Формы обращения в американском варианте английского языка и сирийском диалекте арабского языка: сопоставительный анализ

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Аннотация. Цель исследования - провести сопоставительный анализ форм обращения в американском варианте английского языка и сирийском диалекте арабского языка и учесть их прагматические характеристики в рамках семейных и приятельских отношений. Научная новизна исследования заключается в том, что в нем представлены новые данные, демонстрирующие влияние социального и культурного контекста на использование языка, что может дополнить положения предыдущих работ, посвященных пониманию того, как формируются социальные отношения. Результаты исследования показали, что американская культура индивидуалистична, коммуникативный стиль в ней ориентирован на выравнивание иерархии. Напротив, сирийская культура является коллективистской, в ней коммуникативный стиль ориентирован на возраст и статус.

American English and Syrian Arabic Forms of Address: A Contrastive Analysis

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Abstract. The purpose of the study is to conduct a contrastive analysis of American English and Syrian Arabic address forms and account for their pragmatic characteristics within the settings of family and acquaintances. The scientific novelty of the study lies in its new data displaying the influence of social and cultural context on language use, which may lend support to the existing literature that aims at understanding the constructions of social relationships. The findings of the study have shown that the American culture is individualistic, in which the communicative style is oriented toward flattening the hierarchy. By contrast, the Syrian culture is collectivistic, in which the communicative style is age- and status-oriented.

Introduction

When we communicate with one another, our linguistic behaviour is considerably drawn from our own cultural conceptualisations (Sharifian, 2017), i.e. language reflects cultural reality and expresses cultural identity. This is clear when it comes to intercultural encounters where intercultural failures may occur, e.g. addressing a British person in accordance with Arabic communicative norms. The use of address forms is natural and very frequent among interlocutors in their daily interactions. However, whenever individuals are involved in any interpersonal communication, choosing proper forms of address is one of the uttermost decisions they make, as forms of address show how speakers conceptualise their relationships to the addressees.

The variation of language use from one language to another can increase the risk of miscommunications among interlocutors of different linguistic backgrounds; in addition, forms of address are fundamental tools for social interaction (Wierzbicka, 2015). Forms of address reflect and point out specific characteristics of sociocultural contexts, i.e. they account for the complexity of language-society relationship and the interlocutors' social relationships as well, helping sociolinguists understand and elucidate the construction of these relationships (Keshavarz, 2001).

As each language has a huge variety of its culture-specific address forms, such as first names, titles, kinship terms and many others, which can be used in different social and situational contexts, choosing an appropriate address form is challenging for second-language learners. Therefore, examining address forms, sociocultural norms, such as the attitudes of interlocutors towards each other, is of practical relevance for foreigners who are learning

a second language, as it equips them with the knowledge they need to acquire in order to understand the pragmatic meaning of address forms in the target language.

As the study's aim is oriented towards conducting a contrastive analysis of American English and Syrian Arabic address forms and accounting for their pragmatic characteristics within the settings of family and acquaintances, the research methods adopted in this paper are discourse analysis, pragmatic analysis and linguacultural analysis, both qualitative and quantitative. The data for the analysis were drawn from 20 hours of the American English TV drama 'This Is Us' and 20 hours of the Syrian Arabic TV drama 'Rouzana'. The theoretical background of the study includes cultural studies (Hofstede, 1984; 1991; Triandis, 2018) and (im)politeness theories (Brown, Levinson, 1987; Kádár, Haugh, 2013; Leech, 2014; Locher, Watts, 2008; Sifianou, Blitvich, 2017; Watts, 2003).

To achieve the aim of the present study, the following tasks are defined: shedding light on American English and Syrian Arabic forms of address used within the settings of family and acquaintances and indicating how cultural values and (im)politeness notions construct address behaviour.

The practical value of the present paper stems from the fact that it contributes to sociolinguistics and cultural anthropology and lends support to the existing literature that aims at understanding the constructions of social relationships. The results of such research can be used in the classes of second language teaching and intercultural communication and may have significant implications in translation studies from Arabic to English and vice versa.

