

POWER AND POLITENESS IN SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS STUDY

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Abstract

A great deal of existing research has studied the distribution of power among individuals within different groups and cultures and has examined how this power relationship impacts the concept of politeness in communication. However, very few studies focus on power and politeness expressions as employed in school board meetings. This study aimed to fill this gap by producing a review of the linguistic implication of power and politeness in school board meeting in Kuwait. Through applying the basics of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory on politeness, this paper will describe the positive and negative politeness strategies that are typically employed in a communicative event .

A qualitative design was employed for this study and a structured observation was applied for collecting data. Our study adopts critical discourse analysis method (CDA) to analyze the collected data. The CDA is typically employed to help educators to understand the relationship between language and society. It investigates the relationship between text, context and language in a specific setting (Henderson, 2005). This study examined the discourse that occurred naturally during a school board meeting in Kuwait. Within this research the board meeting was viewed as a hierarchical situation that could be deemed to be representative of the way in which individuals exercise and adhere to power relationships. It was concluded that power and politeness co-occur in a context simultaneously. Power is a transactional factor between superiors and subordinates, also a dynamic factor that do not exist in all contexts. We find evidence that school is considered a rich-information resource for linguistic behavior studies.

Keywords: Power, Politeness, Kuwaiti expressions, School communication.