

Indirectness in Female Conversations: Exploring Differences in Interactions with Females and Males in Mosuli Arabic Conversations

Safa Ayham Abdulqader, Prof. Kamal Hazim Hussein

English Department, College of Education for Humanities, University of Mosul, Iraq

Corresponding Author: Safa Ayham Abdulqader, E-mail:

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the use of indirectness in female conversations, specifically examining the differences in indirectness when interacting with females and males. The hypothesis posits that females employ indirectness differently based on the gender of their interlocutors and that politeness serves as the main motivation for using indirect communication. The research aims to investigate the patterns of indirectness in informal everyday conversations. Data were collected from Mosuli Arabic participants, aged 30-50, with similar social backgrounds but varying educational levels. The study adopts Holtgraves' speech act theory (2002) and Grice's cooperative principle (1975) as the theoretical framework for data analysis. The analysis focuses on 12 selected extracts from smartphone recordings of family, friends, and relative gatherings. Findings reveal that females employ indirectness in distinct ways when interacting with females and males. Politeness, particularly positive politeness, emerges as a primary motivation for using indirect communication in both contexts. In female-female interactions, the nature of the relationship between interlocutors plays a significant role, leading to indirectness being used for intensity, politeness, or even shaming. Cultural factors influence the occurrence of impolite and shaming messages among Arab females. Findings also reveal that in interactions with males, politeness remains prominent, but indirectness is also employed for criticism and defending others. The use of indirectness with males appears to be less influenced by the relationship or age between interlocutors. These findings highlight the complex nature of indirect communication, which is influenced by factors like politeness, dynamics within relationships, and cultural influences.

1. Introduction

Language serves as a vital tool for communication, encompassing both verbal and non-verbal forms. During communication, individuals adhere to linguistic rules and conventions to facilitate effective interactions. Grice (1989, p. 26) proposes the cooperative principle, which consists of four categories known as "the Gricean maxims," as a means to contribute appropriately to conversations. However, people occasionally deviate from these maxims by employing indirect speech to maintain smooth and cooperative interactions.

Indirectness refers to a form of speech where the interpretation of an utterance does not align with the literal meaning of the words used. Searle (1975, p. 60) defines indirectness as a mode of communication where the speaker conveys more than what is explicitly stated, relying on shared knowledge with the listener. Sew (1997, p. 363) views indirectness as the opposite of explicitness.

Indirectness is employed to communicate meaning indirectly through speech or nonverbal actions, with the purpose of achieving specific goals or conveying intentions indirectly (Zhang and You, 2009, p. 99). Indirectness is often utilized to soften potentially harsh words, consider others' feelings, and maintain politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Additionally, indirectness can be used to convey veiled threats or for self-protection (Zhang and You, 2009, p. 100).

The relationship between gender and indirectness has been a topic of extensive discussion, with claims that women employ indirectness more frequently than men (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003, p. 158). Several studies support the notion that women tend to use polite forms and indirectness to convey their intentions, such as employing

questions like "Would you clean your room?" instead of direct commands (Lakoff, 1973, p. 56, 57). However, Jenkins (1985, p. 137) suggests that men are more likely to use indirectness, particularly in humorous interactions with others, as a means of asserting dominance and societal position.

Given the recent interest in the intersection of gender and language, this research aims to examine female's differences in indirectness with both genders within Mosuli Arabic interactions. Indirectness frequently emerges as a significant contributor to communication breakdowns within and across linguistic or cultural groups (Grainger & Mills, 2016, p. 1). Thus, the use of indirectness may result in misinterpretation or different interpretations by listeners, which may lead to challenges in message comprehension.

The present study investigates the concept of indirectness and its relationship with gender from a pragmatic point of view. It attempts to illustrate whether females use indirectness differently when interacting with males and females. The present study hypothesizes that females use indirectness differently when they interact with males and females. It also hypothesises that females' indirectness with both genders is motivated by different reasons but mostly by politeness.

1. Literature Review

Indirectness in speech acts refers to the use of language that does not explicitly state the speaker's intended meaning, requiring the listener to infer it. This can be achieved through linguistic devices such as metaphors, implicature, and indirect speech acts. Understanding indirectness is crucial for developing pragmatic competence, which involves using language appropriately in social contexts (Goatly, 1995, p. 45; Sew, 1997, p. 363; Thomas, 1995, p. 119).

