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Politeness and address forms in contemporary Persian: Thirty years on

Abstract. This paper examines the correlation between language use (particularly address terms and pronouns), politeness norms, and social structure in contemporary Iranian society. The Persian system of address terms in post-revolutionary Iran was influenced by the Islamic ideology of the early 1979 Iranian revolution (Keshavarz 1988). These terms include extensive use of kinship terms such as *bæradæ* ‘brother’ and *xahær* ‘sister’ in public domains, which clearly illustrate that influence. In an attempt to investigate the impact of the 1979 revolution on language use and politeness, the patterns of contemporary Persian address usage are compared with the social and political structure of the 1979 egalitarian ethos. Ten hours of spontaneous media conversation (candid camera and interviews) and 20 sociolinguistics interviews gathered in Iran are analysed. The interactional analysis reveals variation within the Persian address system leading to changes in linguistic and social structuring of language in contemporary Iran.

Keywords: Address terms, politeness, variation, social and cultural revolution, Persian.

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1. Introduction

Macro- and micro-sociolinguistic research indicates variations and changes in the address systems of many languages, including those with a T ‘informal you’ (French *Tu*) and V ‘formal you’ (French *Vous*) distinction (Brown and Gilman 1960). The changes in the address system of each language may be due to social or socio-political factors in the society (Head 1976, Braun 1988). The innovation of a polite second person singular may take any of a number of different forms, such as the use of an honorific noun, a third person pronoun, or a

word for ‘self’ as the new polite form, contrasting with the original second person singular pronoun (Ferguson 1991: 186). However, the most common of the various patterns seems to be the use of the original second person plural to serve as a polite singular (cf. Head 1978, Brown and Levinson 1987). This paper focuses on the second person pronouns and titles as address forms.

To date, there has been limited sociolinguistic research conducted on the practices of the Persian address system in contemporary Iranian society. Previous studies (Keshavarz 1988, Ardehali 1990) show that since the 1979 Iranian revolution, plain speech and forms of address marking solidarity such as *bærad-ær* ‘brother’ and *xahær* ‘sister’ have gained popularity. In his later study, Keshavarz (2001) with questionnaire data only focused on the impact of social context, intimacy, and distance on the choice of Persian pronominal address forms. The findings showed a categorical relation between address form usage and social factors such as age, gender, and context. Conversely, in this study, the analyses of naturally spoken conversation illuminate two findings in the investigation of contemporary address forms and politeness rituals in interaction: firstly, variation is observed in form and function practices of the address system. Secondly, there seems to be versatility in politeness levels of address forms, verbs and their agreement in interaction. Moreover, the data analyses show a good deal of switching between the formal and informal address terms (i.e. titles, address pronouns) and referent pronouns in people’s daily conversations.

In order to explore politeness and face work in the study of address forms this work draws on the concept of face (Goffman 1967, Brown and Levinson 1987) within politeness theory and interactional sociolinguistics (Ervin-Tripp 1972, Blom and Gumperz 1972) in the analysis of data. It shows that the use of the address system, in interaction, in contemporary Iranian society is hybrid and versatile representing a range of address forms such as pre-revolutionary (honorific) forms, revolutionary (egalitarian) forms or a combination of both

that constitute the contemporary forms of address and politeness. Switching between the deferential and informal politeness levels of address and referent forms in interaction index hybrid communicative goals such as attention to both speaker and hearer's positive and negative face wants. The analysis of address form practices in this work highlights that politeness of address form choices are not only constrained by contextual features such as age, gender and context but also by the interlocutors' stancetaking in interaction.

The organisation of this paper is as follows: the next section presents the background studies on address terms. The third section demonstrates the linguistic aspect of this study particularly the normative use of Persian address system (i.e. pronouns of address and titles). In the fourth section we explore the socio-cultural dynamics of the Iranian society with a focus on language use and deviations on address term usage in three periods: the pre-1979 revolution, post Iranian revolution and contemporary Persian. In section five the method of data collection and analysis is illustrated. Subsequently, the result of the interactional and ethnographic data analysis is presented and discussed. In close, the implications of the contemporary Persian address form practices are discussed.

2. Studies in address forms

Terms of address are linguistic forms that are used in addressing others to attract their attention or for referring to them in the course of a conversation. According to Fasold (1990), address forms are words that the interlocutor utilises to designate persons they are talking to while making a conversation. It is widely believed (Brown and Gilman 1960, Braun 1988, Keshavarz 2001) that the choice of linguistic forms is determined by the formality of context and the relationship between interlocutors in a speech event. In sociolinguistics, a T-V distinction describes the situation where a language has second person pronouns that distinguish varying levels of politeness, social distance, courtesy, familiarity, or insult toward the addressee. One of the most influential studies in the area of address forms was the study

conducted by Brown and Gilman in 1960. They investigated the pronominal address system in European languages such as French, German and Italian. Brown and Gilman (1960) suggested that the use of the familiar pronoun T and deferential pronoun V in European languages was governed by two forces: power and solidarity. It is argued that solidarity is mostly expressed in reciprocal use of either the T or the V pronoun, while power is expressed in non-reciprocal use of pronouns between the more and less powerful in communication. The plural form is thus used as a way of expressing formality, respect or social distance. As pointed out by Brown and Gilman (1960), the cause of power can be physical strength, wealth, age, sex, institutionalised role of the church, the state, the army or within the family. On the other hand, solidarity implies intimacy and is reciprocal. Based on this hypothesis, if the interlocutors are close and intimate with each other, they will mutually exchange T.¹

