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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Evaluation of the speech style of the Iranian Asthma and Allergy Research Institute's staff based on gender, age and education

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Abstract

In Persian society, examination of the staff's administrative culture in terms of speech style, is one of the topics that has not been carefully examined. The present research is given in order to explain the relation between nonverbal variables such as gender, education, age and use of Persian speech styles in conversations within social linguistic.

Theoretical foundations are based on researches by people like William Labov, Trudgill and other linguists. The data were analyzed by parametric and nonparametric test such as T-test, Pearson's Correlation test, Chi-Square. Statistical population were selected randomly within the employees of Immunology, Asthma and Allergy Research Institute.

The prepared questionnaire base on gender, education and age of employees in various speech situations.

The results were as follows:

- 1) Female personnel are more polite in their interactions with their co-workers than male employees.
- 2) Formal speech style using is increased by staff's aging.
- 3) By increasing in staff's education, they are using more formal speech style and a few used colloquial one.

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INTRODUCTION

Language is a social phenomenon that has been the subject of man's studies from a long time ago and linguists like William Labov and Joshua Fishman showed the importance of social factors in linguistic studies.

The present research is given in order to explain the relation between nonverbal variables such as gender, education, age and use of Persian speech styles in conversations within sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistics is the descriptive study of the effect of any and all aspects of society, including cultural norms, expectations, and context, on the way language is used, and the effects of language use on society.

Statement of the problem

People based on their social roles use variable speech styles. The diversity of people is as much as variety of their speech. In some cases people speak the Standard Language. They speak differently at home or at work. Also, many people use professional jargon at work. Furthermore, different groups base on their social class, education, occupation, age, gender and other social parameters use different styles of speech.

In Persian society, examination of the staff's administrative culture in terms of speech style, is one of the topics that has not been carefully examined. Thus researcher considering this matter, decide to investigate whether social variables such as gender, education and age are effective in speech style of the Iranian Asthma and Allergy Research Institute's staff?

Questions:

- 1- What is the relation among staff's gender and using polite speech style?
- 2- What is the relation between the age of employees and use of formal speech style?
- 3- What is the relation between staff's education and using colloquial speech style?

Hypotheses:

- 1- Use of polite speech style in this center is directly related with the gender of employees.
- 2- Use of formal speech style in this center is directly related with the staff's age.
- 3- Use of colloquial speech style in this center is directly related with the staff's education.

Sociolinguistics:

Sociolinguistics is the study of how language serves and is shaped by the social nature of human beings. In its broadest conception, sociolinguistics analyzes the many and diverse ways in which language and society entwine. This vast field of inquiry requires and combines insights from a number of disciplines, including linguistics, sociology, psychology and anthropology (Wardhaugh, 1992: 56).

Sociolinguistics examines the interplay of language and society, with language as the starting point. Variation is the key concept, applied to language itself and to its use. The basic premise of sociolinguistics is that language is variable and changing. As a result, language is not homogeneous — not for the individual user and not within or among groups of speakers who use the same language (Trudgill, 1995:32).

Sociolinguistics differs from sociology of language in that the focus of sociology of language is the effect of language on the society, while sociolinguistics focuses on the society's effect on language. Sociolinguistics overlaps to a considerable degree with pragmatics. It is historically closely related to linguistic anthropology and the distinction between the two fields has even been questioned recently (Gumperz, 2008:532).

It also studies how language varieties differ between groups separated by certain social variables (e.g., ethnicity, religion, status, gender, level of education, age, etc.) and how creation and adherence to these rules is used to categorize individuals in social or socioeconomic classes. As the usage of a language varies from place to place, language usage also varies among social classes, and it is these sociolects that sociolinguistics studies (Caroline, 2011:59).

Speech Style

In sociolinguistics, a style is a set of linguistic variants with specific social meanings. In this context, social meanings can include group membership, personal attributes, or beliefs. Linguistic variation is at the heart of the concept of linguistic style—without variation there is no basis for distinguishing social meanings. Variation can occur syntactically, lexically, and phonologically.

William Labov first introduced the concept of style in the context of sociolinguistics in the 1960s, though he did not explicitly define the term. Labov primarily studied individual linguistic variables, and how they were associated with various social groups (e.g. social classes, age, gender, education) (Labov, 1966:32).

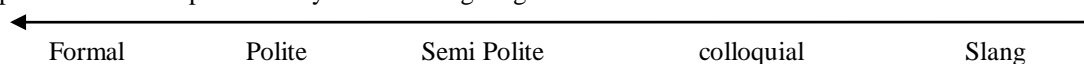
In English language five types of styles has been identified varying on a scale of formality from least to most formal (Joos, 1959:108).

1. Intimate; 2. Casual; 3. Consultative; 4. Formal; 5. Frozen.

In Persian language speech styles can be considered as a spectrum that the official rate of it, depending on the social status of the parties, relationship and intimacy of the speaker and the audience is gradually reduced. It is also influenced by some social factors such as sex, gender and education of the speaker.

However there is no exact boundary between styles and they may partially overlap.

This spectrum can be represented by the following diagram:

**Gender**

“The male is not as the female.” (Holy Quran, Al-i-Imran, 36) God has created men and women as different humans. The two genders are different in many respects, physiologically, psychologically and socially, to name but a few. They have different ways of adapting themselves to the world. According to Conner (2000): “males and females deal

with problems with similar goals but with diverse considerations.” Women tend to take account of multiple sources of information simultaneously and see elements as interconnected. Men are inclined to concentrate on one problem at a time. Women are able to recall memories of strong emotional components. In men, certain experiences which are related to competition or physical activities are more easily recalled (Conner, 2000).

