

The Impact of Gender in Determining Politeness Strategy with Reference to Iraqi Students of English

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Abstract

The current study aims at investigating the impact of gender on the linguistic politeness especially acts threatening the interlocutor's face (FTAs) such as requests, offers, orders ...etc. It is intended to answer some questions concerning the very nature of politeness as a linguistic phenomenon and as a cultural specific concept. Moreover, it investigates which strategies are attributed to be feminine and which are attributed to be masculine.

The most thorough treatment of politeness was made by the scholars Brown & Levinson (1987, (1978)), and Leech (1983) though they were not the first in this field. Their efforts seemed to be conducted to establish the universal norms of politeness and the related items affecting them.

In this concern , showing the linguistic politeness probably depends on these interrelated factors ; the type of the act that the language user might make , the type of relation involving the participants in a given situation i.e. whom one is addressing to see whether the relationship is intimate , formal , informal ...etc , gender and the cultural norms of a certain language .

This paper depends on Brown & Levinson's perspective of the linguistic politeness. Data were gathered by analyzing the students responses on a written test composed of two questions. Politeness was rated by counting the correct choices performed by male and female participants for each item of the given questions.

تأثير الجنس في تحديد استراتيجيات الكياسة اللغوية
بالإشارة الى طلاب اللغة الانكليزية العراقيين

الخلاصة :

تهدف الدراسة الحالية الى البحث في مدى تأثير الجنس على الكياسة اللغوية وبخاصة افعال الكلام التي تهدد الوجه الاجتماعي للمحاور (الافعال المهددة للوجه الاجتماعي) مثل الطلبات والعروض والوامر... الخ . ان الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو الاجابة عن بعض التساؤلات الخاصة بطبيعة التادب اللغوي كظاهرة لغوية وكمفردة مرتبطة بالثقافة . اضافة الى ذلك ، فانها تبحث في اية استراتيجيات توصف بانها انثوية واخرى ذكرية.

ان المعالجة الاكثر شمولاً للكياسة اللغوية قد تمت من قبل علماء اللغة براون وليفنسون عامي ١٩٧٨ و١٩٨٧ ولبيك عام ١٩٨٣ رغم انهم لم يكونوا الاوائل في هذا المجال . كنت جهودهم منصبة لإرساء القواعد العامة للكياسة اللغوية والعوامل المؤثرة في عمل هذه القواعد.

فيما يتعلق بذلك فان اظهار الكياسة اللغوية يعتمد على هذه العوامل التي تعمل بشكل مترابط وهي : نوع فعل الكلام الذي يمكن ان يستخدمه المتكلم ونوع العلاقة التي تربط المتحاورين في موقف معين ،بمعنى اخر من هو المقصود بهذا الحديث لمعرفة فيما اذا كانت هذه العلاقة حميمة،او رسمية ، ام غير رسمية...الخ. ،والجنس والقواعد الثقافية للغة معينة .

البحث الحالي يعتمد على رؤية براون وليفنسون للتدابير اللغوية . لقد جمعت بيانات هذا البحث من خلال تحليل استجابات الطلبة على اختبار مكتوب مؤلف من سواطين. لقد قيست نسبة الكياسة اللغوية من خلال حساب الخيارات الصحيحة التي اداها المشاركون في الاختبار من الذكور والاناث لكل مفردة من الاسئلة المعطاة.

1. Introduction

To understand the very nature of the linguistic politeness, there is a need to raise questions such as what does politeness mean? , what role does it play in language? And does it really mitigate our way of saying things? Actually and most of the time people of a certain language know or they could realize what is polite and what is not .But , the matter is different when dealing with a foreign language user as he would generalize whatever thing associated with the target language . It is worth to deal with politeness as an important dimension of interpersonal relations affecting the whole range of the linguistic choices a hearer and a speaker might possibly depend on. These choices can be modified to express a wide range of attitudes; from the speaker to the hearer. "*Politeness consists of this recognition of the listener and his or her rights in the situation*" (Spolsky 1998: 19).

