

EXPRESSING POLITENESS AND POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN SPOKEN ALBANIAN



KONUŞULAN ARNAVUTÇADA NEZAKET VE NEZAKET STRATEJİLERİNİ İFADE ETME

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ABSTRACT: The present study aims at treating the linguistic devices of politeness in the spoken formal and informal communication of Albanians of Kosovo and Albania as one of the variables that display the changes in the dynamics of Albanian spoken in the two countries. The current research treats formal situations of communication and those less formal ones of linguistic devices of politeness. The research has been conducted using two different measurement. The first one treats two television political debates, one in Kosovo with Kosovar speakers of Albanian, and one in Albania with Albanian speakers. The second measuring treats the informal situation, and for this purpose, a direct observation in the "Albi Mall" (a city mall), specifically in five stores (shoe store, clothing store, and grocery store) in Prishtina has been conducted. In this research, linguistic choices used by the consumers who address the sellers and sellers who address the consumers have been observed.

Keywords: Politeness, strategies, formulaic expressions.

ÖZ: Bu çalışmanın amacı, iki ülkede konuşulan Arnavutça dinamiklerindeki değişimleri gösteren değişkenlerden biri olarak Kosova ve Arnavutluk Arnavutlarının sözlü resmî ve gayriresmî iletişimde sözlü dil bilgisi araçlarını ele almaktır. Araştırma, resmî iletişim durumlarını ve nazik dilsel araçlardan daha az resmî olanları ele almaktadır. Araştırma iki farklı ölçme kullanılarak gerçekleştirildi. Birincisi Kosova'da Arnavutça konuşan konuşmacılarla Arnavutluk'ta Arnavutça konuşanlarla birlikte olan iki televizyon tartışmalarını ele almıştır. İkinci ölçüm ise resmî olmayan durumları ele alıyor ve bu amaçla Prishtine'de "Albi Mall"da (şehir AVM'si) özellikle beş farklı mağazada (ayakkabı, giyim eşyası ve market) doğrudan gözlem gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu çalışmada, tüketicilere hitap eden satıcıların ve satıcılara hitap eden tüketicilerin dil tercihleri gözlemlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: nezaket, stratejiler, formüsel ifadeler

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1. Introduction

The present study aims at treating the linguistic devices of politeness in the spoken formal and informal communication of Albanians of Kosovo and Albania as one of the variables that display the changes in the dynamics of Albanian spoken in the two countries.

Albanians of Albania and former Yugoslavia (Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) had only minimal contacts during the period of 1947 – 1990, whereas the contacts with Albanians of Macedonia, but not with those of other regions, began after the year 1990 (until 1999). During that period of time, different developments of Albanian occurred from both sides. Position and the status of Albanian of that phase have been treated by Beci (2002, Ismajli (2002), Munishi (2009), Kramer (2010), Rugova (2012), together with the dynamics of the development of Albanian in general. Standardization of Albanian in 1972 and the mechanisms of imposing that standard in Kosovo and in Albania have been different, be that on political limitations as well as on the time flow. While in Albania social uniformity was imposed (Sejdiu, Rugova 2015), in Kosovo, there were many other problems related to the status of Albanians in general (Ismajli 2002, Rugova 2012).

The current research treats formal situations of communication and those less formal ones of linguistic devices of politeness. The research has been conducted using two different measurements. The first one treats two television political debates, one in Kosovo with Kosovan speakers of Albanian, and one in Albania with Albanian speakers. Kosovo political debate, with four participants each has been analyzed in the program “Debat” in RTK, 8. 1. 2016, whereas the one from Albania in the program “Opinion” in TV Klan, on 19. 1. 2015. In the transcripts of the debates, interrogative particles and phrases which speakers try to get the floor with, by participating in the communication situation, have been treated, too.

The second measuring treats informal situation, and for this purpose a direct observation in the “Albi Mall” (a city mall), specifically in five stores (shoe store, clothing store, and grocery store) in Prishtina has been conducted. In this research, linguistic choices used by the consumers who address the sellers and sellers who address the consumers have been observed.

Cases of examination whether interrogative words or imperative ones have been used, whether the question words are realized with question particles or using intonation only, whether someone will be addressed using a specific title or personal pronoun in the second person plural, and whether formulaic politeness expressions have been used in both cases will be regarded, too.

- The study relies on the hypothesis that more formulaic expressions of politeness are being used in Albania, and that interrogative sentences or

questions will be expressed through intonation, whereas in Kosovo questions will be realised mainly by using question particles.

- The research is also initiated by the sub-hypothesis that a more standardized and formulaic communication dominates in Albania, whereas in the Albanian of Kosovo the richness of expression is much obvious.