Men and women are also linguistically different. Gender differences in the use of linguistic forms exist in any speech community with varying degrees of intensity. Wardhaugh (2006) describes the Carib Indians as having two different languages for males and females. This situation is the result of a war in which Carib- speaking men massacred the local Arawak-speaking men and mated with their women. Their descendants now speak two languages as boys learn Carib from their fathers and girls learn Arawak from their mothers. A less extreme example is the working-class women in Newcastle who often pronounce the [ɪ] variant for the suffix ‘ing’, while men prefer to use [ɪ^N] variant (Meyerhoff, 2006).

Age

With increasing age, a number of changes occur in speech production, from which the slowing-down of speech rate is confirmed by most researchers (for example, Hartman and Danhauer, 1976; Ramig, 1983; Duchin and Mysak, 1987; Jacewicz et al., 2010).

The differences in speech rate of speakers of different ages are attributable to several reasons: hormonal, psychological, and cognitive changes (Rodriguez-Aranda and Jakobsen, 2011); the aging of the speech organs (Xue and Hao, 2003); and the deterioration of hearing (Hnath-Chisolm et al., 2003). In relation to temporal changes in aging, mainly speech rate and articulation rate have been analyzed (Hartman and Danhauer, 1976; Ramig, 1983), although there are some other factors in speech planning which influence the temporal characteristics: for example, difficulties in lexical access can lead to many pauses and disfluencies in speech (Schmitter-Edgecombe et al., 2000). However, there are contradictory findings about whether these difficulties of speech planning really occur in more frequent and longer pauses or in more disfluencies. Martins and Andrade (2011) found that speakers of 80p age produced pauses more often than speakers between 60 and 79 (they did not analyze the speech of young speakers). On the other hand, Bortfeld et al. (2001) found that old speakers produced more filler words than young speakers did, which is an alternative strategy instead of pausing.

Education

In a linguistic community the higher educated people have the most variety of the continuum of speech style. Awareness of people in the use of terms and concepts related to their education, because education can show the social character of each people in society (Keshavarz, 1992:43).

Method

90 staff agreed to fill the questionnaire that prepared with 10 purposive questions. There were 50 females and 40 males. They were the available samples to the researcher. Their age ranged between 25 and 55 years and their level of education included high-school certificate to PHD. The participants were all native speakers of Persian. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS 17 software.

The effect of gender on speech style

To find out whether the speech style affected by gender, a Chi-Square test independence was run. The null and opposite hypothesis is formulated as follows:

$$\begin{cases} H_0: p_1 = p_2 \\ H_1: p_1 \neq p_2 \end{cases} \rightarrow \begin{cases} H_0 & \text{There is not a significant relationship between gender and speech style} \\ H_1 & \text{There is a significant relationship between gender and speech style} \end{cases}$$

Table1. Chi-Square test (The relationship between gender and speech style)

P-value	p	Freedom degree	Test statistic	Item
9.488	0.05	4	17.734	χ^2
-	-	-	90	Number of samples

$$\chi^2_{(4,0.95)} = 9.488$$

$$\text{If } \chi^2 > \chi^2_{(1-\alpha, df)} \quad H_0 \rightarrow \text{rejected} \quad 17/734 > 9.488 \quad \rightarrow H_0 \text{ reject}$$

The results indicated a significant association between staff's gender and using polite speech style.

The effect of education on speech style

To find out whether the speech style affected by education, a Chi-Square test for independence was run. The null and opposite hypothesis is formulated as follows:

$$\begin{cases} H_0: p_1 = \dots = p_4 \\ H_1: p_1 \neq p_2 \end{cases} \rightarrow \begin{cases} H_0 & \text{There is not a significant relationship between education and speech style} \\ H_1 & \text{There is a significant relationship between education and speech style} \end{cases}$$

$$\chi^2_{(16,0.95)} = 26.296$$

$$\text{If } \chi^2 > \chi^2_{(1-\alpha, df)} \quad H_0 \rightarrow \text{rejected} \quad 38.732 > 26.296 \quad \rightarrow H_0 \text{ rejected}$$

Table2. Chi-Square test (The relationship between education and speech style)

P-value	p	Freedom degree	Test statistic	Item
26.296	0.05	16	38.732	χ^2
-	-	-	90	Number of samples

The results indicated a significant association between staff's education and using ordinary speech style.

The effect of age on speech style

To find out whether the speech style affected by staff's age, a Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient Test was run. The correlation between variables in shape of null and opposite hypothesis was written as follows:

$$\begin{cases} \rho_{XY} = 0 \\ \rho_{XY} \neq 0 \end{cases} \quad \begin{cases} \text{There is not a significant relationship between age and speech style} \\ \text{There is not a significant relationship between age and speech style} \end{cases}$$

Table3. Correlation between age and speech style

value	Statistics	variables
0.184	Correlation	Age
0.0491	p	
90	Number of samples	

Null hypothesis is rejected and the results indicated a significant association between staff's age and using formal speech style.

Discussion and Conclusion

According to the results of this study, the staff's age, gender and education is effective on their speech style and caused to use different speech styles in their interactions with others.

Finally, by evaluating these effects, We Can be partially realized some styles of speech in same institutes and give more correct solutions to the effectiveness of human resources and increase the efficiency performance of the center.

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