The power and solidarity model for the analysis of pronouns of address was later modified to *intimacy* and *status* (Brown and Ford 1964, my emphasis). Although many researchers have confirmed the Brown and Gilman (1960) model, there is some other work which shows its limitations. Their model cannot account for the use of *Sie* (3p) and first name (FN) in German (Clyne et al. 2003), which seems to simultaneously signal intimacy (FN) and status (*Sie*). Likewise, I argue that the T/V model does not accurately account for address form switching patterns and mismatches in politeness levels of subject and verb agreement in Persian. Clyne et al. (2006) argue that socio-political change can complicate the determination of the degree of social distance and therefore choice of address form.

Benjamin and Afful (2006) extended the research studies of address terms to the Amamomo speech community of postcolonial Ghana. Three categories of non-kinship expressions were found to be fundamental to the way residents of Amamomo address one another: personal names, catch phrases and some attention getters. In particular, the influence

¹ These comments about commonly preferred forms for honorifics and the examples noted here express a typological observation in that examples are taken from Indo European languages.

of Westernism and Modernism was reflected in the use of personal names and catch phrases (Benjamin and Afful 2006: 276). The use of these terms was constrained by sociocultural factors such as gender, status, age and relationship of interactants as well as pragmatic factors. Martiny (1996: 765) studied forms of address other than T and V such as indefinite pronouns and first person plural pronouns in French and Dutch. This approach has been referred to as a socio-pragmatic approach, because it considers co-occurrence of address forms such as first name, or French *tu* and *vous* with speech acts. Martiny (1996) points out that forms of address play an important role in the performance of speech acts. First, similar to vocatives they can serve to catch the attention of the addressee, or, if there are several persons present at the place and time of speaking, to select the person to whom a particular speech act is directed. Second, they may also be used to boost or to attenuate the force of a speech act (Martiny 1996: 767).

Following Paulston (1967), linguistic description of the Persian address system is not possible unless one takes into account the social and historical factors of the society. Sociopolitical changes can lead to changes in the linguistic performance of individuals. The 1978-1979 Iranian revolution narrowed the gaps among different social classes. Hence, this social change had a profound impact on language use and forms of address in Iran (Keshavarz 1998: 565).

Considering the mutually constitutive relationship of language and society (Mesthrie et al. 2000), this work investigates how Persian address forms are used to construct and reflect social reality in the contemporary Iranian society. It looks at the impacts of the socio-political changes of the 1979 revolutionary Iran on the contemporary Persian language practices, specifically address terms and politeness. The 1979 Iranian revolution promoted egalitarian social norms of address behavior and lifestyle. Since then not only are the Ulema (refers to the educated class of Muslim scholars engaged in several fields of Islamic Studies)

as a social class immensely influential in Iranian political life, but they have effectively possessed the language of communication. Islam, its symbols and cultural constructs, is quintessentially the language of popular mobilisation (Ansari 2003: 7). However, Iran has undergone diverse socio-cultural, economic and political changes over the three decades following the 1979 Islamic revolution. The influence of mass media and internet has opened up a new prospect of modernity and globalisation in Iranian culture especially amongst the young generation. This young generation favours more casual style in conversation. However, the pre-revolutionary generation seems to favour the deferential language use and maintenance of hierarchical distance in interaction. The socio-cultural changes observed in the current Iranian society open a niche to investigate the dynamics of the contemporary Persian address system and politeness in spontaneous interaction. Prior to this, the next section sheds light on the normative use of the Persian address system and its envelope of variation.

3. Persian address forms: Envelope of variation

Previous research on the Persian address system focus on forms of address rather than the communicative strategies performed with these forms in interaction. For example, Baumgardner (1982) looked at the Persian address paradigm in pre-revolutionary Iranian society from a micro- and macro-sociolinguistic perspective with questionnaire data and a telephone conversation of a lady with the extended family respectively. The macro-analysis results showed a categorical relationship between address forms with social factors such as age, gender and class. The micro-analysis findings only showed the co-occurrence of the deferential address pronoun in agreement with a singular verb agreement in addressing senior members of the in-laws. In his work, the different patterns of address form variation paradigm and their communicative strategy was not addressed. Keshavarz (1988, 2001) tends to focus only on forms as opposed to function, and it applies an overly simplistic model of