The distinction between direct and indirect speech remains contentious. Scholars like Dascal (1987), Grice (1968), and Clark (1985) argue that an utterance can have two meanings: the sentence meaning (literal and direct) and the speaker-intended meaning (potentially different from the sentence meaning). This highlights the complex nature of language use and its implications for communication and comprehension.

Holtgraves (1997, p. 627) categorizes indirect meaning into two types. Conventional indirectness involves easily identifiable intended meanings, like "could you pass me the sauce?" Conversational indirectness, on the other hand, requires cognitive inference from the listener to understand the speaker's intended meaning, making it more complex and demanding (Holtgraves, 1994, p. 423-424).

People often choose to use indirect speech even when they can be direct. This preference for indirectness can be attributed to the pleasure derived from effortless communication and the reward of rapport with the interlocutor. Indirectness can also serve as a self-defence mechanism, allowing individuals to navigate situations where their expressions or ideas may not align with others' assumptions or receive unfavourable responses. Retracting statements or using humour can effectively diffuse such situations (Tannen, 1992, p. 59-60).

Numerous studies have established a correlation between gender and the utilization of indirect language in communication. Indirectness, characterized by the use of vague, ambiguous, or implicit language, has been observed to be more prevalent among women, particularly in professional and academic settings. This phenomenon can be attributed to societal norms and expectations that foster politeness and deferential behaviour among women (Holmes, 2000, p. 159).

Research has consistently demonstrated a connection between gender and the prevalence of indirect language, specifically the employment of hedging and tag questions, with women displaying a higher tendency for such linguistic practices compared to men (Holmes, 1995, p. 454). Several factors contribute to this pattern. First, socialization processes play a pivotal role, shaping women to be more attuned to the emotions of others and emphasizing the maintenance of positive interpersonal relationships (Tannen, 1990, p. 69). Furthermore, cultural disparities can also influence the utilization of indirect communication strategies, as certain cultures place greater value on indirectness as a communicative norm (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988).

Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize that the relationship between gender and indirectness is intricate, contingent upon a range of contextual factors. Elements such as the communicative context, the existing relationship between interlocutors, and the specific topic under discussion significantly impact the manifestation and prevalence of indirect language practices (Kádár & Haugh, 2013).

2. Methodology and Procedures:

The data analysed in the present research have been collected from Mosuli Arabic participants of both genders from various educational backgrounds. However, the participants have similar social backgrounds and are 30-50 years old. The study described in the passage used qualitative data collected through smartphone recording app during family, friends, and relative gatherings. The study includes the analysis of 12 extracts that have been chosen out of 28 recordings depending on the age and the gender of the participants. The first seven extracts include female-female conversations; the second five include female-male conversations.

In the present study, the perception of speech act theory by Holtgraves (2002) and Grice's cooperative principle (1975) are used as the foundation for data analysis. The model suggests two stages for understanding indirect communication: recognizing the literal intended meaning and then inferring the indirect meaning. The process relies on the listener's background, linguistic knowledge, and conventions. Once a violation of a maxim is detected, listeners make inferences based on their beliefs about why the violation occurred.

3. Data Analysis

Extracts 1-7 involving female-female conversations.

Extract 1

At home, a female and her brother's wife are having a conversation about baking Klecha (a kind of Iraqi pastries).

Female1: أيمتي تغيدين نعمل كليجة؟

(When do you want to make Klecha)?

Female2: بكيفكي، أيمتي ما تغيدين أنا حاضرة

(It is up to you, any time you want, I will be ready.)

This extract involves two related females living together. The speaker asks the hearer, who is her sister-in-law, when they will bake some Klecha (a kind of Iraqi pastry). According to Holtgraves (2002, p. 23), the hearer must be aware that some utterances may contain both literal and non-literal illocutionary forces, and in order to understand an utterance's intended meaning, i.e., its non-literal illocutionary force, the hearer must make inferences depending on his/her background, linguistic, and conventional knowledge. The first female asks what appears to be a straightforward question. However, this interrogative form is different from what the speaker intends to say. The listener understands the non-literal illocutionary force following linguistic knowledge. She understands that the speaker implicitly is making a request to make some pastries together. The speaker's flouting of the quality maxim is motivated by negative politeness and is considered to be a face threatening act; by employing this form, she doesn't want to impose on the hearer by asking her indirectly to join her in baking.

