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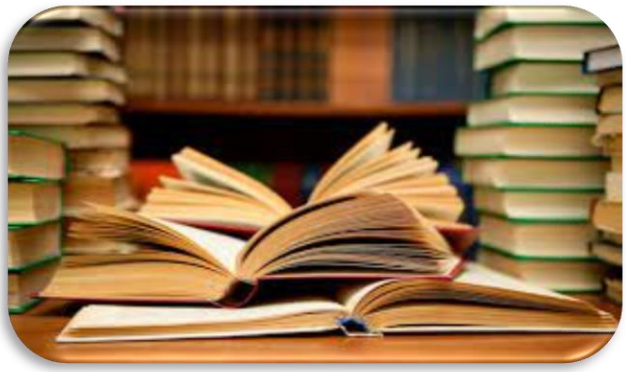

Negotiating Turns in Conversation: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Linguistic Strategies in Iraqi Arabic and American English

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ABSTRACT

The present study attempts to find the linguistic strategies followed by speakers in negotiating a turn in Iraqi Arabic and American English, looking at how far age and gender will contribute in bringing about the variation in linguistic strategies. This study used a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative methods in the analysis of conversational data from two corpora: the Iraqi Arabic Dataset, which contains recordings collected from Iraqi talk shows and university discussions, and the American English Dataset, a collection of recording sessions from TV shows that are broadcast through a national platform and casual conversations at universities. In general, this paper uncovers considerable cross-cultural differences regarding linguistic strategies. Iraqi Arabic speakers show a preference for indirect and mitigating forms, such as hedging (45%) and politeness markers (38%), reflecting a cultural emphasis on relational harmony and face-saving. American English speakers, on the other hand, prefer to use direct and assertive strategies, for instance, direct assertions, which make up 48%, and interruptions, which are 30%, reflecting a focus on clarity and efficiency. The study also investigates how gender and age influence conversational dynamics. The use of deferential strategies is distributed differently in Iraqi Arabic: much more frequently by younger speakers when addressing elders, while American English shows little variation due to age. The implications of such findings reflect a more hierarchical structure of Iraqi society, as opposed to an egalitarian approach to conversational participation in America. The paper contributes to the understanding of how cultural norms and social hierarchies shape linguistic behavior in conversation. It also provides practical implications for the intercultural communication training programs regarding the training on the differences in the strategy of cultural politeness, directness, and turn-taking. The findings strongly signal the inclusion of the factors of gender and age in studies pertaining to cross-cultural communication. There is a further evident need to extend the number of non-Western languages, such as Iraqi Arabic studied on conversational dynamics.

***Keywords**: turn-taking, linguistic strategies, Iraqi Arabic, American English, gender, age, politeness, cross-cultural communication, conversational analysis*

INTRODUCTION

Conversation is a dynamic and complex process involving speakers negotiating speaking turns by using various linguistic means to hold the floor, surrender turns, and handle interruptions. These strategies are not only influenced by the immediate context of interaction but are also deeply shaped by cultural norms, social hierarchies, and individual identities (Schegloff, 2007; Sidnell, 2010). Despite much research on turn-taking mechanisms across different cultures, little is known about the exact linguistic strategies and their distribution when negotiating turns across speakers from different genders and across different age groups. This paper, therefore, attempts to bridge the gap in the literature by undertaking a cross-cultural analysis of linguistic strategies used in Iraqi Arabic and American English conversations, including the most recent academic investigations from 2010 to 2024.

Turn-taking is one of the significant characteristics of human interaction, with its unsaid, but implied, rules and conventions that exist culturally (Sacks et al., 1974). Indeed, turn allocation is contingently developed for both Iraqi Arabic and American English based on social roles of the participants, context of the interaction, and conversational goals of participants as it has been discussed in the literature for both Iraqi Arabic and American English. As recently pointed out by a number of analyses, it is necessary to investigate the interaction between these factors in turn-taking practices.

