ABSTRACT

RESEARCH PAPER: Gender Differences in Gratitude Expressions Within a Saudi Facebook Group

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The study explores the strategies used by Saudi males and females when expressing and responding to gratitude within same and mixed-gender settings. There are few studies that discuss the relationship between gender and thanking in Saudi Arabia. Altalhi (2014) analyzed the ways Saudi females express gratitude in different situations, but doesn’t address strategies used by Saudi males. Hariri (2016) examined thanking only in emails between students and staff in an academic context. This study aims to answer the following questions, 1- do males in Saudi Arabia use different strategies when thanking females or do they use the same strategies that they use with other males? 2- Do Saudi females use more strategies than Saudi males? 3- Which strategies are used most by both genders?

The data for this study will be collected from naturally occurring settings through an academic Facebook group. This virtual community of practice includes both males and females who either have or are pursuing post-graduate studies. The group was established so that the Saudi faculty members can gather and share their experiences and answer each other’s questions. It has more than 7000 members who come from different parts of Saudi Arabia. The group members work at
state universities as faculty members and have relatively similar socioeconomic level since they have the same occupation and their salaries are standardized by the government with only small differences from one university to another. The paper will analyze 200 tokens of thanking with respect to the gender of the interlocutors. The thanking acts will be divided into four sections (male to male, male to female, female to male and female to female).

The way Saudi males and females use language is an area that needs more research. To the best of my knowledge, there aren’t studies that examine how Saudi males and females express gratitude in a social media platform like Facebook. Therefore, this paper aims to bridge this gap by analyzing the masculine and feminine patterns of expressing gratitude in the Saudi culture within a virtual community of practice.