Forms of address: A metapragmatic analysis of formality in Iraqi-Anglo interaction

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Abstract

There are tacit conventions of speaking in different cultures. These unspoken rules exist in every language, but cultures might adhere to them to varying extents. Keeping in mind that there are individual variations among people regarding language use, it is agreed that there are culturally taught preferences, shared by the members of the speech community. Among these variations is formality vs. informality, which includes forms of address. Arabs are listed among those who incline to larger power distance and are characterised by formality in their social relations. This study investigates the different expressions adopted by Iraqis in addressing each other in different settings and contexts, contrasted with British culture and the factors that govern this usage. The qualitative investigative technique has been adopted as a source of information regarding the participants' competence, attitudes, personal perspectives, and behaviour. Thus, data was collected via holding focus group sessions that involve both Iraqi and English participants. Topics discussed in these sessions revolved around, firstly, the stylistic differences between the two languages (the Iraqi Arabic and British English. The focus was mainly on directness vs. indirectness and formality vs. informality. Secondly, politeness alongside its variables, and the influence of religion and culture, and thirdly, the barriers that might hinder the Iraqi- Anglo intercultural communication. Thus, the two nationalities were reflecting on the address forms they usually adopt in their daily communication particularly in vertical and horizontal distance relations such as equal footing,

low-high rank, high-low rank, age difference, intimate relationships and close friendships. This study also highlights the strategies the two nationalities use in addressing the opposite gender as well as their sons and daughters. After conducting the metapragmatic analysis, it has been depicted that the social variables in the Iraqi community represented by the vertical and horizontal distance as well as religion, age, gender, and the cultural norms are all deterministic factors that restrict the manners individuals address each other, significantly different from these in the British communities which are prone to be informality. Such diversity is reflected in their intercultural communication. On the other hand, it must be borne in mind that even in the socialites liable to informality, formality is determined by the context of situation. There are certain situations in which formality is mandatory.

Keywords: pragmatics, politeness, cross cultural communication, intercultural communication, address forms.

Introduction

Address practice significantly influences the effectiveness and success of communication; meanwhile, it saliently indicates the status of relationships. Forms of address are words and phrases used for addressing, referring to the collocutor and, thus, contain a strong element of deixis (Braun, 1988: 13). Different forms of address are used in showing respect or fondness and/or to insult or depreciate the addressee. Some factors need to be considered in addressing others, including rank, sex, age, occupational hierarchy, family relationship, transactional status, race, and degree of intimacy. Because address forms are a social phenomenon, they vary according to the occasion and the regulations of the community wherein they are used.

Philipsen and Huspek (1985: 94) assert that every language and society have some options that determine how individuals are addressed and named. Such systematic features of language behaviour correlate with social ends and social contexts of language use (Yang, 2010). The present study aims at contrasting he address system adopted by Iraqis and British people in using forms of address in different settings and contexts, as well as the factors that govern this usage. It seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the address forms in Arabic and English?
2. To what extent the two languages differ in their address system?

This study comprises seven sections, commencing by introducing the basic terminology so that it can be understood when it is used throughout this work. Cultural dimensions, with their possible influence on communication style, are presented briefly in the second section. Then, there will be a description of the methodology and procedures of this study. After this, the results will be presented, displaying the diverse address practices in Iraqi culture contrasted with those of the British as stated by the participants of this study. Variables that regulate people's interpersonal relations and the manners in which they address each other are tackled in the fifth section. The last two sections question the degree of adaptation Iraqis might achieve during their residence in Britain and the contextual influence on forms of address. Finally, this paper ends with the conclusions arrived at throughout this study.

1. Basic concepts and terminology

This section introduces the terms of address that will be presented in this work. According to Braun (1988: 7), the basic concept of address theory is **address**, denoting "the speakers'

linguistic reference to his/her collocutor(s)". The second term is **address behaviour**. Influenced by a speaker's social and linguistic background, individuals employ the repertoire of address variants available in their language, regulated by sociolinguistic perspectives, such as age, and extralinguistic factors that decide the use of "grammatically interchangeable forms" (Braun, 1988: 13). He further suggests that forms of address are elements of deictic expressions that include words and phrases individuals recruit in addressing each other. Typically, he divides these into three types. Firstly, **pronouns of address**. Brown & Gilman (1960) introduce two address practices to indicate the level of intimacy: T and V forms. The T form signifies an intimate informal level, whereas the V form signifies polite distance and a secondary pronoun of address. Secondly, **verb forms of address** that involves the inflectional suffixes attached to the verb and referencing the collocutor. Thirdly, **nouns of address**, compromising substantives and adjectives used in referring to collocutors. They also include kinships terms, names, titles (honorifics), abstract nouns, etc.