As a female, in Mosuli society, being courteous is one of the main reasons for performing this type of utterance (i.e., an interrogative form) rather than giving a direct order. Also, the relationship between these females is what determines how they interact. They have an informal relationship, but they are not close enough to perform a direct act; if they were sisters, the speaker would use a direct request rather than an indirect one like the above conversation, which is motivated by the speaker's politeness.

Extract 2

A conversation between two sisters after inviting relatives to a gathering and some of them apologized for not being available on the specified date.

Female1: أنا أقول خلي نؤجل الجمعة لي شهر الجي

(I prefer we postpone the gathering to the next month)

Female2: بالله ليش ما تكرمينا بسكوتكي أحسن؟ صاغلنا أشقذ قنخطط

(Why don't you do us a favour and stop talking? We have been planning for this for too long)

This extract is about a conversation between two sisters. After a lengthy discussion about a family and relatives' gathering, the first sister suggests that the meeting should be postponed because some of the people who are invited are busy and have no time to meet. The second sister proceeds with an interrogative form, asking her sister if she can stop talking and stating that they have been planning for this gathering for too long. Based on linguistic knowledge, the literal meaning of the speaker's utterance (female 2) is not intended. The speaker's non-literal meaning is an indirect order to the younger sister to close her mouth because she did not like her sister's idea; it is also an indirect refusal of the hearer's (female 1) notion of rescheduling the family gathering. By flouting the quantity maxim, the speaker's motivating behaviour (refusal) is to leave a strong impression of disagreement with the hearer's opinion, as indirectness is often more effective.

The close relationship between these female interlocutors is one of the reasons for using this indirect rude utterance, "close your mouth." Also, the speaker, as the elder sister, has the power to use such an expression, as it would be formed differently if the speaker were the younger sister.

Extract 3

A woman and her daughter-in-law, in their house, are having a conversation about a door that is left open.

Female1: عمي هاي منو كن نسي الباب مفتوح؟

(Aunt, who forgot to close the door?)

Female2: وي دحقي هاي عمكي كن نسينو

(Oh, I think your father-in-law did)

Female1: عادي عمي. كلتنا بشر وننسى

(It's ok, we all are humans, we forget)

The extract above involves a dialogue between a mother-in-law and her son's wife, who live together. The daughter-in-law starts by asking about a door left open when it should be closed as her father-in-law ordered; when her mother-in-law replies that it is her father-in-law who left the door open, she remarks that all people forget. According to background knowledge, the last assertive utterance seems out of context because forgetting is a common feature of human beings, a fact that everybody knows. Thus, the speaker's (daughter-in-law) last remark is not intended. The daughter-in-law is constantly criticized and scolded by her father-in-law for every single mistake she makes, including the one time she forgot to close the same door they are talking about. Therefore, she flouts the quantity maxim to convey to them that she is not the only one who makes mistakes; all humans do. Direct confrontation is considered impolite and may cause a loss of face; thus, by employing indirectness, she makes it look like a simple justification whereas she is justifying her own mistake.

Being a female in this society and being in an unstable relationship (with the in-laws, in this case) makes it a strong motive for using indirectness, especially when the message is conveyed gently.

Extract 4

Before having lunch, a woman and her mother-in-law have a conversation about the latter's diabetes pill.

A. Female1: خالي, أخذتي دوا السكري؟

(Aunt, did you take your diabetes medicine?)

Female2: أي

(Yes)

B. Female1: خالي, كوي صاغ الأكل

(Aunt, dinner is ready.)

Female 2: أي

(Yes.)

This daily conversation is held between a woman and her mother-in-law who live together. Every day when dinner is ready, these females have the same dialogue. Both utterances (A and B) lead to the same message. In the first utterance, the daughter-in-law performs a directive speech act by asking her mother-in-law if she took her diabetes pill. However, the speaker's (the daughter-in-law) literal illocutionary force of this interrogative form is not intended. The hearer, relying on linguistic knowledge, realizes the ulterior meaning of the speaker's utterance, which is "dinner is ready; come to eat," as the hearer needs to take medicine before eating. Additionally, the literal illocutionary force of the speaker's second utterance "aunt, dinner is ready", is also not intended. She uses this utterance to indirectly request the hearer (mother-in-law) to take her pill as it is time to have dinner. In both conversations, the speaker flouts the relevance maxim to politely call the hearer to the dinner table, instead of using a direct request. Politeness is the primary motive for using these utterances, considering the relationship between the interlocutors and the age gap.