Forms of address are defined as words or expressions used by the speaker in interactive, dyadic and face-to-face encounters in order to characterise the addressee (Oyetade, 1995). They are also recognised as linguistic expressions employed by the speaker to designate the addressee (Afful, 2006).

Forms of address manifest specific characteristics of the sociocultural context, i.e. they account for the complexity of the language-society relationship and the social relationships of interlocutors (Keshavarz, 2001). Such forms are seen as communicative tools that establish the distance and relative power of the speaker and addressee (Wood, Kroger, 1991, p. 145). Hence, studying forms of address as a linguistic realisation of (im)politeness has become popular for many years.

An address system can be defined as all the available repertoire of address strategies and forms in addition to their interrelations in a given language (Braun, 1988). The use of address forms within a specific group of people reflects their cultural norms and values. For example, when kinship terms express seniority and juniority, one can conclude that age is a very significant social factor for the culture at hand.

The level of social distance between interlocutors is regulated with forms of address. In other words, if the addressee considers the address form used by the speaker inappropriate, the chances of getting him/her to cooperate with the speaker diminish. As perceived by Al-Qudah (2017), the speakers of Jordanian Arabic tend to use kinship terms such as *Ammi* (paternal uncle) to address a father in law, for instance, in order to show politeness and express respect.

Cultural specificity of address forms is largely predetermined by cultural values and understanding of politeness and impoliteness notions of a given culture. Societies that value equality, for instance, tend to be informal even in asymmetrical contexts (Wang, 2003).

The complexity of an address system comes from the fact that the use of first names and pronouns may not sufficiently index the social position of the addressee in relation to both the speaker and community, i.e. the use of first names and pronouns to address a status-superior collocutor is not appropriate (Ahn, 2017).

Address behaviours of any speech community are influenced by their shared attitudes and values. Thus, factors such as age, gender, social status as well as sociocultural contexts play a significant role in determining the choice of address forms and explain the variations in the use of these forms (Clyne, Norrby, Warren, 2009).

Results and Discussion

American English forms of address. Sons and daughters, according to the analysed American material, usually address their parents by kinship terms. However, this rule does not seem to be applied all the time, as parents may be addressed by their first names, especially if they have not raised their children.

(1) Randall: There she is. Hey, *Mom* (a 30-year-old son greeting his adoptive mother).

(2) Randall: Hey, *William*, you know your way around? (a 36-year-old son asking his biological father).

As per the findings of the study, kinship terms plus first names are used to address both uncles and aunts. However, first names only may be used to address uncles and aunts.

(3) Tess: Ooh, *Uncle Kevin*, can you speak at my career day? (a 12-year-old niece talking to her 30-year-old uncle).

(4) Toby: Hello, *Dolly*! (an adult nephew in his 30s talking to his aunt).

Based on the data collected from the American series, grandparents are addressed by kinship terms, such as grandpa and grandma.

(5) Tess: Is that medicine? Do you have a cold, *Grandpa*? (a 12-year-old granddaughter asking her grandfather).

(6) Annie: Hi, *Grandma* (a 5-year-old granddaughter greeting her grandmother).

Fathers-in-law as well as mothers-in-law, according to the analysed occurrences, are addressed by their personal names only.

(7) Beth: What are you up to today, *William*? (an adult woman talking to her father-in-law).

(8) Beth: *Rebecca*, I do not know how things work in your marriage (an adult woman talking to her mother-in-law).

In consistence with the analysed American data, older acquaintances are addressed by their first names.

(9) Tess: Hey, *William*! (a 12-year-old girl talking to a man about whom she was told he is her father's friend).

(10) Kevin: Well, I seem to be getting a lot of direction, *William* (a 36-year-old male talking to the biological father of his adopted brother).

Syrian Arabic forms of address. First names are not used at all to address parents, as the conducted analysis has not shown any. Kinship terms, such as *Mama* and *Emmi* 'my mother' as well as *Abi* and *Baba* 'my father', are used by sons and daughters to address their parents.

(11) Wael: *Mom, Mom*, make me a sandwich (a 4-year-old boy talking to his mother).

وائل: /إمي، /إمي، اعمليلي سندويشة.

(12) Feras: Yes, *Dad*, I am buying a few things (an adult male talking to his father).

