

Linguistic Interpretations of Pakistani Job Application Letters

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Abstract

This study strives to sift through the job application letters written by the Pakistani applicants in order to seek linguistic interpretations on different levels. The analysis of these job letters was made keeping in view two major objectives: (i) to explore the level of vividness/vagueness in the letters; and (ii) to highlight politeness strategies demonstrated through these letters. To accomplish the first objective a micro level analysis was furnished on word level. In this context lexical items like proper and common nouns, syntactic patterns like active and passive voice, cohesive devices like referencing and transitional words, rhetorical devices like repetition and parallelism etc. had been studied both quantitatively (to determine the level of concreteness and abstractness in the letters) and qualitatively (to determine what implications are made by this concreteness and abstractness). To achieve the second objective a macro level analysis was made on sentence level to determine positive (directness and optimism); and negative (indirectness, use of modals, expressing appreciation and formulaic expressions) strategies. The findings reveal that the Pakistani applicants have tendency to use more vague expressions than the concrete ones. The study further exhibits that the applicants of the study utilize both the positive and negative politeness strategies in their applications.

Keywords: Job application letters, linguistic interpretations, vividness, vagueness, negative politeness, positive politeness

1. Introduction

“Words can be like X-rays if you use them properly -- they’ll go through anything.”

— Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*

Job Application Letter can prove a landmark in earning a job for the applicant. Bhatia (1993) identifies it under the promotional genre colony like sales letters, book-bblurbs, advertisements etc. The purpose of the job application is the favorable representation of the applicant, which should at least secure interview for the applicant. It provides the writer with an opportunity for ‘favorable self-presentation’ (James et al, 1994, p. 325). The applicants in Pakistan face several problems concerning writing a good job letter. In terms of vividness and vagueness the Pakistani applicants are unable to produce a concrete application letter based on concrete facts. Moreover, they are not aware how their application letters can be perceived in the perspective of politeness strategies.

The present study is conducted to chase two objectives;

- a) To explore the level of concreteness in the Pakistani job letters
- b) To discover politeness strategies demonstrated through these letters

In order to find out concreteness and politeness strategies in Pakistani job application letters 100 job letters written between the years 2010 to 2014 were collected and analyzed. The analysis was done on micro and macro levels. On micro level isolated words like nouns, adjectives, modal verbs and pronouns were studied to see what implications they draw on the minds of the readers. On macro level syntactic patterns, rhetorical devices, cohesive devices and formulaic expressions were studied to see their impact on overall writing scheme.

In Pakistani context a few studies have been conducted on the analysis of job letters. Bhatia (1989, 1993) explores the general generic structure of South Asian job application letters. Ajmal and Tin (2012) investigate generic patterns and linguistic features of 26 Pakistani job letters. This study also provides an extension to the past studies in order to see the compatibility of its results with the previous ones. So it is the need of the hour to expand research in the context of job letters.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Studies Based on Concreteness in Communication

Concreteness of language ensures clarity. Ketcham (1992, p. 112) states that some of the writers consider concreteness as the most important aid to force. Concrete language is not only easy to comprehend but it also brings vigor and strength in expression. Herta A. Murphy’s (1997) work on business English reveals concreteness as the most important feature of business communication. He asserts that concrete language produces visual images which facilitate comprehension. Abstract language, on the other hand hinders comprehension as it blurs ideas. To him even if the readers show discernment and make educated conjectures, there is still space for ambiguity (p. 44).

Thomas’s (1868) work on lexical items like nouns and adjectives, divides these parts of speech into

two major classes; a) those which cause abstractness and b) those which bring clarity due to their concreteness. Numerical adjectives bring clarity and they are further divided into two categories; a) cardinal and b) ordinal. Cardinal adjectives describe the number and ordinal adjectives describe order. These adjectives ensure vividness because they denote only one meaning. Similarly demonstrative and possessive adjectives also bring clarity because they indicate one meaning.

Kreidler (2003, p. 168) reveals some facts on concrete and abstract combinations of the words. He asserts that some constructions of the sentences are more vivid than the other. Active voice sentences are easy to comprehend because here the doer plays active role. In passive voice as agent is sometimes hidden and sometimes it is shown through 'by phrase' and patient takes its place, so it becomes difficult to capture the true meaning at once. Murphy (1997) also recommends active voice for clarity.

