The Impact of Sex on the Choice of Forms of Address in the Speech Form of Tehran Persian Language

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ABSTRACT: The main objective of present study is to investigate the impact of social factor of sex on the choice of forms of address in the speech from of Tehran Persian language. Address forms are a window opened to social and cultural differences in the society. The main hypothesis of current study is that there is no relationship between the social factor of sex and application of different forms of address in Tehran Persian language from the viewpoint of politeness, formality of context, power and solidarity. This study is based on the statistical data obtained from questionnaire administered to subjects chosen from different sex groups. The result of data analysis confirms the impact of sex on choice of forms of address in the speech form of Tehran Persian Language from the above mentioned viewpoints in all cases except in addressing female figure of high social status, female kin in informal familiar situation, spouse in informal familiar situation, children under 12 and over 12 in informal familiar situation, intimate friends in both formal and informal situations and strangers. Consequently, the impact of social factor of sex is more evident in forms of address used for male addresses and in formal situations. The impact of sex on the choice of forms of address has been confirmed in these cases: male figure of high social status, over 45 years old male or female stranger, male kin in informal familiar situation (except younger brother), all kin members in formal situation, superiors and subordinates.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics, Sex, Address Terms, Politeness, Formality of Context, Power, Solidarity

INTRODUCTION

Almost always it is believed that a language society has a single uniform language, but it is not true. Our everyday language has been affected by socio-cultural factors which define personal relations in society like sex, age, education & etc. That is why language speakers use different kinds of speech in different contexts. One of the issues that lately has come into prominence is the relationship between language & sex. The distinction between men & women is not confined to the physical differences. The other important distinction is the difference of language behavior between two sexes. Speech is an act of identity: When we speak one of the things we do is to identify ourselves as male or female (Coats, 1986).

Choosing address terms represents the social relationship between speaker & addressee. Meanwhile, it represents the social characteristics of speaker (Lambert & Tucker, 1976). By now, still there are many unanswered questioned about address terms, since address terms are as complicated as the society itself (Chaika, 1982). The main issue is how people address each other. How distinct area like personal names, family names, pronouns, titles, nicknames are used to address. (Hymes, 1982)

Linguistics’ studies shows that in many societies men & women languages are different (Trudgill, 1983). These differences are slight in some cases & evident in some others. There are many factors which account for language variations. One of these factors which play an outstanding role in these variations is sex. The purpose of this survey is to study the different uses of address terms by Tehran Persian men & women. In other words, is there any relationship between the social factor of sex and different uses of address terms or not.

In fact, the purpose of this study is to show the complicated nature of Address system as linguistic marker of social relations and define the role of social factor of sex in choosing address terms. Moreover, it will allow us to
discuss another aspect of sex effect in society and to consider this issue that whether women have the same status as men or not.

**Purpose and Questions**

The general aim of present research is to study and analyze the impact of sex on the choice of forms of address in the speech form of Tehran Persian language. To be more specific, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

- Is there any differences in the address forms used in speech forms of men and women speakers of Tehran Persian language in terms of politeness and formality of context?
- Is there any differences in the address forms used in speech forms of men and women speakers of Tehran Persian language in terms of power and solidarity?
- Is there any relationship between social factor of sex and the use of different forms of address terms in speech form of Tehran Persian Language?

**Review Of Literature**

**Definition of Address Terms**

Linguistically, Braun (1988: 7) defines Address terms as a means of “initiating contact.” Oyetade (1995) defines address terms as words or expressions used in interactive, dyadic and face to face situations to characterize the person being talked to. Dicey’s (1996) definition of “address” as a speaker’s linguistic reference to his/her interlocutor(s) is clearly a very broad one so he made further divisions. He gives an obvious linguistic classification of address terms by their parts of speech, into nouns, pronouns, and verbs which are further classified in to “bound” and “free” forms. Bound morphemes are those integrated into the syntax of a sentence and free forms are those not integrated in this way. Keshavarz’s (2001: 6) considers that terms of address are linguistic forms that are used in addressing others to attract their attention or for referring to them in the course of a conversation. They are words or linguistic expressions that speakers use to appeal directly to their addressees (Taavitsainen and Jucker, 2003). According to Afful (2006b) address terms refer to the linguistic expressions by which a speaker designates an addressee in a face to face encounter. And finally, Yule (2006) asserts that address term is a word or phrase for the person being talked or written to.