‘intimate you’ *to* versus ‘formal you’ *šoma* to the data. Keshavarz (1988) shows that plain speech and forms of address marking solidarity gained popularity during the 1979 Iranian revolution. With questionnaire data, his later work (Keshavarz 2001), shows that *to* is restricted to family and close friends. The plural form *šoma* is used when addressing someone less familiar. However, this research only focused on the impact of social context, intimacy and distance on the choice of Persian address forms. Conversely, this paper sheds light on the variation patterns of the Persian address system (i.e. pronouns and titles) in contemporary Persian. Specifically it focuses on the address form practices and individuals’ strategic choices of address form in interaction. In order to address the variation patterns observed in the Persian address system it is initially important to illustrate the Persian address paradigm (i.e. pronominal address and titles as address forms) that may be found in normative usage. In what follows initially the normative pronominal address forms are discussed. Later the envelope of variation of titles and names as address forms is presented.

Persian can be categorised as a null-subject, or a pronoun dropping (pro-drop) language in the case of subject pronouns (Word order in Persian is Subject-Object-Verb (SOV). The missing subject is represented by the empty set ‘ \emptyset ’ in the examples and can be retrieved from the agreement marking on the verb, which uniquely identifies each person and number. It shares this feature with Romance languages such as Spanish, Mexican and Catalan (e.g. Cameron 1993, Stewart 2003, Bayley and Pease-Alvarez 1997, Mayol and Clark 2010). Table 1 indicates the normative patterns of subject and verb agreement in the Persian address system.

Second Person Pronoun	Overt pro. + agreement (<i>to</i> + 2s)/ (<i>šoma</i> + 2h/2p)	Null subject + agreement (\emptyset + 2s/2h/2p)	Names/titles + Agreement
Informal (<i>to</i>) Agreement: 2s (<i>-i</i>)	<i>to koja miri?</i> ‘where are you going’	\emptyset <i>koja miri?</i> ‘where are you going?’	<i>Sara koja miri?</i> ‘Sara, where are you going?’

Deferential (<i>šoma</i>) Agreement: 2h (-id)	<i>šoma koja mirid?</i> 'where are you going?'	Ø <i>koja mirid?</i> 'where are you going?'	<i>Agha Farhad koja mirid?</i> 'Mr. Farhad, where are you going?'
Deferential (<i>šoma</i>) Agreement: 2p (-in)	<i>šoma koja mirin?</i> 'where are you going?'	Ø <i>koja mirin?</i> 'where are you going?'	<i>Sara xanum koja mirin?</i> 'Ms. Sara, where are you going?'

Table 1: Persian subject and verb agreement

Glossary of morphology terms and transcription notations are indicated in Appendix A.

As may be seen in Table 1 there is a possibility of variation in subject and verb agreement in Persian. For example, in subject position the address form may occur as an overt pronominal form, a phonetically null subject or as a title and a name. However, the variation paradigm in agreement position is not as diverse as the overt subject position. It allows for either the deferential (-id/-in)² or the informal (-i)³ verb agreement. The choice of different politeness levels for subject and verb agreement in speech is not merely socially indexical but may be used to attend to the interlocutors' positive and negative face wants. In this work, the pronominal variables under investigation are address forms *to* and *šoma* and their agreements. As a normative default *to* 'the overt informal you' and its singular verbal (-i) agreement is used in intimate or informal contexts to address inferiors in terms of age and authority. In contrast, *šoma* 'the overt deferential you' marked with its verbal agreements [(-id) and (-in)] was historically used for second person plural address, however, it is now used as a singular deferential form to address superiors in formal situations.

The analysis of naturally occurring conversation shows that there may also be a possibility of inter-speaker and intra-speaker address form switches and mismatch agreement construction in interaction. These patterns are orderly and strategic deviations that occur in (i) patterns of subject and agreement (ii) politeness level of verb forms. In this paper, switching

² The deferential verbal agreement (-id) is coded as 2h showing great deference and (-in) is coded as 2p indexing politeness not necessarily deference.

³ The singular verbal agreement (-i) is coded as 2s in the analysis of data.

patterns and mismatch construction occur at different politeness levels of address forms, verb stems and verb agreements. For instance an honorific title may occur with a less deferential verb (i.e. speech act) but in agreement with a deferential verb agreement. The reverse may also be possible; a casual address form may be used with an honorific verb and a deferential agreement. These patterns will be discussed in the analysis.

Previous research has indicated that power and solidarity semantics may be shown by the use of names and titles (Brown and Gilman 1960, Brown and Ford 1961, Ervin- Tripp 1972). Titles as address terms are the second sociolinguistic variables under investigation in this paper. Similarly, Sutinen's (2005) study of the usage of French terms of address such as titles and their interaction with pronouns of address in a corpus of modern French films has shown that there is quite a lot of variation in the use of terms of address and pronouns. In addition to social factors, i.e. age, degree of acquaintance and speech situation (e.g. work, home, business), other determining factors observed as influencing the usage of address terms were: feelings, e.g. anger, love; personal preferences, and sentence types, e.g. greetings, imperative forms and questions (Sutinen 2005: 247).