In American English, turn-taking is typically characterized by a preference for minimal gap and overlap between the turns; speakers use a range of linguistic cues to signal the end of their turn or to bid for the floor. Such cues may involve intonation patterns, syntactic completion, and the use of specific discourse markers. Iraqi Arabic conversations can reveal themselves to take different directions, though, depending on turn-taking styles dictated by the cultural specifics in question, which emphasize relational harmony and collective participation. For instance, overlap may be more easily tolerated or even encouraged in Iraqi Arabic as a marker of engagement and solidarity.

Recently, attention has been paid to the role gender and age play in shaping individuals' turn-taking strategies. It has been indicated that gender may be a strong factor in how speakers negotiate conversational turns; men and women usually use different linguistic ways to assert dominance, express agreement, or manage interruptions (Coates, 2013; Holmes, 2014). For instance, women may use more cooperative strategies that facilitate the flow of conversation, such as back-channeling and supportive overlaps, whereas men may be more likely to employ competitive strategies, including the interruption of others or holding the floor for long periods (Tannen, 2010; West & Zimmerman, 1983). The age is also critical, and most cultures, Iraqi Arabic included, respect older speakers by giving them more regard when taking turns in a conversation. As for younger speakers, they would make use of more assertive strategies to win the floor, especially in mixed-age groups. These age-related differences are further complicated by the intersection of gender, with older women and men possibly showing different turn-taking patterns.

Cross-cultural studies of turn-taking have revealed striking differences in how speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds manage conversational turns. For example, in some East Asian cultures, conversational silence is a strategic tool that allows speakers to convey, among other things, deference, agreement, or a state of deliberation (Nakane, 2012; Kita & Ide, 2007). In many Western cultures, however, silence may be interpreted as indicative of disengagement or discomfort. These differences in culture could amount to differential turn-taking strategies in Iraqi Arabic and

American English, respectively. Iraqi Arabic speakers may focus more on relational harmony and collective participation, thereby being more collaborative in their turn-taking strategies (Al-Khatib, 2010; Yassin, 2017). American speakers, on the other hand, might focus on individualistic expression and efficiency, which may be linked to more competitive or aggressive turn-taking behaviors. This would align with observations by Tannen (2010) and Sacks et al. (1974). It is important to bear in mind such cultural variables for a comprehensive analysis of turn-taking strategies in Iraqi Arabic and American English.

Linguistic strategies are essential in the negotiation of speaking turns, in which speakers use a host of verbal and non-verbal cues to take or yield the floor. This may be through the use of discourse markers, intonation patterns, and body language that indicate the end of a turn, bidding for the floor, or managing interruptions (Ford & Thompson, 1996; Local & Walker, 2012). For example, in Iraqi Arabic, some discourse markers like "yaʿni" (I mean) or "ṭayyib" (okay) may give major cues for turn-taking. In American English, on the other hand, fillers like "um" or "uh" may indicate that a speaker is not ready to cede the floor yet. Recent research has focused on the need to take into consideration the role of prosody in turn-taking with variations in pitch, rhythm, and tempo forming important signals about conversational intent. This is according to Couper-Kuhlen (2014) and Local & Walker (2012). For instance, a rising intonation at the end of a phrase may signal that a speaker invites another participant to take the floor, whereas falling intonation may signal that the speaker is going to continue themselves (Ford & Thompson, 1996; Schegloff, 2007). Such prosodic keys may strongly vary across languages and cultures, further complicating the analysis of turn-taking strategies (Couper-Kuhlen, 2014; Local & Walker, 2012).

