Politeness in Language of Bihar: A Case Study of Bhojpuri, Magahi, and Maithili

Shaivya Singh,[1] Rajesh Kumar[2] and Lata Atreya[1]

Abstract

The present study attempts to analyze and demonstrate the politeness in the structure of three languages of Bihar i.e. Bhojpuri, Magahi and Maithili. The physical and geographical proximity of these languages bring them closer to one another on the continuum in more than one ways. Along with physical proximity, cultural traits of the landscape gets visible in the structure of these languages at many instances – manifestation of politeness strategies in the structure happens to be one of them. Politeness is an important and universal feature of human language. People express politeness in a variety of ways in interpersonal communication. It depends on several factors such as age, status, relationship, social constraints, and gender etc., which often influence the linguistic choices in languages. It surfaces differently in different languages. Bhojpuri, Magahi and Maithili are Indo-Aryan languages spoken in Bihar. They have several common features and at the same time they are strikingly different from each another in politeness strategies.

Keywords: Politeness, Syntactic strategies, Verbal communication, languages of Bihar

1. Introduction

Language is a tool of communication, a channel of conveying meaning and is regarded as a cultural phenomenon too.

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[1] Research Scholar; Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Patna, Patna-13, Bihar India. Phone: +91-8986274507, E-mail: s.shaivya@gmail.com
[2] Assistant Profesor; Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Chennai, 600 036, T.N., India.

It is related with all kinds of ethnic, political, regional and class differences which manifest themselves through various linguistic as well as pragmatic variations. Verbal communication not only aims at exchange of information, but also shapes the interpersonal relationships. The speaker makes many choices while speaking, including the politeness level of their utterance (Coulmas 2005). People express gratitude and politeness in a number of ways. When they interact with each other; the addressee's age, status, position, relationship, social constraints and gender often influence the linguistic choices in conversation. Politeness strategies, which are the focus of this study, are considered to be influenced by culture.

Bhojpuri, Magahi and Maithili are genetically related languages mainly spoken in Bihar. The languages being genetically related share many linguistic features in common. Politeness is one of those which we will discuss in this paper. Grierson (1983-87) classified these languages as Bihari languages keeping in mind the place Bihar. These languages form a continuum space wise and have areal connections as well. Grimshaw (1974) is of the view that there may be universals of social interactions which categorize the mapping of social processes or relations into infinitely varying sociolinguistic behaviour. In other words, politeness strategies are such universals which are found across world languages but vary as a sociolinguistic behaviour.

The paper examines three dominant languages, namely Bhojpuri, Magahi and Maithili of Bihar. We discuss how the speakers of these languages carry their cultural domains in form of politeness into the structure of their language. Before moving forward we would like to discuss about the methodology adopted in this paper. The data analysed in this paper are collected and from the native speakers of these languages. It is then cross checked by another set of 5 native speakers of these languages for the grammaticality judgement of the sentences.

The main focus of the paper is grounded on the politeness strategies in the syntactic structures. Features of politeness are mainly associated with pragmatics which is mainly contextual.

However, with this method the data shows that many a times various syntactic structures contemplate the politeness features in the language. In turn this paper ends up providing evidence in favour of one of the major claims of cognitive studies that conceptual developments take place at a very abstract level in the formation of 'knowledge of language' without us being aware of it as well.

2. Politeness in Natural Languages

Politeness means to be nice to others. To characterize polite language usage, we might resort to expression like "the language a person uses to avoid being too direct" (Watts 2003). Politeness criterion differs with cultures and languages. Intercultural differences may lead to pragmatic failure especially in cross cultural business context, whether it is a communication at the work place, at the negotiation table, or in choosing management strategies. The situation aggravates with the fact that language fluency does not necessarily help to avoid these failures. The reason is that while 'pure' language mistakes like grammar, wrong lexical choices, pronunciation, etc are easily understood, as such, inapt use of politeness strategies or speech acts usage may be taken as personality traits. Therefore a person acting out their culture's politeness and speech acts strategies may seem to be a representative of another culture rude and imposing, or insecure and indirect (Thomas 1984).