Regarding social function and meaning of address forms, it can be said that address forms are socially driven phenomena (Murphy,1988). This feature of address forms is conspicuously evident in light of the observation that linguistic forms used to address others mirror the complex social relations between individuals in a speech community (Paulston1976, Trudgill 1983, Chaitka1982). Parkinson (1985: 1) states that terms of address can function as a very important treasure trove of social information. To him, the form of an utterance and the way it is said encode not only a referential meaning, but also “encode much information about which the speaker believes he is, who he believes the addressee is, what he thinks their relationship is, and what he thinks he is doing by saying what he is saying.” He adds that terms of address in spite of little grammatical functions and opaque referential meanings, convey crucial and accurate kinds of social information. All meanings of forms of address refer to the fact that these forms have their roots in the socio-cultural context of the community where they are used. Leech (1999) cited in Afful (2006b) considers terms of address as “important formulaic verbal behaviors well recognized in the sociolinguistics literature to signal transactional, interpersonal and deictic ramifications in human relationships.” To Afful (2006a: 81) terms of address are an important part of verbal behavior through which “the behavior, norms and practices of a society can be identified.”

To be brief, terms of address are words or expressions used to indicate certain relations between people, or to show the difference in identity, position and social status. As a result, address terms as well as other language practices can mirror the thoughts and attitudes that speakers wish or wish not to express (Saeedeh Esmae’li, 2011). In other words, by employing a certain address term, speaker wants to express her/his feeling of respect, solidarity, intimacy, and familiarity to the other people. Brown and Yule (1989:54) argue that “in different social contexts different terms of address will be used.” For example the terms of address used by a social inferior to a social superior may be different from those between peers (Lyons, 1997). Address terms have not only been largely examined in several socio-cultural settings (e.g. Goodenough, 1965; Fang & Heng, 1983; Fitch, 1991; Aceto, 2002), following the most frequently mentioned study by Brown and Gilman’s (1960) work, but also been studied in social institutions and practices such as politics (Jaworski & Galasinski, 2000; Fetzer & Bull, 2004), and religion (Sequeira, 1993; Dzameshie, 1997; Wharry, 2003). Together with Brown and Gilman’s work, these studies have highlighted the power and solidarity as affecting factor in use of address terms. Address forms have been studied in different languages (see, for example, Bates and Benigni 1975; Brown and Gilman 1960; Brown and Ford 1961; Chandrasekhar 1970; Cintra 1972; Paulston 1976; Ostor 1982; Philipsen and Huspeck 1985; Braun
1988; Mühlhäusler and Harre 1990; Oyetade 1995; Martiny 1996). Most of the studies have been concerned with variation in the address forms according to social characteristics of the language users and the relationship between speaker and hearer. Brown and Levinson (1979, cited in Wardhaugh 1993:322-333) mentioned that address forms are the best place to look at the close bond between language and society (Shih, 1986).

In Persian, a number of studies have been conducted on the categorization and variation of the Persian address system. Rahimi Domakani (1991) conducted a sociolinguistic analysis of forms of address with emphasis on TEFL. Keshavarz (1988,1993) indicates that since the 1979 Iranian revolution, plain speech and forms of address marking solidarity have gained popularity. Also, in his later study, he focused on the impact of social context, intimacy and distance on the choice of Persian pronominal and address forms (Keshavarz 2001). Hosseini (1388/2009) focused on the way power distribution is realized verbally by the two opposing sides in the thesis defense sessions regarding politeness principles. Nanbakhsh (2011, 2012) examined the correlation between language uses (particularly address terms and pronouns), politeness norms and social structure in contemporary Iranian society. Afzali (2011) investigated different terms that spouses apply in order to address each other in different social strata in Iran regarding how they reflect power and solidarity relationships of spouses in the present society of Iran. Esmae'li (2011) studies the terms of address usage in terms of Iranian Spouses.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

Participants
The participants in this study were 200 Persian speakers (100 female, 100 male) who meet with following conditions:
- BA graduates, MA students or MA graduates
- Have more than 10 years continual residence in Tehran
- Are 20-40 years old
By doing so two factors of age and social class were removed. Identifying age group is easy but doing the same for the social class is a complicated procedure.

Scientists hold different ideas about identifying social class. For example Lebov (1966) uses a 10 point scale (zero for lowest and 9 for highest) on the basis of three dimensions of education, occupation and income. Wolfram (1969) uses an index which is a combination of education, occupation and residency. In which point 10 shows the highest and point 134 shows the lowest social status.

