

Chapter 3

Chapter 3

Politeness Strategies in Khurkhul

3.0 Introduction

3.1 Politeness: Brown and Levinson

3.2 Politeness in Khurkhul

3.2.1 Khurkhul social hierarchy

3.2.2 Khurkhul family hierarchy

3.3 Some Khurkhul politeness strategies

3.3.1 Verbal politeness strategies

3.3.2 Non-Verbal Politeness Strategies

3.3.2.1 Examples of Non-Verbal Politeness Strategies

3.0 Introduction

In simple terms, politeness is a phenomenon created by societies in order to maintain good relation between people at the personal and social level. It helps to avoid conflict, offending others' feelings, and gives less room for tension and so on. Different cultures have different rules of politeness; thus, in some context, 'something' which is treated as polite in one culture might be treated as impolite in another culture.

This chapter studies politeness strategies both verbal and non-verbal in Khurkhul.

3.1 Politeness: Brown and Levinson

For Brown and Levinson (1978), who pioneered the study of (linguistic) politeness, politeness means the consciousness that one has of the other person either the addressee/the participant while talking, behaving, or doing anything; the speaker or doer considered the feelings of him/her/them. In other words, people use language to transmit information, but to do it effectively, language must be used in a manner that will not cause unnecessary friction between the participants. Thus, Ide (1988) claims that a proper speech creates smooth communication, and the association of language with smooth communication is referred as linguistic politeness.

However, as noted, what is appropriate in communication differs from culture to culture. So, if the speaker uses the language without realizing the different appropriateness may cause friction and conflict, though not intended by the speaker. Because, they have different rules of appropriate since they have different social structure and culture. For instance, in many modern western societies Youngers do not have to show respect to their elders in the way their counterparts in a traditional society like Khurkhul are supposed to. In dealing with elders both groups will thus use language not in the same way. In other words, politeness strategies here will obviously vary.

The key notion in Brown and Levinson's politeness model is Goffman's (1967) notion of face: "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself." (The term ultimately derived from the English expression 'to lose face'; see Brown & Levinson (1987 [1978]: 61). Thus, of face, Brown & Levinson (1987 [1978]: 61) writes:

[F]ace is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction. In general, people cooperate (and assume each other's cooperation) in maintaining face in interaction, such cooperation being based on the mutual vulnerability of face [...] since people can be expected to defend their faces if threatened, and in defending their own to threaten others' faces.

The assumption of the authors is that every individual has two faces,

- a) The positive face: it focuses at group interest rather than individual's interest. Thus, it indicates the need to belong and be accepted.

- b) The negative face: it focuses at individual's space rather than group space. Thus, it indicates the need to independent and free from imposition from others. (Thus, the term 'negative' here just means 'opposite', i.e. it does not carry any negative sense).

The authors claim that face is vulnerable to face-threatening acts (FTAs) such as orders, requests, warnings, reminding, and thus politeness strategies. Thus, for example, when one gives a direct order to someone, it implies that the speaker has social power over the person. It is acceptable for a parent to give his or her child a direct order; there might be situations where close friends can give each other direct commands; but giving a direct order to one's colleague or neighbor is in general a FTA and is, therefore, not acceptable.

In very simple terms, the authors argue that politeness is a redressive action counterbalancing the possible face damage of the face-threatening acts (Brown and Levinson, 1987:70). Therefore, this theory assumes that either the speaker's or hearers' face-wants are threatened in most of speech acts as mentioned above. Thus, to save face, argue Brown and Levinson, we engage in various politeness strategies. One way to save someone's negative face is to show concern about imposition. Thus, for instance, if we want help from somebody, we might phrase the request with an initial face saving phrase like *Excuse me* before we say *I'm sorry to bother you* etc. A way of saving someone's positive face would be, for instance, to increase the sense of group belonging. One common strategy for that in English is to use an inclusive *we*, thereby reducing the request into a common act. If, for example, one wishes to start the discussion but his colleague would not stop roaming inside the room and keep talking on his mobile phone, one might use an *indirect speech act*, for example, *Should we sit down and continue?* Where the question removes the assumption of social power: here the pronoun *we* gives a tone of group belonging, even though there is only one intended addressee. Thus politeness is a way of interaction which shows awareness of and respect for someone else's face.

