

**The Effect of Culture As a Sociolinguistic Variable
on the Speech Act of Praising , A Theoretical Study**

Professor. Dr

Hashim Abdulla Hussein Al-Muradi

(M.A Student)

Majid Salih Khalaf

University of Qadisiya- College of Education

Abstract

It is axiomatic that people praise each other , and rarely a day passes without witnessing a word of praise . This is because praising , like many other types of speech act , such as thanking , apologizing , congratulating ... etc. , is not only a linguistic behaviour but it is a social behaviour . Being so, one cannot think that such an act may not be affected by sociolinguistic variables which, since the appearance of this descriptive branch of linguistic, has been affecting the way language is used . And hence the need of a study to undertake a sociolinguistic investigation into the system of the speech acts of praising. Culture is one of the most important sociolinguistic variables that affects the use of speech acts .In different cultures speech acts may mean different things . It , also, serves different purposes.In certain culture a speech act of praising is used to establish solidarity between speakers , and used in another culture to express approval or admiration toward the listener. In other words, praises can be considered social lubricants that serve to “create or maintain rapport.” A commonly seen phenomenon in human interaction, for instance, is that people frequently offer praise to reinforce or encourage the desired behavior in specific situations, such as teaching and learning. People in different cultures may tend to praise things more than other people in different cultures .People May praise the appearances of someone such as his clothes , hair , eyes ...etc. People of other culture may not give such importance to appearance, instead they concentrate on the person's intelligence , behaviour or performance.

Key words : pragmatics , speech act , praising , culture , sociolinguistic variables .

Speech Act Theory

The uses of language not only can, but even normally do have the character of actions was a fact largely unrealized by those engaged in the

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study of language before the present century, at least in the sense that there was lacking any attempt to come to terms systematically with the action-theoretic peculiarities of language use. Where the action-character of linguistic phenomena was acknowledged, it was normally regarded as a peripheral matter, relating to derivative or nonstandard aspects of language which could afford to be ignored. The reasons for this are largely historical. In the first chapter of his *De interpretatione*, Aristotle writes "Every sentence is significant [...], but not every sentence is a statement-making sentence, but only those in which there is truth or falsity. There is not truth or falsity in all sentences: a prayer is a sentence but is neither true nor false." Aristotle's attitude remained authoritative until the end of the nineteenth century. There are, certainly, medieval writings on sacramental and other ritual and quasi-legal uses of language, as for example in connection with the issue as to what is involved in the constitution of a valid baptism or marriage. But such writings contain at best isolated passages capable of being interpreted with hindsight as belonging to a theory of speech acts. They exerted no wider theoretical influence in their own right, and they did not succeed in bridging the gap opened up by Aristotle between logical and other ("poetical") aspects of language use. The first philosopher to have fought consciously and explicitly against the Aristotelian conception seems to have been Thomas Reid, who saw that there are, in addition to judgments, also other types of sentence permitting of a theoretical treatment. (Smith, 1990:29-30)

It is difficult and it needs a lot of time to view all the opinions and the discussions about the theory of speech act. From Aristotle till those philosophers of the twentieth century. What is said above is just a start point to the subject of speech act. "A prayer is a sentence but is neither true nor false", is a sentence by Aristotle which Wittgenstein discusses the concept behind it in his *Philosophical Investigations*.

Austin (1962:150) distinguishes five general illocutionary classes of verbs:

1. Verdictives are those verbs which are identified by the giving of a verdict, e.g., assess, evaluate, estimate, etc.
2. Exercitives are verbs which represent the exercising of powers, rights or influences e.g. offer, resign, advise, etc.
3. Commissives includes verbs that commit the speaker to some future course of action e.g. promise, vow, consent, etc.
4. Behabitives are those verbs which are related to attitudes and social behaviour e.g. welcome, praise, criticize, etc.

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5. Expositives are the verbs which are used in the acts of exposition e.g. remark, correct, mention, etc.

