# Politeness in Turkish Language by People Living in Jovein in Comparison to Persian Language

Sahar Malekian

MA in English Language Teaching; Hakim Sabzevari University, Sabzevar, Iran

**Abstract**

Language reflects the context in which it is used. We adapt our talk to suit our audience and talk differently to children, customers and colleagues. And all these are also dependant on our speech community. Politeness is a criterion of civilization. It directs the activities of human being. Being a social activity, language is also restrained by this criterion. There are different polite norms in different social groups. In this paper, polite verbal behavior of Turkish people living in Jovein , a city in Iran,is considered with contributions from intercultural communication, sociolinguistics, and cultural studies. This study examines the understanding of politeness phenomena in Jovein. Accordingly, two speech acts namely, request and apology are studied to see the participants' perception and interpretation of the linguistic actions. These speech acts are selected due to their common occurrence in every day human interaction. The study is on the basis of the Grice's Cooperative Principles (CP) and Politeness Principles of Leech. The basic view of this paper is that there are differences between Turkish and Persian polite verbal behavior and that these differences originate from a different culture. To understand verbal behavior in different cultures better, we need to learn about the Turkish people's culture.

**Keywords**: politeness ,culture, Turkish people

## 1-Introduction

Politeness is a construct that has been appealed to widely in explaining language use and has been conceptualised in a number of different ways: As verbal behaviour that maintains harmonious relations (Leech 1983); as verbal and non-verbal behaviour that enables individuals to maintain face (Brown and Levinson 1987); or as social practice consisting of rights and obligations that impact on people's interactional strategies (e.g., Fraser 1990). Establishing social relationship between individuals is perhaps the first step to every communicative event. To do so, people may choose different techniques to open, further, maintain, or close conversations. One important issue in studying communication is to learn how individuals manage to open conversations or how people may address one another in a given language.

According to some scholars such as Beeman (1986), language is used as a strategic tool in Iranian sociocultural interactions. Variations in the linguistic behavior of Iranian speakers (like speakers of other languages) are related not only to the speaker's special characteristics (such as age, sex, class, education, etc.) but also to the sociocultural contexts of the discourse.

This paper examines the influence of sociocultural phenomena on language. It views politeness as an important aspect of socioculturally sanctioned behavior r and analyses its manifestations in the vocabulary, and conversational styles .First, there is a review of literature on politeness and culture and then ,a section is devoted to method and analysis, and finally is the conclusion.

## 2-Review of literature

Speaking to others is a social activity. By virtue of their membership in a particular community, individuals learn the skills necessary for everyday social interaction. It is widely acknowledged that verbal communication is a means of conveying information in addition to establishing, maintaining and terminating social relationship with other people. The rules which determine appropriate behavior are one of the aspects of culture which are clearly reflected in language. The relationship of interactors, their age, the context of situation and several other social factors directly affect language use to degrees determined by the culture. While extensive studies have been done to discover a universal theory to be applied in diverse cultures and languages (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Grice, 1975; Leech, 1983), the idea that every culture has its own norms has attracted many pragmalinguists who study cross-cultural pragmatics.

So, Sociocultural phenomena encompass culture on the one hand, and social phenomena on the other. Culture is "a script or a schema" (Gudykunst andTing-Toomey 1988,P.30) shared by the members of a society and includes the knowledge of a wide range of values, beliefs, norms and ideas shaped by tradition. According to Hofstede (1994), culture "is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2003b, p.3). Keeping in line with this definition ,Spencer-Oatey (2000b) defines culture as "a fuzzy set of attitudes, beliefs, behavioural conventions, and basic assumptions and values that are shared by a group of people, and that influence each member's behavior and each member's interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behavior." (p. 4). Scholars in the area of social cognition have been interested primarily in perception, processing, and representation of social

information by individuals. However, a number of scholars have viewed Cultural cognition to be a property of groups and not just individual minds (e.g., Clark and Chalmers, 1998, Sutton 2005, 2006; Wilson 2005). Group-level cognitions are "at once *grounded* in and yet *transcending* the underlying mental states of the interacting agents to which they are collectively ascribed" (Panzaras a and Jennings 2006,P.402).The particular form of group-level collective cognition  emerges from the interactions between the members of a cultural group across time and space, which is refered to as *cultural cognition* (Sharifian forthcoming).It also applies to the fact that different cultural groups may develop similar or partly similar or very different group-level cognition( Sharifian forthcoming -a). Cultural cognition is *emergent* in the sense that it is a gestalt that is more than the sum of its parts and cannot be reduced to the cognition of a single individual in the group (Beckermann, Flohr, and Kim 1992).

