

Politeness in Iranian Native Speakers' Interactions

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Abstract

The study of politeness is crucial to the study of social interaction. In this regard, this study aims to analyze the speech of 20 Iranian native speakers from the south of Iran in order to investigate the extent of politeness in their speech. In order to elicit the participants' speech, a researcher-made discourse completion task was used. In order to analyze the data, Brown and Levinson's (1987) faced-based model was used. The results of the test indicated that Iranian native speakers' speeches were polite and the participants used negative and bald strategies in their interactions more than other strategies. The study showed that Iranian speakers use politeness strategies when required.

Keywords: bald strategies, discourse completion task, politeness, strategy faced-based model

INTRODUCTION

Brown and Levinson (1987) differentiate between negative and positive politeness strategies. In the former, politeness strategies are based on generating respect and social differences, while the latter use politeness strategies to show affection and solidarity between speakers (Barros & Terkourafi, 2014). Politeness strategies are vital linguistic mechanisms by which a speaker's attitude toward, and evaluation of, his or her relationship with another speaker is mirrored (Holmes, 1992). According to Brown and Levinson (1987) everyone has a positive and negative "face". Brown and Levinson assert that "face" is associated with the notion of being embarrassed or humiliated. It is something in which people are emotionally invested and that can be lost, maintained or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in an interaction (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Face can be related to the notion of "want": positive face is the want of one's wants to be approved of by others (approval) and negative face is the want of one's action to be unimpeded by others (autonomy). Since the use of politeness is universal, the study of politeness paved the way for further sociolinguistic research. The use of politeness strategies indicates the extent and degrees of politeness in a society (Cohen, 2010). Many sociolinguistics' attentions hold attraction for the study of politeness. Although some studies have been investigated politeness in Iran, this subject seems to

be overlooked and needs to be more regarded. The findings of this study are expected to be beneficial to experts in linguistics and sociology and also to those who are eager to conduct studies in the fields of sociolinguistics and the sociology of language.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Politeness is a dominant concept in human interaction (Yu, 2003). Lakoff (1973) defines politeness as the verbal realization of proper social behavior that facilitate interaction among people. Brown and Levinson (1987) define politeness as what the interlocutors attempt to do in order to save face in interactions. According to Sifianou (1992) politeness is the set of social values which speakers consider each other by satisfying shared expectations. Politeness is an effort to emphasize shares attitudes and values avoid intruding on other people (Yu, 2003). Lakoff (1973) creates three rules of politeness; formality, deference and camaraderie. According to Lakoff (1973), formality rule creates distance between the speaker and addressee. The second rule, deference gives the addressee the power to decide how to behave or what to do. The third rule, camaraderie show sympathy, this rule makes the addressee feel liked.

The third politeness theory is Brown and Levinson (1987). The theory says that everyone has a face that wants to keep in the interaction. The face includes negative and positive. Sometimes, the speakers decide to get what she/he wants, so he/she makes face-threatening acts. She/he decides to do. Off-records that is expressing his and her desire implicitly or baldly that means to do the acts. Brown & Levinson (1987) asserts that the speaker attempts to minimize the threat to the addressee's face by using action in this regard he/she uses appealing to the addressee's positive or negative face. Positive politeness strategies include claiming common ground, conveying cooperation with the addressee, fulfilling addressee's wants. In other hand, negative politeness strategies includes being direct, making minimal assumption about addressee's Leech (1983) studies politeness through the theory of illocutionary functions. He classifies illocutionary act into four different types: competitive, convivial, collaborative, and conflictive. Leech states that competitive function, competitive function competes with the social goals (e.g. ordering); convivial functions deals with the social goal (e.g. inviting), collaborative goal concerns with being indifferent to be social goal (e.g. reporting); and conflictive goal that conflicts with the social goal (e.g. threatening). Fraser (1990) theory of politeness regards politeness as face-saving view; the conversational-contract view claims that the speakers enter a conversation with obligation rules they have to obey. Watt (2003) also introduces the theory of the social model of politeness. He asserts that politeness is a socially constituted medium that its functions derived from values.

METHOD

Participants

The participants in the study were 30 male and 30 female participants that were selected through snowball sampling. They aged from 10 to 45. They were from the south of the Iran; Asaloye, Kish, Shiraz, and Zahedan.

Instruments

Discourse Completion Task

In order to elicit the speech of the speakers, a discourse completion task was given to the participants. The task included 15 items that posed questions about different types of speech acts; ordering, requesting, inviting, congratulating, warning.

