

The Effect of Social Class on the Linguistic Behavior of Saudi Female Employees at Al-Imam Muhammed Ibn Saud Islamic University

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate how the linguistic behaviors of Saudi female employees at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University index their social class identity. The study used a holistic case with embedded units design. The researchers carried out interviews to collect the data. The interview questions were validated by eight EFL university professors. Besides, the discourse analysis was discussed based on the ethnography of communicative approach and the interactional sociolinguistics approach. The data analysis revealed that the linguistic behavior of the Saudi female employees yielded variant extents of indexation to their social class identity in terms of self-esteem, prestige, and power. The results proved that the linguistic behavior of the professors indexed their high-class identity in terms of their high level of self-esteem, high level of prestigious state, and high level of possessing power emotions. In addition, the linguistic behavior of the security employees indexed only two phases of their middle-class identity which were unsuccessful attempts to be prestigious speakers and their moderate sense of power. Finally, the indexation of the workers' identity as low-class speakers was manifested in their linguistic behavior in terms of the low level of self-esteem and lack of power possession emotions.

Keywords: Social Class, Language Behavior, Women, Identity, Speech, Occupation

1. Introduction

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia nowadays is exploring massive changes which encompass social and economic aspects. The Saudi government invests various reforms such as allowing women to drive, opening movie theaters, imposing value-added tax, reforming the labor market, and allowing foreign investors. Consequently, the economic and social status of Saudi individuals and families has changed. Hence, there is a need for reassessing and studying the current situation of the social-economic status of Saudi individuals. It is the linguist's responsibility to take part in the transformation movement of the country and provide the needed information of the Saudi society with the implementation of linguistic theories and statistical analysis tools.

Social identity is one of the key concepts in sociolinguistics. The social identity is constructed by different aspects such as the social class, gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, and religion. People often use a language to indicate their membership to specific groups and to give a clue about their social identity (Holmes, 2013). There is no doubt that professors do not speak like taxi drivers, and dentists do not talk in the same way carpenters do. Their social class which represents a part of their overall social identity is expressed in their language use. In addition, the correlation between social class and language use had been investigated in sociolinguistics and proved that individuals' speech determines their social class identity (Gumperz 1958; Labov 1966; Labov 1972; Cedergren, 1973; Trudgill, 1974; Sankoff & Laberge, 1978; Feagin, 1979; Horvath, 1985). Sociolinguists argue that people "signal the social differences between them by features of their phonology, grammar, and lexical choice" (Mesthrie, 2011, p.159). In other words, "particular social classes may indeed have different speech patterns, varying in lingua Franca, register, dialect, accent and diglossia" (Luke & Graham, 2006, p.428).

There is an extensive need to conduct a study in the field of social class and language use due to several reasons. First, there is little research in such area nowadays. Block (2015) noticed in his review of the concept of social class in linguistics that "social class has tended to receive little or no attention in publications that deal with issues around identity and social life" (p.2) in the period 2000 until the present time of his report. Therefore, there is a need to recall social class as a main variable in sociolinguistic researches.

Moreover, most of the studies that investigated social class and language use were carried out in Western societies such as Labov (1966), Labov (1972), Cedergren (1973), Trudgill (1974), Sankoff and Laberge (1978), Feagin (1979), Horvath (1985), Basit, Hughes, Iqbal & Cooper (2015), and Kirkham (2015). There were few studies in the area of the social class and linguistic behavior that were conducted in other parts of the world such as Goa's study (2014) which was conducted in China. Hence, the present study aimed at bridging the contextual and scientific gaps in the linguistic studies by investigating the Saudi society. Another impetus to conduct this study was that most of the studies that are concerned with the social stratification concentrated on low- class and middle- class people such as the studies of (Basit et al, 2015; Kirkham, 2015) in which the high-class people receive little interest. Thus, this study focused on all the variant social classes of the Saudi society in term of their use of the language. Therefore, the aim of the current study was to investigate the effect of the social class on Saudi female employees' linguistic behavior at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University.

2. Statement of the Problem

The most prominent sociologists Marx and Weber divided the society into high, middle and low classes (Carter, 2015). According to the sociology perspective, societies that have classes encounter social conflicts resulted from inequality in power, wealth and status (Mesthrie, 2011). The problem of social class is centered on the idea that the superior class controls the lower class or classes which prohibit justice and peace in the society. For example, people from high classes conquer the means while the lower classes are forced to serve them, as Marx's critique of capitalism (Carter, 2015). People use their prestige and their social networks to get jobs. Additionally, high-class people use their power to make vital decisions only for their interests. In the educational matters, there are many studies which revealed that students from lower class receive unfair educational opportunities because of their economic conditions which affect their future (Kirkham, 2015).

Since the language is one of the major representor of an individual's social class identity, people are judged by their way of talk in everyday social interaction. Therefore, their everyday speech affects many aspects of their social lives such as respect, reputation, and self-esteem, as well as, their lives in general like the opportunity of getting an appropriate job or desired educational level, as mentioned above. Due to these reasons, the present study aims at investigating how Saudi people represent their social status and how they stratify themselves within different social classes of the Saudi community through their language use especially after the social-economic changes the Saudi society has encountered. Moreover, although many studies were conducted worldwide on the relationship between individual social class and their language use, little attention is paid to this issue in the Saudi context.

3. Significance of the Study

The importance of the study stems from its contribution to bridging the contextual and scientific gaps in the Saudi community in the area of the correlation between the linguistic behavior and social class identity. The results of the study might benefit the Saudi government and decision-makers by providing clear view of the social-economic situation of Saudi people in order to meet the Kingdom's goals. Moreover, the study might help both linguists and sociologists in further investigations of Saudi Arabia's society and social community studies around the world as a whole by providing regulations and procedures of scientific research.

4. Research Questions

1 -To what extent do Saudi female professors at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University index their social class identity in their linguistic behavior?

2 -To what extent do Saudi female security employees at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University index their social class identity in their linguistic behavior?