Politeness is that form of behaviour which is "developed in societies in order to reduce friction in personal interactions" (Lacoff 1975). Indirectly this definition claims universality. In such case the central aim and the considered application regarding politeness are lost (Watts 2005). Leech (1983) defines politeness as those forms of behaviour which are aimed at the establishment and maintenance of comity that means the ability of participants in a socio communicative interaction in an atmosphere of relative harmony. Leech gives his maxims of politeness (i.e. maxims of quality, quantity, relation and manner) to supplement Grice's cooperative principles i.e. tact, generosity, approbation, modesty etc. Grice proposed the cooperative principle which is a principle of conversation, stating that participants expect that each will make a "controversial contribution such as is required at the stage which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange". Participants assume that a speaker is cooperative, and thus they make controversial implicatures about what is said. Main purpose of communication is maximally efficient information exchange (Grice 1975).

Grice's maxims of conversation rely on the cooperative principle that is in conversations, participants should stick to the above maxims. Brown and Levinson (1987) too points out in this regard that, if we need to posit new maxims every time we wish to explain how, it is, that interaction is carried out in an atmosphere of relative harmony. We will simply end up with an infinite number of maxims, and the theory of politeness becomes vacuous. According to Levinson (1983), the social function of communication is fundamental. Fraser and Nolan (1981) suggest that politeness is the result of conversational contract in which participants enter into with an effort to maintain socio communicative verbal interaction, conflict free. Politeness is nothing but a set of constraints on verbal behaviour.

Brown and Levinson's theory of linguistic politeness first appeared in 1978. The theory is often referred to as the 'face-saving' theory of politeness. Brown and Levinson's model is an attempt to formulate a theory of how individuals produce linguistic politeness, which means it is a production model. Brown and Levinson assume that every individual has two types of face, positive and negative. Positive face is defined as the individual's desire that he/she wants be appreciated and approved of in social interactions, where as negative face is the desire for freedom of action and freedom from imposition. In 1987 Brown and Levinson propose the influential model of politeness which focuses on rationality and face. The notion of face is universal, but different culture has a different understanding of positive and negative aspects of face.

When we use positive politeness we use speech strategies that emphasize our solidarity with the hearer, like informal pronunciation. One avoids shared dialect or expressions, nicknames and slang for being polite and requests are more indirect and impersonal.

3. Politeness Strategies

Politeness is an important pragmatic feature of languages. People express politeness in a variety of ways in interpersonal communication. Several factors such as age, status, relationship, social constraints, and gender often influence the linguistic choices in conversation. Politeness features are universal phenomenon; but its expression in different languages becomes a matter of parameter.

According to Brown and Levinson, development of politeness strategies is in order to save the hearers' "face." Face refers to the respect that an individual has for him or herself, and maintaining that "self-esteem" in public or in private situations. In various languages we have range of politeness strategies based on phonological, lexical and morphological features. Brown and Levinson (1978) outline four main types of politeness strategies: bald on record, negative politeness, positive politeness, and off record politeness strategies. Subbarao,et.al. (1991) discusses the theory of Brown and Levinson (1978) in his paper. He mainly discusses positive and negative politeness. This includes the use of inclusive pronouns, passives, exaggerated statements, questions, repetitions, ellipsis, etc. In his paper Subbarao discuses various politeness strategies in languages of the Indian subcontinent. Since the languages we are working with, belong to the Indian subcontinent, there has to be some principles and parameters that fit into these universals.

We investigate the details of some of the syntactic strategies in the politeness phenomenon in these languages. If we look deep through the languages there are number of syntactic strategies present in these languages but we include only few of them in our paper. The syntactic strategy that we include here are: multiple agreement, honorificity, particles, request, past tense, causative and passive. We discuss these strategies in various subsections of the paper. In section 3.1, we deal with multiple agreement system in Bhojpuri, Magahi and Maithili. In this particular section we discuss the type of agreement exhibiting Honorificity. In section 3.2., we discuss various honorific expressions, plurality, honorificity reflected in pronominals, particles, honorificity in mood and honorificity reflected in use of various particles in the subsections 3.2.1., 3.2.2., 3.3.3. Section 3.4., discusses politeness strategies in requests. Section 3.5, explores past tense as a politeness strategies. Section 3.6, describes causative as politeness strategy and finally in section 3.7, we examines passives as a politeness strategy in the three languages of Bihar.

