

POLITENESS IN TURKISH FACE-TO-FACE SERVICE ENCOUNTERS

Research Article

Şeyma KÖKCÜ* / Esmâ KOT ARTUNÇ**

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Abstract: Linguistic politeness which is related to how users behave in a specific context depending on sociocultural variables as part of little c culture has been investigated in a lot of studies due to the intertwined relationship between culture and language. One context in which politeness can be examined in various ways is service encounters allowing for transactional interactions, showing the ways native speakers use the language in those settings. This study investigated how the language used by shopkeepers differs in terms of politeness in face-to-face interaction across varied types of shops in Turkey. In this sense, opening/closing sequences, the way the shopkeepers address the customers and positive politeness and negative politeness strategies have been examined to explore the politeness strategies employed by the shopkeepers in service encounters. The participants of this qualitative case study were Turkish shopkeepers in 10 shops varying in terms of what they provide and the economic strength/prestige they possess as high and low. Data were collected by recording the language used by the units of analysis and observation. After transcribing the data, it was analyzed through discourse analysis by the researchers. The main findings of the study revealed that while there is no distinction in positive politeness strategies between the two types of shops, there are some differences in terms of opening and closing sequences in conversation, addressing customer and negative politeness strategies depending on the types of shops, showing that variation in politeness is evident in Turkish. Therefore, it can be argued that making learners of Turkish gain an awareness of these linguistic variations is important for them to communicate appropriately in these settings.

Keywords: Addressing terms, closings, openings, politeness strategies, service encounters.

TÜRKÇE YÜZ YÜZE HİZMET SUNUMLARINDA KİBARLIK

Araştırma Makalesi

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Özet: Küçük k kültürünün de bir parçası olarak dil kullanıcılarının belli bir bağlamda sosyokültürel değişkenlere bağlı olarak dili nasıl kullandıklarıyla ilgili olan dilbilimsel kibarlık, dil ve kültür arasındaki ilişkiden dolayı çok sayıda çalışmada incelenmektedir. Dilde kibarlığın çeşitli yönlerden incelenebildiği bağlamlardan biri de alım satım dayanan bildirişimlere izin veren hizmet sunumlarıdır. Bu çalışmada, mağaza çalışanlarının kullandıkları dilin Türkiye'deki çeşitli yönlerden değişen mağazalardaki yüz yüze bildirişimdeki kibarlık yönünden nasıl farklılık gösterdiği incelenmektedir. Bu bağlamda, hizmet sunumlarındaki mağaza/dükkân görevlileri tarafından kullanılan giriş ifadeleri, kapanış ifadeleri, çalışanların müşterilere seslenme ifadeleri, olumlu kibarlık ve olumsuz kibarlık stratejileri incelenmiştir. Nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden durum çalışması olan araştırmanın katılımcıları sağladıkları hizmet ve ekonomik güç ve saygınlık yönünden yüksek ve düşük güç/saygınlık olarak çeşitlilik gösteren 10 mağazada/dükkânda çalışan mağaza görevlilerinden oluşmaktadır. Veri, doğal konuşma kaydı ve gözlem yoluyla elde edilmiştir. Konuşma kayıtları yazıya döküldükten sonra söylem çözümlemesi yoluyla araştırmacılar tarafından çözümlenmiştir. Elde edilen bulgular iki dükkân/mağaza türü arasında olumlu kibarlık stratejileri bakımından bir fark olmadığını ancak bildirişime giriş, bildirişimi sonlandırma ve müşterilere seslenme ifadeleri ve olumsuz incelik stratejileri yönünden farklılıklar olduğunu ortaya

* Öğr. Gör.; Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu, seyma.kokcu@gop.edu.tr
 0000-0002-0043-1076

** Öğr. Gör.; İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu, kotartunc@itu.edu.tr
 0000-0001-9561-3122

çıkarmıştır. Bu bulgulara dayanarak Türkçede dilbilimsel kibarlığın çeşitlilik gösterdiği ve bu nedenle bu tür bağlamlarda düzgün iletişim kurabilmek için yabancı/ikinci dil Türkçe öğrencilerinin bu çeşitliliğe ilişkin farkındalık kazanmasının önemli olduğu ileri sürülebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Açılış ifadeleri, hitap ifadeleri, hizmet sunumları, kapanış ifadeleri, kibarlık stratejileri.

Introduction

As part of the little c culture, service encounters play a big role in language users' everyday life and they are one of the settings in which linguistic politeness can be observed. Service encounters are settings which allow natural interaction between shopkeepers and customers. During these interactions, which include communicative acts such as greetings, leave-takings and offers, linguistic politeness is an essential phenomenon for shopkeepers. Shopkeepers are supposed to be polite towards the customers due to the factors such as power and social distance. Thus, it is of paramount importance to investigate varying politeness aspects of the interaction taking place in these settings. Variables like power and social distance between the speakers and their age and sex may affect the way they use the language. To communicate appropriately in a certain setting with its unique contextual factors, language users need to be aware of these variables and adjust their language use accordingly. Given that second language (L2) learners of Turkish in Turkey also need to visit a lot of service encounters to satisfy their needs, it is equally important for them to have an awareness of the politeness variables of Turkish in order to avoid pragmatic transfer from their L1 and any misunderstandings between the interlocutors. Linguistic politeness may change across languages and there is no fixed use of interactional patterns in terms of politeness. Therefore, making the students exposed to varying politeness strategies can help them gain the awareness of how the language can be used differently in specific contexts.

