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Gender Differences in Pragmatic Language Use in Iraq

الفروق بين الجنسين في الاستعمال التداولي للغة في العراق

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Abstract

This study examines gender differences in pragmatic language use in the Iraqi context. Pragmatics focuses on how language is used in social interaction, including speech acts such as requests, apologies, and expressions of gratitude. Previous studies have shown that Iraqi males and females differ in their use of language due to cultural norms and social expectations. This paper analyzes these differences through real-life examples from Iraqi Arabic and interprets them within sociolinguistic and pragmatic frameworks. The findings indicate that women tend to use more polite, indirect, and emotionally expressive language, while men often use more direct and assertive forms. These differences reflect broader cultural values and gender roles in Iraqi society.

1. Introduction

The field of pragmatics investigates how individuals create meaning through their language usage to reach their communication goals. People in Iraqi Arabic use their language according to social factors which include age and social

status and their gender. People in Iraq use their cultural values to manage their everyday communication according to research on Iraqi speech acts (Mohammed, 2025).

People communicate through language because of their gender identity.

Iraqi society, like many Arab societies, maintains clear distinctions between male and female roles, which are reflected in language. Men and women express their apologies and show gratitude through different speech acts according to research findings (Muzhir & Rahim, 2012). The researcher attains better understanding of linguistic behavior and cultural values by examining language usage among men and women in real-world contexts.

People use language differently because of their gender identity. Language choices in Iraqi society show how men and women should behave according to Arab cultural norms. Research shows that males and females use different speech acts which include apologies and expressions of gratitude (Muzhir & Rahim, 2012). The study of gender differences in pragmatic language use enables the researcher to investigate the relationship between cultural values and linguistic behavior.

People show their gender differences through their daily ways of communicating with others. Women use polite and indirect speech which contains emotional expressions to maintain social bonds while

showing respect to others. The direct speech preference of men shows their tendency to use short answers during informal situations when they wish to demonstrate their authority. In Iraq, there is a distinction between male and female speech; it is not merely the actual words chosen, but rather the deeply embedded cultures and common social expectations in Iraq that influence male and female speech styles. People keep mastering their talk to be considered acceptable and respectable. Daily talk starts to become almost the way that society expresses itself, like a living interpretation of it.

In Iraq, daily conversation is linked with gender and gender identity concepts. Women often use the cooperative style of talk in their daily interaction to promote interpersonal relations. Daily interaction talks include the use of politeness expressions, empathy signals, and indirectness as the need arises to be tactful, solicitous, and considerate in daily conversation.

As Tannen (1990) has more or less demonstrated, speech is used by women for solidarity and rapport-building and by

men for power to maintain their autonomy. Lakoff (1975) argued that women's speech has historically been characterized by politeness and harmony and attributed this to women's traditional roles as sociable and helping others. Holmes (1995) builds on this and argues that women are structurally nudged into paths that prevent or lessen conflict, and at the same time these same paths enhance personhood and connection. The evidence for this sort of impact is clearly felt in Arabic conversations, where the language choice seems to shift smoothly and effortlessly depending on gender, family relationships, and immediate social status.

Iraqi Arabic speech can actually be really beautifully flexible, as it seems to change considerably depending on the audience and the relationship among people. It is just inappropriate to use any and all common terms in a formal situation. People could not use excessively formal phrases in informal settings.

Language use is also influenced by position, social hierarchy, and status; people will instinctively adjust the level of respect, verbosity, and intonation of their

discourse according to the person with whom they are interacting, such as their teachers, boss, or elders, as respect for their authority and position. However, in casual conversation, idioms, familiar turns of phrase, and other language registers may appear, whereby people feel they are part of society.

A new kind of linguistic culture is somehow forming. New expressions are being pushed into the younger generation of Iraqi Arabic speakers as their everyday speech. Globalization, television, and social networking sites are the main drivers for all of those linguistic changes. They are basically building fresh oral habits that help them show who they are, and they do it by mixing words, short phrases, and idioms taken from other languages, but they merge them into the native dialect smoothly and naturally. But, even with this modern wave, where the tendency is clearly moving forward, some older customs are still there alongside it. One central cultural value keeps steering how people express their identity, but in a covert way. It shapes social interactions, and it also ensures the right behavior shows up, with proper courtesy at the right

moment. Finally, when scholars just watch Iraqi people talking, they get a glimpse of elegance, where deep tradition meets that lively globalized modernism.