3.1. Multiple Agreements

Agreement is a very important feature of Indo-Aryan language family. Many Indo-Aryan languages display agreement and default agreement, though not all the languages show uniformity in this case.

Agreement refers to the relation between the elements in the sentence where a form of one word requires a corresponding form of another. Hindi/Urdu has finite and non finite tense and agreement morphology and ergative case marking depending on the perfective aspect.

Unlike Hindi, In Maithili, Magahi and Bhojpuri, there are instances of triple (multiple) agreement markers as well. In case of multiple agreement, verb exhibits agreement with two or more arguments. The multiple agreement system is heavily constrained and it permits agreement only with the combination of Non Honorific, Mid Honorific, and High Honorific referents.

In Maithili verb exhibits agreement in honorificity with an NP that is postpositionally case marked (Subbarao 2012) as in sentence (1). In this sentence the verb agrees with the indirect object *ahaaN* 'you' and is dative case marked by '*kἐ*'.

Maithili
(1) ham   ahaaN-ke$_j$ paai$_k$ de- l- ahuN$_j$ I you.hon.dat   money   give-pst-agr.Hon 'I gave you money.'

                                                          (Singh 1979)

Following example (2) from Yadava (1999) indicates multiple agreements in Maithili. In this sentence the verb agrees with the subject *ham* 'we', *tohaar* 'your', and the direct object *baabuji* 'father'. The co indexation marker *i* is the subject agreement marker, the direct object agreement marker is *-nh* shown by the co indexation *k*, and the marker for the possessor of the direct object is *–au* shown by the co indexation marker *j* in terms of honorificity.

Maithili
(2) ham$_i$ tohar$_j$ babu-ji$_k$ -ke   dekh- al -i$_i$- au$_j$- nh$_k$ I.nom   your2.MHon father-3.hon   acc see- pst- 1- 2MHon-3.Hon 'I saw your father.'
                                                          (Yadava 1999: 149)

Following example (3) is an illustration of multiple agreements in Magahi. The suffix -*kai* is an agreement marker on the verb *bol*- 'call'. The agreement is between the subject *maiyyaa* and the verb *bol*- 'call'.

Similarly the verb takes the suffix *–ai* as it is in agreement with the direct object *ham* 'me'. This is shown with the co-indexation marker *i* and *j*.

Magahi
(3) maiyaa$_i$ hamaraa$_j$ bol- ai-$_j$ l- kai$_i$ Mother me NHon call- 1p- PST-3p 'My mother called me'

Various suffixes on verb marks Honorificity in these three languages. These suffixes change according to the subject-verb agreement. Honorificity is also reflected in the use of various pronominals, honorificity in mood, and in use of various particles.

3.2. Honorificity

An honorific is a word or expression that conveys esteem or respect when used in addressing or referring to a person. It is also often conflated with systems of honorific speech in linguistics, which are grammatical or morphological ways of encoding the relative social status of speakers. Honorificity plays very important roles in social interaction resulting to different degrees of speech. The analysis of this speech behaviour in terms of its ethnographic context shows a significant range of variation in Bhojpuri honorific and speech levels system. Level of honorificity depends on age, rank and status of the persons in conversation and this is true for both Magahi and Maithili. The use of honorific words marks relationship of respect, thus typifying speech as a marker of social relationships. Moreover, the socio-cultural environment drives people to use certain syntactic and politeness strategies in their language. In all the three languages, Bhojpuri, Magahi and Maithili, use of honorific is not arbitrary. Use of honorific is specific for specific kind of people.

There are three basic levels of Honorific Marker on verb in Bhojpuri Magahi and Maithili. The Honorific Marker belonging to first level denotes the relation between the addressor and addressee as if counterpart or casual. When the addressee is younger in age and the addressor uses a respectful language for him/her the second level of Honorific Marker is used. When addresser uses respectful language for a person elder to him/her then the addresser uses third level of Honorific Marker. The first level of Honorific Marker is *Non-honorific*, the second one is *Mid-honorific* and the third one is, *High-honorific*.