There are some studies investigating the linguistic politeness in service encounters (e.g., Bayyurt & Bayraktaroğlu, 2001; Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2006; Ryoo, 2005); however, the literature needs more studies exploring whether the politeness strategies employed by the shopkeepers vary depending on the types of shops (i.e., low status and high-status shops). Therefore, the present study aims to investigate how the language used by shopkeepers differs in terms of politeness across varied types of shops. In the study, politeness is operationalized as opening/closing sequences, the way the shopkeepers address the customers, and positive/negative politeness strategies. In this regard, the research questions are:

- 1) How do opening and closing sequences used by shopkeepers vary while talking to the customers?
- 2) How does the way the shopkeepers address the customers differ in terms of their use of addressee pronouns and endearment terms?

- 3) How do positive and negative politeness strategies used by the shopkeepers vary while talking to the customers?

1. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Politeness is defined as “a complex system for softening face threats” by Brown and Levinson (1978, p.1) and it has been investigated in several studies in relation to various fields such as sociology, anthropology and sociolinguistics since it is one of the key points of effective communication. Watts, Ide and Ehlich (1992) propose that linguistic politeness, which refers to “verbal strategies for keeping social interaction friction free” (Nwoye, 1992, p. 309), is an important aspect of social interaction. For this reason, many arguments have been put forward on linguistic politeness to find out the role of communication strategies, which are regarded as socioculturally appropriate by the society (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Goffman, 1967; Leech, 1983; Lakoff, 1977, Watts et al., 1992).

One of the most influential views on politeness is the model proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978). The politeness model of Brown and Levinson (1978) comprises strategies used to redress negative feelings against a person to save his /her face. The concept of face in their model comes from Goffman’s theory of face (1967). They explain the notion of face by stating that “face is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained and enhanced and must be constantly attended to in interaction” (p. 61). In this regard, they state that people have two faces, which are positive and negative (Brown & Levinson, 1978). Negative face is defined as “the want of every ‘competent adult member’ that his actions be unimpeded by others”, and positive face is referred to as “the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others” (p. 62). In other words, negative face indicates the desire to have freedom and autonomy to act, and positive face refers to the desire to be admired by other people. Another concept in Brown and Levinson’s (1978) politeness model is the Face Threatening Acts (FTA) which are defined as any action that can damage the face of the hearer, the speaker or both. FTAs tend to occur frequently and they can be softened by employing politeness strategies. These strategies include bald-on record, positive and negative politeness strategies. Bald on record strategies are “the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way possible (for example, for a request, saying ‘Do X’)” (p. 68). Positive politeness is used to address the positive face of the hearer. Brown and Levinson (1978) describes positive politeness in detail as follows:

Positive politeness utterances are used as a kind of metaphorical extension of intimacy, to imply common ground or sharing of wants to a limited extent even between strangers who perceive themselves, for the purposes of the interaction, as somehow similar. For the same reason, positive-politeness techniques are usable not only for FTA redress, but in general as a kind of social accelerator (p. 103).

Some addressing terms or vocabulary items which are expected to be favoured by the hearer such as “Ayşeciğim, tatlım, canım, güzelim, hey yakışıklı, aslan kardeşim” (My dear Ayşe, honey, honey, beauty, hey handsome, my dear brother) are examples to positive politeness in Turkish (Turan, 2011, p. 135). As to the negative politeness, it aims to redress the hearer’s negative face. These strategies “consist in assurances that the speaker recognizes and respects the addressee’s negative-face wants and will not (or will only minimally) interfere with the addressee’s freedom of action” (p. 68). Thus, negative politeness is related to *formality* and *self-effacement*. Addressing terms like “Hanımefendi/Beyefendi, Ayşe Hanım, Ahmet Bey” (Madame/Sir, Miss/Mrs Ayşe, Mr. Ahmet) are some examples of negative politeness in Turkish (Turan, 2011, p. 135).

During an interaction, the use of politeness strategies and the choice of pronouns can be affected by some factors such as power (social status) and social distance (degree of closeness) (Kong, 1998). According to Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2006), power and social distance have dynamic characteristics and they create asymmetrical patterns (i.e., unequal distribution of power between the speaker and hearer like employee and client). People who have the higher power (e.g., employers) do not feel the need to redress the negative face of the ones who have less power (e.g., employees) (Kong, 1998). However, Gavrusseva (1995) states that employees can fight against the asymmetric relationship with the clients by making changes in the structures they use although they have the drawback of being in lower power. Bayyurt and Bayraktaroglu (2001) also propose that the two main factors influencing the choice of pronouns are power and solidarity. Even though power and solidarity seem to be unrelated, they are associated with one another since one requires the other one. After examining the use of address pronouns in Turkish, König (1990) also claims that the choice of pronouns depends on three major factors; biological, psychological and sociological. Biological refers to the features such as age and gender whereas psychological refers to closeness and solidarity, and sociological refers to social class and social status. Therefore, it can be claimed that in certain languages, interlocutors determine whether they will use the second person singular pronoun (e.g., ‘Sen’ in Turkish, less formal form) or the second person plural one (e.g., ‘Siz’ in Turkish, more formal form) depending on the addressee’s age, status, gender and other sociological factors.

Another determining factor affecting power and solidarity is the frequency of contact between interlocutors (e.g., representatives of the service encounter and the customer) which also influences the politeness or the use of pronouns in service encounters. In addition to the one-time interactions between the participants who have not had any contact earlier and possibly will not have in the future as well, there is also the case of repeated interactions (Márquez Reiter & Bou-Franch, 2017). Bayyurt and Bayraktaroglu (2001) investigated the role of frequency of contact in politeness in service encounters and put forward that the more familiar the interlocutors are, the more they use the second person singular pronoun when addressing the other speaker.