Besides these terms, it is necessary to introduce the cultural organisation of people that determines forms of address, namely power and solidarity. Power is a non-reciprocal, asymmetrical relationship between speakers and hearers such that they do not have the same power in the same area of behaviour. Solidarity, on the other hand, denotes intimacy and formality (Brown and Gilman, 1960: 257). To illustrate the dimensions of power and solidarity, the following scheme, based on Brown and Gilman (1960), outlines three levels of power - superior, equal and inferior:

1. a. Superior and solidarity (parent to child)

b. Superior and not solidarity (employer to employee)

2. a. Equal and solidarity

   b. Equal and not solidarity

3. a. Inferior and solidarity (child to parents)

   b. Inferior and not solidarity (employee to employer)

Brown, R. & Gilman (1960) argue that there must be a distinction between reciprocal and non-reciprocal use of address forms as well as between symmetrical and asymmetrical ones. When two speakers address each other using the same form, the address is reciprocal, as in using the first name. By contrast, when one speaker uses the first name and the other uses a kinship term. For example, a mother with a child, this relationship is non-reciprocal. Symmetrical relationship, however, applies when speakers are of different rank - they are either higher-to-lower or lower-to-higher.

The next section explores the classification of cultures and their influence on communication style.

2. Cultural dimensions and communication style

Due to the association between language use and communication, it is found necessary to allocate a section for culture classification as presented by Hofstede (1991) using four dimensions:

i **Power Distance Index (PDI)**. Being either low or high, this measures the extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.

ii **Collectivism vs. Individualism (IDV)**. This is the degree of relatedness of a person to a group. In individualistic societies, ties between people are loose; there is a great concern for autonomy and individuals' rights. By contrast, collectivistic communities assign higher priority to one's identity as a member of a group, to which there are cohesive ties with unquestioned loyalty to the group (Hofstede, 1994: 51). The direction of interpersonal communication in most Western cultures occurs on the horizontal axis, while in most Eastern cultures, it occurs on the vertical axis (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey & Chua, 1988).

iii **Femininity vs. Masculinity (MAS)**. Masculinity pertains to societies in which social gender roles are distinct. Men are supposed to be assertive and tough and to focus on money, competition, and material success, whereas women are assumed to be modest, tender, and concerned with quality of life. Femininity, on the other hand, is associated with societies in which gender roles overlap, i.e., both men and women are deemed to be modest, tender, concerned with quality of life, and caring about others.

iv **Uncertainty avoidance (UA)**. This dimension measures the degree to which people across societies feel threatened by ambiguities and uncertainties and therefore seek to set rules and institutions for the sake of eliminating the causes of any ambiguities.

Two of Hofstede's dimensions are used by Mead (1998) in describing kinds of bureaucracy in the workplace. In showing how organizations vary across cultures and based on the need to avoid uncertainty and variations in power distance, two types of bureaucracy are identified:

1. A full bureaucracy wherein bureaucratic rules and procedures are sat up. This applies to a workplace culture in which functions are strongly distinguished; members maintain authority, and communication is downward, with wide power distances and a strong need to avoid uncertainty.
2. Market bureaucracy is found in cultures characterised by small power distances and weak need for uncertainty avoidance. In this kind of workplace, employees rely on personal relationships instead of their positions in the hierarchy.

This relationship between culture and communication habits is studied by Edward Hall (1989), who identifies High vs. Low Context Communication. According to him, context is a dimension that accounts for the dominant communication style in a given society. Low context societies need a little context to interpret messages since all the information is conveyed explicitly, while high context is a characteristic of societies or groups where people have close connections over a long period. Many aspects of cultural behaviour are not explicitly voiced as most members know how to interpret them due to their long years of communication and shared experience. This sort of context is associated with collectivistic societies. By contrast, low context is regarded as typical of individualistic societies where people have many connections but only of shorter duration. In these societies, cultural behaviour and beliefs have to be explicitly stated so that those coming into this environment

know how to behave. Classification of cultures is shown in Figure 1, based on Hall & Hall (1990), below:

Figure 1: High vs. low context by culture

Further, there are other tacit conventions of speaking in different cultures. These unspoken rules exist in every language, but cultures might adhere to them to differing extents. Keeping in mind that there are individual variations among people regarding language use, it is agreed that there are culturally taught preferences that are shared by the members of a speech community. Based on Stringer and Cassiday (2009: 26), these stylistic variations are shown in Figure 2 below:

Low context ---------- High context

Linear ---------- Circular

Direct ---------- Indirect

Detached---------- Attached

Idea (Task) focused---------- Person (Relationship) focused

Formal---------- Informal

Figure 2: Variations of communication style

A major difference between cultures associated with address practice is formality vs informality. This sort of communication is concerned with the way people construct and develop their interpersonal relationships. Much research has shown that some cultures are liable to be more formal in their daily communications, while others are more informal (Stringer & Cassiday, 2009). In horizontal cultures, people prefer to be more informal in their conversation due to the complementary relationships among them. This can be tangible in their daily interaction by avoiding formal codes of conduct, titles, honorifics, and ritualistic manners. Informality might be demonstrated by the use of the first name, for example. Additionally, they attempt to use the same language whatever their addressee's age, sex, status, and rank (Javidi & Javidi, 1991). By contrast, communication in vertical cultures is, in many respects, highly ritualised, making people more formal in their interactions (Javidi & Javidi, 1991). For example, in some cultures addressing others by their first name is generally avoided (Stringer & Cassiday, 2009). Arab countries are listed among those that prefer larger power distance, and in which formality plays a significant role in the conversational style (Chung & Ting-Toomey, 1999). However, it must be borne in mind that formality is determined by the context of the situation. Even in societies that are prone to informality, there are certain situations where formality is mandatory.