2. Gender and Pragmatic Competence in Iraqi Arabic

The concept of pragmatic competence describes how people use language according to the demands of various social contexts. Social norms in Iraqi Arabic establish rules which determine how people should display their social behavior through their social interactions which include their use of polite and respectful speech (Ahmed & Hasan, 2020). The research findings show that males and females perform different results in pragmatic tasks because their linguistic abilities and social experiences differentiate between them. Iraqi speakers apply distinct approaches when they execute speech acts which include making requests and refusing requests. According to Dawood et al. (2023), women use indirect speech for politeness while men prefer direct speech for their communication needs.

People can see the distinct differences between two things through their actual daily interactions. The female speaker requests help by saying "إذا ماكو زحمة، ممكن تساعدني؟" which means "If it's not too much trouble, could you help me?," while the male speaker uses the simple phrase "تعال ساعدني" which means "Come help me." The female example includes mitigation and politeness markers, whereas the male example is more direct and concise. Social expectations about proper behavior together with language skills determine how people develop their pragmatic competence.

The research shows that two factors which include formality and gender create specific effects on how people make their pragmatic language choices. People use formal speech patterns which include polite and organized language when they communicate in academic and professional settings. Women in these situations show more polite and indirect speech patterns than men. The research shows that Iraqi Arabic speakers use different pragmatic skills according to specific social situations while they maintain their traditional gender-based communication patterns.

People establish their pragmatic skills when they continuously interact with others and practice their communication abilities during their daily routines. People acquire the ability to understand meaning beyond literal speech through the observation of other people and their participation in various speaking situations. In Iraqi society, this learning process is strongly connected to family upbringing and community values, where children learn to speak according to dignity and courtesy and social rank. Through these experiences, speakers learn to modify their language according to recognized cultural standards. The process of developing practical skills consists of personal experience and social norms which shape the development of this ability.

The function of context in communication extends beyond formal elements to include both emotional aspects and interpersonal relations. Speakers use different ways to speak because they want to keep peace with others while showing their understanding of their feelings. People use indirect language because it helps them to speak politely while lessening the impact of their criticism and

expressing their disagreement. Direct expressions become the better choice when people need to express their ideas with complete understanding in critical situations. The speaker selects their words according to their understanding of how people will react to their speech and their ability to choose between proper speech and essential meaning.

The way people from different generations interact with Iraqi society through their pragmatic language skills shows different patterns of language usage. The younger generation uses educational resources combined with digital communication tools to develop their own unique language patterns which differ from established linguistic traditions. People now use simplified expressions which include borrowed terms and informal speech patterns for their daily communication. Traditional norms about showing respect and politeness maintain their power to shape how people interact with each other in formal situations and when dealing with sensitive matters. The combination of traditional and contemporary elements demonstrates how

people develop their practical language skills throughout different time periods.

The research about pragmatic competence shows how language and cultural elements link to the development of personal identity. The researcher studies how speakers select their vocabulary and construct their speech because this research method reveals the fundamental values which shape their communication patterns. The Iraqi Arabic patterns demonstrate that speakers consider social harmony maintenance and respect demonstration and cultural role fulfillment as essential social obligations. People who possess pragmatic competence demonstrate their ability to use language while they operate within the social and cultural frameworks which govern their social interactions and personal expression.

3. Apology Strategies: Indirectness vs Directness

The first significant difference between men and women, which affects their apology approach, is their choice of specific strategies to make apologies. Studies on Iraqi Arabic show that males and females use different apology

strategies depending on the social context (Muzhir & Rahim, 2012). People who interact with each other show their distinct ways of showing regret through their different methods of delivering apologies. A male speaker might use the expression "خطيتي صارت" (It was my mistake) to describe his mistake while a female speaker uses the phrase "والله أسفة كلش، ما كان قصدي" (I'm really sorry, I didn't mean it) to express her regret. The two expressions show identical meaning because they reach the same result through different methods which display different degrees of emotional feeling.

The male example needs only one sentence to present his mistake because he does not require any additional explanation. The female example uses *والله* and *كلش* as intensifiers to create a stronger emphasis which shows her genuine belief in the statement. The apology becomes more emotional through the use of these elements which create a more respectful tone. The female speaker uses her admission of wrongdoing to maintain relationships by reducing the effects of her mistake.

People in Iraqi society expect people to behave according to established social norms. Women are expected to speak with empathy and politeness and emotional awareness, while men tend to use brief and straightforward speech. The existing communication patterns demonstrate how cultural standards determine which gender-specific behavioral patterns are suitable for use in communication (Dawood et al., 2023).