Politeness can be examined in many settings and one of these is service encounters which refer to “personal interactions between customers and employees of service firms” (Keaveney, 1995, p. 76) and “the interaction being oriented to the satisfaction of the customer's presumed desire for some service and the server's obligation to provide that service” (Merrit, 1976, p. 321). Service encounters are defined as an institutional genre consisting of two participants as one representing the related service encounter and the other who is not necessarily a special person (Bailey, 1997; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2005; Márquez Reiter & Bou-Franch, 2005). According to Economidou-Kogetsidis (2005) qualities like “brevity, explicitness, limited range of speech acts, with predominance of requests, and stability in participants’ roles, rights and obligations” are attributed to the structure of service encounters. In a similar vein, Bayyurt and Bayraktaroğlu (2001) define service encounters as the speakers interacting for the first time and who will probably not encounter once again in the future. The interaction between the participants in service encounters is claimed to be “task-oriented” by Márquez Reiter and Bou-Franch (2017, p. 666). What they are expected to say is already prescribed and this interaction is sort of in the form of role-playing (Bayyurt & Bayraktaroğlu, 2001). Bailey (1997) divides the type of interaction in service encounters into two depending on the length of the contact as *socially minimal* and *socially expanded* service encounters. The former refers to the kind encounter which is “limited to no more than greetings/openings, negotiation of the exchange, and closings” (p. 333). The interaction in this kind of service encounter merely focuses on providing service by excluding more personal topics like actions in the outside world. As to the *socially expanded* service encounters, in addition to the basic structure of the transaction explained above, these encounters are comprised of practices increasing *interpersonal involvement* “i.e., involvement politeness strategies such as making jokes or small-talk, discussing personal experiences from outside the store, and explicitly referring to the personal relationship between customer and storekeeper” (p. 333). In a similar vein, building rapport is claimed to be serving the transactional aim of the service encounter as well in addition to the interpersonal by fostering customer’s degree of contentment (Márquez Reiter & Bou-Franch, 2017). For this reason, rapport management can increase the customer’s desire to buy something, form a sense of loyalty toward the shop or the brand and thus get more customers (Gremler & Gwinner, 2000). Furthermore, Gremler and Gwimmer (2000) claims that rapport between the shopkeeper/service provider and the customer can be built “by (a) relating to the customer’s needs, (b) caring about the customer’s service outcome, and/or (c) using humor to place the customer at ease, without any appreciable lengthening of the transaction and without the need for multiple interactions with the same employee” (p. 100).

In service encounters, a typical interaction consists of an “opening sequence” and a “closing sequence” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2006, p. 84). The opening sequence includes *greeting*, *small talk* (e.g., talking about weather) and the closing sequence consists of *well-wishing*, *requests* (e.g., request for payment) and *thanking* (Kerbrat-Orecchioni,

2006). According to David, Ching Hei and DeAlwis (2012) opening and closing sequences are significant in communication as those resources enable the speakers to start the conversation smoothly and they are the sign of politeness in interaction. It is further claimed that opening sequences can be ignored a lot; however, the closing sequences are usually employed in talk-in-interaction (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2006). Furthermore, compliment is another interactional pattern which is highly employed in service encounters (Ryoo, 2005). It is argued that applying the speech act of compliment creates a secure topic for conversation as it does not necessitate the interactants, who mostly do not know each other in service encounters, to give much personal information (Ryoo, 2005). In service encounters, shopkeepers are generally expected to be polite to the customers who have the higher power in their interaction. The study by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2006) about the shops in France showed that all interactions include politeness markers and unlike some few situations in which the client is not polite or disturbing, the shopkeepers behave in a polite manner. As to the openings and closings in Turkish service encounters, depending on the range of power and social distance between the speakers and also sometimes their gender and age, openings by shopkeepers in Turkish service encounters include greeting forms like *Merhaba* (Hello), *Selam* (Greetings), *Hoş geldiniz* (Welcome), *Buyurun!* (Come in!), *Nasil yardımcı olabilirim?* (How can I help you?). In addition, attention getters including *Pardon* (Excuse me), *Bakar mısınız?* (Would you mind looking here?), *Affedersiniz/Affedersin* (Excuse me) can be applied by both shopkeepers and customers during the opening of the interaction. Based on the aforementioned variables, addressing terms in these greetings can be honorific titles like *Hanım* (Lady/Ms.), *Bey* (Mr./Sir), *Hanımefendi* (Madam), *Beyefendi* (Sir), which are regarded as formal, and kinship terms for non-relatives, which are more informal, such as *Abla* (elder sister), *Abi* (elder brother), *Kızım* (my daughter), *Oğlum* (My son), *Teyze* (Maternal aunt), *Amca* (Paternal uncle). When it comes to the closings, thanking phrases like *Teşekkürler* (Thanks), *Sağ olun* (Thanks) and well-wishing phrases such as *Kolay gelsin* (May it be easy), *Hayırlı işler* (Blessed working). In their study investigating the addressing terms in service encounters in Turkey, Bayyurt and Bayraktaroğlu (2001) found that economic strength of the context, namely service encounter had an important effect on the use of addressing terms by the customers. It was seen that while making requests in economically strong/high status contexts, the participants used addressing terms showing respect to the shopkeeper.

2. Methodology

2.1. Setting and Participants

The unit of analysis in this study was shopkeepers working in various shops such as clothes stores, shoe stores and hairdressers in Ankara, Turkey. The shopkeepers were 7 female and 3 male participants aged between 30-40. The number of shops observed by the researchers was 10 as five high-status and five low-status shops in terms of the economic power and prestige they have. The reason why researchers focused on two

different kinds of service encounters in terms of the economic prestige they have is that it is argued that the more affluent the stores are, the more distant the customers keep themselves from the shopkeepers, affecting the attitude of the shopkeeper against the customer in return (Bayyurt & Bayraktaroğlu, 2001). Therefore, in this study, it was aimed to see if the language used by shopkeepers differs across the economic strength of the store they work. To begin with, two of the low-status shops were clothes stores selling women's clothes for reasonably low prices. The other three low-status service encounters were two hairdressers and a shoe store. As to the high-status shops, three of them were famous fashion brand's stores selling men's and women's clothes for higher prices and the other two were one worldwide famous cosmetics store and one shoe store.