The speech act of praising which is the centre of the study of this research lies under the fourth class, perlocutives. This is according to Austin but it might not be true for other classifications by different philosophers of speech act particularly to Searle who has made a modification and systematization for Austin's concept and attitude of the theory of speech act.

Searle suggests a different classification for speech acts from Austin. He suggests five types of speech acts:

- representatives: which commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition (paradigm cases: asserting, concluding, etc.)
- directives: which are attempts by the speaker to get the addressee to do something (requesting, questioning)
- commissives: which commit the speaker to some future course of action (promising, threatening, offering)
- expressives: which express a psychological state (thanking, apologizing, praising, welcoming, congratulating)
- declarations: which effect immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs and which tend to rely on elaborate extra-linguistic institutions (excommunicating, declaring war, christening, firing from employment) (Levinson, 1983:240)

Sociolinguistic

A General View

Developments in branches of knowledge whether scientific or humanitarian happen by either progressing in the same branch of knowledge or by the introduction of new branches depending on the studies of others. Sociolinguistics has been born from the womb of long studies on language and culture. Language and society are intertwined because a society moves with language. When communication takes a proper process whereby meaning is generated, and a society moves with the pace of the language. A language defines the linguistic behaviour of a group of people in a given society.

As Bloome and Green (2002: 396) point out, sociolinguists have tended to avoid giving explicit definitions of the term sociolinguistics, an observation that at a first glance might seem curious. However, Labov (1972: 183) provides a sensible explanation, noting that the term is 'oddly redundant' because language and linguistics are always social.

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Still, not all linguists place emphasis on the social aspects of language, so perhaps the term could be said to refer to a set of interrelated fields which do emphasize the study of language in social contexts. Wardhaugh (2010: 1) uses the phrases 'the relationship between language and society . . . the various functions of language in society' while Bloome and Green (ibid.) stress the dialectical nature of sociolinguistics by noting that 'A sociolinguistic perspective requires exploring how language is used to establish a social context while simultaneously exploring how the social context influences language use and the communication of meaning.' Sociolinguists are therefore often interested in identifying how the identity of a person or social group relates to the way that they use language. Sociolinguists attempt to answer questions such as what linguistic differences (and similarities) there are between (and within) certain types or groups of people, and in what ways

social variables such as age, sex, social class, geographic region, level of education etc. (either alone or in combination with other variables) impact on language use.

Sociolinguistics argues that language exists in context, dependent on the speaker who is using it, and dependent on where it is being used and why. Speakers mark their personal history and identity in their speech as well as their sociocultural, economic and geographical coordinates in time and space. Indeed, some researchers would argue that, since speech is obviously social, to study it without reference to society would be like studying courtship behaviour without relating the behaviour of one partner to that of the other. Two important arguments support this view. First, you cannot take the notion of language X for granted since this in itself is a social notion in so far as it is defined in terms of a group of people who speak X. Therefore, if you want to define the English language you have to define it based on the group of people who speak it. Second, speech has a social function, both as a means of communication and also as a way of identifying social groups. :(Tagliamonte , 2006:3)

Through reading many sources about sociolinguistics , the following definitions can be extracted :

- 1- the study of language in its social contexts and the study of social life through linguistics (Coupland and Jaworski , 1997: 1)
- 2- the relationship between language and society (Trudgill , 2000: 21)
- 3- The study of language in relation to society .(Hudson , 1996:1)
- 4- the correlation of dependent linguistic variables with independent social variables (Chambers , 2003: ix)

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5- Sociolinguistics is that branch of linguistics which studies just those properties of language and languages which require reference to social, including contextual, factors in their explanation. (Downes, 1988 : 9)

Though the last definition seems to be the broadest among other definitions of sociolinguistics mentioned above but in all these definitions, it is clear that sociolinguistics is a discipline that relates sociology with linguistics. It is a branch of sociology and as a concept, it is concerned with how language use is a determinant of a given society's linguistic requirements. Every society has linguistic codes acceptable for communication and interaction. Sociolinguistics show how groups in a given society are separated by certain social variables like, religion, status, gender, level of education, age, etc. and how adherence to these variables is used to categorize individuals in social class.. All the definitions here acknowledge that sociolinguistics has to do with language use and a society's response to it.

