

Literature Review on the Phenomenon of Politeness in Classrooms

لمحة أدبية حول اللياقة اللغوية في الأقسام الدراسية

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Abstract :

Through the present study, we aim at investigating the relationship between three main issues, gender, politeness and classroom interaction. One is trying to explain the linguistic behaviour of male and female students when they interact in the classroom. We specified the CEIL students as a case in point checking gender differences between them and how it affects their linguistic behaviour during class interaction. It is recommended that interaction is valuable to language development. However; different sociolinguistic variable interferes mainly the way students behave when they communicate in their classes. Therefore, male and female students are dissimilar from each other physically, psychologically and linguistically which reflect their politeness especially when the setting is restricted at classroom borders. The problematic statement raised tries to explain how males and females use politeness strategies in one classroom while interacting.

Keywords : Gender, Politeness, Class interaction, Behaviour , Variables.

ملخص البحث

من خلال هذه الدراسة، نهدف إلى التحقق من العلاقة بين ثلاث قضايا رئيسية، الجنس، الأدب والتفاعل داخل الفصل. يحاول أحدهم شرح السلوك اللغوي للطلاب والطالبات عندما يتفاعلون في الفصل. حددنا طلاب CEIL كحالة في نقطة التحقق من الاختلافات بين الجنسين، وكيف تؤثر على سلوكهم اللغوي أثناء تفاعل الفصل. من المستحسن أن يكون التفاعل ذا قيمة لتطوير

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اللغة. ومع ذلك؛ فإن متغيرا اجتماعيا لغويا مختلفا يتدخل بشكل رئيسي في الطريقة التي يتصرف بها الطلاب عندما يتواصلون في فصولهم الدراسية. لذلك، يختلف الطلاب والطالبات عن بعضهم جسديًا ونفسيًا ولغويًا مما يعكس أديهم خاصةً، عندما يكون الإعداد مقيّدًا على حدود الفصل الدراسي. تحاول الإشكالية التي أثّرت شرح كيفية استخدام الذكور والإناث لاستراتيجيات الأدب في فصل دراسي واحد أثناء التفاعل.

كلمات مفتاحية : الجنس ، الأدب ، التفاعل الطبقي ، السلوك ، المتغيرات.



1. Introduction:

One of the topics frequently studied is *politeness*. People have to be polite everywhere. However, politeness in classrooms is different since it is governed by its own rules that can be adopted and adapted relying on the linguistic and the social variables.

Communication forms function in a society respecting the norm of politeness. It gathers the majority of the researches' themes in human sciences studies. It reveals social and cultural aspects interpreted as acts exchange at the level of communication, social discourse and relationships, mimes, gestures, body language and codes use. Learning languages is a spot of interest for various purposes.

For this reason, centres of teaching languages are opened; some are private and others tag along with state control like the Intensif Language Learning Centre(CEIL), which is an institution at some Algerian universities, Tlemcen, Oran, Algiers, Constantine and others. Tlemcen's CEIL is a setting where many languages are taught; Arabic (particularly for Chinese), French, English, Italian, German, Spanish and Turkish, in addition to ESP. CEIL classes aim at experiencing real communicative situations that permit them to express themselves and develop their speaking skill. Classroom interaction creates opportunities to develop knowledge and learning skills.

CEIL classrooms offer opportunities for spontaneous use of the target language; we hypothesize that females are more polite than men in classroom interaction; they are keen on using politeness

strategies spontaneously. We, also, assume that females interact more than males in many ways, and their linguistic behaviour relies on the learning environment where, most often, the social variables do not interfere. The investigation started by observation, note taking, some questions asked, indirectly, in the fieldwork, besides, questionnaires and DCT. The sampling is varied between males and females from different regions, cultures, age and background.