The research could answer the following questions: How do politeness linguistic devices manifest themselves in the expression of language economy in the Albanian of Kosovo and that of Albania and What are the dynamics of the development as for politeness linguistic devices in both spoken varieties of Albanian?

Shamku-Shkreli (2007:15), in her account of politeness in Albanian, describes idiomatic expressions as formulaic language 'through which a formal conversation starts or develops' and considers them to be 'marks of generational transgression of Albanian discourse'. She names these formulaic expressions as concentrated expressions of the mentality of a particular social order. She talks about politeness' formulaic expressions of the formal function without discussing formulas of a family respect like: *babëlok*, *bacë* (granny, uncle) which are more to be treated as a subject study of ethnolinguistics.

The current study does not have an ethno-linguistic treatment, too. What makes the difference between a sociolinguistic treatment in the first case and that of ethno-linguistic one is the formality of communication. In less formal circumstances, the claims for a formal communication are still being treated.

2. Background on politeness as a pragmatic category

The concept of politeness could be treated from different viewpoints. The first could be observed from the viewpoint of speech acts, which views the polite formulas in our corpus as illocutionary acts classified as directives or expressives and they could be also treated as indirect speech acts, following Lee and Pinker (2010), who suggest that majority of formulaic communications belong to indirect speech acts and sort of *indumento*. However, the concept of politeness could be viewed from a broader sense, too: from a socio-cognitive perspective, including discourse analyses.

A linguistic interaction is necessarily a social interaction (Yule, 1996: 59). Speakers take part in different interactions, very often with strangers, and it is because of the dominance of external factors that social distance between the speakers varies. Sometimes they are less and sometimes more distant when being part of different interactions. And the social distance can change its course within a single conversation.

An example of it could be considered the situation when a speaker starts the conversation by addressing to another speaker with the formal

YOU (Ju) and ends up with an increasing informality and by calling the other speaker (you, ti).

Lakoff (1977), considers that politeness is developed by societies in order to reduce friction in personal interaction (1975a). Leech (1983) defines politeness as a strategic conflict avoidance”, and even suggests that it could be measured in terms of the degree of effort made to prevent or minimize the conflict (Watts, 2005: XV). Following Brown and Levinson’s strategies on Politeness (1987), Yule (1996) defines politeness as a means employed to show awareness of another person’s face (Yule, 1996: 60).

Yule emphasizes that such an interaction is sometimes characterized with interpretations, such as “rude”, “inconsiderate”, “thoughtful” or even “considerate”, and it is politeness that investigates such interpretations (Yule, 1996: 60). Following Brown and Levinson’s strategies on Politeness (1987), Yule (1996) defines politeness as a means employed to show awareness of another person’s face (Yule, 1996: 60). When speaking of face as a social and interactional concept, it should be clear that it is about the public self-image that every member want to claim for himself (Brown/Levinson, 1987). Goffman (1959) defines face as a positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact.

Brown and Levinson (1987) conceptualize politeness as the realization of face-threat mitigation. However, their conceptualization of face has been interpreted by many of their opposers and later linguists and language philosophers as selective, as a theory adopted to their purpose and it was even considered to conceal (to hide) the nature of social understanding of face. Watts, Ide, Ehlich (1992, 2005, 2008), claim that defining politeness should not mean creating universal formulas for people’s behaviour rather than looking more closely and more intensively at how people use the language. In their ‘Introduction to the Politeness in Language’ (2008), they are very critical towards Brown and Levinson view on Politeness and they argue very much against the “face-threat mitigation” approach as a basis for the Theory of Politeness.

Werkhofer and Watts (2005) concentrate specifically on some aspects of Brown and Levinson’s model of language politeness, Werkhofer becomes a strong critic of their MP (Model Person) disinvolvement of real speakers and real addressees in real- time situations. (Watts, 2005: xxxi).

Kecskes (2014: 2) claims that standards, common beliefs and shared knowledge create a core common ground, on which intention and cooperation-based pragmatics is built. But what about the intercultural pragmatics? In our case intercultural (within the same language) because of the cultural differences due to different socio-political developments the speakers belonged to and intracultural due to the different spoken varieties of the same language. Kecskes (2014: 2) foresees that pragmatic

analysis becomes more interesting when interlocutors belong to different cultural backgrounds due to the fact that while working on intercultural pragmatics and analyzing the language use in intercultural communication, linguistics may see problems which standard theories on pragmatics may take for granted or even miss them all.

So, it becomes obvious that individuals from different societies or communities interact according to their norms, often resulting in misperception of each-other. But not only across societies, even within them, different rules of speaking can create stereotypes and prejudice against the other group of people. Such norms seem to apply for the Albanian in Albania and in Kosovo, too.

