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Politeness and Conversational Patterns in Cross-Gender Political Media Discourse: An Application to Cairene Colloquial Arabic of the Educated

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Abstract

This research is concerned with studying politeness and conversational patterns in cross-gender political media discourse in Cairene colloquial Arabic of the educated. Its significance lies in the fact that gender studies in Arabic are few, and hence it aims at participating in filling this gap in the literature of Arabic linguistics. The main purpose of the study is to investigate in which ways men and women use politeness strategies and conversational patterns in spoken Cairene colloquial Arabic of the educated. Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness formed the theoretical framework of the study. In addition, conversation analysis, namely Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's (1974) turn taking model, is used as a toolkit in analyzing the data. The data consists of institutional conversations from Egyptian talk shows in which there are one interviewer and two guests, a male and a female, debating a political topic. The researcher made a broad transcription of the data, using the turn taking model. Two variables related to this model, namely the turn length and interruptions, were examined in the data. Moreover, the negative and positive politeness strategies according to Brown

and Levinson's theory were analyzed. Finally, the aggregate results of the participants were compared with one another.

Keywords: Politeness, gender differences, conversation analysis, turn-taking model, political media discourse, Egyptian talk shows.

To my loving mother, "my sun, my moon, and all my stars",

To the cherished memories of my father, and my elder brother,

With love

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List of Abbreviations

MP	Model Person
FTA	Face Threatening Act
S	Speaker
H	Hearer
W*x*	Weightiness of FTA*x*
D	Distance
P	Power
R*x*	Rating of the imposition made by FTA*x*
CA	Conversation Analysis

List of Transcription Symbols

The following transcription symbols were developed by Jefferson and described in Atkinson and Heritage (1984) and Levinson (1983).

[It marks the beginning of an overlapping utterance (Atkinson and Heritage, 1984, p. ix).

= It marks the continuous overflow of speech by one speaker over different lines, to adjust a failed interruption made by another speaker (Atkinson and Heritage, 1984, p. x).

(.) It marks a short pause which takes the duration of an average syllable or less than 0.2 seconds (Levinson, 1983, p. 370).

Chapter One

Introduction

1.0 Introduction:

This research is interdisciplinary straddling two different disciplines, which are linguistics and media studies. With regard to linguistics, it connects between two linguistic branches, namely pragmatics and gender studies, specifically Brown and Levinson's theory of linguistic politeness which was proposed in 1987, and research in gender differences in language use. It also uses conversation analysis, particularly Sacks et al's (1974) turn taking model as a toolkit in analyzing the data. The study examines gender conversational patterns that are derived from the turn taking model and the theory of politeness: the turn length, interruptions, positive politeness strategies and negative politeness strategies. Regarding media studies, the study focuses on the characteristics of media discourse in general, and specifically political media discourse. Its main objective is to investigate the ways in which men and women use language differently with respect to politeness strategies and conversational patterns in political media discourse in spoken Cairene colloquial Arabic of the educated.

1.1 Background and Statement of Problem:

The studies on linguistic gender differences in English started in the 1970s and since then many studies were conducted to examine gender differences in various contexts. With regard to linguistic politeness, the bulk of literature on gender differences indicated that women tend to use linguistic forms that indicate politeness more than men (see Lakoff, 1973; Holmes, 1993; Aitchison, 1999; Meyerhoff, 2006; Holmes, 2008; Lakoff 2010). Some studies, however, argued that there are no significant differences between men and women in using polite forms (see Poos & Simpson 2002). On the other hand, gender studies on spoken language and particularly media discourse in Arabic is an area that needs to be investigated because only few studies have been conducted in this area. This study attempts to

contribute to filling the gap in the research conducted on gender studies and politeness in Arabic linguistics, specifically on the Cairene Arabic dialect.

1.2 Research Questions:

This study aims at answering the following question, which could be further subdivided into four specific questions:

What are the differences, if any, between men and women's conversational styles and use of politeness strategies in spoken Cairene colloquial Arabic of the educated in political media discourse?

1- How do men and women differ in turn taking, if at all?
2- How do men and women differ in interruptions, if at all?
3- How do men and women differ in using positive politeness strategies, if at all?
4- How do men and women differ in using negative politeness strategies, if at all?

1.3 Significance of the Study:

The significance of the study lies in the fact that although there are many written books and documented studies about politeness and gender differences in English, linguistic gender studies related to politeness in Arabic are few. To the researcher's knowledge, such a study has not been conducted on Cairene colloquial Arabic of the educated in the political context before. Hence, the researcher hopes that this study will participate in filling this gap.

1.4 Delimitation of the Study:

The first delimitation is that the study is confined to studying only one type of discourse, which is political media discourse, in one specific level of Egyptian Arabic, namely, colloquial Arabic of the educated. Second, the study is also delimited to analyzing four interviews including 12 participants. This delimitation is attributed to