Lesikar (2003, 64) highlights another abstract syntactic construction where the verb is nominalized. When a verb is nominalized, a noun takes its place. For example when a speaker says, 'give me information', instead of, 'inform me'; here he nominalizes the verb 'inform'. Murphy (1999, p. 46) asserts that in perspective stylistics nominalization of verb is considered difficult for understanding. He proclaims that 7 verbs; -be, give, have, hold, make, put and take are deadly verbs specifically in a situation when the action they introduce is put in a 'quiet noun'.

Similarly Scollon and Scollon (2003) emphasize the use of cohesive devices like transitional words, enumeration, exemplification, referencing and conjunction. These coherent devices maintain unity and ensure and ensure comprehension.

All these studies lay stress on the use of concrete language. Previous researches on concreteness of language highlight a gap as none of them discusses concreteness in language. So the present study aims to highlight the importance of the use of concrete language in this genre.

2.2. Studies based on politeness strategies

Lakoff (1973) asserts that politeness maintains flow in communication and halts conflict during interaction. Like Brown and Levinson (1986), Lakoff is also of the view that politeness works as a buffer against the jagged edges of interaction. Brown and Levinson (1987) present an interactional model. Their model consists of two dimensions of 'face': a) positive and b) negative. Positive dimension indicates the need to closeness to the addressee and the need to 'belong' to the addressee. Scollon and Schollon (1981) call positive strategies as 'solidarity' because these strategies are adopted to limit the aloofness between the two people. On the positive side of the face the two people ensure cooperation with common goals.

Negative dimension on the other hand, shows tendency toward freedom. Here the two people find themselves independent enough to act freely and without other's help or cooperation. The element of respect is greatly focused to show that the addresser is conscious about the freedom and authority of the addressee. Brown and Levinson (1987) state that three variables may cause a threat to positive or negative face: (1) the social distance between the speaker and the addressee; (2) their "power" relative to each other; and (3) the "absolute ranking of impositions in the particular culture" (p. 74). If the speaker is not of equal status to that of the addressee then he will automatically use negative politeness strategies.

Maier's study conducted in 1992 follows the model furnished by Brown and Levinson (1987). Maier's study indicates that negative strategies like apologies, pessimism, indirectness and giving deference were more common in native English speakers. Positive politeness strategies like optimism, directness, showing interest, offering contribution or a benefit were frequent with the non-native speakers. The use of modals was more common in the native speakers and risky statements were frequently found in the corpus of non-native speakers (pg. 203).

Upton and Connor (2001) extend Maier's study to find differences between non-native Finns and Belgian applicants and Native American writers. They establish lexico-grammatical features of politeness strategies. The analysis has been made on two moves 'requesting for interview' and 'giving thanks for consideration'. They conclude that the American writers use more negative politeness strategies than the non-native writers.

The above studies indicate a gap in Pakistani context. The present study is an endeavor to fill this gap by highlighting lexico-grammatical patterns of politeness strategies in Pakistani job letters.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data Collection

The data collection was made on two grounds: a) letters sent to the academic institutes, b) only original and authentic letters were obtained. Academic institutions were selected to collect the data because of the ease of access due to acquaintance. A total number of 100 job application letters were collected written between the years 2010 to 2014, from private schools and colleges of Faisalabad, Pakistan. These letters were written by the candidates applying for teaching jobs. Some of the candidates were experienced and some of them were fresh

graduates. The principals of these institutes were contacted. Keeping in view the ethical considerations, the principals were made explained about the nature and importance of the study. It was made sure that the applicants' personal information would be kept confidential. Moreover, the analysis was not made on the basis of individual identity of the applicants but on the base of region and nationality.

3.2. Data Processing

The data was analyzed on the following grounds. First, the letters were carefully studied to have a general view of concreteness and abstractness in the letters. Secondly, the data was tagged through using CLAWS TAGGER. This tagger tagged the data according to the parts of speech. At the third stage the tagged data was pasted on 'Ant Conc Software' to determine the frequencies of each lexical item, syntactic patterns, cohesive and rhetorical devices used by the writers of the application letters. It is important to note here that at certain place the CLAWS tagger was found lacking. It does not tag the sub categories of the parts of the speech, for example it does not tag the nouns according to their further divisions like proper nouns, common nouns, abstract or concrete nouns. To determine the frequency of these categories; which was highly important to reach the conclusion, all the nouns were divided and tagged manually. There were further complications like the tagger does not tag the rhetorical features like repetition, parallelism and euphemism because these appear in sentence and only a detailed and critical study of the application letters could determine and classify such devices. So to determine the sentence level analysis for syntactic patterns, rhetorical devices and for politeness strategies the applications were studied carefully and critically and then a qualitative analysis was furnished on the basis of these findings. Thus the data was analyzed both quantitatively (to determine frequency of each item) and qualitatively (to critically evaluate and interpret the applications).

