

Verbal behaviour of Tlemcen speech community: Socio-pragmatic investigation in light of politeness theory

Le comportement verbal de la communauté de Tlemcen : Enquête socio-pragmatique à la lumière de la théorie de la politesse

Leila MENIAI¹ 
Université de Tlemcen / ALGÉRIE
Meniaileila2019@gmail.com

Nassim Mohammed NEGADI² 
Université de Tlemcen / ALGÉRIE
nmnassim@yahoo.fr

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Abstract

Sociocultural norms govern the social life of any community. They determine how each individual behaves verbally in the various social interactions that occur mainly through language. The purpose of this paper is to describe how interlocutors in the Tlemcen community act, react and interact verbally in different social situations. This contribution seeks to answer the following question: how do the Tlemcenian interlocutors manage their mutual faces? Various natural conversations of everyday life have been recorded and then transcribed, collected in buses, parks, mosques and family meeting. For this we have mainly resorted to the theory of politeness, notably the model of Brown and Levinson and that of Watts. The results showed some peculiarities of this behaviour: the Tlemcenian adopted certain specific strategies regarding the management of faces, in particular those of threatening act.

Keywords: socio-cultural standards- linguistic behaviour- politeness- face.

Résumé

Les normes socio-culturelles dirigent la vie sociale de toute communauté. Elles déterminent la façon dont chaque individu se comporte verbalement dans les différentes interactions sociales qui se réalisent principalement au moyen du langage. L'objectif de ce présent article est de décrire la façon dont les interlocuteurs de la communauté de Tlemcen agissent, réagissent et interagissent verbalement dans différentes situations sociales. Cette contribution tente de répondre à la question suivante : comment les interlocuteurs tlemceniens gèrent-ils leurs faces mutuelles ? Il s'agit de conversations naturelles de la vie quotidienne enregistrées puis transcrites, collectées dans des bus, des parcs, des mosquées et dans des réunions familiales. Pour cela nous avons recouru principalement à la théorie de la politesse, notamment au modèle de Brown et Levinson et celui de Watts. Les résultats obtenus ont montré certaines particularités du dit comportement : les Tlemceniens adopteraient certaines stratégies particulières quant à la gestion des faces en particulier celles des actes menaçants.

Mots- clés : normes socio-culturelles- comportement linguistique- politesse- face.

* Corresponding author: **Leila MENIAI**

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Introduction

Over the past fifty years, there has been a significant increase in the study of linguistic politeness, which is conducted under an interdisciplinary framework that recognises the significance of context for the reliable realisation of politeness. Divergent opinions of linked concepts are formed by researchers in this tough topic of study. Moreover, the conceptualization and universality of face in politeness theory have been questioned by empirical research. A society's relevance may not always translate to another society's needs. In order to address this, the current study attempts to determine if Tlemcen speakers might use Watts' "Relational Work" (2003) and Brown & Levinson's "Face Saving View" (1978–1987).

The current work is part of the emerging field of language sciences, which holds that studying language in isolation from culture is impossible. Put another way, the goal is the communication profile, or the linguistic conduct. Interactional sociolinguistics and ethnography of communication effectively investigate how members of a certain community interact with one another and how language usage is influenced by social relationships. Thus, context-dependence serves as the foundation for this study, which aims to address the following research questions:

- A. How do Tlemcenian interlocutors effectively manage their face during conversations?
- B. What politeness strategies do Tlemcenian interlocutors employ to achieve conversational objectives?

Research (Goffman, 1955,1967; Brown & Levinson, 1978,1987; Orecchioni,1997) indicates that people use various strategies and devices to protect each other's faces, a universal concept that is embraced by all social interaction participants, demonstrating the importance of face protection and preservation.

The study uses Brown & Levinson's politeness theory (1978-1987) to explain speakers' intentions behind violating Grice's cooperative principle (1975), while Watts' post-modern theory (2003) focuses on the hearer's interpretation rather than the speaker's intention, aiming to minimize conflict among interlocutors; while Brown & Levinson's theory was initially proposed to explain speakers' intentions.

1. Theoretical frame work

1.1. Linguistic Politeness

Linguistic politeness is a significant phenomenon in sociolinguistic and pragmatic studies. It is defined differently depending on the area of investigation, with some being purely linguistic and others being discursive. Leech (1983) views politeness as: "strategic conflict avoidance"; while Wang (2014) defines it as: "showing consideration of others". Watts (2003) & Eelen (2001) argue that politeness coincides with appropriateness, with the hearer/addressee evaluating behaviour based on their expectations. However, politeness, a dynamic concept in post-modern theories, is often viewed as a static fact in conversation, making it challenging to define due to its interplay with various factors such as socio-cultural, psychological states, language, and contexts.

