

Religion and Politeness: An Exploratory Study for the Integration of Religious Expressions with Politeness Strategies in Iraqi Computer-Mediated Communication

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Abstract : This study explores the relationship between polite language use and religion in the Iraqi culture in computer mediated communication. It tackles the speech acts where these expressions are employed, the frequency of their occurrence and the aims behind them. It also investigates if they have equivalent expressions in English and the possibility of translating them in intercultural communication. Despite the wide assumption that language is a reflection of culture and religion, it started to grant the attention sociologists during the recent 40 years when scholars have questioned the possible interconnection between religion and language in which religion is used as a mean of producing language and performing pragmatic functions. It is presumed that Arabs in general, and Iraqis in particular, have an inclination to use religious vocabulary in showing politeness in their greeting and other speech acts. Due to Islamic religion and culture's influences, it is observed that Iraqis are very much concerned of maintaining social solidarity and harmonious relationships which make religion a politeness strategy that operates as the key point of their social behaviours. In addition, religion has found to influence almost all their interactions in which they have a tendency of invoking religious expressions, the lexicon of Allah (God), and Qur'anic verses in their daily politeness discourse. This aspect of Islamic culture may look strange, especially to people who come from individualist societies, such as England. Data collection in this study is based on messaging applications like Viber, WhatsApp, and Facebook. After gaining the approval of the participants, there was an investigation for the different aims behind these expressions and the pragmatic function that they perform. It is found that Iraqis tend to incorporate the lexicon of Allah in most of their communication. Such employment is not only by religious people but also by individuals who do not show strong commitment to religion. Furthermore, the social distance and social power between people do not play a significant role in increasing or reducing the rate of using these expressions. A number of these expressions, though can be translated into English, do not have one to one counterpart or reflect religious feeling. In addition, they might sound odd upon being translated or transliterated in oral and written communication in intercultural communication.

Keywords : computer mediated communication (CMC), intercultural communication, politeness, religion, situation bound utterances rituals, speech acts

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