Gender and Demand Strategies: A Sociolinguistic Study

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The investigation on the impact of gender as a sociolinguistics factor on the use of different strategies for demands or requests by men and women is the aim of this research. Six strategies reviewed in this study: Direct Request, Conventional Indirect Request, Hints, Alerters, Supportive Moves, and Internal Modifiers. To discover the role of gender on the use of these strategies in demands, 80 students of Jahrom University, Iran participated in this study. They divided into two 40 groups according to their gender. A questionnaire of six-items was designed to collect data. Each of the items in the questionnaire explained different situations. T-test and Chi-squared test applied for the data analysis. The result revealed that men use the strategies of direct request, conventional indirect Request, hints and alerters in their requests more than women. On the other hand, women use the strategies of supportive moves and internal modifiers in their demands more than men. The result also showed that female students paid more attention to the way of their demands than male students especially in formal social contexts and act more conservative. This can be related to this fact that women try to observe in social face in their speech acts

1- INTRODUCTION

Language is a social phenomenon and a pattern for the structure of the society. People do not use language just for transforming their thoughts and emotions to their addressees, but they use language to describe their relationship and to define an identity for themselves (Fasold, 1990:1). Language is always under the influence of society and social factors, so the internal differences of a linguistic community are always observable. Social factors like gender, age, education and social statuses define the kind of language usage in society (Fasold, 1990: 89).

Sociolinguists have noticed the linguistic variables in different social contexts. Gender as one of these variables gained a lot of attention in the analysis of speech acts. In some languages, women use especial words and phonetic forms while some other words are just used by men. Sometimes these differences are not only related to the speaker's gender, but also to the listener's gender (Fasold, 1990: 115). In

2- LITERATURE REVIEW

In the middle of 1970s, the credit of linguistic competence, posed by Chomsky (1965), came into question and the study of its shortage lead to raise the new theory of communicative competence by Hymes (1974). Communicative competence reveals that a

general, the way of speaking in conversations is under the influence of social relations between men and women and the kind of society they live in.

Speech act varieties of men and women are different according to culture, believes and life style in each community. Studies have revealed that men and women's ways of speaking are different to some extent in Iran. These differences can be investigated through different aspects. Women use their especial indexes; furthermore, these indexes also vary according to social status, age, education and occupation. Study of the effect of each of these social factors on language varieties needs a vast probing.

The aim of this article is to define different strategies which men and women choose to express their demands. Since using demand strategies is related to social factors, the study must be done in social context. Analysis of all of the linguistic levels is beyond of this study, so we limit the study to lexical and syntactic level.

speaker of a language not only has the ability of using grammatical rules for creating correct sentences, but also knows how and where the sentences should be used. This theory is explained in three parts: grammatical competence, strategic competence and sociolinguistic competence. The

speaker's ability to describe and produce language properly is called sociolinguistic competence. This ability causes the speaker to produce sentences according to different social situations (Yule, 1996:197). The theory of communicative competence opened the windows to next researches in sociolinguistics. One of the important aspects of these researches was the role of gender in the way of using language.

The studies on the correlation of gender and language are most about the investigating of the vulnerable situation of women in society. Before that, sociolinguistics had paid attention to phonetic and lexical aspects of language which men use and women do not use or vice versa. In other studies on sociolinguistic variables, gender was considered as an independent variable alongside other variables (Fasold, 1990: 89).

Lakoff (1973) wrote the first extensive paper on the characteristics of language usage. From his investigations, he came to the conclusion that the varieties which women use in society cause their identities to fade up; because this is the society that encourages them to use banal expressions with uncertainty. He described six aspects of language usage which are under the influence of the speaker's gender. These aspects are lexical distinctions, strong versus weak expletives, women's adjectives versus neutral adjectives, tag questions, intonation in answers to requests and the ability of using directive speech acts.

Fasold (1990: 16) points to the varieties which are special to women. Lakoff (1975) also says women's language includes linguistic items which are used in reaction to dominant characteristics of men. The related studies show men use effective instruments in their conversations with women to be dominant. But women prefer to use two other strategies in interactions. They try to attract men's protection and increase it during conversation and simultaneously they try to confirm the main purpose of their addressees.