3 -To what extent do Saudi female workers at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University index their social class identity in their linguistic behavior?

5. Literature Review

5.1. Theoretical Framework

This study tackles the phenomenon under investigation theoretically from several aspects. The first aspect is related to the social class concept, which is approached using the functional theory, Karl Marx theory, and Max Weber theory. The other aspects involve the social class identity and language behavior as well as the linguistic norms of the social classes. Furthermore, the researcher gives a theoretical account of the ethnography of communication approach and interactional sociolinguistics approach, which are discourse analysis approaches followed in this study.

5.1.1. The Social Class Concept

In order to understand the phenomena of the social class, the researchers review how class is discussed by the sociological perspective and how sociologists tackle the class concept, which represents the independent variable in the present study. The social class is a complicated concept theoretically because each society has its unique culture and norms which contribute to the diversity of criteria used in ranking people within different classes. However, Alkateeb (2009) defines class as "A group of people have the same economic status in the social hierarchy, and this status determines individuals' rights, privileges, power, authority, lifestyle, status and wealth, education, and services that they can enjoy, which are variant from one class to another"(p. 94). For more clarification, the researchers discuss three prominent and respectful theories in the field of sociology regarding class which involves the functional, Karl Marx, and Max Weber theory.

5.1.2. The Functional Theory

The functional theory says that the social stratification is a functional and needed component to complete the social structure of any human society, which increases the diversity of jobs every member has to do depending on their properties such as, talent, education, and training (Alkateeb, 2009). The functional theory argues that a non-class society is a myth has never been in human societies (Anwar, 2018). Moreover, from the functional theory's point of view, the classification of class is mainly determined by the occupation (Alkateeb, 2009). According to the functionalists' claim, each class in terms of occupation serves the higher occupational class, which produces overall coherent in the society (Alkateeb, 2009).

5.1.3. Marx Theory

On the other hand, Marx theory introduces the idea of conflicts between diverse classes as a result of an inequality within a society (Anwar, 2018). Marx insists that class is economically determined (Anwar, 2018). The social stratification in Marx's perspective is materialistic, which means that the economic status is the only factor in classifying individuals within the social hierarchy. Marx highlights that the economic factor is basically centered on the possession of means of production (Alkateeb, 2009). Unlike the functional theory, Marx follows the dream of a classless society (Alhassan, 2010).

5.1.4. Max Weber Theory

Another leading sociologist, Max Weber, admits that class is economically determined, but he appends further important sociocultural dimensions such as education, occupation, prestige, and lifestyle (Anwar, 2018). Weber defines social class, "A group of people sharing similar occupation and have similar income and live in similar circumstances" (Alkateeb, 2009, p. 102). From Weber's point of view, the formula of classifying any person in social strata is the level of their education or skill determining their occupation and thus their income, which consequently affect their class (Alkateeb, 2009). The chances of having a better education are affected by many social factors such as the person's family income, the parents' culture, the living conditions, talent, and skill (Alhassan, 2010).

Taking into account all the above explanations of class along with the Saudi context and the research participants in particular, this study defines the social class as divisions in terms of social prestige, wealth, and power according to differences in occupation. Besides, the occupation is a final representation of underlying sociocultural divisions shaping one's position in the Saudi society. Furthermore, an individual's occupation explains his/her education, family's background and status, social network, income, and lifestyle, which contribute to constructing the social class identity that distinguishes each individual in the society.

5.1.5. The Social Class Identity and Language Behavior

Language is considered as one of the social identity markers. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) as cited in Albirini, (2016, P.153) describe the speakers' use of language as a marker of their identities, "Acts of identity through which they enact their identities rather than describe them". Thus, the social class identity, which is an essential aspect of a person's overall social identity, is indexed in their everyday use of language. Therefore, there is a strong relationship between the language use and social class consciousness (Luke & Graham, 2006). Moreover, the linguistic behavior of each social class is identified based on the shared norms, which cover different areas of social behavior including the linguistic behavior and norms, and social evaluation of linguistic variables used by the members of a speech community (Guy, 2011; Snell, 2014). Furthermore, the linguistic behavior associated with each class is a matter of frequency and arbitrariness (Holmes, 2013). Like the organization of all social classes in a society, the overall linguistic behavior of individuals constitutes a continuum and people within each social class share similar linguistic norms (Wardaugh, 2006).

5.1.6. The Linguistic Norms of the Social Classes

There are several norms of the linguistic behavior in terms of class determined by sociolinguists, which are worthy of consideration when conducting a study in such an area. The linguistic behavior of each class does not appear in careful speech, as in the act of reading, where people usually tend to show their best linguistic behavior, which is close to the standard forms, and thus shift their style to be similar to that of the high-class people (Guy, 2011; Snell, 2014; Wardaugh, 2006). Yet, as lower class people are trying to behave linguistically like higher class people, they appear to have some kind of hypercorrection in which they overdo the higher class way of talk (Wardaugh, 2006). Besides, there are different factors, which include gender and age, that interact with the linguistic behavior of an individual in addition to the social class in which females and older people tend to use standard forms more than males and younger people (Wardaugh, 2006). In addition, the standard varieties are associated with higher-class people whereas the vernacular varieties are linked to lower-class people (Holmes, 2013; Snell, 2014; Wardaugh, 2006). For instance, in different studies conducted in different areas of the world, the pronunciation of [r] after vowels, [h], [ɪŋ], [θ], [t], and diphthong sounds is a pattern of standard prestigious dialects associated with higher-class people whereas [h] dropping, [r] dropping after vowels, as well as the pronunciations of [ɪn] instead of [ɪŋ], [t] and [tθ] instead of [θ], and [ʔ] instead of [t] represent a pattern related to lower-class people (Holmes, 2013; Wardaugh, 2006). However, speakers employ their linguistic behaviors to manage their fluid and multilayered class identities and choose their preferred identity, which is usually affected by several ethnographic factors such as the settings, participants, topic, and function (Holmes, 2013; Albirini, 2016).

