

The Influence of Gender on Males' and Females' Language in Algeria:
Gender and Linguistic Politeness Differences in Terms of Requests

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Abstract

This study examines the differences between males' and females' speech among Algerians. It focuses on the vocabulary items used by both genders. It is an attempt to see whether differences of this kind have an influence on the speech styles of men and women and to see how these differences develop and spread in a society. The research tries to analyse the impact of differences at the level of vocabulary on gendered behaviour in the society. The results obtained revealed that each gender uses a language vocabulary in his own way. Males and females in Algerian society use different linguistic forms and vocabulary items when they speak about the same thing. Furthermore, they have different speech styles. For example; they talk about different topics; while females talk about emotions and feelings and use prestigious language, males avoid talking about their feelings and use simple Algerian dialectal Arabic.

Keywords: gender; linguistic politeness; differences; requests; language.

I-Introduction:

The major thing that distinguishes human beings from animals is basically their way to communicate with each other using language. However, human beings do not use language in the same way; there are many elements that change the use of the latter like age, social class, gender, etc. Gender plays an important role in the use of language. Males' and females' speech have been observed to differ in their form, topic, content, use, etc. We often hear people speaking in public places, in the street, in the bus and in the shop etc. The speech of those people differs from one gender to another, men speak differently from women. In a shop, we may hear a man asking: "How much is this?" But, we hear a woman saying: "Could you tell me about the price of this, please?"

Women use more polite language compared to that of men, as stated by Lakoff (1977). In fact, women speech is characterised by euphemism. This social phenomenon has been studied by sociolinguists from different perspectives. They found that the causes of the differences are not biological at all, but they are social, and the level of education is one of these reasons. In addition, the social status and prestige pattern are some of the reasons. A prestigious language is often used by females more than males (Trudgill 1974). This research concern is about the differences between males' and females' speech at the level of vocabulary use. When two male-friends meet, one of them says: "what's up dude/buddy?" the other answers: "Fine, man, how are you?". Whereas, females tend to greet each other differently: "Hello Sara, how do you do?" The other replies: "Fine dear, how are you?" From these examples, we can say that different words are usually used by males and females. In this research the influence of gender on males' and females' speech is analysed.

When people talk, they not only exchange information, but also form certain interpersonal relationships, during the process of which politeness is a very important factor to be considered. Politeness is commonly seen as an appropriate behaviour in everyday life, yet it is more than refined manners and gentlemanly or ladylike behaviour. Since the consideration of politeness will necessarily decide the different linguistic forms people choose to serve the same speech function within an interaction, politeness is also manifested at various levels of language use: lexical, syntactic, pragmatic and socio-cultural. Norms for polite behaviour vary from one culture to another, and therefore, linguistic politeness is also culturally bound. The topic of politeness has proved to be a popular line of enquiry for language and gender researchers in recent years since the works of Lakoff in the 1970s,

and those of Brown and Levinson in the 1980's. According to Brown and Levinson formulation, polite speech is the use of verbal strategies that take the addressee's feelings into account by showing respect for his or her 'face' (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61; Brown, 1998: 84). Subsequently, our study of requesting behaviour by English Students at Mentouri Brothers University accounts for the role of situational context, power relations and social distance between interlocutors, as well as their age and public identities as members of a specific group (university students). In our opinion, requesting behaviour offers a particularly fertile ground for the study of any potential connections between linguistic politeness and gender. This is mainly because, together with orders, requests are possibly the clearest examples.

Linguistic politeness contributes to better understanding and assists people to reach better decisions. Although men and women from a given social class belong to the same speech community, they may use linguistic politeness in terms of requests differently. The study of linguistic politeness is one of the most important research subjects in sociolinguistics, and there are various theories concerning this topic. Generally, gender uses language to communicate with others, greeting is a way of doing that. But, the problem is whether male and female use the same linguistic forms when they greet. In other words, does gender affect speech?

The reason behind choosing this topic in particular, rather than any other one, is that it is interesting and because this phenomenon exists in our society since long ago. In addition, as time passes, we realise that there are differences between men's and women's speech. There is a necessity for an Algerian touch when dealing with this topic in particular because almost all the studies concerning this topic are made in other societies.