The indirect speech act, as is exemplified above, is a very common face saving device in the modern individualistic society. Leech (1983) states that indirect speech act is considered more polite than direct speech act because it gives more alternative meanings. As a matter of fact, when we engage in indirect speech acts, we actually do not mean exactly what we say. When a stranger carrying a pile of books ask the question, *Do you know where the library is?*, the hearer is likely to interpret it as a command, *Tell me where the library is*, and answer it by giving directions on how to get there, rather than take it as a direct

interrogative speech act and answer something like *Yes, thank you, I know where it is*. Likewise, if a person and his friend are about to get into a car and the friend utters the declarative sentence, *The door on this side is locked*, the person is likely to interpret that as an indirect command, *Open the door for me* rather than just file it as a piece of information and drive off. It is very common for speakers to use speech acts like declaratives and interrogatives as politely disguised requests or commands.

But **indirect** speech acts are not necessarily a politeness strategy across languages and cultures. As noted, when parents use *direct* speech acts with their children or friends do the same with friends, they are not considered FTAs by the addressee. Given this, Brown and Levinson model of politeness is based rather on the modern individualistic society with a strong 'negative face'. Thus, Matsumoto (1988) claims that there is inconsistency between the assumption of 'face' by the two authors and the concept of 'face' in the Japanese culture. She argues that in Japanese culture politeness is governed by acknowledgement of interdependence. In a similar way, Gu (1990) argues that some acts, such as requesting, inviting, and promising, under ordinary circumstances might not be considered as a threat to hearer's negative face in Chinese culture whereas Brown and Levinson might termed them as acts that threaten the hearer's negative face. In Chinese culture, the face of an individual can only be inferred through one's relation to the group (Gu 1990, in Watts 2003).

Blum-Kulka (1987) also argues that the notion of politeness and indirect speech act as parallel dimension: if **direct** speech act is considered as impolite because they denotes a lack of concern of the hearer's face, the **indirect** speech act also can be considered as impolite as it lacks clarity in meaning, because clarity in meaning is the explicitness of speech act in the concept of politeness.

Thus, Brown and Levinson's concept of face and their distinction between positive and negative 'face' may not hold good in all societies, especially the ones governed by collectivism rather than individualism. When the authors regard negative politeness as a more weighty consideration than positive politeness, some communities weight positive face more than negative face. Even in their study, lower-class and middle/upper-class groups differ radically in their tendency to use positive and negative politeness: the middle classes, for them, tend to use negative politeness. However, when British English as a whole is described, it is this middle-class use of politeness which is taken to constitute the

norm for British English as a whole. Thus, the norms of working-class British people are not usually considered to represent British culture. But working-class people may reject certain speech norms which they consider to be associated with middle-class speech and there are many mocking phrases for over-polite, over-refined language. – a discursive tradition with a long history in Britain (see Fitzmaurice 2010).

3.2 Politeness in Khurkhul

As our study reveals, politeness in the Khurkhul society is based on positive rather than negative face. It is, unlike the modern alienated societies, based on a collectivism rather than individualism. The Khurkhuls understand the society as one big family of consanguineal, affinal and social relations.

The notion of negative face threatening seems to be rather alien to the Khurkhul society. For instance, when a child is born to a Khurkhul family, the entire *leikai* (locality) and *khun* (village) have to take the responsibility of rearing the new born baby. From the perspective of some societies, this may rather be a kind of intrusion. But, in the Khurkhul society from his very childhood a Khurkhul learns to live by the advice and wisdom of the elders of the community.

The Khurkhuls seem to be very sensitive about what they call *thaksi-khasi*. To violate *thaksi-khasi* is to lose one's what they call *mingchat*. The literal English translation of the term *mingchat* is 'the name that travels (far and wide)'. It is made of two morphemes, i.e., *ming* 'name' and *chat* 'travel'. Thus, *mingchat* literally means the reputation of an individual that travels far and wide – to the ears of each and every member of the community and beyond. *Mingchat* is considered the most valuable and most important thing in the Khurkhul society. Thus, goes the Khurkhul saying:

pəisa-maŋ-lədi amuk tanbə-jai miŋcət-maŋ-lədi amuk tanba ya-de
 money-lost-if again earn-can reputation-lost-if again earn can-NEG
 'Lost money can be earned again, but not lost reputation.'

Now, the term *thaksi-khasi* in Khurkhul means social bond between the elders and the Youngers, which is finally based on kinship.

<i>tʰək-si</i>	<i>kʰa-si</i>
upper/elder-knot	lower/younger-knot

One of the informants explained the term like this: “*thaksi-khasi* does not mean our social hierarchy. It is a kind of invisible string that binds *thak* (the elders) and *kha* (the younger ones). The elders and the younger must stay connected strongly and firmly by a knot, ensuring smooth sailing of the life of the all in the community.” Thus, the final morpheme *si* ‘knot’ of *thaksi-khasi* metaphorically denotes the tight bond between the older generation and the younger generation. Thus, goes the popular Khurkhul saying:

<i>tʰəksi-kʰasi</i>	<i>kʰəŋ-nə</i>	<i>cət-lu</i>
social bond	know-ADV	go-IMP

‘You must know social bond and practise it.’