5.1.7. The Ethnography of the Communication Approach

The ethnography of speaking or communication is a type of discourse analysis which tries to evoke awareness of culture-bound assumptions in any social interaction (Holmes, 2013). This approach introduces several components which are involved in any communicative events which help to describe the communication system (Holmes, 2013). The topic, setting, participants, and message code are examples of analysis components used by the ethnography of communication approach (Holmes, 2013). Holmes (2013) stated, "Because the framework was devised to highlight the features of a communicative event that people tend to take for granted, it is particularly useful for comparing the speech events between different social and cultural groups" (p.374). Moreover, the ethnography of the communication approach can explain the mismatch between different communicative event components (Holmes, 2013).

5.1.8. The Interactional the Sociolinguistics Approach

Interactional sociolinguistics is an approach to analyze a discourse that considers a wide sociocultural angle of the interactions. This approach is concerned with both the linguistic and paralinguistic behavior in analyzing a discourse. In addition, a researcher who adopts the interactional sociolinguistics approach in analyzing interaction pays attention to contextualization clues and schema. The contextualization clues are features used by speakers to signal what they say and used by listeners to interpret what the interaction is about in the conversations ethnographic context (Holmes, 2013). Besides, Holmes (2013) defines schema as "the set of expectations that we bring to an interaction, based on our previous experiences and our cultural norms" (p.382). Thus, the interactional sociolinguistics approach takes an account to the sociocultural norms and context, the background knowledge, and the presuppositions in the discourse analysis (Holmes, 2013).

5.2. Review of Literature

This section includes mixed-method studies, qualitative studies, and quantitative studies. These studies revolve around the phenomena of social class in terms of three dimensions: language variation and change, language and identity, and language learning and teaching.

5.2.1. Mixed-Method Studies

Rahman (2014) carried out a mixed-method study to investigate the correlation between the social class and language variations in Dhaka city. The social class of the participants was identified based on a survey measuring their income. The researcher used observation and a questionnaire to collect the needed data. In addition, the researcher used an audio tape-recorder to rerecord five different conversational situations in a real time context. The researcher stated that the purpose of the observation was to gain more information about the effect of the social class on people's speech and the role of a spoken variety in demonstrating a person's social identity. However, the questionnaire contained 18 open-ended questions investigating the participants' feelings and thoughts about their linguistic variants. The questionnaire's validity and reliability were assured by the consultation with the supervisor and the literature review taken into account while designing the questionnaire. The data of the questionnaire was analyzed by Microsoft Excel. The results of the study revealed that the participants from various social classes spoke differently in terms of standard and non-standard varieties of Bangla Language. The standard variety was preferred by the upper class people while the non-standard variety was preferred by the lower class people. Furthermore, the middle class people had the same preference for the both standard and non-standard varieties. Moreover, the researcher noticed that the linguistic variation was used as a means of social distinction in Dhaka society.

Basit et al (2015) conducted a mixed-method study to explore the relationship between language development and two social factors which included the socio-economic status and ethnicity in the city of Stoke-on-Trent in the UK. The participants' ages ranged between three and four years old and the children were taken from 26 schools and nurseries. The researchers utilized the New Reynell Developmental Language Scales (NRDLS) to measure the children's language comprehension and production development, the index of multiple deprivation to measure the socio-economic status of the

school or nursery, which depended primarily on the postcode that gave the characteristics of the geographical area of the school or nursery residence, and ethnic codes, which were based on the City Council Local Authorities' categories, to determine the ethnicity of the participants. Besides, the SPSS program was employed to analyze and compare the data statistically. The socio-economic status of the schools or nurseries was classified into three groups, which included very low, low, and middle. The study revealed that the three social groups were different in terms of the comprehension skills. The researchers called for children's equity to achieve their right of a decent educational level.

Kirkham (2015) explored the effects of the social class, ethnicity, and social practice on the social meaning of the happy vowel in Sheffield English. The researcher analyzed the speech of four female communities of practice in a multiethnic secondary school using an ethnographic design and the discourse analysis approach to examine the phonetic variations. Furthermore, the researcher combined quantitative and qualitative research methods. The results of the study proved that the vowels the working class (anti-school) girls articulated were tenser than those articulated by the middle class (pro-school) girls and that the social class intersected with ethnicity in affecting the social practice of producing different patterns of the happy vowels more interestingly. The researcher recommended the use of intersectionality and the community of practice approach to have broader understanding of sociolinguistic changes.

5.3. Qualitative Studies

Palmer (2009) carried out a single-case study to a deep understanding of conversational English and Spanish speaking power dynamics in two-way bilingual immersion education. The study took place in second-grade at an elementary school in San Francisco, U.S. with a self-contained classroom of 20 children. The researcher defined the class of participants as the level of formal education of children's parents. The children were divided into English speakers were descended from highly educated middle-class families, and Spanish speakers were descended from working-class immigrant families. However, the validity of the single-case study was ensured by various data sources that were collected by the researcher. The study employed several instruments to collect and analyze the data, for instance, audio and video record, ethnographic discourse analysis, sociolinguistic ethnography, and culturally-context conversation analysis. The study revealed that there was an imbalance in language learning between Spanish and English children, where English speakers were the dominant. The researcher explained that it was difficult to determine whether the imbalance was because of children's status as English speakers or because of their class identities as superior middle-class.

Dan and Rui (2017) conducted a qualitative study to illustrate the correlation between language behavior and social factors like social class, gender, and geographical factors. The researchers chose a movie to collect the needed data. The authors analyzed the sentences said by different people in the movie. Several findings were revealed by the researcher after the analyses in terms of social class and status. For instance, first, the analysis proved that language and social status had an affective relationship. Second, the judgment and preference of any variation were socially deterrent. Third, it was more common to see that the upper class used Standard English, while low classes used non-Standard English. Fourth, hypercorrection was preferred by high class speakers more than low class speakers. Moreover, the researchers recommended considering the differences in gender, social class and geographical factors in the study of individual language due to their pivotal impact.