4. Gratitude Expressions and Politeness

The way people express their appreciation shows distinct gender differences within Iraqi Arabic. Research shows that Iraqi women tend to use more elaborate and expressive thanking strategies compared to men (Jasim, 2023). People use different lengths and more complex speech patterns according to their gender because this difference exists in their communication with others. A male speaker uses "شكراً" (Thank you) to express gratitude whereas a female speaker uses "تسلم، الله يخليك، ما قصرت" (Thank you, may God protect you, you have done a lot) to show her appreciation. The two expressions of gratitude differ from each

other because they use different methods to show appreciation.

The female response delivers various responses which add to its religious elements to create a more polite and affectionate atmosphere. The additions to the text provide more than a simple "thank you" because they establish stronger social ties between the two speakers. The male response delivers a brief direct answer which only presents his main idea without any extra details.

The difference between these two things shows that various communicative methods require different priority levels of importance. Women use language to create social ties and build personal relationships, but men use language to achieve their goals through efficient communication that uses short sentences. The patterns of speech in Iraqi society show that people expect women to use polite and expressive language when they speak.

5. Use of Taboo and Euphemism

The way people use taboo words in their speech represents one of the main differences between two distinct ways of

using language. Research shows that Iraqi men use forbidden words and offensive terms at higher rates than women do while women use indirect language and euphemisms as their primary choice of communication (Sallo et al., 2021). People show this difference during their everyday conversations. In informal settings, male speakers use direct offensive words while female speakers respond with indirect remarks which include the phrase "عيب" (It is inappropriate to speak like that). The two reactions demonstrate the same problem, but they express different levels of directness and advisory, which makes them sound different.

The analytical study shows that men use forbidden language as a way to demonstrate their authority and self-assurance and connection with their male friends in informal situations that are mostly occupied by men. The method allows users to display their intense feelings through immediate and open emotional expression. Women use euphemistic expressions because they want to show respect and prevent conflicts with others. The speaker decreases the

possibility of conflict through message reduction while maintaining social peace.

The discovered difference shows its connection to the extended cultural standards which exist in current society. The Iraqi community recognizes polite respectful speech as a language tradition which women must follow while men can speak directly and use strong words without restrictions. The research shows that women choose euphemisms while men use taboo words because these behaviors represent their individual preferences which society dictates as proper ways to speak (Dawood et al., 2023).

6. Responses to Rudeness

People respond to rudeness according to their gender differences. Research on Iraqi communication shows that females tend to respond more politely or indirectly while males show a preference for direct or confrontational responses (Ali 2020). The difference shows itself in typical situations when someone experiences feelings of being insulted or treated with disrespect. A male speaker might respond by saying "ليش تحجي" (Why are you talking like that?)

whereas a female speaker would choose a softer response through "يمكن صار سوء فهم" (Maybe there was a misunderstanding). Both responses address the issue yet they use different ways of presenting their answers.

The male response which analyzes from an analytical perspective shows directness because it challenges the other speaker yet creates potential for escalating conflicts. The female response establishes tension reduction through its presentation of an alternative explanation which simultaneously protects her from direct conflict. The strategy functions to keep polite behavior while stopping the conversation from developing into greater disputes.

Different cultures develop their unique methods for achieving their communication goals because this difference proves to be their main distinction. Men use their arguments to establish their authority while women choose to maintain social harmony and protect their social bonds. The studied patterns show that people select their effective solutions based on current

situations and the established cultural gender norms that exist in Iraqi society.

7. Expanded Examples of Gendered Pragmatic Strategies in Iraqi Arabic

In Iraqi Arabic conversations, pragmatic competence appears clearly in the way men and women perform everyday speech acts such as requests, apologies, gratitude, and responses to conflict. Women often prefer indirect expressions and emotionally supportive language in order to maintain politeness and preserve social harmony. For example, a woman may say, "ممكن تساعدني بهالواجب إذا ما عندج" ("Could you help me with this homework if you don't mind?"). Another woman may respond warmly with "أكيد" ("Of course, dear, no problem"). These exchanges usually include mitigation strategies and emotional expressions that strengthen closeness between speakers and create a respectful atmosphere.

Men, however, often use shorter and more direct expressions. A man may simply say, "تعال ساعدني بهالشغلة" ("Come help me with this thing"), followed by the brief response "هسه أجي" ("I'm coming

now”). Similar differences appear in apology strategies. Women frequently intensify their apologies through emotional language, such as “ والله أسفة كلش، صار عندي ” (“I’m really very sorry; I had a situation and could not come”). Men usually prefer shorter apologies like “الصوح مني، سامحني” (“It was my mistake; forgive me”). Female apologies often focus on emotional reassurance and relationship maintenance, while male apologies tend to focus on direct acknowledgment of responsibility.