2.2. Research Design and Data Collection

In this qualitative case study, data was collected through the observation and recordings of natural interaction in service encounter contexts and discourse analysis was applied to analyze the data. The study was carried out in Ankara, in 2017 and only the voluntary participants were included in the study. As the participation was only based on a voluntary basis, data collection took around ten hours by conducting the visits to the service encounters in four different days in two weeks. Before collecting the data, the researchers observed the target areas for two days and made a list of the possible 18 shops to be visited by dividing them into two as high-status and low-status shops depending on the economic strength/prestige they possess. Among these 18, only the shopkeepers from 10 shops as five from each group volunteered to participate. To collect the data, the researchers observed the language behavior between the shopkeepers and the customer in its natural context and the recordings were made. Before the recordings, one of the researchers informed the shopkeepers about the study and asked for their consent for making a recording of the natural interaction in their store without referring to the focus of the recording and study in order not to damage the natural form of data. On the other hand, as asking the actual customers' consent would distort the natural data, the other researcher pretended to be a customer by entering the store later as a random customer and had two-three-minute conversations with the shopkeepers when there were not any other customers around. At the end of the data collection, total amount of recordings were around 28 minutes.

2.3. Data Analysis

In order to analyze the politeness strategies employed by the shopkeepers, first of all, the recorded conversations were transcribed by the researchers. After the audio-recordings were transcribed, discourse analysis was applied in order to identify the politeness strategies used by the participants while talking to the customer. Following this process, the researchers separately examined the data under the subtitles; opening and closing sequences, addressing customer, positive politeness strategies and negative politeness strategies the shopkeepers applied. Namely, the data was analyzed according

to the related subtitle. The analyses obtained from two groups of shops, one consisting of high-status shops and the other including low-status shops, were compared to find out if there were any similarities or differences between them.

To ensure the reliability of consensus and disagreement between the researchers as coders/raters, firstly the analyses of classifying the data under the correct subtitle by both raters, namely the researchers, were compared. Discrepancies were discussed and changes were made in the categorization and evaluation of the data accordingly. Following that, the formula suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) (Reliability = consensus / consensus+disagreement) was run. According to the result of the formula, the internal consistency between the researchers was 92%, meaning that the reliability was obtained as the result was above 75%.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Opening Sequence

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, openings in an interaction include greetings and small talk. In the present study, the most common opening was greetings. As is stated by Bayyurt and Bayraktaroglu (2001), greetings were used as attention-getters and as a means of first contact as well as showing how the shopkeepers would address the customers considering power and solidarity. In low-status shops, the shopkeepers used '*Hoş geldiniz*' (Welcome) (n: 3) and '*Buyurun*' (n: 2) (used in the function of '*What would you like?*') while in high-status shops only '*Hoş geldiniz*' (n: 2) was used as an opening sequence (Table 1).

Table 1

Opening Sequences in Low-Status and High-Status Shops

Opening sequence phrases used	Frequency in low-status shops	Frequency in high-status shops
Hoş geldiniz (Welcome)	3	2
Buyurun (used in the function of 'What would you like?')	2	0
Nasıl yardımcı olabilirim? (How can I help you?)	2	0
Ne aramıştınız? (What are you looking for)	1	0
Hoşgeldiniz kızlar! (Welcome girls!)	2	0
Lack of opening sequence phrases by the shopkeepers	0	3

The reason why the high-status shops used only '*Hoşgeldiniz*' may be that these shops do not feel obliged to convince the customers to sell products as much as the low-status shops do since these shops are big brands and have regular customers. Moreover, in low-status shops, shopkeepers had a tendency to maintain the flow of the conversation by asking additional questions such as '*Nasıl yardımcı olabilirim?*' (How can I help you?) (n: 2), '*Ne aramıştınız?*' (What are you looking for) (n: 1) after saying '*Buyurun?*' (What would you like?). These kinds of questions could be regarded as persuasive language elements since they covertly make the customer think that s/he has to look for something. In addition, in two of the low-status shops, shopkeepers

welcomed the customers with a relatively informal language ‘*Hoş geldiniz kızlar!*’ (*Welcome girls!*), which was not observed at all in high-status shops. It can be argued that the shopkeepers in low-status shops tried to manage rapport with the customer by using a friendly language. It was also observed that the customers mostly started the opening sequence in most of the high-status shops, whereas in low-status shops, the shopkeepers initiated the opening sequence, which displayed consistency with the results of the study by Ryoo (2005).

The results revealed that the shopkeepers in three high-status shops did not initiate an opening sequence with the customers whereas opening sequences were used by the shopkeepers in low-status shops.

Excerpt 1: A high-status clothes shop

Customer: Pardon! (Excuse me!)

Shopkeeper: Buyurun? (Yes?)

Customer: Bu pantolonun başka rengi var mı? (Is there a different color of these pants?)

Excerpt 2: A low-status clothes shop

Shopkeeper: Buyurun? Nasıl yardımcı olabilirim? (Yes? How can I help you?)

Customer: Elbise bakıyorum. (I am looking for a dress.)

As can be seen in Excerpt 1, the results regarding high-status shops are in line with what is suggested by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2006) in that openings can be ignored a lot in talk-in-interaction. However, it can be asserted that shopkeepers in low-status shops employed the opening sequences in the form of greetings, in particular for the purpose of rapport building and to pave the way for their persuasive language.