Since cultural values and norms are manifested in the address system of languages (Braun, 1988), this study addresses the norms of address in Iraqi culture contrasted with that in British culture. The next section explains the procedure of the study and the method by which it was pursued.

3. Method

The qualitative investigative technique has been adopted in this study as the primary source of information regarding the participants' attitudes, personal perspectives, and behaviour. The focus group has been recruited as a major source of data, defined by Litosseliti (2003: 1) as "small structure group with selected participants, typically led by a moderator. They are set up to explore specific topics, and individuals' views and experiences through group interaction".

Ten focus groups have been organised. In each, there are five Iraqi postgraduate students, a facilitator, and a staff member from the English Language Centre. People interested in language variation between cultures in polite language use were also invited. For better management, moderation, engagement in discussion, and analysis, the maximum number of participants in each session was eight (Litosseliti, 2003).

Focus group discussions have passed through several steps of analysis. Participants' names have been replaced by codes. English native speakers' codes start with NS and Iraqis' codes start with RH. After transcribing the recorded data of the ten sessions, NVIVO 7 has been utilised to store these transcripts. It has also been used in the development of data categorisation and in counting the frequency of each theme.

4. Results

The macro level of analysis has been involved in interpreting the rationales related to politeness in intercultural communication. It is also related to the phenomenological paradigm which provides an opportunity to talk about a particular phenomenon, the relationship between culture and language use. The following subsections display the addressing system in Iraqi culture compared with that followed in British culture and the linguistic habits people are bounded by and which are imposed by society.

4.1 Pronouns and verb forms of address

It has been referred earlier that, determined by salient features, second-person pronouns, such as *tu* and *vous* distinctions in French, reflect the level of intimacy, respect, familiarity, or deference (Braun, 1988).

There is a notable difference between Arabic and English in the number of pronouns of address. In English, the distinction between the T and V has been lost; there is only one pronoun of address: *you*, regardless the addressee's position, rank, age. Thus, new forms of grammar need to be used to indicate deference and intimacy (Bowe & Martin, 2007). In studying forms of address in Arabic, Braun (1988) has found some variants. There are five pronouns of address: *ant (singular male), anti (singular female) antuma (plural male and female), antum (plural male), antun (plural female).*The most frequent ones are *inta* (masculine), *inti* (feminine) (T pronoun in Brown and Gilman's terminology). Instead of using V form, Arabis use *hedertak* (m)/ *hadertik* (f). This usage, nevertheless, depends on both the speakers' social and their linguistic backgrounds; usually educated middle or upper

classes in urban areas address others of higher rank and/or remote social distance using *hedertak* (m)/ *hadertik* (f). However, those in rural areas use this form to a lesser extent. Hence, Brown and Gillman's T and V variants in this context do not apply to the Arabic culture. It is relevant here to report an anecdote from social media. A friend of mine (a university professor) was furious when one of her previously taught students kept addressing her using *inti* instead of *hadertik*. I was following their arguments in the comments they were posting. When she expressed her dissatisfaction, that student said that he did not realise that he offended his professor by not using *hadertic* in addressing her. Due to my previous knowledge of the area he was raised and lives in currently, I understood the influence of family and the subcommunity in employing this form.

In some languages, it is not obligatory to use a subject pronoun, the only bearer of the address reference is the verb in the form of an inflectional suffix. Braun's (1988: 8) statement related to Portuguese also applies to Arabic wherein an explicit use of pronoun of address "is inhabited by uncertainty or politeness". The plural pronoun attached to the verb is an indicator of showing respect, as can be seen in the following example:

(1) A: Tajun libaytina?

Will you come to our house?

In this example, the pronoun that indicates the subject *you* in English is represented by the initial letter of *tajun*. Another notable difference in this example is that the person is inviting somebody (singular) using the plural inflectional suffix, the last two letters in *tajun*. By contrast, this form is not available in English. The subject indicator is a free pronoun with no

difference in the form of the verb when addressing individuals of higher rank or showing respect and politeness.

This plural form, RH08 mentions, is a formal speech style. He says that the singular form would be used with someone of the same rank, same gender, close relationship, and similar age, while those who are in a higher position, older in age, of the opposite sex, or barely acquaintances are addressed with the plural form to show a level of respect.

This significant variation between the two languages will be more evident in the next section, wherein the noun of address in its diverse forms is explained.

4.2 Noun of address

Another means of indicating a person's identity is via a noun of address. It has been mentioned earlier that this includes names, kinship terms, honorifics, and abstract nouns. The following subsections cover the nouns of address derived from the data in contrasting the two languages.

4.2.1 Honorifics

Also named by Braun (1988:10) as "abstract nouns", honorifics are defined by Brown & Levinson (1978: 276) as "grammatical encodings of relative social status between participants and persons or things referred to in the communicative events". This includes titles that prefix or suffix names, terms of occupation, terms of address, pronouns, nouns, verbs, and adverbs. The perception is that using honorifics are to convey respect, deference, honour, and solidarity between the speaker and his/her interlocutor (Bowe & Martin, 2007). The approach

varies by the difference in status, seniority, rank, and degree of regular acquaintance (Errington, 1985). Agha (1998: 153) argues that they serve a contrary role in addition, which is "control and dominance, irony, and masked aggression". They are also associated with both linguistic and non-linguistic elements such as gestures, body posture, and dress.