3.2.1. Pronominal

Various pronominals convey different levels of politeness by paying courtesy to the hearer according to the deferential status of the hearer and the speaker. Subbarao, et.al. (1991) states the fact about most of the Indian languages, that there exists a two level or three level hierarchies in the second person pronominal. These pronominals convey different levels of politeness through paying appropriate deference to the hearer according to the differential status of the speaker and the hearer.

Bhojpuri, like most Indian languages have three level of hierarchy in the second person pronominal. The real honorific pronoun in Bhojpuri is *rauraa/raauur* (H Hon) and *tohaar* (M Hon). These are honorific terms of address, whereas *tu/tor* is Non Honorific term of adress. *rauraa* and *raaur* is for addressing elders, lesser known people and in formal instances. Second person honorific *rauaa* and *rauraa* has *ii* – affix with the verb (*rauraa/ rauaa calii*). It is safest to use in all situations. Following sentence (4) illustrates the use of *rauaa/ rauraa* in Bhojpuri.

Bhojpuri

(4) rauraa/rauaa se ham kahlin you-H.Hon to I say.PST 'I said to you'

In Bhojpuri, sometimes *aapan* and *apane* replaces *rauaa* or *rauraa* as honorific pronouns (Tiwari 1960). This is illustrated in Sentence (5).

Bhojpuri

(5) ham aapan/apane   se kahali I you.Hon to told 'I told you.'

Magahi uses two distinct levels of hierarchy in second-person pronominal as opposed to three level of honorificity of Hindi. There are two address markers in Magahi. They are *tu* and *apne*. Where the former *tu* is a pronominal for people of same or lower socio-economic status is informal, the marker *apne* is the pronominal for people higher in socio-economic status. This is the formal use of the second person pronoun in Magahi. When there is a conversation between two unfamiliar speakers, then there is the use of pronominal *apne*.

Magahi

(6) ham   toraa se kahal-iau I you-OBLQ- N.Hon to told 'I told you.'
(7) ham apane se kahal-io I you-Hon   to told 'I told you.'

In Maithili there are three persons, the first person is indeterminate as to honorificity. The second and the third person shows forms which contrasts in honorificity showing honorific and non honorific. In Maithili, *apane* (H Hon), is the pronoun of the highest conceivable honour and respect. In formal circumstances there is a wide use of *ahaN* (Hon). The use of *ahaN* is safer and also its use is more frequent in Maithili. It is used for persons to whom the speaker wants to pay respect under social obligations. In contrast the use of *to* (N Hon) is viewed as impolite. The third person pronoun in Maithili is *o* (Hon) and *uu* (N Hon). Following sentences (8) and (9) illustrate the use of Honorific pronominal *ahaN* and Non Honorific pronominal *to* respectively in Maithili.

Maithili

(8) ahaN ke potʰi hamaraa lage acʰi You-H hon ACC book   me   near
is 'Your book is with me.'
(9) to hunkaa dekʰle You-N hon he-Hon see-PST'You saw him.'

3.2.2. Plurality

Plurality is the morphologically productive category for Noun inflection expressed by -*an* in Hindi. However a periphrastic pluralisation with the word *sab/log* added to any singular form is very common among the languages Maithili and Bhojpuri. In case of Magahi such instances are not found, and if there are any that happens to be very rare and influence of other language such as Hindi. This pluralisation acts as a marker of honorificity. We can see from the examples (10) and (11) that example (10), the singular Noun does not show any honorificity while in example (11), the plurality marker *log* 'everyone' shows honorificity with the suffix –*an* (Honorific Marker) attached with the verb *gail* 'is'.