We came across the following strong but popular Khurkhul sayings on *thaksi-khasi*

<i>tʰəksi-kʰasi</i>	<i>kʰəŋ-də-bə</i>	<i>mi-di</i>	<i>sa-kum-bə-ne</i>
social bond	know-NEG-NMLZ	man-the	animal-SIMI-NMLZ-CONF

‘The man who does not know social bond is just like an animal’.

<i>əhən-də</i>	<i>tʰəksi-kʰasi</i>	<i>kʰəŋ-də-bə</i>	<i>mi</i>	<i>mi nətte</i>
old-DAT	social bond	know-NEG-NMLZ	man	man not

‘The man who does not know how to behave for social bond to elder is not a man’.

<i>nəhaoire</i>	<i>əhənoire</i>	<i>tʰəksi-kʰasi</i>	<i>kʰəŋ-d-əbə</i>	<i>mi-</i>
either young	either old	social bond	know-NEG-NMLZ	man-
<i>di</i>	<i>kʰunai-də</i>	<i>cənnə-de</i>		
the	society-LOC	accept-NEG		

‘The society does not accept the man, old or young, who does not know social bond.’

tʰaksi-kʰasi kʰəŋ-də-bə mi punsidə caokʰətpa ŋam-de
 social bond know-NEG-NMLZ man in life prosperous can-
 NEG

‘The man who does not know social bond cannot prosperous in life.’

punsidə nəha-əhən kʰəŋnə tʰaksi-kʰasi ŋaknə cətpə mi
 in life young-old know social bond maintain go man
mai-paki
 face-wide

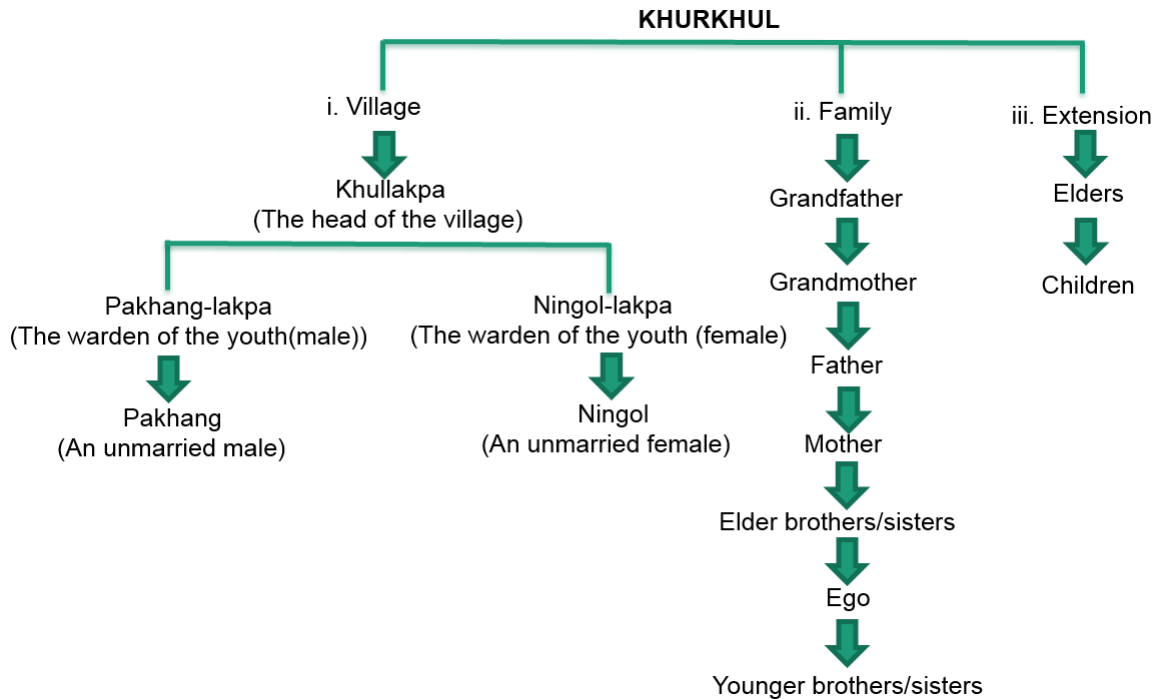
‘The man who knows old-young hierarchy and maintains social bond have a successful life.’

The great importance laid by the Khurkhuls on *thaksi-khasi* perhaps makes it clear that the Khurkhul society is a society with a positive face rather than a negative face (to use Brown and Levinson’s terminology as used and explained above).