Expressions of gratitude also differ according to gender. Women commonly use extended forms of appreciation that include blessings and affectionate language. A woman may say, “تسلمين حبيبتي، ” (“Thank you, dear; may God protect you. You really helped me”). Men often use simpler expressions such as “شكراً حبيبي” (“Thanks, my friend”). These differences reflect the tendency of women to strengthen social relationships through language, whereas men often prefer concise and direct communication.

Gender differences can also be observed in the use of taboo language and

responses to rude behavior. Women usually avoid direct offensive expressions and instead rely on euphemistic statements such as “عيب نحجي بهالطريقة” (“It is inappropriate to speak in this way”). Men are generally more direct when discussing conflict or offensive speech. Likewise, during tense situations, women often attempt to reduce conflict through indirect responses such as “يمكن صار لغط بالموضوع” (“There may have been some misunderstanding about the matter”). Men, in contrast, may respond more directly with statements like “لأن هذا رأيي” (“Because this is my opinion”). These conversational patterns demonstrate how Iraqi speakers adapt their language according to gender expectations, cultural values, and the importance of maintaining social harmony.

8. Discussion

The research results demonstrate that gender determines how people in Iraq use their linguistic skills. The examples which include apologies and expressions of gratitude and forbidden language usage and reactions to disrespectful conduct show consistent and recognizable patterns.

Females generally express themselves through language which combines polite speech with indirect communication and emotional expression. Women typically include emotional components in their apologies because they want to demonstrate their genuine feelings and compassion toward others while men prefer to give brief answers which directly address the issue. Women express gratitude through more elaborate and detailed expressions of thanks while men use basic and limited methods of expressing appreciation.

People demonstrate their differences through the way they react in situations that require sensitive communication when they face situations that involve rudeness or use of forbidden words. Men use informal speech to express their power and self-assurance and their connection to their social groups through their choice of direct and offensive language. Women prefer to communicate through indirect and polite language because it allows them to maintain dignity while creating a peaceful atmosphere. Men show rude behavior through their violent responses while women use peaceful methods to manage

conflict and maintain their social relationships. The social patterns of Iraqi society connect directly to cultural customs that establish proper behavior because women should express their emotions through polite behavior while men should maintain eye contact and speak directly and assertively (Ahmed and Hasan, 2020).

The patterns established through this research should not be considered permanent regulations. Language use demonstrates flexibility because it can adapt to different educational social and global communication exposure contexts. Younger speakers who learn from media and technology will develop intermediate communication styles that do not adhere to conventional gender communication patterns. Both men and women in formal situations tend to speak more respectfully through organized speech because this practice diminishes their vocal differences. The diverse linguistic patterns in Iraqi Arabic continue to show how gender influences practical language usage because they demonstrate the underlying cultural and societal values of Iraqi society.

The analysis of these findings needs to include the examination of how personal character traits combine with established gender norms to influence language patterns. The expected speech patterns do not apply to all speakers because some people tend to speak either directly or indirectly without considering their gender. The different communication patterns people use show that cultural standards create a basic system for communication but personal identity and personality characteristics determine actual language use. People make pragmatic decisions because of their social environment and personal preferences which interact in complicated ways.

The study shows that regional diversity between different areas of Iraq affects its cultural development. The different areas of Iraq together with their unique social customs and dialects and their specific communication traditions create distinct ways of communication among their various communities. There is also a common belief that urban speakers use contemporary communication methods more frequently than rural speakers who follow traditional communication practices

which requires a further investigation and future studies. The different regional speech patterns in the study create new linguistic elements which show that studying gendered language requires the researcher to investigate the different geographic and cultural patterns that exist throughout the nation.

The process of developing gender-based communication methods starts from family bonds and socialization experiences which begin in early life. Children learn to speak when they watch and copy adults who use specific language patterns which they then use to learn proper gender-based speech and behavior. Parents and caregivers reinforce social norms through their active teaching methods and their indirect methods which help children learn proper social behavior. People develop pragmatic competence through a step-by-step process which requires them to adjust their language patterns according to societal standards.

Workplaces create additional challenges for people who communicate according to gender-specific patterns. Employees in media organizations and

educational institutions and governmental agencies need to use standardized communication methods which prioritize clear and professional and respectful ways of speaking. In those situations both men and women will decrease their use of gender-based communication methods to achieve better understanding. The new pattern shows how institutional rules have the power to change existing language practices.

The effect of international contact needs research because global connections continue to grow. People who interact with speakers from diverse languages and cultures need to change their communication methods. The Iraqi speakers who participate in international dialogue will choose neutral communication methods which will change their traditional ways of speaking about gender. The process demonstrates how language changes because it interacts with worldwide cultural developments.