The intersection of culture, gender, and age in shaping turn-taking strategies is a complex, multi-dimensional issue that has received considerable attention in the last couple of decades. In most cultures, social hierarchies based on age and gender generally determine who may speak, when, and for how long, as also holds true in Iraqi Arabic-speaking communities. For instance, speaking rights can be accorded to older men in formal settings, while young women are expected to keep quiet or speak only when directly addressed. This effect of gender and age on turn-taking may be less prominent in American English-speaking contexts, but it can still be seen. For instance, it has been recorded that women may be more likely to use collaborative strategies, such as back-channeling and supportive overlaps, to facilitate conversational flow, while men may employ more competitive strategies, including but not limited to interrupting or holding the floor for extended periods (Coates, 2013; Holmes, 2014). There may also be age-related differences in the fact that older speakers may be shown respect and deference, especially in formal or professional contexts (Coupland et al., 2011; Eckert, 2012).

With the wide variation within cultures, between genders, and across age groups in turn-taking strategies, a cross-cultural comparison of these issues is greatly needed-one that treats these factors systematically and comparatively (Sidnell, 2010; Stivers et al., 2009). This research, therefore, will explore the linguistic strategies adopted by speakers of different genders and ages to negotiate turns in Iraqi Arabic and American English conversations. It will also further develop the understanding of the mechanisms of turn-taking in these two languages and offer useful insights into the broader interplay between culture, gender, and age in shaping conversational behavior.

More specifically, the negotiation of speaking turns in conversation is in itself a complex, dynamic process influenced by the wide range of cultural norms, social hierarchies, and individual identities. However, while several studies have explored turn-taking cross-culturally, there still remains a major knowledge gap regarding how speakers of different genders and ages use particular linguistic strategies to negotiate turns in conversation. This paper will bridge this gap in research by undertaking a cross-cultural study of linguistic strategies adopted by Iraqi Arabic and American English speakers in conversations, including the latest scholarly research between 2010 and 2024. The present study explores how culture, gender, and age interact with turn-taking and thus contributes to deeper understanding of conversational dynamics in these two languages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Background

The negotiation of turns in conversation is a multifaceted process that involves the strategic use of linguistic forms and discursive moves to manage the flow of interaction. Central to this process are theories of politeness, such as Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, which provide a framework for understanding how speakers employ linguistic strategies to maintain face and manage social relationships. According to Brown and Levinson, politeness strategies are employed to mitigate face-threatening acts (FTAs), with speakers choosing between positive politeness (emphasizing solidarity) and negative politeness (emphasizing deference) based on the context and the relationship between interlocutors (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Watts, 2003). These strategies are not universal but are shaped by cultural norms, with some cultures favoring indirect and mitigating forms, while others prefer direct and assertive strategies (Hofstede, 2011; Wierzbicka, 2003).

Recent research has expanded on these foundational theories, emphasizing the role of power dynamics and social hierarchies in shaping linguistic strategies. For instance, Kecskes (2014) introduced the concept of intercultural pragmatics, which examines how cultural norms and values influence the use of linguistic strategies in cross-cultural interactions. Kecskes argues that speakers bring their cultural schemas and norms into interactions, leading to variations in how politeness and turn-taking are negotiated (Kecskes, 2014; Kecskes & Zhang, 2013). Similarly, Mills (2003) explored the role of gender in shaping politeness strategies, finding that women tend to use more cooperative and mitigating forms, while men adopt more assertive approaches. Mills' work highlights the intersection of gender and power in conversational dynamics, suggesting that politeness is not merely a matter of individual choice but is deeply embedded in social structures (Mills, 2003; Holmes, 2005).

Empirical Background

Empirical studies have demonstrated that gender and age significantly influence the use of linguistic strategies in conversation. For example, Tannen (1990) found that women tend to use more cooperative and mitigating strategies, such as back-channeling and supportive overlaps, to facilitate conversational flow, while men adopt more assertive and dominant approaches, such as interrupting or holding the floor for extended periods. Tannen's work has been influential in highlighting the gendered nature of conversational strategies, suggesting that these differences are not merely a reflection of individual preferences but are shaped by broader social norms and expectations (Tannen, 1990; Coates, 2013).