3. Procedure

For the purpose of discussing the issue of politeness in Albanian in both countries and for the purpose of seeing the most fundamental function that such a linguistic expression has, the transcripts of two political debates, with four participants each, have been analyzed: one in Kosovo (Debate 1) in the program “Debat” in RTK, dt. 8. 1. 2016, and the other one in Albania (Debate 2) in the program “Opinion” in TV Klan, dt. 19. 1. 2015. In the transcripts of the debates, question particles and phrases through which speakers try to get the floor by participating in the communication situation (speaking) have been treated.

3.1. Formal Situation 1 (Kosovo)

The first debate emphasizes the gap between the political representatives of position and opposition in a period of huge crisis in Kosovo. If one does not see the sequences from the videos and reads the written transcript only, one could think that the politicians in the debate were extremely polite to each-other (see Appendix 1: The debate in Kosovo: Who is right, the majority or the opposition, June 3rd, 2016, somewhere on the 33rd minute, the overall transmission analyzed: 35:58).

The melodic diagram of the intonation goes up towards the imperative mood, towards interjections *o*, and *bre*, and towards the part of the sentence where polite words have been used: *please, excuse me*. Communicants have asked for permission using various modal expressions, such as: *a po më lë të të tregoj; a bën të më lësh të të tregoj, a bën,... (will you allow me to tell you, is it possible that you allow me to tell you, can I)* which structurally consist of double modality expressions, which do not express modality of asking for permission anymore. This kind of overmodal usage emphasizes the rudeness of the other communicant, giving her/him attribution of not being polite, of not letting her/him to speak. There is a continuous transfer or speech dislocation from the second person singular into plural, in the flow of conversation and within the same sentence:

A po më len me të tregu sa e keqe jeni? –

Me të tregu (singular) – jeni (plural), the addressee in singular, the verb used in plural. Addressing the other with the social deictic marker Mr or Mrs consist 29 cases out of 390 sentences (7,4%), and the cifres change within the flow of the communication by transforming them into *burrë - man* (8 cases) - 2.05%.

So the total of the interrogative sentences analyzed was 390 examples, out of which 317 were rhetorical questions (81,3%). Six cases are questions without question words, based on intonation only. The formulaic expression *të lutem (please)* has been used in 8,6 % of overall dialogues. There are four cases of mixed usage of *Më falni* and *Të lutem (excuse me and please)*, and there are fewer cases when the interjection *bre* has been used with *të lutem (please)*, too.

Permission has been asked with different modal varieties for expressing it: *a po më lë të të tregoj; a bën të më lësh të të tregoj; a bën, ...,* the melodic diagram of intonation goes up to the imperativity, towards the interjections *o, bre* and up to the polite words *më falni* and *të lutem*.

3.2. Formal Situation 2 (Albania)

In the debate extracted from the Albanian TV (a debate from the Albanian national TV channel, Klan TV, entitled: Religious tolerance: reality or myth (see Appendix 2): 1:36 min. / Debate 2), the percentage of formulaic rhetorical questions has been realised almost in a very similar amount or level with the ones in Kosovo. Out of 492 questions in total, 401 were rhetorical (81,5%). 28 questions have been realised without any question words (5,67%), differing a lot from the results obtained in Kosovo debate.

The formula: *të lutem (please)* has been used in 35,3% of cases starting the communication, whereas *më fal (excuse me)* in 23,53% of the cases. Permission has been asked with other interrogative sentences, however, mainly with the deontic modal *mund (can)*. Melodic diagram reaches the particle *a*, but also the adjuncts *tashi/tani (now, hereby)*. Formal address has been realised in 53 cases (10,77%) out of the total. But very often in combination with the interjection *mor* and imperative: *dëgjo, mor ti zotëri...*, creating a threatening tone for the addressee. There are cases when one of the speakers addresses the moderator of the show with his surname converted into a first name. It resembles the grammatical process of conversion from adjectives to nouns but applied into proper nouns. Actually, such a conversion can either show the close relationship between the speakers or it introduces a negative and pejorative inference in the communication.

3.3. Informal situations

When speaking of situations registered in the shopping malls in both countries, out of 291 communication situations, 16 of them consisted of

polite expression “*më fal*” (*excuse me*) – (5.49%). It is the contextual situation that helps the customer to attract the shop assistant’s attention in all other cases of communication. 110 questions start with the question word *a*, and the formula *ju lutem / please* has never been used, neither by shop assistants. The communication relied mainly on *urdhëroni* dhe *faleminderit* (*here it is, here they are* and *thank you*). There is not a single case of interrogativity without the question word *A(a)*.