Extract 5

Three related females are having a conversation in the house about cleaning routines.

Female1: البيحة قدنظف الثلاجي, وأغشعلكي عفن بالمجر

(Yesterday, I was cleaning the fridge and found mould in the drawer.)

Female2: أي عادي مرات الويحد ما يركز, ما ينتبه يعني

(It's ok, sometimes one fails to notice)

Female1: لا عيني, لو تنتظف دائما ما يطلع بيها عفن

(No, if it is getting cleaned regularly, mould will not grow in.)

Female3: ليش منو قللكي ما تنتظف؟ أنا دائما أنظفها

(Who told you it is not getting cleaned? I always do.)

The extract above involves a conversation between three related females who live together; the first and second females are sisters, and the third is their sister-in-law. The conversation starts with the first female saying that she found some mould while cleaning the fridge; then, she states that if the fridge is being cleaned regularly, the mould will not grow inside. The second female adds that failing to notice such a thing is normal. These three utterances sound like an everyday conversation about the cleaning routine. However, the third female's utterance, "I do clean it," implies that the three utterances above have an implicature, and their literal meanings are not intended. According to their background knowledge, the interlocutors know that mould naturally grows in dark and cold areas. So, the listener, the sister-in-law, figures out the hidden meanings of the first three utterances and says that she usually cleans the fridge to defend herself. Both the first and the second females are directing their speech to the third female. The first speaker, by her utterance "no, if it is getting cleaned regularly, mould will not grow in", (female1) intends to say that "you are not cleaning the fridge properly; therefore, I found mould in the drawer". The second speaker, by saying "it is ok, sometimes one fails to notice", (female2) indirectly justifies the hearer's mistake; they (female 1 and female 2) both seem to violate the quantity maxim. The motive behind the first speaker's indirect message is shaming the hearer and blaming her for being remiss and for not doing her job properly. The motive behind the second speaker's indirect utterance is to mitigate the first speaker's act of shaming and to justify the mistake, as she states that it is normal not to pay attention to such a thing.

Extract 6

A conversation between a female and her guest, who is a friend.

Female1: أش تشغيبين؟ جاي لو قهوي؟

(What would you like to drink? Tea or coffee?)

Female2: والله الصراحة قهوتكي طيبتي

(Honestly, your coffee is delicious)

The dialogue in the above extract is between two friends, one of whom is a visitor at the home of the other. The first woman asks her guest interrogatively what she would like to be served, giving her a choice between "tea or coffee." The second woman responds, saying in an expressive speech act that the hearer's coffee is delectable. The shared linguistic knowledge between these two women suggests that the speaker (female 2) is trying to communicate more than she actually says. The utterance's literal meaning is accurate since the hearer (female 1) does make wonderful coffee. However, the non-literal meaning of the speaker's speech contains an indirect appeal to the hearer to make coffee rather than tea. The speaker flouts the quantity maxim by asking the listener to make the drink she prefers indirectly because she believes that it would seem like an order if she asked for it directly. Thus, the motive behind stating her intention indirectly is positive politeness (Leech, 2014, p. 99). Although the two interlocutors in the extract above are friends and have a close relationship, the speaker could not convey her intent directly and preferred using an indirect request.

Extract 7

A conversation between a woman and her daughter-in-law; the daughter-in-law is about to leave the house to go to the university.

Female 1: وين طيلعة هكذا؟

(Where are you going dressing like that?)

Female 2: عالـدوام.

(To university).

Female 1: بس لبسكي ما مال دوام. وينو أبوكي؟ خلي يجي يغشع.

(But your outfit is not suitable. Where is your father? He should come and see).

Female 2: ليش عمي أشببنيو؟ لبسي رسمي.

(Why is that? It is formal).