Holmes (1995) as cited in (Gibson 2009: 1) suggests that "*politeness' will be used to refer to behaviour which actively expresses positive concern for others, as well as non-imposing distancing behaviour*". Accordingly, politeness is a form of behaviour that can be best reflected linguistically and otherwise i.e. it is obvious linguistically in verbal communication, non-linguistically when dealing with the other aspects of language that is of body language, or in some other cases one would expect the mixture between the two, saying 'hello' to somebody and shaking hands with him is a good example of that mixture and so on so forth.

2. Definitions of politeness

In attempting to define politeness, it is quite important to take some scholars' perspectives into consideration. Lakoff (1975:69) sees politeness as a form of

behaviour that has been "*developed in societies in order to reduce friction in personal interaction*".

Leech (1983:104) interprets politeness as forms of behaviour that are directed for the establishment and the maintenance of comity. He has developed his own understanding of politeness by putting it in a form of a principle calling it ' politeness principle '. It includes six important maxims (Ibid: 119 ff).These maxims are:

- (1) Tact maxim: minimize cost to other; maximize benefit to other.
- (2) Generosity maxim: minimize benefit to self; maximize cost to self.
- (3) Approbation maxim: minimize dispraise of other; maximize praise of other.
- (4) Modesty maxim: minimize praise of self; maximize dispraise of self.
- (5) Agreement maxim: minimize disagreement between self and other; maximize agreement between self and other.
- (6) Sympathy maxim: minimize antipathy between self and other; maximize sympathy between self and other.

So according to Leech, in order to be polite one has got to follow the politeness principle.

Brown & Levinson's model of politeness (1978) suggests having much more focus on others 'face wants' .They define face as "*the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself*" (Ibid: 67).So they propose two types of face:

- (a) Negative face that represents the wants of every 'competent adult member 'that his actions be unimpeded by others.
- (b) Positive face that represents the wants of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some other (Ibid: 68).

Depending on the two aspects of face, two types of politeness are associated with them: positive politeness and negative one .The positive politeness is seen as a redressive action directed to the addressee's positive face. Whereas the negative politeness is a mitigated action directed to the addressee's negative face .On another words, the negative politeness involves the addressee's desire to be free from imposition and his attention to be unimpeded. Here negative politeness corresponds with what people usually consider as 'polite'.

When people talk they usually do so performing a great deal of face threatening acts (FTAs). And for the purpose of reducing these acts, Brown &Levinson (1978:74) recommended five levels strategies which are:

(1) Bald on record (most direct); (2) positive politeness; (3) negative politeness; (4) off-record (giving hints), and (5) do not do face threatening acts (least direct).

Verschueren (1999: 45) states that" *'politeness' has become a cover term in pragmatics for whatever choices are made in language use in relation to the need to preserve people's face in general i.e. Their public self-image"*

On other words, any act that puts face wants at risk of losing face is a face threatening act. Sentence (1) represents a plain request that involves a threat to negative face:

- (1) When you're down in Como, buy me a silk tie.
- (2) A: Where did Dan get that new silk tie?
B: I 'm not going to tell you.

Sentence (2) represents a threat to positive face. Both (1) and (2.B) are considered as bald on record strategy. In such a situation, politeness strategies involve mitigation either by using negative politeness strategies as in (3) or positive politeness strategies as in (4):

- (3) I hate to impose on you , but when you 're down in Como, Could you buy me a Silk tie?
- (4) I know its stupid, but I promised him not to tell any one. I did not know you would be interested.

Both of (3) and (4) are in the domain of on record strategy. Another strategy is off record strategy as in (5); it is understood as giving hints for the already given request:

- (5) I should probably get myself one of those silk ties! (Ibid: 45f)

3. Related basics to politeness

Generally, we all agree that in showing the linguistic politeness to someone else we are having a goal to be achieved. And to fulfill that goal there is a need to consider politeness from the following basic aspects:

1. Face and face wants.
2. Social knowledge.
3. Culture.
4. Gender.

3.1 Face and face wants

In their model of politeness, Brown & Levinson were much concerned with the concept, as adapted from Goffman (1967), of face, a preferred image that a

participant would like to guarantee during the course of interaction (Goffman (1967) as cited in Gibson 2009:2) .They argue that many of the speech acts people utter involve considerable amount of threat to the addressee's face. One's face in pragmatics is his own public self-image. It has emotional and social senses that every member expects every one else to recognize (Yule 1985:134). And so as to mitigate the impact of that threat, the focus should be on two categories of strategies: 'negative politeness' and 'positive politeness' . Specific strategies from each category are listed below.