Sociolinguistic variables

To most of us, most languages may appear to be homogeneous; i.e., our languages may seem invariable from speaker to speaker, from region to region, from situation to situation, and so on. In other words, it may be thought that the pronunciation, morphology, grammar and vocabulary of our language are the same on all occasions and that is why we understand one another. However, there is no such a thing as homogeneity in any language.

The variationist approach in sociolinguistics is typified by researchers like Labov (1966, 1972b), Cheshire (1982), Trudgill (1984) and Milroy and Milroy (1993). In general, the language use of one or more identity groups is charted by examining the presence (or non- presence) of particular linguistic variables. Such variables can be prosodic, phonetic, lexical, grammatical, discoursal or pragmatic. Written or spoken language production can be examined, although many sociolinguists have tended to focus on spoken language use. Language users are often divided into one or more discrete demographic categories based on the identities that they hold. For example, using sex as a variable, we could compare male speakers against female speakers. Many sociolinguistic studies attempt to take multiple variables into account, for example, categorizing people according to combinations of sex, age, social class, occupation, geographic location, sexuality etc. (Baker ,2010 : 31)

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One approach that has been taken by some variationists is to elicit data. For example, in a famous study, Labov (1966) visited three Manhattan department stores (aimed at high, middle and low wage earners) and asked employees a question that was designed to elicit the answer 'fourth floor'. Pronouncing the r in the words like fourth and floor is prestigious in American English (the so-called 'postvocalic r', the pronunciation of which is not considered prestigious in the English of England). However, New Yorkers fluctuate a good deal in their use of this feature, with the absence of r carrying less prestige. Having elicited the response 'fourth floor', Labov pretended not to have heard the reply, so that he could elicit a more emphatic, careful repetition of the answer. He found that people in the high-priced store used the prestige form more, while those from the low-priced store used it least, and those from the mid-priced store showed the greatest shift to using the prestige form when they were asked to repeat their reply. His study indicated that use of this prestige form varied according to level of formality and social class. (*ibid* :32)

The sociolinguistic variable is, Fasold (1990 :18) says, a set of alternative ways of saying the same thing, although the alternatives, or variants, have social significance. More specifically, a sociolinguistic variable is a linguistic element that co-varies not only with other linguistic elements, but also with a number of extralinguistic independent variables like social class, age, sex, ethnic group or contextual style. Labovian methodology seeks to isolate variables at the levels of core features and to derive rules for their distribution, making correlations with social variables.

The concept of the sociolinguistic variable is theoretically significant because it allows quantitative statements to be made about language use. For instance, one speaker might be said to use more or less of a particular variant than another speaker, rather than categorically to use it or not. Studies using the concept of the sociolinguistic variable reveal probabilistic, not categorical, occurrences. Nevertheless, "sociolinguistic variables "are themselves constitutive of social reality and can be treated as part of a more general class of indexical signs which guide and channel the interpretation of intent." (Gumperz , 1992: vii)

According to Labov, 'the most important step in sociolinguistic investigation is the correct analysis of the linguistic variable'. 'Correct' in this case means 'accountable' to the data. In variation analysis, accountability is defined by the 'principle of accountability', which holds

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that every variant that is part of the variable context, whether the variants are realized or unrealized elements in the system, must be taken into account. In other words, you cannot simply study the variant forms that are new, interesting, unusual or non-standard – ain't, for example, or got. You must also study the forms with which such features vary in all the contexts in which either of them would have been possible. In the case of ain't, this would mean all the cases where ain't is used as well as all other negation variants with the same referential value as ain't, e.g. I haven't got nothing or perhaps even I don't got nothing – whatever occurs in the same context. By definition, an accountable analysis demands of the analyst an exhaustive report for every case in which a variable element occurs out of the total number of environments where the variable element could have occurred, but did not (Tagliamonte, 2006: 12-3)

In fact to include all the variables affecting the use of the speech act of praise needs a lot of time and effort, that's why the concentration will be on the familiar and most important ones. Of these are culture, gender, age, social class and education.