3.2. Closing Sequence

Closings in service encounters involve well-wishing, requests and thanking. In this study, it was observed that participants usually used well-wishing phrases such as ‘*İyi günler*’ (*Have a good day*) (n: 3) and ‘*Hoşça kalın*’ (*Goodbye*) (n: 2). However, in high-status shops, closings were initiated by the customers whereas in low-status shops, they were initiated by the shopkeepers. In other words, in high-status shops, firstly the customers used a thanking phrase such as ‘*Teşekkürler*’ (*Thank you*) or a well-wishing phrase like ‘*Kolay gelsin*’ (*May it be easy*) and in return shopkeepers responded by saying ‘*Rica ederim*’ (*You are welcome*) and ‘*Sağolun*’ (*Thanks*) respectively (Table 2).

Table 2

Closing Sequences in Low-Status and High-Status Shops

Closing sequence phrases used	Frequency in low-status shops	Frequency in high-status shops
İyi günler (Have a good day)	3	0

Hoşça kalın (Goodbye)	2	0
Hoşça kalın, yine bekleriz (Bye, hope to see you again)	2	0
Initiation of the closing sequence by the customers	0	5

In the study by David, Ching Hei and DeAlwis (2012), the results revealed that Malaysian shopkeepers do not feel the need to use closings. In this respect, it can be argued that closings may not always be employed by the customers or the shopkeepers. On the other hand, in low-status shops, the shopkeepers started the closing sequence themselves by saying '*Hoşça kalın, yine bekleriz*' (n: 2) (*Bye, hope to see you again*). This finding might also be an indication of persuasive language used by the shopkeepers in low-status shops.

Although it is claimed by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2006) that speakers tend to use closings more in talk-in-interaction while they ignore openings, the results of the present study show the opposite regarding closings since the participants did not employ any of them in high-status shops. Considering power and solidarity, the reason why shopkeepers did not interact with the customer in high-status shops by using closing sequences might be attributed to the distant relationship between them.

3.3. Addressing Customers

The findings regarding the way the shopkeepers addressed the customer showed that shopkeepers working at high-status shops always used the second person plural '*siz*' (*you*) to address the customer. Nevertheless, second person singular (n: 3) was used by shopkeepers as well as second person plural (n: 2) in low-status shops. For example, a shopkeeper working at one of the low-status clothes shops responded to the customer by saying '*Elbise yok, canım*' (*We don't sell dresses, honey.*) when they asked if they had any dress (Table 3).

Table 3

The Language used to Address Customers in Low-Status and High-Status Shops

The language used when addressing the customer	Frequency in low-status shops	Frequency in high-status shops
Second person plural ' <i>siz</i> ' (<i>you</i>)	2	5
Second person singular ' <i>sen</i> ' (<i>you</i>)	3	0
Switch to second person singular ' <i>sen</i> ' (<i>you</i>) as the conversation proceeds	2	0

In Bayyurt and Bayraktaroglu (2001), it is discussed that in Turkish, interlocutors do not always have to use a pronoun to indicate the power and solidarity relationship between them. Since Turkish is an agglutinative language, speakers might show it with the suffixes they add. Furthermore, it can be claimed in the sentences which do not require any addressee pronouns (e.g. *Elbise yok, canım* / *We don't sell dresses, honey*), power and solidarity concepts can be observed in endearment terms such as '*canım*'/'honey'.

Furthermore, in two low-status shops, the shopkeepers first used the second person plural 'siz' (you), but they continued the conversation by using second person singular 'sen' (you) as the time passed.

Excerpt 3: A low-status hairdresser-1

Customer: Boya hemen geçer mi? (Does the hair dye last long?)

Hairdresser: Evet, sürekli boyatmanız gerekir. (Yes, you need to have it dyed continuously.)

...

Customer: Fiyatını öğrenebilir miyim? Sadece uçlarını boyatmak istiyorum. (How much does it cost? I only want to have my hair tips dyed.)

Hairdresser: Ne kadar istiyorsun mesela? (Can you show me that part?)

Excerpt 4: A low-status clothes shop

Customer: Çorap bakıyorum. (I'm looking for socks.)

Shopkeeper: Nasıl bir şey istersiniz? (What kind of socks do you want?)

...

Shopkeeper: Bunlara da bi bak istersen. (Have a look at those.)

In Bayyurt and Bayraktaroglu (2001), the second person singular was never used by shopkeepers working in chic fashion-shops (e.g., Vakko) taking into account the fact that the customers and shopkeepers in such high-status shops regard that they have a social distance between them, which refers to solidarity again. In these two low-status shops in this study, while in the opening sequence, the shopkeepers kept their relationship distant with the customer and used the second person plural (i.e., Siz), they later on switched to the second person singular, which might have resulted from some biological, psychological or sociological factors discussed by König (1990).

On the other hand, in another hairdresser, the customer was addressed with the second person singular first, and then with the second person plural pronoun.

Excerpt 5: A low-status hairdresser- 2

Shopkeeper: Nasıl kestirmek istiyorsun? (How would you like to have your hair cut?)

Customer: Kısa lütfen. (Short, please.)

...

Shopkeeper: Okuyor musun yoksa çalışıyor musun? (Do you study or work?)

Customer: Çalışıyorum, bir üniversitede öğretim görevlisiyim. (I do work, I am a lecturer at a university.)

Shopkeeper: *Aaa hocam, kusura bakmayın. (Oh, sorry.)*

As is clear in Excerpt 5, the shopkeeper started the conversation with the second person singular; however, after learning that the customer works as a lecturer at a university, the shopkeeper switched to the second person plural pronoun and never used the second person singular one again. It can be claimed in this context that the shopkeeper might have used the second person singular pronoun first taking into consideration the biological factors such as age and gender stated by König (1990). Nevertheless, after asking about the customer's profession, the service provider started to use the second person plural pronoun, which might be attributed to sociological factors such as social status. It is also possible to discuss the psychological factors such as power and solidarity in this case as the service provider distanced the relationship, he had with the customer considering that he had lower power.