Bhojpuri

> (10)   raam aa gail raam.sg come is.N. Hon 'raam has come'
> (11)   raam *log* aa gail-*aN* Raam and all come   is.Hon 'raam and everyone else have come'

3.2.3. Honorificity in Mood

       To form an imperative mood in Bhojpuri verbs take various suffixes like - *iN* or – *a* or -*u* to its root form. These suffixes are indicators of High Honorificity, Mid Honorificity and Non Honorificity marker on verb. These High and Mid Honorific Marker indicate a polite suggestion or request instead of a command. On the other hand, the Non Honorific marker on the verb makes the sentence as a straight forward command. These suffixes are used to show high honour, mid honour and no honour respectively. These are illustrated in sentences (12), (13) and (14) respectively. In sentence (12), the suffix –*iN* attached with the root verb *baiT^h* 'sit' is the High Honorific marker. Likewise in sentence (13), the suffix –*a is* a mid Honorific marker, whereas in sentence (14), suffix –*u* is showing Non Honorificity, and also when the root verb *baith* 'sit' is used independently without any honorific or non honorific suffix marker, then it shows non honorificity as shown in example (14).

Bhojpuri

> (12) baiT^h –*iN* sit-H Hon 'Have a seat'
> (13) baiT^h –*a* sit-M Hon 'Have a seat.'
> (14) baiT^h -*u*/ *baiT* sit-N Hon/N.Hon 'Have a seat.'

       In Magahi there are various Non-honorific and Mid-honorific marker suffixes each corresponding to a tense and a person. There is no High- honorific marker suffix for first person, whereas for second and third person it is same i.e. *-thin*, except a different suffix for past suffix i.e. –*lathin/ -lakhin*, also, different Honorific Markers are used for Imperative sentences. An amazing fact about use of Honorific in Magahi is that, even for Subject having First Person feature, there are two levels of Honorific used on verb. These two levels are Non-honorific and Mid-honorific. There are various suffixes representing different Honorific level and different Tenses. The use of Mid-honorific suffixes happen when the speaker shows more respect for the listener.

Following sentence (15) shows the use of Non-honorific when the subject is First person and listener does not demand respect. Sentence (16) shows the use of Mid-honorific suffix used in the case when the listener demands respect from the speaker.

Magahi

> (15) ham jaa h-i-*ai* I   go is-1st P-PRES-N.Hon 'I go'
> (16) ham jaa   h-i-*o* i go is-1stP-PRES-M.Hon 'I go'

Similar to Bhojpuri, there are different honorific suffixes used in imperative mood in Magahi. When there is use of Mid and High Honorific suffixes on the verb, the sentence reflects politeness merged with a request rather than an order. The imperative suffixes to show honour are –*e/ -o, -aa*, and –*t^{h}in/ -k^{h}in*. These suffixes respectively belong to Non-Honorific, Mid-Honorific and High-Honorific levels. Following three sentences (17), (18) and (19) are the examples in Magahi showing the respective use of these three imperative suffixes.

Magahi

> (17) k^{h}aa I-*e* eat take-Imp.N.Hon 'Eat.'
> (18) k^{h}aa I-*aa* eat take-Imp-M.Hon b'Please eat.'
> (19) k^{h}aa le-t^h*in* eat take-Imp.H.Hon 'Please eat.'

Use of sentences of imperative mood is unique in Maithili; they tend to stand apart from similar constructions in other languages. In Maithili even when there is suppression of second person subject pronoun their presence is still felt in the verbal category which carries person honorific agreement suffixes. We can say that in absence of distinct pronoun forms for the honorific or non honorific, the verbal inflections serves the purpose. Few examples for the first and second pronominal are as follow.

Maithili

(20) ham ai-l-*i* I come-PST-N.Hon 'I came'
 (21) ham ae-l-*ahuN* i come-PST-Hon 'I came'
(22) to ae-l-*ah* you-M.Hon come-pst-M.Hon 'You came'
(23) to ae-l-*e* you-N.Hon come-PST-N.Hon 'You came'

Honorificity is a very wide aspect of language and it goes very deep into the human cognition. Honorificity is a feature that influences language structure in variety of ways. Thus this section shows only the most important aspect of the honorificity feature.