On the other hand, Trudgill (1979) uses an index which is based on 6 factors: occupation, income, education, housing, locality and father’s occupation.

Identifying social class in the present study was based on the information elicited from the first part of questionnaire. In this part some questions about education, place of living (city and area), living period in the said city, current and previous occupation of subject, father’s or spouse’s occupation were asked.

Considering the answers, the research subjects have been chosen from the ones living in the middle class areas of Tehran, with an average income. So, their belonging to the middle class of society is much more probable.

Instruments
The data for this study were collected by means of a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. Part one aimed at eliciting personal information about the participants to make the task of categorization possible, as illustrated above. Part two, included seven scenarios that asked the participants to choose the address forms they usually use for interaction in given situations.

Procedure
The researcher approached the participants in a friendly manner and tried to gain their cooperation and assistance. They also explained the goals of the research to the participants and assured them that the personal information they provide in the first part of the questionnaire will not be disclosed. In order to emphasize this point, the participants were asked not to write their names on the questionnaire. Therefore, they felt comfortable in responding to the questions.

Then, the questionnaire has been divided according to sex groups and the obtained data studied and analyzed by means of computer.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The questionnaire submitted to each subject consisted of seven scenarios which showed the address terms used by two sexes in different situations as follows:
1st Scenario: Address terms used by men/women to address a man/woman of high social status
2nd Scenario: Address terms used by men/women to address a female stranger over 45 years old of middle class status
3rd Scenario: Address terms used by men/women to address a male stranger over 45 years old of middle class status
4th Scenario: Address terms used by men/women to address kin members of middle class status in informal familiar situations
5th Scenario: Address terms used by men/women to address kin members of middle class status in formal situations
6th Scenario: Address terms used by men/women to address an intimate friend of middle class status in formal/informal situations
7th Scenario: Address terms used by men/women to address a superior/subordinates of middle class status

The result of data analysis shows following results:

Impact of sex on the choice of forms of address in speech form of Tehran Persian language in terms of politeness & formality of context:
The result is confirmed in most cases except addressing strangers, intimate friends, women of high social status, female kin member in informal familiar situation, younger brother in informal familiar situation, children (less than & over 12 years old) in informal familiar situation.

The obtained results show that in most cases women with the same age, education and social group are more polite than men –though it may not be obvious. This behavior arises from public opinion and beliefs and society expectation from women to be more polite. The underlying causes must be sought in the different social roles of Tehran men and women.

Women are more polite in speaking and more conservative in their relationships than men. Women learned to use more polite, more humble and more modest language than men. Women are more polite because most of the time they imagine that firstly they are speaking with someone who is superior, secondly there is some kind of social distance between addressees & them, and finally they try to avoid any face threatening acts in their speech.

Impact of sex on the choice of forms of address in speech form of Tehran Persian language in terms of power and solidarity:
The result is confirmed in most cases except addressing strangers, intimate friends, women of high social status, female kin member in informal familiar situation, spouse in informal familiar situation, younger brother in informal familiar situation, children (less than & over 12 years old) in informal familiar situation.

The obtained results show that in most cases women use of address terms indicating more formality and distance; on the other hand, men use terms indicating more intimacy and solidarity. This is more obvious when addressing addressees of the same sex.

This behavior may be the result of less social security of women in different societies. Women need to show and secure their social status by means of language. So they pay more attention to language factor which is a good marker for determining the social class of people in the society. Women are expected to be more serious and dignified and to use upper class pattern of speech. So, as Trudgill believes, social opinions and beliefs affect speech and language behavior of both men and women. People usually speak in a way that society expects them to, not in a way they themselves wish to.

Because of their unstable social status, women usually seek support and speak in a more hesitant, questioning way; while, men usually seek competitors and speak in an aggressive, controller manner.

Relationship between social factor of sex and the use of different forms of address terms in speech form of Tehran Persian Language

The result is confirmed in most cases except addressing strangers, intimate friends, women of high social status, female kin member in informal familiar situation, spouse in informal familiar situation, younger brother in informal familiar situation, children (less than & over 12 years old) in informal familiar situation.

So, the impact of sex on the choice of forms of address in the speech form of Tehran Persian Language is more obvious in cases of male addresses and formal contexts. Cases in which this impact is confirmed are male figure of high social status, over 45 years old male or female stranger, male kin in informal familiar situation (except younger brother), all kin members in formal situation, superiors and subordinates.

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