Negative politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson 1987: 131):

- N1. Be conventionally indirect
- N2. Question, hedge
- N3. Be pessimistic
- N4. Minimize the imposition
- N5. Give deference
- N6. Apologize
- N7. Impersonalize the speaker and hearer
- N8. State the face threatening action as a general rule
- N9. Nominalize
- N10. Go on record as incurring a debt

Positive politeness strategies (Ibid: 102)

- P1. Notice; attend to the hearer's needs
- P2. Exaggerate interest, approval, sympathy
- P3. Intensify interest to the hearer
- P4. Use in-group identity markers
- P5. Seek agreement
- P6. Avoid disagreement
- P7. Presuppose / raise/ assert common ground
- P8. Joke
- P9. Assert/ presuppose knowledge of hearer's concerns
- P10. Offer, promise
- P11. Be optimistic
- P12. Include both speaker and hearer in activity
- P13. Give or ask for a reason
- P14. Assume or assert reciprocity
- P15. Give gifts to the hearer

Sometimes ,there is a feel that the (FTAs) is unavoidable , so the speaker has to be polite to balance the threat using a redressive action to maintain a higher degree of independence and freedom from imposition going straight forwards to the negative politeness (Gibson 2009: 2) . Using negative politeness, such as uttering negative question' I couldn't borrow 30 dollars, could I?' .This would make the question easier to be refused by the hearer (Ibid). The positive politeness can reduce the threat to its minimum by preparing a suitable ground for friendship relation. And in doing so the hearer might feel good .Also much more (FTAs) can be avoided using indirectness, or off the record as a strategy.

3.2 Social knowledge

Politeness as a principle should be dealt with as a necessary and supported to Grice's co-operative principle that underlies the process of communication (Leech 1983: 82). In such a process 'politeness maxims' work in conjunction with the co-operative maxims. Mean while, Leech (1983) suggests that there are two perspectives to be considered in language use; the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic perspectives. The former is concerned with the linguistic strategies that can be used to convey a given pragmatic meaning , whereas the latter focuses on the socially assessments , beliefs and interactional principles people often perform to determine their choices of the linguistic strategies (Verschueren 2002:80) . So that deciding the degree of intimacy between participants i.e. .close, distant, equal or unequal, is a good example of the sociopragmatic dimension of language use .Pragmalinguistic perspective concentrates on the linguistic strategies enabling and ensuring their operation. To take the request utterance into consideration:

- "Pass the salt will you?"

There is a conventionally indirect request:

- "Can you pass the salt please?"

Or non-conventionally indirect request:

- " I like my food quite salty"

For both of the two indirect requests, it is important to be aware of the appropriate use of language that can not be obtained unless an interlocutor has his own social knowledge including the politeness norms and conventions. Politeness is seen as a "*one component of a more general skill, the appropriate*

use of language" (Aitchison 1999:109). Being polite involves having two basic social "no criticism"

And "no interference". Consequently, anyone with social " know-how" will minimize criticism of others and will avoid interfering with their freedom, at least overtly (Ibid: 105).

3.3 Culture

"Ideas about the appropriate language to mark politeness differ substantially from one culture to the next culture" (Yule 1985: 134) .On other words what might be regarded as polite in one culture might be impolite in another. In their model of politeness, Brown & Levinson (1987), they deal with politeness as a cultural specific dimension of language use .And the fact that every culture has developed its own systematic mechanisms enabling its speakers to convey a wide range of polite attitude towards others (Hernandes 1999:128) .In each culture, we may notice different view of values that in one way or another might affect the criteria of politeness and lead to differences in various aspects. There are some differences between cultures to be noticed here:

(a) Ways of greeting

In English speaking community, to greet someone you know you may say 'hello' or you may decide depending on the time of greeting i.e. 'good morning', 'good afternoon'

...etc. The most common types of politeness formulas are involved with greeting, because greetings are considered the "*basic oil of social relations*" (Spolsky 1998:20).