3.3. Particles

Jii is the honorific particle in Bhojpuri, Magahi and Maithili. We mark the use of this particle while referring or conversing with elders, at work places/ situation, or in any formal instances. The use conveys politeness and deference to the addressee. It is a very common trait other Indo-Aryan languages too. *Jii* is the most prolific particle among all and can collocate with any sort of terms. Everyday speech of the people consists of the use of particle such as *jii*. For example, to refer to a person apart from title or pronoun one can use expression like, *kaa jii*, 'so sir'. The particle *jii* signals respect. It can follow first name, last name, and occupational titles and kinship terms. The sentence (24) illustrates the use of particle *jii* in Bhojpuri.

Bhojpuri

(24) kaa *jii* Tʰiik Tʰaak baanii na what particle well   same is particle 'So, sir are you ok!'

The name or position for older people or respectable person uses *jii* after itself, as in the word *bAbU jii*.

In Magahi, there are various particles representing various degree of honour. The particles are: *age* (feminine), *are/re* (masculine) and *ajii* or *jii.* A speaker uses the particles *age* (feminine), *are/re* (masculine) for persons of lower or same socio-economic status.

The same particles when used for persons of higher socio-economic status indicate a very high degree of proximity between the speaker and the listener as shown in the following sentence (25) shows honorificity.

Magahi

(25) *age* maay kʰaay le de-de particle mother food take give Redup 'Oh mamma! Please give me the food to eat.'

On the contrary, particles like *ajii* or *jii* is used for persons of higher socio-economic status as shown in following sentence (26).

Magahi

(26) *ajii* daadaa suna ho Particle elder brother listen is 'Brother, do you listen?'

Use of honorific particle is similar in Maithili as of Bhojpuri. Few honorific particles like *sri* and *srimati* may precede the first name in Maithili and even in Bhojpuri or Magahi. The factors governing the choice of honorific particles are those which govern the use of honorific verbal inflections. It automatically triggers the non optional use of the verbal inflections as illustrated in sentence (27) and (28). We have in these languages, a strategy of using double honorific marker with a name or position, to show more honour as illustrated in the sentence (29).

Maithili

(27) radha *baabu* aib ge-l-*ahi* radha babuucome go-PST- Hon 'Radha baabu has come' And not –
(28) radha *baabu* aib ge-*io* radha babuu come go-PST N Hon 'Radha babu has come.'
(29) *Sri* mohan jha *jii*

Examples like radha *baabu*, daactar *saaheb*, etc are also very common in Maithili. Honorific such as *sarkaar, saaheb, maalik, baabuu*, etc, when used independently is indicative of the speaker's inferiority and his attitude of deference for the addressee. Its use along with the name is for the sake of formality and social etiquette.

3.4. Request

In our everyday life, we make and respond to many requests. Making requests is inseparable from politeness strategies. For a Harmonious communication to occur, one has to save the "face" and avoid conflicts. The requests should be socially appropriate. The accomplishment of requests is via indirectness and external and internal modifications (Blum Kulka 1989). When considering requests, we cannot omit responses. There are researches on responses to direct requests and conventionally indirect requests (Clark, 1979; Clark and Schunk, 1980).

There are many ways to interpret requests. If the speaker does not make explicit that the utterance is a request, it may possibly be a different way of interpreting the request. Because of this, there are many possibilities of responding to requests, which can create misunderstanding between speaker and hearer, because hearer's response sometimes does not match speaker's expectation. This kind of misunderstanding is likely to occur when speaker and hearer do not share the same cultural background.

In Bhojpuri and Magahi words to make request is *tani*. As in English we use the expression 'please' to request, in Bhojpuri *tani* serves the purpose. Sentence (30) illustrates the use of request word *tani* in Bhojpuri.

Bhojpuri

(30) *tani* bhiitar aaib Please inside come 'Please! Can you come inside?'

Indirect request provides a means for the speaker to convey something while at the same time avoiding responsibility for what he is conveying. Indirectness saves face. The use of indirectness seems to create the impression that the hearer has freedom to his/her decision complies or not. This is illustrated in sentence (31).

Bhojpuri

(31) gilasiyaa   naahi-*iN* deb Glass not.Hon give 'Will you not give the glass?'