The evolution of digital communication technology has established fresh environments which enable people to speak without following traditional

patterns that separate male and female speech. Users who interact online will choose to use brief informal speech because these platforms value quickness and effectiveness above all else. The digital platforms permit users to create artistic content through their use of emojis and symbols and their combination of different languages, which results in the creation of new artistic boundaries. The changes show that technology currently transforms the way people demonstrate their practical skills in modern society.

The study of education needs to include its role in teaching people about effective communication methods. Academic programs, especially in media and linguistics fields teach students to modify their language according to different audience needs and communication objectives. The students who obtain this training will learn to use both clear communication and polite behavior as their main communication approach. The educational system produces outcomes which result in people using language patterns that match specific situations instead of following strict gender-based rules.

The ongoing research about gender differences in Iraqi Arabic shows how people from different societies use their languages to communicate with one another. Language usage will keep changing because of both existing cultural standards and incoming new influences. Scholars who investigate these changes will obtain better knowledge about how people use language to establish their social identities and present their social statuses. The research project establishes two benefits because it advances research in pragmatics and it helps improve communication methods which Iraqi people use in their daily life.

9. Conclusion

The study demonstrates that Iraqi Arabic speakers show distinct differences between male and female speakers during their use of pragmatic language. The study of various speech acts which include apologies and gratitude expressions and taboo language and responses to rude behavior shows that men and women use different communication methods to interact socially. Women tend to use polite and indirect methods which show their

feelings whenever they give apologies or show appreciation. Men prefer to express themselves through direct and short statements which lack detailed information. The observed differences between men and women show a strong connection to the social expectations which define appropriate communication conduct for both genders.

The way speakers manage sensitive situations shows their different ways of using language. When faced with rudeness, men tend to handle the situation through direct confrontation, but women prefer to use indirect methods which help them avoid conflicts. Men typically use forbidden words more than women, who prefer to speak using milder terms. The patterns show which cultural values determine Iraqi society, because women show their femininity through polite behavior and emotional display and social harmony, while men show their masculinity through direct communication and forceful behavior. The different ways of speaking between men and women show their cultural needs and social identity, which are expressed through their language choices.

The research requires comprehension of these distinctions which is essential for studying linguistic systems and for enhancing communication in actual settings. The study explains how misunderstandings develop between speakers from two different genders because their communication patterns follow social standards. In educational settings and translation work and intercultural communication, people who understand pragmatic differences will achieve better understanding through their increased awareness.

The research results demonstrate that gender-based distinctions between males and females show permanent existence in society because they can change according to social conditions that exist at the time. Speakers will modify their speaking patterns based on the different situations they encounter and the particular audience they address and the specific goals they want to achieve. Women in professional or academic environments that need direct communication will use direct language, while men will choose to speak in polite language when talking to older people and

those who hold higher social positions. The capacity to adapt demonstrates that people develop their pragmatic behaviors through their understanding of social situations, which differs according to their gender, which enables them to adapt to various situations when they need to communicate.

The way people use language is affected by their educational background and their experience with different language environments. Educated speakers show better ability to choose suitable communication methods because they understand various strategies and their impacts. The ability to switch between different linguistic styles demonstrates how bilingual and multilingual people adapt their speech based on their current language and cultural setting. The way people use language shows that they need both linguistic knowledge and social experience to communicate effectively and appropriately.

The process of human communication among Iraqi Arabic speakers undergoes transformation through technological advancements which bring about alterations in their social interaction

methods. Social media platforms together with digital communication tools have created new online spaces which enable users to test and establish new social customs. In these environments both men and women use informal and brief yet expressive language styles which differ from their normal face-to-face communication methods. Online communication now displays common usage of emojis together with abbreviations and mixed-language expressions which demonstrate a transition toward more flexible and hybrid linguistic patterns. The current technological advancements drive ongoing changes in the established norms of practical language usage.

The study of gender differences in pragmatics shows how people communicate between their social systems and their cultural values. Scholars and practitioners can use these patterns to identify communication barriers which need solutions to help different groups interact better. The research shows that multiple elements must be studied together which include context and education and technological effects to understand

language behavior. Future research will discover new aspects of human behavior which lead to better knowledge of pragmatic competence development and its current usage in Iraqi society.

Future studies should conduct additional research on the impact of modernization and globalization and digital communication on traditional patterns of study. Young people will develop new practical styles through their use of current social media platforms and online platforms except for traditional gender patterns. Researchers will gain insights into gender-based pragmatic differences in Iraqi Arabic through their study of evolving patterns in digital communication.

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