Fasold (1990: 92) proposed "Gender Pattern" according to the results of sociolinguistic researches. By gender pattern he means the usage of different language frameworks on the basis of social status of men and women. According to this pattern, language frameworks are classified according to social status and the way of their applications. Men use the patterns which are not so notable in society. They use more explicit and direct statements and do not care about the soundness of speech in society. On the other hand, women prefer to use standard language. They try to speak like the people who have good

social statuses and their speeches are sound and acceptable socially. Women are more aware of linguistic characteristics and frameworks, so they try not to use very explicit and direct statements which are accompanied with a kind of "violence" and "toughness" (Fasold, 1990:2). So men seem to use more explicit and substandard statements (Trudgill, 1974).

Researches have revealed that women tend to use more language standards than men; this can be seen in syntactic, morphological and phonetic levels (Labov, 1966; Trudgill, 1974). Most of the time, women prefer to approximate their idiolects and local dialects to the standard dialect in order to preserve their social status.

Mullany (2000) reviewed the studies about language and gender through the passage of the time from 1970 to 2000. He believes that after the Lakoff's researches in the beginning of eighties, a kind of research method included power/dominance was popularized and in the middle of eighties, another method included culture/difference was founded. The difference between men and women's language patterns is postulated in the both of the methods, although the kind of views is different. Researchers like Spender (1980) and Fishman (1980) who followed the power/dominance method in their studies believes that the high economic power of men compared with women in society pervades into language and causes men's dominance in interactions. Men's influence over power structures of society causes their language to have a special credit (Mullany, 2000:4). Tannen (1994) is one of the followers of power/dominance method who believe that men and women speak differently because of their different ways of socialization. Mullany (2000) believes that the issue of gender is polarized and this can be problematic in related investigations on language and gender, but Bulter (1990) saw gender as a social behavioral structure which prevents polarization in the speech of men and women.

Different investigations have been done on the role of gender in different aspects of language in Iran. For example considering age and education variables, Mahdipour (2010) studied the issue of power in men's speech in comparison to women's. She concludes that Iranian women are powerless and uncertain in their speeches, while men are powerful and certain in their statements. Nosrati (2011) studied stress pattern differences in men and women's speeches in Tehran, the capital of Iran. She reveals that different social factors like gender, age, education and ethnicity are important in language varieties. Yegane (2015) studied the role of gender and age of speaker and listener on the level of

politeness in Iran and compared the results with other investigations held in other countries. He expresses women are more polite than men in their speeches, but age variable does not affect the level of politeness.

In general, it is difficult to summarize the results of all studies to an ultimate result. But, it seems Fasold's gender pattern has the ability to answer the questions related to the role of gender in language. Considering the cited researchers' studies as theoretical framework, we applied a basic framework in this study which is introduced in the next section.

3- THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Eslamirasekh (1993) introduced six strategies which speakers may choose in requests: Direct Request, Conventional Indirect Request, Hints, Alerters, Supportive Moves, and Internal Modifiers.
Direct requests are expressed without any intermediate expressions and hesitation. This kind of request is not usually expressed in question form like "Menu, please.", "Close the window."

Conventional indirect requests are those usually expressed by question form, but the speaker tries to make it more favorable than direct request such as "Excuse me, could you help me with this machine?", "Can you please give your notes to me?"

Hints are those demands which are expressed in question without any direct references to what the speaker wants to get such as "Do you have a pen?", "Excuse me, Prof. do you know how this machine works?" In these sentences, the speaker prefers not to use imperative sentences and expresses his or her demands by hints.

Alerters can serve as attention getters, which in turn can affect the social impact of the utterance. In their sociopragmatic role, they may act either as downgraders, meant to mitigate (soften) the act or alternatively as upgraders that intensify its degree of coerciveness like "If it is possible, pass me the salt". The usage of the expression "If it is possible" mitigates the act, but the rest of the sentence is expressed directly. The difference between alerts and conventional indirect requests is that alerts are not expressed by question form.