Honorifics are divided by Levinson (1983: 90-91) into two main types: Referential and Absolute Honorifics. Being of greater importance, referential honorifics are "mainly concerned with the socially deictic information in languages of the world". Three subcategories are distinguished within this system:

1. Addressee honorifics: These forms are direct indexing of the speaker-addressee relationship without any reference to the addressee (Yang, 2010) (Brown & Levinson, 1978: 276).

(2) The soup is hot.

2. Referent honorifics: These forms are used to express respect for the relations held between the speaker and the referents that is the things or persons referred to:

(3) Did the father open the door?

3. By-stander honorifics: these refer to the participants in the audience role as well as to non-participant overhearers.

(4) Those young ladies are waiting for the show.

4. Formality levels of honorifics: these are concerned mainly with the relation between the speaker and, probably, other participants and the setting.

Absolute honorifics, which are the concern of this study, express the relationship between the speaker and the setting via formality levels. In turn, and according to the perspectives of the speakers and recipients, absolute honorifics are categorized into:

1. Authorized speakers: this form includes expressions mostly used for certain speakers such as *Mr, Miss, Dr,* etc. (Al-Assam & AL-Rawi, 2018)
2. Authorized recipients: This form contains expressions reserved for recipients, including restrictions on most titles of address, such as *your honour, your majesty, Mr President*, etc.

Although honorifics may be universal, as Al-Ni'aymi (2007) and Agha (1998) remark, speakers of different languages utilise them differently. In English honorifics, a possessive pronoun precedes the possessive as in *your majesty, your excellency, your highness, your honour*. In Arabic, however, either the plural pronoun is attached to the noun as a suffix as in saeadatukum (your excellency), samukum (your highness), jalalatukum (your majesty), syadatakum (your excellency), or a word that refers to the possession of the title can precede the name as in *sahib alsaeada* (the owner of Excellency), sahib alsumu (the owner of highness).

In the two languages, nouns of address are employed in addressing a group using *ladies and gentlemen* in English and *sayadati sadati* in Arabic. Some terms indicate profession such as *doctor, professor* in both languages. In addressing teachers, however, the two languages follow a different strategy. Using *Sir* and *Miss* in addressing teachers in British English, while In Iraqi Arabic, as is also the case in Japanese, *ustath* and *sit* (teacher) is generally employed

in addressing not only schoolteachers or university teachers but also to show respect to people of the other gender, people with large social distance, and with those who are of higher rank (Koyama, 1992). Nevertheless, it might sound unacceptable in intercultural encounters, as NS04 explains in 4.3.1.

4.2.2 Kinship terms

Kinship terms refer to blood relations and affines (Braun, 1988). Usually, children in both the British community and the Iraqi one refers to their parents as *mummy (mama)* or *daddy (baba)*. They use *uncle (amu)* in referring to the father's and mother's brother and *aunt* (amma and khala) in referring to father's sister and mother's sister. Significantly mentioned, fathers' sisters are addressed differently from mothers' sisters in Iraqi dialect. (Bowe & Martin, 2007).

Kinship terms can be expanded to refer to the older and younger generation even though there is no blood relationship with the collocutor (Bowe & Martin, 2007). This is called a fictive use of kinship terms (Braun, 1988). For example, in Iraqi culture, as RH08 mentions a woman is called *Khala* (aunt), and a man is called *Amu* (uncle) even if they are not their biological uncles or aunts. Furthermore, RH46 and RH33 recall that in some other cities the uncle's wife is either called *Khala* or *Baji*. The mother-in-law is referred to as *Amma* or *khala*, meaning *aunt.* Likewise, the father-in-law is addressed as *Amu (uncle).* In comparison, the first name is used in British communities, as NS02 confirms.

NS01 descends from an Arabic family. She spent her childhood in England; the customs in the house where she is raised follow the Arabic traditions, however. She recalls the difficulty she encountered in addressing her Mum's friends:

Extract (1)

***NS01**: I remember when we first came here I have to call somebody who I would have called auntie I had to cal- her name was Debby and I can remember and she became my mum's friend and she was coming to our house and I was always referring to her "UMM would you like this?" and one day she stopped me and I was very smaller I remember and she said **NS01** why don't you ever refer to me you always say, "umm excuse me" and the like and then I explained to her that "I can't call you Debby because it's so rude but I can't call you auntie because you just going to think I'm not your auntie".*

Another significant difference between the two cultures is "address inversion". Coined by Renzi (1968), cited in Braun (1988: 12). This is a special pattern of nominal address referring to "the use of a term, mostly a KT, which does not (as would be usual) express the addressee's, but the speaker's role". Iraqi parents mostly address their children as *Mama* or *Papa*. Additionally, this case occurs with fictive KT, when biological and non-biological males or females address a young person as *Amu* (uncle) or *Khala* (aunt). This term can be reciprocal in the sense the addressee might use the same address form. Address inversion is not restricted to KT terms, however. It can be used whenever an address form applies to the speaker rather than to the hearer.