Persian classic titles	English Equivalents
<i>Agha,</i> <i>Jenabe aghaye</i>	Mr Sir
<i>Xanum,</i> <i>Særkar xanum</i>	Mrs, Ms, Lady

Table 2: Persian classic address titles

Persian second person non-pronominal address terms (titles) are hierarchical in nature and allow for the expression of numerous degrees of politeness. Table 2 depicts the classic (i.e. normative) address titles in Persian. For example *agha* 'Mr' is the classical address form whereas *jenabe aghaye* 'sir' indexes deferential politeness. Similarly, in addressing women there are two address forms with similar variation patterns in terms of politeness. *Xanum* 'Mrs, Ms' is the classic form and less deferential than *særkar xanum* 'lady'. Therefore, pronoun switching may consist of socially-deictic terms that function along with pronouns to

mark Iranian social relations. Through the varied combinations of either First Name (FN) and/or Last Name (LN) plus a limited number of enclitics and titles, a great range of social distinctions can be made for both male and female addressees. Having presented the classic forms of address, in the next section we turn to the discussion of social norms and address form usage in pre- and post- 1979 revolutionary Iran.

4. Address terms and politeness in Persian: Socio-historical background

4.1. Persian monarchy norms of address

The social norms of the Iranian society during the monarchy era were highly stratified. In the early 20th century it consisted of a narrow ruling elite (i.e. the Qajar dynasty monarch and his extended family, court-appointed officials in Tehran and provincial capitals, major landlords, and chiefs of large nomadic tribes); a middle tier, including urban bazaar merchants, the Shi'a clergy, and craftsmen; and a large, poor segment comprising mostly share-cropping peasants and nomads but also some town dwellers engaged in service-sector trades (Ansari 2003). The pre-revolutionary social stratification in Iran was an amalgam of both traditional class structure and a superimposed structure dominated by the vast industrialisation and modernisation under the Pahlavi dynasty. Needless to say the divergence in social structure began to manifest itself in Iranian cultural values. Namely, the upper class dominated every aspect of Iranian character, personality and cultural values, while the lower class maintained heavily traditional lifestyles and values (Keddie 1978: 324-325).

However, there were certain cultural values shared by lower and upper classes in Iranian society which affect the present study of address forms directly. One of these values was respect and authority, which pervades all aspects of Iranian behaviour. Iranian interpersonal relations were marked by a conscious recognition of the equal or unequal status of interactants. Those people in the lower social classes were expected to show deference to those in the classes above them. Even within the lower class there was social stratification

with those in the lower reaches of the lower classes also supposed to defer to those above them in the same class (Hodge 1957). Table 3 illustrates the different forms of monarchy terms of address. These forms are honorific terms of address usually used as a substitute for the second person address pronoun ‘You’. Furthermore, these forms were mainly used in addressing the Shah or a senior member of ones acquaintance.

Persian titles	English Equivalents
hæzræt-e ali	Your Excellency
jenab-e ali	Your Excellency
særvæ,	master
bozorg,	gentleman
ræyis	boss
æmir	emir, prince
xan	sir
agha	Mr

Table 3: Stratified monarchy terms of address

Respect for authority naturally was extended to the family unit as well. The father in an Iranian family was the supreme authority to which both wife and children defer, and this obedience was expected even when the children became adults. Furthermore, age was respected in Iran both inside and outside the family. Correct marking of these differences made interaction very time- and energy-consuming in any social situation in Iran (Beeman 1986). Having reviewed socio-cultural aspects of pre-revolutionary era of Iran, we move on to discuss the 1979 revolutionary event and its impacts on socio-cultural values.

4.2. Egalitarian ethos of language use

Socio-political changes can lead to changes in the linguistic performance of individuals. The 1978-1979 Iranian revolution narrowed the gaps between different social classes. Hence, this social change had a profound impact on language use and forms of address in Iran (Keshavarz 1988: 565). Previous research (Paulston 1967, Yuan et al. 1990) shows the address system is versatile and subject to variation in terms of social indexicality with social changes that a society undertakes. Prior to 1979 Iranian revolution norms of address

behaviour and life style were highly stratified. The more prominent in the social scale used the casual address forms while receiving the deferential forms of address.

By the late 1970s, the professional and technocratic middle class had divided into secular and religious factions. Both groups contributed to the overthrow of the Shah in 1979. The secular group objected to the autocratic rule and economic corruption of the monarchy, and demanded political freedom, democracy, social equality, and economic justice, while the religious group feared that the Shah's embrace of the West threatened traditional Islamic morality.

Finally in 1979, the conflicts culminated in the transfer of power to a new group of leaders who envisioned fundamental economic and social changes in the structure of Iranian society. Ayatollah Khomeini consistently promised independence and freedom; after the revolution he also emphasised that the Islamic republic would be an egalitarian social and economic system in which the interests of the *mostazafin* "the deprived and oppressed" (Parsa 1989: 2) would be served. The 1979 revolution may be considered as a revolutionary class movement, a shift from technocrat (elite) ruling class to traditional (religious) class (Arjomand 1988: 200).