The role of individuals in a cultural group may best be described in terms of a circular pattern of cause and effect. Panzarasa and Jennings (2006,P.402) maintain that "individual cognition is necessary for collective cognition to come into existence: thus the latter is nomologically dependent on the former". Two intrinsic aspects of cultural cognition are *cultural conceptualizations* and *language* .Cultural conceptualizations are the ways in which people across different cultural groups construe various aspects of the world and their experiences (Sharifian 2003). These include people's view of the world, thoughts, and feelings. Language is a central aspect of cultural cognition in that it serves as a "collective memory bank" (Frank 2003, 2005; wa Thiong'o 1986) for cultural conceptualizations, past and recent. It is shaped by the cultural conceptualizations that have prevailed at different stages in the history of a speech community and these can leave their traces in current linguistic practice. In this sense language can be viewed as one of the primary mechanisms for storing and communicating cultural conceptualizations. It acts as both a memory bank and a fluid vehicle for the (re-transmission of these socioculturally embodied cultural conceptualizations. Like cultural cognition, language can also be viewed as a complex adaptive system (e.g., Frank forthcoming; Steels 2000; Sharifian forthcoming-a). The lexicon of a language is perhaps the most direct link with cultural conceptualizations in the sense that lexical items largely act as labels, and hence "memory banks", for conceptualizations that are culturally constructed.

Social phenomena constitute individuals' understanding of situational factors such as gender roles, distance versus closeness, power and solidarity. Socio-cultural phenomena and language reciprocally influence each other. Socio-cultural phenomena affect language, and the way language is used can have an impact on how socio-cultural phenomena are perceived. This is because beliefs, values, ideas and perceptions are reinstated through language and can eventually become considered as appropriate behaviour.

As  in  Goodenough's well known definition(1957,P.167): "A societies culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and to do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves". As Ronald Wardlaugh (2006) satates  "This social awareness of social customs is shown through the general politeness with which we use language"(P.276).

what is politeness? politeness can be shown in a variety of ways: linguistically, which is concerned with verbal communication; non‐linguistically, which is concerned with other aspects of communication such as body language; or a variety of both (Lakoff 2004,P. 2).  Grundy (2000) defines politeness as: "*the term we use to describe the extent to which actions, including the way  things are said, match addressees' perceptions of how they should be performed"*.(Grundy 2000, cited in Bloomer, Griffiths & Merrison 2005,P.111) Holmes (1995) goes into more detail: "*'politeness' will be used to refer to behavior which actively expresses positive concern for others, as well as non‐imposing distancing behavior"*.(Holmes 1995, cited in Bloomer, Griffiths & Merrison 2005,P. 112). According to work of Janney and Ardnt (1993,P. 14) "politeness is viewed as a rational, rule-governed, pragmatic aspect of speech that is rooted in the human need to maintain relationships and avoid conflicts".

According to Fraser (1990), research over the years has shown a lack of consistency among researchers on what politeness is and how it may be accounted for.
Earlier research appears to indicate that there are four major perspectives on politeness. Each of these perspectives is briefly introduced below and the selected view, the conversational maxim view, which is used in the present study, would be discussed as well.

*The social norm view*
"The social norm view of politeness assumes that each society has a particular set of social norms consisting of more or less explicit rules that prescribe a certain behavior, a state of affairs, or a way of thinking in a context" (Fraser, 1990: 220). Ide (1989) was one of the first to express this view in her study of politeness phenomena in the Japanese society.

*The conversational-contract view*
In this approach, when entering into a conversation, each party "brings an understanding of some initial set of rights and obligations that will determine, at least for the preliminary stages, what the participants can expect

from the other(s)" (Fraser, 1990: 232). These rights and obligations are based on the parties' social relationships with one another and can be adjusted and re-adjusted during the course of time or when there is change in context.