Culture

Speech acts are an important and integral part of day-to-day life in all languages. In language acquisition, the need to teach speech acts in a target language has been demonstrated in studies conducted in the field of interlanguage pragmatics which indicate that the performance of speech acts may differ considerably from culture to culture, thus creating communication difficulties in cross-cultural encounters. Before talking about the effect of culture as a sociolinguistic variable on the speech act of praising, a brief clarification should be said about the meaning of culture or what the word "culture" refers to. According to many studies, the term "culture" has several related senses but there are two of these senses should be talked about because of their importance to the research.

Lyons (1981:301) talked about these two senses. He, first, refers to culture as a synonymous with "civilization" and in older and extreme formulation of the contrast, opposed to "barbarism". This is the sense that is operative, in English, in the adjective "cultured". It rests ultimately upon the classical conception of what constitutes excellence in art, literature, manners and social institutions. Revived by the Renaissance humanists, the classical conception was emphasized by thinkers of the eighteenth century Enlightenment and associated by them with their view of human history as progress and self-development. This view of history was challenged by Herder who said, "nothing is more

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intermediate than this word [he means culture] , and nothing is more deceptive than its application to all nations and periods ".

A second sense that is proposed by Herder , "culture" is employed without any implication of unilinear human progress from barbarism to civilization and without any prior value-judgments being made as to the aesthetic or intellectual quality of a particular society's art , literature , institutions ,etc. In this sense of the term , which has spread from anthropology to other social sciences , every society has its own culture , and different subgroups within a society may have their own distinctive subculture . (ibid:302)

To talk about culture in general needs a lot of time and many views and opinions should be provided but briefly culture can be described as Hudson (1980:74) when he describes or defines culture as "socially acquired knowledge " , i.e. as the knowledge that someone has by virtue of his being a member of a particular society .

It is a well-known fact that language and culture usually relate to each other in such an intricate way that culture can never be treated lightly if language learners want to use the target language well. In general, the embodiment of any language speech act behavior has to do with the traditions of the society to which this languages belong.

Another good description about the relation between language and culture is made by Sapir (1920:207) when he said " language does not exist apart from culture , that is , from the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives."

Socio-cultural phenomena encompass culture on the one hand , and social phenomena on the other . Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey Culture is " a script or a schema "

It is now a well-known fact that, in intercultural communication, speakers, in addition to acquiring grammatical rules to achieve linguistic accuracy, need also to internalize sociolinguistic rules that can assist them in the choice of appropriate forms. Perhaps the fascination that researchers hold for cross-cultural encounters originates from the serious trouble which foreign language speakers may encounter due to a lack of sociolinguistic awareness. Oftentimes mastery of linguistic forms combined with sociolinguistic confusion can make these speakers seem so improper or incompetent as to cause cross-cultural misunderstandings and even offense when they can understand only the literal meaning of the words but do not know the sociolinguistic rules of use for interpreting those words. Such rules can never be treated lightly if foreign language

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speakers aim not only to employ grammatically correct forms but also to know when to use these forms and under what circumstances.(Yu,2005:91-2)

Within the movement to focus on sociolinguistic competence in cross cultural communication, empirical studies on speech acts play a vital role by serving as a means to define to what this competence actually refers. Speech act research has thus contributed significantly to avoiding cross-cultural miscommunication. Speaker populations from a variety of cultural backgrounds, including native speakers of English, Arabic, German, Hebrew, Japanese, Spanish, and so on have been studied by many linguists during the last years to discover the differences and similarities that are found between different cultures and societies in speech acts and their performance.(ibid)

This , in fact ,will help learners , speakers, and translators of different languages overcome misunderstanding they encounter in using languages other than theirs.