3.2.1 Khurkhul social hierarchy

The Khurkhul social hierarchy is schematized in Fig 1 below.

Fig 1: The hierarchy of the Khurkhul society



As noted, the Khurkhuls practice *thaksi-khasi* on the basis of the hierarchy as presented in Fig 1 above. In the immediately following lines the hierarchy in relation to *thaksi-khasi* is explained.

- a) *Khullakpa*: *Khullakpa* is the head of the hierarchy. According to one of the informants, *Khullakpa*, *Pakhanglakpa*, and *Ningollakpa* (see (ii) and (iii) below) were selected and appointed by the King of Manipur before the kingdom was colonized by the British in 1891. After the British colonized Manipur, the Khurkhuls began to select and appoint their heads by themselves. The head has the full authority to punish anyone who violate *thakshi-khasi*.
- b) *Ningol-lakpa* (the warden of daughters): *Ningol-lakpa* (*ningol* ‘daughter’; *lakpa* ‘controller’) teaches *thakshi-khasi* to the female children. The female child is called *leisabi* (nubile) once she is 12 years old and attains puberty. As a *leisabi* she formally joins the band of nubile in the *leikai* (locality) and *khun* (village). For instance, she starts contributing money for *thabal-chongba* (Literally, it means

moonlit dance which is a type of ball organized by the nubile of a community). Besides taking care of all affairs of the girls in the village, *Ningol-lakpa* can impose *wakongsen* (fine) to those who do not follow *thakshi-khashi*.

- c) *Pakhang-lakpa* (the warden of sons): It is *Pakhang-lakpa* who teaches *thakshi-khashi* to the male children of the village. The age to attain *pakhang* is 13. Like a *leisabi* does, once a male child becomes a *pakhang*, he has to involve himself in the activities of the village that a *pakhang* is entitled to. It is the duty of the *Pakhang-lakpa* to fine a *pakhang* if he violates *thaksi-khashi*.

Thus, the Khurkhul society is based on the idea of group interest. The society, therefore, teaches *thaksi-khashi* to the young with all seriousness.

3.2.2 Khurkhul family hierarchy

In many societies age is seen as unavoidable, mutual withdrawal from the society, i.e. declined interaction between the aging person and others, whereas in some communities like Lunda, who speak a Bantu language of the Central African Plateau in the Northwestern corner of Zambia, recognize the necessity of the presence of elder in order to maintain the society. As reported in Mutunda they compare elder with ‘frying pan’ which protects the fire to consume water and water from putting of the fire. They are the medium who keeps peace in the society. Likewise, the Khurkhuls value the presence of the elder in the society and they are the decision makers. Thus, goes one Khurkhul proverb:

<i>naha-nə</i>	<i>maibə-sabə</i>	<i>məŋ-tʰəlle</i>
young-by	male priest-make	graveyard-full

‘When the young tend to ignore *maiba* they bring destruction to the society.

The *maiba* (male local priest) is considered the most knowledgeable person of the village. Thus, *maiba* has a metaphorical sense in the saying cited above. By ignoring *maiba* the young generation only create ‘an entire graveyard. Thus, for the Khurkhuls age is not only a number indicating how old one has become, rather it stands for experiences of life and knowledge. Thus, if one wants to live a peaceful, successful, and prosperous life he should

listen to and learn from the experiences of the elders. Thus, the elder is compared with the pillar of a house. Thus goes another popular Khurkhul proverb:

<i>jumpi-tek-ladi</i>	<i>jum-tekle</i>
pillar-break-if	house-break

‘When the pillar breaks, the house collapses’.

This proverb is often used in the context where there is conflict within a family after the death of the eldest person, who with his knowledge and wisdom, kept the family united, just like the main pillar of a house.

Thus, in the hierarchy of a Khurkhul family, the grandfather holds the highest position; in terms of position, he is serially followed by the grandmother, the father, the mother, the elder brothers/sisters, the Ego, and the younger siblings. In many patriarchy societies, after the death of the grandfather, the father may substitute the highest position of the hierarchy. However, in the Khurkhul society, he is replaced by the person who was next to him in age, be the person is a male or female. Thus, his position usually goes to the grandmother, if alive.

Also, in the Khurkhul society, the name of the eldest person of the family is used in inviting to a ceremony like marriage, because it is he/she who represents the family. In many patriarchy societies, after the death of the grandfather, it might be the father whose name is used in the invitation. However, in the Khurkhul society, it may be the grandmother if she is now in the highest position.