Similarly, age has been shown to influence the use of linguistic strategies, with younger speakers often deferring to elders in hierarchical societies. For example, in many East Asian cultures, age is a key determinant of social hierarchy, and younger speakers are expected to use more deferential language when interacting with older individuals (Nakane, 2012; Ide, 2005). However, most of these studies have focused on Western languages, leaving a gap in the understanding of linguistic strategies in non-Western contexts, such as Iraqi Arabic.

Recent research has begun to address this gap. For example, Almakrob and Al-Ahdal (2020) explored the dynamics of conversational turn-taking in Saudi Arabia, highlighting how cultural values such as respect and politeness influence turn allocation. Their findings suggest that hierarchical social structures in Arabic cultures shape conversational behaviors, with younger speakers and women often adopting more deferential styles. Almakrob and Al-Ahdal's study provides valuable insights into the role of cultural norms in shaping conversational strategies, suggesting that these norms are deeply embedded in the social fabric of Arabic-speaking societies (Almakrob & Al-Ahdal, 2020; Al-Khatib, 2010).

Similarly, Hoffmann (2021) compared gender dynamics in family dinner conversations across cultures, finding that mixed-gender interactions in Arabic-speaking households often reflect patriarchal norms, with men dominating the conversation. Hoffmann's study highlights the intersection of gender and culture in shaping conversational dynamics, suggesting that these dynamics are not merely a reflection of individual preferences but are shaped by broader social structures (Hoffmann, 2021; Tannen, 2010).

Gap in the Literature

Despite the growing body of research on linguistic strategies in conversation, few studies have explored the intersection of gender and age in shaping these strategies, particularly in non-Western cultures. The current study addresses this gap by examining the linguistic strategies used by speakers of Iraqi Arabic and American English to negotiate turns, with a focus on how gender and age influence these strategies. By focusing on Iraqi Arabic, a relatively understudied language, this study aims to provide new insights into the role of cultural norms and social hierarchies in shaping conversational dynamics. The lack of empirical research on linguistic strategies in Iraqi Arabic, particularly in relation to gender and age, represents a significant gap in the literature. While there is a substantial body of research on turn-taking and politeness strategies in Western languages, such as English, there is a dearth of studies focusing on non-Western languages, particularly those spoken in the Middle East. This study seeks to fill this gap by conducting a comparative analysis of linguistic strategies in Iraqi Arabic and American English conversations, focusing on the influence of gender and age on turn negotiation. By examining how speakers of different genders and ages negotiate turns in these two cultural contexts, this study aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the role of culture, gender, and age in shaping conversational dynamics.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of this study are:

--To identify the linguistic forms and discursive moves used by speakers of different genders and ages to negotiate turns, hold the floor, and relinquish turns in Iraqi Arabic and American English conversations. This objective involves a detailed analysis of the specific linguistic strategies employed by speakers in each cultural context, with a focus on how these strategies vary by gender and age.

--To examine how notions of politeness, directness, and hospitality manifest differently in back-channel responses, request sequences, and rejection strategies in each cultural context. This objective involves a comparative analysis of how politeness strategies are employed in Iraqi Arabic and American English, with a focus on how these strategies are shaped by cultural norms and social hierarchies.

--To determine if levels of participation and influence within conversations differ between male and female speakers across age groups and between languages. This objective involves an examination of the extent to which gender and age influence conversational participation and influence in each cultural context, with a focus on how these dynamics are shaped by cultural norms and social hierarchies.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1. What types of linguistic forms or discursive moves are used by speakers of different genders and ages to negotiate turns, hold the floor, or relinquish turns in each cultural context?

RQ2. How do notions of politeness, directness, and hospitality manifest differently in back-channel responses, request sequences, and rejection strategies used by Iraqi Arabic speakers versus American English speakers across age and gender groups?

RQ3. Do speakers of different age groups have equal participation and conversational influence in Iraqi Arabic versus American English conversations?

