A sociopragmatic comparative study of ostensible invitations in English and Farsi

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A comparative sociopragmatic study of ostensible invitations in English and Farsi

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Received 2 June 2004; revised 13 December 2005; accepted 13 December 2005

Abstract

In their study in 1990, Clark and Isaacs identified five properties and seven defining features that distinguished between English ostensible and genuine invitations. To see if Persian ostensible and genuine invitations could be distinguished by the same features and properties, the present study was carried out. Forty five field workers observed and reported 566 ostensible and 607 genuine invitations. In addition, 34 undergraduate students were interviewed and 68 ostensible and 68 genuine invitations were gathered. Forty one pairs of friends were also interviewed and afforded 41 ostensible invitations. The results of the data analysis revealed that Persian ostensible invitations can also be distinguished from Persian genuine invitations by the features and properties identified by Clark and Isaacs.

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Keywords: Ostensible invitations; Politeness; Speech act theory; Pragmatics; Face threatening acts

1. Introduction

Very often, linguists claim that instances of verbal communication can be broken down into a series of speech acts, or communicative acts. Speakers use these acts and act sequences in a systematic way to accomplish certain purposes. As such, a number of research projects have focused on the study of conversations. These investigations have sought to fathom the depths of communicative events to arrive at the unspoken purposes that lie at the heart of each. The present paper reports the results, and discusses the findings, of the research done to investigate the probable similarities and differences in the use of genuine and ostensible invitations by native speakers of English and Persian.

2. Background of the study

Brown and Levinson (1978) are famous for their work on "politeness" which is usually viewed as a powerful constraint that controls the way people interact verbally. Politeness is the manifestation, through speech, of respect for another individual's face. We all evaluate the people to whom we talk partly on the basis of their ability to interact verbally. That is, we develop a feeling about others partly based on how they speak. The overall impression (of themselves) that people leave in us can be