One last point needs to be highlighted here; as Braun (1988) presents, there must be a distinction between address and reference. Grandson, for example, is a common form of reference. It is however hardly used as a form of address. The first name is usually the nominal variant for addressing the grandson in English. The same applies to the Iraqi culture;

nevertheless, in addition to using the first name in addressing grandsons and daughters, address inversion, explained in the above paragraph, is widely used among Iraqis. A grandfather and grandmother usually call their grandchildren as *Jiddu* (grandfather) and *Bibi* (grandmother) respectively.

4.2.3 Nicknames

Nicknames are usually a substitute for or serve alongside a person's real name and develop among people whose relationship is intimate with a high degree of familiarity. Nicknames serve several functions: in many instances, they are diminutives, used because they are shorter than the real name, more familiar, and /or more descriptive. For example, *Bob* or *Rob* from *Robert*. Sometimes a nickname portrays the physical and personal characters of a person, such as *Stretch*, *Fats*, *Red*, or *Spike*, their hobbies and interests, and their role in society. Nicknames are also a sign of endearment and friendships and signal the addressee's social and cultural position within their group (Bowe & Martin, 2007).

Notably, diminutives in English can either be short forms, *Kathy* for *Kathleen*, *Lizi* for *Elizabeth*, or formed by adding a suffix to the original name or the name's short form. The most common suffix is -y/-ie, as in *Abby*, *Debbie*, *Charlie*, *Johnny* and *Sammy*.

Allen (1956) studied nicknames in Egyptian Arabic. Although there are slight variations between the two languages, it is possible to rely on his categorisation of nicknames into two main groups, depending on whether this name is related to the given name or it lacks any correlation.

The first type in the Iraqi dialect can be formed by phonetic alteration: by vowel variations and adding the suffix -y/-i, e.g., *Hassuni* for *Hassan* and *Hussein*, *Alawi* for *Ali*. This method causes semantic as well as morphological variations (Allen, 1956).

Another common type of nickname is that of reduplication. Mostly used for young children and among family members, and close friends, it is constituted by duplicating either all or part of a syllable(s) of the given name. *Rashrash* for *Rasha*, *Fifi* for *Affaf* (Allen, 1956).

There is a subclass of nicknames that is small and quite different from the others. Although it is directly correlated to the original name, the basis of this correlation is not phonetic; rather, it is metalinguistic and is presumably based on historical background. For example, if a person is named *Hassan*, he can be called *Abu Ali*. This is after the historical character *Al-Hassan*, the son of *Ali*, who was both the cousin and the son-in-law of prophet Muhammad. For a similar reason, *Ibrahim* can be known as *Abu Khalil* (Allen, 1956).

The second type of nickname has no direct correlation with a person's name. *Nona* is usually a name given to a young female in a family.

Nicknames, though, must carefully be used in Iraqi culture, with preference for them to be adopted by close friends, family members, same gender, from high-to-low level, and similar age group and rank. Remarkably, Iraqis will never address somebody older than them by their nickname, as RH18 asserts. She finds it strange in British culture when NS02 who is at the same age as her mother is known among all the Iraqis, including young children, as Kathy. Age respect in Iraqi culture will be elaborated upon in Section 4.3.1.

Regarding computer-mediated communication (CMC), it is notable that nicknames have become a necessity in this virtual world. These nicknames can be a borrowed name, can

contain numbers, date of birth, interests, etc. They are a sign of individuality and represent the face that people desire to present online (Bays, 1998: 11). For anonymity purposes, many Iraqis employ nicknames which are not their real nicknames. RH29 recalls that her sister-in-law's nickname is *Nona.* Although she is married, with four children, she is still known among her whole family, close friends, and relatives as *Nona*. RH29 says that once her sister-in-law was somehow embarrassed when she mentioned her in a comment on Facebook as *Nona*, saying that all her friends on social media will know this nickname.

Having discussed nouns of address, it is relevant to allocate a section to investigating the social variables that govern address forms and the perceptions behind them.

4.3 Variables influencing forms of address

A sociolinguistic view of language holds that language usage varies according to certain variables that govern interaction among speakers. These variables include the collocutors' age, sex, religion, class, education, ideology, etc. (Braun, 1988). In the subsequent subsections, the influence of formality on address practice is tackled, comprising expressions used for teachers, those of the other gender, higher position, employers, older generations, and social distance.

4.3.1 Deference

It has been mentioned that cultures differ in their adherence to formality and informality. Iraqi participants mention that the notable difference between the culture where they come from and this host British community is the absence of titles in addressing tutors and supervisors. The academic setting in Iraq is governed by formal speech style, particularly between teachers

and their students. The participants in this study remark that professors in Iraq must be addressed with a title or with their scientific degree out of politeness and to show respect. They observe that in the UK, it is not offensive when they address their advisor by their first name.

A funny incident is recalled by RH53 in relation to this formal relationship. He says that he was the director of computing and, at the same time, a lecturer at a certain university. He proposed to marry his student whom he had taught for three years. Despite his persistent request that she call him by his name, she found it difficult because of being her tutor and a manager at the university where she studied. He adds that during the whole period of their engagement the girl was calling him as Mr RH53 until the date of their marriage when she dared to say RH53 in a fast and low voice.

Likewise, RH37 mentions that RH39, who is sitting next to him, was his student at the university back in Iraq, where he used to call him *teacher*. He mentions that even though they are now at the same grade and are supervised by the same professor, RH39 never calls him by his first name. Now they are on equal footing, their relationship has developed to be less formal; RH39 started to call him by the name of his eldest son, as will be seen in the next subsection.