The extract above shows a conversation between a female and her daughter-in-law before the latter leaves the house in the morning. The mother-in-law questions where her son's wife is going while dressed as she is. When the speaker (female 1, the mother-in-law) hears the response "To university," she comments that the outfit of the hearer (female 2, the daughter-in-law) is unsuitable. She asks the listener, in an interrogative form, where her father is and indicates that he has to examine his daughter's clothing. With the last utterance, the listener wonders why the formal attire is unacceptable. The discussion seems to be proceeding normally until the third utterance. Depending on linguistic knowledge, the hearer infers the speaker's intended meaning. Using such expression "where is your father? He

should come and see” is a common way used by Mosuli Arabic speakers to implicate a different meaning from the literal one and is usually employed to denote criticism. Therefore, the speaker is not actually asking where the hearer’s father is; she implies that if the hearer’s father saw his daughter’s attire, he would disapprove her wearing it outside. Therefore, the speaker seems to flout the quality and quantity maxims. This flouting is motivated by the speaker’s desire to shame her daughter-in-law for the way she dresses.

Extracts 8-13 involving female-male conversations.

Extract 8

A conversation between a woman and a related man about eating unhealthy food.

Male: أش قتاكلون. ما تقولولي؟

هاي الخرابيط كلها تدمر الصحة

(What are you eating? it is harmful to your health)

Female: و الجكاير عمو؟

(What about cigarettes, uncle?)

This extract is about a conversation between two relatives who do not live together; the female is the niece of the male’s wife. The female and some other relatives are having some snacks (crisps and sweets) when the speaker starts the conversation with a rhetorical question about the junk food they are having, and then he states that it is all horrible for their health. The female replies with an interrogative form, asking him, "What about cigarettes?" But based on language and context, it’s clear that this interrogative form, which is the literal illocutionary force, is not what the female speaker meant. Cigarettes are very dangerous and are one of the main causes of cancer and other deadly diseases, which is a fact everyone knows. Therefore, the speaker’s non-literal illocutionary force is a rhetorical question that doesn’t need an answer. The female, in her speech, performs a defensive act and flouts the relevance maxim as a motive to criticize the hearer (the male) as she ironically wonders if the cigarettes he smokes are not as harmful and bad as junk food, if not worse.

Despite the age gap between the interlocutors, in the utterance above, the speaker, as a female, did use an impolite but rather a shy way to convey her message. This way of employing indirectness can only sometimes be seen in Mosuli society, especially when the speaker is a female and the listener is a male.

Extract 9

A family is having breakfast, and the husband leaves the table after finishing his meal.

A wife: الله يرضى عنك, بس أكو صموناي بالكابسة

(God bless you, there is a piece of bread in the toaster.)

A husband: هسة أجيبها

(I will bring it.)

This extract involves a conversation between a female and her husband. The family is having breakfast together while chatting. When the husband leaves the table, his wife immediately informs him with an assertive speech act that there is a piece of bread in the toaster. She associates it with a praying expression which is very common in Arabic culture "الله يرضى عنك". According to the model adopted in the present study, the interlocutors must have some common knowledge for their interaction to be cooperative. Relying on shared linguistic knowledge, the hearer will easily infer the speaker’s intended meaning. The speaker does not mean what she says because it is useless information. Thus, the hearer perceives the speaker’s intended meaning as an indirect request for him to take the toast out of the toaster and bring it to her. The speaker flouts the quantity maxim; this flouting is motivated by the wife’s sense of politeness; she also uses the nice expression "God bless you" which is a prayer used as a sign of gratitude to the person doing or about to do the speaker a favour. So, the speaker thanks him in advance to soften her request in terms of positive politeness and endearment.

Extract 10

At a family gathering, a female and her brother are having a conversation.

Female: محمد, بالله كثير عجيني هذا النبات, كلش حلو

(Muhammad, I really liked this plant, so beautiful.)

Male: تدللين بمعودة, يجر الكي

(You got it!)

This extract is about a conversation between a woman and her brother. The speaker’s (the sister) utterance is an expressive speech act whose literal meaning is merely an admiration of a plant she saw in her brother’s house.

According to the hearer's (the brother) reply, the speaker has more to say than the literal meaning of the utterance. So, the non-literal meaning of the first utterance is an indirect request to the listener to get her a plant just like the one he has. Instead of saying what she wants directly, she shows her admiration for it, which goes against the maxim of quantity. This way of requesting is common in Iraqi culture regarding politeness, as it would sound inappropriate to admire something and ask its owner to get the same for them. Also, this way of requesting would not threaten the speaker's face, as it could be perceived as merely showing admiration and it is called positive politeness. These siblings share rather similar background knowledge in this conversation, and their talk is completely cooperative because the hearer realizes the speaker's intention and offers to bring her the same. However, these kinds of utterances may differ depending on the relationship between the interlocutors; sometimes people do ask directly for things they like when they have no boundaries in their relationships and when their request is answered by a refusal that would not threaten their positive face, like relationships between sisters, spouses, and even very close friends.