Those types of greeting are ranging from informal 'hi' through neutral ' good morning ' to a slowly disappearing formula 'how do you do?'(Ibid). Whereas in Arabic speaking society, people would say 'marhaba' or ' asalamu'alaykum'; or depend on the time of greeting as ' sabah alkhair' for the morning greetings.

(b) Addressing forms

Iraqi people often use one's occupation to address him to show respect, whether in formal or informal situations. The social status might be embodied for example 'austathe' is the address form of teacher and 'sit' used to address the female teacher .Sometimes the religious status is highly appreciated when

addressing some people such as 'sayid, sheikh , hajji, aulwiyah, abunah, messier ...etc .The case is different in English speaking society . So in their formal situations people would prefer using address that reveals their professions e.g professor John, chairman Bill ...etc. Whereas, in the informal situations; even a professor would like to be called with his given name.

When dealing with culture , it sounds significant to realize the cultural values of a given society .Generally , English people are much concerned about their cultural values especially their privacy and the considerations of taboos .An act might be regarded as an intrusion upon a person's privacy . Therefore, speakers have to balance the merits and demerits of ' straight talking ' (Aitchison 1999: 105). So asking a woman about her age would be regarded as taboo and the same could be said when talking about someone's religion, salary, marriage and sex .Taboo has a significant influence on the linguistic growth of both sexes (Trudgill 1974:87)

3.4 Gender

Actually, it is important to deal with the linguistic sex variations as being the result of social differences .These differences attribute the differences in linguistic behaviour which are expected from both sexes (Trudgill 1974:95). Men and women speak as they do because they feel a particular form of language appropriate to their sexes (Ibid:101) .This leads to the notion of 'genderlect', it is a term used to account for the apparently systematic differences in the way men and women's talk (Liamas and Stockwell 2002 : 159) .There are certain factors causing these differences :

(1) Social pressure: in fact there are certain social pressures on the part of participants to acquire prestige or to appear ' correct'. And these pressures are more evident in women's talk because they have more status-conscious ability (Aitchison 1999:117)

(2) Power talking: this characteristic is more typically in men's speech. Men do not only talk more but also interrupt more without of course realizing that they are doing so (Ibid:119). It is quite obvious in men's performing direct orders. For instance, in the doctor-patient interactions in USA, men use more explicit directives like 'lie down' 'take off your shirt'. Whereas women are in favour of

using joint action when performing commands 'may we should just take the top of your dress of ' ...etc.

(3) Conversative purpose: women's speech is expected to be less aggressive, less innovative and more conversative (Trudgill 1974:95)

(4) Level of education: this factor appears to be of crucial importance in such a way that women's talk is usually associated with home and domestic activities .While men's associated with the outside world and the economic activities (Spolsky 1998: 17). In recent years women began to think in a rather different way. They just feel the need to behave in a ' lady-like' manner because they are essentially the 'child-rearers' enabling their children to grow socially and linguistically. Moreover, women speak ' nicely' in such a way to have the chance to get new job which depends on communication abilities rather than on strength.

Lakoff is quite well known for her contributions in studying the characteristics of women's talk. Her paper which turned book "Language and Women's Place" (1975, 2004) has gained a great deal of emphasis. She explains the reasons behind certain tendencies of women's speech including the use of hedges, empty adjectives, and tag questions. Moreover, women are likely to produce more tag questions to make their speech more polite (Lakoff 2004: 50). She has made her proposal which closely associated with Brown &Levinson's theory of politeness concerning the avoidance of (FTAs) through using the negative politeness strategies.

4. Gaps in Brown &Levinson theories of politeness

Burke & Kraut (2008: 2) state that there are two essential criticisms of Brown & Levinson theory of politeness. First, the strategies are ambiguous, partially overlapping and fall at many different levels of communication, from syntactic (e.g. question form) to pragmatic (e.g. joking). Second, the emphasis is on the speaker's perception of politeness rather than the hearer's.