In the 1970s, the fields of pragmatics and interactional sociolinguistics emerged, giving rise to the notion of politeness. Nonetheless, scholarly study and advancement of politeness ideas did not truly take off till the 1980s and 1990s. Researchers that study linguistic politeness are interested in how people establish, preserve, or mend constructive social interactions. As a result, they study how people build productive interpersonal connections through language interaction in a variety of contexts that are defined either pragmatically or sociologically.

Linguistic politeness has grown significantly over the past fifty years, making it one of the most fascinating areas of language studies. There have been developments in both classic and post-modern methods for studying linguistic politeness.

1.2. Face saving view

Brown and Levinson developed the most well-known theory of politeness, which focused on interpersonal communication, in 1978. They later updated it in 1987. It has been regarded as one of the most significant contributions to interlanguage pragmatic research ever since (Al-duleimi et al, 2016).

Based on the idea of face, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1978–1987) depends on Goffman's face work theory (1955–1967), Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969) speech acts theory, and Grice's (1975) theory of co-operative maxims. To preserve and safeguard the interlocutors' faces throughout speaking actions in any social engagement, they suggested many politeness strategies for this respect.

As a result, the work of Brown and Levinson is predicated on the previously described Goffman idea of "face." Later on, this idea was expanded upon to become the central idea of their theory. They separated it into two categories: the negative face stands for the freedom from coercion or the desire for autonomy and independence from obligations. Furthermore, the positive face is a person's desire to be liked, respected, and appreciated by others; Orecchioni (1997) rebranded these concepts as "territories" and "face" respectively.

According to Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, interlocutors control their interactions by employing various strategies to prevent one another from face threatening acts. They developed positive politeness as a means of upholding the interlocutors' positive face, while negative politeness serves as a tactic for the interactants to take into account each other's negative face.

Furthermore, a feature of Brown and Levinson's (1987) approach was the model person (MP), which was detached from lay speakers. It is assumed that MP possesses rationality and face. Therefore, the MP must decide on the best course of action to fulfil his/her interaction objective, which is to process face work. At least according to Brown and Levinson, face work theory and politeness theory have always been related. A person feels compelled to be courteous or to employ politeness methods in everyday social interactions in order to preserve and defend their own face as well as the face of others and their interpersonal relations.

1.3. Politeness strategies:

"Face threatening acts" and a variety of strategies that interlocutors must use to counter or lessen these acts form the basis of Brown & Levinson's view. According to Brown and Levinson, politeness strategies were arranged as follows:

1. **Bald on record** is a strategy employed when the speaker is more interested in having an FTA than in satisfying the addressee's face.

2. **Positive politeness** addressing the positive face of the addressee (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 101).

3. Negative politeness is a redressive behaviour directed towards the addressee's negative face (ibid: 129).

4. Off-record is a strategy employed by speakers who wish to give themselves several interpretations; in other words, they want to threaten the others' face, but don't want to take on the accountability of doing so.

5. avoid doing an FTA

The following example where 'a girl asks her sister for the help in the homework' illustrates these strategies in different ways:

- Does the FTA: Say something

- Off-record: rani haʃla f ha:d ətamri:n

This exercise is so difficult

- On-record:

*Bald on-record (without redress): ʃawnini f ha:d ətamri:n

Help me doing this exercise

*Face saving acts (with redress):

Negative politeness: ʔəllah jχχali:k təndʒmi tʃawnini f ha:d ətamri:n

God bless you, could you help me doing this exercise?

Positive politeness: əχtitu: nti tafahmi χi:r manni

Sister (sweetheart), you're more intelligent than me.

- Doesn't do the FTA: She says nothing, but tries to seem annoyed and/or worries about the teacher's feedback if she doesn't do her homework.

Generally, the use of one of these strategies is conditioned by different social factors that determine the seriousness of an FTA (W_x) as Brown & Levinson (1987: 76) state that " $W_x = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R_x$."

W_x : Seriousness of an FTA.

D : Degree of social distance.

P : Power.

R : Rank of imposition.

S : Speaker.

H : Hearer.

Degree of social distance: i.e., is the measure of how near the interlocutors are to one another. Put otherwise, the degree of proximity between the interlocutors determines the distance.

Power: Scollon & Scollon state that “power refers to the vertical disparity between the participants in a hierarchical structure” (2001: 52). Because of this, the participants' language use is quite predictable.