2. Some Features of Politeness

Lakoff (1973) was among the first who relied on politeness principles to extend grammatical rules and consider the form of sentences (i.e) specific constructions for either to be polite or not. She proposed two rules of pragmatic competence; being clear and polite. In 1990, Lakoff defined politeness as “a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange”¹

Leech (1983) introduced the politeness principle that functions to establish a social balance and friendly relations; which enable people to assume that the interlocutors are cooperative. Then, he proposed six interpersonal maxims: Tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, agreement maxim and sympathy maxim. Besides, Leech made a distinction between politeness in a specific situation, named “relative politeness”, and the degree of politeness associated with the speakers’ actions or “absolute politeness”.

Politeness by Watts (1989) is viewed as “explicitly marked, conventionally interpretable subset of 'politic' responsible for the smooth functioning of socio-communicative interaction and the consequent production of well-formed discourse within open social groups characterized by elaborated speech codes”². It is, then, an expected linguistic behaviour.

Cruse (2000) defined politeness as "a matter of what is said, and not a matter of what is thought or believed."³. Politeness, from this perspective, aims at maintaining social relations that are necessary for message transmission such as social, psychological and even physical nature of reality.

Scollon (2001) suggested a social interaction model which explains face relations in an intercultural communication frame through introducing the idea of *involvement* to focus over people’s rights and

needs. The involvement action decreases the social distance between speakers and listeners through different ways such as using first names, paying attention to each other, encouraging group membership...etc.

Politeness is a dynamic concept and an interpersonal activity related to everyday life. It is defined by Watts et al (2005) as “a set of strategies to achieve social goals with a minimum of social friction”⁴. Lakoff (1975) added that politeness is developed by societies where the friction in personal interaction is decreased.

Politeness varies between different social groups which makes it a moral concept. It is said that politeness can be adapted at any time under various circumstances, moral values and human behaviour can be changed over time. In the 18th century, politeness had been used to distinguish social classes. Thus, it has been regarded as a central concept in the formation of social classes.

Malinowski came up with another aspect of politeness related to the social functions by investigating the human tendencies to be in groups and share social values, feelings and ideas. Furthermore, Fairclough (2006) drew attention to the ideological dimension illustrating this with turn-taking in the classroom or the conventions between teachers and learners describing ideological assumptions of social relationships and identities.

I. The Notion of Face

In the field of politeness, ‘face’ is a crucial term of Asian origin. It was used, in the ancient time, metaphorically to describe a person’s qualities and characteristics. Yet, each researcher sees it in a personal vision. The purpose of the face to Goffman, for instance, is “to describe the self-image which the speaker or hearer would like”⁵. On the other hand, Brown & Levinson claimed that “face is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction” *idem*. All in all, face is one’s self-image expected by others.

Two subcategories of face are identified; positive and the negative face. Watts (2003) suggested that positive face is characterized as “the individual’s desire that her/his wants be appreciated and approved of in social interaction”, while the negative face is “the desire for freedom of action and freedom from imposition” *ibid*: 19.

The notion of face had a metaphorical function across cultures. It reveals individual values and characteristics like honour, respect, nobility and self- esteem. The pioneers of politeness studies set two kinds of face, positive and negative. What persons valued in a public interaction are the *positive face* and the need for the freedom of actions and escaping imposition is the connotation of the *negative face*. Brown and Levinson's theory presumes that any given speech act threatens either the speaker's or the listeners' face, hence, it is the task of politeness to lessen such threats. Goffman defines the face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact"⁶. The face can have various forms depending on the occurrence of the verbal and the social interactions leading to negotiating facework within the boundary lines of political and linguistic behaviour.