Following sentence (32) in Magahi is an example of the use of the request word *tani*.
Magahi

(32) *tani* bʰitraa aaba please   room   come 'Please come inside the room.'

In Maithili language the imperative mood conveys an order or request. The speaker is requested to realize the event as illustrated in sentences (33) and (34).

Maithili

(33) ham ja-u i go-IMP 'May I go?'
(34) ah-*aN* chal-*u* You-Hon walk -IMP-HON 'You go.'

3.5. Past Tense

The past tense is a grammatical tense that places an action or situation in the past of the current moment. The past tense is a verb tense expressing activity, action state or being in the past. Past tense is a more polite form than other tenses. Suppose two persons are in a conversation with each other and the hearer misses a sentence of the speaker; he can ask about the missed sentence in both tenses, past and the present using a level of honorific marker on the verb. But the sentence with past tense marker on the verb is more polite in contrast to other tenses. It is probable that the use of present tense may express the irritation and the threat or order of the speaker but the use of past tense will have an effect of more politeness on the hearer.

We can see from the following sentences (35) and (36) from Bhojpuri, how politeness is expressed using the past tense at the same time use of present tense respectively. The use of present tense is not very polite and is direct and imposing to the hearer as in sentence (36).

Bhojpuri

(35) ham kahat rahali-*iN* ki narawaa khodwaa debe ke I say.PST.Hon that well dig do is 'I was thinking to have dug up the well'

(36) ham kahat *baani/haiiN*   ki narawaa khodwaa   debe ke I say.PRS that well dig do is 'I am thinking to have dug up the well'

From the above sentences we can see that the use of past tense *rahali- iN* shows the polite form whereas *baani/haiiN* expresses the impolite form, instead it expresses the form of order.

In Magahi, present tense when used with proper honorific marker is though not impolite but the same sentence when expressed in past tense is more polite. In the following sentences (37) and (38), speaker expresses the same phenomenon. Sentence (37) is in present tense and is not as polite as sentence (38) which is in past tense.

Magahi

(37) ki kaha   h-*a* what say is-Pres-M.Hon 'What are you saying?'
(38) ki   kaha-I-*k^hin* What say-Past-H.Hon 'What did you say?'

In Magahi, uncertainty factor in the speech makes the sentence more polite. Following sentence (39) illustrates this fact.

Magahi

(39) kuC^h kahabo kai-I-*k^hin* something say-M.Hon   do-past-H.Hon   'Did you say something?'

Similarly, in Maithili past tense is more polite than present tense as illustrated in sentence (40) which is in present tense and sentence (41) which is in past tense.

Maithili

(40) ham ii jamiin ke beC debe
    i this land ACC   sell do-PRST 'I will sell this land'
(41) ham soCe c^hlauN je ii jamin ke   beC del jau

i think PROG that this land ACC sell give go 'I was thinking to sell this piece of land.'

We can make out from the above sentence (41) that to make the speech even more polite one can add uncertainty factor in his/ her speech.

3.6. Causative

Causative is a grammatical term relating to a form or class of verbs, that express causation. In linguistics, a causative is a form that indicates that a subject causes someone or something else to do or be something, or causes a change in state of a non-violent event. All languages have ways to express causation, but differ in the means. In Indo Aryan languages, there is a complex system of causative formation where we can distinguish three distinct processes, i.e. intransitivization, direct causatives and indirect causatives.

Causativization in Bhojpuri, Magahi and Maithili is mainly suffixal. In this paper we are concerned with the two types of causative verb forms causative; Direct and Indirect causative. The first implies that the degree of closeness between the cause and the effect is immediate or direct. The second implies that the degree of closeness between the cause and the effect is mediated or less direct. In these languages causatives are considered more polite as the speaker does not tell directly to the doer to do the job. The purpose of the causativization is to drive away directness. Subbarao, et.al. (1991) writes about the use of causatives for politeness that, the use of causative construction helps to minimize the risk of the hearers face loss by showing that he understands that it is not his/her job and that he does not intend to coerce him/her into doing something below his/her dignity. This holds true for Magahi, Maithili and Bhojpuri also.

