

Hafiz or Shakespeare? Which One Is More Polite?

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Abstract: This study is a report of a comparative study of English and Persian verbal politeness in two classic masterpieces of literary world i.e., “The Complete work of Hafiz and Shakespeare's sonnets”. Assuming that degree of verbal politeness correlates with degree of shift in speaker's point of reference, reasearchers in the present study, try to indicate the difference in the degree of politeness as it changes by the intended shift in deixis. To this end, social and empathetic deixis have been focused on as the indicator of such a shift. The results of χ^2 -test showed that Persian in contrast with English is abundant with the means through which the empathetic shift is carried out which is best exemplified in Hafiz love poetry; quite aligned with Leech's East-West divide in the continuum of politeness Hafiz is placed somewhere closer to the polite extreme while Shakespeare is placed far lower than him. From there, reasearchers pointed out that there must be a concern for developing a model for quantifying the degree of politeness in terms of the deictic shift and the distance that is allowed by the speaker for going with the addressee around the temporal and spatial immediacy.

Key words: Deictic shift, empathetic deixis, social deixis, verbal politeness, χ^2 -test, Iran

INTRODUCTION

One of the obvious features pervading medieval Persian verse is rhetoric of praise poetry or panegyric (Davis, 2004). It can be taken as virtually axiomatic that the speaker of a non-narrative Persian poem places himself in an inferior position to the poem's subject whether the poem directly addresses the subject as a you or refers to the subject in the third person. But panegyric in itself hardly exists, as a respectable form in English verse.

This is not to say that panegyrics have not been written but they have rarely been valued as especially interesting poetry and they have always in English, smacked of undignified fawning as if they were the kind of thing that no real poet would want to be involved with. In fact, this rhetoric is culture-specific; it seems to be generally absent, for example in poetry of the far East in Chinese or Japanese or Korean poetry. And though extravagant praise of the other and a concomitant self-abasement can at times be found in English poetry, these elements of perspective are not considered intrinsically poetic in the way that they are in Persian (ibid).

In the context of linguistic theories of politeness, also, such a conceptualization of panegyricism can be dealt with where continuum of politeness includes degrees of speaker egocentricity. For example, a Shakespearean scholar, Joel Fineman in his book, “The

Subjectivity Effect in Western Literary Tradition” criticized Shakespeare and a number of other literary figures for the invention of a kind of individualized subjectivity in which power relation seems not only benign but also transparent.

In sonnet 94, Shakespeare's speaker comments on those that have power to hurt and will do none. Or in several cases (e.g., sonnet 57, 58, 88, 89 and 94), Shakespeare's language is negotiating problematic speech acts involving the correction or the rebuke of the superiors where these situations involve the relation between a subordinate and a superior he is engaged to serve (Magnusson, 1999).

This study is a report of a comparative study of English and Persian verbal politeness in two classic masterpieces of literary world i.e., “The Complete work of Hafiz (Divan) and Shakespeare's sonnets”. Assuming that degree of verbal politeness correlates with degree of shift in speaker's point of reference (Koike, 1992), reasearchers in the present study, try to indicate the difference in the degree of politeness as it changes by the intended shift in deixis.

To this end, social and empathetic deixis have been focused on as the indicator of such a shift. Results of the frequency counts of these devices then entered into the Chi-Square analysis to show whether there is a significant difference between two poets in the use of politeness indicators or not.

Theoretical background of the study: In this study researchers, regarding a number of previous studies conducted on communicative practice, deictic field and socially constituted objects of reference (Hanks, 2005), the concepts of emotion, emotional control, empathetic deixis (Argaman, 2007) and social deixis (Fillmore, 1975; Levinson, 1983), try to compare the frequency of empathetic (demonstrative this and that intended shift in personal deixis or *iltefat* and vocatives) and social deictic (honorifics) devices used in first hundred verses of Hafiz with hundred verses of Shakespeare sonnets from there they go on to show through Chi-square analysis that there is a difference in the degree of egocentricity. Persian and English poets maintain in their relationship with a specific addressee. Bellow, some notions adopted from the above-mentioned studies have been introduced briefly.

Deixis from a socio-pragmatic perspective: Levinson (1983) elaborates on the philosophical and descriptive approaches to the definition of deixis. He analyzed the main categories of deixis. In his analysis, he asserts the idea that the function of deixis is to draw the relationship between language and context. He states that Deixis concerns the ways in which language encodes or grammatical features of the context of utterance or speech events and thus also concerns ways in which the interpretation of utterances depends on the analysis of that context of utterance.

Social deixis: According to Fillmore (1975), social deixis means the aspects of sentences which reflect or establish or are determined by certain realities of the social situation in which the speech act occurs. He adds that social deixis encodes the social identities of participants or the social relation between them or between one of them and persons and entities referred to.

To capture the social aspects of deixis, we would need to add one further dimension, relative rank in which the speaker is socially higher, lower or equal to the addressee and other persons that might be referred to (Levinson, 1983). In addition, according to Levinson (2006), social deixis involves the marking of social relationships in linguistic expressions with direct or oblique reference to the social status or role of participants in the speech event.

In this case, Hanks (2005) wrote a study which focused on the ways in which speakers make reference to themselves to one another and to objects in everyday settings of talk. Drawing on research in linguistic anthropology, sociology and linguistics, it proposes an

approach to language based on concepts of communicative practice, deictic field and socially constituted objects of reference.

Empathetic deixis: Empathetic shift is a rhetorical device through which the speaker expresses, indirectly to some extent, his psychological feelings good or bad towards the addressee or the target of speech whether a human being or an object. Argaman (2007) asserts that consequently, empathetic deixis is an important discursive tool for emotionally distancing or drawing oneself nearer to an object. Usually, the speaker achieves this function through some lexical and structural means. Lyons (1977) says that this function is mainly achieved when the speaker is personally involved with the entity, situation or place to which he is referring or is identifying himself with the attitude or viewpoint of the addressee. Argaman (2007) introduced in his study the concepts of emotion, emotional control and empathetic deixis.