3.3. Data Analysis

All the hundred application letters were quantitatively processed first to determine the level of concreteness in them. The data was further processed to establish qualitative interpretations in the light of expert opinion. The investigations revealed that abstract nouns, quantifiers, passive voice sentences, putting action into the infinitive and noun etc. turn the language abstract and thus less comprehensible. On the other hand, the use of concrete nouns, active voice sentences, possessive adjectives, relative clauses, demonstrative adjectives etc. make the language concrete and therefore intelligible.

All lexical items are classified according to their roles and functions. These word-categories are assigned different names like nouns, verbs, adjectives, articles etc. Some words are more prone to abstractness and ambiguity because they are meant different to different people while other words are more concrete because they convey single meaning to everyone. Following is the discussion related to the lexical items found in the corpus of the present study.

3.3.1. Lexical Items

3.3.1.1. Nouns

Noun is the name of a person, place, thing, idea or quality. In written correspondence, nouns play an important role. In a sentence noun appears as a subject or an object. Saeed (2003, pg.27) considers noun as the most important element of business correspondence. In job letters too if the applicants use the nouns carefully, they can make their writing more vivid and concrete. The nouns, which turn the language vague or vivid, fall in four categories; a) common, b) proper, c) concrete and d) abstract. The noun which connotes single meaning will bring vividness in the language. Proper nouns have single meaning e.g. *Muhammad, Islamabad and Punjab College* cause no ambiguity because they carry just one referent. On the other hand *school, institution and college* turn the language abstract because they refer to many academic institutions. The following table carries the division of nouns in the corpus:

Table 1: Division of nouns in the Corpus

Sr. No.	Types of nouns	Frequency	Total No. of nouns in corpus	Percentage
1	Abstract nouns	427	1113	38.36%
2	Concrete nouns	686	1113	61.63%

The above table indicates that the percentage of abstract nouns is higher than the concrete nouns. Here it is important to explain that the nouns which may carry different connotations for different people are named as abstract and the nouns which have single meaning are considered concrete nouns. To clarify further the following examples are quoted from Corpus;

- (1) It came to my notice through some reliable sources...
- (2) I have come to know through a person...
- (3) I have completed my graduation.
- (4) I have already served in a college as a teacher.
- (5) I did matric in science with first division in 2007.

- (6) With reference to your advertisement in Daily Jung newspaper of July 15, 2013.
- (7) I have been teaching in Shibli Post Graduate College for women since the last two years as a lecturer.
- (8) I have done BA from Virtual University Lahore.

In example 1, 2, 3 and 4, the nouns carry different meanings. In example 1 we cannot determine through which *sources* the person knew about that job. In example 2 again the statement is vague because the addressee cannot determine who that *person* is. In example 4 the applicant informs about his/her *graduation* but again this is ambiguous because the applicant does not mention the subjects like agriculture, arts, biology etc. to make it vivid. Similarly, in example 4 *college* and *teacher* are not clear. The name of the college could have made the statement more concrete and the noun *teacher* could have been clearer if the subject was added with it like *teacher in English* etc. The examples from 5-8 are, however, carrying concrete nouns which make the statements solid and clear. In example 5 the compound noun *matric in science* makes it clear that the person has done his matric in science subjects and the noun *division* also becomes clearer with the addition of *first* with it. In example 6 the reference to the newspaper Daily Jung and with it the addition of date July 15, 2013 makes the statement vivid and leaves no ambiguity in the mind of the addressee. In example 7 the name of the college makes it clear where the person has already served but the use of the word *lecturer* makes it vague as we cannot determine lecturer in what subject. Example 8 is also clear because name of the university is mentioned but it could have been clearer if the person had added the subject or area with *BA* like *BA in Social Sciences*. It is important to note here that the nouns have been considered in the combination and not isolated because in isolation they stay ambiguous but their determiners make it clear like *Matric in Science* has been counted as a single noun.