This form of address is also used for people who are in a higher position even if they are younger than the speaker. For example, the moderator of the session, who might be of the same age as RH53, he says that because of her position, if they were in Iraq, he would call her

Abla. When she asked him what he calls her in the UK, he said that he avoids calling her anything. He neither calls her by a title nor by her name.

As far as formality in British academic society is concerned, the British tutors in the Language Centre at the university of Salford notice this difference between the two cultures. They mention the reason why they prefer first name address forms, telling their newly arrived overseas students to call them by their first names. Initially, students find it strange and difficult to use first name address, then they become accustomed to it. NS01 reports how she encourages the newly admitted student to address her by her first name

Extract (2)

> ***NS01****: As a teacher I feel it can creates a barrier because initially my student would say to me "Miss* ***NS01****" oh just call me* ***NS01*** *it's fine and no matter how many times I tell them just call me* ***NS01*** *and they still saying Miss* ***NS01*** *or Mrs.* ***NS01*** *even and I like why do you do that because I feel like it puts me in this MISS* ***NS01*** *(show like a person of authority)*

Tutors in the aforementioned centre find the ways NNSs address them somehow strange. NS07, RH01, NS04, and NS05 say that their students address them in different ways, reflecting that what attracts their attention is when one of them is addressed as Mr plus the first name, which they find unusual and funny. Additionally, they find it strange when Middle Eastern overseas students address them by their profession, as *teachers.* NS05 and NS08 maintain, however, that it does not sound nice to them. These forms of address are the most common in the Iraqi society, which are indicators of negative pragmatic transfer from the native culture and language to the target one.

Extract (3)

***NS04**: Oh yes in quite a deep thing. We always say on the first day call me so some students find it very difficult, they don't some of call teacher which actually sounds not nice even they think it sounds very polite we don't like to be called teacher*

In reaction to this statement, NS01 argues that calling teachers by a title is not always a case of showing respect. Many individuals use titles, yet they are impolite with their tutors by being rude, saying bad stuff about them, and arguing with them. It is always possible to call people by their first name while showing respect. She adds that such respect should not be for their title, rather for the knowledge that they have because that is deeper than titles. NS02 clarifies that despite this informality in British society by addressing teachers by their first names, as long as rules are made clear from the outset, teachers can maintain their respect. Thus, teachers can be friendly and informal, but at the same time the students know what the consequences might be if they break the rules. She concludes that it is the ego inside a person that insists that other people should call them doctor or professor.

As affirmed by RH47and RH22, the advantage of calling tutors, teachers, and supervisors by their first names is that it reduces the distance between them. They mention that informality makes them like friends that encourage students not to let their critical friend down.

The opposite is true in Iraqi society; people who are in a higher position would find it easier to address their students or their employees by their first names or even with nicknames, as asserted by RH37. He says that he uses nicknames with his students to show informality, asserting that it makes them more comfortable and reduces the distance between them, thereby increasing their self-confidence.

Formality is mandatory not only in the academic context; titles are also employed with those in authority. RH35 remarks that high status individuals deserve to be treated in a special way in accordance with their position via addressing them with a title. Analogising them to judges in the court, he says that it is not permitted to address the judge by his first name in the UK. In addition, RH26 compares formality to calling the prime minster or the queen by their first name. He wonders if people should address people in a high position with a title just to respect their position, which is the case in Iraqi society, while it would be more appropriate to respect them as humans and not their job.

Regarding formality between managers and their employees in British society, it is assuredly subject to individual preferences. NS07 remembers his manager's behaviour when he was working at a part-time job in Tesco: she would rather prefer to be addressed with her title.

In addition to formality with those of higher rank, it is a requisite with those of older age. Age in Iraqi society is a significant variable in politeness. To show respect towards individuals who are older in age is reflected by avoiding first name address. For example, RH53, who is from the north of Iraq, mentions that he calls a woman who is older than him *Abla* and a man *Abi*. An old man is always called *Hajji*, while an old woman is called *Hijjia.* It is worth mentioning that *Hajji* is a title which is formally given to a Muslim person who has successfully completed the pilgrimage to Mecca. *Hajjia* is used for females. In some situations, it is used with old people even if they have not been to Mecca, RH48 asserts. RH22 notes that religion interferes in first name avoidance with parents and elders. Iraqis also use

the word Sheikh an honorific title commonly referring to the ruler of a tribe. It is also as a religious term referring to religious men.

Interestingly, informality in addressing the older generation and teachers in British society is a recent tendency. RH05 says that forty or fifty years ago people were more formal. Titles with surnames were employed in addressing teachers or colleagues in the workplace. She mentions that this transference in the level of formality was adopted first in the United States and extended to the European countries. In this regard, NS02, who is 65 years old, relates to this in an anecdote from her childhood.

Extract (5)

> ***NS02****: I went to a child's friend fifteenth party and eh her parents were there and I'd always address them with Mr. and Mrs Borrowy and the mother said to me* ***NS02*** *call me Lucy you know because I used to as referring to Mrs. Borrowy and I said sorry I can't I I just cannot do it you you to me as Mrs. Borowy and I don't feel comfortable calling you Lucy and she accepted that I and keep that a formal respected politeness within me you know towards her.*

This variation between the two cultures in showing deference with tutors, the older generation, and employers confirms Chung & Toomey's (1999) statement that Arabs incline to larger power distance characterised by formality in addressing each other.