*The Brown and Levinson face-saving view*

Brown and Levinson's (1987) study into politeness was concerned with the concept, as adapted from Goffman (1967), of face, the image that a speaker or hearer would like to maintain during the course of an interaction (Goffman 1967,cited in Bloomer, Griffiths & Merrison 2005: 113). The area of linguistic politeness has grown considerably since the works of Lakoff in the 1970s, and those of Brown and Levinson in the 1980s.

Brown and Levinson account for language usage by constructing a Model Person (MP). Their MP is a fluent speaker of a language who has two special properties, viz., rationality and face. By 'rationality' Brown and Levinson mean that the MP would be able to use a specific mode of reasoning to choose means that satisfy his/her ends. Brown and Levinson (1987, P. 61) define "face" as the "public self image that everyone wants to claim for himself". For MP this means that he/she is endowed with two particular wants or desires that he/she will try to maintain in interactions with others. Brown and Levinson refer to these two wants as positive face (the desire to be accepted and have what one wants approved by others) and negative face (the desire for autonomy, not to be imposed by others).

Brown and Levinson's (1987) work is pivotal, they stress the importance of politeness in avoiding communication breakdown between individuals. Much other work that has since been written on politeness expands on the model proposed by Brown and Levinson, and it is therefore at the core of any sociolinguistic exploration in this field. The significance of their work in politeness theory is paramount: Gino Eelin (2001) has argued that, "The names Brown and Levinson have become almost synonymous with the word 'politeness' itself" (3), and Sara Mills (2003) has stated that their "model of politeness has influenced almost all of the theoretical and analytical work in this field" (57). This is because, as Brown and Levinson explain in their own words, their model pioneers a new way of looking at politeness, arguing "for a shift in emphasis from the current pre-occupation with speaker identity, to a focus on dyadic patterns of verbal interaction as the expression of social relationships"(1987,P.2).

Their model is based on the notion of face, which is essentially an individuals" self-esteem, and Brown and Levinson (1987) use it to explain politeness behavior in social interaction. The model revolves around the existence of Face Threatening Acts. A FTA unless it is an unmitigated "bald on record" (1987 ,P. 59), must be mitigated by the use of certain strategies (which essentially constitute politeness) to avoid a breakdown in communication. They make a "distinction between acts that threaten negative face and those that threaten positive face" (1987,P.61), as according to their model, every individual has a "positive" and "negative" face. In general, they argue, it is in the "mutual interest" for people interacting with each other "to maintain each other 's face" (1987,P.59). Thus the distinction between the two types of face can be explained as such: a person's negative face is "the want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others", whereas positive face is "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others" (1978,p.62). Thus at the crux of their model is the distinction between positive and negative politeness, the former being used for "the expression of "solidarity" and the latter for "the expression of restraint" (1987,P.2).

*The conversational-maxim view*

The conversational-maxim perspective of politeness relies principally on the work of Grice (1975). Grice argues that "conversationalists are rational individuals who are, all other things being equal, primarily interested in the efficient conveying of messages" (Fraser, 1990:222). To this end, Grice (1975: 45) maintains that the overriding principle in conversation is the cooperative principle (CP), that is to "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talkexchange in which you are engaged." Simply  put, the CP requires one to say that which has to be said, at the time it has to be said, and in the manner in which it has to be said. Grice lists four maxims that follow from the CP, which has assumes speaker will follow. These are the maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner. Grice assumes that theCP is always observed and that any violations of the maxims signal conversational explicatures. Furthermore, he suggests that this principle and these maxims characterize ideal exchanges.

**Grice's Cooperative Principles (CP)**
1. Quantity (QN): Give the right amount of information
2. Quality (QL): Tell the truth
3. Relevance (R): Be relevant
4. Manner (M): Be clear and brief
Leech (1983,P. 80) believes that "…the CP in itself cannot explain (i) why people are often so indirect in conveying what they mean; and (ii) what is the relation between sense and force when non-declarative types of

sentences are being considered". People do not always adhere to the CP for various reasons. And as a result he proposes his politeness maxims.