3.3.1.2. Articles

Articles a, an, and the also play an important role in making the language vivid or vague. The use of definite article 'the' make the noun specific and it shows that the reader is familiar with the noun already. For example if one says, 'I have served in Punjab College. The college polished my abilities.' Here the use of 'the' before 'college' makes it clear that it is that particular college about which the writer has already discussed. The indefinite article 'a' and 'an', however, make the person or thing general. The following table shows the frequency of each article;

Table 2: Division of Articles in the Corpus

Sr. No	Articles	Frequency
1	A	141
2	An	36
3	The	91

Table 2 indicates that indefinite articles are used more in number in the corpus. How the use of articles makes the writing vivid or vague, the following examples have been cited from the letters;

- (1) Kindly appoint me an assistant director in your department.
- (2) So, I request you to grant me a job.
- (3) It would be a point of great honor for me to get appointed in a world class institute.
- (4) I have been working as an assistant teacher...
- (5) I have come to know that there is a post in your department for the forest officer...
- (6) My research work is all about the plant diseases.

In the example 1 the use of article 'an' makes it ambiguous as it is difficult to determine the department in which the person wants to be appointed as an assistant director. The use of 'the' with director makes it easy to clarify that the person wants to be appointed in the department and for a post which is familiar to the addressee. In example 2 the use of 'a' makes the noun 'job' vague because it is difficult to determine about which job the writer is talking about, however, the use of definite article like 'the job' makes it clear to the addressee that the person is talking about the job which is lying vacant in their institute or department. In the examples 5 and 6 the use of 'the' makes the nouns 'forest officer' and 'plant diseases' specific and so more concrete.

3.3.1.3. Adjectives

Adjective is the part of speech that modifies, explains or refers to a noun or a pronoun. There are four types of adjectives which may turn the language vivid or vague: quantifier, numeral, possessive and demonstrative adjectives. Out of these four adjectives only quantifiers create ambiguity. Table 3 gives frequency of each quantifier adjective with examples from the letters.

Table 3: Division of Quantifier adjectives in the Corpus

Sr. No.	Quantifiers Adjectives	Frequency	Examples from the corpus
1	Some	29	<u>Some</u> experience, <u>some</u> sources, <u>some</u> jobs, <u>some</u> vacancies
2	All	10	<u>All</u> about the plants, <u>all</u> the requirements, <u>all</u> copies of documents, <u>all</u> my qualifications
3	Any	14	<u>Any</u> proper job, in any aspect, to handle <u>any</u> sort of problem, <u>any</u> vacancy
4	Both	Zero	Zero
5	Each	Zero	Zero
6	Enough	4	I am <u>enough</u> confident, I am lucky <u>enough</u> , enthusiastic <u>enough</u> , <u>enough</u> flexible
7	Every	1	I can bring <u>every</u> satisfaction concerning job.
8	Few	1	<u>A few</u> posts are vacant
9	Fewer	Zero	Zero
10	Little	Zero	Zero
11	A lot/lot of	2	Which helped me <u>a lot</u> , <u>a lot of</u> vacancies
12	Many	2	I know the <u>many</u> ways, there are <u>many</u> vacancies
13	More/less	Zero	Zero
14	No	14	<u>No</u> source of income, <u>no</u> limit, <u>no</u> expenses,
15	Several	Zero	Zero
16	Large/short	Zero	Zero
Total No. of quantifiers= 311			

Table 3 enlists all the quantifier adjectives in the corpus. The examples in the table indicate that none of the quantifiers gives an exact measure of the extent of the things and their occurrence and thus leave the language vague and difficult to understand.

Numeral adjectives on the other hand provide with exact measure and so leave no ambiguity in measurement or counting. Table 4 gives the frequency of different numeral adjectives used in the letters with examples.

Table 4: Division of Numeral Adjectives in the Corpus

Sr. No.	Numeral Adjectives	Frequency	Examples from the Corpus
1	Firstly	3	<u>Firstly</u> my experience is appropriate
2	First	7	<u>First</u> division, <u>first</u> because it is an Islamic school
3	Date	7	<u>July 15, 2014</u> , <u>4th of June</u> , <u>1st of January</u>
Total No of numeral adjectives = 17			

Table 4 illustrates the use of numeral adjectives in the job letters. The examples stated above indicate that numeral adjectives leave no room for ambiguity and thus they make the language more vivid.

Possessive adjectives are pronoun like forms and they are used by the writers with nouns to indicate possession. My, your, his, her, its, their and whose are possessive adjectives. When possessive adjectives are used with nouns they connote single meaning. Table 5 demonstrates possessive adjectives in the corpus.