Egalitarian revolutionary norms were observed in language use such as address terms. When there is a social movement for change to equality, for example where power relations have been unequal, one commonly manifested change is the elimination of overt markers of hierarchy. An egalitarian ethos of language use may well be elaborated as Fairclough (1992) argues all indexes of power may be eliminated. Among the many types of markers which tend to be avoided are, asymmetrical terms of address imperatives, directives, and asymmetries in rights to initiate topics or asking questions (Fairclough 1992: 203). For instance, solidary address terms such as *bæradær* 'brother' and *xahær* 'sister' was observed to replace the pre-revolutionary norm of address term (e.g. *særkar xanum* 'Mrs',

agha ‘Mr’) among members of the public (Keshavarz 1988). Moreover, this transition also emerged in the use of pronominal address forms, as *to* ‘informal you’ was used more frequently, compared to the *šoma* ‘formal you’, which was a norm of respect and authority in the pre-revolutionary time. The next section sheds light on the Persian address term practices and socio-cultural norms in contemporary Iranian society.

4.3. Contemporary Persian norms address

In order to study language use after the revolution in the society, the social changes associated with the revolution and the linguistic realisation of such changes is highlighted. That is from a pre-revolutionary highly stratified sociolinguistic norms and a focus on horriification even within the family to the revolutionary ideals of a more egalitarian society where non-deferential address terms were encouraged (e.g. *bæradær* ‘brother’) to post-revolutionary society were, for instance, older people claim the structure of the family has become more child centred (rather than parent-specially father-centred).

Thirty years after the 1979 Iranian revolution variation in language can be seen in a slightly less religious form and a tendency to more contemporary use of these forms. The linguistic realisation of these changes may be seen in the use of casual verbs, address terms, pronouns as a marker of equality in society. The egalitarian ideology that all members of society are one is currently formed by a constellation of honorific, religious and casual linguistic and social factors in speech, accommodating with the modern world. For example, the presidency of Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005) in Iran instigated political, social and cultural policy reform due to his appreciation of democracy and freedom of speech. This period of time is referred to as the ‘reform era’. During this period, Iran’s young generation found the opportunity to express themselves via media, newspapers, music, blogs and cinema. As a result the Persian language evolved with more English words being incorporated into the language.

In contemporary Iran, age is no longer a significant index of status and authority among non traditional family units. In this time period, we can observe changes in family structure in the middle and upper classes. The youth after the 1979 generation have a more flexible and open relationship with their parents. Qualitative analysis of spontaneous conversation shows that in modern Persian we can observe an amalgam of honorific, egalitarian and modern address terms in interaction. This indicates the evolution of the linguistic norms with the social and cultural norms. Table 4 highlights some of the Persian address terms used in contemporary Iranian society.

	Male	Female
1	<i>Jenab</i> 'Excellency, sir'	<i>Særkar</i> 'Lady'
2	<i>Agha</i> 'sir, mister'	<i>Xanum</i> 'Mrs/Ms/Madam/Miss'
3	<i>Agha-ye + mohtæræm</i> Sir-ez + respectful 'Gentleman'	<i>Xanum-e + mohtæræm</i> Mrs-ez + respectful 'Lady'
4	<i>Ghorban</i> 'Sir' (honorific)	No equivalent female term
5	<i>Haj + agha</i> 'Mr Haji'	<i>Haj + xanum</i> 'Mrs Haji'
6	<i>Pedær(jan)</i> 'Dear father'	No equivalent female term
7	<i>Bæradær</i> 'Brother'	<i>Xahær</i> 'Sister'
8	<i>Ostad + (jan)</i> 'Teacher + (dear) 'Sir' (colloquial)	No equivalent female term

Table4:Contemporary Persian address terms

In this paper the address forms as well as the pronoun and agreement forms outlined earlier are investigated alongside each other. Even in contemporary Persian there is a wide array of address terms in play and they are by no means all 'equal'. That is some retain pre-revolutionary norms such as *Jenab* 'Your Excellency' and *Ghorban* 'Sir' and some are more popular revolutionary (e.g. *Haji* 'Mr Haji' – *Haj agha* 'Mr Haji', *Bæradær* 'brother') as its is a religious address term. Some are more contemporary such as *Ostad jan* 'Sir' *Pedar jan* 'dear father'). What is interesting is that in contemporary Persian terms of address of

different registers (i.e. university, business, religious etc.) are used strategically that index metaphorical meaning (Ervin-Tripp 1972). For example, *Ostad jan* literally means ‘Dear Master’ or ‘Dear Teacher’, but it can be used metaphorically to address anybody, not necessarily your teacher, to raise the status of the addressee (an instance of this is shown in Example 2, line 9). In contemporary Persian, we see endearment terms of less religious connotation. Even the singular informal pronominal address forms are observed to be used more frequently in the public domain than the deferential forms.

