to maintain the self-esteem and social integrity of Pakistani. A clear glimpse of deference and sense of caring for Feroza is present in his polite expressions and kind offerings. Since Politeness strategy is solidarity strategy so use of personal pronoun "we" reveals his desire of connectivity. All such conversational examples demonstrate how Pakistanis uphold public faces and maintain mutual respect while their correspondence.

Table 3

Characters	Sentences	Sub-strategy	Main-strategy
Manek	"You're in America now: you've to learn to control your temper now"	Advice	Positive politeness
Manek	"You'll have to stand a lot of things in this world"	Advice	Positive politeness
Manek	"you'd better forget this honour-shonour business".	Advice	Positive politeness
Manek	"You're the smelly desi!"	Direct	Bald on-record
Manek	"You already stink like a goat."	Direct	Bald on-record
Manek	"Don't stare, it's dangerous".	Imperative	Bald on-record
Manek	"If something happens to you, I won't know what to do?"	Avoidance based, wish for freedom	Negative politeness
Manek	" If you hang that socialist bastard on my wall, I'll tear him to bits".	Direct	Bald on-record
Manek	" I don't know when you desis will learn good manners."	Direct	Bald on-record
Manek	"You don't know because nobody works in Pakistan."	Direct	Bald on-record
Manek	"They think they work, but compared to America, every day is Sunday."	Direct	Bald on-record

Manek	"If you want to be independent and enjoy the good life, you've got to get into the habit of working."	Advice	Positive politeness
Manek	"There is no "cook, bring me soup" and "Bearer, and bring me whisky-pani."	Direct	Bald on-record
Manek	"Look, I'm not a lady of leisure like you."	Direct	Bald on-record
Manek	"You can't rely on anyone but yourself if you want to live in this country."	Advice	Positive politeness
Manek	"I'm only trying to prepare you for life."	Avoidance based	Negative politeness
Manek	"You can prepare yourself all you want, but let me live my life."	Wish for freedom	Negative politeness
Manek	"The first lesson you learn in life is to be humble."	Advice	Positive politeness
Manek	"If you wouldn't feel so proud, you wouldn't so humiliate."	Advice	Positive politeness
Manek	"you've got to stop eating with your fingers, it makes them sick."	Advice	Positive politeness
Feroza	"What rubbish!"	Direct	Bald on-record
Feroza	"Look. You don't stand up for your sister's honour."	Direct	Bald on-record
Feroza	"Don't shout at me for defending her izzat"	Imperative	Bald on-record
Feroza	"You Third world native yourself!"	Direct	Bald on-record
Feroza	"It's my time, and my life, and I'm answerable to no one but my parents and my God!"	Want for freedom	Negative politeness
Feroza	"Look don't try to palm off your complexes on me."	Imperative	Bald on-record
Feroza	"If you're going to shame me, I'm going."	Want for freedom	Negative Politeness

Material Process of Feroza and Manek (Sidhwa,1993, p.58 - 138-Appendix C)

In "An American Brat", Bapsi Sidhwa illustrates cross-cultural conversational dissimilarities between First and third world countries' speakers. Moreover, effects of a dominant culture over colonized immigrants are evident from Feroza's changed attitude. Her Uncle, Manek advises Feroza to control her temper and forget about honour to adjust over there. He lectures her about eating manners in commanding way. He makes frequent use of imperatives to dictate her behaviors and demonstrate his power over her. His identifying term 'goat' for Feroza is demonstration of Americans' impolite and carefree speaking style which they freely use towards

colonized people without paying a little attention towards their public faces. He labels Pakistanis as “backwards” which exhibits Americans’ contempt for immigrants of third world countries. While directing Feroza, he adopts avoidance-based approach which is the supportive strategy of negative politeness. It is reflected from above illustrations that he wants to attain independence from all sorts of constraints for himself as he says “I’m only trying to prepare you for life” and let me live my life’ which demonstrate a hidden desire for individual identity. Americans materialistic approach is also visible from Manek’s expressions. Feroza’s polite language is replaced by Americans direct and authoritative way of speech in the accompany of Manek. By calling Manek a third world native, she pays him back in same coin very insolently. Moreover, her preference for negative politeness strategy reveals her desire for freedom.

Table 4

Characters	Sentence	Sub-strategy	Main strategy
Zareen	“Your father and I offered you our finger and you grabbed our whole arm!”	Direct	Bald on-record
Zareen	“You have to listen to us.”	Imposition	Bald on-record
Zareen	“It’s time you settled down.”	Direct	Bald on-record
Zareen	“You will be thrown out of the community.”	Direct	Bald on-record
Zareen	“You’ve always been so stubborn!”	Direct	Bald on-record
Zareen	“You’ll disgrace the family.”	Direct	Bald on-record
Zareen	“Look what it’s done to you____ you’ve become an American brat!”	Direct	Bald on-record
Feroza	“Let me graduate at least”.	Minimize imposition	Positive Politeness
Feroza	“I’m not settling anywhere without a career.”	Direct	Bald on-record
Feroza	“I don’t want to be at the mercy of my husband.”	Direct	Bald on-record
Feroza	“If I have a career I can earn a living, and he will respect me more.”	Give reason	Positive politeness
Feroza	“You don’t know how thrilling it is to earn your money.”	Seek interest of Addressee	Positive politeness
Feroza	“I refuse to die an old maid!”	Direct	Bald on-record
Feroza	“We’re having a civil marriage in	Direct	Bald on-

	any case, a judge will marry us."		record
Feroza	"If the family wants to feel disgraced, let them".	Direct	Bald on-record
Feroza	"I don't care a fuck what they think."	Direct	Bald on-record

Material Process of Feroza and Zareen (Sidhwa,1993, p.227-277- Appendix-D)

After the exposure to American luxurious life style, Feroza gets used to it and decides to adjust over there everlastingly. Her mother Zareen courageously censures Feroza's changed attitude. She warns Feroza about the consequences of her decision to marry a non-parsi boy, David. Zareen's criticism and warnings are hostile for Feroza's negative face. Zareen's bold, face threatening expression "American brat" for Feroza demolishes her self-respect and self-esteem. Zareen's all persuasions are useless in front of a changed, self-assured and dominant woman, Feroza. She uses language impolitely paying no attention towards her mother's face, public self-image. She has become profane, rude and arrogant in her speech that she utilizes abusive term "fuck" for her own culture without any sense of shame. Positive politeness strategy is replaced with bald-on strategy of expression. Feroza's daring linguistic expressions are exemplification of her changed self-governing and autonomous personality.

Conclusion

This research was initiated with the objective of discovering cross-cultural politeness perspective of Bapsi Sidhwa's novel "An American brat". More specific objective of this research was to point out those politeness strategies which are much preferred by Americans and Pakistanis during their conversation. Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness was employed as a research tool for the textual analysis of the novel. This research has analyzed that several politeness strategies such as positive politeness, negative politeness and bald on record are used by Americans and Pakistanis while communication. Among these strategies, Bald on record politeness strategy is much preferred by Americans to exhibit their power and superiority. While Pakistani characters favor positive politeness to show deference towards hearer's public image and to maintain interpersonal relations. American characters' preference for "Bald on record" politeness strategy justifies their social image as rude and arrogant. They have no restrictions to discuss anything directly which Pakistani consider awkward and try to avoid to it in conversation. They have authority too. Therefore, Pakistani immigrants have to use positive politeness to pay homage and show submissiveness towards higher authorities, Americans. Feroza has to adopt Americans' norms of social interaction to being a part of that culture. Consequently, she changes herself linguistically, socially and psychologically as well.

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