

A Macro-Linguistic Analysis of Persian Second Person Pronouns

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Since the 1979 revolution, Iranian public ideologies about politeness and address have been fundamentally reframed in egalitarian terms. This research investigates the changes in address terms usage in modern colloquial Persian in Tehran. Persian has two personal pronouns for singular second person, *to* the familiar 'you' and *šoma* the deferential 'you'. Moreover, Persian is a pro-drop language, so the interaction between pronouns and agreement marking on the verb must be taken into account. Another significant feature of colloquial Persian is hybrid usage of second person pronouns and agreement, i.e. *šoma* with 2s verb agreement. This is a very interesting aspect that shows different levels of politeness in one utterance.

Spontaneous data collected in Tehran, 23 family conversations (20 hours), and 13 media interviews (10 hours) show not only that the use of *to* seems to have increased but that pronouns may also serve as different speech functions. A quantitative analysis is carried out to investigate the significance of age and gender in the use of *to* and *šoma*. It can be hypothesised if there is no significant difference between the participants' pronouns in different classified groups (age, gender), the pronoun usage can be categorised as familiar and deferential in idiosyncratic ways.

The quantitative analysis of the collected data shows the importance of the idiosyncratic features of politeness. Idiosyncratic politeness implies that each person has a particular definition of politeness based on his/her personality and identity. Consequently, each person uses second person pronouns in his/her own particular way. To elaborate the functions of mismatch pronoun construction and pronoun switching, which are used idiosyncratically, a qualitative analysis is necessary. In other words, the macro-analysis of spontaneous data opens up a need for a micro-analysis of politeness in the second person pronoun usage.

Macro- and micro-analysis of the data suggests several things:

1. There is a shift towards use of *to* among the younger generation in Iran (Tehran)
2. The combinations of second person pronouns (esp. pronoun mismatches and switches) vary in different communities of practice.

These combinations reflect the diverse and idiosyncratic style of the community at large and individuals' politeness preferences.

This study will have a great social importance in Iran; it will demonstrate the transforming nature of language and society along time. It illuminates the impact of local social change on language variation, and also revitalises the study of address terms and politeness by considering novel data from Persian. Thus, it opens a new horizon in the study of linguistic politeness and gender and language in non-western cultures.