3. Intercultural Aspect of Politeness

Oral communication is the tool of social interaction to maintain relationships. To determine social and suitable manners, one would better mind the cultural aspects that have a direct influence over language. Culture settles on different social variables that affect language use in one way or another influencing the correlation between participants emphasizing age, power, solidarity and context. According to Hofstede (1994):

Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (...) Keeping in line with this definition ,Spencer-Oatey (2000b) defines culture as "a fuzzy set of attitudes, beliefs, behavioural conventions, and basic assumptions and values that are shared by a group of people, and that influence each member's behavior and each member's interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behavior. Malekian, 2016, p. 1

Culture is an aspect shared by social members whom they belong to the same speech community; share the same, language, values, beliefs, norms and traditions. Offering services in a centre of learning languages must have a polite surround that tribute to what Sparks (2002) name "quasi – friendship" between the client and the

secretary. The same situation was given “HAND” named by Lashley (2002) (i.e) Have A Nice Day culture⁷. Such behaviour may not be accepted in some cultures because it can impose and generate anxiety. On the whole, polite facial expressions like a smile are fancy; employees are required to have a sort of matching polite behaviour. Transferring linguistic significances of greetings, refusals, requests and apologies differ in language structure, lexis and cultures. Essentially, one should avoid non-verbal cues which lead to misunderstandings because simple actions have functions, symbolic values and realities that are not comparable between cultures.

4. The Linguistic Politeness

One of the traditional views states that linguistic politeness emphasizes the use of communication strategies to establish and promote social harmony. People make sure to use **socially positive** expressions, by supporting face, displaying positive emotions and feelings, showing consideration,... as well as **contextually suitable** complying with two major social norms; prescriptive social norms that are concerned by behaviour principles, good manners and etiquette, etc; besides, descriptive or experiential social norms which are rules set based on individual experience.

A linguistic interaction is by obligation a social interaction to make sense. Most often, various external factors guide interaction such as closeness, social distance and even participants taking into consideration the social variables of age, power and gender...etc. Social distance is determined even in interactions with strangers by controlling external factors. On the other hands, internal factors such as the amount of imposition or degree of friendship may lead to a marked status and an initial social distance altering. It is worthy to mention that both external and internal factors affect what people say and how they are interpreted. Usually, interpretations go beyond what is intended to be expressed.

Politeness is common to all cultures; it shows good manners and consideration for others. Face based model of Brown and Levinson suggested five pragmatic super strategies each with its linguistic output characteristics recited in brief; bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, off record. The degree of politeness depends on FTA. On the other hand, some messages are transmitted

indirectly. Indirectness and politeness were proposed on 1983 by Leech, it serves many social purposes but unfortunately, the research was not empirically tested and thus, it is important not to be taken as a foundation for other research studies. As an example of the concept, the teacher says: 'I cannot hear myself', indirect message but polite, it is better than saying, 'shut up' which is direct and impolite. Impoliteness refers to the negatively evaluated social or linguistic behaviour; it causes specific emotional reactions like anger.

5. Brown and Levinson's Politeness Model

Distinct models tried to explain how politeness work and this specific theory is the most influential at this phase. It was first presented as a part of a collection of essays **Questions and politeness: Strategies in social interaction edited by Esther N. Goody**. Politeness is a free linguistic behaviour based on the context and Face wants.

The face is an individual's self-image and it is tightly related to one's self-esteem. Petříčková (2012) quoted Goffman's definition of the face as a "positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" p. 11. Mutual vulnerability is required to maintain the face where people aim at either saving their face or saving other's faces. Two major features make up the notion of face. Positive face and negative face.

- Positive Face: is the want to be liked and accepted.
- Negative Face: is the want to be independent and not forced to by others. It is connected to formal politeness.

Face threatening act (FTA) is preferred to be kept away in any interaction whenever it is possible. Some acts are fundamentally faced threatening, sometimes to the listener or even to the speaker. For instance, a positive face may be threatened by disagreement since it indicates a lack of receiving the listener's viewpoints. On the other hand, requests threaten the listener's negative face since it implies an imposition as it limits the listener's freedom.