فراس: إي *بابا*، أنا عم إشتري كم غرض.

Uncles and aunts, according to the Syrian material, are addressed by kinship terms. Due to the distinction between paternal and maternal relatives, the Syrian kinship system dedicates two distinct kinship terms for uncles and two terms for aunts, namely, *Khalti/Khalto* 'my maternal aunt', *Amti/Amto* 'my paternal aunt', *Khali/Khalo* 'my maternal uncle' and *Ammi/Ammo* 'my paternal uncle'.

(13) Anwar: Okay, my *maternal aunt*. She will call me for sure (an adult male talking to his maternal aunt).

أنور: ماشي خالتي، هي بكل الأحوال رح تحكيلي شو صار.

(14) Dima: Hello, my *paternal uncle* (an adult female greeting her paternal uncle).

ديما: مرحبا عمو.

The findings of the study show that kinship terms are used by grandchildren to address their grandparents. Kinship terms, such as *Jeddo* 'my grandfather' and *Nana* or *Teitei* 'grandmother', are used by grandchildren to address their grandfathers and grandmothers.

(15) Wael: Yes, *Grandmother*, I am coming (a 4-year-old boy talking to his grandmother).

وائل: إي نانا هلأ بجي.

(16) Jood: Hello, *Grandmother* (a 30-year-old male greeting his grandmother).

جود: مرحبا، تيتة.

Fictive kinship terms pursuant to the occurrences analysed are used to address fathers and mothers-in-law. For example, *Mart Ammo/Mart Ammi* 'my paternal uncle's wife' and *Ammo/Ammi* 'paternal uncle' are used to address mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law respectively.

(17) Diana: Thank you, my *paternal uncle's wife* (a daughter-in-law talking to her mother-in-law).

ديانا: تسلميلي مرت عمو.

(18) Diana: Good evening, *paternal uncle* (a daughter-in-law talking to her father-in-law).

ديانا: مسا الخير عمو.

In consistence with the Syrian Arabic material, older acquaintances, such as parents' friends, friends' parents, etc., are addressed by fictive kinship terms.

(19) Razan: *Maternal aunt*, come to our house. You are welcome.

رزان: تفضلي طنط [خالتو]، أهلا وسهلا.

(20) Basem: *Paternal uncle*, how is your son, who lives in Australia? Is it true that he has another daughter? (an adult male talking to his friend's father).

باسم: عمو، كيف ابنك يلي عايش باستراليا؟ صحيح صار عندو بنت تانية؟

Conclusion

The contrastive analysis of the paper has revealed both differences and similarities regarding the use of American English and Syrian Arabic forms of address among family members and acquaintances.

The communicative behaviour of Syrian and American interlocutors in similar situations differs, which is related to horizontal distance and vertical distance stated by Hofstede (1984; 1991). The American culture is characterised by short power distance and long social distance in contrast to the Syrian culture. The American culture is individualistic, i.e. equality and distance are very important. The American family is nuclear and the semantic field of kinship terms is narrow, highlighting the tendency to minimise the differences of status and age. This means that the American kinship terms function within family members only and they almost pay no attention to either age or status.

By contrast, the Syrian culture is a collectivistic type of culture, in which showing intimacy and respect through emphasising the status of the addressee and closeness in relationship is essential. The concept of family and having children is very significant in the Syrian culture. Therefore, the semantic field of Syrian Arabic kinship terms is broad. In Syria, kinship terms function as means of addressing family and non-family members.

The choice of address forms is determined by culture-specific peculiarities that are predetermined by cultural values and deep knowledge of politeness. The data of the study confirm that the notions of politeness and face concept of western cultures do not sufficiently explain the interactional patterns in collectivist cultures, such as the Syrian one.

The results of the study prove that politeness in the Syrian culture is showing closeness and intimacy to older people, while politeness in the American English culture is showing equality and keeping distance. Thus, intimacy and status orientation characterise the Syrian communicative style, whereas equality and keeping distance characterise the American style of communication.

It is anticipated to conduct further research that offers a more detailed picture of address behaviour in the American English and Syrian Arabic linguocultures.

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