Rank of imposition: It alludes to the significance of the subject under discussion or the level of difficulty of the circumstance.

According to Scollon and Scollon (2001), in certain communities, the variables of power and distance can also stem from disparities in gender, age, education, physical strength, skin colour, and family affiliation, rather than only from the organisational relationship.

Brown and Levinson's politeness theory was widely publicised, and despite their groundbreaking work in the field, they were not without criticism. Based on their research, other academics do similar studies in the topic, bringing fresh ideas and concepts that have increased both the discipline's popularity and complexity.

1.4. Politic and polite behaviour:

Watts (2003) attempted the adoption of a new discursive paradigm by drawing on Brown & Levinson (1987). In line with Eelen (2001), who claims that politeness¹ refers to the "common sense notion of politeness" and politeness² refers to "the scientific conceptualisation of politeness," he argued that politeness theory should investigate first-order politeness (politeness¹) as opposed to second-order politeness (politeness²).

Watts (2003) has made a significant addition to the field of politeness by introducing novel notions that set his work apart. "Politic" behaviour and "polite" behaviour are these notions. The former refers to proper language use, whereas the latter encompasses all what is beyond appropriateness. According to Watts, polite behaviour is an observable contribution, impolite behaviour is an observable violation of politic behaviour which is mutually shared acts of regard for others. Watts' concepts of polite and politic behaviour (2003:274), which aligns with Bourdieu's concept of 'Habitus', refers to the dispositions to behave appropriately in social interactions, influenced by social and context variables. He argued that politeness is nurture rather than natural trait, a skill that individuals learn and be socialized into, rather than being born with it.

Furthermore, Watts (2003) has embraced Bourdieu's social practice theory, which maintains that politeness should be looked at or studied in a continuous interaction process. Therefore, Watts' theory adopted the dynamic method, which is associated with politeness 1, as opposed to the static approach, which is associated with politeness 2. Furthermore, Watts analyses face work from a distinct perspective termed “relational work” and encompasses: Direct/indirect, polite/impolite, and appropriate/inappropriate behaviour.

According to Watts (2003), conduct that goes beyond what is appropriate in certain situations and does so in an overdone manner is considered negatively marked. Conversely, polite behaviour that is appropriate for the context is positively marked, and anticipated behaviour in a given verbal exchange is unmarked. According to Watts, social and cultural factors can cause certain features of social interaction to vary throughout cultures.

The differences between static and dynamic approach are shown in the following table:

Table 1: The difference between static and dynamic theory

Static Theory (Brown & Levinson's view)	dynamic Theory (Watts's view)
Homogeneity	Heterogeneity
expands on Grice's cooperative principles and the theory of speech acts.	expands on Bourdieu's social practice - Analysed at the discourse level
The speaker's intention is given a greater importance.	The hearer's interpretation and negotiation is given a greater importance
Model person	Lay person
Prediction	No prediction

1.5. Conversation Analysis :

The typical interaction method, by which people exchange information, express their emotions, and discuss problems, is conversation. It is the most common and extensive use of language. Talk-in-interaction and speech-exchange are two types of conversation (Orecchioni, 1997). This communication tool has been the subject of a methodical investigation known as conversation analysis (henceforth CA).

The primary focus of CA is on spontaneous talks in any context. These environments might be the most commonplace and typical daily occurrences. It investigates the use of spoken language in interpersonal communication. For example, in form of requests, apologies, complements, complaints. It is crucial to remember that the primary emphasis of CA is action in interaction rather than language itself (Sidnell, 2012).

CA was developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, principally by Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson (1974) even though its beginnings are found earlier in the work of Goffman (1955/1983) and Garfinkel (1967). It has become an established strategy utilised in numerous fields such as Sociology, Anthropology, Linguistics, and Psychology. Moreover, Orecchioni (1997) notes that it has a special impact on discourse analysis, discursive psychology, and interactional sociolinguistics. Since its founding, CA has concentrated on the analytical orders that utilise Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson model (SSJ model). The pillars of this latter, thus, are "sequence organisation" and "turn taking."

Example: A sensitive discussion between two young individuals that ends with some sort of argument.

A: ħmijja:n¹ fwijja χfa:n maʃi qadijjat ʃunʃurijja mani:ʃ ʃunʃuri

Hmeyan are a touch rough, this is not racism, I'm not so.

B: smaʃni la la rah ʃandək waħd əʃfwijja ntaʃ lʃunʃurijjah

So pay attention to me...no..no, you seem to be a little racist.