The speaker may choose to support or to aggravate the speech act by external modifications (supportive moves). Supportive moves do not affect the utterance used for realizing the act, but rather affect the context in which it is embedded, and thus indirectly modify illocutionary force (Edmondson, 1981). In sentences "Kevin, would you please close the window? **It is too cold in here**.", "Excuse me, do you have an extra pen that I could borrow? **I can't believe I forgot to bring one**." the bold sentences are used for supporting the demands.

Internal modifiers are defined as those elements which are linked to the head act, whose presence is not essential for the utterance to be potentially understood as a request (Faerch & Kasper, 1989). Internal modifiers can affect the social impact of the utterance. They may act as softening the impact of the act like "Can I please borrow your notes?" The presence of the word "please" softens the impact of the act and makes the request more indirect.

Considering Eslamirasekh's framework, the authors try to discover the impact of gender on each of the abovementioned strategies.

4- RESEARCH METHOD

To collect data, 80 undergraduate students from Jahrom University, Iran were chosen and divided into two equal groups of male and female. Since this study investigates just the variable of gender, the authors tried to choose the students from similar age and level of education. Then, each of the students was given a questionnaire. The face and content validity of the instrument was ensured. There were six items designated to elicit the required information in the questionnaire. Each of the questions presented a special social situation. The subjects were asked to answer the questions which were about the way of demands in different special situations. For example one of those questions was like "suppose you want to fill out a form. You look into all of your pockets, but you do not find a pen. You decide to ask your friend to borrow one. What would you say?" This question presents a semi-formal situation to evaluate the differences. After gathering the questionnaires, they were given points according to proposed strategies by Eslamirasekh (1993). The point 6 is given to direct requests and the point 1 is given to internal modifiers; and the rest of strategies are given points in this continuum. Since each questionnaire consisted of six different situations, each of the subjects had six kinds of points.

First, t-test was employed for the data analysis to know whether the difference between male and female in expressing their demands is significant or not. Then,chi-square test applied to define significant differences between male and female's using of each of the cited strategies. The percentage of usage of each strategy by two groups was defined, and then another chi-square test applied to define the differences of usage of overall strategies.

5- DATA ANALYSIS

The situations designed in the questionnaire were based on the six strategies according to the continuum of strict direct request to strict indirect one. Distribution of these strategies is based on the degree of being direct in demands. Table1 shows the difference between male and female in using the strategies. The six strategies are considered as dependent variables and gender as independent variable. By applying t-test, it reveals that the impact of gender on the degree of being direct in demands at 0.001 is significant. This shows that gender can be considered as a social factor for distinguishing different speech acts.

Table1. Difference between male and female in using strategies by applying t-test

Gender	N	Mean	SD	SE	F-test	probability of significance in two-tailed test	T-test	df	probability of significance in two- tailed test
Male	40	22.425	3.842	0.608	1.14	0.688	3.43	78	0.001
Female	40	19.375	4.099	0.648					

Table2 summarizes this fact that by applying Chi-squared test, it is revealed that the difference between male and female students in using direct request is significant at 0.025. Men use this strategy more than women (58.6 percent for men and 41.4 percent for women). The percentage of difference between male and female is to some extant high. This shows that men prefer to express their thought directly. In using conventional indirect request, the result is significant at 0.90. Men use conventional indirect request more than women (52.2 percent). The Chi-squared test shows that male students use hints more than female students (54.7 percent). It also reveals that male students use alerters more than female students (55percent). Chi-squared test is significant at 0.900 for the use of supportive moves. It shows that women use this strategy more than men (49 percent for men and 51 percent for women). It seems that for being sure about receiving positive answer, women add some other items to their speech to make it more impressive. In other words, they try to attract their addressees' attention. Chi-squared test is also significant at 0.005 for the use of internal modifiers. It also reveals that female students use this strategy more than male ones (33.3 percent for men and 66.7 percent for women). This case is a witness for this issue that women express their demands more indirectly than men. They try to increase the social impact of their speeches by using the expressions like "please". They also try to persuade their addressees to show a proper reaction to their demands by increasing their social politeness.

