Gender Differences in Linguistic Forms With Particular Reference to Jordanian Women's Expressions of Politeness

By

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Abstract

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The main focus of this study is gender differences in complimenting in relation to the theory of women's politeness as it was firstly introduced by Lakoff (1975). Strictly speaking, the importance of this research comes from its research methodology and findings.

As for research methodology, two tools of gathering data were used: systematic observation and a questionnaire. These two tools provided the study with novelty and reliable and authentic data. Systematic observation of compliments used on social occasions and situations took a period of over three months. During this period, all the complimentary expressions that were gathered were written on special cards. In addition, an observation of over one month was made at Ibn-Al-Nafis hospital by recording visitors' expressions of congratulating patients after recovery.
The questionnaire was used as an enforcement for the study. It was designed on the form of questions designed to elicit data related to certain social occasions and situations.

Data analysis revealed that females used elaborated compliment more than males did on most of occasions and situations studied except for four occasions and situations studied by the questionnaire. These included the situations of thanking a friend for doing a big favor, thanking a girl for picking something missed through walking, congratulating a friend on having a new car, and thanking a friend for paying the bus-bill. In addition, the results of this study were discussed in the light of the theory of women's politeness. Since the use of compliments is considered to be as one aspect of politeness in language, and since females have been found to use compliments more than males do, it is inferred that females are more linguistically polite than males.

Apparently, females' greater use of compliments is related to their position in society. In the Jordanian society, females are considered as secondary to males. Therefore, they try to compensate for their subordinate position through language. Yet, females' use of complimentary expressions more than males can be also referred to as more deferential. Females, in general, are more affectionate and sensitive, so they care about their language and its appropriateness.