One of the speech acts that maintains relations between communities and people is praising and it also motivates the performance of people. Languages and cultures that are going to be chosen for discussing the effect of culture on the speech act of praising do not mean that they are the only cultures and languages that contain such effect and difference but they are just examples to clarify the idea.

It is argued that the main function of speech act of praising ,like compliments, is to establish solidarity between speakers and. Manes, for example, maintains that praise in American English functions to both establish and reinforce solidarity between speaker and listener. Wolfson (1983, :86) essentially argues along the same line as Manes, contending that by offering praise, the speaker in effect expresses approval or admiration toward the listener, and that solidarity between interlocutors thus emerges or is established. In other words, praises can be considered social lubricants that serve to “create or maintain rapport.” A commonly seen phenomenon in human interaction, for instance, is that people frequently offer praise to reinforce or encourage the desired behavior in specific situations, such as teaching and learning. Another possible function praising may serve is to strengthen or replace other speech acts like apologizing, greeting, reprimanding, or thanking, or to soften acts such as criticism, or even to serve as acts like sarcasm or a conversation opener (Wolfson, 1983: 86).

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The above-noted functions of praising are based mainly on research centering on American English speakers. Like all variation in linguistic behavior, variation in speech act behavior may be affected by socio-cultural parameters. Studies have shown that the function of praising in one society can be very different from that of another. For example, in a study on American and South African English speech act of praising, Herbert and Straight (1989, :44) found that, whereas American praises serve to negotiate social solidarity, South African praise functions non-negotiatively, probably as a way to affirm such solidarity.

Another example of the effect of culture on the speech act of praising is related to the strategy of politeness for this speech act. Based on Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness and this is previously mentioned in chapter two, the act of praising, in general, is a kind of positive politeness strategy, that is, action that attends to the addressee's positive face by including him or her in the group. This is due to the fact that the act of praising signals concerns about the addressee's positive face by noticing or attending to the addressee's face desires. This is sometimes not true in other cultures. In Samoan culture, praising could be a very face-threatening act because a given speaker's expression of admiration for an object will in general impose an obligation on the hearer to offer that object to the speaker. It therefore comes as no surprise to find that the Samoan may respond to a praising such as :

25- What an unusual necklace. It's beautiful.

with something like:

26- Please take it. (ibid)

A further example that sheds light on the difference of using the speech act of praising is related to directness and indirectness. Ming-chung Yu, a Chinese specialist in pragmatics with his assistants has made a questionnaire in the Taipei and Boston metropolitan areas over a two-year period (2001 – 2003), purpose of the study lies in comparing and contrasting Chinese and Americans' performances of the praising act in their mother tongue, the Chinese and American English data were from native speakers of each group living in their respective native area, and the data collectors were native speakers of the relevant language they were observing.

The Chinese corpus considered here consists of 410 exchanges; the American corpus consists of 789 exchanges. Because one focus of this study is the frequency of the praising act, the observed exchanges were tokens rather than types. In the Chinese data, 356 participants produced

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410 praises, while in the American English data, 636 participants produced 789 praises. All the interactions observed for the Chinese and American groups occurred among the largely middle class interlocutors within the college community who held or were pursuing a college degree or held white-collar positions at the time of recording. The speakers ranged in age from 18 to 55 years, with the majority being in their early twenties.

The following table includes all the praises strategies adopted by Chinese and American English speakers in their 410 and 789 exchanges in the corpus respectively. An examination of the distribution of Chinese and American English praises strategies in the two broad categories indicates (a) that praising frequency is much lower for Chinese speakers than for English speakers, (b) that direct praising was the most often adopted strategy for both speaker groups, and (c) that Chinese speakers used indirect praises proportionately more than Americans did. (Yu, 2005:97-9)

The results of this investigation can be summed best in the following table.