Zaghlool & Ben Yahia (2020) investigated the Saudi women's style of talk that constructs their gender identity in mixed-gender informal interaction qualitatively. The sample of the study consisted of four Saudi females and two Saudi males. The study included two embedded units, in which each unit involved two female participants and one male participant. Besides, observation of the two units was used to collect data. To analyze data qualitatively, an instrument based on the interactional sociolinguistics and the conversation analysis approaches and the description of women's language, which was validated by six EFL university professors, was used. It was found that the females' use of the involvement forms and strategies and the discussion of feminine topics were extremely prominent. However, the females employed the politeness strategies and the general features of women's talk to a certain extent. Yet, this accommodation the female attempted to reach did not result in a great shift with respect to their feminine identity. Therefore, the feminine identity of the females was presented clearly in both units.

Al Shboul (2021) investigated the linguistic choices made by the participants at the level of phonetics and morphosyntax. He also examined the way speakers reconstructed their new identity, as belonging to an upper social class rather than to their real middle class. The data were extracted from the videos of ten field interviews. The study showed that gender, age and education influence the way people speak. Young people (both males and females) were more triggered to make linguistic changes than their aged counterparts. Females produced more vernacular variants than the males. The study concluded that social class, in particular, served as a motivation factor that pushed speakers to reformulate their identity.

5.4. Quantitative Studies

Habib (2010) explored the effect of age, gender, residential area, and social class on the use of the voiceless uvular stop, [q], and the glottal stop, [ʔ], in the Colloquial Arabic of Christian rural migrants to the city of Hims in Syria and their approximated use to the urban form [ʔ] which is considered a prestigious variant. The researcher divided the participant into lower-middle and upper-middle in terms of social class depending on income and residential area. However, according to the researcher, occupation and education had less or no association to class division in the Syrian context. The data were collected from fifty-two rural migrant speakers in individual informal conversations. The quantitative analysis explained that there was a contradiction in speakers' use of the [q] and [ʔ] variations. The social factors, age, gender, and residential area showed a significant effect in this variation, while the social class variable emanated negative effects.

Korat (2011) studied the estimations of mothers and teachers of the literacy level of 60 children and their relation to the children's actual performance in different socio-economic status groups. The participants of the study were 60 children living in Tel-Aviv, whose ages ranged between five and six years old. The study depended on Israel Central Bureau of Statistics Report List to classify the socio-economic status of the participants' neighborhoods, which were divided into high and low socio-economic status. The researcher employed a demographic questionnaire involving three dimensions, which were the fathers' education level, the professional levels of the mothers and fathers, and the family income, to explore the characteristics of both socio-economic status groups. Furthermore, the researcher used several tools, which included an accuracy and fluency reading test, a reading comprehension multiple-choice test, and a spelling test, to assess children's literacy levels. Moreover, Cohen's kappa was used to measure inter-rater reliability of all the tests. In addition, the findings illustrated that there were differences in children's literacy levels resulting from the differences in the socio-economic status in which the high socio-economic status children scores were higher than their peers from low socio-economic status.

Omari and Jaber (2019) examined the correlation between gender and social class on contrastive emphatic coronals in Jordanian Arabic. The participants of the study were divided into upper-class and lower-middle class based on the type of school and parents' residential area and occupation. 40 participants were exposed to a reading task of a minimal pairs list, and their reading was recorded and measured by VOT (voiceless stops), post-release duration (voiced stops), friction duration, vowel duration, and vowel formant frequencies (F1–F3) at onset and midpoint positions. Face validity was used to judge the validity of research instruments. The results were analyzed by Three-way Repeated-Measures Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs). The results of the study illustrated several important findings, such as there were a different linguistic distribution in terms of the effect of gender and social class on in emphasis production of the investigated variation. Gender showed effects on emphasis production of F1 (onset and midpoint) and F2 (onset and midpoint), whereas social class showed effects on the onset position of F1 and F2, vowel duration, and the post-release lag of the voiced emphatic stop. In addition, the lower-middle class speakers preferred strong emphasis cues. Significant intersects between gender and social class had been pointed regarding F1 (onset and midpoint) and F2 midpoint. Furthermore, the researchers stated that the different educational backgrounds of the two socioeconomic groups, which were considered a limitation of the study, might have some effect on the results, thus there is a need for a further investigation.

6. Methodology

6.1. Sample of the Study

The sample of the study consisted of nine Saudi female employees at Al-Imam Muhammed Ibn Saud Islamic University. The participants' age ranged between 35-42 years old. The participants were divided into three groups in terms of their social class. The researchers stratified the participants of the study depending on their occupations which were titled as university professors, security employees, and workers; they were considered to be belonging to the high, middle, low classes respectively. The researchers chose the university's employees for the purpose of stratifying them clearly and precisely into different social classes according to the occupation measurement. Furthermore, they chose the occupation for measuring the participants' class because the employees' educational level, cultural background, and name of the family determine their occupation which affects their income, lifestyle, and prestige. Thus, individuals' occupations can explain many phases of their social class identity. In addition, they chose the university as the setting to conduct this study because the social class identity can be more prominent in such environment. Consequently, the practice of the class identity through the use of language can be noticed. The researchers used a purposeful sampling method which is compatible with the research objective and design.