3.4. Positive Politeness Strategies

In this study, the only positive politeness strategy, applied by the shopkeepers in both high-status and low-status shops, was complimenting, which was also found in the study by Ryoo (2005) (Table 4).

Table 4

Positive Politeness Strategy in Low-Status and High-Status Shops

Positive politeness strategy	Frequency in low-status shops	Frequency in high-status shops
Complimenting	1	1

Therefore, there was no distinction between the two types of shops in terms of using positive politeness strategies with the customer. It can be argued that through complimenting, the shopkeepers might have aimed to manage a friendly conversation with the customer.

Excerpt 6: A high-status cosmetics store

Shopkeeper: *Cildiniz bebek gibi. (Your skin is like a baby's skin.)*

Customer: *Aa teşekkürler. (Oh thanks.)*

Excerpt 7: A low-status clothes store

Customer: *Emin olamadım bedeninden. (I'm not sure about the size.)*

Shopkeeper: *Bence size çok yakıştı, beliniz de çok ince zaten. (I think it looks perfect on you, your waist is quite thin as well.)*

The interaction between the customer and the shopkeepers in Excerpt 6 and 7 can be regarded as socially expanded for it engages interpersonal involvement (Bailey, 1997). Furthermore, it can be claimed that the shopkeepers in both low-status and high-status shops might have tried to build rapport with the customer by using positive politeness strategies with the intention of getting the customer to buy something (Gremler &

Gwinner, 2000). It can be further argued that the shopkeepers may have attempted to lead the customer to buy the related product in an indirect way by complimenting rather than insisting overtly.

3.5. Negative Politeness Strategies

As to the negative politeness strategies, it was discovered that the most common negative politeness strategy was asking the customer if they need any help and it was observed only in low-status shops (Table 5).

Table 5

Negative Politeness Strategies in Low-Status and High-Status Shops

Negative politeness utterance	Frequency in low-status shops	Frequency in high-status shops
Nasıl yardımcı olalım? (How can I help you?)	1	0
Özellikle aradığınız bir şey var mı? (Are you specifically looking for something?)	1	0

While the customer was walking around, the shopkeepers asked them what they were looking for although the customer did not ask for their help.

Excerpt 8: A low-status shoes store

Shopkeeper: Nasıl yardımcı olalım? (How can I help you?)

Customer: Sadece bakıyorum. (I'm just looking.)

Excerpt 9: A low-status clothes store:

Shopkeeper: Özellikle aradığınız bir şey var mı? (Are you specifically looking for something?)

Customer: Hayır, genel bakıyorum. (No, I'm just looking.)

It can be argued that in low-status shops, the shopkeepers attempted to build rapport with the customer by initiating an opening sequence first, and then by using some negative politeness strategies. The shopkeepers in low-status shops disregarded the asymmetric relationship and the power and solidarity issues, and they tended to be more task-oriented (Márquez Reiter and Bou-Franch, 2017). More specifically, the shopkeepers in low-status shops can be claimed to have used a prescribed language in order to convince the customer to buy a product regardless of the close or distant relationship they had with the customer. Still, the shopkeepers working in high-status shops did not have such a concern. For this reason, they did not resort to any negative face strategies.

Conclusion

In this study, in low-status shops, shopkeepers initiated both opening and closing sequences themselves. To put it more simply, the shopkeepers started the conversation by using opening phrases such as '*Hoş geldiniz*' (Welcome) and '*Buyurun*' (Come in)

and they maintained the conversation by asking some questions such as ‘*Nasıl yardımcı olabilirim?*’ (How can I help you?) and ‘*Özellikle aradığınız bir şey var mı?*’ (Are you specifically looking for something?). On the other hand, in most of the high-status shops, the opening and closing sequences were started by the customer by asking for help in general. In this regard, it can be argued that the reason why the shopkeepers in low-status started the conversation is that they are more concerned about selling products. For this reason, they tend to maintain the conversation to convince the customers to buy a product.

When it comes to the way the shopkeepers addressed the customer, it was found that the shopkeepers in low-status shops sometimes used the second person singular ‘*sen*’ (you) whereas the ones in high-status shops always used the second person plural ‘*siz*’ (you). The findings indicate that the shopkeepers in low-status shops try to build rapport with the customer because the second person singular is used while addressing somebody you are close to. Moreover, biological, psychological or sociological factors along with power and solidarity also determine the choice of pronouns in both types of shops.

As to the positive and negative politeness strategies adopted by the shopkeepers, no difference was found between the low-status and high-status shops in terms of positive politeness strategies since the shopkeepers in both types of shops complimented the customer to address her positive face. However, negative politeness strategies were applied only in low-status shops (i.e., *Nasıl yardımcı olabilirim?*). As aforementioned above, the shopkeepers in low-status shops use a prescribed language by resorting to negative politeness strategies due to their concerns about selling products.

Studying language teaching and culture has always been an interest to researchers due to the intertwined relationship between these two concepts. Kramsch (2013) points out that while ‘big C’ culture is related to the literature and arts of a target language (TL), ‘little c’ culture is about “the native speakers’ ways of behaving, eating, talking, dwelling, their customs, their beliefs and values” (p. 65). In this sense, the present study applies to the little c culture as it shows what language to use or to be exposed to in a lower or higher status shop. Moreover, it is of great importance to provide students in language classes with various linguistic politeness strategies as they need to practice those strategies when they visit service encounters to meet their needs in everyday life. For this reason, making learners exposed to various politeness strategies is quite important to develop their sociolinguistic and pragmatic abilities, leading to communicate appropriately with native speakers of the TL. To achieve this, material designers and textbook authors need to take sociolinguistic and pragmatic features of the TL into consideration while developing teaching materials and teachers should have an awareness of these sociolinguistic varieties to integrate into their teaching as well. This is especially crucial to learners of Turkish in foreign language contexts since the most important sources of input are the textbooks and teachers in this context. Being exposed to the authentic input, namely the sociolinguistic and pragmatic features of Turkish, outside the classroom can compensate for the lack of authentic input in the

textbook or classroom for the L2 learners studying in Turkey while there is no equal opportunity for the foreign language learners studying abroad.