A: ʃla:ʃ

¹ The Arab tribes known as Hmeyan arrived in North Africa during the great migration of the Hilalites. They are the ancestors of the tribes that currently live in Mechreya, the area south of Tlemcen, Sidi Bel Abbas, and southern Oran.

why?

B: smaʕni ²[mli:h

Pay close attention to what I have to say.

A: [ʒala:l galak bælli ʕandək ʕunʃurjja
Djalal, I'm a racist, he said!

The strategy that is adopted in this conversation is “doing an FTA” shown in the (B) attitude regarding what (A) said about hmeyan. Therefore, B objected without hesitation to the point where he interrupted the speaker (the second pair in the first sequence), threatening A's positive face in the process.

Because of the delicate nature of the subject, B intervened in this case far too quickly and failed to take any corrective measures to lessen the threat. As a result, A felt ashamed, so he sought to save face by purposefully, sarcastically interrupting B and trying to bring up someone else to the conversation. Consequently, there is an implied conflict in the discourse that may be resolved by using distinct strategies. But, depending on the subject being addressed, B's language use can typically be seen as appropriate rather than impolite.

2. Methodological Framework

2.1. Methods

A descriptive instrumental holistic case study with Tlemcen speakers has carried out the study. Thus, the data that have been gathered have been qualitative in nature. This technique focuses primarily on the subjective evaluation of linguistic behaviour related to politeness in the Tlemcen speech community. The best tool is scientific observation (participant and non-participant), which is used in this work in two different formats: notes and recordings, in addition to the transcription of conversations as shown in the examples above.

In order to improve the readability and clarity of the conversations in this study, we have implemented the following symbols:

Table 2: Phonetic symbols

Arabi c sound	Symbol	Example	Arabic sound	Symbol	Example
ء	[ʔ]	[ʔri:ʔ] (road)	ض	[d]	[dalma] (darkness)
			ع	[ʕ]	[ʕurs] (wedding)
ب	[b]	[bu:sa] (kiss)	غ	[ɣ]	[ɣala:ja] (coffee-pot)

² : [displays the overlapping.

ت	[t]	[tmmar] (date)	ف	[f]	[tafa:ħa] (an apple)
ج	[ʒ]or[dʒ]	[ədʒdʒamʃ a] (Friday)	ق	[q]	[qahwa] (coffee)
ح	[ħ]	[ħama:m] (bath)	ك	[k]	[əlkalb] (the dog)
خ	[χ]	[χu:ja] (my brother)	ل	[l]	[labna:t] (girls)
د	[d]	[dmu:ʃ] (tears)	م	[m]	[əmʃa:na] (with us)
ر	[r]	[ra:si] (my head)	ن	[n]	[nalʃbu:] (we play)
ز	[z]	[əzzru:dija] (carrot)	ه	[h]	[huwa] (he)
س	[s]	[əssra:wal] (the trouser)	و	[w]	[warda] (a rose)
ش	[ʃ]	[ʃku:n] (who's that?)	ي	[j]	[ja(d)ʒri] (he runs)
ص	[ʂ]	[ənʂaʔʂi:k] (I ask you)	ط	[t]	[əjti:r] (he flies)

Vowels

Short	Long
a	a: ^ا
u	u: ^و
i	i: ^ي

3.2. Research sample

The current study focuses on Tlemcen residents who are native Arabic speakers. Using stratified random sampling, the sample has been utilised to characterise the politeness of their language use in everyday conversations.

3. Practical Fraework: Results Discussion and Interpretation

In general, acceptable communicative profiles have regulated talks when the social factors (R, P, and D) reach their high degree. However, this profile was negatively marked in some circumstances where it was felt that the too-polite behaviour was inappropriate.

Example:

A: llaħ jʃalli mqa:mək ja əʃʃaf, ləbnita raha haʃʃat do:sji nta:ʃ ərikrutmu, wkan jla tʃofənnə h̄babək jawqfu: mʃana

May God Almighty raise your status, boss. My daughter posted the recruiting paperwork; I'm hoping you'll convince your acquaintances to stand with us.

B: inʃʃaaʔ əllah jku:n əlxɪ:r

Hopefully, it will be beneficial.

A: ja wəddi..wasəm nqu:lək əllaah janʃrak, jaʃti:k əʃʃaha, rabi jʒazi:k. wəllah rani takkəl ʃla rabi w ʃli:k

Oh, I don't know what to say. May God bring you success! May he give you health!

May my god reward you! I trust in God and in you.

B: li fiih əlxɪir rabi jʒi:bəh

What is good comes from God.

In, practically, every society, compliments are seen as positive language use; nevertheless, in the example given above, even though the comment was meant to be polite, it was, generally, interpreted negatively. This is as a result of A's exaggeration and inappropriate linguistic behaviour. His conversational exchanges were negatively perceived and marked.