This study aims to examine whether there are differences between men and women's polite verbal behaviour in terms of requests. On the other hand, we want to reveal the reality of using linguistic politeness with the same gender and across gender, taking requests as an example. So, the purpose behind this research is to investigate the relationship between gender and politeness with regards to information seeking questions.

In addition, the goal behind this study is to describe the whole range of requesting patterns that arise in their data, and to print the connections between these particular facets. So, requesting behaviour offers a particularly fertile ground for the study of any potential connections between linguistic politeness and gender.

The present research is concerned with gender's differences in linguistic politeness in terms of requests. The questions that tackle this issue are as follows:

1. What makes the difference between men's and women's Algerian Arabic?
2. Do men and women have different speech styles in Algerian Arabic?
3. Are polite speech patterns associated with women or men?
4. Do women opt for linguistic politeness more frequently than their male counterparts?

This study is supposed to target third year Algerian students studying English as a foreign language. Regarding the former findings in the field of gender and linguistic politeness differences, we hypothesise that:

Women use more linguistic politeness, especially in the use of requests forms, than men in order to attract attention to their prestige and femininity.

I.1. Literature Review:

a. Gender:

The term *gender* is a culture- specific concept that differs from one society into another. That is to say, what is regarded as acceptable in one culture as an individual's role is not regarded so in another. According to the World Health Organisation, the term gender "refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women". So, as it is expressed clearly, the terms "sex" and "gender" are extremely distinct from each other where sex is basically related to biological or physiological differences between men and women whereas the concept of gender is not related to biological difference but mainly to the attitudes, expectations, prejudices and particularities of men's and women's statues in different cultures

and societies; it is related to masculinity and femininity. Gender generally divides people into different binary groups that are inalterable. Nevertheless, it can be used as a description specific for the male or female sex in words, feelings, personal features and organisations etc. The general public use of the word gender increasingly started in the late 1960s and until the 1970s (Zosuls et. al. 2011).

b. Aspects of Gender:

It refers to certain norms, beliefs and behaviours that penetrate humans' activity. In every culture, infants are transformed gradually into feminine or masculine adults. Cultural measures and expectations are governed by gender identity, for males and females how to behave. It can also refer to a person's own experience and personal sense of his or her gender. Furthermore, it is also commonly described as a private and personal sense of being for a woman or a man, mainly like a membership acceptance to one of the categories: males or females. This exists in all societies, mostly with characteristics given to males or females in a basic and separated division (Shazu,2014).

c. Gender Roles:

They are the roles of both men and women under 'social definitions.' They differ from one society to another according to the culture, class and age of those concerned. As it is represented on the FAO Website, Household's structure and global economy has certain impacts as well as other relevant local factors often condition specific responsibilities and roles of the gender ("What is gender?").

d. Gender Relations:

According to Liping and Williams (2000: 6), "Gender relations are the ways in which a culture or society defines rights, responsibilities, and identities of men and women in relation to one another." This quote clarifies gender relations which represent what men and women should do to one another. In other words, gender relations represents their duties and rights towards each other, and who a person is.

I. 2. Gender in Relation to Language:

It is a common belief that men and women both use language in a different way. To confirm this, many studies have been conducted upon gender and language. These studies have considerably evolved since the 1970s. Lakoff Robin is one of the most prominent scholars who began researching in this field, in her book *Language and Woman's Place* (1975). As the name suggests, she identified gender inequality with specific speech styles; which she claimed caused women to be inferior in the society. Among these speech styles were powerless and powerful language. According to her, powerless language contained:

- Hedges (I guess, maybe and kind of...)
- Plenty of intensifiers and qualifiers (really, definitely, too and so)
- Tag questions (right?, isn't it?)
- Polite forms (please, thank you)
- The use of 'Wh' imperatives (like: why don't you close the door?...)
- Female empty adjectives (adorable, lovely and sweet)
- Apologising more often (I'm sorry but I think that...)
- More use of direct quotations (men tend to paraphrase more)
- Fillers
- Less swear words and profanities, as well as less interruptions.