Minimizing FTA is a strategy to establish a positive face. Brown and Levinson listed five options performed by the addresser to save face. The following schema is adopted from Petříčková's study⁸

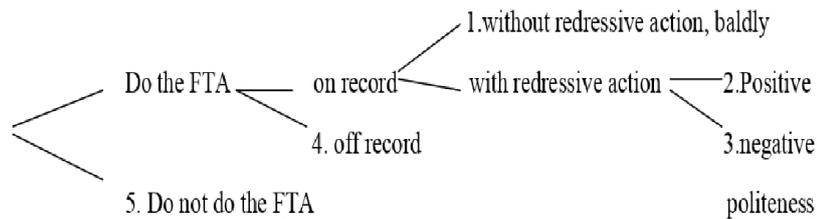


Figure 1. Brown & Levinson's FTA avoiding strategies

On record strategy without regressive action is one of the elements that made up Brown & Levinson's theory. The act baldly on record is the direct and threatening strategies. Bown & Levinson (1987) noted that direct speech acts follow Grice's maxims of cooperation. Such acts are brief, clear, precise and no face wants are expressed. Bald on record acts are performed either when the threat is very small or when the addresser is powerful than the addressee. Other times, speakers decide to go off record where no clear communication is attributed.

6. Gender Stereotyping

Stereotyping is about the attitude towards people's traits, features and cognitive frameworks that affect the increase of any social sequence. Stereotyping becomes forbidden by international human rights to abolish gender discrimination. An online definition from the United Nations of human rights explains gender stereotype as:

generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by women and men. A gender stereotype is harmful when it limits women's and men's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices about their lives.

Stereotyping cause limitation the individual’s capacities and natural talent progress, in addition to drawbacks at the educational and professional fields. Cultural norms around the world lead to unrelated stereotypes that echo the linguistic forms and control language use. Stereotypes are identified to be representations of social judgments about individuals’ appearances, power and knowledge. Some stereotypes are common around the world such as:

Table 1. Examples of Masculine and Feminine Stereotypes

MEN	WOMEN
Assertive Swears too much Use vulgar words too much Like topics like: sport, technology, travel,... Independent Competitive Strategic	Gossips Talkative and intuitive Ask many questions Polite Direct Emotional and tolerant Spontaneous cooperative

Research conclusions indicated that Gender stereotypes can be useful for characterizing oneself. They can serve an adaptive purpose to simplify people’s outlook and to put together predictions about others.

7. Gender Approaches and Politeness

Politeness is an assessment issue in the educational context due to the different linguistic features that reflect on the complication of the connection between the two aspects. Politeness, for non-specialists, is women’s interest concerning in terms of behaviour, etiquette and manners. Femininity attaches some features that are associated with the same idea interrelated with culture and local traditions; psychologically associated with self-effacement, weakness and susceptibility. Such code practice is referred to as ‘*talking like a lady*’. Thanks to the supposition that females are powerless and weak, politeness forms emerge. On the other hand, maleness is associated with aggression, directness and rigidity though they frequently show politeness to females.

Table 2. Gender Approaches

GENDER APPROACHES

- 1) The biological approach (no distinction between sex & gender)
- 2) The deficit approach
- 3) The dominance approach
- 4) The difference approach
- 5) The social constructionist approach

The first approach flows for the essentialist movement that spots gender as a seen as a biological sexual category qualified by innate biological characteristics, severe dual oppositions between males and females, in addition to the last feature of bipolarization. The biological sex constructs gendered manners and acts which are caused by innate parts of hormones and chromosomes that some cultural universals classify Algerians males as violent and stressed more than women. One of the mature linguists who worked on language and gender issues, before Lakoff, is Jespersen who introduced the deficit approach which initiates the thought that language is a resource of men's power using a correct language and precise terms even better than females. Women, on the other hand, are moving downward after men's choice because of their incomplete speech due to limited vocabulary. He adds that females' speech is fluent and less doubtful.