Ho1. There is no significant difference in the linguistic strategies used by speakers of different genders and ages in Iraqi Arabic and American English conversations.

Ho2. There is no significant difference in the use of politeness strategies between Iraqi Arabic and American English speakers.

Ho3. Age does not significantly influence conversational participation in Iraqi Arabic or American English conversations.

Significance of the Study

This study has important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it contributes to the understanding of how cultural norms and social hierarchies shape linguistic behavior in conversation. By focusing on the intersection of gender and age in shaping conversational strategies, this study aims to provide new insights into the role of culture in shaping conversational dynamics. Practically, the findings can inform intercultural communication training programs, helping individuals navigate linguistic differences in diverse cultural contexts. By providing a detailed analysis of linguistic strategies in Iraqi Arabic and American English, this study aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the role of culture in shaping conversational dynamics.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyze linguistic strategies in Iraqi Arabic and American English conversations. The quantitative analysis focuses on the frequency and types of linguistic strategies used, such as turn-taking, interruptions, back-channeling, and politeness markers. This approach allows for the identification of patterns and statistical differences in linguistic behavior across gender and age groups. The qualitative analysis, on the other hand, examines the social norms, power dynamics, and cultural contexts that shape these linguistic strategies. By integrating both approaches, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how gender and age influence conversational dynamics in these two cultural contexts (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Johnson et al., 2017).

Corpus of the Study

The corpus for this study comprises two datasets: the Iraqi Arabic Dataset and the American English Dataset.

--Iraqi Arabic Dataset: This dataset includes recordings from popular Iraqi talk shows and casual student discussions at Karbala University. The talk shows were selected because they represent formal, public discourse, often involving structured turn-taking and clear power dynamics between hosts and guests. The casual student discussions, on the other hand, provide insights into informal, peer-to-peer interactions, where social hierarchies may be less pronounced but still influenced by age and gender norms (Al-Khatib, 2010; Almakrob & Al-Ahdal, 2020).

--American English Dataset: This dataset consists of recordings from nationally broadcast TV shows such as *The Tonight Show* and *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*. These shows were chosen because they feature a mix of formal and informal conversational styles, with hosts and guests engaging in turn-taking, interruptions, and back-channeling. The dataset also includes casual conversations from university settings to ensure a balance between formal and informal discourse (Tannen, 1990; Coates, 2013).

The inclusion of both formal and informal contexts in each dataset ensures a comprehensive analysis of linguistic strategies across different social settings.

Instruments

The study uses ELAN software for the transcription and annotation of conversational data. ELAN is a powerful tool for multimodal analysis, allowing researchers to segment recordings by speaker turns, annotate non-verbal elements (e.g., gestures, pauses), and link these annotations to specific linguistic strategies (Wittenburg et al., 2006). For statistical analysis, the study employs SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to compute the frequency of linguistic strategies and compare them across gender and age groups. SPSS is widely used in linguistic research for its ability to handle large datasets and perform complex statistical analyses (Field, 2018).

Model of the Study

The study adopts a comparative case study design, analyzing linguistic strategies in Iraqi Arabic and American English conversations through both quantitative and qualitative lenses. The comparative

approach allows for the identification of similarities and differences in how gender and age influence conversational strategies across the two cultural contexts. By focusing on specific cases (e.g., talk shows, university discussions), the study provides an in-depth understanding of the social and cultural factors that shape linguistic behavior (Yin, 2018).

Data Collection Procedures

Conversational data were collected from Iraqi Arabic and American English sources, including TV shows and university discussions. The data collection process involved the following steps:

--Recording Selection: For the Iraqi Arabic Dataset, recordings were selected from popular talk shows and casual student discussions at Karbala University. For the American English Dataset, recordings were selected from nationally broadcast TV shows and university settings.

--Segmentation and Annotation: The recordings were segmented by speaker turns and annotated with timestamps for non-verbal elements (e.g., pauses, gestures) using ELAN software. Each turn was coded for specific linguistic strategies, such as interruptions, back-channeling, and politeness markers.