**Leech's Politeness Principles (PP)**
1. Tact Maxim (TM): Minimize the cost to other
2. Generosity Maxim (GM): Minimize the benefit to self
3. Approbation Maxim (APM): Maximize praise of other
4. Modesty Maxim (MM): Minimize praise of self
5. Agreement Maxim (AGM): Maximize agreement between self and other
6. Sympathy Maxim (SM): Maximize sympathy between self and other

Generally speaking politeness involves taking account of the feeling of others .A polite person makes others feel comfortable. Being linguistically polite involves speaking to people appropriately in the light of their relationship to you. Inappropriate linguistic choices may be considered rude. Making decisions about what is or is not considered polite in any community, therefore involves assessing social relationships along the dimensions of social distance or solidarity, and relative power or status. We need to understand the social values of a society in order to speak politely . (Holmes, 1995,P.26).

In an attempt to account for politeness in this study, the Grice's Cooperative Principles (CP) and Leech's Politeness Maxims (PP), the two main subcategories of interpersonal rhetorics, are employed. The manner of one's speech (thoughts and actions) is crucial in maintaining or disrupting social harmony. Speech acts are, therefore, common manifestations of politeness behavior in human interactions. Linguistic politeness is culturally determined. Different speech communities emphasize different  actions, and express particular functions differently. The way people decide which form to use in a particular context depends on some factors such as the social distance between participants, their relative status, and the formality of context.

**4- Method**
To gather information on the understanding of politeness in the target community a number of questions adapted from a study by Bharuthram (2003) was used in this study, and it was translated in to Persian with a few necessary modification.The questions  was structured to obtain responses to both requests and apology situations. The specific situations, reflected potential real-life occurrences within the target community. The questions comprised three sections and each situation in the questions varied according to the social factors of social distance, status, age and gender. Participants were expected to answer each situation. The participants of the present study were a combination of Persian speakers and Turk people, who are non-native speakers of Persian. The goal was to have a comparison between the two groups as well.

**5-Analysis**
To analyze the outcome of the data the two languages were contrasted in terms of observing or violating CP or PP maxims. Because the Questions has many parts and sub parts, two questions from the request questions and two from the apology were selected randomly to mention at this part.

**Requests**
**An acquaintance (female)** owes you some money which is long overdue. You bump into her at the shopping center and decide to approach her for the money.

**YOU:**
**Turkish:** salam,halet khoobe? Bebin,alan pool lazem daram!Age bedi,khoob mishae.Dastet dard nakone.
**Persian:** salam,khoobi?che khabara?Migam yadete chand vaghte ghabl ye meghdar pool azam gerefti! Midooni yek kary baram pish omadeh be pool niaz daram,bebakhshida,age lazem nadashtam aslan nemigoftam.vali be khoda sharmande!Kheili bebakhshid.

| Lang | PP | CP | SC |
|------|-----|----------|------------------------------------|
| P | TM,GM | VQL,VQN,VM | Feel too sorry when ask someone a request |
| T | GM | R,M,QN,QL | Say the request without problem |

**Apology**
You had arranged to meet your colleague (female) at the shopping mall but failed to do so. Later that evening your colleagues comes home.
**Colleague:** I waited for you for an entire hour!

**YOU:**
**Turkish:** Ey! Aslan yadam nabood , enghadar gereftaram ke hichi  yadam nemimooneh ! Noch!
**Persian:** Vay! vaghean sharmandeham! Pak yadam rafteh bood.Kheili bad shod.bazham  mazerat mikhaham.

Omidvaram  mano bebakhshid. Baese sharmandegi ! Sharmandatam.

| Lang | PP | CP | Sc |
|------|------|--------|-------|
| P | APM,MM,SM | VQL,VQN,VM | Feel sorry too much when apologizing |
| T | MM | VQN,R | Explain the excuse and feel sorry |

## 6. Conclusion

The central theme of this research was that politeness is fundamental to human relationships. The more one is willing to continue the relationship with others, the more he tries to respect others. Of course, these  questions were unable to reflect the usage of non-verbal strategies. According to results it was clear that age, power, and sex are crucial factors in human beings interactions. Females were observed to use more polite forms and receive more. Also more polite forms are used to address elders than those from the same age or youngsters. The analysis of the above exhange units shed lights on the fact that Persian speakers use positive politeness more, while the Turkish people refer the negative politeness, not imposing others, and respecting others' privacy.Altogether, we can say that the request and apology in Turkish is not as lengthy as it is in Persian. Of course there is no claim of generalization in this study and more research should be done in the area of politeness and the functions of language.

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