There are some limitations of this study. Firstly, a larger number of shops could be observed to collect data. Secondly, although the shops were classified based on what they sell, the number of shops in each category was not equal in the present study. Thus, a further study can be carried out with an equal number of shops and more categories can be added in order to enrich the data. Lastly, since the shopkeepers were informed about the recordings beforehand to get their consent, they were somehow expecting to be recorded by that customer (researcher), which might have resulted in a harm to the natural language behavior of the shopkeepers. Therefore, the same shops can be visited on the following days to record the same participants and to make sure there is no distortion of natural interaction. In this regard, further studies can be done on this topic by taking into consideration these limitations to have deeper information.

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Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet

Küçük k kültürünün de bir parçası olan hizmet sunumları (service encounters), dil kullanıcılarının günlük hayatında önemli bir yere sahiptir ve bu alanlar, dilbilimsel kibarlığın gözlemlenebildiği bağamlardan biridir. Hizmet sunumu esnasında mağaza/dükkân çalışanlarının güç ve sosyal mesafe gibi etkenlerden dolayı müşterilere karşı kibar olmaları beklenmektedir ve bu etkenler bildirişim esnasında dilin nasıl kullanıldığını da etkilemektedir. Bu sebeple, bu iletişim bağamlarında gerçekleşen bildirişimlerin kibarlık açısından gösterdikleri çeşitliliklerin incelenmesi ve bu çeşitliliklerin hedef dil öğrencileri tarafından bilinmesi oldukça önemlidir. Türkiye’de Türkçe öğrenen ikinci dil (D2) öğrencileri de sosyal aktörler olarak günlük yaşamdaki ihtiyaçlarını karşılamak için pek çok hizmet sunumu bildirişimine katılmaktadır. Bu bildirişimler esnasında bildirişim katılımcıları (interlocutors) arasında herhangi bir iletişim aksaklığı olmaması için öğrencilerin Türkçenin dilbilimsel kibarlık değişkelerine ilişkin farkındalığa sahip olmaları büyük önem taşımaktadır.

Hizmet sunumlarında dilbilimsel kibarlığı inceleyen bazı çalışmalar mevcut olsa da (Bayyurt & Bayraktaroğlu, 2001; Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2006; Ryoo, 2005) mağazaların/dükkânların ekonomik gücüne göre dilbilimsel kibarlığın nasıl değiştiği üzerine yeterince çalışma olmadığı görülmektedir. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma farklı mağazalarda/dükkânlarda çalışanlar tarafından kullanılan dilin kibarlık açısından ne tür çeşitlilik gösterdiğini incelemeyi hedeflemektedir. Çalışmada kibarlık, bildirişime giriş (opening sequence), bildirişimi sonlandırma (closing sequence), müşterilere seslenme ve olumlu ve olumsuz kibarlık stratejileri bakımından incelenmektedir. Bu bağlamda, araştırmada şu sorulara yanıt aranmaktadır:

1. Mağaza/Dükkân görevlilerinin müşterilerle konuşurken kullandıkları bildirişime giriş ve sonlandırma ifadeleri ne tür çeşitlilik göstermektedir?
2. Mağaza/Dükkân görevlilerinin müşterilere hitap ederken kullandıkları hitap zamirleri ve yakınlık/sevgi sözcükleri ne tür çeşitlilik göstermektedir?
3. Mağaza/Dükkân görevlilerinin müşterilerle konuşurken kullandıkları olumlu ve olumsuz incelik stratejileri ne tür çeşitlilik göstermektedir?

Nitel veriye dayalı bir durum çalışması olan araştırma, Ankara, Türkiye’de çeşitli hizmet sunumu alanlarında çalışan ve yaşları 30-40 arasında değişen yedi kadın ve üç erkek katılımcıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Örnekleme oluşturan mağazalar/hizmet sunumu alanları ekonomik güçlerine göre beş yüksek-konumlu (high-status) ve beş düşük-konumlu (low-status) olmak üzere toplam 10 adettir. Çalışmada ekonomik güç bakımından iki farklı grup seçilerek çalışanların kullandıkları dilin kibarlık açısından mağazanın ekonomik gücüne göre değişip değişmediğinin incelenmesi hedeflenmiştir.

Çalışmada veri, gözlem yoluyla ve hizmet sunumu bağamlarında araştırmacılardan birinin müşteri olarak çalışanlarla gerçekleştirdiği doğal bildirişimlerin kaydedilmesiyle

toplanmıştır. Kayıtlardan önce, verinin doğallığını bozmamak amacıyla çalışmanın odak noktasına değinmeden katılımcılara çalışma hakkında bilgi verilerek mağazadaki doğal bildirişimi kaydetmek üzere izinleri istenmiş ve gönüllü katılımı kabul eden katılımcıların bildirişimleri kaydedilmiştir.