6.2. Design

The researchers employed a qualitative case study design to meet the research questions. They approached a case study type called the holistic case with embedded units to gain a rich analysis of the participants' linguistic behavior who belong to variant occupational classes. The purpose of choosing such a design was to enable the researchers to have a deep understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

6.3. Instrument

The researchers used one instrument to collect the data which was the interview. The purpose of choosing the interview was twofold. First, the researchers preferred the interview over other tools such as the observation to elicit spontaneous flow of the participants' use of language which helped in indexing their social class identity, away from implied competition with their peers which might take place because of the workplace context of the study which was outside the scope of this study. Second, the interview was suitable to the researchers when considering the limitation of time. Moreover, the researchers held a conversation with the participants structured by five questions (See Appendix A) as well as other additional questions required to complete the natural interaction between the researchers and the interviewees. In order to avoid the risk of the participants' misleading careful speech, the researchers opted for conversations about personal life experiences and thoughts. Thus, the participants were relaxed and comfortable while they were talking about themselves where their authentic linguistic behavior was substantial and recognizable. In addition, to achieve the validity of the instrument, the interview questions were given to eight EFL university professors whose comments and suggestions were considered (See Appendix B). As for the trustworthiness and reliability of the instrument, the researchers conducted a pilot study on three female randomly-selected employees using the same instrument of the study. The pilot study indicated that the interview questions were appropriate for

the research aims and design. However, the pilot study revealed that the analysis criteria of the linguistic behavior of the participants, which were based on three phenomena in sociolinguistics that included the dialect, style, and register, needed to be modified and reformulated since they were not evident enough. Such criteria followed in the data analysis in the pilot study were not comprehensive to detect the relationship between the linguistic behavior of the participants and their social class in terms of occupation. Besides, these criteria restricted the researchers and did not allow them to have a detailed analysis that lead to a better understanding and contribute to the trustworthiness and credibility of the results. Therefore, the researchers had employed an inductive approach and analyzed the data to detect certain patterns and draw conclusions. Thus, they guaranteed that the data analysis criteria were comprehensive and covered all the aspects of the investigated phenomenon.

6.4. Data Collection Procedures

After ensuring the validity and reliability of the research instruments, the researchers met three female employees from each class and the total number of the participants was nine. The researchers ranked the participant into high, middle and low classes depending on their job titles which were professors, security employees, and workers. Furthermore, the researchers had a conversation with each participant separately for 10-20 minutes throughout the duration of their worktime. During the structured conversations, the researchers needed to ask extra questions to follow the norms of natural informal conversations, and thus the participants were speaking spontaneously and their linguistic behavior was authentic. The conversations were recorded. Then immediate notes were taken after each interview to document the first incipient interpretations. Besides, the ethnographic features were written down in this stage, which were collected either by asking the participants or noticed by the researchers. Likewise, the raw data were stored in a well-organized archive for the sake of adequacy test for the analysis and interpretations. After that, the data were transcribed and read many times to look for accurate interpretations.

6.5. Ethical Issues

The researchers committed to certain ethical issues while conducting the present study. For example, credibility and trustworthiness in the data collection, data analysis and findings were maintained. In addition, the participants in the study were given the freedom to volunteer in the study after explaining the aims and the purposes of the research. Moreover, the participants were promised that their names and records were confidential; they would only be seen by the researchers.

6.6. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in a very systematic and organized process. Furthermore, the data were analyzed using two different approaches: the ethnography of communication approach and the interactional sociolinguistics approach. Besides, the linguistic behavior of the participants was analyzed and coded according to three aspects: the level of self-esteem, prestige, and power that each class showed. Moreover, the researchers analyzed each participant's speech separately and then as whole with the other peers in the same class.

To answer the research questions, the researchers analyzed the linguistic behavior of the participants regarding their unconscious attempts to index their social class identities. The social class identity, which was represented by the participants' linguistic behavior, was measured by the level of self-esteem, prestige, and power that each class showed. The three classes of employees were ranked within a continuum where doctors were considered as high and workers as low. Besides, the discourse analysis was discussed based on the ethnography of the communication approach and the interactional sociolinguistics approach. Moreover, the original data were written in Saudi dialect and the instances stated in this chapter were translated into English. In addition, the researchers provided phonemic transcriptions of some examples.

6.7. The Ethnographic Features of the Participants

To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of data analysis, the ethnographic characteristics of the participants and the whole communication sessions were considered while analyzing the linguistic behavior. Furthermore, the ethnographic features played a major role in manipulating the linguistic behavior in relation to a complex variable such as the social class identity. Moreover, the researchers considered some relevant ethnographic components discussed by Holmes (2013). The researchers discussed the ethnographic characteristics in three stages, which included general features highlighted in this section, specific features illustrated in table (1) and other detailed features discussed later during the analysis of the linguistic behavior.

The general features of the whole social communication could be expressed in terms of the type of the event, topic, participants, and formality. The type of interaction was an interview between the researchers and nine participants. The topic discussed by the researchers revolved around personal emotions and life experiences. The social interaction was considered informal based on the type questions and the atmosphere that the researchers attempted to construct. Moreover, more specific ethnographic features were illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. The Ethnographic Features of the Participants

The participant	Occupation	Class	Age	Setting	Message channel
HC1	Professor in Sharia	High	50	Office	Face-to-face
HC2	Professor in Islamic law	High	39	Office	Face-to-face

HC3	Professor in Applied Linguistics	High	38		Phone-call
MC1	Security	Middle	41	security Desk	Face-to-face
MC2	Security	Middle	35	security Desk	Face-to-face
MC3	Security	Middle	37	security Desk	Face-to-face
LC1	Worker	Low	34	Kitchen	Face-to-face
LC2	Worker	Low	37	Kitchen	Face-to-face
LC3	Worker	Low			Phone-call

7. Findings of the Study

7.1. Findings to the First Research Question

To answer of the first question, "To what extent do Saudi female professors at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University index their social class identity in their linguistic behavior?" the data were analyzed in terms of three important measurements of the high-class identity which were the self-esteem, prestige, and power.

The level of the self-esteem that a person had played a significant role in shaping the overall of his/her social class identity. Thus, the researchers analyzed the level of the self-esteem of doctors in terms of their behavior and emotions exhibited during their interaction in the interviews. Their high level of self-esteem was indicted through their paralinguistic and linguistics behavior. Moreover, in many situations, they expressed a positive image about themselves, which indicated a high level of self-esteem. Additionally, they looked back on sad or negative events in a very optimistic perspective. For example, when HC3 reported that she failed in one of the master courses, she said that it was a good experience in her life. Furthermore, the high-class speakers expressed a balanced use of the suprasegmental features such as stress, tone, and pitch. Besides, the doctors utilized a correction habit of the interviewer's ideas and thoughts to some extent, which was considered a contextual cue of a high level of self-esteem in the Saudi society.