Table 5: Division of Possessive Adjectives in the Corpus

Sr. No.	Possessive Adjectives	Frequency	Examples from the corpus
1	My	192	<u>My</u> best, have completed <u>my</u> , <u>my</u> research area
2	Your	130	<u>Your</u> College, <u>your</u> institution, <u>your</u> department
3	His	Zero	Zero
4	Her	Zero	Zero
5	Its	4	<u>Its</u> progress, to be <u>its</u> part
6	Our	Zero	Zero
7	Their	Zero	Zero
8	Whose	Zero	Zero
Total No. of Possessive adjectives = 326			

The example given in the above table illustrate that possessive adjectives convey single meaning. As the present study examines job letters genre, that is why 'my' and 'your' possessive adjectives are largely used here because these application letters are addressed to a single person and are written by a single person.

Demonstrative adjectives indicate that the referent is nearby. These, this, those and that are demonstrative adjectives. The frequency and examples of possessive adjectives are highlighted in table 6.

Table 6: Division of Demonstrative Adjectives in the Corpus

Sr. No.	Demonstrative Adjectives	Frequency	Examples from the corpus
1	These	1	Your school is providing <u>these</u> facilities
2	This	70	<u>This</u> act of kindness, from <u>this</u> department, <u>this</u> job, <u>this</u> year, <u>this</u> subject
3	That	5	<u>That</u> post, <u>that</u> opportunity, <u>that</u> vacancy, <u>that</u> institute
4	Those	Zero	Zero
Total No. of Demonstrative Adjectives = 76			

The above table shows that the demonstrative adjectives make the language vivid and leave no room for vagueness. *These* in the first example indicate that the referent was mentioned in the preceding sentence.

3.3.2. Syntactic Patterns

In the above section analysis was done on word level to see how words cause ambiguity in the sentence. In this section an endeavor has been made to highlight how the order of these words in sentences may bring vagueness and how a tactfully constructed sentence brings vividness in the message. Certain patterns like 'passive voice' sentences cause problem because here the 'doer' of the subject is either missing or appears in 'by phrase'. Similarly putting action in infinitives and nouns can also cause problem in understanding the sentence or message. The following table highlights the distribution of syntactic patterns in the corpus.

Table 7: Division of Syntactic Patterns in the Corpus

Sr. No.	Syntactic Patterns	Frequency	Examples from the Corpus
1	Passive Voice	62	Some seats have been announced by your department
2	Putting action in nouns	36	Kindly give me information about the upcoming interviews
3	Putting action in infinitives	47	I hope you to get maximum benefit from my abilities
4	Relative clauses	18	My CV is attached to the application which contains my whole bio data
Total = 163			

Each syntactic pattern has been explained under its relative section below;

3.3.2.1. Passive Voice

Passive voice sentence do not lay stress on the doer of the action rather they stress on the action itself and the doer goes in the background. Passive construction of the sentences causes ambiguity in the language. Consider the following examples in this context:

- (1) Both the skills and the confidence were imparted in me and further I anticipate to learn from your institution.
- (2) I shall be greatly obliged.

In the above examples the doer of the action is invisible and so it makes the sentences vague and difficult to comprehend. The patients of the sentences take the place of the agents or doers of the action. The sentence is further blurred by the passive construction with the use of past participle with the helping verbs 'were' and 'shall + be'. Here the identity of the doer is completely obscured and we cannot determine 'who imparted those skills and confidence'. Murphy (1997) lays emphasis on the active voice sentences for written correspondence for the business personnel. According to him passive construction blurs the meaning and so it should be avoided.

3.3.2.2. Putting Action into Nouns and Infinitives

Another weird construction which makes the writing vague is when the writers put the action into nouns instead of the action words i.e. verbs. This construction is also called nominalization or camouflaged verb construction. When a verb is camouflaged or nominalized it is changed into a noun. The camouflaged verb obstructs clarity. Consider the following examples in this regard;

- (1) Kindly give me information about the upcoming interviews.
- (2) I hope you to get maximum benefit from my abilities and skills.
- (3) I hope that I will prove myself beneficial for your school.

In the above example the applicants put the action into nouns like 'give' and 'get' which make the construction vague. Instead of giving action to the actual action word which is 'inform' in the first example the writer introduces another dead verb 'give' with it which is of no use and further it makes the sentence abstract. In the second example the writer puts the action into infinitive 'to' and a dead verb 'get'. The verb get cannot be expanded further here. A better construction is demonstrated in the third example which is comparatively vivid.