Veri analizi için doğal konuşma kayıtları araştırmacılar tarafından yazıya geçirildikten sonra elde edilen veri her iki araştırmacı tarafından söylem çözümlemesi yoluyla incelenmiştir. Veri, araştırmacıların her biri tarafından çalışmanın başında incelenmesi hedeflenen başlıklar olan bildirişime giriş, bildirişimi sonlandırma, olumlu incelik stratejileri ve olumsuz stratejileri alt başlıkları altında sınıflandırılarak analiz edilmiştir. Daha sonra, elde edilen veri yüksek-konumlu ve düşük-konumlu mağazalar arasında dilbilimsel kibarlık yönünden benzerlik ve farklılık olup olmadığını bulmak amacıyla kıyaslanarak incelenmiştir.

Elde edilen bulgular, katılımcılar tarafından en sık kullanılan bildirişim başlatıcının iletişimde dikkat çekme aracı işlevi olan selamlama olduğunu göstermiştir. Düşük-konumlu mağazalarda çalışanlar bildirişimi başlatmak için selamlama olarak '*Hoş geldiniz*' ve '*Buyurun*' ifadelerini kullanırken yüksek-konumlu olarak gruplandırılan hizmet sunum alanlarında bildirişim yalnızca iki mağazada çalışanlar tarafından başlatılmıştır ve '*Hoş geldiniz*' kullanılmıştır. Buna ek olarak, iki düşük-konumlu mağazada çalışanlar müşterileri teklifsiz dil kullanımıyla '*Hoş geldiniz kızlar!*' şeklinde karşılaşmıştır. İyi dilek bildirim ve teşekkür gibi bildirişim sonlandırıcılara gelince bu çalışmada katılımcıların çoğunlukla '*İyi günler*' ve '*Hoşça kalın*' gibi iyi dilek bildirim ifadeleri kullandıkları görülmüştür. Yüksek-konumlu mağazalarda, müşterinin ayrılırken '*teşekkürler*' veya '*kolay gelsin*' gibi iyi dilek ifadeleriyle bildirişimi sonlandırmayı başlattığı durumlarda çalışanların '*rica ederim*' ve '*sağ olun*' şeklinde karşılık vererek bildirişimi sonlandırdığı görülürken düşük-konumlu mağazalarda '*yine bekleriz*' sözcüsünün de kullanıldığı ortaya çıkmıştır. Müşterilere hitap etme biçimiyle ilgili bulgular incelendiğinde ise yüksek-konumlu mağaza görevlilerinin tamamının '*siz*' adını kullandıkları görülürken diğer gruptaki mağazalarda '*sen*' adının kullanıldığı ve bazı durumlarda adıl seçiminin bildirişimin akışına göre değiştiği gözlemlenmiştir. Dinleyenin hoşuna gideceği düşünülerek olumlu yüzüne hitap eden olumlu incelik stratejilerine ilişkin bulgular katılımcıların olumlu incelik stratejisi olarak yalnızca iltifat etmeye başvurduklarını göstermiştir. Dinleyenin olumsuz yüzüne hitap eden ve eylem özgürlüğüyle ilişkili olan olumsuz incelik strateji ise yalnızca düşük-konumlu mağazalarda ve müşterilere yardım teklifinde bulunma şeklinde gerçekleşmiştir.

Çalışma sonucunda elde edilen bulgular pedagojik çıkarım bakımından ele alınırsa dilbilimsel kibarlık dilden dile değişiklik gösterebildiği için ikinci dil öğrencilerini hedef dilde çeşitli kibarlık stratejilerine maruz bırakmak öğrencilerin dilin belli bağlamlardaki farklı kullanımına ilişkin farkındalık kazanmalarına ve bunun sonucunda anadili konuşurlarıyla başarılı iletişim kurmalarına katkı sağlayacaktır. Bu bağlamda, materyal geliştirenlerin ve ders kitabı yazarlarının öğretim materyalleri

tasarlarken hedef dilin toplumdilbilimsel ve edimbilimsel özelliklerini göz önünde bulundurması gerektiği öne sürülebilir. Bu bilgileri derslerin bir parçası haline getirebilmek için öğreticilerin de bu çeşitliliklere dair bilgiye sahip olması oldukça önemlidir. Bu durum, özellikle öğrencilerin hedef dile ait toplumdilbilimsel ve edimbilimsel bilgileri edinebilmeleri için en büyük dilsel girdi kaynaklarının öğretici ve ders kitabı olduğu yabancı dil bağlamında, yani Türkiye dışında Türkçe öğrenenler için büyük bir öneme sahiptir. Türkiye’de Türkçe öğrenenler için sınıf dışında özgün dilsel girdiye maruz kalma olanağı ders kitaplarındaki özgün dilsel girdi eksikliğini telafi edebilirken yabancı dil bağlamında Türkçe öğrenenler sınıf dışında özgün dilsel girdiye erişmekte eşit olanaklara sahip olmayabilirler. Bu sebeple, yabancı dil bağlamında kullanılan öğretim materyallerinde mümkün olduğunca özgün toplumdilbilimsel ve edimbilimsel bilgilere yer vermek hedef dili bu bağlamda öğrenen öğrenciler için büyük önem taşımaktadır.

İleride yapılacak çalışmalarda daha yüksek sayıda hizmet sunumu alanından veri toplanarak veriler zenginleştirilebilir. Buna ek olarak çalışmadaki mağazalar sundukları hizmet bakımından eşit sayıda değildir, bir başka çalışmada bu unsur da dikkate alınabilir. Son olarak, bu çalışmada mağaza/dükkan çalışanlarından ses kayıtlarından önce gönüllü katılımları için izinleri alınmıştır. Bu sebeple, çalışanlar bir noktada kayıt altına alınacaklarını bildikleri için verinin doğruluğunun zarar görme ihtimali bulunmaktadır. Bunun önüne geçmek için başka bir çalışmada aynı katılımcılarla daha sonra tekrar hizmet sunumuna yönelik bildirişim kurularak bu bildirişimler kayıt altına alınabilir.