The researchers attempted to analyze the state of prestige in the participants' linguistic behavior because it was an important feature affecting the position of a person in the social stratification. Furthermore, the state of prestige indicated in the doctors' linguistic behavior was analyzed in relation to their high-class identity. They expressed their prestigious position in their linguistic behavior. They also showed a great tendency to the use of standard Arabic which was considered an indicator of the most educated people, especially when taking into account the university as a context of the interaction. For example, HL1 used a lot of Standard Arabic such as "السائق الباص" /sa:ʔiq il ba:sʕ/, translated as *the bus driver*, "لا يوجد وقت فراغ" /la: ju:ʒad waqit faray/, translated as *there is no free time*, "الوالدة" /ilwa:lidah/, translated as *my mother*, "حوار" /hiwa:r/, translated as *dialogue*, "اطفالي" /ʔatʕfa:li:/, translated as *my children*, "عمال شاقة" /ʔaʕma:l ʕa:qah/, translated as *hard work*. In addition, the doctors illustrated their high status in their regular use of specialty registers. For example, HC1, as a doctor in Sharia, used expressions like "بصيرة" /basʕi:rah/, translated as *insight*, and "الله عز وجل" /ʔala:h ʕaza wa ʒal/, translated as *Allah the Almighty*. Similarly, HC2, as doctor in Islamic Law, used expressions such as "البيوع" /albuju:ʕ/, translated as *sales*, "شروحات علمية" /ʕuruha:t ʕilmijah/, translated as *scientific explanations*, "العقيدة" /alʕa:qi:dah/ translated as *the creed*, "حجابك" /hiʒa:bik/, translated as *your veil*, and "النوازل" /alnawa:zil/, translated as *calamities*. Besides, HC3, as a doctor in Applied Linguistics, used registers like *linguistics*.

Moreover, the general atmosphere of the interviews with the doctors was formal to some extent. This was seen in their inclination to avoid unnecessary details when they were reporting past events. For instance, when HC1 was telling a story about her sister, she said "تركت غرض عندي", translated as *She left some stuff with me*, in which she showed her preference to say nothing about what was the thing that her sister left, which indicated that she was aware of the formality and purpose of the interaction, and that the interviewer was not interested in the story in reality. This behavior could be accounted a contextualization cue when considering the prestige state in the Saudi society in such type of interactions.

In addition, the type of topics and the participants' choice of events could be interpreted as prestigious behavior. The discussed topics revolved around education, job, religion, and lifestyle in general. The personal topics were revealed in a very subjective way as well.

To recap, the high level of prestige was prominent in the participants' linguistic behavior. Their use of standard Arabic specialty registers and formal style of talk as well as their choice of topics expressed their high status. The feeling of possessing power was an unavoidable measurement when analyzing the class identity. Furthermore, the doctors' feeling of possessing power was coded in terms of the linguistic and paralinguistic behavior, which included the feelings of authority, confidence, and their attitudes towards the researchers.

The high level of the feeling of authority of the high-class employees was noticed in their attitudes towards the interruption situations by external interlocutors. For instance, during the interview, HC1 did not respond to a student when she was talking. She just moved her hand which conveyed a message meaning talk to me later.

Moreover, their feeling of possessing power could be seen in the participants' attitudes toward the interviewer. They treated her as their student not as a professional interviewer. They structured a student teacher relationship. Thus, they took a superior attitude to a certain extent. Besides, their superior behavior could be noticed in their interruptions and corrections to the interviewer's speech. For example, when the interviewer asked about how they feel in the university currently, HC2 corrected her saying "قصدك وش استقتني بعد هالسنين كلها". translated as *You mean what did you benefit from all these years?* In conclusion, the language behavior of the doctors at Al Imam University indexed their high-class identity in terms of their high level of self-esteem, high level of prestige, and high level of possessing power.

7.2. Findings to the Second Research Question

The second research question was "To what extent do Saudi female security employees at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University index their social class identity in their linguistic behavior?" To answer this question, the researcher analyzed the linguistic behavior of the security employees in relation to three aspects of the middle-class identity, which were self-esteem, prestige, and power. The middle-class identity was tested in terms of the level of self-esteem emotions that the security employees showed throughout their linguistic behavior in their social interaction. The middle-class speakers expressed various levels of self-esteem ranged from middle to low levels. For example, MC3 said, which means "لا أنا قلبي يحب" "No my heart loves all people, I am kind-hearted indeed." when she sought her friend's agreement about her commendation which could be considered a cue for a medium level of self-esteem. MC1 had a low self-esteem level which was clear in the suprasegmental features. For instance, when the interviewer asked her about Mariam whom she respects, she responded with rising intonation "يا اختي أحبها وحتو معنا", translated as *Oh sister, I love her. She is working with us.* Her sudden rising intonation was considered as a contextual presupposition of a strong attack which revealed her hidden emotions or concept that she cannot love or respect anyone she wants. Moreover, MC2 showed low self-esteem which was evident in her preference for the use of plural pronouns when she was referring to herself. For example, she said "ما عرفنا نوم" "That day", translated as "We could not sleep that day" and "بعد الجامعة قعدنا في البيت", translated as *After we graduated from the university, we sat at home.* Furthermore, the participant used the subject pronoun *you* instead of *I* when she was talking about herself in situations like "فجأة تطلعين لمجتمع ثاني", translated as *you moved to a different community suddenly.* Besides, her low self-esteem could be seen in her frequent use of swear expressions such as "إيه والله" /i:h wala:h/, translated as *I swear that's right*, and "والله" /wala:h/, translated as *I swear*, before and after most of her sentences, which could be interpreted as over confirmation behavior.