The causative suffixes in Bhojpuri are: *-aa*, and *-waa* the addition of these suffixes to the verb changes the non causative verb to the causative verb. Sentence (43) which uses a causative verb is more polite than the sentence (42) which uses non causative verb. Causativization is the tool to make indirectness. We can see from the example (42) and (43) that in example (43) no one is asking the person directly, therefore it implies indirectness and shows politeness.

Bhojpuri

(42) shyaam ke bol-*aa*-wa shyam DAT call 'Call Shyam'

(43) shyaam ke bola-*waa*-wa shyaam DAT   call. CAUS 'Shyam be called.'

The sentence (44) is in Magahi to show the use of causatives in Magahi.

Magahi

(44) tebulbaa   saap^h kar-*baa* de table clean do-caus give 'Please make the table clean.'

In Maithili language addition of the suffix –*aa* to the non causative verb stem forms the first case causative. The addition of the suffix –*baa* to the non causative verb stem forms the second case causative. Following sentences (45), (46) and (47) illustrates this.

Maithili

(45) to aataa   san-ab I flour   mixed 'I mixed the flour'

(46) to aataa   san-*aa*-eb I flour mixed.caus 'I cause to mixed the flour.'

(47) to aataa   san-*baa*-eb I flour mixed.caus 'I cause to have mixed the flour.'

3.7. Passives

The passive voice is a grammatical construction in which the subject of a sentence or clause denotes the recipient of the action rather than the performer. The passive which promotes the underlying object and demotes the underlying subject, in addition to adding passive markings and agreement rules, exists primarily as an impersonalizing mechanism, which is to avoid pinning down the responsibility for an action on the agent (Brown and Levinson 1978). Passive voice is used when the focus is on the action. It is not important or not known who or what is performing the action. Passives are more polite in Bhojpuri, Magahi and Maithili as illustrated in sentences (48), (49) and (50).

The passive formation in Bhojpuri is analytical and periphrastic (Tiwari 1960). Addition of the past participle suffixes on the active verb form passives grammatically along with the addition of the auxiliary verb *jaa* (to go). But the verbal compounds are often an idiomatical way to express a passive sense. Passives with the verb *jaa* occur very frequently in Bhojpuri.

Bhojpuri

(48) khaiil *jay* eat go.FUT 'Will be eaten'

Similarly, in Magahi passive sentences are more polite as expressed in sentence (49).

Magahi

(49) baiTʰal *jay* sit-pass go-PASS 'Please be seated.'

In Maithili there are two types of passive verb form. The first type is inflexional passive. suffixing –*a* to the non passive main verb stem forms this first type of passive. Second is the periphrastic passive which forms when we add suffix of past participle –*al* to the main verb in addition to an auxiliary verb of motion *jaa* 'go'. In the passives instrumental post position *sa/saa* follows the subject or agent.

Maithili

(51) bʰojan kael *jaae* food do go-PASS 'Please have the food.'

4. Conclusion

To be polite and to protect the face of all sides of communication, people favour a variety of language type which is pleasant and less direct across languages. Bhojpuri, Magahi, and Maithili go several steps further in being less direct. Politeness should not be restricted and considered an inherent property of honorific lexical system. Politeness can also be conveyed by using different syntactic strategies like multiple agreement, passives, causatives, tenses etc. as we find in this paper.

Politeness should be considered on the particular interaction depending on the context and the situation (Firth 1957; Halliday 1973). We have found that there is a special honorific system in these three languages which works at three levels (High Honorific, Mid Honorific, Non honorific. We found three levels of pronominals in Maithili and Bhojpuri; however, only two levels of such pronominals in Magahi.

In the case of plurality Bhojpuri and Maithili exhibits honorificity whereas Magahi does not. We also found universals of politeness strategies like requests, tense, uncertainty in statements in all three languages. We have seen parametric variation in these aspects on the basis of lexical level. On the other hand, at the syntactic level these languages show very similar patterns. Such patterned differences and similarities indicate uniform cognitive development of human mind across cultures and languages.

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