In their work, Brown & Levinson do not involve a clear distinction between negative politeness and positive politeness. And the fact that they categorize many face threatening acts are threatening both faces; negative and positive ones (Meier 1995: 384). Furthermore , the claim of 'universality' of their theories has been repeatedly put into question by many researchers , as Brown & Levinson provide data from three different languages English ,Tzeltal , and Tamil . Kasper (1990:194) thinks that any account of politeness has to deal with the fact

that politeness theories are often "*over-simplistic as theories with claim to universality*". Hernandes (1999: 211) mentions three fronts of the objection to the claim of universality: face-dualism, the relative exposition of the role of face in politeness, and the existence of some inapplicable data. Finally, in their theories Brown & Levinson do not include the role and effect of gender on politeness (Gibson 2009: 3).

5. Research Questions

There are three essential questions involved within the scope of this research:

1. Do Iraqi students of English of both sexes have the ability to recognize polite requests from those impolite ones?
2. If they gain the least ability to do so, is there any difference between male and female participants?
3. What are the politeness strategies that male and female participants intend to perform?

5. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of gender in the determination of politeness strategies, with regards to negative and positive strategies. The study has been conducted through the means of analytic data collection. Participants all of whom were of similar age, and level of education. They were fourth stage (EFL) students, College of Arts, Basrah University. The students were grouped in classroom setting within the time of one lecture limit which is (60) minutes .The group consisted of nine male and eighteen female. They were asked to perform their answers concerning a written test composing of two questions:

- (a) A question that investigate the participants' recognition of what is the very polite, polite, average, impolite and rude request.
- (b) A question composing of ten imaginative situations based on six negative strategies and five positive strategies as the last item of the question is a compound one consisting of two strategies; avoiding disagreement and seeking agreement.

Two analytical methods are conducted for obtaining the results:

5.1 The first question

For the sake of measuring the degree of the participants' recognition of linguistic politeness by male and female informants, it was preferred to employ Lakoff's (2004) proposal concerning requests. The theory states that the more compound the request, the more polite it is realized (Lakoff 2004, cited in Gibson2009:8). On other words, the more the request contains free morphemes, the more polite it is, without of course forgetting that it would be politer to say

things indirectly (Leech 1983). So that by counting the number of the free morphemes in a certain request, I can get a clear idea about the degree of politeness realization. To take the test's request into consideration , very polite request would be sentences (4) and (6):

4. I'd appreciate it if you could lend me ten dollars.

6. Do you suppose you could let me borrow ten dollars?

As both of them contain ten free morphemes and also they appeared to be more indirect, whereas the rude request would be sentence (5) as it contains only four free morphemes and very direct:

5. Lend me ten bucks.

5.2 The second question

Concerning the second question and for the purpose of measuring the type of strategy a participant intends to apply, it is been conducted by following Brown & Levinson (1987) model of politeness as a method for analyzing the participants' responses. The assessment would be much more dependent on the negative as well as the positive strategies. And by counting the number of the correct responses that correspond with each strategy we can have an idea about the performance of each sex. As it is been mentioned previously, six negative strategies and five positive strategies have been chosen and arranged respectively here:

1. Indirectness.
2. Minimizing the imposition.
3. Stating (FTA) as a general rule.
4. Apologizing.
5. Giving deference.
6. Question, hedge.
7. Sympathy.
8. Asking for a reason.
9. Offer.
10. Avoiding disagreement/ seeking agreement.

6. Results

The following tables show the holistic polite choices performed by male and female (EFL) students:

Table 1 shows the students'(male and female) total performance concerning their

Number+ Sex	V. Polite	Polite	Average	Impolite	Rude	Median	Correct Choice
1.Male			0.55	0.44		Average	Average
1.Female		0.16	0.61	0.05	0.16	Average	Average
2.Male		0.55	0.33	0.11		Polite	Average
2.Female	0.11	0.72	0.11	0.05		Polite	Average
3.Male	0.33	0.66				Polite	Polite
3.Female	0.66	0.33				V. Polite	Polite
4.Male	0.77			0.11	0.11	V. Polite	V.Polite
4.Female	0.5	0.11	0.22	0.16		V.Polite	V.Polite
5.Male				0.44	0.55	Rude	Rude
5. Female		0.11	0.16	0.38	0.44	Rude	Rude
6.Male			0.55	0.22	0.22	Average	V.Polite
6.Female	0.16		0.22	0.27	0.33	Rude	V.Polite

realization of linguistic politeness compared with the correct choices.