Powerful language was mainly characterised by the absence of powerless language (qtidin Rozek2015: 22-23). Lakoff (1975: 53) claimed in her book that women's language was synonymous to powerless language and that has caused them to appear less competent and persuasive which also was the reason for them to have a lower social status; this prospect, it is deduced that men's tendency to use powerful speech more than women did allow them to gain a higher social status (Rozek

2015:33-38), which gives them an advantage and permits them to dominate verbal humour. It may also cause them to receive higher ratings of competence in funniness, and since dominant characteristics are associated more frequently with men, women are expected to have a lower role in producing humour.

Another scholar who echoed Lakoff's theory in a different way was Jespersen(1922)in his studies on language and gender, he concluded that women obtained a vocabulary size that was smaller than that of men, and that men do the majority of the work in changing the dialect of a community. His idea was mainly that women had inferior characteristics of language. This serves the notion that women's humour was considered lower in rank than that men's, because it was not influential enough since they are associated with an inferior language style. To confirm this idea, Australian feminist and scholar Dale Spender, published a book under the title "*Man Made Language 1980*, explaining her main idea about men being more dominant in the society, and through her mixed-sex studies of conversations, spotted power imbalance among both gendersand discussed that men's gender dominance is derived from their language use, and the way they control conversations (qtd. inMei, 2006: 7-8). The following tables represent both verbal and non-verbal qualities used by men and women and to what extent they differ.

a. Different Verbal Qualities Used by Men and Women

Men	Women
Loud talk	Soft talk
Downward intonation	Upward Intonation
Talk slowly	Talk fast
Relaxed pitch	Strident pitch
Powerful manner	Powerless manner

Table 01: (Shazu 2014: 96)

a) Different Non-Verbal Qualities Used by Men and Women

Men	Women
Take more physical space	Give their physical space
Staring, and keeping a straight face	Mild eye contact, and more face expressions
Use dominating gestures	Use submissive gestures
Head and gaze straight	Tilt slightly their head
More straightforward declarations	being silent to show dissatisfaction
Debating and challenging in a conversation	More apologetic even if it is not they are right

Table 02: (Shazu 2014: 96)

From the tables mentioned previously, it is noticed that men tend to be in a position of power more often, they like to enforce their presence and reconcile between leaving good impressions by the way they speak and act. On the other hand, women are more personal and fairly emotional, and even not as confident as men when interacting with others, they also give importance to building cooperative relationships, with utilising more refined and empathic expressions.

I. 3. Reasons of Difference:

There are various reasons behind the differences in language and gender. First, these differences are approached by simply saying that men and women are biologically different. Therefore, their behaviour, attitude, thoughts and language use must be different. Accordingly, it causes salient consequences. Women are supportive, caring and non-competitive, while men are more dominating, independent and predisposed to power. Second, "social organizations are built up on hierarchical set of power relationships" (Shazu 2014: 97); men occupy a position of dominance and power in this regard, and for that they usually take control, even when talking they tend to select topics they want and interrupt more. They treat each other this way and they extend it with women too. While women being less concerned with that, they unconsciously accept to be powerless. Third, language is also a behaviour that is learnt in the society, and 'to be a man' is a part of it. The stereotype qualifies women's style as cooperative, and men's as competitive. Lastly, Social roles and acculturation styles also cause great difference in the language used (Shazu 2014: 97).

II- Methods and Materials:

This study is conducted in order to test the hypothesis in the Algerian Academic context among users of the English language. It investigates the connection found between linguistic politeness and gender among third year English students at the level of Mentouri Brothers University, aged between 21 and 26 years old. The main issue of this study is to find out how the two distinct genders use the language regarding requests. This debate in that field is going to end by providing tangible statistics and evidence. The chosen sample was based on a random selection from the previously mentioned population (Third year English students).

Sixty students (thirty males and thirty females) randomly selected took part in this study. The participants were all students of English, studying in the Department of Arts and the English Language, Mentouri Brothers University of Constantine 1. The participants use the same languages as their mother tongue but speak English in Academic settings. The average age of the male participants is 21,33 years old, and the average age of female participants is 21,5 years old. The rationale behind choosing university students for the study of gender and linguistic politeness of requests is that at university we can find both males and females with equal IQ (Intelligence Quotient) levels. In other social settings, there might be a difference in the intelligence of the participants and this difference might affect their expression of requests. In other words, there is not a very clear variation in the population. So, university students can be considered the most suitable and reliable population for the data collection.

