

The socio-cultural impact of the 1979 Iranian revolution on language use and politeness: Evidence from Iranian family and media discourse

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This work addresses the socio-cultural impact of the 1979 Iranian revolution on politeness and language use in Iranian contemporary society. Since the revolution, public ideologies about politeness and address forms have been radically reframed in egalitarian terms. This research aims to shed light on to what extent these macro-social ideologies are reflected in the micro-sociolinguistic behaviour of individuals.

Previous literature on Persian address forms (Keshavarz 1988) only focused on address terms which were influenced by the Islamic ideology of the early 1979 Iranian revolution. These include excessive use of kinship terms such as *baraadar* 'brother' and *xaahar* 'sister' in public domains which clearly illuminated the Islamic ideology. However, this study demonstrates how new address forms are being used in the contemporary Persian language. The domains of observed change are in society and family dynamics that show accelerated changes in the use of address terms which may be due to solidarity, the influence of media discourse or the gradual change of social norm or perspective of politeness in families (e.g. child and parent relationship).

The analyses of 10 hours of recorded spontaneous speech from 20 family dinner time conversations and 10 hours of recorded talk from 8 episodes of Iranian candid camera programme¹ shows that these changes of address term usage are due to changes in how social solidarity is marked in the post-79 generation. Also, it highlights that the Iranian 1979 revolution with an egalitarian ideology of equality, has resulted to socio-cultural changes in language use in family domain. The analyses show how ideological perspective of equality has narrowed the gap between social hierarchy in society yielding to use of new address terms and titles among the post 1979 generation. The family interviews examined signs of change of father dominance to child dominance in the contemporary Iranian society among some communities of practice. The old generation seemed to favour the use of hierarchical address terms however the middle aged and post 1979 Iranian revolution favoured the intimate forms of address.

It is rare to be able to study changes in language and cultural norms of such magnitude as those following the Iranian revolution. This study will have a great social importance in Iran; it will demonstrate the transforming nature of language and society along time. Thus, it opens a new horizon in the study of linguistic politeness and language in Iran.

Reference

Keshavarz, H.M. (1988). Forms of address in post-revolutionary Iranian Persian: a sociolinguistic analysis. *Language in Society* 17: 565-575.

¹The recorded media discourse consisted of two scenarios: the first scenario is a candid camera of a social dilemma in the society (e.g., whether people buy bus tickets at a cheaper price, or people's social awareness of collecting the rubbish that they see on the floor, etc.). In the second scene, with presence of a camera, the interviewer usually interviews the pedestrian.