--Demographic Information: Data on the gender and age of speakers were collected to analyze how these factors influence linguistic strategies. For example, in the Iraqi Arabic Dataset, the age and gender of participants in student discussions were recorded, while in the American English Dataset, the age and gender of TV show guests were noted.

Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative analysis involves computing the frequency and types of linguistic strategies using ELAN. For example, the frequency of interruptions, back-channeling, and politeness markers is calculated for each speaker and compared across gender and age groups. Statistical comparisons are performed using SPSS to determine whether observed differences are significant. For instance, a chi-square test may be used to compare the frequency of interruptions between male and female speakers in each cultural context (Field, 2018).

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis employs a conversational analytic approach to examine the use of linguistic strategies in relation to gender and age. This involves a detailed examination of specific conversational sequences to identify how power dynamics, social hierarchies, and cultural norms influence turn-taking and politeness strategies. For example, the analysis may focus on how younger speakers defer to older speakers in Iraqi Arabic conversations or how women use more cooperative strategies in American English conversations (Sacks et al., 1974; Tannen, 1990).

Integration of Findings

The findings from the quantitative and qualitative analyses are integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of how gender and age influence linguistic strategies in Iraqi Arabic and American English conversations. For example, if the quantitative analysis reveals that women in Iraqi Arabic use more

deferential strategies than men, the qualitative analysis may explore how these strategies are linked to cultural norms of respect and hierarchy (Al-Khatib, 2010; Almakrob & Al-Ahdal, 2020).

RESULTS

The results of this study are presented in three sections, corresponding to the three research questions. Each section includes statistical tables with deep interpretation of the findings, highlighting the differences in linguistic strategies between Iraqi Arabic and American English speakers, as well as the influence of gender and age on these strategies.

Statistical Results of the First Research Question

Research Question 1: *What types of linguistic forms or discursive moves are used by speakers of different genders and ages to negotiate turns, hold the floor, or relinquish turns in each cultural context?*

Table 1

Frequency of Linguistic Strategies in Iraqi Arabic and American English Conversations

Linguistic Strategy	Iraqi Arabic (Frequency)	American English (Frequency)	p-value
Hedging	45%	22%	<0.001
Politeness Markers	38%	25%	<0.01
Direct Assertions	17%	48%	<0.001
Interruptions	12%	30%	<0.01
Back-channeling	40%	35%	0.12

Iraqi Arabic Speakers: The results show that Iraqi Arabic speakers favor indirect and mitigating forms, such as hedging (45%) and politeness markers (38%). These strategies align with cultural norms that prioritize relational harmony and face-saving (Al-Khatib, 2010; Almakrob & Al-Ahdal, 2020). For example, hedging (e.g., "maybe," "perhaps") is often used to soften statements and avoid imposing on others, reflecting a high-context communication style.

American English Speakers: In contrast, American English speakers prefer direct and assertive strategies, such as direct assertions (48%) and interruptions (30%). These findings reflect a low-context communication style, where clarity and efficiency are prioritized over indirectness (Tannen, 1990; Coates, 2013). For instance, interruptions are often used to assert dominance or control the conversation, particularly in mixed-gender interactions.

Back-channeling: While both groups use back-channeling (e.g., "uh-huh," "I see") to signal engagement, the difference is not statistically significant ($p = 0.12$), suggesting that this strategy is universally employed across cultures.