3.3 Some Khurkhul politeness strategies

We have discussed in the preceding chapters the wide and strict practice of *thaksi-khasi* in the Khurkhul society as evidence to the fact that the Khurkhul society is based rather on what Brown and Levinson (ibid) call ‘positive face’.

However, in certain areas, ‘negative face’ seems to apply to this society, which we discuss below.

3.3.1 Verbal politeness strategies

Indirect speech act: It is considered sparsely impolite to speak about menstruation, pregnancy, delivery and the like in direct language. The Khurkhuls are very careful that they use indirect speech acts in such cases, which are basically euphemistic expressions. A direct speech act here would immediately be considered ‘a negative face threatening act’. In Table 1 below some direct and their indirect expressions are populated.

Table 1: Some direct and indirect expressions in Khurkhul

Direct expressions	Indirect expressions
<i>ahanba mangba</i> (first menstruation)	<i>masa leppa</i> (stopping body growth)
<i>angang pokba</i> (delivering of a baby)	<i>angang unnaba</i> (meeting a baby)

Phatic communication: Leech (1983) introduces the Phatic Maxim as the activity of talking merely to preserve sociability. But in many modern western societies, because of alienation, phatic utterances may be considered FTAs against the hearer’s negative face so that the safest way is to remain silent. However, many scholars argue that silence can be treated as bad mood or shyness (e.g. Jaworki, 1993, Sifianou, 1995).

Being silent is considered very impolite in the Khurkhul society. A very popular Khurkhul folk tale thus goes like this:

One upon a time, there was a ningol mawa (husband who lives in wife’s home). Phatic communication would not come to him. One day his wife openly told how angry her mother is that he never exchanges a word when passes by her. The man realized that he did a mistake and thought he must immediately compensate for it. So, the man rushed to the toilet where his mother-in-law was meeting nature’s call at that time. He knocked at the door of the toilet rapidly, asking her: “inempok, thi phairiro?” ‘Mother-in-law, are you producing stool?’

This folk tale is often used to criticize and mock at a man who does not know when to talk and when not to, i.e. how to save the positive and the negative face. But facts remain that this is rather an extreme example of negative face.

Thus, in the Khurkhul society one is expected to make phatic communication; it is not considered as a negative face threatening act.

In the Table 2 below, is presented form of language used in phatic communication in Khurkhul.

In a language like English, the topic of phatic communication is mostly weather; the form is usually affirmative (e.g It is a cold day). In Khurkhul, the topic is rather related to day-to-day activities and the form is interrogative. From an English perspective, such expressions may, however, be considered FTAs, but for the Khurkhuls such phatic questions of private nature mean rather concern for the hearer; they are thus welcome as language of friendship and bondage. The Khurkhuls use the term *chinlumba* ‘the heavy mouthed’ to scornfully refer to a person who is bad at phatic communication.

Table 2: The phatic language in Khurkhul

Khurkhul	Gloss
<i>Chak chariro?</i>	(Are you) eating rice?
<i>Chak thongiro?</i>	(Are you) cooking rice?
<i>Phi suiro?</i>	(Are you) washing clothes?
<i>Tummiro?</i>	(Are you) sleeping?
<i>Phammiro?</i>	(Are you) sitting?
<i>Cha thak (l)iro?</i>	(Are you) drinking tea?
<i>Ensang hek(l)iro?</i>	(Are you) plucking vegetables?

Address terms: Homes (1992), “The choice of address terms can be a sign of politeness since it is closely depends on the interactant’s relationship or social distance” (Holmes, 1992, 268). Address term signifies human’s conscious and unconscious presentation of their identities, their belonging to a specific culture or group and also their tendencies to become closer or distant from others. Different address terms imply different degrees of distance and closeness. Thus, in the Khurkhul society, the right use of address terms is one important linguistic means of politeness, like in many other linguistic communities.

Teknonymy: It is a practice in which parents cease to be known by their personal names after the birth of their first child. They are then known as ‘father of (the child’s name) and ‘mother of (the child’s name) (Mandende, 2009, 53). Teknonymy is to be found in many

languages of Africa and Asia. It is commonly practiced in Khurkhul as well. Once parents have their first baby, whether it is a boy or a girl, they address each other by using the name of the child, e.g. if the name of their first child is *Ibungo*, the father addresses his wife as *Ibungo maaaa* (Ibungo’s mother) and the wife also addresses her husband as *Ibungo mapa* (Ibungo’s father). As was pointed out by an old informant (late Louriyam Sukorsing), this way of addressing make the husband and the wife aware that they are now parents, their life is now with another life with definite responsibilities towards him.