Table 1: the students' realization of linguistic politeness as median represents their choices.

Table 2 shows the students' (male and female) total performance of the negative politeness strategies:

Number+ Sex	V.Polite	Polite	Average	Impolite	Rude	Median
1.Male		0.125	0.5		0.375	Average
1.Female		0.44	0.44		0.11	Average and Polite
2.Male		0.142	0.142	0.571	0.142	Impolite
2.Female		0.266	0.066	0.53	0.13	Impolite
3.Male		0.44	0.11		0.44	Polite &Rude

3.Female		0.33	0.16	0.44	0.05	Impolite
4.Male	0.33	0.55	0.11			Polite
4.Female	0.294	0.47	0.235			Polite
5.Male	0.33	0.55		0.11		Polite
5.Female	0.437	0.437		0.125		Very Polite & Polite
6.Male		0.5	0.375		0.125	Polite
6.Female		0.294	0.294	0.294	0.117	Polite & Average

Table 2: the students' performance of the negative politeness strategies.

Table 3 shows the students' (male and female) total performance of the positive politeness strategies:

Number	Very polite	Polite	Average	Impolite	Rude	Median
7Male		0.33	0.33	0.33		Polite & Average
7Female		0.588	0.352	0.058		Polite
8Male		0.125	0.5	0.125	0.375	Average
8Female		0.588	0.117	0.294		Polite
9Male		0.25	0.5	0.25		Average
9Female		0.588	0.352	0.058		Polite
10Male		0.142	0.285	1.75		Impolite
10Female		0.352	0.41	0.235		Average

Table 3: the students' performance of the positive politeness strategies.

Table 4 shows the holistic differences between male and female students' realizing linguistic politeness:

Number+ Sex	Correct Choice	X ²	P_value
1Male	55	0.00	>0.05
1Female	61		
2Male	33	11.00	< 0.01
2Female	11		
3Male	66	11.00	<0.01
3Female	33		
4Male	77	5.74	<0.05
4Female	50		
5Male	55	1.22	>0.05
5Female	44		
6Male	0		<0.05
6Female	16		

Table 4: the holistic responses signifying their choices

Table 5 & 6 show the total differences between male and female performing negative politeness strategies:

Number+ Sex	Polite	X ²	P_value
1Male	12.5	16.86	< 0.01
1Female	44		
2Male	14.2	4.12	<0.05
2Female	26.6		
3Male	44	1.57	>0.05
3Female	33		
4Male	55	0.627	>0.05
4Female	47		
5Male	55	1.22	>0.05
5Female	43.7		
6Male	50	5	<0.05
6Female	29.4		

Table 5: the holistic responses signifying students negative politeness strategies (polite responses)

Number Sex	V. Polite	X ²	P-Value
4Male	33	0.143	>0.05
4Female	29.4		
5Male	33	1.571	>0.05
5Female	43.7		

Table 6: the holistic responses signifying students' negative (very polite responses)

Table 7 shows the total differences between male and female performing positive polite strategies:

Number+ Sex	Polite	X ²	P_ value
7Male	33	7.348	< 0.01
7Female	58.8		
8Male	12.5	30.229	<0.001
8Female	58.8		
9Male	25	13.762	<0.001
9Female	58.8		
10Male	14.2	9	<0.005
10Female	35.2		

Table 7: the holistic responses signifying the students' positive politeness strategy

7. Discussion

Generally and concerning the first question in this study I found that (EFL) Iraqi students do have the ability to recognize the polite requests. It is obvious in table (1). In this table we can notice that there is a considerable rate of those students who do well and perceive what is polite. In addition to that we need to

mention that there is a significant difference between male and female performance in the recognition process. By noticing table (4), male do better than female except in sentences (1) and (5) as no significant difference is appeared. And this would actually reflect the answer of the second question of this study. There is a belief that women use more polite language and accordingly they have the ability to grasp what is polite more than men do. This belief has been disproved by this study.