In contemporary society, it is noteworthy that even greetings may be seen as a form of an FTA, with the recipient believing that they are entitled to anything beyond the phrase "Peace be upon you" or "Assalamu ʃalajkum." The following verbal interaction would be a concrete example.

The example: A public bus chat between two people who appear to know each other, if not be pals.

A: əssalam əʃlikum kunt nəhawəs ʃli:k

Peace be upon you (Hi), I was trying to find you.

B: ʔtaʒi:tni [tʔəddal

Did you need me? Go ahead!

A: [la: ɾi: bɾi:t nsaqsi ʃli:k w nəhki:w ʃwija

No, I just wanted to ask about you, and I wanted to talk a bit

B: təbɾi nətlaqaw mu:r əlmarreb f loup blanc wella fajan mma tabɾi

Would you want to get together in the evening at "caffee" Loup Blanc, or somewhere else?

A: nʃʃallah

God willing!

In this exchange, B seemed to be under an FTA from A to the point that he disregarded the local management system by failing to respect the adjacency pair system; where he did not respond to A's greeting. On the other side, B's "ʔtaʒi:tni" response, which means "did you need me?" challenged A's positive face in return, so he overlapped B in his pair and said "la:" "no." B sought to repair his act by proposing a meeting for that day, even though he was aware that he had offended A.

In today's Tlemcen culture, it is evident that even greetings may be noticed as an FTA, particularly, toward negative face or individuals' territories. Nonetheless, it has been noted that interlocutors use specific strategies to, mutually, maintain one another's faces in each setting or context.

Almost all Tlemcenians used face-saving acts as a linguistic behaviour to apologise when faced with social factors, regardless of how severe they were. They employed phrases of address and other forms of swearing to back up their statements that what transpired was unintentional in

order to achieve their goal. Furthermore, the positive politeness that characterises their conversational profile has been influenced by their culture.

Examples:

* əlkalb həfə:k

The dog, far from you!

* da:k əlkalb f ɪ :r wedʒək/wəʒhək

That dog, far from your face!

Employing the Arabic term "əlkalb," which means "dog," is often seen as an FTA towards others' positive face. The Tlemcenians people employ the phrases "həfə:k," which means "far from you," and "fə ɪ:r wəhək," which means "far from your face," to mitigate that FTA. Furthermore, the phrase "da:k blqanaʃ" (meaning "that contented"), which is used by the elderly people, implies the term "dog." Nonetheless, Tlemcen youth openly use the term "dog" without resorting to other strategies to lessen the FTA.

*əddar or wla:di

My wife.

To some extent, the speaker's positive face is associated with the wife's name as an FTA. "əddar," which means "the house," or "wla:di," which means "my children," are used as alternatives of it. This tradition was passed down from earlier generations, albeit the way that Tlemcen youth perceive and use these phrases has changed somewhat in recent years. For example, young people use "əzzawdʒa/əzzawʒa" (the wife) or "əlmada:m" (the lady) or the wife's proper name in place of "əddar" or "wla:di." Thus, this seeming change is the result of how differently young and elderly understand intimacy; although young people do not mark the wife's name as an FTA towards their positive face, old people do!

Conclusion

Politeness is a crucial aspect of language, reflecting human solidarity and sympathy, and is a key aspect of social and linguistic interaction, with face work as a mediating concept.

The study investigates the applicability of politeness theories (Brown & Levinson, 1987; and Watts, 2003) in Tlemcen speech community, focusing on its linguistic behaviour. It found that Tlemcenians use polite behaviour, face work, and politic behaviour for successful conversations, although interlocutors may be inappropriate or impolite depending on their conversational aims or benefits.

Studying politeness behaviour is such an intricate research task whether in social or language sciences. Politeness behaviour has evolved and/or changed over time, and its study will not end with consensus on its definition or investigation methods, as it is a matter of nurture rather than nature.

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Author's biographies

Nom : MENIAÏ

Diplômes :

Baccalauréat Scientifique

Baccalauréat Lettres et philosophie

Licence classique en sciences juridiques

Master Anglais

Doctorante en sciences du langage au département d'anglais de l'université de Tlemcen.

Mohammed Nassim NEGADI is a Professor of Linguistics at the University of Tlemcen, Department of English. He holds a Doctorate in Linguistics. His major research focuses on language and society, dialectology, language contact phenomena including bilingualism, code-switching and borrowing. His research interests also cover language education and second/foreign teaching in the Algerian context.