In fact, it is only after the child is born that a woman gets a term to address her husband. Before the child is born, she has no term to address him. Thus she practices *namhai* (addressing indirectly). For example, she utters expressions like *taribo* (“Can you hear me?”); *keino* (something); *sida* (here) etc are used until they have their first child. Khurkhuls hold teknonymy as a polite way of addressing his wife/her husband.

Kinship, as Cheal puts it, “is the main basis around which social relationship are organized” - (Cheal, 2008:117). So, kinship is the root ground that enables people to organize their relation to one another. Despite the intimate relationship and solidarity space shared by individuals in the family, the Khurkhul society maintains politeness with the help of kinship address terms. Here, a kinship address term does not mean only an ‘address term’, but also the responsibilities and respects to one another. Some kinship address term are listed in Table 3 below (see also Chapter 2 on kinship terms in Khurkhul).

Table 3: Some Kinship address terms

Father’s side	Gloss	Mother’s side	Gloss
<i>pachi</i>	Father	<i>Ima</i>	Mother
<i>ipu</i>	Grandfather	<i>Ipu</i>	Grandfather
<i>ipen</i>	Grandmother	<i>Ipen</i>	Grandmother
<i>ipanthou</i>	Father’s elder brother	<i>imanthou</i>	Mother’s elder sister
<i>imanthou</i>	<i>ipanthou</i> ’s wife	<i>Ipanthou</i>	<i>imanthou</i> ’s husband
<i>iton</i>	Father’s younger brother	<i>Inomcha</i>	Mother’s younger sister
<i>inomcha</i>	<i>iton</i> ’s wife	<i>Ìton</i>	<i>inomcha</i> ’s husband
<i>ine</i>	Father’s sister	<i>Mamma</i>	Mother’s brother
<i>mamma</i>	<i>ine</i> ’s husband	<i>Ine</i>	Mamma’s wife

The use of kinship terms before the second person pronoun is one politeness means in Khurkhul. Khurkhul does not have binary distinction in second person pronoun. In many of the European languages it is very common to have a binary distinction of second person pronoun, where one form is considered familiar and the other polite. This binary distinction in pronouns of address is often called T/V pronouns, after the Latin *tu* (you.sg.nom) and *vos* (you.pl.nom). In the sample of 207 languages on politeness distinctions in second person pronouns, Helmbrecht (2011) found that 49 languages (23.7%) make use of this kind of binary distinction, for instance, in French distinction *tu/vous*, both of which refer to a single person.

However, the second person singular pronoun in Khurkhul, as noted, does not have the above-mentioned binary division. Thus, it is just *nang* (you), which goes with all.

iton nang ca-rə-bo
 uncle you eat-PERF-INT
 ‘Uncle, have you eaten?’

inao nang ca-rə-bo
 last younger brother/sister you eat-PERF-INT
 ‘Your brother and you have eaten.’

The plural form of the second person is *noi* which, unlike the V pronoun as mentioned above, has nothing to do with politeness. It denotes only plurality. This is clear from the following example.

mammə noi ca-rə-bo?
 maternal uncle you (PL) eat-PERF-INT
 ‘Uncle, have all of you eaten?’

The T form is the ‘familiar’ form and it is considered as the most direct way of addressing. Thus, a language that has T form for both familiar and politeness, can be considered as a direct form of language (Frajzyngier and Jirsa, 2006). Thus, Khurkhul can be considered as a direct form of language.

3.3.2 Non-Verbal Politeness Strategies

According to Ambady *et al* (1996) there are two main reasons why nonverbal politeness should include in the study of politeness:

The daily face to face conversation is not purely verbal or linguistic; it is a mixture of both linguistic and non-linguistic ways. For instance, the same semantic terms may interpret in different meaning according to different facial gesture.

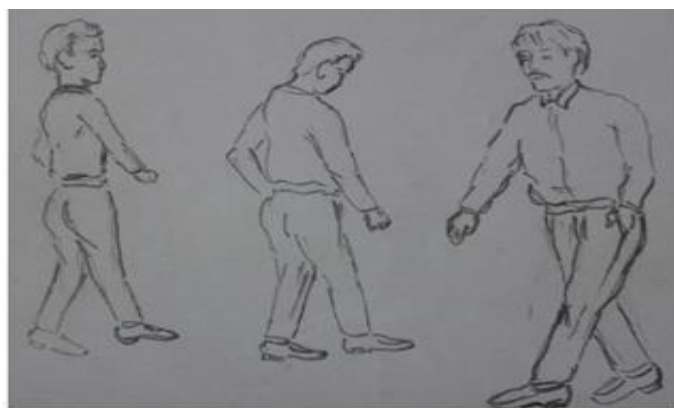
Goffman's (1967) conceptualization of 'face work' is considered the base of politeness theory where he clearly suggested that a great deal of face work occurs through expressive behavior and nonverbal channels of communication.