Extract 11

A conversation between a male and his wife.

A wife: الله، أشون جو مال سفرات

(God, the weather is perfect for picnics)

A husband: والله تعذرني عندي دوام

(I am sorry, I have to go to work)

The extract above involves a dialogue between a husband and his wife. The wife starts by admiring the nice weather and stating that it is typical picnic weather; the husband proceeds with an apology and says that he has work to do. The conversation doesn't seem cooperative by looking at the literal illocutionary force of both utterances. However, to figure out whether the utterances in this conversation have other meanings rather than the literal ones, the hearer must infer by relying on the shared knowledge. Based on background knowledge, it can be inferred that neither of these utterances is meant to be taken literally. The speaker's (the wife) intended meaning is a directive speech act realized by an indirect request to her husband to take them out for a picnic.

On the other hand, the hearer's (the husband) intended meaning is a commissive speech act realized by an indirect refusal to his wife's indirect request demonstrated by his intent to say, "I don't have time for picnics, I have to work." Both interlocutors violate the quantity maxim in terms of politeness and face management (Brown & Levinson, 1985). They both use indirectness to not impose on the other interlocutor; the wife's motivating act of indirect request is to protect her positive face and avoid threatening her husband's negative face; the husband's motivating act of refusal is to avoid threatening his wife's positive face. Even though the two people in the above extract have a close and friendly relationship, they both send their polite messages indirectly.

Extract 12

A conversation between a male and a female relative.

Male: يمعودين طاش غاسنا من الهوسة. ما تعففون تسكتون؟

(The noise is giving me a headache; don't you know when to be quiet?)

Female: أخبار التلفزيون أبو أحمد؟

(What about the television, Abu Ahmad?)

The excerpt above shows a conversation between a woman and her brother-in-law. While the man is watching a football game on television, his nephews are playing nearby. The man begins by saying that the noise his nephews are making is giving him a headache, and he then asks them if they know how to be quiet. "What about the television?" the woman responds. The conversation appears uncooperative when examining the literal meaning of both utterances because the interlocutors are speaking about distinct topics. However, according to linguistic knowledge, both utterances' literal meanings are not intended. The male appears to flout the quantity maxim to control the children's conduct; his utterance's non-literal meaning implicates an indirect command to his nephews to cease making noise since he has begun to get a headache. On the other hand, the female's non-literal meaning, which is realized by an interrogative form, is an indirect and shy criticism of the male's behaviour; she attempts to defend her children's actions by implying that the television match he is watching is making noise as well. She is unhappy that her children are receiving criticism and feels the need to stand up for them. The age gap and the semi-informal relationship between the two speakers are the reasons that the female employed indirectness rather than stating her opinion directly; she was shy to state a direct criticism to her brother-in-law. However, she managed to convey what she intended to say indirectly.

Extract 13

A conversation between a female and two other interlocutors (her sister and her sister's husband).

Female1: ما لقيتي معلمة لحمزة؟

(Have you found a teacher for Hamza?)

Female2: لا والله بعد

(No, not yet)

Male: معلمة وتدرّس لابنها معلمة

(A teacher looks for a teacher for her son!)

Female1: لو أكو أحد يساعدنا، ما كان دوغت على معلمة

(If she had someone to help her, she would not look for a teacher)

The extract above is about a conversation between three related interlocutors; the two females are sisters, and the male is the second female's husband. The conversation starts with the speaker (female 1) asking her sister if she has found a teacher for her son, as he needs to learn more. After the second female replies with no, the husband states, "A teacher is looking for a teacher for her son!" The speaker remarks, "If she had someone to help, she would not look for a teacher." The talk looks quite normal and straightforward until the last two utterances. They seem to be out of context and are not related to the rest of the conversation. Therefore, according to the model adopted in the present study, the hearer must use the literal meaning to arrive at the speaker's intention by relying on conversational implicature. Interlocutors figure out the non-literal illocutionary force of each other's utterances based on linguistic knowledge. The speaker (the husband) flouts the quantity maxim, stating indirectly, "You should teach your son because you are a teacher, instead of getting him another teacher." The husband's motive for using indirectness is to provoke his wife. He criticizes her for not educating her son properly because she is trying to find him a teacher while she is herself a teacher. The hearer (the speaker's sister-in-law) remarks indirectly, "if you could help your wife with the kids' teaching, she would not need another teacher to help her." The hearer flouts the quantity maxim to defend her sister by criticising him back. This motivating act (indirect criticism) will convey the intended message and maintain good boundaries between the interlocutors. The hearer feels embarrassed to say what she means directly because she does not intend to say something rude to her brother-in-law and does not want to cross the line.