3.3.2.3. Relative Clauses

Fowler (1933) is of the view that non-defining relative clauses turn the language vague because they do not

identify a person or a thing but rather give extra unnecessary information which is not required. Consider the following examples in this regard:

- (1) My CV is attached to the application which contains my whole bio data.
- (2) My documents that contain statistical illustration about my qualification are attached to the application.

In the above example the relative clauses ‘which contains’ and ‘that contains’, are not vivid because they do not identify the items but furnish additional and needless information about the antecedent.

3.3.3. Cohesive Devices

Many researchers like Schollon (2001) and Murphy (1997) assert that referencing, transitional words, conjunctions, enumeration and exemplification are most preferred devices to ensure concreteness in the writing. The following table indicates cohesive devices in the corpus.

Table 8: Division of Cohesive Devices in the Corpus

Sr. No.	Cohesive Devices	Frequency	Examples from the corpus
1	Referencing	7	With reference to your advertisement...
2	Transitional words and conjunctions	456	...and how to resist the plant diseases
3	Enumeration	25	The following documents are attached: 1)_____...
3	Exemplification	43	As I have already performed such duties so...
Total = 531			

The table reveals that transitional words and conjunctions occupy a large portion of the data. Each cohesive device is discussed below;

3.3.3.1. Referencing

To make the writing clear and concrete the writers use referencing technique. In the present data 7 applicants start their letters with referencing technique. For example;

- (1) It is with the reference of your advertisement...
- (2) With reference to your vacancy announcement in the Daily Jung newspaper...

This start is considered wise by the experts like Murphy (1997).

3.3.3.2. Enumeration

Enumeration is another cohesive device which ensures vividness in the language. Enumerative linking adverbials are used to bring a logical order in the quantity of the things. In the corpus of the present study 25 writers used enumeration to make their application letters more concrete. Enumeration technique saves the addressee from extra effort to find the details about the things. Consider the following examples in this regard:

- (1) The following degrees are attached to the application:
 - i) Matric
 - ii) F.Sc.
 - iii) B. Sc.
 - iv) M. Sc.

In the above example the applicant uses cardinal numbers to show the order of the documents attached to the letter.

3.3.3.3. Exemplification

Exemplification technique is used to make the idea more clear. Fondiller (1999) states that exemplification technique is used to provide example for something or issue. In the corpus 43 times exemplification technique has been used. Consider the following examples;

- (1) As I have already performed these duties at my previous work place so I find myself eligible for this job.
- (2) I am suitable for this job because I have gained sufficient experience such as I have taught 3 years to intermediate classes in a local college.

The above examples clearly indicate that exemplification makes the writing more vivid without which the idea cannot be conveyed to that level of clarity.

3.3.3.4. Transitional Words and Conjunctions

As transitional words and conjunctions are of many types so a separate table has been furnished to show the frequency for each word. See the table below:

Table 9: Division of Transitional words and Conjunctions in the Corpus

Sr. No.	Transitional Conjunctions	Words	and	Frequency	Examples from the Corpus
1	Addition	And		164	...and how to resist the plant diseases
		Moreover		1	Moreover I can teach at bachelor level too.
2	Cause/result	So		16	As I am capable to do this so I request you...
		For		129	...for the forest officer
		If		23	I shall be obliged if you...
		When		1	You will learn about my abilities only when I serve you
		Because		9	...because I find myself suitable...
		As		43	I am master in criminology pharmacy as I topped...
3	Choice	Or		7	...or as a part time teacher
4	Similarities			Zero	Zero
5	Concession			Zero	Zero
6	Condition	If		23	If you give me a chance...
7	Opposites	But		5	I have no experience but I am enough confident...
8	Emphasis			Zero	Zero
9	Conclusion			Zero	Zero
10	Time	Before		15	Before this I was doing a job...
		After		6	After this I served in...
		Since		1	I have been teaching since...
		Then		4	...then I did my masters...
		Next		3	Next research paper...
		Later		3	Later on during my studies I did internship...
		Earlier		3	Earlier to this I have 5 month experience...
Total transitional words and conjunctions = 456					

The above table provides a vivid picture all the transitional words and conjunctions used in the corpus. From the examples it is clear that how the ideas become smooth through these words.

Rhetorical devices

The corpus carries a few examples of rhetorical devices. The examples drawn from the corpus indicate that the rhetorical devices like repetition, parallelism and euphemism make the writing concrete.