Table2. The percentage of using each strategy according to gender

Strategies		Male	Female
Direct Request	$p<0.0250$, $x^2=2.585$	58.6	41.4
Conventional Indirect Request	$p<0.0900$, $x^2=0.059$	52.2	47.8
Hints	$p<0.750$, $x^2=0.39$	54.7	45.3
Alerters	$p<0.750$, $x^2=0.416$	55	45
Supportive Moves	$p<0.900$, $x^2=0.09$	49	51
Internal Modifiers	$p<0.005$, $x^2=0.344$	33.3	66.7

P= probability, x^2= Chi-squared test

Table3 shows the distribution of all of the cited strategies in each of the groups (male and female) by analyzing the result of Chi-squared test. The difference between the strategies is significant at 0.01 for the male group and it is significant at 0.001 for the female group.

Table3. Distribution of strategies in each of the groups

Group	Strategies					
	Direct Request	Conventional Indirect Request	Hints	Alerters	Supportive Moves	Internal Modifiers
Male $X^2=15.1$ P<0.01	24.16	14.58	14.58	13.75	20.47	12.5
Female $X^2=21.90$ P<0.001	17.08	13.34	12.08	11.25	21.25	25

According to the above table, direct request is the one strategy which men use the most in comparison to other strategies (24.16 percent) and the least one which is used by men is internal modifiers (12.5 percent). For women, supportive moves strategy is the most used one (21.25 percent) and least one is alerters (11.25 percent).

As it is said, there are significant differences between men and women's usage of language for expressing demands. These differences are explained according the results of study in this section.

The result of table1 shows that the difference between men and women is statistically significant at 0.001. In general, men act more directly than women to reach their demands; in other words, most of the direct speeches are used by men, and most of the indirect speech acts are used by women. It seems men don not spend much time on explaining what they want. They do not waste time for finding polite expressions to attract their addressees. They speak in power and talk in a way as if they are sure about gaining the ultimate results they want. This power and trust are absent in Iranian women's speech. This can be obviously seen in their way of using the expressions like: "Excuse me to take up your time" or "I beg your pardon to take up your time". Using such expressions and hence observing social politeness, Iranian women try to reach their goals. The reason of these differences can be studied from two points of view. On one hand, the inherent differences between men and women and their different view of society overshadow their speeches. This issue can be related to gender psychology. On the other hand, men are judged by their occupation and their ability to obtain power in patriarchies like Iran, but occupation and power are not considered important for women; so they try to use other social factors such as politeness in their speeches to attract the addressees.

Imperative verbs such as "give" and "close" are often absent in women's statements, but the expressions such as "if it is possible" and "would you please" are common especially in formal situations. They use extra explanations to gain their addressees' support,

like "I want to use this machine, but unfortunately I do not know how to do this".

Different situations have also impact on the way of expressing demands. Indirect speech acts used more in formal situations such as facing with teachers or borrowing a pen from an unfamiliar person. This issue was the same for both men and women.

6- CONCLUSION

Directive speech acts or imperative sentences have a vast spectrum of language forms. By classifying these acts from the most direct to the most indirect, we can define the degree of politeness. The addressee cannot often dodge to meet the request if the demand is in direct statement (Lakoff, 1973). Since the direct speech acts are in imperative mood, the listener's answer is always positive. But this case is true when the speaker is in power status. The results of this study show that Iranian women prefer to express their demands in indirect speech acts accompany with more explanations. They are more polite and conservative than men in their interactions. In other words, it seems that women have learnt to use more polite, modest and popular language forms. The usage of the sentences like "I beg your pardon to take up your time" shows politeness, courtesy and kindness on the part of the speaker. The sentences such as "I want to use this machine, but unfortunately I do not know how to do this" show that sometimes women speak from a lower and weaker status to achieve their goals more easily. They often use the expression "Excuse me" to show their humility. Women present these kinds of language behaviors to gain higher level of social status. In other words, they speak indirectly, because they do not want their social characteristics to be damaged. The sentence "Excuse me sir, do you know how this machine works!" is the witness of this issue.

Using supportive moves and internal modifiers strategies which make the linguistic elements more favorable cause women speak differently from men. These strategies are the most polite and indirect way of demand which women use to observe their social politeness.

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