4. Results and Discussion

The analysis above shows the differences between the way females interact indirectly with females and the way they interact with males. The major motive for employing indirectness for females interacting with both genders is politeness and mainly positive politeness (Leech, 2014, p. 99). In the cases of women-women interactions, the relationship between the interlocutors plays a very important role in determining the motive for using indirectness. As in the conversation between two sisters, the message is indirectly intense whereas the other extracts are motivated by either politeness or completely the opposite which is shaming. Thus, due to cultural reasons, impolite and shaming messages can be seen in conversations among Arabic females, although it is the least strategy to be used as it would threaten to break the rapport among interlocutors. Furthermore, a polite blame can be the motive for using indirectness when there is an age gap between the interlocutors and the relationship is not very close.

The way females interact with males can also be motivated by politeness, mainly, even when the speakers have a close relationship like spouses. However, acts like criticism can be seen as motives when females intend to prove a point or defend something or someone. They convey their indirect criticism even though the listeners are elder and they are not really close. Using indirectness in this way makes the listener feel embarrassed even when the listener is a male. The use of indirectness between the females and males in these extracts are neither affected by the relationship nor the age between the interlocutors, although, according to cultural factors, females tend to be more polite and less critic with males, it can be seen that females used indirectness to convey politeness with males that are close and used indirectness to criticise with males who are not close. The main motive for females using indirectness with males beside politeness is defending others.

The study finds that women's primary motivation for using indirectness is politeness. In Arabic culture, politeness and respect are highly valued, and using indirectness can be a way to show respect to others. The way women are raised in Arabic societies influences how they behave, speak, and interact, including the reasons they use indirectness for. As a result, women tend to convey their messages in terms of politeness, regardless of their listener's age or gender. The analysis reveals that approximately fifty percent of women's indirectness is motivated by politeness, as they are more likely to consider both their own as well as others' self-esteem.

In a stark contrast to politeness, shame is an almost common motivation in certain relationships in Mosuli society among women. Typically, this impolite method of communicating an indirect message is employed to leave a stronger impression on the recipient. Shaming differs from criticism in that it is more intense and harsher to the hearer and is frequently a false accusation.

5. Conclusion

The analysis reveals notable differences in the way females employ indirectness when interacting with females compared to when they interact with males. In both scenarios, the primary motive for using indirect communication is politeness, particularly positive politeness. When engaging in conversations with females, the relationship between interlocutors plays a role in determining the motive for using indirectness. While impolite and shaming messages are present among Arabic females, they are sparingly used due to cultural reasons, as they pose a threat to rapport between interlocutors. Additionally, a polite blame can motivate the use of indirectness when there is an age gap between interlocutors and the relationship is not very close.

Conversely, when interacting with males, it has been found that politeness remains a prominent factor, even in cases where there is a close relationship such as between spouses. However, indirectness is also employed for acts like criticism, aiming to assert a point or defend something or someone. Interestingly, females convey indirect criticism even when the listeners are older and they are not closely connected. This use of indirectness creates a sense of embarrassment for the listener, regardless of their gender. However, according to cultural factors, rude acts like shaming were never experienced when interacting with males. The study also finds that the dynamics of the female-male interactions in the analysed extracts are not significantly influenced by the relationship or age between interlocutors. Nonetheless, cultural factors contribute to females being generally more polite and less critical with males.

The study highlights distinct differences in the way females employ indirectness in their conversations with females versus males. While politeness remains a common motive in both contexts, the influence of the relationship dynamics and cultural factors shape the specific motivations for indirectness. The findings contribute to a better understanding of the complexities of female communication, shedding light on the varying strategies employed in different social contexts. Further research in this area can continue to explore the variations of indirect communication strategies employed by females in different cultural contexts.

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