Table 10: Division of Rhetorical Devices in the Corpus

Sr. No.	Rhetorical Devices	Frequency	Examples from the Corpus
1	Repetition	3	Kindly study my resume as in my resume...
2	Parallelism	9	By hard work, devotion and dedication...
3	Euphemism	Zero	Zero
Total rhetorical devices = 12			

The table shows that the rhetorical devices were not much utilized by the applicants. Only 12 people examples could be found in this regard. However, it has been observed that wherever these devices are used they not made the writing clear and the argument more powerful but they also brought beauty in the writing.

3.4. Summary of Findings Related to the Use of Vivid and Vague Language

The findings indicate that Pakistani job applicants tend to be more abstract in expression. The nouns used by the applicants scored higher on abstractness and concrete nouns were comparatively less in frequency. Then definite article 'the' was used comparatively less than indefinite article 'a'. The use of definite article turns language concrete because it refers to something specific which is familiar to the reader. Then a large number of quantifiers were used by the writers which cause vagueness in language because these quantifiers do not tell the exact number of something but only a rough estimation like 'large', 'less' etc. cannot tell the exact figure and make language abstract. The division of adjectives indicates that the writers used a very small number (17) of numeral adjectives, however, they used a considerably large number (326) of possessive adjectives and demonstrative adjectives were 76 in number. In 100 letters there were 66 passive sentences. The use of passive voice also turns language vague. In total 163 such syntactic patterns were used by the applicants where the language could cause danger to clarity. The corpus reveals 531 cohesive devices which make the expression comprehensible. On rhetorical devices, however, the applicants scored low with the frequency of 12 only.

3.4.1. Analysis of Politeness Strategies in the Corpus

The study is further extended to explore positive and negative politeness strategies in the present corpus. The examination of the politeness strategies was considered important because Pakistani applicants need to learn about them to meet the standards of international community and to eliminate the level of aloofness while corresponding internationally.

3.4.1.1. Negative Politeness Strategies in the Corpus

Brown and Levinson (1987) theorize that negative politeness is indicated through speaker's respect for the addressee and through a distance revealed through that respect. This distance is considered as a token of acknowledgement for the addressee's independence and authority to perform an action. In the present corpus these negative politeness strategies were demonstrated by the applicants in a number of different ways. These strategies are discussed below;

3.4.1.1.1. Indirectness

Here the speaker indirectly asks for something to avoid a gesture of command. The speaker maintains distance between himself and the addressee for the sake of respect and to indicate that the addressee is authoritative to perform an action according to his will. Directness, on the contrary, can prove unsafe for the speaker because it lurks the freedom of the addressee and resultantly may annoy him or her. Imperative sentences are direct which start with a verb like 'go away', 'give me a chance' etc. Other direct sentences are the ones starting with first and second person pronoun like 'I' and 'you'. Indirect sentences which start other than 'I' and 'you' ensure distance between the speaker and the addressee. In this study only those sentences are considered to be discussed under positive and negative politeness strategies where the applicants were making requests to be contacted or to be appointed. The following table shows the frequency of direct and indirect sentences in the corpus.

Table 11: Division of Direct and Indirect sentences in the Corpus

Sr. No.	Type of Sentence	Frequency	Examples from the Corpus
1	Imperative	3	Give me a chance Sir, and you will find me beneficial...
2	'I' and 'you'	31	I am available for interview any time you desire
3	Other	53	Please, give me a chance...

The above table demonstrates that most of the applicants were indirect in their requests in order to ensure the element of respect for the addressee. Some more examples are given below:

Provide me with an opportunity... (Imperative)

Allow me a chance... (Imperative)

You can get me on the following address... (Sentence with 2nd person pronoun)

I am always here to discuss the many ways to ensure progress to the institute. (Sentence with 1st person pronoun)

If provided with a chance to serve in your institute... (Indirect sentence)

Kindly, consider my candidature... (Command with a respectful note by the use of 'kindly')

3.4.1.1.2. Use of Modals

Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) state that 'social interactional' modals are used to decrease the intensity of the idea being conveyed. These modals are called social interactional because the speaker knows the social situation in which he or she is interacting. The use of modal verb is considered a negative politeness strategy because again they establish a distance between the speaker and the addressee. The modal verbs make the speaker's expectations moderate. The modal verbs that qualify statements are; would, could, may, might, shall and should. The following table shows the frequency for each modal verb.

