



Evaluation of the Speaker's Politeness based on Unequal Social Status and the Gender of the Audience with Equal Social Status in the University Environment

Fatemeh Rezaee¹, Behzad Rahbar²
Mohammadreza Oroji³

Received: 18/10/2020

Accepted: 23/01/2021

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Lakoff (2004), in order to evaluate the degree of politeness, some principles must be observed based on which some kinds of behavior can be called polite and some impolite. These behaviors differ from culture to culture. In each society, polite and impolite behaviors are due to the culture and the thinking of the people of that society. By comparing these behaviors with one another, it could be understood that it might be possible that some behaviors which are considered polite in one culture could be regarded as impolite in another. The social status of the interlocutor and the scope of conversation affect the truth of speech and observation of customs and linguistic coding. The current research studies the degree of politeness used by both male and female students with respect to their social status based on Lakoff's (1975, 2004) approach. Do students respond to the demands of different people in the university setting equally? Or the social status of people affect the diversity of words and the degree of politeness among students.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This was a descriptive, analytic research and the data were collected from 240 male and female, 18 to 30 years of age, students' responses to a questionnaire. The responses of 100 male and 100 female students were selected out of all. Some answers were omitted because they were similar for all respondents. The questionnaire was designed based on Gibson (2009) and based on Lakoff's theory and with the purpose of evaluating the degree and the kind of politeness words used by the selected students. The participants were selected from Islamic Azad University of Zanjan and Elmi-Karbordi and Jahad Daneshgahi based on convenience sampling. The respondents were divided into 4 groups with regards to

¹ Ph.D. Candidate of Linguistics, Islamic Azad University, Zanjan Branch, Iran, Zanjan; fatemehRezaee@iauz.ac.ir

² Assistant Professor of Linguistics, Allameh Tabatab'ei University, Iran, Tehran (corresponding author); behzadrahbar@atu.ac.ir

³ Assistant Professor of Linguistics, Islamic Azad University, Zanjan Branch, Iran, Zanjan; mohammadrezaoroji@iauz.ac.ir

their social status. In the first group, the university chancellor, the dean of the university, university assistants and lecturers participated. In the second group, the education staff, the exam staff, the class staff were involved. In the third group, male and female classmates and in the fourth group, university personnel and the guards participated. The responses were divided into three groups. The super polite responses, polite responses, and less polite responses. The refusal of the demands was divided into three groups as well: Polite refusals, neutral refusals, and impolite refusals.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

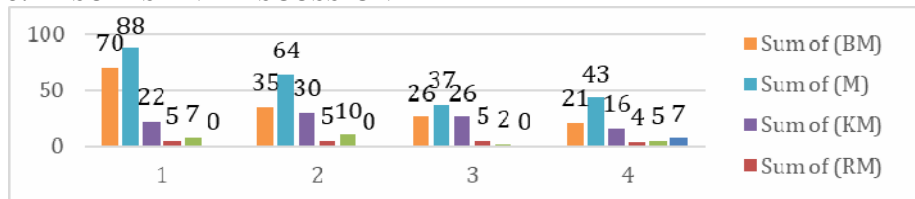


Figure 1. Summary of the responses

According to the information of Figure 1, the answers given to the first group of audience are the most polite answers. With the decline of the social status of the participants, politeness decreases. The findings were gained by an ANOVA test, with the significant figure of 0.027 and the 95 percent confidence. The findings illustrated that there was a significant difference between social status and respect. In other words, as social status decreases, the use of respect and politeness markers diminishes. The findings of the comparative test between the two independent groups showed that there was no significant difference between male and female students with respect to their use of politeness. It was also shown that girls and boys were both more polite towards boys.

4. CONCLUSION

This study confirmed Kadar and Mills' (2011) and Montgomri's (1998) findings that social status affects politeness and shows the social status of individuals was influential in their use of politeness. The findings of this research were in line with the outcomes of Lakoff (1975) and Montgomri (1998) in that women do not use more politeness than men. It was also shown that there was no significant difference between girls and boys in terms of the use of politeness. This study approved of Gibson's (2009) findings that boys and girls use politeness almost equally. It was also depicted that both girls and boys were more polite towards their male classmates. The findings of this research were in line with those of Baxter (1984), Hefner (1998), and Smith (1992). Despite women's more use of politeness markers, more impoliteness was shown toward women. The outcomes illustrated that individual's social status was effective in their use of politeness and with any decrease of people's social status, there is a decrease of polite responses toward them.

This research is done in academic environment. In order to achieve the validity, more researches are needed to prove this relationship in the society between different groups of people.

Keywords: Demands; Gender; Politeness; Social Status; University Settings