With respect to the third question it is noticed that male are appeared to be better than female in performing negative politeness strategies. Women show their ability to express positive politeness strategies. These differences can be seen in tables (2) and (3). By noticing the same tables, we can see that male participants are good in some negative strategies i.e. stating (FTA) as a general rule, apologizing, giving deference, and question, hedge. Men's speech contains a great deal of threat, so they would prefer to use these strategies to mitigate the impact of that threat. In tables (5), (6) and (7), it is found that there are some significant differences between male and female performing negative and positive politeness strategies. I was expecting that women would perform more negative strategies as they are interested in lady-like behaviour. Again this doesn't prove totally for the already given reason. Women are much more able in using positive politeness strategies as they feel the importance of solidarity in their social relationships.

One of the aspects that was observed in this study is the use of the mitigated device 'please' to indicate respect. It is been performed as being the appropriate expression reflecting the value system of individual without paying an attention to face demands:

Male: Would you please lend me this camera?

Female: Could you lend me your camera, please?

Participants here probably would rely on more indirectness devices when performing requests as it is seen in the above example without realizing its importance in the reduction of the impact of threat on the part of the addressee.

When dealing with advices, participants of both sexes do not employ any linguistic device for the purpose of mitigating the threat, on the contrary they use direct speech acts. Here gender does not have an effective role in performing the responses.

Male: Do not go to the market tonight.

Female: Study hard in the coming exam.

In the case of apologies, female use more elaborates linguistic expressions to their concern of others in most cases:

Male: I'm sorry to break it.

Female: I'm sorry for that and I'll bring you another one.

This study also revealed that female used more sympathetic expressions than male:

Male: You have to study hard in the next exam.

Female: Don't worry; you will pass the exam next time.

Another aspect, female participants are well-known for their blaming utterances, because they would like to include their emotional attitudes within their expressions as it is clear in these responses:

Male: Never mind.

Female: Why you forgot our appointment?

Also, this study shows that male participants use more conflictive attitudes when dealing with others as it is obvious in their willing of performing disagreement utterances which are deeply rooted as part of their social personality, but the question is that do they realize they are doing so I doubt it. Let's have a final look at the participants' responses:

Male: Well I don't agree with you for always you are mistaken.

Female: I hope so.

Finally, it is better to mention that if politeness or $(P) > 0.05$, this means that the difference between male and female is not a big deal. On other words there is non-significant difference(NS) between the two sexes.

8. Conclusions

In this study I aimed to investigate the impact of gender in determining politeness strategy. I felt the necessity to shed a light on the relationship between gender and linguistic politeness. There are some points to be noticed here:

1. Men are more able to perceive polite requests as compared with women. Gender here plays a considerable role in the recognition of polite requests.
2. Men are able to perform negative politeness strategies, but to some extents.
3. Women's ability is more reliable in performing positive politeness strategies as compared with men's ability.
4. Participants of both sexes do not realize that using direct requests would imply rudeness on the part of the addressee.
5. Most participants of both sexes would not realize that the use of utterances like can you, could you, would you mind ... etc will mitigate the impact of threat on the part of the hearer. Usually they consider 'please' as the only mitigating device.

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Appendix: Form of the written test

Q1. The following sentences are ranging from very polite to rude .Try to say which of these is (very polite, polite, average, impolite, and rude)

1. How about lending me ten bucks?
2. Could you lend me ten dollars?
3. Would you please lend me ten dollars?
4. I'd appreciate it if you could lend me ten dollars.
5. Lend me ten bucks!
6. Do you suppose you could let me borrow ten dollars?

(Hudson2000:486)

Q2. Respond to the following:

1. A request to borrow your friend's camera.
2. A piece of advice you do have you like to say to your friend.
3. You are in your friend's house. Ask him to change the TV channel.
4. While you were there, you broke something of his own. What would you say?
5. How would you greet your friend's mother?
6. You are starving .How would you tell your friend that?
7. Your friend hasn't done well in the exam. What would you say?
8. Your friend forgot your appointment .What would you say?
9. Your friend needs a help in house work .What kind of offer you might provide.
10. Your friend thinks that the college team may win in the next championship.
What would you say?

Note: your friend might be a male or a female.