This study probes into the aspect of educational change. Drawing on the rhetorical perspective that talk is never without end, the study shows how two conversing parties use the deixis; it as a referent to their emotion standpoint regarding the context of a school change.

Social deixis in Persian: Fillmore (1975) has suggested that honorifics are properly considered part of the deictic system of language, just as the meaning here and come are anchored by reference to the spatial properties of the communication events. The target is to analyze the usage and function of such deictic terms within the social context. Bearing in mind the polite pronouns, titles of address, kinship relations and so on, one can notice that social deixis is one of the richest areas where language and culture are interrelated.

Perhaps Mehrotar is right in pointing out that the use of honorifics is a common trait of most oriental languages. They are used when a speaker wishes to show respect to the addressees. In Persian, as in other oriental languages like Arabic, Turkish and Urdu etc., there are numerous types of appositional expressions which could be used in order to honor or dignify the addressed person. This honorific or honor names include a collection of religious, cultural, occupational, ideological as well as pet names. Such terms may be used in several forms; before, after, with or without the name of the addressee.

In order to put more formality into speech, Persian speakers enjoy a good number of address terms. Some examples are: *ghorbân*/(sir), *jenâb*/(sir) and *sarkâr*/(lady) (Aliakbari and Toni, 2008). In the context of present study, researchers limited their focus on simply a number of religious honorifics like *Sheykh* and *Hazrat* from hafiz and

also the words like sir, lady, prince and the majesty in Shakespeare. An example is presented from Hafiz's sonnets:

If I asked for help from the Magi leader, do
not blame me; the chieftain said that in the
monastery, there is no ambition

Empathetic shift in Persian: The first means through which empathetic shift is achieved in Persian is the use of the vocative particles in conscious way. In Persian, vocative particles are divided into two categories: those used to refer to a person close to the speaker including and those used to refer to a person far from the speaker which the most prominent is. These particles, however may be used to achieve empathy or emotional distance; for example can be used to refer to a person far from the speaker to express the speaker's empathy, love and intimacy towards the addressee as in the following example:

O, Unseen from the eyes of beholders! Thou
are the one who became the companion of
the heart; I will pray for thee and send thee
praise

A second means through which empathetic shift is achieved in Persian is the use of demonstrative pronouns in a way different from the usual one. The demonstrative pronouns which concern us here are in this which pragmatically means close to the speaker at coding time and an that which pragmatically means far from the speaker at coding time (Levinson, 1983). To achieve the empathetic shift in this can be used with a referent far from the speaker at coding time to express empathy and closeness to the heart of the speaker as in the following example:

We saw the green color of thy path and then
from the garden of Paradise, we, having a
claim for this love, sprouted

The deitic from an that on the other hand is used sometimes to refer to a person present in the speech event to express emotional distance on the part of the speaker as in the following examples:

In the corner of the hope, like the spectators
of the moon, we gazed at that arch of the
eyebrow with our begging eyes

A third way by which empathetic shift is achieved is called *iltifa:t*. This device which is taken from Arabic is called the courage or momentum since it is not easy to be used or applied. It is a rhetoric device in which the speaker exchanges his speech from the addressee to an

absent person or an object and vice versa using mainly the second and third person pronouns or a completely independent sentence. This change, however is purposeful that is every time such a change takes place, there is a reason behind that. The researcher has found that one of the functions for which such an exchange is carried out is empathetic shift (Ibn Al-Thir). The following verse indicates an instance of such a shift from Hafiz, where the second hemistich is a completely independent sentence:

Fulfill your desire for wine and the beloved at
the end your life; what a pity that the time
passes, totally in vain

Hafiz is more polite than Shakespeare: Results of 4 Chi-square tests conducted for the frequency counts of honorifics ($p = 0.05$, $\chi^2 = 4.86$) and empathetic deixis including: Vocatives ($p = 0.027$, $\chi^2 = 3.42$), Demonstratives ($p = 0.000$, $\chi^2 = 13.072$) and *Eltifat* ($p = 0.0006$, $\chi^2 = 20.841$) again showed the same trend as mentioned in the introduction, i.e., egocentricity or subjectivity in Shakespeare and self abjection and intersubjectivity in Hafiz.

CONCLUSION

The results of the present study is in accordance to Leech's Grand Strategy of Politeness (GSP) where in order to be polite, S expresses or implies meanings which place a high value on what pertains to O (O = other person (s), (mainly the addressee) or place a low value on what pertains to S (S = self, speaker). Leech (1983) attempted to reformulate the maxims of politeness in POP. His maxims of the PP (Maxims of Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement and Sympathy) are the results of his appraisal of something that he, himself, called it East-West Divide. By this term, he and a number of other researchers (Ide, 1989, 1993; Matsumoto, 1989; Gu, 1990; Mao, 1994) criticized the absolutism involved in such a claim as Universality of Politeness, monopolized by Brown and Levinson, under which there is an overemphasis on face-threat and assumption of individualistic and egalitarian motivations behind polite manners (So called Western Bias), as opposed to the more group-centered hierarchy-based ethos of Eastern societies.

Bearing this criticism in mind, it can be concluded that the present study is just one small step in appreciating the existence of such a divide between East and West, by calling to witness two strong masterpieces of literary world as an aid in introducing a device for quantifying the degree of politeness in terms of the shift speakers

conveyed in their use of deixis. Although, the purpose of the present study is not to develop a model for quantifying the politeness but it clearly showed that such an achievement can be obtained through more careful studies and investigations in this field.

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