The research is based on personal observation providing examples of the way males and females use different vocabulary to express one meaning through a group discussion. A questionnaire is used in order to have concrete results about the differences between males' and females' speech.

The sample includes students of both gender of third year English students at Mentouri Brothers University in Constantine. The analysis was a qualitative one because it deals with the linguistic aspect and compares and contrasts the manner of speech among the two genders.

III- Results and discussion:

As a result, when we try to join some girls' and boys' groups talk about their fathers, male students use the word (الشيخ) /shykh/, for example:

1. "the old man" to mean my father (dad) (الشيخ تاعنا في حالة أو طلعناه للسيطار البارح) /shykhta 'nafi hāla-aw ṭala'nāhlesbitārlbārah/ (The old man <my father> is very ill, we took him to the hospital last night).

However, when females talk about their fathers, they use (Baba) "my father" in contrast to boys, for example:

2. (بابا غدوة يطلع لداير نشا الله) /bābaghadwayatla' ldayarnshāllah/ (My father will go to Algiers tomorrow if God wills).

We obtain that girls prefer to use French since it is a prestigious language. For instance:

3. (وما ريفيزيتش غدوة عندي) /ghadwa 'andikontrūwl w ma rivizitch/ (Le 15 Mai normalement نبدأ les contrôles) /lukinz mi nurmalmūnabdāwlkontrūwl/.

What we notice is that girls tend to speak about subjects related to their studies, exams, future partner, home, fashion, decoration, clothes, tastes, etc. In addition, the use of code switching was prominent in the participants' speech. The following examples illustrate that:

1. (أنا نحب الرجل يكون قاري متربي و زين) /'ana nhabrrājalykūwnqārimtrabbi w zīn/ (I like to marry an educated man, well brought up and handsome)

2. (اللي لابستها أمينة تهبل) /shatti la rūwblilābsatha 'aminathabbal/ (شنتي) (Have you seen the dress that Amina wore? It is very nice)

3. (عجوزتها دارت فيها المنكر) /'jūwzathadāratfīhalmunkur/ (Her mother-in-law treats her badly)

On the other hand, we remark that boys prefer to speak about cars, football matches, discussing news, politics, business...

1. (الشومبيونة أي لينا لعبنا مع الريال و ربحناها) /shūwmbiunaāylīnal'abnam'arryāl w rbaḥnāha/ (The champions league is ours, we played against Real Madrid and we won).

2. /mazālly 'āmin w nukhrujrutrīt/ (مازاللي عامين و نخرج retraiate)

(I will retire after two years)

3. /sma't bennizāmlajdīd ta' bin ghabrīt/ (سمعت بالنظام لجديد تاع بن غبريط)

(have you heard about the new system of Ben Ghabrit)

4. /wāshrāykumfītusun/ (واش رايكم في Tucson)

(Did you like the new price of Tucson cars)

The second step is the questionnaire. Through the questions that we asked, we found that males speak in louder voice, and they disclose less personal information contrast to females.

(س1: واش هي الصفات تاع زوج (ة) المستقبل?) /wāshhyaṣṣifāt ta' zawjlmustaqbal/

(Q1 : What are the characteristics you like in your future wife/husband to have?)

The Males' Answer:

/mash rāyahnatzawwajwnabqahakkaṭulhyati/ (مش رايع ننتزوج و نبقي هكا طول حياتي)

(I will not marry, I will remain single all my life)

The Females' Answer:

/ykūwnmatrabbi w khaddām w 'andudāruwaḥdu (يكون متربي و خدامو عندو دارو وحدو مانيشحابة نعيش مع بياه)

w manishhābban'ishm'ayammāh/

(I want him to be well brought up, employed and that he has his own house; I do not want to live with his mother).

We also found that men use more polite language than men.

(س2: كي تكون في البيسو واحد واقف في طريقك كيفاه تطلب منو يبعدك?) /kitkūwnfalbīs w wāḥadwāqaf fi

ṭriqakkifahtatlubmannuyba'adlak?/

(Q2 : When you are in the bus and someone is standing in your way, how do you ask him to move away?)