Participants in spontaneous open-ended interviews report interesting perceptions of the social changes affecting language use and politeness norms in contemporary Persian. Interestingly, homogenous perceptions regarding how language has evolved towards informality and a casual style over time is observed among all generations and genders. The following interview which was conducted in Iran during my fieldwork sheds light on this matter more clearly. Nina is a 29 year old female graduate student. Over the phone we are talking about language use in Iran:

Example 1:

1 Researcher: *šoma ċe tægirat-i dar estefadeh-e formha-ye*
2p what change-ind. in use-ez type-pl.

2 *xatbi dær sal-ha-ye æxir dideh-id?*
address in year-pl-ez recent seen-2h?

‘what changes have you observed in address form use in recent years?’

3 Nina: *jame’eh be sæmte bi-ædæb šodæn piš ræfte*
society to direction neg-politeness become ahead gone
‘the society has tended towards impoliteness (more rude behaviours)’

4 *šayæd goman bær næzdiki væ sæmimiyaete bištær*
maybe thought in closeness and friendship more

5 *dær in hal æst.*
in this state is

‘maybe it is assumed that these (impolite) behaviours convey more intimacy and friendship’

This example clearly highlights social consciousness of the young generation regarding the evolution of language norms in contemporary Iranian society. The participant (Nina)

accounts for the deviation of social norms (deference and respect) as impolite, that it is indexed by use of intimate and casual address forms. Consequently, this shift in social norms shows that power in speech style may have diminished, narrowing the gap between people in different age groups and with different social statuses. Accordingly, variations in norms of etiquette and politeness in social practices may well be described by considering the relationship between change in culture and language, and social change (Fairclough 1992, 2003). In the following section I will address the methods used in data collection and analysis.

5. Data and methods

Spontaneous face-to-face interactions have not been used so far in Persian linguistics research focusing on the address system. Up to now, address forms have been investigated with questionnaires, focusing on addressee's social factor (such as age, gender and education). In order to investigate the social changes in the society and their impact on language, participants from various generations and social strata are required to portray a clear picture of language use and politeness. Therefore, spontaneous media data is chosen for the analysis of address forms and politeness in this work. The chosen media programme (candid camera and interviews) shows various social dilemmas in practice with various society members. This kind of data allows us to examine not only how address forms are used linguistically but also to identify the social norms and values in the society. Alongside address term, in the data analysis, other linguistic politeness features such as enclitics and speech acts are considered and discussed.

Variation in language use was observed both at the macro (i.e. social) and micro (i.e. individual) level. In order to study address forms and politeness, an Iranian candid camera and interview programme called *Mæn ta ma* 'I to we', which contains more than ten hours of conversation, were recorded and transcribed. Furthermore, individual and group perceptions on language use and politeness norms in contemporary Persian were investigated using open

ended sociolinguistic interviews on more than 20 informants. The open ended sociolinguistic interviews targeted perceptions and attitudes of young, middle age, and older age groups on Persian language use, politeness, and changes after 1979. This set of data was analysed using content analysis. This set of data was analysed using content analysis to learn whether speakers were conscious of their address form usage patterns.

The recorded media discourse consisted of two scenarios: the first scenario is a candid camera of a social dilemma in the society (e.g., whether people buy bus tickets at a cheaper price, or people's social awareness of collecting the rubbish that they see on the floor, etc.). In the second scene, in the presence of a camera, the interviewer usually interviews the pedestrian. In this context the goal is to preserve the social norms of the society and raise awareness of people's action and its effects on the society at large. The larger goal is to raise social awareness that people's indifferent behaviour to the society's social dilemmas can have a negative impact on achieving social unity in society. The address forms used in all the episodes of the media corpus are analysed. This paper presents an interactional sociolinguistic analysis of only one example taken from the larger corpus. It is very typical of the kind of interaction and the use of address forms we find in this episode, but this is particularly interesting because of the range of forms used within one very short period. The next section presents variation patterns of the address paradigm in contemporary Persian.

6. Strategic uses of contemporary Persian address terms

In contemporary Persian we can observe versatile but strategic deployment of the Persian address terms in interaction. The following extract highlights the various uses of the Persian address terms and pronouns in interaction. In this example we can observe fluctuation in politeness level of verbs and pronouns. Namely, different switching patterns occur between formal and informal verbs and pronouns. The theme of this programme is to observe how people in various professions respond to attempts at bribery, that is, whether they accept or

reject it. Later on in the interview section peoples attitudes and perceptions towards their actions and the topic of the scene is inquired. The context of this interaction is between a driver (B) who wishes to park his car in a hospital car park to go to the *bazar*. However, as we can see in the interaction B is confronted with the parking attendant's (N's) refusal.