The dominance approach affirms that male's speech is ideal persisting on the idea of power unfairness between the two genders assuming the idea that women are dominated by the strong position of men because they are short of power, low in the social status but linguistically polite. Males' social power degree makes them dominating interactions at ease. "In its general sense, the dominance framework assumes that women use language in a way which reflects their subordinate position in society, while men use it in a way which reflects their power".⁹ Reflecting the Algerian case, the proposal that women are low-graded led to gender inequality affirming female positive positions in the society preliminary by the use of prestigious forms.

The difference theory emerged as a response to Lakoff theories. It adapts the cross cultural aspects of communication revealing different gender experiences; even in the manner they are treated, their speech style and their culture; it is all different. Women are collaboratively oriented in interaction and their culture directs their distinct behaviour and choice of topics they can have for chats.

The last model to deal with is the social constructionist approach starting steadily to consider gender as a fundamental part in setting social identities. It is established upon performative social pattern where males and females demonstrate language and behaviour freeing women from the ancient frame of being low graded.

Language and gender are not the only variables that affect the use of politeness strategies in classroom interaction. Many other variables interfere. Some social variables may affect one situation but not another, so, it comes back to the context in addition to gender, the cultural background, age, power and solidarity and even the participants' psychology.

8. Conclusion

One of the difficult tasks in speaking a foreign language while still acquiring it; it calls for regular practice to better understanding and using the language. The best way for accurate messages is classroom verbal interaction. Receiving explicit feedback corrects the students and makes them familiar with their mistakes for better mastery of language. Men and women have unlike linguistic politeness and conversational measures. The supposition in response to the hypothesis that claims women are more polite. One has concluded that both genders perform polite linguistic and non-verbal acts, however, males are more polite in CEIL class interaction. These findings do not sustain traditional supposition. Female speech is highly formal and polite; males as well as emphasize the correct use of phonetic rules. Moreover, positive politeness is not the only strategy adopted by CEIL participants; they do use all politeness strategies by different degrees and quality. Students' good manners are performed by choice; that is, they want to be kind, prestigious and educated so, they behave the way they think it is appropriate. Sometimes they have misconceptions of what is good and what is better ; what is bad and what is worst which may lead to unlike

levels of politeness besides the socio-cultural and psychological variables that intervene in language choice and affects individuals' behaviour.

Language and gender are not the only variables that affect the use of politeness strategies in classroom interaction. Many other variables interfere. Some social variables may affect one situation but not another, so, it comes back to the context in addition to gender, the cultural background, age, power and solidarity and even the participants' psychology.

Students face many problems when they learn languages. CEIL is a centre in which people can learn foreign languages passing by different levels depending on their intensity and needs. Teachers in the centre try often to motivate the learners and when they are classified and all things are set; the courses start and the teachers have to manage their classes setting rules of politeness and a class routine preventing socio-educational troubles. Teachers aim at having an effective class interaction avoiding any act that may threat the learner regarding self-image; they should rather make use of strategies to reduce the threat and that is, in simple word, politeness. The best manner for good interaction between teachers and learners is via politeness strategies. Learning languages is a spot of interest for Algerians for various purposes. For this reason, centres of teaching languages are opened some are private and others tag along with state control like the CEIL which is an institution at some Algerian universities, Tlemcen, Oran, Algiers, Constantine and others. CEIL in Tlemcen is a setting where many languages are taught; Arabic (specifically for Chinese), French, English, Italian, German, Spanish and Turkish, in addition to ESP. CEIL classes aim at experiencing real communicative situations that permit them to express themselves and develop their speaking skill. Classroom interaction creates opportunities to develop knowledge and learning skills. Thanks to the importance of communication, the difference between men and women use of language is one of the most important issues among sociolinguistic scholars. It is essential to understand the different communication patterns that women and men typically use to better understanding and achieve effective communication.

Linguistic verbal context is about the background words are used including syntactic and morphological interpretation of texts components. Any student should be aware of the necessary items that determine meanings; nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs which are implications' clues that provide a full understanding of statements. Females' linguistic behaviour is connected to positive politeness by all means; cooperative and crash prevention.

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