Table:1 Percentage (and raw frequencies) of compliment strategies for speaker groups

Praise Strategy	Chinese		American	
	Number	%	Number	%
Direct Praising	334	81.5	719	91.1
Indirect Praising	76	18.5	70	8.9
Total	410	100	789	100

Examples of direct and indirect praises can be seen in the following respectively :

27- Great job!

28- When did you learn to play like this ? (ibid)

In her study on the nature of speech acts in American and New Zealand societies, Holmes makes a comparison between the use of the speech act of praising used by the people living in both societies. One of the conclusions she arrived at is that the majority of speech acts of praising is drawn on a very restricted range of items. In the New Zealand data she concluded that 65% of the praising used adjectives to express positive effects used adjectives to express the positive affect. The total range of adjectives used in the data was approximately 86. However, the

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distribution was far from even; a very few adjectives were used with high frequency. The six most frequently occurring adjectives were nice, good, lovely, beautiful, great, and neat, and these six adjectives accounted for about two-thirds of all the adjectives used. (Holmes, 1986:490)

Turning to non-adjectival praises, the range of lexical items which occur in the speech act of praising is remarkably narrow. They depended upon just a few semantically positive verbs "like", "love", "enjoy", "admire", and "be impressed by". With the verbs "like" and "love" alone accounting for 90% of the New Zealand data and 86% of the American data.

Another good example on the effect of culture on speech acts in general and that of praising in particular is what Lee (2009:519) has found during his study on the speech act of praising on Singaporean Chinese speakers who differ in their methods of complimenting and responding to praises according to age and gender. Praising in this study were mostly of the non-acceptance type, with belittling one's self being the most common praise response. Nevertheless, in doing so, the speakers of the praising exchange would understand that the praising has been acknowledged and accepted, even though outwardly there appears to be a rejection. Consider the following praises exchange between two Malay speakers:

29- Speaker A: That colour looks really nice on you.

30- Speaker B: Is that right? I look like a cheap curtain.

31- Speaker A: No, you really look nice.

32- Speaker B: You should have your eyes checked.

In all probability, Speaker B agrees with Speaker A's praising that she looks nice; otherwise, why would she be wearing the outfit? But, following the Eastern culture, in the event of a praising, Speaker B must put herself down, as openly accepting a praise in the Malay culture will make her appear pompous and may not even be acceptable to the person giving the praising, Speaker A, in the first place. Consider, on the other hand, the following created exchange, if it were to occur between two Malay speakers:

33- Speaker A: That colour looks really nice on you.

34- Speaker B: Thank you. I think so too.

In this case, Speaker B by agreeing to and accepting Speaker A's praising, may be seen as praising herself and this is quite unacceptable in the Malay society, and thus acceptance of praises is rarely articulated. In short, in Malay as in Chinese, praises must not only be denied and

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rejected by the receiver, but the praising giver must also put herself (or himself) down as much as possible, as in the following utterance, which reflects the typical rejection of praising in the Malay culture: (ibid :524)

35- S. A: What a lovely baby you have. She is absolutely adorable.

36-S. B: You think so, my slanted-eyed and flat-nosed baby? Your kids are adorable.

37- Speaker A: Those devils at home?

In the above exchange, Speaker B not only rejects the praise, she also denies them and downgrades the object of the praise. Instead, she offers the praise back to Speaker A, by praising the latter's children. This would be a typical three-part praising response found among Malay speakers. Similarly, Speaker A does the same thing. Thus we can see that unlike in the Western culture, praises in the Malay culture are not overtly accepted and appreciated. In fact, in the local Malay context, rejection of praising should occur regardless of the language used by the speakers at the time the exchange is taking place. In some cases, an offer is even made of the thing praised, as in the following exchange:

38- Speaker A: Your handbag is really gorgeous.