Example 2

[Setting: Candid camera, Episode: Parking B: Driver, male, c.45 (accompanied with a male friend) – N: Parking attendant: male, c. 70]

- 1B: *sælam agha hal-e-tun xub-e?*
hello mr state-ez-2p.cl fine-is?
'Hello sir how are you?'
- 2 *mi-x-am ye sa'at mašin-o park kon-im*
dur-want-1s one hour car-om park do-1p
'I want to park the car for an hour'
- 3 *ber-im ta bazar væ bi-ay-im*
subj.go-1p until bazaar and sub-come-1p
'we want to go to bazaar and return'
- 4N: *næ*
'no'
- 5B: *axe inja væsayl tu mašin-emun-e*
because here instruments in car-ez possessive-1p-is
'because here we have stuff in our car'
- 6N: *balatær parking hæst*
further parking exists
'there is a parking further up'
- 7B: *ræft-im dighe ja næ-bud*
go-1p no longer place negative-was.3s
'we went there but there wasn't any room'
- 8N: <returns to the car park closes and locks the gates>**
- 9B: *ostad jan ye læhze be-bæxš-id, næ↑ ye læhze*
professor dear a minute imp-sorry-2h no a minute
'dear master excuse me a minute, no↑, a minute'
- 10 *ozr-mi-x-am, kar.et dar-æm pedær jan*
forgive-dur-want.1s job.2s.cl have-1s father dear
'forgive me, I have business with you father'
- 11 *kar-et dar-æm be-zar ma hærf-æm*
business-2s.cl have-1s imp-let.2s 1p word-1s
'I have business with you, let me tell you'
- 12 *ro be-zæn-æm*
om imp-tell-1s
'my business'
- 13N: <came back to the scene >**
- 14B: *haj aga ye sa'at mi-r-im bazar o*
title mr a hour dur-go-1p bazaar and
'Mr haji we will go to bazaar for an hour and'

- 15 *bærmigærd-im* *čon* *vasayel* *tušh-e*
 return-1p because stuff inside-is
 ‘return because there is stuff in the car’
- 16N: <with a loud voice> *æslæn sohbæt-eš* *hæm* *næ-kon*
 never talk-3s-cl also neg-imp-2s-do
 ‘don’t even talk about it’

→17B: *ne.mi-zar-in?*
 neg-dur-put-2p?
 ‘you won’t allow us?’

- 18N: *næ↑* *æslan sohbæt-e-šo* *nækon,* *in* *hærfæ* *či-ye*
 neg adv speech-ez-3s.cl not.do.2s this talk what-is
 ‘no ↑ don’t even talk about it, not at all’

→19B: *baba* *čiz-i* *hæm* *be-xah-i* *behet* *mi-d-im*
 hey anything too subj-want-2s you.2s.cl dur-give-1p
 ‘we could do a deal with’

- 20N: *be* *pul-et* *niyaz* *næ-dar-æm*
 prep money-2s.cl need neg-have-1s
 ‘I don’t need your money’

<Once again the porter returns to the car park waving a negative answer with his hand>

→21B: *hægehesab-e-tun↑* *be-het* *mi-d-im* *čekar* *kon-im* *pedær jan?*
 right-ez-2pl.cl to-2s.cl dur-give-1p what do-1p father dear?
 ‘we’ll pay you, what shall we do father?’

By examining the ongoing conversational exchange in this scenario, we can observe crucial features which deviate from the revolutionary language policy of the regime. We expect the language policy of the post-revolutionary social norms to predict uniform 2s forms of revolutionary ideology. The functions can be seen in line with the use of various hierarchal and informal verbs. These formal and informal variants in verb-stems bear similarity to the Japanese deferential and informal stems.

The theme of the conversation ‘an act of bribery’ is an issue and how language is used to meet the demands in the interactions is interesting to analyse. It is clear that the parking attendant is reluctant to allow B to park in the car park. B switches frequently in speech to get his approval but fails. This is deviant in terms of the revolutionary language policy as it promotes the egalitarian use of language. B starts of with the classic address form *agha* ‘Mr’ (line 1). After some turns in which he does not succeed in obtaining N’s approval to park there, it is interesting how in lines 9-12, B struggles to find the appropriate form of address and switches constantly between different formal and deferential address forms and verbs. He

uses a contemporary address term *ostad jan* ‘dear professor’ with a casual verb *bebakšid* ‘apologies, sorry’ but congruent with a deferential agreement (-id). The mismatch between the deferential address term with a casual verb functions as other elevating and attention to speaker positive face wants. However, B self repairs (line 10) and uses an honorific verb *ozrmixam* ‘I am sorry’ (rather than the plain form) but with a singular intimate referent which he follows up with a self correction or the switch to the use of the more intimate and informal address term *pedar jan* ‘dear father’ (line 10). This is congruent with the singular referent on *karet* ‘your job’ and the singular imperative verb *bezar* ‘let me’ in line 11.

Use of a more religious form *haj agha* ‘Mr haji’ coincides with his motivation for wanting to park there. The parking attendant responds with a non-polite or egalitarian refusal. At this point the parking attendant switches in line 17 to a deferential spoken form 2p which is the casual deferential address form. Following line 18, in which N uses an informal address form (2s) for the second time in his refusal, *sohbæt-e-š o nækon* ‘don’t even talk about it’, the driver switches back to the singular and offers a bribe.