Another remarkable phenomenon found in the two societies is terms of endearment in non-reciprocal asymmetrical relationships, reflecting Brown & Gilman's (1960) first scheme mentioned in section1 as superior to inferior with a close relationship. They are determined by context and function instead of semantic characteristics. To a certain extent, forms of endearment are conventionalised with the involvement of linguistic creativity and individual

imagination. Parents address their children or those with whom they are close with different names, whether previously existing or ones that they invent (Braun, 1988).

4.3.2 Intimacy

Interpersonal relations form the second domain where informality is depicted. The smaller the distance between individuals, the less politeness is demanded. Referring to Brown and Gilman's (1960) dimension of solidarity, Moreno (2002: 19) suggests that address systems are governed by the frequency of contact, like-mindedness, similarity of behaviour, and/or affection. Similarity of class, family, religion, profession, sex, and/or birthplace can all increase the level of solidarity.

Bargiela et al. (2002) argue that many British and American speakers presume that informality facilitates communication with strangers. Despite some variations in naming practices among English speaking countries, the general rule is to "move to first name terms as soon as possible" (p. 4). Nonetheless, cultures that prefer formal communicative style such as Russian, Chinese, Arabic, and Italian may find this informality impolite in that they prefer to maintain distance with those they are unfamiliar with via the formal naming and addressing practice with strangers.

In contrast, formality of address is also employed in Iraqi culture between individuals who are of the same gender, close in age, and with small social distance, because people have become accustomed to this addressing, an opinion affirmed by RH23. Addressing others with the first name is adopted solely when the relationship is very close. Some Iraqi participants point out that when they were friends and colleagues at the same University in Iraq, they used to

address each other with titles. RH51 says that he was addressing RH08, who is sitting next to him now, as *ustath* RH08 (teacher RH08). Later, when they came to the UK, they started avoided titles. When he is asked which address form he prefers, he said that he prefers the informal one since it reduces the distance between them.

In addition to titles, a significantly mentioned phenomenon in the Iraqi community is in showing less formality. Al-Ni'aymi (2007) states 'teknonyms' refer to calling a person as the father or (mother) of his/ her first child. For example, *Abu Ali* (father of Ali), *um Muhamad* (mother of Mohammad). RH37 mentions that although he knows RH09, because their relationship is not so close, they would avoid calling each other by their first names.

Interestingly, the participants from the two nationalities assert that formality among close friends used as a form of mock politeness. As a joke, RH20 says, he calls his flatmate, who is his close friend, Dr RH41. Related to Section 4.2, RH37 asserts that he and his friends use nicknames in showing how close their relationship is.

The next section shows a very significant variation in address from between the two genders, influenced by cultural regulations and religious perspectives.

4.3.3 Gender relations

In this section, communicative strategies between the two genders in the two cultures will be addressed. Due to respect, formality, politeness, and religious perspectives, calling individuals of the opposite gender by the first name is widely avoided in the Iraqi community. As to a married lady or gentleman, teknonyms, explained in the previous subsection, is the typical addressing practice between the two genders, as RH27 and RH39 confirm. A woman and a

man must be called by the name of their eldest son. If they do not have a son, they will be called by the name of their eldest daughter. Interestingly, RH05 says that he did not even know the name of the researcher, i.e., my name, until she distributed the invitation letters.

An unmarried woman, RH25 maintains, would be addressed as *Sit X* (teacher X) even if she is not a teacher. She might also be called *Ukhti* (my sister). The only exception is the relationship between university students, who are not restricted by such formality.

English, however, seems to have no such forms (Al-Ni'aymi, 2007). NS04 states that usually they call any woman by her first name freely provided that it is not a formal setting. In formal speech, on the other hand, alongside the surname, *Mr* is used in addressing males. Different terms, though, are used to address females; *Miss* for unmarried, *Mrs* for married, and *Ms* for those whose social status is not indicated.

Concerning terms of endearment indicated earlier, it is found that endearment in English is a way by which strangers address women in public situations. Yang (2010) remarks that, no matter what their age or status, women are publicly addressed by non-reciprocal terms of endearment. The common ones are dear, love, honey, sweetheart. There are also unusual terms such as cake, peach, tomato, dish, cheese, etc.

From their side, Iraqi participants stated that there are also some expressions between the two genders that might show solidarity and affiliation in British society but are not favoured in the Iraqi one. RH42 notices that the word *love* is uttered frequently in greetings or conversation between the two genders, affirming that it can never be used in the Iraqi community because it carries inappropriate implications. RH06 affirms that endearment can only be said to wives,

sisters, and mothers. At the same time, RH35 and RH06 demonstrate that this word is widely used in same-sex conversation but not with the opposite sex. From the British perspective, NS04 explains that *love* is an informal old-fashioned expression used by the older generation.

Accordingly, politeness in daily encounters between males and females in Iraqi society is governed by formality in the sense there must always be a distance between the two genders. Such formality is for the sake of showing respect for a woman.