39- Speaker B: Gorgeous, this old thing? If you want, you can have it.

In the above exchange, Speaker A appears to be praising Speaker B's personal belonging; Speaker B aptly denies the praise and then makes an offer of the handbag to Speaker A instead. Speaker B's reaction of offering the handbag to Speaker A can be interpreted in two ways by Speaker B, or anyone in the vicinity: (1) Speaker B understands the indirect speech act given by Speaker A in the form of the praise, that is she is making a request for the handbag; (2) Speaker B understands that Speaker A is indeed only

Conclusion

It is a well-known fact that language and culture usually relate to each other in such an intricate way that culture can never be treated lightly if language learners want to use the target language well. In general, the embodiment of any language speech act behavior has to do with the traditions of the society to which this languages belong. It is concluded that culture is an important sociolinguistic variable that affects to an extent, not only the speech act of praising, but also all the other speech acts classified by the pragmatists. This factor influences the type of politeness, A theory set by Brown and Levinson. In certain cultures, praising is considered as a saving-face strategy but the same praising is considered as a threatening-face strategy. In fact, this is because of

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the habits , traditions and conventions of people related to the cultures where people belong to . That's why we find praising in America , for example , serves certain purposes which are not served in Japan by the same praise.

ملخص البحث

ان من البديهي ان الناس يمدح احدهم الاخر وقلما يمر يوم من دون ان تمر على مسامعنا كلمة مدح . وهذا واضح وجلي لان المدح ' شأنه شأن أفعال الكلام الأخرى كالشكر والاعتذار والتهنئة ... الخ ' ليس فقط سلوك لغوياً بل انه أيضا سلوكا اجتماعياً . ولكونه كذلك فلا نعتقد بأن فعلاً من أفعال الكلام مثل المدح لا يتأثر بالعوامل الاجتماعية اللغوية والتي كانت ' منذ ظهور هذا الفرع الوصفي في علم اللغة ' ولا يزال يؤثر في استعمال اللغة ولذلك جاءت أهمية دراسة العوامل الاجتماعية التي تؤثر على أفعال الكلام وبشكل عام على فعل كلام المدح بشكل خاص . وتعبير حضارة واحدة من العوامل اللغوية الاجتماعية المهمة التي تؤثر على استعمال أفعال الكلام بشكل عام وفعل المدح بشكل خاص فهي تفيد لإغراض مختلفة في المدح . ففي حضارة معينة قد يؤسس المدح إلى قوة تماسك وتقارب بين المتكلمين (المتكلم والمخاطب) بينما يشير المدح في حضارة أخرى إلى التعبير عن الاستحسان والإعجاب تجاه الشخص المتلقي . وبكلمات أخرى فان المدح يعتبر من المقومات الاجتماعية التي تعزز الألفة التواصل البشري وتقوي السلوك المرغوب في مواقف كثيرة كالتعلم والتعليم وغيرها . ان الناس الذين ينتمون الى حضارات معينة قد يميلون الى استعمال المدح في سلوكهم اللغوي اليومي اكثر من اخرين ينتمون الى حضارات اخرى . فضلاً عند ذلك فان تركيز المدح على اشياء معينة دون اخرى يتفاوت من حضارة الى اخرى . فمثلاً نجد ان بعض الناس في حضارة ما يميلون الى مدح المظاهر كالملبس ' الجمال ' طريقة مشي الانسان الخ على حساب اشياء اخرى بينما يميل اخرون في حضارة مختلفة الى مدح اشياء اكثر اهمية كاداء الشخص ' سلوكه ' ذكائه او اشياء اخرى لا تتعلق بالمظهر والعكس صحيح . من

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هذا تاتي اهمية القاء الضوء على اهمية الحضارة كعامل لغوي اجتماعي يؤثر في استعمال فعل كلام المدح

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