Table 12: Division of Modals in the Corpus

Sr. No.	Modals	Frequency	Examples from the Corpus
1	Would	16	I am hopeful that I would be perfect for this job. If you give me a chance I would prove myself beneficial...
2	Could	Zero	Zero
3	May	Zero	Zero
4	Might	Zero	Zero
5	Shall	Zero	Zero (occurred in the corpus as a modal of obligation and not for qualifying the statement)
6	should	Zero	Zero

The table reveals that the Pakistani applicants used only 'would' as a qualifying modal for statement. The modal verb 'shall' appeared 22 times in the corpus but it was used as a modal for obligation and not for qualification.

3.4.1.1.3. Formulaic Expressions

Formulaic expressions like 'I look forward to...' may not in themselves a negative strategy, yet they are accepted as norm or as a formula to be implemented in specific situations. So the use of formulaic expressions

presents the applicant as a person who is a follower of rules and this discipline maintains distance between the speaker and the addressee. In the corpus of the present study the formulaic expressions were used by all the 100 applicants. Consider the following examples in this regard;

I look forward...
Thanking you in anticipation...
I am available for...
I express my gratitude...

3.4.1.1.4. Expression of Appreciation

Brown and Levinson (1987) are of that the expression of appreciation is like 'going on record as incurring a debt' (pg. 210). The data reveals that 47% applicants used this expression and in a formulaic manner. Consider the following examples in this context;

I will be very grateful if you consider...
I will be highly thankful if you allow...

3.3.1.2. Positive Politeness Strategies

When the speaker and the one who is being addressed consider themselves equal in rank and as co-workers then positive politeness strategies are expected in communication. Positive politeness strategies emphasize on common goals and aims of the speaker and the addressee. The harm in using the positive politeness strategies is that the speaker may annoy the addressee because the addressee may not consider the speaker as his equal. However, positive politeness carries a note of optimism, directness and frankness. The following points are elaborated under positive politeness:

3.3.1.2.1. Directness

As discussed earlier under negative politeness that the sentences starting with 'I' and 'you' in the letters appeared direct in nature. The imperative sentences like 'give me a chance...' were daring and direct in tone. There were some sentences which though imperative in nature were softened by the use of 'please' and 'kindly' before them like 'Please, consider my application...' and 'kindly pay attention to my application'.

3.3.1.2.2. Optimism

Optimism is positive because here the speaker expresses his hope for his desires to be fulfilled. In the corpus optimism was expressed through such expressions; 'I look forward to...', 'I hope...', 'I anticipate...' and '...in anticipation'.

3.4.2. Summary of Findings Related To the Use of Politeness Strategies

Overall the results indicate that the Pakistani applicants tend to more indirect in their way of making requests and anticipation. Though they have used direct expressions as well where the element of positive politeness is highlighted yet it appeared with other polite words like; 'kindly', 'please', 'Sir' etc. It is important to know that the applicants were well aware of the use of formulaic expressions and they utilized them well where required. The study also revealed humble and submissive nature of the applicants. The expressions like 'If your kind administration gives me a chance...' indicate that the applicant lack confidences about his abilities and submits himself before the addressee in order to be considered for the job. In the use modal verbs the Pakistani applicants surprisingly used only 'would' and other modal verbs were totally ignored.

Conclusion

The study focused on linguistic features of Pakistani job letters. 100 job letters were thoroughly studied to find the possible meanings of the words used by the writers. The investigations show that the applicants had tendency toward vagueness in the use of language. The use of abstract nouns, passive voice, putting the action into nouns and infinitive, unnecessary use of relative clauses and quantifiers turn language ambiguous. Active voice structure should preferably be used as recommended by Murphy (1999). The use of numerals, referencing, exemplification, enumeration etc. should be consciously expanded in the application. These techniques turn the language concrete and resultantly win the favor of the addressee because it saves the time of the addressee to chase the applicant for such confirmation as date of passing the examination etc.

We need to promote awareness for the use of politeness strategies. Though Pakistani applicants use these strategies yet the use can be made more effective. It is observed that in Pakistani institutes while teaching letter writing patterns, the issue of negative politeness and positive politeness is completely ignored. Moreover, the students are seldom given any advice concerning syntactic patterns, rhetorical devices, cohesive devices and such other uses of language.

So the study opens new arenas for the researchers and teachers of English language teaching in Pakistani institutes. For the researchers this study may prove a lead and the prospective researchers can design their studies on this pattern. It is anticipated that this research along with other studies conducted in Pakistani context, would contribute to our society.

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