The Khurkhul society uses many non-verbal politeness strategies to maintain politeness in the society. The Khurkhul society might not sustain without it, its absence might cause conflict between the speakers. Thus, in maintaining *thaksi-khasi* non-verbal politeness means play a very important role. Also note that all these politeness means are named in Khurkhul, i.e. there are single terms referring to them.

3.3.2.1 Examples of Non-Verbal Politeness Strategies

The following are some of the non-verbal politeness strategies use in Khurkhul.

Image1: *Marailukpa*



Marailunkpa: It literally means 'walking with the head down'. *Marailunkpa* is practiced in front of elders as a sign of politeness. In Image 1 above, we see two children walking in

front of an elder. The second child is impolite as he violates the norm of *marailunkpa*. So, it's a social norm for children to walk looking downwards in front of the elders. Thus they say,

m̄arailukt̄ab̄-əj̄aŋ

walking with no head down-child

punsid̄ə

in life

maipak-te

wide face-NEG

‘The child who does not know how to respect the elder never success in life.’

Thus, from this saying, it is observed that *marailukpa* is one of the important non-verbal politeness strategies of the Khurkhul society. From the perspective of some other culture it might look an impolite or rude imposition on the younger, but this may or is not be case.

Kokkumppa: It literally means ‘covering head’. It is practiced by only married women. There are three situations where women need to cover their heads:

Image 2: Kokkhumba (covering head)



The Ego knows beforehand that *itei* (the elder brother of her husband) is present, so she already covers her head.

The Ego confronts *itei* (the elder brother of her husband) suddenly, so she lifts her *phina* (the tail of a shawl) to cover her head.

The Ego confronts *itei* (the elder brother of her husband) in an odd situation where she is without a *phina*. So, she uses her hand to cover her head.

The woman practices this nonlinguistic politeness means in three contexts:

When she is newly married. She covers her head in front of her in-laws. It symbolizes her respect towards the in-laws, i.e. with this she maintains the 'right' distance. This is relaxed once she becomes closer to her in-laws with the passes of time.

When a woman is in some public place or in some social ceremony, e.g. in a marriage ceremony, she covers her head as a respect to elders who might be present there.

However, it is only in the relation between Ego and her husband's elder brother she needs to cover her head. This relation doesn't allow any relaxation here. Ego has to cover her head, no matter how uncomfortable the context is, as shown in (c) of Image 3 above. They are expected to maintain distance throughout. However, this seems to have nothing to do with Brown and Levinson's negative face wants; this is done to nip at the bud any possible sexual attraction between each other from each other. One of the informants said, "Perhaps it has become almost instinctive with us. When we see *itei*, we automatically pick up anything within our reach - sometimes it can even be my own slippers or my son's pants I was taking out to wash!"

Phamlen: The mat on the right side of the *mangkol/mangkon* (the front courtyard of the house) is called *phamlen*.

Image 3: Phamlen



Phamlen is the seat of the eldest person of the family. For instance, in a family, where there is a grandfather and a grandmother, only the grandfather will sit on it. Others (i.e. grandmother, father, mother, and their siblings) will sit on the mat placed at *mangchok* (the mat which is placed opposite to *phamlen*). It is considered absolutely impolite for these ‘others’ to sit on *phamlen*.

Khongkaichanba: It means sitting with folded knees. Only the eldest person in the family is allowed to sit in this position.

Image 4: Khongkaichanba

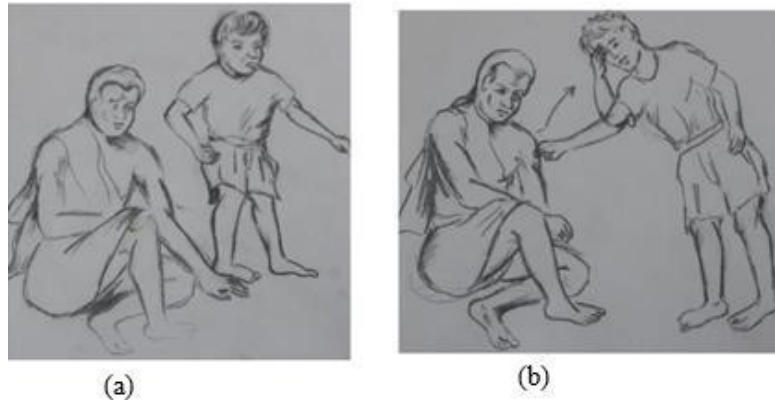


They believe, if children sit in that position, the life span of the parents will become short.