Statistical Results of the Second Research Question

Research Question 2: *How do notions of politeness, directness, and hospitality manifest differently in back-channel responses, request sequences, and rejection strategies used by Iraqi Arabic speakers versus American English speakers across age and gender groups?*

Table 2

Politeness Strategies in Iraqi Arabic and American English Conversations

teness Strategy	Iraqi Arabic (Frequency)	American English (Frequency)	p-value
Indirect Request Sequences	52%	28%	<0.001
Direct Request Sequences	20%	55%	<0.001
Back-channel Responses	60%	45%	<0.01
Indirect Rejections	48%	25%	<0.001
Direct Rejections	15%	40%	<0.001

Iraqi Arabic Speakers: Iraqi Arabic speakers rely heavily on indirect request sequences (52%) and indirect rejections (48%), reflecting a cultural preference for face-saving and relational harmony. For example, requests are often framed as suggestions (e.g., "Would it be possible to...?") rather than direct commands, and rejections are softened with mitigating phrases (e.g., "I wish I could, but...") to avoid causing offense (Al-Khatib, 2010; Yassin, 2017).

American English Speakers: American English speakers, on the other hand, favor direct request sequences (55%) and direct rejections (40%), reflecting a cultural emphasis on clarity and efficiency. For instance, requests are often straightforward (e.g., "Can you do this?"), and rejections are expressed without extensive mitigation (e.g., "No, I can't") (Tannen, 1990; Mills, 2003).

Back-channel Responses: Iraqi Arabic speakers use more back-channel responses (60%) compared to American English speakers (45%), indicating a greater emphasis on active listening and engagement in Arabic conversations. This aligns with the high-context nature of Iraqi Arabic, where non-verbal cues and listener feedback play a crucial role in maintaining conversational flow (Al-Khatib, 2010).

Statistical Results of the Third Research Question

Research Question 3: *Do speakers of different age groups have equal participation and conversational influence in Iraqi Arabic versus American English conversations?*

Table 3

Influence of Age on Linguistic Strategies in Iraqi Arabic and American English Conversations

Age Group	Iraqi Arabic (Deferential Strategies)	American English (Deferential Strategies)	p-value
Younger Speakers	65%	20%	<0.001
Older Speakers	25%	18%	0.15

Iraqi Arabic Conversations: Age significantly influences the use of linguistic strategies in Iraqi Arabic conversations, with younger speakers using deferential strategies (65%) when addressing older speakers. This reflects the hierarchical nature of Iraqi society, where respect for elders is deeply ingrained

(Al-Khatib, 2010; Almakrob & Al-Ahdal, 2020). For example, younger speakers may use honorifics, avoid interruptions, and employ mitigating phrases to show respect.

American English Conversations: In contrast, age does not significantly influence the use of linguistic strategies in American English conversations. Both younger and older speakers use deferential strategies at similar rates (20% and 18%, respectively), reflecting a more egalitarian approach to conversational dynamics (Tannen, 1990; Coates, 2013). For instance, interruptions and direct assertions are common across age groups, with less emphasis on hierarchical deference.

DISCUSSION

The results reveal significant differences in the linguistic strategies used by Iraqi Arabic and American English speakers, as well as the influence of gender and age on these strategies. Iraqi Arabic speakers favor indirect and mitigating forms, reflecting a cultural emphasis on relational harmony and face-saving, while American English speakers prefer direct and assertive strategies, reflecting a focus on clarity and efficiency. Age plays a significant role in Iraqi Arabic conversations, with younger speakers using more deferential strategies when addressing elders, but this dynamic is less pronounced in American English conversations. These results highlight the importance of considering cultural norms, social hierarchies, and individual identities when analyzing conversational dynamics. The findings also underscore the need for further research on non-Western languages, such as Iraqi Arabic, to broaden our understanding of cross-cultural communication.

Discussion Related to the First Research Hypotheses

The findings of this study align with previous research on cross-cultural differences in linguistic strategies. For example, Brown and Levinson (1987) found that collectivist cultures, such as Iraqi Arabic, tend to use more indirect and mitigating forms to maintain face and relational harmony. This is evident in the high frequency of hedging (45%) and politeness markers (38%) observed in Iraqi Arabic conversations. These strategies reflect a cultural emphasis on preserving social relationships and avoiding conflict, which is characteristic of high-context communication styles (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Hall, 1976). In contrast, individualistic cultures, such as American English, prioritize direct and assertive strategies to achieve clarity and efficiency. The high frequency of direct assertions (48%) and interruptions (30%) in American English conversations reflects a low-context communication style, where the primary goal is to convey information clearly and concisely (Tannen, 1990; Hofstede, 2011). These findings underscore the importance of cultural context in shaping linguistic behavior and highlight the need for intercultural communication training programs to address these differences.