4.5 Contextual influences

It is known for a fact now that speakers have a "repertoire" of various styles, deployed in response to the needs of communication. For individuals who inhabit a foreign culture and develop an intercultural identity, Kecskes (2014) demonstrates that people's multiple nationalities or ethnic memberships may suggest the possibility of variant styles governed by the contextual settings. The data of this study show that this variation in style is not exclusive to multiple nationalities; people of a single nationality change their manners of communication in different settings or on the basis of the existence of overhearers. In British culture, NS06 reports his mother and her close friends' habits in their workplace:

Extract (6)

> ***NS04****: my mother used to teach in a primary school and she was in the staff room with two colleagues that she had known for years and years and years and years and they were calling each other Jane and Emily and my mother is called Frida. Frida and then two other colleagues came in whom they didn't know very well and my mother and her two friends were * to using the family name so they were Mrs* ***NS04*** *Mrs Parrott Mrs. eh while these two people were in, they call them by their family name and when those people leave they return to calling each other by their first name; that was interesting*

Similarly, some Iraqi participants assert that they use formality when overhearers exist. This duality of character is mentioned by RH48, saying:

Extract (7)

> ***RH48****: we have two characters one in the class and the university with the students and the second character that's what famous scholar is called Ali Alwardi say more Iraqi most of Iraqis have two characters inside them one urban and one rural yeah and this is fighting between each other.*

The influence of setting applies not only to intimacy but also to deference. The request of title avoidance by some university teachers was found unusual by many participants when RH05 reported his experience with his university teacher who was encouraging them to avoid formality and use his first name outside the university campus. This desire, we must admit, is scarce in the Iraqi culture, where teachers and professors prefer to retain formality even with the change of setting.

4.4 The question of adaptation

Since we accept the diversity of cultures in their addressing system, it is questionable whether speakers of a foreign language will pragmatically and linguistically acquire the pragmalinguistic conventions followed in the host community or they will maintain the customs they are accustomed to in their own culture.

Regarding the first inquiry, RH33 recalls that in her first meeting with her supervisor when he first met her, he asked her to allow him to use her first name and that she uses his first name too. In a later conversation with her Iraqi friend, RH33 was surprised to hear that this friend was still using the title with the first name in addressing the same supervisor. The friend says

that she finds it difficult to shift into informality with him. It can be inferred that Iraqis vary in their readiness to acquire the informality of the community where informality is an indicator of solidarity and reduces distance.

It is questionable, however, whether those who show a convergent nature towards the British informal speech style will maintain this informality that they acquire or shift to the old formal one once they return to their home country.

When I heard from the same person, i.e., RH33, and inquired if she still enjoys informality, she recalled an incident when she found it unacceptable when an old colleague addressed her as *rashawi* (her nickname) to reflect his close friendship. She states that he can either use her title, the name of her daughter or at least *sit RH31*. In her opinion, formality is supposed to be followed between the two genders and the avoidance of this formal style is a lack of respect. This incident demonstrates the maintenance of the habits and customs with which a child is raised in the native culture.

Conclusion

This study has contrasted address practice in Iraqi with that in British culture based on metapragmatic techniques. Using focus groups as an instrument for data collection, it is found that languages and their variations have a different repertoire of address. Individuals from the two cultures reported the conventions for addressing others of higher, lower, and equal footing relationships. This study has arrived at the following conclusions.

1. The addressing system in Iraq is governed by formality, leading to misunderstanding in the intercultural context. The use of the first name is confusing for many non-native

speakers, who belong to a community that prefers the informal speech style. It might cause offence and harm when informality is used with those who prefer the formal addressing system.

2. Power and distance can determine communication strategies in Iraqi culture; hence, different evaluations of social variables can cause misunderstanding

3. The setting determines the manners and style of communication. Even in cultures that adhere to informality, formality is a necessity in certain situations.

4. Influenced by the tradition of the Islamic religion, cultural values and norms might be reflected in the address system. In some communities governed by religious regulations, as in the Iraqi culture, Hajji and Sheikh indicate the sociolinguistic interest of the diversity among cultures in using the address system. These norms emphasise the importance of age.

5. The two cultures differ in using titles; Iraqis use title plus first name while in the British system titles are followed by the surname.

6. Gender relations are very restricted in Iraqi culture. First name addressing practice is always avoided with the opposite gender, with a tendency to use teknonyms and titles. Further, endearment is used differently in the two cultures. Therefore, upon intercultural communication, this restricted relationship with the opposite gender can lead to negative interpretations of many expressions that do not carry bad intentions but breach the cultural norms of politeness in the other culture.

7. Nicknames must be used carefully in Iraqi culture, with preference for them to be adopted by close friends, family members, same gender, from high to low level, similar age group, and similar rank.

8. A notable difference in Iraq culture is that kinship terms can include non-blood relations and the use of address inversion.

From this perspective, common ground between the speaker and their addressee supposes the hearer's competence in understanding utterances. The choice of language and its style are based on this assumption. The advantage of common ground is that it assists speakers of the same languages to be more economical in wording their utterances. Those who belong to the same culture do not need to explain to others who share the same rituals, traditions, and conventions the idea behind employing this address form rather than another. In intercultural communication, however, in which this common ground might be very limited, speakers might be under the pressure to make more inferences.

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