Laibakkatpa. This single term for the non-verbal politeness means which involves kicking someone unintentionally or something of that sort. In *laibakkapta*, one touches his forehead

as a symbol of an apology. In (a) of Image below, the boy unknowingly stepped on the other person's foot. He thus touches his forehead in front of him as seen (b).

Image 5: *Laibakkatpa*



This nonlinguistic politeness means gives an idea how the Khurkhul society views different body parts. The *laibak* 'forehead' is often compared in Khurkhul with a *thambal* 'lotus', something sacred and beautiful; the *khuya* 'foot' with *uphun* 'sand', something rather ordinary. Thus, children are always taught not to miss *laibakkatpa*. They are thus warned: "*ahanda khongna sokladi laibakkatlo nattradi ahan oiraga khong nikkani*". If you do not perform *laibakkatpa* after stepping on the elder's foot your legs may become paralysed.'

Lambi niba (Nonlinguistic way of asking for a way):

When an English speaker wants to ask for a way in the crowd, he says, "*Excuse me*", or "*May I have a way, please*". However, the Khurkhuls in most cases use nonlinguistic gestures to ask for a way or to seek permission to be part of a group. Males and females performs this slightly differently as can be seen from Image 6 below.

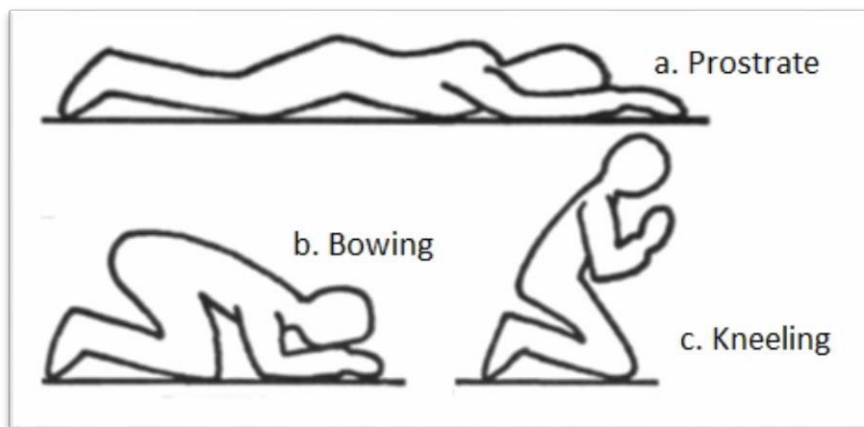
Image 6: Lambi niba (Seeking a way out)



If the person male then put his left hand fingers on the right hand between the elbow and the wrist. As he does this he slightly bends his body. In the case of a female, the left hand fingers are put at the start of the wrist.

Khurumba: The Khurkhuls practice *khurumba* (i.e. *thaksi-khashi* postures) as a means to show respect to elders; loyalty or commitment to a superior or to a group or cause. *Khurumba* is thus not necessarily religious; rather it is an important means with which the Khurkhul maintains balance and harmony in personal and social relations. As can be seen from Fig 7 below there are three variants of *khurumba*, which have different meanings.

Image 7: Khurumba



Khurumba is thus used mainly in praying, asking blessings/forgiveness from elders; while entering the *sonnapung* (mandap, i.e. a temporary platform set up for weddings and religious ceremonies), and *nupi haiba* (seeking hand in marriage).

In asking for blessings both males and females use (b) in Image 7 above.

Before entering the *sonnabung*, a male performs (a); the female (b). This is done to show respect to those who have already arrived.

In *nupi haiba* (seeking bride's hand), the elder (male) who goes to the bride's place performs (a) to the parents of the bride as a prayer to accept the marriage proposal.

To get one's wife back, who has left his place following a quarrel, the husband and his parents have to perform *khurumba* to her parents and the entire *sagei*.

A younger must perform *khuruma* (especially (a) above) to an elder when the younger had entered into a quarrel with him or her. When it is two person of the same age, they both must perform *khurumba* (especially (a) above) to those who have resolved the conflict between them.

Sitting order: In any social gathering or in a family, youngsters will always take their seats to the left of the elders. Children will not be sitting while an elder or elders are standing.

Image 8: Sitting order



This 'right to left' position applies to the spatial position of the houses of sons of a family, too. A younger brother will build his house only to the left of the house of his immediately elder brother. Thus, the spatial positions of houses in the Khurkhul society indicates the birth positions of the sons of family: the owner of the house at the extreme right was born first; the owner of the house at the extreme left was born last (see Fig 9 below).

Fig 2: Spatial order for houses of sons