Procedure

In order to elicit the extent of the participants' politeness, 20 participants were selected through snow sampling. The participants received the task through email, telegram application and paper and pen format. They were asked to answer the questions and sent or gave their answers to the researcher. In order to analyze the data, Brown & Levinson (1987) face-model was used. The responses were codified and analyzed quantitatively.

RESULTS

In order to find out whether the speeches of the interlocutors were polite or not, the researcher codified each utterance as polite or impolite. Table 1 reports the numbers of polite answers to the questions.

Table 1. The Numbers of Polite Answers

items	Numbers of Polite Answers
1	20
2	20
3	20
4	20
5	20
6	20
7	19
8	20
9	20
10	20
11	20
12	20
13	20
14	20

As table 1 shows almost the participants used speech acts politely. However, one participant answered one question using taboo word that the answer was identified impolite by the researcher. Table 2 illustrated the analysis of the participants answers based on the Brown and Levin's (1987) face model.

Table 2. Brown and Levin's (1987) Face Model Analysis

Politeness Strategies	Total Politeness Strategies
Bold on Record	300
Off on Record	0
Negative politeness strategies	190
Positive Politeness strategies	110

As table 2 shows, out of 20 participants, Bold on record politeness strategies used 300 times by Iranian native speakers, on the contrary they never used off on record strategy. Moreover, the participants used negative strategy more than positive strategy.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the current study was to investigate whether Iranian native speakers were polite or not. In order to answer the question a researcher-made discourse completion task was given to 20 participants. The results of the study showed that Iranian native speakers were used politeness strategies in speech acts such as ordering, inviting, requesting, and warning and congratulating. The results also showed that Iranian native speakers used bold on record politeness strategy in using speech acts such as ordering, inviting, requesting, and warning and congratulating, on the contrary, they never used off-on record in using such speech acts. The participants used both negative and positive strategies in their speech that showed they tend to convey cooperation with the addressee, fulfilling addressee's wants and be direct in expressing their desires. The results of the study can have different implications. It seemed that Iranian native speakers use negative strategy more than positive strategy and the reasons pragmatically and psychologically should be investigated by future researchers. It is interesting to mention that the adult participants' responses to the questions varied while the young participants' responses to the questions were almost the same. The present study could just consider some speech acts such as inviting, requesting, and warning and congratulating while the other speech acts such as suggesting, apologizing, thanking, regretting, etc. were eliminated due to lack of time. Future research might explore the aforementioned issues.

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Appendix: Discourse Completion Task

جنسیت	تحصیلات
۱. شما قصد دارید که با بیرون بر تماس بگیرید و سفارش غذا بدهید شما خواهید گفت:	
۲. شما قصد دارید از مادر خود بخواهید که کتابی را برای بیاورد شما خواهید گفت:	
۳. شما به کارگر خود دستور برداشتن بسته ای را می دهید شما خواهید گفت:	
۴. شما قصد دارید استاد خود را به شام دعوت کنید شما خواهید گفت:	
۵. شما قصد دارید دوست خود را برای دیدن فیلم به سینما دعوت کنید شما خواهید گفت:	
۶. شما قصد دارید نامزد یا همسر خود را به مهمانی دعوت کنید شما خواهید گفت:	
۷. شما می خواهید به مزاحم تلفنی خود بخاطر مزاحمت هشدار دهید شما خواهید گفت:	
۸. شما می خواهید به خواهر یا برادر خود بخاطر شراکت با فردی که مورد اعتماد نیست هشدار دهید شما خواهید گفت:	
۹. شما می خواهید به کارمند خود بخاطر دیر آمدن به محل کار هشدار دهید شما خواهید گفت:	
۱۰. همسایه ی شما صاحب نوزاد شده است و قصد دارید به او تبریک بگویید شما خواهید گفت:	
۱۱. دوست شما قصد ازدواج دارد شما قصد تبریک به او دارید شما خواهید گفت:	
۱۲. برادر شما ماشین خریده است و شما قصد تبریک به او دارید شما خواهید گفت:	
۱۳. شما سردرد گرفته اید و از دوست خود می خواهید برای شما قرص بخرد شما خواهید گفت:	
۱۴. از پدر خود می خواهید به شما مقداری پول بدهد شما خواهید گفت:	
۱۵. از خدمتکار خود می خواهید که برای شما یک لیوان آب بیاورد شما خواهید گفت:	