The Males' Answer:

/assimuḥammadba'ad mnaṭriq/ (أسي محمد بعد من الطريق)

(Hey man, move away!)

The Females' Answer:

/ma'lish tba'adlishwyanfūwt/ (معلش تبعدلي شوية نفوت؟)

Could you please move a bit to let me pass?

Women language includes more adjectives than that of men's. When we asked women to describe their mothers, they gave us the following answer:

/māma 'andhaqalbkbīr w (ماما عندها قلب كبير و هي مثال للحنان و تاني باهية و لطيفة بصبح ساعات واعرة)

hyamithāllalḥanān w tanibāhya w lṭifa beṣṣaḥsa'ātwa'ra/

(My mother has a big heart, she is a symbol of kindness, she is beautiful and lovely, though she is severe sometimes).

Whereas males gave us this answer: (مما أنا نحبّ طيايها) /mma ana nḥabṭyabha/

(My mother? Oh, I love her cooking)

Spoken language differences exist between males and females at four levels: form, topic, content and use. Women's speech is said to contain politeness forms, apology and laughter, cry and unfinished sentences. They are reputed to talk more about home and family and to be more emotional and positively evaluative. Further, women's speech is stereotyped as non-assertive, tentative and supportive. Men, on the other hand, are reputed to use more slang.

Sociolinguistic research on language and gender has found differences in speech patterns, and through that we have viewed that women in general are more attentive to others' feelings and thus more polite than men. Women are more actively engaged in ensuring interaction than men. The use of negative politeness by male and female speakers is mainly equal. The use of "positive politeness" did not appear to be relative to the status of gender, since positive politeness is only used by attorneys.

This study proved that females are more polite in the face of both men and women. It proved that both male and female are more polite to the opposite gender than they are to their own. Men used the same types of request strategies in their requests.

The study of greeting forms used shows that there are significant differences at the level of the two genders. Though the chosen settings are the same, different answers were made. When speech takes place between two friends, though male use more informal expressions and feel a great power face, in comparison to female speakers because they put more stress on their feelings and attitudes toward the speaker. Furthermore, females mostly tend to talk about private subjects and show how they feel about the subject matter. In meeting the males, they tend to speak in a less informal way and female are politer. In other words, as intimacy decreases, the differences become less significant.

The results that may be inferred show that males' and females' speech differ a lot. They use different linguistic forms to mean the same thing. Females tend to use the French language mixed with Algerian Arabic because it is a prestigious form while males use dialectal Algerian Arabic in different topics. As a result, these factors affect men's and women's speech.

IV-Conclusion:

In conclusion, we can say that men and women are equally polite in terms of language use, and both are linguistically polite to some extent. Evidence suggests that it is the personal relationship rather than gender that may influence the way people communicate with each other. Though degrees of formality vary, females and males use almost the same positive politeness to show concern to friends. The only slight difference is that men are sometimes likely to use a more casual and humorous way to initiate a greeting or any other speech pattern.

Many researchersexamine politeness variations between women and men in daily interactions. Based on many well-known studies of gender-specific language, this piece of research leaps to the conclusion that men tend to see a language as a tool for obtaining and conveying information, on the one hand. On the other hand, women tend to be more concerned with living together in harmony than getting work done, and tend to speak more formally; also, women tend to be more polite than men through a range of differences in compliments and requests. Most of these linguistic forms are used more by females rather than males to maintain politeness in cross-sex conversations. Notwithstanding, there are some oppositions to this belief in sociolinguistics. Knowing the differences in polite behaviour between men and women can be very helpful to achieve effective communication as well as to enhance relationship. All in all, it can be said that women are more polite than men in the use of linguistic politeness in general because people are free to choose the best style of speech according to different situations to show politeness.

We recommend that this study is very important; the findings we came to might be of great importance for further and extended studies. In the same scope, they suggest new ideas that might help the future research.

Gender difference can never be an adequate explanatory end point for our analysis, because it is a social construction that needs studying in and of itself in order to develop a productive approach that goes beyond and explore the uncountable ways in which gender and gender difference are constructed.

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