The middle-class speakers expressed unsuccessful attempts to present themselves as prestigious figures. That was very clear when they shifted their style and went back and forth between the Saudi dialect as the low variety and standard Arabic as the high variety. Their use of standard Arabic could be interpreted as hypercorrection which signaled their efforts to represent themselves as educated people, especially in such a context which was the university context. MC1 practiced such a behavior when the interviewer asked her to describe her first day in her job, she stated "كان يوم على قولتهم مفعم بالرهية", translated as *It was a dreadful day as it is said.* Her use of the phrase "على قولتهم" /ʔalaqo:latuhum/, translated as *as it is said*, indicated that it was not her way or style of speech but she was imitating prestigious people. MC3 expressed her feelings in standard Arabic instead of the colloquial Arabic when she said "مستحيل تنسينها ما دمتي حية", translated as *It is impossible to forget that as long as you are alive.* Her use of Standard Arabic in this situation signaled contextual presupposition of hypercorrection because it was inconsistent with the norms of the Saudi culture of women style of expressing feelings in any informal interaction. However, the middle-class speakers showed a restricted use of code-switching for a showing off purposes, which were limited to one situation when MC3 switched to English in the word *weekend*. Moreover, the topics that the middle-class interviewees discussed were considered a cue of non-prestigious behavior in the Saudi culture when bearing in mind that the interviewer was a stranger.

The middle-class interviewees' feeling of power as an important aspect of the social class identity was measured by the linguistic and paralinguistic behavior in terms of the feelings of authority, confidence, their attitudes towards the researcher, and voice tone. Furthermore, the first impression that the interviewer had regarding the middle-class speakers' feelings of authority was captured before having the interviews sessions. The middle-class interviewees needed to get permission from their head via a phone call before they accepted to volunteer to participate in the study, which revealed that they had limited feelings of authority. It is important to highlight that the middle-class speakers' limited feeling of authority was expected and respected by the researcher due to their job as security employees.

The researchers explored the participants' confidence as a significant aspect of the power feeling since confidence is a strong evidence of having feeling of power. Moreover, the middle-class speakers expressed variant levels of confidence which ranged from high to low levels. They showed a high level of confidence in their choice of talking about sensitive personal problems and struggles. They did not feel any sort of shame when they were talking about their issues such as low financial status, husbands' disrespect, over duties, families' disagreement, and transportation difficulties. However, they used considerable amount of affirmation features like "أنت عارفة" /ʔanti:ʕa:rifa:h/, translated as *you know*, "تعرفين" /taʕarifi:n/, translated as *you know*, "طبعاً" /tʕabaʕan/, translated as *sure*, and "فهمت علي؟" /fahamti ʕalaja:ʕ/, translated as *Do you understand what I am saying?* that could be interpreted as an act of seeking approval of other people or at least an excuse. Besides, they showed a tendency to give unnecessary explanations to any decisions or conclusions they discussed. Their use of the affirmation features were compatible with the over clarification, which gave the interviewer a cue of low confidence levels among the middle-class speakers.

Their feeling of power could be expressed in their attitudes towards the interviewer and the purpose of the interaction as well. They treated the interviewer as a friend showing neither superior nor inferior feelings. It was obvious in their use of a regional register such as the use of /s/ at the end of expressions like “الله يسلمس” /ʔala:h jisalimis/, translated as *May Allah bless you.*, the use of the Najdi expression “طلبتنه” /titʕalabitah/, translated as *I asked him insistently.* and used to ask somebody something with a pressing tone, and the Southern expression “أحكى لك” /ʔahaki lik/, translated as *I tell you*, “بكت” /bike:t/, translated as *I cried*, as well as intimate expressions like “يا حبيبة قلبي” /ja: habi:bat qalbi:/, translated as *oh my sweetheart*, “حبي لك” /ja: hibi: lik/, translated as *I love you so much.*, and “حبييتي” / habi:biti:/, translated as *my dear*. Furthermore, they adopted the norms of the turn-taking system of informal interaction where they interrupted the researcher and in some cases, the researcher interrupted them. In addition, they invited outsider interlocutors to participate in the negotiation and asked them to conform what they were saying, which contributed to creating a friendly atmosphere. Additionally, a lot of laughter was noticed. Their ability of having friendly behavior could denote that the middle-class employees had considerable feeling of power in that they could impose their favorite atmosphere during the whole interaction sessions.

Concerning the level of voice tone as a representation of the maintenance or loss of power in some conditions in the Saudi culture, the researcher investigated the meaning of such a linguistic behavior. The level of voice tone of the interviewees was variant, which seemed to depend on the personality of the interviewee and the topic of discussion. This indicated that the voice tone could not explain any correlation between such a feature and the social class identity among the security employees.

After discussing the feeling of power of the middle-class speakers' language behavior in terms of the feelings of authority, confidence, their attitudes toward the researcher, and the voice tone, the researcher ensured that they had a moderate sense of power.

To sum up, the researchers analyzed the indexation of the social class identity in the linguistic behavior of the security employees. The findings revealed that the middle-class identity was expressed in their language behavior in terms of the middle to low levels of self-esteem feelings, unsuccessful attempts to be prestigious, and a moderate sense of power.

7.3. Findings to the Third Research Question

The third research question was “*To what extent do Saudi female workers at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University index their social class identity in their linguistic behavior?*” To answer this question, the researchers attempted to analyze the participants' speech in relation to their low-class identity as workers. The language behavior was coded in terms of the three criteria of the worker's identity: the low level of self-esteem, non-prestigious style, and the feeling of the lack of power and position.