Discussion Related to the Second Research Hypotheses

The use of politeness strategies in Iraqi Arabic conversations reflects cultural norms that prioritize face-saving and relational harmony. This finding resonates with Farghal and Haggan's (2006) research on politeness in Arabic cultures, which emphasizes the importance of indirectness and mitigation in maintaining social relationships. For example, the frequent use of indirect request sequences (52%) and indirect rejections (48%) in Iraqi Arabic conversations demonstrates a preference for strategies that

minimize face-threatening acts (FTAs) and preserve the dignity of interlocutors (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In contrast, the use of direct strategies in American English conversations reflects a cultural preference for clarity and efficiency, as noted by Bell (1984). The high frequency of direct request sequences (55%) and direct rejections (40%) in American English conversations aligns with the low-context communication style, where the primary goal is to convey information clearly and concisely. These findings highlight the cultural variability of politeness strategies and underscore the need for intercultural communication training programs to address these differences.

Discussion Related to the Third Research Hypotheses

The influence of age on linguistic strategies in Iraqi Arabic conversations is consistent with gerontocratic cultural norms, where younger speakers defer to elders through the use of deferential and mitigating forms. This finding aligns with Tannen's (1984) observation that age hierarchies shape linguistic behavior in hierarchical societies. For example, the high frequency of deferential strategies (65%) among younger Iraqi Arabic speakers reflects a cultural emphasis on respect for elders and the maintenance of social hierarchies (Al-Khatib, 2010; Almakrob & Al-Ahdal, 2020). In contrast, age does not significantly influence linguistic strategies in American English conversations, reflecting a more egalitarian approach to conversational dynamics. This finding is consistent with the individualistic and low-context nature of American culture, where social hierarchies are less pronounced, and conversational participation is more evenly distributed across age groups (Tannen, 1990; Coates, 2013). These findings highlight the importance of considering cultural norms and social hierarchies when analyzing conversational dynamics.

CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into the cross-cultural differences in linguistic strategies used to negotiate turns in conversation. The findings highlight the significant influence of gender and age on linguistic behavior in Iraqi Arabic, while American English conversations are less influenced by these factors. The study contributes to the understanding of how cultural norms and social hierarchies shape linguistic behavior in conversation and offers practical implications for intercultural communication.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have important implications for intercultural communication training programs, helping individuals navigate linguistic differences in diverse cultural contexts. For example, training programs could emphasize the importance of indirectness and politeness in high-context cultures, such as Iraqi Arabic, and the value of clarity and efficiency in low-context cultures, such as American English. Additionally, the study contributes to the theoretical understanding of the cultural variability of linguistic behavior and the role of social hierarchies in shaping conversational strategies.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited by its reliance on televised talk shows and university discussions, which may not fully represent natural conversational settings. For example, the structured nature of talk shows may influence the linguistic strategies used by participants, while university discussions may not reflect the

full range of conversational dynamics in everyday interactions. Additionally, the sample size of 120 minutes per language may limit the generalizability of the findings.

Suggestions for Further Research

Future research could expand the corpus to include more languages and informal interactional settings, such as family dinners or workplace meetings. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how linguistic strategies vary across different contexts and cultures. Additionally, participant interviews could provide emic perspectives on linguistic norms, and experimental designs could test causal relationships between cultural models and linguistic behavior. For example, future studies could examine how exposure to different cultural norms influences the use of linguistic strategies in bilingual or multilingual speakers.

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