However, as can be seen in line 20 N rejects the offer still with the 2s forms. In line 21, B uses an endearment term, *pedær jan* ‘dear father’, but this turn provides more interesting evidence of how easily speakers switch between the available linguistic resources to explore the interactional potential. Note that in line 21 there is a mismatch in how the speaker indexes the parking attendant. He uses both the intimate 2s enclitic form in *behet* ‘your’, and the 2p enclitic form *-tun* in *hægehesab-e-tun* ‘your reward’. Use of a 2p form to refer to the addressee usually marks distance or respect in relationships.

All these switching and mismatch constructions are about negotiating power in the interaction. N’s form of address use was informal 2s imperative; however, B used a combination of both deferential and casual style of speech. The analysis of address forms and other politeness features in this conversation shows that in modern Persian we may see old and new social,

cultural, and linguistic features collide in interaction. By no means has hierarchy been eliminated or substituted by intimacy and informality in contemporary Iran, but the synergy of formal and informal linguistic features are used as strategic tools in interaction.

7. Implications and conclusions

This paper highlights the effect on address forms of the Iranian post-evolutionary experience. As shown in the final example (the driver trying to convince the attendant to allow him to park in the hospital area) that the driver shifts from the more casual terms to more traditional honorifics in his efforts to influence the guard. This implies that both systems of address remain available to speakers and that pragmatic considerations influence the choice.

The analysis showed that the use of the address system in interactions in contemporary Iranian society is hybrid and versatile representing a range of address forms such as pre-revolutionary (honorific) forms, revolutionary (egalitarian) forms or a combination of both that constitute the contemporary forms of address and politeness. Switching between the deferential and informal politeness levels of address and referent forms in interaction index hybrid communicative goals such as attention to both speaker and hearer's positive and negative face wants. The analysis showed that politeness in address form choices is not only constrained by contextual features such as age, gender, and situation, but also by the interlocutors' stance-taking in interaction.

Great fluctuation and hybrid use of polite and casual forms of address are observed (such as title and pronoun switching, mismatch construction, 2h and 2s verb agreement switching). This is further highlighted in the strategic switching patterns between the deferential and casual language features such as address terms, pronouns, verbs, and enclitics. The switches serve as implicit language negotiation patterns or indirectly index (Ochs 1992) negotiation of power and solidarity in interaction.

There are various motivations for hybrid use of deferential and informal features of politeness in the interactions: i) to mark yourself off from ‘outsiders’, ii) to achieve a feeling of ‘solidarity’ with others and iii) to react to the pressures of the ‘linguistic marketplace’ (Bourdieu 1991). Linguistic marketplace forces may also be at work here. Bourdieu (1991) refers to this feature as speakers’ use of different options to assert social stances, and accrue social capital in different kinds of interactions.

We discussed revolutionary address forms such as the use of family endearment forms (like ‘brother’ and ‘sister’), which were prescribed as a show of solidarity. During the first 10 years after the revolution these forms were used, as deviation from their use indexed an anti-revolutionary ideology. However, people resisted this and favoured the non-prescribed address forms. For example, some women find it disrespectful to be addressed ‘Xahær’ sister by strangers. Thus we see mismatches and variations in use of address terms in contemporary Iranian society.

Address forms are a window to a society’s cultural and social variation. Thirty years after the revolution, variation in language can be seen in a general preference for eclectic use of language in the wider speech community. The linguistic realisation of these variations may be seen in the use of fewer honorific verbs, address terms, and pronouns as a marker of equality in society. In today’s Iran, we can observe an eclectic ethos of social practices such as deference and honorifics (pre-revolutionary), religious address forms (revolutionary), and contemporary colloquial terms of address illuminating how language is used as an amalgam of social norms and values among different generations.

APPENDIX A

Morphological glossary

agr	agreement
assoc	associative marker (-ina)
cl	classifier
comp	complementiser (ke)
def	definite marker (-æ)
dur	durative marker (mi-)
ez	the Ezafe vowel (-e)
imp	imperative
ind	indefinite marker (-i)
infl	inflection
neg	negative marker (næ-, ne)
om	object marker (-ro, -o)
part	participle
sg	singular
pl	plural
pres	present
subj	subjunctive marker (be-)
pro	pronoun
1s.cl, 2s.cl	pronominal possessive enclitics
1p	first person plural
2s	second person singular
2h/(2p)	second person plural

Transcription notation

Character Format

Italics	Transcription for Persian
Bold	Emphasis for transcription of Persian
Normal	Syntactic transliteration and English translation of Persian
Underline	To highlight linguistic features other than address form in speech

Symbols

()	Indicates unclear speech
(.)	A pause between utterances
=	Continuous utterances
:	Lengthened sound / syllable
[Overlap
< >	Material that is not part of talk being transcribed (e.g. laughter, loud aggressive voice)
↑	Indication of higher pitch
→	Marking transition point in address form usage

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