The level of self-esteem feelings of the low-class participants could be explained by their linguistic behaviors. Furthermore, the interviewer first noticed that the participants took an attitude characterized by over politeness which, in their case as workers, could be considered a cue of inferior feelings in the Saudi context. An example of the participants' over politeness attitude towards the interviewer could be seen when LC1 offered a chair to the interviewer while she was sitting on the floor. This behavior was an indicator of her inferior emotions especially when considering the age differences. In addition, the workers used a great amount of hesitation features such as hedges, pauses, repetitions, and corrections. Their use of such features along with topics like dreams not achieved and positive personal emotions could be interpreted as a sign of a low self-esteem level in the Saudi female context. For instance, when LC1 was talking about an old dream that was not achieved, she said “كان عندي حلم” /kan ʕandi ḥalm/, translated as *I used to have a dream*. After that, she hesitated to continue, paused, and corrected herself “في نفس الوقت اجيب عيال وادرس” /fi nafas al-waqt ajiyb ʕiyal wa-ʕadris/, translated as *I used to give birth to my children and study at the same time*. as if she regretted to say anything about her dreams. Then, she pushed herself again and said “كان حلمي اصير دكتوراه الصراحة” /kan ḥalmi ʕsir dakturaḥ al-ṣraḥaḥ/, translated as *It had been actually my dream to be a doctor.*, with a stress in articulating the word “الصراحة” /isʕara:ḥah/, translated as *actually*. Moreover, LC3 repeated a lot of phrases such as “وشسمه” /wiʕismah/, used as a filler to remember something and translated literally as *what it is called*, “لا إله إلا الله” /la: ʔila:ha ʔila ʔala:h/, used as a filler to remember something and translated as *there is not God except Allah*, “سبحان الله” /subḥa:na ʔala:h/, used as a filler to express exclamation and translated as *glory be to Allah*, and “وكننا” /wikiḏa:/, translated as *and so on*. Moreover, all the three workers revealed a low level of self-esteem denoted by some suprasegmental features such as the voice tone. Their apparent low tone along with paralinguistic behavior such as the absence of eye contact and the low head position could be a strong evidence of low self-esteem emotions.

The prestige is another criterion that enabled the researcher to analyze the low-class identity indexed in the workers' linguistic behavior. The use of prestigious varieties by the three workers was very rare. Furthermore, the use of the standard Arabic variety in LC1's speech was limited to one code which was “الطفل” /atʕifil/, translated as *a child*, in the conversational unit lasted for 20 minutes. LC2 and LC3 did not use any prestigious registers. However, LC1 admitted that she was talking in the Hijazi dialect, which was not her native dialect, in order to be more prestigious. In her case, shifting her style to the Hijazi variety was considered an unsuccessful attempt to be a prestigious speaker, especially when taking into account the geographical context, which was Najd region. On the other hand, the workers showed a high level of prestige in their attitudes towards the interviewer. For example, they were talking about sensitive topics in a subjective perspective, which was clear in their tendency to avoid expressing personal feelings or emotions. In addition, they were aware of the formality and purpose of the interaction, which were showed many times in their responses before and after the interview sessions. Thus, the workers showed a moderate level of prestige in their linguistic behavior, which was inconsistent with their social class identity.

The low level of power in the linguistic behavior of the workers as an identifier of the low-class identity was analyzed in correlation with their linguistic and paralinguistic behavior. For instance, the type of topics that they chose to discuss could be considered a contextualization cue of powerless emotions. The type of topics in general revolved around orphans, domestic violence, poverty, and loneliness. Besides, the interviewer had a full control of the turn-taking system negotiated in the whole three units. Moreover, the low-class participants had several paralinguistic attitudes which might be interpreted as powerless behavior in the Saudi society. For example, LC2 had an immediate response to two interruptions in which she was interrupted by a phone call at first and then by a student. Her improper responses to external distractors gave the interviewer an impression that she practiced non-prioritization habit, especially when the interrupters were not important people. The lack of prioritization talent might be interpreted as a cue of a powerless character in the Saudi society. In addition, the low-class interviewees showed a noticeable tendency to present themselves in a way compatible with the interviewer's ideas and thoughts in different situations. Following that way indicated that the participants were suffering from a low level of confidence since they avoided the expression of their real personal ideas and thoughts in such friendly atmosphere.

To sum up, the linguistic behavior of the workers illustrated their low-class identity in terms of their low level of self-esteem, lack of power, and position feelings. However, they showed a moderate level of prestige which reclassified them as middle-class speakers.

8. Discussion of the Findings of the Study

The researchers discussed the findings of the present study in relation to the previous researches in the field according to three important findings which were the correlation between the social class and linguistic behavior, standard varieties, and the ethnographical features.

The findings of the study revealed a positive correlation, that emerged from a great to some extents, of the relationship between the social class identity and linguistic behavior, which were consistent with the findings of Cedergren (1973) Feagin, (1979), Gumperz (1958), Horvath(1985), Labov (1966), Labov (1972) Sankoff & Laberge (1978), and Trudgill (1974). However, the findings were opposite to the findings of Habib's study (2010), which was an important study when considering its geographical context which was an Arab Syrian society. Habib (2010) did not find any correlation between the social class and the investigated linguistic variations. This could be attributed to the differences between Habib (2010) and the present study in terms of the social class measurements. Furthermore, Habib (2010) classified his participants according to their income and residential areas, which could explain the negative results.

The use of standard varieties as a prestigious marker was a prominent finding of this study, which was consistent with the findings of Dan and Rui (2017) and Rahman (2014). Besides, the two studies revealed similar findings that the use of standard varieties was practiced by the high-class speakers while non-standard varieties were practiced by the lower-class speakers.

Concerning the ethnographical features of the participants, which were discussed in the present study, the present study proved to apparent effects of such ethnographic features on the interpretation of the linguistic behavior in terms of the social identity. This result was reported in the studies of Basit et al. (2015), Dan and Rui (2017), Habib (2010), Kirkham (2015), Omari and Jaber (2019), and Snell (2010). This proved that the researchers were successful when considering the ethnographic aspects of the participants such as gender and age, in analyzing the data.

9. Conclusion

In light of the results, it could be concluded that the linguistic behavior of the doctors indexed their high-class identity in terms of their high level of self-esteem, high level of prestigious state, and high level of possessing power emotions. In addition, the linguistic behavior of the security employees indexed only two phases of their middle-class identity, which were unsuccessful attempts to be prestigious speakers and their moderate sense of power. Moreover, the indexation of the workers' identity as low-class speakers was seen in their linguistic behavior in terms of the low level of self-esteem and lack of power possession emotions.

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