When speaking of similar situations in Albania, out of 311 communications, 39 of them use the formula *excuse me / më fal* (12,54 %), *Më fal* (*Excuse me*) is followed by *Ka mundësi?* (*is it possible*), a different expression from Kosovo situations of communication which uses the particle *a*. There are 11 cases of second person plural usage (*na falni / oprostite nam*). The formulaic expression *ju lutem / please* has not been used at all, except by the shop assistants when having received a thankful expression from the customer.

4. Conclusion

The research has detected several differences in the language devices used to express politeness in Albanian in Kosovo and Albania. The first hypothesis that Albanian in Albania uses more formulaic expressions of politeness has not been supported by the TV debate results of the analysis since their usage is almost linear. However, a slight difference appears at less formal situations: in shops, where the usage of formulaic expressions is double higher in Albania than in Kosovo. The research also shows that in Kosovo interrogative sentences have been realised via question word “*A*”, or other interrogative particles, whereas in Albania interrogativity was realised through intonation. Albanian in Albania was characterized by more standard communication, based on predicted language formulas, such as: *më fal* (*excuse me*), *të lutem* (*please*) and with modal questions initiated by *mund* (*can*). Albanian in Kosovo occurs with more modal varieties and typology: *a mund*, *a kishe mundë*, *a do të mund* (*can, could, would*). Moreover, Albanian of Kosovo, contrary to that of Albania, proves less usage of language formal expressions in a non-formal communication.

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Spoken corpus taken from internet sources::

Debate 1:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2-kZpjHc0w> (Accessed: 05.06.2016)

Debate 2:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nt2Bubrdg> (Accessed: 05.06.2016)

Appendices:

Appendix 1

1. A bon me m'leju me të tregu se s'osh e vërtetë?
2. A po m'len me t'tregu unë ty sa e keqe jeni?
3. A bon m'u, abon m'u dëgju?
4. A bon veç një minut?
5. Vetëm pak ju lutem n'qofse ka mundsi me m'leju?
6. Ju lutem, veç ta përfundoj qeta!
7. Ju lutem shumë... m'i manipulu!
8. Po të lutem ni moment, pa përfundoj unë...!
9. T'lutem shumë, asnji nen!
10. Të lutem shumë, të lutem shumë...
11. Të lutem shumë, të lutem shumë... lermë o burrë të tregoj...
12. O zotni, vazhdo!
13. M'falni, ju lutem!
14. Ju lutem, kenë konsideratë!
15. T'lutem mos e lësho debatin në këtë nivel!

16. Edhe të lutem, kur të flas, mos më ndërhyj zotni!
17. Ju lutem, bre!
18. Vetëm pak, vetëm pak...
19. Vetëm pak, vetëm pak, vetëm pak...
20. Vetëm pak, vetëm pak, jo, jo, jo, jo, jo...
21. Veç edhe qeto.
22. Të lutem dëgjomë, nuk du me komentue!
23. O zotni!

Appendix 2:

1. A mund ta mbaroj unë tashi?
2. A mund të mbaroj unë tashi, të lutem?
3. A do m'lësh të mbaroj?
4. A mund të flasim për gjëra më serioze?
5. Do pyetjet po? Jo?
6. Ti mban përgjegjësi?
7. Do përgjigjen? Më fal, më fal, më fal, më fal, më fal,
8. M'fal, m'fal
9. Po të lutem tani?
10. Zotëri, më ler ta mbaroj!
11. Tashi, të lutem ta mbaroj!
12. Po dëgjo, mor ti zotëri!
13. Po të lutem shumë, se është e turpshme!
14. Të lutem të jemi seriozë,
15. Të lutem shumë Fevzi, ta mbaroj!
16. Më fal, ta mbaroj mo!
17. Më fal mo, ta mbaroj

Appendix 3

1. Më fal, a munësh me ma gjetë?
2. M'fal, papuqe a keni se s'pava?
3. M'fal, prej kësaj të gjelbrës sa ka numra?
4. M'fal, a bon orej kësaj?
5. M'fal, as po bahen ma shumë modelet ma t gjana a ma t'ngushta?
6. M'fal mos keni çadra?
7. M'fal a ka numra prej qitynve?
8. M'fal a mujsh me ma dhonë qato nalt?
9. M'fal a ki qasi pink, me provu?
10. M'fal a ki edhe njo njëjtë si qajo?
11. M'fal a bon nji numër ma t'vogël?
12. M'fal, nji xhemper të xhelbër e kom pa dje, ku o?
13. M'fal xhempera të shkurtë me pullë?
14. M'fal ku i keni farmerakt?
15. Kjo sa o, m'fal?